



HEAL BY HAIR



2025
ACTIVITY REPORT



BLUEMIND
FOUNDATION

UNITED FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN AFRICA

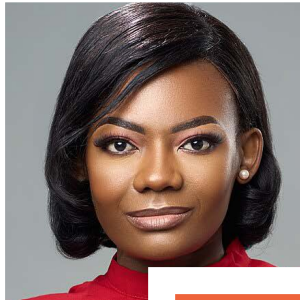
Mental health is health.

“The impact of a single Heal by Hair training session in Lomé is something that Togolese psychiatrists could not have achieved in ten years.”

Prof. Wenkourama, MD, Psychiatrist

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1 THE EDITORIAL

Some things stay with you.

The hesitation in our earliest partners' eyes. The fragility of a pilot programme held together more by conviction than by certainty. The first ambassador hairdressers — proud, apprehensive, standing at the edge of something they couldn't yet name. The first women who came to us : their words chosen carefully, their silences sometimes louder. The raw, undisguised weight of distress that had been carried too long, alone. And the first handful of allies who saw it too — before anyone else, before the evidence, before the numbers — and said : yes, this matters.

Mental health is health. It needs saying again, plainly and without apology.

The evidence demands it. Over a billion people worldwide are living with a mental health condition. Anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress rank among the primary drivers of global disability — and they fall disproportionately on women. Policy has moved. The gaps have not. Funding remains scarce. Specialists, scarcer. Equitable access, a distant prospect for most.

In low- and middle-income countries, fewer than one in ten people affected by mental health conditions receives adequate support. That number drops further when the conversation turns to women — to peripheral urban communities, to settings where stigma functions as a wall.

Our own 2025 baseline data confirmed what communities already lived : among hairdressers and their clients, mental health conditions are widespread, chronic, and largely invisible. Anxiety, post-traumatic stress, disordered eating, emotional exhaustion — rates between 16% and 34% depending on the indicator. And fewer than 8% of the women concerned had ever, before Heal by Hair, spoken to a mental health professional.

That gap — between a global crisis and the absence of a local response — is where we work.

Not to layer services onto systems already stretched thin.

But because the services that exist, more often than not, are neither accessible, nor adapted, nor located anywhere near where life actually happens. Our aim is to turn absence into presence, presence into care, and care into something that feels like dignity restored.

There are places where women put down their guard. Where they speak the things they carry. Where no clipboard, no diagnosis, no prior appointment stands between them and a human being willing to listen. The hair salon is one of those places.

Mental well-being often surfaces in these small cracks in the daily routine — in the trusted spaces where the body relaxes and words become possible. Where a woman exists, briefly, as herself. Not as someone's mother, wife, or employee.

Heal by Hair begins there. With the gesture performed ten thousand times. With the comb, the braid, the wash, the touch. An act so ordinary it is almost invisible — and precisely because of that, an act that opens something. We chose to make that gesture a gateway. Not by turning hairdressers into clinicians. By training the women already at the centre of their communities to notice, to listen, to hold space, and to point the way toward help. By making mental health a social, cultural, and political concern — embedded in the texture of daily life, not confined to a clinic.

In 2025, this work has crossed a threshold. Lomé has become the anchor. A city that has assumed a pioneer's responsibility on the continent : placing women's mental health at the centre of its future. Not through declarations — through method, documentation, research, and the quiet discipline of institutions and communities choosing to act together.

Every training session is documented. Every outcome is tracked. Every woman reached is not a data point — she is a life breathing a little more freely, finding her footing, contributing more fully to the world around her.

The fifth edition of Heal by Hair, held in Lomé from 19 to 22 October 2025, marks an acceleration unlike anything we have seen before. More than 400 new hairdressers



trained, joining the 152 already active. Four hundred new sentinels. Four hundred more ears open in the city. Four hundred additional points of connection where something important can begin. The salon becomes what it has always been, and more : a safe space, discreet, deeply social, where what hurts can finally be said — without shame, without judgment, without consequence.

To every donor, partner, and ally who has walked this path with us : thank you. Thank you for understanding that precision and compassion are not in tension. That the most rigorous work and the most human work can be the same work. That lasting change tends to come from initiatives that are specific, grounded, and honest about what they are.

Supporting Heal by Hair is a demanding choice. It is the choice of impact that can be pointed to, followed, and repeated.

Of a mental health that does not announce itself from stages — but is woven, quietly, into the lives of women and the communities they hold together.

Lomé opened the door.
What comes next, we write together.

Marie-Alix de Putter

Founder and President, Bluemind Foundation

2 THE BIG PICTURE

The faces of this silent revolution

A woman with dark hair, wearing a pink sleeveless top, is styling the hair of a mannequin head. The mannequin has long, dark hair and is wearing a red top. The woman is using a comb and scissors. The background is a workshop with a brick wall and a large fan. The text is overlaid on the image.

No white coat. No stethoscope. A comb.
A pair of scissors. Sometimes, just an
open ear. And yet : these are the
women who are opening the first
doors.

She no longer just cuts. She cuts through the silence.

Afi, 39 years

She has learned to read the weight of a silence. And to make sure no one sits inside it alone.

Akossiwa, 44 years

The youngest in the group. Already a safe place for women twice her age.

Ruth, 22 years

Her hands work. Her presence holds.

Nadine, 33 years

They used to come for a style. Now they come back for themselves.

Mariam, 27 years

She will tell you : not everyone gets better. But no one has to fall apart alone.

Yawa, 51 years

None of these women changed careers. Through Heal by Hair, they expanded what their work can hold.

In their salons, people laugh. Sometimes cry. Often talk. And when the talking becomes too much to carry alone, these women know what to do next — how to refer, how to alert, how to stay present without overstepping. Without judgment. Without exposure. Without force.

This revolution is quiet because it happens in private. But the ground beneath it is firm.

One in four people on earth will face a mental or neurological condition in their lifetime. In Africa, the picture is sharper : around 66 million women on the continent live with depression or anxiety disorders, and 85% receive no treatment at all. Women bear the disproportionate weight. UN

Women notes that more than 60% of those living in extreme poverty are women — a precarity that feeds directly into chronic stress and the erosion of mental health. In sub-Saharan Africa, this is compounded by high exposure to violence : over one in five women aged 15–49 with a partner has experienced physical or sexual violence. Against this backdrop, the average government mental health budget across Africa sits at \$0.46 per person per year — leaving most women with nowhere to turn.

Heal by Hair does not claim to solve all of this.

It claims one entry point — the right one : the women who already trust these hairdressers.

Here, the statistic becomes a person. The data becomes a story. And mental health finds its rightful place — inside a life, not outside it.

