

Infant Feeding in Wartime: professional and ethical challenges

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Content

- Infant feeding recommendations
- Importance of breastfeeding
- Infant feeding in wartime
- Ethical and professional challenges
- Croatia's experience



Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) recommendations

- WHO and UNICEF recommend:
 - early initiation of breastfeeding, within 1h of birth;
 - exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life; and
 - introduction of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary (solid) foods at 6 months together with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond.



Importance of breastfeeding – for **children**

- Over 820 000 children's lives could be saved every year among children under 5 years, if all children 0–23 months were optimally breastfed.
- Breastfeeding improves IQ, school attendance, and is associated with higher income in adult life.
- Improving child development and reducing health costs through breastfeeding results in economic gains for individual families as well as at the national level.

Importance of breastfeeding – for mothers



- Reduces the risk of breast cancer – 20,000 lives annually could be saved!
- Breastfeeding is associated with a 24% lower risk of invasive ovarian cancer.
- Helps space pregnancies – Lactation Amenorrhoea Method!
- Reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect. Victora CG et al. *Lancet*. (2016) 387:475 – 490.

Babic A, Sasamoto N, Rosner BA, et al. Association Between Breastfeeding and Ovarian Cancer Risk. *JAMA Oncol*. 2020;6(6):e200421. doi:10.1001/jamaoncol.2020.0421

Tschiderer L, Seekircher L, Kunutsor SK, Peters SAE, O’Keeffe LM, Willeit P. Breastfeeding Is Associated With a Reduced Maternal Cardiovascular Risk: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Involving Data From 8 Studies and 1 192 700 Parous Women. *JAHA*, 2022; DOI: [10.1161/JAHA.121.022746](https://doi.org/10.1161/JAHA.121.022746)

Wartime conditions

- Crowded
- Limited water
- Limited food
- Limited fuel
- Unsanitary
- Stressful
- Separation



Photo by Ahmed akacha: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/kids-playing-in-refugee-camp-6463398/>

- Increased risk of infectious diseases, malnutrition and death!
 - **Infants and young children most vulnerable!**

IYCF during Croatia's War for Independence

- 1996, nation-wide survey of households with children under 5 (n=1,937)
- IYCF practices compared between households in war-free and war-affected areas
- Breastfeeding initiation did not differ (94.6%)
- **Breastfeeding duration was significantly longer in war-free areas (p=0.0015)**
- Attributed to unsolicited, uncontrolled, regular donations of breast milk substitutes in war-affected areas

Wartime conditions: formula feeding

- Formula feeding
 - contaminated water sources
 - contaminated formula
 - limited cleansing facilities
 - inconsistent access to formula (risk of dilution)
 - equipment needed

- Formula feeding is dangerous!



Visibly contaminated bottle repeatedly used by refugee mother. Source: IZG

Wartime conditions: breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding
 - ensures food and water
 - protects from illnesses
 - aids recovery from sickness
 - decreases stress
 - no equipment needed 😊



A mother fleeing from Ukraine breastfeeds her son at Nyugati station, after Russia launched a massive military operation against Ukraine, in Budapest, Hungary, on February 27, 2022. REUTERS/Marton Monus

Unsolicited donations of formula: the Balkan crisis

- Make up a significant proportion of humanitarian aid:
 - In the initial weeks of the 'Balkan crisis', NATO in Macedonia received 3,500 metric tonnes of donated humanitarian aid of which 40% was baby food.
- Labels on baby food cans in foreign languages:
 - A convoy of 36 trucks of humanitarian aid from UK delivered baby food all labelled in English.
- Baby food of wrong type:
 - Therapeutic infant formula for babies with severe fat malabsorption was donated and indiscriminately distributed.
- Expired or near expiry dates

Unsolicited donations of formula: the Java earthquake

- Mass distribution of infant formula with no instructions on safe use or screening of recipient families' needs
- Significantly more infants consumed infant formula if the household had received donations than if the household had not (67% vs 37%).
- One week incidence of diarrhoea among those who received donations was more than double than of those who did not (25% vs 11%)
- Up to 90% of deaths in emergency situations are due to diarrhoea.

