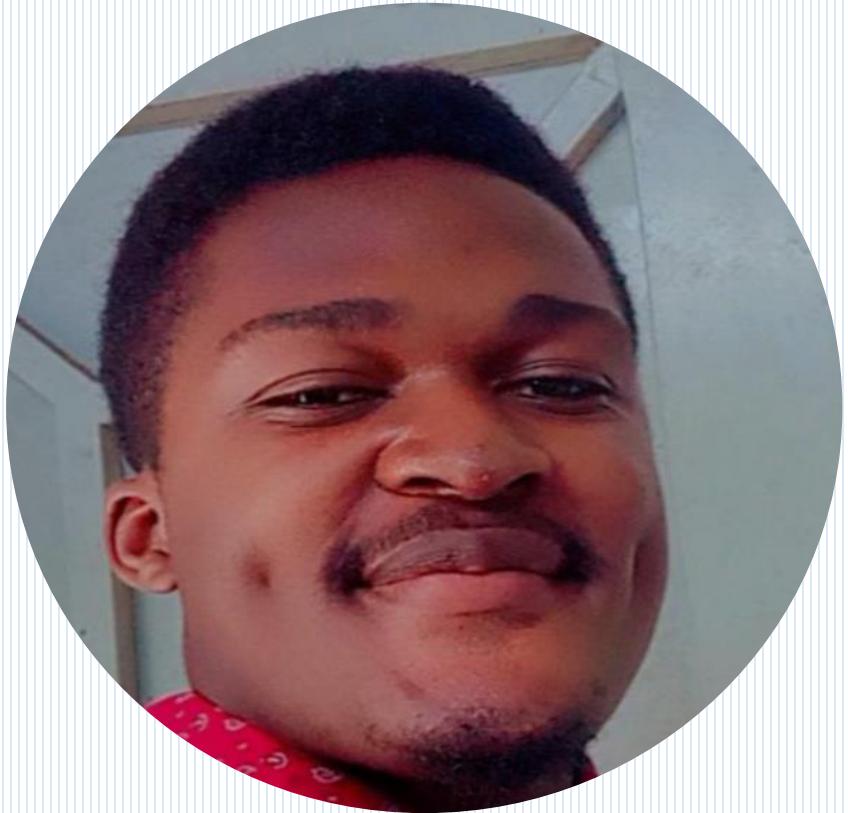




CREATIVE PATHWAYS TO WELL-BEING: COMMUNITY-BASED LESSONS FROM BAMENDA II

*Presented by Chea Gerald, Founder Gifted Hands and Healing Voices
YLAH Summit Bamenda 2025*



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Promoting Well-Being: Reducing Stress & Building Resilience

