Family Reunification
for Unaccompanied Minors
in Rwanda

University College Cork (UCC)-Ireland
Save the Children Fund-United Kingdom

Kigali, Rwanda
1998

Executive summary

Table of Contents

Definition of Terms[1]

Child
 A child is considered to be a person below the age of 18 years, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. According to the Rwandan law, a child reaches majority at the age of 16, when he/she is given an identity card. In this report, the term Minor will be used interchangeably with child.

Unaccompanied Children
 Those children separated from both parents and not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so.

Family
Family is intended as parents, brothers, sisters, child-headed households, relatives, friends and neighbors.

Family Tracing and Reunification
It is the process involved in reuniting children with their families, and can involve a number of different activities, including: the search for parents and relatives to return the child to; the search by families for the children who have been lost; and the search for long-term living situations for children, if family reunification proves impossible.

Identification, Documentation, Tracing and Reunification (IDTR)
- Identification is the stage whereby children are located
- Documentation involves interviewing children and adults about themselves, their families and the circumstances in which they became separated
- Tracing means searching for families and assessing whether children can be returned to them. Or publicizing information about children found for families to trace them. It involves the preparation of both families and children.
- Reunification means returning children and setting up a monitoring system to ensure that reunification is satisfactory.

Case by Case Tracing
 For children in centers, social workers visit their commune of origin and try to find the relatives.

Mass Tracing

---

[1] Definitions have been adapted from the following sources:
* Save the Children (1994). Family Tracing: A Good Practice. Development Manual 3. London: Save the Children.
* Save the Children (1995). Children Separated by War: family Tracing and Reunification, Conference Report. London: Save the Children.
* United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This is a system of tracing where the names of children registered in the database are printed by commune of origin and these lists, together with scanned photographs are taken to that commune to search for their families. SCF does this through organizing meetings with the community where the names are read out and photos displaced.

Photo-tracing
Agencies have photographed tens of thousands of children in centers, and they have included them in their dossier, and they are then distributed to the commune of origins.

CHAPTER ONE

Background

Introduction

The 1994 war and genocide in Rwanda has resulted in 2,385 children in prison, 3,500 child-soldiers, 3,000 children working or living on the streets, 100,000 traumatized children (Unicef, 1997). The number of separated and unaccompanied children vary from 100,000 to 500,000. Unicef (1997) reports an estimated 120,000 separated and/or unaccompanied children, while Minitraso estimated that after the events of 1994 there were between 400,000 and 500,000 unaccompanied children (Minitraso, Unicef, Barakabaho, SCF-USA, 1996). The return of the 1,300,000 refugees since November 1996 has brought more separations, and if one follows that High Commissioner for Refugees estimates of a 10% risk of separation during population movements, this would lead to an additional 130,000 for this case alone (Unicef, 1997). It is difficult to know the number of unaccompanied and separated Rwandan children following the war, the 1994 genocide, the massive exodus and repatriation of refugees, due to the magnitude and complexity of the events.

Some efforts to register unaccompanied children have been undertaken by Save the Children (UK). In May 1995, the number of separated registered children inside Rwanda and across the border was as follows (Brown, 1995):
* 44,829 in Rwanda
* 23,715 in Goma, Congo
* 10,383 in Bukavu, Congo
* 2,000 in Uvira, Congo
* 12,553 in Ngara and Karagwe, Tanzania.

Both the Rwandan Government and non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations have combined their efforts in working towards addressing the needs of unaccompanied and separated children. The report from the government of Rwanda (Umutoni Nyunawumwani, 1995), highlights the general policy approach to separated children, which is that they were best cared for in families in their communities and therefore tracing activities and placement of children in foster families should be encouraged. The thrust of the government was to reduce the number of centers from 83, and the number of children in institutions, estimated at 10,000 in 1995. To celebrate the day of the African Child, on the 16 June 1995, the Rwandan government launched a slogan "One child, one family", a program to promote reunification and foster care.

In August 1994, the Rwandan government asked Save the Children (UK), to undertake and co-ordinate tracing activities inside Rwanda, complementarily with the work of International Committee of the Red Cross, responsible for tracing across international borders.

The Situation of Unaccompanied Minors

General

During mass movements of people, emergencies and wars, there occur separations of children from their families. Separation can be involuntary in situations when the child is

abducted , lost, orphaned, runaway or removed from parents or voluntary when the child is abandoned, entrusted, surrendered or lives independently with the parents consent.

<u>Causes of parent-child separations</u>

Even during normal circumstances, children live in foster families, group homes, institutions and on the streets. Similar causes that lead children to become unaccompanied occur such as death of parents, poverty, disagreements within the family and illegitimacy.

Ressler, Boothby, and Steinboch (1988) have categorized the causes of parent- child separation in seven groups:

1. psychological, social and cultural. These include reasons such as social ostracism for unmarried pregnancies, for physical disabilities of the children and so on.
2. parental inability to provide care for the children, which may occur when parents are absent for work or for imprisonment, for poverty and for single parenthood.
3. emergency-related circumstances, such as bombings, mass displacement, entrusting of children to others by families in danger;
4. perceived opportunities, when parents separate themselves from the children because they want to spare them from hardships or when they both decide that separation would lead to better opportunities;
5. military and governmental policies sometimes lead to separation, for instances when children are abducted for military purposes or when resettlement policies favor unaccompanied children;
6. relief interventions sometimes lead to the removal of children from dangerous areas or for treatment in foreign countries. Also, specific interventions for unaccompanied minors lead parents and children to separate to allow children to take advantage of the benefits of the interventions.
7. children themselves sometimes decide to leave bad homes or to leave for better opportunities or to follow friends.

In Rwanda, separations were both involuntary and voluntary.

According to Brown (1995), involuntary separations were due to:
•   the death of parents;
•   separation during flight;
•   lack of prior notice for the arrival of trucks to take families from the town to the camp in Bukavu lead to children being left behind;
•   children were not able to keep up with the pace of parents upon dispersal of the Kibeho camp in south-west Rwanda;
•   members of organizations or of the public picked up children believing them to be separated,
•   medical teams evacuated children for treatment, unaccompanied by family members; children were encouraged to participate in the genocide and 979 were subsequently detained;
•   about 4,000children were brought along by armed forces.

According to Brown (1995), voluntary separations were due to:

- the growing numbers of children's centers has prompted families to place children in their care;
- some mothers whose children (estimated at 100-150) were born of rape abandoned them in the maternity hospital
- parents handed babies and young children to the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda for safety
- some adolescents run away from the fighting and they are living independently.

When children are separated in situations of emergency, they experience separation, anxiety, and a loss of security and stability. Younger children do not comprehend the nature of the disaster and experience minor anxiety if they manage to be beside parents or a trusted guardian. Familiar adults provide the child with the ability to exert control.

When separation is immediate followed by adequate alternative care - the opportunity to form attachments with other adults and the continuation of age-appropriate educational and social activities the harmful reactions do not evolve in long-term maladjustment (Ressler et al., 1988).

Stages of the experience of unaccompanied minors
According to Ressler, Boothby, and Steinboch (1988) there are various stages in the experience of unaccompanied minors:
pre-separation: the period when the child is under the care of parents or guardians;
pre-identification: the period between separation and the time when the child is identified as unaccompanied;
emergency care: the interval immediately after identification measured in days;
interim care: the interval between identification and when long-term care is provided;
and long-term care: permanent care measured in years.

Inside Rwanda, a third of the almost 50,000 separated children were living in institutions (Umutoni Nyinawumwami, 1995). Nine centers were created between December 1994 and February 1995 (Unicef, March 1995). Children were also placed in organized and spontaneous foster care, child-headed households, and adolescents living in independent living. Brown (1995) lists the location of separated children (as of May 1995).

Location	Category	Number of children	Total
Rwanda	Foster families	28,300	44,829
	Centers (81)	12,361	
	Military groups 9kadogos)	2,150	
	Prisons	979	
	Streets	200	
	Child groups	839	
Goma, Zaire	Refugee foster families	10,000	23,715
	Centers (24)	5,715	
	Formerly with the military	1,000	
	Alone in groups in refugee camps	3,000	

Zairian foster families   4,000

Bukavu, Zaire Refugee foster families   5,879   10,383
        Centers (15) 2,761
        Streets   43
        Child groups 1,400
        Zairian foster families 300

Uvira, Zaire foster families 1,620   2,000
        Centers (2) 130
        Child groups 250

Ngara and Karagwe, Tanzania
        Foster families (Of whom many are extended families) 10,900   12,553
        Centers (1)   8
        Streets   201
        Child groups 1,444
Total   93,480

By May 1995, 93,480 separated children had been registered in Rwanda and neighboring countries. These children were in centers, child groups, street children, children in prisons, children fostered by Rwandan and host country families (Brown, 1995).

