



ICRC

Restoring Family Links Strategy
(and implementation plan)

for the

**International Red Cross and Red
Crescent Movement**

(2008-2018)

Document prepared by the Central Tracing Agency
of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in consultation with National Societies and
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1. Vision and Introduction

Whenever people are separated from, or without news of, their loved ones as a result of armed conflict, other situations of violence, natural disaster or other situations requiring humanitarian response, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement responds efficiently and effectively by mobilizing its resources to restore family links.

Armed conflicts, other situations of violence, natural and man-made disasters, international migration and other hardships leave countless people seeking news of family members. Respect for family unity goes hand in hand with respect for human dignity. A person's well-being depends greatly on his/her ability to stay in touch with loved ones or at least receive information about what has happened to them. The various components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have been striving for decades to restore family links (RFL). This unique service, with the moral support it affords, lies at the heart of the Movement's work. Every year RFL benefits hundreds of thousands of people.

RFL is the generic term given to a range of activities that aim to prevent separation and disappearance, restore and maintain contact between families and clarify the fate of persons reported missing. These activities are often interconnected with the psychological, legal and material support to families and persons affected, resettlement or reintegration programmes and social welfare services. Other activities include the management of human remains and forensic identification.

The ICRC is strongly committed to helping people left without news of their relatives. In reaffirming and implementing the commitments it made at the International Conference of Governmental and Non-Governmental Experts on the Missing and their Families (2003) and as part of the Agenda for Humanitarian Action of the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (2003), the organization launched a global initiative to strengthen the Movement's ability to restore family links. The *RFL Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement* is the outcome of this initiative. It is also a reaffirmation of the ICRC's support for National Societies in meeting their RFL obligations, as defined in the Movement's Statutes and in resolutions adopted over the years by the Council of Delegates (CoD) and the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IC).

Today, the Family Links Network (comprising the Central Tracing Agency, the tracing agencies in ICRC delegations, and the National Societies tracing services) faces significant challenges. Across the Network there is insufficient understanding of the work of restoring family links and an inadequate sense of commitment and responsibility. When this is combined with the problem of scarce resources, the increasing scale and complexity of the situations requiring humanitarian action, and the growing number of other entities involved in this traditional field of Movement activity, great effort is needed if the various components of the Movement are to retain their high profile.

The ICRC, the National Societies and the International Federation all have a responsibility to build, strengthen and maintain the Family Links Network. The effectiveness of this unique international network depends on the components' ability to strengthen capacity, intensify cooperation and prioritize action. To address these issues, the Movement needs to take a more global approach to building capacities across the Network by:

- increasing National Society participation
- strengthening the operational efficiency of the ICRC and its partnership approach with National Societies in operational contexts
- greater cooperation between the ICRC and International Federation to support both the development of National Societies and their RFL activities.

The *RFL Strategy for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement* builds on the Movement's Statutes and on resolutions of the IC and of the CoD, and is underpinned by the Agreement on the Organization of the International Activities of the Components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Seville Agreement, CoD, November 1997) and its subsequent Supplementary Measures (CoD, Seoul, November 2005). The Strategy was not drawn up in a vacuum. It is based on the strengths and knowledge of individual National Society tracing services and the experience and expertise of the ICRC, and seeks to develop a consistent approach that will enhance RFL work, both locally and worldwide.

Effective change takes time and needs resources. The *RFL Strategy for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement* recognize the importance of the task and expresses the Movement's long-term commitment to shouldering it.

2. Restoring Family Links Strategy

2.1 Restoring family links and the role of the Movement's components

The RFL activities of the various components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in particular the ICRC and the National Societies, are drawn from the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Movement's Statutes, and the resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and those of the Council of Delegates. They are further based on resolutions of the International Federation's statutory meetings, together with the policy frameworks of the ICRC, individual National Societies and the International Federation.

Under international law, everyone has the right to know what has happened to missing relatives, and to correspond and communicate with members of their family from whom they have been separated. The main responsibility for ensuring that these rights are respected lies with authorities of the State (including armed security forces) and, in situations of armed conflict, any other organized armed groups. However, they may be unable or unwilling to do so.

The Movement's principal strength lies in its potential to provide a worldwide RFL Network and at the same time a grassroots network in each country that can apply the same principles and working methods. The Movement can thus achieve greater results than any other humanitarian organization in the world.

The relevant components of the Movement undertake RFL activities whenever required and for as long as needed, helping people who have loved ones unaccounted for or from whom they are separated as a consequence of specific situations such as:

- armed conflicts and other situations of violence;
- natural and man-made disasters;
- population movements including international migration;
- other situations requiring humanitarian response where the specific capacities and mandates of the components of the Movement and the Red Cross/Red Crescent principles represent added value.

RFL activities may take various forms, depending on the situation and context:

