Management of small and nutritionally at-risk infants under six months and their mothers (MAMI)
Acknowledgements

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About the MAMI Global Network

The MAMI Global Network is an active community of implementers, researchers and policy-makers working together to improve policy, evidence and practice for small and nutritionally at-risk infants under six months (u6m) and their mothers (MAMI).

Our aim is to assist local, national and international collaborators to work together to improve policy, evidence and practice for small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers. To achieve this, our mission is to build an effective and energetic network to enhance mutual capacity, bridge disciplines, address evidence gaps and champion MAMI care. Membership is open to all who share our vision that every small and nutritionally at-risk infant u6m and their mother is supported to survive and thrive.

The MAMI Global Network is coordinated by ENN, co-led by ENN and LSHTM and governed by a steering committee. Working groups, special interest groups, advisory groups and country chapters work together to contribute to the collective delivery of a shared workplan guided by our five-year strategy (2021–2025).

We welcome collaboration with individuals, agencies and initiatives across disciplines, services and contexts with shared visions. Contact the MAMI Global Network Coordinator: mami@ennonline.net.

For more information, visit www.ennonline.net/ourwork/research/mami.
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1. Background and purpose

This Communications Guide has been developed to establish consistent and clear communication on the management of small and nutritionally at-risk infants under six months (u6m) and their mothers (MAMI), and to inform advocacy for the approach. Its primary purpose is to support engagement with key stakeholders across sectors/disciplines from sub-national to global levels in order to facilitate delivery of the MAMI Global Network Strategy. To achieve this, the guide outlines:

- Target audiences for MAMI communications and advocacy across sectors and levels (section 2)
- General key messages (section 3)
- Audience-specific key messages (section 4)
- Communications channels (section 5)
- Existing communications and advocacy materials (section 6)

The intended users of this document are those engaged in communication and advocacy regarding the development, planning, funding and/or delivery of care for small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers. Users may be communication specialists or those working in related policy, research or practice who want to understand more or wish to communicate clearly with others. The content demonstrates the relevance of MAMI to various specialities and disciplines and can help to establish connections for collaborative planning and action.

This guide provides key communication considerations to facilitate conversations with different stakeholders. More detailed and targeted communication and advocacy may be necessary. Communications with communities, families, mothers and fathers are not addressed in this guide.

2. Target audiences

Suggested target audiences for MAMI communications and advocacy include:

- Relevant government ministries in countries with high burdens of small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m
- Global and national/sub-national-level practitioners working in relevant nutrition and health service planning and delivery, including United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donors and civil society
- Global policy-makers/changemakers across relevant nutrition and health disciplines and initiatives
- Academics and researchers in MAMI-related fields
3. Key messages

This section outlines key messages for use in general communications on MAMI and the MAMI Global Network (MAMI GN). For audience-specific key messages see section 4.

What is MAMI?

- MAMI is the management of small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers.
- ‘Small and nutritionally at-risk’ includes infants u6m who have a low birth weight (pre-term infants, small for gestational age) and/or infants u6m who are wasted, stunted and/or underweight. These infants are often described as malnourished.
- The MAMI vision is that every small and nutritionally at-risk infant u6m and their mother is supported to survive and thrive.

What is the MAMI approach?

- MAMI is an integrated approach to supporting the identification, assessment and management of small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers together.
- MAMI involves early treatment to prevent immediate and future poor outcomes, such as more severe or recurrent malnutrition, illness, poor development and death. This means it encompasses both prevention and treatment.
- MAMI bridges maternal and child nutrition, health and social interventions, using and building on existing systems and services wherever possible.
- The MAMI approach promotes the integration of care into existing health and nutrition systems and services to increase the chances of sustainable, scalable care for mothers and infants.

Why is MAMI needed?

