Professional Certificate in Nutrition in Humanitarian Aid

Nutrition and Health in Emergencies

A

Acute Malnutrition: a rapid decline in nutritional status resulting in weight-for-height Related terms: chronic malnutrition, moderate acute malnutrition, severe acute malnutrition. In a refugee camp, a child who loses 10 % of body weight in two weeks is classified as acutely malnourished. Practical application: rapid nutrition assessment teams use MUAC tapes to screen populations. Challenges: limited staff, cultural acceptability of measurement, and supply chain interruptions for therapeutic foods.

B

Blended Food Rations: pre-cooked, fortified blends of cereals, legumes, and oil designed for distribution in emergency settings. Related terms: general food distribution (GFD), specialized supplementary rations, ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF). Example: a 2 kg bag of blended wheat-lentil porridge provides 500 kcal per day for a family of five. Practical application: logistics teams calculate weight-to-calorie ratios to optimize transport. Challenges: shelf-life in hot climates, taste preferences, and ensuring adequate micronutrient fortification.

C

Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM): an approach that treats acute malnutrition at the community level using outpatient protocols, with inpatient care reserved for complications. Related terms: inpatient care, outpatient therapeutic program (OTP), integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI). In a flood-affected district, health volunteers identify children with MUAC Practical application: training community health workers to dispense RUTF and monitor weight gain. Challenges: maintaining quality control, tracking defaulters, and coordinating with local authorities.

D

Diarrhoea Management in Emergencies: protocols for rapid rehydration, zinc supplementation, and prevention of transmission. Related terms: oral rehydration salts (ORS), water-sanitation-hygiene (WASH), acute watery diarrhoea. In a camp where cholera outbreaks are common, health posts provide ORS packets and zinc tablets to children under five. Practical application: pre-positioning ORS kits and training volunteers on the WHO rehydration plan. Challenges: ensuring clean water, cultural myths about ORS taste, and stock-out risks.

E

Emergency Nutrition Assessment (ENA) Software: a digital tool for calculating anthropometric indicators, such as WHZ, MUAC, and prevalence rates. Related terms: SMART methodology, nutrition surveillance, data dashboards. Field nutritionists in a disaster zone use tablets with ENA to upload data in real time. Practical

application: rapid generation of prevalence maps to guide resource allocation. Challenges: limited internet connectivity, device battery life, and data security concerns.

F

Food Security: the condition when all people have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. Related terms: food availability, food access, food utilization. In a protracted conflict, households may have adequate food stocks but lack purchasing power, leading to hidden hunger. Practical application: cash-based transfers (CBT) to restore purchasing power. Challenges: market volatility, inflation, and targeting errors.

G

General Food Distribution (GFD): the standard method of providing staple foods (e.g., rice, maize, pulses) to displaced populations. Related terms: targeted food distribution, ration size, food basket. In a temporary settlement, families receive a monthly 15-kg rice ration. Practical application: calculating per-capita caloric needs (2,100 kcal) to set ration sizes. Challenges: logistics bottlenecks, spoilage, and unequal distribution.

H

Health-Nutrition Linkages: the interdependence of health services and nutrition outcomes, especially in emergencies. Related terms: integrated primary health care, disease-nutrition cycle, preventive health. A malaria outbreak increases anaemia rates among children, illustrating the health-nutrition feedback loop. Practical application: co-locating nutrition screening with malaria testing. Challenges: siloed funding streams and differing program timelines.

I

Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in Emergencies: guidelines for protecting, promoting, and supporting optimal feeding practices for children 0-24 months during crises. Related terms: exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, breast-milk substitutes. In a camp, mothers are encouraged to breastfeed on demand despite limited privacy. Practical application: establishing breast-feeding support corners staffed by lactation counselors. Challenges: cultural stigma, lack of safe spaces, and misinformation about formula.

J

Joint Humanitarian Nutrition Programme (JHNP): a collaborative framework where multiple agencies coordinate nutrition interventions to avoid duplication and maximize impact. Related terms: cluster coordination, inter-agency working group (IAWG), sector plan. During a cyclone response, UN agencies, NGOs, and the government share a joint nutrition action plan. Practical application: joint monitoring dashboards and shared supply chains. Challenges: differing reporting requirements and competition for donor funds.

K

Kits for Micronutrient Supplementation (MMS): pre-packed sachets containing vitamins and minerals

designed for distribution to at-risk groups. Related terms: multiple micronutrient powders (MNP), vitamin-A supplementation, iron-folic acid tablets. In a drought-affected region, mothers receive MMS to add to children's porridge. Practical application: training caregivers on correct dosage and timing. Challenges: taste acceptance, storage conditions, and monitoring adherence.

L

Logistics Cluster: the coordination mechanism that manages procurement, transport, and storage of humanitarian supplies, including nutrition commodities. Related terms: supply chain management, warehousing, convoy security. In a conflict zone, the logistics cluster ensures that RUTF reaches remote health posts. Practical application: using GPS tracking for shipments. Challenges: road blockades, customs delays, and fuel shortages.

M

Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC): a rapid screening tool measuring the circumference of the upper arm to identify acute malnutrition. Related terms: MUAC tape, cut-off points, field anthropometry. A MUAC Practical application: community volunteers conduct door-to-door MUAC screening. Challenges: inter-observer variability and ensuring sterile measurement techniques.

