

# THE LOST ONES

## Emergency care and family tracing for separated children from birth to five years

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**THE LOST ONES:  
EMERGENCY CARE AND FAMILY TRACING FOR  
SEPARATED CHILDREN  
FROM BIRTH TO FIVE YEARS**

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**April 2007**

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This is a working document. It was prepared by Marie de la Soudière, Jan Williamson and Jacqueline Botte, under the supervision of Marie de la Soudière, formerly Director and Special Advisor, Child and Youth Protection and Development Unit, International Rescue Committee. The paper was commissioned and revised by Jean-Claude Legrand, Manuel Fontaine and Rebecca Symington of UNICEF. The advice and recommendations come from experience acquired in a variety of emergency settings in Asia, Africa and Europe, including Aceh, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Kosovo, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Thailand, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania, among others.

The document is intended to provide concrete advice on how to put the guiding principles common to most child protection actors into practice. Though cultural traditions and customs may require the advice to be adapted to the specific context, the authors believe that the advice provided is grounded in sufficiently broad experience to guide measures that ensure children under five are not separated when this can be avoided, and, if separated, can be reunited with their families as quickly as possible.

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## **Introduction**

*The Lost Ones: Emergency care and family tracing for separated children from birth to five years* describes how to care for the youngest children who are separated from their families in emergencies. This working guide also provides information on how parents and humanitarian workers can prevent children from becoming separated during emergencies in the first place. In the event of separation, the guide outlines how to trace the families of separated children and discusses possible care models to meet developmental needs. Finally, it addresses the steps required to verify the relationship between the child and the adult and explains best practices for the reunification of the child with parents or other family members.

This working document is intended for non-governmental organizations, communities, national agencies, United Nations organizations and other groups responsible for the care of very young separated children and for tracing and reuniting them with their families.

The UN and non-governmental organizations have formulated comprehensive policies concerning the care, protection, family tracing and reunification of separated children. Several excellent manuals and papers exist on guidelines and principles in addressing the needs of these children. There is a need, nonetheless, for a practical, field-oriented methodology to guide an appropriate response to the specific needs of emergency care, tracing and family reunification of very young children. This working manual attempts to fill this specific gap and should be read in conjunction with other, more comprehensive works on the subject of separated children, noted in the Bibliography in Annex II.

# Chapter 1: Separated and unaccompanied children

## 1.1 Who are separated and unaccompanied children?

In situations of armed conflict, particularly when associated with sudden or mass population movements, a significant number of children become separated from their families. (Families are defined here as parents, close relatives or other persons designated by law or custom to care for the child.) According to UN inter-agency guidelines, children who are not with their families during times of conflict are designated as 'separated children' or as 'unaccompanied children'.

**Separated children** are separated from both parents or from their previous legal guardian or customary primary caregiver but are not necessarily separated from other relatives. These may include children accompanied by other adult family members.<sup>1</sup>

**Unaccompanied children**, also called unaccompanied minors, have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by any adult who by law or custom is responsible for doing so.<sup>2</sup>

Babies and very young unaccompanied children may be found with groups of other children, with underage siblings, or in such institutions as hospitals and orphanages.

## 1.2 How do young children become separated or unaccompanied?

Young children become separated or unaccompanied during emergencies in different ways. Separation may be accidental or intentional and can occur to children who:

- Are not with their mother when people were forced to leave suddenly
- Became lost during the flight, at the onset of an attack or during the trip to a safer location
- Lose their parents after they died of illness or were killed
- Are entrusted to a neighbour or stranger for temporary safe keeping
- Are taken to an orphanage by destitute parents who felt unable to care for or protect them
- Are sent away to other family members believed to be living in a safer area
- Are set down or briefly left unattended while parents went to search for food or water
- Were in the care of others who had to move before the parents returned
- Stop being visited in the hospital by their parents, whose address had not been noted or was insufficiently detailed to help locate them.

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<sup>1</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross, *Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*, ICRC, Geneva, January 2004, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

### **POINT TO NOTE > Risk of separation for babies and young children**

Every emergency situation presents its own specific risks of separation, which fall into two broad categories:

- **Involuntary separation** resulting from such incidents as forced population movement, death or abduction
- **Deliberate separation** arising out of dire poverty or insecurity, or both.

### **1.3 Why is it critical to find the youngest unaccompanied children as soon as possible?**

Children under five have special developmental needs and depend entirely on adults to care for them. Without this care, they may not survive even in times of peace and stability. Because the youngest separated and unaccompanied children cannot tell us who they are, they rely on caregivers for their survival and well-being.

Although they are the most vulnerable, the youngest children are not the only ones who suffer as a result of separation. Older children may not remember where they lived or be unable to describe who they are. They may regress to the behaviour of an earlier age because they feel the loss of their parents so deeply. Some may no longer speak or may forget the few words they once knew.

Because of the rapid growth and changes in children's physical appearance from birth through age five, **photographs must be taken as soon as possible to record their identity**. Their continued growth and well-being depend on having a person or family to care for them. There is an urgent need for this age group to have the care of an adult until they can be returned to their own parents or relatives.



## **Chapter 2: Preventing family separation and loss of identity in emergencies**

Separation of babies and very young children from their families can occur at any stage of an emergency, including after the displaced population has settled in camps. In some situations, steps can be taken ahead of time to prevent family separation, or, if separation occurs, to reduce the risk that babies and very young children lose their identities – and with it the chance of their families ever finding them again.

### **2.1 Preventing involuntary separation and loss of identity in mass population movements**

In tense political situations, refugee camps or other circumstances when populations may have to flee or are forced to leave their communities in large numbers, there are ways to prevent separation and loss of identity of babies and very young children. Measures that can be taken to prevent involuntary family separation and loss of identity before and during an emergency include:

- Targeting messages to parents and communities
- Targeting messages to emergency workers
- Key actions by child protection agencies.

These measures are outlined in greater detail below.

#### **Messages for parents and communities**

- Well in advance of the possible time of departure, encourage parents to teach their children their family name and address.
- If a long walk is anticipated, give parents light ropes to place around their own wrists and those of their small children.
- Provide parents with identity tags to attach to clothes or wear as bracelets or necklaces, and rehearse with them at which time and how to put them on their children.
- Explain to parents that, based on experience, institutions may not be able to guarantee their children's safety and may even be the target of attacks. Encourage parents to immediately remove any of their children from institutional care.
- Conduct mass education campaigns – utilising radio and other media, flyers, meetings in villages and communities – on ways to prevent separation and loss of identity.

## **POINT TO NOTE** ➤ **Preventing identity loss among young children**

Preventing loss of identity is one of the most effective ways to avert permanent family separation. Even two-year-olds can learn two words:

- Their family name.
- The name of their village.

## **Messages for emergency workers at all levels**

### ➤ **For logistics and transport emergency personnel**

- Using a megaphone or other means of amplification including loudspeakers, instruct parents to register their children before departing.
- If necessary, register children and parents on the spot or as they board transport vehicles (buses, automobiles, trains, airplanes or ships) and provide pre-printed registration forms, or at least, pen and paper.
- Distribute identification tags and help parents note the identities of their babies and young children.
- Wait for missing children.
- Refer separated and unaccompanied children to specialized agencies that work with these children.

### ➤ **For medical professional and paraprofessional workers**

- Ensure that pre-printed registration forms are stocked in the medical facilities. These forms should ask for the full name of the child and parents or guardians, as well as the present location of the family.
- Ensure that medical personnel understand the urgent need to collect this information and are adequately trained in completing these forms.

## **ADVICE FOR EMERGENCY WORKERS** ➤ **Facilitating family tracing**

Ensure that all emergency workers are familiar with the following procedures when they find a separated baby or very young child:

- Unless there is imminent danger, **never move a child from their current location**. If the child appears to be with a group, ask members of the group whether anyone knows the child. If not, ask older children and adults in the vicinity whether they know the child or the child's family.
- Find out where this particular group of people comes from. Collate the details of the group's origin, including village or town name, province or area where the village is located, ethnicity and other identifying features.

## **Key actions by child protection agencies**

In addition to giving the messages and training mentioned above, the following actions should be taken by child protection agencies:

- **Inform adults in transit how to prevent separation and who to notify if they lose a child.**
  - Print and distribute flyers with pictures (for those who cannot read) outlining how to prevent separation.
  - Post notices on the topic of family separation in public places.
- **Identify places where separation is most likely to occur.**
  - Determine the most likely routes of flight and identify the expected points where people might gather for water, health care or other services or stop to rest.
  - Map these places and plan to post child protection teams at these staging posts to undertake separation prevention work.
- **Locate children's residential centres.**
  - Meet with heads of residential centres, such as orphanages, boarding schools and hospitals, and discuss plans to keep the children safe and their identity secure.
  - Encourage parents and residential centres to make arrangements for separated children to return home.

## **2.2 Preventing separation caused by family poverty or lack of security**

Measures can be taken to prevent separation caused by the worsening of already dire economic circumstances or chronic insecurity. Chief among these are:

- **Identifying the most vulnerable families**
  - Interview new arrivals at registration sites, border crossings, feeding stations and hospitals.
  - Ask women, community leaders and local organizations to identify families at risk.
  - Work with public health and other community outreach services to ensure they include relevant questions to identify separated (fostered) babies and children and families at risk of separation.
  - Work with hospitals to identify vulnerable mothers at risk of letting go of their infants.
- **Finding ways to ensure at-risk families are supported**
  - Work with the UN and other relief agencies to ensure families receive their food rations and non-food items.
  - Ensure separated children in foster families are duly registered and qualified to receive food and other supportive entitlements.

- Refer vulnerable families to agencies providing services for the most vulnerable. If none of these services exist, consider setting them up. At the very least, advocate for the development and implementation of such services.

## **ADVICE FOR PARENTS ➤ Keeping the family together**

If you must leave home in a hurry, here are a few simple things you can do to keep your family together.

