Community Sentiment and the Importance of Community Voices in Disaster Recovery



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Australian Red Cross

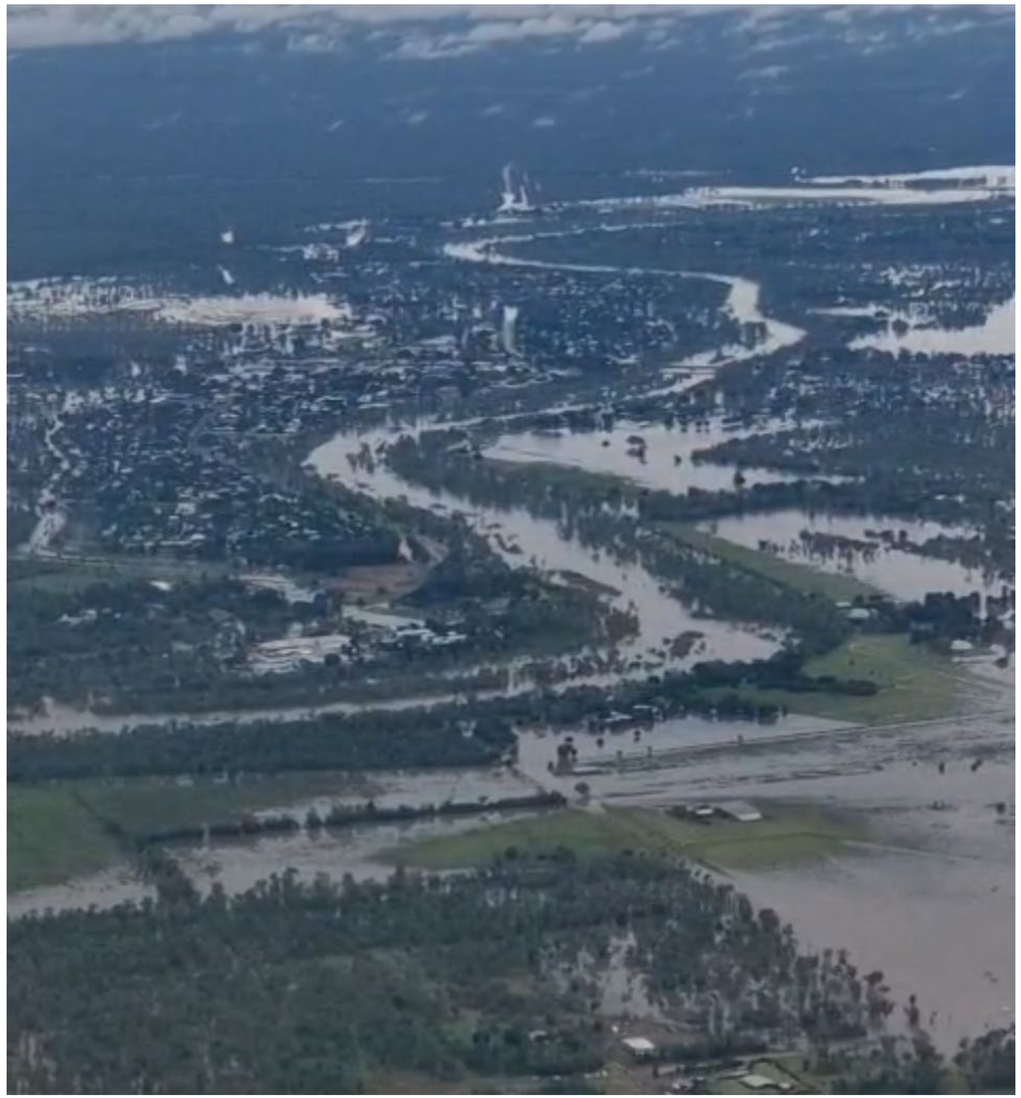


Australian Red Cross acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this land, their ancestors and Elders, past and present.

