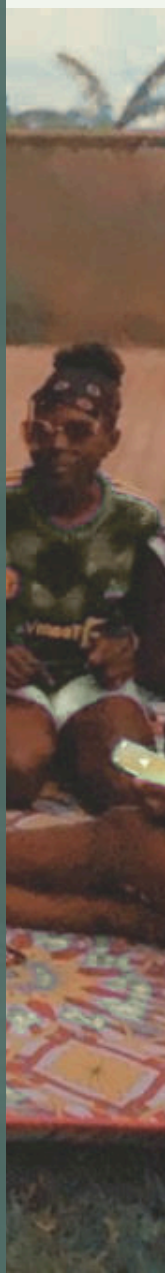
DIVERSE
EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION

FFENA KUKYOTO

A Community-Led Methodology for Collective Healing, Dialogue, and Inclusive Care





Diverse Empowerment Foundation
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Author's Note

This document comes from practice.
Ffena Kukyoto was not developed as a framework from the beginning. It emerged over time, through gathering, listening, and responding to what people needed in ways that were not always visible in formal systems of care. What is written here reflects what has been learned, what has been adjusted, and what has remained.

The decision to document this methodology comes from a recognition that work like this is often done, but not always recorded. Over time, it became clear to me that if it was not written down, much of what had been built — the intention behind it, the way the space is held, the lessons learned — could be lost or misunderstood. This document is an effort to make that knowledge visible, so that it can be carried forward, adapted, and built upon.

This is not presented as a finished or fixed model. It reflects a process that is still ongoing, shaped by the people who continue to be part of it. What is shared here is offered with the understanding that others will take it into their own contexts, and that it will continue to evolve in ways that respond to different communities and realities.
What matters most is not that the model is replicated exactly, but that the intention behind it is understood and held with care.

Gracie Brendah Nanyunja and Ruby Loretta

Acknowledgments

This work is rooted in community.

Ffena Kukyoto exists because individuals chose to show up, to share their experiences, and to be present with one another in ways that made the space what it is. The openness, trust, and willingness of participants to speak, listen, and hold each other have shaped this methodology in ways inseparable from the people themselves.

The Diverse Empowerment Foundation team, including facilitators, counselors, and those who supported the space in different ways, has played a critical role in holding and sustaining this work. Through their presence, attentiveness, and commitment, they have helped create the conditions that allow the space to remain grounded, responsive, and safe.
This work has also been made possible through the belief and support of partners who trusted the need for such a space and contributed to its continuity. Their support created the conditions for this methodology to grow and be documented.

This document reflects a shared effort.

It is shaped by those who gathered, those who held the space, and those who believed in the work as it was becoming.

1. Introduction

Across Uganda, gender diverse persons, particularly LBQTGNC persons with and without disabilities, navigate layered realities of exclusion, violence, and limited access to care. Research indicates that over 24% of adults experience mental health challenges, with depression and anxiety among the most prevalent conditions (John Nelson Opio, 2021). At the same time, access to mental health services remains limited, under-resourced, and often inaccessible, particularly for marginalized communities.

For LBQTGNC individuals, these challenges are intensified by stigma, criminalization, and social isolation. Gender-based violence remains widespread, yet existing response systems often fail to meet the needs of those living at the intersections of disability, queerness, and economic vulnerability.

The Diverse Empowerment Foundation (DEF), a grassroots LBQTGNC, feminist, disability justice organization led by diverse persons with and without disabilities in Uganda, has been actively engaged in responding to these gaps through community-led programming, advocacy, and inclusive service design.

In practice, this leaves many individuals without safe, accessible, and responsive spaces that reflect their lived realities. They lack places where they can speak openly, access affirming mental health support, connect with others, and ask questions without fear of judgment or exclusion.

It is within this context that DEF began to listen more closely to what community members were already expressing, not only in formal settings, but in everyday conversations and shared living spaces. People spoke about isolation, stigma, and the difficulty of navigating daily life without support. Many described the need for somewhere to go after a difficult day or week, a place to sit, to breathe, and to be with others without pressure to explain or perform strength.

What became clear was that beyond services, there was a need for something more immediate and more human: a space grounded in presence, where people could gather, speak freely, and be held without expectation.

Ffena Kukyoto emerged from this need.

Meaning “All of Us by the Bonfire,” Ffena Kukyoto is a community-led methodology developed by DEF. It draws from the cultural practice of gathering around a fire, not only as a physical setting, but as a way of being together, where stories are shared, presence is valued, and no one is required to carry their experiences alone.