### ➤ **Before you leave**

- Ensure all of your children know their name, the address of the family home and both parents' names. To teach the youngest ones, rehearse a rhyme or song to make sure they can answer and give their name, address and parents' names.
- Prepare an identity tag for your youngest children with their name, your full name and the address to which you will be returning. The tag can be a label attached to their clothes or a necklace small enough so it cannot be taken off over a child's head. It must be placed inside a case or small plastic bag to protect it from water and wear.
- Bring a rope or cloth in case you need to secure your child to you to prevent separation.
- If you have a child in a residential institution, such as an orphanage, hospital or boarding school, bring your child home!
- When you leave, go together. Do not send your children ahead. It is imperative that family groups leave as units. Children should not be moved without their families.
- Tell your children – even the older ones – that if they are separated from you, they must immediately ask for Red Cross or Red Crescent workers to get help and registration for identity and family tracing.

### ➤ **During your journey**

- Do not let your children stray from your side. Make sure your children stay close to you. Hold their hands. Use a rope to connect them to you if the crowd is dense.
- Carry the smallest children in a carrying pack to leave your hands free, especially if you have other young children who need to hold your hand.
- Remind older children to hold hands with their younger siblings and keep an eye on them.
- Unless there is imminent danger, **never move a baby or very young child from the location where you found him or her** without immediately enquiring whether anyone knows the child or their family and identifying, if possible, where they come from – including such specific information as village name, province, area or region of the home country, and ethnic connections. This will facilitate family tracing, if necessary, later on.

## **Chapter 3: Care and development of infants and young children**

### **3.1 Rights to development and care**

All children are entitled to protection and care under national, regional and international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Several of the rights guaranteed by the Convention are particularly relevant to separated children in emergency and refugee situations. For example, all children have a right to:

- A name, legal identity and registration at birth
- Physical and legal protection
- Know and be cared for by their families
- Remain with their families and, if separated, be reunited with family members
- Provisions for their basic subsistence
- Care and assistance appropriate to their age and developmental needs, including the preservation of language and culture
- Participate in decisions about their future, in accordance with their age and maturity.

### **3.2 Developmental needs and stages**

Before the age of one, an infant's body and brain mature at a very rapid rate – 20 times faster than at any other time of life. Research confirms the importance of environmental factors on brain development at this age. At the same time, infants are completely dependent on others to survive. The quality of their interaction with others and their cumulative experience – health, nutrition, care and stimulation – during the first 18 months of life results in long-lasting developmental outcomes.

Caring for infants and very young children presents different challenges from those related to looking after older children. Babies cannot explain how they are feeling or why they are crying. Consequently, it takes more time and greater attention to discover their likes and dislikes, the foods they can eat and those that make them ill, actions that upset them and those that make them feel safe or laugh again.

#### **POINT TO NOTE** ➤ **Interaction with babies**

Babies and children under two must be carried, touched, spoken and sung to. Their life depends on it!

All children go through similar developmental stages, although the expression and timing of these stages may vary from one culture to another. Within a particular culture, mothers usually know when these stages occur in healthy children. It is useful to find out what children are expected to know, understand and perceive at each stage of development within each culture. Such knowledge can be gleaned from national staff responsible for separated children's programmes, foster mothers or

other caregivers and key community members. This will assist emergency workers and others responsible for separated children to identify healthy babies, as well as those who are not thriving or who are developmentally delayed according to the norms of the prevailing culture.

## **POINTS TO NOTE** ➤ **Basic needs of infants and young children**

While local perceptions of developmental stages for young children should be understood, emergency workers should also understand that many needs of children are universal. For their bodies and brains to mature, and for their overall healthy development, **all infants and children need:**

- Protection from physical danger
- Adequate nutrition and health care
- Attachment to a responsible, caring adult who can protect and nurture the child
- Individual attention and interaction with this caring adult and other people
- Sensory stimulation, i.e., things to look at, touch, hear, smell and taste
- Physical contact, i.e., to be held, touched and talked to throughout the day.

In addition to these universal and basic needs, there are specific essentials for each age group.

### **Birth to one year**

- Breast milk, through wet-nursing if possible, or milk substitutes prepared with clean water (*for details, see Annex 1: Breastfeeding and wet-nursing recommendations*)
- Medical care, including evaluation of the health of the baby or infant on a regular basis
- Immunizations and records of immunizations, which may be the only record for young separated children

### **One to two years**

- Soft foods for early feeding, which may start as soon as 6 months or as late as 10 months, depending on custom and food availability
- An area to explore while touching things and learning to walk (babies may still be carried at this age so will do these things later, according to custom and culture)
- Adults and/or older children who teach through example words and meanings – and encourage language and early learning

### **Three to five years**

- A greater variety of foods to provide proper nutrition for development
- A place to learn social skills and cooperative play, providing exposure to a greater range of vocabulary and activities
- A community of caring individuals and role models, both adults and older children, whose activities can be learned by copying
- A safe place and safe objects or toys to practise simple tasks – such as throwing a ball, balancing objects, filling or pouring, and putting one object inside another – to develop motor skills.

### **3.3 Development of communication skills**

#### **When does communication begin in a child's life and how is it learned?**

Communication starts as soon as a baby is born. Babies learn to smile, and soon afterwards, to talk by watching and listening to the adults around them. They carefully watch their mother's face, listen to her voice and see her reaction to their own smiles and sounds. Babies and young children communicate in many ways that do not involve language. The quality and frequency of their movements, sounds, cries, glances and smiles reveal much about what they may think and feel.

Communication includes language, social skills and our perception of the world around us. Children learn to use words to describe what they see, what they need and how they feel. Language skills and other forms of communication are among the most important challenges in the life of a young child. But learning to communicate is much more complex than simply using words. It involves knowing how to interpret the meaning of a smile, laugh, frown, tone of voice and other non-verbal expression. Even at the earliest stage of children's lives, they need adults and older children to show them how to become well-adjusted social beings.

#### **POINT TO NOTE > Communication begins as soon as a baby is born**

Babies learn to communicate through interaction with the mother, father, siblings and other persons close to them. Children separated from their own families often miss out on the basic experience of good communication. In your emergency setting, look for signs of good communication, and if it is not happening, show caregivers and foster families what the child needs. To encourage the healthy development of expressiveness and communication skills:

- Smile and make other facial expressions.
- Make sounds, talk or sing to the baby.
- Hold and play with the baby.
- React to the baby's body and eye movements.
- Name persons, objects and feelings repeatedly until the baby understands their meaning.
- Listen, watch and respond to babies' and children's expressions, behaviour and words.
- Play simple games, such as hide-and-seek, and repeat them with the baby.
- Encourage babies to move their limbs and bodies.

### **3.4 The importance of play**

Play is vital to the health and well-being of a young child. Even in the most difficult circumstances, children will attempt to play and interact with the world around them. This is a normal activity they use to learn things by practising many times actions and events they observe. Children also use play to learn to manage their fears. In times of crisis, adults sometimes tell others what has happened to them, often repeatedly. Children utilize play for the same purpose. They may act out what has

happened to them by repeating the same game or story or by repeatedly asking the same questions. Just like adults, repetition provides some relief from their fears and anxieties.

### **POINT TO NOTE > The necessity of play**

Ensure that children in your care have opportunities to play! Play is necessary for the cognitive and emotional development of children. It is also useful in recovery from losses because it helps children:

- Normalize their present life
- Find relief from stress and memories of past events
- Understand and accept what has happened to them.

## **3.5 Loss, grief and suffering in young children**

### **Distress in babies and toddlers in times of crisis**

Very young children and even infants experience loss, grief and suffering. Children suffer because they have lost people they love and may have been exposed to frightening experiences. They suffer in ways that are distinct from adults; consequently, both their behaviour and recovery are also different.

The timing of each stage of infant development may vary according to cultural norms. Understanding these norms can help provide an appropriate context in which to assess a child's emotional well-being, as well as their physical health.

Given their often limited language skills and emotional development, young children express emotions through their behaviour. Some children become excessively quiet or loud; others may cease to play or interact with their peers, hardly ever laugh or smile, or cry frequently for no obvious reason. Children may fight or argue excessively with others, or experience nightmares and be afraid to sleep at night. They may act younger than their age, cling to every adult they meet or, conversely, be afraid of any adult who comes near them.

The behaviour may be due to **emotional** or **physical** causes, or both.

### **Physical causes of behavioural distress**

From the outset, find out if the distress is caused by a physiological condition. These include:

- *Hearing difficulties:* A child who is not trying to talk or cannot say words may have a hearing problem.
- *Speech impediments:* A speech difficulty may be caused by a condition in the mouth, tongue or vocal chords.
- *Epidemiological or nutritional deficiencies:* A child who is listless and does not want to be touched



or played with may be sick, undernourished or suffering from a vitamin or mineral deficiency.

- *Physical disability:* Children who are very slow to develop (e.g. those who have difficulties sitting, feeding themselves or walking) may have serious physical problems or even suffer from a permanent disability.
- *Developmental difficulties and other factors:* Developmental delays could be due to mental retardation, certain medical conditions, or HIV and AIDS.

All of these causes may require the help of a doctor, nurse, child specialist or physical therapist.

### **Emotional causes of behavioural distress**

If the problem is not physical, due to undernutrition or illness, it may stem from emotional causes. These include any or all of the following:

- Sadness due to loss of a mother and/or other relatives
- Distress or shock because of frightening events they have experienced, seen or heard about
- Insufficient care, affection and attention in their current setting

## **3.6 Helping children recover from their fears and losses**

Most young children will recover from loss of parents and family if given the type of support outlined in this working manual. However, emotional and physical stress can undermine a child's capacity to cope with loss or traumatic experiences. The extent of the distress suffered can be ameliorated by the action of caring adults and the support given to the child. If adults are coping well, the children are often less affected and recover faster.

### **ADVICE TO CAREGIVERS AND EMERGENCY WORKERS ➤** **How to help children recover from their fears and losses**

You should try the actions listed below for all children in your care and for all separated children. Keep a list of other ideas you have for the children in your particular situation.

