

A PRACTICE HANDBOOK FOR FAMILY TRACING AND REUNIFICATION IN EMERGENCIES



Save the Children

South Sudan experience

Save the Children is the world's leading independent organisation for children. Save the Children works in more than 120 countries. We save children's lives. We fight for their rights. We help them fulfil their potential.

Our vision

A world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

Our mission

To inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. We will stay true to our values of accountability, ambition, collaboration, creativity and integrity.

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Cover photo: Paiyo, 17, gets an emotional hug from his mother, sister and nephew. He was the 5,000th child to be reunited with family through our Family Tracing and Reunification programme in South Sudan in 2017. Credit: Emmanuel Kenyi/Save the Children

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This Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) practice handbook for Missing, Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) in conflict emergencies, is inspired by the milestones achieved by the UASC Inter-Agency Working Group (IA WG) of South Sudan. The practice handbook has been developed by Save the Children in South Sudan with the contribution from UNICEF, members of the Inter-Agency Working Group and Dr. Omolo; the consultant, who documented it. We would like to thank you all for your motivation, insightful support and specialized contributions.

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We particularly thank staff and colleagues from Save the Children in South Sudan for the intuitive leadership, guardianship and valuable support towards the successful completion of this practice handbook. As part of the Save the Children's knowledge management system, the handbook has demonstrated the effective acquisition, storage and dissemination of best practice for application by managers and case workers who implement FTR programmes in similar context. It is a deliberate measure to help actualise the Save the Children's theory of change of being the voice, being the innovator, building partnership and achieving results at scale.

We would like to extend our thanks to all people who have contributed to the development of this handbook by providing feedback, comments and to partner agencies who have contributed towards the documentation of this FTR practice handbook in different ways and whose names could not be all included here, to them all we say *Shukran!* (thank you!).

Country Director South Sudan – Deirdre Keogh



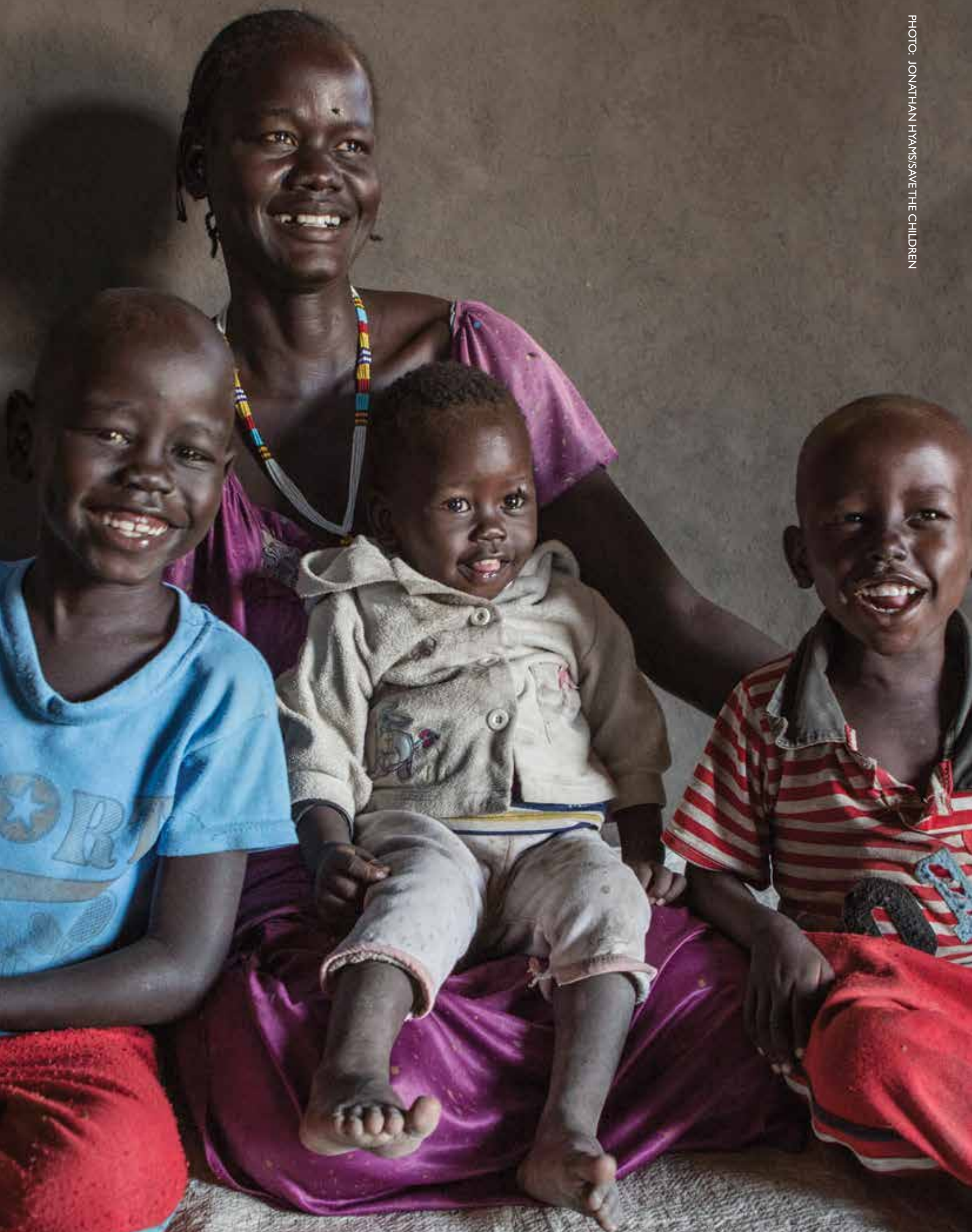
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Save the Children's Family Tracing and Reunification case worker sorts through files of unaccompanied and separated children living in Waat, Jonglei state, South Sudan.



Sammy*, six, and James*, three, at home with their mother Mary* and little brother in Waat, South Sudan. Sammy and James were reunited with their family by Save the Children in May 2015.

ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ANPPCAM	African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCC	Confident Children out of Conflict
CP	Child Protection
CPiE	Child Protection in Emergencies
CP IMS	Child Protection Information Management System
CRG	Child Rights Governance
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
FTR	Family Tracing and Reunification
GBV	Gender Based Violence
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IA WG	Inter-Agency Working Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMC	International Medical Corps
IMS	Information Management System
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRNA	Initial Rapid Needs Assessment
ISP	Information Sharing Protocol
MSF	Medicine San Frontiers
NFI	Non-Food Items
NNGO	National Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	Nonviolent Peace force
PoC	Protection of Civilians
PSS	Psychosocial Support
ROSS	Relief Organisation for South Sudan
SC	Save the Children
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPLA-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition
SS	South Sudan
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs



Seven-year-old Nyabitu was the 4,000th child to be reunited with her family through our Family Tracing and Reunification programme in South Sudan.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Save the Children is the world's leading independent organisation for children – saving children's lives; fighting for their rights; helping them fulfil their potential. These are underpinned by a vision in a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation. Save the Children continues to make a difference in children's lives in more than 120 countries. Its mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. Save the Children is dedicated to its core values of accountability, ambition, collaboration, creativity and integrity. Its culture is embedded in these values, along with a strong commitment to the Child Safeguarding Protocol, ensuring that all representatives of Save the Children demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour towards children both in their private and professional lives.

Save the Children has worked in South Sudan for over twenty years and currently delivers programmes in Child Protection (CP), Education, Health and Nutrition, Child Rights Governance (CRG), Food Security and Livelihoods. In 2017, Save the Children strengthened the delivery of the Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) as a Child Protection in Emergencies Programme in South Sudan. This involves 27 implementing agencies (Inter-Agency Working Group – IA WG) in all states of South Sudan.

1.2 The motivation and purpose of this handbook

Since the onset of the current phase of the South Sudan conflict in December 2013, nearly 3 million people have been displaced. Two million people have fled to neighbouring countries and another 1.9 million¹ others remain internally displaced. Furthermore, 180,000 people are sheltering at the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites across the country. The ongoing conflict in South Sudan and the increasing food insecurity as well as economic crisis are contributing to heightened protection risks for children.

Conflict brings about instability in the community starting from the basic family unit. The sudden and unprecedented instability leads to separation as family members flee to places of safety without a clear destination in mind.

In the process of the fleeing, children can often be separated from their parents. This happens particularly when conflict starts and children are out in the field grazing livestock or playing within the community and do not have time to get back home and flee together as a family. Children can then end up being either separated and living with relatives they may get to meet – separated children. In worse situations children can end up with adults who have no legal or customary responsibility to them or unrelated children – unaccompanied children. Similarly, parents can end up looking for children following the flight – these children are referred to as missing.

Save the Children is the lead agency for FTR in South Sudan. It works with the international and national partner agencies to coordinate the humanitarian action and response to children who have become separated from their families. The programme has achieved notable successes in the reunification rate, in reaching more locations and more children with services. Hence, the number of registered unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) increased from 4,530 in October 2014 to 13,118 by September 2017. The number of reunified children also increased from 432 in October 2014 to 5131 in September 2017².

Save the Children has also provided support to other Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) programmes where family separation is a significant factor. It has facilitated knowledge and experience exchange in a way that such knowledge is retained and not lost with turnover of staff. The documentation of this practice handbook is motivated by the successes that the FTR programme in South Sudan has achieved and the need to document and disseminate the lessons learnt across Africa. A detailed record of the successes and what helped is captured in Section 1.4.

