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MEASURING SEPARATION IN EMERGENCIES

Pilot Summary Report
Democratic Republic of Congo

Community-Based Surveillance Method

August – October 2014

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The work reported on here was coordinated and project managed by Save the Children, with Columbia University the intellectual and methodological lead on field testing the community-based surveillance method. The pilot was conducted in collaboration with Save the Children in the DRC as well as with its partner organisation PAMI (Programme d'Appui à la Lutte Contre la Misère) and supported by the Child Protection Sub Cluster for North Kivu.

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Summary

Families are the basic protective unit for children in society, and, in almost all cases, provide the best environment for meeting a child's developmental needs. An unaccompanied[1] or separated[2] child is therefore very vulnerable and at greater risk of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect. Identifying protective and supportive interim care for a child and carrying out family tracing and reunification activities to get them back to their family as quickly as possible are two of the most significant protective interventions that humanitarian actors can make in an emergency.

The Measuring Separation in Emergencies (MSiE) project is an interagency initiative funded by the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and is coordinated by Save the Children in partnership with Columbia University and Johns Hopkins University. Additionally, it is steered by a multi-agency Advisory Panel including 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). The overall aim of the MSiE project is to strengthen emergency response programmes 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.

Based on extensive desk research and consultation, three methods for measuring separation in emergencies are currently being explored:

1. **Projection method:** This method aims to use existing population data from a given location, combined with empirical data from comparable emergencies, to generate models of UASC risk profiles characteristic of certain emergency types and phases and to test/validate those projections against actual data in existing or evolving emergencies.

2. **Population-based estimation method:** This method aims to provide a population-based estimation of the prevalence, number and basic characteristics of UASC in a defined area, affected by the same emergency, at any given point in time.

3. **Community-based surveillance method:** This method incorporates a community-based surveillance system capable of continuous, ongoing measurement of trends in the frequency and basic characteristics of UASC in defined areas over time.

[1] **Unaccompanied children** (also referred to as unaccompanied minors) are children, as per the definition in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 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.

[2] **Separated children** are children, as per the definition in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), who have been 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.

This pilot summary document reports on the field testing of the community-based surveillance method in North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The surveillance method was used to monitor new cases of separation in 'real time' across ten village sites in the territory of Nyiragongo. The pilot ran for an 11-week period from August to October 2014.

Data for this pilot was collected by 31 Community Focal Points using a mobile phone-based surveillance system. On identification of a new case of separation, a Focal Point sent a text message containing a 'string' of numeric codes to a central programme phone held by a Coordinator. The numerical codes represented basic information on the specific child (age, gender) and the nature of the separation (cause, separated/unaccompanied, current caretaker, etc). Text messages were verified by the Coordinator through contacting Focal Points in the field and also automatically transmitted from the central programme phone to a web-based inbox, which compiled the data. Field verification visits by the Coordinator ensured the quality and consistency of data collection and motivation on the part of the Focal Points.

Over the 11 weeks of the pilot, 62 verified new cases of separation were reported by the Community Focal Points across the ten village sites. With the exception of Week 8 (29 September to 5 October), the numbers of separated children reported were roughly evenly distributed over the period. Most cases of UASC identified were between 5–14 years of age, although some were younger and some older. The majority had been under the care of their parents prior to separation.One of the most striking findings from the data was the high number of unaccompanied children. More than half the reported cases were said to be unaccompanied. In terms of the circumstances surrounding separation, twice as many cases were considered as unintentional separation compared to intentional separation. The death or disappearance of parents or family members was by far the most common reason for separation.

In this pilot, FTR (family tracing and reunification) programming was undertaken by our partner organisation PAMI (Programme d'Appui à la Lutte Contre la Misère) based on the information received about new cases of UASC from the pilot. Further verification of cases in the field by PAMI thus enabled calculation of the 'sensitivity' of the method – the percentage of cases identified which were verified to be UASC. Out of 62 cases, 56 were confirmed by the FTR field agents, yielding a sensitivity of 90.3%.

The pilot in North Kivu has demonstrated that the community-based surveillance method works in practice – able to provide continuous, real-time information about trends and basic characteristics of UASC in a protracted emergency setting. The majority of Community Focal Points and community members gave positive feedback on the system, noting its importance in finding and supporting UASC in their communities. Additionally, the implementing organisation, PAMI, found the system more efficient and effective in identifying UASC than approaches previously used.

Lessons learned as a result of piloting the surveillance method in North Kivu, with implications for further field testing and development, include: (1) the need to establish the surveillance system over a longer period to better understand how it performs over time; (2) the importance of fostering motivation in Focal Points and providing adequate technical support; and (3) the need to further explore and monitor response mechanisms linked to community surveillance, ie, how newly identified cases of UASC are responded to.

