



Complementary Feeding Bowl

unicef 
for every child

Supply Division



Overview

The challenge

Globally, 1 in 3 children under 5 are not growing well due to malnutrition, and almost half do not eat a diverse diet with fruit, vegetables, eggs, dairy, fish and meat in the complementary feeding stage (6 - 23 months).

The quality of children's diets is more important before the age of 2 than at any other time in life. Insufficient nutrients can irreversibly harm a child's development. For example, [vitamin A deficiency is the main cause of blindness in children](#), and an [iron deficiency can reduce physical and mental development](#), limiting future ability to learn.

Many factors, including socio-economic, prevent access to nutritious foods. At the household level a lack of knowledge of the amount and diversity of foods young children need can also be a factor.

UNICEF supports Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counselling to train communities in improved nutrition. However, sessions are often conducted without utensils (bowls, spoons) making it hard to illustrate key nutritional messages.

The response

UNICEF developed a Complementary Feeding Bowl and Spoon to provide caregivers with a simple tool to remember nutrition messages when they are preparing food for their child. This will help ensure children receive a diverse and nutrient-dense diet at the right frequency.

The kit is designed to be used by counsellors during IYCF behaviour change sessions for a clearer and more interactive demonstration of nutritional messages. Caregivers then take the bowl home as an ongoing reminder.

To reflect the need for dietary diversity, culturally-relevant nutritional food icons are on the rim of the bowl. Inside, measuring lines show age-appropriate portion sizes for meal quantity, while other icons show age-appropriate meal frequency.

A slotted spoon accompanies the bowl. While this may seem counterintuitive, it ensures the first semi-solid foods are the right consistency (not watered down) and energy-dense.

The product builds on [research by Emory University](#) who tested a bowl prototype in five countries and found an increase in meal volume by up to 20 per cent. UNICEF built on the concept, adding more features to support key nutritional messages. It also includes WASH messages and is inclusive for users living with disabilities.

In 2022, UNICEF will implement the bowl in eight countries to further understand its impact, particularly on the diversity of young children's diets. To date, 400,000 bowl and spoon kits have been procured. It is also one of just 10 innovations highlighted in the [UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030](#) as a way to increase access to nutritious diets.

The impact

Through equipping caregivers with knowledge on improved nutritional practices we can help prevent malnutrition and give millions of children the best start in life. This project will increase the number of children who receive optimal nutrition during the critical first two years of life, ensuring they grow up healthy and can fulfil their full potential. This will also contribute to long-term educational and health outcomes.

When fully scaled, this frugal innovation has the potential to reach 57 million caregivers through existing IYCF programmes.

Key figures

Issue

1 in 3 children under 5 are not growing well due to malnutrition.

48 per cent of children aged 6–23 months are not fed often enough.

2 in 3 children aged 6–23 months lack a diverse diet and are not fed foods from the minimum number of food groups.

340 million children suffer from hidden hunger due to a lack of essential vitamins and minerals in their diets.

Response

57 million caregivers receive counselling through IYCF programmes and could benefit from this project.

20% increase

in meal volume found in [trial of bowl prototype](#), conducted by Emory University.

8 countries

will implement the new UNICEF product in 2022.

Key figures 'issue' source: [State of the World's Children, 2019](#), [UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020-30](#) and [Fed to Fail?](#)



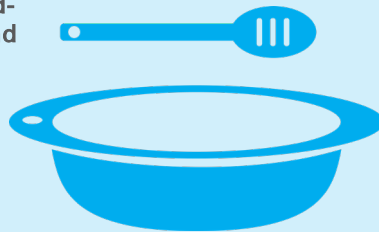
Complementary Feeding Bowl

Colour and design are child-friendly, gender-neutral, and inclusive.

3 slots in spoon to ensure correct thickness of food

Wide rim for printing icons of the 8 different food groups

Hole allows for wall-hanging with both items



Indications for 1/2 bowl, 3/4 bowl, full bowl, age group & number of meals

Handwashing symbol inside bowl shows importance of hand hygiene

Flat bottom & stackable structure

250ml capacity

Supporting evidence

Prototypes of the bowl and spoon have been used and tested in different countries by Emory University. [Results from field reports](#) have been positive:

- In **India** (2013) results suggested that the tool has the potential to **positively impact both maternal and child dietary practices**.
- In **Kenya** (2014) studies indicated that mothers liked the bowl and spillover effects were observed where **mothers shared the new knowledge with other mothers**.
- In **Malawi** (2015, 2016) cluster randomized trials took place with a control group receiving only nutrition education and the intervention group receiving nutrition education and the bowl/spoon toolkits. The study found that **meal volumes increased significantly in the intervention group – up to 20 per cent**.
- In **Tanzania** (2017) the **majority of mothers reported changes in their child’s diet** since they started using the feeding toolkit, including increases in quantity of the food the child ate and positive changes in the child’s health.
- In **Ethiopia** (2018, 2019) the ‘Healthy Mother, Healthy Child’ project showed **significant improvements in portion size, minimum dietary diversity and thickness**.



How to procure Complementary Feeding Bowl kits

Three different bowl and spoon kits are available from different suppliers via the [UNICEF Supply Catalogue](#), with prices ranging for \$0.20 - \$1.39 per kit.

They are designed to align with existing IYCF programming and materials and include culturally-relevant food icons for different regions. All three products are made from a high-quality plastic with a smooth finish, ability to withstand temperatures up to 70°C, and last for at least 24 months.



Nutrition counsellors often lack relevant tools, such as a bowl and spoon, to demonstrate dietary diversity and quantity in existing IYCF sessions with caregivers. The bowl will help during counselling sessions to clearly illustrate key messages in an interactive and engaging way, as well as provide a regular at-home reminder for caregivers at the point when they are preparing their children’s meals.

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