



# 2025 Annual Report

 ARTOLUTION



EDUCATION IS KEY  
LIFE IS GOOD, ♡♡

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# Artolution Impact in 2025

**4,694**

people participated directly  
in Artolution programs in 23  
countries



**82,500 people**

people engaged through exhibitions,  
murals, and community activations



**+10.08%**  
increase in total  
participants  
compared with 2024



**+35%**  
increase in students'  
sense of involvement  
in decision-making at  
school, at home, and  
in class



**+29.5%**  
increase in  
participants' sense of  
belonging



**+34.6%**  
increase in  
satisfaction with  
school support for  
students' talents



**43 new artists**

certified through Artolution  
training programs



**140 teachers**

supported the integration of  
arts-based learning across **58**  
schools



**122**

artists and facilitators led pro-  
grams reaching youth and com-  
munities



**138 youth**

were trained in digital art and design to build  
job skills, **including 25 who engaged in 3D  
art-making** in Virtual Reality through Virtual  
Bridges, connecting with peers globally



**+16.2%**  
increase in  
hope for  
the future

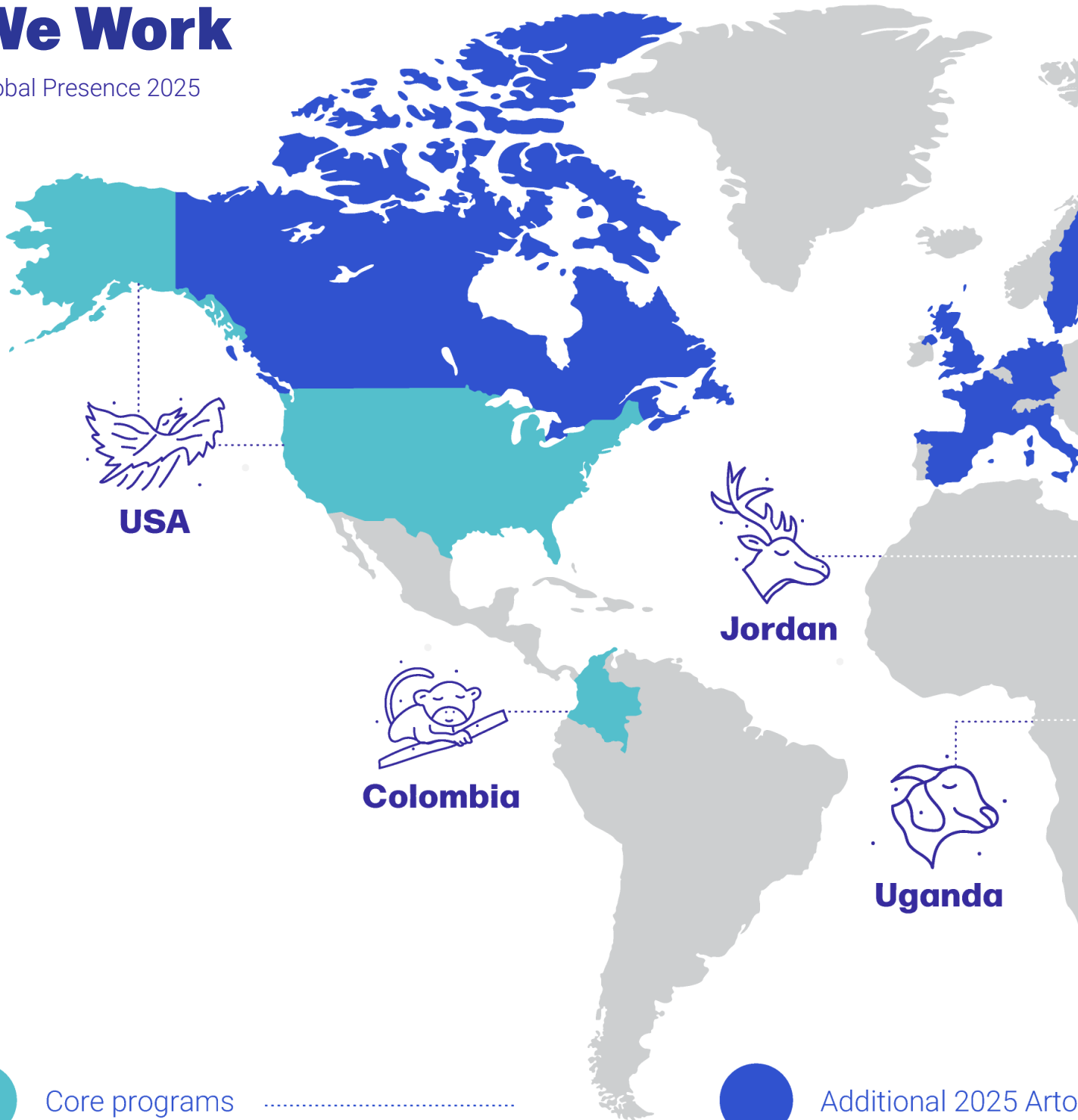
**93%**  
of youth in Jordan  
reported reduced  
depression and  
anxiety symptoms

**52%**  
of youth in Uganda  
reported positive  
mental health  
outcomes

These outcomes reflect sustained participation in multi-session programs and year-round initiatives, measured through pre- and post-program evaluation tools.