Background

The humanitarian community has significant experience and expertise in working with unaccompanied and separated children. However, the lack of robust data available on UASC in emergencies makes it extremely difficult to:

- generate adequate and timely funding
- design and implement the most appropriate programmes
- strengthen relevant child protection systems and influence national/international policies and laws relating to separation.

Current tools, while meeting general rapid assessment needs, fall short of providing enough nuanced and representative data to be able to reliably say how many children are unaccompanied or separated in an emergency, or to have confidence that we understand the full picture in terms of the causes of separation, the needs of separated children and the changing situation of separation over time.

Save the Children, along with Columbia University, Johns Hopkins University and members of an interagency Advisory Panel drawn from the IAWG UASC and the A&MTF are partners working together on the more effective measurement of separation in emergencies. Together we aim to strengthen emergency response programming for UASC through the development of practical, methodologically sound methods that can be used in a majority of emergency contexts to generate robust measurement and assessment of the scale and nature of separation.

At the project outset, a set of four key questions (for all stages of an emergency) provided a broad framework for discussion on the required focus of these new measurement methods:

1. How many UASC are there?
2. Where are UASC now, where have they come from, where are they going?
3. What are the causes of separation, which children are most vulnerable to them and why?
4. What are the main support needs of UASC? What protection risks are they facing?

Informed by desk research and consultation with a range of stakeholders, technical child protection input from Advisory Panel members and guidance on appropriate methodologies from Columbia and Johns Hopkins Universities, consensus was gained at a 'Methodology Kick-Off Workshop' on the methodological approaches to be explored. Participants agreed that the priority would be to focus on the estimation of UASC, but that the more qualitative questions (for example, the causes of separation and the needs of UASC) would also be addressed where and to the extent feasible. Three methods are currently being explored:

1. ***Projection method:*** This method aims to use existing population data from a given location, combined with empirical data from comparable emergencies, to generate models of UASC risk profiles characteristic of certain emergency types and phases and to test/validate those projections against actual data in existing or evolving emergencies.

2. ***Population-based estimation method:*** This method aims to provide a population-based estimation of the prevalence, number and basic characteristics of UASC in a defined area, affected by the same emergency, at any given point in time.

3. ***Community-based surveillance method:*** This method incorporates a community-based surveillance system capable of continuous, ongoing measurement of trends in the frequency and basic characteristics of UASC in defined areas over time.

This summary report focuses on the community-based estimation method, developed by Columbia University, and the field testing of this method in North Kivu in the DRC over an 11-week period from August to October 2014. The pilot was hosted by Save the Children, based in Goma, and supported by local partner organisation PAMI (Programme d'Appui à la Lutte Contre la Misère) and the Child Protection Sub Cluster for North Kivu. FTR agents working with PAMI followed up new cases of UASC identified through the surveillance and connected them to their families as well as to appropriate interim services and support.

Pilot context

The Democratic Republic of Congo's five-year war officially ended on 29 June 2003, but fighting continues in the east, terrorising the civilian population. Since April 2009, the Congolese army, supported by MONUSCO, has been carrying out offensives against armed groups in North Kivu, including the newly emerged opposition movement, M23. Such conflict has caused and continues to cause significant and frequent internal displacement in North Kivu, with family separation an area of key humanitarian concern. Unaccompanied and separated children living without their primary caregivers and independently looking for ways to survive in Eastern DRC can, for example, become victims of child labour, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and abuse, or forced recruitment into armed groups.

Save the Children works directly through local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and with international partner organisations to address family separation in North Kivu. Programming includes family tracing and reunification (FTR) activity as well as awareness-raising and prevention of family separation. At strategic level, coordination takes place through the Child Protection Sub Cluster for North Kivu. The DRC therefore presents a very relevant context for piloting methods to more effectively measure separation in emergencies.

The pilot for the community-based surveillance method took place across ten village sites in Nyiragongo territory. Separation was measured in real time for an 11-week period from August to October 2014.

Figure 1: North Kivu in the DRC

Design and methods

This objective of this surveillance method is to establish a **community-based surveillance system** capable of continuous, ongoing measurement of the trends in the frequency and basic characteristics of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in defined areas over time.

Surveillance systems can be created to monitor issues that need urgent attention or can be used to monitor long-term trends. They tend to provide more 'real-time' information, which is important in situations of rapid change in order to be able to respond quickly. Continuous data collection is helpful when the ability to trend data and/or detect changes in occurrence or distribution is desired.

Community-based surveillance usually relies on **Community Focal Points** to provide regular reports about the situation where they live. The rationale is that community members will be privy to insider knowledge about the people who live close to them and, with proper organisation, training and incentives, this knowledge can be routinely gathered and centralised to get a picture of a given issue.

Although the **Child Protection Rapid Assessment (CPRA)** Toolkit, endorsed by the Global CPWG for use in all emergencies, gathers data on family separation, this data represents a 'snapshot' or single point in time and thus fails to adequately capture the dynamism of trends in family separation. In addition, while cases of UASC are registered by responding agencies and a database of cases is compiled using the **Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS)**, there is no mechanism for monitoring separation outside of existing programmatic areas, caseload or areas of operation. The community-based surveillance method aims to address these gaps in the effective measurement of separation in emergencies. It is complementary to existing assessment and measurement tools.