Refugee crisis in Croatia: 2015 – 2016

PRIVREMENO PRIHVATIŠTE ZA MIGRANTE
SLAVONSKI BROD



LEGENDA

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. SMJEŠTAJ ZA MIGRANTE - SEKTOR 1 | 13. HCK - PREHRANA |
| 2. SMJEŠTAJ ZA MIGRANTE - SEKTOR 2 | 14. NEVLADNE ORGANIZACIJE (NGO) |
| 3. SMJEŠTAJ ZA MIGRANTE - SEKTOR 3 | 15. PROSTOR ZA NOVINARE |
| 4. SMJEŠTAJ ZA MIGRANTE - SEKTOR 4 | 16. STOŽER |
| 5. SMJEŠTAJ ZA MIGRANTE - SEKTOR 5 | 17. BOLNICA |
| 6. SMJEŠTAJ ZA MIGRANTE - SEKTOR 6 | 18. JAVNI RADOVI |
| 7. AMBULANTA | 19. SKLADIŠTE DUZS-a |
| 8. PROSTOR ZA REGISTRACIJU MIGRANATA | 20. SKLADIŠTE HV-a |
| 9. AGENCIJA ZA SPAJANJE OBITELJI | 21. SKLADIŠTE HCK-a |
| 10. ŠATOR POLICIJE | 22. PRIČUVNA BOLNICA |
| 11. MJENJAČNICA I KANTINA | 23. TRAFOSTANICA |
| 12. PROSTOR ZA SPAJANJE OBITELJI | |

02.11.2015.



Refugee crisis in Croatia: 2015 – 2016

Support for breastfeeding and young child feeding in emergencies

Experiences gained during the migrant and refugee crisis in Croatia in 2015 and 2016

