

Participant Handbook



**Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies Counseling
Training Package for Frontline Workers**

2025

INTRODUCING THE IYCF-E SESSIONS:

ADDRESSING STRESS AND SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS AFFECTED BY GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This section includes two sessions, *Addressing Stress in Emergencies* and *Supporting Caregivers Affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV)*, which were adapted from the *Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies (IYCF-E) Counseling Training Package for Frontline Workers*.

The full IYCF-E package aims to strengthen the ability of frontline workers to provide effective, inclusive, and context-appropriate IYCF counseling in emergencies. It builds on the *UNICEF Community IYCF Counseling Package* by adding an emergency lens, focusing on flexibility, inclusion, and trauma-informed care in disrupted environments.

These two sessions have been selected to complement the Disability-Inclusive Nutrition Services Training Package. These modules offer practical tools for supporting caregivers who may be experiencing high stress, the impacts of disability, or the effects of GBV, issues that are often linked with displacement and protection risks. Used together, they help you strengthen the emotional, psychological, and physical support you provide to caregivers and their children.

Each session lasts about two hours and follows the same five-step structure:

STEP	1	Set the scene	Connect the topic to real emergency scenarios and introduce the learning objectives.
STEP	2	Strengthen key knowledge, concepts, and skills	Present the technical information and considerations required to meet each learning objective.
STEP	3	Demonstrate	Observe facilitators modelling skills in a scenario-based role play.
STEP	4	Participant role-play	Practice new skills in small groups through guided role play and peer feedback.
STEP	5	Self-reflection	Consolidate learning through self-reflection and group discussion

The sessions focus on advanced counseling skills, building on the basic skills introduced in the UNICEF IYCF Counseling Package, while strengthening their application in emergency contexts. Throughout the training, facilitators will integrate short refreshers on counseling skills as part of the discussions, demonstrations, and role plays.

Each session focuses on three selected counseling skills to make practice more focused and effective. However, in day-to-day counseling, participants are expected to apply all foundational skills together with the Assess–Analyze–Act (3A) process.

Core counseling skills

Listening and learning

1. Use helpful non-verbal communication
 - Keep your head level with the mother or caregiver
 - Pay attention (eye contact)
 - Remove physical barriers (tables and notes)
 - Take time, and allow the mother or caregiver time to talk
 - Use appropriate touch
2. Ask open questions (Allows mother or caregiver to give detailed information.)
3. Use responses and gestures that show interest
4. Reflect back what the mother or caregiver says
5. Show that you understand how mother or caregiver feels (showing empathy).
6. Avoid words or tones that sound judging

Building confidence and giving support

1. Accept what the mother or caregiver thinks and feels (To establish confidence, let the mother or caregiver talk through her or his concerns before correcting information.)
2. Recognize and praise what the mother or caregiver and baby are doing right
3. Give practical help
4. Share small, relevant pieces of information
5. Using simple language
6. Make one or two suggestions, not commands



The counseling process: Assess–Analyze–Act (3A)

The counseling process helps structure every interaction with a caregiver:



1. Assess:

Ask, observe and listen to the caregiver and experience with infant or young child feeding.



2. Analyze:

Think about the caregiver or group's concerns and prioritize what topics and counseling cards you can share.



3. Act:

Provide information, praise, and identify solutions together that the caregiver or group can try.

UNICEF (2024). *Community Infant and Young Child Feeding Counseling Package: Counseling Cards*. New York: UNICEF.

You are encouraged to use the UNICEF IYCF Counseling Cards in your counseling sessions, as they are practical tools to support discussion and reinforce key messages with caregivers.

Using supportive language takes practice

Using encouraging, non-judgmental language may feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable at first, especially when conversations are emotional or sensitive. Like any counseling skill, it becomes easier with awareness and practice.

Practical ways to build confidence:

- **Role-play** common counseling scenarios with a colleague or supervisor.
- **Record yourself** saying supportive phrases and listen for tone, pace, and warmth.
- **Start small:** choose one or two neutral phrases to practice each session until they feel natural.
- **Reflect after sessions** on what worked well and what felt challenging and adjust your wording accordingly.
- **Observe others** who use calm, supportive language and learn from their phrasing and tone.

With steady practice, supportive communication becomes more natural and effective, which help to create a space where mothers, fathers, and caregivers feel **safe, respected, and empowered**.

Trauma-Informed Care

Across all sessions, a Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) approach is emphasized.

What is Trauma-Informed Care?

TIC is an approach that recognizes how distressing or harmful experiences can affect a person's well-being, behavior, and ability to trust others. It aims to create safe, respectful, and supportive interactions that avoid re-traumatization and promote healing.

Five guiding principles:

- **Safety** – ensuring physical, emotional, and psychological safety.
- **Trustworthiness** – being reliable, transparent, and consistent.
- **Choice** – offering meaningful options and respecting decisions.
- **Collaboration** – working *with* people, not *for* or *on* them.
- **Empowerment** – recognizing strengths and supporting self-efficacy.

In practice, TIC means shifting from asking “*What’s wrong with you?*” to “*What happened to you?*”, an approach that fosters compassion, dignity, and inclusion across all counseling interactions.

Finally, remember that this handbook is designed for you to learn actively. You are welcome to make notes, write reflections, and keep it as a reference in your work.