Through Arts in Bamenda

Mental Health Challenges



Mental Health Challenges: Regional Insights

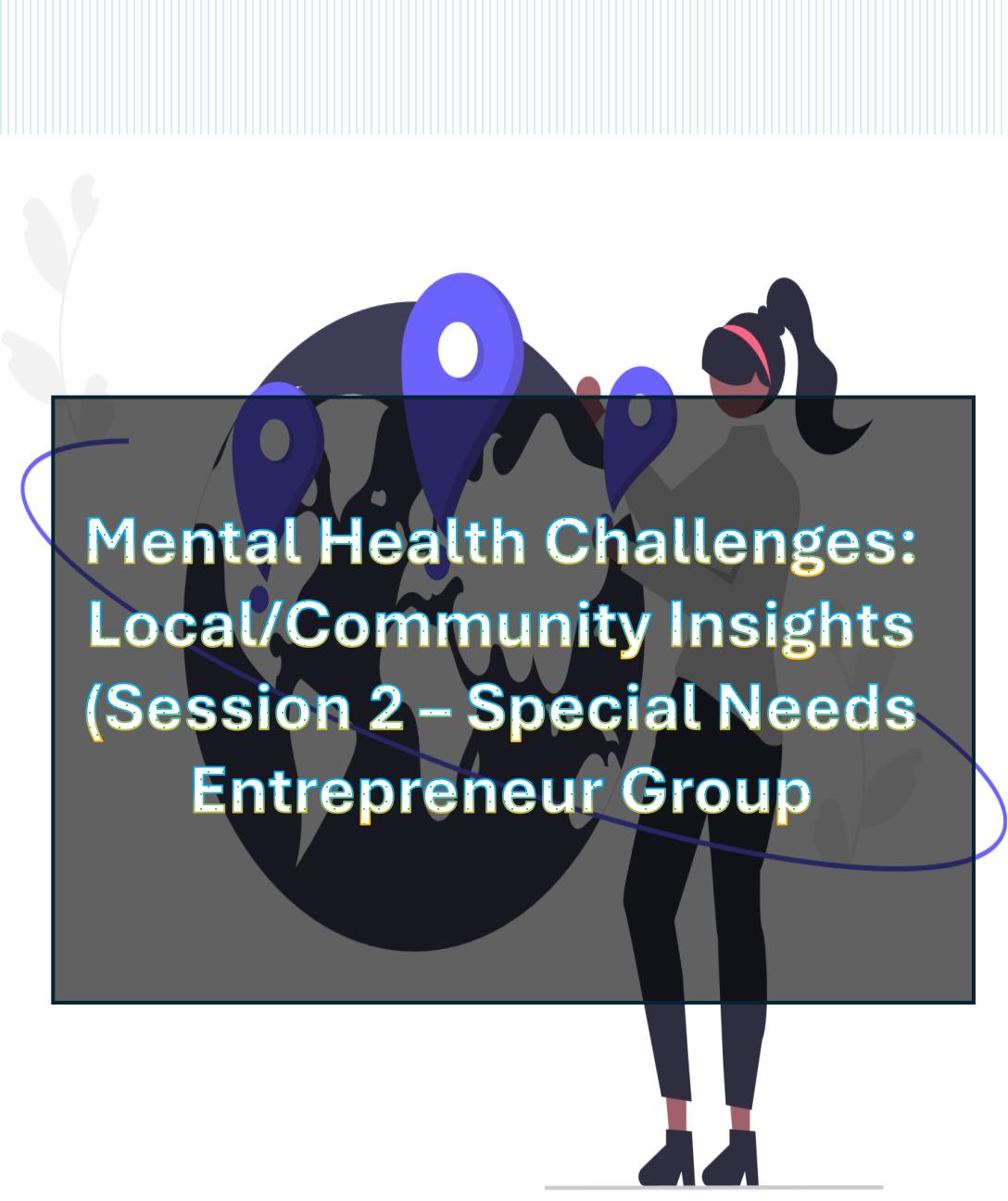
- Mental health issues widespread in Cameroon, especially underserved groups (IDPs, refugees, disabled, youth)
- Common problems: depression, trauma, PTSD, loneliness
- Limited access to mental health services due to resources, insecurity, and few trained personnel
- Stigma and low help-seeking hinder use of professional support.
- Integration into healthcare is minimal, especially in crisis-affected regions
- Evidence (2024–2025): UNICEF, UNFPA, OCHA reports highlight urgent need for psychosocial support
- Highlights need for community-based interventions.



Mental Health Challenges: Local/Community Insights (Session 1 – Special Needs Entrepreneur Group)

Regional reports (UNICEF, UNFPA, OCHA) highlight high prevalence of mental health challenges, low access to services, and need for psychosocial support. Local workshop data mirrors these trends:

- Poor mental health: **33% (3/9)**
- Good mental health: **56% (5/9)**
- Disconnected from community: **33.3% (3/9)**
- Never Sought professional help: **44.4% (4/9)**
- **Insight: Even within a small group, there were signs of mental health struggles and isolation, echoing regional concerns.**



Mental Health Challenges: Local/Community Insights (Session 2 – Special Needs Entrepreneur Group)

- Poor mental health: 4% (1/22); Fair: 14% (3/22)
- Good/Excellent health: 82% (18/22)
- Disconnected from community: **9% (2/22)**
- Never sought professional help: **66% (16/21)**
- Insight: Many reported good/excellent health, but isolation and low help-seeking confirm regional findings (UNOCHA, UNICEF, UNFPA) on barriers to care in North West Cameroon.



Gifted Hands and Healing Voices

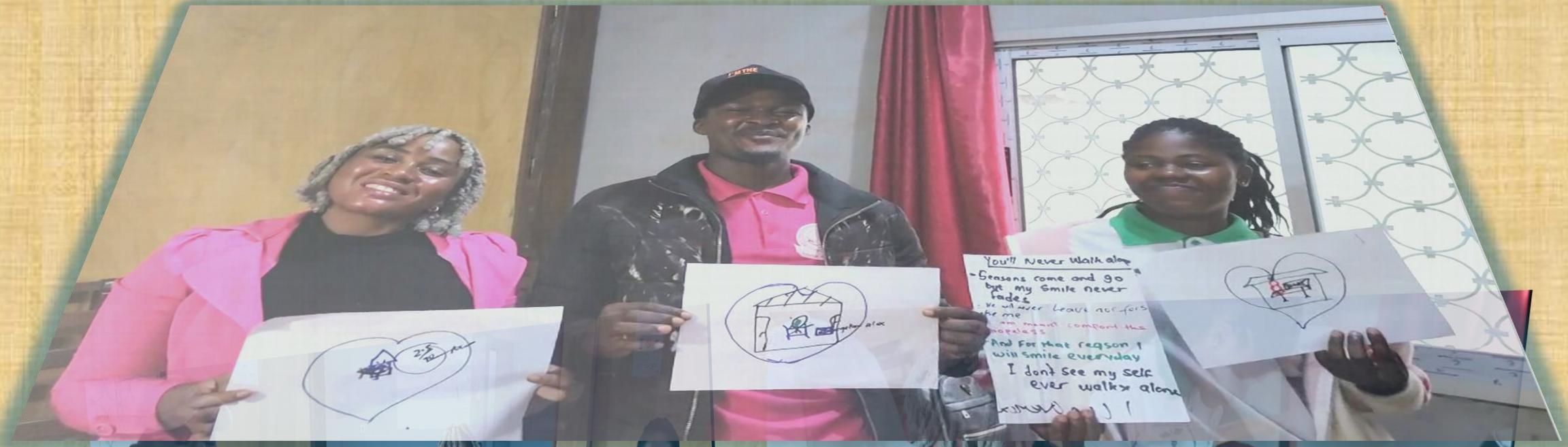
- **Local Initiative:** Using creative arts to improve mental health and social connection in Bamenda II.
- **Target Groups:** Youth, handicapped persons, IDPs, trauma survivors, orphans.
- **Core Activities:** Drawing, theatre, music, poetry, gardening.
- **Impact:** Participants report improved mood and stronger social connections.
- **Approach:** Inclusive, culturally sensitive, and community-led.

