Infant and young child feeding: Remote counselling eLearning

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To respond to the challenges highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, a new eLearning course has been launched which targets infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counsellors. The course is designed to equip learners with the knowledge and skills to remotely counsel clients on understanding, adopting and sustaining optimal IYCF behaviors and practices during infectious disease outbreaks. This course was developed by READY, a USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance-funded consortium of partners led by Save the Children, augmenting the global capacity of non-government organisations to respond to major infectious disease outbreaks.

In 2021, a global survey was conducted to understand which programmatic adaptations for COVID-19 were most adopted by frontline workers and field practitioners. The survey found that remote counselling services supporting the adoption of IYCF behaviours and practices was the least implemented adaptation. With further investigation, it was found that –

despite the strong need for remote counselling services at a time when access to skilled IYCF support was lacking – there was a gap in capacity strengthening tools on how to implement remote counselling.

To meet this identified gap in the delivery of IYCF services during COVID-19, IYCF Remote Counseling builds on the skills that IYCF counsellors already possess, and translates these to remote delivery. To achieve this, the course uses audio and scenario-based exercises, knowledge checks, and opportunities for self-reflection. By the end of the course, learners are able to remotely assess the nutrition situation of their client and their child, analyse potential feeding challenges, and act to address those challenges. The course also provides additional considerations for IYCF counselling in specific remote settings including infectious disease outbreaks, conflict areas, and during migration or displacement events.

The course is designed for low-bandwidth environments, is mobile-optimised and can

be played across a range of browsers and platforms. User feedback will be used to strengthen future versions of the course and future IYCF capacity-building initiatives, particularly those occurring in outbreak settings. While only recently launched – in early 2022 – the course currently has over 400 learners enrolled from over 70 countries. Based on demand, this course will be republished in Arabic, French, Indonesian, and Spanish in October 2022.

For more information about the course, please visit **https://www.ready-initiative.org/ready-training/elearning-iycf-remote-counseling/**

Wasting and stunting': Two new publications from the research-influencing sub-working group

The research-influencing sub-working group of the Wasting and Stunting Technical Interest Group (WaSt-TIG) has recently published two papers aimed at researchers working in this field.

The first is a peer-reviewed perspectives piece published in the *Journal of Nutrition* (Sadler et al, 2022), which summarises the learnings from the Wasting and Stunting Project to date – a project that aimed to better understand the complex relationship between wasting and stunting and examine whether current separations that were apparent in approaches to policy, financing, and programmes were justified or useful. The article brings a wasting and stunting lens to how research is designed and financed for the nutrition community to better understand, prevent, and treat child undernutrition. The authors discuss key lessons learned, focusing on the synergy and temporal relationships between children's weight loss and linear growth faltering, the various factors that drive diverse forms of undernutrition, and how to best identify and target those most at risk. They conclude that supporting progress in all these

areas requires research collaborations that highlight the value of research that moves beyond a focus on single forms of undernutrition and ensures that equal attention is given to wasting compared to other forms of malnutrition.

The second paper is a technical brief that explores research methods for studies looking at the relationship between wasting and stunting (James & Khara, 2022). The brief aims to share the extensive experience of the WaSt-TIG in scrutinising this relationship, with the aim of inspiring and facilitating others to do the same. Data used by the group includes multiple datasets drawn from diverse settings, collected using a variety of objectives and methodologies. The authors start with an overview of the main characteristics of cross-sectional and longitudinal data and how these different types of data have been used by the WaSt-TIG. In doing so, they set out some of the strengths and limitations of both, discussing which research questions lend themselves to each type of data.

The second part of the brief then summarises some of the best practices that arose from the collective experience of the WaSt-TIG, focusing

on the choice of outcomes and exposures, the consideration of seasonality, the duration of the studies, the frequency of data collection, pooling datasets, and data cleaning. The brief finishes with reflections on systematic reviews and provides short concluding remarks.

The lessons learned may help researchers and programmers involved in similar research and they are relevant not only for the design and planning of new studies but also for the analysis of existing datasets through the lens of wasting and stunting.

References

James P and Khara T (2022) Research methods for studies looking at the relationship between wasting and stunting. **https://www.ennonline.net/wast-tigtechnicalbriefingpaper2022**

Sadler K, James P, Bhutta Z et al (2022) How can nutrition research better reflect the relationship between wasting and stunting in children? Learnings from the wasting and stunting project. The Journal of Nutrition. **https://academic.oup.com/jn/advance-article/doi/10.1093/jn/nxac091/6605596**