# Where We Work

Global Presence 2025



**Core programs** .....

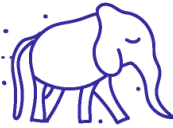
Bangladesh, Uganda, Jordan, United States, Colombia, and Kenya (Kenya reflects partner-supported work through AfroCure Arts Centre)

**Additional 2025 Artolution work**

Ukraine	Thailand
Myanmar	China
France	Spain
Canada	Germany



**Kenya**



**Bangladesh**

Evolution Projects

---

Singapore  
South Korea  
Japan  
Australia

Taiwan  
Italy  
Hong Kong  
Indonesia

Malaysia  
Sweden  
Netherlands  
India

United Kingdom  
Philippines  
Vietnam

# Global Context

In many of the communities where Artolution works, daily life is shaped by displacement, instability, and prolonged uncertainty. Around the world, an estimated

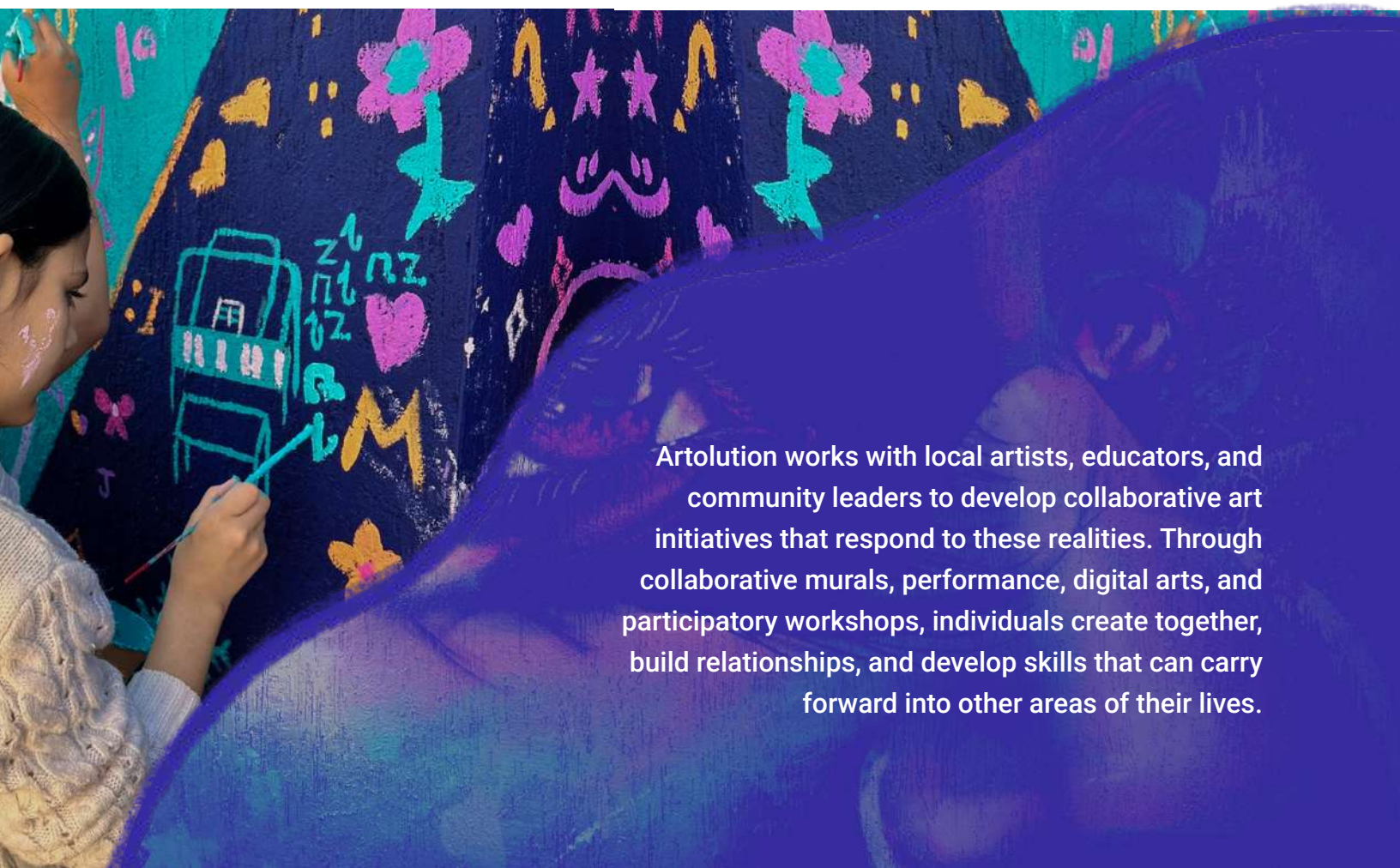
**123 million people are currently displaced due to conflict, violence, and persecution.**

According to UNHCR, approximately 40% are children and youth growing up without consistent access to education, stability, or safe spaces to gather.

In these conditions, opportunities for expression and connection are limited. Social ties weaken, learning environments become inconsistent, and there are fewer places where young people can explore identity, creativity, and voice.

In these settings, sustained spaces for gathering and creative work are rare. Where they do exist, they offer focus, continuity, and a way for people to come together. Over time, these shared processes begin to rebuild trust and connection.





Artolution works with local artists, educators, and community leaders to develop collaborative art initiatives that respond to these realities. Through collaborative murals, performance, digital arts, and participatory workshops, individuals create together, build relationships, and develop skills that can carry forward into other areas of their lives.

# Co-Founders' Message

**As Artolution approaches its 10-year anniversary, we find ourselves returning to the question that has always guided us: what does it take for arts programming to make a lasting impact in the lives and communities we serve?**

The answer, we have learned, can begin with a single project and grow over time. In the refugee camps, public housing developments, and vulnerable communities where we work, trust is built slowly – through showing up, elevating local leadership, and staying long enough for something real to take root. The most enduring impact comes from relationships that continue, carried forward by local artists who are themselves part of the communities they serve.