Healing does not begin with intervention.
It begins with presence, safety, and community.

Through structured yet flexible dialogue spaces, Ffena Kukyoto brings together storytelling, peer support, shared learning, and collective care. Participants engage with topics such as mental health, sexuality, identity, relationships, and survival, not through instruction alone, but through lived experience, conversation, and collective reflection.

Over time, what began as small, intentional bonfire gatherings has developed into a broader ecosystem of care. This includes Ffena Kukyoto Healing Circles, community-based dialogue sessions, integrated mental health support through in-house and referral counseling, and peer-led spaces that extend beyond the structured session. Together, these elements form a continuum of support, moving from immediate emotional holding — the practice of being present with and supporting individuals through lived experiences without judgment or pressure to resolve — to longer-term pathways for care and connection.

This document seeks to:

- Document the Ffena Kukyoto methodology as it exists in practice
- Articulate the principles and processes that make it effective
- Offer guidance for adaptation in ways that remain true to its core

It is not a fixed manual.
It is a reflection of a living practice, one built through experience, trust, and the continuous act of showing up for one another. Readers are invited to engage with this document not as a rigid guide, but as a framework to be understood, interpreted, and adapted with care, grounded in the realities of the communities they serve.

This methodology reflects a practice that existed before it was named, and continues beyond this document.

2. Origins of Ffena Kukyoto

Ffena Kukyoto did not begin as a formal program. It emerged from a moment of recognition within the work of the Diverse Empowerment Foundation (DEF) that existing approaches, while necessary, were not fully meeting people's needs in their daily lives.

Within DEF's engagements, there were recurring moments that stood out. Not only in structured activities, but in quieter, in-between spaces, people spoke about the emotional weight of navigating stigma, isolation, and survival. They spoke about needing somewhere to go where they did not have to explain themselves, defend their identities, or hold everything together.

It was in responding to these moments that the idea behind Ffena Kukyoto began to take shape.
At the center of this development was a shared understanding rooted in the philosophy of Ubuntu, introduced and held within the work by Ruby Loretta Nakandi. Ubuntu, often expressed as "I am because we are," emphasizes that individual well-being is inseparable from the well-being of the community.

Within Ffena Kukyoto, this was not taken as a theory. It became practice. Ubuntu informed the decision to create a space where people could gather without hierarchy, where participation was not enforced, and where care could emerge through presence rather than instruction.

It shaped the understanding that support can come from being in community, listening, responding, and holding space for one another.

Alongside this, another principle became equally central, though less often named directly: love.

Not as sentiment, but as practice.

Love, in this context, meant creating a space where people would be met with care, patience, and dignity. It meant designing an environment where no one was treated as a problem to be solved, and where showing up for one another, without expectation of return, was both possible and encouraged. This intention shaped how people were welcomed, how conversations unfolded, and how the space was held over time.

The bonfire became both symbol and structure within this emerging practice. It reflected a familiar cultural way of gathering and created a physical and emotional center around which people could come together. Around it, individuals could sit in ways that were comfortable to them, speak in the language that felt natural to them, and engage at their own pace.

The early gatherings were simple. People came, sat together, shared when they wanted to, and listened when they did not. There were no rigid expectations, no forced participation, and no predefined outcomes. What emerged instead was a pattern of exchange, people sharing their experiences, others responding with attentiveness and care, and a collective sense that the space belonged to everyone present.

Over time, this practice deepened and took on a recognizable form.

Participants began to return, not only for themselves, but for each other. They brought questions, stories, and reflections. They offered support, sometimes through words, sometimes through presence, and sometimes through simple gestures of care. Through this repetition, a shared way of being in the space began to form, one shaped by respect, consent, attentiveness, and a growing sense of collective responsibility.

These were not introduced as rules. They emerged through practice and would later become the foundational principles of the methodology.

It was through this process of gathering, reflecting, and returning that Ffena Kukyoto evolved from a space into a method. What began as an intentional act of creating room for people to be together became a structured yet flexible approach to dialogue, healing, and collective care, one that continues to grow, adapt, and respond to the realities of the communities it serves.



3. Philosophy and Ethical Foundation

Ffena Kukyoto is grounded in a set of principles that shape how the space is created, held, and experienced. These principles did not originate as formal guidelines. They emerged through practice, through repeated gatherings, shared experiences, and the ways participants chose to show up for one another.
Over time, they became the ethical and operational foundation of the methodology.