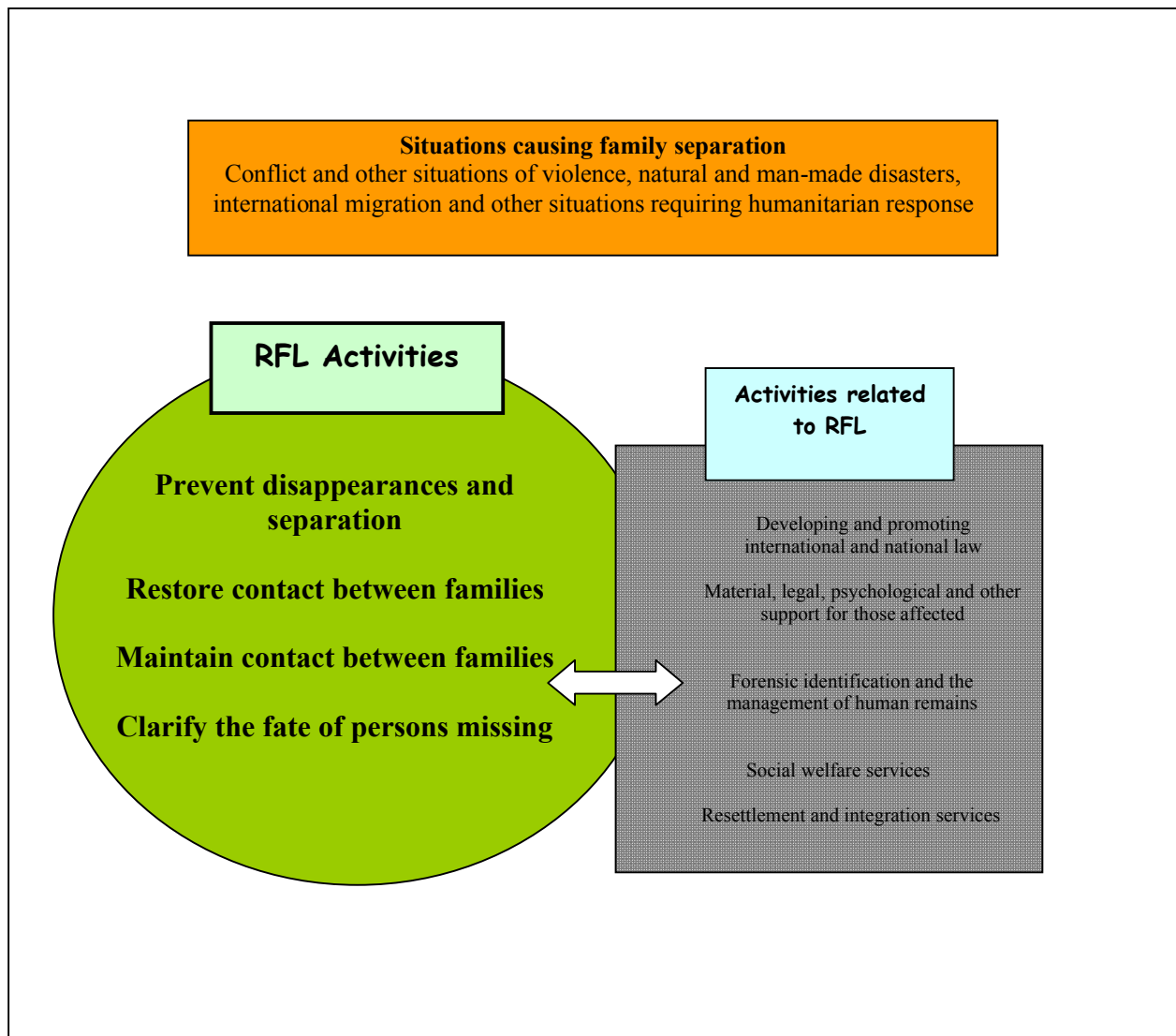
- organizing the exchange of family news;
- tracing individuals;
- registering and following up individuals (children or adults) to prevent their disappearance and to enable their families to be informed;
- reuniting families and repatriation;
- collecting, managing and forwarding information on the dead (location, recovery and identification);
- transmitting official documents, such as birth certificates, identity papers or various other certificates issued by the authorities
- issuing attestations of individual detention and documents attesting to other situations that led to individual registration;
- issuing ICRC travel documents;
- monitoring the integration of those reunited with their family members.
- promoting and supporting the establishment of mechanisms to clarify the fate of persons unaccounted for.

These activities imply regular contact and interventions with authorities on the right of relatives to communicate and be informed of each other's whereabouts or fate.

These activities relate to other activities including:

- developing and promoting international law and supporting its application including reform of existing law where needed;
- the management of human remains and forensic identification;
- the material, legal and psychological support to the families of missing persons;
- resettlement services or reintegration programmes for vulnerable groups where family reunification has failed or is not possible, such as street children;
- cases of successful reunification where however there may be a need of integration (e.g. children formerly affiliated with fighting forces);
- social welfare services.

Restoring Family Links



This requires a cross-disciplinary approach and almost always involves working with actors outside the Movement, including the private sector.

Protecting personal data and confidential handling of other sensitive information are crucial to people's safety. This must be kept in mind when using public information networks, forwarding data electronically, conducting active searches in the field and making use of other organizations or individuals.

The safety of Red Cross and Red Crescent workers must also be ensured.

The Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures re-emphasize the crucial importance of coordinating the efforts of the Movement's components to optimize assistance. They also confirm the organizational concept of a "lead role" based on specific competencies assigned to a component by the Geneva Conventions, the Movement's Statutes and/or resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The concept of lead role implies the existence of other partners with rights and responsibilities in these matters.

The role of the ICRC

As a neutral and independent organization, the ICRC has the role of protecting and assisting the victims of international and non-international armed conflict and other situations of violence. Article 5.3 of the Movement's Statutes expands this role to include other types of situations, and establishes a permanent basis on

which the ICRC can take any humanitarian initiative compatible with its status as a specifically neutral and independent organization and intermediary.

The ICRC has the important task of reminding authorities of their obligations under international humanitarian law and other relevant bodies of law with regard to family links, and carrying out direct action in the field when and for as long as required and possible. In this regard the ICRC takes a comprehensive approach to RFL and aims to prevent separation, restore and maintain contact between members of separated families, clarify what has happened to persons reported missing, and provide support for their families. Unaccompanied children separated from their families are of particular concern to the ICRC, given their vulnerability, as are other affected persons such as women acting alone as heads of households.

The part played by the ICRC in RFL is more precisely defined by the following instruments, including its lead role within the Movement:

- the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols;
- Statutes of the Movement (Article 5), and in particular Article 5.2(e) specifying that the ICRC must ensure the operation of the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) as stipulated by the Geneva Conventions;
- resolutions of the Movement's statutory bodies, in particular, the respective resolutions of the 25th and 26th International Conferences (Geneva, 1986 and 1995) which drew the attention of the States to the role of the ICRC and the CTA as coordinator and technical adviser to National Societies and governments;
- resolutions of the Council of Delegates, and the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures.

