

Infant and Young Child Feeding in Refugee Situations:

A Multi-Sectoral Framework for Action

Roll-out Guide



**Infant and Young Child Feeding
in Refugee Situations:**

A Multi-Sectoral Framework for Action Roll-out Guide

A UNHCR-Save the Children Initiative

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Introduction

During emergencies it is the youngest children who are the most vulnerable. Risks associated with malnutrition, disease, and deaths of children increase during emergencies. Child mortality can soar up to 70 times higher than average.¹

The protection of Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) is a lifesaving intervention in emergencies for children from birth up to two years. IYCF encompasses a range of multisectoral actions to support safe and appropriate feeding practices during emergencies. The activities focus on infants, young children up to 24 months, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and other caretakers of young children in a humanitarian setting.

Protection, promotion and support to infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices are increasingly part of humanitarian responses, but specific resource mobilization and raising general attention to IYCF have still proven to be difficult. It is recognized however that, especially in the early stages of an emergency, appropriate IYCF practices are key to saving lives, preventing malnutrition and are an essential part of infant and young child health.

Integration with other sectors and coordination are key enabling factors to ensuring the success of IYCF programming and, more broadly, the protection of pregnant and lactating women (PLW), infants and young children. The IYCF Framework² ([Infant and Young Child Feeding in Refugee Situations: A multi-sectoral framework for action](#)) provides guidance across sectors on what needs to be considered to create an **'infant and young child friendly'** environment and facilitate optimal IYCF in refugee situations.

The Framework primarily targets IYCF managers and staff who will be responsible for planning and implementing IYCF responses and for leading or coordinating the actions and activities proposed in the Framework.

The purpose of this document is to describe step-by-step guidance on ***how to roll out the IYCF Framework in refugee operations***, either in or outside of camp settings. The Roll Out Guide has been directly informed by experience from the operations that have rolled out the IYCF Framework since its publication in 2018. The Six Steps, as shown in Figure 1, build on concepts and tools provided in the IYCF Framework and incorporate updated recommendations and guidance released by the global nutrition community since 2018. The target user for this handbook is the IYCF Framework Roll-out Focal Point who is accountable for coordinating roll out activities across stakeholders to drive forward the Objectives and Actions of the IYCF Framework. Each step of the roll out guide is divided into briefly defined activities and linked to tools to support their operationalization. Brief examples of potential adaptations are included below each step to describe the different ways the roll out has been organized across contexts and illustrate that while this document is a guide, the roll out of the Framework will be defined by the actors and circumstances, both strengths and constraints, in each context.

Figure 1 - The Six Steps To Roll-Out The IYCF Framework





Step 1: Prepare

Outline initial plan and map needs and resources

In this step, the IYCF Framework Rollout Focal Point will set the foundation for the roll out by planning the roll out activities and confirming the needs and resources available in the roll out location. As part of planning, the Focal Point will clarify the expectations and roles of staff involved and outline the timing and sequence of activities. At this first step, it is important to identify the priority sectors for integration based on needs analysis and a mapping of existing programming, partners and resources.

The following activities and tools will guide the Focal Point in the preparation of the roll out of the framework.

- Identify and define roles and responsibilities for UNHCR focal points at the different levels: national / sub national / specific operational refugee location(s).

Tool: [IYCF Framework Roll Out Focal Point Terms of Reference \(TOR\)](#) Template to clarify role and accountability of IYCF Framework Roll Out Focal Point. Note: In certain contexts, this may be divided amongst multiple staff member based on existing responsibilities.

- Create an initial workplan with the focal point(s) for the roll out of the framework

Tool: [Workplan template](#) Template to organize the roll-out over time, including location, responsibilities and resources.

- Map needs and resources for priority sectors
 - Document needs related to PLW and children 0-23 months³

Tools:

- » [Key IYCF Questions to be included in Joint Assessments](#) Reference guide for IYCF questions that can be included in joint assessments.
- » SENS data:
 - For contexts where SENS data have been collected, information can be accessed under [Infant and young child feeding \(IYCF\) | Standardised Expanded Nutrition Survey \(unhcr.org\)](#)
 - For contexts where SENS data plans to be implemented, the resource [MODULE 4: IYCF](#) can be used as a guide.

- Identify priority sectors for integration opportunities and map existing programming and partners, both for IYCF and identified, priority sectors in target roll out location.

Tools:

- » [Stakeholder 4W Mapping Template](#) A tool to create a summary of partners activities from relevant sectors.

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

Various roll out locations have approached the decision of where to first roll out the Framework in different ways. In Uganda, UNHCR and partners focused the IYCF Framework roll out in locations with the highest needs (i.e., suboptimal IYCF practices, high risk factors for infant and young child morbidity and mortality). Other locations, such as Rwanda and Chad, took a strengths-based approach and first focused the IYCF Framework on locations with strong coordination, programming and partners.



