

BLOSSOM GROUP

UJALA – The Light Project

**Comprehensive Community Transformation Report
2024–2025**

Before UJALA was even named, 450 South Asian women shared their truths that shaped everything. This was never a blank-slate initiative. It was built on real conversations, real silences, and real needs. We didn't start with solutions – we started with listening.

"We don't know what help is even out there." "The help we've tried didn't feel made for us." "No one ever asks us. We just cope."

Blossom Group – Change Can Only Happen From Within



A Full Account of Transformation

From Listening to Leading

This document is not simply an impact report. It is a full account of a transformation that was led from within. It captures the origin, implementation, scale, and evolution of UJALA – The Light Project – from early conversations in community kitchens to the development of a culturally rooted mental health movement.

What began in humble spaces has grown into a national presence, demonstrating what becomes possible when mental health support is designed and delivered by those with lived experience, deep trust, and cultural fluency.



What follows is a full report in narrative and data: storytelling and structure, numbers and nuance, outcomes and opportunities. This is a model that reimagines what mental health support can be when we center the voices of those who know these communities best.

Executive Summary

UJALA is a community-led mental health and wellness project designed and delivered by South Asian women in the UK. From October 2024 through May 2025, the project embedded culturally grounded mental health support into everyday community spaces. It was created and run by Blossom Group, a CIC rooted in deep cultural fluency and authentic community relationships.

Outcomes at a Glance

731

Direct Outreach

Interactions in shops, homes, and faith centers

15+

Community Events

Reaching 1,348 attendees across cultural celebrations

38

Volunteers Trained

In culturally adapted mental health literacy

521

Wellness Participants

Engaged in Yoga 4 All and Walking Groups

100K+

Radio Listeners

Cumulative reach through culturally fluent programming

1

Historic First

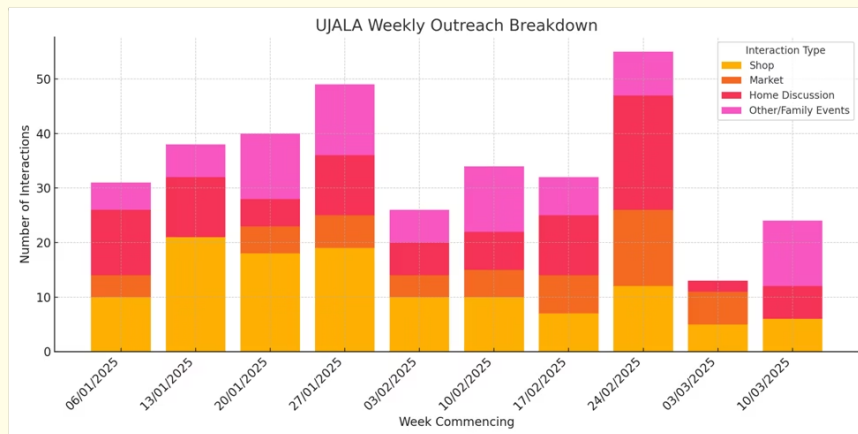
UK's first South Asian mental health radio channel

Background & Community Listening

Project Genesis

UJALA (meaning "light") emerged from the lived realities of 450 South Asian women who shared their experiences of isolation, stigma, and disconnection from mainstream mental health services. These weren't focus groups or surveys – they were real conversations held in kitchens, at temple gatherings, and over chai in living rooms.

These conversations laid the groundwork for a radically different approach – one grounded in accessibility, cultural fluency, and community ownership. Women spoke of navigating systems that felt foreign, being prescribed solutions that ignored their spiritual beliefs, and facing services that couldn't speak their languages or understand their family structures.



Key Insight

Conventional service models weren't underutilized because of ignorance or stigma alone. They were culturally disconnected and systemically inaccessible. The gap wasn't just about awareness – it was about fundamental design failure.

Theory of Change: The ART Framework

Accessible. Relevant. Trusted.

These three principles formed the foundation of every intervention. They weren't aspirational values – they were practical design requirements that shaped every decision, from where we showed up to how we spoke to what we offered.