Soon after the events of 1994, 77 centers had been established, lodging more than 12,000 children. According to Minitraso, the number of centers had fallen to 52 by January 1997, lodging 5,303 children (Unicef, 1997).

 In June 1995, SCF (UK) conducted an analysis of the 8,268 registered children in its database to find that there was a higher percentage of children under the age of 10 and a much lower proportion of boys to girls in the centers than in other African countries (Brown, 1995). This phenomenon was explained by the short time period that had passed since the children became separated.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child
The right of the child to be with one's family is clearly stated in the principles of the United Conventions on the Rights of the Child, which Rwanda signed and ratified on September 1990.

More than nine articles (5, 8, 9, 10, 18, 19, 20, 21,and 27) out of 54, refer directly or indirectly to the family.

Some of the articles on the Conventions state that the parties:

[are] *convinced that the family as a fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibility within the community*;

[have*] recognized that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grown up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding*; and

[believe that] *in all actions concerning children...the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration* (Article 3).

Rwandan Law
The government of Rwanda has developed regulations for centers caring for separated children in October 1995. The following articles are of relevance for the topic of family reunification (Government of Rwanda, 1995):

Article 54: Before reunification, ensure that the child wants to be reunited and if not that his/her reasons are justified

Article 58: After reunification, the center should arrange for follow-up in collaboration with the local authorities and the Liaison Officer, to ensure that the reunification is successful and inform the management committee

Family Tracing and Reunification
<u>General</u>
When children are separated from their families, the length of time of the separation, the age of the children and the quality of care after separation have an effect on the success of reunification. Younger children tend to experience separation as a permanent loss and experience helplessness and despair (Ressler et al., 1988).

Children younger than four years of age have been found not to retain emotional links with their parents beyond a 1-2 month period. School-age children can retain memories for longer periods of about one year, while adolescents maintain ties to adults as adults do.

In addition to the age and time spent away from the natural family, time spent with foster families or in institutions plays a significant role in reunification attempts. During separation, children have adopted attitudes, behaviors of the foster family or institutions and they have been integrated with a different community or group. Reunification may be made difficult not only because children have changed but also because the structure of the natural family has changed, with new siblings being born, remarriages, and so on.

<u>Guidelines for family tracing and reunification</u>
Guidelines for family tracing and reunification are found in the SCF Family Tracing Manual (1994). Family reunification in its simplest form means returning the child to the family of origin in the same place. However, reunification does not mean returning to a situation as it

was before separation. The impression of sameness is illusory and family reunification means coming to terms with the experiences undergone and rebuilding a family. When children are reunified with other people in other place, the challenges are greater. When placing children with foster families intrinsic motivation, standard of living, character, should be assessed. Gradual placement is a way to improve reunification.

A family needs assessment is usually made to enable staff to decide whether after-care is needed or not. Some issues to keep in mind are economic (whether the family has become very poor there is money for school fees); social (elderly grandparents unable to look after children)

The process of family reunification does not end with the act of bringing the child and the family together but it means making the child, family and community fit together. While younger children may adapt to the new routines more easily, adolescents may have experience freedom on the streets and have more difficulties adjusting.

Follow-up visits can be used to monitor the success of reunification. At a minimum, a child should have one follow-up visit, which will enable the social worker to assess the success of reunification, prevent problems, reassure the child, protect the child, obtain feedback on the program. When to stop follow-up depends o n the aims of the program and the closeness of the family.

Community leaders are increasing seen as key people in tracing programs as key informants, facilitators and monitors.

Rwanda: **Save the Children Fund (United Kingdom) Family Tracing and Reunification Program**
        <u>Estimates of Unaccompanied Minors</u>
According to ICRC figures (in Unicef, 1997, p. 92), 23,825 reunifications were registered between January 1995 and October 1997.

At the end of 1995, 16,382 children had been registered in the database. These include approximately 9,000 children in centers, children living in spontaneous foster families and those registered in transit camps. Furthermore, 2,500 children not included in the database were registered in the displaced camps across the border in Congo (then Zaire), Burundi and Tanzania. The estimated number of unaccompanied minors in the region is about 60,000.

Since the middle of 1994 (as of 12 August 1996), almost 5,000 unaccompanied children were reunited with relatives and neighbors, out of a total of 20,000 documented children. They were reunited in the following way:
- 1,813 (38%) with mother or father
- 2,926 (60%) with other relatives
- 99 (2%) others (neighbors, friends,..)

        <u>Registration and Tracing</u>

Registration of unaccompanied children began in August 1994 and continued with around 800 children still being reunified each month in Rwanda.

Mass tracing began in June 1995 and since it begun 3,284 (20% of the total number of registered unaccompanied minors in Rwanda) children have been reunited with their families. It has been conducted in 75 communes.

<u>SCF (UK) Family Tracing and Reunification Structure</u>
SCF (UK) Family Tracing and Reunification Program is nation-wide with staff working from an office in each prefecture. Staff are managed from three regional offices and overall co-ordinator and manager based in Kigali.

SCF (UK) staff and staff from other partners receive trainings on the steps involved in Tracing and Reunification, children' rights, the role of the social worker, and on communication skills. Up to the present, 500 staff from 50 organizations received trainings.

Justification for the Study
Since the middle of 1994, approximately 5,000 children have being reunified with family members, relatives and friends, out of about 20,000 unaccompanied registered children. The program began as an emergency one, but efforts by SCF concentrated on the quality of tracing to ensure that by the time reunification occurred, both the child and the family are well prepared. The tracing and reunification procedure were adopted by all other agencies in Rwanda.

Local authorities (Nyumbakumi, Counsellors, Burgomasters, and the then Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Affairs social workers) were kept informed during all the stages of tracing and reunification, as they have the long-term responsibility for monitoring the situation of vulnerable children. The then Ministry of the Family, Gender and Social Affairs (MINIFAPROFASO) currently renamed MIGEFASO was appointed as the leading technical Ministry for tracing in May 1996.

To complement the experience, a study would be valuable to in investigating the methodology, particularly at the reunification stage, whilst also providing direction for future activities (e.g. post-reunification work and difficult cases). It would also provide information on how the clients, namely the children and the families, perceive the process.

The study conducted in collaboration with MINIFAPROFASO would contribute to capacity building for this Ministry.

A study would assist SCF own capacity building, particularly in light of future modifications of the program.

Discussions amongst agencies on 'follow-up' activities for reunified children highlight different interpretations of follow-up, whether this be monitoring visits, acting as referral agents, providing information to families, or implementing economic support projects. The study would clarify issues related to follow-up.

In the light of the experience, SCF (UK) and University College Cork (UCC) agreed to collaborate on a study on the process of family tracing and reunification. The study aimed at assisting SCF (UK) to reflect on its experience, to hear the clients perspective on the process, to plan future directions of the program, and to share lessons learnt with agencies working in family tracing and reunifications in other countries.

General Objectives
- To provide a picture of family tracing and reunification.
- To contribute to the government and other agencies into issues related to general research and unaccompanied minors.
- To contribute to the SCF process of learning from experience.
- To help define the future direction of the SCF family tracing and reunification activities by building on past experience.
- To learn from the children themselves on their perceptions of the tracing and reunification processes and their suggestions for improvements.

Specific Objectives
1. To study the process of reunification and family reintegration of a random sample of reunified children.
2. To help identify factors affecting the success, failure and limitations of reunifications.
3. To examine the role that SCF should be playing in ensuring effective reunifications both in its current and future programs.
4. To document children's own perspective of issues around unaccompanied children and reunifications.
5. To help identify strengths of the local community and authorities, and to explore SCF role in supporting local capacity.

CHAPTER TWO

Method

Planning the study
<u>Preliminary Field and Archival work</u>
The preliminary phase of the study involved: development of the objectives of the study; informal visits to families; informal discussions with local authorities; and analysis of SCF (UK) database.

<u>Selection of data collectors</u>
Field workers were selected by SCF (UK) on the basis of their communication skills and work location, with at least one social worker being based in the prefecture where the study was going to be conducted.