3.1 Non-Judgment

Ffena Kukyoto operates on the understanding that no experience, emotion, or question is inherently wrong.
Participants can speak without fear of being corrected, dismissed, or evaluated. This creates a space where individuals can express thoughts or ask questions they may not feel safe raising elsewhere, particularly around sensitive topics such as sexuality, relationships, or mental health.
In practice, non-judgment is upheld by responding with curiosity rather than correction, allowing multiple perspectives to exist without hierarchy, and recognizing lived experience as valid knowledge.

3.2 Voluntary Participation and Presence

Participation in Ffena Kukyoto is not enforced.
Individuals are not required to speak, share, or engage in any particular way. Silence, observation, and presence are recognized as valid forms of participation.

This removes pressure and allows engagement to emerge naturally over time, as individuals choose when and how they want to enter the conversation.

3.3 Mutual Respect and Attentive Listening

The space is guided by a shared commitment to listening fully and allowing others to complete their thoughts without interruption. Participants typically speak one at a time, guided by a shared understanding that each person's voice deserves space. Contributions emerge through this rhythm, with participants asking to speak rather than interrupting, and engaging with what has been shared rather than responding prematurely.

3.4 Consent-Based Interaction

Care within Ffena Kukyoto is practiced with attention to boundaries.
Participants do not assume physical or emotional access to others. Even gestures of support, such as offering a hug, are preceded by consent, and both verbal and non-verbal boundaries are respected. This ensures that care is experienced as safe, intentional, and responsive to individual comfort, while also recognizing that support can take different forms depending on what a person needs in that moment.

3.5 Lived Experience as Knowledge

Ffena Kukyoto recognizes lived experience as a primary source of knowledge.
Participants bring insights from their own lives, which are treated as valuable contributions to collective understanding. This challenges traditional hierarchies in which expertise is limited to

formal training or professional roles and instead centers knowledge grounded in everyday survival, adaptation, and lived reality.

This is visible in how conversations unfold. For example, discussions on topics such as relationships, sexuality, or independent living are not led solely by facilitators, but shaped by participants sharing what has worked for them, what has not, and how they navigate their circumstances. Others respond, reflect, and build on these experiences, creating a shared body of knowledge that is both practical and contextually relevant.

3.6 Collective Responsibility for Care

The safety and integrity of the space are shared by everyone present.

Rather than relying solely on a facilitator, participants help maintain an environment of respect, attentiveness, and support. Care is not delivered to individuals; it is created collectively through how people listen, respond, and adjust to one another in real time. This is reflected in the way participants respond with care when someone shares, how the group becomes attentive when someone is in distress, and how responsibility for maintaining the space is understood as shared rather than centralized.

3.7 Emotional Holding as Practice

A defining feature of Ffena Kukyoto is the practice of emotional holding.

Emotional holding refers to the act of being present with

someone's experience without attempting to immediately interpret, redirect, or move them toward a particular outcome. It involves listening, allowing space, and supporting individuals as they express what they are carrying.

When participants share something heavy or emotional, the space slows down, attention shifts to the person speaking, and responses prioritize presence over solutions.

This is supported by the presence of trained counselors, who are available for individual support as needed, while the group maintains a grounded and safe environment.

Emotional holding distinguishes Ffena Kukyoto from many service-delivery models. It allows participants to be seen and supported without the pressure to move quickly toward closure or explanation.

Together, these principles form the ethical foundation of Ffena Kukyoto. They shape not only what happens within the space, but how it feels to be part of it. They are not enforced as rules, but practiced as shared commitments.

It is through these commitments that the space becomes one where people can arrive as they are, engage at their own pace, and experience care as something created collectively rather than delivered.

4. The Ffena Kukyoto Methodology

Ffena Kukyoto is not a rigid sequence of steps, but a structured process shaped by intention, environment, and interaction. While each gathering responds to the needs of those present, a consistent pattern has emerged over time, allowing the methodology to be understood, practiced, and adapted.

This section outlines the core components of a Ffena Kukyoto session, from arrival to closing, showing how the principles described earlier are translated into practice.

4.1 Creating the Space: Entry and Environment

The Ffena Kukyoto experience begins before any conversation takes place.

