

Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in Refugee Situations: Priorities for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

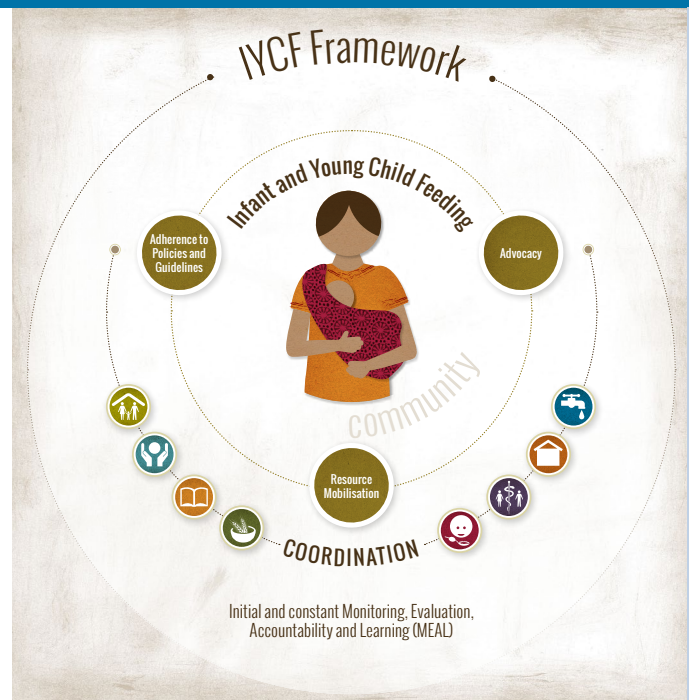
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Rationale for IYCF and WASH Integration

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 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) 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.

WASH and IYCF can specifically **integrate** by promoting good hygiene practices including safe use of water and handwashing before feeding a child. Implementing best practices such as these can help **reduce morbidity and mortality** due to faeco-oral transmission and disease-bearing vectors. Infants and young children have specific hygiene needs related to handling and preparation of their food as well as handling of their faeces.



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

Reduce the risk of contamination and stop the vicious circle of waterborne diseases, diarrhoea and morbidity in infants and young children through:

- Improved access to safe water and food of sufficient quality and quantity;
- Improved access to quality sanitation and management of faeces;
- Improved food and environmental hygiene practices;
- Improve WASH in hospitals, health and nutrition centres, schools and other institutions.

Key Integrated Activities

- IYCF staff to participate in WASH working groups to **raise awareness** of IYCF and ensure the needs of PLW, infants and young children are considered;
- Consider identifying a **trained IYCF champion** from the WASH team to maintain knowledge and follow up specific activities e.g. referrals;
- **Consider standardization and joint dissemination of relevant IYCF and WASH messages** for PLW and caregivers of children 0-23 months particularly as they relate to care practices of children 0-23 months and availability of and access to relevant services;
- Consider ways of **incorporating IYCF indicators** in already established monitoring systems and checklists, such as the WASH monthly report card and the WASH knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) survey to collect, analyse and utilize information related to IYCF;
- **Organise orientation sessions** on IYCF for WASH staff, integrate IYCF into existing WASH training curricula, and provide a list of key IYCF information;
- **Develop clear procedures for identification, referral and follow-up** between WASH and IYCF programmes when needs/risks are identified by either team or the community;
- **Collaborate to ensure clean water and WASH facilities** such as latrines and hand washing stations are available at breastfeeding corners and all IYCF facilities (even when IYCF structure is mobile e.g. mobile IYCF caravan).



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Overarching Opportunities for Collaboration

- **Design programming that includes excreta disposal methods** relevant to infants and young children;
- **Prioritize PLW and children 0-23 months** for the distribution of soap and hygiene kits;
- Ensure caregivers of artificially fed infants have **access to a safe water supply to safely prepare breastmilk substitutes (BMS)**.
- Ensure all **staff are aware of available IYCF programmes**;
- **Organise joint needs assessments** at household level and in other relevant places such as Baby Friendly Spaces (BFS) etc. and disaggregate assessment and monitoring data for pregnant women, lactating women, 0-5 months, 6-11 months, 12-23 months.

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