From Insight → Action



- Engage 25+ participants from vulnerable groups in art-based sensitization activities.
- Collect baseline feedback on participants' mental health and social connection through pre-surveys.
- Expose all participants to at least one creative health activity (drawing, poetry, theatre, gardening).
- Establish 3+ partnerships with local organizations to support engagement and outreach.

Pilot Sessions with Volunteers



A photograph showing a group of approximately ten women of diverse ethnicities and ages sitting in a circle on chairs. They are all focused on a task on the floor in front of them, which appears to be a piece of fabric or a large sheet of paper. The women are dressed in a variety of colorful clothing, including dresses, shirts, and pants. The setting is an indoor room with a plain wall in the background.

Creative Health in Action: Outcomes and Insights

Collaborative Session



How Participants See Their Own Wellbeing

Session 1: Group A

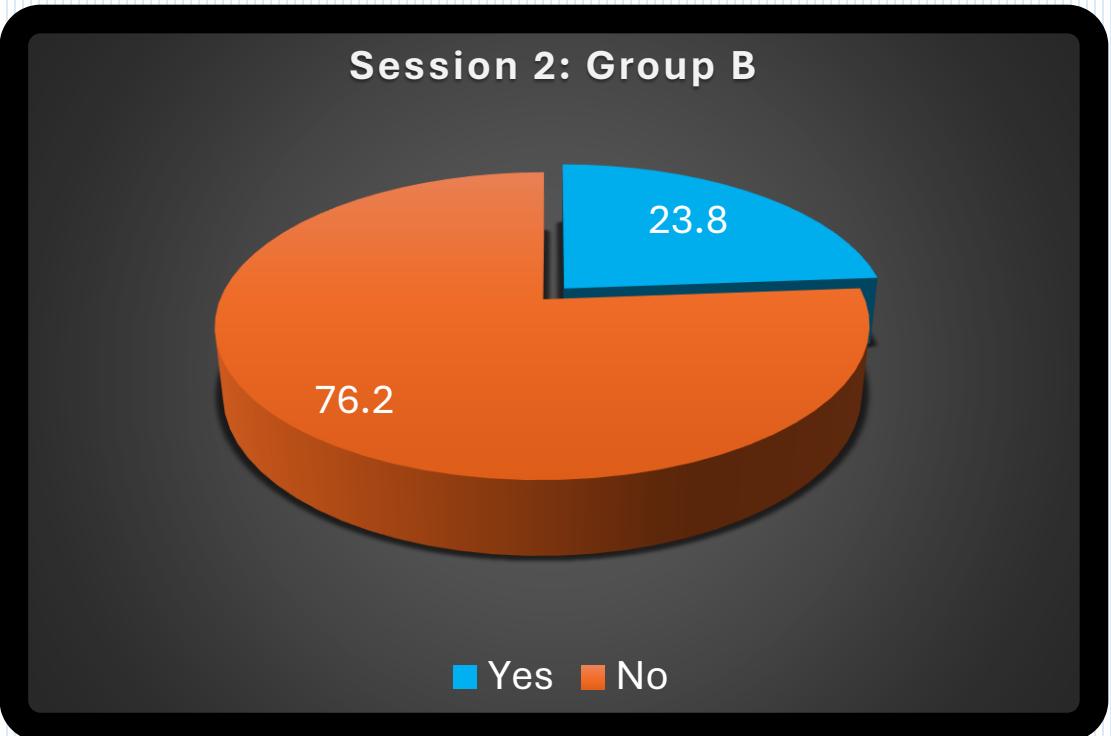
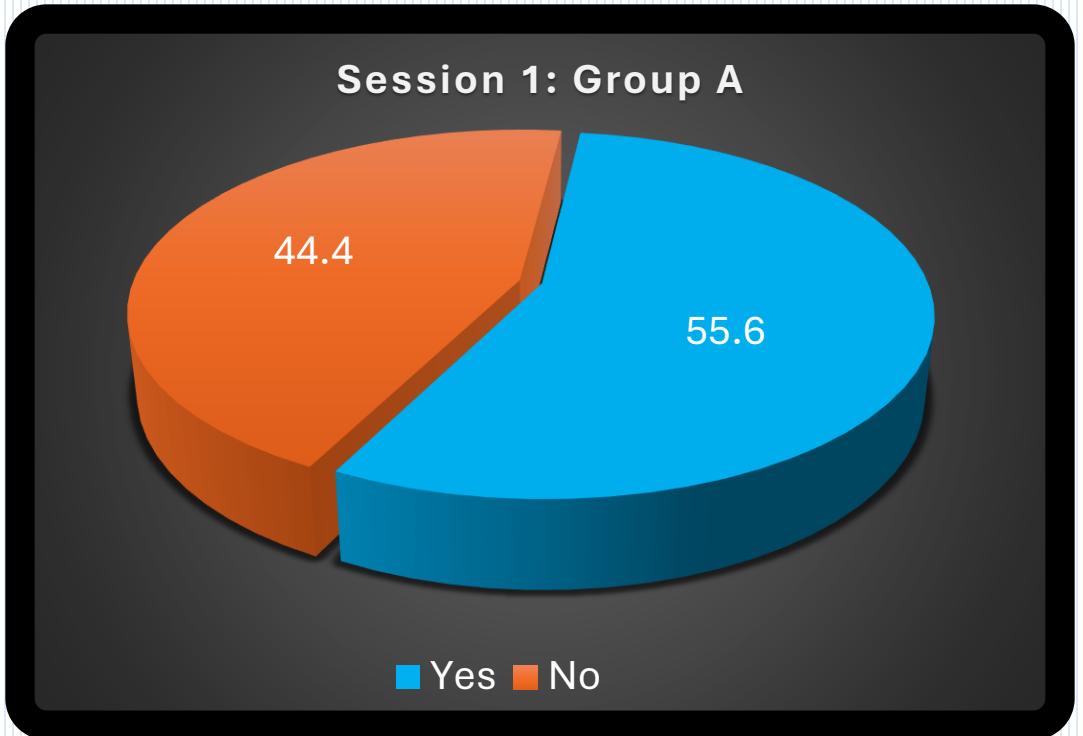