- Ensure that separated children are cared for by an adult who has the time and patience to give them enough attention, who holds the baby or infant, and who smiles, sings, talks and listens to them.
- Try to enrol young separated children in any preschool activities or recreation that may exist in the community/refugee camp. If none exists, encourage simple activities within your setting.
- Train caregivers to identify babies and children who are doing poorly, and to look for physical causes of distress before considering emotional factors.
- Ask foster mothers and caregivers what they think can be done to help children recover:

What have they done to help their own children? What was traditionally done to help children and families before the war or displacement?

- Discuss with other community members – especially members of women’s organizations, teachers and grandparents – what is usually done to help emotionally distressed children, including orphans, recover.

### **POINT TO NOTE > Cultural norms for healing and recovery**

Some cultures have special ceremonies for healing and for recovering from past events; most have traditional stories about overcoming difficulties, which might help young children feel better. These ceremonies and rituals can also be beneficial to infants because they will encourage the adult caretakers to accept the children and care for them.

- Organize group discussions about how to help these children in severe cases; arrange for home visits and offer counselling to the caregiver or foster mother.
- Reassure the children by talking to them about their lost parents and telling them people are looking for them (but take care not to make promises). Even very young children may have some understanding, or they will learn what events mean over time, if the emergency situation is talked about in an encouraging way.
- For three- to five-year-olds, talk about their lives before the family separation occurred – but only if staff and caregivers can do this in gentle, non-intrusive ways and can handle these discussions emotionally.
- Listen every time they want to talk, even if they repeat the same stories. Hold them on your lap, hug them, pat their head softly or otherwise show them physically (how to do it depends on the context and the culture) that you understand that they miss their family.
- It is critical to talk to children and even babies ahead of time about any changes which are about to happen in their lives. Tell them if they are going to be taken to the doctor, to school and, of course, before any movement to new living arrangements and help prepare them for changes.

### **POINT TO NOTE > Babies require comforting**

Even small babies can understand a soothing voice and learn to recognize a few words that will help them know what is going on.

- Set up a routine and follow it as much as possible. A schedule provides a stable, familiar and comforting routine that will help soothe and calm an anxious child.
- Help caregivers learn how to recognize what the children do and need to feel safer.

- Remind all caregivers to reassure children over and over again that they are safe. At first, children need the repetition and the reminder on a daily basis. They may not be able to ask for this, but it still needs to be given over a long period of time. This can be done through a song (lullaby) or a simple game or story that speaks of safety. The simplest game of hide-and-seek helps a child learn that the caregiver is still there and will stay with her or him, which alleviates the fear of isolation.

# Chapter 4: Care of unaccompanied children in emergencies

## 4.1 The case for family care

In most emergencies, communities will spontaneously take in and care for unaccompanied children, particularly babies and young children. Under extreme circumstances, however, this capacity for care may be overwhelmed. Most often, external factors disrupt a community's accepted ways of caring for orphans and other children without families. Setting up orphanages or hasty adoptions in the middle of an emergency can destabilize communities by sending an unequivocal signal to families and communities that others are there to care for children. In this regard, it is generally seen as a disempowering intervention.

During emergencies, experience has shown that thousands of families are enticed into taking their babies and children to orphanages, trying to pass them off as orphans in the hope of securing them more food and material goods for them. Because children in orphanages may receive more food and material security than others, this strategy can provide short-term benefits. It is equally true, however, that orphanages set up during conflict or post-conflict situations have yet to prove consistently and unequivocally that they can offer the emotional support and continuity of care required for healthy development of babies and young children. Because conflict, displacement and refugee situations are ambiguous and unpredictable, many of these children never manage to return to their families, and in the end, their separation often becomes permanent.

## 4.2 Foster care

**Fostering:** The best arrangement is usually when a separated or unaccompanied baby or young child under five is spontaneously taken in by a family from the same community as the child. Actively recruiting families willing to take in very young children has also been possible in most of the emergency situations monitored during the past 20 years. This type of family care is known as foster care or fostering.

In most emergency situations, the practice of fostering is somewhat different from its usual interpretation. Under non-emergency conditions, fostering is the practice whereby the government or an accredited voluntary agency remunerates families for taking in a child, monitors the care according to the national child welfare policy and does not expect that the families will necessarily care for the child until adulthood. By contrast, in most recent emergencies, the cultural norms of the respective community often insist that families take in orphaned children without expecting any reward from external agents or agencies. The recipient families, for their part, sometimes expect some work from the child in exchange for offering shelter. In addition, the foster families generally expect the child to stay with them until adulthood because there are no external agents to alter family placement.

Understanding the distinction between these interpretations of fostering is crucial to formulate effective responses to the needs of separated and unaccompanied children and to develop synergies between them. In most recent emergencies, the care of separated children has been monitored. For that reason, cultural norms of care for orphaned and otherwise parentless children must be explored in depth and monitoring adjusted accordingly.

**Spontaneous fostering:** Because the new family may not have known the child's original family, regular monitoring of the situation is essential. Emergency workers and others who are officially assisting placement should help and encourage families that have spontaneously taken in unaccompanied children. If assistance is needed, it is preferable to provide support to the whole family rather than only the unaccompanied child.

**Foster placements:** Families must be found for babies and children who have no one to care for them, as well as for those in orphanages. The best way to find responsible and caring families is through respected community members, such as those who belong to a child welfare and protection committee. Emergency workers entrusted with the fostering of separated and unaccompanied children should:

- Actively look for families willing to care for babies and children who are separated from their own, engaging the assistance of religious leaders, women's associations, community health volunteers and others.
- Take the time to learn and review child-rearing practices, customs and accepted ways of caring for orphans or children without parents.
- Find out who was responsible for the care and protection of children before they were displaced or separated.
- Design strategies in conjunction with the local community – successful emergency care programmes for children engage key community members in decision-making from the outset.

**Child welfare and protection committees:** One way to engage the community is to create a child welfare and protection committee, comprised of key community members, religious leaders, teachers, social workers and parents, as well as youth and children. With orientation and initial support, these committees can:

- Develop the standards of care for unaccompanied children.
- Develop criteria for foster families and then find them.
- Monitor the care of unaccompanied children in foster families.
- Determine if there is any problem of abuse or neglect and generally ensure that the care arrangement is adequate before deciding to move a child and disrupt the connection with their original family.

In all cases, care of unaccompanied children by substitute families must be regularly monitored. Some families may need support to care for the child, but the support should not be the reason for taking in the child. It is best when support can be given to the family as a whole, or even better, given to all at-risk families.

## **POINTS TO NOTE > All children need families**

It is essential to encourage and help foster families continue to care for children they have taken in. It is also vital to look for families willing to care for unaccompanied children, and to monitor the care and protection of fostered children.

### **Factors to explore in choosing a foster family**

- Reasons for the family's willingness to care for an unaccompanied child.
- Role the child will have within the family.
- Any specific reasons why the family might stop caring for the child.
- Attitude of the extended family towards fostering.
- Expectations for material support.
- Capacity to care for the child (e.g., number of children in the family, plans for the future, material and emotional resources).
- Whether language, religion and ethnic background are compatible with those of the child.
- Willingness to give up the child when or if the child's biological family is found.

### **Process and procedures in making foster arrangements**

- Comply with government guidelines relating to fostering.
- Inform local authorities of the placement and, as appropriate in the particular setting – International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or UNICEF.
- Legally sanction foster placement where possible and appropriate.
- Include a screening process; if possible, incorporate matching the child's personality to a potential new family.
- Secure a written agreement of the foster family to release the child if and when a reunion becomes possible with the child's biological family.
- Discuss with the potential foster family its willingness to care for the child until the original family is traced and, if necessary, to provide care over the long term.
- Ensure that the family agrees to be monitored by a community child welfare committee, local agency or international organization.
- Ensure the family agrees not to leave with the child or change the child's placement without notifying and getting the agreement of the monitoring committee or agency.
- Record every foster placement using appropriate forms that outline the duties and responsibilities of the foster family.
- Set up a system for monitoring the placement on a regular basis.

### 4.3 Emergency group care when family care is temporarily not possible

Group care is **never** the first-choice placement option, especially for babies and very young children. There are cases in emergency situations, however, when no family placement is immediately possible and group care in orphanages or similar institutions must be arranged. Even if a large number of babies and children need emergency care, you can create a family-like environment within a larger institutional setting. The guidelines below will help create a model of care as close as possible to that of a family.

#### ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS ➤

##### Placing children into emergency care groups

- To ensure the baby receives plenty of physical contact and attention, ensure that one caregiver does not care for more than one baby under two years old.
- Babies and young children need to be cared for as they would be in a family.
- In potential caregivers, look for adults who have already cared for children and who are patient, energetic and loving.
- A maximum of five children may live together under the care of a responsible adult wherever there is a child under two years old.
- Mix ages and gender so the group is more like a family in which older children take care and play with the little ones.
- Always keep siblings together; do not separate them by age.
- Small houses or divided spaces within a larger area must be provided for each family group that lives, sleeps, cooks and eats together within the 'home'. This can be done even when a dormitory or other large building is used.
- The family group prepares its own meals (there is no central kitchen) and eats together.
- Basic supplies, such as clothing and cooking utensils, are provided to caregivers for them to give to the children in their care, using their discretion as parents would.
- Ensure that nutrition is adequate. If possible and safe, provide a wet nurse for babies (see Annex I: Breastfeeding and wet-nursing).
- Organize training and monitor proper infant food preparation, ensuring that water is always boiled for mixing baby formula and sterilizing feeding bottles.
- Organize regular medical check-ups and ensure that vaccinations are regularly updated, administered and recorded.
- Ensure that every baby and child is photographed, registered and fully documented, using a modified generic UN form or other approved form for the particular setting.
- To the extent possible, keep unaccompanied babies and children close to the area where they were found, or within the area where their community has gone, or both. This facilitates tracing and family reunification.



Recreating a family-like environment in an institution is important to the well-being of babies and young children. *Goma, United Republic of Tanzania.* © Marie de la Soudière, 1995.

## **Chapter 5: Finding the families of unaccompanied babies and very young children**

Tracing the families of older unaccompanied children, who generally know their identities and place of origin, is by now a well-established part of any emergency response. In several cases, a combination of methods has produced success rates in family tracing of 90 per cent or greater. The success rate also depends on many contingent factors, such as length of time children have been separated from their families, distance travelled from their homes by the fleeing families and their access to information in their new location.

