

Manual for conducting Responsive Feeding & Play Sessions

May 2008



Introduction

The aim of these sessions is to encourage mothers to be more responsive when feeding and playing with her child; a responsive mother watches for her child's behavioural signals, interprets them and responds in line with them, not against them. For example, when a child reaches for a piece of vegetable on a plate, the child's signal is saying "*I want to pick up the vegetable, it looks tasty*", a responsive mother would respond by encouraging her child to pick up the vegetable and then to eat it. When the child refuses, the mother should not ignore the child's signal of disinterest and should not force feed; a responsive mother would respond to refusals by offering a new food, pausing to talk, or showing that she likes the food.

There will 6-7 mother-child pairs in each session, the mothers will bring their child to every session except the first. It is best if the child does not eat for a couple of hours before the session starts, so arrange sessions at least 2 hours after the usual morning or midday meal. The sessions are based on the 3Ps: **P**actice, **P**eer Support and **P**roblem Solving. The mothers will be encouraged to participate in the session by discussing problems and solutions with other mothers and practicing new ways of feeding their children. Each Practice is preceded by a Demonstration and followed by Coaching. Although, there will be some foods available in the session, the purpose of the session is for mothers to learn new feeding strategies, not to provide food for them.

For each session, the facilitators provide a selection of healthy foods for the children to eat. These are cheap foods which are readily available and which mothers can afford to buy. The back page has a list of some good foods, but you can probably think of more. Do not give the children rice, potatoes or khitchuri; these are good foods, but the children already eat this type of food at home. Try new foods and snacks that children can pick up and eat on their own. Before each activity involving food, make sure that the mothers wash their child's hands using the bucket of water and soap provided. During hand-washing, the facilitator will say to each child: "First you wash your hands; then you touch the food." Quickly the mothers will learn this line, and they will say it every day to their child as they wash hands before the meal. It will remind the mother and child that hand washing allows the child to self-feed. Mothers will also learn to repeat the 5 main messages found at the end of each session. Use hand motions for actions like hand-washing, self-feeding, watching, and responding to help mothers recall the 5 messages.

During the discussions when mothers are talking to each other, have some low cost items available for the children to play with (e.g. plastic bottles/containers, spoons, blocks* etc). This will distract the children while the mothers are talking. It also models an important principle, i.e. that children should be encouraged to play!

Make sure you have done some preparation before the session starts. You should have all the food prepared before the mothers arrive and you should have memorized the session plan so you know what you have to do.

Remember to keep a list of the mothers who attend each session.

If you experience any problems or have any questions, the Plan staff are there to help you.

Finally, at the end of every session, tell mothers about the home work to be done over the week. Ask each mother what new strategies she will try at home. They must make a commitment to try something new at home, but they can choose which. They will tell you at the next session how it worked with their child and what problems they encountered.

*make sure these are safe for the children – small enough for children to hold in their hands but too large to put in their mouth.

SESSION 1. Feeding problems and solutions. Telling about Responsive & Self-Feeding

Information for only Community Facilitators to read ahead of session

- Mothers will come without their children for the first session.
- This session is to tell them about foods to feed their children and ways to feed them.
- First, you will start by asking if they have faced certain problems when feeding their children or heard of others who face these problems. Have a short discussion about this.
- There are 2 messages for this session: One is to encourage children to feed themselves starting at 8 months and to be fully self-feeding by 12 months. Even when children feed themselves, they need a mother there to support and show love. So the second message is that mothers talk in a responsive way with their child. This means that mothers watch and listen for signals from their child and then tell the child that they saw the signal and respond to it. This is important when children signal hunger; it is also important when children refuse food.
- These 5 sessions are about ways to make their children happy eaters. Happy eaters develop into healthy, intelligent, happy children.

Session Objectives: By the end of the session, the mothers in the group will have:

- Talked to other mothers in the group about the type of problems they have when giving (semi) solid food to their child
- Listened to the messages about hand-washing, self-feeding, responsive feeding, and child play materials

Session Duration: 1 hour - 1 hour 15 minutes

Session Materials: Laminated Picture

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Activity 1. Group Discussion – Sharing child feeding problems (15 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is for mothers in the group to talk to the other mothers about: a) the types of foods they give their children, and b) the type of problems they experience giving their children (semi) solid foods. Problems during "mealtime" include those encountered anytime from when the mother prepares her child for eating such as by washing hands, to the end of the meal such as when the child's mouth and hands are washed.

Questions for the group

1. **"What foods do you give your child? "Which of these does your child like to eat?"** *Let all mothers talk about what their child likes to eat and doesn't like to eat.*
2. **"What problems do you encounter when feeding your child? Here are some examples:**
 - 2a. **"Some mothers say that their child refuses food sometimes. Have you ever seen this in your own child or in another child?"** *Let all mothers talk about how children refuse and how mothers respond.*
 - 2b. **"Some mothers say that their child is too young to self-feed because they drop food and it is wasted or because they like their mothers to feed them. Have you ever had this opinion?"** *Let all mothers talk about the good and bad outcomes when children feed themselves between 8 and 24 months.*
 - 2c. **"Some mothers talk to their children while feeding. They ask them why they refused food. They praise them when they eat. They ask if they want another food instead of rice. What do you say to your child when feeding?"** *Let all mothers talk about what they say to their child while feeding.*

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Activity 2. Group Messages – Tell mothers about refusals, self-feeding, responding (20 min)

Tell mothers: Over the 6 sessions we will talk about how to reduce refusals, encourage self-feeding, talk to children while feeding, and feed them good foods. This will make your children healthy, happy and intelligent.

a. **About Refusals:** Children refuse for a good reason. What is the reason?

- It may be that the food is still passing into their body and needs time to settle. So mothers should wait a bit before offering more. Do not hurry the child.
- It may be because the child wants to touch the food and self-feed. So mothers should let them pick up some food to put in their mouth.
- It may be that they want to try another food. Always have two or more foods ready to offer.
- It may be that they ate a snack shortly before. Always wait 2 hours between feedings of snacks and meals.

Some mothers force-feed, beat or threaten their child. Children do not like being force-fed or threatened. Later we will discuss positive ways for mothers to respond to refusals.

b. **About Self-Feeding:** It is good for children to feed themselves. I will tell you why.