The physical environment is intentionally designed to convey comfort, accessibility, and a sense of welcome. Participants encounter a space with multiple seating options, including chairs, mats, and bean bags, as well as areas for resting. The arrangement allows wheelchair access and accommodates diverse physical needs without requiring adjustments or explanations.

At the center of the space is the bonfire, which functions as both a physical and symbolic anchor. It creates warmth, focus, and a shared point of connection around which participants gather.

There is no expectation to engage immediately. Participants may sit, observe, or rest. This moment of arrival allows individuals to transition from their external environment into the shared space at their own pace.

4.2 Opening the Space: Welcome and Shared Agreements

Once participants have settled, the session begins with a welcome from the facilitator or a DEF representative.

The facilitator introduces the purpose of the gathering, shares the topic or focus of the session, and orients participants to the space. Rather than imposing rules, the facilitator guides the group in establishing shared agreements. These agreements reflect the underlying principles of the methodology, translated into accessible language for the space in that moment. They typically include respect for each other's experiences, listening without interruption, consent-based interaction, and non-judgment.

Participants are reminded that they are not required to speak, that there are no right or wrong contributions, and that they are free to engage in ways that feel comfortable to them.
These agreements create a foundation of trust while maintaining the non-formal nature of the space.

4.3 Beginning the Conversation: Informal Activation

The transition into dialogue is gradual rather than directive. Often, this stage overlaps with shared activities such as having tea, eating, or informal interaction. As participants settle into the space, the facilitator introduces the topic as an invitation rather than instruction.

Because expectations have already been removed and safety has been established, participation develops without the need for facilitation techniques that direct or extract responses.

Practice Note: Invitation into Dialogue
Facilitators may support the transition from an informal gathering to a shared conversation through gentle invitations rather than direct prompting.

Examples include:

- “As we sit together, what feels present for you today?”
- “Is there something from this week that has stayed with you?”
- “If anyone would like to begin, you are welcome to share.”

These invitations are not meant to initiate structured discussion, but to open space. Silence remains a valid response, and the absence of immediate sharing is understood as part of the space's rhythm.

4.4 Holding the Dialogue: Flow, Reflection, and Exchange

As the conversation deepens, the role of the facilitator becomes one of attentiveness rather than control.
Participants share experiences, ask questions, and respond to one another. Lived realities shape discussions, and learning happens through storytelling, collective reflection, and shared problem-solving.

The facilitator observes the emotional tone of the space, ensures that shared agreements are maintained, and gently guides the conversation when needed.

The dialogue is not linear. It moves between personal experiences, group reflections, moments of silence, and moments of collective engagement. This fluidity allows the space to respond to what participants bring into it.

4.5 Responding to Emotional Moments: Care in Practice

When a participant shares something heavy or emotionally significant, the dynamics of the space shift.
The conversation slows, and attention centers on the speaker. Participants respond with presence rather than urgency, allowing the person to express themselves fully without interruption or pressure.

Support emerges through attentiveness, quiet acknowledgment, and, where appropriate, consent-based gestures such as offering a hug. These responses are not assumed, but asked for, ensuring that care remains respectful and responsive.

In addition to peer support, structured care is available. Trained counselors are present within the space, and participants can access private, individual sessions when needed. Facilitators ensure that the group remains grounded while support is provided.

This integration of collective and professional care allows emotional experiences to be held safely without disrupting the space as a whole.



“There was a day I shared something heavy, something I had never said out loud. I thought I would feel worse after. But people stayed with me. No one tried to fix it. They just stayed. And that helped.”

Practice Note: Holding Silence

Not all participants will speak, and silence is recognized as a form of participation.

Facilitators support silent participants by:

- maintaining inclusive body language and eye contact without applying direct pressure
- acknowledging the group collectively rather than calling individuals to speak
- ensuring that closing reflections include space for internal processing, not only spoken responses
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In practice, this means allowing participants to remain present without requiring them to express themselves, while still recognizing that they are part of the shared experience.

“Sometimes I come and don’t say anything. I just sit and listen. But I still feel like I was part of something. Like I was held, even without speaking.”

Ffena Kukyoto sessions do not end abruptly.

The closing process is intentional and responsive to the emotional tone of the gathering. Depending on the depth of the discussion, a facilitator or counselor may guide participants through grounding practices.

In the context of Ffena Kukyoto, grounding is not a formal or clinical exercise. It may include simple breathing together, gently naming what has been shared, or inviting participants to reflect on what they are taking with them. These practices help individuals return to themselves, reconnect with the present moment, and leave the space feeling steady rather than overwhelmed.

