

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

A UNHCR - Save the Children Initiative

Rationale for IYCF and Child Protection 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 Child Protection (CP) 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.

CP and IYCF can specifically interact by **building a strong partnership** and working together to keep the protection of children at the centre of their work. One way this can be done is through information sharing between the two sectors and discussion relevant to the wellbeing of pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and infants and young children 0-23 months old.



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 the right to life, survival and development of children 0-23 months;
- Ensure children have the best starting point in life to grow, develop and reach their potential as the time from conception to 2 years are critical years for child development;
- Ensure children 0-23 months are safe where they live, learn and play;
- Ensure children 0-23 months obtain legal documentation at birth or as soon as possible, enabling access to basic services;
- Ensure children 0-23 months with specific needs receive targeted support.

Key Integrated Activities

- Advocate for **inclusion of IYCF approaches and materials** in CP policies and guidance material, and vice versa;
- IYCF staff to participate in child protection sector/ working groups to **raise awareness on IYCF** and ensure the needs of PLW, infant and young children are considered;
- **Standardize and disseminate relevant IYCF and CP messages** for PLW and caregivers of children 0-23 months particularly as they relate to availability of and access to relevant services;
- **Organise orientation sessions** on IYCF for CP staff, or integrate IYCF into existing CP training curricula – and provide a list of key IYCF information;
- **Develop clear procedures for identification and referral of PLW and children 0-23 months** between CP and IYCF programmes that are safe and confidential. At the early stages of an emergency and according to the context, agree on referral criteria and ensure cases that need urgent care are referred to the appropriate structure (e.g. separated children, malnourished children, non-breastfed infants etc.);



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Overarching Opportunities for Collaboration

- Child Protection activities and outreach programmes should **consider needs and space for IYCF activities** i.e. space for lactating women to breastfeed or mother-to-mother support groups to hold discussions in CP spaces;
- Collaborate across IYCF, CP and Education to **identify psychosocial stimulation** activities that are safe and engaging for 0-23 month olds;
- Jointly advocate for **establishing mechanisms** where newborns are registered and issued official birth certificates by the authorities, and procedures are in place for late birth registration.

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