



HATEYMALO ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAM

ICRC'S COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT PROGRAM TO THE FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS IN NEPAL



ICRC

IN BRIEF



ICRC

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“ If we stay at home, we feel bad, so it’s nice to come together in the group sessions. We can share our problems with one another. We feel lighter in the meeting. ”

Relative of a missing person



INTRODUCTION

More than 1,380 people remain unaccounted for since the 10-year armed conflict ended in 2006. Many families do not know whether their missing relatives are dead or alive. Other families have learnt about the death of their family members but still yearn to know where their loved-ones are buried and to recover their remains. These families live with the pain caused by uncertainty and are unable to grieve.

To help these families, the ICRC has worked on clarifying the fate of their relatives during and after the armed conflict. In 2010, the ICRC launched an accompaniment program called Hateymalo. While providing psychosocial

support to the families of missing persons, the ICRC in collaboration with national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) delivers psychological, economical, legal/administrative and socio-cultural support to them. With support groups being at the core of its multi-faceted interventions, the program helps families cope with their specific problems and rebuild social and community bonds.

Currently, the Hateymalo Program is operational in 16 districts in partnership with national NGOs, NRCS, and Heifer International. (See the map on inside back cover).



QUICK FACTS

Pilot phase (2010 Aug—2012 June), phased out

- 267 families
- in 28 VDCs (sub-districts)
- 1 implementing partner NGO
- 15 accompaniers
- 2 supervisors

1st expansion (2011 March-2013 June), phased out

- 348 families
- in 110 VDCs
- 5 implementing partner NGOs
- 32 accompaniers
- 10 supervisors

2nd expansion on-going since November 2011

- 126 families
- in 50 VDCs
- 2 implementing partner NGOs
- 12 accompaniers
- 4 supervisors

3rd expansion On-going since March 2013

- 252 families
- in more than 150 VDCs
- 9 implementing NRCS DCs and 1 NGO partner
- 22 accompaniers
- 9 supervisors
- 5 Admin and Finance Assistant
- 9 focal people from NRCS District Chapters



CHALLENGES FOR THE FAMILIES OF THE MISSING

Under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, families have the right to know about the fate of their missing relatives, including their whereabouts. If their relatives are dead, they have a right to know the circumstances of their death, and the place of burial if known. These families also need a proof of death to perform the final rites that are supposed to liberate the soul of the dead person, and to begin the grieving process.

Families of missing persons are usually facing economic hardships aggravated by the disappearance of their relative. In

particular, many families have no land or very small pieces of land, they live in small houses if they have one and have limited and unsustainable sources of income. In Nepal, 90% of the people still missing are men. Elderly parents and wives have lost their main bread winner and are economically vulnerable. Children who have to live without their father are often subject to discrimination by other children.

The uncertainty about the fate of their relative, the guilt, self-blame, anger, loss of interest in important areas of life can lead to depression, anxiety, physical pain, intra-

