In collaboration with United Nations Children’s fund (UNICEF) and Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN)

Implementation considerations on Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and infant feeding in the context of emergencies

14 to 16 September 2016
Salle G and D (main building)
WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

Breastfeeding is one of the foundations of children’s health, development and survival, especially where diarrhoea, pneumonia and undernutrition are common causes of mortality among young children. Breastfeeding is part of the strategy for HIV-free survival of children exposed to HIV. In a world where the number of people affected by emergencies is growing and HIV is still prevalent there is a need to develop guidance on how to implement HIV-infant feeding recommendations in the context of emergencies.

WHO and UNICEF recently published the Guideline: Updates on HIV and infant feeding (2016), where the relevance of these recommendations in emergencies is recognized. Moreover, the guidelines underscore the wide range of challenging settings where the updated recommendations would be relevant, including acute, protracted and recurrent conflict and emergency contexts. Due to the complexity of data collection, there is a lack of evidence on how best to support and guide infant feeding practices in the context of HIV in emergencies. Yet, consideration of the balance of risks of feeding options and the impact on child survival is paramount.

It is estimated that 125 million people are currently affected by emergencies, including conflicts, disease outbreaks and natural disasters. Global figures indicate a rise since 2013: over 58 million people –the highest number to date– were reportedly forced to flee from violence or persecution, while an estimated 107.3 million people were affected by disasters caused by natural hazards –over 10.7 million more people than in the previous year. There is an urgent need to respond to challenges faced by people in emergency settings.

HIV infection continues to be a global problem. The UNAIDS Prevention Gap Report 2016 shows that while significant progress is being made in stopping new HIV infections among children, the decline in new HIV infections among adults has stalled and new HIV infections among adults are rising in some regions. People affected by humanitarian crises face disruptions in HIV treatment, heightened exposure to HIV vulnerability and risks, and limited access to quality health care and nutritious food. Data on crisis-affected populations living with HIV are scarce.

WHO’s Departments of Nutrition for Health and Development, of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health, and of HIV/AIDS, in collaboration with UNICEF and ENN, are convening this meeting with participation from United Nations agencies, government representatives, and operational nongovernmental organizations working in nutrition and health, and other nutrition and health agencies to clarify programmatic issues,
implementation strategies, and develop a framework and key principles regarding infant feeding and HIV in emergencies. It also seeks to help put the current HIV and infant feeding guidance into practice to further the enjoyment of the right to health and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The meeting will draw on case studies commissioned through a public call for papers. A report will be prepared to inform the discussions and summarize the conclusions. An important output of this meeting will be the identification of evidence gaps and prioritization of research questions that need to be addressed.

The meeting will also inform the relevant provisions of the Operational Guidance on Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies, a key policy guidance endorsed by the World Health Assembly (WHA 23.23, 2010). It is currently being updated by a global interagency group (Infant Feeding in Emergencies Core Group) in which WHO participates, co-led by UNICEF and ENN.

**Overall objective of the meeting**
To review operational experiences with HIV and infant feeding in the context of emergencies and to develop guidance to support the implementation of the Guideline: Updates on HIV and infant feeding (2016) in emergencies.

**Specific objectives of the meeting**
1. To identify challenges and programmatic issues for HIV and infant feeding in emergencies and risk-prone contexts.
2. To develop a framework and guiding principles addressing HIV and infant feeding in emergencies.
3. To map out clear implementation strategies and pathways for putting guidance into practice including stakeholder partnerships and engagement across sectors.
4. To map clear entry points for integration into health programmes, e.g. HIV, PMTCT, infant and young child feeding in emergencies.