In addition to its operational responsibilities the ICRC, through the CTA, must coordinate, advise and strengthen the capacity of its partners within the Movement in RFL matters, whether in connection with a conflict or other situation of violence, natural or man-made disaster, international migration or other situations requiring a humanitarian response from the Movement.

The CTA promotes consistency within the Network and provides the National Societies with methods and guidelines.¹

As coordinator, the CTA decides what action is to be taken in armed conflict or other situations of violence. In other circumstances requiring an international effort it coordinates the activities of National Society tracing services to ensure the most effective possible response to RFL needs.

As technical adviser, the CTA establishes working practices for tracing services in all situations. Training seminars and regional meetings are held for the purpose of pooling experience and consolidating shared knowledge.

The role of National Societies

The functions of the National Societies are set out in Article 3 of the Movement's Statutes. They must carry out their humanitarian activities in conformity with their own statutes and national legislation and act as auxiliaries to their national authorities in the humanitarian field. In particular, their role is to assist the victims of armed conflict as stipulated by the Geneva Conventions, and the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies for whom help is needed (Art. 3.1. and 3.2). They contribute, as far as they are able, to the development of other National Societies (Art. 3.3). The Seville Agreement stresses that a National Society is responsible for its own development.

As outlined in Resolution XVI of the 25th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, National Societies have an important role as components of the international network for tracing and reuniting families. They must continue their work as long as needs exist, and this may extend well beyond the end of a conflict, natural or man-made disaster, or other emergency.

National Societies are also called upon to take action in accordance with the resolutions of regional Red Cross and Red Crescent conferences and the policy frameworks established within the International Federation. These cover migration as well as natural and man-made disasters.

¹ Such as the *Restoring Family Links: a guide for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies* (ICRC, November 2000) and the *Recommendations and Conclusions of the International Conference of Governmental and Non-Governmental Experts on the Missing and their Families* (2003).

In view of the Movement's responsibility for helping to preserve or restore the family unit, the National Societies need to incorporate their RFL activities in an overall plan of action. They must also draw the attention of the public, humanitarian agencies and governments to the existence and significance of their RFL activities.

Individual National Societies are responsible for setting up or consolidating an effective national RFL network. Depending on the circumstances, they must work with the CTA, the relevant ICRC delegations and/or the tracing services of other National Societies. They must decide what action is to be taken during national disasters, and may call on the ICRC where the RFL response is beyond their capacity.

The role of the Secretariat of the International Federation

The functions of the Secretariat of the International Federation are defined in Article 6 of the Movement's Statutes, and in the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures. The Secretariat has the lead role regarding the development of National Societies and coordinating support for those Societies in terms of institutional development.

Although the Movement's Statutes do not specifically mention the part played by the International Federation in RFL, the Federation Secretariat strives, in coordination with the ICRC, to have RFL activities included in National Society development plans and to ensure that disaster-preparedness and -response plans emphasize the role and importance of RFL.

In the event of a natural or man-made disaster, the Secretariat will ensure that assessments of the situation take into account the need for RFL and the degree to which the National Societies of affected countries can respond. The role of the Secretariat also includes liaising with the ICRC, particularly the CTA (so that the ICRC can play its lead role), and cooperation in the deployment of tracing delegates.

2.2 The status of the Family Links Network

To determine how the Movement will achieve its vision in RFL, it is necessary to understand the current capabilities of the National Society tracing services, the CTA and ICRC delegations, and to identify the key issues.

The capacities of the National Societies

In 2005, a global mapping exercise was initiated to assess the capacities of the National Society tracing services. Over a 12-month period, 154 National Societies completed an RFL assessment, often in consultation with ICRC delegations.

The capacity assessment considered five core areas:

- programme ownership;
- programme planning and organization;
- the skills and expertise needed to carry out and manage RFL activities;
- the network of relationships;
- tools and other resources needed to achieve professionalism and efficiency.

The assessment indicates that there is an overall lack of a sense of commitment to RFL activities within the National Societies. While some Societies see RFL as part of their responsibilities, generally RFL is not viewed as something that should be placed at the centre of the Movement's humanitarian response. While some National Societies are well able to conduct RFL activities, capacity across the Network is uneven and in some areas insufficient. Very few National Societies have assessed needs in terms of RFL. Such assessments are an important means of identifying individuals and populations requiring help and of supporting programme planning, resource allocation and service delivery.

While some National Societies have a good understanding of RFL and of the expertise needed to conduct and manage those activities, the majority could improve in this area. Programme tools and resources require further development if the National Societies are to fully provide professional and effective services. Without the knowledge, skills and material resources required to carry out RFL, it is impossible to meet the needs.

It is essential for a National Society to develop and maintain relationships with other components of the Movement, and to have contact with other humanitarian agencies and national authorities as well as affected individuals and populations, if it is to engage in strategic dialogue, develop targeted services and disseminate information. However, the majority of National Societies have few or no relationships of this sort, and have little or no regular contact with other components of the Movement regarding RFL, at either strategic or service delivery levels.

Overall, the capacity of National Society tracing services to identify and meet RFL needs is insufficient. The Movement faces significant challenges if it is to have a truly functional worldwide Network to help people who are without news of loved ones. However, strengths do exist within National Societies in all areas covered by the capacity assessment. The Network must capitalize on these strengths, making better use of information, skills, tools and resources to enhance the capacity of individual Societies and to strengthen the Network as a whole.

The capacity of the ICRC, through the CTA, to act as coordinator and technical adviser on RFL

In 2006, the ICRC/CTA undertook a review of its capacity to act as coordinator and technical adviser on RFL to National Societies. This assessment involved interviews with headquarters staff, field questionnaires and visits involving other humanitarian actors, national authorities and some National Societies.

The assessment considered several key areas:

- the role of coordinator and technical adviser
- management and development of human resources
- RFL methods and tools.

The review highlighted the importance of the ICRC's proximity to individuals and populations through its extensive, long-term field presence, and the strength this provides. Its solid experience in the field of RFL and its ability to mobilize financial resources are well recognized and considered a strength that could be further exploited. Nevertheless, the ICRC could do more to mainstream RFL in emergency and contingency planning. Systematic deployment of RFL specialists in emerging situations or in the start-up phase of new operations would enhance both assessment and planning.