Accessible

Mental health support was delivered where people already were – not in clinical buildings that felt intimidating or unfamiliar.

- Community markets and shops
- Homes and kitchens
- Places of worship
- Cultural festivals
- Walking paths and parks

Relevant

Services reflected cultural, spiritual, familial, and linguistic needs – not just translated versions of Western models.

- Multiple South Asian languages
- Integration of faith and spirituality
- Respect for family dynamics
- Culturally resonant metaphors
- Holistic wellness approaches

Trusted

Community members led the work, bringing years of relational credibility that no external expert could replicate.

- Known faces from the community
- Shared lived experiences
- Long-standing relationships
- Cultural insider knowledge
- Mutual accountability

Implementation Structure



Project Leadership

Blossom Group ASA CIC served as the project anchor, composed of local women with lived experience of mental health challenges, volunteers from diverse South Asian faiths and linguistic communities, and advisors from mental health, cultural, and public health sectors. This wasn't a traditional hierarchy – it was a network of trust.



Delivery Sites

Support happened everywhere the community gathered: Gurdwaras, mosques, and temples; community halls and bustling markets; private homes, walking paths, and kitchens; online spaces via WhatsApp groups and radio broadcasts. Mental health support became part of the fabric of daily life.



Partnership Ecosystem

UJALA operated within a rich network of existing community assets. We partnered with faith leaders, local businesses, cultural organizations, and grassroots groups. Rather than creating parallel systems, we strengthened and connected what already existed, building on decades of community trust.

Direct Outreach & Community Interaction



Weekly Outreach

Our team members showed up consistently, week after week, in the spaces where community life unfolded naturally. These weren't appointments or clinical visits — they were genuine human connections.



731 direct engagements

One-on-one conversations, information sharing, check-ins



Five languages spoken

Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Hindi, English



Multiple formats

Informal chats, gentle information sharing, onward referrals

Impact Beyond Numbers

Safe Environments

Created low-pressure spaces for discussion where people could share at their own pace without fear of judgment or misunderstanding

Trust Over Time

Built authentic relationships through repeated encounters, allowing healing conversations to emerge naturally rather than being forced

Normalized Conversations

Made mental health as ordinary as asking about a neighbor's cooking, removing the clinical stigma and cultural barriers



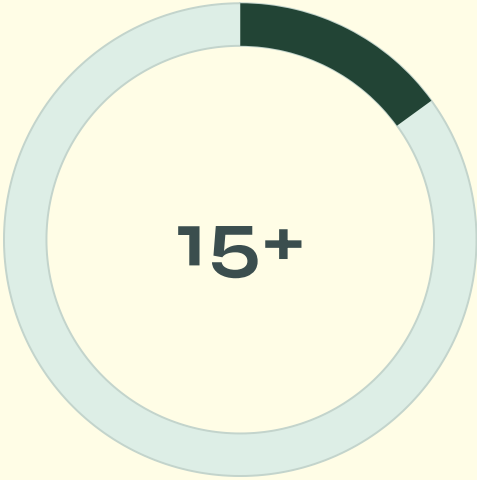
Events & Celebrations

Events were designed around cultural celebrations and moments of joy, where mental health wasn't a side topic but fully integrated into the experience. These weren't "mental health awareness events" with informational booths and clinical leaflets. They were vibrant cultural gatherings where wellbeing became a natural conversation.