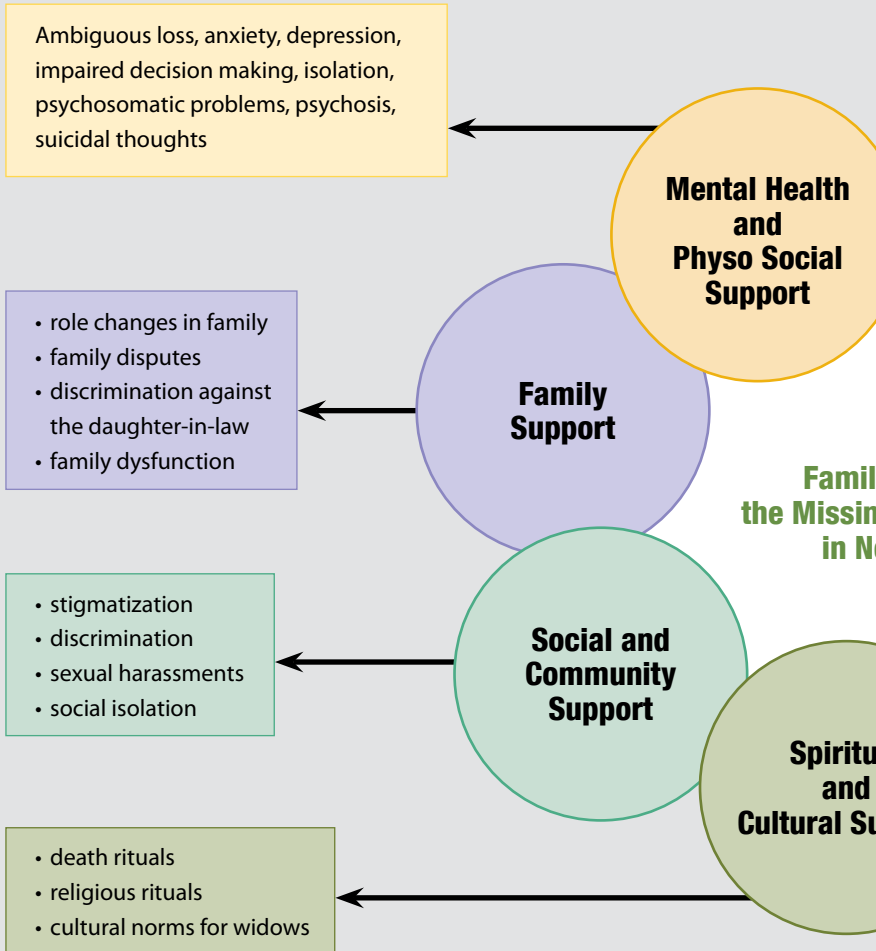


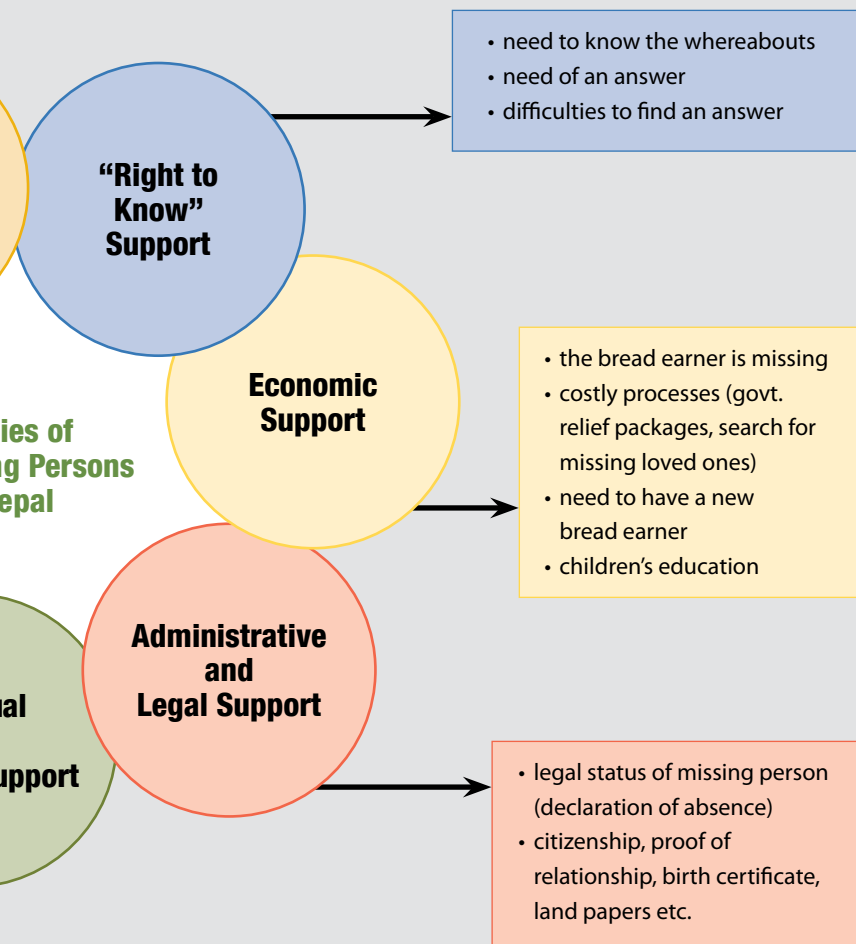
family disputes and even suicidal thoughts. In addition to these psychological consequences, families also face difficulties in relating with their community, which affects their daily lives. Wives of missing persons are particularly stigmatized. Society expects them to behave and dress as widows, which most wives do not accept. Other women in the community may consider them as threats, and men may perceive them as sexually available. Within the family circle, they lose their position and are often perceived as just an extra mouth to feed. They cannot inherit their husband's property and going back to their

