

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

A UNHCR - Save the Children Initiative

## Rationale for IYCF and Education 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 Education 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.

Education and IYCF can specifically integrate through **learning opportunities** for pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and caregivers of infants and young children, and through early childhood development for children up to two years of age. Provision of security, safety and physical, cognitive and psychological well-being not only improves their education but also has profound effects on their overall wellbeing.



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

- Protect nutritional status and well-being of infants and young children through adequate IYCF, caring and stimulation, to best prepare them for pre-school and primary school and further learning and development;
- Improve and strengthen knowledge of infant and young child care and feeding practices in the community;
- Protect the right of PLW and caregivers of infants and young children to access continued learning and development;
- Contribute to the well-being of the entire community by providing a supporting role to adults and older children caring for pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and infants and young children.

## Key Integrated Activities

- **Advocate for inclusion of IYCF** and ECD approaches and materials in education policies and guidance material, and in teacher training/curriculum, and advocate for inclusion of ECD topics (i.e. psychosocial stimulation) in relevant IYCF and nutrition policies and programmes;
- Consider identifying a **trained IYCF champion** from the education team;
- **Organise orientation sessions** on IYCF for education staff;
- **Develop clear procedures for identification and criteria for referral** between education and IYCF programmes;
- Identify ways to **increase access** of adolescent mothers and mothers involved in adult learning activities to both Education and IYCF services by offering complementary session times/locations and/or child care services in or close to learning facilities;
- **Include counselling on caring practices** in line with ECD in one-to-one IYCF counselling;
- **Include ECD messaging** in waiting rooms at IYCF facilities or other places where PLW are gathering;
- **Include ECD regularly in mother-baby groups** and in baby-friendly spaces.



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## Overarching Opportunities for Collaboration

- Consider opportunities to **co-locate IYCF and Education services** (e.g. schools, temporary learning spaces (TLS));
- **Advocate for maternity support** for teachers, including paid maternity leave, time off for breastfeeding children <12 months, and available and affordable child care services in or close to teaching facilities;
- Specifically **consider the identified needs and vulnerabilities of PLW and 0-23 month olds** when designing education programmes;
- **Conduct joint needs assessments** that gather relevant education and IYCF data, and disaggregate assessment and monitoring data for pregnant women, lactating women, children 0-5 months, 6-11 months and 12-23 months.

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)