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## *Measuring Separation in Emergencies*

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### **Rationale**

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The separation of children from their families is one of the most dramatic impacts that humanitarian crises have on individuals' lives world-wide. UNICEF notes that: "Every emergency, whether a rapid onset natural disaster or armed conflict, often leads to the separation of children from their families and caregivers in the commotion of survival and flight."

Such separation may occur accidentally as a consequence of the emergency, such as during sudden displacement, or deliberately when adults are forced to make difficult decisions about what they feel is in the best interests of their family. Separation can also occur by force, such as when abduction, trafficking or forced recruitment takes place. In addition, the action of humanitarian organizations can themselves unintentionally result in separation, for example during medical evacuations. Secondary separation, from an interim caregiver, can also occur when caregivers' capacity to cope is eroded over time.

The global humanitarian community lacks robust tools to measure the scale and nature of family separation in emergencies. Such tools are urgently required for more targeted fundraising, effective advocacy and programming to meet this critical and global child protection concern.

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### **Project Overview**

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The *Measuring Separation in Emergencies* (MSiE) project is funded by the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). It is implemented by Save the Children and Columbia University in association with other key academic partners including Johns Hopkins University. It is steered by members of the Inter Agency Working Group on Unaccompanied and Separated Children (IAWG UASC) and the Assessment and Measurement Task Force (A&MTF) of the Global Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) who form a project-specific Advisory Panel.

The MSiE project aims to strengthen emergency response programming for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) through the development of practical, field-tested tools to enhance the assessment of the scale and nature of separation in emergencies. Ultimately, this improved capacity to measure the separation of children will enable more successful fundraising, timely evidence-based advocacy, and better informed program design and implementation of prevention of separation, interim care, and family tracing and reunification activity linked to child protection systems. The development of such measurement tools is a significant undertaking. Assessing the scale and scope of separation in an emergency is widely considered 'hard to measure' and there are many challenges involved. In addition, the methodologies employed by the tools developed have not been applied to the measurement of family separation before.

Over the past 18-month period, informed by desk research and consultation, Save the Children and its academic partners have worked with the members of the Advisory Panel on the development of three innovative tools addressing identified gaps in the effective measurement of separation in emergencies:

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## Measurement Tools

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During Phase 1 of the MSiE Project, three tools have been considered and developed:

- **Desk Research and Projection Tool:** This tool aims to use existing population data from a given location, combined with empirically-based data from comparable emergencies, to generate a model of 'risk profiles' of separation, characteristic of certain emergency types and phases and to test/validate those projections against actual data in existing or evolving emergencies.
- **Population-Based Estimation Tool:** This tool aims to provide a population-based estimation of the prevalence and basic characteristics of unaccompanied and separated children in a defined area, affected by the same emergency, at any given point and time.
- **Community-Based Surveillance Tool:** This tool is part of the development of a system capable of continuous, on-going measurement of trends, and basic characteristics of unaccompanied and separated children through the engagement of community focal points in defined areas over time.

The Population-Based Estimation and Community-Based Surveillance tools were recently piloted in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Population-based Estimation Tool was found to be effective in measuring numbers and characteristics of UASC, with some important lessons learned for future piloting. Piloting of the Community-based surveillance Tool suggested that the approach can work effectively in a complex setting, though a longer pilot is warranted. The NGO partner reported numerous additional benefits of this method for case identification of UASC, compared with their existing time and location-limited mechanisms.

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## Next steps

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Phase Two of the MSiE Project will start in June 2015 and continue for a further 18 months. During this time, next steps for the development of a projection tool will be explored and a further tool will be developed to measure separation of children in to residential care. The residential tool and population-based estimation tool will be piloted in a rapid onset scenario, and the community-based surveillance tool will be piloted for an extended period in a protracted setting. Tools and findings will be presented at the CPWG Annual Meetings and a High Level Workshop will be held to review learning from the process and consider how this can be applied to other hard to measure issues.

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## Contacts

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