In contrast, family tracing for babies and very young children has been less systematic. Lacking methodologies and tools specifically designed for this age group, child protection staff often direct tracing efforts first to the easier caseload, the older children, and may only turn their attention to the youngest several months into an emergency.

While tracing the families of very young children is complex and challenging, it is possible! In numerous cases, the families of seemingly untraceable children were found, thanks to the creativity and perseverance of emergency workers.

The methods described in this handbook have all been tried and proved to be very useful. Because the choice of methods depends on the context, emergency workers may not need to use all methods in their particular setting. It is important to remember to use the communities' resources and your own ingenuity to find the families.

### **POINTS TO NOTE > Finding the families of babies and young children**

To find the families of babies and young children, emergency workers need to demonstrate several characteristics in their tracing methods:

- Speed: The search must begin immediately.
- Creativity: Be prepared to try new and innovative methods if recommended advice fails.
- Respect and trust: Involve the community, including older children.
- Attention to detail: Listen attentively to young children's words and sounds.
- Perseverance: Do not ignore any clue or detail uncovered during the process, no matter how small.

### **The family tracing process**

The family tracing process can be divided into four components: identification, registration and documentation, tracing activities and family reunification. Some of these activities can be carried out simultaneously: Follow-up (a fifth component) is recommended but not always feasible due to geographical distance.



## 5.1 Identification

Unaccompanied babies and young children are among the most vulnerable children in emergencies. Deprived of the care and protection of their families when they need it the most, they are at high risk of being trafficked, neglected, abused and abandoned. Babies face an increased risk of mortality and morbidity owing to lack of care and attention. During emergency and post-emergency situations, their vulnerability makes it imperative to identify babies and young children early. Waiting even a few months may be too late, as by then it may be impossible to find their families.

There are several ways to identify separated and unaccompanied children:

- **Speak to people in the community** who can help find these children. These include community leaders, teachers, health workers, nurses, social workers, women in the market or religious leaders. Ask community groups – such as women’s organizations, local police, Red Crescent or Red Cross societies and sports or youth organizations – where they think unaccompanied and separated children might be.
- **Speak to your national or refugee staff.** They are an invaluable source of information, **and** it is usually easy for them to find out where some of these children are.
- **Make a list** of every place you think children might be found, including hospitals, feeding stations and orphanages. Unaccompanied children might also be found near markets, in temporary shelters, under the care of churches, gathered at border crossings, on the streets, or in neighbours’ homes. From your list, decide which places are the most precarious for children and begin your search in those places you consider the least safe.

### Potential risks during the identification process

The process of identifying separated children is not a neutral exercise. There is a risk that finding a separated child may disrupt a family care arrangement or raise unrealistic expectations. Communities that learn about the systematic identification of separated children may think an orphanage is going to be built. They may assume this is best for the children, and either take their foster child there if the orphanage is constructed, or, worse, have their own children masquerade as unaccompanied children so that the institution will accept them. Foster families may assume some assistance will follow identification and registration interviews, and claim that their own children are unaccompanied. When assistance is not forthcoming, they may even reject fostered children.

The corollary is also possible. Families that are deeply attached to their foster baby or young child, anxious that they may be taken away by the tracing agency, may declare them as their own. Unless this pretence is detected, the child and their biological family may never be reunited.

From the outset, it is critical to explain to foster parents that the identification process does not intend to undermine current care arrangements that are beneficial to unaccompanied children. Emergency workers must clearly explain that the purpose is to ensure children are well cared for and that tracing biological families must begin as soon as possible. They should also be prepared to resolve misunderstandings and false expectations, which often occur during the identification process despite careful explanation by emergency workers.

## 5.2 Registration and documentation

An unaccompanied child should be registered as soon as possible after identification. Unaccompanied babies and very young children are highly likely to have no formal identity documents in their possession. They depend on adults to document their existence. Registration is the first step towards regaining an identity and establishing a legal process for their protection. Information on separated children must be registered in order to commence family tracing and make a complete assessment of their care situation.

Emergency workers should check whether a rapid assessment of the situation has been undertaken, and, if not, conduct such an assessment during the registration process. They must also be prepared to act rapidly and decisively in the event a child requires emergency nutrition or medical assistance, or a transfer to a more caring and safer family.

### **POINT TO NOTE** > **Speed is essential**

Expediency is required when identifying and registering unaccompanied children. The longer the delay, the sligher the chance these children will ever find their families again.

### **Registering babies and children who are too young to talk**

Babies and very young children rely on others to speak on their behalf. Expediency is critical. Parents, siblings, relatives, family friends and other members of the community may still be nearby. When an infant is found, immediately ask questions of people in close proximity:

The registration of babies and young children should always be accompanied by questions and activities associated with tracing their families. The chances of finding their families are fairly high if tracing begins soon after separation. The initial registration may be the only time emergency workers are able to speak with someone who found the baby or to discover the village or area of origin.

### **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS** > **The registration process**

- Before you begin the registration process, review the sample registration form (*see Sample Form, page 38*). Adapt the form to fit the context of your situation.
- Register children individually, using one form per child. Enter the details for each child in a registration book.
- Assign a registration number to each child.
- Try to find the people who found the child and document the details of what happened. Even several months or longer after separation, it is often possible to find the people who originally found the child and obtain valuable tracing information from them.
- Ask where the child was and who they were with when they were found.
- Even if you do not find anyone who can answer these questions, try to find out which group of people the children were with when they were separated and where this group is from.

- Engage older children in looking for information on younger children.
- Record in the sample form any information adults or older children provide regarding the child's identity and events related to the separation.
- Take a photograph of the child immediately and staple it to the child's information sheets.
- Provide the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with a duplicate copy of registration forms if they are active in the area. If the separated child is also a refugee, give a copy to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); enquire if the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) would also like a copy.
- In most non-refugee and some refugee situations, a copy of the registration form should be forwarded to local or national authorities; this is done on a case-by-case basis, after discussion with UNICEF or UNHCR.
- Ensure that a copy of each registration form stays with the child. Identify the adult or older child who is the best person to safeguard this form on behalf of the baby or very young child.
- Ensure you keep a copy of each child's registration and documentation form. Determine who the best person to safeguard this form is.
- Coordinate all actions on behalf of separated children with the designated UN agency and other child protection agencies assisting separated children.
- If you have trained staff, or can train them and guarantee follow-up training, use the relevant database or handbook on registration of separated and unaccompanied children.

### 5.3 Photographs and interviews

#### Photographing unaccompanied children

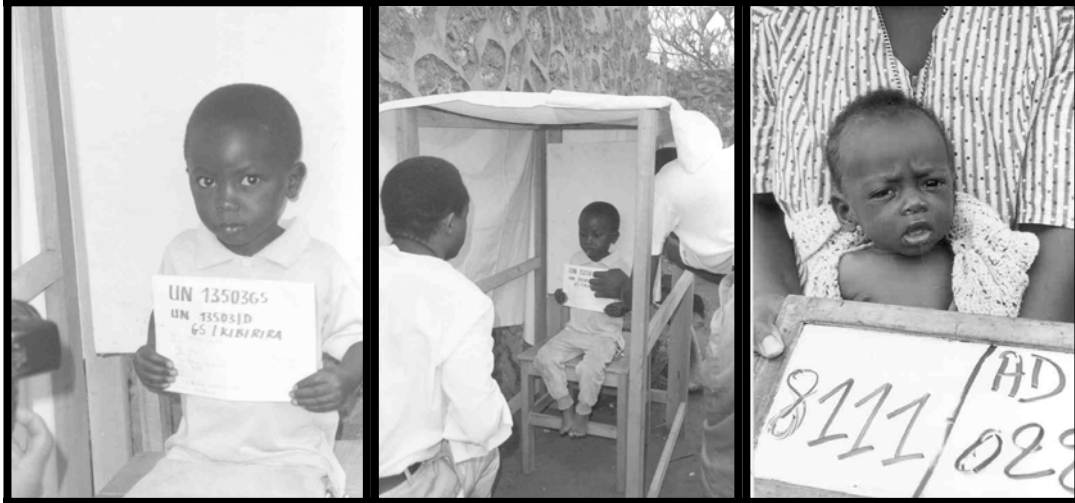
A photograph may be a child's only formal identification document and the sole legal proof of their existence. Taking a photograph of babies and very young children is an essential component of registration and takes precedence over photographing older separated children. The features of babies and very young children can change rapidly as they grow and develop. But if photographs are taken soon after separation they have a chance that their parents, other family members or even friends of the family will recognize them even a year or more after separation.

Any camera will do, but plan carefully how you will reproduce the photographs in sufficient numbers for tracing purposes.

#### **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS ➤ Photographing unaccompanied children as part of the registration process**

- **Use a Polaroid® camera when expediency is essential.** Staple a photo onto the child's registration form immediately and, if appropriate, paste another photo on makeshift bulletin boards. (Immediate tracing might be appropriate in certain situations, for example, when displaced people are on the move after an attack and may be able to view the photographs as they walk past).
- If possible, **also use a digital camera**, because a simple printer can enlarge the photos and give you as many copies as you need at a very modest cost.