Participants are given space to process the experience before leaving.
There is no single way to exit the space. Some participants leave, some remain to continue informal conversations, and others rest or transition into quieter engagement. This flexibility allows individuals to leave in a way that aligns with their emotional state.

Practice Note: Facilitator Aftercare
After the session, facilitators may also require space to transition out of the role of holding the group.

This can include:

- brief debriefing with co-facilitators or counselors
- quiet reflection or grounding before leaving the space
- consciously marking the end of the session, for example, through stepping away from the circle or engaging in a simple closing routine

These practices support facilitators in releasing what has been held and maintaining their own well-being over time.

4.7 Continuity Beyond the Session

Ffena Kukyoto does not end when the gathering closes.
Participants often continue conversations beyond the structured session, either informally within the space or through relationships that develop over time. Many return to future gatherings, not only for their own support, but to be present for others, offering listening, sharing experiences, and helping to hold the space in the same way it once held them.

Those who require additional support are connected to counseling services or other forms of care within DEF's broader ecosystem. In this way, Ffena Kukyoto becomes part of an ongoing process rather than a single event, contributing to sustained networks of care, shared knowledge, and community connection.

Together, these components illustrate how Ffena Kukyoto translates its principles into practice.

What appears informal is, in fact, intentionally structured.

Each stage, from entry to closing, contributes to creating a space where individuals can participate without pressure, engage meaningfully with others, and experience care as something shared. The methodology does not rely on rigid sequencing, but on the consistent application of its underlying principles

5. Safeguarding the Space

As Ffena Kukyoto has grown, certain questions have become central to maintaining the model's integrity. These include how the space is sustained for those who hold it, how harm is addressed within a non-judgment framework, and how the model can expand without losing its relational depth.
This section outlines how the methodology responds to these questions in practice.

5.1 Facilitator Sustainability and Care

Ffena Kukyoto recognizes that holding space, particularly spaces where participants share emotional and lived experiences, requires care not only for participants but for those facilitating and supporting the space.

Facilitators are not expected to carry the full emotional weight of the group. Instead, care is distributed across multiple layers within the space. Participants contribute to holding one another, reducing the burden on any single individual. Trained counselors are present, ensuring that emotional support does not rest solely with facilitators and remains available to both participants and, when needed, facilitators themselves.

Sessions are often co-facilitated or rotated, allowing for shared leadership and continuity over time. In addition, facilitators and team members engage in reflection and debriefing after sessions, creating space to process what has been held.

In practice, this means that facilitators are not positioned as the sole holders of emotional weight, but as part of a broader system of care. Their role is to guide and hold the container, not to absorb or resolve everything that emerges within it.

5.2 Addressing Harm within a Non-Judgment Space

The principle of non-judgment does not mean the absence of accountability.

In a space where lived experiences are shared openly, there may be moments where what one person expresses unintentionally affects another. Ffena Kukyoto responds to this through a practice of “calling in rather than calling out.”

This is approached by slowing the conversation when needed, allowing space for reflection rather than reaction. The person speaking may be invited to clarify what they meant, while attention is also given to how the statement has been received.

The focus remains on understanding and impact, rather than blame or correction. Facilitators may step in to gently re-ground the space, reminding participants of shared agreements and guiding the conversation back to a place of respect and attentiveness.

Recognizing when a pause is needed relies on facilitator attentiveness, including noticing shifts in tone, body language, or emotional responses within the group. This is a practice that develops through experience rather than rigid rules.
The aim is not to silence or exclude, but to restore the conditions of safety and respect that allow the space to function.

In this way, accountability is practiced in alignment with the methodology's core principles, through dialogue, reflection, and care, rather than punishment or exclusion.

Practice Note: Reflective Questions in Moments of Tension

During moments where harm may have occurred, facilitators may draw on reflective questions to guide the space without assigning blame or shutting down dialogue.

These may include:

- "Can we take a moment to understand what was said and how it was received?"
- "How can we hold space for what has been shared, while also recognizing the impact it may have had?"
- "What do we need right now to return to a place of respect and safety together?"
- "Is there anything that needs to be clarified so that we can continue with care?"

These questions are not used to direct outcomes, but to slow the space down, center reflection, and support the group in restoring shared understanding.

