



# Separated Children

*Care & Protection of Children in Emergencies*  
*A Field Guide* • Amy Hepburn, Jan Williamson & Tanya Wolfram

Cover photo by Christine Knudsen:

*Wenela Camp, Mozambique, March 2000. After the floods in Mozambique, a woman is reunited with her two grandchildren and continues searching for their mother.*

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## FOREWORD

Today's humanitarian crises have led to ever increasing numbers of civilians—mostly women and children—being displaced, injured, abused, and threatened. More than 45 million people have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict around the world, and about half of these are children. In the chaos of fighting, or during the fallout of natural disasters, many of these children may become separated from their families and have to face survival on their own. Unaccompanied and separated children are more prone to illness, to death, to exploitation, and to missing out on opportunities which are vital to their healthy development.

In situations that pose a violent, extreme or sudden threat to the survival and well-being of children and women, Save the Children's basic objectives are to *ensure the survival* of the most vulnerable children and women; *assure protection* against violence and exploitation; *support the rehabilitation and recovery* of children, families and communities; and *promote lasting solutions* by creating and strengthening the capacity of families and communities to build an environment in which children can thrive.

Save the Children knows that families provide the best care and protection of their children. When children become separated from their families in emergencies, therefore, every effort must be made to ensure that children are reunited with their families and provide a care-giver who will promote the child's well-being and safeguard his or her protection.

Much research and documentation has been developed over the past 20 years on working with unaccompanied and separated children. International guidelines and inter-agency mechanisms have been developed to ensure that the needs of these children are met in a consistent way and in every emergency. Save the Children works with separated children throughout the world and in all of its crisis programming, whether through direct family tracing initiatives or through inclusion of separated children into other programs such as health or education.

This *Field Guide to Separated Children Programs in Emergencies* is an important element in overall emergency programming, providing guidance on assessment as well as programming elements which can be stand-alone or incorporated into other sectors. Protecting unaccompanied and separated children must always be a priority so that they can find the nurturing and caring environment so critical to their survival and development.

### **Bob Laprade**

Director, Emergencies and Protection Unit  
*Save the Children*





# INTRODUCTION

Save the Children is pleased to introduce this *Field Guide to Separated Children Programs in Emergencies*, as one of a series compiled through its Children and War Capacity Building Initiative. Through this initiative, Save the Children has made a clear institutional commitment to providing quality programs that support children’s well-being in emergencies and crises, and to ensuring that SC staff have the knowledge and skills they need to continue this important work.

After consultations with staff at both headquarters and in the field, it became clear that there was a need not only for a thematic overview on key protection concerns, but also a quick and practical reference for practitioners when facing new emergencies or designing new programs. With this in mind, the Emergencies and Protection Unit has designed this series of field guides as the basis for in-depth training sessions on priority subjects, while including quick implementation tools, such as checklists of key concerns, sample forms, and rapid guideline references in a portable format.

The field guides have been designed specifically for SC field, headquarters, and partner organization staff members who are involved in the design and management of children and war programs. As such, the series builds on Save the Children’s specific approach and programming principles while also bringing in best practices and examples from other agencies’ experience. At the same time, however, we hope that these field guides may prove useful to other organizations engaged in similar programming and contribute to the further development of child-focused emergency programs within the international community.

The *Field Guide to Separated Children Programs in Emergencies* draws on the extensive research and documentation which has been done in this field over the past two decades, especially the *Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*. In doing so, the Field Guide aims to integrate previous experiences and best practices to strengthen the ability of SC staff to develop programs, design activities, and ensure the protection of unaccompanied and separated children.

The *Field Guide to Separated Children Programs in Emergencies* has benefited greatly from the contributions of Olivia Tecosky during editing and production. Dr. Laura Arntson has provided useful insights into developing guidance for monitoring and evaluation. Valuable comments from Heather MacLeod have enriched critical programming perspectives.

This field guide is an important element in building an understanding of programs which promote protection and strengthen the resiliency of children in emergencies, as SC seeks to reunite families as well as meet the needs of separated children within the generally affected population. I hope that this guide will provide useful insights into the fundamental challenges and risks that children face when separated from their families during emergencies.

**Christine Knudsen**  
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# I. OVERVIEW

## OVERVIEW OF THE CHILDREN AND WAR PROGRAM FIELD GUIDE SERIES

This field guide is one in a series compiled by Save the Children (SC) as part of its Children and War Capacity Building Initiative. The SC Emergencies and Protection Unit has developed this initiative in order to support SC staff in responding to the priority care and protection needs of children and adolescents during new emergencies and in situations of chronic armed conflict or displacement.

SC recognizes children as being any person under the age of 18, including adolescents as well as younger children. Children of all ages are of key concern to SC, and their specific needs and resources are priority considerations in any programming decision. For the sake of brevity, the term “children” will be used in this document to encompass all individuals under the age of 18, while recognizing that the needs and resources of adolescents and younger children may vary significantly and should be considered specifically when designing programs.

The field guides are intended to provide comprehensive, hands-on guidance for programming in each of six key thematic areas during emergencies and crisis:

- **Education in emergencies:** focusing on the transition from non-formal to formal education activities in order to foster sustainability and community involvement.
- **Youth:** an approach to planning non-formal education, vocational training, community mobilization, and other activities for 13-25 year-olds.
- **Separated children:** care and protection of children separated from families as well as steps to take toward reunification.
- **Child soldiers:** social reintegration and the prevention of recruitment of girls and boys.
- **Gender-based violence:** prevention of violence and support to survivors.
- **Psychosocial care and support:** a resource kit applicable for all areas of children and war programming.

The field guides have been cross-referenced and designed as complementary documents. While there are clearly a number of areas of overlap among the themes, repetition has

been minimized while ensuring that each field guide remains a useful stand-alone document. Each field guide is also accompanied by a CD-ROM, which contains key reference materials and international guidelines for further consideration, as well as practical tools that can be easily modified for use in a specific situation.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD GUIDE FOR SEPARATED CHILDREN PROGRAMS**

The *Field Guide to Separated Children Programs in Emergencies* is intended for SC staff and partners designing and implementing programs to support and care for separated children and to take steps toward family reunification in situations of crisis. This field guide is meant to be useful both for staff who have limited experience in emergency situations and for experienced staff who wish to improve their understanding of the particular needs and challenges faced in working with separated children. It is not designed to be a technical manual for guiding a step-by-step tracing program, but rather strives to provide an overview of the identification, protection, care, and support of separated children.<sup>1</sup>

This document is designed to provide a framework that will guide the development and implementation of programs which support unaccompanied and separated children, either in a stand-alone project or as part of the general beneficiary population being served by other activities undertaken by SC and partners. The field guide relies heavily on the *Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*, which provides thorough and overarching guidance in this area.<sup>2</sup> The *Inter-agency Principles*, produced by Save the Children (UK), IRC, World Vision International, UNICEF, UNHCR, and the ICRC, have emerged from a highly collaborative process which draws on decades of extensive field work and institutional learning in this area. While the *Inter-agency Principles* reflect broadly-accepted approaches to working with separated children, this field guide seeks to illustrate the principles through an SC operational lens.

The following chapters will introduce key concepts in working with unaccompanied and separated children, as well as establish a programming framework which reflects SC's core principles. Section II of the field guide, *The Issues*, defines the categories of unaccompanied

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<sup>1</sup>For detailed technical guidance on the implementation of tracing programs, see Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. (1998). *Working with Separated Children: Field Guide*. London: Save the Children UK.

<sup>2</sup>See the accompanying CD-ROM for the text of the *Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*.

and separated children and discusses key concerns to be considered in analysis and program design. Section III, *International Framework*, presents a discussion of the applicable international laws and policy instruments and highlights the role of international organizations with a specific mandate to work with separated children.

Section IV provides a *Programming Framework*, which includes prevention of separation, care of separated children, tracing activities, and family reunification. It also includes a discussion of the specific needs of separated refugee children. Section V, *Programming Process*, presents the various stages of program implementation as they relate to separated children: situational assessment, planning and design, and monitoring and evaluation. Section VI, the *Conclusion*, provides a summary checklist of key issues to consider when implementing programs for and with separated children.





## II. THE ISSUES

### WHO ARE UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN?

Children may become separated from their families in many different ways. Armed conflict, mass population displacement, natural disasters, and other crises can cause children to become separated from their families or other adults responsible for them. Separation can occur either accidentally, such as when families are fleeing from attacks without warning, or deliberately, when children are abandoned or given over to the care of another individual or institution because their families are unable to care for them. Children may also be abducted for ransom, sale, forced labor, or military recruitment.

In an armed conflict or other crisis environment, the status of children separated from their parents or other caregivers is seldom clear. They may be separated from their parents, but living with other adult relatives such as an older sister or uncle. They may be separated from all adult relatives, but living with another adult caregiver. They may be on their own or caring for younger siblings. They may have one or both parents that are known to be dead. Although many terms are used to describe these situations, it is important to have a common understanding. SC uses the following definitions to describe children in these situations:<sup>3</sup>

**Separated children** are those who are separated from both parents, or from their legal or customary caregiver, but accompanied by another adult. Separated children may include those in the care of adult siblings or other adult family members.

**Unaccompanied minors** (UAMs) are children who have been separated from parents or other legal or customary caregivers, as well as other adult relatives. These children are not being cared for by an adult who is customarily responsible for doing so. They may, however, be with other young siblings under 18.

**Orphans** are children with no living parent. In many cultures, this term may be used to describe children who have lost only one parent, but SC uses the term for children whose parents are both known to be deceased.

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<sup>3</sup>Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children. (2001). ICRC, IRC, Save the Children UK, UNICEF, UNHCR, World Vision International, p.10.

Each of these categories of children have specific protection and care needs that require attention. Both separated children and unaccompanied minors may require immediate assistance in obtaining a safe care situation and initiating activities to trace family members, as well as careful monitoring of their care situation. Separated children or unaccompanied minors may also be orphans who require special attention to determine long-term care options that will be in their best interest.

Since separated children and unaccompanied minors share many of the same concerns, for the purpose of this field guide, the term “separated children” will be used to refer to both separated children and unaccompanied minors as defined above. However, because they have been separated from all adult relatives, unaccompanied minors may face different risks and concerns, which will be discussed separately when appropriate.

## **KEY ISSUES REGARDING SEPARATED CHILDREN**

All children depend on others for care and protection from harm as they grow and develop. During conflict or crisis, children who become separated from their families suffer not only from the dangerous and stressful environment that all children experience, but must also face the loss of their family and the protection offered by a parent at the same time. As children see their homes and schools destroyed, forced to flee all that is familiar to them, they will naturally seek reassurance and security from family members. Children experience the world not only through their own perceptions, but also through those of family members close to them. When those family members have also been lost or separated, children must face the chaos of conflict and displacement on their own.

The combined effects of loss and grief, as well as the immediate responsibility for their own survival can be extremely difficult for children to face without appropriate support and care. Separated children may have to take on adult responsibilities to care for younger siblings, are at increased risk of exploitation or recruitment, and face higher risks of death and disease as they may not be able to access services necessary to their survival and development. Although all children in crisis may require assistance to ensure their physical, social, and emotional development, separated children face additional and particularly critical challenges. These concerns are highlighted here for consideration, with references for further discussion of particular needs.

## ***Physical, Nutritional, and Health Needs***

Separated children may face additional health and nutritional issues because of their vulnerable status. Humanitarian distribution systems may put separated children in general, and unaccompanied minors in particular, at a disadvantage as it is often difficult for them to access food assistance or health programs without the intervention of an adult. As a result, they may have difficulty getting supplies or accessing medical services, resulting in malnutrition and placing them at greater risk for disease and injuries, especially if they are living in crowded environments. In many camp settings, only adults are registered, and therefore unaccompanied minors will often be forced to associate themselves with an adult in order to get food or care. This, in turn, puts these children at a higher risk of exploitation if the adult does not undertake an appropriate care role for the child.

Babies and young children under five that are separated from families need special food and care. For example, SC recommends that babies younger than six months old should be fed exclusively on breast milk. When the child is separated from his or her mother, this should be done through a wet nurse if it is possible, culturally acceptable, and there is little risk of HIV infection. If it is not possible, breast-milk substitute or modified animal milk should be used with careful monitoring. Feeding of infants who are separated from their mothers and families should follow the guidelines of the World Health Organization.<sup>4</sup>

## ***Protection Needs***

Separated children have lost the protective care of parents and other family members to care for them, shield them from outside threats, and help them adapt to a changing and dangerous environment. As a result, they are one of the most vulnerable groups in crisis situations. Not only may their physical survival be threatened, but they face the broadest range of risks to their immediate and long-term well-being. Their status puts them at high risk for abuse, exploitation, forced labor, abduction, or recruitment into armed forces.

If separated children do not have direct access to food and services necessary to survival, they may be forced into potentially exploitative situations with adults. They may be exploited as forced laborers or sexual objects. Both boys and girls may be forced to join armed groups, or face arranged marriages or unwanted sexual relationships.

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<sup>4</sup>Saadeh, R., C. Casanovall, A. Brownlee, L. Sanei, and M. Kroeger. (2003). *Infant and Young Child Feeding*. Geneva: WHO.