- **Motor Development:** Fine motor coordination is useful for later school work (e.g. writing & drawing) and other household tasks (e.g. tying knots, cutting, sewing, planting, chopping)
- **Mental Development:** Children will understand different shapes and textures of foods and how to hold them, understand names of food items and how they look, feel and taste.
- **Development of Self Esteem & Confidence:** Children get a sense of pride and mastery from being able to do things by themselves.
- **Self-care and Feeding Development:** Children can learn to look after themselves, e.g. wash hands, feed themselves, use the latrine, notice hunger and fullness signals from the stomach.

If your child drops food while self-feeding, how can you prevent wastage? *Let mothers make suggestions and thank each one. Then offer your own solutions:*

- Tell him or her to hang over the plate. Then the food spills on the plate.
- If the child is small, then the mother can hold the plate under the child's mouth.
- If the child is older, let them hold the plate under their mouth.
- If children play with the food, say that food is not for play. Say you will give food when they are ready to eat and remove it when they want to play.

c. **About responding to children's sounds and actions:** Why is it good for mothers to talk to children?

Let mothers give answers and thank each one. Then give your answer.

- **Learning Language:** Children learn language by hearing it spoken to them.
- **Development of a Good Relationship between Mother & Child:** Children whose mothers talk with them in a loving and encouraging way will have a stronger love for their mothers.
- **Development of Self-Esteem & Confidence:** Children whose mothers encourage and praise them will grow up believing that they are capable people. This belief will help them do better in school.

Is talking only one-way – from adult to child? No, talking is 2-ways – child to mother to child.

How can it be 2-ways if a child does not talk much?

Children talk in signals. [from Glossary] **Signals are sounds or body movements.**

- For example, smiling is the child's way of saying, "I am happy."
- Waving is a child's way of saying look at me or hello or goodbye.
- Clinging to the mother's body is the child's way of saying "I need to be close; comfort me."
- Opening the mouth or reaching for food is the child's way of saying, "I am hungry."

- Turning the face away from food is the child's way of saying, "I cannot eat right now; ask me why; wait or give me something else."

d. **About time for child play and mother's talk:**

It is also good for babies to play with objects and for mothers to talk to babies while they play.

Why do babies need to play with things? *Let mothers give answers and thank each one. Then give your answer.* The answer is almost the same as what I told you about self-feeding.

- **Motor Development:** By playing with objects, babies develop their fingers and they use their eyes to guide their fingers. This is necessary for later school work (e.g. writing & drawing) and for household tasks (e.g. tying knots, cutting, sewing, planting, chopping)
- **Mental Development:** Children will think about how to put things together, e.g. inside, on top. They will need this when they think about numbers and letters.
- **Development of Self Esteem & Confidence:** Children get a sense of pride and mastery from being able to do things by themselves.
- **Keeping themselves busy:** Play of babies and children is like work for an adult. By playing, babies set themselves a small task that they try to complete. When they get older, they will set chores to complete.

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Activity 3. Mothers play a word game

The game is called "What comes to mind?" One person says a word, any word, and the next person says the first word that comes to mind when she hears that word. I am going to start by saying a word, and then everyone should quickly say whatever the word makes them think of. Everyone will probably say something different because there are no right or wrong answers. Here is my word: NAME. Let all mothers say a word or phrase that comes to their mind when they hear your word. See how many said the same word and how many said a different word. Each word comes from their own experience. Here is another word: COOK. Here is another word: BABY. Say some funny words so players are entertained. Mothers can take turns saying the start word, and the Community Facilitator will say what word comes to her mind when she hears is.

At the end, tell mothers This is a game you can play with your child. Whenever the child says a word or even a sound, the mother can say a related word or sound. She can even make it funny. This way the child will learn the fun of 2-way talk with the mother.

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Activity 4. Questions for Mothers to Answer (15 minutes)

Tell mothers: **When children talk in words or in signals, mothers need to answer, not ignore.** *Ask mothers the following questions. Let them give their answers and appreciate each. Then repeat the good answers (included after the question; but let mothers give their answer before you give your answer).*

- **If a child smiles, how does a loving mother answer?**
Your answer: Loving mothers smile or hug the child.
- **If a child clings, how does a loving mother answer?**
Your answer: they hold the child and say kind words.
- **If a child is sitting and fussing with nothing to do, how does a loving mother answer?**
Your answer: Loving mothers can hug the child and then find some things for the child to play with.
- **If a child eats a mouthful of food, how does a loving mother answer?**
Your answer: they praise their child and offer more or offer the plate of food to self-feed.

- **If a child cries, how does a loving mother answer? There are many reasons why a child cries. How does the mother know if the child is afraid, angry, hungry, or bored?**
Your answer: they can ask their child or try different things such as holding, soothing, singing, feeding, talking or bouncing, to see what works.
- **If a child refuses food, how does a loving mother answer?**
Your answer: they ask their children if they want to self-feed or if they want to wait a bit, or if they want to try some other food. Ignoring the child's refusal and forcing food or threatening is not a good solution. A refusal is like a cry; mothers have to listen to their child.

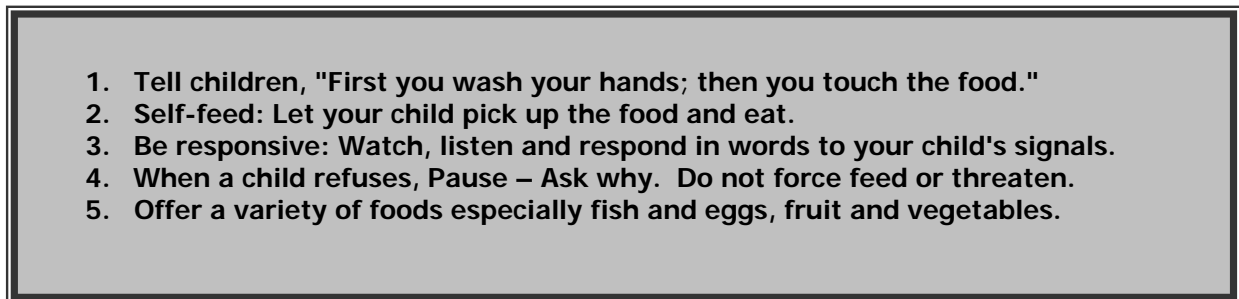
Look at this picture. *Show the laminated picture of mother and child.*

What is the mother doing to make the child a happy eater, healthy and intelligent?

Mothers should mention in any order the following. Appreciate every answer. At the end, say these:

- 1. Mother washes her child's hands before touching food.**
- 2. Mother lets her child self-feed.**
- 3. Mother watches her child's signals and talks nicely to her child.**
- 4. Mother offers good foods like vegetables, fruit, fish and egg.**

Then Read mothers the 5 main messages on the laminated picture.



