



Creating awareness of Mental Health in Rural Communities of Ghana

## 1 Main activities in the months June – October 2025

### *Set-up of project management infrastructure*

This report provides an update on the Mental Health Awareness Project in Adaklu, highlighting key achievements, progress, and plans for the next quarter. The project aims to enhance mental health education and support in remote communities, and has made significant strides since its inception.

Before launching the mental health awareness project in ten Adaklu district communities (Amuzudeve, Seva, Kpodoave, Kordiabe, Dzakpo, Dorkpo, Ahunda Kpodzi, Gavorkope, Dawunu, and Golokope) and three senior high schools (Gbekor Senior High, Adaklu Senior High, and Mawuko Senior High in Ho), The Grow Your Dream Foundation (GYDF) held regular meetings in the project communities. Building on previous collaborations with Schmitz Stiftungen and HITA, GYDF focused on community engagement to rejuvenate and strengthen local groups in preparation for the project's formal start. The team drafted forms for reporting expenses, reimbursements, and monthly reporting, and initiated the project using self-funded resources while awaiting the project funds, which were delayed.

The project has procured t-shirts and office equipment, enhancing the team's visibility and efficiency in implementing project activities and boosting their morale and credibility in the communities and schools

### *Community entry*

The project was initiated on June 1<sup>st</sup>, commencing with community entry activities. In adherence to established protocols, the GYDF team initially contacted opinion leaders, chiefs, and elders of each community to introduce the project and secure their support. Upon obtaining their endorsement, the team engaged with community members, presenting the project's objectives and scope. This facilitated an assessment of interest among community members, including fathers, mothers, and adolescents, to participate in monthly Club meetings, chaired by the GYDF team. The inaugural meetings provided a platform for open discussions regarding the project, the necessity for such initiatives, and the potential community benefits

Formal engagements were also conducted with the Ghana Health Service (GHS) Adaklu district and heads of the selected schools. The GHS Adaklu district formally accepted the project and designated the mental health desk to oversee project trainings and community meetings.

### *Set-up of Clubs and community activities*

Each of the ten communities approached by the GYDF has warmly welcomed the mental health project and committed to providing maximum support for its success. Fathers' and Mothers' Clubs have been established, with a designated Club Leader for each. The formation of Adolescent Clubs will be revisited later in the project. The participating communities are: Ahunda Kpodzi, Amuzudeve, Dawanu, Dorkpo, Dzakpo, Gavorkorfe, Golokope, Kordiabe, Kpodoave, and Seva. In Kpodoave, the project team leveraged a community forum to discuss mental health and its impact on women and girls, leading to the formation of a committee to support girls' well-being. The project will engage the Fathers' and Mothers' Clubs, as well as school clubs

in Gbekor Senior High, Adaklu Senior High, and Mawuko Senior High, to promote mental health awareness and provide support.

The Chief of Dawunu participated in all 7 community meetings, demonstrating leadership support. In Amuzudeve, Rev. Fia Daniel, a mental health ambassador and Daddies' Club Leader, played a vital role in educating the community and his church (ARS Church). In Dorkpo, Mr. Ayim Peter has been instrumental in setting up meeting grounds and regularly attends meetings. Additionally, Irine Ayim from Hehekpoe, a volunteer, participated in the training although her community is not part of the selected communities on the project. Five community meetings held with her was very successful.

In communities such as Ahunda Kpodzi, Gavorkorfe, and Golokope, the GYDF team conducted comprehensive community meetings covering various topics, including mental health, its importance, and common mental health conditions. The discussions also explored remedies, both community-based and medical, as well as the intersection of mental health and gender equality. Traditional roles and their impact on mental health were examined, with activities such as role-playing "Man Box" and "Women Box" exercises to illustrate the effects of societal expectations. The "Hour in a Day" exercise highlighted the disproportionate burden of household chores on women, sparking conversations on how communities can support members in improving mental health. Community leaders' roles in promoting mental well-being were also discussed, with many leaders committing to support the initiative.

The GYDF team conducted mental health awareness sessions in Gbekor Senior High, Adaklu Senior High, and EPC Mawuko Senior High, engaging students and staff on topics such as mental health, its importance, and common mental health conditions. The discussions covered stress management, coping mechanisms, and the role of schools in promoting mental well-being. Interactive activities, including group discussions and role-plays, helped students explore mental health and gender equality, traditional roles, and their impact on mental health. The sessions also addressed ways schools can support students' mental health, with many students and teachers committing to promote mental health awareness in their schools.

