# Module 2.2 – Rapid Assessment of Family Separation

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| Rapid assessments of family separation – An overview | |
| **An ethical approach demands:** | * A commitment to follow up action, if required. * Refraining from taking action if the local community can cope by itself, unless the community’s action violates the basic rights of children. * Avoiding the creation of false expectations. * Avoiding methods that could stigmatise children, endanger them in any way or increase the incidence of family separation. |
| **Assessments should be conducted:** | * Ideally, by a team which includes members with experience and expertise in matters related to family separation in emergencies, including assessment methods. * Where possible, including team members with knowledge of the context; historical, social and political situation or at the least with team members who have been thoroughly briefed on pre-existing separation issues of the region. * With due regard to confidentiality of information ensuring all assessors understand the need for confidentiality and that systems are in place for safe transmission and storage of data and information collected and agreement has been reached on information sharing. * With the active participation of members of the affected community including children and their families where possible. In highly politicised circumstances, careful judgement must be exercised in the choice of local team members who may wish to pursue their own agenda. * In a way that builds on existing knowledge and documentation, particularly any assessments undertaken in the preparedness phase, and is informed by a review of these assessments. * In a way that engages children’s participation, and considers their opinions and wishes, and is age, gender, and culturally-sensitive, using ‘child-friendly’ listening and interviewing techniques. * Using direct observation and key informant interviews with a broad range of key community informants and leaders. These include children, religious leaders, women’s groups, local and national authorities, teachers, health workers, soldiers, prison authorities, orphanage staff, and staff of local and international organisations. * In places where UASC are likely to be found including in hospitals, prisons and all forms of residential care. * In such a way as to sensitise the community, the authorities, NGO’s and others regarding issues related to family separation. |
| **Assessments must include:** | * An analysis of the causes and patterns of separation. * Numbers of all UASC in various locations disaggregated by age (*see Assessment questions)* and gender. * Groups of children at special risk should be identified such as those with disabilities or chronic illnesses, CAAFAG, child parents and child headed households, adolescent girls, babies and very young children. * Information on local practices and types of care arrangements in place for UASC. * Reports or evidence of children unaccounted for including estimated numbers and potential causes (ensuring referrals where relevant to other organisations, such as the ICRC, for cases of children unaccounted for). * Reports or evidence of children being taken away from their community, including estimated numbers and information about who is taking them away and for what reason. * An analysis of measures taken by the community itself, and its resources, for example community members with transferable skills such as social workers, active youth groups such as scouts. * An analysis of the potential impact of relief programmes on family unity. * The identification of factors with potential to cause new separations or to aggravate the circumstances of children already separated. These may include particular patterns and degrees of violence, mortality rate and displacement, climatic conditions, lack of food, security and access to basic services, lack of income generating activities, recruitment into armed forces or armed groups and residential care provision. |
| **A desk review, if not completed during preparedness phase, should include:** | * A study of the community’s customary attitudes towards “orphaned” or otherwise UASC and the care it provided, including through institutional care, prior to the emergency. * A review of the policies of all national and local authorities pertaining to UASC and orphaned children. |

*(Adapted from the Interagency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, ICRC, Geneva, 2004, pp.30-32)*