- Nearly half of all child deaths are due to undernutrition and infants u6m are the most vulnerable.\(^1,2\)
- Infants may be born small and nutritionally at risk or may become malnourished after birth.
- Globally, an estimated 23.8 million infants u6m are underweight, 24.5 million are wasted and 21.5 million are stunted.
- About one in five infants u6m is small and nutritionally at-risk.\(^3\) In low- and middle-income countries:
  - 20.1% of infants are underweight
  - 21.3% are wasted
  - 17.6% are stunted
  - Around 15.0% are born with a low birth weight\(^4\)

These infants are at higher risk of illness, death, poor development and long-term ill health.

- Infants who experience wasting in the first six months of life are more likely to be wasted or stunted in later childhood.\(^5\)
- Many small and nutritionally at-risk infants and their mothers do not receive the care that they need, particularly after the newborn period between six weeks and six months of age and in community-based outpatient services.
What is the MAMI Care Pathway?

- The MAMI Care Pathway describes an integrated care pathway approach. Implementation should consider the need, as well as the processes, resources and participation required to support continuity of care across maternal and infant nutrition and health services.
- Implementation of the MAMI Care Pathway requires adaptation of the approach for different contexts, systems and services.
- The MAMI Care Pathway Package is a resource material that guides practitioners on how to identify, assess and manage small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers.
- The package is applicable across development and humanitarian/fragile/conflict-affected settings. It can be applied in both government and NGO-delivered/supported services.
- Key service components of MAMI care include screening, assessment and support of infants u6m and their mothers. These components include active growth monitoring and supporting maternal mental wellbeing.
- The MAMI Care Pathway integrates, and is modelled on, the integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI) approach, to strengthen and complement IMCI implementation.
- More research is needed on the implementation and impact of the MAMI Care Pathway approach in different settings.

What is the MAMI Global Network?

- The MAMI Global Network is an active community of local, national and international implementers, researchers and policy-makers working together to improve policy, evidence and practice for small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers.
- The MAMI Global Network is coordinated by ENN and co-led by ENN and LSHTM.
- The MAMI Global Network is governed by a steering committee and composed of working groups and country chapters, who contribute to the collective delivery of a shared workplan.
- Membership of the MAMI Global Network is open to all. Sign up here.

What does the MAMI Global Network do?

- The MAMI Global Network is guided by a Five-Year Strategy (2021–2025).
- The MAMI Global Network facilitates communication and collaboration between frontline practitioners, researchers and policy-makers across national and international stakeholders.
- The MAMI Global Network is guided by and is committed to supporting country priorities and actions.
- The MAMI Global Network aims to engage individuals and organisations from a range of sectors/disciplines.
- Specifically, the MAMI Global Network:
  - Hosts working groups to facilitate information sharing and collaboration, as well as to address technical issues on MAMI
  - Engages in the development of global normative and implementation guidance
  - Undertakes secondary data analysis to build evidence
  - Provides advisors to external research groups
  - Disseminates emerging learning and evidence
  - Provides a platform for practitioners to share information and troubleshoot MAMI-related implementation issues (found here)
4. Audience-specific key messages

MAMI audiences include stakeholders across many sectors/disciplines/services, including nutrition (infant, child and maternal), health (newborn, child and maternal), mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and early childhood development (ECD). Other strategic target audiences include those engaged in work related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and climate change. The development, uptake and implementation of effective MAMI services at scale relies on successful engagement across these diverse stakeholders and initiatives.

General messages that are relevant across target audiences

How does MAMI support linkages between different sectors?

MAMI facilitates communication and collaboration between different sectors/disciplines/services by bridging:

- Wasting and stunting
- Wasting and underweight
- Nutrition and maternal and child health
- Nutrition and newborn care
- Nutrition, health and child development
- Nutrition and mental health
- Maternal nutrition and health and infant outcomes
- Humanitarian/fragile/conflict and development contexts

How can different stakeholders support MAMI?

Practitioners:
- See where to integrate relevant elements of the MAMI Care Pathway into service delivery during contact points with mothers of infants u6m.
- Use the MAMI Care Pathway Package during programme/service development – ideally integrating MAMI components from the start.
- Review sector-specific messages (below) to identify common ground with other service providers.
- Reach out to complementary services to develop pathways of referral and care.
- Advocate to, and work with, other stakeholders to fill MAMI service gaps.