The definition and positioning of RFL within the ICRC plays an important role in communication, promotion and lobbying, both internally and externally. There is a need for clear definitions of the role of coordinator and technical adviser, and of RFL itself. These terms are understood in different ways within the ICRC and this has an impact on how National Societies and others outside the Movement understand the concepts. Clear terminology should be consistently applied in all documentation and communication regarding RFL.

One of the strengths of the CTA is its expertise in protecting and managing personal data and its tradition of confidentiality. The value of this cannot be overstated.

On the other hand, the ICRC/CTA could strengthen its quality-assurance role by clearly defining the desired RFL results and developing indicators for monitoring and performance management. Systematic consultation of beneficiaries would also provide an opportunity to learn more about their needs and expectations.

RFL knowledge management has a significant impact on the effectiveness by which the Network and the ICRC undertake RFL. While tools are available, they are often not known, or are not used consistently. Up-to-date, accessible, high-quality tools are essential to improving performance and to raising the ICRC's and National Societies' profile in the field of RFL.

As coordinator of the Family Links Network, the CTA has the role of both facilitating and leading. The ICRC/CTA nevertheless needs to improve its understanding of the needs of the Network and its activities. The ICRC could strengthen this role by aiming to become a centre of excellence while broadening access across the Network to RFL knowledge, principles and tools. In addition, the ICRC/CTA could take greater advantage of the experience and interest of National Societies to build capacity across the Network.

Overall, the ICRC/CTA has great ability in terms of its traditional tasks. However, further investment is needed in building National Society capacity and exploiting the resources available within the Network.

2.3 The external environment

The work of restoring family links takes place in an ever-changing environment to which the Movement must constantly adapt. The changing nature of conflict and other situations of violence, the increase in the number of natural and man-made disasters, massive population movements and forgotten social cases, and the emergence of new technologies all affect the environment in which the Movement undertakes RFL.

Conflicts and other situations of violence

- Today, internal conflicts and other types of internal violence account for most cases of armed violence. These are generally characterized by the widespread proliferation of weapons and by mass displacement, especially from the countryside to towns, resulting in sprawling urban centres in many countries. In such situations, families become dispersed, combatants and civilians are wounded, people are killed and not properly identified, and people are detained without anyone being notified. In addition, regions become inaccessible and means of communication are disrupted. While the total number of refugees has decreased in recent years to an estimated 8.4 million persons,² the number of internally displaced persons resulting from conflict and other situations of violence is currently estimated at around 23.7 million, involving some 50 countries.³

Natural and man-made disasters

- Global climate change is expected to have wide-ranging effects on the natural environment, on societies and on economies. Scientists predict that this change will increase the number of extreme weather events. Population growth, urbanization and the impact of poverty on people's ability to move make it more likely that increasing numbers will be vulnerable to natural disasters. In 2004 to 2006, millions of people were displaced and hundreds of thousands lost their lives or livelihoods as a result of tsunamis, earthquakes and hurricanes.

Management of human remains and information on the dead

- Failure to identify people who have died during emergencies – especially armed conflicts or other situations of violence – significantly increases the number of persons classified as missing. Very often, little or nothing is done to find, collect and deal with the remains of those killed in fighting or in other circumstances. Human remains are often buried without being identified and graves are often not marked. As a result, valuable information on the dead is lost or unavailable, and families either do not know that their missing relatives have died at all, or are aware of their death but do not know the location of their bodies.

Managing the dead is also one of the most difficult aspects of response in natural and man-made disasters. Recent events – the continuing plight of relatives of missing persons following conflicts in the Balkans and the massive loss of life following the South Asian tsunami in 2004, together with several other recent major disasters in the Americas and South Asia – highlighted limits to the ability of local systems to enable identification of human remains. There are also challenges involving inter-agency coordination, especially in situations where fact-finding missions are operating alongside humanitarian operations, with clear differences in mandates and priorities.

International migration

- Cross-border population movements have steadily increased and now constitute one of the most complex issues faced by governments, humanitarian organizations and other bodies. The United Nations⁴ estimated the number of migrants⁵ at 191 million in 2005 and this figure is projected to reach 230 million by 2050. International migration affects countries at different levels of economic development and of varying ideologies and cultures. Migrants are now to be found in every part of the world, with many States being simultaneously countries of origin, transit and destination. Increasingly restrictive migration policies have resulted in the proliferation of processing and detention centres and the increased involvement of various organizations in helping people deprived of their freedom in the areas of legal and psychological support, family tracing and integration. In addition, trafficking in persons and human smuggling are two of the fastest growing areas of international criminal activity.

² UNHCR, Global Refugee Trends, 9 June 2006: "By the end of 2005, the global number of refugees reached an estimated 8.4 million persons, the lowest level since 1980." This figure does not include 4.3 million Palestinian refugees falling under the responsibility of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East.

³ Internal Displacement Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2005, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, March 2006.

⁴ United Nations, Trends in Migrant Stock: Revision 2005

⁵ People who crossed an international border.

According to various studies, 600,000 to 800,000⁶ people are allegedly trafficked each year, the majority women and children. Extreme poverty, lack of economic opportunity, civil unrest, political uncertainty and disregard for the basic elements of humanity all contribute to an environment that encourages the smuggling and trafficking of human beings.

Civil society

- Demands on public services for support to individuals and whole communities continue to grow as a result of conflicts, natural and man-made disasters, poverty and the movement of populations within and from outside countries. Public services will face increasing pressure to meet the need for:
 - information on the whereabouts of family members
 - legal advice and, social and psychological support for the families of missing persons and for migrant populations
 - family reunification, integration and resettlement services.

Science

- Forensic sciences play an increasingly important role in the management and identification of the remains of people who have disappeared or been killed in connection with conflict or other man-made or natural disasters. In particular, forensic procedures (autopsies, fingerprinting, dental examinations and DNA analysis) are used to identify remains and to find out what has happened to missing persons.