parents is not culturally and economically accepted. Finally, families of the missing face severe legal and administrative problems i.e. related to inheritance, the transfer or registration of land, difficulties to obtain loans or citizenship. Such issues are aggravated because missing persons do not have a legal status.

The Hateymalo program seeks to address all these closely interconnected psychological, socio-cultural, economic and relational issues.

NEEDS OF THE FAMILI







THE HATEYMALO PROGRAM

The ICRC trains interested and motivated non-professionals/volunteers (the so-called companions) on a number of skills that enables them to facilitate or organise most of the support groups' activities. These companions also facilitate the referral of families of the missing to various service providers for specific needs.

a. Social and Community Support

In order to reduce the stigma and marginalization of the families, awareness and sensitization programs are carried out among the communities. For example, street theatres and art events depict the plight of the families of missing persons. At district level, the companions help families of the missing to be in contact with public services or organisations that can support them.

b. Family Support

To minimize potential conflicts within the family circle, companions run information sessions to reduce intra-family disputes. In some cases, families are referred to organizations specialized in mediation, or to village leaders to help them resolve disputes. The companions inform the families of governmental interim relief packages and ensure they benefit from these. They also refer them to appropriate service providers depending on their needs.



c. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Accompaniers run support group sessions for wives, mothers and fathers from families of missing persons, to share their common suffering and grief. The most vulnerable people, or those who are unable to attend these group sessions, receive home visits and individual counselling support through trained counsellors. In certain exceptional situations, members of families of missing persons can develop suicidal feelings, or suffer from severe depression, anxiety or psychosis. In these cases, accompaniers can refer them to institutions that provide specialized mental health care.

A SOLIDARITY NETWORK TO HELP THE FAMILIES

A single organization cannot address all the needs of the families. Channelling resources from multiple service providers is the only way to respond to these needs effectively. Hence, the Hateymalo Program has built a solidarity network for other organizations to include families of the missing persons in their assistance programs.

At national level, the solidarity network comprises Helvetas Employment Fund, the Center for Mental Health and Counselling (CMC), the Mental Hospital in Lagankhel, and Sahakarmi Samaj in Banke. At district level, governmental, non-governmental and traditional organisations work together to address the challenges faced by the families of missing persons. Heifer International and the ICRC have collaborated together to improve the livelihood of 615 families of missing persons as well as 400 economically vulnerable families in 13 districts.



d. Spiritual and Cultural Support

During the group sessions, families generally express the desire to keep the memory of their loved ones alive. They decide which type of commemoration is most appropriate for them and for the missing person. Religious events/rituals take place to give peace to the soul of the missing person, whether dead or alive. Public spaces such as community buildings, waiting areas, and water wells are constructed in the name of the missing persons and inaugurated in the presence of the communities. Apart from helping the families of the missing find some comfort, this helps them gain recognition and solidarity.

e. “Right to Know” Support

The ICRC approaches all former parties to the conflict in order to clarify the fate of missing persons. In addition, the ICRC liaises with other organizations that have collected information on disappearances. Finally, with the support of the Nepal Red Cross, the ICRC conducts field visits and meets with local authorities and neighbouring communities in order to gather any available information on the whereabouts of missing people. The ICRC also supports the National Network of Families of Disappeared and Missing Nepal (NEFAD). NEFAD also provides valuable contribution in providing support to the families of the missing as far as their right to know is concerned.



f. Economic Support

Most of the families of missing persons live in rural areas and are farmers. The ICRC partners with Heifer International to provide them with economical support such as farm and animal management training and distribution of livestock (goats and pigs) and seeds. Based on the Heifer International principle of “passing on the gift”, all beneficiaries give an off-spring of their livestock to another vulnerable family. The families who want to join income generation training are referred to governmental and non-governmental organizations that provide these services.

g. Administrative and Legal Support

Hateymalo accompaniers assist families of the missing in obtaining administrative documents such as birth certificates or proof of relationship and government assistance, in particular interim relief packages at district level. Follow-ups are conducted at ministerial levels in Kathmandu to facilitate bureaucratic processes. Families facing complicated legal issues are referred to organizations providing free legal services.

