Family Tracing & Reunification of separated children

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Summary of FTR actions

- IDTR (F)
- **I**dentification
- **D**ocumentation / Registration
- **T**racing / Ensuring care arrangements
- **V**erification
- **R**eunification (Prevention of separation) /Alternative care arrangements
- **F**ollow-up

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Guiding principles

The **principle of family unity** – or integrity of the family – states that all children have a right to a family, and families have a right to care for their children. Unaccompanied and separated children must be provided with services aimed at reuniting them with their parents or primary legal or customary caregivers as quickly as possible.

The **best interest of the child** constitute the basic standard for guiding decisions and actions taken to help children, whether by national or international organizations, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies.

Non-discrimination: one of the basic tenets of international humanitarian law is that the protection and guarantees it lays down must be granted to all without discrimination.

Child's opinion should be listened to and given due weight in relation to the child's age and maturity

Actions for Family Tracing Identification

Identification

The identification process establishes which children are separated from their families/care givers and where they are to be found.

Information gathered at the identification point must be sufficient to lead those doing the documentation back to the child

Actions for Documentation/Registration

Documentation / Registration

The collection and recording of information about the child, his/her family and place of origin, the circumstances of separation and the wishes of the child.

Use the Interagency Registration Forms to register separated children and parents who have lost their children

Actions for Family Tracing

Undertake Tracing

The processes used to find the parents or other family members of the child

Make all possible efforts to ensure that tracing for the families of infants and very young children start as soon as the children are identified and registered

The aim of tracing is to find a long-term solution that is 'in the best interests of the child'; in most cases this will mean a return to the family

When its not possible to return to the family, tracing is still useful as it can clarify options for long-term care and provide the child with information about their family

Actions for Family Tracing

Verification

The process of validating the relationships between the child and family member, and confirming the willingness of both for reunification

Does this person really know the child and vice-versa? This usually involves a separate verification for the child and the caregiver

There is also a need to assess the caregiver's ability to care for the child and what support will be needed

Actions for Family Tracing

Reunification

The ultimate aim of family tracing, to reunite the child with parents or previous family carers, or place the child with other members of the extended family Prepare all parties for and effect reunion of the child with the family

Family and the separated child need to be prepared for this step, especially if the family structure has changed. There are big expectations and concerns on both sides

An assessment should be made of the family to ensure that reunification is in the best interest of the child and to determine support needs in the reintegration process

Inter-Agency Child Protection Information System

How the Inter-Agency Information System can support Child Protection Programs

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CP Database Overview

- The inter-agency information system supports child protection's activities and more specifically:
  - ✓ Family Tracing & Reunification Programs
  - ✓ Demobilization Disarmament & Reintegration Programs
  - ✓ Programs for other Vulnerable Children
- It facilitates the tracing, reunifications and follow-ups as well as matches between family members searching for missing children and separated children.

- The system also facilitates case management and identifies protection concerns for separated children, children associated with fighting forces and armed groups (CAAFAGs) and other vulnerable children

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CP Database Overview

Countries where the information system is being used:

- Aceh (SC UK & DEPSOS)

- North and South Sudan (SC UK, SC US, UNICEF and implementing partners)

- Guinea (IRC)

- Liberia (SC UK & IRC)

- Ivory Coast (SC UK & IRC)

- Uganda (SC Uganda, CCF, WorldVision, War Child, CARITAS, FHI, UNICEF, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development & national partners)

- Nepal (SC Norway, SC US, SC Japan IRC, UNICEF, Local Partners)

- Chad (CCF, JRS, Care)

- Kenya (SC UK & LWF)

- Central African Republic (UNICEF and implementing partners)

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Tools to help – the CP Database

How does it help our work?

- Database holds data about children, FTR, care monitoring, reintegration

- Direct support to tracing

- Case monitoring - overdue lists - remembering where a child has reached

- Keeping a simple history of each child

- Analysis and monitoring

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Operational Challenges

- Information sharing / Coordination

- Challenges of verification

- How to prioritise huge case loads?

- Determining the best interests of the child
  When the family cannot support child….When the child doesn't want to be   reunified…

- Follow-up visits – often don't happen regularly / issue of training

- Assumption that best place for child is with their family – not always true

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Operational Challenges

Challenges of the standard inter-agency information system

- Information Sharing: protection of confidentiality

- Sustainability: global and local levels

- Focus: child protection or just separated children/ CAAFGs

- Commitment of field offices

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Reference materials for FTR

Interagency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, ICRC, IRC, Save the Children UK, UNICEF, UNHCR, World Vision.

The Lost Ones. Emergency Care and Family Tracing for children from birth to five years. The IRC, New York, 2005

Action for the Rights of the Child (ARC): Separated Children, Save the Children Alliance, UNHCR, UNICEF and OCHR, Geneva, 1998

Working with separated children – Field Guide and Training Manual, Save the children UK, London, 1998 Reference material for FTR?