Homework for the week: During the week, notice what your child likes to eat and what objects your child likes to play with. Tell us now what your child likes to play with. Each mother should say something a bit different; if they repeat what other mothers said, ask, "Can you add something new?"

Tell mothers about preparing for the next session: **You must bring your baby to the next session and all other sessions. Babies should be hungry so don't feed the baby for 2 hours before the session (except breast milk). Bring a cloth or jute bag containing any play objects or learning materials that your child likes to play with. We will let the children play while we talk.**

SESSION 2. Self-feeding with finger

Information for only Community Facilitators to read ahead of session

- Children are able to start feeding themselves at 8-9 months when they can use their finger and thumb to pick up small things.
- Children who feed themselves tend to eat more food and refuse less often.
- Eating is easier if the food can be grasped in the fingers. So mothers can give fruit, vegetables (partly cooked pumpkin or carrots, cucumber) or a boiled egg. Fruits are good snacks; vegetables and eggs can be a snack or offered at meals.
- If the food is new, be patient and keep trying a little at a time. It may take 10 tastes over 1 month.
- When children are learning these skills, they will still need some help and lots of encouragement from mothers to make sure they eat enough, but soon they will be able to manage a full meal on their own.
- Brain development is most rapid from 0-3 years. In addition to good nutrition, children need lots of stimulation from their parents during these ages. The best way to stimulate children is to let them touch food and talk to them while they eat.
- Playing with objects, in the morning while the mother is working, is also necessary stimulation for babies. Playing will give the child enjoyment, improve motor and mental development, and increase appetite.

Objectives

By the end of the session, the mothers will have:

- Understood why children like to touch food and feed themselves
- Practiced encouraging their child to eat many different foods by him/her self
- Practiced praising their child after a mouthful was eaten
- Practiced providing play objects and encouraging their child to play and talk.

Session Duration

1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes

Materials

Soft but not mashed orange vegetables, fruits, boiled eggs

Water bucket with soap

Drinking water

Laminated picture with messages

A bag of play materials that can be found in households and around the village.

Review of Homework (5-10 minutes): What did mothers notice about foods her child ate and things he/she played with? Ask each mother in turn to say foods. Thank each one after she speaks.

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Practice Activity 1. Children like to play with objects. Let's show what we have in our play bags and learn from each other about new play things (20 minutes)

Children should be seated facing the mother. Tell mothers: **Let your child reach into the bag himself and pull out 3 things. Then let children play with those objects. Let them pull out more objects if they want. While they play we will tell each other what the child is doing. After telling us, you can look at your baby and say, "Good baby."** Let all mothers tell. Make sure each mother then says something nice to her baby. Mothers should not touch the toys unless the child gives it to her. Mothers can talk to them.

Then the facilitator can show what is in her play bag. As she takes each out, she can pass it to a child to play with. Especially to a child who does not have many toys or who is looking bored.

- Seeds, rice or beans in a bag or plastic bottle to shake (for infants under 12 months)
- Sticks or Candle (to be inserted in the ground) and 1 or more bangles
- 6 sticks to count, make shapes, draw in the ground
- Rope to attach to something to pull
- Cloth to wrap around self or a piece to hide/cover an object
- Picture from magazine or store product
- Spoon to carry seeds
- Flat stones to stack on top of one another
- Small clay objects
- Palm leaves or Spinning top (*latim*)
- 10 blocks of any shape from carpentry shop or bamboo blocks
- Cups or any small container to hold small things

While the children are playing, the facilitator can say, **Babies need things to play with. Try to put something new in your child's bag every week. Do not put sharp objects or small objects that can be swallowed. Most babies like to play with water; sit them in front of a bowl of water with some cups and they will be occupied for a long time playing. Water is harmless and good for children's play.**

Before the next activity, put all the play objects back in the bags.

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Practice Activity 2. Children like to feed themselves, they are interested in feeling different textures of food and seeing different colours of food (30 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to encourage mothers to let their children touch the food and put it in their own mouths.

1. Facilitator demonstrates with a baby.
2. Mothers practice with their baby.
3. Facilitators coach the mothers – praise and correct.

Ask mothers "**At what age are children able to put food into their own mouths?**" Let all mothers give their answer and then say, "**As soon as children are able to pick up a stone or stick with their finger and thumb, they are ready. They are usually capable at 8-9 months. If babies have no teeth, they can chew with their gums; it is good to make gums more tough by chewing. Today, we will see if children can feed themselves.**"

1. Demonstration. First the facilitator will ask all mothers and children to wash their hands with soap and water while she says, "**First you wash your hands; then you touch the food.**"

Then the facilitator will demonstrate the feeding activity with a child or with a doll.

Start with the child's position. Say, "**Position your child so you can see his/her face – either on the floor facing you with the plate between, or on your knee while you hold the plate of food in front of the child. Do not stand.**"

Then demonstrate encouragement of self-feeding. Say to the child, "**Here is some food. Pick it up in your hand and eat it.**" If the child does not touch the food, say "**I will put some food in your hand and you can**



put it in your mouth. *Facilitators should praise and encourage the child whenever she touches the food and brings it to his/her mouth, for example:*

"Good baby. Eat it. It tastes good. You will like the taste. It is good for you to eat. You are good at eating food by yourself."

If the child is reluctant to touch or eat the food, the mother can say encouraging words such as:

"Good baby. Try to touch the pumpkin. You will like the feel of it. Look how pretty is the pumpkin. Use your fingers to hold it. Try to put it in your mouth now. You will like it. It tastes good."

Tell mothers: **It is important to give the baby plenty of time. Do NOT hurry your child by telling him or her to eat quickly. Children refuse and choke on food if they are hurried.**

2. **Mothers Practice.** After you have demonstrated, ask the mothers to practice the activity by themselves with their children. **"Put the baby so you can see his or her eyes and mouth. This means on the floor facing you with the plate between (if the child can sit) or on your knee while you support the child's back with one arm and hold the plate with the other hand."** Make sure all mothers can see their child's eyes and mouth. **"Now tell your child to eat and give lots of praise and encouragement."**

3. **Coach** the mothers by praising them for the good words and actions. Always offer some praise to mothers. Suggest correct words and actions if you see any mistakes, such as not seeing the child's face, or not talking to the child, or mother feeding the child without letting the child touch the food. Remind mothers not to feed their child but simply to encourage the child to touch the food, watch and respond to the child. If the child persists in NOT touching the food, then the mother can model this by saying, **"Watch me. I am picking up a piece of food and putting it into my mouth. It tastes good. Now you do it."** Or mother can put food into child's hand.