Technology

- Access to information technology continues to grow across the world, providing greater opportunities for communication and shortening the time needed for humanitarian response. Major differences in access to and use of these technologies persist, but substantial change has taken place. Mobile phone capacity has grown significantly in recent years in nearly all parts of the world, particularly Asia and Latin America. Despite major differences between countries and areas, Africa is also experiencing impressive growth in mobile phone use. Increased access to the Internet, greater use of computers and regionally accessible protected databases are providing more effective ways of communicating and transmitting data. At the same time this raises issues for the protection of personal data and other sensitive information.

Media

- The media are present on the ground in selected crises of humanitarian concern, playing a catalytic role as formers of public opinion and affecting the way governments and humanitarian agencies deal with those crises. The immediacy of international news (especially television) and widespread access to information technologies increase, it is true, the ability of the humanitarian sector to respond rapidly to needs. But they also generate unrealistic expectations. Meanwhile, other crises – often with a more severe impact in humanitarian terms – receive little media attention. The media can today define what is and what is not a "humanitarian emergency" by emphasizing or ignoring an event.

Other actors

- The number of organizations conducting, or willing to conduct RFL continues to increase, especially in connection with minors unaccompanied and/or separated from their families. The United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Save the Children Fund, the International Rescue Committee and World Vision International are some of the best-known organizations helping these children. The International Organization for Migration is stepping up its work in the field of migration and other bodies such as the International Commission on Missing Persons are intensifying their work to resolve cases of persons unaccounted for. Increasingly the Movement finds itself in competition with international and national organizations that today engage in this traditional Movement activity. There is often a lack of inter-agency cooperation and coordination due to inadequate specialized skills and common standards and procedures, to an absence of operational planning and knowledge of activities carried out by others, to limited financial resources and to a desire to promote one's own organization. The corporate sector – especially software companies – is increasingly itself taking RFL action or supporting others in this realm during high-profile natural and man-made disasters.

In an increasingly competitive environment, the impact of external trends must be anticipated, with services reviewed and adapted to render them increasingly professional, targeted and innovative. Intensified coordination within the Movement and cooperation with external actors is essential if the RFL Network is to help affected groups and individuals and if the service is not to be taken over by other humanitarian organizations.

⁶ 'Migration in an interconnected world: new directions for action', Report of the Global Commission on International Migration, October 2005.

2.4 Strategic Objectives

The capacity assessments and the factors in the external environment highlight the significant challenges faced by the Movement in improving RFL performance. While conflicts and other situations of violence account for the bulk of its work, the Family Links Network also meets RFL needs arising from natural and man-made disasters, population movements (including international migration) and other situations requiring humanitarian response.

Specific situations require specific RFL responses. To provide any services, the needs related to dispersed family members and missing persons must first be identified, then the gaps in services and the resources required to fill them. This process must ensure that RFL needs are met somehow either by components of the Movement or by other entities.

The RFL Strategy for the Movement therefore proposes three objectives. These objectives flow from an analysis of the current status of the Family Links Network and the present and future challenges presented in the external environment.

Strategic Objective 1

Improving restoring family links capacity and performance

- Building a Family Links Network that is robust and meets the needs of affected individuals and populations requires medium- and long-term investment in order to enhance and effectively utilize skills and resources. Building capacity requires coherent methodology, effective mobilization of human resources, training and systematic exchange of information to ensure that the best practices are employed.

The Movement must also better understand the environment in which it works and be able to adapt and fully utilize modern technologies.

Strategic Objective 2

Enhancing coordination and intra- Movement cooperation

- The Movement's ability to effectively meet the needs of people separated from their families depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Family Links Network. Improving capacity to respond rapidly in emergencies, enhancing functional cooperation and coordination within the Movement at all times and strengthening interaction with authorities and other organizations will improve performance across the Network.

As coordinator of the Family Links Network, the ICRC draws more than previously on National Society contributions to build capacity, strengthen regional linkages and share responsibility for building a stronger Network.

Strategic Objective 3

Strengthening support for restoring family links

- The Movement is in a unique position to conduct RFL since it is the only organization having a worldwide network with the potential to aid affected individuals and populations everywhere. To lead in the field of RFL, the Movement must place its work on a solid foundation, encourage and motivate staff and volunteers to adopt its vision and practices, and improve communication so as to assume a commanding position in the humanitarian sector. The Movement can enhance its leading role in RFL by strengthening its components.