This past year reinforced that truth across every country and context we operate in. When young people are given space to create and lead, something shifts. Confidence grows. Connections deepen. Collaborative art-making becomes a powerful entry point for mental health support – offering moments of reflection, expression, and stability in environments where those moments are rare.

At the heart of this work are our local artists. They shape programs from within, build the trust that makes transformation possible, and carry the work forward long after a project ends. Many have been with us since the very beginning, growing into mentors and community leaders who now anchor everything we do. Through this

network, creative approaches travel across contexts while remaining grounded in local realities, while also connecting communities across countries who recognize shared experiences in one another.

As we look ahead, our commitment is clear: stay close to what works, invest more deeply in the people leading this work, and build programs that grow alongside the communities themselves.

**We are grateful to everyone who is part of this journey.**



**With gratitude,  
Joel Bergner & Dr. Max Frieder, Ed.D  
Co-Founders, Artolution**





# Local Artists as Leaders



**At the center of Artolution's work are artists trained and certified to facilitate arts-based projects within their own communities.**

Through intensive training and ongoing mentorship, they learn how to lead group sessions, guide collective decision-making, and navigate the dynamics of working with participants across different backgrounds and ages. This includes building trust, holding sensitive conversations, and ensuring that each participant can contribute in a meaningful way.

Projects follow a clear progression. Workshops begin by establishing connection and shared ground. Ideas are developed collectively, drawing from lived experiences. Facilitators guide this process step by step, from discussion and sketching to large-scale murals and public art works. Each contribution becomes part of a shared outcome rather than a single author's vision.

Participants return, take on more responsibility, and move toward greater ownership of the process, building creative problem-solving and leadership skills. Many begin supporting and co-designing sessions, and some become teaching artists themselves. In 2025, 122 community artists led Artolution initiatives across the world, reaching 4,694 direct participants, with impact extending beyond each program through public artworks, performances, and community engagement.

Projects do not rely on outside facilitation to continue. They are carried forward by trained artists, allowing the work to remain consistent, adaptable, and grounded in the realities of each context.





# Global Teaching Artists







## A Space to Breathe

In these sessions, the pace changes. People sit together. Hands move. Attention settles. There is time to focus, to make, to stay with a process without interruption.

Conversations happen naturally. Some are quiet. Some are shared. What begins as a simple activity becomes a space where people can be present with each other.

**Before anything appears on a wall or stage, this is where the work begins.**



# Bangladesh Program Spotlight

**Bangladesh is home to the largest refugee camps in the world, with Rohingya communities living in prolonged displacement under highly challenging conditions. Within this context, Artolution's work has grown into a sustained, artist-led presence inside the camps.**

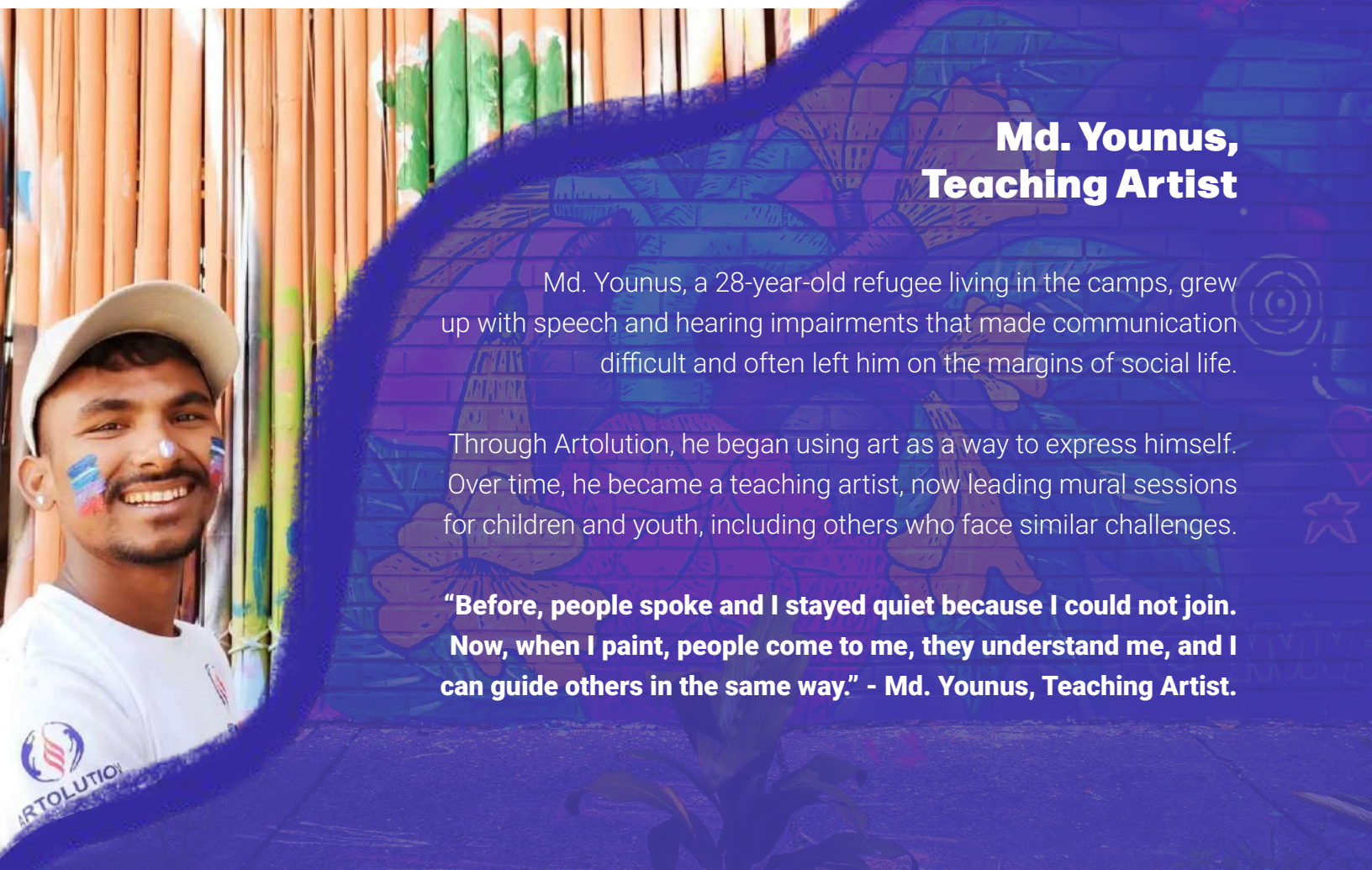
The program runs throughout the year, anchored by a core team of teaching artists who live and work in the community. Their presence creates continuity in environments where many interventions are facing severe challenges and cuts, allowing relationships, trust, and creative practice to build over time.