Mothers should imitate the words you used in your demonstration, so keep repeating these: "Good baby, Do you want to pick up the food? Try to put it in your mouth, you will like it" as written above.

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Discussion Activity 3. Facilitator asks Questions and Mothers Answer

(20 minutes) After Mothers answer, then Facilitator repeats the good answer.

Q: Why should children start to feed themselves at 8 months?

A: Children will have a better appetite if they can feel and smell food. It helps them develop fine motor coordination to use their hands and mouth. They will learn about tastes and textures. It gives them self-confidence to have new skills. They will learn to feed and clean themselves. If children do not use their new muscles, they don't grow quickly.

Q: How can I prevent my child from wasting food?

A: Start by giving the child some finger foods that are easy to pick up. If the child does this well, then give other kinds of food. If the child cannot pick up pieces of fruit or vegetable, then keep practicing with those before adding other foods. Also hold the plate under the child's mouth so food falls into it.

Q: What if my child spits out food?

A: Children spit out food when they are not ready for it. Maybe the taste or texture is new and they are afraid. So speak gently and tell your child that it is good food – show that you like it by eating some and saying, "Good". Leave it on the plate so your child can try again. Offer the food in small amounts 10 times over 1 month until your child gets used to it.

Q: What if my child does not know how to feed herself/himself?

A: Children learn how to do this through practice every day. Just like language. At 8-9 months of age, their hands and mouths are ready to start, and with practice they will become expert.

Q: Can my child eat meals with his fingers or only snacks?

A: Children over 8 months can eat meals and snacks with their fingers. Help them to master this skill by providing food in pieces and helping at the start. Vegetables, fish, and eggs are good at meals with potato and rice. Pieces of fruit are good snacks; store-bought food with sugar is bad.

Q: What if my child wants to walk around while eating? Should I follow with the food?

A: No. Child should be taught to sit in one place while they eat. It should be the same place every day so they learn that is the eating mat. If the child leaves the mat, the mother should bring him or her back. If the child continues to leave, the mother should say, "This is the eating mat. If you leave the mat, I will remove the food." If the child keeps leaving, then put him/her on a chair.

Stand the laminated picture while you and the mothers do the hand motions and read twice

1. Tell children, "First you wash your hands; then you touch the food."
2. Self-feed: Let your child pick up the food and eat.
3. Be responsive: Watch, listen and respond in words to your child's signals.
4. When a child refuses, Pause – Ask why. Do not force feed or threaten.
5. Offer a variety of foods especially fish and eggs, fruit and vegetables.

Homework for the week: End the session by encouraging the mothers to watch how their child self-feeds meals at home. Remind mothers to wash their child's hands first while saying, "*First you wash your hands; then you touch the food*".

Commitment Statement from Mothers: Ask each mother in turn, " **What food will you give your child tomorrow noon that he/she can pick up and eat? And what will you do and say before giving the food?** ("First you wash") **Can you do that each day this week?**"

Next session, remember to bring your child's play bag. Add some new toys that you saw here today.

SESSION 3. Self Feeding: Interpreting and responding to your child's signals

Information for only Community Facilitators to read ahead of session

- Responsive feeding means that mothers watch and listen to their child, notice the child's signal, interpret the signal, and respond in line with the signal, not against the signal. This means that if the child wants to take a mouthful of egg, not rice, then the mother should let the child eat egg first. If the child reaches out to touch the food then the mother should encourage the child, not stop him. The mother should respond as soon as the child makes the signal. If the child is reaching for food, give the food immediately; do not wait.
- This does not mean that the mother agrees to everything her child wants, but she should say she heard the child and agrees or disagrees. If the child is being hurtful or destructive; then mother's should say "don't hit your sister" or a similar rule. If the child asks for sugar, she says, "No sugar; it is bad for you." If the child turns away from food, the mother can ask, "Why are you turning away?"
- One signal can have different meanings; it is the mother's job to interpret her child's signal and respond. Sometimes she might have to try several different responses before getting the correct one. Mothers must learn to know their children; each one is a different person.

Objectives

By the end of the session, the mothers will have:

- Noticed appetite & satiety signals from their own child who is given food to eat
- Responded with words and actions to some of their child's signals during play and feeding

Session Duration: 1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes

Materials: Facilitator's play bag

Egg, vegetables such as sweet pumpkin or carrot chunks mixed with thick dal

Bucket of water, soap

Drinking water

Laminated Poster with messages; of baby reaching for food [or play things]

Review of Homework (5-10 minutes): Ask each mother what they committed to do last session and if they were able to do it or do something else. If some mothers did not do it, ask why. Talk about how they can overcome the barrier. For example, if they forgot, then ask if they can remember by asking someone to remind them. If the child was not successful at self-feeding, did the mother try again each day or give up and stop? Then ask if the mothers remembered to say to their children "*First you wash your hands; then you touch the food*".

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Practice Activity 1: Watch, Interpret & Respond to child play signals (20 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is for the facilitator to model to the mothers how they should **WATCH, LISTEN, and INTERPRET** their child's play signals and how they should **RESPOND**.

Facilitator first gives instruction, "Mothers will position their child in order to see the child's eyes and mouth. Then give your child the play bag to find some toys and play. Watch your child's signals."
Watch your child's eyes [Facilitator point to eyes]. **Are they looking at the play toys?**
Watch your child's mouth? **Is it happy or uncertain and looking at the mother for encouragement?**
Watch your child's arm and hand. **Do they reach for the toys? Do they throw or bang the toys?**
Watch your child's body. **Does it move toward the toy or away from the toy?**
Listen to your child's sounds [Facilitator point to ears]. **Are they happy or angry sounds?"**

Tell your child what you see in his face and body.

Say, 'I see you are looking. Good baby.'

or 'I see you are reaching. Good baby. Take it if you want.'

or 'I see you are picking up the toy. Good baby. Do you want to play with it?'

Let mothers practice talking to their child in this way while the children play. If child plays well, then the mother should only watch and talk to the child in the 2-way style. If the child will not play, then the mother can use encouraging words such as, "There is a _____. What can you do with it? Pick it up and do something with it." or "Look how long the spoon is. Can you touch something far away with it?"