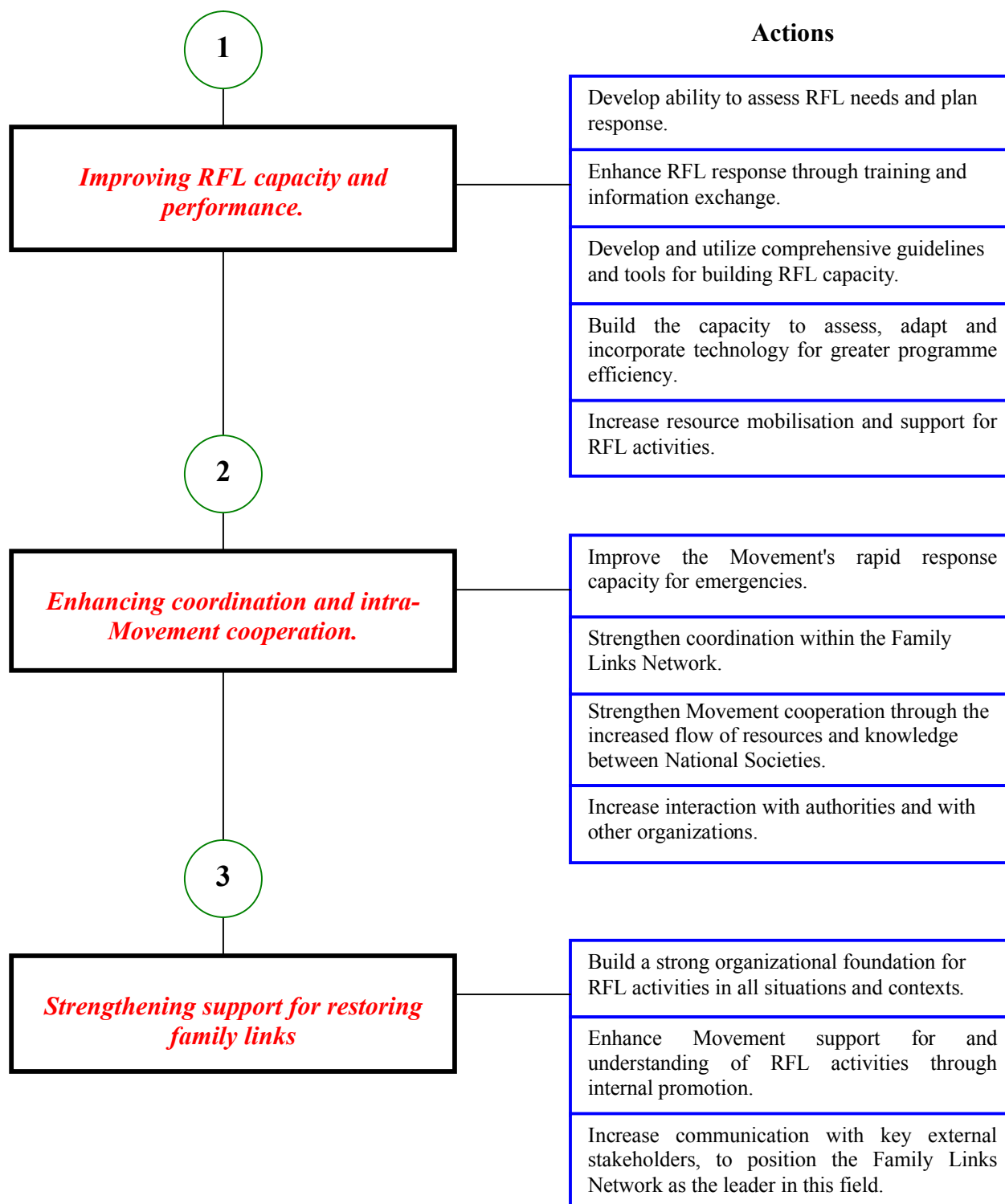
For the Family Links Network, building capacity means investing in the development and strategic orientation of RFL activities. The implementation plan for the RFL Strategy focuses on the following actions:

- understanding RFL and the related needs of separated and missing people
- strengthening programme ownership for RFL activities;
- raising the profile of RFL and enhancing its positioning;
- improving RFL capability and services;
- improving cooperation between National Societies and across the Network as a whole;
- coordinating more effectively and consistently, and
- understanding and improving coordination with authorities and other organizations providing services in this field.

Vision

Whenever people are separated from, or without news of, their loved ones as a result of armed conflict, other situations of violence, natural disaster or other situations requiring humanitarian response, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement responds efficiently and effectively by mobilizing its resources to restore family links.

Strategic Objectives



3. Implementation plan for the Movement

The ultimate aim of the *RFL Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement* is to better meet the needs of individuals and entire populations by improving the performance of the Family Links Network.

The three strategic objectives cover performance management, coordination and cooperation, leadership and positioning in the field of RFL. The strategic objectives are all inter-linked and the measures taken for one will affect the others.

The Implementation Plan outlines the actions to be taken to achieve each of the strategic objectives and lists the results expected. It also proposes implementation measures and sets out the responsibilities and time frames for the Movement components concerned.

The time frames proposed for implementation of the various measures should guide all components in adapting the strategy and developing their individual plans. The time frames take into consideration – and may be adapted according to – global, regional, national and local particularities. They are intended to be specific enough to indicate the measures required but general enough to allow adaptation to local circumstances and needs.

Underpinning the Strategy is the effort to enhance participation in the Family Links Network by all the Movement's components. The Strategy and Implementation Plan outlines a Movement-wide approach which recognizes that meeting RFL needs and building capacity is not only an ICRC responsibility but a responsibility for all components within the framework of their respective mandates.

Strategic Objective 1: Improving restoring family links capacity and performance

Building a Family Links Network that is robust and meets the needs of affected individuals and populations requires medium- and long-term investment in order to enhance and effectively utilize skills and resources. Building capacity requires coherent methodology, effective mobilization of human resources, training and systematic exchange of information to ensure that the best practices are employed.

The Movement must also better understand the environment in which it works and be able to adapt and fully utilize modern technologies.

Action 1

Develop capacity for assessing RFL needs and planning operational response

RFL needs and the capacity to meet them must be systematically and meticulously assessed. The Movement must regularly review and adapt its services to account for needs, capacities, resources and the operational context.

Expected results

- RFL needs are identified, the ability to meet them known. There is regular assessment and adaptation.
- The affected individuals and populations take part in the RFL assessments.
- Plans of action are developed to provide suitable programmes for affected individuals and populations.
- Operational plans clearly respond to national, regional and international needs in emergencies and non-emergencies.

Implementation

The **National Societies** and the **ICRC/CTA** will respectively:

- 1.1.1 ➤ Undertake, in consultation with the affected individuals, populations and other concerned parties, comprehensive RFL assessments incorporating:
- existing and potential populations in need of RFL assistance (RFL core activities and interconnected activities);
 - the capacity of the NS or the ICRC to respond;
 - the role and activities of authorities and other organizations in this field;

Assessments of RFL needs should include, according to the respective contexts;

- people affected by armed conflict (international and non-international);
 - people affected by internal disturbances and other situations of internal violence;
 - refugees and asylum seekers;
 - migrants
 - people affected by natural and man-made disasters.
 - particularly vulnerable people (children, the elderly and social cases, where the components of the Movement may play a specific role by virtue of their respective mandates);
- 1.1.2 ➤ Develop operational plans to meet the needs of affected populations and respond to enquiries from within the Family Links Network. Plans should include systematic consultations with beneficiaries and review of RFL action

and consider, where necessary, combining RFL activities with other programmes (e.g. health, social/welfare, disaster preparedness and response, first aid).