The 'profile' of data on UASC to be collected by the community-based surveillance method includes the trends and patterns in relation to:

- numbers of UASC
- age (exact or approximate)
- gender
- arrival or departure
- separated or unaccompanied
- reason(s) for the separation
- current caretaker(s).

New cases of unaccompanied and separated children are recorded by the surveillance method through collecting data on two distinct populations of children: arrivals and departures. **Arrivals** are defined as separated or unaccompanied children who started living in a household in the surveillance area at any point after the beginning of the pilot. **Departures** are defined as children who left a household in the surveillance area at any point after the beginning of the pilot. Departures could therefore also include children living outside of households (for example, moving to a residential care facility, or living on the street or with an armed group).

A surveillance system using Community Focal Points was implemented in ten villages in Nyiragongo to field test the measurement of separation over time using the surveillance method. In each village, three Focal Points were chosen, one from each of the following three groups: village chiefs, representatives of youth or women's groups, and members of the community. At least one Community Focal Point from each site had to be female.

The village chief was always asked to participate as a Focal Point, respecting the central role of the chief in the community as well as his knowledge about movement into and out of the village. The other two Focal Points were elected by community members. Once identified, each Focal Point was responsible for reporting on separation within a defined geographic area of approximately 100–150 houses in their community. All Focal Points received in-depth training on UASC case definitions and reporting procedures, as well as hands-on practice through case scenarios to ensure competency.

A data collection system was established for the surveillance using mobile phone technology. Mobile phone and web-based technologies are increasingly being used to cheaply collect real-time surveillance data on a range of topics, including military attacks in emergencies, violence against women and children, and broken water-points in rural communities.[3] Such systems generally work by having people send text messages about incidents of interest to a centralised source.

In this pilot, Focal Points engaged in the pilot were provided with mobile phones and weekly phone credit to facilitate the reporting process. When a Focal Point learned about a new case of separation in their reporting zone, s/he would text a series of numeric codes to a central programme phone.

[3] Van der Windt P, Humphreys M. Crowdseeding in Eastern Congo Using Cell Phones to Collect Conflict Events Data in Real Time. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2014:0022002714553104.
Hyman P. 'Peace technologies' enable eyewitness reporting when disasters strike. *Communications of the ACM* 2014;57(1):27-9.
Moestue H, Muggah R. Digitally Enhanced Child Protection: How new technology can prevent violence against children in the Global South. November 2014. http://igarape.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Artigo-estrategico-10-Child-Protection-4.pdf. (Accessed 13 Jan. 2015).
Kumpel E, Sridharan A, Kote T, et al. NextDrop: Using Human Observations to Track Water Distribution. *USENIX NSDR '12*. Boston, MA, 2012.

This six-component code provided the following information for each child:

- age (exact or approximate)
- gender
- whether the child arrived in the community or departed from the community
- whether the child is separated or unaccompanied
- reason(s) for the separation, and
- current caretaker(s).

Focal Points were required to submit a distinct 'string' of codes for each individual separated child, even if multiple children were separated by the same incident or lived with/came from the same caretaker. If Focal Points did not encounter any cases of separation in a given week, they were required to text '0000' so that their continued engagement could be assured. If Focal Points had a problem and needed to talk to someone from the research team, they were instructed to text '9999' at any time. The Project Coordinator based at PAMI would respond to texts and help coordinate verification of reported cases.

All text messages were sent to a central smartphone that was connected to Frontline SMS, a free, open-source software that enables automatic transmission of the coded text messages to a special web-based inbox. This set-up allowed project and research staff to retrieve and monitor reports from villages remotely. Every time a case report was received via the Frontline SMS system, the Project Coordinator made a phone call to the Focal Point that submitted the report. The purpose of the call was to verify that the case was valid (for example, that it was a new case of separation, that it occurred within the Focal Point's defined monitoring zone, and that the codes were entered correctly). If any inconsistencies were identified, errors were logged and Focal Points were required to send corrected reports.

The Project Coordinator visited all villages several weeks into the project to learn about the experiences of the Focal Points and to verify a sample of cases and examine any data discrepancies, especially between reports from Focal Points in the same village. During these supervision visits, the Project Coordinator met with each Focal Point individually to complete a standardised assessment form; s/he also convened a collective discussion with all the Focal Points from a given village. Where possible, feedback received during these meetings was used to improve and strengthen the surveillance reporting process. At the close of the project, there was a collective evaluation meeting of all Focal Points from all villages.

