



Save the Children's IYCF-E Programming in Europe

A Retrospective Qualitative Evaluation

Study Aim

To assess the unique challenges of responding to IYCF-E needs in a transiting population and to evaluate the SC IYCF-E interventions in Greece, Serbia and Croatia against guidelines and standard operating procedures with the goal to inform future procedures in similar contexts.

Study Objectives

1. To describe the context and challenges of the IYCF-E intervention in the transiting Refugee Population in Europe.
2. To evaluate how effectively the IYCF-E interventions in Greece, Croatia and Serbia responded against standard IYCF-E guidelines.

Methods

Humanitarian worker interviews were completed; SC strategic documents and assessments as well as operating procedures were reviewed. A thematic approach was used to compare individual accounts of the IYCF-E intervention. Findings were analysed using Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria created by the Organisation for Economic Coordination and Development (OECD).

FINDINGS

Key Findings - Six themes emerged from the research:

Theme 1 Breastfeeding Behaviour

SC counselled breastfeeding as well as non-breastfeeding mothers and encouraged decreasing artificial feeding.

Theme 2 Breastmilk Substitutes

SC actively promoted exclusive breastfeeding but was prepared to give Powdered Infant Formula (PIF) to mothers unable or unwilling to breastfeed.

Theme 3 Complementary Foods (CF)

SC did not distribute CF but helped other organisations ensure that dietary diversity was considered during food distributions.

Theme 4 Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

Hygiene was an issue with few sanitation facilities available for caregivers to properly clean feeding equipment.

Theme 5 Programme Implementation

Fast transiting often left staff members without enough face-to-face time to counsel mothers properly. Insufficient numbers of interpreters made communication with beneficiaries from varying nationalities challenging.

Theme 6 Coordination

Initially poor coordination improved with the establishment of advocacy and IYCF-E working groups led.

Conclusion

In a unique emergency context, SC followed standard operating procedures and IYCF-E guidelines. To improve similar future interventions, recommendations are to establish IYCF-E working groups early on, implement a beneficiary tracking system and make skilled staff more readily available.