

IYCF Framework

Traditionally, a significant amount of nutrition resources go into the treatment of acute malnutrition in humanitarian operations. While protection, promotion and support of infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices are increasingly part of humanitarian responses, specific resource mobilisation and raising general attention to IYCF has still proven difficult. However, it is recognised that appropriate IYCF practices are key to saving lives and preventing malnutrition in infants and young children in emergencies. During crises, rates of child mortality can soar up to 70 times higher than average, with the youngest being the most vulnerable. Most children do not die from conflicts or natural disasters themselves, but rather from resulting food shortages, lack of safe water, inadequate health care, and poor sanitation and hygiene. Ensuring that children are adequately cared for and fed is the best hope for preventing disability and death among children during emergencies. Improving breastfeeding practices alone can save lives. Therefore, protecting and promoting optimal IYCF programming is crucial to preventing malnutrition, death and disease in infants and young children.

The IYCF Framework has been developed by UNHCR and Save the Children to protect infants and young children in refugee situations and enhance their chances of survival, healthy growth and development. In order for an IYCF strategy to reach its highest potential, IYCF must be mainstreamed and integrated with all other sectors operating in the context. For that to happen, all stakeholders need to have a basic understanding of IYCF, even if they are not nutritionists or public health experts. The Framework was created for the purpose of providing guidance to managers and technical staff across sectors on what needs to be considered to create an 'infant and young child friendly' environment and facilitate optimal infant and young child feeding in refugee situations. The Framework specifically encourages protection of pregnant and lactating women (PLW), infants and young children through multi-sectoral integration of IYCF-sensitive activities by taking advantage of all contact points with PLW, infants, young children and caregivers. With the IYCF Framework we wish to bring IYCF higher up on the agenda in all humanitarian responses.

The finalized IYCF Framework is a tool to assist with implementing international policies, standards and guidance. The framework describes seven multi-sectoral, broad ranging actions for management and/or technical staff, including advocacy, resource mobilisation, policy endorsement, selection of appropriate IYCF activities, integration of IYCF, coordination, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL). The framework outlines, by sector, practical examples of how IYCF can be built into multi-sector programming and how IYCF can contribute to the priorities of different sectors, including camp management, child protection, education, food security and livelihoods, public health, nutrition, WASH, and settlement and shelter. A clear and well defined monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) mechanism will be put in place to measure the impact of this framework.

The IYCF Framework will be applicable in refugee situations globally, although there is scope to also utilize it in non-refugee contexts in addition. The Framework was piloted in Jordan, Kenya and Bangladesh in 2015 and was refined accordingly, with input from a wide range of stakeholders through a consultative process. In conjunction with other partners, the finalised IYCF Framework is being rolled out in East Africa from 2016 onwards, with further roll out globally thereafter. In collaboration with field, regional and global teams, the roll out will be initiated in four to five field locations in the region. Roll out efforts will be supported through related workshops and through UNHCR, SC and partner staff working in the region. Remote support will continue to the teams in Jordan, Kenya and Bangladesh who piloted the Framework in 2015. For further information on how to access the tool, please contact Nicki Connell, Save the Children at nconnell@savechildren.org or Caroline Wilkinson, UNHCR at wilkinson@unhcr.org.