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Understanding Community Sentiment

- More than public opinion
- Trust in institutions
- Confidence in the future.
- Lived experiences.
- Sense of safety.
- Feeling of belonging.
- Hope and optimism for the future



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Lessons from Past Disasters

- **Communities know best**
- **Local knowledge – better decisions**
- **Listen early, recover better**
- Recovery should reflect:
  - **Local priorities**
  - **Community experience**
  - **Existing strengths**
- **Work with communities, not to them**
- **Community-led recovery delivers stronger outcomes**



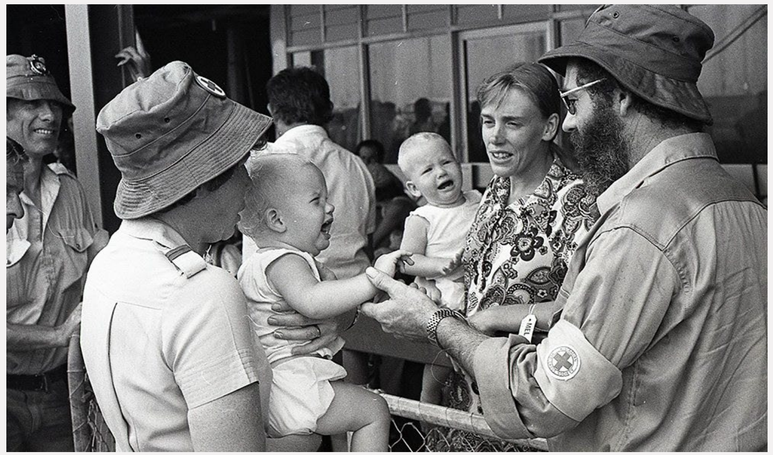


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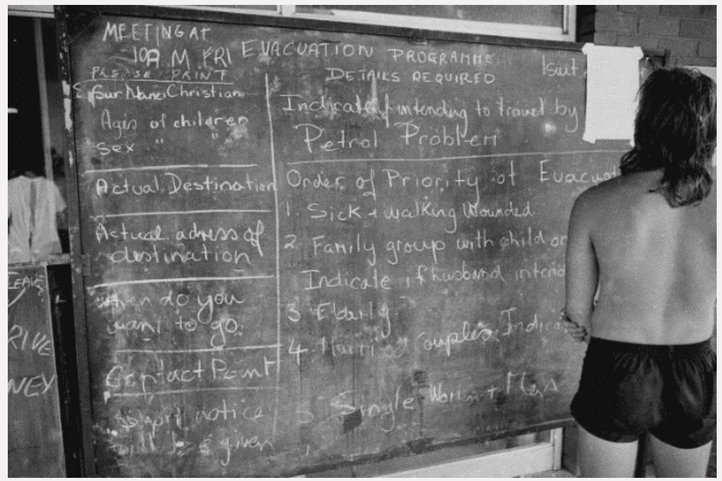
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Cyclone Tracy 24 December 1974

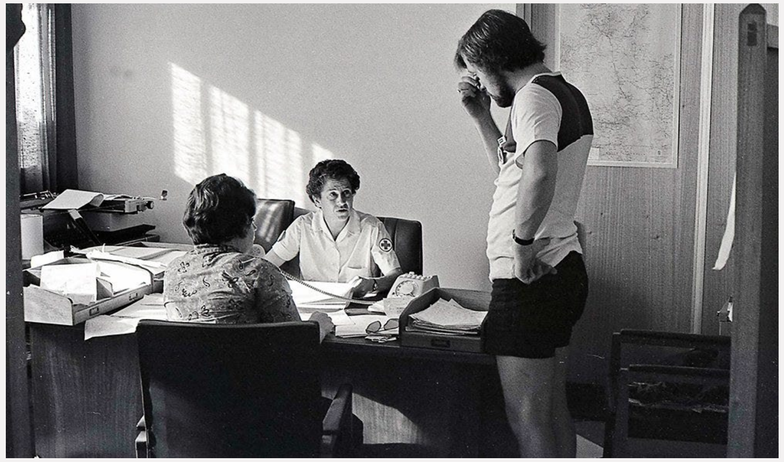
Cyclone Tracy in 1974 was one of Australia's worst natural disasters and led to its greatest peacetime evacuation and reconstruction effort.











Picture credit: Ramon A Williams/ Worldwide Photos

Why Community Voices Matter

- Local insight improves decisions
- Builds trust and confidence
- Shapes effective recovery
- Strengthens resilience
- Creates recovery partners, not recipients
- Promotes ownership and inclusion





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Looking Forward

- Community-led recovery
- Partnerships drive better outcomes
- Locally informed, sustainable solutions
- Collaboration before, during, and after disasters
- Preparedness starts with listening





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Why is Community Voices Important?

Family separation is not just a consequence of emergencies. It is a driver of long-term harm.