In 2025, the work continued to deepen through a wide range of activities shaped by participants. Drawing, painting, folkloric music, movement, and textile-based practices came together across learning centers and shared spaces, where children and youth engaged regularly and brought their own ideas into the process. These activities extended into the physical environment, with artworks integrated into classrooms and community spaces, shaping the visual landscape of the camps.

Training remained a central part of the year. Teaching artists continued to develop their practice through facilitation, mentorship, and targeted training sessions, strengthening their ability to guide both creative work and group dynamics. Both Artolution co-founders made visits to the program in 2025 to provide new training and support. Ongoing collaboration with partner organizations supported regular programming and expanded access to safe, consistent spaces.

In Bangladesh, the program has grown through consistency and continued presence. Artists remain embedded in the communities they serve, and participants return regularly, building relationships, skills, and shared experience. Creative practice becomes part of everyday life, carrying memory, expression, and connection across the camps, for the future of the Rohingya community.





## Md. Younus, Teaching Artist

Md. Younus, a 28-year-old refugee living in the camps, grew up with speech and hearing impairments that made communication difficult and often left him on the margins of social life.

Through Artolution, he began using art as a way to express himself. Over time, he became a teaching artist, now leading mural sessions for children and youth, including others who face similar challenges.

**“Before, people spoke and I stayed quiet because I could not join. Now, when I paint, people come to me, they understand me, and I can guide others in the same way.” - Md. Younus, Teaching Artist.**

# Jordan Program Spotlight

**In Jordan, Artolution's work is defined by consistency and by how deeply it is embedded across different settings. Programs have expanded across locations while remaining closely connected to the people who shape them.**

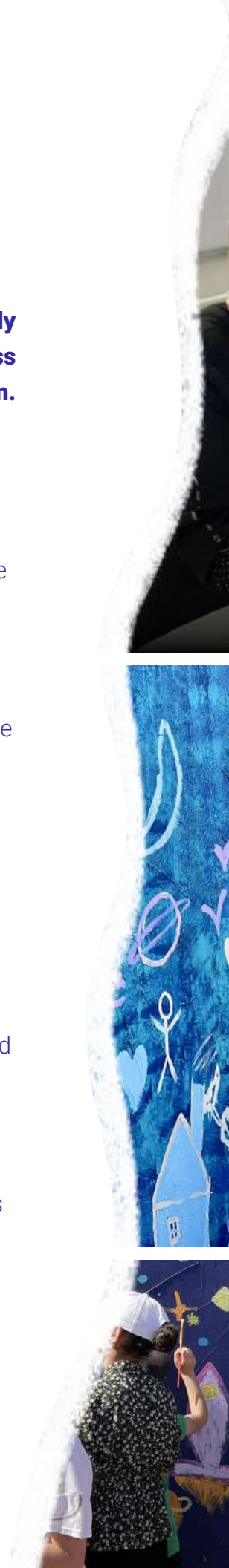
In 2025, this was visible across three areas of work. In Azraq Refugee Camp, we launched Salwa's House as a community arts space where women, many of whom were widowed during the Syrian war, gathered throughout the year, engaging in pottery, hand knitting, and Islamic geometry workshops. Many arrive struggling to find direction. Over time, they stay, return, and commit to the work. Together, participants build skills and regain direction, focus, and confidence.

Beyond the camp, Artolution's education program worked with 240 teachers across 60 public schools, reaching nearly 1,500 students across Jordan. Creative practice became part of everyday learning, giving teachers new ways to engage their classrooms and support expression, collaboration, and participation. In June, we launched the Creative Education program in Azraq Camp to engage children and youth through collaborative murals, performance, theatre and arts-based learning, led by artists from within the camp. In Jordan, 93% of youth reported reduced depression and anxiety symptoms, 95% reported feeling more connected to their community, and 88% reported an increased belief in gender equality following participation.

In Jordan, these efforts are interconnected. Classrooms, community spaces, and refugee settings are not treated separately. Skills and ideas move across them, carried forward by teachers, artists, and young people.

Salwa's House offers a clear view of this progression. Across multiple cohorts, women develop confidence through practice and shared experience. It becomes part of their routine, creating room for concentration and connection, and extending beyond the sessions. Women build support networks that strengthen their daily lives.

What has taken shape in Jordan is steady and cumulative. It is visible in how people engage and how their work develops over time.





**“I was lost before. Here, I found something that is mine.”**



## Ruqqayya's Story

Ruqqayya joined Salwa's House expecting something familiar. A short workshop. A way to pass time.

