

Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in Refugee Situations: Priorities for Settlement and Shelter

A UNHCR - Save the Children Initiative

Rationale for IYCF and Settlement and Shelter Integration

Most children do not die due to conflicts or natural disasters themselves, but rather to resulting food shortages, lack of safe water, inadequate health care, inferior shelter and poor sanitation and hygiene.

To ensure that most children are protected and provided with vital services, optimal IYCF practices must be in place through comprehensive and appropriate integration of IYCF with the Settlement and Shelter Sector. Protecting, promoting and supporting optimal IYCF practices not only **saves lives**, but also ensures that the living standards of refugees are upheld and that their human rights are protected. Good coordination of services, identification of needs and gaps in assistance, avoidance in duplication, enhancement of women's participation, and ensuring that humanitarian standards are applied and human rights are protected helps meet many of the same goals that are integral to IYCF.

Children and PLW, whose bodies are sensitive to the drastic changes in the environment, may be prone to adverse health outcomes if they are left exposed to environmental elements. Thus, Settlement and Shelter and IYCF can specifically interact by navigating the harsh pressures on this sector and **advocating strongly** for pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and infants when necessary.



The mother and baby in the Framework infographic (above) are the principle focus. They are supported by the community they live in, which closely affects IYCF practices. The circle around them represents high level actions to consider such as advocacy, resource mobilization, and adherence to policies and guidelines. A coordinated effort between **all sectors** and IYCF ensures protection of rights of children up to 2 years and pregnant and lactating women (PLW). Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) ensure quality.

Who should use it?

- UNHCR and Partners (including other UN Agencies)
- National and International Staff
- Senior Management
- Program Managers
- Technical Advisors
- Field Staff
- IYCF Specialists & Non Specialists
- Local and National authorities

Where should it be used?

The Framework applies to **all refugee operations** including the initial phase of an emergency as well as protracted/chronic crises. With minimal adaptation, it would also be applicable in settings outside of camps, including refugees living in host communities, in urban areas and rural settings, and for host communities themselves.

Common Strategic Objectives

- Contribute to providing security, peace and dignity for PLW and infants and young children 0-23 months in refugee situations;
- Enable refugee PLW, infants and young children to access secure settlements and live in peace and dignity;
- Enable refugee PLW, infants and young children to access shelter solutions that provide privacy and protection from the elements.

Key Integrated Activities

- According to the situation, IYCF teams should attend settlement and shelter **coordination meetings** at the early stages of an emergency and liaise with settlement and shelter teams to discuss the best way to address the specific needs of PLW and children 0-23 months;
- **Organise orientation sessions** for settlement and shelter staff to raise awareness of key IYCF information and specific settlement and shelter needs and risks related to PLW, infants and young children;
- Consider identifying a **trained IYCF champion** from the settlement and shelter teams;
- Ensure that settlement and shelter **responses support and encourage families to stay together**;
- Ensure that **transit centres are safe and provide privacy** for PLW, infants and young children;
- **Develop clear procedures for identification and referral** between settlement and shelter and IYCF, and ensure settlement and shelter staff are aware of available IYCF programmes and key criteria for IYCF referrals.



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Overarching Opportunities for Collaboration

- Take into consideration the **specific needs of PLW and children 0-23 months** when defining the contents of shelter specific non-food items (NFI);
- **Prioritise mothers and newborn babies** for private shelter, or at least provide temporary private shelter the first six weeks after birth;
- Develop **standard guidelines for the design and construction** of Baby Friendly Spaces; consider also child-friendly spaces that include baby-friendly areas.

For more information on the Framework, please go to: www.unhcr.org/uk/nutrition-and-food-security.html