Policy-makers:
- Include MAMI in relevant policies, strategies and guidance at national and international levels.
- Champion MAMI to develop and deliver quality, comprehensive continuity of care for small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers.
- Invite other relevant sectors/specialities to contribute to policy development.
- Collaborate with practitioners and researchers to support the development of evidence-based policy.
- Allocate funding for MAMI service development and delivery in budgets, including for staff training.
- Hold service providers accountable for including small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers within relevant services.
- Advocate to, and work, with other stakeholders to fill MAMI policy gaps.

Researchers:
- Include infants u6m in research to build evidence in priority areas.6
- Include MAMI priorities in calls for research funding.
- Design research that will directly inform WHO and national policy and guideline development.
- Co-create research through fair and collaborative partnerships with national policy-makers and service planners to support evidence to inform decision-making and policy development.7
- Publish research in open access journals and on pre-print platforms.
- Integrate MAMI into university and in-service training and postgraduate research projects.
- Generate and share evidence on the process and impact of integrated/collaborative service development and delivery in different contexts.

All
- Join the MAMI Global Network and take part in our collective action by contacting mami@ennonline.net.
- Share implementation experiences and research: for example, by publishing in ENN’s Field Exchange publication and in peer-reviewed journals.
How is MAMI relevant to the nutrition sector?

- MAMI is critical to the achievement of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).
- MAMI responds to the Lancet’s 2021 Maternal and Child Undernutrition series Call for Action to bring together resources, leadership and coordination, along with data and evidence, to address the burden of undernutrition worldwide.9
- MAMI helps deliver on UNICEF’s ‘No Time to Waste’ initiative that includes the MAMI Care Pathway Package as a promising way to prevent and treat malnutrition in wasted infants u6m.
- MAMI shares the vision of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement for government-led collective action to ensure every child, adolescent, mother and family realises their right to food and nutrition, allowing them to reach their full potential and shape sustainable and prosperous societies.
- MAMI provides an opportunity to tackle adolescent nutrition and health in young mothers of small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and to interrupt intergenerational cycles of malnutrition.9

Evidence linking MAMI and nutrition

- Improving the nutrition and health of infants u6m has positive effects throughout the life cycle and across generations.
- MAMI supports growth and development in infants u6m, targeting a period of high (and often the highest) prevalence of wasting and stunting.10
- MAMI reduces the risk of illness and death. It also supports improved development for better educational outcomes and earning capacity later in life.11 There is growing evidence that preventing severe malnutrition in infancy and childhood may reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases later in life.12

How can MAMI support other nutrition initiatives?

- The MAMI Care Pathway Package provides practical guidance and materials to help operationalise upcoming WHO guidelines on the management of growth faltering in infants u6m.
- The MAMI Care Pathway Package provides resources:
  - To inform how to deliver community-based management of wasting and integrated community case management of infants u6m
  - That show how it is possible to embed feeding assessment and counselling with clinical care of the infant and support to the mother
  - To link with other nutrition services; e.g., referral to and early case finding for management of wasting in children u6m

How can nutrition stakeholders support MAMI?

**Practitioners:**
- Gather and share surveillance and programme data on the burden of small and nutritionally at-risk infants and their mothers and on programme outcomes for infants u6m.
- Identify points of integration, develop capacity and secure referral pathways for infants u6m and their mothers within services that treat wasting in children over six months of age.

**Policy-makers:**
- Explicitly include the burden of small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers and prioritise addressing their needs in nutrition strategies and plans, including in guidelines that address wasting/malnutrition.

**Researchers:**
- Conduct formal and operational research to build evidence on the process and impact of the MAMI Care Pathway in relation to infant and child outcomes in different contexts.
Newborn health

How is MAMI relevant to the newborn health sector?