Instead, she found something she did not expect. At first, she felt nervous and hesitant. She had never worked with clay before and did not see herself as someone with creative ability. But she kept coming back. Slowly, the process began to shift.

Through pottery, she found a sense of focus she had been missing. The repetition, the time spent shaping each piece, and the quiet of the space allowed her to step away from the weight of daily life.

What started as curiosity became part of her routine. A place she chose to return to. A place where she began to feel like herself again and build connections with others.



# Uganda Program Spotlight

**In Uganda, Artolution's work has grown into a year-round presence that brings together creative practice, mental health support, and pathways to independence across refugee settlements and urban communities.**

This is built across several connected areas. In Bidibidi and Kyangwali refugee settlements, long-term initiatives create consistent spaces where children and youth gather regularly, building trust, skills, and confidence. Murals, storytelling, and collaborative art continue to reshape shared spaces, turning schools and community centers into places shaped by those who use them.

New areas of practice have also taken root. Our Virtual Bridges program introduces digital art and design, and connects young people across the world through live, shared creative sessions, where they exchange ideas, collaborate in real time, and see their experiences reflected beyond their immediate surroundings. These exchanges shift how participants see themselves and their place in the world.

Livelihood pathways have become a stronger focus. Through fashion and design initiatives, young people move from learning to producing, creating garments and handmade work that reflect cultural identity and create income opportunities. For many, this marks a transition from participation to ownership. Teaching artists trained within these initiatives are now leading workshops, mentoring others, and contributing to projects beyond Uganda, carrying this approach into other communities.

The work continues to grow from within the communities themselves. Young people find focus, artists step into leadership, and communities shape spaces that reflect their own voices.





## Voices from Uganda

**"Art brings both the host and refugee communities together. Through mural painting and shared activities, we build connection and understanding."**

*Luba Winnie, Teaching Artist*

**"As a leader, I have gained confidence, self-esteem, and become a role model for the youth I work with."**

*Flora Ayakaka, Teaching Artist*

**"Youth in my community have gained skills in painting, digital art, and fashion design, and some are now using these skills to support themselves."**

*Wellborn Kenedy, Teaching Artist*

# U.S. Highlights

**Across the United States, Artolution's work continues through collaborative art-making programs across community, institutional, and public housing settings.**

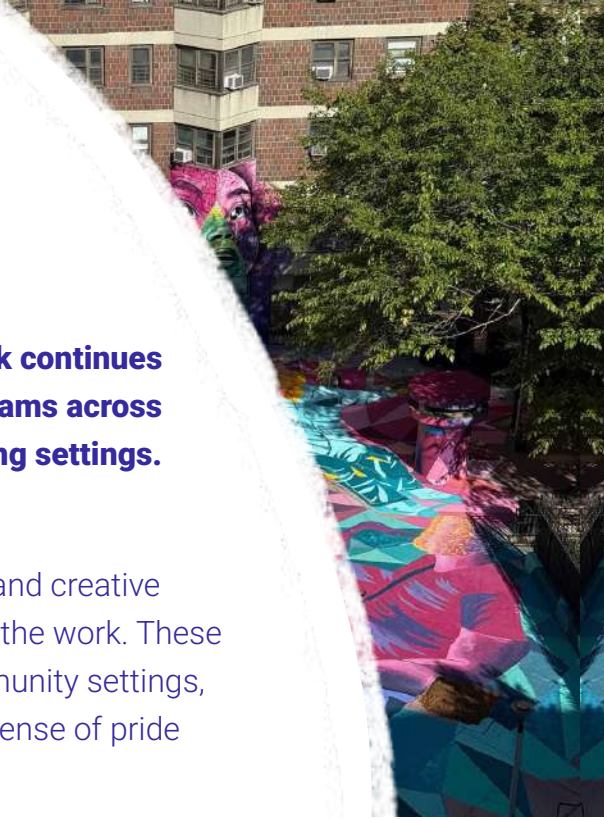
Youth and community residents participate in workshops and creative processes that bring their ideas and lived experiences into the work. These programs take place in schools, neighborhoods, and community settings, where participants shape shared artworks and develop a sense of pride and ownership in the spaces around them.

This work also extends into public and cultural spaces through murals, exhibitions, and community activations that bring collaborative art-making into wider view, bringing people together across neighborhoods and public spaces.

Collaborations with cultural institutions, community-based organizations, and public agencies expand access to these programs, while ongoing engagement with academic and cultural partners supports sustained programming across locations. Artolution also completed multiple ground and wall mural projects across New York public housing communities in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Manhattan in collaboration with Lincoln Center, the Public Housing Community Fund, and NYCHA.

Children in Washington, DC developed their own artwork through workshops, which was then incorporated into a large-scale mural installed in the city. Project funded by the NoMa BID.

**"It felt amazing because everybody could see it. People driving their cars, they can see my work." Caly, Student, Two Rivers Public School**





# Global Highlights

Artolution's work in 2025 also extended across a wider set of international collaborations, public activations, and locally led initiatives, reflecting the transferability of the Artolution collaborative art-making approach across many contexts.



## **Bouquet of Peace: Picasso Museum x Artolution x UNIQLO**

In partnership with UNIQLO and the Musée National Picasso-Paris, Artolution helped facilitate the Bouquet of Peace workshops across 25 cities worldwide. Participants created hundreds of artworks reflecting on peace, connection, and shared humanity, which were assembled into a collective installation at the Picasso Museum, in UNIQLO France and at the UNIQLO HQ in Tokyo. The project brought Artolution's collaborative approach into a global public setting while keeping participant voices at the center and working with artists around the world to create a monumental collective artwork.