- **Obtain a printer.** Colour reproductions are best but expensive; black-and-white prints are fine if photo reproductions are sufficiently large.
- **Prepare a small board** (white erasable board or large, light-coloured cardboard) and **write the child's registration number on it in BIG LETTERS.** Under the number, write the location of the child in a code and other information you think is necessary. (For the protection of the child, her or his current location must never be publicly displayed. The given contact address is that of the child protection agency handling the family tracing.)
- If possible, **make a test photo before photographing a large number of children** to be sure the registration number is large and bold enough to be visible on the printed photos. The number must correspond to the child's registration number on the registration form.
- **Ask the child to sit on a chair and have him or her hold the registration number signboard at chest level.** Babies should be held by a caregiver or foster parent, who holds the signboard (*see photo, page 23*).
- Ensure there is **a plain background behind the child**, such as a light-coloured cloth or a blank wall. If there are patterns (such as a window or tree leaves) in the background, it will be more difficult to recognize the child.
- **Always take the photo with a flash**, even if you're working 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 (*see photo, page 23*). If this is not possible, take the photo in a shady place that has a plain background.
- **Photograph the child only from the chest upward** to ensure the face is visible and large enough. Make sure the whole face and registration number are included.
- Place the camera on **a tripod about 1 metre (3 feet) from the child.**
- **Ask the child to look straight at you.** Encourage babies to look at you with soothing sounds or attractive objects; the person holding the baby can assist you in directing their attention to the camera.
- **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 negative.
- **Take two photographs**, one to staple immediately in the registration form or book, the other for future tracing.
- If you have an opportunity to do 'instant photo' tracing, **take three photographs**, one for the registration form or book, one for immediate tracing and one to reproduce for the future.



Photographing children against a neutral background eliminates glare and ensuring a child holds his or her identity number eases tracing. *Goma, United Republic of Tanzania.* © Marie de la Soudière, 1995.

## **Interviewing young children for registration, documentation and tracing**

Interviewing very young children is a key part of the documentation and tracing process. While the manner in which the interview is conducted will depend on the age, maturity and circumstances of the unaccompanied or separated child, there are a few simple principles that should be followed in each case.

### **POINT TO NOTE > Creating a relaxing environment when interviewing children**

Create a pleasant and even playful environment when interviewing young children. If a child trusts you, feels relaxed and can smile, they often remember more of their past and their circumstances and family identity prior to separation.

### **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS > Interviewing separated and unaccompanied young children**

- As far as possible, make sure you have plenty of time to conduct the interview.
- Introduce a playful activity at the outset.
- Introduce yourself to the child and explain the reasons for your questions. Mention that you know they have been separated from their parents and that you would like to help find them.
- Ask children if they have any questions about you.

- Ask all questions in a soft and sensitive tone of voice. Above all, be patient! Do not immediately repeat a question more than three times (and ask the question in a different way if you receive no response at first). Leave unanswered questions and return to them when the child is more relaxed and ready to talk or remember.
- Document everything, even strange words that do not make much sense, because they may be useful for tracing or verification of family links.
- Try to make the child relaxed and even smile. This will help them remember more about their family and home.
- You can ask them to describe or draw (*see 'Remembering through drawing', below*) what they recall about being separated from their parents or where their brothers or sisters are.
- Asking about parents and separation may upset the child terribly. If children are crying or otherwise upset by the interview, ask their caregivers to hold them or soothe them in other ways. Stop the direct interview and tell the child, even a baby, you know how sad it is to be without a family. Remind the child that you are looking for their family and want to help.
- After the interview, be sure the child is with someone they know who can provide a feeling of safety.
- Try not to interview children in the evening. It is better to give them time to talk to others about the interview and process the experience before they sleep. This will reduce the risk of nightmares associated with negative memories revived during the interview.
- Notify the caregivers if the child is sad or upset by the interview and advise these adults to take time to listen to and talk with the child afterwards.
- Make a note if a child needs attention or appears to be undernourished or sick, and be sure to advise other caregivers to follow up and attend to the child's needs.

## **Remembering through drawing**

A useful way to help toddlers remember is to ask them, even if they have never held a pencil, to draw important people or events in their lives before separation. The process of drawing family members, the family home, backyard, animals, plants or other persons and things familiar to the child before separation has been found to revive seemingly forgotten memories.

## **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS ➤ Using drawing to recall identity**

- Even if the children have never drawn a picture before, ask them in a soft tone of voice to draw first their house.
- Take the hand and guide the movement of those who cannot draw at all.
- With the child, draw a simple house, roughly in the shape of the houses where the child comes from. Then ask her or him to draw their family at night, when they are asleep. Ask such questions as "Where did your mother sleep?"
- With the child, draw a stick figure. Continue the quiet questioning: "Where did your father sleep?" Then ask about brothers and sisters, and, finally, "Where did you sleep?"
- Help draw the child asleep at home and show great interest in what was happening at home:

“Did you sleep next to your big sister? Was anyone else on the other side? It must have been nice to be with them, yes?”

- Ask children about what they did during the day. For example, “What did you do in the morning when you woke up?” If the child is quiet, suggest a few things the child may have done: “Did you follow your mother around as she lit the fire, cooked, went to fetch water? Did you go out with brothers or sisters to get water or firewood? Did you watch the baby while your mother was cooking?”
- Do not rush the process. The visual representation, however clumsy, of everyday events and other family members in the child’s past aids the process of remembering.
- When the child acquiesces, either verbally or with body movements, help them draw the event. After a short while, children usually take over and either correct what you are proposing or start talking spontaneously about their daily lives. Let the child draw, or help them draw, everything you have talked about.
- Along the way, but especially when the page is already quite filled, point at the different parts of the drawing, asking many questions about the people, their names, what they were doing where they have gone: “Who is this person? What is his or her name? What is the name of the brother who used to sleep next to you? Who did you go fetch the water with, right here, this little boy?”
- Additional questions might include “Where was your house? In which village? Did your father leave the house in the morning? Did he come back every night? Did your brother or sister go to school?”

Through this process, if you give them a lot of time so they can re-experience the past, children often begin to remember. They begin to put names on clumsily drawn stick figures, telling you what their fathers were doing, whether their siblings went to school, whether they enjoyed going to the field with their families and many other details of their former life. At the beginning, children are often puzzled and confused when they start remembering names, places and events. But sometimes a flood of memories follows and they become animated and verbose. When this happens, you must ensure that an adult stays with the child several hours after the session is over, engaging the child in play and activity to avert the possible onset of depression.

Remind the child at the end of the session that they are in the same position as other children who have lost their families and that you will be looking for the people they have described. Avoid making any firm promises about tracing their families, but let them know how helpful the drawing session has been.

## **Documenting unaccompanied children over time**

If the separation is recent, some children may be too upset to talk or may be unable to describe what took place or to relate other information. Others may initially be in shock and may not remember their names for days or even weeks after the separation. Children may not understand why their parents took them to an orphanage and told them not to tell anyone who brought them there.

Although it is important to find out what the child knows as soon as possible, in case they forget names and locations, children must also be re-interviewed over a longer period of time. Useful

information can emerge long after the initial interview. Do not be surprised if information changes over time. Enter every new piece of information into the child's file as a matter of record to facilitate tracing and verification of family ties.

### **POINTS TO NOTE > Listening to and recording the memories of young unaccompanied children**

Collecting information on very young children that can be useful for tracing and verifying family ties cannot be undertaken in a short interview. Those who care for the child on a daily basis are in the best position to gather this information. Childcare workers and foster mothers must be trained in listening to and recording the things children say or act out through play.

- Caregivers can listen for family names or who is in the family. A young child might respond to a game or song and say the name of the person who sang the song. A caregiver can ask a child if his or her mother prepared certain foods and who else liked the food. If children are feeling safe and relaxed, they might mention an older brother or the name of a little sister or other information that can provide a better idea of the child's family.
- Caregivers can listen for places or geographical clues. A child may be asked if she or he remembers living near the water, in the mountains, by "the big temple," near "the big highway with lots of traffic" or by "the soccer stadium with the red and blue flags." Sometimes names of refugee camps are mentioned in young children's speech.
- Caregivers can listen for memories of events or holidays. A child might remember attending a weekly market by the river or going to a big festival in the next village that had a mosque, thus providing a clue about locations.
- Every name or special word the child speaks must be recorded. They will be useful if a claim is made for this child later.

## **5.4 Family tracing**

### **The need for urgency when tracing the families of unaccompanied children**

All children suffer greatly when they are separated from family and parents. Babies and young children may even die because of separation. The sooner a child can be returned to their parents or placed with a family member, the better and healthier their life will be. Parents also suffer severe emotional distress when they lose their children.

### **Characteristics of family-tracing programmes**

**Family tracing** refers to activities undertaken by parents, relatives or other agencies for the purpose of locating parents or other relatives of a separated child.



**Emergency workers** trace the families of unaccompanied and separated children with the help of people in the community. Parents, child protection agency staff and community members undertake family tracing. Although the process relies heavily on human resources, it requires minimal infrastructure.

A successful tracing programme must have a **central repository** where all information about possible whereabouts of family members is collated. Information on children, parents and other relatives may be derived from a variety of sources, including distant locations hundred of miles away and across borders, and must be validated against existing information in the central tracing location.



Displaying photographs rekindles a parent or relative's hope of tracing and finding their lost child. *Goma, United Republic of Tanzania.* © Marie de la Soudiere, 1995.

**Tracing programmes require a complex and rigorous organization.** Although individuals are encouraged to undertake their own searches for their missing children, agencies that cannot guarantee a regular flow of information between key locations in the search process should not attempt to set up a comprehensive tracing programme. Nonetheless, they can collaborate with tracing agencies by helping identify and register children, and may also provide useful information about population movements.

**Parents want to find their children** and are generally eager to learn how to help in tracing them. Assisting parents can include providing information on how to register their missing children, and how and where to look for them. Emergency workers should inform parents of the ICRC tracing programme and encourage them to register their missing children with the agency.

**Communities can be active participants in the tracing process.** They know far more than outsiders about where the children's families might have gone. In places where telecommunication and travel are challenging, communities have informal ways of getting information to distant places with difficult access.

## **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS ➤ Tracing methods**

### **Physical recognition of the child is a primary component of successful family tracing.**

Although many of these recommendations may be conducted over time, the steps outlined below have proved most successful if undertaken immediately or shortly after the child has been found.

- The moment a baby or child is found, and before further population movements occur, show the child to people in the immediate vicinity and ask if they recognize the child. Early action will increase the chances the people from the child's community are still in the vicinity.
- Ask others to spread the information. Use a megaphone, loudspeakers or other ways of immediately notifying all in the area that a child has been found.

