

# Strengthening community nutrition programming

TOOLS FOR REACHING CAREGIVERS, HOUSEHOLDS, AND COMMUNITIES

## Introduction

The Infant & Young Child Nutrition (IYCN) Project has created a collection of tools and resources for use by community-based nutrition programs. Informed by IYCN's experience implementing community-based nutrition projects in eight countries, the tools fill specific program needs but can be adapted for use in other country settings. This brief summarizes the approaches and methods that were used to develop the materials and provides a description of each tool.

## Our approach to community-based nutrition programs

Because multiple social and environmental factors influence how mothers and other caregivers feed their children, improving infant and young child feeding practices is not possible without engaging the many people who influence the way children are fed. Through our projects, most of which have been implemented in sub-Saharan Africa, IYCN has used strategic activities to reach mothers, grandmothers, fathers, community leaders, and other household and community members with critical nutrition messages and support. These community-based strategies have been an important part of the project's social and behavior change communication approach for achieving sustainable improvements in maternal, infant, and young child nutrition.

To apply this approach, IYCN collaborated with a wide range of partners to train community workers and volunteers in how to encourage feasible improvements in feeding practices and address cultural constraints and beliefs that prevent mothers from meeting their children's nutritional



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needs. These trained community workers then counseled mothers on improved ways to feed their children. Incorporating nutrition messages into the activities of mother support groups, male groups, and grandmother groups can encourage communities to overcome harmful sociocultural norms, such as the pressure to give water and food to an infant younger than 6 months of age, a significant barrier to healthy feeding during the critical first 1,000 days of life. We also integrated community-based nutrition activities into HIV programs, and other health platforms and sectors, such as agriculture and education.

Supportive communications materials and activities—such as take-home brochures for mothers and families and job aids for community workers—encourage the adoption of positive behaviors. To enhance follow-up support in communities and increase utilization of health services, we strengthened two-way referral systems between health facilities and communities.

## Building the capacity of community-based workers in Kenya

IYCN's *Infant Feeding and HIV: Guide and Participant's Manual for Training Community-Based Workers and Volunteers* was used by the Society for Women and AIDS in Kenya and PATH to train more than 400 volunteer counselors to incorporate infant feeding into existing HIV activities, including home visits, discussion groups, and community mobilization activities. These volunteers reached more than 34,000 community members with infant feeding messages and provided individual support to breastfeeding mothers, helping to increase infants' chances of HIV-free survival.



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## Developing materials to enhance programs

To develop the collection of resources and tools presented below, IYCN identified global gaps in available materials and worked with country partners to identify programmatic needs. This included conducting literature reviews, assessing nutrition services, and examining existing materials in countries where the project has worked. We also collaborated with ministries of health, nongovernmental organizations, and other partners to understand feeding practices and the roles and influence of community and household members.

We then determined how to adapt existing resources, such as the United Nations Children's Fund Community Infant and Young Child Feeding Counseling Package, and develop new resources to better meet the needs of community-based nutrition programs. This meant responding to the needs of end users: for example, requests from facilitators of mother support groups in Kenya informed the mother support group guide described below.

The project's global and country technical experts, with external reviewers, conducted a comprehensive review of the materials, which were pilot-tested in different settings. The materials reflect best practices, existing products, principles of adult learning, and international guidelines, particularly the World Health Organization's 2010 guidelines on HIV and infant feeding.

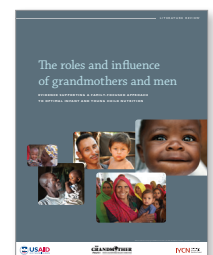
The collection of tools and resources contain practical exercises that encourage participants to reflect on current and recommended practices, share experiences, and participate. For example, a small group exercise included in our training manual for male group leaders encourages participants to create a problem tree to explore how family decisions can impact their children's health.

## Available tools and resources

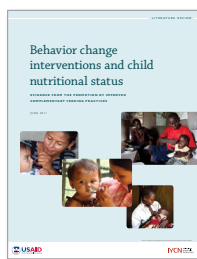
The tools and resources described below can be used together or separately to meet programmatic needs. For a list of additional resources to complement these materials, please visit [www.iycn.org/community](http://www.iycn.org/community).