¹ South Sudan 2017 Humanitarian Response – UNOCHA for Humanitarian Country Team 2016.

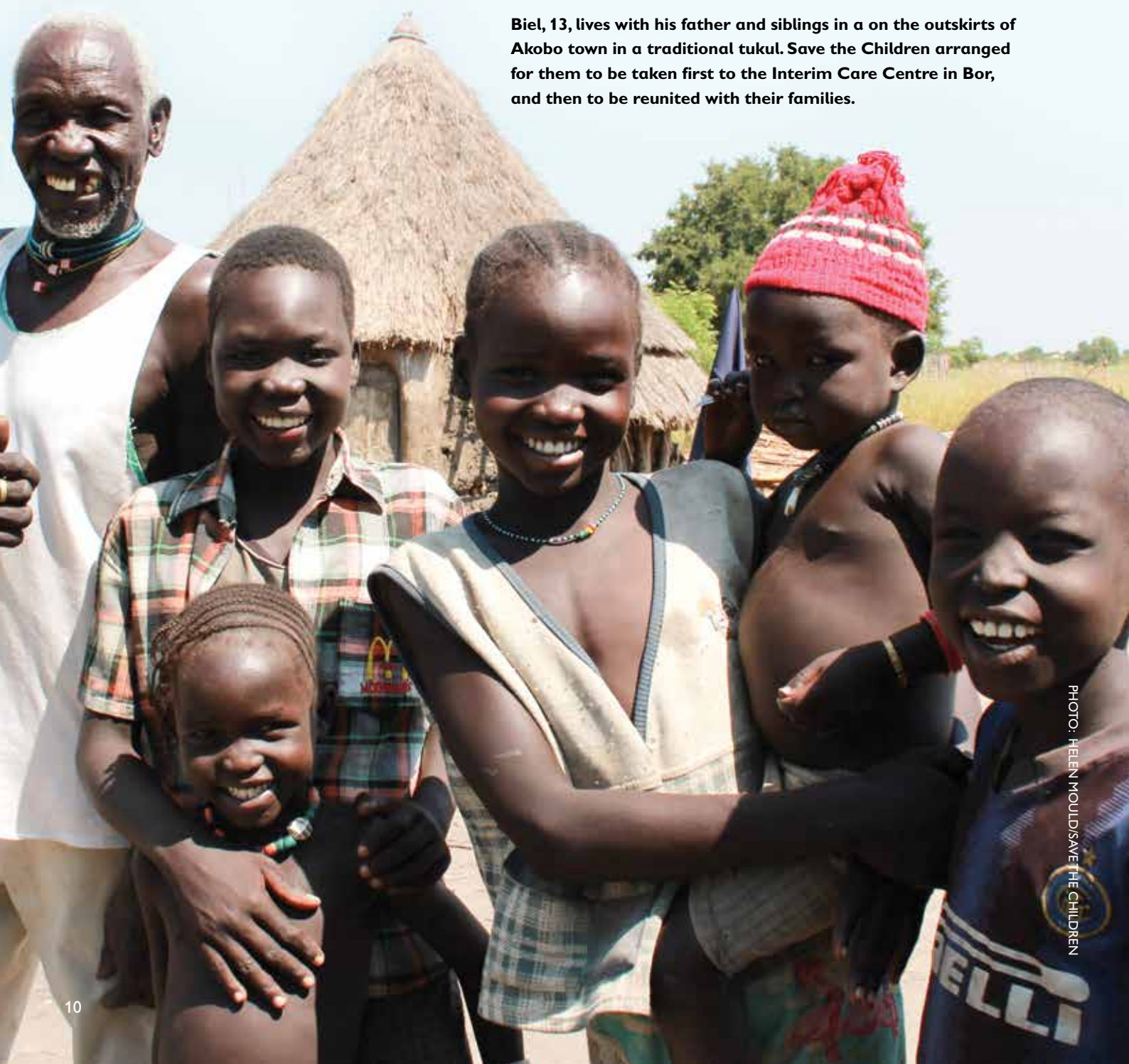
² FTR CP IMS database – September 2017

1.3 Why this FTR practice handbook in emergencies?

The handbook consolidates learning garnered from the experience of setting up, managing and investing in the FTR programme in South Sudan in order to contribute to the strengthening of Save the Children's approach to FTR in sudden onset of emergencies where CPiE programmes need to respond to large scale family separations. Thus, the handbook:

- Provides practical reference on how to set up and operationalise a national Inter-Agency FTR programme in emergency response.
- Documents the experience of Save the Children in coordinating a national participatory inter-agency approach to family tracing and reunification in emergency response in South Sudan.
- Details the FTR successes since its inception in December 2013 and the factors that have helped improve its effectiveness and spread its coverage in the emergency affected regions of South Sudan.

Biel, 13, lives with his father and siblings in a on the outskirts of Akobo town in a traditional tukul. Save the Children arranged for them to be taken first to the Interim Care Centre in Bor, and then to be reunited with their families.



1.4 Setting up an Inter-Agency national FTR system

1. Gather ideas on CP FTR from the Inter-Agency

Working Group on UASC and Regional FTR teams: it is valuable to make use of global and regional resources available to support FTR programmes. Practical tools have been developed, ideas on how to raise funds can be shared and valuable lessons already learnt can help while designing FTR programme.

2. Carry out an Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA): participate in the IRNA to determine the FTR needs and the UASC caseloads in the key field locations of concern. This can be arranged through the cluster system to assess the CP needs and the extent of family separations.

3. Identify and strengthen existing community-based CP mechanisms: build capacity of community response networks to help prevent and identify family separations as well as facilitate family tracing and monitor reunification of children. Similarly, establish Foster Parents Association or group to be on standby for response as part of placement of unaccompanied children identified. Involve and work with community leaders and community based organizations. Tap into existing informal community communication networks and self-reunification methodologies.

4. Secure stable funding: identify strategic and responsive funding partner/s with minimum funding guarantee running for not less than six months. Define resource needs (e.g. staffing, capacity gaps, FTR equipment (computers), reintegration reunification kit and Non-Food Items to support reunifications. to support reunification etc.). Involve the funding partner/s in programme design and setting up of the national Inter-Agency UASC working group.

5. Set up national UASC Working Group (WG): with mutually agreed terms of reference. It is chaired by the lead implementing agency who acts as the main coordination body of FTR implementation by the agencies. The lead agency is responsible of capacity building for all agencies and also for the management of information related to FTR through the CP IMS and regular information flows but all decision making must be a collaborative effort of the UASC Working Group. Maintain up to date physical location and contact list of WG partners. Develop a surveillance system to monitor potential separation of children.

6. Clarify the different roles of the Inter-Agency UASC WG: this should be based on their human and financial resource capabilities. Who will do What, When and Where shall it be done and for Whom.

7. Recruit and train staff and volunteers in FTR processes: documentation of cases, case file system, prioritisation of cases and case management system. This should be informed by the anticipated caseload (language, gender, etc.). Training is continuous, on the job, focuses on practical skills development and should help transform practical challenges into learning opportunities and new strategies.

8. Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Information Sharing Protocol (ISP): these are the two primary documents that govern the process of how

agencies conduct their FTR activities in line with minimum standards, best practice, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines, national laws and any other relevant national policies and procedures. Train partners on SOPs and ISP; improve case workers approach and work through increased supervision and mentoring to ensure a quality relationship between the child and the caseworker; determine which agency has the responsibility for which caseload based on partner's presence and capacity; how and where information is stored and; how and what information is shared between agencies. Outline role of non-implementing agencies (UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, UN peacekeeping mission) and have all partners sign the two documents.

9. Start FTR implementation and field activities: lobby for government acceptance and involvement to help facilitate tracing and reunification of children and provide document authorisation for cross-border reunification and other relevant support. Provide tailor-made support to partners and ensure strategic, inclusive communication and information sharing.

10. Establish FTR transition centres: a temporary short-term formal or informal family based interim care to ensure the safety of children during the transit for family reunification purposes.

11. Agree on the standard FTR forms at the CP Sub-Cluster at national level and customise the CP IMS to tally with the FTR forms: the forms to mirror the context of the response. Gauge the level of interest by partners in adopting the CP IMS database and using standardised forms. For practical reasons it is always preferable that all implementing agencies use the same system and contextualise the forms as well as customise the tools to reflect the exact paper documentation to be used in the field.

12. Review standardised forms for data gathering after rollout: ensure that there is active participation of partners. Their relevance and effectiveness in capturing current CP data of Missing Children and UASC. Make relevant adjustments to the forms to ensure they are responding to the context and are user friendly. If possible, the initial registration form should "talk to" the progress by UNHCR³ as well as the ICRC database.

13. Set up basic indicators for FTR monitoring: including disaggregation of data by partner agencies e.g. unaccompanied, separated, missing, registered, reunified, followed up, closed, gender, age groups and children who have found a long-term solution⁴. Set up reporting templates and timeframes (weekly, fortnightly or monthly). This should also help to inform programming and new funding opportunities and projects based on lessons learnt.

14. Endeavour to document experiences and milestones in the course of implementation through videos and publications as part of a conscious effort towards avoiding tacit knowledge and making it explicit. Documenting each experience and achievement can also help to communicate on the work effectively and highlight its significance.