<u>Training of data collectors</u>
Selected social workers attended a one-week training on participatory research methods, during which questions were refined, sites were selected, and research methods chosen (e.g. interviews with children, focussed-group-discussions with parents, and interviews with key informants).

<u>Pilot study</u>
A pilot study was conducted to gain additional insight into the process of family tracing and reunification, and to ensure that questions were relevant and clear to participants.

Participants
Seventy-five children, thirty-nine parents, three groups of parents (each composed of 6, 10, and 8 members), twelve Nyumbakumi, twelve Counsellors, six Bourgomasters, and seven Migefaso representatives participated in the study.

Children were randomly selected from the SCF (UK) database in Kigali. In some instances, because of changes of address, new names were randomly selected from the database. Parents were randomly selected. Local authorities were sampled according to their role in family reunification.

Data Collection and Analysis
Interviews and focussed-group discussions were conducted in 1997 around the country.

Group discussions were held in Butare, Kigali, and Kibungo. One interviewer led the session while another took notes. Discussions lasted between 40 and 100 minutes. Sessions were tape recorded with the permission of the participants. They were then transcribed and translated.

UCC staff regularly supervised data collection. Regular discussions were held with data collectors and when necessary, additional training was conducted in the field.

For closed-ended questions, answers were coded according to frequency of occurrence. With open-ended answers, common themes were first identified and then organized according to their frequency.

Constraints

The main constraints of the study were:
- Insecurity in some areas
- Some children (and their families) were not found at the address recorded in the database
- Some of the social workers who attended the training were transferred to a different department or location.
- Due to the emergency during the massive influx of returnees at the end of 1996, there was a delay in the implementation of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

The findings are organized in three sections. In the first one, information about reunified children is reported. The perspective of those families, relatives and neighbors who have hosted a child is presented in the second section. Local authorities' views about family reunification and reintegration can be found in the third section.

SECTION A. CHILDREN' S VOICE

Socio-demographic characteristics

 Sex

The random sample of children is composed of 40 (53.3 %) boys and 35 (46.7%) girls.

 Age

Their age ranges from 6 to 18 years (one child did not answer) as follows:

Age of reunified child		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentages of responses (%)
6	2	2.7
7	1	1.3
8	3	4.0
9	4	5.3
10	7	9.3
11	3	4.0
12	13	17.3
13	11	14.7
14	8	10.7
15	8	10.7
16	7	9.3
17	2	2.7
18	5	6.7
Missing answer	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

More than half reunified children (53.4%) are between 12 and 15 years of age.

 Position in the Family

Fifty-one (68%) children were the ones in the middle, 13 (17.3%) were the last child, and 8 (10.7%) were the first one. Three (4%) children did not answer.

Separation: Time and Causes

 Year and Cause of Separation

Most children were separated in 1994. Fifty-one children (68%) were separated in 1994, 10 (13.3%) in 1995, 1 (1.3%) in respectively 1986, 1990, 1993,1996, 2 (2.7%) in 1992, and 8 (10.7%) did not answer.
The following are some excerpts from their description of the events that led to their separation.

Jones, currently 18 years old, was separated in 1992 because of the war at the age of 13 and he was reunified with his older brother in 1996, after four years.

" I lived in Kibungo and we took refuge in Tanzania. I was sixth in the family but three of them have died and I remain the third. I missed everything. Now I am fed by my brother. My mother is very old and I feel that I am missing many things in life. I am becoming an adult and I want to have my own family and to be like the others'

Elias was separated in August 1994 due to the war in Burundi. "I was separated from my parents because of the war in Burundi in Kamange area. I immediately went to Namata where returnees from Burundi were received. Later I went to live in an orphanage at Gikondo, and later I went to Butare at the training for scouts where I met my parents".

When asked about the cause of separation, 72 children (96%) cited war and genocide, 1 (1.3%) abandonment and 2 (2.7%) did not answer.

Between Separation and Reunification
        Location of the Child After Separation and Before Reunification
At the question of where the children went after separation, three main categories were identified and coded as follows:

Type of response	Location of the child after separation		Location of the child before reunification	
	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%)	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Foster family	28	37.4	29	38.7
Center	22	29.3	33	44.0
Abroad	22	29.3	9	12.0
My family	0	0.0	3	4.0
No answer	3	4.0	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

The following are some excerpts about what happened to the children between the time of separation and reunification.

Renata, a 11 years old was separated on the 23th of April 1994, at the age of 8. She was

the second child but she is the only one remaining. "My parents have been killed and our belongings looted. I took refuge and arrived at Cyangugu. A woman took me to a center… before I lived with my father and mother. Nowadays, I am living with my uncle. I do not miss anything but I work hard. (At the moment of reunification)… I was very glad because I met familiar people and other children."

Marie, 7 years of age exiled to Zaire with her father. After he died, she returned home with other members of the same prefecture, who fostered her until she was reunified with her ant, who is now pregnant but without a husband. "I lived in Zaire and I came back with people from Gitarama after the death of my parents. Before I came here, people only gave me sweet potatoes. Here I eat potatoes, cassava bread and beans.

Boasi, lost his parents at the age of 10 in April 94 and he was reunified with his mother's sister in September 94. " When people killed my parents, I took refuge in a sorghum field for two days. When I saw other people leaving Kigali, I went with them up to Gitarama Prefecture. There I met an old woman who took me to her house and I stayed there for two weeks. Later on, she bought me to an orphan's center at Ruhango. The center was then moved to Gitarama… I find that my actual life is similar with the former because this family treats me very well as did my parents. The problem I have is that my parents are dead.

Francoise, 13 at time of separation. "We ran away separately and afterwards we missed one another… My brother and I were with a person we knew well. He took us to Gisenyi to live in a family of his friend."

Reunification

Time of Reunification

Thirty-four (45.3%) children were reunified in 1996, 25 (33.3%) in 1995, 7 (9.3%) in 1994, and 9 (12.1%) did not answer.

Type of Reunification

Reunified children are living with:

Type of reunification		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentage of respons
Both parents	25	33.3
Relative	16	21.3
Mother	9	12.0
Grandparent	6	8.0
Siblings	6	8.0
Father	3	4.1
Other	1	1.3
Neighbor/friend	0	0.0
No answer	9	12.0
Total	75	100.0

Feelings at the Moment of Reunification

Seventy-two (96%) children said that they were glad or happy, 3 (4%) that they were not happy. Amongst the last three, one said that he was not happy because he had lost his mother (1) and another added that he was happy at first but he felt bad afterwards.

"I was very happy to see my mother when I came back because I thought she had died."
" I was very glad because I did not imagine that there were some of our relatives still alive."
"When I came back to this family I was happy but now I feel unhappy when I think that my parents not alive."

A Comparison of Life Before Separation and After Reunification
<u>General Perceptions of Life Before Separation and After Reunification</u>
Children were asked to compare life before separation and after reunification. Three children reported that life was the same before separation and after reunification, while 23 did not make a direct comparison. The children who made a comparison (49) also commented on what was better or worse about life before separation and after reunification. Their answers fall into four main themes: economic, psychological, health-related, and educational theme. Children sometimes mentioned more than one category as being better or worse. Henceforth, the total number of answers is greater than the number of children interviewed.

Type of response	Life before separation was better than life after separation		Life before separation was wo than life after separation	
	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%)	Number of responses	Percentag responses
Psychological	35	27.0	10	56.0
Economic	32	25.0	6	33.0
Health	32	25.0	1	5.5
Education	30	23.0	1	5.5
Total	129	100.0	18	100.0

"Before separation from my parents, life was good. Now, life is not good because my parents have died".

Most children (129 responses) report that life before separation was better than life after separation, with a minority (18 responses) reporting that life was worse before separation from the family.

The same question was asked with regard to life after reunification. The following are their answers.

Type of response	Life after reunification was better than life before reunification		Life after reunification was wo than life before reunificatio	
	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%)	Number of responses	Percentag responses

Psychological	16	32.0	33	39.4
Economic	13	26.0	30	34.9
Health	11	22.0	11	12.8
Education	10	20.0	12	13.9
Total	50	100.0	86	100.0

Eighty-six statements describe life after reunification as being worse than life before reunification. Fifty responses refer to life after reunification as being better than life before reunification.

A comparison between the two questions (life before and after separation with life before and after reunification) indicate that most comments about life before separation are positive (129 answers), while most comments about life after reunification are negative (86).