N

Nutrition Surveillance: systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of nutrition data to detect trends and outbreaks. Related terms: early warning system, rapid assessment, prevalence surveys. In a protracted refugee situation, weekly MUAC data flag a rise in moderate acute malnutrition, prompting a supplemental feeding response. Practical application: establishing sentinel sites for regular data collection. Challenges: data quality, timeliness, and integration with health surveillance.

O

Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS): a low-cost solution of glucose and electrolytes that treats dehydration caused by diarrhoea. Related terms: rehydration solution, zinc supplementation, cholera treatment. In a camp clinic, caregivers are taught to dissolve one ORS packet in 1 L of clean water. Practical application: pre-positioning ORS packets at health posts. Challenges: ensuring clean water, taste aversion, and stock management.

P

Prepared-Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF): energy-dense, lipid-based paste that treats severe acute malnutrition without need for water or cooking. Related terms: Plumpy'Nut, therapeutic feeding, outpatient therapeutic program. A child with SAM consumes 200 kcal of RUTF twice daily, achieving weight gain of 5 g/kg/day. Practical application: local production to reduce import reliance. Challenges: cultural acceptance, supply chain resilience, and cost.

Q

Quick Assessment of Nutritional Status (QANS): a rapid field tool combining MUAC, weight-for-age, and

visual assessment to prioritize interventions. Related terms: rapid nutrition screening, triage, SMART methodology. First responders use QANS to decide which households receive emergency supplementary feeding. Practical application: integrating QANS into disaster-response checklists. Challenges: limited training time and the need for calibrated equipment.

R

Ready-to-Eat (RTE) Food Packs: shelf-stable, pre-cooked meals suitable for immediate consumption in emergencies. Related terms: high-energy biscuits (HEB), fortified snacks, humanitarian food aid. In an earthquake shelter, families receive 2-kg packs of fortified rice-bean meals providing 2,200 kcal/day. Practical application: pre-positioning RTE packs in regional hubs. Challenges: weight constraints for air transport and ensuring dietary diversity.

S

Supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP): targeted distribution of fortified foods to moderately malnourished individuals to prevent progression to severe malnutrition. Related terms: moderate acute malnutrition, fortified blended foods, supplementary feeding centres. In a drought-stricken area, children with MUAC 115-124 mm receive daily sachets of fortified millet porridge. Practical application: monitoring weight gain of at least 5 g/kg/day. Challenges: adherence, sharing of rations within households, and seasonal food availability.

T

Therapeutic Feeding: the provision of specialized nutrient-dense foods, such as RUTF or F-100 milk, to treat severe acute malnutrition. Related terms: inpatient therapeutic feeding, outpatient therapeutic feeding, SAM protocols. A child with SAM is admitted to an inpatient unit, receives F-100 milk until stable, then transitions to RUTF for home-based care. Practical application: establishing “treatment corners” in health facilities. Challenges: monitoring for medical complications and ensuring continuity of care after discharge.

U

UNICEF Supply Division: the agency responsible for procurement, storage, and distribution of nutrition commodities for humanitarian operations. Related terms: procurement guidelines, strategic stockpile, multi-agency procurement. UNICEF’s emergency kit includes RUTF, ORS, and micronutrient powders, dispatched to a regional hub. Practical application: using the UN Global Marketplace (UNGM) for fast purchasing. Challenges: aligning donor specifications with field realities and customs clearance delays.

V

Vitamin-A Supplementation (VAS): high-dose vitamin-A capsules administered semi-annually to reduce morbidity and mortality among children 6-59 months. Related terms: micronutrient deficiency, prophylactic supplementation, integrated campaigns. In a post-conflict setting, health workers distribute 200,000 VAS capsules alongside measles vaccination. Practical application: integrating VAS into mass immunization campaigns. Challenges: ensuring coverage of hard-to-reach populations and avoiding duplication.

W

Water-Sanitation-Hygiene (WASH) in Nutrition: the synergy between safe water, adequate sanitation, and hygiene practices to prevent nutrition-related diseases. Related terms: diarrhoea prevention, hand-washing stations, water quality testing. Installing latrines and hand-washing facilities in a refugee camp reduces diarrhoea incidence, supporting better nutrient absorption. Practical application: joint WASH-nutrition monitoring indicators. Challenges: cultural norms around latrine use and maintenance of facilities.

X

X-ray Diffraction (XRD) for Food Quality: a laboratory technique used to verify the composition and fortification of emergency food supplies. Related terms: quality assurance, food fortification verification, laboratory testing. Samples of blended rations are sent to a regional lab for XRD analysis to confirm iron fortification levels. Practical application: routine batch testing before shipment. Challenges: limited laboratory capacity in crisis zones and time delays.

Y

Yield-Based Food Ration Planning: calculating the amount of food needed based on projected agricultural yields and population movements. Related terms: food security forecasting, commodity market analysis, stockpile management. In a flood-prone region, planners estimate a 30 % loss of local rice harvest and increase emergency stock accordingly. Practical application: adjusting procurement schedules to match forecasted deficits. Challenges: unpredictable weather patterns and limited reliable yield data.

Z

Zero-Hour Nutrition Response: the immediate activation of nutrition protocols within the first 24 hours of an emergency. Related terms: rapid response team, emergency operations centre (EOC), initial assessment. The nutrition focal point convenes a meeting at hour 12 to launch MUAC screening and RUTF pre-positioning. Practical application: pre-signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) for swift mobilization. Challenges: coordination among multiple agencies and ensuring staff availability during night shifts.