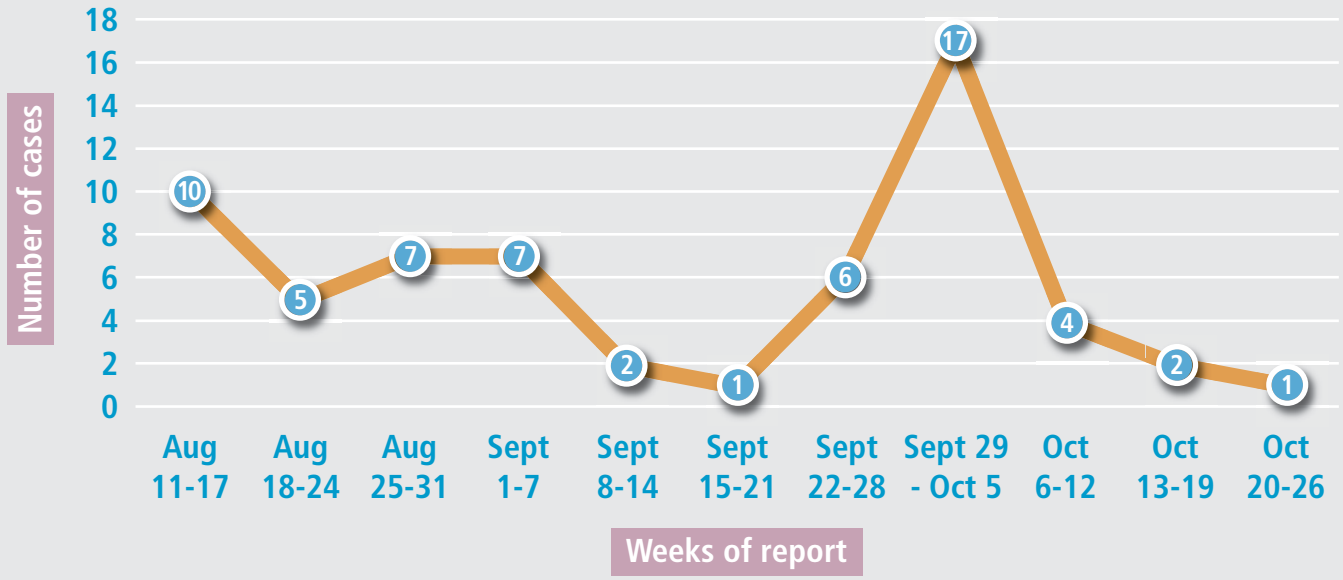
A Coordinator was employed for the 11-week period, based at PAMI, to receive and verify text messages, link with and report to researchers and provide centralised support to Focal Points. PAMI field agents followed up each reported case of a separated child, reunifying them with their families and caregivers where possible and/or connecting them to services such as interim care.

Findings

Over the 11 weeks that the pilot ran, 62 unique new cases of separation were reported and verified. In other words, across the ten communities an average of 5.6 new separations were reported each week, with a range of one to 17 cases per week. With the exception of Week 8 (29 September to 5 October), the numbers of separated children reported were roughly evenly distributed over the pilot period. The spike in cases during Week 8 was likely the result of a temporary increase in Focal Point motivation after a 'refresher' training session and probably does not reflect a real increase in the number of separations (see Figure 2).

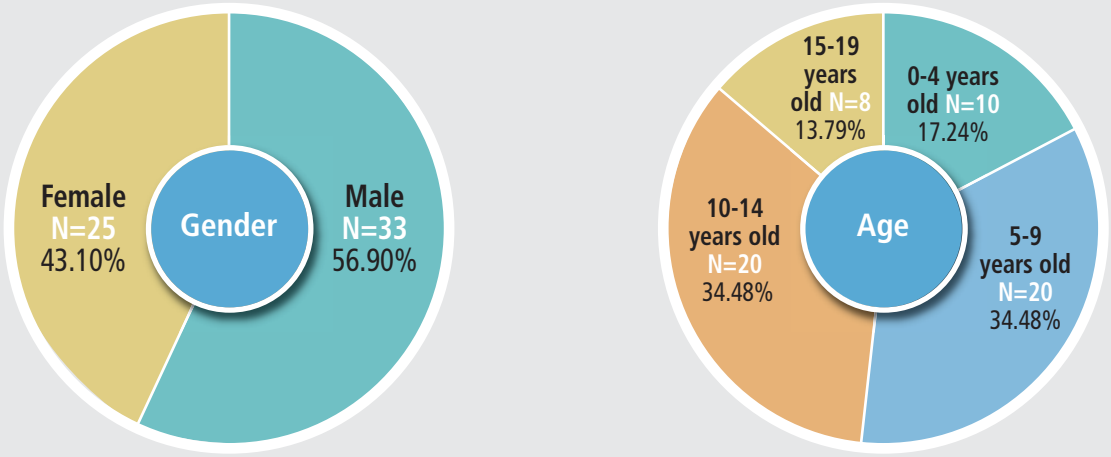
The basic characteristics of the separated, arriving children are presented in Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 below.[4] Because there were only four reported cases of separated, departing children, we restricted the descriptive analysis to arrivals.

