

Integrating Traditional Leadership and School-Based Prevention into Addiction Recovery and Social Rehabilitation: Lessons from the Savannah Region of Ghana

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Abstract:

Introduction: Addiction is no longer just a public health issue it is a complex social, psychological, and developmental challenge. Across the world, substance abuse continues to undermine human potential, disrupt families, and place enormous pressure on healthcare and justice systems. While prevention remains crucial, there is increasing recognition that rehabilitation and social reintegration are equally important in addressing the full cycle of addiction.

In many developing regions, including Northern Ghana, the situation is further compounded by:

- Limited access to treatment and rehabilitation services
- Social stigma associated with addiction
- Youth unemployment and vulnerability
- Weak institutional presence in rural communities

Yet, within these challenges lies an opportunity to harness community structures and culturally grounded leadership systems to support both prevention and rehabilitation.

Context: Savannah Region of Ghana

The Savannah Region is one of the largest regions in Ghana, with a predominantly youthful population.

Despite its rich cultural heritage, the region faces socio-economic challenges that increase young people's exposure to substance abuse—often as a coping mechanism or due to peer pressure.

In response, we initiated a school engagement program, not only as a preventive tool but increasingly as a pathway for:

- Early intervention
- behavioral change
- social reintegration.