5.3 Maintaining Intimacy as the Model Expands

As Ffena Kukyoto has grown from small gatherings into a broader ecosystem of care, maintaining the intimacy of the space has remained a central concern.

The methodology does not scale by increasing the size of individual gatherings. Instead, it scales through replication of the

model in multiple, contained spaces, each of which maintains the same conditions of care. This includes limiting group size to ensure that participants can be seen, heard, and held; maintaining the bonfire structure where physical and relational proximity is preserved; training facilitators in principles, not scripts, allowing them to adapt while holding the core of the model; and centering experience over expansion, ensuring that growth does not compromise the quality of the space.

In practice, this means that Ffena Kukyoto expands horizontally rather than vertically. It grows through more spaces, not larger ones.

This approach allows the methodology to remain relational and human, even as it reaches more communities.
In practice, facilitators remain connected through an informal but intentional network of reflection and exchange. This can be understood as a circle of facilitators in which experiences are shared, challenges are discussed, and alignment with the core principles is maintained over time.

Practice Note: Maintaining Connection Across Spaces
As Ffena Kukyoto expands into multiple small gatherings, connection is maintained through shared principles rather than centralized control.
In practice, this may include:

- facilitators remaining connected through periodic reflection or exchange
- shared documentation practices that capture learning across spaces

- ongoing relationships with DEF that support continuity without imposing uniformity

This approach allows each space to remain locally grounded while still connected to a broader ecosystem of practice.

These considerations are not separate from the methodology. They are part of how it sustains itself over time.
By supporting facilitators, practicing accountability with care, and maintaining small, intentional spaces, Ffena Kukyoto preserves the conditions of trust, presence, and collective responsibility that allow it to function as a space of collective care.



6. What the Model Makes Possible

Ffena Kukyoto is designed as a space of presence, dialogue, and collective care. Its outcomes are therefore not limited to single moments of participation, but unfold over time through repeated engagement, shared experience, and ongoing connection.
This section outlines the kinds of changes observed during the implementation of the methodology, drawing on activity reports, participant experiences, and program reflections.

6.1 Strengthened Emotional Well-Being and Regulation

Participants consistently report feeling lighter, calmer, and more grounded after engaging in Ffena Kukyoto sessions.

The structure of the space, particularly its emphasis on non-judgment, voluntary participation, and emotional holding, allows individuals to express what they may not be able to share elsewhere. This process of speaking, being heard, and remaining in a supported environment contributes to emotional release and stabilization.

Over time, participants begin to recognize and name their emotions more clearly, develop personal ways of managing stress and overwhelm, and approach difficult experiences with greater steadiness.
These shifts are not presented as clinical outcomes, but as lived changes in how individuals relate to themselves and their experiences.

6.2 Increased Confidence in Speaking and Self-Expression

For many participants, Ffena Kukyoto is one of the first spaces where they can speak openly without fear of judgment.
As individuals return to the space, participation shifts visibly. Those who initially remain silent often begin to contribute, first in small ways, and then more fully over time.

Participants ask questions they previously felt unable to ask, share personal experiences with increasing confidence, and engage in dialogue without fear of being corrected or dismissed. This shift reflects not only individual confidence but also trust in the space and in the community.



"The first time I spoke, my voice was shaking. I wasn't sure if I should say it. But no one laughed, no one interrupted. People just listened. After that, it became easier."

Learning within Ffena Kukyoto is shaped by lived experience rather than formal instruction.
Participants gain knowledge on topics such as mental health, sexuality, relationships, and daily survival through shared stories and collective reflection. This form of learning is practical, contextually relevant, and immediately applicable.

As a result, participants develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others, gain access to information that is often unavailable or stigmatized, and learn strategies from peers who navigate similar realities.

This reinforces the principle that knowledge within the space is co-created rather than delivered.

“There are things I didn’t know, things I was afraid to ask anywhere else. Here, I could ask, and no one made me feel stupid. Someone always explains in a way you understand.”

One of the most consistent outcomes of Ffena Kukyoto is the strengthening of relationships among participants.

The space creates conditions for connection that extend beyond the session itself. Participants begin to recognize one another not only as individuals with shared challenges, but as people they can turn to, listen to, and show up for over time. Conversations continue outside the structured space, support is offered in moments of difficulty, and participants return not only to receive care but to contribute to it.

These relationships reduce isolation and build a sense of belonging that extends beyond the bonfire.

I don’t just come for myself anymore. I come because I know someone else might need what I needed before.”