Figure 2: Number of verified case reports by week (all cases)



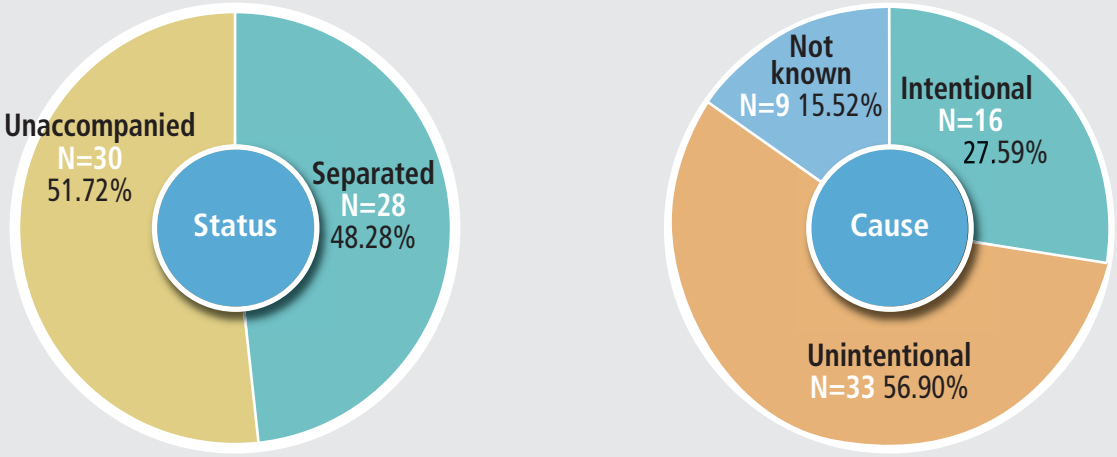
[4] Please note: percentages are provided in figures to two decimal places for clarity but, as a result, will not always total here to 100%.

Figure 3: Age and sex of separated children



From Figure 3, it can be seen that the reported cases of arrivals at the ten sites consist of a slightly larger number of male children, compared to female children. Most children were between 5 and 14 years of age, although some younger and some older children were identified. The majority of children had been under the care of their parents prior to separation.

Figure 4: Separation status and cause of separation



One of the most striking findings from the data is the high number of unaccompanied children. More than half the reported cases were unaccompanied.

At the time of reporting, more than 40% of the arrivals (n=25) were under the care of someone with whom they had no family relationship and another 10% did not have an adult caregiver at all, but instead lived with other children (n=6). Grandparents were also caring for a sizable proportion of the children (n=14, 24.14%), with a few children under the care of aunts or uncles (n=5, 8.62%), adult siblings (n=3, 5.17%) or other family members (n=1, 1.72%).

