

Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies

Gilbert Tshitauzi
Nutrition Manager
UNICEF South Africa
06 August 2024



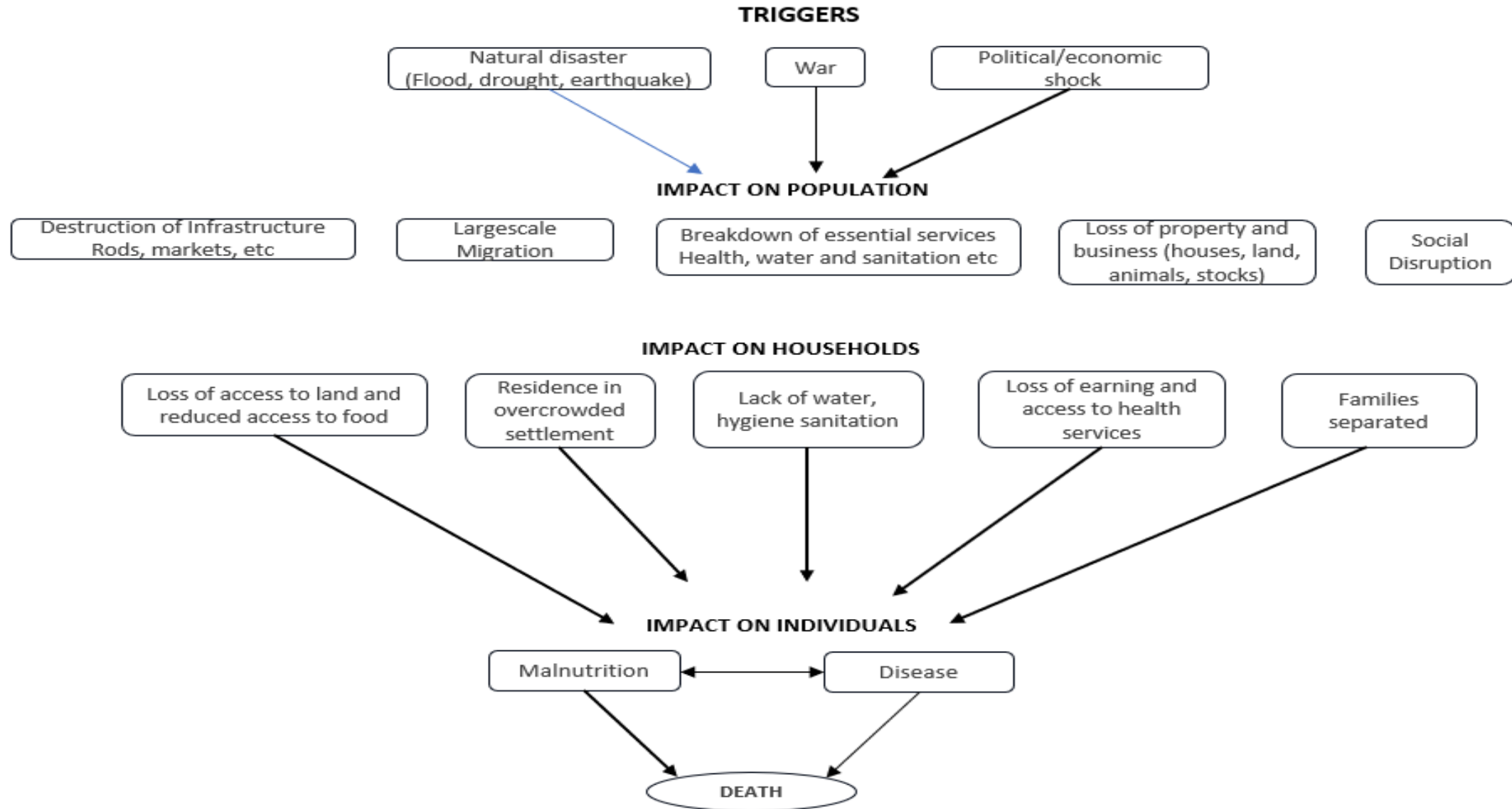
unicef 
for every child



Outline

- Nutrition in Emergencies
- Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies
- Conclusion