Step 2: Build buy-in

Build buy-in, orient stakeholders and identify champions across sectors

The focus of Step 2 is to raise awareness of the IYCF Framework and build a broad base of individuals, including decision makers and individuals across sectors and areas of operation, who accept the vision central to the Framework and are willing to actively support and participate in the associated activities. Critical to building this buy-in is coordinating with key stakeholders, conducting orientations, engaging in active communication and identifying champions.

The Focal Point can use a wide range of tools to build buy-in and the descriptions below will guide the Focal Point to raise awareness and to identify the champions.

- Participate in coordination mechanisms to elevate IYCF on the agenda and influence decision-making; strengthen and/or activate coordination mechanisms where needed.
- Conduct brief orientations (remote or in person) to introduce the framework and:
 - to sensitize key senior level decisions makers as IYCF advocates.
 - to present the proposed actions, targeting the nutrition sector / cluster and/or working group and for priority sectors.

Tools:

- » [Framework Introduction](#) A 10-minute presentation to introduce the IYCF Framework to senior level staff and partners across sectors to advocate for IYCF integration and mainstreaming in all sectors.
- » [Framework Orientation - Video](#) This Video provides an orientation to the IYCF Framework with a focus on the ways this Multisector Framework for Action facilitates improved services for the mother-infant pair in refugee settings. The video is included in the Framework Introduction described above but can be used as stand alone. It is available in French, Bahasa and English.
- » [Infant and Young Child Feeding in Refugee Situations A Multi-Sectoral Framework for Action \(Briefer\)](#) This two-page briefer introduces the Infant and Young Child Feeding IYCF Framework, including the purpose and objectives. This can be used as a handout during the orientation session.

- Identify champions across technical sectors and operational areas such as supply, external relations, administration and program. To clarify their role, conduct a 10-minute optional session to walk participants through the shared objectives and some examples of integrated activities.

Tools:

- » [Session Plan](#) This document describes how to lead the session to identify the champions using the two-page briefer per sector and the Champion ToR.
- » [IYCF Framework Collection](#) Two-page briefers are available for all sectors located in the IYCF Framework Collection and can be used with orientations for individual sectors. In addition, all videos related to the Framework are included in the collection and can be useful in building constituencies around this topic.
- » [ToR for the IYCF Champion \(Annex 5\)](#) A TOR describing the expectations of an IYCF Champion.

- Map stakeholder engagement opportunities and track the different communications and advocacy events and orientation sessions conducted.

Tools:

- » [Communications and Orientation Tracking Tool](#) This tool can be used to identify and track events and opportunities to advocate throughout the process: from the initial roll-out to ongoing implementation.

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

In Ethiopia, a focus of the roll out was on senior level decision makers. The UNHCR Focal Point underscored the importance of orienting senior staff in IYCF so they could follow up and have the ability to speak with key stakeholders (internally and externally). This buy-in was also critical to enable the inclusion of IYCF and IYCF indicators in the Strategic Frameworks (ie Regional Response Plans or Multi-year Multi-partner Strategic Plans and Country Operational Plan). The allocation of budgets for IYCF follows the inclusion in these strategic frameworks. As the Focal Point pointed out, “in that way, even with turnover of staff, the Program Section (running strategic vision and funding) can still follow up on the IYCF indicators.” With this critical inclusion and buy in at the senior level, IYCF activities and the enabling environment for IYCF are institutionalized.



Step 3: Assess and train

Assess capacity and train public health and nutrition teams

In Step 3, the Focal Point will focus on building the capacity of public health and nutrition partners in services and programming to protect, promote and support recommended Infant and Young Child Feeding.

The main activities for Step 3 are described below. The associated tools align with available resources endorsed by the Global Nutrition Cluster and Save the Children's IYCF in Emergencies (IYCF-E) curriculum..

- Assess the capacity of the health and nutrition services providers to understand their knowledge, skills and confidence in delivering IYCF services.

Tool:

- » [IYCF-E Individual Capacity Assessment Tool \(2020\)](#)⁴ An individual capacity assessment tool for health and nutrition services providers.

- Conduct a 5-day IYCF-E training for public health and nutrition teams or a shorter version of the training based on the capacity assessment results. In the final session of the training, it is recommended to focus and discuss the Action 4 of the IYCF Framework: Select appropriate IYCF activities.

Tools:

Different training resources are available and can be used for the purpose of this Step.