Figure 5: Former and current caretakers of separated children

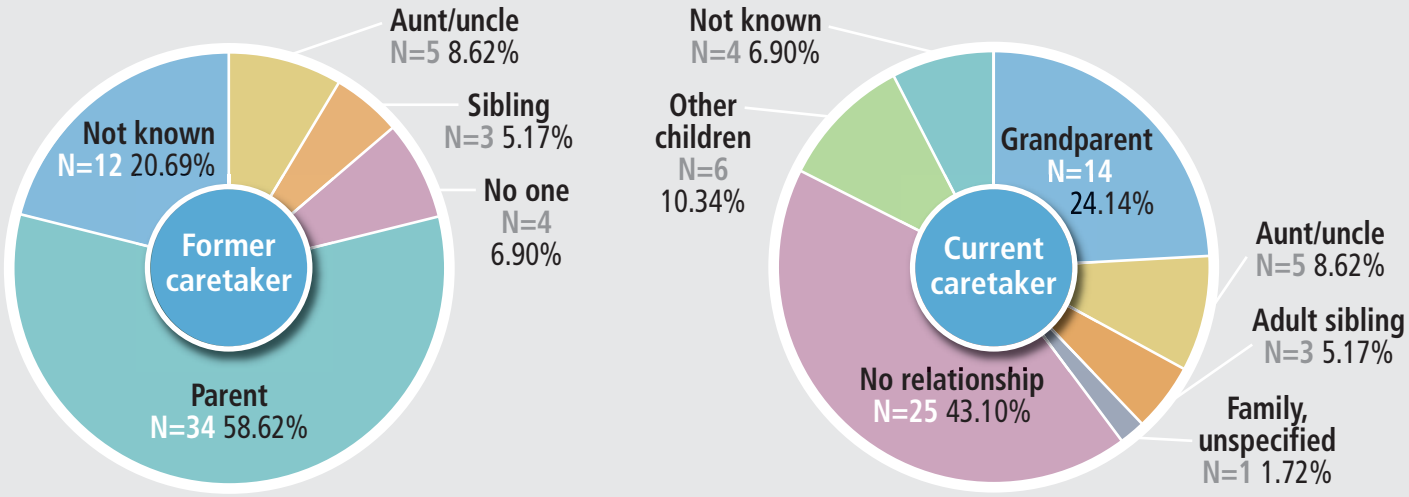
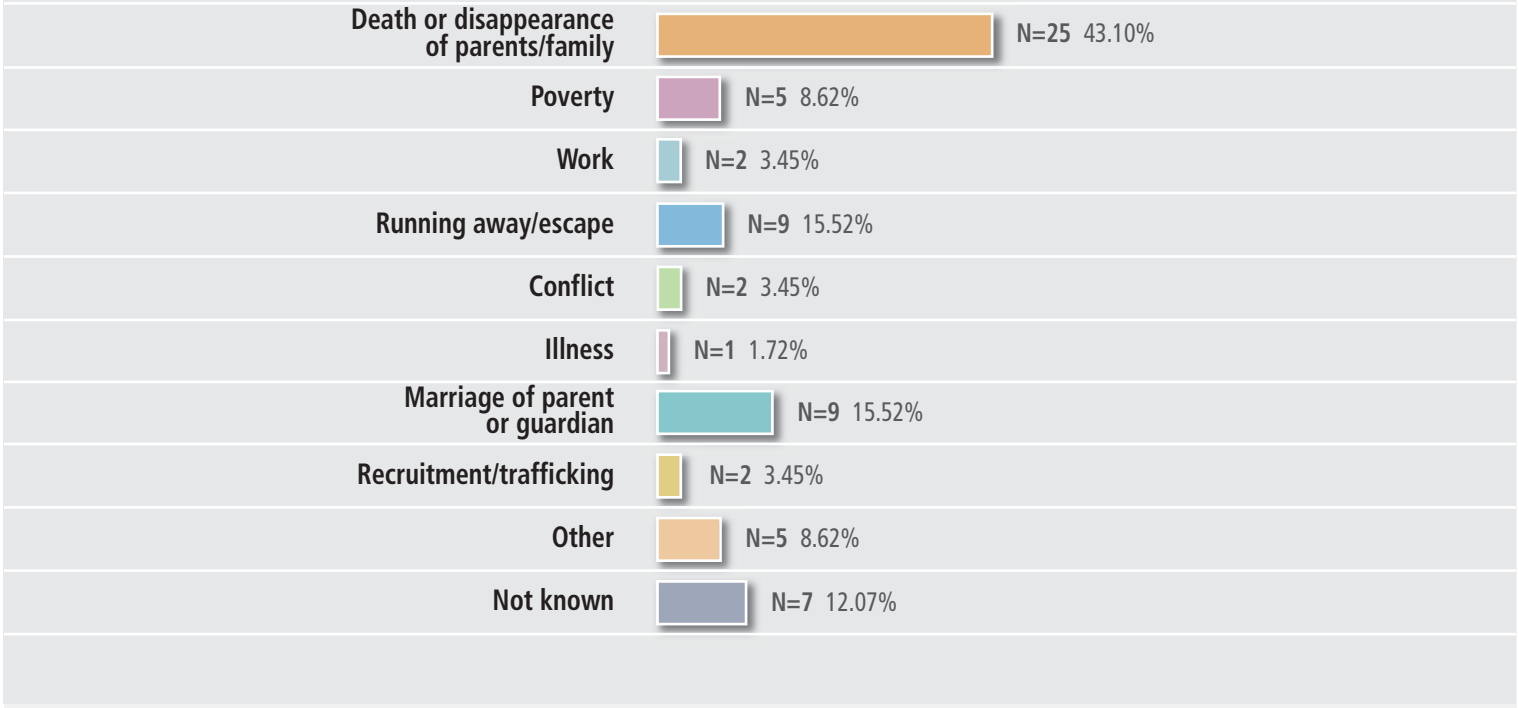