## ***Psychosocial Needs***

During conflict and displacement many children experience violence, fear, humiliation and loss. Children who have become separated from their families will have survived traumatic events and must cope with the further loss, fear, and disorientation of having lost their parents and other family members. Without family support and protection, separated children are more vulnerable to the stress and fear of their circumstances. These children process their conflict experience alone, which may intrude on their daily activities, disturb their sleep, disrupt their concentration and prevent them from being able to fully engage in daily activities such as playing, learning, or basic social interaction. Without appropriate care and support, these experiences may have long-term effects which could prevent children from making necessary attachments or emotional bonds with others in the future.

Unaccompanied minors in particular face the loss of a sense of identity and belonging as well as assurance that others will support them in difficult times. This loss, along with the process of grieving and bereavement, can greatly affect children's behavior. SC psychosocial programming seeks to identify specific care relationships which support children's normal recovery from traumatic events as well as integrate separated and unaccompanied children into their community. A small percentage of children may require more targeted or more sustained mental health care, and referral mechanisms should be established to provide support for them.<sup>5</sup>

## ***Guardianship***

Although the precise legal definition of guardianship differs according to national law, guardianship generally refers to the appointment of an individual or an organization that will assume responsibility for the child and represent his or her best interests. Guardianship and physical custody are different; one person or agency may have guardianship while the child resides with a separate caretaker.<sup>6</sup>

The guardian is the advocate for the child, ensuring care and protection for him or her in the absence of the family. Each separated child should, at all times, have a guardian who

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<sup>5</sup>For more discussion of this topic, see the *Field Guide to Psychosocial Programs in Emergencies* by Arntson, L. and C. Knudsen in this series.

<sup>6</sup>For more discussion of the legal concept of guardianship, see Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. (1998). *Working with Separated Children: Training Manual*. London: Save the Children UK. Chapter Five, section E. Available at: <http://www.oneworld.org/scf/onlinepubs/guide/AAstart.html>.

is legally appointed and recognized by the appropriate local and national authorities. Guardianship is not limited to legal representation, but also includes the responsibility for consulting with and keeping children informed about their choices.<sup>7</sup> In situations such as large-scale emergencies legal guardianship may be difficult to obtain, but the welfare of separated children must still be protected by organizations working in their best interests.

## **BALANCING THE NEEDS OF SEPARATED CHILDREN WITH THE NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN**

It is important that SC staff balance assistance for separated children with assistance for all children in emergencies. While separated children are especially vulnerable, care should be taken to provide support in a way that does not cause jealousy or stigmatize children. Care must also be taken not to provide incentives for children with families to claim separated status or for parents to abandon their children in order to gain benefits either for themselves or for their children. Targeting assistance to separated children without providing appropriate assistance to the generally-affected population can create the risk of creating further separations.

Following the Rwandan genocide and mass population movements, orphanages were established for the large number of children who were separated, unaccompanied, or orphaned. The establishment of these orphanages led some parents to abandon their children at the centers because they believed the children had better opportunities for education, better care and food, and other special services. Community-based options, rather than institutionalized care, that support separated children but do not create different standards of services can minimize this risk. Institutional care is considered only as a last option in most cases.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>United Nations. (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York: UN General Assembly. Articles 3 and 12.

<sup>8</sup>Dunn, A., E. Jareg, and D. Webb. (2003). A Last Resort. London: International Save the Children Alliance, pp.12-13.

## **BEST INTEREST PRINCIPLE**

In all circumstances of assistance affecting separated children, SC must ensure that the child's best interest is taken into account and respected. The best interest principle is the most fundamental guiding principle of SC's work with separated children. As discussed in the following chapter, the best interest principle is articulated in international law as part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and constitutes the basic standard for decision-making with and for children in crisis situations. The principle requires that any international or local agency taking action on behalf of children must consider the child's wishes, opinions, and best interests at every stage of the decision-making and programming process.

### III. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The successful application of international and national legal protection mechanisms is essential to the well-being of separated children. This section briefly outlines the international legal framework established for their care and protection and provides an overview of the international agencies with an internationally recognized mandate to support refugee or displaced separated children. While international legal instruments provide an important legal framework for child protection, understanding national law and custom as it relates to separated children is also essential to establishing appropriate care and protection.

It is important to note that the primary responsibility for the care and protection of children lies with their families and their communities. The primary responsibility for protecting the rights of children lies with local and national authorities. It is only when these responsibilities cannot or will not be fulfilled that organizations such as SC have a role to play in establishing other appropriate care and protection mechanisms. All efforts must also be taken to promote family unity and to urge states to undertake their fullest responsibilities.

#### INTERNATIONAL LAW AND POLICY INSTRUMENTS

All children are entitled to care and protection under international law. Several international legal instruments note the legal rights of particular significance for unaccompanied and separated children which include:<sup>9</sup>

- The right to a name, a nationality and birth registration;
- The right to physical and legal protection;
- The right to know and be cared for by their parents or legal caregivers;
- The right to maintain personal relations and direct contact with their parents;
- The right to provisions for their basic subsistence;
- The right to care and assistance appropriate to their age and developmental needs;
- The right to participate in decisions about their future.

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<sup>9</sup>Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children. pp.37-40.

There are three principal legal instruments<sup>10</sup> that directly apply to separated children:

*The Geneva Conventions (1949)*: Although all four of the Geneva Conventions provide various protections to civilians, the *Fourth Geneva Convention* is specifically designed to protect children and civilians in times of war. Article 47 establishes family reunification as a priority in times of armed conflict. The two additional protocols to the Conventions (*Protocol Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflict and the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions, 1977*) provide for the special protection of children and address their participation in hostilities.

The *1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Principle 6)* provides a specific reference to the right of separated children to family reunification by stating “children shall, wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of their parents, and... a child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his mother.”

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20th, 1989) is the most important document in addressing both protection and care standards for separated children. At this writing it has been ratified by all countries except the United States and Somalia. The CRC provides the most comprehensive standards to be found on the rights of all children, with specific reference to unaccompanied and separated children.

*Article 3*: States that the *best interests* of the child should be a primary consideration in all programming and protection efforts. A child’s best interest should therefore be considered in the context of physical care, safety and security, material support, as well as adequate psychological and emotional support. It recognizes that children have a right to receive care and protection appropriate to the culture and community where they are living.

*Article 7*: Provides the necessary actions regarding identity at birth or upon separation.

*Article 8*: States the right to preserve or re-establish the child’s identity (name, nationality and family ties).

*Article 9*: States the right to live with parents, unless this is deemed incompatible with the child’s best interest, and the right to maintain contact with both parents. It also

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<sup>10</sup>See the accompanying CD-ROM for the full text of these instruments.

notes the obligation of the State to provide information when separation results from State actions.

*Article 10:* States the right to leave or enter any country and to maintain contact with both parents.

*Article 35:* Outlines the responsibility of the State to prevent the abduction, sale and trafficking of children.

*Article 20:* Outlines the responsibilities of parties to the conflict to ensure that children who have been separated from their families are not left to their own resources, and to arrange for all children under twelve whom have been moved to an asylum country to be identified by the wearing of “identity discs” or some other means.

A list of other legal instruments which relate to the status of children in conflict and refugee children is included in Appendix 1; the text of these instruments is included in the CD-ROM.

## **RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL BODIES**

Both the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UNHCR have recognized mandates to ensure the support of children separated from their families in refugee settings. In cases of internal displacement and separation, there are fewer recognized guidelines, although the general principles outlined here are still applicable on the whole. In both refugee and internally displaced settings, coordination among international actors as well as local or national authorities is essential to provide integrated support to separated children. Without a well coordinated inter-agency effort, children may become lost in the system and suffer as a result of inadequate services and protection. SC should work with other actors to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all agencies working with separated children in the early stages of any emergency.

While it is unlikely that any operating organization will attempt to meet all the needs of separated children by itself, it is important that each organization be knowledgeable about programming implications for separated children including prevention of separation, provision of appropriate care, and protection of separated children so that activities can be best designed to meet their particular physical or emotional needs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. Working with Separated Children: Training Manual.

## ***The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)***

The International Committee of the Red Cross is an impartial, independent, and neutral body charged with carrying out the specific mandate of the Geneva Convention (Article 74: Reunion of Dispersed Families). As such, it houses and coordinates the Central Tracing Agency which directs and coordinates all activities related to restoring family links, reuniting families and searching for missing persons. While the ICRC does include children in their broad tracing efforts for adults and families, coordination with NGOs is important to their mandate in order to carry out more detailed interviewing of children, active community tracing, monitoring of interim care situations, and follow-up to reunification.

Through the Central Tracing Agency, the ICRC will register and track all unaccompanied children, recording the identity of each child (name, age, parent's name, previous and present address), and photographing the child, setting in motion a mechanism for tracing parents. In recent years this tracing process has become increasingly collaborative with international NGOs. The *Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children* provides a clear understanding of how roles may be delineated to foster the best cooperation on behalf of separated children.<sup>12</sup>

## ***United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)***

In refugee situations, and in an increasing number of internally displaced settings, UNHCR is mandated by the United Nations to lead and coordinate actions to protect refugees and respond to forced migration emergencies. UNHCR has affirmed the protection of refugee children as part of its core mandate, noting that children often compose up to one-half of their population of concern. The reunification of children with their families is seen as a principle protection concern. UNHCR applies the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the key reference document in its work with separated children and unaccompanied minors. UNHCR has also developed a comprehensive document which serves as a key reference in the protection of children and recognizing the specific needs refugee children, including separated children, *Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>*Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*, p.12.

<sup>13</sup>See the accompanying CD-ROM for a copy of these Guidelines, including a more detailed discussion of status determination and best interest principles as they apply to the protection of separated children and unaccompanied minors in emergencies.

## IV. PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK

### SAVE THE CHILDREN'S PRINCIPLES FOR SEPARATED CHILDREN PROGRAMMING

SC has developed six principles to guide and strengthen its programs worldwide. This section discusses the application of these principles to programming for separated children.

1. *Child-centeredness.* SC is committed to protecting the rights of all children while recognizing that each child may possess different strengths and face different risks. Separated children, as a group, require specific attention since they do not have the protection of a parent. Programs which seek to address their concerns must pursue the child's best interests, based on both the child's own perception of her situation and an analysis of care and safety concerns.
2. *Gender equity.* SC is committed to ensuring that its programs recognize and respond to the gender-specific strengths and vulnerabilities of both female and male separated children. Gender issues become a critical factor in ensuring the physical safety for separated children and are important in program choices. For instance, both female and male children may require protection from forced recruitment and/or sexual exploitation, but protection approaches and interventions may vary according to gender. Gender equity in staffing is a core commitment for SC, and it is of particular importance when identifying staff to work with separated children.
3. *Empowerment.* In all of its programming SC utilizes a community-based approach which emphasizes active participation and ownership by local individuals and organizations in developing programs and activities. In many cases, family reunification is most effectively and quickly done through community mechanisms, such as informal "word of mouth," and it is important to work with communities to mobilize their own resources to protect and promote family unity. In working with separated children, empowerment and community involvement is key to developing culturally appropriate tracing mechanisms and care alternatives. At the level of the individual child, SC is committed to an approach which ensures the participation of separated children in assessments, program design, and in the range of decisions and actions that affect them, in a manner appropriate to the child's age and development.

4. *Sustainability.* SC is committed to ensuring long-term provision of services to children within their community by looking beyond the immediate crisis. SC seeks to incorporate capacity building in all programs in order to foster long-term program success. When working with separated children, SC will therefore work with a variety of partners such as community organizations, local authorities, national social welfare ministries, and individuals. While urgent actions may need to be taken to ensure the survival and well-being of separated children in emergencies, the sustainability of programming and services is a critical component of continued care and successful integration into their community.
5. *Scaling up.* SC is committed to designing quality programs that reach as many separated children as possible. In large-scale emergencies, large numbers of separated children may be identified and require immediate protection and support. Identifying key partners is important when scaling up to meet the needs of separated children, from identification through tracing, care and reunification.
6. *Measurable impact.* SC is committed to implementing programs which bring about lasting, positive change in the lives of children. Programs should be carefully designed, monitored and evaluated to establish if they are providing services effectively to the target population and meeting program goals and objectives. For separated children, this includes diligent monitoring of care situations and reunification to measure quantitative and qualitative intermediate and long-term effects on children.

## **SEPARATED CHILDREN PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK**

Programming for separated children may be undertaken at several levels at the same time: preventing separations, ensuring appropriate protection and care for separated children, working towards the goal of reunifying families as quickly as possible, and monitoring reintegration after reunification. This part of the field guide discusses in detail the four components of the SC framework for programming for separated children: *prevention, provision of interim care, tracing, and reunification*. In addition, this chapter includes a section on separated children in refugee situations since separated children who are also refugees may face specific challenges and risks.

## ***Prevention***

An essential aspect of preventing separations is to raise awareness among communities, organizations, and governments about the causes of separation and ways to reduce the risks. Even in emergency situations it is possible to prevent many children from being separated from their families or to rapidly reunify families who may be separated only momentarily.

### **PREVENTING INTENTIONAL SEPARATIONS**

Conflict tends to exacerbate poverty and socio-economic stress, which are the primary reasons for voluntary separations. Parents that are frightened, feel unable to care for children, or believe their children will be safer or have more opportunities elsewhere may entrust children to a neighbor or stranger for safekeeping or take them to an orphanage. Alternatively, children may be sent from the family in order to search for food or other supplies for the family, or may leave their families intentionally due to a lack of food and resources.