3

THE BLUEMIND FOUNDATION

Our commitment, our legitimacy



The Bluemind Foundation

Who are we and why us?

The Bluemind Foundation is an international non-profit organization founded by Marie-Alix de Putter around a single, non-negotiable conviction : mental health must be accessible to everyone, everywhere, every day. The organization was born from personal experience — from resilience, and from the refusal to accept that what happened to her would continue happening to millions of others without a response equal to the scale of the problem. Heal by Hair is that response.

The starting point is a number that should stop anyone in their tracks. In Africa, there is, on average, one psychiatrist for every 500,000 people. The Bluemind Foundation chose not to work around that constraint by reproducing conventional logic. Instead : social innovation, radical proximity, and the patient, structural work of reducing the stigma attached to mental illness — by building on what communities already have. Trust. Repetition. Human connection.

A Record, Not a Pitch.

Five editions. Three countries. Demand that has never once waned.

To date, 776 hairdressers trained and certified across Abidjan, Douala, and Lomé, reaching close to +600,000 women and their families. At the October 2025 session at the University of Lomé : 2,139 applications for 480 places. That ratio — nearly five candidates for every seat — says more than any advocacy document about the depth of the need and the degree of trust the program has earned. From that process, 308 hairdressers were certified, 14 specialists led the sessions, and 103 volunteers made the entire edition possible.

A Clear Role. No Ambiguity.

Ambassador hairdressers are not therapists. They are not counsellors. Their function is defined, bounded, and strictly supervised : to listen well, to recognise warning signs, to help normalise the act of seeking support, and to point the way toward appropriate professional care. They replace no one. That clarity is not a limitation — it is the architecture that makes the model safe, credible, and replicable.

Three days of foundational training. Six months of structured follow-up. And then : women permanently embedded in their neighbourhoods, becoming the kind of community presence that formal health systems cannot manufacture. Trusted. Available. Consistent.



Why the Bluemind Foundation Is the Right Operator

At under €1 per woman reached, across five editions and three countries, Heal by Hair has shown that rigour and scale are not opposites. That a community-based model can be scientifically grounded, institutionally anchored, and deeply human — simultaneously. This is not a promise about future potential. It is a documented reality.

The credibility of this organisation rests on six pillars that cannot be separated from each other : a proven, replicable model built across distinct cultural and institutional contexts ;

world-class scientific infrastructure, including an RCT covering 4,800 women conducted with IPA — the largest in community mental health in French-speaking Africa — alongside World Bank and University of Paris-Saclay evaluations ; long-standing institutional partnerships with Togo's Ministry of Health, the University of Lomé, and the European Union Delegation ; confirmed international media reach through The Guardian, TV5 Monde, and Africa 24 ; a governance culture that refuses premature expansion and holds two non-negotiable commitments : the safety and dignity of every woman accompanied ; and a dual credibility, earned equally among communities who trust the work and institutions that recognise it.



4.1. Program overview

Heal by Hair starts from a conviction : mental health is health — and it cannot be real unless it reaches women where their lives are actually lived. Before the crisis takes hold. Before the suffering calcifies. Before silence becomes the only option.

Designed by the Bluemind Foundation, Heal by Hair is a short, structured, evidence-based training program designed to mobilize a network of hairdressing professionals as the first secure link in a continuum of mental health care. The program is based on international scientific recommendations, including the World Health Organization's Mental Health Gap Action Program (mhGAP) , which has been rolled out in more than 90 countries, while being rigorously adapted to African social, cultural, and community realities.

Like first aid, Heal by Hair does not make hairdressers into health professionals. It gives them something specific and bounded to do :

recognise, listen, normalise, refer — with care, judgment, and a clear sense of where their role ends and another begins.

Trained to identify early signs of psychological distress, anxiety, or trauma, ambassador hairdressers learn an active, compassionate form of listening — and the language and referral pathways needed to connect clients with appropriate care, within the local health ecosystem.

This is the core of the model : Heal by Hair makes care more accessible without making ordinary life feel clinical. It strengthens what already exists without stepping in front of it.

By 2035, 5,000 trained ambassador hairdressers could reach and support up to 5 million women across some twenty African cities — with multiplier effects running through families, children, and entire communities.



4.2. Objectives of the Heal by Hair program

The ultimate aim of Heal by Hair is the lasting improvement of the mental health and wellbeing of African women — one client at a time, through the ordinary act of sitting down together.

Heal by Hair is based
on a clear trajectory, summarized in
three founding verbs :



HEAL

Soothe, recognize,
support.



EMPOWER

Strengthen individual and
collective capacities, restore the
power to act.



