

Creating awareness of Mental Health in Rural Communities of Ghana



SECOND ACTIVITY REPORT
NOVEMBER 2025 –
JANUARY 2026



1 Main activities in the months November 2025 to January 2026

Overview

The Mental Health Awareness Creation Project in Adaklu District adopts a two-pronged approach to reach our target population: community sensitization across ten communities and targeted interventions in three senior high schools. The second quarter (November 2025 to January 2026) marked significant progress, with **12 community meetings successfully held in each of the ten communities**, alongside **four school-based activities** led by school counsellors. These initiatives engaged thousands of students through club activities, mainstreaming mental health issues and gender equality to challenge entrenched gender norms that exacerbate mental health disorders.

During the period under review, **community meetings** demonstrated tremendous success in reaching our set targets, guided by the World Health Organization (WHO) Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) manual. These forums fostered open discussions, creating vital platforms for participants to confront and dismantle pervasive myths about mental health that have long hindered rural populations lacking access to reliable information. Opportunities emerged to unravel entrenched stigmas such as viewing mental illness as spiritual affliction or weakness empowering attendees with evidence-based knowledge on symptoms, treatment, and support systems. Over 1,200 community members across the ten targeted areas actively participated, proposing practical solutions like peer support networks and early intervention strategies. This not only boosted awareness but also reinforced gender equality efforts by highlighting how cultural norms exacerbate disorders like depression and anxiety among women and youth.

School engagements proved highly dynamic and participatory, with students and teachers eagerly joining open forums led by expert Mr. Jones Nkafo, Mental Health Nurse from the Adaklu Health Directorate. These sessions delivered actionable insights on recognizing mental health signs, seeking help, and promoting gender equality to counter norms that fuel issues like anxiety and self-harm among youth. Activities unfolded weekly: Sundays from 3:00 to 4:00 PM at **Adaklu Senior High School**, Wednesdays at **Gbekor Senior High School**, and Mondays at **Mawuko Senior High School**. Over 800 students and 50 educators across the three schools engaged actively through interactive discussions, role-playing scenarios, and Q&A segments, fostering a supportive environment where participants shared personal stories and committed to peer advocacy. This initiative not only amplified reach but also equipped school communities with tools for sustained mental health promotion. Most of the activities discussed during these period with the community groups and the school are the causes of mental health illnesses and their prevention.

Activities per community

Seva

In Seva community, 12 targeted meetings were successfully held and facilitated by project staff, delivering a comprehensive package on mental health, gender equality, and community development. Emphasis was placed on mental health as the cornerstone of human development, underscoring how psychological well-being drives personal empowerment, economic productivity, and social harmony. Sessions covered practical

topics like stress management, suicide prevention, and dismantling gender stereotypes that perpetuate disorders such as postpartum de-pression in women. With over 120 attendees including chiefs, women leaders, and youth interactive elements like group reflections and commitment pledges sparked commitments to community watch groups and referral pathways to Adaklu Health Services. These gatherings not only disseminated knowledge but also ignited local ownership, positioning mental health as a catalyst for holistic community resilience.

Golokope

Golokope community hosted this year's Christmas celebration with children, a special program designed to uplift one of the remotest project sites deprived of basic social amenities like reliable water, electricity, and recreational spaces. The project team brought joy and support by providing gifts from staff, abundant food and drinks, and bags of rice for parents, transforming the event into a vibrant gathering filled with games, music, carols, and laughter for over 40 children and families. An open forum wove in gender equality themes, exploring cultural factors such as patriarchal norms and widowhood rites that exacerbate mental health challenges like depression and trauma in women and girls. Participants shared stories, proposed community advocacy against harmful practices, and pledged to promote equitable access to mental health resources, reinforcing the project's mission to build inclusive, resilient futures even in the most underserved areas.

Dawanu

The Dawanu community organized a dynamic Women Week to reaffirm their commitment to the program, with GYDF mobilizing representatives from nearly all project communities to inspire both women and men in launching a community savings and loan scheme. This initiative empowers groups to access affordable loans for basic needs like school fees, farming inputs, and healthcare addressing economic barriers that often fuel mental health strains such as anxiety from poverty. For over a year, participants have sustained contributions, with monthly meetings doubling as hubs for project updates, mental health discussions, and group activities like skill-sharing workshops. Over 150 members now actively support project progress, using these platforms to reinforce gender equality, track mental health referrals, and celebrate milestones, demonstrating grassroots ownership in fostering resilient, self-reliant communities.

Kordiabe

Kordiabe boasts robust adolescent and mother support groups, which conducted seven community meetings alongside field staff and two self-initiated sessions. These gatherings featured hour-long role-plays illustrating real-life scenarios: how burdensome daily household chores induce chronic stress and mental health issues like depression in women; men's supportive roles during pregnancy; and shared decision-making to promote family harmony. With over 35 participants, including youth and mothers, the focus remained squarely on mental health equipping attendees with coping strategies, early warning signs, and referrals to Adaklu Health Services. These interactive methods not only helped dismantle gender stereotypes but also built empathy and collective action, empowering groups to sustain peer-led discussions and monitor community well-being independently.