Total Attendees

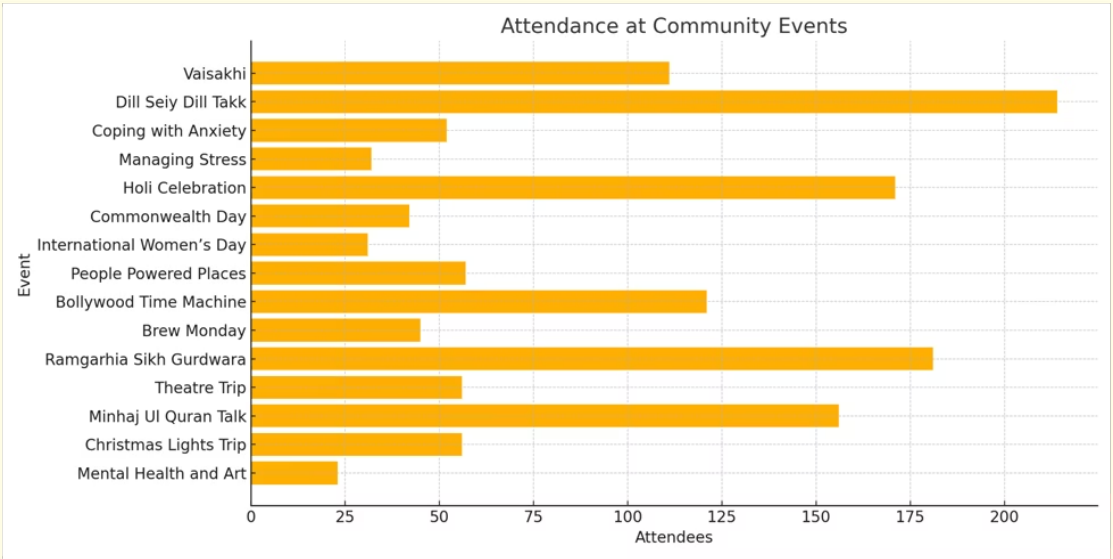
Across 15+ culturally rooted events



Unique Events

From Vaisakhi to Bollywood celebrations

Featured Events Throughout the Year



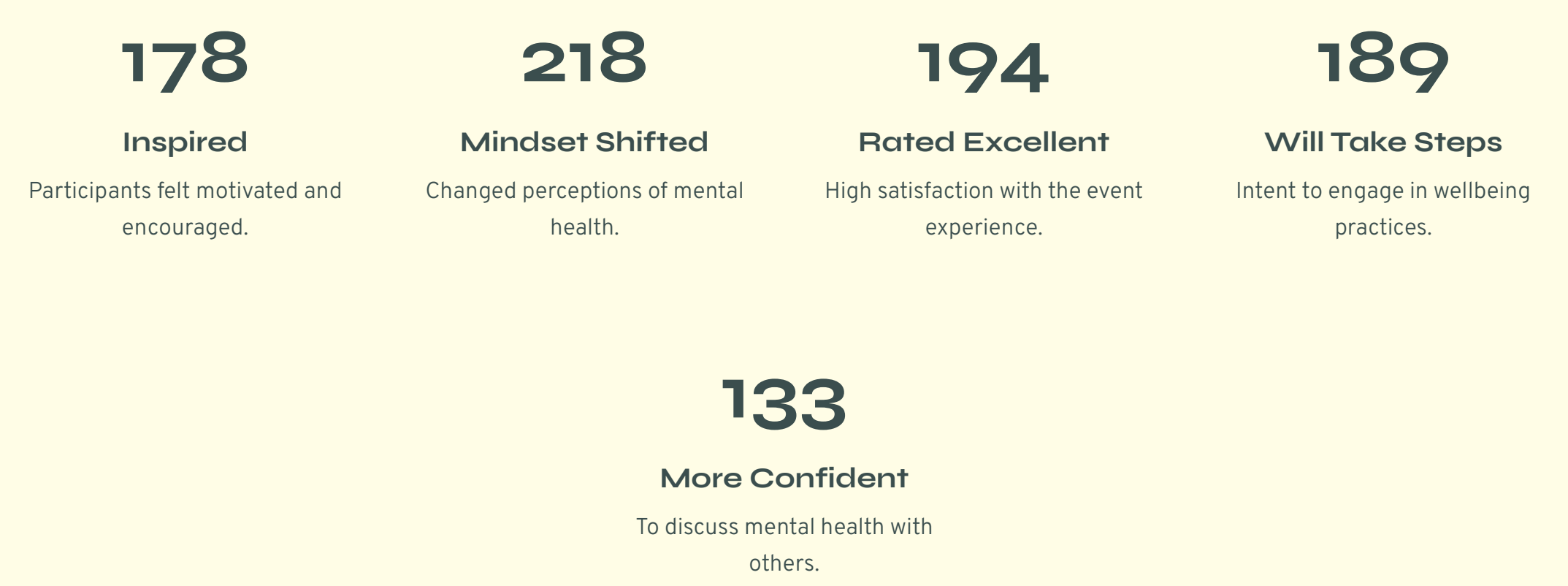
Key Takeaway: These celebrations created joy-first entry points where therapy became a natural conversation. People came for the music, the food, the company – and left with resources, connections, and hope.