Impact of Emergencies on the Nutritional Status



Vulnerability to Nutrition Emergencies

- **Existing health and nutrition situation** greatly affects how vulnerable a population is to a nutritional emergency
- **Chronic diseases (e.g. HIV and AIDS)** increases food insecurity, poverty, and even has negative effects on labour force and agriculture at large scale
- **Poverty and urban pressure** - overcrowding, inadequate drinking water, substandard sanitation facilities and infrastructure, exposure to urban pollution and hazardous materials, landlessness, and frequent food shortages
- **Climate change** may have an increasing impact, leading to more frequent natural disasters in the future

Triggers to Nutrition Emergencies

- **Natural disasters** affect food availability and access, disrupt health systems, destroy WASH systems
- **Conflict** can lead to nutrition emergencies in many ways due to lack of access to food, health, WASH, etc. The Riots in KZN in 2022
- **Political crises and economic shocks** contribute to nutrition emergencies
- **Global food price fluctuations** have caused increased levels of poverty, food insecurity and resulting undernutrition

Which Groups are Most Vulnerable in Emergencies?

- **Physiological vulnerability:** children younger than 5, older people, people affected by chronic diseases.
- **Geographical vulnerability:** flood or drought-prone areas, conflict front lines.
- **Political vulnerability:** discrimination, xenophobia, persecution.
- **Internal displacement and refugee status.**

What Type of Malnutrition Occur in Emergencies?

- The major concern in emergencies is the **increased risk of moderate and severe wasting** because acute malnutrition is strongly associated with death.
- •In many **long-term emergencies** levels of other forms of malnutrition (**stunting and underweight**) are often high.
- •**Micronutrient deficiencies** are common in emergencies, particularly in affected people dependent on food rations.

Challenges in Nutrition Emergencies

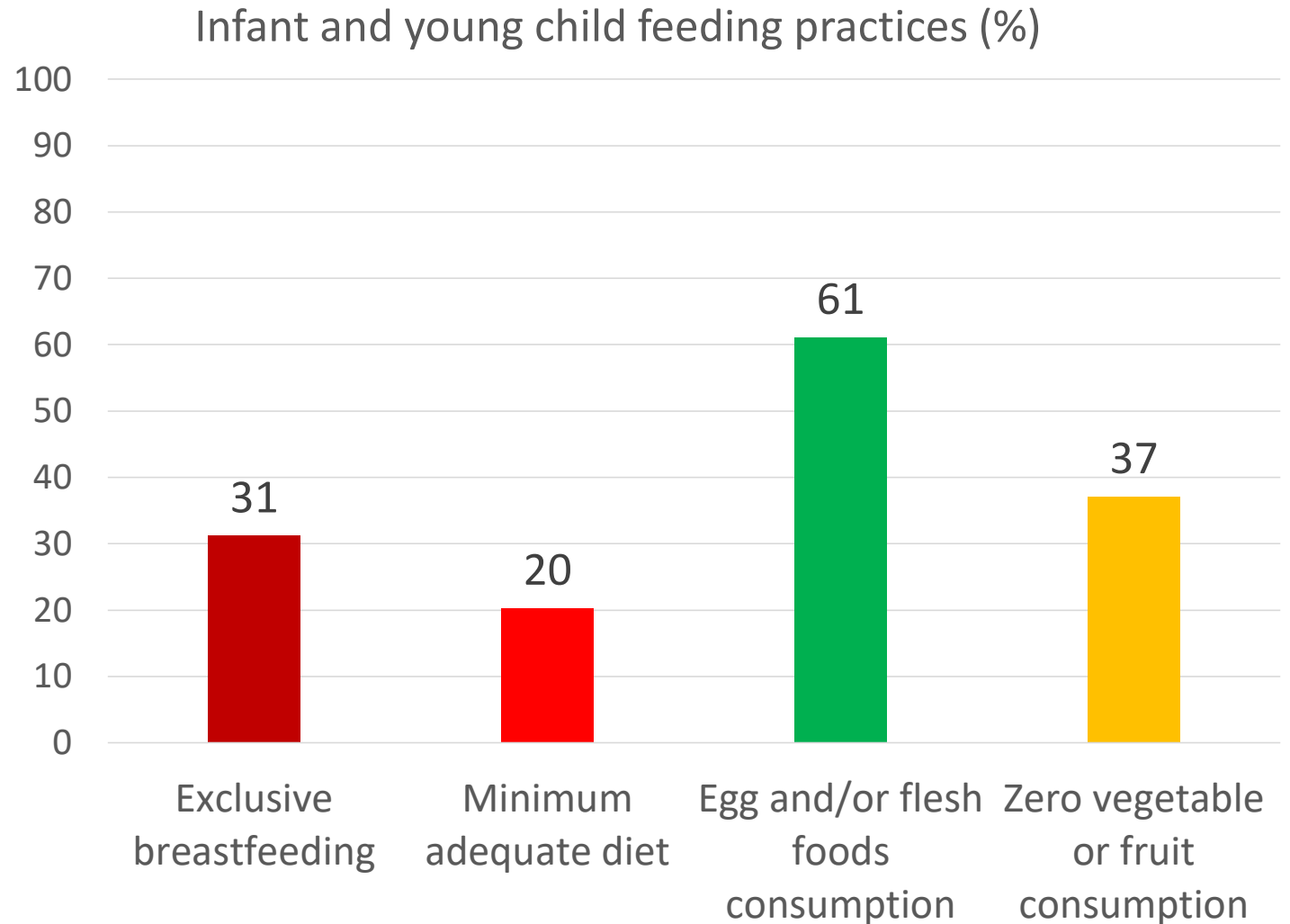
- Lack of impartiality in responding to nutrition emergencies: **response does not match needs**. Political and media focus often followed by higher rates of response
- **Dominance of food donations**: represents the most funded domain of all humanitarian interventions.
- Constraints of the operational environment: **access to the populations in need** is often difficult for many reasons such as weak infrastructure, insecurity.
- **People living with chronic conditions**: stigma and discrimination remain common challenges.
- **Lack of skills and expertise** in nutrition in emergencies: capacity is often missing in the country during emergencies.
- **Limited linkages and coordination with various role players** and fragmentation of interventions.