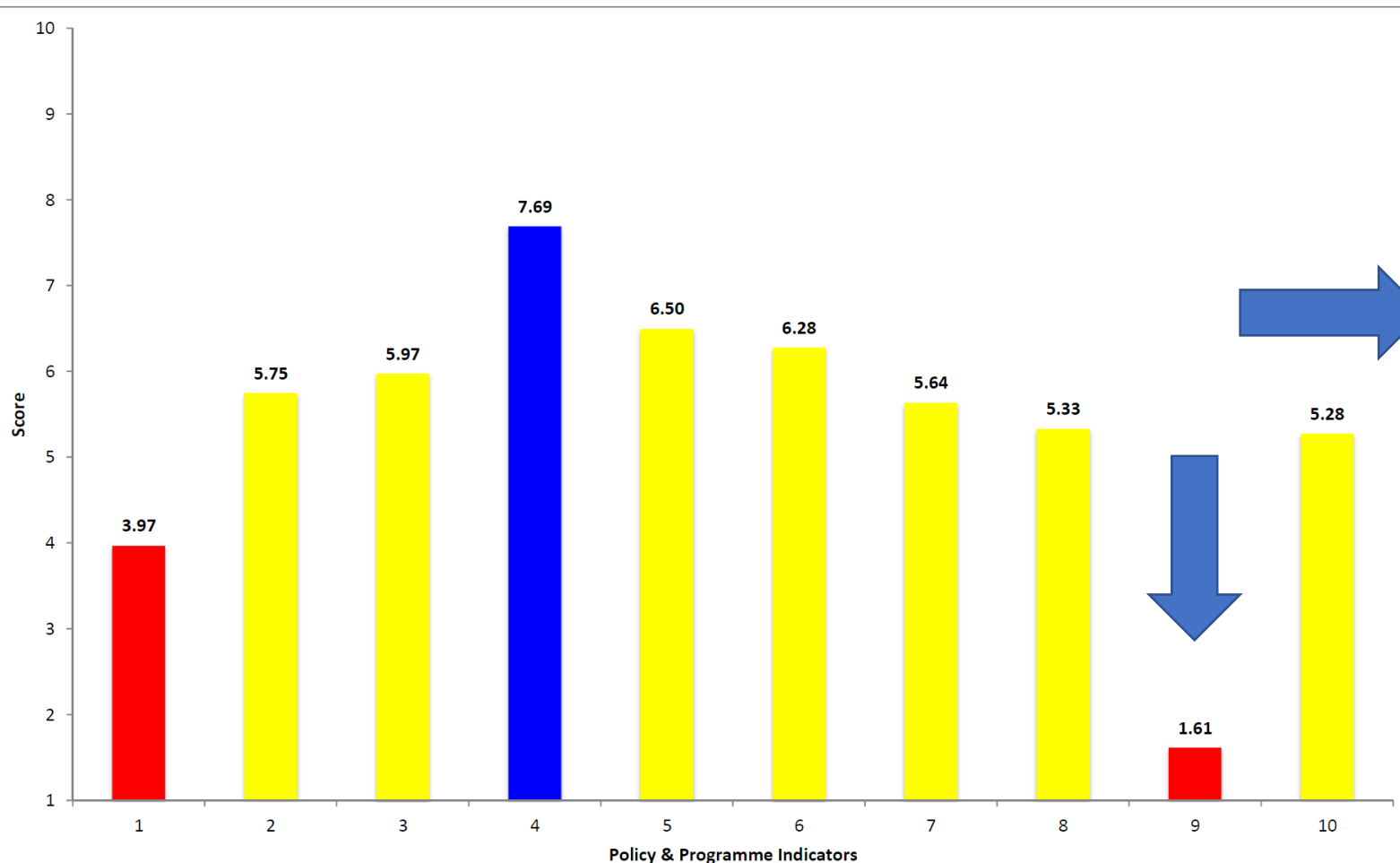


What were the challenges?

- No national guidelines on IYCF-E
- **Unsolicited donations of powdered infant formula**
- Not enough awareness of risks of formula feeding
- No instructions on preparation of infant formula in Farsi
- Not enough translators
- Not enough trained health workers to support bf and safe formula feeding
- No time/space for women to breastfeed
- No Ready-to-use infant formula
- No standardised method of monitoring infant feeding



Global issue: World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative 18-country European report



1. National Policy, Programme and Coordination
2. Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative
3. Implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes
4. Maternity Protection
5. Health and Nutrition Care Systems
6. Mother Support and Community Outreach
7. Information Support
8. Infant Feeding and HIV
9. Infant Feeding During Emergencies
10. Monitoring and Evaluation