- MAMI shares the vision that every newborn will survive and thrive, as stated in the Every Newborn Action Plan, the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health, and the SDGs.
- The MAMI Care Pathway has the mother–infant dyad at its centre.
- The MAMI Care Pathway package promotes and supports Kangaroo care (skin to skin contact).
- The MAMI Care Pathway can be used to support every newborn to make the best start in life, regardless of where they are born in the world.
- The MAMI approach aligns with the WHO standards of quality of care for small and sick newborns.

Evidence linking MAMI and newborn health

- An estimated 2.4 million newborns die every year, mostly from preventable causes. Vulnerable infants need targeted care in the newborn period and beyond.
- One in every 10 infants is born pre-term. One in every seven infants is born with a low birth weight. These infants need special support to survive and thrive.

How can MAMI support newborn health initiatives?

- MAMI includes small infants and their mothers as a target group.
- The MAMI Care Pathway resource materials can be used for stable newborns to support feeding and maternal mental health.
- The MAMI Care Pathway integrated approach can help identify connection points between inpatient care and community services to facilitate continued support for at-risk small and sick newborns and their mothers through infancy.

How can newborn health stakeholders support MAMI?

Practitioners:
- Integrate MAMI Care Pathway risk screening into antenatal/postnatal services, including immunisations.
- Use the MAMI Care Pathway resources to support skilled feeding of small and sick newborns and to support maternal mental wellbeing within facilities.
- Develop referral pathways for small and sick newborns from inpatient facilities to outpatient/community follow-up beyond the neonatal period.

Policy-makers:
- Integrate relevant components of MAMI into existing national strategies for the continuum of care, including the Every Newborn Action Plan, national nutrition plans, and immunisation plans.

Researchers:
- Conduct and share research on how to deliver MAMI care and on the outcomes of support provided to small and sick newborns.
Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

How is MAMI relevant to the MHPSS sector?

• The MAMI Global Network supports the goal of the Global Alliance for Maternal Mental Health to improve the mental health and wellbeing of women and their infants during pregnancy and the first year of life.

Evidence linking MAMI with MHPSS

• Common perinatal mental disorders are a leading cause of disability during and after pregnancy, affecting the quality of life of the mother and the child. MAMI provides an entry point to support maternal mental wellbeing and health.
• Interventions that support maternal mental health can improve rates of exclusive breastfeeding – this has the power to save infant lives and improve the lives of mothers.

How can MAMI support MHPSS initiatives?

• MAMI provides an entry point to identify maternal mental health issues and support maternal mental wellbeing and health.
• The MAMI Care Pathway Package includes basic (non-specialist) support for maternal mental wellbeing and strategies to address maternal mental health.
• The MAMI Care Pathway Package can help identify and refer mothers to more specialist services where needed.

How can MHPSS stakeholders support MAMI?

Practitioners:
• Integrate MAMI Care Pathway risk screening into MHPSS and protection contact points.
• Develop referral pathways for at-risk infants u6m and mothers to MAMI outpatient/community follow-up.
• Collaborate with MAMI services to strengthen support for maternal mental health, such as training for non-specialist health workers on assessment and care.
• Establish referral pathways to specialist services for at-risk mothers identified in MAMI services.

Policy-makers:
• Integrate maternal mental health into relevant nutrition and health policies, strategies and plans.

Researchers:
• Generate and share evidence on how to deliver maternal mental health support by different cadres of health worker and the impact of support on infant nutrition, health and development outcomes in different contexts.
Early childhood development (ECD)

How is MAMI relevant to the ECD sector?
- MAMI shares the vision and supports the implementation of the Nurturing Care for Early Childhood Development Framework to help every child reach their full potential.

Evidence linking MAMI with ECD
- The first six months of an infant’s life are among the most critical for healthy brain development – providing nurturing care in this period sets infants up for better development and learning outcomes, with implications for future prosperity and health.

How can MAMI support ECD initiatives?
- The MAMI Care Pathway includes support actions for ECD in small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m as a core component of care.
- The MAMI Care Pathway provides an entry point for including nurturing care in health and nutrition services.

How can ECD stakeholders support MAMI?

