

Community-integrated intervention to enhance Psychostimulation



Enhancing paediatric recovery through psychostimulation. A community-integrated intervention in Malakal, South Sudan.

Background: Although psychostimulation is recommended by WHO and MSF as part of malnourished children care, Malakal project faced several challenges for its implementation until August 2024. Some of them included lack of proper space and lack of toys: children were sharing toys from a single box, raising concerns about IPC and continuation of psychostimulation after structured sessions time.

Main results: integrating the Psychostimulation activities in ITFC care

The spaces for running out Psychostimulation were renewed and the quality of the sessions improved. The "Toy lab" carried regular sessions from September 2024 to April 2025, allowing every child admitted in ITFC to receive 1 toy at admission. Tensions in the community regarding volunteer selection led to the decision of rotating the group every four months. The activity was discontinued in April 2025 due to rising instability in Malakal.

The "Toy Lab" model offers a scalable approach to integrate Psychostimulation in low-resource, high-risk settings.

The activity was positively received, fostering women's empowerment, interethnic cohesion, and community involvement in patient care

The collaboration between Pediatrician, Mental Health Team and CEHP Team was perceived as highly effective

The "one child-one toy" approach reduces the risk of cross-infections and enables more play time between mothers and children



Image 1. 100 toys were produced monthly during the period of the activity.



Image 2. MH team using toys to stimulate malnourished children, September 2025

Methods: a 2-pronged intervention to address the gaps

Integrating community, creation of a "Toy Lab":

- ✓ 8 locally-recruited female volunteers, representing the different ethnicities, with monthly incentive payment
- ✓ Supervised meetings every 2 weeks to craft adapted toys from recycled materials
- ✓ Education sessions in each meeting related to malnutrition and female health

Improving Psychostimulation activities in Hospital:

- ✓ Renovation of the Psychostimulation room
- ✓ Specific trainings for counselors: MHPSS and baby massage
- ✓ In-room sessions for unstable patients who couldn't mobilize
- ✓ One toy per child provided at admission in malnutrition ward



Image 3. First meeting of the "Toy lab", September 2024



Image 4. A session with mothers and children in the renovated Psychostimulation room, September 2025

Limitations: the monitoring of the intervention was limited. A comprehensive evaluation of the social impact and the clinical outcomes of malnourished patients in Malakal's programme would be useful.

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