



MISSING PERSONS PROJECT

WORKING TOGETHER TO ADDRESS
A GLOBAL HUMAN TRAGEDY

A HUMAN TRAGEDY

Hundreds of thousands of people are missing around the world as a result of armed conflict, violence, migration and natural disasters. Some go missing in action. Others are forcibly disappeared. And thousands lose contact with their loved ones as they flee fighting or seek a better life elsewhere. Many never return and are never heard from again.

Disappearance is a global problem that has devastating, often long-lasting consequences for families, communities and entire societies. Yet in many cases, efforts to stop people from disappearing, or to find those who have gone missing, lack resources or political will.



A GLOBAL CHALLENGE: SOME EXAMPLES



In COLOMBIA, an estimated 79,000 people have gone missing during an internal conflict spanning five decades.



In IRAQ, sources place the number of people who went missing in 2003–2013 at between 250,000 and 1 million.



In SOUTH SUDAN, more than 10,000 children have been registered as unaccompanied, separated or missing.



And in 2018 alone, the International Organization for Migration estimates that 1,741 people – or more than four people a day – have died or gone missing crossing the MEDITERRANEAN.



OUR PROJECT AIMS

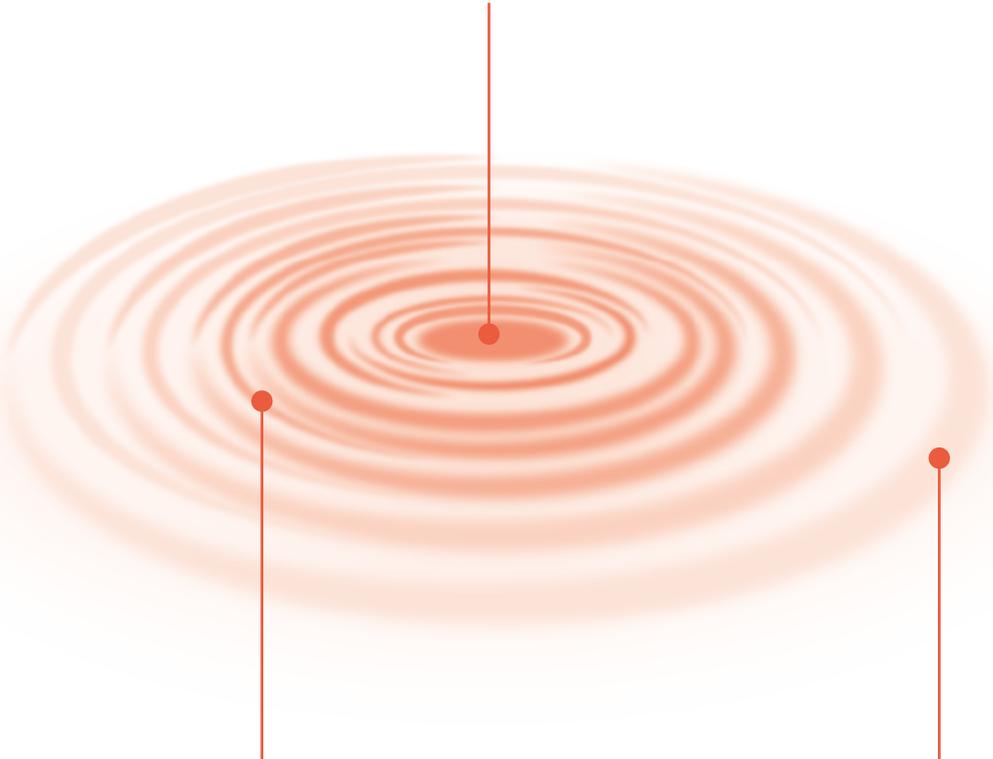
Stopping people from disappearing, finding those who have gone missing and supporting the families affected are all immensely challenging tasks. No two sets of circumstances – geographical, social or political – are the same. In some places, practitioners have come up with workable solutions. In others, they struggle to get effective responses off the ground. And they often work in isolation, with little contact with their peers elsewhere.