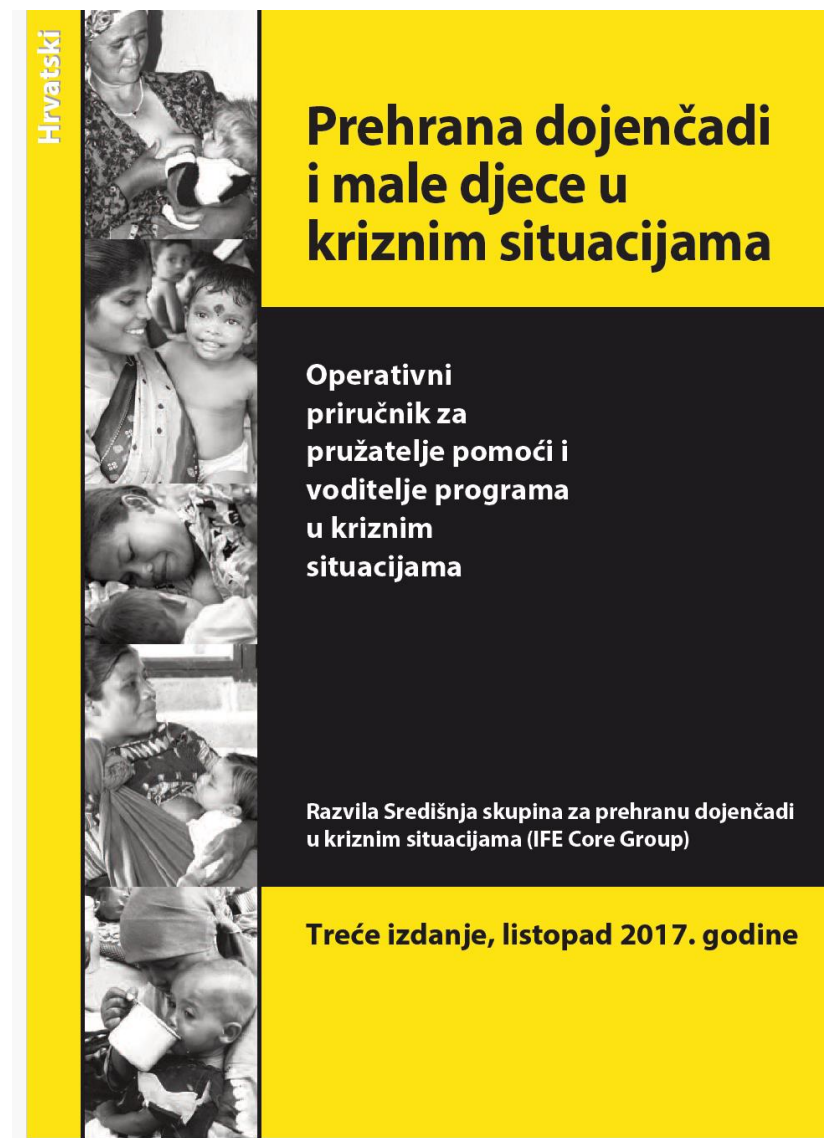
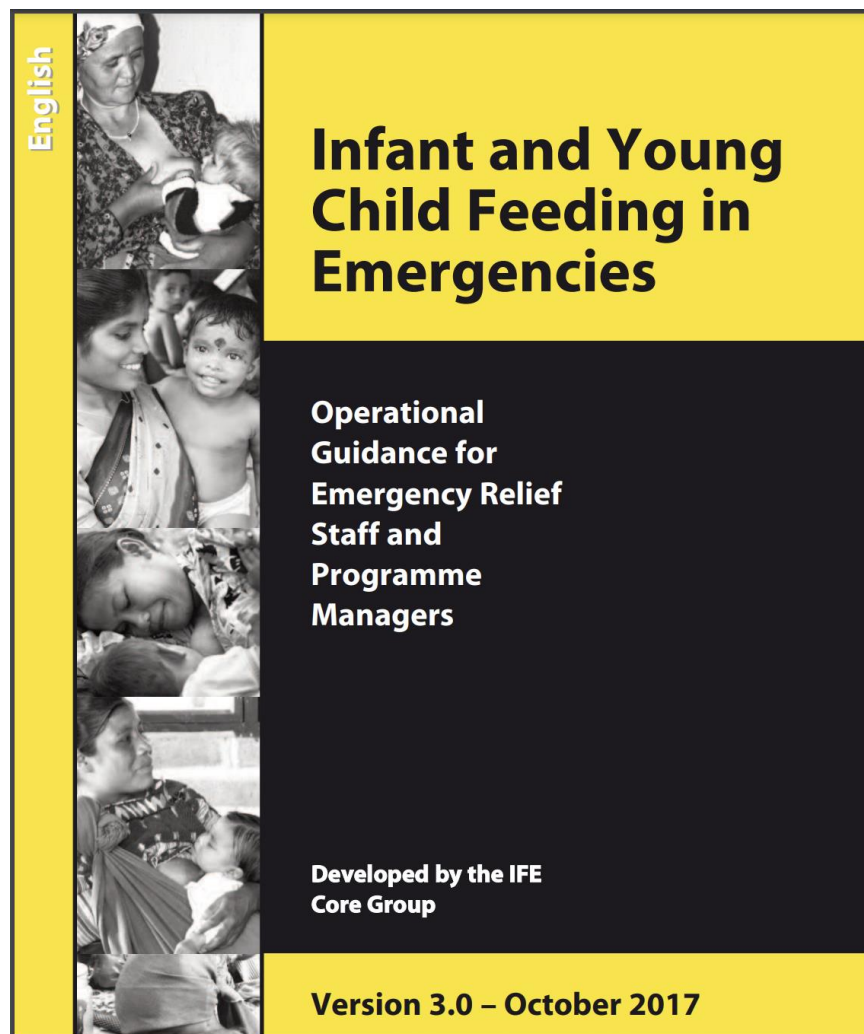