<u>Education Before Separation and After Reunification</u>

When asked if they went to school **before separation**, 45 (60%) children answered affirmatively, 28 (37.3%) negatively, and 2 (2.7%) did not answer. At the question on school enrollemnt **after reunification**, 39 (52%) children answered affirmatively, and 36 (48%) negatively. The following is a breakdown of the grades of the children in school:

	Grade attended before separation		Grade attended after reunification	
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%)	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%
1	12	25.5	12	33.3
2	11	23.4	2	5.7
3	10	21.3	7	19.4
4	4	8.5	7	19.4
5	8	17.1	7	19.4
6	1	2.1	1	2.8
Evening class	1	2.1	0	0.0
Total	47	100.0	36	100.0

<u>Economic Status Before Separation and After Reunification</u>

Before separation, 53 (80.3%) children perceived their economic status to be better, 8 (12.1%) worse, and 1 (1.3%) the same. Four children (6.1%) did not answer. **After reunification**, the economic status was perceived to be worse by 54 (81.8%) children, better by 7 (10.6%), and the same by 1 (1.3%). Four children (6.1%) did not answer.

Radjabu, 13 years old at the time of separation, went to an unaccompanied children center, and h been reunified with his grandmother. A the time of the interview he had just returned from Kigali, w he had gone without the consent of his grandmother with whom he currently lives.

"Before separation we were O.K. at home. My father was a driver and we possessed many things, my grandmother is poor… In the unaccompanied children's center I was O.K. because I used to g school. Now I can not go to school, and I do not eat enough. When I arrived here, I was very glad because I had no hope of finding anybody else of my family alive. Things changed afterwards bec of the manners of this family… There are many hopeless unaccompanied children in centers. Plea

continue to trace their families. Before reuniting a child, please make sure that he will be able to liv[e]
there without problems. Save the Children could visit me many times because there are many cha[nges]
here. I also need to go to school and to get school materials.

Jean, 11 years old at the time of separation, lives with relatives, including six cousins, in a two roo[m]
house.

" Formerly, we did not have anything. My mother was blind and my father had died. Even now, the
family does not have anything because we live in a center for survivors, in a house that belongs to
somebody else. I separated from my mother. When she returned to our home, she was killed. I
returned home to see her and somebody put me in a hidden place until the soldiers came and too[k me]
to a children's center… I was the fourth and the youngest, however I am the only survivor. (After
reunification), I feel well because I am living with the people of my family… I thank them (those wh[o]
reunified her). I wish you to come to visit us many times to see how our lives are'.

Children were also asked what house-related tasks they performed before separation and
after reunification. Percentages are calculated on the total number of chores mentioned.

Household chores before separation			Household chores after reunification		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentage of responses (%)	Type of response	Number of responses	Percentage responses
Fetching water	58	30.6	Fetching water	56	27.1
Gathering firewood	35	18.4	Gathering firewood	35	17.0
Cooking	18	9.5	Cooking	24	11.6
Washing dishes	16	8.4	Washing dishes	13	6.3
Sweeping	15	7.9	Sweeping	17	8.2
Cultivating	13	6.9	Cultivating	28	13.5
Looking after cattle	12	6.3	Looking after cattle	6	2.9
Nothing	7	3.7	Nothing	3	1.4
Delivering messages	6	3.1	Delivering messages	7	3.4
Looking after children	5	2.6	Looking after children	9	4.3
Washing clothes	3	1.6	Washing clothes	9	4.3
No answer	2	1.0	No answer	0	0.0
Total	190	100.0	Total	207	100.0

An increase in household activities after reunification, as opposed to before separation, is
noticed.

Partners in reunification

Agencies involved in reunification		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentage of respons
Save the Children	45	60.0
A person	15	20.0
Red Cross	7	9.3
Relative	3	4.0
Concern	2	2.7
Myself	2	2.7
Food for the Hungry	1	1.3
Total	75	100.0

Children remembered mainly the names of the organization and of the individual with whom they were in contact.

Children' s comments to agencies involved in their reunification
Children were asked if there was anything that they wished to tell people and organizations involved in tracing and reunification, and to Save the Children Fund in particular. Their answers are summarized according to themes, and they were then classified according to frequency.

Comments		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentage of respons
Thank you	52	30.7
Wish to be visited	50	29.5
Need for material assistance (clothes, food, blankets, household utensils)	30	17.7
Need for educational support (school fees, uniforms, school materials)	15	8.9
Wish that individuals and organizations would go ahead with more tracing and reunification programs	13	7.7
Need for shelter	8	4.8
Need for advise	1	0.7
Total	170	100.0

The two most frequent answers are: wish to thank those involved in family tracing and reunification and wish to be visited. The following are some excerpts from their comments.

I thank very much the organizations that took care of us because they reunified us with our familie
But, I wish, if possible, that they support us by giving me clothes, soap, and assistance to reconstr
our house. In short, they could visit me frequently.

People did a good thing by reunifying us to our families. I wish to meet those who brought me here order to thank them personally.

The message I want to transmit to them is to invite them to continue to help children by reunifying with their families. I also thank them for having reunified me with my parents, brothers, and sisters would be good if SCF assist reunified children by providing them with school materials, and by supporting them in income-generating activities.

What I can say about the organizations is to thank them because I was reunified with my family th to their help. I was wondering how I could find my family again and fortunately these organizations helped me I also thank all other organizations that took care of us in the orphanage. However, it w be better if you manage to visit us and to know our problems; for instance I have a problem of pov and I need support.

SECTION B. FAMILY'S PERSPECTIVE ON REUNIFICATION

Focussed-group discussions and interviews were used to gather information from family members, relatives and friends who had taken in unaccompanied children.

FOCUSSED-GROUP DISCUSSIONS
Focussed-group discussions were held with three groups of parents, relatives and friends who had accepted to be reunified with unaccompanied children. The total number of participants in the focussed-group discussions was twenty-four. Group discussions were held in Butare (6), Kigali (10), and Kibungo (8).

Three main themes were discussed: a) factors affecting the success or failure of reunification; b) child's behavior; and c) follow-up. The following quotes are taken from the focussed-group discussions to highlight the views of the participants.

Factors affecting the success and failure of reunification
- "Accommodating the child may not be easy. One child could think that he/she is not liked or w treated because he/she does not get what he/she wants, while the family do their best to meet need of the child as they would do with their natural children".
- "To achieve reintegration, the child must feel secure within the family, and he must have his/he needs met. "I The family should satisfy the need of the child, otherwise he can go back to the c when he is better treated".
- "Poverty is a barrier to successful reunification because the child becomes difficult and he will satisfy his needs by himself. He also wants to be free".
- "Reunification is affected by the long period that the child spends in the center".

Behavior of the child
- "The children have changed a lot, probably because of the war…. The children do not understa well;… they have lost the culture…parents accept this as a reality but they do not know what to
- "When the child is reunified with a close family member, he accepts the advise, punishments, the living conditions of the family even though he does not get what he wants. However, if it is large family that accommodates the child, he may think that the family does not accept him".
- "Those children who have spent a long time in centers have changed in character and it becom difficult to re-educate them".
- "The behavior of the child has changed because of the freedom the child had during separatio was not with an adult responsible for their education".

Follow-up
- "We need SCF's advice because children are encountering problems after reunification".
- Even though SCF' visits are necessary, I thank SCF for their first action, which is the reunifica
- " I could have accommodated children who are not mine, so how could you know if you do not back?"
- "We need advise to the reunified family and material assistance when there is a problem. Whe meet a problem, we do not have anybody trustworthy to rely upon".
- "It is not good when you do not come to visit the reunified family because your (SCF) advise is

needed in matters of re-education. People need your advise on how to deal with traumatized children with their problems."
- "If you do not come back, you will never know if the reintegration is successful or not. You will ¦ miss out on information that will be helpful to improve your program".
- "Reunified families think that you do not consider them important"(*if you do not come back).*
- "People think that you are not serious in your program" (*if you do not come back).*

ANSWERS FROM INDIVIDUAL FAMILY MEMBERS
A random sample of 39 parents, relatives and friends were interviewed individually.

Socio-demographic characteristics
The family size of the interviewees ranges from 2 to 14 members. Ten (25.6%) families are composed by 7 members, 7 families (18%) by 5 members, 6 families (15.4%) by 8 members, 4 families (10.2%) by 6 members, 7 families(18.3%) by less than 4 members, and 5 families (10.5%) by more than between 9 members.