By integrating counseling into the Ffena Kukyoto space, participants can access mental health support in ways that feel safe and approachable.

The presence of counselors within a non-clinical environment reduces barriers to seeking help. Participants can engage in private sessions, ask questions openly, and build familiarity with care providers over time.

This gradual process of trust-building is significant. Rather than expecting immediate engagement with formal services, Ffena Kukyoto creates the conditions for trust to develop first, allowing participants to access support when they feel ready.

6.6 Collective Shifts in Community Care Practices

Beyond individual outcomes, Ffena Kukyoto contributes to broader shifts in how care is understood and practiced within the community.

Participants carry the practices of listening, consent, non-judgment, and emotional holding into other areas of their lives. This is reflected in how they relate to peers, how they respond to others in moments of difficulty, and how they begin to create similar conditions of care in their own spaces.

Over time, this contributes to a shared understanding of care as something collective, practiced through everyday interactions rather than reserved for formal settings.

These shifts are particularly significant in contexts where LBQTGNC persons with and without disabilities experience isolation, as they contribute to the rebuilding of connection, belonging, and mutual support.

6.7 Evidence from Practice and Documentation

The impact of Ffena Kukyoto has been documented through activity reports, participant reflections, and ongoing program observations.

This documentation takes multiple forms, including facilitator session notes, participant reflection forms, informal feedback shared during and after sessions, and compiled activity reports. Together, these provide a layered understanding of how participants experience the space and how change unfolds over time.

Rather than prioritizing purely quantitative measurement, the methodology has intentionally centered participatory and experience-based documentation. This approach reflects the nature of the model itself, which values lived experience, narrative, and relational change as primary indicators of impact.

Across multiple implementation cycles, documentation has shown consistent patterns, including strong participant engagement and return attendance, increased willingness to participate over time, positive feedback on the space's safety and relevance, and continued demand for sessions.

Participants have also reported improvements in emotional well-being, increased knowledge on key topics, and uptake of counseling and support services.
These findings do not attempt to reduce the model to a single metric. Instead, they demonstrate that Ffena Kukyoto produces meaningful, observable shifts that align with its core purpose.

The impact of Ffena Kukyoto is both immediate and cumulative. It can be seen in moments — a participant speaking for the first time, a group responding with care, a conversation that continues beyond the session. It can also be seen over time, in the relationships formed, the knowledge shared, and the ways participants begin to carry these practices into their lives.

Rather than producing a single measurable outcome, the methodology creates conditions in which multiple forms of change become possible.



7. Partnerships and Co-Building

Ffena Kukyoto did not develop in isolation. While the methodology emerged from community practice and lived experience, its growth and continuity have been made possible by the support, trust, and engagement of partners who have chosen to invest in the work at different stages.

These partners are not positioned as external supporters, but as co-builders of the space.

7.1 Belief as the Starting Point

At the early stages of Ffena Kukyoto, the need for such a space was articulated through concept notes, conversations, and program proposals. At that time, the model was still evolving, shaped by observation, intuition, and ongoing engagement with participants. Partners who chose to support the work did so not because the model was already fully defined, but because they recognized the need and trusted the vision.

This belief made it possible not only to resource the space, but to develop the methodology itself. It created the conditions for the model to be tried, adapted, and refined over time, rather than being expected to arrive fully formed.

In practice, this support enabled consistent gatherings, the provision of basic resources such as food and facilitation, and the continuity

required for learning and iteration.

7.2 Supporting the Conditions of Care

The nature of Ffena Kukyoto requires resources that are often overlooked in traditional program design.
Creating a space where people can gather comfortably, access refreshments, engage in shared activities, and remain present for extended periods is central to the methodology's effectiveness. These elements are not supplementary; they are part of the structure of care.

Partners have supported these conditions in practical ways, including ensuring that participants have access to food and refreshments during sessions, enabling accessibility through sign language interpretation and inclusive space design, supporting facilitation and counseling presence, and providing materials that allow for creative and informal engagement.

This form of support has allowed the space to remain consistent, responsive, and grounded in participants' needs.

7.3 Named Contributions and Collective Impact

Organizations such as the Disability Rights Fund (DRF), Akinamama wa Afrika, and a broader network of partners have helped sustain and expand Ffena Kukyoto.