Figure 6: Reasons for separation

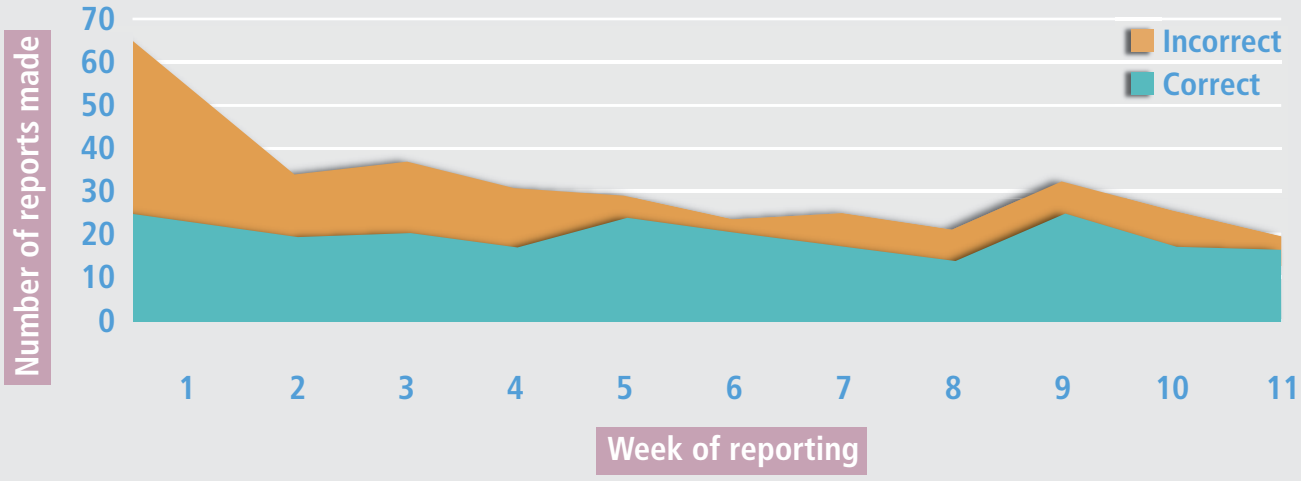


Interestingly, some of these findings from the community surveillance system are markedly different than the findings from the population-based survey conducted in these same communities, particularly with regard to the high proportion of unaccompanied children, children under the care of non-family members, and children living with no adult guardian.[5] It is possible that the surveillance system picked up on a real rise in unaccompanied children that occurred after the household survey had been carried out, but it is more likely that this finding reflects differences in the nature of the two approaches and methods. For example, the surveillance system might be especially likely to detect cases where children are living with non-traditional caregivers, whereas the household survey may be better at detecting cases of separated children who are not unaccompanied. Further research is needed to explore the magnitude of the biases in each method (eg, does the community surveillance system underrepresent separated children who are not unaccompanied?). This information could inform ideas about how practitioners and policy makers can best use the different sources of data in tandem.

Surveillance system performance

An important part of the pilot was to measure the 'success' of the surveillance system, its feasibility and ability to identify 'true' cases of UASC. Of the 31 Focal Points, 18 (58%) made a correct report to the central project phone each week. Correct reports included case reports, reports of no new cases (0000), and requests for follow-up calls. All 62 verified new cases of separation were reported from these 18 Focal Points. By the fifth week of the project, most messages received adhered to protocol (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Number of SMS messages received, by week (all messages)



[5] See *Pilot Summary Report DRC Population-Based Estimation July-August 2014*, Save the Children and Columbia University.

The probability of correct and consistent reporting was highest among those Focal Points who were elected by their communities, compared to Focal Points who were chiefs or representatives of youth or women's groups (RR=2.18, 95% CI: 1.17-4.06). The probability of correct and consistent reporting was also slightly higher for male Focal Points, compared to female Focal Points, regardless of mechanism of selection, but this result was not statistically significant (RR=1.22, 95% CI: 0.57-2.62).

Focal Points learned about new cases through a variety of mechanisms, although the most commonly reported were active visits to community members' households, observation, casual conversations and reports from neighbours. Some Focal Points also obtained information by asking children questions, making announcements at church, enlisting additional volunteers, attending village security meetings, and exchanging information with authority figures. The amount of time devoted to information gathering and reporting varied substantially among Focal Points, from two to 42 hours a week (self-reported).

We were also able to assess the 'sensitivity' of the community-based surveillance method, ie, the degree to which cases identified by the method were in fact 'true' cases of UASC, using the data from PAMI's programmatic follow-up. For each new case of separation that was reported, an IDTR (Identification, Tracing and Reunification) field agent was assigned to collect further information and begin the process of improving the child's current care situation, locating the child's family, or finding a temporary care arrangement. Sensitivity was calculated as the percentage of cases identified by text messages and verified by the Project Coordinator that were subsequently confirmed by the IDTR agents. Out of 62 cases verified by the Project Coordinator, 56 were also confirmed by the IDTR field agents, yielding a sensitivity of 90.3%.

Because the system may not always have a devoted Project Coordinator to follow up each report, we also looked at the sensitivity of the system without this role. The system received a total of 114 coded reports of separation (only 62 were verified by the Project Coordinator). If sensitivity is calculated from the total number of coded reports sent to the system, prior to verification and classification by the Project Coordinator, sensitivity drops to 49.1%. Most reports that were excluded by the Project Coordinator were children who either were not separated or unaccompanied by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee definitions, or had been separated from their caregivers prior to the timeline of the project. Additionally, some children who travelled to other cities to visit family members were mistaken as separated children until the Project Coordinator asked the Focal Point to more thoroughly probe the situation. There were also a few duplicate case reports that the Project Coordinator identified and excluded manually.