- Ask community members where they think the child may be from and where his or her parents may have gone. (Many of the adults or older children may know where fighting or other dramatic events occurred and the area, villages or towns that were displaced. Others may also know the direction or location a specific group of displaced people was headed.)
- Do not throw away clothing or any other possessions of separated or unaccompanied children. Clothes and other items can be washed and placed in a bag. They may be needed for verification of family ties and successful family reunification.
- Photograph the child's clothing and other possessions or write down a description of all possessions (clothes, bracelets, necklaces, toys).
- If possible, do not move children at an early stage of displacement from the area where they were found.
- If the child is not with the person who found them at the time of separation, you must try to trace that person by questioning all previous caregivers all the way back to the one who first cared for the child immediately after separation. This person often has valuable information on the child's identity or at least knows the village and family of origin.
- Help parents quickly search for lost children in the immediate area.
- To increase the chances of family reunification, take the children to various key locations where people congregate – the marketplace, churches and, especially, any children's centres or orphanages. (In emergencies where large numbers of family members have been separated, unaccompanied siblings may end up in different foster families or orphanages. If given a chance to see the babies, older siblings have quickly recognized their younger brothers or sisters.)

**Word of mouth is one of the most successful methods for tracing families, particularly those of babies.** To increase the effectiveness of person-to-person communication:

- Inform adults that they must let it be known if they are caring for an unaccompanied child.
- Encourage anyone who knows about an unaccompanied child to tell others.
- Ask people if they know anyone missing a child and encourage parents searching for children to tell their story to as many people as possible. (In times of armed conflict, when roads are impassable and telecommunication media such as radio or telephone are often unavailable, news travels across the country by word of mouth. Children have been reunited under the most difficult circumstances because someone heard they were lost and told another person where to find them.)

**Utilize print, radio and other broadcast media.** If available, broadcast media are convenient and practical channels to trace families over large geographical areas or in places where physical access is difficult. In some countries, children's names, age and gender have been broadcast over the radio, printed in the newspapers and shown on television, with considerable success at reuniting families. Broadcast and print media have also been used to promote methods of tracing and family reunification, as well as to inform parents how and where to find information on their missing children.

**Speak to older children who have been reunited with their families.** Children who have successfully reunited with their families can provide invaluable and unique information on children

who are still missing. In many cases, older children have returned home and been able to tell others in the village that they have seen missing children. They can often identify children they met in children's centres or in orphanages and relay the names of children they recognize to adults who are still searching.

**Use photographs in family tracing (Photo-tracing).** Photographs are useful in tracing the families of infants and young children. Posting photos in prominent locations immediately or soon after family separation yields positive results.

Emergency workers and agencies should be aware that establishing a sound photo-tracing programme is complex and should not be underestimated. It requires a large and well-trained staff, significant transport capacity, vigilance, attention to detail and compassion.

The percentage of positive identification through viewing photographs of babies and very young children declines as the period of separation lengthens, particularly among populations that are unfamiliar with photographs. In one large emergency where this was closely monitored, after 18 or more months of separation, positive identification of children younger than age two was around 10 per cent to 15 per cent in the first round of viewing the photo-tracing boards. The rate increased to about 25 per cent in cases of children older than two or after parents had learned to 'read' a photograph.

When reproducing photos for circulation, the child's picture should be taken from the middle of the chest up to ensure that facial features are clear. Each print should be sufficiently large to maximize the chances of recognition. Remember that reproduction and sizing will largely depend on the availability of appropriate equipment and adequate resources.

Depending on the situation and resources, decide which forms of photo-tracing to employ. More than one method should be considered. Photo-tracing can be undertaken through such channels as:

- Flyers, posters, newspapers, tracing books or any other method that enables a group of pictures to be circulated to a large number of people.
- Displaying photos on large boards in both public and private places where people gather, for example, churches, markets, hospitals, schools, clinics, stadiums, collection centres, feeding stations, border crossings and distribution points.
- Circulating photos at events where a large number of people gather, such as weekly markets, church services or sports events. Information accompanying the photos should include:
  - The name or identity number of the child
  - The area where the child was found
  - The name and contact information of the agency responsible for tracing.

To ensure a child's protection, the exact location of the child **must never be disclosed** on the photograph.

The photo-tracing station must strive to retain the complete file or at least secure additional information about each child whose photo is posted. This will facilitate preliminary on-site verification of family ties. Claims for a child of the wrong sex or wrong age, for instance, can be

quickly clarified without having the parent go through the ordeal of travelling to the specified location to find out whether the child is theirs.

**Be prepared to assist parents** who believe they have identified their child in travelling to the location where the child is living in order to verify family ties. Train or employ skilled staff able to help parents go through the process of verification of family ties, as well as support them emotionally if the verification proves negative.

**Work in cooperation with ICRC and the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.** Always ensure that unaccompanied children are registered with the ICRC and/or the Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies. ICRC generally is able to register children and circulate information to adults who have registered their children within the organization's tracing network. This is a valuable source of information that can be used across borders and into areas where other agencies are not allowed or capable of assisting in the early stages of an emergency.

**Use computer databases circumspectly.** Although databases have been used for tracing purposes for a long time, their impact has been somewhat limited. The main drawback is that while databases allow for the entry of the names and details of unaccompanied children, parents looking for their children are required to contact the database administrator and provide their names in order to make a positive match. Posting photographs or circulating lists of names will reach a large number of adults in addition to parents, such as uncles and aunts, siblings, and even friends and neighbours, increasing the number of possible recognitions of the child.

The low relative success rates of positive matching using databases are further reduced in the case of babies or very young children who have limited or no name identity.

On the other hand, databases are very useful in managing information on unaccompanied children. They accelerate and simplify the process of classifying children by any category required, such as sex and ages, date and places where child was found, places where they are from, and are invaluable in producing tracing lists that can then be posted or circulated for child name recognition.

Databases are a useful tool for case management and can be one tool in the tracing process. They require technical training of staff, constant updating and of course, a computer and the appropriate software.

Whenever possible, use the database common to other child care or tracing agencies in each specific emergency. This is usually decided on by agencies in meetings, often convened by UNICEF or UNHCR, to coordinate the emergency response for separated and unaccompanied children.

**Periodically renew efforts to trace children.** Over time, especially with the under-five age group, tracing efforts can cease and parents give up hope of finding their children. Experience has taught us that even after a year or more, children can still be reunited with parents or other family members. Keeping the issue alive and in the minds of the community is imperative. Re-circulating photographs and names of missing children may provide parents with renewed hope that their children are still alive and help revive their search.

## **Chapter 6: Verification of family ties, family reunification and following up**

When a claim is made for the child, the next step is verification of kinship or family ties. If the claim is verified, the child is then reunited with the family.

### **6.1 Verification of kinship/family ties**

All claims made for unaccompanied children must be verified. Erroneous claims are often made because of mistakes in recognizing young children or because adults want to take a child who is not theirs. Distraught parents, missing their own children, may seek to replace them with an unaccompanied child. There is also the risk that claimants are motivated by exploitative intentions. In the worst political circumstances, such as genocide, unaccompanied children may also be claimed for purposes of extermination.

#### **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS> Methods of verification**

The methods of verification involve a series of steps that should be followed in all cases. Adult claimants should be requested to:

- Pick the child's photo out of a number of photos.
- Describe the child, including any birthmarks, scars, skin markings, tattoos or other any other defining physical characteristics.
- Describe the clothing, jewellery or objects the child was wearing or carrying at the time of separation. (If these items have been saved, they can be compared to the claimant's description.)
- Recall the place where the child was left and how the separation occurred. This description can be checked against any known information about the child or the location where they were found.
- Identify any words or phrases the child knew before the separation (in cases where the child is already talking). These might include nicknames, pet names or a certain way a child pronounced the name of a sibling or family member.
- Name locations or places the child knew at the time of separation. These may have been repeated and recorded by caregivers, for example, a child might talk about "going to the river" or to a church where there is singing.
- Recall a young child's favourite game or song.
- Describe a key or unique characteristic of the child's personality, for example, whether the child has a special routine to enable him or her to fall asleep, or has strong likes or dislikes in foods.
- Whenever possible, ask the relatives' neighbours for corroboration of claims. Enquire whether the parent or relatives had a child, a nephew or grandchild of a certain age and sex. Also ask them to recall any information they know about the place and date of separation

between the claimant and the child.

- Test for DNA. DNA identification is increasingly being used as proof of family blood ties. This procedure is recommended when more than one family member claims the same child and the dispute cannot be resolved in any other way. DNA testing is easily available and the cost is not prohibitive. Some clinics may conduct the test free of charge if it is for 'humanitarian' purposes.
- Document the method of verification or use a verification form that is placed in the child's records in case it is needed in the future. In some instances, after a child has been reunited a subsequent claim may be made by another relative.

**POINT TO NOTE ➤ Gathering information and keeping the belongings of unaccompanied children can be critical to the verification of claims**

In the absence of formal identity documents and certainty of physical recognition, the main instruments of corroboration are derived from items and clues that caregivers and programme personnel have gathered immediately after the child was found. Physical items include clothing and other possessions. Information – such as the location and circumstances of separation – will also be revealed over time, through listening to the child's songs and spoken words.

## **6.2 Family reunification**

In most instances, after an unaccompanied child has been claimed and the verification has proved positive, the child can be returned to their family in a short time. Most reunions are joyous and poignant for those involved. However, reunification may be complicated and even traumatic after long separation. If a child has become attached to the surrogate caregiver or has little or no recollection of their family, or when families are severely disrupted – for example, when a parent has died in the interim or other children have been born – the reunion should be undertaken slowly and after careful preparation.

### **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS ➤ Arranging the reunification**

Preparations for a reunification must be carefully considered to minimize emotional distress.

- When you interview parents or other relatives, look for indications that they wish to care for the child again.
- Spend a little time discussing household composition and arrangements. Enquire about other family support, such as extended family members, and observe the interactions of the child and the adults to assess how easy or difficult the transition into the family might be. This will help you decide how soon a post-reunification visit should be made, if that is feasible in your context.
- Families may want to care for a child but lack sufficient resources. If families indicate they are destitute, explore with them ways they can get assistance to prevent another separation.

