

Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in Refugee Situations: Priorities for Other Nutrition Programmes

A UNHCR - Save the Children Initiative

Rationale for Integration of IYCF with Other Nutrition Programmes

Most children do not die due to conflicts or natural disasters themselves, but rather from 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 Nutrition 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.

IYCF is part of nutrition. The Nutrition sector's objectives in refugee situations are to prevent and treat undernutrition. IYCF is a modality that is part of prevention and treatment. **Integration** between other nutrition programmes and IYCF will result in unifying efforts to **prevent and treat malnutrition** in children under five and pregnant and lactating women through protecting, promoting and supporting recommended infant and young child feeding practices.



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

- Prevention of acute malnutrition (moderate and severe) in PLW, infants and young children 0-23 months;
- Treatment of acute malnutrition (moderate and severe) in PLW, infants and young children 0-23 months;
- Prevention and treatment of micronutrient deficiencies in PLW and young children 6-23 months.

Key Integrated Activities

- Consider establishing a **cross-sectoral Infant and Young Child working group** to discuss relevant nutrition strategies, guidelines and sub-agreements, and ensure that key policies are endorsed by nutrition providers;
- Identify at least **one trained IYCF champion** from each nutrition post or community group;
- **Standardize relevant IYCF and nutrition messages** for PLW and caregivers of children 0-23 months particularly as they relate to availability of and access to relevant services;
- **Train nutrition and IYCF staff**, with a focus on the needs of PLW and children 0-23 months;
- **Develop clear procedures for identification and referral** between IYCF and all other nutrition programmes. Ensure all members of staff are aware of what services are available and are able to refer accordingly;
- **Promote basic IYCF practices** in all malnutrition treatment programmes and outreach activities: early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding; continuous breastfeeding up to 2 years along with appropriate complementary feeding and maternal nutrition;
- At a minimum, **complete an IYCF screening questionnaire for every child under 2 years** admitted for treatment of acute malnutrition;
- **Monitor the nutritional status of PLW**, infants and young children.



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Overarching Opportunities for Collaboration

- Consider ways of **incorporating IYCF indicators** in already established monitoring systems and checklists, such as the Health Information System (HIS) to collect, analyse and utilize information related to IYCF;
- Conduct **comprehensive assessment on the causes of malnutrition and feeding and care practices** to identify causes of current malnutrition, identify barriers to optimal feeding practices and mitigate the effects of the crisis on the nutritional status of PLW, infants and young children;
- **Disaggregate data per age group**: 0-5 months, 6-11 months, 12-23 months; add pregnant and lactating woman in the data collection for critical analysis;
- **Include or link IYCF counselling with nutrition services**, providing for the specific needs of PLW, infants and young children.

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