Session 2: Group B



- Group A: 44% rated Fair/Poor mental health while Group B: 18% rated Fair/Poor.
- Both groups show significant unmet needs, not just isolated cases.
- Findings align with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNOCHA reports on hidden mental health struggles.

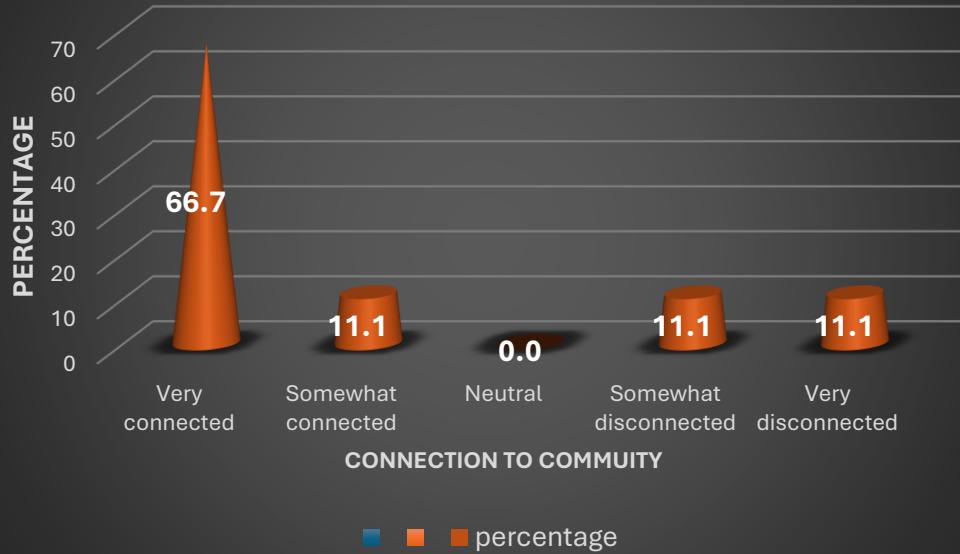
Seeking Help: The Path Rarely Taken