All but two of the 31 Focal Points participated in an evaluation at the end of the project, including an assessment of their satisfaction with the role of Focal Point. On average, Focal Points rated their roles as moderately difficult (5.4 on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the most difficult). Ten of the 29 Focal Points said they had some security concerns related to their roles, primarily because the community was jealous of their perceived financial benefits. Around half of all Focal Points who participated in the evaluation were very happy with their roles and thought their communities appreciated them.

Learning and implications

The pilot in North Kivu has demonstrated that the community-based surveillance method works in practice. It can enable us to set up a surveillance system that provides continuous, real-time information about trends and basic characteristics of UASC in a protracted emergency setting. The majority of Community Focal Points and community members gave positive feedback about the system, noting its importance in finding and supporting UASC in their communities. Additionally, the implementing organisation, PAMI, found the system more efficient and effective in identifying UASC than approaches previously used (for example, community members reporting at certain times and locations to PAMI staff members at 'listening posts').

An important strength of the system was its relative low cost: once established, the operating costs were limited to those associated with site visits, reimbursement to Focal Points for text messages, and the salary of a Project Coordinator. In addition, the ability to establish and run this programme in North Kivu – where there is unreliable mobile phone reception in many villages and frequent interruptions in service – proves that a mobile phone-based reporting system is possible even in a difficult environment. In their project evaluations, none of the Focal Points reported having any difficulty sending or receiving text messages or mentioned the mobile phone network as a challenge to their reporting.

Some areas of learning can be identified from field testing the community-based surveillance method in North Kivu, with implications for further method development and piloting. Each area of learning is outlined below, along with recommendations for future piloting.

1. Reporting criteria and surveillance period

Despite training being given to all Community Focal Points, there was a lack of clarity surrounding the inclusion criteria for reporting new cases of separation, particularly with regard to the timing of separation and to children separated through a departure. During the first week of data collection, all reports referred to separations that had occurred before the pilot project began, and so had to be removed from analysis. Focal Points only started to include 'departures' alongside 'arrivals' in their reporting several weeks into the surveillance period. There was not sufficient time in the pilot for reporting systems and criteria to be sufficiently embedded so that trends in separation could be monitored over an extensive period of time.

Recommendation: The surveillance system should be established over a longer period (6-9 months) to better understand how the system performs over time. This could mean piloting in a rapid onset emergency followed by prolonged period of secondary separation or piloting in another protracted emergency context.

2. Motivation of Focal Points

The lack of motivation among some of the Community Focal Points was a challenge, with uneven participation and some reporting of 'no cases' as a strategy to receive a weekly allowance with minimal effort. This problem was directly addressed at the refresher training and case reports increased dramatically afterwards. Still, the spike in case reports in the week immediately following the refresher training was fleeting and in the next week, the number of reported cases dropped back down to pre-training levels. Furthermore, participation always remained uneven, with some Focal Points participating much more strongly than others. Those characteristics that were predictive of strong participation (ie, elected representatives) might help ensure more consistent participation from Focal Points in future pilots.

3. Surveillance technology

There were some minor technological limitations during the surveillance pilot. Four phones did not work correctly and/or had battery faults, two phones were stolen, and one female Focal Point had her phone confiscated by her husband. Mobile phone charging costs were also a burden to Focal Points, although this was resolved by providing a solar-powered charging strip to each village towards the end of the project as recognition for their participation.

Recommendation: Ensure that Focal Points are able to charge phones and report without any additional cost or challenge.

4. Sensitivity and specificity

The 'specificity' (probability that children who are not identified by the system are not separated) of the surveillance method and its 'sensitivity' (probability that children who are identified by the system are true cases) need to be tested during the next pilot (eg, via a parallel household census in a selected area). To justify investment in the surveillance method, the sensitivity and specificity of community surveillance need to be compared with the sensitivity and specificity of other methods for measuring separation.

5. Connection to FTR

A further strength of the surveillance system in this pilot was its direct link to FTR activity. Participating communities saw tangible results related to the data collection and felt the system served a purpose beyond research. Focal Points valued their own role in facilitating reunifications and service provision that benefited children and families in their communities. In an environment such as North Kivu where scepticism towards NGO work can be a serious barrier to data collection, these advantages should not be underestimated.

It is important to note, however, that the surveillance system did not originally intend to include FTR links. The link to FTR changes the role of surveillance from a measurement activity to a case-finding and response mechanism. While this change in direction might merit replication, it also requires additional resources in terms of finance and trained staff, which may not be feasible in other settings. Most importantly, the parameters of the surveillance system should be made explicit at the project's onset so that community expectations are not inflated.

Recommendation: Response mechanisms linked to community-based surveillance need to be explored, monitored and tested (eg, community-based or more formal mechanisms, focal points, child helplines) as part of the next pilot, including referral mechanisms and what constitutes a 'spike' in the data received or a trigger for response.

Beni
Beni
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Lubero
Kayna
Kanyabayonga
Walikale
Rutshuru
Masisi
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