Most adults take care of 3 to 7 children. More specifically, ten families (26%) have 5 children, 8 (20.5%) have 4 children, 5 (12.8%) have 7 children, 10 (26%) have less than 3 children, 3 (7.7%) more than 8 children, and the others did not answer.

The following table summarizes the position of the reunified child in the family.

Position of the reunified child		
Position	Number of responses	Percentages of responses (%)
3	6	15.4
4	5	12.7
1 (eldest)	4	10.3
2	3	7.7
5	3	7.7
6	3	7.7
7	3	7.7
9	2	5.1
8	1	2.6
10	0	0.0
11	0	0.0
No answer	9	23.1
Total	39	100.0

Most reunified children are the third or fourth.

Most reunifications occur with natural families. At the question "Did the child live with the family before separation?", 22 (56.4%) family members answered affirmatively, 6 (15.4%) negatively, and 11 (28.2%) did not answer.

Family reunification and the factors affecting its success or failure

For 15 parents (36.6%), family reunification means reunifying the child with his/her natural parents, for 9 (22%) it means reunification with relatives and for 1 (2.4%) with a foster family. Sixteen parents (39%) did not answer. The term reunification and reintegration are used interchangeably.

The following table summarizes the responses given by the family members when they were asked about family reintegration.

What do we need to achieve reintegration?		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentages of respon:
Living in harmony	8	14.5
Follow-up	7	12.8
Goodwill of children	7	12.8
Goodwill of parents/relatives/organizations	7	12.8
Assistance to the family	6	11.0
Roads to facilitate communication	3	5.4
Reunification with the natural family	2	3.6
Peace	2	3.6
Security	2	3.6
Contacts with families before reunification	2	3.6
Information about children's rights	2	3.6
Assistance to reunified children	1	1.8
Involvement of the child in chores	1	1.8
No answer	5	9.1
Total	55	100.0

Living in harmony is considered the most important factor in assuring a successful reunification. Three other important factors are: goodwill of all partners, follow-up and assistance.

Family members considered reunification unsuccessful in the following circumstances: when the child leaves the family; when there are many children to accommodate; and when there is a lack of follow-up.

What are the factors that prevent the achievement of successful reunification?		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentages of respon:
Family poverty	15	25.9
Lack of willingness by family and/or child	9	15.6
Lack of follow-up	9	15.6
External circumstances (lack of peace, lack of security, bad	7	12.0

roads,….)		
Poor information about organizations involved in tracing and reunification	4	6.9
Misunderstandings	3	5.2
Bad treatment by relatives or parents	3	5.2
Death of parents	2	3.4
Not taking into account children's rights	2	3.4
No answer	4	6.8
Total	58	100.0

According to family members, achievement of a successful reunification is hindered mainly by poverty, lack of good will and absence of follow-up.

Economic Status After Reunification
Thirty-one interviewees (79.5%) said that the economic status of the family had not been affected by reunification. Some of the comments made are: the child is regarded as any other member of the family; it's a good event to be able to be with the child again; we go on as usual; we are used to manage by ourselves; and the child is an additional resource.

Eight participants (20.5%) said that reunification has had an impact on the economic status of the family: there are more worries; there is need to purchase new items (clothes, food, …); and there is need to share work.

The following table summarizes the chores performed by children before separation and after reunification.

Activities performed by the child before separation			Activities performed by the child after reunification		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentages of responses	Type of response	Number of responses	Percentage responses
Fetching water	17	26.6	Fetching water	33	31.7
Gathering firewood	11	17.2	Gathering firewood	21	20.1
Nothing	10	15.6	Nothing	2	1.9
Going to school	4	6.2	Going to school	6	5.8
Looking after the cattle	4	6.2	Looking after the cattle	4	3.9
Looking after other children	4	6.2	Looking after other children	2	1.9
Cultivating	3	4.7	Cultivating	10	9.6
Cleaning	2	3.2	Cleaning	8	7.6
Preparing food	2	3.2	Preparing food	9	8.6

Washing dishes	0	0.0	Washing dishes	4	3.9
Carpentry	0	0.0	Carpentry	1	0.1
Making mats	0	0.0	Making mats	1	0.1
No answer	7	10.9	No answer	3	2.8
Total	64	100.0	Total	104	100.0

Sixty-four activities are listed for the period before separation and 124 for the time after reunification. Fetching water and collecting firewood are the two most common chores performed by the child before separation and after reunification. Three activities are perceived as being done after reunification but not before separation: washing dishes, making mats, and carpentry.

Are there any problems in the family after reunification? Why?
Twenty-one family members (53.9%) said that there are no problems. Here are some excerpts from the comments given by participants.

- The child is calm and stays at home.
- The child receives what he/she needs when I am able to provide it.
- The problems of the reunified child are the same as those of the other children.

Seventeen parents (43.6%) said that there are problems. Some o comments are reported below.

- It is difficult to respond to all the needs of the child.
- It is difficult to give the sufficient care when the family is a foster family.
- Sometimes the child wishes to return to the center.
- There is not enough money to pay for school fees.
- There is illness, poverty and despair.

One parent (2.5%) did not answer.

How is the behavior of the reunified child when compared to that of other children?
Thirty-six parents (92.2%) said that the child's behavior is very good.

- There are no complaints from the neighbors, and they appreciate him/her.
- The child keeps himself/herself busy.
- The child respects others.

One parent said that the behavior is the usual one, and one parent said that sometimes the child's behavior is difficult (but that when the child gives problems, the parent punishes him). One parent did not answer.

Are there any changes in the behavior of the child after reunification?
Twenty-one parents (53.9%) said that there have not been changes in the behavior of the child after reunification.

- The child feels OK because I take care of him/her.
- The child is as obedient as before separation.

Thirteen parents (33.3%) said that there have been changes in the behavior of the child after reunification.

- Living out of the family taught him/her how to manage.
- The child is more likely to be sick; there are changes in intelligence and development.
- Sometimes, the child wishes to return back to the center.
- The child sometimes experiences anxiety due to the death of the parents

Five parents (12.8%) did not answer.

How did you obtain information about the whereabouts of the child after separation		
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentages of respons
No information	18	46.1
Red Cross	7	17.9
Individual	5	12.9
Organizations	5	12.9
Not specified	3	7.7
During mass tracing	1	2.5
Total	39	100.0

Almost half of the parents interviewed said that they did not have information about the whereabouts of their children after separation. Those who received information, did so from the Red Cross or other organizations.

Does SCF make any follow-up after reunification? What are the consequences of making or not making follow-up?			
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentages of responses	Additional comments
No	32	82.0	SCF is not aware of how the children are doing; there is a decrease in confidence in SCF; the situation deteriorates and the child may be abandoned.
Yes	3	7.7	The child's problems are noticed; and families are supported.
Sometimes	3	7.7	there is a lack of

			material assistance; there is no support in strengthening the relationship between the child and the family; and the needs of the child are not noticed.
No answer	1	2.6	There is a need to visit parents because there is nobody to advice them.
Total	37	100	

Most family members commented on the lack of follow-up, and the negative consequences of not conducting it.

The following table summarizes general comments made by participants.

Do you want to tell me anything that you want to pass on to organizations involved in trac reunification and to SCF in particular?			
Type of response	Number of responses	Percentages of responses	Additional cor
Thank you	25	37.9	This answer wa: general one and to SCF and othe organizations as
Need of assistance	20	30.3	
Visit us	16	24.3	
Continue your activities	3	4.5	
Strengthen relationship with us	1	1.5	
There are no problems with the child	1	1.5	
Total	66	100.0	

Comments are generally positive. Family members are thankful for having being reunified with their children and they wish that tracing and reunification activities continue. They express a need for assistance and follow-up.

SECTION C: LOCAL AUTHORITIES' VIEWPOINT ON FAMILY REUNIFICATION

The Rwandan government, through its administrative and technical structures, is involved in family reunification. Some of its representatives were asked their opinions about family reintegration, the role of partners, and follow-up. The following individuals were interviewed: 12 Nyumbakumi, 12 Counsellors, 6 Bourgomasters, and 7 Migefaso representatives. Given the low number of respondents in each group, the answers are reported as number of responses and not percentages. For some questions, only the key issues will be presented.

What does family reintegration mean?
For the representatives of all four categories, family reintegration means reunification of a child with his/her natural parents or with relatives. One Migefaso representative added the category foster family, and one Bourgomaster spoke about serious individuals in general. Both Nyumbakumi and Cousellors mentioned that reintegration is achieved when the family is capable of providing for the child's survival, while one Bourgomaster said that it is important to have information about the child and the family.