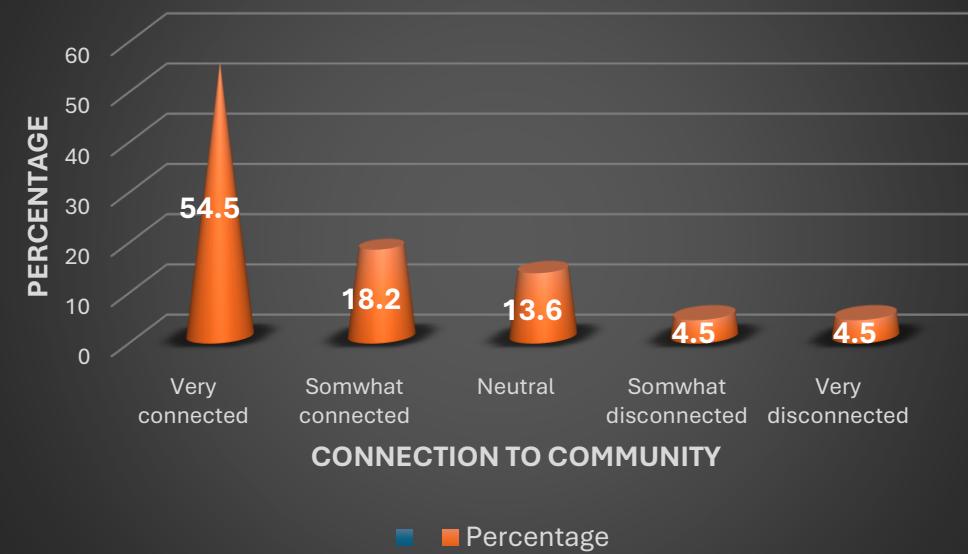
- In Group A, 55.6% had sought professional help, compared to only 23.8% in Group B.
- Across both sessions, the majority had never accessed mental health services, revealing a significant help-seeking gap.

Connected or Alone?

Session 1: Group A



Session 2: Group B

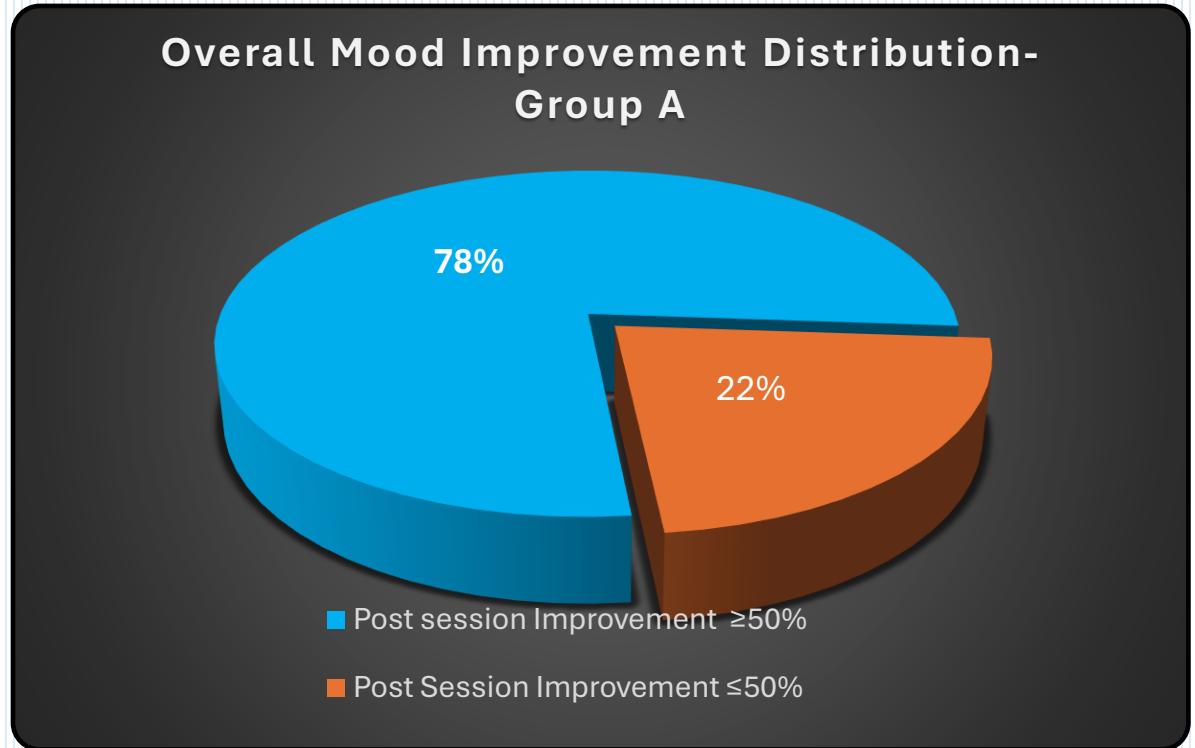
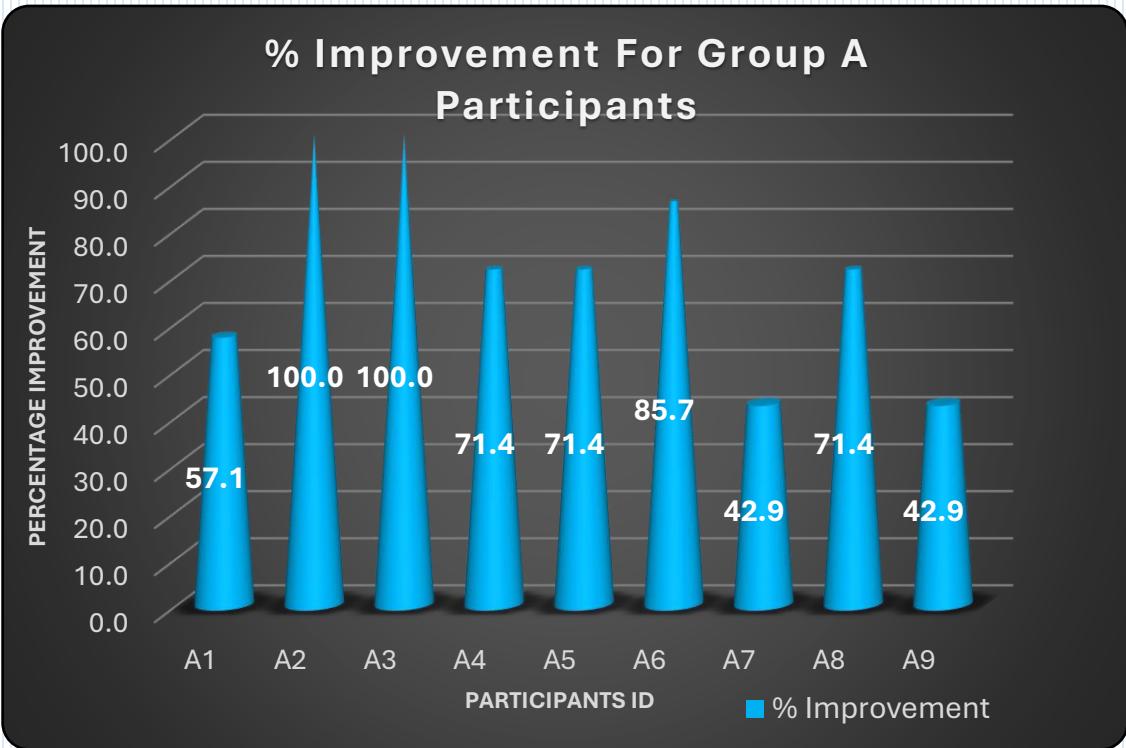