- If the relationship between the adult claimant and the child is not parental, the relatives are strangers to the child, or the child has formed a strong attachment to the caregiver and the family, arrange for several visits between the parties. This will help the child become familiar and comfortable with the adults before going to live with them.
- To the extent possible, include siblings in these familiarization visits and create an environment in which siblings can play with together.



Mother and child reunited through photo-tracing.  
Goma, United Republic of Tanzania. © Marie de la Soudière, 1995.

- Parents may become very upset if the child is not released and entrusted to them immediately after a reunion. Explain to them that the child will need a little time to become familiar once again.
- If possible, follow-up visits should be made to the family for a short time after the reunification to ensure the child has assimilated, both in terms of meeting basic needs and providing emotional continuity.

## **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS ➤ Potential pitfalls in completing reunification**

Even when family members are eager and able to care for a child and need no further assistance, circumstances may temporarily prevent family reunification.

- Foster families may refuse to surrender the child, either because they have genuinely grown attached or because they were hoping to exploit the child for free labour, in which case they often demand monetary compensation for expenses. These situations require quick action, because the risk that the family will suddenly move to an unknown location is very real.
- Possible actions include involving important community members or religious authorities after determining they are sympathetic to the issue. You may also decide to call on local authorities. This should be done in collaboration with UNICEF or UNHCR.
- Continuous fighting or other incidents that seal off the area of return will also delay reunification. Because national or local services that provide travel documents may be disrupted for a long time, it may be impossible to obtain visas for entry or exit out of the country. In these cases, the existing care arrangement should be continued to avoid additional disruption in the child's life. The arrangement should be monitored closely, however, because a family that knows it will lose the child in the near future may begin to emotionally disengage itself from the child.

- The child and their biological family should be informed of what is happening to keep the idea of reunification alive. Even very young children are reassured when they receive information that is repeated in a simple way.
- Notify the appropriate personnel of the government, UNICEF (or UNHCR, in the case of refugee children), and ICRC or the national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies (in cases of children registered with the agency). Secure their assistance in gaining information and maintaining communication between those awaiting reunification.

## **Reunification and the best interests of the child**

While family reunion may be the ultimate goal for all unaccompanied children, the decision to proceed should be made in the best interests of the child. **Under no circumstances should it serve any other interests.** To the extent possible, law or customary practice should be sanctioned as a protective tool. In some cases, it may be difficult to determine what course of action is indeed in the child's best interest.

Children who have been separated from their families for an extended period may prove the most difficult to reunite with their original families. These children have often developed strong attachments to the foster family or may have forgotten their parents' language. Emergency workers should remember that reunification is often complex, given such challenges.

Refugee situations are also challenging. Leaving a refugee child in the host country severely diminishes the chances that the original family will ever be found or that the child will be reunified when the refugee population is repatriated.

## **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS ➤ Completing the reunification**

- **Family reunification should include gestures of gratitude.** If the biological family is too poor to bring a gift to the foster family, they should be assisted in doing so. This is a gracious gesture by the child's own family in thanking the foster family for caring for their child and is generally appreciated. A modest gift, such as cooking utensils, a blanket or soap, is usually sufficient in rural locations, but appropriate gifts must be decided upon in each situation.
- **Family reunification should be as joyful as possible.** For that reason, 'family reunification kits' are often provided in situations of material hardship. They are never grand enough to risk becoming an incentive to reunification, but they may fill a small material gap. Providing the child's own cup, plate and spoon, a blanket and mat, or some clothing and soap – usually in scarce supply in refugee and other emergency situations – would be sufficient and appreciated. Sometimes the family's living quarters are too small to accommodate an additional child. Therefore plastic sheeting or other material to enlarge a hut or a house might be provided.
- **Take the time to bring the reunification full circle.** After the family has signed the appropriate reunification forms, ensure that they visit the children's centre or have sufficient time to chat with the foster family. In all cases, allow plenty of time for goodbyes.
- If possible, **take photographs of the reunification** and give copies to both the foster family and the biological family. Ensure that both families exchange addresses, if they so wish.



### **6.3 Follow up**

A follow-up visit should be made about two to four weeks after reunification.

#### **ADVICE TO EMERGENCY WORKERS > Following up**

Steps to be taken when planning and conducting follow-up activities:

- If the child is reunified far from the location of the childcare agency, refer the family to another agency close to where the family lives. In most cases, the young child will have become comfortable with the family, and there may only need to be a second and final visit a few weeks later.
- If, however, the care of the child is found to be deficient, the child is anxious, or the family is not happy with the child, try to find out whether there are specific issues with the care and attention the family is giving the child. Observation is essential to assessing the state and condition of the child. Neighbours can be a good secondary source of information.
- If possible, continue to visit the family, asking for prominent community members to help out, if deemed appropriate in the context. Otherwise, try to help improve the situation for the family and child through counselling or other assistance. Help the child integrate in the community by assisting the family to enrol him or her in a nursery school if there is one in the area. You can also assist by ensuring there are opportunities to play and interact with other children.
- If distance or programme budget considerations do not permit follow-up by the staff members who have been handling the case, refer the child and family to a community-based organization, women's group, government social welfare services or a non-governmental organization.

## **ANNEX I: BREASTFEEDING AND WET-NURSING**

This annex is excerpted from *HIV and Infant Feeding: Guidelines for decision-makers*, a joint project of UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO and UNFPA, and published by World Health Organization, Geneva, 2003. The guidelines can be ordered by sending an email to [bookorder@who.int](mailto:bookorder@who.int) or downloaded at [http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/publications/NUTRITION/ISBN\\_92\\_4\\_159122\\_6.htm](http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/publications/NUTRITION/ISBN_92_4_159122_6.htm).

### **Promoting appropriate feeding for infants and young children**

Breastfeeding is an unequalled way to provide ideal food for the healthy growth and development of infants. It is also an integral part of the reproductive process, with important implications for the health of mothers.

As a global public health recommendation, infants should be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life to achieve optimal growth, development and health. To meet their evolving nutritional requirements, infants should receive nutritionally adequate and safe complementary foods while breastfeeding continues for up to two years of age or beyond.

### **Risks of breastfeeding and replacement feeding**

The benefits of breastfeeding – optimal nutrition, reduced sickness and death due to infections other than HIV, and delayed return of fertility – are greatest in the first six months of life.

Exclusive breastfeeding during the first four to six months carries greater benefits than mixed feeding with respect to morbidity and mortality from infectious diseases other than HIV.

Replacement feeding carries an increased risk of morbidity associated with undernutrition and associated with infectious disease other than HIV. This is especially high in the first six months of life and decreases thereafter.

Breastfeeding is associated with a significant additional risk of HIV transmission from mother to child compared to not breastfeeding. For those HIV-positive women who are untreated and continue breastfeeding after the first year, the absolute risk of transmission through breastfeeding is 10 per cent to 20 per cent.

When replacement feeding is acceptable, feasible, affordable, sustainable and safe, avoidance of all breastfeeding by HIV-infected mothers is recommended.

### **Breast-milk feeding: Wet-nursing**

- Wet-nursing is traditional in some cultures.
- It carries a risk of HIV transmission to the infant if the wet nurse is HIV-infected.
- Monitoring the HIV status of a wet nurse may be difficult.
- A prospective wet nurse should be tested for HIV and voluntarily counselled. She should maintain breast health and, if sexually active, should practice safer sex.
- The infant and wet nurse will need to be in continuous contact to facilitate good breastfeeding practices. There is a theoretical risk to the wet nurse if the infant is HIV-infected. But there is no documented experience of wet-nursing in this context.

## **ANNEX II: BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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**CHILD PROTECTION NETWORK**  
**RAPID REGISTRATION FORM FOR SEPARATED CHILDREN**

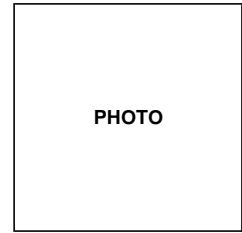
**SECTION 1 - CHILD'S PERSONAL DETAILS**

Registration ID number  
 (generated by database)

What is the child's separation status?

Separated

Unaccompanied



Other ID number

What subcategory best describes the child's circumstances?

IDP

CAFF

Other

Refugee

Street child

Child's name

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
------------	-------------	-----------

Child's nickname

Sex Male  Female

Age given by child

Age estimated by interviewer

Year of birth

Birth/home address

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	

**SECTION 2 - FAMILY DETAILS**

Child's father

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
------------	-------------	-----------

Child's mother

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
------------	-------------	-----------

Is the father alive?

Yes  No  Don't know

Is the mother alive?

Yes  No  Don't know

**SECTION 3 - SIBLINGS/RELATIVES ACCOMPANYING THE CHILD**

*Each person should have a separate file and be entered into the database separately.*

1st

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
------------	-------------	-----------

Database ID number

Other ID number

Relationship (sibling, uncle, aunt, grandparent, other)

2nd

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
------------	-------------	-----------

Database ID number

Other ID number

Relationship

If additional siblings and relatives accompany the child, please add an additional page giving the above information for each person.

**SECTION 4 - HISTORY OF SEPARATION**

Date of separation

Place of separation

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	

**SECTION 5 - CURRENT CARE ARRANGEMENTS**

Foster family	<input type="checkbox"/>	Street	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interim care centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child-headed household	<input type="checkbox"/>	Orphanage	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of current caregiver

Child's current address

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	

**SECTION 6 - CHILD'S PREFERRED GUARDIAN/CAREGIVERS FOR TRACING**

Name

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
------------	-------------	-----------

Relationship

(parent, sibling, uncle, aunt, grandparent, other)

Does the child want personal details (name, photo, etc.) to be made public for tracing?

Yes  No

**SECTION 7 - INTERVIEWER**

Name  Position

Agency  Date

Location of interview

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	

Data entry fields for the database are shaded and enclosed in boxes with thicker borders.

## CHILD PROTECTION NETWORK

### REGISTRATION FORM FOR UNACCOMPANIED & SEPARATED CHILDREN

Children Associated with Fighting Forces (CAFF), children under five,  
 married or have children.