Date	Event	Attendees
31/10/2024	Mental Health and Art	23
21/12/2024	Christmas Lights Trip	56
31/12/2024	Minhaj Ul Quran Talk	156
04/01/2025	Theatre Trip	56
05/01/2025	Ramgarhia Sikh Gurdwara	181
20/01/2025	Brew Monday	45
24/01/2025	Bollywood Time Machine	121
28/01/2025	People Powered Places	57
08/03/2025	International Women's Day	31
10/03/2025	Commonwealth Day	42
14/03/2025	Holi Celebration	171
17/03/2025	Managing Stress	32
24/03/2025	Coping with Anxiety	52
14/04/2025	Dill Seiy Dill Takk	214
20/04/2025	Vaisakhi	111

Heart-to-Heart Event: Community Voices & Impact

The Heart-to-Heart Event was a pivotal moment in our year-long engagement, bringing the community together for a deep dive into shared experiences and mental wellness. It wasn't just an event; it was a testament to the power of connection and conversation in fostering a supportive environment for mental health.

Key Feedback from the Heart-to-Heart Event



The overwhelming positive feedback from the Heart-to-Heart Event highlights a profound shift within the community. It signifies a growing openness to mental health discussions and a tangible desire to take proactive steps towards wellbeing. This event fostered an environment where vulnerability was met with understanding, and support networks were organically strengthened.

This success is a clear indicator of UJALA's broader impact – demonstrating that culturally sensitive, joy-first approaches are not only effective but essential in empowering individuals and transforming community attitudes towards mental health.

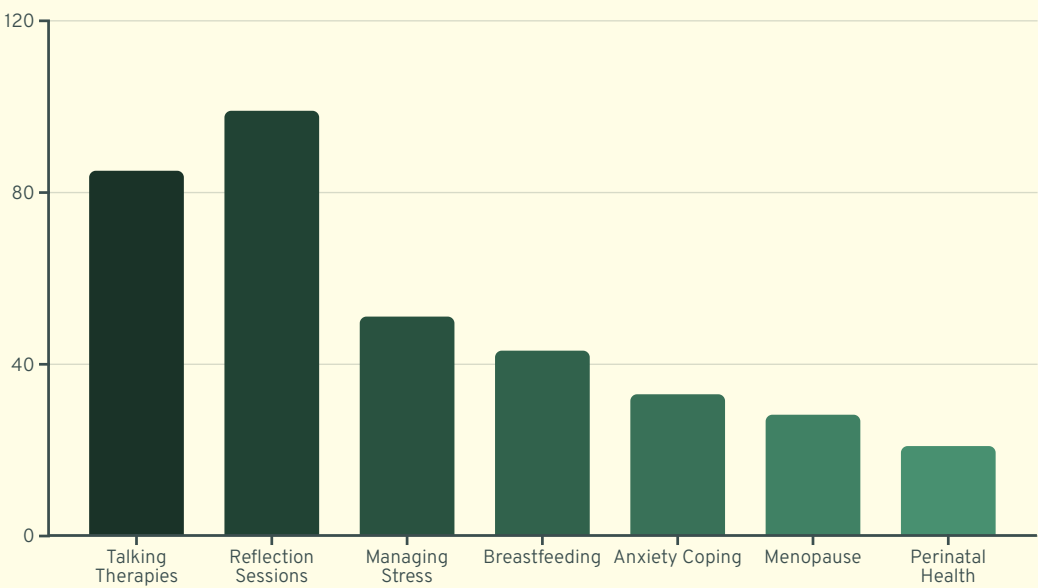


Volunteer Mobilization

38 Volunteers Trained

Volunteers became the heart of UJALA. They weren't just helpers – they became trusted voices in their own communities, supporting neighbors, translating therapy concepts into culturally resonant language, and accompanying others through healing journeys. Many had their own experiences with mental health challenges, which deepened their empathy and credibility.