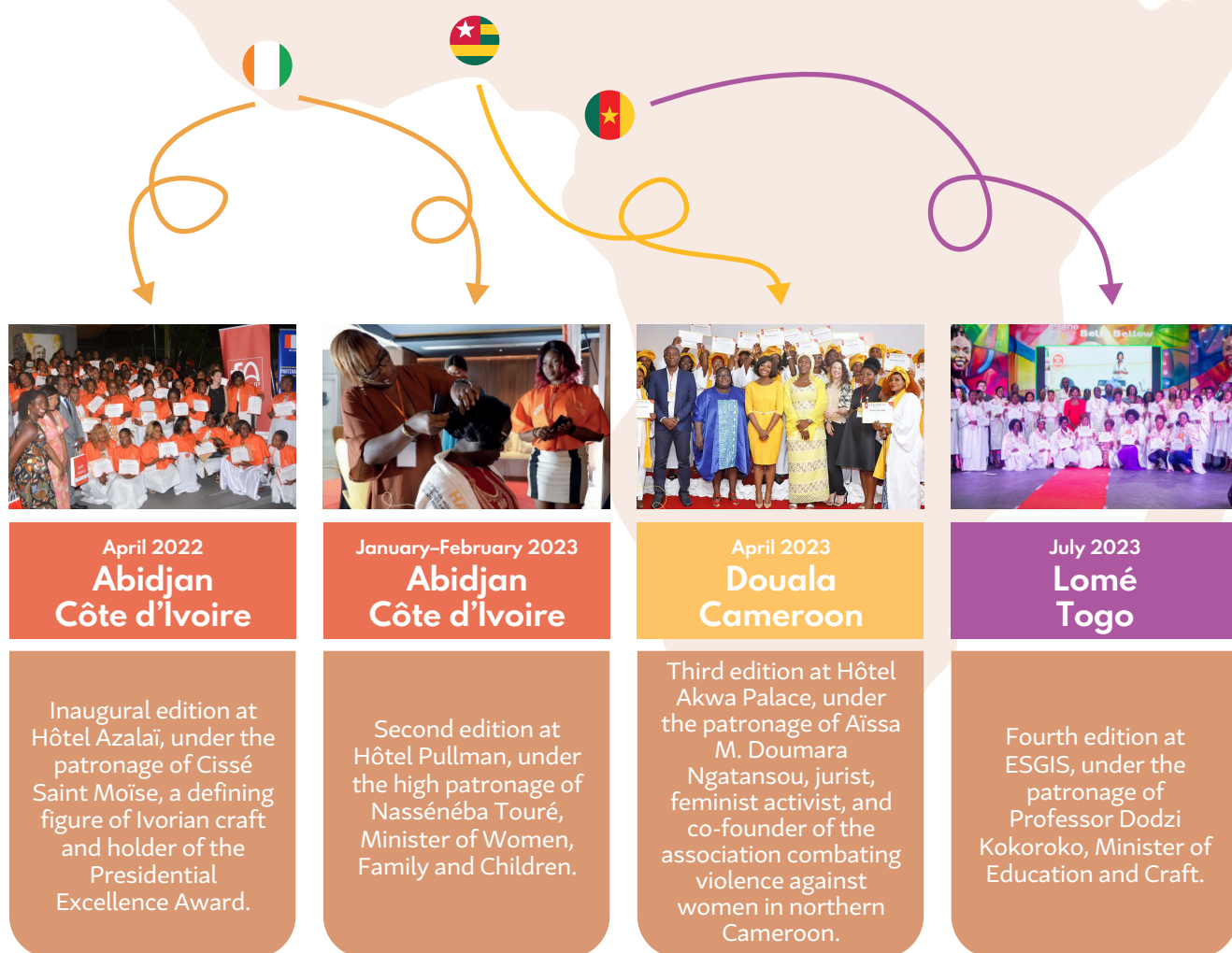
ELEVATE

Elevate women, communities, and
mental health as a public health
issue.

At the end of the three-day training, participants sit an exam. A certificate goes to those scoring 80% or above — a deliberately high bar, deliberately maintained. Six months of follow-up with regular impact measurement ensure the program continues to evolve, sharpen, and deliver.

4.3. How It Unfolded : Previous Editions

Heal by Hair has grown deliberately and methodically across West and Central Africa, in partnership with public institutions, community actors, and mental health professionals at each stage.



Each edition strengthened the model, sharpened the tools, and deepened the institutional roots of the program - building toward a fifth edition that had the ambition the work deserved.



What Heal by Hair Actually Changes

The premise at the Bluemind Foundation is that mental health care must arrive before the crisis — not in response to it.

Heal by Hair is a community care delivery system built for the exact conditions where most systems fail : where specialists are absent, stigma is thick, and the spaces of daily life are the only infrastructure available.

It works because it combines four things that are rarely found together : pre-existing trust between women ; recurrence built into the rhythm of everyday life ; clarity about who does what ; and sustained support that outlasts the training itself. In 2025, that foundation was strengthened by one critical addition : the Heal by Hair Circles.

1. Begin Where the Trust Already Lives

Women return to their hairdressers every two to four weeks. Sometimes for years. That regularity creates, without any additional cost or design, a rhythm of contact - repeated opportunities for early recognition, and

a continuity of relationship that no clinic can replicate. The sustainability of the model is not manufactured. It rides the existing habits of women's lives.

2. Keep the Roles Exact

Hairdressers are frontline ambassadors, not therapists. Listen. Notice. Normalize. Refer. That is the full perimeter of their role — and that precision is not a restriction, it is what makes the model safe to scale. After a three-day training and six months of structured follow-up, ambassadors are embedded in their communities for the long term : genuine leaders, everyday first responders, known and trusted by name.

3. Train Fast, Train Well, Train on Science

All training content draws on the WHO's mhGAP and is delivered by psychiatrists and mental health specialists. The format is deliberately compressed — intensive, structured, replicable without losing quality. Follow-up over six months reinforces what was learned and provides support for the hairdressers themselves. The program does not create a parallel health system. It works within and alongside the ones that exist.



4. The Heal by Hair Circles : A Critical Step Forward

Introduced in 2025, the Circles address a gap that data and fieldwork had made impossible to ignore : the in-between. The zone where early identification is not enough, but a clinical referral is not yet warranted.

These are collective, time-limited, facilitated spaces — run by trained ambassadors under psychologist supervision. Peer support. Psychosocial relief. The gradual normalization of asking for help. The identification of those who need to go further.

Early qualitative findings show something we did not fully anticipate : protective social networks forming among participants — networks that persist long after the formal sessions end. This is consistent with international evidence from Friendship Bench, StrongMinds, and a growing body of research : social capital is one of the strongest predictors of lasting mental health outcomes.

5. A Three-Level System

With the integration of the Circles, Heal by Hair now relies on three complementary levels :

1. Early detection and listening in salons,
2. Collective psychosocial support via the Circles,
3. Referral to specialized care in conjunction with health authorities.

This three-dimensional structure enhances the accessibility, safety, continuity, and institutional credibility of the model—making Heal by Hair much more than a training program : it is a true community care system.

6. Data, research, and cost-effectiveness

Heal by Hair is operational in three countries — Togo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon — backed by a research corpus that has been built layer by layer : a pilot RCT in Abidjan ; multi-country qualitative studies across three contexts ; and a large-scale international RCT currently underway with IPA (2025–2027), covering 4,800 women in Greater Lomé — the largest study of its kind in community mental health in French-speaking Africa.

The cost : under €1 per woman reached. And falling, as the network grows denser — without new infrastructure, without new specialists.

4.4. Theory of change

Before Heal by Hair, the hairdresser was a trusted presence with no place in the care pathway. After Heal by Hair, she is a certified ambassador : a community leader, a compassionate listener, an agent of destigmatisation, and a door into care.

This transformation rests on a causal hypothesis that is now under scientific validation : changing the role of actors already embedded in communities produces measurable effects on the mental health of the women around them — provided that role is clearly defined, ethically bounded, and sustained over time.

THREE MECHANISM underpin this logic.



Activating trust that already exists

Heal by Hair does not build a new relationship between women and a health system. It works with one that has been forming for months, sometimes years — between a client and her hairdresser.

That existing bond lowers the threshold for speaking, reduces the weight of perceived stigma, and makes early recognition possible in places where it had always been off the table.



Role clarity as the basis for safety

The model's effectiveness depends on a firm line : ambassadors open doors, they do not walk through them on behalf of others.

Listening, noticing, normalizing, referring — this precise perimeter protects everyone : the client, the hairdresser, and the integrity of the program. It is this rigor, not loosened over time but held, that allows the model to grow without losing what makes it work.