Their contributions have made it possible to run multiple cycles of healing circles and dialogue sessions, support the participation of individuals who might otherwise be unable to attend, integrate mental health services into the space, and strengthen the documentation and reflection processes that have informed this

methodology.
These contributions are recognized not only for what they provided materially, but for how they enabled the work to deepen, continue, and take shape over time.

7.4 Co-Building Through Engagement and Learning

Beyond financial support, partnerships have also taken the form of engagement, observation, and shared learning.
Organizations and individuals have participated in sessions, contributed as facilitators or resource persons, engaged with the model as it evolved, and offered feedback and insight that informed its development.

This has created a process of co-building in which the methodology has been shaped not only by DEF, but by a broader network of actors who have engaged with it in practice.

7.5 From Support to Shared Ownership of Learning

As Ffena Kukyoto reaches a stage where it can be documented and shared more widely, it is important to recognize that this moment is not the result of a single organization's effort.
It is the outcome of community participation, facilitator commitment, and partner belief.

The documentation of this methodology is therefore also a reflection of that shared investment.

By supporting the work at different stages, partners have contributed to the development of a model that is now being made available for others to learn from, adapt, and build upon.

Ffena Kukyoto exists as it does today because people chose to believe in it before it was fully defined.

That belief created the space for experimentation, learning, and growth.

In recognizing partners as co-builders, this section acknowledges that the strength of the model lies not only in its design, but in the relationships that have sustained it.



8. Replication, Adaptation, and Closing Reflections

Ffena Kukyoto is being shared at a point where it has grown from lived practice into a documented methodology. This section offers guidance on how the model can be applied in other contexts while remaining grounded in the principles that make it effective.

8.1 Replication as Understanding, Not Copying

Ffena Kukyoto is not designed to be replicated through exact duplication.

The model is rooted in specific cultural, social, and relational contexts. Attempting to reproduce it as a fixed format risks losing the very elements that allow it to function.

Instead, replication begins with understanding.
This includes understanding the philosophical foundations of the space, particularly the role of presence and non-judgment in shaping how people gather and engage, as well as the practical elements that support this experience, such as the environment's role in creating comfort, accessibility, and a sense of welcome. It also requires an understanding of voluntary participation and the role of facilitators as guides rather than directors.

Practitioners are encouraged to engage with the methodology as a framework, identifying what must remain constant and what can be

adapted to local realities.

8.2 Adapting to Context

While the core principles of Ffena Kukyoto remain consistent, the form of the space may differ depending on context.

Adaptation may include using a different cultural or symbolic anchor in place of a bonfire, adjusting language and facilitation approaches to reflect local norms, responding to different accessibility needs, and incorporating locally relevant topics and forms of expression.

What remains essential is not the form, but the conditions created within the space. These include safety without judgment, participation without pressure, care without hierarchy, and connection without expectation.

Adaptation should strengthen these conditions, not replace them.

8.3 What Must Be Protected

As the model is adapted and shared, certain elements must be protected to maintain its integrity.

These include the principle of non-judgment, the voluntary nature of participation, the practice of emotional holding, and the distribution of care across the group. When these elements are weakened or removed, the space can shift into something else entirely, such as a structured training, a clinical session, or a facilitated discussion that prioritizes outcomes over experience. Ffena Kukyoto works because it resists these forms.

8.4 Building with Intention

Creating a Ffena Kukyoto space requires more than understanding the steps of a session. It requires intention. Facilitators and organizations seeking to implement the model should consider why the space is being created, who it is being created for, and what conditions are needed for participants to feel safe and present.

The success of the model depends not on technical execution, but on the alignment between intention, practice, and context. When this alignment is present, the space feels coherent and responsive; when it is not, the structure may remain, but the experience of care begins to weaken.

8.5 A Living Methodology

Ffena Kukyoto continues to evolve.
As it is adapted in new contexts, it will take on new forms, respond to different needs, and generate new insights. This is not a limitation, but a strength.

Those who engage with the model are not only implementers, but contributors to its ongoing development.
In this way, Ffena Kukyoto remains a living methodology, shaped by those who practice it.

Closing Reflections

Ffena Kukyoto began as a response to a simple but urgent need: a space where people could come together, speak freely, and be held without expectation.

What has emerged is a methodology grounded in presence, trust, and collective care.

Its strength does not lie in complexity but in its ability to create conditions in which people can arrive as they are, connect with others, and experience care as something shared.

As this work is carried forward, its integrity will depend on those who engage with it — how they hold the space, how they listen, and how they choose to show up for others.

Contact Us

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