Training Topics Covered



Transformation Stories

Training sessions were interactive, culturally grounded, and led by community members who understood the nuances of language, faith, and family dynamics. Volunteers learned not just clinical information, but how to hold space, listen deeply, and navigate cultural sensitivities.

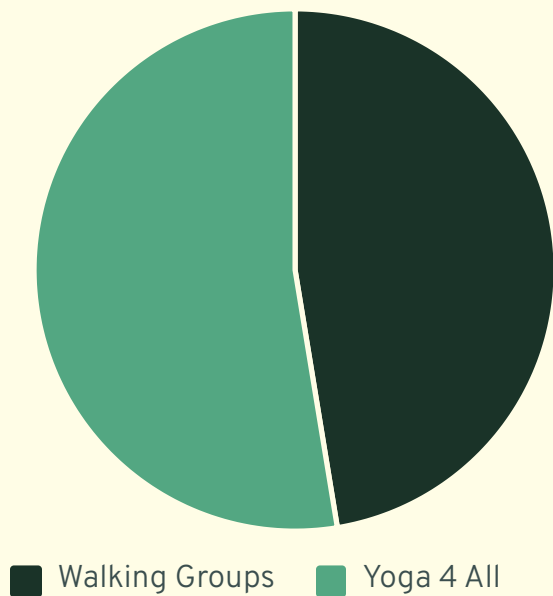
The ripple effect was profound. Each trained volunteer reached dozens more through their personal networks, creating an exponential spread of mental health literacy and compassionate support.

"I thought only educated people could lead. Now I teach others what therapy means."

Wellness Activities: Movement & Mindfulness

Gentle Entry Points

These informal activities gave participants gentle entry points into emotional wellbeing without the weight of clinical labels or formal therapy settings. For many, especially stressed mothers, isolated elders, and people new to mental health support, movement felt more natural and less intimidating than sitting in a waiting room.



Total wellness participants: 521

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"Healing came from walking with someone, not waiting in a room."

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"I never thought yoga was for someone like me. Now I bring my daughter and my mother."

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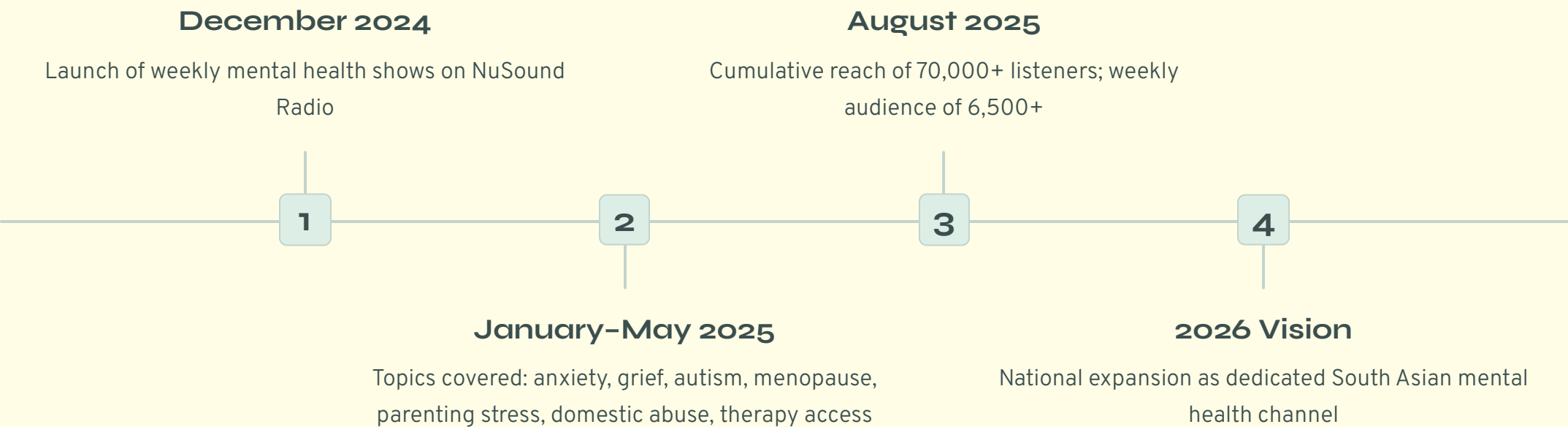
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Walking groups became mobile support circles where conversation flowed naturally. Yoga sessions honored both physical wellness and spiritual grounding, incorporating elements familiar from cultural and religious practices. Both activities created community while healing the individual.