Preventing voluntary or intentional separations during emergencies requires SC to ensure access to basic resources and services for all members of the community and address the fears that adults and children might have regarding safety. It is important for SC to work with community leaders to identify vulnerable families, such as single parents with large numbers of children or families with a child with disabilities. Once these at-risk families are identified, specific efforts need to be undertaken to strengthen family unity and increase the community's capacity to support them.

In some cases, the distribution systems for assistance and relief during emergencies exacerbate the problem by providing incentives for families to abandon their children. Parents may feel that children are more likely to receive supplies and/or services if special programs provide a higher level of assistance to separated children. To avoid this negative incentive, all households should have access to basic relief supplies and to equitable health and educational services. Programming for separated children should support children in their own communities through a broader relief effort in order to minimize the risk of further separations.

## **PREVENTING ACCIDENTAL SEPARATIONS**

Accidental separations generally occur when conflict forces individuals, families, and communities to flee without warning, or during large-scale organized population movements. Children may have been away from home when their families had to flee during an armed attack or may have been left unattended while parents were away from the home. Children can also become separated during the chaos of flight, either at the onset or during travel as some members of the family stop to rest or wander from the group.

During conflict, even planned movements are often done quickly, with little or no time to prepare. For this reason, it is important to educate and discuss preventive measures with the community, especially since those responsible for quick large-scale movements may not account for the needs of children. Local groups, communities, governments, and relief agencies need to be fully aware that separations can happen, and that they can take actions to prevent them. While it is very important not to contribute to an atmosphere of anxiety and unrest, SC should work with the community and its partners to prepare families by educating them about what will need to be done if they need to move and what steps to take to prevent separations.

During unplanned large-scale movements, it is equally important to make announcements along the road about preventing family separation, such as noting that children should walk in front of their families and not behind them where they may get lost. Parents should also be instructed that an adult should hold the child's hand if possible, and to attach a tag or piece of paper to their child's clothing with parents' name and address.<sup>14</sup>

### **Legal Identity and Birth Registration**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child calls for all children to be registered at birth, but an estimated one-third of births around the world are unregistered.<sup>15</sup> As a result, many separated children may not have proper birth registration, which places the child at risk of losing his or her identity, becoming stateless, and losing the guaranteed protection of any state, including basic rights, legal status, and security.<sup>16</sup> SC should work with communities to ensure that the identity, including nationality, of all children, is recorded and preserved according to international, local or customary law. In refugee situations, it is important to

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<sup>14</sup>Williamson, J. and A. Moser. (1988). Unaccompanied Children in Emergencies: A Field Guide for Their Care and Protection. Geneva: International Social Services, p.36.

<sup>15</sup>Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup>Ressler, E. and J. Williamson. (1994). Refugee Children: Guidelines on Protection and Care. Geneva: UNHCR, pp. 44-46.

note that UNHCR Field Offices have the right to issue a written attestation for the facts of birth. In some instances, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies may also be involved in assisting local or refugee personnel in issuing certificates of birth for refugee children.

### **Before departure**

If the community is uncertain when movement will occur or is under threat of mass movement, SC staff should educate parents about what they can do to help protect their children and prevent separation. Parents, the community, and aid workers need to know what to do if they lose a child or if they see a young child alone. Watchful adults who know what to do can take steps to quickly find a lost parent or child. SC staff should recognize that communities under threat of movement will understandably be nervous and care must be taken to avoid creating undue worry or alarming families unnecessarily.

Concrete actions can be taken to help families prepare for movement, such as providing parents with identity tags for clothing or bracelets to put on children if the need arises. Parents should also teach their children their family name and address. Even small children can learn two words: their family name and the name of their village or town. This can be taught in a simple song or verse to younger children and repeated daily.

### **Once movement is underway<sup>17</sup>**

- SC staff should provide information about how to prevent a separation and who to notify if a child is lost. This information can be provided through posters or announced with megaphones along the travel route.
- Give parents twine or light ropes to place around their wrist and the wrist of their small child.
- If the movement is by vehicles, SC staff should provide drivers with rosters of children and parents on the day of the move and provide staff to gather information needed to reunite families at the new location. Broadcast information over megaphones about the need to register children before leaving and be prepared to register children and parents on the spot or as they board the transport.

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<sup>17</sup>de la Soudiere, M. and J. Williamson. (2000). Tracing for Children Under the Age of Five. New York: UNICEF. Prepared by International Rescue Committee for UNICEF.

## IMMEDIATE REUNIFICATIONS

Be prepared to attempt immediate reunifications even as people are moving. In Liberia, SC (UK) was able to quickly reunite dozens of children during large-scale movements simply by announcing over megaphones that lost children or families missing children should contact a staff member. Children were then taken ahead of the movement where families could look for their children as they walked past. By taking this kind of immediate and creative action, families were reunited after only hours of separation.

### Upon arrival at the new location

- SC staff should set up checkpoints at arrival stations for families getting out of vehicles or arriving on foot to be sure families are still together, identify those who are not, and immediately locate lost children before the parents move out of the area.
- Rosters from the point of departure should be checked against arrival, with any discrepancies noted for immediate action.
- Have a visible location for parents to report lost children and for adults finding lost children to wait before people move away from the arrival point.
- In refugee or displaced persons situations, SC should work with the community to inform them how to preserve the child's identity and register the child for tracing where appropriate. For example, host families or agencies conducting registration should keep the clothes of the child when found and be able to recall the circumstances of the separation.<sup>18</sup> This will be discussed further below in the section on tracing and reunification.

### Planned evacuations

In planned evacuations, including medical evacuations, children should be evacuated with adult family members whenever possible. If it is determined that entire families cannot be evacuated and children must be evacuated separately for protection and assistance (with parental consent), the personal and family information of each child must be recorded in a file which should travel with the child if doing so will not put the child at risk. Copies of the file should be given to the parents, national authorities, the organization responsible for the evacuation, and a neutral monitoring agency. The evacuation should be limited to a place as close as possible to the child's home and family, and communication between the child and family must be maintained.

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<sup>18</sup>Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. *Working with Separated Children: Field Guide*. Chapter 2. Section E.

## ***Interim Care Arrangements***

Separated children need care to ensure their safety, health, development, and psychosocial well-being. Interim care for separated children is necessary until they are reunited with their families or until other long-term or durable care arrangements are made. In interim care, the focus is on providing protection, stability, and support to the child while performing family tracing to help achieve the goal of reunification. Interim care may include fostering, peer groupings, or institutional care.

Separated children accompanied by adult family members should be cared for by those relatives if the relatives are willing and able to do so, if the child does not object, and if an assessment of the situation shows that the child is well cared for and safe. Careful attention should be given to regular monitoring of these care situations to ensure that the environment remains caring and safe.

Before setting up care for unaccompanied children, it is necessary for SC to identify any spontaneous care arrangements already in place. In many cases, children may be attached to families or individuals, and these situations should be reviewed to ensure that the child is in a safe environment which will afford the child appropriate care and opportunities. Moving a child from a spontaneous care arrangement may cause further disruption and instability, so it is important to thoroughly assess existing care arrangements before moving a child. The child should be removed from a spontaneous care arrangement if it is found that the child is suffering from physical or emotional abuse, exploitative labor, neglect, poor care, or abandonment.

While no care environment may be an ideal situation for an unaccompanied child or adolescent, the best situations should be culturally appropriate, provide age-appropriate care for normal development, provide for basic needs at a level comparable to the surrounding community, allow siblings to remain together, and allow children to maintain relationships that they already have.

There are several key principles to consider when planning interim care options:<sup>19</sup>

- Identify informal care systems that already exist in the community and find out whether traditional arrangements for the care of unaccompanied and separated children have been affected by the emergency.

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<sup>19</sup>Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. *Working with Separated Children: Field Guide*. Chapter Five. Section A.

- Build on informal systems and community strengths when designing interim care.
- Document the care arrangements for all separated children and design a system to monitor and follow up on care activities.
- Analyze the sustainability of all interim care activities.

It is essential that interim care arrangements build on and strengthen the systems that are already in place in the community, rather than establish new systems. Communities traditionally have their own ways of dealing with children who need care in the absence of primary caregivers, such as extended families, community-based networks, or informal fostering. Interventions designed by external NGOs may disrupt these local coping mechanisms and care arrangements. For example, formal fostering programs run by third party agencies may set standards that disrupt informal fostering. Institutional care may weaken informal community fostering practices. To minimize disruptions, it is important for SC staff to have a good understanding of the care that is already being provided so that interventions can support existing local structures.

### ***Durable Care Arrangements***

Although family reunification and interim care are the immediate priority for unaccompanied and separated children, in instances when reunification is not possible or is not in the child's best interests, long-term options for care will need to be arranged. Long-term options could include foster care, group homes, or adoption. The principles SC applies for establishing interim care are also applicable to durable care. Each case should be considered individually in the context of national child-welfare policy, legislation and practice in the region, and any solution should serve the child's best interest and meet his or her developmental needs.<sup>20</sup>

Children must be kept informed at all stages of their care arrangements, and must be allowed input into the decision of their placement. Ideally, children should be cared for within their community of origin. However, if this is not an option and the child must remain outside her or his community, efforts should be made to keep them in contact with their own culture, such as placement in a family from the same geographical region or ethnic group. Any type of care should provide a safe environment and safeguard against further separations.

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<sup>20</sup>Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, pp. 31-33.

In the following section, five types of interim and durable care options are discussed briefly: foster care, adolescent and peer group care, institutional care, child-headed households and adoption.

## **FOSTER CARE**

Fostering occurs when children are cared for in a household other than that of their biological family. It is generally understood to be a temporary arrangement, and birth parents retain their parental rights and responsibilities.

It is important to become familiar with local policies, laws, and conventions governing foster care and the removal of children from foster care. Fostering can cover a variety of arrangements:<sup>21</sup>

- *Informal or traditional fostering*: the child is taken into the care of a family or other household that may or may not be related to the child's family. Though no other third party is involved in these arrangements, the local community generally recognizes and supports them. These arrangements are often based on traditional custom and practice, and need to be identified and monitored.
- *Spontaneous fostering*: the child is taken into the care of a family without any prior arrangement. The family is not related to the child and may be from a different community. This occurs most often during emergency movements.
- *Arranged fostering*: the child is placed into the care of a family as part of an arrangement by a third party, usually an agency involved in social welfare such as a government department, religious organization, or national or international organization. It may or may not be covered by formal legislation.

In all cases of fostering, whether spontaneous or arranged, it is important to document the children for protection and for inclusion in all tracing efforts. All foster care arrangements need to be documented and monitored by an agency or child care worker affiliated with an accredited agency to ensure that the arrangement remains in the best interests of the child. Although the family setting may be better than an institution, children are still at risk of neglect, abuse, and exploitation.

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<sup>21</sup>Definitions from [Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children](#), p. 25.

Foster care arrangements must also include a screening process for prospective foster parents. To help avoid neglect or abuse, the community should be involved in defining the criteria for foster families and selecting those families. Whenever possible, the foster families should be from the same community as the child, and programming should develop the capacity of community welfare structures to allow the local community to manage and support the foster care system.

### CREATIVE SUPPORT

There are many creative ways to support separated children and their caregivers without providing a cash incentive. In Burundi, a number of widowed mothers were selected as foster parents. Once a child had been placed with the foster mother, she was offered a sewing machine and tailoring classes. This support allowed some women to eventually become economically independent and able to support themselves and their foster children.

Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. [Working with Separated Children: Field Guide.](#)

SC should ensure that criteria for foster parents consider the following characteristics:

- Experience with children because they have been parents or have cared for children before;
- Ability to speak the child's language or dialect;
- Ability to stay with the child over time and provide the continuity of a family;
- Willingness to care for children without the expectation of payment or material goods;
- Recognition that children are separated from their parents and acceptance that children will be returned to their family if tracing is successful.

In general, the best foster families are those who volunteer to care for a child without expectation of payment. However, families may be helped to obtain basic means of support since some may not be able to take in children if they will incur extra costs, such as paying additional school fees.

All foster parents should receive assistance in three areas:

1. Training in basic childcare, feeding, hygiene, play activities, and developmental milestones for children. For school-age children, foster families should be included in educational plans and counseled on school attendance.

2. Support and advice on obtaining basic material needs, including school supplies if appropriate, and ongoing support from child care workers or other foster parents as questions arise.
3. Basic information on how to maintain and update records for the health, history, and tracing of children in foster care so caregivers recognize what information the agency needs to monitor the placement.

### **ADOLESCENTS AND PEER GROUP CARE**

Adolescents require age-appropriate care and protection as much as younger children. However, their needs may be different due to their development, maturity, and ability to participate more fully in decisions. In many cultures, adolescents take on adult roles, even though they have not developed the full judgment of adults. Adolescents are typically developing their own identity as individuals and as members of their community, but require positive adult role models and emotional support as well as opportunities to develop skills which can lead to economic independence.<sup>22</sup>

Peer group care is often a suitable option for adolescents. In peer group situations, small groups of teenagers live together under the care of one adult who acts as a parental figure while preparing the group to become independent young adults. SC should evaluate age and maturity as key considerations in determining whether teenagers should be placed in this type of care. In the peer group care setting, adolescents should receive some form of educational or vocational training to prepare them to support themselves economically in the future.

### **INSTITUTIONAL CARE**

Priority should be given to family-based care that builds on existing social structures. However, there are situations when family-based care is not possible and temporary institutional care and protection is necessary.<sup>23</sup> Institutional care refers to children's centers or orphanages, where children are cared for in groups by one or more adults. Institutional care should be used as a last resort since it can rarely offer the individual care that a child needs to develop holistically. Institutional care should be considered only as a short-term arrangement, until reunification or community-based care is found.