### Literature reviews on community-based nutrition programs

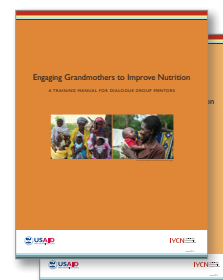
*The roles and influence of grandmothers and men: Evidence supporting a family-focused approach to optimal infant and young child nutrition.* Reviews evidence of the roles and influence of grandmothers and men on childhood nutrition and offers recommendations for how program implementers can strengthen community approaches for addressing malnutrition and improving results.



*Behavior change interventions and child nutritional status: Evidence from the promotion of improved complementary feeding practices.* Analyzes behavior change interventions aiming to improve complementary feeding practices and children's nutritional status and provides recommendations for designing and implementing these interventions.

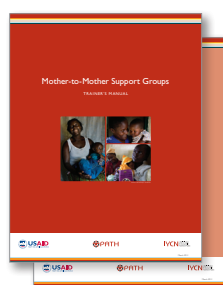


*Engaging Grandmothers to Improve Nutrition: A Training Manual for Dialogue Group Mentors.* A tool for training grandmothers to serve as dialogue group mentors. Offers information and techniques for facilitating discussions on family care and maternal and child nutrition.



## Social and behavior change tools for reaching mothers and caregivers

*Mother-to-Mother Support Groups: Trainer's Manual and Facilitator's Manual with Discussion Guide.* A tool for training mother-to-mother support group facilitators to lead participatory discussions on maternal, infant, and young child nutrition. Provides detailed information on potential support group topics and answers to questions that may arise during support group sessions.

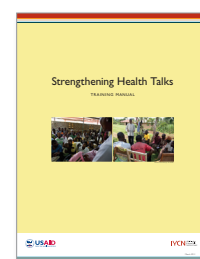


*Infant Feeding and HIV: Guide and Participant's Manual for Training Community-Based Workers and Volunteers.* A tool for training peer educators to incorporate nutrition into current community-based HIV prevention, care, and treatment activities.

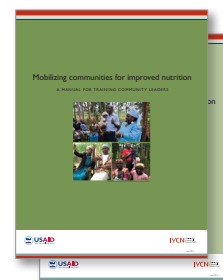


## Social and behavior change tools for reaching community members

*Strengthening Health Talks: Training Manual.* Offers step-by-step instructions for facilitating a half-day workshop with health workers or community workers to improve the quality of group counseling sessions and health talks.

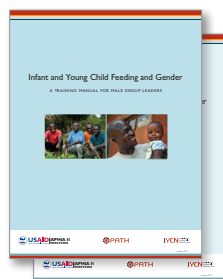


*Mobilizing Communities for Improved Nutrition: A Training Manual and Participant Manual for Community Leaders.* Provides step-by-step instructions for facilitating a one-day workshop with community leaders (including religious leaders, business leaders, and government officials) to support and improve children's health and well-being through improved maternal, infant, and young child nutrition.



## Social and behavior change tools for reaching household members

*Infant and Young Child Feeding and Gender: A Training Manual and Participant Manual for Male Group Leaders.* A tool for training male group leaders to share information and encourage discussions on gender roles related to optimal infant and young child feeding practices.



*Community Theatre for Improved Nutrition: A Guide for Program Managers and Theatre Groups.* Offers recommendations for program managers and community theatre groups to integrate maternal, infant, and young child nutrition content into existing community theatre activities.





## Strengthening health talks in Zambia

At Bwacha and Makululu Health Centers in Zambia's Kabwe District, IYCN trained 35 health workers and community health volunteers to improve the quality of health talks using the *Strengthening Health Talks Training Manual*. At both facilities, health talks on infant and young child feeding occurred more frequently after the training. Caregivers attending the health talks conducted by trained workers reported that the introduction of appropriate visual aids, such as counseling cards, increased audience participation and made the talks easier to understand.



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## Monitoring and evaluation tools

*Counseling Supervision Checklist and Guidelines*. A tool for health worker supervisors to measure health workers' knowledge and record their behaviors during counseling sessions. Periodic use of the checklist can help programs identify gaps, implement solutions, and measure changes over time.

*Exit Interview Questionnaire and Guidelines*. Assists program managers in assessing the quality of counseling services and client satisfaction. The Guidelines provide detailed instructions for using the Questionnaire.

*Referral Tracking Form and Register*. A tool to track referrals of caregivers from community volunteers to health centers.



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Please visit [www.iycn.org](http://www.iycn.org) for additional resources from IYCN activities in Ethiopia, Haiti, Zambia, and several other countries. Look for our new *Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices Monitoring Tool* and other materials coming soon.