³ UNHCR registration software programme used to improve the way information on refugees and other persons of concern are collected, shared and used.

⁴ Long-term solutions are agreed after an assessment is conducted based on children's best interest; this is relevant for children for whom reunification is not appropriate or the best option.

1.5 FTR experience in South Sudan

FTR SUCCESES	WHAT HELPED
Expanded reunification rates, spread to more locations and more children reached with FTR services. The number of UASC registered from 4,530 by 31st October 2014 to 13,118 by September 2017, prioritising and attending to the most critical cases of UASC.	Rapid Response mechanism approach with quality intervention and active involvement of UASC partners in FTR delivery (mobilization, identification and registration, assessment, tracing, reunification and case closure). UASC partners increased from 12 in 2014 to 27 ⁵ in 2017.
Increased number of UASC reunified from 432 by the 31st October 2014 to 5131 by September 2017.	Adequate and stable resource mobilization, allocation and sustaining funding portfolios across agencies since 2014 to date. User-friendly FTR operation tools and effective national coordination. The shift from largely electronic data matching in CP IMS in early 2014 to the active tracing methodologies in use today.
Effective facilitation of the Inter-Agency UASC WG at local, national and regional level.	Support a national level advocacy (humanitarian response committee) from the Child Protection Sub-Cluster and effective coordination of the national FTR focal point UASC Working Group. Leadership and active involvement of UNICEF, their buy in, support of Save the Children's leadership & inspiring NGOs to get involved.
Stable funding and strategic resource planning and use. Low staff turnover and high support by partner agencies.	UNICEF strategic funding, extensive linkages and stable technical staff and other support (purchase of laptops for partners for FTR use etc.). Involving funding partner in designing Inter-Agency UASC WG.
Established and strengthened community structures to help in the identification of, and reduction of incidences of UASC.	Tailor-made and culturally appropriate training to diverse community levels and groups on UASC, FTR and its purpose.
Strategic staff recruitment and training in FTR implementation.	FTR operating standards and implementation within specified staff competencies. On-going and regular presence of partner's staffs in the field (Save the Children, and UNICEF) and field level on-the-job training.
Quality FTR outcome (tracing and reunification) for UASC and effective case follow ups and feedback.	Trained UASC Working Group (FTR focal point staff and managers) in FTR steps, documentation, reporting and monitoring.
Installation and use of CP IMS by UASC partners with user-friendly data entry interface and options.	CP IMS as a central system and a key part of the programme and quality monitoring. Providing tailor-made training for Inter-Agency WG on CP IMS and on the job mentoring of CP IMS users.
Effective documentation and sharing of essential case management information across national and regional partners.	Use of central data management system (CP IMS), standard tools and forms for data gathering, Information Sharing Protocols and reporting. Partners signing commitment to deliver quality and timely FTR activities.

⁵ This does not include agencies that had stopped implementing the programme due to various reasons ranging from inaccessibility due to insecurity to inadequate funding hence left.

FTR SUCSESSES	WHAT HELPED
Self-motivated partners (UASC WG) and effective delivery of FTR outcome for UASC on the local and national levels.	Partners adapted tailor-made technical support by the national UASC focal point. Effective and consistence communication pathways and use of simplified reporting format.
Recognition of the prevention and response for UASC as a valuable component in child protection in South Sudan and in the wider context of emergency response.	Evidence based reporting and use of visual tools such as graphs to represent concrete FTR and child protection realities.
Strategic resource planning and prioritizing of investment in specific states and counties with critical FTR challenges.	Ability to map caseloads with partner staff capacities using CP IMS and Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessments (IRNA) led to improved reporting, awareness at Cluster level and visibility with donors which led to more funding.
Swift response and early tracing of UASC, personalised mentorship for partners, prompt update of FTR related occurrences nationally, gaps filled in FTR implementation and improved partners' performance.	Fortnightly meetings for the National UASC WG, central data management systems and Inter-Agency communication pathways. Timely review meetings between Save the Children and UNICEF to solve emerging problems.
Safe and secure facilitation of reunification movements of UASC to diverse regions of South Sudan and abroad.	Identification and use of UASC Interim and Temporary care centre at the Confident Children out of Conflict (CCC) premise for children on transit for reunification other than a hotel, during their transit in CCC children were accompanied by their case workers throughout the journey. Active involvement and support of FTR activities by the Government providing authorization letters for the tracing and reunification actions.



PHOTO: COLIN CROWLEY/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Children at the Child Friendly Space (CFS) in Doro camp, Upper Nile State, South Sudan.

1.6 Defining key concepts in FTR

The global principles⁶ and standards⁷ about child protection in emergencies provided a helpful technical perspective while setting up the Inter-Agency WG and the FTR programme in South Sudan. However, there were no documented practical ideas or experiences on how to start and manage an FTR programme in a sudden onset emergency.⁸ This handbook is meant to fill this gap by documenting

practical experiences and the lessons learnt from setting up and coordinating Inter-Agency UASC activities to reunify UASC with their families in an emergency response.

Apart from family tracing and reunification which are explained in the discussions about FTR steps (3.5 and 3.6.) the definitions of the main concepts used in this handbook are provided below.

A CHILD:

A child means any person under the age of 18, unless under the (national) law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (UNCRC 1989 – Article 1, The Child Act South Sudan 2008 – Article 5, ACRWC 1999 – Article 2).

SEPARATED CHILDREN:

“Separated children are those separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members.”⁹

UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN:

“Unaccompanied children (also referred to as unaccompanied minors) are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.” (ibid.)

MISSING CHILDREN:

In the event that a parent or a caregiver reports, during an emergency situation that they are unable to trace their child, the child can be registered as missing. It may not be practically possible to determine whether the child had run for safety with other community members, or got abducted, severely injured or even killed. Such children are documented as missing so that tracing processes can be initiated.

CHILD PROTECTION:

Save the Children defines child protection as “a set of measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children”¹⁰

CASE MANAGEMENT IN FTR:

A case is a child for whom FTR services are provided. Case management is the process used while working with a child (and the family) to identify his or her protection needs, plan and act on interim care services, arrange family tracing and reunification and tackle other problems affecting the child. It is a systematic approach upon which a case worker assesses the specific protection risks of the child and arranges how to address them. It can also involve organising for multiple care and support to the child either directly or referral to other relevant service providers especially from the Inter-Agency Working Group. Such plans must also include responding to the protection concerns of the child.

⁶ Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on UASC 2004.

⁷ Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action 2012.

⁸ This gap has been addressed in the ACPHA Handbook and Toolkit for UASC published in April 2017.

⁹ Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on UASC 2004.

¹⁰ Save the Children's Child Protection Thematic Plan 2016-2018.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES IN FAMILY TRACING AND REUNIFICATION

The fundamental principles for the identification, assessment, family tracing and reunification of separated children in emergency response are derived from standards set out in the Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on UASC of 2004.

2.1 Do no harm

The 'Do no harm' principle lays the responsibility on child protection agencies, such as Save the Children, to safeguard the physical and psychological wellbeing of the separated children while taking actions to reunify them with their families. A key step to guarantee no harm to the child in FTR is the verification of the family information given by the child and information about the child given by the family. Causing a child to recall graphic details of disaster or violence experience can traumatise and negatively impact on his or her family reunification possibilities. Sensitivity is fundamental while supporting children to positively deal with the incidences leading to their separation and their subsequent distressing experience. Similar thoughtfulness is vital when deciding whether or not a child and family should physically reunite or simply stay in contact. However, it should not be assumed that family reunification is always in the best interest of the child.

2.2 The best interest of the child

In FTR, the best interest of the child constitute the basic standard for guiding decisions and actions of the Inter-Agency Working Group to provide care and support to the UASC. The obligation to protect children against any harm when deciding or acting to reunify them must be premised on the best interest principle. In South Sudan, the principle is a prerequisite to any tracing or reunification action. Attention is given to the age of the child, level of maturity and the capability to make informed decisions or consent any reunification measures.

2.3 Emphasise family life

As the social unit for the growth and wellbeing of the children, successful family reunification and case

management of separated children involves working closely and collaboratively with the parents and other relations. Thus, family tracing and reunification is motivated by the evidence that a safe family environment is the best place for protecting and nurturing children. It is in families that children get to learn about their culture, gain ancestral knowledge and exploit opportunities to help them map out and appreciate their neighbouring communities. Hence, the first priority should be to reunify the child with his or her family. However, the decision to reunify the child with other relatives or any foster caregiver must be done when options of reunification with the parents is not possible in the best interest of the child. Knowledge about the capabilities and critical challenges of the family are central to a successful reintegration of the child. Such knowledge can help map and plan for the support that might be required by the family to ensure successful reunification. It can also help in focusing the Inter-Agency cooperation in terms of who will offer what services to support the reintegration of the reunified child and when such services must be provided.

2.4 Building on community-based support

Family tracing and reunification has a lot to gain from existing community mechanisms that support and ensures the wellbeing of children. Aid agencies can provide temporary support but it is the community that can provide sustainable solutions and favourable environment for family tracing and reunification of the separated children. Emphasis should be put on gaining understanding about the existing opportunities and resources in the communities that can be reinforced to support the child's successful reintegration in the family. It is upon gaining such knowledge and greater contextual awareness that the collaborative efforts of the humanitarian agencies can help design activities to strengthen and stabilise families as well as increase capabilities of the parents. This can ensure safety and a stable environment for the child to grow and socialise. Recognition and involvement of different stakeholders (community leaders, schools, community-based organisations, local authority etc.) of the community is essential, not only for family reunification, but also for the prevention of separations.

