

SOUTH SUDAN

Mental Health & Psychosocial Support

2021 | Quarter 2 Report



Psychosocial Mobile Team members in Baliet County during orientation and inception MHPSS training
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9,223
individuals
reached with
MHPSS
services



1,219
at-risk individuals
provided with
psychosocial
support



1,448
caregivers provided
with psychosocial
support

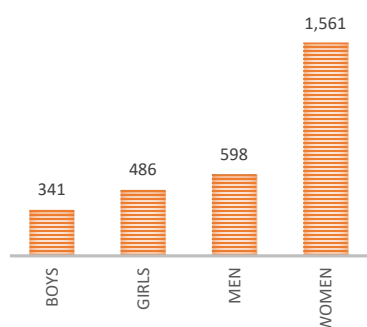


2,395
individuals
provided with
psychosocial
first aid (PFA)

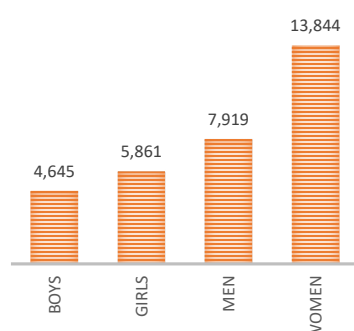


44,536
individuals
participating in
social, creative &
recreational
activities

MHPSS focused non-specialized services provided to new beneficiaries (e.g. counselling, support groups)



Community-based recreational, communal and non-formal learning activities



Dialogue on Mental Health Needs and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services in South Sudan

On 9-10 June 2021, the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Technical Working Group (TWG) in South Sudan, chaired by IOM and co-chaired by UNICEF, organized a “Dialogue on Mental Health Needs and MHPSS Services in South Sudan” in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH). During the event, representatives of the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender Child and Social Welfare, MHPSS partner agencies and donors were given the opportunity to discuss ongoing mental health related trends in the country, achievements and progress made in the area of MHPSS service provision to ensure improved mental health outcomes and psychosocial well-being. The need for capacity building in the area of specialized mental health service provision and compliance with the AAAQ (Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality) Framework¹ was highlighted explicitly during presentation made by Dr. Atong Ayuel, Director of Mental Health, MoH. While Dr. Atong reported on the rates and corresponding causes for mental health related referrals, among which, epileptic seizures and substance-induced mental disorders where among the top, emphasis was placed on the importance and need for community-based interventions and coordinated provision of focused, non-specialized services to alleviate challenges faced by people with mental health conditions/ challenges and their families. Dr. Fahmy Hanna, co-chair of the IASC Reference Group on MHPSS, praised progress made in the field of MHPSS service provision in South Sudan noting the establishment of the Mental

¹ The right to health imposes four essential standards on healthcare services: Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality. This is also called AAAQ Framework. **Availability** of services requires that public health and healthcare facilities are available in sufficient quantity, taking into account a country's developmental and economic condition. **Accessibility** has four overlapping dimensions: Non-discrimination, Physical accessibility, Economic accessibility, and Information accessibility. **Acceptability** requires that health services are ethically and culturally appropriate. **Quality** requires that health services must be scientifically and medically appropriate and of the highest quality.

Health Department under the MoH in 2015. Furthermore, Dr. Hanna encouraged both MHPSS practitioners and donors to invest more efforts and funding to enhance local capacities and strengthen coordination mechanisms and focus on the development of the National Mental Health Strategy for South Sudan.

During the second day of this nationwide dialogue, MHPSS technical working group and forum coordinators at the state level had an opportunity to discuss achievements, progress, challenges and existing gaps in coordination of MHPSS service provision and the operationalization of a Regional Hotline for MHPSS in South Sudan. All seven chairs participating in the dialogue agreed that for betterments of inter-state coordination and ensuring nationwide harmonization of the remote MHPSS service provision standards as well as for improvement of coordination between state-level MHPSS TWGs, quarterly coordination meetings shall take place in a hybrid manner – either face-to-face, online or mixing both modalities.