Say to mothers,

- "Signals are like words. If the child could speak, the child would be saying words such as, 'I want ...' or 'I do not want' Mothers cannot ignore these signals. They must interpret the meaning and respond."
- "To interpret signals means that mothers watch the child's actions and listen to the child's sounds and then figure out what the signal means."
- "To respond means that mothers directly and quickly answer the child's signal with words and by acting in line with it, not against it."

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Discussion Activity 2: Problem Solving: *What should I do when ...?*

Q: What if my child wants to run around and doesn't want to play sitting down?

A: Children sometimes need to sit and sometimes need to run around and play. Give your children play materials when they are sitting, and more active games to play, like Hide and Seek, or running in circles, when they are feeling active.

Work out a schedule that is comfortable for you and your child, so both of you know the times when they will sit and play with objects, and the times when they will be active.

Q: I can't find a toy to add to my child's play bag every week.

A: Talk to other people and find out what play materials they give their children. Maybe your community can create a play trunk where different families can come and borrow toys.

Q: What if my child breaks the play things?

A: Play objects are meant to be played with and they sometimes do get broken. Children still need many different materials to play with. Do not keep play materials out of reach (in the cupboard).

Q: What if the older children want to take the toys to play with?

A: Let them play with the toys, and ask them to share with the younger child. That way, the younger child will learn about new ways of playing with their materials. Also, children have fun playing together.

Q: What do I do if my child doesn't do anything with the toys?

A: First, you can try bringing in another child who likes playing with the toys; your child will watch them and learn.

Another strategy is to use words to encourage them. For example, you can say, "There is some cloth. What can you do with it? Can you wave it?" Mothers should use encouraging words, but not play with the toys themselves.

Q: What if my children like to play together with no toys? Do they have to have toys?

A: Children should play with toys at some time during the day, because it develops their fine motor skills and their thinking. They should also play running, jumping, and hopping games, because that helps them develop other skills. There is enough time in one day for both kinds of play.

Q: What if I am too busy to talk to my child?

A: All mothers are busy. Mothers need to be busy with housework and talk to their child at the same time. You can let your child talk while you listen, and respond from time to time to show that you are listening.

Q: Why do adults have to play with young children? Why can't older sisters and brothers play with them?

A: Adults don't have to play with children. However, adults do have to provide children with play materials and adult talk so children learn new words. Sisters and brothers are fun to play with, but they are children, and so cannot teach the child as much as adults can.

Then collect the toys, saying "**We are going to feed children and we do not want any toys out while feeding because toys distract children from food. Always put toys away from the place where you feed.**"

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Practice Activity 3: Watch, Interpret & Respond to child feeding signals

(30 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is for the facilitator to model to the mothers how they should **WATCH, LISTEN, and INTERPRET** their child's hunger and satiety signals and how they should **RESPOND**.

1. Demonstration by Community Facilitator

"**Now we will watch feeding signals from children.**" Pick one mother-child pair. Start off with the hand-washing routine "**First you wash your hands, then you touch the food.**" Give the food to the child on a plate. **INTERPRET** the child's signals by saying what you see and the possible meaning of the signal.

Say some of these:

"See his head moving. See his eyes are watching the food. See his smile. His hands are moving but they don't yet reach for the food. I think this child is hungry and ready for food"

"Look, his mouth is open and he is looking at the carrot, but he turns his head when she offered it to him. I think this child wants to eat the carrot by himself"

"This baby has a plate of food in front of him but he is looking at the water. I think he wants a drink to moisten his mouth before he starts"

The facilitator should then demonstrate how the mother can **RESPOND** to the child. "**Now we will talk to the child saying that we noticed the child's signal and asking if we have the right interpretation.**"

"Baby, I see that you are looking at this tasty food. Are you hungry?"

"I see you are smiling at the tasty food. Do you want to eat it?"

"Pick up the food if you are hungry. Start eating whenever you are ready."

"Baby, you have some tasty food there but I can see you looking at the water. Would you like to drink before eating food?"

"Here take the glass of water, you can do it yourself, you are such a grown-up girl now"

Say: "Let the child pick up and eat the food as soon as he/she starts to show the hunger signals. Continue to watch for signals and respond to them with words. Respond with praise."

"Baby, do you like the pumpkin that you picked up? You are such a good baby."

"Now you have finished all the carrots. What else do you want to eat? I have some bananas & egg. What do you like?"

2. Mothers Practice. Then mothers can take a plate of food as before to repeat the activity on their own with their child. Remember to wash their hands first and sit in a face-to-face position. **"Tell children what signals you see and hear. Praise your child."**

3. Facilitators Coach the Mothers.

Make sure mothers are letting their child eat the food. Mothers should not feed – most children of this age can self-feed finger food.

Make sure mothers are watching the child's eyes and mouth and hands.

If mothers are talking to their child, praise the mother.

If a mother is not talking to her child, then give her some words to say.

If mothers start looking around and talking to other mothers, tell them there will be time to socialize after. Now it is time to socialize with babies.

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Discussion Activity 4. Discuss Laminated Picture (10 min)

When most of the food has been eaten, have mothers talk about the laminated picture of child reaching for food [or play things].

Show the picture and ask, **"What signals do you see being made by the child? What do the signals say about the child's appetite or lack of appetite?"** Mothers can mention the child's body, hands, head, eyes, mouth.

Then ask, **"How does a responsive mother respond to those signals, what can she say to her child?"**

Mothers can mention

"I see you are reaching for the food [toys]. You can have it now."

"I see you are reaching for the food. First we wash your hands."

"I see you are smiling. Are you happy to have some food [toys] now?"

Then ask, **"How does a responsive mother answer a child who cries for a sweet biscuit?"**

Good answer: She takes the child away from seeing sweet biscuits and says, "Babies cannot eat sugar or salt. I have better food for you to make you grow."



Homework for the week: Mothers will try to notice different signals given by their child to communicate during feeding, playing, bathing and bedtime. Mothers should give their child different foods to pick up and eat by themselves, read their child's signal (watch, listen and interpret), and respond. Notice unhappy signals and eager signals.

Commitment Statement: Ask each mother in turn **"Tell us one happy or unhappy signal that your child sometimes gives you and then tell us what you will say tomorrow in response to that signal."**

SESSION 4. Responsive behaviour after refusals

Information for only Community Facilitators to read ahead of session

- Refusals are common. A child who turns his head, or spits out a mouthful of food is giving you a signal that says "*I don't want this particular mouthful right now*". But it does not necessarily mean that the child is full-up and no longer has any appetite. Do not terminate the feeding until there are 3 refusals.
- There are lots reasons why a child might refuse food. The mother's job is to work out what is the reason for the refusal and then to respond to it.
- Here are some good responses to refusals: ask if your child wants to pause for a minute, ask your child what he or she wants, ask your child if he or she wants to self-feed, say that you will talk for a minute before offering food again, hug your child so he or she will relax. Then offer the plate of food a second and third time. If the child refuses 3 times and you have tried a range of different strategies, then you should stop and try again after 30-60 minutes.
- Never force-feed or threaten your child, because the child will learn to resent and resist food.