ICRC HATEYMALO PROGRAM PARTNERS

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Kathmandu Valley

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Dang

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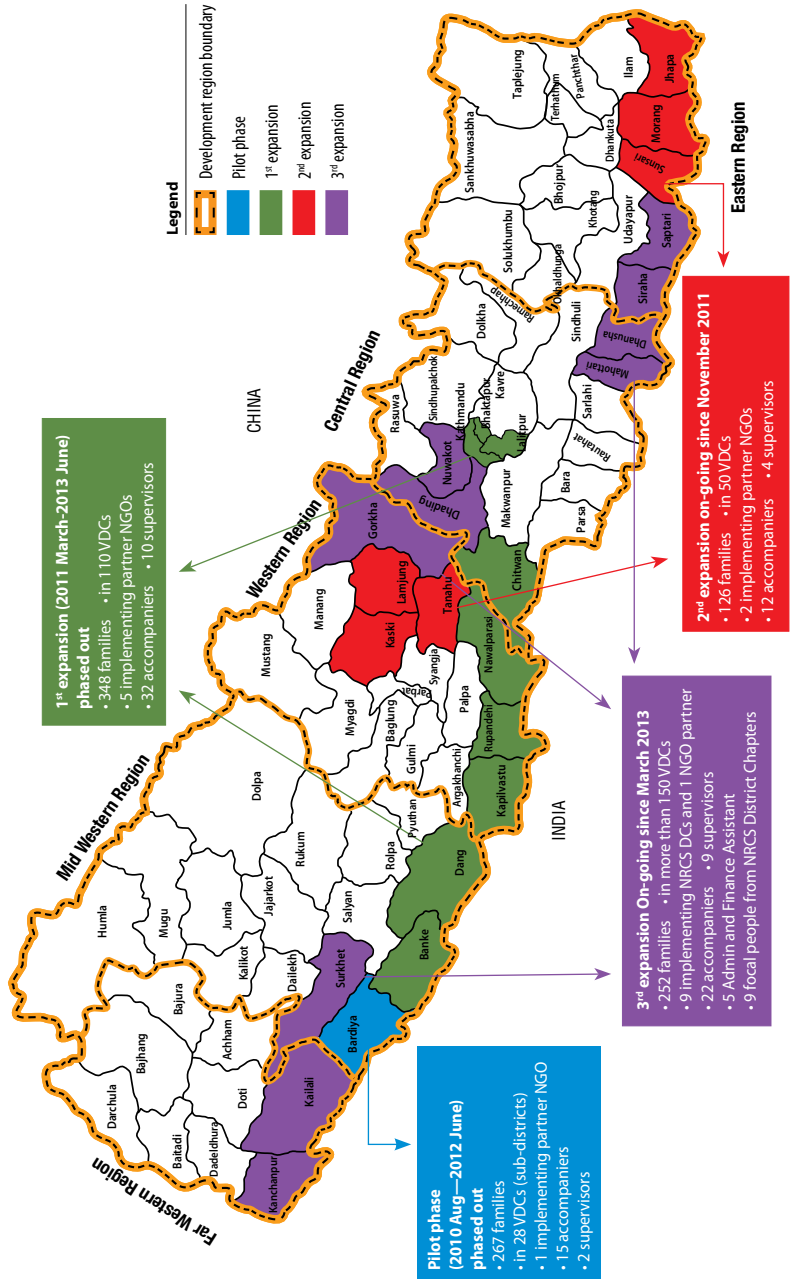
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NRCS Kanchanpur

Tel: 099-523983/525588

ICRC HATEYMALO ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAM (2010-2015)



MISSION

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.

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