Practitioners:
- Integrate MAMI Care Pathway screening into ECD services that target families with infants u6m.
- Collaborate with MAMI services to strengthen ECD support, such as training for non-specialist health workers.

Policy-makers:
- Champion MAMI care as a multisectoral approach to infant health that includes nurturing care for ECD.
- Include small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m as a vulnerable group to target with ECD support within treatment services.

Researchers/academics:
- Generate and share evidence on how to deliver ECD and the impact of ECD support on infant nutrition, health and development outcomes of small and nutritionally at-risk infants u6m in different contexts.
How is MAMI relevant to the health sector?

- MAMI provides an entry point to child health services for small and nutritionally at-risk infants U6m.
- MAMI saves resources for health systems by intervening early to prevent more serious and future malnutrition and illness, which costs more to manage.
- MAMI adds value to child health services because better nourished infants have improved outcomes when afflicted by other childhood illnesses.
- The MAMI Global Network supports country-level action towards Universal Health Coverage – the approach builds links and bridges between child health and wider nutrition, social, maternal, and MHPSS services.

Evidence linking MAMI and child health

- Undernutrition contributes to the deaths of over 3 million children under five every year in low- and middle-income countries; these children die of preventable causes that could be avoided by providing adequate nutrition alongside other simple and affordable interventions.

How can MAMI support child health?

- The MAMI Care Pathway approach connects antenatal, postnatal and early childhood health services, improving continuity of care for small and nutritionally at-risk infants after discharge from newborn care up to six months of age.
- The MAMI Care Pathway supports implementation of IMCI.
- The MAMI Care Pathway Package provides a framework/checklist to help health workers provide consistent support across nutrition and health.
- MAMI care creates additional incentives for mothers to attend health services by adding value to clinical contact points (e.g., through providing rapid nutrition assessments during immunisations).
- MAMI integrates clinical, nutritional and social support to provide a comprehensive package of care, increasing the potential for improved infant outcomes in the immediate and longer term.

How can child health stakeholders support MAMI?

Practitioners:
- Integrate MAMI Care Pathway screening into contact points with infants u6m and their mothers attending health services and in community outreach.
- Develop referral pathways between inpatient and outpatient services for small/nutritionally at-risk infants u6m and their mothers.
- Examine child health policies and plans to identify areas to integrate and connect with core components of the MAMI Care Pathway Package.
- Establish ways to support, or develop, pathways for referral to specialist services for at-risk mothers identified in child health services.

Policy-makers:
- Integrate MAMI into Universal Health Coverage initiatives and into relevant nutrition and health policies, strategies and plans.
- Include the provision of MAMI care at all health service levels (tertiary, secondary, primary level/inpatient, and outpatient/community care), including training of staff.
Maternal health and nutrition

How is MAMI relevant to maternal health and nutrition?

- MAMI considers the mother–infant dyad and is concerned with the health and nutrition of both.
- Women’s nutrition is not prioritised globally. MAMI can act as an entry point to identify at-risk mothers, including adolescent girls, and to help them to access health and nutrition services.

Evidence linking MAMI and maternal health and nutrition

- Women have increased nutritional requirements before, during and after pregnancy, making them physiologically vulnerable to undernutrition.
- Women’s nutritional status is associated with nutrition, health and development outcomes in their infants and children.
- Women who are underweight or overweight during pregnancy have a higher risk of poor pregnancy and breastfeeding outcomes.
- Adolescent mothers in low- and middle-income countries are at increased risk of low birthweight, short birth length and pre-term delivery, with heightened risks for poor infant nutritional status and growth.

How can MAMI support maternal health and nutrition?

- The MAMI Care Pathway considers maternal health and nutrition as part of a package of care for the mother–infant dyad.
- The MAMI Care Pathway includes maternal health and nutrition assessment, basic support (maternal mental wellbeing, family planning, supportive family and community) and referral to more specialist services.
- Adolescent mothers are explicitly included in screening criteria.

How can maternal health and nutrition stakeholders support MAMI?