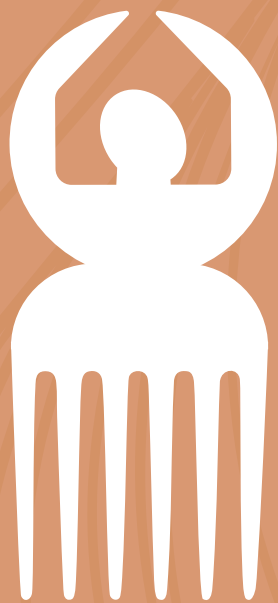


Continuity as the driver of impact

A single interaction changes nothing. The hypothesis at the centre of Heal by Hair is that repetition — reinforced by the Circles, by six months of follow-up, by ongoing professional supervision — produces durable shifts in individual trajectories and community norms.

Change settles in over time. It is not an event ; it is a new way of relating to care, gradually becoming part of how women understand themselves and their communities.

As evidence accumulates, this theory of change is becoming something more : an exportable, adaptable model with real potential to reshape mental health policy across Africa and beyond.



HEAL BY HAIR

5th Edition



5

HEAL BY HAIR V

The faces of this silent revolution

5.1. One country : Togo, where the heart of the pioneers beats

In 2025, Togo did not simply host Heal by Hair again. It became the programme's spine.

For the first time, an African public university opened its doors to a community mental health programme at this scale. The University of Lomé did not simply provide a venue. It made a statement — about what a university is for, about whose knowledge counts, about the relationship between formal institutions and the women who have long held communities together without recognition from either.

Togo has, over years, made a consistent commitment to health and social protection — nearly half of national social expenditure directed there. That sustained investment created the conditions for this kind of partnership to take root. The density of engagement achieved in Lomé, the quality of the institutional relationships, the integration of Heal by Hair into everyday health touchpoints — salons, pharmacies, university campuses — have positioned Togo as a reference point for public adoption across French-speaking Africa.

5.2. The Heal by Hair curriculum

ACTIVE LISTENING
PROFESSIONAL CONFIDENTIALITY
GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE
EARLY DETECTION
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP
REFERRAL

5.3. The Experts : Where Credibility Is Built

Behind every Heal by Hair session — behind every ambassador who knows exactly what to do in a difficult moment — is a community of specialists who gave the programme its scientific and ethical spine.

Their contribution is not limited to transmitting knowledge. They sat with hairdressers through the most challenging material : what psychological distress actually

looks like ; how to hear what someone cannot say directly ; how to remain present with vulnerability without claiming authority over it. They also modelled something harder to teach : the confidence to act from a precise, bounded role, and to be proud of it.

The specialists who led the 2025 training



**Dr.
Christian Eyoum**

Psychiatrist, Head of the Psychiatry Department at Laquintinie Hospital in Douala. Regional reference in community mental health. Vice-President of the Bluemind Foundation.



**Prof.
Samuel Traoré**

Psychiatrist, addiction expert. Assistant Professor at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University (Abidjan). Coordinator of the Bluemind Foundation's Scientific Council.



**Prof.
Daméga Wenkourama**

Psychiatrist specializing in addiction. Head of the Psychiatry Department at Kara University Hospital. Lecturer and researcher, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Kara.



**Dr.
Angélique Dusabe**

Clinical psychologist at Lomé University Hospital. Specialist in chronic conditions and gender-based violence. Contributor to national GBV guidelines.



"In mental health, the challenge is not only to identify distress, but to create a credible continuum of care before the crisis. Heal by Hair provides a structured response where traditional systems fail to reach women. It is one of the few community-based models that combines social anchoring, clarity of roles, and scientific requirements—a decisive combination that underpins its credibility and potential for public adoption."

Prof. Samuel Traoré

Psychiatrist, Scientific Council Coordinator, Bluemind Foundation

"The impact of one Heal by Hair training in Lomé is something Togolese psychiatrists could not have achieved in ten years."

Prof. Wenkourama

MD, Psychiatrist





Dr. Christian Eyoum

Psychiatrist, graduate in psychiatry from the Universities of Bordeaux II and Clermont1 in France, and Cheikh Anta Diop University in Senegal. Since 2014, he has been head of the psychiatry department at Laquintinie Hospital in Douala, Cameroon. In 2017, his management of the department earned him the Special Award from the management of La Quintinie Hospital in Douala (Doctor of the Year). Dr. Eyoum has written and contributed to several books and articles on mental health. He is a member of the African Society of Psychopathology (Dakar, Senegal). He is also a member of the Scientific Council (SC) of the Bluemind Foundation.



Prof. Samuel Traoré

Psychiatrist Head of the Medical and Psychological Center for Children and Adolescents, EPS Erasme, Hauts-de-Seine (France) Psychiatrist, addiction specialist, Senior Lecturer at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University, Abidjan (Ivory Coast)



Dr. Wenkourama Daméga

A psychiatrist specializing in addiction medicine, he is currently Head of the Psychiatry Department at Kara University Hospital and Associate Professor of Adult Psychiatry at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Kara (Togo) since December 2024.

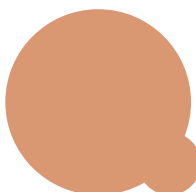
He holds a Doctorate in Medicine from the University of Lomé and specialized in adult psychiatry in Togo, Benin, and France. He holds degrees in Psychiatry (DES), Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies, Clinical Addiction Medicine, and Epidemiological Methods and Practices (University of Bordeaux). He also holds an international certification in addiction treatment (ICAP I-Treatment).

His university hospital career led him to practice in France (Dieppe Hospital Center, University of Rouen, Paris Descartes University) before continuing his career in Togo, notably at the Lomé University Hospital Campus, the Zébé Psychiatric Hospital in Aného, and the Kara University Hospital, where he has held positions of responsibility since 2018.



Dr. Dusabe Angélique

Clinical Psychologist in the Hepatology and Gastroenterology Department at the Lomé University Hospital Campus. She works primarily with patients living with chronic digestive tract diseases, end-of-life patients, and patients struggling with alcohol addiction. For the past two years, she has also been working with vulnerable individuals and key figures to raise awareness about gender-based violence (GBV) and how to address it. She is also involved in developing national guidelines on mental health care for GBV victims.



