





## *Broken Links: Psychosocial support for people separated from family members (A field guide)*

- Was developed to support staff and volunteers

Focuses on:

- the causes and consequences of being separated from family members
- the psychosocial impacts of separation
- how staff and volunteers can support
- self-care for staff and volunteers



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When a family member or loved one has gone missing, the resulting uncertainty is one of the most difficult conditions to cope with.



## Causes of separation

- Migration
- Disasters – natural or man-made
- Pandemics and epidemics
- Armed conflict and other situations of violence
- Imprisonment and detention
- The death of a parent or close relative
- Seeking refuge
- Human trafficking.



## Causes of separation



Whether as soldiers or civilians, men are more likely to go missing than women. As the man is often the family's main provider, his disappearance can leave dependents financially destitute. Families' needs will differ depending on their education, economic situation and other circumstances. However, most families will agree on their priorities: they want an answer regarding the fate of the missing, and they need economic support in the absence of a breadwinner. Some families also mention justice as a priority.

ICRC, THE NEED TO KNOW: RESTORING FAMILY LINKS TO DISPERSED FAMILY MEMBERS, 2010 (P. 6).



"You can hide in the shelter to escape artillery shells, but how can you avoid suffering when you have no idea what has happened to your son?"

**Mirvat, 65, Lebanon**

ICRC, THE NEED TO KNOW:  
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS TO  
DISPERSED FAMILY MEMBERS,  
2010 (P. 2).

## What is RFL?

Restoring Family Links (RFL) is the process of reuniting families with lost loved ones. It involves:

- Searching for lost family members
- Restoring contact
- reuniting families
- seeking to clarify the fate of those who remain missing.



## The psychosocial impact of being separated from family members

- Experiencing loss
  - Hope and despair
- External factors
  - Cultural background
  - Religious beliefs
- Psychological factors
  - Reactions to loss
  - grief



## Supporting people who have been separated

- Basic helping skills
- The initial interview
- Delivering news
- On-going support and referrals
- Reunification.



## Self-care

National Societies can create conditions that foster resilience in individuals and teams by:

- encouraging reasonable working conditions through policies and strategies
- providing accessible guidance and support from managers and peers, and normalizing responses
- providing psycho-education regarding emotionally stressful work



## Self-care

- creating an organizational culture where people can talk openly and share problems while respecting the principle of confidentiality
- arranging regular meetings which bring all staff and/or volunteers together and foster a feeling of belonging to a team
- creating a work culture where getting together after a critical event is the norm, e.g. a peer support system.





## Broken Links

Psychosocial support for people  
separated from family members

A field guide

Download

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separated from family members  
(A field guide)*

&

A training module including a set of PowerPoint slides  
and trainer's notes from [www.pscentre.org](http://www.pscentre.org).