Objectives: By the end of the session, the mothers will have:

- Discussed different reasons why children refuse food and different ways mothers can respond to refusals
- Practiced ways to respond to refusals

Session Duration: 1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes

Materials: 10 coloured pictures cut out from magazines, calendars, store items
Plates with egg, cooked potato and carrot with thick dal, [and fruit] for each child.
Bucket of water, soap
Drinking water
Laminated picture with messages

Review of Homework (5-10 minutes): Ask each mother what they committed to do last session and if they were able to see and respond to happy or unhappy signals from her child. What did they do if they did not understand the child's signal or how to respond? Did they try different responses to see what worked?

Review of Messages: "**Do you remember the first 3 messages? Who remembers one? Who remembers another?**" Remind them using the hand motions.

Tell the child "*First you wash your hands; then you touch the food*".

Self-feed.

Be responsive. Watch, listen and respond to signals with words.

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Practice Activity 1. 2-way talk with child about a picture (15 min)

We are going to do 2-way responsive talk with the children. Children like pictures so talking with them about pictures is a good way to help their language development. Remember that to be responsive means that you respond to your child's interest and sounds. Get your child started by asking an open-ended question, such as "What do you see?" It is "open" because the child can choose what to answer so you will see what their interest is. If your child doesn't talk, then they can point. Then it is the mother's turn to talk – she can say the child's word and put it into a larger sentence.

1. Demonstration by Community Facilitator

Take a child who does not talk much. Show him/her your picture and ask,

- a. "What do you see?" Let the child point and/or make a sound and then follow by saying the word in a 5-word sentence, "You see the _____."
- b. "Good, what else?" Let the child point to as many objects as possible.
- c. "Where is the _____?" let the child point .Ask "where" about another object in picture..
- d. "What things do you like in this picture?" then the adult puts that into a sentence.

Tell mothers that when their child knows how to talk, the child should say a word, not point, and then the mother can put that word into a sentence. Then ask, "What else do you see?" If the child says, a cow, the mother can say, "Yes, there is the cow eating grass." "What else is the cow doing?" Or the mother can ask, "What colours do you see?"

2. Mothers practice. Mothers will then practice this with their child. The community facilitator will hand out pictures to each mother-child pair and ask the mothers to talk with their child about them.

3. Coaching. The Facilitator will walk around and listen to the conversations and coach mothers – this means praising them when they have it right and giving gentle suggestions if they need improvement.

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Discussion Activity 2. How can mothers respond to refusals? (15 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to talk about what children mean when they refuse food. How should mothers respond to this signal?

Tell Mothers, "**Remember to do the following whenever your child refuses a mouthful:**

**PAUSE & ASK WHY
CHILD REFUSES – MOTHER PAUSES – MOTHER ASKS THE CHILD & HERSELF WHY**

Question for the group

What are the reasons why a child might refuse a mouthful of food? Facilitator states the reason (as seen below on the left), and then asks the group **So if that was the reason for the refusal, what is a good way to respond?** (let mothers answer and then give your answer on the right).

The Facilitator will state one at a time these possible reasons why a child might refuse?

Facilitator will then ask mothers **"How will you respond to your child?"**

He may want to feed himself, rather than being fed by you.

Give him some food he can easily pick up and encourage him to self-feed.

You may be feeding him too quickly.

Take a break, try pausing longer between mouthfuls. Do not hurry your child by telling her to "eat quickly". Instead, say "*you can pick up food when you are ready for more.*"

He may want another type of food.

Try offering a different type of food; for example say "*I have some egg or vegetable. Which would you like to try?*"

He may be thirsty.

Offer him a drink of warm water.

He may be distracted by something in his environment	Take a break by pausing and then re-focus his attention by saying <i>"Baby, now is the time for eating, you can play as soon as you have finished. Look at all the tasty food I've got for you! What would you like to try next; rice, egg or pumpkin?"</i>
He may want some praise, or encouragement from you.	Take a break, praise & encourage your child for all the good mouthfuls she has eaten so far.
He may not feel well or he might have a pain.	Take a break, hold and hug and watch your child closely, wait until he/she seems more comfortable before offering the plate of food.
He may feel tired, or just be in a cross mood.	Try comforting him, praise him for all the good mouthfuls he has had so far. If he is tired, let him have a sleep and offer food at another time.
He may not be hungry.	If he repeatedly gives you signals of being full after you have tried the above, even if he has not eaten a full meal, then it is time to stop the feeding, you can try again after 30-60 minutes.
He may have eaten within the past 2 hours.	Wait for 2 hours after the last meal or snack.
Some mothers say they force-feed. What do you think?	Tell mothers that forcing, threatening, and pressuring children to eat will hurt the child and make him or her dislike food and meals.

**"Remember, when the child refuses: REFUSE– PAUSE & ASK WHY.
Try 4 or 5 of the above strategies before removing the food and starting up 30 minutes later."**

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Practice Activity 3. How to respond to refusals – practicing new strategies (30 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to give the mothers the opportunity to practice some of the strategies discussed above concerning self-feeding, responding to signals, responding to refusal signals.

1. Demonstration by Community Facilitator

CF should pretend to be the baby. One mother will pretend to offer you food; accept the first mouthful and refuse the second mouthful. Then tell that mother **"Respond to me as if I were your baby. Think of the strategies we spoke about. Why am I refusing? and How can you talk to me?"** Let her say one thing she would say to her refusing baby. Then go to a second mother. She will pretend to offer you food and you refuse a second time. She must **respond in a different way** from the first mother. And so on for all the mothers. If they have forgotten some of the responses you mentioned before, then ask other mothers to remind them.

2. Mothers Practice messages 1, 2, 3, 4.

Without the laminated card, ask, **"Do you remember the messages? Say four of them."**

Then wash children's hands saying *"First"* And then give food.

Mothers will practice the first 4 messages while their child eats.

- Wash children's hands, saying, "First you wash your hands, then you eat the food."
- Encourage self-feeding by children.
- Be responsive: watch, listen to child's signals and respond with words.
- If a child refuses, Pause and Ask Why, then try 4 or 5 strategies before waiting for 30 min.