Dr. Faidibe Yentaguime

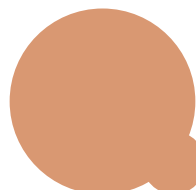
Currently Head of Mental Health Services, Clinical and Health Psychologist (Togolese Civil Service, Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene) Bassar District Hospital, Kara Region. Also, Program Manager for the Healthy Ways Togo association for stress and substance use prevention ; Professional support worker for recovery from psychoactive substance use, trained in the prevention and treatment of psychoactive substance use disorders with Colombo Plan ; From 2020 to 2024, Community Mental Health Consultant with Handicap International and Creuset Togo, responsible for training community actors, health training managers, and social workers in mental health and psychosocial support ; February to December

2024 : Psychologist and sociologist, research assistant on the project : Research and advocacy for psychosocial support in the Savanes region of northern Togo, funded by the American people through USAID and implemented by the A2P Association of Practicing Psychologists of Togo. December 2024 to present : Research associate at CESJEP (Nantes, France) Research and support for businesses, socio-economic, legal, environmental, and political studies, June 2017 to October 2024 : Head of Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry at CHP Mango, Civil Service, Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene, Savanes region.



Dr. Adansikou Kouami

Lecturer in Clinical Psychology and Psychopathology, Department of Applied Psychology ; University of Lomé.



Dr. Pissa Massima

Doctor of Clinical and Health Psychology, Civil Servant at CHU-Sylvanus Olympio in Lomé, Adjunct Professor and author of a dozen scientific publications, including : PISSA M. (2024). Acceptability of voluntary termination of pregnancy in Togo (THESIS). European University Press, pp. 1-221. * KPANAKE L., MULLET-MUNOZ C., PISSA M. & ADJIWANOU V. (2024). Why are pregnant women in Togo reluctant to undergo caesarean section? A systematic inventory of movies. Journal of Psychosomatic Obstetrics & Gynecology, 45(1), 1-11. * PISSA M (2023). Issues in research on communication within the therapeutic relationship in health psychology. Scientific notes, man and society, 18(1), 233-253.



Dr. Ahloma Lidawouwè

Doctorate in Medicine from the University of Lomé (TOGO) ; in 2019 ; Diploma of Specialized Studies in Psychiatry from Joseph KI-ZERBO University (Burkina Faso) ; January 2024 ; In-ter-University Diploma in Forensic Psychiatry from Paris Cité University ; 2022 ; Diploma in Specialized Medical Training in Psychiatry from the University of Caen Normandy (France) ; 2022 ; Associate Intern in Adult Psychiatry at the Orne Psychotherapy Center (France) ; 202 ; Psychiatrist at the Dapaong Regional Hospital Center (Togo) since February 2025, Deputy Secretary General of the Togolese Mental Health Society (SOTOSAM), Member of the Burk-inabe Mental Health Society (SOBUSAM)



Dr. Dogboe Zinsou

Holder of a unique doctorate in clinical and health psychology, I am a lecturer and researcher in the Department of Applied Psychology at the University of Lomé, Togo. My areas of re-search and intervention are addiction, psychotrauma (sexual abuse), sexual and reproduc-tive health and related rights, and community health. I am the author of several scientific and press articles.

5.4. The Heal by Hair V session — in figures

2,139
APPLICATIONS
RECEIVED

480
PARTICIPANTS
SELECTED AND
TRAINED

308
CERTIFIED
HAIRDRESSERS

103
VOLUNTEER
MOBILIZED

14
EXPERT
SPEAKERS

12
INSTITUTIONAL
AND TECHNICAL
PARTNERS

Perceived quality

81%

OF PARTICIPANTS
REPORT HAVING
ACQUIRED NEW SKILLS

98%

GAVE THE TRAINING
CONTENT A SCORE
OF $\geq 8/10$

97%

GAVE THE
TRAINERS A SCORE
OF $\geq 8/10$



5.5. The Delegates of the 5th cohort

Elected by their peers. Carrying their trust.

These fourteen women represent hundreds of ambassadors in the field. They structure, mobilize, amplify. They are the connective tissue of Heal by Hair between editions — the living proof that the program does not begin and end with a training.

List of delegates

N°	Names
1	Ms. Adjo Albertine TAMELOUKPO
2	Ms. Akou Massa GBOLOGA
3	Ms. Akouvi Elikplim SIAKOU
4	Ms. Amélé Odile WODOME
5	Ms. Ayawa AGLAGOH
6	Ms. Dovi Amélévo KLOUTSE
7	Ms. Falilatou ALI NASSOMA WATTARA
8	Ms. Gloria Akou DOKPO
9	Ms. Kokoè Christine ADAMA-HONDEGLA
10	Ms. Nèhouè Amévi TOOVI
11	Ms. Omolasho Adetohoun ABATAN
12	Ms. Têlé Florence WILSON-BAHUN
13	Ms. Yawa Selom AGBENOHEVI
14	Ms. Yawavi Dodji ADJAHO

Typical profile - Ambassador hairdresser 2025



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Three ambassadors share their stories

6

A GESTURE

"I've learned that sometimes what matters most isn't what I say, but how I remain silent."

Ms. Tchala Merveille

Heal by Hair mental health ambassador

A MOMENT

"She came in for a bun. That day, she left feeling calm, knowing that her story would remain safe, without judgment or exposure."

Ms. Gomez Ayaba Philomène

Heal by Hair mental health ambassador

A CLIENT

"Before, I could sense her fatigue but didn't know how to respond. Now I know when to listen and when to offer guidance, while staying in my place."

Ms. Amou Prérézam

Heal by Hair mental health ambassador

WHAT WE KEEP LEARNING

Heal by Hair is a living programme. Every implementation cycle brings new realities — and we integrate them without waiting. 2025 was a year that asked us to be honest with ourselves about what was working, what needed refinement, and what we had not yet fully understood. Three threads emerged.



Heal by Hair Circles a space that transforms

Bringing the Circles into the 2025 program was a strategic shift : moving from early identification as a standalone intervention to a full continuum of community care. The Circles are collective spaces — facilitated, time-limited, supervised by psychologists — where something happens that is harder to design than it is to recognize when you see it.

Early qualitative data shows protective social networks forming among participants and persisting long after sessions end. Durable bonds. A shared language around distress. The capacity to hold each other up without professional prompting. These results echo the teachings of Friendship Bench , StrongMinds , and international literature : social capital is one of the most powerful predictors of lasting effects on mental health . We are now working with our partner psychologists to standardize these dynamics — to make them replicable without flattening what makes them work.

"I came for a haircut. I left feeling calm and less alone. Talking in a group with a hairdresser I trust gave me the strength to start."

Marie AHOLOU,
client, participant in a Heal by Hair Circle

Supporting hairdressers between peer support and protection

never see. Before Heal by Hair, many were already the confidants of the women around them — absorbing everything, supported by nothing. The training gave them the tools to listen without internalising, to accompany without losing themselves, to refer without guilt.

