



## **Chapter 1 *Introduction***

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the MAMI Project

The management of acute malnutrition in infants under six months (MAMI) is currently hampered by poor evidence on which to base guidelines. Both facility-based<sup>1</sup> and community-based programmes<sup>2,3</sup> face challenges in their management. Such challenges have been highlighted in recent published concerns,<sup>4,5</sup> documented field experiences and debate<sup>6</sup>, a WHO technical review of the management of severe malnutrition<sup>7</sup> and in the proceedings of the Infant Feeding in Emergencies (IFE) Core Group<sup>8</sup>.

As a result, infants under six months are admitted to programmes with variable capacity and skill to manage them. Efforts have been made to 'stop-gap' the lack of guidance<sup>9,10</sup> and operational agencies have undertaken different interventions, sometimes guided by field research. Thus a body of experience in MAMI has accumulated. However, this remains disparate and often exists as raw data or internal agency documents. Once collated and formally analysed, however, these data are valuable and worthy of use as an initial basis for investigation.

The Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN) was established in 1996 by international humanitarian agencies to accelerate learning and improve institutional memory in the emergency food and nutrition sector. Many of the challenges around MAMI have been highlighted to ENN in its flagship publication, Field Exchange, and through its involvement in the IFE Core Group. The MAMI Project was conceptualised by the ENN and implemented in collaboration with UCL Centre for International Child Health and Development (CIHD) and Action Contre la Faim (ACF). MAMI was funded by the UNICEF-led Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Nutrition Cluster.

Given the background and ENN's mandate, the MAMI Project is located in the emergency nutrition sector and speaks especially to those concerned with humanitarian response.

## 1.2 Aim, objectives and long term vision

The MAMI Project focuses on infants aged less than six months (0 to 5.9 months old). From hereon, this age-group is referred to as 'infant <6m' (plural 'infants <6m'). Older infants and young children aged six to 59 months are referred to as 'children 6 to 59m'.

**Aim:** The aim of the MAMI Project is to investigate the management of acutely malnourished infants <6m in emergency programmes, in order to improve practice by contributing to evidence-based, better practice guidelines.

**Objectives:** Focused on acutely malnourished infants <6m, the objectives are:

- To establish the infant burden of disease.<sup>i</sup>
- To establish what is currently advised in the form of guidelines, policies and strategies
- To determine what is carried out in practice
- On the basis of this 'field evidence' and other relevant published literature, to make recommendations for future practice and research.

**Vision:** Long term, all malnourished infants should receive effective, evidence-based care. There are multiple competing health needs in vulnerable populations, therefore strategies to treat this group should also be cost effective and achieve maximal possible public health impact.

**Outputs:** Evidence presented in the MAMI report will be used to form the basis of:

- Summary report targeted at field staff, with an emphasis on content relevant to inform better practice
- Published research

<sup>i</sup> This first objective was not in the original project objectives, but was added following initial consultations with stakeholders.

### 1.3 The process

It is hoped that the MAMI Project will provide a starting place for the development of a stronger evidence base through further operational and formal research, leading to more formal best practice guidelines in future.

**Target audience:** This report should be of particular interest to:

- a) Policy makers, programme managers and clinicians involved in MAMI in emergency contexts and nutritionally vulnerable settings.
- b) Professionals in related disciplines with indirect involvement in MAMI, such as neonatal, reproductive health, psychosocial, speech and language, breastfeeding counsellors and community development specialists.
- c) Researchers, students and others wishing to gain a rapid overview of current practices and key issues surrounding MAMI.

### 1.3 The process

The MAMI Project was implemented from January 2008 to July 2009). The process involved a MAMI 'core' team comprising the ENN, UCL CIHD and ACF, a research advisory group (RAG) and an interagency steering group (IASG) of UN agencies, NGOs and independent individuals with relevant experiences (see acknowledgements for members and contributors). Face to face meetings, e-mail and phone were used to establish and elaborate on the key questions to be addressed, and how to address them.

The MAMI Project has been an iterative process. Opportunities to explore further emerging key issues beyond the original remit of the project were taken, such as assessment of disease burden of infant malnutrition (Chapter 3), review of breastfeeding assessment tools (Chapter 7) and a review of antibiotic use in infants < 6m (summarised in Section 9.7).

The main outputs of the MAMI Project are this report, a summary report and publication of key findings (in process and planned). Key findings of the project have been shared at a number of key meetings and a variety of for a in the UK, Malawi and Bangkok<sup>11</sup>. With completion of the MAMI Project, the MAMI 'core' team will continue to actively disseminate findings.

### 1.4 MAMI Project Framework

From the outset of the MAMI Project, it was considered essential to locate the MAMI Project within a framework for the management of malnutrition in this age-group. An initial draft framework, modelled on the UNICEF conceptual framework, informed early discussions with RAG and the IASG, was developed during the course of the project and finalised in light of project findings (see Appendix 1).

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> WHO. (2009) Management of severe malnutrition: a manual for physicians and other senior health workers. Geneva: World Health Organisation.
- <sup>2</sup> Valid International. (2006) Community-based Therapeutic Care (CTC). A Field Manual. Oxford: Valid International.
- <sup>3</sup> WHO, WFP, UNSCN & UNICEF. (2007) Community-based management of severe acute malnutrition. A Joint Statement by the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition and the United Nations Children's Fund.
- <sup>4</sup> Seal, A., Taylor, A., Gostelow, L. & McGrath, M. (2001) Review of policies and guidelines on infant feeding in emergencies: common ground and gaps. *Disasters*. 2001 Jun; 25(2):136-48.
- <sup>5</sup> Seal, A., McGrath, M., Seal, A., Taylor, A. (2002) Infant feeding indicators for use in emergencies: an analysis of current recommendations and practice. *Public Health Nutr*. 2002 Jun; 5(3):365-72.
- <sup>6</sup> Corbett, M. (2000) Infant feeding in a TFP, *Field Exchange* 9, p7; ENN (2000) ENN/GIFA Project, summary of presentation, *Field Exchange* 19, p28; ENN (2003) Diet and renal function in malnutrition, Summary of presentation, *Field Exchange* 19, p24; McGrath, M., Shoham, J & O'Reilly, F. (2003) Debate on the management of severe malnutrition. *Field Exchange* 20, p16.
- <sup>7</sup> WHO. (2004) Severe malnutrition: Report of a consultation to review current literature. Geneva: World Health Organisation..
- <sup>8</sup> IFE Core Group (2006) Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies. Making it Matter. Proceedings of an International Strategy Meeting, 1-2 November 2006. IFE Core Group.
- <sup>9</sup> ENN (2004) Infant feeding in emergencies. Module 2. Version 1.0 Developed through collaboration of ENN, IBRAN, Terre des Hommes, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, WFP. Core Manual (for training, practice and reference).
- <sup>10</sup> ENN et al. (2009) Integration of infant and young child feeding into CTC/CMAM. Manual.
- <sup>11</sup> MAINN (Maternal & Infant Nutrition & Nurture) Conference, UK, workshop session on MAMI led by Marko Kerac; CAPGAN (Commonwealth Association of Paediatric Gastroenterology & Nutrition), Blantyre, Malawi, August 12th to 16th 2009; Sphere Regional Consultation, Malawi, August 2009; MSF (Medecins Sans Frontiers) Scientific Day London, UK, June 11th 2009; Infant feeding in emergencies UNICEF regional training, Nairobi, July, 2009; Working Group on Nutrition in Emergencies, SCN 1 day meeting, Bangkok, 10th October, 2009; Nutrition Cluster Meeting, London, 20 October 2009; Sphere Core Meeting, London, 22-23 October, 2009