## Ukraine

In Kyiv and other communities, local artists led collaborative mural projects with children and youth in settings shaped by ongoing instability. This included a summer program developed with Go Global and Snapchat that combined mural-making with augmented reality activities, expanding how young people could create, connect, and imagine beyond their immediate surroundings.



## Myanmar

In Rakhine State, Artolution worked with ACTED and UNHCR on a community-based arts and psychosocial support initiative focused on youth engagement, wellbeing, and peaceful coexistence. In an active conflict-affected environment, the program brought together participants from diverse ethnic and religious communities through collaborative art and dialogue, creating space for expression, interaction, and trust-building.



## South Korea

In Seoul, Artolution worked with Medair Korea on its first public engagement program in South Korea, bringing collaborative art-making into community and private-sector settings. Across three projects with local partners, participants engaged with Artolution's approach through shared art activities rooted in storytelling, creativity, and connection. The pilot also helped launch support for the Arts and Mental Health Fund, creating a foundation for continued collaboration in 2026 and beyond.



## Japan (JICA)

In Japan, Artolution partnered with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on a cross-cultural exchange connecting communities in Uganda and Japan through collaborative art-making. The project brought together Artolution artists from South Sudan, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to co-create a series of community-based artworks across locations. Drawings developed in Congolese and South Sudanese refugee settlements were combined with pieces created separately in Japan through workshops and public events in Yokohama, engaging over 120 participants in a central public space. The final artworks were exhibited at the TICAD9 international conference, reaching a wide public audience, and were later displayed at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, while opening pathways for continued collaboration across countries.



# AfroCure Arts Centre, Kenya

**In Kibera, Nairobi, opportunities for young people to access creative space, mentorship, and structured support are limited. AfroCure was created in response to that reality.**

Founded in 2020 by Amos Odhiambo, who first worked with Artolution's co-founder, Joel Bergner, as a teenage participant, AfroCure began as a small, informal gathering of children coming together through dance and art. It reflects a long-term pathway of Artolution's work, where participants grow into artists and leaders within their own communities. Today, it has developed into a year-round program led by local artists and facilitators, working with more than 100 children and youth.

Participants return regularly to take part in visual arts, dance, theatre, and mentorship sessions. Over time, many take on greater responsibility, supporting younger participants and helping shape the program. This continuity has created a stable environment where young people build skills, confidence, and lasting connections.

Artolution has played a direct role in this growth through mentorship, training, and sustained support, working alongside AfroCure to strengthen its capacity as an independent, locally led organization.

A major step in that process is the development of a permanent arts center in Kibera. Artolution funded the purchase of land and the construction of the center, creating the foundation for expanded programming, increased participation, and income-generating activities that support long-term sustainability.

AfroCure reflects how this work develops over time: local artists leading, programs growing from within communities, and organizations building the foundation to sustain the work independently.

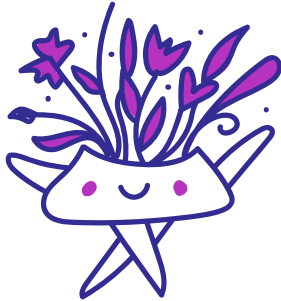




**“This is the first time I felt that I’m not different from anyone. I was part of the group, and my drawing was on the wall like everyone else’s.”**

— 12-year-old student with a physical disability

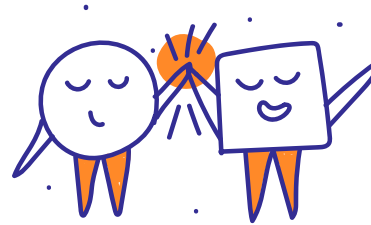
# Impact Across Our Pillars



## Mental Health

Artolution creates space for emotional expression, connection, and healing in contexts shaped by prolonged stress and uncertainty. With consistent creative engagement, individuals rebuild confidence, develop trust, and reconnect with a sense of identity.

Through collaborative art-making, people process difficult experiences, regain stability and build a support network. In structured environments like Salwa's House in Jordan and year-round initiatives in Bangladesh and Uganda, people come back regularly, finding relief, focus, and a sense of belonging.



## Social Inclusion

Artolution brings people together across lines of division, creating shared experiences where trust develops. Collaborative art-making allows individuals from different ethnic, religious, national, or social backgrounds to work side by side, building relationships that extend beyond the sessions.

In refugee camps, urban areas, and public spaces, murals, performances, and art workshops become points of connection. People who might not otherwise interact begin to see one another differently, contributing to more cohesive and supportive environments over time.



## Livelihoods

At the core of Artolution's approach is the development of local artists as leaders, who serve as key multipliers and sustain the work over time. Teaching artists are trained, mentored, and provided paid work leading programs in the places where they live, creating pathways for both income and long-term leadership. In addition, participants develop skills needed for employment and entrepreneurship, such as digital design and handicrafts.

Across our regions, our work supports livelihoods, from artists leading programs in Bangladesh and Uganda to the growth of AfroCure in Kenya, where a former participant now leads a team delivering year-round programming. Creative practice becomes both a form of expression and a sustained source of livelihood.



## Awareness

Artolution programs support community members in becoming active voices around the issues that affect their lives. Topics such as mental health, early marriage, gender-based violence, and displacement are explored and translated into public artworks that reach wider audiences.

Murals, performances, and community exhibitions become spaces for dialogue, making critical messages visible and accessible. Through this process, learning becomes visible in how communities respond to these issues.