2.5 Confidentiality

Confidentiality in FTR involves restricting the sharing of information concerning the child with partner agencies on a 'need-to-know basis'. Sensitive personal identifying information of the child and family is restricted to specific individuals and must be properly secured to ensure their safety. A name (especially if such names are distinct to certain ethnicities) can expose a child to life threatening violation. Though the sharing of information is a key activity of the Inter-Agency Working Group while planning family reunification, it is in the best interest of the child to regulate the type and extent such information is shared. It must prioritise personal data critical for securing safety, stability and successful reunification of the child. It is upon the Inter-Agency partners to find the right balance between information that must be shared and actions that need to be taken to achieve family reunification while upholding the best interest principle.

2.6 Non-discrimination

Article 2 of the UNCRC, set up the standards and explains that all children must be accorded the treatment according to their needs, regardless of their gender, colour or any other social status. In FTR processes, primary attention is given to vulnerable children with high priority protection concern as identified in the Standards Operating Procedures and have less or no options to protect themselves at the onset of emergencies. In South Sudan, the Inter-Agency Working Group have developed standard operating procedures (SOP)¹¹ to ensure coherent practice amongst its members while identifying separated children with high priority protection concerns.

2.7 Child participation

Article 12 of the UNCRC, reinforces that the views of the children must be accorded due recognition based on their age and level of maturity. In FTR, involvement of children in decisions concerning their family tracing and reunification processes is not only a matter of priority but also a practice standard intended to safeguard the best interest of the child. In South Sudan, while making decisions and planning for family tracing and reunification, Inter-Agency case workers involve the children and constantly discuss with them any progress update.

2.8 UASC Inter-Agency coordination and complementarity.

Family tracing and reunification is an active collaborative process that cannot be successfully achieved by a single organization. It involves

networking of human and financial resources in order to tackle protection concerns of separated children with maximum precision. Thus, setting up an Inter-Agency Working Group cannot be seen as a measure of convenience but a vital component required in managing the family tracing, reunification and reintegration processes effectively. During these meetings, aid agencies are able to share, challenges in the field, the most recent displacement and need for back up support, improve staff skills and knowledge, to exchange lessons from their work and ensure efficiency in delivering quality child protection services to the UASC. It is important to involve actors – government agencies included – with a mandate to protect children separated from their families.

Delivery of quality outcomes for the separated children by the Inter-Agency Working Group can be guided best by the information sharing and standard operating procedures. Such protocols guide the relationship of the agencies with one another as well as their behaviours while working to protect UASC.

2.9 Case management for UASC

Case management is the approach used while working with children and families with a range of protection issues or at risk of harm that requires care and support. FTR is one service amongst many that is provided through a holistic case management approach. By using the case management approach, the specific protection needs of the UASC and his or her family is identified then the services required to realize such needs is facilitated through direct support or referral. Considering that FTR in emergencies is a complex collaborative effort of the Inter-Agency Working Group, the case management approach can help refine the quality of outcomes for UASC. Thus, the initial steps of case management (identification, documentation and assessment) mirror those in FTR and within a case management approach where family tracing and reunification becomes a service.¹² These six core steps of case management are embedded in the FTR steps discussed below.



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAMS/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Rebecca*, six, and her sister Abi*, 5, are reunified with their mother Grace* in 2015. Rebecca* and Abi* were separated from their mother Grace* when violence broke out in December 2013.

¹¹ SOP, Inter-Agency Working Group, South Sudan 2015.

¹² Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection 2014.

3. STEPS IN FAMILY TRACING AND REUNIFICATION

3.1 Community assessment for FTR

Priority must be given to building knowledge about the nature and scale of family separations and the extent (geographical spread and severity) of protection risks faced by children. Emphasis should also be put on expanding understanding about the degree and the effects of child protection challenges on the communities in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and other social variables. Is there a genuine need for family tracing and reunification of UASC? Does the community use family separation as a strategy for survival? Or, was separation initially a survival strategy but as the conflict spread to new locations previously seen as 'safe', further separations now require FTR services? Or, have people lost each other over time? It is important to understand what protection measures, including the types of care and support that are already in place in the community and what additional help and support can realistically be provided by external organisations to meet the emerging needs of the affected community. Can we directly respond to specific needs and who is best placed to respond? Having clarity about the extent and nature of family separation in a community can help in making decisions on whether to intervene or not and how we can ensure our intervention complements existing community capacity, and fills gaps identified as critical by those communities. Knowledge about opportunities for local partnerships with grassroots organisations can help strengthen identification and use of existing community resources. While conducting community assessments for FTR, it is critical to ensure that FTR principles are integrated into all the processes and protection measures implemented.

3.2 Community mobilization

Identify and review existing community mechanisms and capacities that can help in the prevention and response to family separations and support tracing, reunification and reintegration efforts of UASC. The measures that are implemented to care for, and support reunified children and their families must complement existing community based responses. Such measures must not

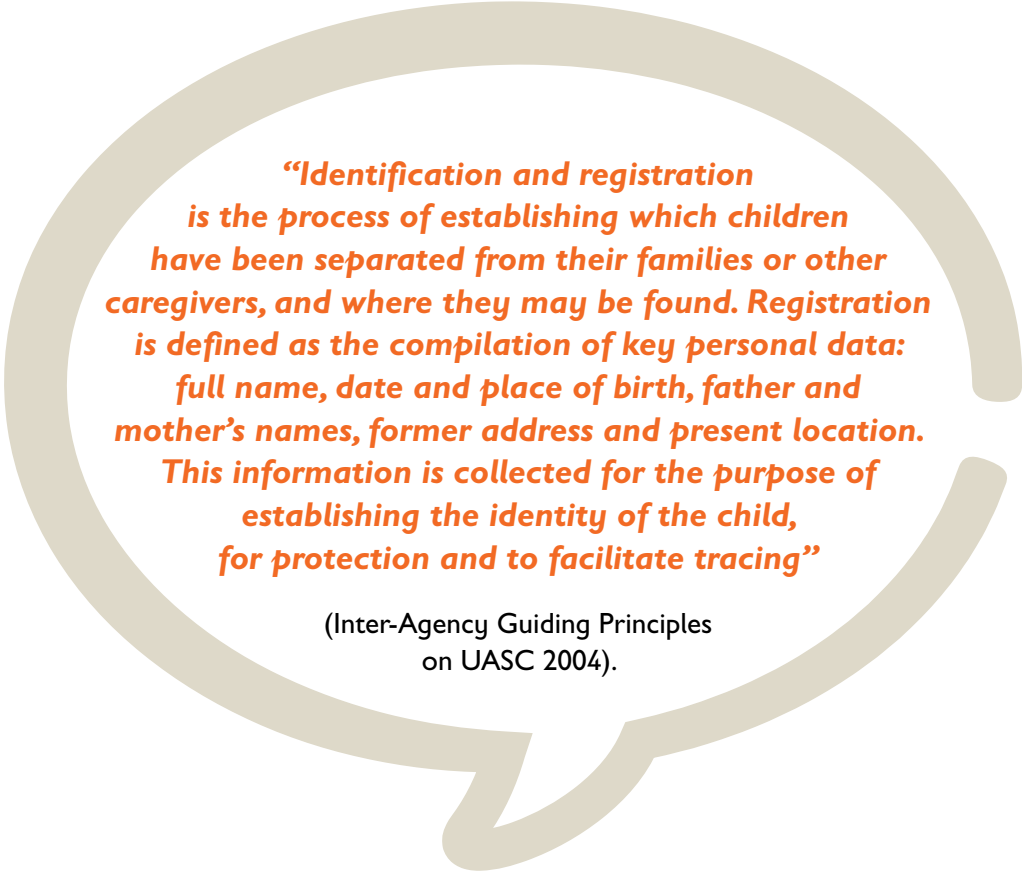
replace or undermine existing community mechanisms. What resources in the community can help facilitate reunification processes and how can such resources be utilised and maximised to achieve the best outcome for children and their families? What roles can faith and community based organisations, village and church leaders, schools and other social institutions play in managing challenges of stigmatisation that might be experienced by UASC and reunified children? What can the different actors in the community do to enable speedy and holistic reintegration of UASC and reunified children? What support can be provided to protect UASC and reunified children in the community and the school environment? How can the community monitor the progress of UASC in alternative care arrangements and reunified children and help him or her gain acceptance and help them gain acceptance and any support they might require? These are critical questions that are necessary towards gaining knowledge about the communities and designing culturally appropriate measures to help them play a key role in identification, tracing and reunification of UASC. To effectively mobilize community participation, emphasis must be given to the existing community forums. Community forums are valuable opportunities to actively engage with the communities while building their capacities with skills to help them facilitate child protection, family tracing and reunification processes.