- » [Save the Children IYCF-E Curriculum](#) The Save the Children IYCF-E Curriculum is designed with a modularized approach to contextualize the content based on the capacity assessment and IYCF context analysis.
- » [IYCF-E Curriculum Learning Objectives and Session Description](#) The Save the Children IYCF-E Curriculum includes guidance to select relevant topics among 13 core modules and 13 optional modules, based on the training needs and resources available.
- » [Refugee Nutrition Presentation \(45 minutes\)](#) This training module is designed to strengthen participants' knowledge in how to support a nutrition response for refugee emergencies.

- For public health and nutrition partners that are not able to attend the IYCF-E training, share links to self-learning resources.

Tools:

- » [Short E-Course - Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies](#) This course explains recommended Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) guidelines and practices. It takes about 28 minutes to complete the course.

- After any training, establish a follow-up system for monitoring, support, feedback and supervision of all participants, as appropriate to the situation.

Tools:

- » [IYCF Training Tracking Tool](#) This tool allows to keep track of IYCF training and to follow up participants.

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

Depending on the context, available resources and IYCF capacity of partners, a full IYCF Training can be implemented as part of the Framework Roll Out or teams may opt to conduct briefer “refresher” trainings and then identify a full IYCF Training as part of the priority actions in the Action Plan. The Roll Out in Rwanda (Mahama Camps) and parts of Uganda (Palabec Camps) combined Steps 4 and 5, providing more in depth IYCF training to public health teams and moving directly into the training of sector partners and champions culminating in the creation of the Action Plan. In Chad, the IYCF-E Training is planned as part of the Action Plan following the initial roll out.



Step 4: Equip and design actions

Train multisector partners, equip champions and design action plan

Through Step 4, the Focal Point will focus on training prioritized stakeholders beyond those implementing or supporting nutrition activities to create a multi-sector team to champion IYCF in the roll out location. A critical output of Step 4 is the Action Plan that will identify the activities the Focal Point and the partners agree are meaningful and feasible to achieve in roll-out location.

The Focal Point can use the guidance and tools describe below to train partners and champions and to design the action plan.

- Conduct 2.5-hour training for partners from prioritized sectors and functions, including sector leads and champions identified in step 2. This training will also serve to equip champions with the additional IYCF knowledge needed to fulfill this role.

Tools:

- » IYCF-E Multi-Sectoral Training Package (2.5 hours) The package is specifically designed to equip multi-sector partners, including champions, with the knowledge and skills to develop the action plan and support the roll-out of the framework. The package includes the following:
 - [Session Plan](#)
 - [PowerPoint](#)
 - Handouts:
 - [Activity Plan Conceptual Framework and Risks](#)
 - [Key IYCF Messages \(Annex 6\)](#) One-page communication outlines key messages related to IYCF. It can be used by all staff, regardless of sector or position, to ensure anyone requiring IYCF support is identified and prioritized. The document can be used at food distribution points, camp management offices, community volunteer gathering points, registration points etc.
 - [Simple Rapid Assessment](#)⁵ This tool is included as an example of one of the many globally available resources to support integration across sectors. The Simple Rapid Assessment can be used by any staff member of any sector to record basic information, guide questions relevant to IYCF and identify cases for IYCF referral. This tool can be used as a concrete example of how to protect and support PLW and children <2 across sectors
 - Optional: [Refugee Nutrition Presentation: An optional 45-minutes presentation](#) (refer to Step 3)

- Design an IYCF Framework Action Plan along with agreed measures to monitor progress (*Note: The above training and the development of the action plans combine as a full day activity. The Action Plan will be developed at the end of the training by all the actors together.*)

Tools:

- » [Guidance for the Action Plan Activity](#) This tool guides the facilitator to lead the creation of the Action Plan with the participants.
- » [Action Plan Template](#) Recommendation is to use the Framework Reporting Database as the Action Plan to directly link the design of actions with monitoring and reporting.

- Keep track of the individuals that were trained

Tools:

- » [Champions Training Tracking Sheet](#) Tracking tool to collect data about multi-sector partners and champions training.

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

The COVID pandemic has required adaptations to “traditional” implementation of Step 5. Prior to COVID, many locations had brought together all prioritized sectors in their location to design the Action Plan. In Rwanda, partners from non-roll out locations (i.e. – locations beyond Mahama camp) were also invited to join the trainings and Action Planning to continue growing interest and sensitization of this tool in other refugee settlements. In 2021, the roll out of the Framework in Niger and Chad were conducted remotely. For this to be manageable, IYCF Framework Focal Points divided up the prioritized sectors so that each Training and Action Plan session was attended by two sectors. They ran the training and Action Planning twice and afterward consolidated the Action Plan.



Step 5: Implement

Implement the action plan

In Step 5, the focus is on taking action! The tools provided below include libraries of resources to support quality implementation of IYCF programming including those delivered by nutritionists as well as resources for integrated programming.