Sign Language Training in Bentiu, Wau and Malakal for Enhancement of Participation and Inclusiveness of People With Speech and/or Hearing Impairments

Promoting holistic inclusion of people with disabilities into communal life, IOM through its MHPSS programme, organized sign language trainings for Psychosocial Mobile Teams (PMTs) and community stakeholders in Bentiu, Malakal and Wau. Marginalization of people with speech and hearing impairments poses significant risks to their overall mental health state and psychosocial well-being as they often face challenges in elementary communication with their family members and community and have significant issues accessing essential services in emergency settings such as, humanitarian assistance and health services. Sign language training were organized by MHPSS Unit at each field location aimed at enabling development of basic communication skills to facilitate interaction among persons with speech and hearing impairments, their caretakers and key stakeholders of the community. Testimonies of sign language training beneficiaries confirmed that psychosocial impact of this intervention was

obvious and instantaneous, since acquired knowledge and skills enabled them to initiate basic interaction among their family members who have speech or hearing impairments. Beneficiaries expressed hope that with repeated interventions of this nature and with commitment of the community to contribute to multiplication of the gained communication skills, significant progress will be made in reduction of marginalization of people with hearing and speech impairments, resulting in better mental health outcomes among the latter and will contribute to building more inclusive and holistic societies in South Sudan. Overall, 44 individuals (21 women and 23 men), PMT members, social workers, community leaders, caretakers and other community stakeholders attended the sign language training throughout all field locations: in Bentiu 15 participants (7 women and 8 men), in Wau 15 participants (6 women and 9 men) and in Malakal 14 participants (8 women and 6 men).

Expansion of MHPSS Operations in Areas of Baliet, Adong and Rianguom, Baliet County and Raja County, Western Bahr el Ghazal

After conducting rapid Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and inter-sectoral needs assessments in Baliet County, Upper Nile, IOM established a Psychosocial Mobile Team (PMT) in Baliet County that will provide focused, non-specialized MHPSS services to conflict-affected and returnees in the area. Newly established PMT was capacitated by orientation and inception trainings to better enable PMT members to provide counselling as well as facilitation of both peer support and interest groups. Moreover, PMTs were trained to facilitate recreational activities for beneficiaries and to provide basic psychoeducation, including on MHPSS considerations in the context of COVID-19, thus

adequately responding to psychosocial challenges imposed by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

MHPSS team participated in the response mission to Raja County, Western Bahr el Ghazal during which emotional support and basic counselling services were provided to 53 vulnerable individuals (20 male and 33 female). During the response mission, 100 care kits produced by beneficiaries of the MHPSS programme were distributed to the most vulnerable individuals that were identified by the MHPSS team.

Human interest story



Luise in his sewing workshop at the Malakal PoC
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A 24-year-old Luise, who lives in Malakal PoC, Sector 2, Block Y, shared his story of becoming a tailor and attaining self-reliance owing to the MHPSS programme of IOM. “When the war broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, my family and I sought refuge in Malakal PoC”, says Luise, “There are five of us – four brothers and one sister – I am the youngest among siblings – they are all married and live with their families in the PoC. My brothers and sisters are struggling for food and necessities to provide for their children”. Luise was one of the beneficiaries of the vocational training organized as part of MHPSS programme and was working on the production of care kits intended for the most vulnerable beneficiaries. “This programme has changed my life for the better”, says Luise. “When my volunteer contract with IOM has come to an end, I was able to start up my own tailoring shop. I am renting a sewing machine and am paying on a monthly basis to its owner, while I can earn for living by tailoring skills that I mastered!” says Luise while he works in his small workshop. “I urge youth of South Sudan to take such chances as much as possible, to master vocational skills and bring changes to one’s own life for the benefit of themselves, their families and the community as a whole”.