3.3 Identification and registration

Identification and registration of UASC does not constitute the entirety of a child protection response in itself. Often FTR field teams will have the mistaken impression (particularly in the early days and weeks of an emergency response) that the goal of a FTR programme is to know and document the scale of family separation. For a child protection agency, the goal of identifying and registering UASC must be only the first step in a holistic case management process that meets the protection needs of each child, including offering FTR services where appropriate or needed. However, it is important to note that identification and registration following an emergency incident

can support the rapid reunification of some children and ensure that case workers are searching for opportunities to facilitate rapid reunification. FTR programme is not a census or child protection monitoring programme. Collecting data that UASC already know is not a service provision. It is critical that all field teams understand that this is not a race to the highest caseload, but the first step in quality

case management that will be determined by the level of services provided that meet an individual child's needs. It is important to have skilled staff conducting such registration processes to ensure no harm to the child while gathering quality information required for FTR. Once UASC are identified and registered, the Inter-Agency UASC WG has a role to play in prioritising children who require an immediate response,



“Identification and registration is the process of establishing which children have been separated from their families or other caregivers, and where they may be found. Registration is defined as the compilation of key personal data: full name, date and place of birth, father and mother’s names, former address and present location. This information is collected for the purpose of establishing the identity of the child, for protection and to facilitate tracing”

(Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on UASC 2004).

determining the resources required to respond sufficiently to needs, those best placed to intervene effectively in each area, and the most critical gaps that require additional measures in order to ensure all communities are covered.

For the parents or relatives inquiring over a missing child, a short registration form for inquirers is filled and the child is entered into the system as a ‘missing child’. Missing children are not treated as UASC and do not have a case management plan. Once the data has been sent to the coordination office and quality control has been performed, record matching is done to find out if the child has been registered in another location as UASC. In the case of a positive match, reference is made to the agency who registered the child so as to conduct information verification then continue with the rest of the FTR process.

In order to enable successful family tracing and subsequent reunification, a detailed documentation about the child's social history in relation to his or her past, current status and hopes for the future, is taken. The child's information must be safely stored and protected from any unwarranted access. Considering that proper documentation helps in case management planning, the case worker conducting the documentation in the field must ensure that all the forms are properly filled in. Quality control is conducted once the documentation is sent to the FTR coordination office to be included in the national FTR database and thereafter initiate the tracing process. In emergency settings many people congregate in temporary shelters and it can be difficult to have privacy to ask hard questions. Large groups of people and other children will often gather around to listen to the interviews. Ensure that people wait in a queue and are allowed to come into a secluded area to be interviewed one by one.

CASE STUDY: IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION

It was on a food distribution day in Awerial when a village elder found Paul, 12, sitting alone at the food distribution centre while crying. Paul informed the village elder that he had no one to care for him neither did he have a food ration card. After listening to Paul's story, the village elder brought him to a Save the Children case worker at the food distribution centre (child protection desk) to further listen to Paul's case. Paul was at school when the fighting broke out in Bor in 2013. The parents were not at home when he got there and many people were fleeing towards the direction of the Nile. He followed the people to the river and crossed over to Awerial with a boat but he could not find his parents or any of his relatives when he got there. He was being cared for by an elderly woman who found him stranded in Awerial and took him to her family. After a brief interview by the caseworker his details were taken and a planned visit made to the home of the elderly woman who lived with him. More details were gathered and Paul was registered as unaccompanied child. A ration card was also given to him and the FTR process continued until the parents were traced in Duk County where they were reunified.

By Julius Lubajo, FTR Capacity Building Coordinator

IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION CHECKLIST

Sources of identification

- Community based organizations – youth groups, women groups etc.
- Community leadership i.e. ROSS or RRC Coordinators, Payam Administrators, chiefs, church elders.
- Village committees i.e. GBV and CP action group and committees.
- Faith based organizations i.e. churches and mosques.
- Schools, health facilities, markets and relief food distribution centres.
- Registration points, transit centres or border crossings.
- Self-referral to FTR Agency.
- Other impelmenting agencies.

Registration

- Train case workers to conduct identification and registration.
- Explain to the community the purpose of identification and registration.
- Outline the inclusion and exclusion criteria and reasons behind these criteria.
- Get the consent of the child and/or the caregiver and explain the process to them before starting the registration.
- Clarify the data of the children to be recorded.
- Conduct quality checks to ensure that all the vital information is recorded.
- Assign the child a case number to avoid mix-up and to ensure confidentiality.

Documentation and quality control

- Arrange for a secluded environment to ensure confidentiality during the interviews.
- Document child's past and present social history and his or her hopes for the future.
- Verify information from the field and ensure the forms are properly filled in.
- Safely store data collected and ensure restricted access.

3.4 ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR UASC

A holistic assessment should be conducted as close to identification and registration of UASC as possible. The objective of the assessment is to meet the needs of UASC which may include FTR as well as responding to any protection concerns identified, especially for UASC who may not need FTR. The assessment helps to gather all the information needed to determine:

1. If a UASC has a tracing need at all (e.g. a separated child who has travelled with his aunt with the full knowledge and consent of his mother, and who remains in contact with his mother, may have no tracing need at all),
2. If tracing and reunification is in the short, medium and long-term in the best interest of the child (e.g. a child may wish to return to his/her family immediately but knows his/her family is located in a very dangerous area currently experiencing a lot of conflict),
3. The purpose of tracing is for physical reunification or just to restore family contact,
4. The collection of information necessary to carry out tracing. At this stage, staff should bear in mind that the tracing process could be long and challenging so the more accurate information the better,
5. Plan for the immediate and interim protection needs of the individual child (including referrals, alternative care requirements, psychosocial support needs, priority level of the child's case etc.).
6. Assess children's care situation. Undertake basic checks to ensure that UASC who require alternative care are placed in interim care. For children who have already been placed under informal interim care, assess with the children and the caregiver whether the current arrangements are suitable and whether additional support or services are required.

The competency of the staff member conducting assessments is critical to the quality of data gathered and thus the success of the tracing and reunification process. What type of immediate care is required by the child? Can such care be provided within a family or community based setting, or will other alternative care options need to be considered? What capacity strengthening is required to support such mechanisms? Who can provide such capacity strengthening? Nonetheless, temporary placement in institutional shelter, as a last resort, must be properly assessed, monitored and time-limited. Such decisions must include child participation and be shaped by the best interest of the child.

The role of the Inter-Agency UASC WG in ensuring a coordinated, collaborative and common approach to the process of assessing and prioritising immediate needs of UASC is critical in achieving success at this step. Who will do what, when, where and for whom ensures caseload planning and specific services distribution between the agencies! In an emergency context, the urgency of an unaccompanied or separated child's tracing need will be determined by CP factors, levels of vulnerability, risks likely to be faced and any protective factors that may assist his or her resilience. This is how holistic and effective case management can

be a critical factor in successful FTR.

3.5 Family tracing

Tracing is the process of searching for family members or primary legal or customary caregivers of the child. The primary aspiration of tracing is to achieve a long-term solution for the child's protection issues. Tracing attends to opportunities that can help towards re-establishing contact or reuniting the separated child with their families in the child's best interest. Tracing can also be used when referring to a child being searched for by the parents – a missing child¹³

There are two types of tracing:

1. **Electronic data matching in CP IMS:** It involves the use of the database to match a list of missing children received from the partners in the field. A function for 'record matching' in the CP IMS database is used to match the cases from the field (inquirers) and those in the database. Once there is/are positive match/es an email is sent to the registering agency and the requesting agency who can both start the process of verifying the information of the parents (requesting agency) and the child (registering

¹³ Inter-Agency guiding principle for UASC, 2004 and Minimum Standards for Child Protection, 2012.



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAM/SAVE THE CHILDREN

A Save the Children child protection officer, Bol Nguol, visits Rebecca*, six and Abi*, five, at their grandmother's home in Waat, Jonglei state, South Sudan, where they have been living since they were separated from their mother Grace* when violence broke out in December 2013.

agency). The information in the inquirer form must be accurately entered so as to avoid any failed matching occasioned by poor quality of data. Thus, thorough quality control must be conducted on such requests for the family tracing of UASC before the tracing action is conducted.

2. **Active tracing:** this involves sharing information about the child's family with the partner agency operating in the location where the registered child supposes his or her parents could be found. The agency in the field can use their local community networks to trace the parents of the child or any other technique based on the operating context, to trace the family. Once the family is identified, the registering and requesting agencies can start the verification of the information of the child and the family respectively. In South Sudan, by mid-June 2014, 3974 of missing and UASC had been registered but only 222 had been reunified. This prompted the need to involve all the partners in active family tracing. The presence and the geographic spread of NNGOs, cooperation of partners and active support by UNICEF improved the quality and extent of tracing actions.

Verification of the child and the adult:

Child: the agency registering the child compares the information given by the child and that of the family (inquiring). If the two sources of information match the process of reunification starts.

Adult: the case worker tracing the family shows the adult a photo with two different children, their child and another child. They can also be shown a photo of their child amongst a group of children. If they select the right photo of their child then we know that it is the real parent or primary caregiver of the child. In addition to the photo verification, it is also good to confirm the verification process through other means, such as asking the parents specific questions about their children.

Verification takes place when the information of the child has been matched with that of the parents or adult caregiver. It is a very important quality control process that helps to avoid reunifying a child with a wrong family and preventing instances of child trafficking.

It is important not to assume that successful tracing means reunification, because there have been cases where the tracing is successful but the child is not reunified. An example is included in the family tracing case study.