# Partnerships

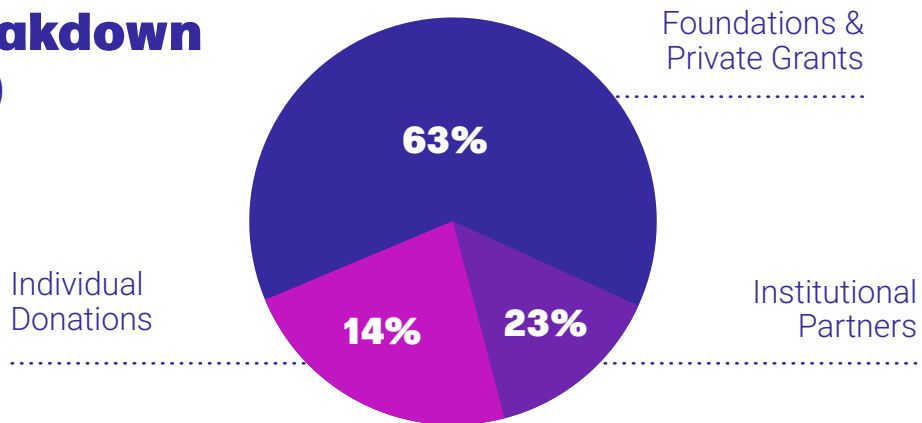




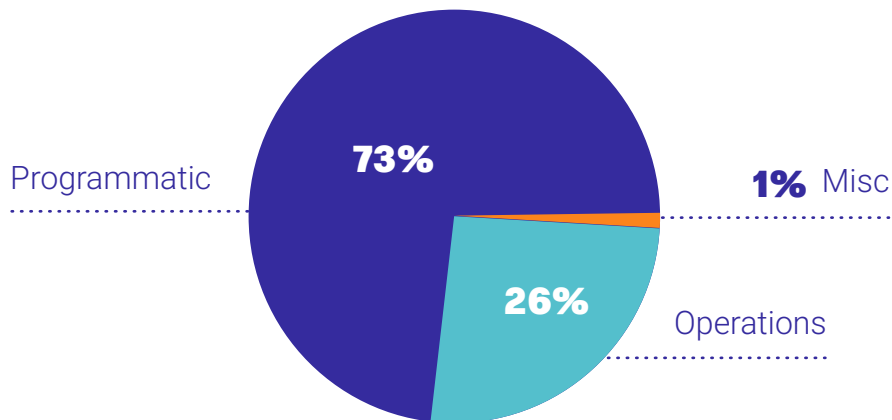
# Financial Overview

Artolution's funding supports long-term, community-based programming across its regions. In 2025, Artolution raised \$1,337,721, with funding primarily from foundations and private grants (63%), followed by individual donations (23%) and institutional partners (14%). This reflects a shift toward private funding, consistent with broader changes across the sector. The majority of resources are directed toward program implementation, with 73% supporting field-based work, alongside 26% allocated to operations and 1% to miscellaneous costs.