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<sup>22</sup>For a more in-depth discussion on adolescent and youth issues, see the *Field Guide to Youth Programs in Emergencies* by Marc Sommers in this series.

<sup>23</sup>Dunn, A., E. Jareg, and D. Webb. [A Last Resort](#).

Institutional care must be carefully monitored to ensure that children are enjoying the same opportunities and rights as other children in the community. Institutions must provide adequate basic health care and nutrition, and provide a stimulating environment that includes periods of education, recreation, and rest. Children should also be taught appropriate life skills which would enable them to participate in the broader community. Staff should be experienced and trained in caring for groups of children, as well as the documentation required to monitor and update the tracing efforts of the children. It is important that staff receive ongoing training and support to address difficult situations.

Institutional care centers should be small and considered temporary. When possible, SC should work with institutional care centers to organize children into small family style groups to ensure that children receive proper attention and care that meets their emotional and developmental needs. In institutional care, siblings, friends, and separated children from the same communities should be kept together. Since integration within the local community can lead to spontaneous fostering or recognition for tracing and reunification, children in institutional care should be integrated into the local community as much as possible, including access to the same schools and services.

### **CHILD-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS**

In many emergencies or crisis situations, groups of children are left without any adult to care for them, and an older child or young adult may assume responsibility as head of the household. This arrangement often—although not exclusively—occurs in sibling groups. Child-headed households are particularly vulnerable and need extra support and protection; they may have problems procuring basic necessities such as shelter, food, or health care, and some children in the household are likely to give up their access to education or skills training to care for younger children.

If it is determined that a child-headed household does not require placement of an adult, staff should ensure that there are nearby adults who can assist and monitor the household's needs on a daily basis. Members of the community may be selected to supervise or provide guidance to the households. SC must be able to provide support to these children by expanding basic services and developing informal and formal "safety nets" to ensure that these children receive appropriate support and can meet their basic needs with dignity without resorting to exploitative situations.

## ADOPTION

Adoption is the permanent and legal or customary transfer of parental rights and responsibilities to the adopter. **It is never appropriate to begin adoptions in emergencies** since it is not known if children are truly without family members until tracing activities can be initiated and followed through. Most unaccompanied and separated children have parents or extended family members who will be willing and able to care for them. Only in limited circumstances—and after a significant passage of time—are children considered as potential participants in adoption.

Adoption should always be carried out according to national and international legal and child welfare guidelines, with appropriate assessment of the situation, express consideration of the child's best interests, and the child's own preference. Adoption does not signal an end to tracing efforts on behalf of the child.

Adoption should only be considered if:<sup>24</sup>

- There is no reasonable hope of successful tracing and family reunification.
- A reasonable period (usually at least two years) has passed during which all feasible measures have been taken to trace parents or other relatives.
- The parent or guardian provides free and informed consent.
- The child gives consent.

As stated in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, cross-border adoption should only be considered, "if the child cannot be placed in a foster or adoptive family or cannot in any suitable manner be cared for in the child's country of origin."<sup>25</sup> Inter-country adoptions should be carried out by the state authority or by accredited nonprofit professional bodies. There should be no payment, with the exception of legitimate legal costs and adoption agency expenses. Care should be taken in matching the child with any prospective adoptive family, applying the same requirements and standards of practice as when adoption is carried out within the home country. When inter-country adoptions take place, the children should always be accompanied by documentation of their identity and should have continued access to that information.

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<sup>24</sup>Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, pp.31-32.

<sup>25</sup>UN. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 21.

## ***Tracing and Reunification Process***

There are four fundamental aspects of the family tracing and reunification process: identification, registration and documentation, tracing and verification, and reunification and follow-up. These phases are commonly referred to by the acronym IDTR (identification, documentation, tracing, and reunification) and are usually completed sequentially, building upon the information gathered in each stage. The successful implementation of each phase is critical and affects the overall success of tracing and reunification efforts. The different elements of the IDTR process are defined briefly below and will be developed more in this section:<sup>26</sup>

**Identification:** the process of establishing which children have been separated from their families or other caregivers, and where they may be found.

**Registration:** the compilation of key personal data: full name, date and place of birth, father and mother's name, former address and present location. This information is collected for the purpose of establishing the identity of the child, for protection and to facilitate tracing.

**Documentation:** the process of recording further information in order to meet the specific needs of the child, including tracing, and make plans for his or her future. This is a continuation of the registration process and not a separate undertaking.

**Tracing:** for children, this is the process of searching for their family members or primary legal or customary caregivers. The term also refers to the search for children whose parents are looking for them. The objective of tracing is reunification with parents or other close relatives.

**Verification:** the process of establishing the validity of relationships and confirming the willingness of the child and the family member to be reunited.

**Reunification:** the process of bringing together the child and family or previous care-provider for the purpose of establishing or re-establishing long-term care.

**Follow-up:** refers to a range of activities for children and their families to facilitate reintegration. These activities may include social and economic support.

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<sup>26</sup>The definitions in this section are taken from [Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children](#).

## IDENTIFICATION

It is critical to identify children who have been separated as quickly as possible so that they can be reunited with family if they are still in the same area. In addition, experience demonstrates that unaccompanied and separated children face high risks of illness, exploitation, and even death during the early stages of their separation if they are not assisted. SC should adopt a systematic approach for locating children by looking in all possible places where children could be staying, working with community members to identify children.

### IDTR AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The following pages discuss the need to identify, register and actively seek reunification for children using the information gathered. It is important to discuss the confidentiality of this information with all SC staff and all other agencies involved in the IDTR process in order to agree on protocols. In some settings, such as areas of active conflict or ethnic cleansing, revealing the name and location of children is unsafe. It is important that staff be fully aware of the dangers that can arise from violating the confidentiality of the children in their care.

As already noted, careful attention should be paid to find children who are genuinely separated and to not attract false cases. It is very important to make the objectives of the IDTR process absolutely clear to the community, noting for instance that children will not be taken away from the community and that no additional material support is linked to identifying separated children.

To first identify unaccompanied or separated children, SC should work with other cooperating agencies to do the following:

- Make a list of all possible places children might be found. This might include churches, hospitals, feeding stations, orphanages, near market places, schools, temporary shelters, army barracks, prisons, border crossings, on the streets or in the homes of family or neighbors.
- Decide which places may be unsafe for children. Start looking in the unsafe places first.
- Talk to people who can help find the children. Ask community leaders, teachers, health workers, nurses, social workers, women in the market, or religious leaders. Ask community groups like women's clubs, local police, the local Red Cross or Red Crescent society, sports or youth organizations where they think children might be.

Once children have been located, it is important to begin the documentation and registration process immediately, discussed in more detail below, by gathering essential information, writing down the children's names, their situation and noting their most urgent needs.

Before beginning the documentation process, SC staff should verify that the child is truly separated from family or primary caregivers by interviewing the child and other members of the community.

## **REGISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION**

It is important to register and document separated and unaccompanied children as soon as they are identified. Registration forms and records of interviews should be kept with or near the child (as long as the confidentiality of the material is not compromised) and any change of location clearly noted. This process begins with the recording of basic information about the child, including name, age, address, family history, and a brief discussion of the circumstances leading to separation. This initial information is crucial to establishing the identity of the child and may be the only opportunity to safeguard family information for the child over time. If possible, it is important to gather complete information in the initial interview as there may not be an opportunity to interview separated children a second time. In large-scale emergencies, priority in interviewing and registering should be given to young children, as they have less developed long-term memories and may forget important details over time.

Children should be interviewed in a calm, quiet setting by staff who are well trained in interview techniques and who are comfortable talking with children. See Appendices 5 and 6 for a more detailed discussion on interviewing children and taking their photographs.

### **CONSENSUS ON FORMS IS CRUCIAL**

It is critical that consensus among all IDTR agencies is reached early in any emergency as to which forms will be used for registration and documentation of separated children. Not only is consistency important, forms must be identical so that valuable information is not lost due to errors, missing information, or confusion concerning different records. The forms included with this field guide are those agreed by the Inter-agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, but may be modified if necessary for the situation. Forms will only be successful to the degree that they are adopted by all actors.

Registration forms and individual profiles should be established for each child. Forms which have been adopted by the Inter-agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children are included in Appendix 7 and should be used as a starting point.<sup>27</sup> Each emergency may require these forms to be modified to reflect key information necessary to tracing efforts, but it is important that consensus is reached early among all actors and that the same standardized form is used by all. In addition, ICRC registration forms should be completed so that the child can become part of the Central Tracing Agency's efforts.

In addition to the initial interview, the registration and documentation process is conducted by talking to separated children and the adults around them. Throughout this process, important information about the child's identity, circumstances of the separation and the course of their flight after separation is recorded and safeguarded for the child. The individual profile and family information on the child should be sent with children if they move. The registration book should always include the child's registration number as well as the ICRC registration data and a photograph of the child.<sup>28</sup>

As a guideline, the following information is useful to gather about and from children as early as possible as it may lead to rapid reunification or details which will be important to later verification and reunification:

- Ask where and with whom the child was found. Talk with these people before they move again in order to establish any more details about the separation.
- Find out what was going on in the area at the time the child was found. For example did fighting occur in one area that forced people to flee in a certain direction or location? Did a village or group of people move from one location to another and if so, where were they going?
- Look for any people in the area that might recognize the child or have been in a group with the child. Show the child to adults and children in the immediate area before more movements occur to see if anyone recognizes or remembers anything about the child or whom the child was with.

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<sup>27</sup>See the accompanying CD-ROM for copies of these forms.

<sup>28</sup>Whether older children should actually carry copies of information is debatable for personal safety reasons and to prevent loss of the record. If it is deemed dangerous for children to be identified by name, political or ethnic group, confidential precautions must be in place. Each situation should be assessed as to what is in the best interests of the child. However, children's long-term access to family information must receive high consideration.

- Note what the child is wearing or what is with the child. Photograph the child's clothing or write down a description of everything that is with the child including clothes, bracelets, necklaces, toys, etc.<sup>29</sup>
- Take a photo of the child and another of sibling groups immediately and attach to the child's documentation forms.<sup>30</sup>
- Interview older children and compile a family history from what they can tell you or what others have told you about the family. A good family history usually requires more than one interview (example forms for family charts and histories can be found in Appendix 7).
- Interview children who have moved from one location to another as they often have information about the location of other children and adults.
- Ensure that all children, particularly older children, have a voice in decisions based on interviews and have access to information.

## TRACING

Tracing is the active search for family members and is based on the information gathered during the documentation and registration process. Tracing should be initiated as early as possible. Even in situations where family reunification is not possible, tracing efforts can lead to re-establishing family contacts which allow siblings and parents to communicate about the location and fate of their family members. As in the case of documentation and registration, priority should be given to unaccompanied children and very young children.

Approaches to tracing must take into account the reasons for separation. Tracing is often approached in several ways:

**Informal or spontaneous tracing** is done by parents, relatives and communities and occurs outside of agency organized efforts to find children. It can provide access to networks of important information that an outside agency may not know about and often forms the basis for more formal efforts when supported by outside resources.

**Formal large-scale tracing** may involve several agencies and a large geographical area. As noted earlier, once undertaken, it is critical that the various people involved reach agreement on procedures for gathering information and circulating it in a systematic way. A

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<sup>29</sup>This information can be used for verification purposes later, and may help parents to identify their child especially if a long period of time has passed. See de la Soudiere, M. and J. Williamson. [Tracing for Children Under the Age of Five](#).

<sup>30</sup>UNHCR. (2003, Provisional Release). [Handbook for Registration](#). Geneva: UNHCR, p. 154. See Appendix 6 for guidelines on photographing children.

standard set of documents is completed for each child and information is compiled in a central database.

**Cross border tracing**<sup>31</sup> takes place when families have settled in distant countries or temporarily across a border. This method of tracing requires contacts on both sides of the border and a central database to successfully exchange information and keep it up to date. This work always involves extensive cooperation with ICRC who leads on cross-border tracing in most instances.

**Active case-by-case tracing** is a time-consuming, labor- and resource-intensive method of tracing which involves individual follow-up. However, it is very effective, especially when several children who left the same location can be identified and grouped for tracing at the same time. There will always be a certain number of cases that require this individual attention to complete the tracing process.

**Mass tracing** describes a collection of methods that can be carried out simultaneously with the above-mentioned efforts and are effective in high concentrations of people. These efforts include providing information such as children's or parents' names at public meetings or by radio and producing posters with children's photographs. Photographs should not provide the child's name, but rather a code and contact information for the agency facilitating the child's tracing (See Appendix 6).

#### CONFIDENTIALITY AND PHOTOS

In tracing programs, photos can be compiled into a book or put onto posters, taking care not to divulge information about the child which could be used inappropriately. The name of a child is **never** used. Instead, a number or letter is placed on the photo. This corresponds to the child's name but is only known to the tracing agency, to ensure anonymity (see Appendix 6). If a claim is made based on the photograph, the staff can investigate this before revealing the name or location of the child in question. In addition to ensuring a child's confidentiality and protection, another reason for not providing all details of a child is to prevent false claims for reunification. A claim must be verified before a child is reunited with an adult. To do so, the adult must be able to provide the information they would obviously know if they are, in fact, related to the child.