Zakarija-Grković I, Cattaneo A, Bettinelli ME, et al. Are our babies off to a healthy start? The state of implementation of the Global strategy for infant and young child feeding in Europe. *Int Breastfeed J*. 2020;15(1):51. Published 2020 Jun 4. doi:10.1186/s13006-020-00282-z

1st step – establishment of IYCF-E working group

- Formal working group of MoH National Breastfeeding Committee
- Mandate to prepare IYCF-E guidelines as per National Breastfeeding Program
- Voluntary, multidisciplinary group
 - UNICEF representative
 - MoH representatives
 - Roda (NGO) representative
 - Community nurse
 - Family physician/IBCLC (chair)
- Regular online meetings (since 2019)

2nd step: translated international IYCF-E guidelines



3rd step- adapted guidelines to Croatian setting

4th Step – validated by relevant partners

Adaptation

- Adapted to:
 - Croatian legislation
 - Croatian language
 - Organisation of health care
 - Organisation of emergency services
 - Population
 - Past experiences
 - Local resources

- Shortened, simplified

Validation

- MoH office for public health
- MoH office for procurement of supplies
- National institute of public health

Success! 1st Croatian IYCF-E guidelines!

REPUBLIKA HRVATSKA
MINISTARSTVO ZDRAVSTVA

3RD IN THE WORLD (AFTER NZ, NM), 2ND IN EUROPE!

**PREHRANA DOJENČADI I MALE DJECE U KRIZNIM
SITUACIJAMA - SMJERNICE ZA PRUŽATELJE
POMOĆI I VODITELJE PROGRAMA U KRIZNIM
SITUACIJAMA**

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MINISTARSTVO ZDRAVSTVA

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URBROJ: 534-07-2-1/2-23-8
Zagreb, 12. rujna 2023. godine

Na temelju članka 52. Zakona o sustavu državne uprave („Narodne novine“, broj 66/19.)
ministar zdravstva donosi

ODLUKU

**O DONOŠENJU DOKUMENTA PREHRANA DOJENČADI I MALE
DJECE U KRIZNIM SITUACIJAMA - SMJERNICE ZA PRUŽATELJE
POMOĆI I VODITELJE PROGRAMA U KRIZNIM SITUACIJAMA**

I.

Ovom Odlukom donosi se dokument Prehrana dojenčadi i male djece u kriznim
situacijama - Smjernice za pružatelje pomoći i voditelje programa u kriznim situacijama (u
daljnjem tekstu: Smjernice).

II

<https://zdravlje.gov.hr/nacionalni-programi-projekti-i-strategije/ostali-programi/prehrana-dojenjadi-i-male-djece-u-kriznim-situacijama-smjernice-za-pruzatelje-pomoci-i-voditelje-programa-u-kriznim-situacijama/6105>

Next steps: training and preparation for next crisis

- Dissemination of guidelines
- Action plan for implementation of guidelines
- Training materials
- Training of relevant personnel
- Public awareness materials
- Standardised forms for monitoring IYCF-E

**We do not accept
donations of infant
formula**



**If you wish to help families with
formula fed babies, please
donate money so we can buy
and supply infant formula and
other resources.**



Thank you for your attention!

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