We continue to refine the post-training supervision structure, the debriefing protocols, and the criteria for signalling when a situation needs professional escalation. A model that improves wellbeing for those it serves while slowly grinding down those who deliver it would not last — and it would not deserve to.

"The training taught me to listen without taking on too much, to support without losing myself. Today, I know how to recognize when a situation is beyond me. My mind is calmer. At home, too, something has calmed down."

Adama ADAKU,
ambassador hairdresser and facilitator for Cercles Heal by Hair

A Clinical Protocol That Never Stops Improving

In partnership with our clinical teams and with IPA's support, we track impact against internationally validated measures — PHQ-9, GAD-7, resilience scales. That data feeds directly back into the program : Circle content, pedagogical tools, referral thresholds. The evidence loop is not separate from program delivery. It runs through it.

8 RESEARCH : EVIDENCE THROUGH SCIENCE

Heal by Hair is among the most thoroughly evidenced community mental health programmes in French-speaking Africa. This is not accidental. Rigour is not an add-on to the model — it is the condition under which the model earns the right to be adopted at scale, funded by governments, and taken seriously by the institutions that set the agenda for public health.



The body of evidence has been built up gradually, in successive layers.

- A pilot RCT conducted in Abidjan laid the initial foundations for validation.
- A multi-country qualitative study conducted in 2023 deepened understanding of the mechanisms at work in different cultural contexts, documenting the diversity of experiences while confirming the consistency of the model.
- Finally, in partnership with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), an international RCT is underway (2025–2027), involving 4,800 women in Greater Lomé—the largest ever conducted in community mental health in French-speaking Africa.



This body of work transforms each edition into data, each training into a testable hypothesis, each ambassador into a measurement point inside a system that learns as it goes.

Heal by Hair works because it brings together things that are rarely found in the same model at the same time :

- **pre-existing trust,**
- **recurrence rooted in everyday life,**
- **clear and secure roles,**
- **collective support ahead of the crisis**
- **a credible path toward public adoption.**

The efficiency of the model rests on something uncommon in the sector : it uses infrastructure that is already there. Relationships already formed. Habits already established. No new structures to build, no new specialists to recruit.

Under **€1**
**PER WOMAN
REACHED**

And as the network of ambassadors grows denser, the cost falls further — while the effects multiply outward, through families, children, and communities, far beyond the first ring of direct contact.

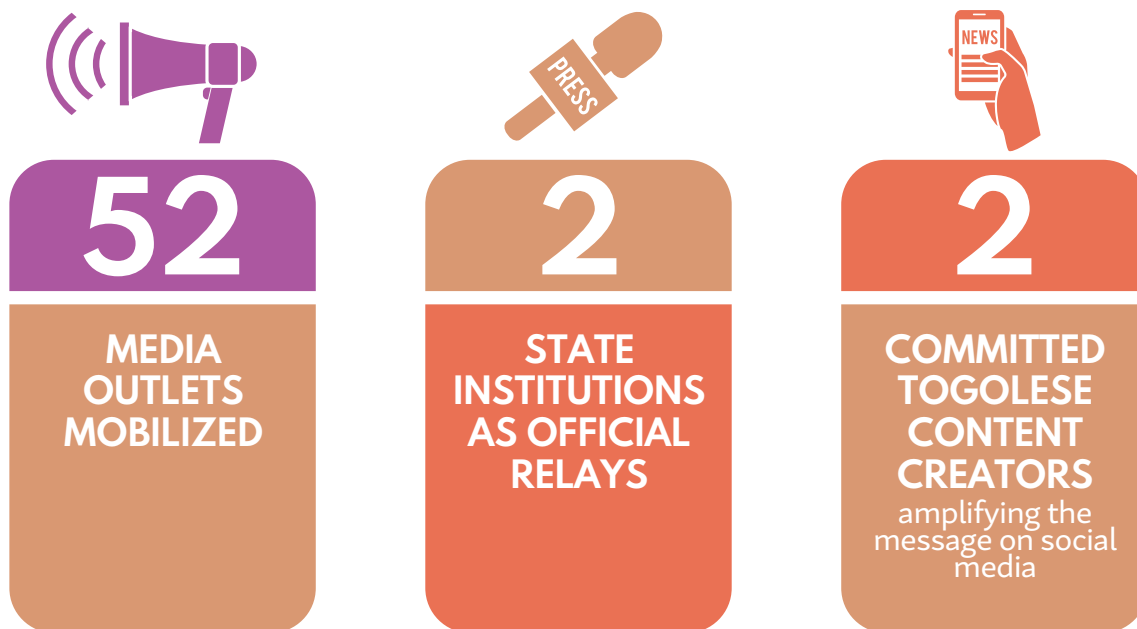
Health economists have a name for this : increasing returns to scale. The more the model grows, the more efficient it becomes. That trajectory is rare. It is also exactly what any serious funder of large-scale impact needs to see.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MEDIA, or when mental enters the public conversation

A program with this kind of ambition does not move the needle on its own. It needs voices willing to carry the message into places the program itself cannot reach. It needs stories capable of shifting what people think is normal, possible, important. In October 2025, in Lomé, that happened.

MEDIA & CULTURAL EVIDENCE Heal by Hair V, Lomé (October 19–25, 2025)

For a week, Heal by Hair went beyond the scope of a training course to become a major cultural, social, and media event, covered nationally, pan-Africanly, and internationally.



Television, radio, print, digital platforms — the breadth and density of coverage represent something rare in mental health communications : genuine, unsolicited buy-in from a media landscape that is notoriously selective about what it carries.

A strong signal, beyond the numbers

The publication in The Guardian in the preceding days, followed by reports on TV5 Monde, Africa 24, and One TV, marked a symbolic turning point : the mental health of African women has seen its place on the global media agenda considerably strengthened, no longer treated as a niche topic, but as a social, public policy, and human development issue.

A global audience, at a minimum 84 to 89 million people reached worldwide

This is a deliberately conservative figure, built only from verifiable public data across the digital platforms and social media of partner outlets. For broadcast and local radio media where no public data was available, the actual numbers are likely higher.





LOMÉ, CAPITAL OF WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

From **October 19 to 25, 2025**, the University of Lomé hosted the fifth edition of Heal by Hair, the second to be held in the Togolese capital since July 2023, establishing Lomé as the African capital of women's mental health.

This edition marks a historic record :

- 400+ women trained, becoming the first link in the mental health care chain in Togo and French-speaking Africa,
- A two-part training program :
 - **October 19–22** : theoretical and practical training,
 - **October 23–25** : a unique cultural program raising awareness of mental health in several neighborhoods of the city.