- Only a small proportion of participants reported feeling disconnected from the community (First session: 22.2%; Second session: 9%).
- Most participants felt somewhat or very connected, showing strong community ties.
- Highlights the importance of support groups like JANGI in Bamenda, where formal mental health services are limited.

Inclusive Participation in Action



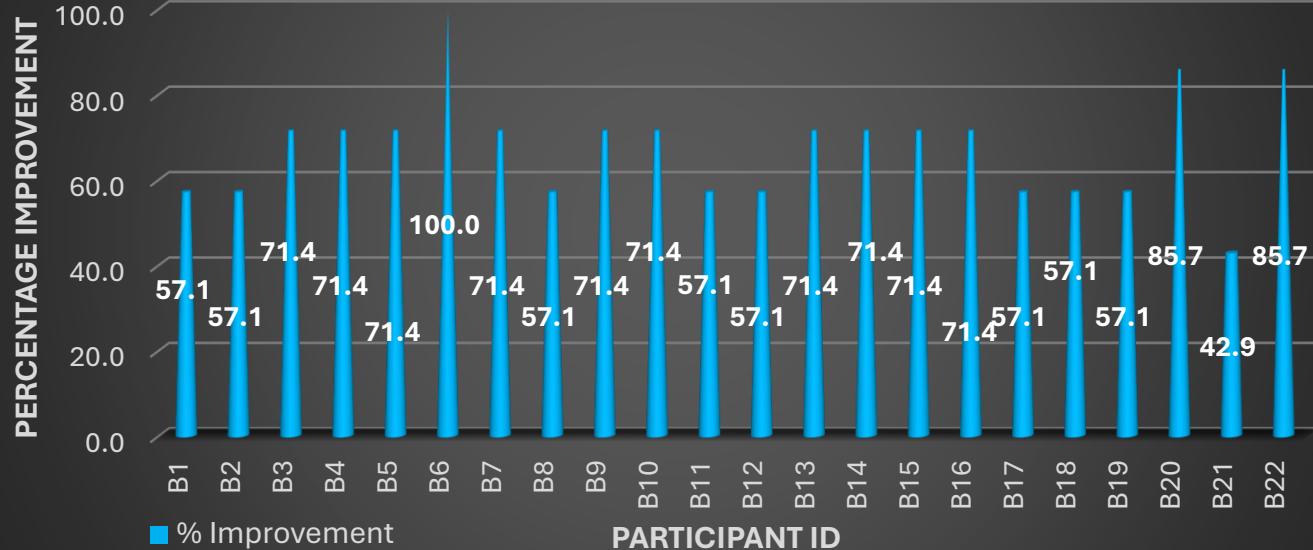
From Sadness to Smiles: Session 1