- 1.1.3 ➤ Revise, by 2010, the assessment tools needed to systematically include RFL in surveys of vulnerable populations.

The **ICRC** will:

- 1.1.4 ➤ Develop, by 2009, comprehensive RFL assessment tools in consultation with National Societies.
- 1.1.5 ➤ Support National Societies, where requested, in the incorporation of RFL in operational plans.

The **International Federation** will:

- 1.1.6 ➤ Include RFL in disaster preparedness and emergency-response plans.
- 1.1.7 ➤ Encourage and, in coordination with the ICRC, support National Societies in their incorporation of RFL in operational plans.

Action 2

Enhance RFL response through training and information exchange

To improve performance and build professional practices, develop the knowledge and skills required for RFL. Greater awareness of the connections between RFL and other Movement programmes leads to better service.

Investing in professional development for staff and volunteers will have a direct, positive impact on performance and enhance the Movement's credibility.

Expected results

- RFL staff and volunteers possess the professional skills and adopt the practices needed for high-quality RFL.
- Greater exchange of information between RFL practitioners at the ICRC and in National Societies.
- International Federation Secretariat staff and delegates understand RFL and the connection between RFL and other programmes.

Implementation

The **National Societies** will:

- 1.2.1 ➤ Devise and run training programmes for professional staff and volunteers covering RFL response to national needs and to requests from the Family Links Network. RFL will be incorporated into training programmes for volunteers wherever possible.
- 1.2.2 ➤ Develop RFL programmes to supervise and support RFL practitioners at headquarters and in the branches.
- 1.2.3 ➤ Carry out staff exchanges, programme visits or internships involving other National Societies, convey useful practices and build an understanding of RFL across a variety of contexts.

The **ICRC/CTA** will:

- 1.2.4 ➤ Devise and conduct, by 2010, a professional training and development programme enabling heads of National Society tracing services and ICRC practitioners to build skills, consolidate knowledge and enhance information exchange.
- 1.2.5 ➤ Devise, by 2011, RFL training modules for various types of situations on the basis of the *Restoring Family Links Manual for the Movement*.
- 1.2.6 ➤ Incorporate the following into professional development programmes for ICRC staff: staff exchanges, programme visits to or internships in National Societies.
- 1.2.7 ➤ Every three years conduct regional capacity-building courses for RFL practitioners (commencing in 2011). These workshops will focus on developing professional skills and knowledge, regional and inter-regional issues and the implementation plan of the *RFL Strategy for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*.
- 1.2.8 ➤ Further develop and run training programmes for ICRC staff covering RFL response to national needs and response to requests from the Family Links Network. Increase involvement and training of locally hired ICRC staff in RFL.
- 1.2.9 ➤ Increase knowledge and understanding of RFL capacity-building principles and concepts with ICRC staff.
- 1.2.10 ➤ Encourage National Societies to carry out staff exchanges, programme visits and internships with other National Societies.

The **International Federation** will:

- 1.2.11 ➤ Include, by 2010, RFL in training programmes for Secretariat staff, disaster preparedness and emergency response teams and field delegates utilizing the RFL modules devised in cooperation with the ICRC.
- 1.2.12 ➤ Include, by 2010, RFL in training programmes for organizational development delegates.

Action 3

Develop and utilize comprehensive guidelines and tools for building RFL capacity

Restoring family links across a range of diverse situations of humanitarian concern requires common guidelines and tools for building coherent methods, practices and understanding across the Network. To measure performance and ensure that services are of high quality and truly benefit those in need, performance indicators, monitoring and evaluation tools must be used.

Expected results

- Standard guidelines and tools for the development of RFL activities are developed and utilized across the Movement.
- Performance management in RFL is improved through the development and use of indicators, monitoring, evaluation and regular reporting systems.

Implementation

The **National Societies** will:

- 1.3.1 ➤ Regularly collect, by 2013, data on RFL using the *Family Links Network data collection tool* and analyse that data to ensure high-quality service and optimum use of resources.

- 1.3.2 ➤ Establish, by 2013, processes for the monitoring and evaluation of RFL activities, using the *Family Links Network performance management tools*.
- 1.3.3 ➤ Develop, by 2013, RFL guidelines and tools adapted to the context and culture, in accordance with the *Restoring Family Links Manual for the Movement* and the *Family Links Network performance management tools*.
- 1.3.4 ➤ Disseminate, by 2014, RFL guidelines and tools throughout their headquarters and branch structure.

The **ICRC/CTA** will:

- 1.3.5 ➤ Lead the development of a comprehensive *Restoring Family Links Manual for the Movement*. Such a manual will build on *Restoring Family Links: a guide for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Tracing Services*, the *Conclusions and Recommendations of the Expert Conference on the Missing and their Families*, the *Guiding Principles for Separated and Unaccompanied Children*, *Guidelines for Tracing in Disasters*, the *Management of Dead Bodies after Disasters: A Field Manual for First Responders*, and the forthcoming *Field Manual for Restoring Family Links in Natural or man-made Disasters*.
To be completed by 2011.
- 1.3.6 ➤ Finalize, by 2008, the *Field Manual for Restoring Family Links in Natural or man-made Disasters*.
- 1.3.7 ➤ Adapt, by 2009 and in cooperation with National Societies and International Federation, traditional RFL guidelines and tools for use in migration situations and human trafficking.
- 1.3.8 ➤ Develop, by 2011, a single RFL *data-collection tool* for use by all National Societies and the ICRC, and produce periodic reports on the activities of the Family Links Network.
- 1.3.9 ➤ Develop, by 2011 and in consultation with National Societies, *performance-management tools* for the Family Links Network including: indicators (for example timeliness, situations analysis), monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.
- 1.3.10 ➤ Support National Societies in incorporating RFL guidelines into disaster-preparedness and -response plans, and performance-management systems.
- 1.3.11 ➤ Increase, by 2012, the use of qualitative data collection and analysis in the monitoring systems for ICRC operations.