While approaches to tracing differ greatly depending on the emergency situation, there are several commonly used formal and non-formal methods of tracing including physical recognition, circulation of photos, and word of mouth.

<sup>31</sup>SC works closely with the ICRC in cross-border tracing and to expedite the legal permission needed for cross-border reunions or reunions in areas of restricted access due to safety or status of the families involved (for settings where displaced or refugee populations are not given travel documents).

For children too young to talk, physical recognition is the best and fastest form for immediate reunification. The moment a child is found SC staff should:

- Ask anyone in the area if they recognize him/her.
- Ask if anyone with or around the child knows the child.
- Ask other children in the immediate area if they know the child.
- Show the child to anyone in the vicinity.
- Ask others to quickly circulate the information that a lost child has been found.
- Use a megaphone or other ways of immediately notifying all in the area that a child has been found.
- Show the child to other adults who are looking for their own children.
- Show the child to anyone where the child has been staying. It often happens that a child is left in a center or other location and someone there knows who left him or her and why the child is there.

#### **CASE EXAMPLE: ALBANIA AND RWANDA**

If it is available, the use of media can reach a large number of people in a short period of time. In Albania, the names of children and a description of them were broadcast over the radio, printed in the newspapers and shown on television. Special battery operated radios were distributed and a special radio frequency used to broadcast news to refugee populations and tracing information on unaccompanied children with great success. In Rwanda, the radio was used to promote the ideas and methods of tracing and reunifications, for discussions of psychosocial needs of children and to inform parents of how and where to find information on their missing children.

Children can be taken by car from one location to another to allow others to see them. Such action needs to consider the feelings and fears of the child and must only be done when an adult she or he knows and trusts accompanies the child. When it is known that many children have been reunited to a particular village or location, it may be worth setting up a visit to bring separated children to that location in the hopes that someone will recognize them. It is also important to provide transportation for older children to return to areas where they believe family might still be located or be returning. Returning to old addresses can result in finding family or neighbors who may have information about family members.

The immediate and ongoing circulation of photographs of children and their information is critical in the tracing process. Photos should be taken as soon as a child is found and must be updated frequently as the child's appearance changes. However, it is important to keep the original photographs of the child when he or she was found as parents may not immediately recognize later photographs.

Many separated children have also been reunited with their families because people talk about them. Anyone who knows about an unaccompanied child should be encouraged to tell others about the child, to ask others if they know anyone missing a child and to encourage parents searching for children to tell their story to others. Information can continue to circulate, even in times of armed conflict or impassable roads. Children have been reunited under the most difficult of circumstances because someone heard that they were lost and told someone else how to find them.

Over time, a good source of information is the children who have successfully found their families and been reunited. In many cases older children have returned home and been able to tell others about missing children they had seen and where they are located. They can identify children they met in children's centers or in orphanages, or they can relay the names of children that they recognize to adults still searching.

Although it is hoped that children can be traced and reunited with families quickly, it is realistic to expect that some cases will take much longer. It is important to periodically renew efforts and review cases for new approaches. Over time, tracing efforts stop and parents give up hope of finding children. However, experience has shown that even after a year or many years, children can still be reunited with parents or other family members. Keeping the issue alive and in the minds of the community will help this process. SC should regularly renew tracing efforts since just knowing that tracing efforts continue will often encourage the efforts of others. One reunification in an area can give others new hope for their own search.

## VERIFICATION

With successful tracing, some reunifications can be completed swiftly, others need additional monitoring, but all require some form of verification. Once a claim is made for a separated child, it is necessary to find some evidence and proof that the adult claiming the child is, in fact, the child's relative. Verification is always necessary before releasing a child to an adult as false claims may arise for a variety of reasons:

- There may be a genuine mistake due to accidents in recognizing young children.
- Bureaucratic errors occur. In some instances records have matched children with the same name and birth date with a claim for a missing child, but the families were different.
- Some parents who have lost children may attempt to take a child who is not their own.
- If material incentives or support are offered on completion of reunions, adults may attempt to claim a child for the material gain, then abandon the child later.
- In some cases, an adult may attempt to obtain a child to perform work, for sexual exploitation or other abusive activities.

Verification is especially important for young children who cannot fully contribute in the verification process verbally and often may not recognize a relative after a short span of time.

**Verification includes not only an accurate identification of an adult but also their willingness to accept and care for the child as a family member.**

Several methods of verification are acceptable and can be used together to ensure a claim is valid. All depend upon having accurate and detailed information from the child, highlighting the importance of good interviewing methods and systematic documentation.<sup>32</sup>

- Ask the adult to pick the child's photo out of a number of photos shown.
- Ask the adult to describe the child, including any birthmarks, scars, skin markings, tattoos, or other physical characteristics that would identify the child.
- Ask the adult to describe the clothing the child was wearing, any jewelry or objects with the child at separation. If these have been saved and/or photographed, they can be compared to the description.
- Ask the adult to describe the place the child was left and how the separation occurred. Check against any known information about the child or the location where the child was found and reports by the child.

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<sup>32</sup>Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. *Working with Separated Children: Training Manual*. Chapter Two. Section G.

- Ask the adult if they recall a favorite game or song sung by the child.
- Ask for information only the parent and child would know (family nicknames, name of pets, etc.).
- Verify the identity of the person making the claim through communities or local authorities.

Ultimately, the decision of whether to accept the verification lies with those who have legal guardianship of the child. It is necessary to document the method of verification or use a verification form that is then placed in the child's records in case the claim is contested in the future.<sup>33</sup>

## **FAMILY REUNIFICATION**

Hopefully, when a separated child is claimed and verification is complete, the child can be returned to his or her family in a short time. Most reunions are joyful times for those involved and there is little question as to the benefit of such an event. However, children should always be prepared before reunification, particularly if the separation has been lengthy. Also, further exploration is needed if SC staff has concerns, the child expresses concerns, or the family is uncertain about accepting the child.

### **Arranging the Reunification**

SC should perform certain tasks in arranging the reunification to encourage a smooth transition:

- Parents should be interviewed and asked whether they wish to reunite with the child and if they will care for the child. Plans need to be made on where, when, and how the reunification will take place.
- Home visits might be needed to verify the willingness of the family to care for the child and verify the claim was not made for material gains or incentives.
- Home assessments must be made if there is any evidence or reports of neglect or abuse of children, alcohol or drug use within the home.
- Families may very much want to care for a child but not have the means to do so. Their capacity to care for a child may be compromised by illness, handicaps, or being elderly. In order to prevent repeated separation, methods of obtaining assistance should be explored with the family and the community.

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<sup>33</sup>See sample verification form in Appendix 7, Save the Children UK. See the accompanying CD-ROM for a copy of this form.

- If the separation has been a long one, there may be a need for counseling and support to help the family integrate the child into their midst and adjust to the new situation. Each reunification should be made according to the needs and experience of the child and family.
- Follow-up visits should be made to the family for a time after the reunion to make sure all is going well, both emotionally and in the material support of the child.

Cases that may require special attention include those where:

- The relationship of the adults and the child is distant;
- The relatives are complete strangers to the child;
- The child has formed a strong attachment to his/her caregivers;
- The child is not old enough to express his/her wishes about the reunion;
- The child has been conscripted as a child soldier, been imprisoned, abused, or endured other hardships that might effect his or her adjustment into a family setting.

In these cases, additional time may be needed to allow for visits between family and child, adjustments for re-integration into the family or a chance for child to bond with the new family.

### **Delays in Completing Reunifications**

In many cases, family members may be ready and able to care for a child and need no further assistance. However there are situations that delay reunification. These include situations where:

- It is impossible to obtain the appropriate legal or travel documents or visas for entry or exit. National or local services to provide such documents may be disrupted for a long period of time.
- The conditions that created the initial displacement and separation of the family may also prevent a return to the same location.
- Armed conflict or other dangers may delay a safe return or seal off an area that cannot be entered or exited.
- The family members may be imprisoned, detained or in some other way prevented from having a child with them.

When it is not safe or possible for separated children to be returned immediately, alternative arrangements must be made. If delays occur, appropriate interim care should be provided and the legal rights of the child and family safeguarded by government or international organizations acting on behalf of the child. The child and family should be kept informed of what is happening and the child prepared for eventual reunion by talking about the family and what will happen when the move is made. In addition, ongoing contact, such as the exchange of letters and photos, should be maintained throughout the delay.

### **Follow-up and post-reunification support**

Once a family is reunified, it is important to continue a regular monitoring of the situation. Although this step is often overlooked or given less attention, it is critical to ensuring the safety and well-being of the child as well as that of the family. As in any population, child abuse, neglect, and exploitation can occur within the reunified family or within the community. Reuniting children with families after voluntary separations can be particularly difficult.<sup>34</sup> During times of armed conflict and displacement, tremendous additional stress is placed on families including:

- An increase in drug and alcohol abuse within families;
- An increase in domestic violence and child abuse cases;
- Fragmentation of the community, and subsequent loss of support of families;
- The loss of traditional coping skills due to the physical and mental stresses of the emergency.

When working with separated children and family reunification, SC is responsible for conducting an assessment of the conditions of the family to determine if the child will be cared for adequately and that any potential concerns are addressed. A schedule of follow-up visits should be discussed with the child and with the family. These visits should be documented and used to complete the child's profile when the case is closed.

Community involvement is key to successful reunification and reintegration, particularly after long separations. Existing structures, including formal social welfare systems, play an important role in long-term support and monitoring of the reunification. When support is provided to the reunified family, it is also important to consider how support may be provided to the community at large in order to facilitate reintegration.

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<sup>34</sup>Brown, M., H. Charnley and C. Petty (eds.). (1995). *Children Separated by War: Family Tracing and Reunification*. Conference Report. London: Save the Children UK.

## SEPARATED CHILDREN IN REFUGEE SITUATIONS

Separated children who are also refugees face particular risks, as they have lost the protection of their home government, and their parents or caregivers may be in the country of origin, the asylum country, or in a third country. Although separated refugee children have the same needs as other separated children, programming for unaccompanied and separated refugee children must take into consideration specific concerns associated with their situation.

Refugee camps have their own social and political structures, which may affect programming for separated children. Therefore, it is essential to assess how displacement has affected pre-existing social networks and traditional care arrangements.

Children are usually granted refugee status based on the asylum claim of their parents. However, when the child is separated from family members, procedures exist to ensure the child can be provided status determination. Separated children should be admitted to the asylum country if they are seeking refugee status. In large-scale emergencies, refugee status is often granted to all members of a group and separated children will automatically benefit from this process.

If individual status determination is required for the child, the child's age and views should be taken into account and a legal representative or guardian should be appointed to advocate for a decision in the child's best interests. Children who are not granted refugee status should be returned to the country of origin if family reunification can be arranged or an adult caregiver, appropriate governmental or nongovernmental organization is able to provide immediate protection and care.<sup>35</sup>

In a refugee setting, children should be placed in foster families within their own community. They should not be placed with host families within the asylum country. If children have been placed with foster families in the asylum country community, special efforts must be taken to monitor these children as they may be at increased risk of exploitation and abuse and regular monitoring is difficult. Factors such as legal status and ethnic tension in the foster home should be considered in the cases of individual children and groups of children.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, pp.34-5.

<sup>36</sup>Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. *Working with Separated Children: Field Guide*. Chapter 5. Section C.

Family reunification in the country of origin through voluntary repatriation is the goal for separated refugee children. The decision to return a child to the country of origin for family reunification depends on several factors:<sup>37</sup>

- Conditions in the place of return and whether they pose a threat to the child's physical security or pose a risk of persecution;
- Conditions in the country of asylum;
- Wishes of the child;
- Wishes of the parents and their capacity to care for the child;
- Quality of care arrangements in the country of asylum.

If reunification is not possible and voluntary repatriation is possible, alternative placement for the child in the country of origin is the preferred solution. Agencies should establish links on both sides of the border and set up procedures for transporting individual separated children. Careful planning and monitoring of transfer, reception, tracing, and care is essential. Documentation should accompany the child if deemed safe.

As already noted, adoption is not a preferred option in emergencies, and adoption within the country of asylum is not generally desirable, especially if there is a possibility of repatriation. As discussed previously, inter-country adoption, should only be considered if the child cannot be suitably cared for in his or her country of origin. Inter-country adoption should only occur if voluntary repatriation is not feasible and options in the country of origin would not provide for the child's well-being.

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<sup>37</sup>From Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, pp.35-36.

### CASE STUDY: REFUGEE CHILDREN SEPARATED IN TANZANIA

In Karagwe, Tanzania, Save the Children Federation (UK) set up “child care committees” to participate in work with separated children and to collaborate with the tracing staff. With a goal of building the community’s capacity for the care of separated children, incentives were offered to individuals. The committees grew to unmanageable sizes and there were cases of corruption.

The original committees were disbanded and new, smaller ones were formed, with members from the same area of origin as the children. The second time, no incentives were offered, greater care was given to the selection of members, and training was provided. The committees remained in place until the refugees repatriated, playing an important role in the care of separated children. The second initiative was set up in a more participatory way and took longer to get going, but it was more successful. The incident illustrates the importance of finding a balance between starting activities right away and taking time to discover how a community functions.

Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. Working with Separated Children: Field Guide.



## V. PROGRAMMING PROCESS

Problems faced by separated children are traditionally addressed by two programming approaches: a service delivery approach in which services are targeted only for separated children, and a community mobilization approach in which services are provided by integrating them into programming for all children which will include separated children.