Radio as a Cultural Intervention

From NuSound to Nagrecha Radio

Radio became an unexpected powerhouse for reaching isolated community members, especially elders and those with limited mobility. What began as weekly mental health segments on NuSound Radio evolved into something unprecedented: **Nagrecha Radio**, the UK's first South Asian mental health-focused broadcast channel.



Why Radio Worked

- Reached people in their homes, cars, and workplaces
- No literacy barriers or technology requirements
- Normalized hearing mental health discussed in mother tongues
- Built familiarity with therapists and support workers before meetings
- Created shared community conversation topics



Listener Testimonial

"I learnt about diabetes in the most simple way ever delivered bt Darshana. It feels like family."



Community Feedback & Case Studies

Common Themes from Participants



Therapy Normalized

Mental health support became part of ordinary conversation, not something shameful or foreign



Trust in Community

Volunteers were trusted more than external professionals because of shared experience and language



Communal Healing

Recovery felt collective rather than isolated, honoring cultural values of family and community



Elders Honored

Older community members finally felt seen, heard, and valued in their wholeness



Spirituality Integrated

Faith and wellbeing were honored as inseparable, not competing frameworks

Real Stories of Transformation

Case Study 1: Finding Strength Through Movement

A 63-year-old Punjabi grandmother began attending Yoga 4 All after hearing about it on Nagrecha Radio. She carried chronic back pain and deep grief after losing her husband two years prior. Her children lived far away, and she felt profoundly alone.

After six weeks of gentle yoga and walking groups, she reported feeling stronger emotionally and physically. More importantly, she found connection. "I finally found people who understood me," she shared. "I'm not just someone's mother or grandmother here. I'm myself." She now brings other isolated elders from her apartment building.

Case Study 2: Youth Leadership Emerges

Two teenage girls initially joined walking groups reluctantly, accompanying their mothers. But something shifted. They began opening up about school pressure, identity struggles, and mental health challenges their parents didn't understand.

With support, they started their own peer support circle. They translated key mental health concepts into short TikTok videos in Urdu and Gujarati, reaching hundreds of young people. Now they lead weekly mini-huddles for younger participants, creating a bridge between generations and cultures.

Gaps and Learning

UJALA achieved remarkable reach, but honest reflection reveals important gaps and opportunities for growth. These limitations don't diminish the work — they guide its evolution.

Gap Identified	Challenge	Next Step
Men's Participation	Low engagement due to stigma around masculinity and gender-separated spaces	Develop male-only spaces with trusted male community leaders; partner with sports groups and faith leaders
Digital Exclusion	Many elders lacked smartphones or technical skills to access online resources	Expand offline methods: printed materials in multiple languages, more radio programming, home visits
Postnatal Support	Uptake remained low among new mothers despite targeted outreach	Partner directly with midwives, doulas, and maternity services; offer support in hospitals and homes
Sustainability Fears	Community members feared abandonment when funding cycles end	Build long-term governance structures with community co-ownership; diversify funding; create enduring infrastructure

 Community Voice

"Don't lift us only to let us fall again. That hurts more."