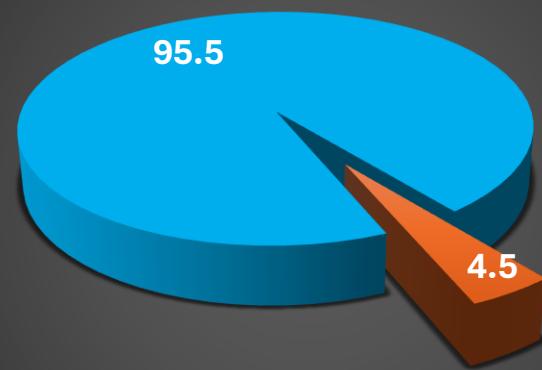
- Participants showed varied levels of mood improvement, ranging from 42% to 100% post the session.
- 78% improved by more than half of the maximum possible improvement in mood.
- 22% improved less than half.
- Overall, the session boosted emotional well-being and connection.

A Stronger Shift in Session 2

% Improvement For Group B Participants

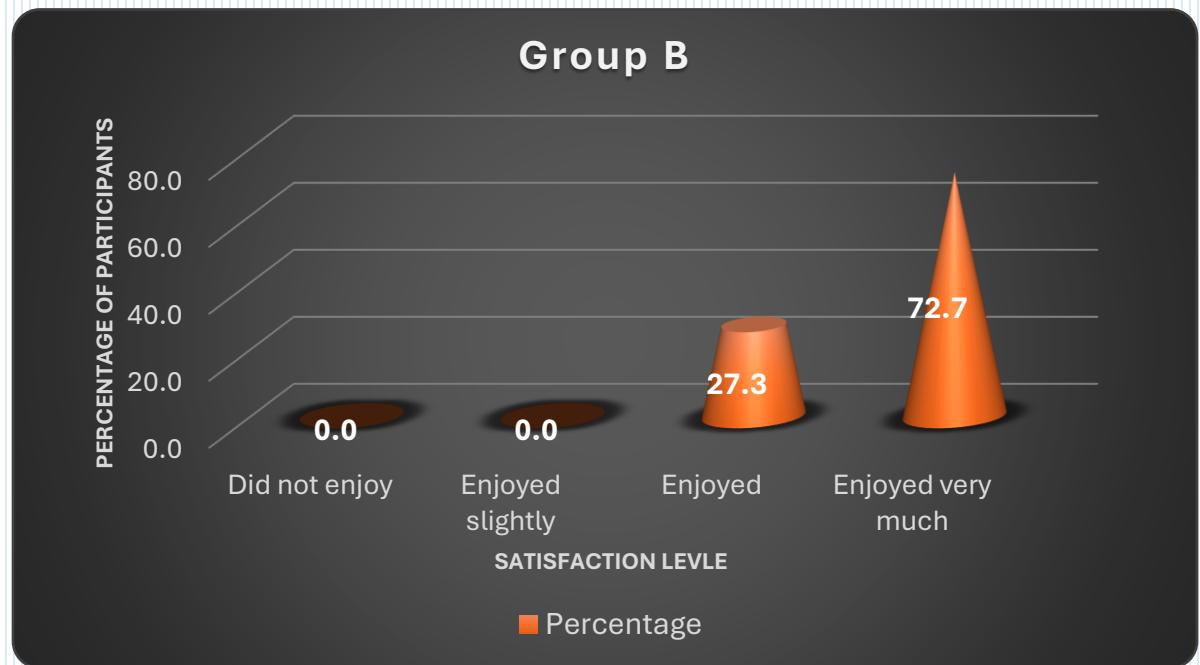
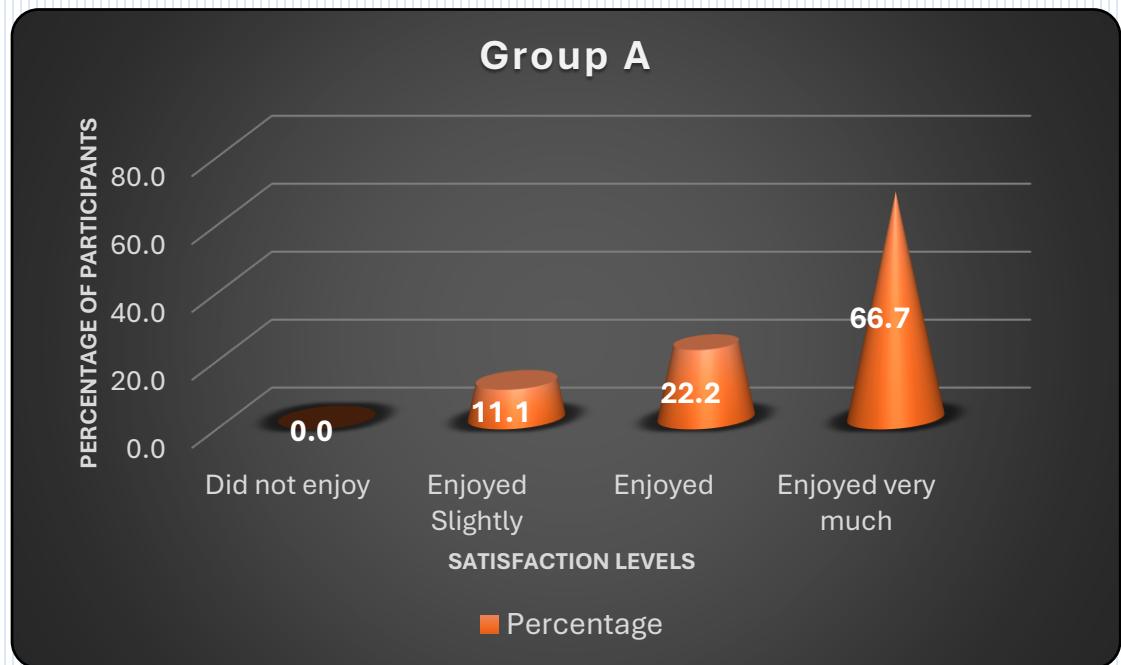