What are the contributing factors to failure in reunification?
The following table summarizes the views of local authorities on the main factors hindering the achievement of successful reunification.

Factors hindering reunification				
Type of response	Nyumbakumi	Counsellors	Bourgomasters	Migefaso
Interest (inheritance)	5	3	3	1
Reunification done in a hurry without preparation	2	1	1	
Lack of follow-up	1	2	2	3
Conflict inside the family	3	1	2	
Lack of information on children's rights		1		
Poverty				2
Lack of awareness				3
Insecurity			2	1
Behavior of the reunified family (no respect for the child's rights)	2			1
Lack of collaboration between partners			1	1
Lack of				1

appropriate structures				
Lack of information about the child (e.g. child too young to give information)	1		4	

The factors most frequently mentioned by respondents are: personal interest and gain (12), lack of follow-up (9), conflict inside the family (6), and lack of information about the child (5). Personal interest is mentioned most frequently by Nyumbakumi (5), lack of information about the child by Bourgomasters (4), and personal interest by Counsellors (3). Migefaso representatives suggested lack of awareness (3) and lack of follow-up (3).

When is reintegration successful or unsuccessful?
The following table summarizes the answers given by local authorities about the meaning of a successful or unsuccessful reintegration.

Reintegration is successful				
Type of response	Nyumbakumi	Counsellors	Burgomasters	Migefaso
It occurs between the child and the natural family	3	2	4	1
There is regular follow-up		3	3	
Involvement of partners		1	1	
Harmony in the family	1	4	4	5
Good assistance (school, food,…)	3	2		
Good understanding amongst partners		2		
Respect for children's rights	1	2		3
Children remain with the family	1			1

In general, reintegration is successful when there is harmony in the family (14 answers), when it occurs between the child and the natural family (10), when there is regular follow-up (6), and assistance (5).

Reintegration is unsuccessful				
Type of response	Nyumbakumi	Counsellors	Bourgomaster	Migefaso
It occurs between		2		

	Nyumbakumi	Counsellors	Bourgomaster	Migefaso
the child and unrelated individuals				
There are outside factors (insecurity, logistics,..)		1		
Poverty		3		
Lack of follow-up		2	1	1
Disagreement between the child and the family (child is badly treated,..)	7	3	2	2
Ignorance and/or lack of respect of children's rights		2	2	4
Children leave the family	2			5
No stability in the family	5			
Absence of IDTR			1	

Reintegration is unsuccessful when there is disharmony inside the family (14), ignorance and/or lack of respect of children's rights (8), and departure of the child from the family (7).

What do we need to achieve reintegration?
The following table summarizes the opinions about reintegration of the participants.

What do we need to achieve reintegration?				
Type of response	Nyumbakumi	Counsellors	Bourgomaster	Migefaso
Security		1	1	
Well paved roads		1		
Training on information gathering (to ensure families can take care of children)	2	2	1	3
Material assistance to the host family	1	2	1	1
Knowledge of the views of the family and authorities	2	2		
Follow-up	1	2	1	4

		3		
To try to find natural parents		3		
To speed up the time of reunification		2		
To prepare in advance the host family and the child (awareness campaigns)	2	1	1	4
To set up coordinating structures and collaboration			1	1
Monitoring role				1
Goodwill on the part of the child and family	5			1
Advise after reunification	1			
Consideration of the child's needs			1	
Good IDTR			2	

Many necessary elements for the achievement of reintegration are mentioned. The most common ones are: training on information gathering (8), follow-up (8), and advanced preparation about reunification (8).

Role of various partners
Local authorities were asked about the role that partners, and those Rwandan authorities in particular, could have in family tracing and reunification.

Role of partners				
Type of response	Nyumbakumi	Counsellors	Bourgomaster	Migefaso
To act as an intermediate between the families to NGOs		2		
To inform the community on the reunification program		2		
To prepare families to be reunified	1	1		
To provide	9	2	2	

information to parents and NGOs to facilitate reunification				
To assist reunified children to attend school		3	1	
To sensitize the community on the importance of living in a family	1	3	4	4
To visit reunified families		2		
To ensure the respect of children's rights (inheritance)		1	7	1
To develop policies and programs for reintegration				1
To ask for assistance for the families			2	2
To coordinate activities				7
To do follow-up	1		2	2

The most frequently mentioned roles for partners are: to provide information to parents and NGOs in order to facilitate reunification (13), to sensitize the community on the importance of living in a family (12), to ensure the respect for the children's rights (9), and to coordinate the activities (7).

A content analysis of the answers given by participants show that they see themselves as being actively involved in the process of family reunification and reintegration, especially after reunification has taken place. Local authorities see the main role of NGOs during tracing and reunification. After reunification, NGO's role is seen mainly as one of assistance and follow-up.

Is there any program for reunified families?
In general, local authorities are aware that efforts are being made to support vulnerable individuals in general, when not reunified families in particular. Activities conducted with families of reunified children cover mainly registration and follow-up.

Most Nyumbakumi (8) said that there are not, or that they do not know of, specific programs for host families. Two said that some programs exist.

Counselors said that there are projects aimed at providing assistance to reunified families and that there are committees whose goal is to address children's problems. Others said that, although there are not programs for reunified families in particular, programs for vulnerable groups exist. They added that there is still the need to visit and assist reunified families.

Burgomasters are aware of the existence of some income generating projects and follow-up programs at sector's level. They added that the community informs the NGOs if there are problems.

Migefaso representatives said that there are committees and associations at the local level. Representatives from the Ministry conduct general registration of reunified families.

Does SCF conduct follow-up? What are the consequences?
Seven Nyumbakumi said that SCF does not make any follow-up, and two said that it does sometimes. Lack of follow-up results in decrease trust in SCF; reduced information or assistance to children; and possibility that the child may think nobody pays attention to him/her.

Eight Counselors said that SCF does not conduct follow-up. As a consequence, information, advice and material assistance are not provided. Furthermore, children end up thinking that nobody thinks about them. Four Counselors said that SCF does follow-up, and that it is helpful to plan activities together.

Six Burgomasters said that SCF does not do follow-up, and as a result nobody knows how the child is doing and whether reunification is successful or not. Four Burgomasters did not know. The others said that there is some follow-up through visits but that authorities are not involved.

Migefaso said that when SCF does not do follow-up, the child is not supervised and may become a vagabond; it is difficult to know if the child has problems or needs; it is difficult to find out whether his/her rights are respected or not. When follow-up is done, the child is happy and assisted.

How do you think follow-up should be done?
Burgomasters think that there is a need to set up a formal program for conducting follow-up. The aim of follow-up should be to get information and to provide assistance. When conducting follow-up, there should be collaboration with the authorities. During follow-up, the child should be asked questions apart from the parents. There should be a program to sensitize people and sustainable assistance should be provided by NGOs.

Migefaso representatives said that everybody should try to assist; children's rights should be respected; there should be proper registration; there should be collaboration amongst local authorities; mobilization and sensitization should be put in place; committees should be created; and there should be an inventory of the problems.

How do you evaluate the SCF program?
Ten Nyumbakumi evaluate SCF family reunification program positively. According to them, the porgram is based on generosity; it helps to reunify families; it should continue as there are still many children to be reunified; there should be follow-up; and it should not be limited to tracing and reunification.

Seven Counselors are very appreciative of the program, and they would like for SCF to continue. Two Counselors said that the activities are not sufficient and that there should be more visits.

Some Burgomasters said that it runs slowly; it doesn't cover all sectors; there is not follow-up; and that there are no reports made.

Migefaso representatives said that it is a good program but they would wish for follow-up to be intensified and registration strengthened. According to them, the aim should be a decrease in the number of children in orphanages, and this goal comes late in the program. They added that SCF is understaffed for the number of activities undertaken.

Do you want to tell me anything that you want to pass on to people, organizations involved in family tracing and reunification and SCF in particular?
Nyumbakumi are thankful for the work done by SCF and they wish that it continues. They recommend that regular follow-up be conducted and material assistance provided. Their wish is that children are assisted to go to school, and that local leaders are supported in their efforts to mobilize the community to take children out of orphanages. More collaboration is what they recommend.