PEOPLE NEED CERTAINTY

COMMUNICATION FAILS

SUPPORTS RECOVERY

Not knowing whether loved ones are safe can be one of the most distressing experiences during an emergency. When phones, internet and transport are disrupted, reunification becomes a critical recovery outcome.

BEYOND THE FLOODS

Separation from loved ones was identified as a risk factor for long term mental health impacts.

Restoring Family Links and Register.Find.Reunite. helps reduce uncertainty, reconnect loved ones and support community recovery.

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SAFETY TIPS FOR FAMILIES

#KeepFamilyTogether



Learn phone numbers and email address of your family members by heart

#KeepFamilyTogether



Memorize username and password for social media accounts

#KeepFamilyTogether



Communicate your intended route to family members

#KeepFamilyTogether



Inform family members in intervals about your journey and your locations

#KeepFamilyTogether



When traveling with children, help them memorize useful information, such as parents name

#KeepFamilyTogether



Look for a Red Cross or Red Crescent point immediately when losing contact with family members

#KeepFamilyTogether

Are you looking for a family member?
Please contact us (familylinks.icrc.org)

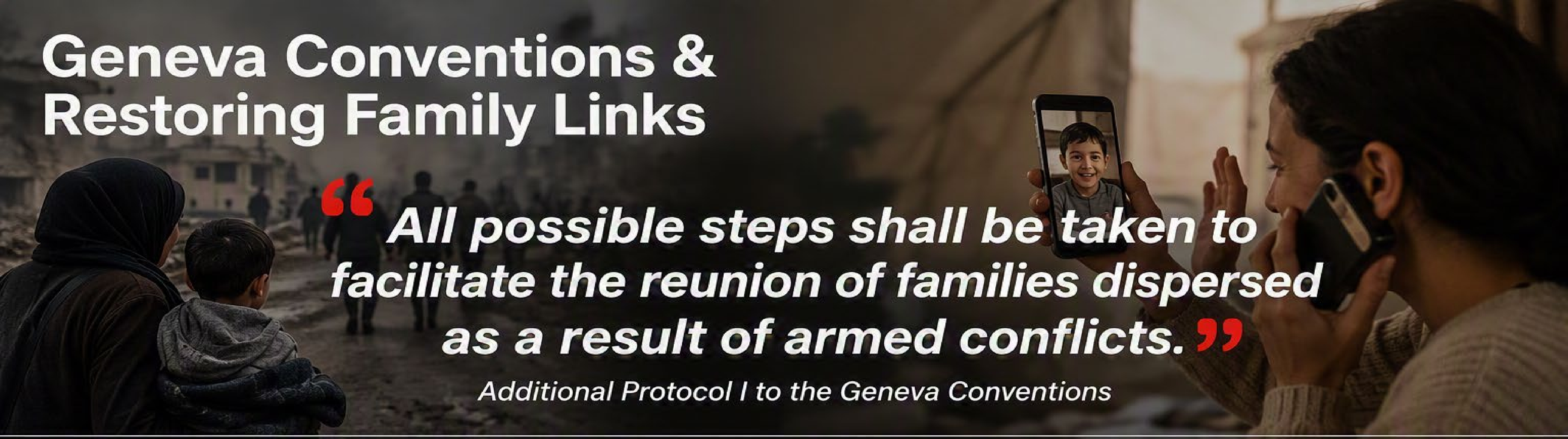
Produced in cooperation with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS

ICRC

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Geneva Conventions & Restoring Family Links



> ***"All possible steps shall be taken to facilitate the reunion of families dispersed as a result of armed conflicts."***
>
> *Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions*

Geneva Conventions

Provide the humanitarian foundation for protecting family links during conflict.

Tracing

Locate missing family members across borders and crises.

Restore Contact

Reconnect loved ones when normal communication channels fail.

Reunification

Support families to reconnect and recover together.

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Families have the right to know.

Families have the right to communicate.

Families have the right to be reunited.

Psycho-Social Impacts Beyond Borders



Photo Wall of the missing- Nepal 2026

Displacement can happen in an instant

Disasters can happen to anyone

What limits the impact is what happens next.

Through strong partnerships, coordinated action and the everyday strengths of our agencies, we can reduce disruption, minimise harm and help people reconnect with what matters most.

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Lessons Learned

Key Takeaway

- Listen to communities
- Respect local knowledge
- Share decision-making
- Support community leadership
- Recovery succeeds when communities lead





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Questions

Thank You

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