## Revenue Breakdown (2025)



## Expense Allocation





# Team and Governance

## Board of Directors

**Michele Dastin-van Rijn**  
Board Chair

**Clarence Hahn**  
Board Treasurer

**Jennifer Wu**  
Board Member

**Kerstin Holst**  
Board Member

**Wajma Rasul**  
Board Member

**Joel Bergner**  
Board Member

**Dr. Max Frieder, Ed.D**  
Board Member

## Advisory Council

**Shiphrah Mutungi**  
Theatre and peacebuilding expert, DT Global

**Dr. Laura Berk, Ph.D**  
Distinguished Professor Emerita, Illinois State University

**Fulya Kulabas**  
Senior fundraising leader, nonprofit and multinational sectors

**Jennivee Fiorese**  
Soprano, music educator, and founder of Music4Dreamers

**Janet Riley**  
President, Janet Riley Strategies; communications and media strategist

**Rodrigo Moran**  
Creative Director, WhatsApp; leader of the Pirate Team

**Joseph Fowler**  
Head of Arts and Culture, World Economic Forum

**Dr. Lena Verdeli, Ph.D**  
Director, Global Mental Health Lab, Columbia University

**Dr. Ty Flewelling, MD**  
Retired Senior Foreign Service Officer and global health specialist

**Martin Fletcher**  
Author and former Middle East correspondent, NBC News

**Amb. (ret.) Michael Ratney**  
Former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia

**Dean Brooks**  
Education in emergencies expert; former Head of INEE

**Steven Corliss**  
Senior humanitarian leader; former UNHCR Representative, Bangladesh

## Global Team



**Joel Bergner**  
Co-founder, CEO



**Dr. Max Frieder, Ed.D**  
Co-Founder, Chief Creative Officer



**Marine Arango**  
Operations Director & MHPSS Advisor



**Samir Omary**  
Communications & Development Officer



**Rebecca Buehler**  
Global Program Coordinator



**Paula Golez**  
Finance Officer



**Carolina Gómez**  
Administrative Assistant



**Essi Aziagbe**  
Administrative Assistant

## Country & Regional Teams



**Ayat Asa'ad**  
Jordan Country  
Director



**Muhammad  
Moshir Rahman**  
Program Manager Bangladesh



**Francis Bulega**  
Program Manager,  
Uganda



**Camilo Echeverri**  
Executive Director,  
Artolución Colombia



**Camila Arboleda**  
Creative Director,  
Artolución Colombia



**Esero Nalyong**  
Uganda  
Field Manager



**Juliette Nakate**  
Uganda Finance &  
Admin Officer



**Shamirah Nantege**  
Uganda  
Finance Officer



**Erfanul Haque**  
Bangladesh  
Finance Officer



**Mahmudul Islam**  
Bangladesh  
Field Coordinator



**Haya Iseed**  
Jordan  
Field Coordinator

## Global Specialists



**CJ Thomas**  
Global Performance Specialist



**Emma Altman**  
Global Fashion Specialist



**Batuhan Bintas**  
Creative Technology Lead



# Looking Ahead

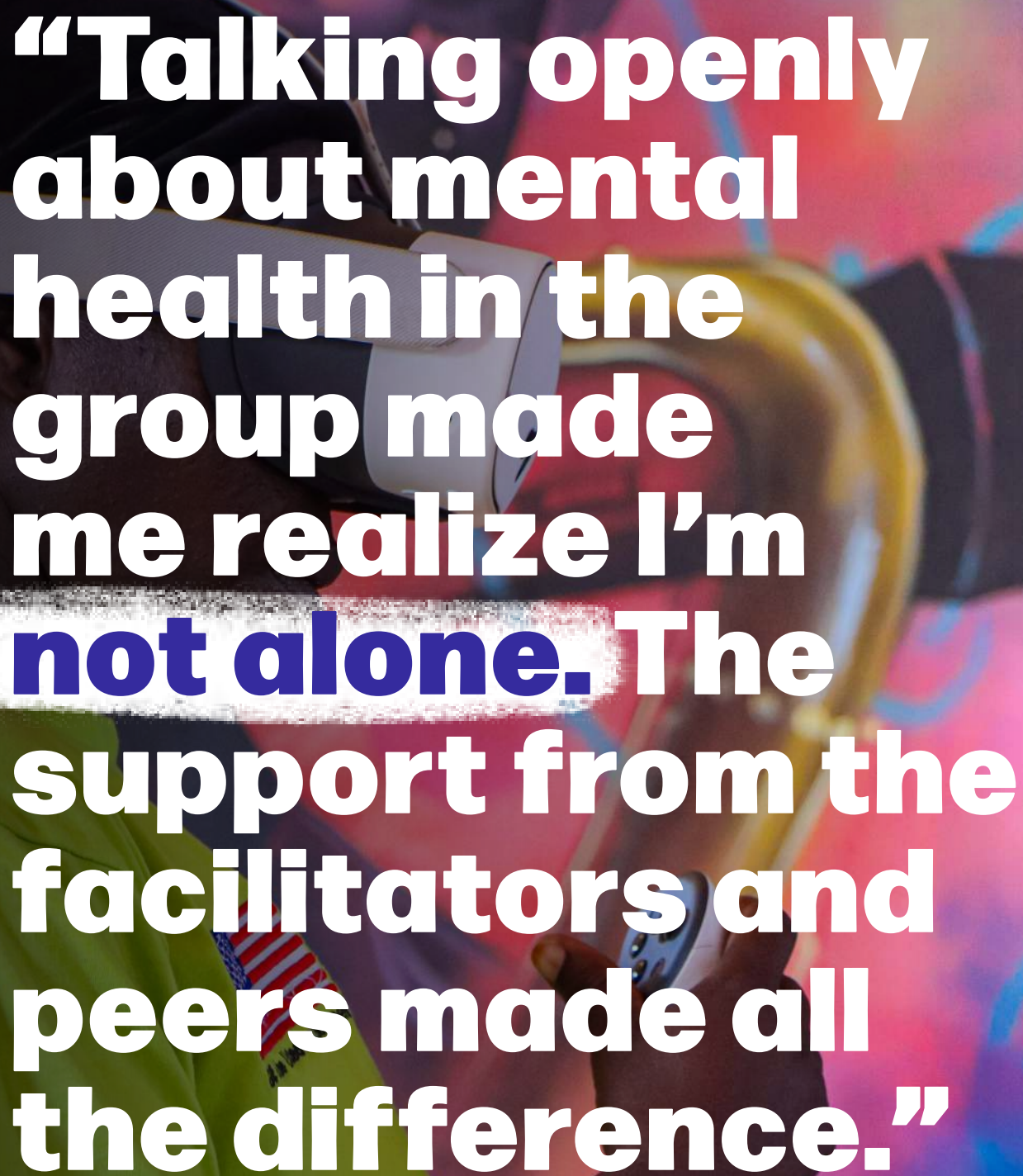
The direction for Artolution remains grounded in what has shaped the work so far: long-term engagement, local artist leadership, and consistent presence within communities.

Across all locations, the focus is on deepening what already exists. This means continuing to support teaching artists, strengthening year-round programs, and creating spaces where creative work can remain steady and accessible over time. In many places, the work is carried forward by the people who lead it.

The work continues to evolve through digital collaboration, new forms of creative practice, and expanded partnerships. There is also a continued focus on strengthening local artist networks, increasing visibility of the model, and building the long-term capacity needed to sustain and grow this work across contexts.

For those who want to be part of this work, there are clear ways to contribute. Support can take the form of donations, funding programs directly, building long-term partnerships, or helping bring this work into new spaces and communities. Each of these plays a role in ensuring that artists can continue leading this work, and that programs remain consistent and accessible to the communities they serve.

This is how the work continues to grow: through sustained support, strong partnerships, and the artists who lead it.

A group of people in a colorful setting, with one person in the foreground holding a yellow object. The background is a vibrant, abstract pattern of colors including purple, blue, green, and red. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, white font, with the words "not alone" highlighted in a blue, textured background.

**“Talking openly about mental health in the group made me realize I’m not alone. The support from the facilitators and peers made all the difference.”**

– Mary Monday, South Sudan participant, Uganda program



**ARTOLUTION**

[www.artolution.org](http://www.artolution.org)  
Annual Report 2025