While these approaches are not mutually exclusive, the majority of assistance, and the approach SC typically uses, will be in the form of community-wide efforts that assist all children, including those that are separated. Direct services to support unaccompanied and separated children are designed to supplement these activities if children's needs are not met by the integrated approach.

This chapter discusses three general aspects of program implementation—assessment, planning, and monitoring and evaluation—noting the particular aspects that must be addressed for unaccompanied and separated children.

### **ASSESSMENT**<sup>38</sup>

The purpose of a situational needs assessment for separated children is to explore and document the nature and scale of an emergency, possible developments and immediate priorities. A multi-disciplinary team familiar with the issues related to separated children should conduct assessments with the participation of local community members affected by the emergency. Assessments should be done periodically as children's situations and needs change rapidly during an emergency.

Assessments should rely on direct observations and interviews with community leaders, men, women and children. Examples of methods used to gather information on the status of separated children in a particular community include:

- Adding questions to camp-wide surveys to identify households with separated children.
- Raising issues of separated children in community or camp planning meetings.

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<sup>38</sup>Building on documented best practices, this section relies heavily on material presented in two documents: Upard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. [Working with Separated Children: Field Guide](#) and [Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children](#).

- Identifying and collaborating with other agencies (government and local and international NGOs) involved in child assistance in the area.
- Conducting a door-to-door survey to locate families caring for separated children.

Taking into account this operating framework, SC should work closely with other collaborating agencies to explore the following issues to identify appropriate programming designs and assess the need for a family tracing and reunification program.<sup>39</sup> A full listing of assessment questions are included in Appendix 8.

### ***Situational overview***

How have children become separated? Is the problem widespread? How is the community responding? Who is currently involved in identifying and placing separated children? Does this pose any problems itself?

### ***Programming infrastructure***

What activities are now being done for and with separated children? What are the gaps in services? How are separated children being documented?

### ***Policy and programming***

Is there a government agency charged with child welfare? Which actors are active in this area? Is there an existing capacity which could be strengthened?

### ***Looking forward***

Is it likely that separations may continue to occur?

Once these questions have been explored, SC can work with partner organizations to begin planning culturally appropriate programs that address the needs of children in their community.

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<sup>39</sup>These questions are taken directly from Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. Working with Separated Children: Field Guide.

## **PROGRAM DESIGN AND STRATEGIC PLANNING**

In the program design and strategic planning phase, SC program staff make decisions about various aspects of the program based on the needs assessment, including the activities to be implemented, the scale and duration, the geographic location, the goals and interventions, partnerships with other agencies, and staff. In programming for separated children, a plan of action needs to be developed within the SC office, between other child-focused agencies working in the emergency, and within the context of the broader relief efforts. Joint planning between SC and other operational agencies is necessary early in an emergency to develop a shared strategy and clarify the roles and responsibilities of each.

### ***Goals and Objectives***

Clear goals and objectives are always necessary to effectively design programs. Goals are the general statements of intended program impacts and should be developed according to the problems and issues the program seeks to address within the national and local context and in adhering to SC's principles. In programming for separated children, SC has three main goals:

- Prevent further separations
- Reunite children with their families as quickly as possible
- Protect and care for separated children.

Objectives are the more specific statements that translate the broader goals into measurable commitments related to program outcomes. Objectives should be specific, clearly defined, and measurable. For example, objectives may include documenting all separated children, finding a specific number of foster parents, arranging suitable placement for a specific percentage (or all) separated children, and reuniting a specific percentage of separated children with parents or other family members within a specific time frame.

Goals and objectives should be developed using a collaborative process that includes all stakeholders, including program staff, children, family members, and community members. As the program moves beyond planning to implementation, it may be necessary to revise goals and objectives based on lessons learned during the implementation process.

## ***Staff and Training Development***

Although staffing needs will vary from program to program, the three types of staff typically needed for separated children programs include management, program staff, and support staff.

*Management:* A program manager, senior program coordinator, or other senior staff person with international experience working with separated children is responsible for coordinating and supervising the work of program staff, acting as a liaison with other agencies and local authorities, organizing the necessary materials and logistical support, monitoring the situation, and assessing the need for changes to interventions.

*Program staff:* The staff and social workers that work directly with children and communities are one of the most essential components of programming for separated children. Social workers, teachers, health workers, and others with experience working with children are a good source of staff since they often have transferable skills.

Whenever possible, tracing staff should be nationals of the country from which the children originate. Such staff will be familiar with the language, geography, and culture of the region, making it easier to interview children and avoid misspelling personal and geographic names.

Although it may be difficult to set up a lengthy staff interview process during an emergency, it is important to maintain professional standards.<sup>40</sup> Since long-term staffing needs may not be evident at the beginning of a program, it is advisable to employ staff on short-term contracts that can be extended. Specific attention should be given to ensure that female staff are recruited. Ideally, social workers or tracing staff should have the following qualifications:

- Secondary education;
- The ability to read and write the local languages and the international language used in paperwork (test should be administered);
- Sensitivity to the needs of children and readiness to promote their rights and best interests;
- Experience with children;
- Organizational skills and good attention to detail.

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<sup>40</sup>All staff must be made aware of SC's Child Safety Policy and agree to follow these guidelines. The policy is included on the accompanying CD-ROM.

The provision of interim care and the tracing program require a number of refugee, community participants, or national staff whose language and culture are the same or very similar to that of the children receiving assistance. Training in child development, foster care, and an understanding of children's emotional well being is necessary. Training should include an understanding of the basic standards of care as well as instruction in tracing methods, registering children, conducting interviews and coordinating the efforts over an extended period of time.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Separated children programs need to be monitored and evaluated at different points in their delivery to establish if they are providing the services intended and whether those services are effective. During the planning stages, activities should be developed with a plan for their evaluation based on the goals and objectives discussed previously. Effective monitoring and evaluation is essential to determine whether the program is meeting its objectives; it allows staff to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as make necessary changes and modifications to become more effective.

Monitoring is the ongoing tracking of the program's implementation. For example, all separated children's programs should include home visits to monitor the care situations of children, both in foster families and in group settings.

Evaluation examines the medium and long-term outcomes to determine if goals and objectives are being met. Evaluation should draw on the insights of the children and others in the community. Examples of evaluations for separated children's programs could include:

- The percent of separated children successfully placed into foster families;
- The number and percent of separated children successfully reunified with family members;
- Reduction in the numbers of separated children conscripted by the armed forces.

It is important to remember that these stages are seldom linear, and have a cyclical aspect as activities are carried out and new needs are discovered. The goals and objectives of the community may change. As a result, adjustments and improvements are made to the

program. For example, during a tracing program, large movements may occur, so new children will need to be registered and entered in the system; geographical areas not previously a part of the service may need to be included if they become accessible; or other areas where tracing was being done may become inaccessible.

Eventually efforts to trace on behalf of children will result in reunifications, or information may be exhausted. Examples of such adjustments and modifications include:

- A particular activity is complete (for example, the names of all children have been successfully entered into an information tracing system).
- A particular activity needs more effort (partial information for some children needs to be completed to include them in care arrangements or tracing efforts).
- A particular activity needs to be redirected to other areas (the tracing system needs to expand to cross-border information).

Constant monitoring and evaluation of services will ensure that the program remains flexible and responsive to the needs of separated children within the context of their situation.

## ***Indicators***

An indicator is a marker or variable used to help monitor program implementation and to evaluate program outcomes and inputs. Indicators are used to determine if a program is meeting its objectives. Although the development of indicators to measure the well-being of children is far from complete, SC's core principles help guide basic indicators for children's programs.

Indicators should be chosen at the same time that the objectives are being developed in the planning process and be revised as necessary during implementation. The key challenge in developing indicators is defining what is a good measure or benchmark for more general goals and objectives. SC program staff should consult with separated children, separated families, and community members to gain insight into indicators that are meaningful and relevant in the local context.

Indicators fall into two basic categories: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative indicators can be measured using numbers or percentages that can be compared during different

stages of implementation. Qualitative indicators are based on observations, interviews, and the perceptions of those affected by programming.

Quantitative indicators may include:

- Numbers of children placed into foster care;
- Numbers of separated children returned to families;
- Numbers of separated children attending school and community activities;
- Numbers of separated children registered.

Qualitative indicators may include:

- Reports by teachers on the school achievement of separated children;
- Anecdotal reports by families of improved outlook of children;
- Children and foster families report satisfaction with arrangements;
- Overall reduction in disturbances involving separated children as reported by community leaders;
- Successful spontaneous care arrangements with minimal support from SC.

Program activities will help identify the indicators selected to measure the success or failure of program actions and implementation. Indicators point the way toward changes and improvements needed in the program over time. It is important to spend time early on in the program to develop the correct indicators which will serve as benchmark measures towards expected outcomes and which allow for periodic review and revision of activities or approaches in order to best support unaccompanied and separated children in a changing environment.





## VI. CONCLUSION

Separated children are a particularly vulnerable group, requiring protection, care, and efforts to reunite them with their family. Below is a summary of key issues to address when designing and managing programs for separated children as a specific group or as part of the general population.

- Separated children have lost the parental buffer that protects them from the world at large and traumatic events. Without this protection, separated children will be more vulnerable to health problems, abuse, exploitation, and psychosocial stress.
- It is important to balance assistance for separated children with assistance for all children in emergencies. While separated children are especially vulnerable, care should be taken to provide support in a way that does not cause jealousy, stigmatize children, or provide incentives for children with families to claim separated status or for parents to abandon their children in order to gain benefits either for themselves or for their children. Targeting assistance to separated children without providing appropriate assistance to the generally-affected population can create the risk of causing further separations.
- Preventing separation of children from their families is a community-wide effort that requires coordination and education about strategies to help stop children from becoming separated during large-scale movements.
- In the absence of family care, the best care for unaccompanied and separated children is community-based and uses the informal and formal networks that already exist within a community. Care arrangements should meet children's basic physical and material needs while offering a supportive environment for emotional and social development.
- Documentation, tracing, and reunification are most effective when part of an integrated community effort. The community should be involved in the active tracing of children, as well as monitoring their care.

- The sharing of information within and between agencies and countries is essential in planning and implementing integrated programs for separated children. Concerns regarding the best interests of the child should govern the balance between confidentiality and information sharing. Information sharing should provide the maximum information for tracing at the minimum risk to the child and family.
- It is necessary to periodically renew efforts to trace children and families since their situations may change over time.
- Family reunification should occur only after an evaluation and monitoring process has been conducted to ensure that reunification is in the best interests of the child. After reunification, follow-up is necessary to ensure the care and protection of the child.
- It is critical to conduct a situational needs assessment to explore the reasons and scale of separation during an emergency and the programming needs of separated children. Such assessments should be conducted periodically as the situation and children's needs can change rapidly during an emergency.
- Ongoing monitoring of programs for separated children is necessary to evaluate their effectiveness and to be able to modify them as the situations of children and their families change along with the broader emergency situation.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON SEPARATED CHILDREN AND UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

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## APPENDIX 2: RELEVANT WEBSITES

**Caring for Unaccompanied Children Under Difficult Circumstances by Jean Long, Ros O’Loughlin, and Annalies Borrel** — Jean Long and Ros O’Loughlin worked for Concern in Kisingani (DRC) in the fall of 1997, establishing the separated children program:  
<http://www.enonline.net/fex/04/fa4.html>

**Institute for Child Rights and Development:**  
<http://web.uvic.ca/iicrd/index.html>

**Lost Children’s Network — Separated Children in Kosovo:**  
<http://www.lostchildren.org/KOSOVO.htm>

**Norwegian Refugee Council:**  
<http://www.nrc.no/engindex.htm>

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees:**  
<http://www.unhcr.ch>

**IRC — Family Reunification, Alternative Care & Community Reintegration of Separated Children in Post-Conflict Rwanda:**  
[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/the\\_funds/pubs/irc\\_rwanda.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds/pubs/irc_rwanda.pdf)

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## **APPENDIX 3: SEPARATED CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

### **HIV/AIDS AND SEPARATED CHILDREN<sup>41</sup>**

HIV/AIDS is increasingly prevalent among mass displacements, in situations of armed conflict and in refugee settings. Many of the countries with high numbers of children orphaned by AIDS are either in conflict or on the brink of emergency. The most vulnerable groups within this population are separated adolescent girls, often the victims of rape, forced into prostitution and becoming sex workers, forced into unwanted sexual partnerships to obtain protection, food and shelter, or taken into military camps and sexually abused by soldiers. In recent episodes of genocide, rape has been used increasingly to terrorize communities and to attack the very fiber of the ethnic groups by impregnating women and girls.

On the other end of the age range, infants who are born HIV-positive present an ethical question of disclosure to potential foster parents, and pose a greater challenge in providing necessary medical care. NGOs assisting separated children may find themselves in the position of caring for adolescents who have been infected by rape and their infants who may be born with the infection.

Each office must consider the issue of disclosure in placement of HIV-positive children. The present consensus among international organizations is to not support testing of infants or to disclose this information prior to placement. If or when the child becomes ill, then informed consent to continued care is necessary along with education and medical support for the foster family.

If infants and young children require placement in foster care, once the disease becomes evident, it may require supportive services to ensure the family will continue to care for the child. Or if care takers become ill, support for continued care of the foster child and monitoring of the needs of the family will be necessary.

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<sup>41</sup>Ockwell, R. and J. Williamson. (1992). UNICEF Handbook for Emergencies. Geneva: UNICEF, unpublished work.