Mental health has thus moved out of the training rooms and into the public space, the body, culture, and everyday conversations.

The Message That Travelled Everywhere

One message ran through all media coverage, in French and local languages, particularly Mina : "Mental health is health."
Simple. Political. Universal.

What this coverage really says

This level of media mobilisation is not proof of good communications. It is proof of a model that is honest, that respects the communities it works with, and that combines scientific credibility with cultural intelligence and a clear aesthetic sense of what matters.

For donors, partners, and decision-makers, it demonstrates that Heal by Hair is not only effective in the field. It is a clear, accessible, and desirable model, capable of changing social norms and public priorities.

This summary provides an overview of the media and editorial content produced as part of Heal by Hair V, Lomé 2025—not as a showcase, but as cultural proof of impact, in the service of lasting change.

Because in mental health, as elsewhere, what is not seen does not exist.

And in October 2025, in Lomé, women's mental health was seen, heard, and recognized.

AT A GLANCE

- **52** media outlets mobilized
TV · RADIO · PRINT MEDIA
ONLINE MEDIA · AGENCIES
- **2** state institutions as official relays
- **2** content creators involved
- Bilingual coverage : French & local languages (Mina)
- Pan-African and international presence



THEY SPOKE OUT

Television :

**TV5 MONDE · AFRICA 24 · NEW WORLD TV
ONE TV · TVT · SOS DOCTEUR TV**

Radio :

**RADIO LOMÉ · NANA FM · PYRAMIDE FM
TAXI FM · KANAL FM**

Press & Digital :

**THE GUARDIAN · TOGO PRESSE · RTI INFO
AIP · L'ÉCONOMISTE DU TOGO · AFRICA RDV
AFREEPRESS · AFRIKELLES · TOGO FIRST
GLOBAL ACTU · SAVOIR NEWS · EDUC-PLUS
MÉDIA (among others)**

Some references :

QR CODE

• TV 5 MONDE :

VIDEO. Togo : Hair salons that are good for women's mental health | TV5MONDE - News

QR CODE

• AFREEPRESS :

Lomé hosts the 5th edition of the Heal by Hair program : 400 hairdressers trained in mental health - Afreepress

QR CODE

• AFRICA 24 :

Africa : mental health remains a major concern on the continent | Africa24 TV

QR CODE

• THE GUARDIAN :

'We all need someone' : the hairdressers tackling stigma of mental health issues in West Africa | Africa | The Guardian

QR CODE

• AGENCE IVOIRIENNE PRESSE :

Ivory Coast-AIP/Inter/Mental health : 400 hairdressers trained in Lomé to support psychological prevention for women - AIP - Agence Ivoirienne de Presse

QR CODE

• GLOBAL ACTU :

Mental health : Heal by Hair turns 400 hairdressers into students of circumstance at the University of Lomé - Global Actu

A photograph of two women, one with dark hair and one with long braids, looking at a smartphone together. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text "MEDIA QUOTES" is centered over the image in white, bold, sans-serif font.

MEDIA QUOTES

"Lomé is establishing itself as an African laboratory for community mental health."

Africa 24

"Training hairdressers means training social sentinels."

TV5 Monde



A CULTURAL MOMENT, NOT JUST TRAINING

Heal by Hair V is not just about training more than 400 women in community mental health.

It is also :

- a unique cultural program (October 23–25, 2025),
- artistic performances,
- wellness workshops,
- popular gatherings in several neighborhoods of Lomé, bringing mental health out of training rooms and into the city, bodies, and stories.

WHY THIS MEDIA COVERAGE MATTERS

This media coverage demonstrates that Heal by Hair is :

UNDERSTANDABLE
to the general public
without losing its rigor

LEGITIMATE
in the eyes
of institutions

**CULTURALLY
DESIRABLE**

SCALABLE
without distorting
its message

A key indicator of the model's maturity and potential for public adoption.

THE MESSAGE THAT HAS SURVIVED IT ALL

"Mental health is health."

A SIMPLE TRUTH | REPEATED | SHARED | APPROPRIATE

10

IMPACT

When numbers meet lives

IMPACT IN NUMBERS Total (5 editions)

4,373
TOTAL
APPLICATIONS

776
HAIRDRESSERS
TRAINED

460
AMBASSADORS
CERTIFIED

+600,000
WOMEN REACHED

82
PARTNERS

2026 : Lomé Lit It. Kara Will Carry It.

In Lomé, in 2025, Heal by Hair crossed a line : from a program proving its relevance to one actively reshaping a city. The ambassador hairdressers trained and certified in the fifth edition are already in their salons, in their neighborhoods, in the lives of women who return week after week — sometimes without words, sometimes with too many silences to hold alone. They listen. They notice. They support. They refer. They act precisely where the formal system does not arrive in time — or does not arrive at all.

The six months after training are not a coda.

They are the heart of the model. A time for anchoring, consolidating, and distributing responsibility. Ambassadors receive structured support :

- psychosocial support circles bringing together hairdressers and clients,
- monthly meetings to monitor and analyze situations,
- group discussion forums to prevent burnout,
- and individualized follow-ups provided by partner psychologists and psychiatrists.

This continuity is where Heal by Hair becomes what it promises to be — not a moment, but a system.



2026 : North to Kara

In June and July 2026, Heal by Hair opens a new chapter in Kara, northern Togo — bringing together hairdressers from Kara, Sokodé, and Dapaong, in regions where need is acute and specialist resources remain far too thin on the ground.

Lomé showed the model can work and can grow. Kara will show that it travels — beyond the capital, into different geographies, different communities, with its quality intact.

The edition will be preceded by a community campaign across villages, markets, and schools in the region : patient, respectful, designed to let the conversation about mental health arrive naturally in places where it has rarely been welcomed. Two hundred hairdressers will be trained and certified, becoming the new connective tissue of women's wellbeing in the north.

A photograph of three women in traditional African attire walking in a festival procession. They are wearing colorful, patterned dresses and large, ornate headpieces. The background shows a large crowd of people in similar attire, suggesting a large-scale event. The lighting is warm, with a golden glow, possibly from the setting or rising sun.

A FESTIVAL as a Statement

In Kara, Heal by Hair will also take the form of a popular festival — weaving awareness, culture, and celebration. A major traditional wrestling showcase, with international participation, conceived as a gathering around mental health : not clinical, not solemn, but alive.

Because community healing cannot be decreed. It must be celebrated, shared, and experienced.

From Lomé to Kara

The same conviction, new ground.