We want to change that.

The Missing Persons Project is a new community of practice for everyone involved in tackling the problem of missing people – practitioners, experts, institutions, States and families. Together, we will compare experiences, share information and advice, and develop technical standards and best practice that can be applied anywhere in the world.

THE WIDER IMPACT

Having a loved one go missing can take a heavy emotional and material toll on families, sometimes for generations. Family members can experience severe psychological suffering linked to the uncertainty about the fate of a loved one. Losing the main breadwinner can leave households struggling to make ends meet. And in some countries, relatives of missing people find it hard to remarry, claim their inheritance, receive benefits and generally rebuild their lives because they face legal and administrative hurdles.



Missing people are more than just individuals. They are also part of ethnic, religious, political and other communities that can struggle to cope with the loss of an important member.

Sometimes, when people disappear, the impact of that loss is felt beyond communities and across the entire society, endangering peace and reconciliation efforts – often for decades after their disappearance.

Oude's son Ibrama went missing in 2004, when he was 25. He left Senegal for Morocco, where he called to tell his family that he was leaving on a boat to Spain. "Pray for me," were his last words. "We knew the trip takes two or three days, but we never heard from him again," says Oude. He left two children behind, who are now in Oude's care.



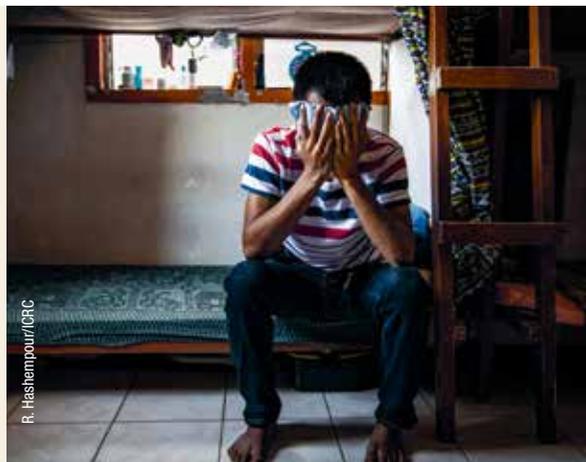
J. Candam/CRC



B. Hofman/CRC

Natalia still doesn't know what happened to her son Sasha, who disappeared during the crisis in Ukraine in spring 2014. She clings to the box of her son's favourite model ship like she clings to the hope that he'll come home. Living in uncertainty and being denied the chance to mourn a missing loved one has a severe emotional, social and financial impact.

Fighting in 2017 in the southern Philippines drove 230,000 people to flee their homes. Like many others, this man lost contact with his parents: "We ended up taking refuge in a house with 50 other people. Then my parents decided to return home. That was the last time I saw them. It's like I keep on looking for something that's gone missing but never find it. That's the most painful thing."



R. Heshempour/CRC



Family organizations



Civil society organizations



States



International organizations



Experts



Academic institutions

OUR COMMUNITY

No single person or organization can tackle this problem alone. Experts and practitioners must work hand in hand with families, States, international organizations and others to stop people from disappearing, find those who have gone missing and support the people affected. That's why we plan to build a community around the Missing Persons issue.

In particular, we will launch an online platform where all those working on this issue can share expertise, experience and information with their peers, work on joint initiatives and solutions, and give the issue the full attention it deserves.



A. Romenzi/CRC

We will hold a series of workshops around the world to map prevention, tracing and support practices and to identify where standards, tools and best practices can fill existing gaps. Our aim will be to answer a number of fundamental questions:



What are the most effective ways to collect and manage information about where missing people might be and what happened to them?



How can we best deliver the psychosocial, legal and financial support that missing people's families need?



What forensic standards and best practice can help us better analyse and identify mortal remains and solve missing person cases?



How can we prevent migrants from going missing, and how can we find, share and analyse relevant data to help us find them when they do?

If you would like to learn more about the project or find out how you can get involved, please write to us at:
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