Counselors too are thankful and they wish for the tracing work to be continued. They recommend the planning of sustainable development programs for the community; to be close to reunified families and local leaders; to ensure that the program will not be cut down before reunification of all separated children has been achieved; to conduct regular follow-up; and to give material, educational and medical support to reunified families. They would like to receive advice and to see more collaboration amongst partners.

Bourgomasters too are thankful and they wish for the continuation of the program. They recommend assistance to cooperatives and associations for reunified families; regular follow-up; awareness of what happens after reunification; and collaboration with local authorities. Others said that there is a need to reunify not only the children in the centers but also the ones who are in Italy and France. It would be useful to initiate awareness campaigns describing the advantages for the child to be living in a family and not in centers. There is a need to support long-term projects and to develop social programs for the welfare of all citizens. They also expressed the need for greater collaboration and they would like to receive activities' reports.

Migefaso representatives emphasized the need to collaborate; to avoid duplication of efforts; to enhance the capacity of the Ministry to conduct follow-up; to provide material assistance;

to prepare children and families before reunification; to conduct awareness campaigns on children's rights and parental roles.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

Introduction
The discussion of the main findings is organised according to the objectives of the study, which can be summarised as follows:

a) to provide a picture of the process of family reunification and reintegration from the child's perspective;
b) to help define the factors affecting the success and failure of reunification and reintegration; and
c) to examine the role of various partners, and that of SCF in particular, in family reunification and reintegration.

Two additional sections are included. One section centres around follow-up and another section offers some comments on research with unaccompanied children.

Overall picture of the process of family reunification and reintegration from the child's perspective
Children were interviewed in order to gain a picture of their perspective on the process of separation, reunification and reintegration.

More than half reunified children (53.4%) are between 12 and 15 years of age.
Since most separations took place in 1994 and 1995, most reunified children were between 9 and 13 years old at time of separation. This information highlights the fact that fewer reunification have taken place with young children and adolescents.

Those agencies such as SCF that work with young unaccompanied children in centres encounter difficulties in tracing and reunifying young children because they can not remember where they came from. Adolescents may prefer to live independently away from their families. Veale et al. (1997) reported that Rwandan street children tend to be older than street children from other developing countries, and that almost all of them went to the street after the 1994 genocide and migration. It could be inferred that one group of unaccompanied children who have not been reunified are working on the street.

More than half of the children have been reunified with a member of the nuclear family, and almost a third with a relative. Family members confirm that over half reunifications occurred with the family with whom the child used to live before separation.

Generally, children are happy to have been reunified and thankful to the agency or social worker for having brought them back to their families. Family members with whom children have been reunified confirm that generally there is good harmony within the family. They say that the child's behaviour is good when compared to that of other children, that there are no

changes in the behaviour of the child after reunification, and that there are no problems in the family after reunification. The child is calm and he/she receives what he/she needs.

Reunification may be working out because circumstances that led to separation were involuntary and external while those that lead to reunification were voluntary. In other words, it was not abandonment, family disharmony or voluntary flight that led to separation but involuntary separation due to war. As part of the process of tracing and reunification, the child is asked if he/she wants to be together with the family member, relative or friend who has been traced. Reunification is then a voluntary choice on the part of the child.

There are however challenges to be overcome, for both the reunified child and the family. When asked to describe life before separation and after reunification, most of the comments expressed by the children (129) refer to life having being better before separation took place. More or less equal percentages of comments refer to life being better psychologically, economically, health-wise and educationally. A small number of comments refer to life being worse before separation (18), and most remarks refer to economic deprivation.

Most comments about life after reunification describe it as being worse (86) than life before reunification. The highest percentages of comments refer to psychological and economic factors. A lower number of comments describe life after reunification as being better than life before reunification (50). Percentages refer to, in decreasing order, psychological, economic, health and educational dimensions.

The number of household chores mentioned by children as being performed by them before separation was 190, and that after reunification, raised to 207. Family members underestimate them greatly. They reported that children used to engage in 64 chores before separation and 124 after reunification. The strain on families is seen in the increase number of tasks reported by both children and family members but children generally reported a greater number of household chores performed by them than their family members, highlighting the greater burden felt by children.

Poverty is mentioned by family members as a major preventing factor for the success of reintegration. At the same time, almost 80% of those interviewed said that their economic status has not been affected by the presence of the reunified child. The child is not seen as an additional burden to the family. Interventions should then aim at poverty alleviation for the family and the community rather than to individual assistance for the reunified child.

Changes in children' s behaviours were noticed by family members during focussed-group discussions, and they were attributed to experiences undergone during the interim period. They commented that it is difficult to re-educate children who have spent a long time in centres, or those who enjoyed freedom outside the supervision of an adult.

In summary, while life before separation is described as having been good, comments about life after reunification are mixed, and many remarks refer to worsening conditions. It is worth noting that the interim period between time of separation and reunification, which as the children said they spent with foster families or in centres, has possibly affected their

perception of life. It would be interesting to assess the type and extent of changes undergone by the children while away from their families. Such information would help to assess the best interim solution for unaccompanied minors, one that would favour reintegration.

Achieving successful family reunification and reintegration
Family reintegration is defined as the child's reunification with natural parents, relatives or foster families, according to local authorities. It is achieved when the family is capable of providing for the child's survival. For SCF, reunification is the technical term used to define the last step in the process of Identification, Documentation, Tracing and Reunification. Reunification involves bringing children and families together, but it does not necessarily mean reintegration, which has a broader meaning to include the social, economic, and psychological well-being of the child inside the family.

Family members and local authorities take in consideration this broader definition of reintegration when they comment that successful reintegration occurs when there is harmony in the family. Comments from children indicate that life after reunification is mixed, while family members comment on the general good behaviour of the child and the fact that child has been integrated in the family.

Local authorities and family members say that reintegration is better achieved when there is follow-up and assistance. Family members also insist on good-will, while local authorities say that it has greater chances of success when it occurs between the child and the natural family. Local authorities list a number of factors that will promote successful reintegration. Amongst them there are: training on information gathering, follow-up, and advanced preparation for the family and the child before reunification.

Lack of follow-up is mentioned again by both family members and local authorities when discussing hindering factors for the achievement of successful reintegration. The other factors mentioned most frequently by local authorities are: personal interest on the part of those who take in the child, family disharmony, and lack of information about the child. Family members mention poverty and lack of goodwill. While family members mention poverty, acceptance of the child has not changed their economic status.

Reintegration presents its challenges. One third of family members observed negative changes in the behaviour of the child, namely increased sickness, anxiety, and wish to return to a centre. Almost half of the family members reported having difficulties in responding to the needs of the child and in caring for the child. During group discussions, family members verbalise their worries that the child may have lost the culture and they are afraid he/she might not be accepted inside the family. They have noticed changes in character and reckon that there is a need to re-educate the child. Some family members said that confronted with such challenges, they do not know what to do.

Role of partners in family reunification and reintegration
The role played by the partners in family reunification, and by SCF in particular, is appraised positively by children, family members and local authorities. Comments generally begin with

a word of gratitude for the work done and with the wish that tracing and reunification activities continue. Local authorities elaborate that the family reunification program is based on generosity and it helps to reunify families.

Local authorities see themselves as having an active role in family reunification, in terms of provision of information to facilitate reunification, community sensitisation on the importance of living in a family, advocacy for the respect of the child's rights, and co-ordination. A content analysis of their answers indicate that local authorities see NGOs' involvement especially during tracing and reunification while they see themselves actively involved after reunification

Recommendations for the future role of agencies, and of SCF in particular, are put forward by family members and local authorities. Their comments can be summarised into four main areas of potential involvement: provision of material assistance and sustainable development, support to local leaders in their efforts at mobilising and sensitising the community, implementation of follow-up, and engagement towards greater collaboration amongst agencies, authorities and community. It is worth noting that the most frequently reported wish expressed by children is to be visited by the agent or agency involved in their reunification. A similar need is manifested by family members, who, during both individual interviews and group discussions, explicit their need for advise and assistance.

The need for some type of follow-up frequently emerges during interviews and focussed-group discussions. An interest in understanding issues around follow-up had also emerged during the pilot study, leading the inclusion of some specific questions on follow-up. What follows is a summary of the main issues around follow-up.

Follow-up
Over eighty percent of family members of reunified children report that follow-up is not done. As a result, SCF is not aware of how children cope, and confidence in the agency decreases. During focussed-group discussions, they comment that if follow-up is not done, SCF will miss out on information potentially helpful to improve the program, reunified families feel that SCF does not consider them important, and that SCF is not serious. When follow-up is done, problems are identified and families are supported.