3. Coaching Mothers. Watch mothers, praise good practices, correct poor practices. Support mothers who encounter child refusals. Remind them of strategies. Do not allow forced feeding.

Stand the laminated picture while you and the mothers do the hand motions and read twice

1. Tell children, "First you wash your hands; then you touch the food."
2. Self-feed: Let your child pick up the food and eat.
3. Be responsive: Watch, listen and respond in words to your child's signals.
4. When a child refuses, Pause – Ask why. Do not force feed or threaten.
5. Offer a variety of foods especially fish and eggs, fruit and vegetables.

Repeat together several times until the mothers have memorized the 5 messages.

Then ask if they can add a 6th message about play. It could be something like:

6. Offer a variety of play materials and talk while he/she plays.

Homework for the week. Mothers should notice during the week if her child refuses food. The phrase to remember is: **REFUSE – PAUSE – ASK WHY?**. 5 different strategies before terminating for 30 minutes. Commitment Statement of Mothers. One at a time, ask each mother what she will say to her child after a refusal in the coming week. Let each mother say as many things as she can remember.

Remind mothers to bring their child with the play bag to the next session.

Session 5. Foods to feed and How to Solve Feeding Problems

Objectives: By the end of the session, the mothers will have:

- Watched how their child responds to a novel food
- Discussed some common difficulties that arise
- Discussed how other people in their family might react to the new feeding strategies and how they can cope with resistance.

Session Duration: 1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes

Materials: Animal products – Fish; some rice mixed with oil and egg.
Bucket of water, soap.
Drinking water
Laminated picture with messages

Review of Homework (5-10 minutes): Ask each mother what they committed to do last session and what they did after refusals. Ask **"How can you reduce the number of refusals?"**

Review of Messages: **"Do you remember the 5 messages? Who remembers one? Who remembers another?"** Then say all of them together, reminding them with the hand motions.

Tell the child *"First you wash your hands; then you touch the food"*.

Self-feed.

Be responsive. Watch, listen and respond to signals with words.

When a child refuses, pause and ask why. Do not force feed or threaten.

Offer a variety of foods, especially fish and eggs, fruit and vegetables.

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Basic Information to say to Mothers

- Animal products are important. Give cooked eggs, fish or chicken to your child as often as possible and at least 3 times a week.
- The time to offer children new and different foods is from 6 months to 3 years, because after that time, their tastes become fixed and it will be more difficult to introduce new things into their diet.
- A new food should be offered 10 times, spaced over 1 month. If the child refuses each time, then try again 2 months later.
- Children under 5 years of age need to have 3 meals and 2 healthy snacks. Eat all meals with your children; that way you can share your vegetables, fish, and oil with them. A meal of only rice will not produce a happy, healthy, intelligent child.

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Practice Activity 1. Mixing egg and fish and oil with rice (20 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is for mothers to watch how their children respond to a novel food.

1. Mothers Practice letting their child self-feed & helping if needed

Do the hand-washing routine first with the phrase *"First you wash your hands; then you touch the food."*

Present the fish and egg separately from the rice-oil mixture.

Tell mothers, **"Do not touch the food. Let your child try to feed himself/herself. The fish and egg are kept separate so children can taste the flavours and learn to like fish and eggs. Talk to your child as you learned before. Respond to their signals; give them encouragement. Mothers can feed yourself a mouthful to show your child it is tasty."**

Mothers can say, *"You are looking at the new food, I think you are interested in it. Go on pick it up. Good girl. Now try putting it in your mouth"*

Discussion Activity 2: What should I do when.....? (30 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to solve any difficulties or obstacles that mothers might have implementing the new strategies. As before, try and encourage the mothers to come up with their own solutions to the problems before you tell them.

1) My child wants to eat sugary foods, chips & puffed rice.

Tell your child that sugary foods are bad for his/her teeth and puffed rice is not growing food. Hide these foods so the child will not be tempted to ask you for them. Fruits are sweet but do not contain bad sugar, so fruits are good for children.

2) The older children buy snacks such as chips and biscuits with the money I give them.

If you give your child some taka to buy a snack, tell them that they can choose between buying a banana/ guava /papaya (or some other fruit that is in season) or an egg. Ask them to bring the food back for their baby brother or sister. If they bring back chips or biscuits then either confiscate the foods, explaining why you are doing so, or ask them to take it back to the shop and exchange it. Remember you are the adult and you should make decisions about what good food your children eat. If the older children keep buying unhealthy foods, then you should go to the shop with them and make sure they buy healthy food.

3) I don't have enough money to buy fish, eggs, fruit & vegetables

Give animal products as often as you can because they will make your child healthy and intelligent – they are more filling than rice. Fruit and vegetables do not have to be expensive, if you choose the ones that are in season and readily available. Cheap vegetables such as pumpkin, carrot, eggplant, sweet potato and fruits such as banana and papaya are very nutritious and offer much better value for money than snacks such as chips, sweets & biscuits. If you buy a big fruit such as a jackfruit, you could share with a friend who has children the same age; the next time she buys she can share with you. This will reduce waste.

4) If I encourage my child to self feed, then he will waste food

When your child is 6-12 months old, he will be interested in touching and exploring food. This is an important part of learning about food. Start by giving him a couple of pieces of finger food such as carrot to explore; this way if he does not eat it then not much is wasted. Also, to begin, children might drop the food as they are still learning to hold onto small things. If your child throws food or turns the plate over, you can say firmly, "*Food is for eating, not for throwing. Do you want to eat food now or later?*" If the child continues to throw food, then explain that you are taking it away. Children soon learn that food is not for wasting.

5) My child reaches for food but his/her hands are dirty.

Before showing the food, tell your child to wash his/her hands in the bucket or with the cloth you give him then. Say the words: "*First you wash your hands; then you touch the food*". This is *your* signal to your child that food is coming. Then you can praise the child for washing hands before eating. If you did not wash his hands before the food arrives, then say that you see his signal by saying "*I can see that you are hungry, which is good because we have lots of tasty food, but first we need to wash your hands*".

6) My child asks for water before eating.

Give warm water to stimulate the child's appetite. If the child wishes, let the child drink a few mouthfuls of water after eating a few mouthfuls of food. This will moisten the mouth which will help with eating. Giving your child small amounts of water during meals will not fill them up.

7) My child wants to snack often during the day rather than eat larger meals.

