# Activity 1 - Case Study 2

My name is Jean-Claude, and I am eight years old. Before the war I lived with my parents, my two sisters and two little brothers up on a hillside. On a clear day you could see the mountains in the far distance from our house.

One day there was fighting all around our house. I didn’t know what was happening.

I was afraid and I couldn’t see my parents. I managed to pick up my three-year-old brother Emile, who was on the ground crying. I also grabbed one blanket, a mat, a pot, a plate, and a few heads of corn.

We headed in the direction that I thought the rest of the village would have taken, but we found ourselves on our own. We didn’t know where our parents, sisters or brother were. We were particularly worried about our brother Pascal, who was only two years old and might be lost.

Eventually we arrived at a river, where you could pay to get a boat across. We were told that on the other side, 10 kilometres further on, there was a camp where you could get food from the Red Cross. Since we had no money, we had to give up our only saucepan to be able to get across.

By the time we got to the other side there were thousands of people, some sick, some walking very slowly, others rushing around frantically. We kept asking about our family, but no one knew them. Emile would often cry, and I would try to comfort him.

A few kilometres on, there was a narrow bridge that everyone was trying to cross at the same time. It was the rainy season, and the ground was slippery with deep mud. We were all squashed together, men, women, children and even some goats, trying to edge forwards. I tried to hold on tightly to Emile’s hand.

Suddenly there was panic because someone heard shooting. Some people pushed forwards, others backwards. Emile’s hand had slipped from mine. I shouted his name many times, but I could not see or hear him. I ran backwards to see if he was there. I then ran in the other direction, but there was no sign of him. In the panic some people had jumped into the river and drowned. I prayed that Emile was not among them, and that some kind family had found him and comforted him. I climbed a small tree, hoping that I would be able to see Emile if he went by.

Eventually I decided to make my way towards the Red Cross camp. When I got there, I was so exhausted that I just found a corner and went to sleep. Early the next morning, just as it was getting light, an adult came up to me and asked me if I had lost my family. At first, I was scared to answer, since I didn’t know who this person was. Then I saw that they were wearing the badge of an organisation, and they explained that they were looking for children on their own so that they could help them find their families again.’

Adapted from ARC, Module 6 Topic 4