Practitioners:
- Collaborate to establish pathways for referral to specialist health and nutrition services for at-risk mothers identified in MAMI services.
- Work with MAMI service providers to integrate/strengthen maternal nutrition and health services within the approach; e.g., the provision of multiple micronutrient supplements to mothers and family planning services.
- Contribute to maternal health and nutrition components of MAMI training.

Policy-makers:
- Integrate MAMI into relevant maternal nutrition and health policies, strategies and plans.

Researchers:
- Generate and share evidence on how to provide maternal nutrition and health services in the context of MAMI, including specifically for adolescent mothers, and the impacts on infant outcomes in different contexts.
**Initiative-specific messages**

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

**How is MAMI relevant to the SDGs?**

- MAMI supports and underpins many of the SDGs. Delivering nutrition interventions and improving nutrition outcomes impacts the achievement of at least 12 of the 17 SDGs, including SDGs 1–5, SDG 13, and SDG 2 and 3, particularly Targets 2.2.2 and 3.2.
- Significant improvements in the outcomes of small and nutritionally at-risk infants under 6 months and their mothers are essential to achieve SDGs 2 and 3, particularly Targets 2.2.2 and 3.2.
- Improved nutrition and health from conception and through the first six months of life provides a head start for progress in all aspects of life, including health, education and employment, as well as promoting women’s empowerment and reducing poverty and inequality.
- MAMI targets those who are at greatest risk and those who are furthest behind; attention and accelerated support to these higher-risk mothers and infants is needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

**Climate change**

**How is MAMI relevant to climate change?**

- The biggest climate-related threat to health is through undernutrition. Those who are most affected by climate change are those who are most vulnerable to nutrition deficits in low- and middle-income countries, including mothers and infants.
- Climate change increases the nutritional vulnerability of infants and mothers because of food insecurity. This is driven by unreliable food supply chains, increased food prices, loss of, or changes to, livelihoods, and high rates of disease. Impacts on pregnant women and mothers may compromise nutrition, health and care of infants under 6 months.
- Preliminary evidence suggests that air pollution and extreme heat events may increase the risk of delivering pre-term and low birthweight infants, both of which are target groups for MAMI care.
- Healthy and sustainable food systems begin with breastfeeding. The protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding is a core aim of MAMI care.

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i SDG 1: No Poverty; SDG 2: Zero Hunger; SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing; SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 5: Gender Equality.

ii SDG 13: Climate Action.

iii SDG 2: Zero Hunger; SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing.

iv SDG 2.2.2: Prevalence of malnutrition (weight for height > +2 or < -2 standard deviation from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards) among children under five years of age, by type (wasting and overweight); SDG 3.2: By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under five years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under five mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.
5. Communications channels

The following channels can be used by members and non-members to share MAMI-related communications:
1. Direct communication with MAMI Global Network members via monthly update emails
2. The MAMI page on ENN’s website
3. The MAMI Global Network Twitter account (@MAMIGlobalNet)
4. The MAMI Global Network YouTube channel

Please get in touch with the MAMI Global Network at mami@ennonline.net to share your work via these channels. You can also post directly on the MAMI section of ENN’s online technical forum, en-net.

6. Communications and advocacy materials

A series of infographics are available to download and use to support simple communication with different audiences (see annex 1). Additional resources to use in communication and advocacy materials, such as short videos, infographics, presentations and podcasts, are also available. To view the available materials, go to the MAMI page of ENN’s website.

We encourage translation of the MAMI materials into multiple languages and we welcome those with the capacity to do so to contact us. We ask that stakeholders send through any translated and any new materials to us so that they can be shared with the wider MAMI community. Please also acknowledge the use/adaptation of materials by referencing the original source document.

Contact us

MAMI Global Network Coordinator: mami@ennonline.net
Website: www.ennonline.net/ourwork/research/mami
MAMI Care Pathway Package: www.ennonline.net/mamicarepathway
References


7. ENN (2021) How we support and collaborate with research partners. Brief. Found at: https://www.ennonline.net/researchpartners


Annex 1

Examples of infographic series available to download here.