Children under 5 should eat 3 meals a day and 2 snacks. If they eat small amounts too often then their stomachs never get big enough to hold a meal. So get your child used to a routine of meals and snacks. If she/he is very hungry and crying for food, give a small amount to overcome the hunger while you prepare something more

substantial. If your child is used to eating every 1-2 hours, as they do when breastfeeding in the months after birth, then try to give larger amounts and stretch out the time gradually to 3 hours. Children should have a meal at 6 am, a snack at 9 am, then another meal at 12 noon and a snack at 3 pm, then a meal at 6 pm.

8) Can children eat while lying down?

Children should be sitting and awake while they eat. That way they can swallow properly and the food goes down. It is dangerous to let food stay in the mouth while the child sleeps.

9) Why is it bad to give children biscuits and puffed rice when they cry for food?

Children need 3 meals and 2 snacks every day. Do not wait until they cry; this will disturb you when you are in the middle of a chore. And so you give bad biscuits to stop the crying. Biscuits stop crying but they do not make children healthy. It is better if you plan ahead to have the meals and healthy snacks ready. If you feed your child in the morning at 6 or 7 am, then put aside a fruit, potato, boiled egg, or cooked vegetable for your child to eat at 9 or 10 am. Children can feed themselves. Do the same at midday; cook an extra potato or vegetable or egg or put aside banana for a 3 pm snack. Then give a full meal at 6 or 7 pm.

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Activity 3. Group Discussion: How will the rest of your family react to your new feeding approach? (10 minutes)

The purpose of this activity for mothers to anticipate any resistance from their families; think of solutions. Ask, What will they say or do? How can you respond? How can you get support from another mother? This includes discussing the inappropriateness of most food avoidances.

Let all mothers recite the 5 main messages.

1. Tell children, "First you wash your hands; then you touch the food."
2. Self-feed: Let your child pick up the food and eat.
3. Be responsive: Watch, listen and respond in words to your child's signals.
4. When a child refuses, Pause – Ask why. Do not force feed or threaten.
5. Offer a variety of foods especially fish and eggs, fruit and vegetables.

Booster Session 6.

Community Facilitator should re-read the Manual for sessions 1 to 5.

Objectives: Mothers will recall the 5 messages.
Mothers will practice all 5 message behaviours properly.

Session Duration: 1 hour

Materials: Bucket of water with soap
Plate of fruit, egg or vegetables
Laminated picture with messages

Ask mothers, "**Do you remember the 5 messages?**" Let them say what they remember. Whatever they forgot to say, show them the hand signal and see if that reminds them.

Then show the laminated card and tell them: **Repeat the 5 messages using the hand signals.**

Review the major points the mothers have learned over the 5 sessions

1. **Tell children, "First you wash your hands; then you touch the food."**
2. **Self-feed: Let your child pick up the food and eat.**
3. **Be responsive: Watch, listen and respond in words to your child's signals.**
4. **When a child refuses, Pause – Ask why. Do not force feed or threaten.**
5. **Offer a variety of foods especially fish and eggs, fruit and vegetables.**

Taking one message at a time, ask if they encountered barriers or problems doing it. If someone had a problem ask other mothers how they solved it.

Can you remember to wash your child's hands before the meal? Does your child know the words?

How much of the meal can your child self-feed? All of it?

What signals do you see and how do you answer your child?

How do you respond to refusals?

Remind them: PAUSE & ASK WHY. Try 5 different strategies before stopping and restarting 30 minutes later.

What foods does your child eat at lunch? Can you eat with your child but from a separate plate?

Practice Activity 2. Mothers practice the messages with the child while their child eats.

Mothers can take a plate of food as before to repeat the activity on their own with their child. Tell mothers to tell their child what signals the mother sees and hears. Then praise their child.

Facilitators Coach the Mothers.

Make sure mothers are letting their child eat the food – most children of this age do not need to be fed.

Make sure mothers are watching the child's eyes and mouth and hands.

If mothers are talking to their child, praise the mother.

If a mother is not talking to her child, then give her some words to say.

If mothers start looking around and talking to other mothers, tell them there will be time to socialize after. Now it is time to socialize with babies.

In particular, help mothers respond to refusals. Remind her of different strategies.

Glossary of terms used in the Manual

Force-feed refers to pushing food into the child's mouth when the child does not voluntarily open it.

Interpreting signals means that the adult tries to understand what the child is trying to communicate by body movements, facial gestures or sounds.

Mealtime refers to the period of time starting when hands are washed prior to the meal, then the food is eaten, and ending when the plate (with or without food) is removed, and the hands and mouth are wiped clean.

Problem solving refers to finding solutions to difficulties or obstacles. First one identifies the problem; then one thinks about ways of overcoming or avoiding the problem. It is important to find 3 or 4 solutions for a problem, because the first one or two may not work.

Reading signals means that the adult watches, listening and interprets the child's behaviour so it is understood.

Responsive behaviour means responding to the child's signals in a quick and positive way. It entails reading signals and responding to the signals. Mothers first notice signals by watching the child's actions and listening to the child's sounds, and then interpret what the signals mean. To respond means that mothers directly and quickly answer the child's signal by acting in line with it.

(alternative definition that does not use the word "signals". Responsive behaviour is actions or words that are in direct response to something done by the child. It is in line with the child's behaviour, not against the child. It follows immediately after the child's behaviour.)

Signals refer to body movements, facial gestures, or words that convey something about how the child feels. It is a means of communication. For example, smiling conveys happiness; waving conveys wanting someone to look at them or saying goodbye; clinging conveys a need to be close and comforted; an open mouth conveys desire for food.

Taste refers to the sensation in your tongue though it may also be influenced by smell. Tastes may be sour, sweet, bitter, or spicy.

Texture refers to how an object feels to your skin including the skin on your hands or your lips and mouth. Textures may be rough, smooth, slippery, bumpy, hard, or mushy.

Finger Foods refer to foods that can be cut into approximately 1 cm or 2 cm size or which children can pick up with their fingers.

Examples of healthy, cheap, available finger foods for the sessions are listed below. The vegetables should be prepared for the sessions by cutting them into 1-inch pieces and boiling so they are soft but not too soft. Do not add salt or sugar.

Vegetables

Sweet Pumpkin
Sweet Potato
Cauliflower
Ochre/ Ladies Finger
Long Beans
Eggplant
Cucumber
Tomato

Green papaya
Carrot
Spinach
Leafy vegetables

Fruits

Banana
Papaya
Jack Fruit
Pineapple
Mango

Animal products

Eggs
Fish
Chicken
Cheese