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## SEPARATED CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES<sup>42</sup>

Separated children with disabilities are at a much greater risk than any other group. In any emergency, the disabled often face abandonment and greater risk of physical threat, injury and death.

For separated children:

- Seek to prevent disabilities from arising through providing adequate nutrition, primary health care, immunizations, and sanitation and by reducing health hazards.
- Identify children with disabilities and conduct a needs assessment in the early phase of the emergency.
- Ensure that disabled children have equal access to the assistance provided and that their survival needs are being met.
- Provide community-based assistance as much as possible, seeking to involve and train foster family members or primary care givers.
- Include disabled separated children in community activities to promote their social integration.
- Screen disabled children for medical conditions and refer them for treatment as soon as possible to prevent further deterioration of their condition.
- Prioritize measures to increase the mobility of disabled children both for safety and to facilitate self-sufficiency.
- Set up a referral system to enhance the rehabilitation and assistance needs of separated and disabled children.

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<sup>42</sup>UNICEF Handbook for Emergencies.

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Questions to ask for disabled separated children:

- Are there medical and rehabilitation facilities? If so, do separated children have access to them? If not, what is the alternative solution?
- Has an assessment been conducted to determine the numbers of separated children with disabilities and the type of disabilities?
- How many children will require special services?
- Is the disability a result of the emergency or the circumstances of the separation?
- Were children abandoned due to the disability and what steps are needed to prevent another separation if tracing is successful?
- What is being done by the community both at present and traditionally for treatment and rehabilitation (what are the cultural responses to disabilities)?
- What measures have been introduced to prevent disabilities: immunizations, supplementary feeding, distribution of vitamin A and land mine clearing programs (including education for children and families)?

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## **APPENDIX 4: BASIC INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THE DOCUMENTATION OF A SEPARATED CHILD**

### **Basic personal data:**

Family names • forename/given name/nicknames or other names • sex • date of birth/year • place of birth • tribe/casts/ethnic origin • nationality • language spoken • religion • education • particular identifying features (birth marks, scars, disabilities, tattoos, etc) • personal belongings.

### **Accompanying siblings:**

(brother/sisters/other child relatives) • names • sexes • ages • relationships • address if different from the child.

### **Circumstances when identified:**

Location/address where found • date and time. If found/reported by other adults: the adult's names • address • relationship to child

### **If in the care of these adults:**

how the association came about • the length of time the child has been with them; if found with other separated children: the names and reference/registration numbers of the other children • how long they have been together.

What immediate care needs are there and can adults continue to care adequately for the child?

### **Family relationship:**

Name • age/date of birth • relationship to the child • occupation • last known location/address of: father, mother, step parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, other relatives or other persons normally living in the family household (extended family or friends).

### **Circumstances of the family/child separation:**

Reasons for separation • date and place of separation • when and in what circumstances child last saw parents/other family members • if death of parents is presumed, why child believes this to be so.

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**History of the child before the separation:**

Important events in the child's life • descriptions of people and places remembered.

**History of the child since separation:**

Places of residence • legal status on any formal placements • length of time spent in each place • important events, people and places remembered • how shelter, food and water was obtained.

**Psychosocial assessment:**

Appraisal of the child's current emotional state • the importance of current relationships • extent to which the child's (age-specific) developmental needs are being met. Other information of importance for the daily care of the child.

**The child's intentions, wishes, plans, best interest concerns:**

With whom the child wishes to be reunited if tracing is successful • their relationship • where and how they might be traced for • information about the wishes of the parents, if known, for the child.

**Other information relevant for tracing:**

Names and locations/addresses of other persons who may provide additional information that might be helpful in establishing the child's identity, locating family members or understanding more fully the circumstances of the separation • information relevant to the determination of refugee status and wishes for repatriation, local settlement or resettlement, where appropriate.

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## APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEWING SEPARATED CHILDREN<sup>43</sup>

Interviewing children and community members is a critical aspect of the registration and documentation process. Initial interviews gather the basics (name, age, parents' names) and details of the child's history (a brief sequential report of how the separation occurred, information about where the family could be). Over time, those caring for the child can collect further details. Basic information that needs to be included in the overall documentation of separated children is given in *Appendix 4*. If necessary, priority should be given to interviewing very young children separated in emergency situations, and unaccompanied children as they are particularly vulnerable and their memories are less likely to be long-term.

Interviews should be done by the staff caring for children (listening and recording what they remember over time) and by local staff trained to conduct interviews with children for purposes of tracing.

Points for SC staff to remember for interviewing separated children in general:

- Be familiar with the child's culture, meaning of words within their language, and developmental norms for children in this setting.
- Gain the trust of children, talk with them first, smile and help them to relax. The interview can provide the child with relief from stress, fear, guilt and the burden of keeping their experience inside.
- Ask for details of the separation and compile in a sequence of events. Write down your observation of the child or adolescent and your perception of the accuracy (truthfulness) of the information given.
- Interview children in a quiet and calm location if possible, and have someone there who knows the child if they are frightened of the interview or upset by retelling what happened to them.

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<sup>43</sup>This section draws heavily on Williamson, J. and A. Moser. (1989). [Guidelines for Interviewing Unaccompanied Refugee Children and Adolescents and Preparing Social Histories](#). Geneva: UNHCR and International Social Services.

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- Make a note if a child needs attention, is malnourished or sick, and inform others who will follow up and attend to the child's needs. Make a note of educational needs of older children.
  - Involve children in discussions of their hopes and wishes regarding any decisions being made about them. Actively work to ensure this information is known to others in the decision-making process. Allow older children and adolescents to participate and make informed decisions regarding their future.

It is important to note that children and adolescents may change the details of their stories to protect themselves emotionally. For example, it may be easier for a child to state that a relative is dead than to experience again the uncertainty of what happened to them. Over time, details may change, family relationships may be reported differently, or the circumstances may not be as originally told. These are protective measures and not efforts to deceive the interviewer.

It is also important to look for changes in children's initial stories. Due to emotional distress and the shock of the separation, or due to witnessing the injury or death of family members, children and teenagers may not be able to recall or speak about what they have been through. Over time, as children feel more secure, they may be able to tell you more and recall more family details.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY IN INTERVIEWING**

Play is also a way of finding out more information about a child's past. When a child feels safe and secure she will play with other children or adults. During play, adults can ask a child questions that may give a name or a family member for future tracing. For example, an adult can hear a child sing a song and ask where the child learned the song or if mother/aunt/sister sang that song. While there is no need to push a child to remember something, gentle conversation and questions during a playful happy time may allow a child to remember and talk about other times with people she can name. A child may also be able to recall how many siblings she had and if they are older, much older or younger than herself. Gathering information through play, over time, can add important information about a child's background. Even older children may recall more details in conversations over time or activities that remind them of happier times. Engaging older children in activities that put them at ease or allow them to talk less directly about painful events may provide important information.

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## APPENDIX 6: PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs of unaccompanied and separated children are essential for their registration as well as tracing programs. Because photographs can provide a recognizable image, they should be kept on file by all agencies collaborating to meet the needs of separated children and they should be replicable for use in tracing. Every effort should be made to take photographs of separated children.

However, precautions must be taken when sharing and publishing information on unaccompanied and separated children. It is important to know who will have access to the information collected.<sup>45</sup>

### HOW TO PHOTOGRAPH<sup>46</sup>

Areas should be designated where photographs can be taken in a manner that ensures the safety of children while respecting their privacy.

Polaroid (instant) cameras or digital cameras are usually the most effective cameras to use because the photograph can be verified immediately. Priority needs to be given to taking pictures of younger children as babies and toddlers change rapidly and families may have a harder time recognizing them if they have not seen them for several months.

Prepare a small board (or a notebook) and write the child's registration number on it in BIG LETTERS. Underneath the number, write other information you think is necessary as well as the location of the child in code. The child's name should **never** be included on the photograph. For the safety of the child, their identity should be protected and their location should be expressed as a letter or number code that only you or your agency will understand. For example, if there are several camps in one country, the first letter of the country, the first two letters of the camp name, and the number of the child could be used. If there is only one camp in that particular country, use only the first two letters of the camp name and the number of the child. For the first child photographed in the Nonah transit camp in Guinea, the number could read G-NO-001.



Photo by Christine Knudsen.

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<sup>44</sup>Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, p. 23.

<sup>45</sup>de la Soudiere, M. Handbook for Registration. International Rescue Committee and UNHCR.

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If possible, do a trial run before photographing a large number of children to be sure the sign board is large enough and writing is dark enough to be visible in the complete photos. The registration number must correspond to the registration number of the child in the Registration Book. If the Red Cross has already registered the child, also write down the Red Cross or ICRC registration number in big letters on the board or notebook.

- Sit the child on a chair and have him/her hold the sign board with the registration number in front at the level of the chest.
- Place a plain background behind the child: a light colored cloth or a blank wall. If there are patterns in back of the child, such as a window or leaves of a tree, it is more difficult to recognize the child in the photo.
- Always take the photo with a flash, even if photographing takes place outside.
- If you photograph outside; eliminate shadows and bright light by making a small tent over the child with a white sheet or thin cloth. If this is not possible, take the photo in a shady place.
- Photograph the child only from the chest up to ensure the face is visible. Make sure the whole face and the number are included. If the child is very small, capture the whole body in the photograph.
- Place the camera on a tripod about 1 meter (3 feet) from the child.
- Ask the child to look straight at you.

The technology used to photograph children may intimidate and scare them. It is important to work with children to avoid photographs that are distorted by movement or crying.

Write the name of the child on the back of the photo (if it is instantly developed) or keep a careful record of this information to match each photo, digital image, or negative.

Take two photographs (four is best) so that you have one to place immediately in the Registration Book and one to use for tracing, either immediately or at a later stage (for posters, tracing books or other methods). Verify that the pictures are acceptable before the child is allowed to leave the photographing area.

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## **APPENDIX 7: SAMPLE FORMS USED WITH SEPARATED CHILDREN**

These forms are taken from other complex emergencies and should be considered as a starting point for modifying one that suits the specifics of each situation. Please note that electronic copies of the forms (which may print out more accurately) are available on the CD-ROM.

### **INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP ON UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN<sup>46</sup>**

1. Registration for Unaccompanied and Separated Children

#### **IRC<sup>47</sup>**

2. Individual Profile

3. Inquiry to Trace for a Child

4. Chart for Family Members Tracing Separated Children

#### **SAVE THE CHILDREN/UK<sup>48</sup>**

5. Documentation Form 1 & 2 (Identity of the Child and Family Members Chart)

6. Verification Report Adult

7. Verification Report Child

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<sup>46</sup>Inter-agency Guiding Principles for Separated and Unaccompanied Children. (Best version as of March 11, 2004.)

<sup>47</sup>de la Soudiere, M. (2001). International Rescue Committee Agency Forms. New York: IRC.

<sup>48</sup>Uppard, S., C. Petty, and M. Tamplin. (1998). Working with Separated Children: Training Exercises and Sample Forms. London: Save the Children UK.

**Form 1: Registration Form for Unaccompanied and Separated Children**

REGISTRATION FORM FOR  
UNACCOMPANIED AND  
SEPARATED CHILDREN



ICRC ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

Other ID No. \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please specify organisation)

Unaccompanied child   
Separated child

*Please Note:*

• A **separated** child is any person under the age of 18, separated from both parents, or from his/her previous legal or customary primary care giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. An **unaccompanied** child is any person who is under the age of 18, separated from both parents, or from his/her previous legal or customary primary care giver and **also** his/her relatives.

• If the child does not remember his/her address, please note other relevant information, such as descriptions of mosques, churches, schools and other landmarks.

Please fill out this form with a ballpoint pen. (1 form per child except for siblings under point 2.)

**1. Identity of the child**

Personal ID document type and no. \_\_\_\_\_ Sex M  F

Full name (as expressed locally) \_\_\_\_\_

Also known as (nickname) \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) given to the child by others after separation from parents? Yes  No

Date of birth/age \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic group \_\_\_\_\_

Language(s) spoken \_\_\_\_\_

Distinguishing physical characteristics \_\_\_\_\_

Father's full name \_\_\_\_\_

Alive  Dead  don't know

Mother's full name \_\_\_\_\_

Alive  Dead  don't know

If father and/or mother believed dead, please give details \_\_\_\_\_

Other persons familiar to the child \_\_\_\_\_

Address of the child before separation (i.e. where the child grew up) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) with whom child lived \_\_\_\_\_

---

**2. Siblings (brothers/sisters) accompanying the child**

A. Full name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth/age \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Current address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Tel. no. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Full name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth/age \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Current address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Tel. no. \_\_\_\_\_

---

**3. Current care arrangement of the child**

a. Children's centre  b. Foster family (please specify nationality)

c. Other (please specify)

Full name of institution/person(s) responsible \_\_\_\_\_

Current address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Tel. no. \_\_\_\_\_

Date this care arrangement commenced \_\_\_\_\_

Place foster family intends or is likely to return to or resettle in:

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

---

**4. History of separation**

Date of separation \_\_\_\_\_

Place of separation \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_

Circumstances of separation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List additional movements between place of initial separation and current location

\_\_\_\_\_

---

**5. In case the child has been evacuated**

By whom / through which organization? \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Reason(s) for evacuation \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

To where? \_\_\_\_\_

---

**6. Additional protection concerns**

Has the child been associated with an armed force or armed group? Yes  No

Child headed household Yes  No

Disabled child Yes  No

Medical Yes  No

Street child Yes  No

Girl mother Yes  No

Abuse situation Yes  No

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Further Information \_\_\_\_\_

Immediate action required? Yes  No  \_\_\_\_\_

---

**7. Wishes of the Child**

Person/s child wishes to find

Father  Mother  Brother  Sister

Other (please specify)  \_\_\_\_\_

A. Full name and relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Last known address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. no. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Full name and relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Last known address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. no. \_\_\_\_\_

C. Full name and relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Last known address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. no. \_\_\_\_\_

Is the child in contact with/has heard from any relative(s)? (please give details) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Does the child want family reunification?  Yes, as soon as possible  Yes, later  No

---

**8. Interview by other organisation involved in tracing**

Has the child been interviewed by any other organization(s) ? Yes  No

Name of organization(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Place of interview \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Reference no. given to the child by other organization \_\_\_\_\_

---

**9. List of documents carried by the child**

\_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Additional information which could help trace the child's family** (please ask the child where he/she thinks his/her relatives, including siblings might be or whether the child is in contact with any family friend)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

**11. Disclosure of information**

Does the child/guardian agree to the public disclosure (on radio, Internet, etc.) of his/her name and the names of relatives for the purpose of tracing his/her family?