CASE STUDY: FAMILY TRACING

Four siblings were resgistered as UASC in Leer but the parents were traced and found in Juba. However, the parents did not want the children to be reunified with them in Juba citing lack of proper income to sustain the children in Juba. Instead, they requested to be transported to Leer to be reunified with their children there. Since the FTR policies in South Sudan on reunification do not include transportation of the parents of UASC from one location to another, reunification could not take place even though there was positive verification of the information of both the parents and the children. This process did not achieve reunification but it restored the family links and the children were facilitated to communicate with their parents directly through a satellite phone.

Case study by Philip Kipruto CP IMS Manager

The tracing checklist below explains the specific tracing actions that should be included in different tracing contexts.

FAMILY TRACING CHECKLIST

Active tracing

- Tracing referral and the child's details sent to the FTR coordinating agency (i.e. Save the Children in Juba).
- Request relevant partners operating in the tracing location to conduct the tracing action based on the location of the adult being traced.
- Put the requesting agency and the agency receiving the referral in direct contact through email.
- Receiving agency engages competent case workers to undertake tracing action.
- Ensure adequate information is available to the tracing agency to facilitate successful tracing.
- Ensure tracing methods are culturally appropriate for the community and context of tracing.
- Use practical family tracing experiences from the receiving FTR agency to help plan tracing.
- Help case workers balance between principles of confidentiality and practical realities in the field.
- Use standard approach and tools for data collection for tracing i.e. FTR forms.
- Agree on standards for information sharing (i.e. need-to-know basis).
- Update the child or parents on tracing progress and next steps.
- Share tracing weekly summary between the requesting and receiving agency to remind them on the pending tracing requests.
- Ensure that the receiving agency shares within 2 weeks the outcomes of the tracing request (whether the tracing is positive, negative or still pending) with the coordinating agency and requesting agency to be able to update the children and/or the caregivers.

Data base tracing (CP IMS, Rapid FTR and other IMS)

- List of missing children is shared by partner agency (inquirers) working in the field.

FAMILY TRACING CHECKLIST (cont.)

Assessing and verifying the child's and family's information

Child

- Have we done everything possible to ensure adequate and thorough verification of information to avoid the possibility of child trafficking or incorrect reunification?
- Have we assessed the child's willingness to reunify with family, explored concerns and discussed alternative option where appropriate?
- Is the child aware of the current living situation of his/her family members/primary caregiver and still willing to be reunified?
- How accurately does the information provided by the child match with the one provided by the adult? Would additional verification activities (e.g. a phone call between caregivers, exchange of photos, asking additional question to the adult about the child such as his favourite food, sleeping habits etc.) be prudent or preferable?
- Use photos of children (at least three if possible) and let the caregiver identify the correct one and do the same for the child.
- Does the child have additional support needs now, which were not present before? (e.g. additional health concerns, pregnancy, new baby etc.).

Family or primary caregiver

- Is the primary caregiver willing to be reunified with the child?
- How accurate is the information provided by the child compared with that of the adult primary caregiver? Would additional verification actions be required?
- Can the socio-economic circumstances of the family support successful reunification?
- Are there child protection concerns for the child in the family? Are there CP concerns for any other children in the family that may affect the reunified child?
- What needs to be done to strengthen family circumstances to accommodate the child?
- Is the family fully prepared to reintegrate the child as s/he is now (e.g. a child separated at eight years old but is now a teenager)?
- Does the family, or certain family members, need mediation or additional psychosocial support (or professional mental health support) in preparation for physical reunification?
- Are there likely to be any adverse effects on the child, family, other children as a result of physical reunification? What can we do to mitigate these adverse effects? Are these so severe that reunification should not go ahead, and have alternative options been explored?



Children play in a Child Friendly Space (CFS) in Waat, South Sudan.

FAMILY TRACING CHECKLIST (cont.)

Tracing context

- **During or right after outbreaks of violence:** gather information about the current conditions in the tracing location. What are the personal safety concerns for the case worker and the child and how to mitigate them? What works best to help tracing actions (i.e. send tracing information through community links such as leaders or groups or case worker conducting physical tracing)? Is it the right time to do tracing and have the people moved back to their homes?
- **Urban and rural:** in the urban areas tracing through mobile phone can be initiated if the child is able to remember the telephone number of the parents. In order to protect the child and manage expectations, case workers should avoid having the tracing calls in the presence of the child. Community structures (village and church elders, community groups) can be used to help tracing in the rural areas. The tracing through mobile phone can be challenging especially in areas where the communities have experienced ethnic profiling and killings. They may deny that they are the parents being traced until they are certain of their safety.
- **National level tracing:** how can the national Inter-Agency team support the tracing action in the identified locations? How can the concerned government agencies or other local authorities or other structures be involved?
- **Not the wish of the child:** tracing should be done in the best interest of the child. If the child does not want tracing it's critical to explore the reasons why, address concerns, mitigate problems and determine whether or not it is in his or her best interest to undertake tracing.
- **Tracing visit with the child:** is the child properly prepared about what they might find or not find? Is the area familiar to the child? Sometimes not being able to locate the home/parents can be a very traumatising experience to the child.

All activities concerning tracing must guarantee no harm to the child, prioritise child participation, consider the best interest of the child and ensure adequate confidentiality.



PHOTO: EMMANUEL KENTY/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Majak,* 77, was reunited with his grandchild by Save the Children's Family Tracing and Reunification programme in Awerial after they had been separated during fighting in South Sudan.

3.6 Family reunification

Reunification can be the physical return of the child to their family, or to their previous primary caregiver, or with other next of kin. Where family reunification is not possible or feasible, the CP agency can instead establish a restoration of communication links between the child and family members, either with a view to eventual physical reunification sometime in the future, or without an intention for physical reunification for whatever reason. Wherever possible and suitable, physical family reunification is the preferred outcome of FTR activities, but the benefits of the simple restoration of communication links between a child and a family should not be discounted. A decision not to conduct physical family reunification should not be considered as a 'failure' of FTR.

The primary purpose of reunification is to place the child in a long-term and stable protection and care environment for which the caregiver has primary legal and/or customary responsibility to take care of the child, and accepts that responsibility without condition. It is usually an emotional encounter that requires proper preparation of the child and the family beforehand. It is important for both the child and the family to understand that considering the different experiences they have undergone since their separation, there will be some aspects of their condition that may have changed. In almost all cases, the family and/or child will have lived in a number of different locations where new living habits were developed out of necessity, and the living location to which the child/adult is being reunified will be unfamiliar. The case worker should explain to the child what is going to happen during the reunification process and why. Such explanations should be repeated over a period of time until he or she is sure that they are well understood by the child. To benefit from an expanded support to the reunified child and the family, prior preparations should include the relevant community networks.

For the preparation, the case worker should have prior knowledge about the context in which the child is being reunified. This can help facilitate adequate preparation of the child and the family for the reunification process. Is it the same family and location prior to when the separation happened? Is the environment familiar or completely new to the child? Does the child know the current living status and number in the household? Different reunification settings require diverse and specific levels of planning involving Inter-Agency partners operating at local and national levels. Since the reunification process transfers the role of protection and care to the family, it is important to ensure that all the documentation is done to the Inter-Agency standards and legal requirement of the concerned local or national authority. The family of reunification have to state their willingness and commitment to take up the protection and care. Responsibilities for the

child in writing or by signing a standard filled in form. A South Sudan experience of physical reunification, a reunification checklist and a reunification case study with photos is included below.

Reunification experience in South Sudan

Upon the verification of the information of the child and the parents or the primary caregiver, the planning for physical reunification begins. The reunification date is set with the parents and the child taking into consideration the UNHAS flight schedules. As per our procedures in South Sudan, UNICEF facilitates the booking and payment for the flights for the child and the accompanying case worker (all children who are to be reunified have to travel with an accompanying adult, usually the case worker who has been following the case). The parents or primary caregiver are prepared to receive the child at the airstrip upon arrival. Based on the schedules for the reconnecting flights, plans are made with CCC in Juba (a national organisation providing safe accommodation for children) to provide temporary care and shelter for the child for the required days, while the accompanying adult is in charge of arranging his/her own accommodation). Bearing in mind that the flights can be rescheduled due to bad weather or security challenges, the child and parents must be informed in advance about possible delays in order to manage any anxiety. It is important to ensure that the government is contacted in time and authorisation is given for children travelling to the SPLA-IO (opposition) areas.



PHOTO: JONATHAN HYAM/SAVE THE CHILDREN

Patrick*, nine, at his aunt's home in Waat, Jonglei state, South Sudan. Patrick was separated from his mother when violence broke out in December 2013.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION CHECKLIST

The family reunification checklist further illustrates the diverse levels of awareness and measures required to achieve a successful family reunification process.