#### SECTION 1 - CHILD'S PERSONAL DETAILS

Registration ID number	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	What is the child's separation status?		<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: auto;">PHOTO</div>						
Other ID number	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Separated	<input type="checkbox"/>							
	<input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Unaccompanied	<input type="checkbox"/>							
What subcategory best describes the child's circumstances?	IDP <input type="checkbox"/>	CAFF <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>							
	Refugee <input type="checkbox"/>	Street child <input type="checkbox"/>								
Child's name	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">First Name</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Middle Name</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Last Name</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> </tr> </table>		First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name								
<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>								
Any name(s) given after separation?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes give full name(s)	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>						
Child's nickname	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		Sex	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>						
Age given by child	<input style="width: 40%;" type="text"/>	Age estimated by interviewer	<input style="width: 40%;" type="text"/>	Year of birth						
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>							
Child's ethnic affiliation	Ethnic affiliation1	Ethnic affiliation2	Ethnic affiliation3							
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>							
NOTE: To be determined by the program										
Traditional leaders for the child's community	Leader 1	Leader 2	Leader 3							
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>							
Languages spoken by the child	Language1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Language2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>						
Child's religion	Religion1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Religion2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/>						
Nationality	Nationality 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Nationality 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Nationality 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Nationality 5 <input type="checkbox"/>						
	Nationality 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>							
Birth/home address	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2							
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>							
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address								
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>							
Distinguishing physical characteristics	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>									
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>									
What type of education, training or work experience has the child had prior to separation?	Early childhood <input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary <input type="checkbox"/>	Non-formal education <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>						
	Primary <input type="checkbox"/>	Vocational <input type="checkbox"/>	Accelerated learning <input type="checkbox"/>							
If relevant, what level has the child achieved?	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>									

(P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, GS1, GS2, GS3, SS1, SS2, SS3, Level 1, Level 2, tailoring, hairdressing, carpentry, woodwork, other)

#### SECTION 2 - FAMILY DETAILS

Child's father	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">First Name</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Middle Name</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Last Name</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> </tr> </table>		First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name						
<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>						
Father's home address (if different from child's)	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2					
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>					
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address						
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>					
Child's mother	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">First Name</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Middle Name</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Last Name</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> <td><input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/></td> </tr> </table>		First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name						
<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>						
Mother's home address (if different from child's)	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2					
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>					
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical Address						
	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>		<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>					

Father's occupation  Mother's occupation

Is the father alive? Yes  No  Don't know  Is the mother alive? Yes  No  Don't know

If father or mother are believed dead, give details

Name of caregiver before separation (if different from father/mother)

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Relationship (parent, sibling, uncle, aunt, grandparent, other)

Permanent address prior to separation (if different from child's)

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	

**Family members the child is separated from**  
 Note for children under 5: Write down any names or nicknames of significant others mentioned by the child. From time to time, ask the child again for the names of mother, father, brothers and sisters.

Relationship	Name (first, last and nickname)	Sex	Age	Alive?	Occupation	Last known address	Separation date	Comments
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**SECTION 3 - HISTORY OF SEPARATION**

Date of separation

What was the main cause of separation?

Voluntary <input type="checkbox"/>	Divorce/remarriage <input type="checkbox"/>	War <input type="checkbox"/>	Poverty <input type="checkbox"/>
Abandoned <input type="checkbox"/>	Natural disaster <input type="checkbox"/>	Death <input type="checkbox"/>	Abducted <input type="checkbox"/>
Domestic violence <input type="checkbox"/>	Sickness of family member <input type="checkbox"/>	Repatriation <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>

NOTE: To be determined by the program (as many cause of separations can be added to the form and into the database)

Place of separation

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	

Describe the circumstances of separation

Other moves between place of separation and current location

**SECTION 4 - SIBLINGS/RELATIVES ACCOMPANYING THE CHILD**

Each person should have a separate file and be entered into the database separately.

1st

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Database ID number  Any other ID number

Relationship (sister, brother, uncle, aunt, grandparent, other)

2nd

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Database ID number  Any other ID number

Relationship

3rd

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Database ID number  Any other ID number

Relationship

**SECTION 5 - CURRENT CARE ARRANGEMENTS**

What are the child's current care arrangements? Foster family  Street  Interim care centre   
 Child-headed household  Orphanage  Other

Name of the current caregiver?  What is this person's relationship to the child?

Child's current address	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	

When did this care arrangement start?

If the current address is temporary, where does the caretaker plan to live (repatriate, move, etc.)?

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	

**SECTION 6 - ADDITIONAL PROTECTION CONCERNS**

Protection concerns **Child has been trafficked; child living in institution; child living on the streets; Child-headed household; child is in a worst form of labour; medical/health problems; disability; girl mother or pregnant; physical abuse; drug/substance abuse; lack of registration card; prostitution/sex worker; not attending school; in conflict with the law; other forms of abuse & exploitation; other protection concerns**

Category of concern  Immediate action required? Yes  No

Details of concern, action required and action taken (please specify date of any action taken)

Category of concern  Immediate action required? Yes  No

Details of concern, action required and action taken (please specify date of any action taken)

Category of concern  Immediate action required? Yes  No

Details of concern, action required and action taken (please specify date of any action taken)

**SECTION 7 - CHILD'S PREFERRED GUARDIAN/CAREGIVERS FOR TRACING**

Type of care arrangement the child wishes to have Interim Care  Immediate reunification  Independent living arrangement

Type of immediate basic assistance needed

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

If "No" or "yes, but later", please explain why:

**If the child does NOT want family reunification:**

Country	District	County
Sub-County	Parish & Village	

Who does the child plan to live with? Self  Husband/wife  Other family members  Don't know

**If the child DOES want family reunification:**  
**1st Preference**

Name

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
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Relationship

Last known address	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	

Telephone number



**2nd Preference**

Name	First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
Relationship			
Last known address	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	
Telephone number			

**3rd Preference**

Name	First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
Relationship			
Last known address	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	
Telephone number			
Is the child in contact with any relatives?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	

If yes, give details


**SECTION 8 - OTHER INFORMATION**

Give the name of any other agency that has interviewed the child

--

Give any other information that may assist with tracing for the child


List details of any documents carried by the child


Does the child want personal details (name, photo, etc.) to be made public for tracing?

Yes  No

Describe any specific issues that need to be considered before disclosing the child's personal details


**SECTION 9 - INTERVIEWER**

Name			
Position			
Agency		Date	
Location of interview	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical address	

Data entry fields for the database are shaded and enclosed in boxes with thicker borders.

# CHILD PROTECTION NETWORK

## FORM FOR UNDER FIVE

Complete this supplementary information for all children who are under 5. This form must be filled out in addition to the Registration Form or questions below must be added to the Registration form

Remember to try and have the child draw –even with your help- the answer to some of the questions you ask him/her

### SECTION 1 - CHILD'S PERSONAL DETAILS - TO BE FILLED OUT ON THE REGISTRATION FORM

### SECTION 2 - DETAILS ON HOW THE CHILD WAS FOUND OR ENTERED THE FAMILY OR CHILDREN'S CENTER

Date child was found

Exact location where child was found	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical Address	

Please describe in details how the child was found or taken in the family/children's center

Where did the people who were part of the group that was displaced at the same time?	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical Address	

Name of person who gave the child to the family/ children's center?	First Name	Middle Name	Last Name

What is this person's relationship to the child?

Address	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical Address	

If that person's address is not known, how could we find him or her and /or provide name(s) and address(es) who may know the person who found the child?

**NOTE: WHEN YOU FIND THAT PERSON PLEASE REFER TO SECTION 8 TO DOCUMENT ANY INFORMATION THEY HAVE ON THE CHILD.**

### SECTION 3 - LIST AND DESCRIPTIONS OF CLOTHES AND BELONGINGS THE CHILD WAS FOUND WITH

Are there any clothes and belongings the child was found with?      Yes       No

Please list and describe (Including medals, bracelets, hair ties, etc.):

Note: Please keep all child's belonging with the child's photo and a copy of the Registration and Documentation form/s in an individualized plastic bag.

### SECTION 6 - SIGNIFICANT WORDS AND SENTENCES SPOKEN BY THE CHILD

Please write down any stories, songs, words most often repeated by the child. Write down specific fruits, vegetables or animals the child talks about (they may give a clue as to his/her area of origin). Write down what the child says about father's or mother's professional occupation: for example farmer or work in the city.


**If the child speaks with an accent and if the family separation has been short (a few months), from what region do you think the child comes from?**

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical Address	

**SECTION 7 - SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR FEATURES**

Please write down any behavior specific to the child that may help a parent identify him/her later on such as child's games and main interests or specific things he/she likes to do (for example: loves to play in puddles, plays lengthly with a stick, during his games, imitates adult attitudes that he witnessed, such as his/ her father's work as a mechanics or farmer, etc.)


**SECTION 8 - INFORMATION ON PERSON WHO RECOGNIZES THE CHILD OR GAVE THE CHILD TO RECEPTION CENTER**

**Number of persons who recognizes the child or found the child and from whom we have additional information on the child:**

**Note:** For each person please fill in the information below and fill in a new documentation form and under 5 form.

Please specify at the top of these forms that this information has been provided by the person (note their name).

Enter into the database only information that have not been already gathered through the original documentation form and the name, address, relationship and gender of the person.

Any additional or contrary information can be kept on the paper forms in the child's file for the social worker to refer to.

First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Nickname
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Address	Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
	Admin Level 3	Village/Area/Physical Address	

**Relationship (relative, neighbor, etc)**  **Sex** Male  Female

**How and where do you know the child from?**


**When did you see the child for the last time?**

**Whom were you with and what were the circumstances?**


**What are the signs that makes the person say s/he recognizes the child (face, clothes)?**


**Any other information which could help in tracing the child's family**


**SECTION 9 - FORM COMPLETED BY**

**Name**  **Position**

**Agency**  **Date**

**Registration Location**

Country	Admin Level 1	Admin Level 2
Admin Level 3	Admin Level 4	Village/Area/Physical Address

*Data entry fields for the database are shaded and enclosed in boxes with thicker borders.*



For more information please contact

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