Yes  No  \_\_\_\_\_

---

**12. Place and date of interview** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

**13. Information obtained from:**

the child  guardian  other (please specify)

---

**14. Name of interviewer and organisation** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

**15. Organisation in charge of tracing the child's family** (please specify name, address and contact numbers)

\_\_\_\_\_

---

**16. Signature of the child (if old enough)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Form 2: Individual Profile**

PLACE PHOTOGRAPH HERE

CHILD'S NAME:

SEX: \_\_\_\_ AGE: \_\_\_\_ REGISTRATION NO: \_\_\_\_

ICRC NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Write names of brothers & sisters who are with the child
  
2. Find out name and location of person/s who found or brought child to current location, interview that person record that information
  
3. Interview any other adults & children who may have information on child's family and record that information
  
4. Write down any visit the child receives: date, name and address of visitor and relationship to the child

Record child's movements: date & places: e.g. hospital, nutrition center, etc and final move for family reunion or other reasons

**Form 3: Inquiry to Trace for a Child**

 <b>INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE</b>	CONFIDENTIAL FILE <b>International Rescue Committee /Guinea</b> INQUIRER REQUEST TO TRACE CHILD
	UN Number:
	Additional Number (i.e. passport):
	Additional Number Type:
Case comments or other numbers:	

I. Information About The Inquirer	
First Name:	
Middle Name:	
Last Name:	
Also Known As/Nickname:	
Sex:	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Date of Birth (mm-dd-yy):	Age: <input type="text"/>
Job/Profession:	
Current Address:	
Is Inquirer Married:	
If yes, name of spouse (first middle last):	
Is the inquirer living with spouse?	If not, why? <input type="text"/>
Country of Origin:	
County/Province of Origin:	
Chiefdom/District of Origin:	
City/Village of Origin:	
Additional Contact Information:	
Does inquirer know whereabouts of child's relatives?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
If so, which one(s):	
Relatives' current address:	
What are the Inquirer's reasons for looking for the child (i.e. bring him/her home, other, etc):	

II. Interviewer Information	
Place of interview:	Date: <input type="text"/>
Name of interviewer:	Signature: <input type="text"/>
Title:	Organization: <input type="text"/>

**Form 4: Chart for Family Members Tracing Separated Children**

Children Inquirer Is Looking For									
First Name:	Middle Name:	Last Name:	Also Known As/ Nickname:	Date of Birth:	Sex:	Relationship:	Date of last contact:	Place of last contact:	Comments:

**Form 5: Documentation Form Part 1 and Part 2**

<b>I Documentation form - part 1</b>			
<b>IDENTITY OF THE CHILD</b>			
Documentation No:		PIN No:	
Full name:		Age:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male
Nickname:		Nationality:	
Father's name:		Mother's name:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Alive <input type="checkbox"/> Dead	<input type="checkbox"/> Alive <input type="checkbox"/> Dead	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	
Origin:			
Province:	District:	Sub-district:	Village:
<b>CURRENT SITUATION</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> In a children's centre	<input type="checkbox"/> In a foster family	<input type="checkbox"/> Alone	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Date of arrival at current location:			
Brothers or sisters with the child:			
Name:	Age:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	
Name:	Age:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	
Current address			
Coming from (if refugee or displaced):			
<b>DETAILS OF FOSTER FAMILY (IF WITH A FOSTER FAMILY)</b>			
Full name:	<input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Male	Age:	Relationship:
Place of origin:			
<b>DESTINATION (IF REFUGEE OR DISPLACED)</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> In a children's centre	<input type="checkbox"/> In a foster family	<input type="checkbox"/> Alone	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Destination address:			
		Departure date to new destination:	
<b>HISTORY OF SEPARATION</b>			
Date of separation:		Place of separation:	
Circumstances of separation:			
<b>CHILD'S WISHES</b>			
Name of person the child would like to be traced:		Relationship:	
Possible address:			
Alternative person:		Relationship:	
Possible address:			
Date:		Place:	
Signature of tracing worker:		Organisation:	

<b>2 Family members and other persons the child wishes to find</b>			
Name of child:			
Documentation No:		PIN No:	
Complete name			
Also known as			
Age			
Sex			
Relationship			
Lost contact: when and where			
Last known address			
Comments			

**3 Documentation form - part 2  
FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT ADDRESS**

**IDENTITY OF THE CHILD**

Documentation No:		PIN No:	
Full name:		Age if known:	<input type="text"/> Female <input type="text"/> Male
Is this the child's original name?	<input type="text"/> Yes <input type="text"/> No	If no, who gave it to them?	

**INFORMATION PROVIDED BY OTHERS**

Father's name:	Mother's name:
Address of child's family:	
Additional information regarding circumstances of separation:	
Person giving the information:	Address:

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE CHILD**

Father's occupation:	Mother's occupation:
Places remembered (e.g. rivers, markets, schools, churches):	
Activities in the area (e.g. crops grown, artisan activities):	
School attended by the child (if any):	Name of teacher
People remembered:	
Events remembered (e.g. marriages, funerals, festivals):	

**OBSERVATIONS BY THOSE CARING FOR THE CHILD**

<i>Physical:</i>	Scars:	Face colouring	Hair colouring:
	Other:		
<i>Behaviour:</i>	Habits:		
	Mannerisms:		
Languages spoken:	Accent:		

**OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION (e.g. GAMES PLAYED, FAVOURITE SONGS, THINGS TALKED ABOUT BY THE CHILD)**

Clothes worn when found:	
Items carried when found:	
Date:	Place:
Tracing worker:	Organisation:

**Form 6: Verification Report by Adult**

<b>4 Verification report adult - part 1</b>			
Documentation No:	<input type="text"/>	PIN No:	<input type="text"/>
Name of child:	<input type="text"/>		Age:
<i>Ask the adult the following questions and record below:</i>			
<b>IDENTIFICATION OF THE CHILD</b>			
What is the name of the child?	Nickname:	Age:	
Do you recognise the child from any of the photographs displayed?	<input type="text"/> Yes <input type="text"/> No	No on photo identified:	
What is the name of the child' mother?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> Alive Dead <input type="text"/> Don't know	<input type="text"/>
What is the name of the child' father?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> Alive Dead <input type="text"/> Don't know	<input type="text"/>
What are the names of other family members?			
Are any other children missing?	<input type="text"/> Yes	<input type="text"/> No	
Where did the child use to live?	Province:	District:	
	Sub-district:	Village:	
What information do you have about the child and their life (for example name of school attended)?			
What events do you know that the child might remember?			
<b>CIRCUMTANCES OF SEPARATION</b>			
When was the child separated from his/her family?	Where did the separation happen?		
How did the child become separated?			
<b>INFORMATION ABOUT FAMILY MEMBER LOCATED</b>			
What is your name?	Age?	Relationship to the child?	
Address: Province:	District:	Sub-district:	Village:
How can your house be found?			
With whom do you live there?			Relationship:
What is the name of your father?			Mother?
<b>ACCEPTANCE TO TAKE CARE OF THE CHILD</b>			
Do you want the child to come and live with you?	<input type="text"/> Yes	<input type="text"/> No	
Are you able to care for them?	<input type="text"/> Yes	<input type="text"/> No	
If not, is there any other family member who could take this child?	Name:	<input type="text"/>	
Address:			
<b>AGREEMENT TO TAKE THE CHILD</b>			
I agree to accept this child into my home to live as part of my family			
Signature/thumbprint:			
<b>COMMENTS</b>			
Comments of social worker			
<input type="text"/>			
Signature of tracing worker:	Date:	Organisation:	

<b>5 Verification report adult - part 2</b>	
<b>FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT ADDRESS</b>	
Name	PIN No: Documentation No:
<b>A: INTERVIEW WITH THE ADULT CLAIMING THE CHILD</b>	
<i>Ask the adult the following questions and record below:</i>	
<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE FAMILY AND HOME</b>	
What is the child's nickname?	
What is the father's occupation?	Mother's occupation?
What places might the child remember (e.g. rivers, markets, schools, churches)?	
What aspects of the area may the child remember (e.g. crops cultivated, artisan activities)?	
<b>PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILD</b>	
What scars does the child have?	
Face colouring?	Hair colouring?
Other:	
<b>BEHAVIOUR OF THE CHILD</b>	
What habits does the child have?	
Mannerisms:	
Languages spoken:	Accent:
What other information do you know about the child (e.g. games played favourite songs, things talked about by the child)?	
What people might the child remember?	
What clothes was the child wearing when separated?	
What items did the child have with him/her when separated?	
<i>If the above information given by the adult corresponds with that known about the child, proceed with physical identification:</i>	
<b>B: PHYSICAL IDENTIFICATION</b>	
<i>When arranging physical identification note the following.</i>	
Can the adult recognise a photo of the child from amongst a number of photos?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Can the adult recognise the child among several in a group?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
What is the reaction of the child on meeting the adult?	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> Negative
Observations:	
Can other relatives or neighbors identify the child?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Comments:	
Date:	Place:
Tracing worker:	Organisation:

**Form 7: Verification Report by a Child**

<b>6 Verification report child</b>		
<i>1. The office should complete sections A and B after they have received an adult verification.</i>		
<i>2. If the details about the child on the documentation form part 1 correspond with the details given by the adult, the child verification form can then be sent to the team who will meet the child and fill in sections C, D and E.</i>		
<b>A: INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD</b>		
Documentation No:		PIN No:
Name of child:		Age:
Currently living at:		
Mother's name:		Father's name:
Address before separation?	Province:	District:
	Sub-district:	Village:
<b>B: VERIFICATION</b>		
<i>1. Does the information on the Verification Report Adult correspond with the information on the child's documentation form part 1?</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>2. On the Verification Report Adult, put a tick by the details which do correspond and a cross by the details which do not.</i>		
Comments:		
<b>C: INFORMATION ABOUT THE CHILD'S WISHES</b>		
Does the child know the person who claims him/her?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the child want to live with them?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does he/she have any worries about living with them?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Comments:		
Do you recommend that reunification should take place?		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Comments:		
<b>D: FURTHER ACTION NEEDED</b>		
<i>If reunification is not recommended, what further action do you suggest?</i>		
Further tracing		
Other		
<b>E: REUNIFICATION REQUEST</b>		
This child should be reunited with:		Relationship:
who lives at:	Province:	District:
	Sub-district:	Village:
Signature of tracing worker:	Date:	Organisation:

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## **APPENDIX 8: ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

### **SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW**

- Is this an emergency in which significant numbers of children have become separated from their families?
- If so, what are the circumstances in which separations are taking place? Is rapid action likely to prevent further separations?
- How are the affected populations dealing with the care of separated children? Is outside intervention necessary?
- How are people currently caring for separated children? Estimate the shortfall between what is being provided and what needs to be provided to adequately care for separated children.
- Where are children being found and what are their immediate needs in terms of care and well being?
- Are local and international military personnel involved in identifying and placing separated children? Does this appear to be working or causing additional problems?

### **CURRENT PROGRAMMING INFRASTRUCTURE**

- What kind of activities are people engaging in to meet the basic needs of children separated from parents? What resources, opportunities or policies would help expand services to separated children?
- What existing services could be expanded to address problems for separated children and the adults looking for them? What new services, assistance, advocacy or other actions are needed to address problems for separated children and parents?

- 
- What procedures are already in place for identifying and documenting separated children for tracing purposes? Are additional resources needed?
  - What professional or technical skills that would assist separated children can be found in the affected population? What would enable these skills and resources within the community to be put to use on behalf of separated children?

## **POLICY AND PROGRAMMING IMPLEMENTATION**

- How has the emergency affected government departments responsible for child welfare and protection? Is there a policy on separated children, and is it being implemented? Where are the gaps in policy regarding separated children at the various levels?
- Which of the following are present in the affected areas?
  - Government social welfare agencies
  - National/International NGOs
  - International organizations (e.g. UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC)
  - Community organizations (such as churches)
- Are any of these organizations currently involved with separated children? Do they have the capacity to extend their work to include separated children?

## **LOOKING FORWARD:**

- Is there any indication that separations on a significant scale may happen in the future?