- Support the implementation of the action plan and refer stakeholders to relevant tools and resources as needed.

Tools:

- » [IYCF-E Hub](#) An online library housing resources including guidelines, reports and guidance relevant to IYCF, community management of acute malnutrition, and management of at-risk mothers and infants.
- » [IYCF-E Toolkit](#) A collection of tools to support frontline teams in designing, implementing and monitoring IYCF activities, particularly in emergency contexts.
- » **Coordination / Technical Support** to support implementation of activities to create an IYCF friendly environment and share lessons learned:
 - [UNHCR public health community of practice](#)
 - [GNC Technical Alliance IFE Core Group](#)

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

UNHCR and Save the Children produced the [IYCF Framework COVID Adaptations Briefer \(2020\)](#) as a briefer highlighting ways the IYCF Framework can be adapted in response to COVID, including examples from current operations. In combination with the IYCF Framework sector chapters, the COVID Briefer provides additional ideas for adapted IYCF program implementation and integration activities.



Step 6: Monitor

Monitor, report progress and improve

Critically, in Step 6, the Focal Point will monitor and report on the progress achieved against the Action Plan. As with any initiative, monitoring and communicating progress and challenges will facilitate continued co-creation of the IYCF Framework vision in the roll-out context with the champions that were identified.

The following activities and tools will support the Focal Point in this last step of the roll out.

- Monitor progress against the Action Plan

Tools:

- » [Guidance on Monitoring of the Framework implementation \(Annex 12\)](#) An explanation on the objectives of the Framework Reporting Database tool (below).
- » [Framework Reporting Database](#) A tool to assist monitoring of the IYCF Framework to record progress against objectives and enhance visibility on activities aimed at creating an “IYCF Friendly” environment.

- Conduct regular meetings, ideally quarterly, to review, measure and document progress against the objectives and activities outlined in the Action Plan. Capitalize on opportunities to incorporate updates into UNHCR reporting mechanisms such as mid-year review and end year reviews.
- Collect feedback on the overall feasibility and usefulness of the Framework and document successes and areas for improvement to establish institutional memory related to the Framework roll out.
- Distribute key conclusions to all relevant stakeholders and at global level for critical analysis and further review of the Framework.
- Ultimately, measure the impact of this Framework on PLW, infants and children under 2 years of age.

Tools:

- » SENS data:
 - For contexts where SENS data have been collected, information can be accessed under [Infant and young child feeding \(IYCF\) | Standardised Expanded Nutrition Survey \(unhcr.org\)](#)
 - For contexts where SENS data plans to be implemented, the resource [MODULE 4: IYCF](#) can be used as a guide

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

IYCF Framework Focal Points in Ethiopia, Rwanda and Bangladesh underscored that measurement and reporting of progress was critical to the successful roll out of the Framework in nearly all locations. Focal Points recommended reviewing the Framework Reporting Database during quarterly meetings in key coordination groups to keep committed actions at the top of the agenda and champions and partners invigorated about the Framework.

Next Steps

As with all programs, the roll out of the IYCF Framework is circular, inviting Focal Points to consider revisiting steps from Step 1 to ensure the capturing of new and changing needs of the target population, ongoing awareness raising in light of staff turnover, continuous building and nurturing of buy in and the inclusion of new ideas to grow or adapt the roll out.

POTENTIAL ADAPTATIONS

The Framework was first rolled out in Cox's Bazaar during the initial pilot phase of the project in 2004. When major influx of refugees caused the Cox's Bazaar camps to grow and brought in multiple new partners and new programming, UNHCR re-started the IYCF Framework Roll out from Step 2. Similarly, UNHCR Focal Points in Gambella, Ethiopia, revisited each step in the roll out each year recognizing the evolution of context and continuously changing needs and staffing.

Endnotes

- 1 Black RE, Allen LH, Bhutta ZA, Caulfield LE, de Onis M, Ezzati M, & al, for the Maternal and Child Undernutrition Study Group* [Maternal and child undernutrition: global and regional exposures and health consequences](#). Lancet 2008; 371: 243–60
- 2 In this guide, we will refer to the *Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in Refugee Situations: A Multisectoral Framework for Action* as the “IYCF Framework”.
- 3 For further guidance, refer to the IYCF Framework, Section 1: Introduction; Context Analysis (Page 20-22).
- 4 https://www.enonline.net/attachments/3850/IYCF-E-individual-capacity-assessment-tool_English_Nov2020.pdf
- 5 ENN, IFE Core Group (2021). Operational Guidance on Breastfeeding Counselling in Emergencies. www.enonline.net/breastfeedingcounsellinginemergencies

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