This warning became our north star. Any future expansion must prioritize sustainability, community ownership, and long-term commitment over short-term metrics.

Policy and Replication Recommendations

UJALA's success offers a blueprint for transforming mental health support across diverse communities. These recommendations emerge from lived experience, evidence, and deep cultural knowledge.

01	02	03
Fund Community-Led Models Place resources directly in the hands of trusted local organizations with proven community relationships. Stop requiring community groups to become "professionalized" in ways that strip their cultural authenticity and relational power.	Elevate Cultural Fluency as Core Stop treating cultural adaptation as an optional add-on. Make cultural and linguistic competency a fundamental requirement for all mental health funding. Translation is not enough — transformation is needed.	Invest in Volunteer Infrastructure Scale up trust, not just service slots. Trained community volunteers with lived experience are more effective than credentialed professionals without cultural fluency. Fund their training, support, and sustainability.
04	05	
Recognize Informal Healing Spaces Homes, prayer halls, markets, and festivals are therapeutic spaces. Fund mental health work that happens outside clinical settings. Reimagine what "service delivery" looks like.	Integrate Language and Spirituality Mental health must respect cultural worldviews where mind, body, and spirit are inseparable. Stop asking communities to compartmentalize their healing. Honor holistic approaches rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions.	

What's Next: Beyond UJALA

Why Blossom Must Continue

The infrastructure built through UJALA cannot be allowed to dissolve. Trust takes years to build and moments to destroy. The community has invested deeply – emotionally, relationally, and practically – in this work.

Trust is Already Built

Years of relationship-building cannot be replicated quickly by new organizations

Cultural Credibility

The team's insider knowledge and lived experience create credibility no external expert can duplicate

Volunteer Network Primed

389 trained volunteers are ready to expand reach across the UK

National Movement

Nagrega Radio positions Blossom to lead nationally, not just locally



"This wasn't just help. It was a village. We became our own light."

Blossom is not simply a service provider. It is a **movement enabler**. The light lit by UJALA cannot be allowed to go dark. The next phase must include sustained funding, infrastructure development, leadership cultivation, and strategic expansion that honors the community-led model at its core.

Evidence & Documentation

1

Growth & Engagement Charts

- Monthly outreach interaction trends
- Event attendance by type and season
- Training participation across topics
- Wellness activity enrollment patterns
- Radio listenership growth trajectory

2

Radio Programming Archives

- Complete episode list with topics covered
- Guest speakers and their expertise areas
- Languages used across broadcasts
- Listener feedback and testimonials
- Partnership development timeline

3

Training Curriculum Details

- Module summaries for each training type
- Culturally adapted materials samples
- Volunteer feedback on effectiveness
- Pre/post assessment data
- Certification and ongoing support structures

4

Community Feedback Collection

- Structured interview highlights
- Anonymous survey results
- Story collection methodology
- Thematic analysis of common experiences
- Recommendations from participants

Complete appendices with detailed charts, transcripts, curriculum materials, and community feedback documentation are available upon request. This evidence base demonstrates both quantitative impact and qualitative transformation.

**The Community
Became the Light**

UJALA proves what is possible when we design *with*, not *for*. When we center language, culture, faith, and relationship above institutional convenience. When we build villages, not just systems. When we stop asking communities to translate themselves into frameworks that were never built for them – and instead let them lead from their own wisdom, strength, and lived experience.

731 Conversations That planted seeds of hope and healing	38 Volunteers Who became trusted healers in their communities
1,348 People Who gathered in joy and found support	70,000+ Listeners Who heard their experiences reflected back

The numbers tell one story. But the real story lives in the grandmother who walks without pain, the teenagers who now lead their peers, the mother who found her voice, the elder who feels seen. The real story is in radio waves carrying hope into isolated homes, in yoga mats laid out in community halls, in chai shared while talking about therapy.

The light didn't shine on the community. The community became the light.

This is not the end of UJALA. It is the beginning of what's possible when we trust communities to heal themselves – and give them the resources, respect, and space to do so. **Change can only happen from within.** And the light is just beginning to spread.