After making Lomé the African capital of women's mental health, the work now is to make Kara the place where community healing took root beyond the capital.

diluting, change that respects women and the territories they live in, a mental health that is built — quietly, steadily — as close as possible to those who need it most.

Supporting Heal by Hair today means choosing impact that scales without

By 2030, the Bluemind Foundation aims to :

- Train **5,000 hairdressers** as frontline mental health ambassadors
- Deploy **3,000 community** mental health hubs in **20 cities**
- Make mental health support accessible to **10 million** people
- Reduce stigma by **50%** and improve mental health literacy for **30 million** people
- Achieve financial autonomy covering **50%** of operating costs

This is a long-distance race with obstacles. The only non-negotiable is that we finish it.

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GOVERNMENT SCALING

A condition for sustainability

Embedding Heal by Hair in national mental health policy is not one objective among others. It is the condition under which everything else becomes permanent. From the beginning, the Bluemind Foundation built its model with institutionalization in mind — treating experimentation not as an end in itself but as the path to adoption, at the pace that quality requires.

Heal by Hair is not working around governments. It is being built with them. Togo's Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene. The University of Lomé. Pharmacie Univers Santé. A national public health campaign that reached over 1.5 million people. A high-level European Union delegation visiting the Foundation's headquarters in November 2025 — confirming what patient relationship-building eventually produces : not access, but partnership.

This governmental engagement creates three effects that reinforce each other.

Legitimacy. When authorities endorse the program, stigma falls. Communities engage more readily. The work of ambassador hairdressers becomes easier because it is seen — publicly — as a serious contribution to health.

Financing. Government commitment opens the door to public budgets and durable institutional homes — reducing exposure to the volatility of donor cycles and securing a long-term trajectory.

Scale. Mass deployment through existing institutional channels — vocational training centers, district health networks — becomes possible without building anything new or hiring anyone new. The infrastructure is already there.

“By partnering with the Bluemind Foundation's approach, we are affirming that mental health is an integral part of every Togolese person's healthcare journey and that pharmacies must be even more attentive to this often unspoken issue.”

Dr. Innocent Kpeto
CEO, Pharmacie Univers Santé, former president of
the National Order of Pharmacists of Togo

Institutional recognition also sends a signal outward. When governments are seen to co-invest, the Bluemind Foundation's credibility grows in the eyes of the international donors whose multi-year funding the program needs to reach its full potential. Public partnership and private investment reinforce each other. That dynamic is not accidental. It was designed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The coalition of the possible

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Nothing of this scale is built alone. Ubuntu. Heal by Hair V is the product of a coalition — rare, demanding, genuinely aligned — in which public institutions, researchers, artists, professional unions, journalists, and civil society chose to move in the same direction. Not because they were asked to agree. Because they looked at the same problem and arrived at the same conviction.

This fifth edition marks a milestone : in its scope, its discipline, and its ambition, it has demonstrated that a different path for women's mental health in Africa is not only imaginable. It is already under construction.

With Particular Gratitude to :

- **The Government of the Togolese Republic** — the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene, the Ministry of Solidarity, Gender and Family, the territorial administrations that worked, often quietly, to make this edition possible. Their constancy was decisive.
- **The University of Lomé** — for opening its institution not just its buildings. For affirming that a public university belongs, fully, in the conversation about community health and social innovation.
- **The Fund for Innovation in Development (FID)** — financial partner, strategic partner, and the cornerstone of this edition.
- **Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)** — for rigorous scientific accompaniment and an unwavering commitment to evidence that serves real policy decisions.
- **The professional hairdressing unions** — for the kind of mobilisation that cannot be manufactured : organised, community-rooted, and deeply motivated.
- **Our cultural and artistic partners** — Opéra, Africa Media Agency, Néré, Hands

from Above — for helping mental health find its place in the public imagination, not as a clinical subject but as a human one.

- Our media partners — for carrying the message that mattered most : mental health is health.

Special tribute to the FID **A partnership of renewed trust**

The Fund for Innovation in Development made a choice that goes beyond financial support. It chose a long-term strategic relationship — one founded on trust, held to rigorous mutual expectations, and oriented toward lasting impact. The renewal and deepening of that commitment is a signal to the broader field : a serious institution has looked hard at the Heal by Hair model and concluded that it is worth backing for the long run. That matters enormously — both for what it enables, and for what it says.

The Leadership Team and the hundred volunteers of the Bluemind Foundation - An architecture of trust

The success of Heal by Hair V relies on a committed, rigorous, and resilient leadership team.

From strategic vision to operational execution, each member of the team has carried this program forward with rare commitment and absolute loyalty to the mission.

This success is the result of collective, assertive leadership, capable of handling complexity without ever losing sight of the bigger picture.

The Management Committee - The foundations

Special tribute is paid to the members of the Board of Directors, in particular Audrey Tankeu, Me Fortuné Bawubadi Ahoulouma, and Pierre-Paul Alipoé.

Your voluntary commitment goes beyond your role. It is fundamental. Your consistency and presence have made these results and more possible.

The Research Team - The proof in the shadows

While the impact of Heal by Hair can be measured in the field, its credibility is also built on the patient, methodical, and demanding work of the research team. Ethical selection of participants, rigorous protocols, data collection and analysis, alignment with international standards : this invisible work ensures that every advance is documented, every decision is informed, and every euro invested produces a traceable impact. So, thank you.

Service providers

Finally, we would like to extend our warmest thanks to all the technical and logistical service providers who helped make this iconic edition possible. Heal by Hair is a collective effort.

A coalition of skills, convictions, and shared responsibilities.

To all those who made this edition possible : thank you for working with us to build accessible, dignified, and deeply human mental health care for everyone, everywhere, every day.



Fonds d'Innovation
pour le Développement



A HAIRCUT CAN SAVE A LIFE

What we have observed, structured, and supported has become clear, measurable, and transferable. When trust already exists, care can begin earlier. When care begins earlier, trajectories change—profoundly and lastingly.

Heal by Hair does not create trust.

It activates it where it already exists.
Heal by Hair is not a promise.

It is a proven, measured, reproducible model.

A daily gesture that has become an act of public health.

“
Today, a new
chapter is beginning.

To scale up without losing
our soul, we need partners
who choose real impact,
scientific rigor, and the
elegance of a fair
commitment.

Supporting Heal by Hair
is to invest in women,
communities,
and a healthier, more
dignified future.

TO SUPPORT US





**BLUEMIND
FOUNDATION**

UNITED FOR MENTAL HEALTH IN AFRICA

www.bluemindfoundation.org
welcome@bluemindfoundation.org

**Because a chair can become a refuge.
Because a strand of hair can open a path.
Because a simple gesture can sometimes save a life.**