- Family reunification is not a one-time event but a process towards reintegration of the child.
- Engage skilled case worker to manage the reunification process and do effective case management.
- Prepare the case worker for the emotional encounter i.e. how to work with possible outburst of emotion during the physical reunion of the child and the parents.
- Plan for temporary shelter in a 'transit centre' (i.e. CCC in Juba) to manage the challenge of layovers due to flight schedules and possible delays.
- Discuss the logistical arrangements with the adult and child. i.e. transportation and accommodation. What insurance cover is required for child/family moving in vehicles or by other means? What responsibilities do we accept during transit – food, accommodation, medical care, nutrition for infants etc.?
- Ensure that the child is accompanied by a trained FTR or Child Protection member of staff at every stage of the process – where possible this should be the child's case worker who should accompany the child at every step.
- Transfer case to the reunifying agency and provide adequate information either from the electronic data or paper files.
- Explain to the child what to expect during reunification and check that is understood.
- Assess parent's abilities to prioritise the child's needs and work on family strengthening.
- Assess the child's ability to fit in the family and work on strengthening weak areas.
- Address potential protection concerns for the child in the family.
- Assess the need for reunification kit and non-food items i.e. who can provide them?
- Listen to the child's views and include them in the reunification long-term plans.
- Set long-term goals with the family to ensure the child's stability at home.
- Plan for child's social needs (education, health, psychosocial etc.) and how they will be accessed.
- Plan for parent's post reunification needs i.e. parenting skills and psychosocial support.
- Facilitate case conferencing and stimulate family and community-based support in case of a major child protection concern after the reunification.
- Send inspirational and feedback email to all the agencies that played different roles in the family tracing and reunification processes on the successful conclusion of reunification.
- Review and adjust case plan as appropriate.
- Arrange post-reunification support to child and family. i.e. what, when, where, who, for whom?
- In the event that the child is not reunified, plans can be made for another visit either to check on progress of agreed plan (to help future reunification) or strengthen family links.
- Agree on next reintegration follow-up visit with the child and family at the end of the reunification.
- Outline how progress on reintegration will be reported by the new case worker and to whom.
- Document reunification outcome and experience as set out in Inter-Agency standards; ensure the forms are properly filled in.
- Leave 'service card' with the child and family to indicate visits and planned follow up in order to avoid any risk of duplication by another agency.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION CHECKLIST (cont.)

Reunification context

- **With family of separation:** consider socio-economic changes that might have impacted on the characters of both the child and the family. Help arrange assistance from family networks and community based support (i.e. psychosocial, food and NFI).
- **With other relatives:** the child may have not seen or lived with them before but is perhaps aware of them. Involve community leaders (village and church elders, chiefs etc.) to support the protection and care of the child and to monitor reintegration progress.

Reunification actions must guarantee no harm to the child, prioritise child participation, consider the best interest of the child and ensure adequate confidentiality.

CASE STUDY

Family Reunification of Joseph in Walgak

Joseph, 13, lived with his uncle, a military commander in Juba while attending primary school class five in 2013. In December 2013, during the abrupt conflict which took place, Joseph had to flee to the UNMISS PoC for personal safety while his uncle got killed in the fight. He was later identified by a school officer at the PoC upon which he was registered by Save the Children as UASC. During the registration process he gave accurate information about his home in Walgak which was near the only church building there. This made the tracing work easier and quicker and after the verification of the information given by Joseph and the parents about one another, reunification was arranged and implemented. Accompanied by a case worker from the FTR partner they both boarded a UNHAS flight to Walgak where Joseph was successfully reunified with his parents.

Reintegration follow up has been conducted for Joseph as was intended in the case management plan and Joseph was found to have successfully settled in and joined Walgak primary school (with the support of Save the Children) to continue with his education. A case conference was later conducted and it was realized that there was no further protection concern and the case was formally closed.

By Bol Nyuol, CP Officer, Walgak



Case workers visit an unaccompanied girl living in foster care. Akong*, 13, ran away when the conflict broke out in her village and got separated from her parents and siblings. Save the Children has registered her for the Family Tracing and Reunification programme.

3.7 Case closure and transfer

Case closure is the final step in the case management process. It happens only when strict conditions (pre-determined by the UASC WG) have been met and involves the realisation of tangible set goals for the child as outlined in the case plan. The successful reunification and reintegration of UASC with his/her family is not, on its own, sufficient to close a case. In some cases, a reunified family may be at risk of another separation. Hence, case closure can be initiated upon realisation of set goals for the child and the family or in the unfortunate circumstance of the death of the child.

When a case of UASC is transferred the case management process is handed over to another partner agency. The case transfer happens when a child and his or her caregiver move from the location they were registered to a new area. Once the registering agency becomes aware of this, the FTR partner agency operating in the same area the child has relocated is notified and they are then requested to take over the case. The case transfer process in the database removes the case from the registering (transferring) agency's database and moves it to the agency receiving the case. At this point, the receiving agency continues with the case management process as required.

3.8 Coordination of family tracing and reunification

Family tracing and reunification is a complex Inter-Agency collaborative process that requires careful planning and a well-thought management strategy. Agencies delivering humanitarian assistance understand that coordinating resources and capabilities is a crucial component to ensure quality and timely assistance to the affected communities. In South Sudan, the scale and nature of family separation is widespread and in very remote locations with very minimal, if any, NGO or CBO presence made effective and cooperative Inter-Agency collaboration a critical component of the FTR programme from the very beginning. The sudden onset nature of the emergency over a period of relative quiet in South Sudan (Christmas holidays) and the permeation of conflict into multiple locations over a short space of time, meant that the FTR programme had to grow from 4 INGOs in one county of one state in December 2013, to 23 agencies in 39 counties in 10 states in 2014. There were significant challenges as new agencies in hard-to-reach areas began FTR activities with minimal training and experience.

In South Sudan, coordination of the Inter-Agency efforts in family tracing and reunification processes is the primary vehicle that drives national FTR delivery. Apart from mobilizing key players in child protection to join the Inter-Agency Working Group, acquiring adequate and stable funding is a key priority in setting up the Inter-Agency coordination and support mechanisms.

CASE CLOSURE AND TRANSFER CHECKLIST

Case transfer

- The child has relocated to an area where a partner agency is working. i.e. the receiving agency takes over the case and continues with the case management of the child.

Case closure

- Set goals for the reintegration of the child as per case management plan have been realised.
- Protection concerns are resolved and other concerns are managed or mitigated by the child and surrounding support structures.
- Child is in a stable environment for period of time.
- Unfortunate occurrence of the death of the child, or the child turns 18 and receives sufficient support for reintegration

Case transfer and case closure must ensure active participation of the child and the primary caregiver as well as guarantee his or her best interest. The required documentation (FTR forms) must be conducted within the set standards.

A detailed elaboration of how to set up an FTR system and coordination is included in section 1.5. Factors that must be considered when setting up an Inter-Agency national FTR system include, but is not limited to: identifying partners and securing their commitments; conducting assessment of FTR needs; recruiting competent staff; assessing and building the capacity of the agency and staff; setting up partner's meeting timeframes; developing Standard Operating Protocols (SOP) and Information Sharing Protocols (ISP) and; installing and training partners on Information Management Systems (IMS). In South Sudan, with the strong support of UNICEF, Save the Children is the lead agency in the delivery of FTR services. Save the Children offers technical support, with 4 FTR dedicated staff, to the 27 members of the Inter-Agency Working Group carrying out FTR. The Working Group work collaboratively to harness their resources and ensure quality FTR services to UASC. Having a stable funding, material and technical support from UNICEF is a primary contribution to FTR successes in South Sudan. Save the Children consolidates FTR reports which are disseminated to other actors (national CP Sub-Cluster) and to the Inter-Agency Working Group during the fortnightly meetings.

Set up a transit centre (as in the case of CCC in Juba) for the children and accommodation arrangements for accompanying case worker. A standard monitoring and reporting mechanism is essential for ensuring accountability amongst FTR agencies. Maintain consistent timeline for receiving the Inter-Agency partner's reports to the coordinating agency to enable production of a national FTR report (every Friday in the case of South Sudan) on time. Keeping a steady link with the Child Protection Sub-Cluster can help lobby policies, funding and support at the national level. Such elaborate planning and resource networking must not overshadow the primary principles of doing no harm to the child as well as guaranteeing the best interest of the child. The main challenge of the coordination is how to make the FTR system work. Thus, adequate consideration must be given to finding pragmatic solutions to practical problems and attending to 'what must be done'. Additional practical elaboration of factors concerning the coordination of FTR is included in the 'FTR Coordination checklist'.



Schol, 10, was reunited with his uncle as primary caregiver in September 2017 with the support of national Family Tracing and Reunification partners.

FTR COORDINATION CHECKLIST

Setting up FTR coordination

- Mobilize key players in child protection to join the Inter-Agency UASC working group.
- Conduct Inter-Agency community assessment for FTR needs i.e. IRNA.
- Set up the Inter-Agency coordination and support mechanisms for FTR activities.
- Adequate and stable funding for FTR coordination and partner activities to be raised. i.e. stable funding by UNICEF remains a key pillar for FTR success in South Sudan.
- Actively involve funding partners in designing national UASC working group.
- Develop Standard Operating Procedures and Information Management Systems for FTR.
- Operationalise FTR systems.

FTR coordination dynamics and partners' support

- In South Sudan, UNICEF provides funding and material support (i.e. computers for CP IMS) to all partners while Save the Children provides technical support and training.
- Remain practical and focus on what must be done to make FTR work i.e. based on the experience in South Sudan, in critical emergencies:
 - Arrange for lost children reporting and collection points during critical emergencies.
 - Arrange volunteers or other individuals to stay with the children while awaiting collection by parents or relatives.
 - Ensure information on registration is adequate enough to help tracing.
 - Agree on the timeframe to start family tracing.
- Provide practical on the job training and support to partners, i.e. newly recruited:
 - Turn practical challenges of the partners into opportunities for skills development and capacity building i.e. active learning.
 - Provide coaching and mentorship and give consistent feedback to caseworkers.
- Build trust amongst the partners and provide daily trouble shooting and problem solving. i.e. on the spot solution to practical problems.
- Ensure periodic specialised support to partners. i.e. seek funds to engage specialised interns.
- Ensure there are enough caseworkers on the ground to accomplish the work:
 - Partners balance caseloads with their caseworker's capacities i.e. ratio of 1:25.
 - Every child is seen at least once every two months by a caseworker.