At Gbekor Senior High, the school counselor commenced the meeting by expressing gratitude for the mental health project, acknowledging its relevance and importance. The discussion that followed explored mental health, stress management, and coping mechanisms, engaging students and staff in an open conversation about mental well-being.

The mental health project has made significant strides, reaching over **700** community members across the participating communities during the first quarter, with women comprising a larger proportion of the beneficiaries.

In addition to community meetings, the Grow Your Dream team leveraged community information centres to disseminate mental health education, extending the project's reach to a broader audience and engaging individuals who may not have been part of the initial community gatherings, thereby amplifying the project's impact.

The mental health project has made a significant impact in the schools, reaching over 600 students across Gbekor Senior High, Adaklu Senior High, and Mawuko Senior High, providing them with essential knowledge and skills to promote mental well-being and support their peers.

At this reporting period, GYDF has made significant strides, conducting 16 community meetings in all project communities, completed 10 community entry exercises, and organized 2 successful durbars, underscoring a successful project take-off.



### ***First training sessions***

The first training for group leaders was successfully conducted on June 8, 2025, at Goefe EP Church Adaklu, bringing together two leaders from each of the ten participating communities, two student leaders, and counselors from the three schools. The training, led by a mental health officer from the Ghana Health Service Directorate, Adaklu District, covered crucial topics including mental health, its importance, common mental health conditions, the role of mental health ambassadors, and gender equality and health. Pre-test and post-test assessments on mental health, prepared by HITA, were administered before and after the training, yielding very positive outcomes, demonstrating the effectiveness of the training in enhancing the knowledge and skills of the participants.



### *Impact achieved in the first quarter*

In the first quarter, the project achieved significant milestones, including:

- Reaching over 700 community members and 600 students with mental health education and awareness;
- Training 20 community leaders, 6 student leaders, and 3 school counsellors on mental health, gender equality, and general health;
- (Re-)Establishing Fathers' and Mothers' Clubs in 10 communities;
- Engaging community leaders, including chiefs and assembly members, in promoting mental health;
- Leveraging community information centres to extend the project's reach;
- Conducting interactive sessions with students and community members, sparking meaningful conversations and commitments to support mental health initiatives.

## **2 Challenges**

The project team faced significant challenges in accessing the communities, with transportation proving to be a major hurdle. The communities are located in remote and rural areas, with poor road networks and long distances between them, making it difficult to navigate, especially on foot. The lack of motorable roads hindered the team's movement, requiring extra effort and time to reach the communities, but the team's dedication and commitment to the project's objectives helped overcome these challenges.

Considering the challenges with transportation, acquiring a motorbike would greatly enhance the project's accessibility to remote communities, enabling the team to navigate rough roads and long distances more efficiently, and ultimately increase the project's reach and impact.

In the remaining months of the project the focus will be on:

- Continuing community outreach and education on mental health;
- Strengthening partnerships with community leaders and stakeholders;
- Monitoring and evaluating progress to inform future programming;
- The project will conduct a mid-year evaluation and assessment using focus group discussions and interviews to validate successes achieved so far. This will inform strategies to reinforce community commitment and engagement, ensuring the project remains on track and responsive to community needs.

Beyond the timespan of the project, GYDF will seek to:

- Procuring a motorbike to improve transportation and access to remote communities;
- Scale up the project to reach more communities and schools;
- Collaborate with Ghana Health Service to include pregnant women and nursing mothers in child welfare clinics across Adaklu district;
- Expand mental health education to four Junior High Schools in Adaklu District;
- Respond to requests from additional communities seeking mental health support and community meetings.

## **3 Conclusion**

The project's progress indicates a strong foundation for continued impact in Adaklu. With community engagement and strategic partnerships, the Mental Health Awareness Project is poised to improve mental

health outcomes and support vulnerable populations. The mid-year evaluation will inform future directions, ensuring the project remains effective and responsive to community needs.

GROW YOUR DREAM FOUNDATION - GHANA  
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COMPILED BY,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
GROW YOUR DREAM FOUNDATION GHANA.  
MR AHIAVE JACOB SEDEMOR.