Hehekpoe

Hehekpoe community hosted five impactful meetings, actively including teenage mothers encouraged to join the mother support group for education on motherhood responsibilities and rights from prenatal care and infant nutrition to legal protections against stigma. Mental health formed a core component, addressing postpartum challenges like isolation and anxiety through rejuvenating activities led by Irene Ayim, the Mother Support Group Leader. Sessions featured sharing circles, relaxation exercises, and empowerment talks reaching over 80 participants, including 5 teenage mothers. This initiative not only boosted confidence and retention in the group but also linked gender equality to mental resilience, equipping women with tools to advocate for themselves and access support services.

Kpodoave

In Kpodoave, the project organized a targeted workshop for group leaders to equip them with skills and boost confidence, countering their previous dormancy in project meetings. This hands-on training covered facilitation techniques, mental health messaging, gender sensitivity, and advocacy strategies, empowering 10 leaders to drive community dialogues effectively. Complementing this, seven meetings were held, drawing over 300 participants for discussions on stress reduction, family support systems, and challenging norms that hinder women's mental well-being. The initiative sparked renewed enthusiasm, with leaders now independently coordinating follow-ups and reporting increased attendance, ensuring Kpodoave's active contribution to the project's two-pronged approach.

Dorkpo

Dorkpo's group flourished under the dynamic leadership of Peter Ayim, a community-based facilitator who works closely with the project team to mobilize residents and lead community engagement activities. He who initiated seven highly engaging meetings that drew over 250 residents. Ayim's approach blending storytelling with practical drills ignited participation; for instance, one session used role-plays where men simulated supportive partners during crises, illustrating how shared emotional labour reduces women's mental health burdens like chronic fatigue.

Dzakpo

Dzakpo hosted vibrant youth-led forums across six meetings, reaching 180 adolescents. Leaders organized "Mental Health Challenge" games, where participants matched stigma myths (e.g., "Mental illness is witchcraft") to facts from the WHO mhGAP manual, fostering open talks on peer pressure and gender norms fuelling anxiety.

Ahunda Kpodzi

In Ahunda Kpodzi, five mother-child circles emphasized resilience, with 120 attendees exploring pregnancy stress via group sketches depicting overloaded mothers versus balanced families. Discussions led to pledges for spousal support, directly tackling cultural factors linked to postpartum depression.

Gavorkope and Amuzuvede

Gavorkope and Amuzuvede had a joint community meeting which proved very interesting according to attendees. There were discussions on issues including suicidal thoughts.

Coordination, monitoring and evaluation

Mr. Jacob Ahiave, the project's dedicated M&E Officer, conducted rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all activities across the ten communities and three senior high schools during this quarter. Employing tools like attendance registers, pre/post knowledge quizzes, focus group discussions, and digital feedback forms (reaching 85% response rate), he tracked key indicators: participant reach (over 100 individuals), myth-busting efficacy (70% attitude shift on mental health stigmas), and referral uptake. Field visits to events like Golokope's Christmas program and Kordiabe's role-plays ensured quality, identifying strengths such as vibrant youth engagement while noting areas for improvement, like deeper rural outreach. Mr. Ahiave's monthly reports recommended scaling peer-led sessions and integrating mobile alerts for sustainability.

To comprehensively evaluate project impacts and respond to interest from over 120 additional communities, the project team will, in the remaining four months of the project, conduct focus group discussions and key informant interviews in all ten project communities and the three senior high schools. This assessment will quantify outcomes (e.g., reduced stigmas, increased referrals) and gather testimonials for scaling. Key objectives include:

- Measure changes in mental health knowledge, gender norm attitudes, and service uptake;

- Identify success factors and lessons for expansion;
- Generate evidence to onboard new communities.

The methodological approach will consist of 20 focus group sessions (2 per community/school; 8-10 participants each) on topics including myth reduction, role-play impacts, sustainability; 50 semi-structured interviews with, e.g., chiefs, counsellors, beneficiaries; and impact reporting including metrics (e.g., % of change in attitudes suggesting stigmatisation) and stories; drafting of a scalability blueprint, prioritizing high-interest communities.

2 Challenges

As reported earlier, a primary challenge this quarter was the lack of reliable transportation, particularly motorbikes, which hindered field staff mobility across remote communities like Golokope and Amuzudeve. Rough terrains and long distances (up to 20km per visit) led to delayed meetings (3 out of 72 affected) and reduced coverage in rainy conditions, potentially limiting reach by 15-20%. This strained monitoring efforts by Mr. Ahiave Jacob and increased staff fatigue.

3 Conclusion

The second quarter (November 2025 to January 2026) showcased remarkable strides in the Mental Health Awareness Creation Project across Adaklu District's ten communities and three senior high schools. Through community meetings, vibrant school forums, special events like Golokope's Christmas celebration, and innovative group activities from Dawanu's savings schemes to Kordiabe's role-plays, we reached over 5,000 individuals, thereby helping dismantle mental health myths and reshape gender norms with technical support from Ghana Health Service and leadership from the Grow Your Dream Foundation project team.

GROW YOUR DREAM FOUNDATION - GHANA

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18/ FEBRUARY 2025.

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4 Annex: Photos of activities in the reporting period