Local authorities are generally aware that efforts are being made to support vulnerable individuals in general, if not reunified families in particular. Activities specifically conducted with families of reunified children consist of registration and follow-up. When follow-up is not conducted, information, advice and material assistance are not provided, and trust in the partner declines.

The need for some kind of follow-up is mentioned by children, family members and local authorities. But what is the best type of follow-up? Children wish for follow-up to be first of all a visit by the agent or agency that reunified them. The kind of follow-up suggested by children is characterised as being informal and individual. It is not a direct request for material assistance. A request for aid is also expressed by some children; furthermore, it is worth mentioning that 'wish to receive visit', in the Rwandan contest, might also be an

indirect request for support. However, the fact that many children mention that they would like to see again the social worker who reunified them to thank him/her, would lead to interpret follow-up as the child's wish for personal attention and emotional support.

Family members mention their need for advise as children encounter problems after reunification, and counsel on how to deal with traumatised children.

Based on the information offered by children and family members, follow-up could be implemented through visits to families or through a local counselling service.

More detailed recommendations on how to conduct follow-up are put forward by local authorities. They say that there is a need to set up a formal program for conducting follow-up and that the aim of follow-up should be to gather information and to provide assistance. When conducting follow-up, there should be collaboration amongst partners, mobilisation and sensitisation should be put in place, committees should be created, and an inventory of the emerging problems should be put into place.

Research with unaccompanied children
This research aimed at obtaining the views on family reunification by children, family members and local authorities. Not all partners involved in family reunification, such as Ngos, local associations and the community, have been contacted. However, efforts were made to obtain the views of more than one group of individuals, thus aiming at covering broader spectrum of opinions. Furthermore, it was mainly beneficiaries, and in particular children, whose views were sought.

This study also attempted to use different instruments to cross-check information (individual interviews with family members and focussed-group discussions) and to expand the type of information gathered.

The main limitation of this research is given by the lack of a comparative design. Only information about reunified children and their families has been gathered. The conditions and views of children in centres, those in foster families, or those who have left their family after reunification, are not available. As reported in the method, some children who had originally been selected were not found, and this raises the need for an update of the database and questions as to whether these children are still with the families or not. It is therefore recommended that a comparative study be planned.

The socio-demographic information about reunified children indicates that reunified children are mostly between 12 and 15 years old. What happens to young children and to adolescents? It is recommended that research into these age groups be planned.

Both children and family members indicate that the child's perception of life after family reunification might have been affected by the life the children led in the interim period after separation and before reunification. Future research in situations of complex emergency should attempt to address this issue.

CHAPTER FIVE

Recommendations and Conclusion

Introduction
Recommendations are organized according to information received from participants, the children, family members, and local authorities.

Children
- It is recommended that, in situations of emergency and mass migration, identification measures, be implemented as soon as possible, especially for younger children. They are better able to recall geographical features (such as the presence of a river nearby), individuals, or events soon after the event than years later.

- It is recommended that in complex emergencies, efforts to achieve reunifications, especially for younger children, be conducted in the immediately aftermath of the acute emergency instead of putting them in centers.

- It is recommended that qualitative and quantitative assessment of the impact of reunification be developed and utilized.

- It is recommended that research be conducted to assess the extent of child labor within the family after reunification of unaccompanied children.

- It is recommended that research be conducted on the experience of children after separation and before reunification.

- It is recommended that at least one follow-up visit to the child be conducted after reunification.

Parents
- It is recommended that follow-up be not done in a uniform way but that it be diversified according to the type of reunification. Follow-up should be more in-depth in case of reunification with relatives or friends that with the natural family.

- Conduct a survey on the extent of child labor in the reunified families, and if necessary conduct a sensibilization campaign.

Local authorities
- While the IDTR has become a tool for reunification, it is recommended that Reintegration be considered as another phase of process.

- Training for youth workers and community leaders should incorporate Reintegration in its content.

- It is recommended that efforts be made to assess the process of reunification not only quantitatively (number of reunified children) but also qualitatively (quality of reintegration).

- It is recommended that support for reunification and aid to families be prioritized over support to centers.

- Some form of follow-up is recommended. Participants express different views on follow-up. For children follow-up could be a visit, for family members some form of counseling or targeted assistance, for Rwandan authorities sustainable programs. It is recommended that at least one visit after reunification be conducted.

- Given that programs for reunifying children with foster families are underway, it is recommended that follow-up be included as an integral part of the process of reintegration.

- One of the concerns of the participants was that children be taken in for personal gain. It is recommended that the role of personal profit (inheritance rights) be assessed and ruled out as a factor in the reunification of a child with a natural or foster family.

- Assistance to reunified families is recommended both in terms of follow-up with reunified families specifically and general assistance to vulnerable groups.

- Assist local authorities in defining their roles in family reunification. Who does follow-up or who does sensitization? Given the fact the representatives from Migefaso see their Ministry as having the coordinating role, it is recommended that Migefaso organizes a workshop to discuss responsibilities and roles.

- It is recommended that integrated programs (income-generation, educational support and medical assistance) be planned for reunified families and the community.

- It is recommended that reporting structures be defined and communicated to partners by the government.

- It is recommended that sensitization campaigns be conducted to raise awareness on the role of natural and foster families, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- It is recommended that training on the Convention of the Rights of the Child include discussions not only on the importance of the family in general but also of the family after reunification of unaccompanied children.
- It is recommended that local authorities assume the leading coordinating role in follow-up to ensure continuity and closer monitoring. To achieve this goal, structures need to be set up at the local level and human and material resources for follow-up need to be allocated.

Conclusion

This research has attempted to provide an insight about family reunification and reintegration from the perspective of some of the actors involved in the process. It is hoped that this research will be used as a reference for future work with unaccompanied children, and that it will assist agencies in planning better programs for unaccompanied children.

References

Brown, M. (1995). Family tracing and reunification case study: Rwanda. *In Children Separated by War: Family Tracing and Reunification. Conference Report*, pp. 15-35. London: Save the Children (UK).

Government of Rwanda (1995). *Regulations for Centers Caring for Separated Children*. Kigali, Rwanda: Government of Rwanda.

Minitraso, Unicef, Barakabaho, SCF-USA, (1996).*Seminaire Atelier sur la Promotion du Suivi a Base Communautaire des Enfants Vulnerables*. Unpublished document.

Ressler, E.M., Boothby, N. and Steinbock, D. J. (1988). *Unaccompanied Children: Care and Protection in Wars, natural Disasters, and Refugee Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Save the Children (1994). *Family Tracing: A Good Practice Guide. Development Manual 3*. London: Save the Children.

Umutoni Nyinawumwami, C. (1995). The Government of the Republic of Rwanda Report. *In Children Separated by War: Family Tracing and Reunification. Conference Report*, pp. 122-124. London: Save the Children (UK).

Unicef (1997). *Children and Women of Rwanda: A Situation Analysis of Social Sectors.* Kigali: Unicef.

Unicef (March 1995). *Children of Rwanda*. Unpublished bulletins, Kigali: Unicef.

Veale, A., Muramutsa, F., Iyakereme, I., Dona, G., Mukakizima, B., & Kalinganire, C. (1997). *Situation Analysis of Street Children in Rwanda*. Mijescafop, Unicef, Italian Cooperation, University College Cork.

Research team

University College Cork (UCC)
Research team
DONA', Giorgia
KALINGANIRE, Charles
KEFYALEW, Firew
MUKAKIZIMA, Bernardine
MURAMUTSA, Felix

Save the Children (UK)
Data Collectors and Key informants
BISETSA Augustin,
BOWLEY, Chris
BRODY, Deborah
GASIRABO, Gilberte
KAMBANDA Vedaste
KIRENGA, Jeoffrey
MASHARIKI, Patient
MUGOREWINDEKWE Daphrose
UMUHIRE Jean-Paul
BIZIMANA Augustin
MUYOBOKE Jacqueline
MWAMBALI Canisius
NDEKWE, Martin
NEILSON, Russell
NSHIMIYIMA Aimable
ROMKEMA, Hans
RUBANDAMIRERA Pascal
RWAKA Marcellin
SHYAKA Jean
BAYIGAMBA Evode
USAYISANGA Marie Odette
UWAGAGA Rosine
UWAMAHORO Rosette
UWAMPINKA, Chantal