Infant and Young Child Feeding

Less than **one in three** baby is exclusively breastfed

Only **one in five** children aged 6-23 months eat adequately

- 1 in 7 children born with low-birth-weight
- **Maternal undernutrition**
- Inadequate care
- Unhealthy diets



Source: UNICEF reanalysis 2016 DHS

Risks to IYCF during Outbreaks and Emergencies

- transmission risks via breastfeeding
- Maternal illness or death
- Mother-child separation (unnecessary / necessary)
- Disrupted access health and feeding support services
- deterioration in household food security and livelihoods
- Low caregiver awareness & worries about transmitting disease to baby
- Inappropriate advice from health workers
- Disrupted livelihoods and food insecurity (esp. for BMS dependent infants)
- Poor WASH
- Disaster myths and misconceptions
- R991 Regulations Violations



Take Action to Mitigate Risks!!

**South African Infant and Young Child Feeding in
Emergencies (IYCF-E)
2024**

Operational Guide



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Key Objective of the IYCF-E Operational Guide

To guide the development of National, Provincial and District IYCF-E Preparedness and Response Plans which will ensure a predictable, timely, and effective nutrition response in case of emergency.

Scope of the Operational Guide

- takes an evidence-based approach to ensure a coherent, timely, efficient and effective response to emergency situations
- in line with the National Infant and Young Child Feeding Policy
- and global best practices to reduce mortality and morbidity and to promote optimal nutritional status, growth and development for infants and young children in difficult circumstances.

Conclusion

- In every emergency – including infectious disease outbreaks – **ASSESS** and **ACT** to protect the nutrition needs and care of infants and young children, pregnant women and other vulnerable groups.
- **Nutrition Programming in Emergencies**
 - Assess the Situation
 - Analyse the Situation
 - Design Actions for Appropriate Interventions

A healthcare worker wearing a white lab coat and a light blue surgical mask is measuring a young child's height against a vertical scale. The worker is looking at the child with a gentle expression. The child is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a clinical setting with other people and equipment.

Thank you

unicef 
for every child