

# Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in Refugee Situations: Priorities for Food Security and Livelihoods

A UNHCR - Save the Children Initiative

## Rationale for IYCF and Food Security and Livelihoods 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 Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) 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.

The right to food, including a life free from hunger, is critical to the **right to survival**. The Sphere Project explicitly links food security and nutrition as essential determinants in protecting this right. FSL and IYCF must consider the vital role FSL has in protecting and promoting breastfeeding for infants below 6 months and supporting optimal complementary feeding for children 6-23 months.



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

- Improve availability, utilization, access and stability of food for PLW, infants and young children;
- Contribute to minimize the risk of malnutrition among infants and young children by supporting optimal feeding practices of infants and young children;
- Promote the right to work for PLW and caregivers of infants and young children.

## Key Integrated Activities

- IYCF staff to participate in food security and livelihoods working groups to **raise awareness of IYCF** and ensure the needs of PLW, infants and young children are considered;
- **Ensure IYCF is included** in relevant strategies, guidelines and sub-agreements, and that key policies are endorsed by actors within food security and livelihoods;
- Consider identifying a **trained IYCF champion** from the food security and/or livelihoods teams;
- Consider **standardizing relevant IYCF and food security messages** considering the needs identified in the needs assessment e.g. related to availability, access and utilization of food for this target group. Jointly plan dissemination opportunities in one another's programmes;
- **Organise orientation sessions** on IYCF for food security and livelihoods staff, and provide a list of key IYCF information;
- **Develop clear procedures for identification and referral** between food security and livelihoods (FSL) and IYCF programmes. Ensure all staff are aware of available programmes and key criteria for referral;
- **Ensure inclusion and effective access** of PLW and children 0-23 months (and caregivers) in food assistance programmes. Work with food assistance team to clearly define target group (i.e. from 2nd trimester of pregnancy through 6 months after birth).



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## Overarching Opportunities for Collaboration

- Ensure Food Assistance **Accountability Mechanisms reflect needs of 0-23 month olds**;
- **Organise joint needs assessments** that gather relevant IYCF, nutrition and FSL data, and disaggregate assessment and monitoring data for PLW, children 0-5 months, 6-11 months and 12-23 months;
- Engage with PLW and caregivers to **improve distribution systems** (distribution points, organization of distribution) to ensure needs of this group are considered, especially given that women are often the ones to receive the household ration.

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