FTR operating standards

- Communication strategy for the media i.e. 'press release' i.e. managing media relations.
- Reporting and data gathering templates for FTR i.e. FTR forms.
- Logical flow of the data gathering templates i.e. FTR forms.
- Review and update the FTR data gathering templates constantly.
- Reporting schedules and clear contents for Inter-Agency partners.
- Meeting schedules and specific roles of the members.
- Annual or biannual FTR review schedules and role of each member.

Information is shared between members must be on the need-to-know basis and all members must strive to protect the child against any harm and ensure the best interest of the child.

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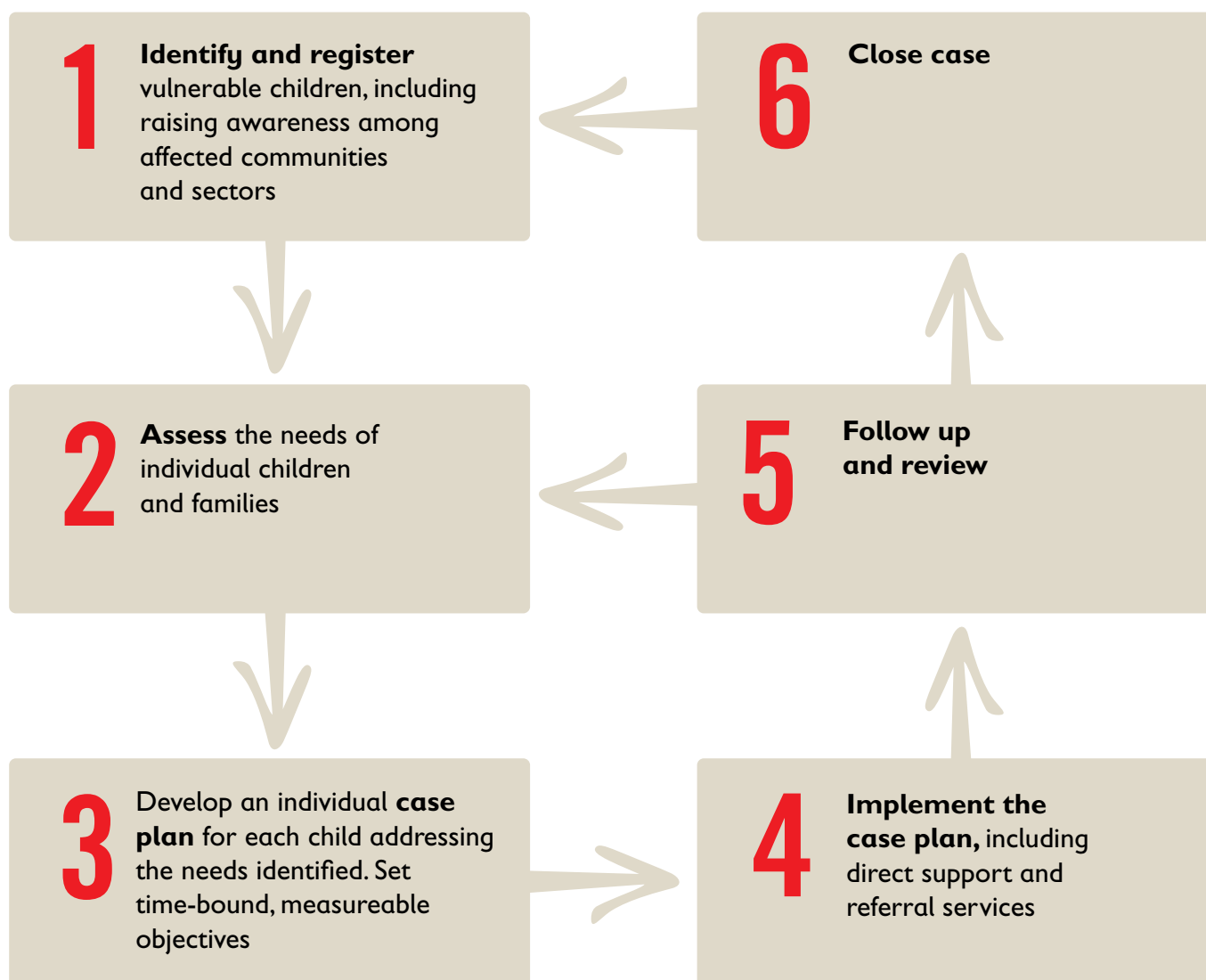
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Samuel Mwangi, Emergency Child Protection Manager, holds a team meeting with his field staff, in Save the Children's compound in Awerial IDP camp, South Sudan.

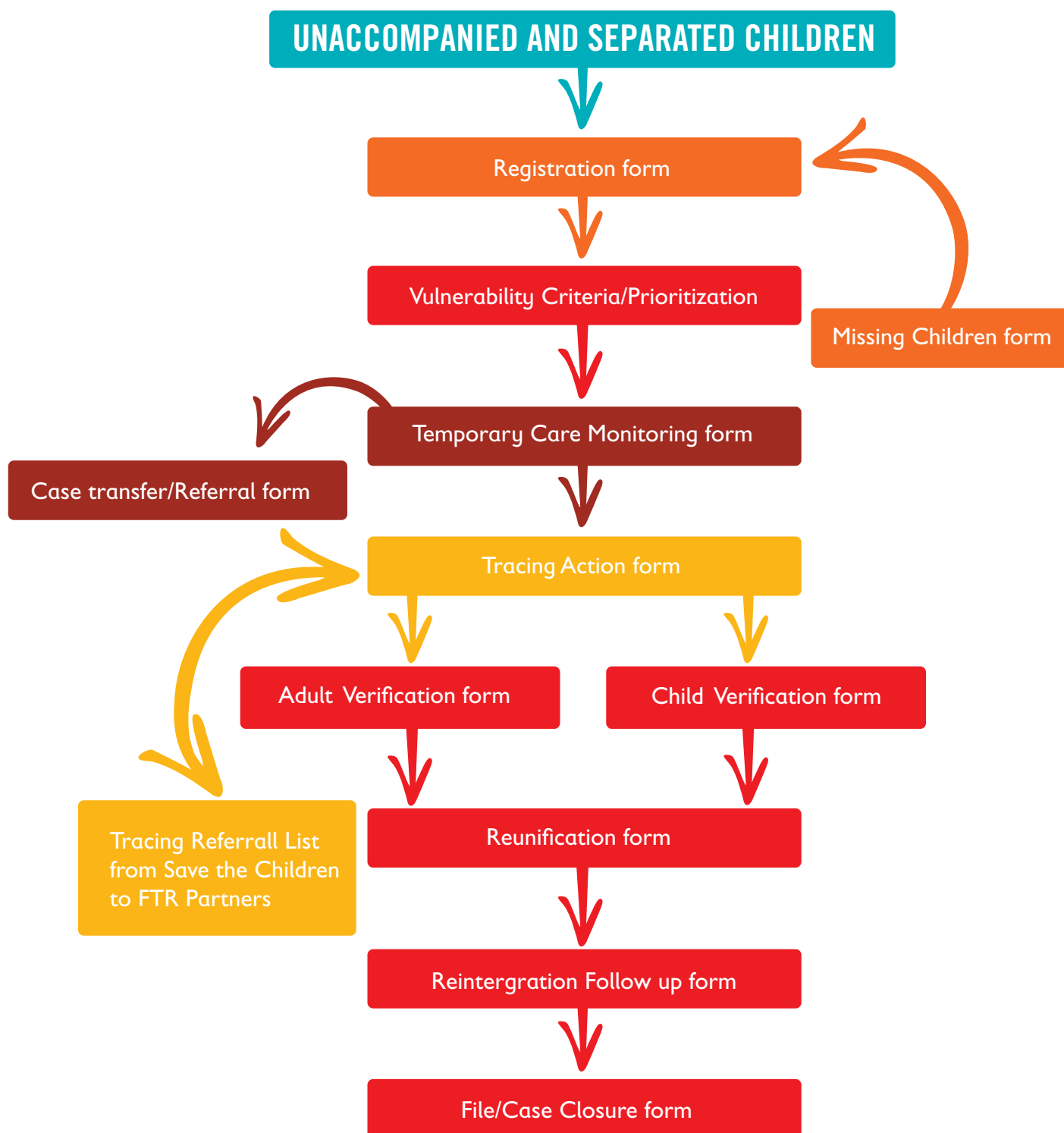
5. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Case management process¹²



¹² Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection: The role of case management in the protection of children: A guide for policy and programme managers and case workers.

Annex II: Case management flowchart¹³



¹³ Martin Odhiambo, FTR Specialist, Save the Children South Sudan, 2015

A PRACTICE HANDBOOK **FOR FAMILY TRACING AND** **REUNIFICATION IN EMERGENCIES**



Save the Children

South Sudan experience

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