Overall Mood Improvement Distribution-Group B



- **Strong overall impact:** 95.5% of participants achieved mood improvements above 50%.
- **Individual growth:** Most participants improved between 57.1% and 71.4%, with some reaching 100%.
- **Minimal low response:** Only 4.5% showed less than 50% improvement, highlighting the session's effectiveness.

Did They Really Enjoy the Sessions?



- Majority of participants in both groups reported high enjoyment, with 66.7% (Group A) and 72.7% (Group B) indicating “enjoyed very much.”
- Only a small proportion of participants reported moderate enjoyment, and none reported disliking the session.
- These results suggest the session effectively engaged participants and positively influenced their experience.

Sharing, Learning, and Togetherness

Highlights of First Visit



Highlights of Second Visit



Eager to Return for More



- All participants across both sessions expressed willingness to join future activities, showing strong engagement.
- Majority reported high enjoyment, with most selecting “enjoyed very much” during the sessions.
- Mood improvements were significant, reflecting the positive impact of creative health activities on emotional well-being and community connection.

Voices from the Community



- *“I enjoyed the drawing and the way it was explained.”*
- *“Music helps me get rid of sad thoughts.”*
- *“Always come visit us.”*
- *“The session showed how different we think — and that is beautiful.”*

Ripple Effects: Creative Healing Beyond Borders



- Our Healing Reflection Series explored prompts like “My Shield, My Safe Space, My Inner Child.”
- Wendy Grossman (GAIMF alumna) used these at Butler Hospital, Rhode Island during a staff strike.
- Activities in painting, drawing, and writing brought relief and connection.

A photograph showing a group of people in a room with green and red walls. In the center, a woman in a green and red patterned dress holds a white plastic bag with the text "SEL FOND IODE" and "VENTE" visible. To her left, a person sits on a wooden chair, looking down at some papers. Behind them, two men stand smiling; one wears a pink shirt and a black cap, the other wears a white t-shirt with a logo. A cardboard box leans against the wall on the right.

Acknowledging Our Collaborators and Mentors

*“From the Solo Journey to Community
Impact”*

Special Thanks

-  **Dr. Kunle Adewale – CEO, GAIMF & YLAH Summit, strategic mentorship**
-  **Ma Foba – Professor & mentor, guidance on creative health workshops**
-  **Father Franklin (Caritas Bamenda) – Branding ideas, transition from solo to group activity**
-  **Francaisse Alliance – Workshop spaces, early community support**
-  **Ma Irene (Cameroon National Association for Family Welfare) – Creative suggestions & ideas**
-  **Glorious Care Foundation – Present from day one, accompanied GH&HV to community**
-  **Honourable Etoh Anzah – Project management support & data analysis guidance**
-  **Special Needs Entrepreneur Management and Team**

Join the Creative Wellbeing Movement

*“Support us with ideas, resources, or your
presence in community workshops.”*

Thank You!