The **International Federation** will:

- 1.3.12 ➤ Encourage and, in coordination with ICRC, support National Societies in incorporating ICRC RFL guidelines and tools in disaster preparedness and response, and in performance management systems.

Action 4

Build the capacity to assess, adapt and incorporate technology for greater programme efficiency.

The Movement's components use methods and technologies adapted to the context. To ensure that the Network is responsive and effective, they use electronic data transmission, mobile computers, database systems, the Internet, and new technologies. Modern technologies are assessed and integrated to provide increasingly professional, targeted and innovative services, and thus improved response.

All RFL activities must ensure the protection of individual data and of any other sensitive information, at all times. The confidentiality of personal and other sensitive data is paramount and the principles for their protection must be respected by all.

Expected results

- The Movement has the ability to use the methods and technology best suited to each situation. It anticipates, reviews, adapts and applies new methods and technologies to improve its services.
- The Family Links Network utilizes information technologies according to need, culture and operational context to ensure maximum effectiveness. It protects personal and other sensitive data.

Implementation

The **National Societies** will:

- 1.4.1 ➤ Ensure that their tracing services have access to the internet and other technologies that help improve performance.
- 1.4.2 ➤ Share with the ICRC applications or technologies developed for RFL.
- 1.4.3 ➤ Contribute, by 2012 and in cooperation with the ICRC, to the appraisal and development of new RFL methods and technologies.
- 1.4.4 ➤ Approach the CTA to use the ICRC Family Links website for RFL response in major natural or man-made disasters.

The **ICRC** will:

- 1.4.5 ➤ Conduct, by 2010, regular assessments of existing and new RFL methods and technologies.
- 1.4.6 ➤ Propose and implement, by 2012, new methods and technologies, backed up by guidelines, for the Family Links Network. These will be based on needs, culture and context.
- 1.4.7 ➤ Assess, by 2012, the feasibility of cooperation with private companies to further develop technical tools and provide support materials in accordance with Movement standards.
- 1.4.8 ➤ Develop, by 2012 and in consultation with National Societies, standardized software with training materials for National Society RFL.
- 1.4.9 ➤ Continue to provide National Societies with space on the ICRC Family Links website, in accordance with defined guidelines.

The **International Federation** will:

- 1.4.10 ➤ Support, in coordination with the ICRC, National Societies in making the internet available to tracing services and accessing other needed technologies.
-

Action 5***Increase resource mobilization and support for RFL activities***

In order to support the development and delivery of RFL activities, the Movement's components must better utilize the resources they have and increase the resources at their disposal. All components can boost their ability to raise funds. In addition to financial resources, the Movement will better identify the skills, capacities and contributions that the various components need to share. In this way, resources can be better utilized across the Network.

Expected results

- National Societies have the capacity and expertise to raise funds for RFL activities and to support service delivery.
- The different components of the Movement mobilize the resources (financial and non-financial) required to meet the need for RFL.
- Governments and private donors provide financial and material support for RFL.

Implementation

The **National Societies** will:

- 1.5.1 ➤ Ensure cooperation between fundraising, communication and tracing services and develop plans of action to raise funds for RFL that are part of the overall fundraising policy.
- 1.5.2 ➤ Share with each other information and best practices regarding fundraising.
- 1.5.3 ➤ Allocate core funds to develop and maintain RFL, and assess diversified funding sources.
- 1.5.4 ➤ Incorporate RFL in their regular fundraising appeals.
- 1.5.5 ➤ Participate, in 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017, in the RFL *contributions assessment* that will identify the skills, capacities, time and resources that can be shared across the Network.

The **ICRC** will:

- 1.5.6 ➤ Coordinate a pan-Movement effort to devise tools to raise funds for National Society RFL, a process to be completed by 2011.
- 1.5.7 ➤ Work with National Societies to devise communications and marketing tools for RFL by 2010.
- 1.5.8 ➤ Commencing in 2008, undertake every three years an RFL *contributions assessment* together with National Societies to identify the skills, capacities, time and resources available within the Network and to maximize their use.

The **National Societies and the ICRC** will:

- 1.5.9 ➤ Devise fundraising proposals based on identified RFL projects.
- 1.5.10 ➤ Talk to donors about RFL to ensure that this work is known and understood.

The **International Federation** will:

- 1.5.11 ➤ Work with the ICRC to support National Societies to ensure cooperation between fundraising, communication and tracing services, and to include RFL as part of the overall National Societies fundraising policy.

Strategic Objective 2: Enhancing coordination and intra-Movement cooperation

The Movement's ability to effectively meet the needs of people separated from their families depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Family Links Network. Improving capacity to respond rapidly in emergencies, enhancing functional cooperation and coordination within the Movement at all times and strengthening interaction with authorities and other organizations will improve performance across the Network.

As coordinator of the Family Links Network, the ICRC draws more than previously on National Society contributions to build capacity, strengthen regional linkages and share responsibility for building a stronger Network.

Action 1

Improve the Movement's rapid response capacity for emergencies

Increasingly major and complex emergencies, combined with varying capacities for RFL response within the Movement, require better coordinated and faster response. Reducing the time taken to assess needs and deliver RFL activities is essential for effectiveness.

Taking into account that RFL operational activities are coordinated by,

- the ICRC in conflict and other situations of violence or in disasters requiring an international response,
- individual National Societies during national disasters, and
- the ICRC at the request of the National Society where the RFL response is beyond its capacity during national disasters,

greater emphasis must be placed on rapid and coordinated response, making better use of Movement resources and experienced RFL specialists.

Expected results

- The Movement's various components have incorporated RFL in emergency-preparedness and response plans.
- The components respond rapidly and effectively to RFL needs in emergencies.
- The components mobilize resources at a local, regional and/or international level, as required by the emergency.

Implementation measures

The **National Societies** will:

- 2.1.1 ➤ Incorporate RFL action in emergency-preparedness and response plans in accordance with ICRC guidelines for RFL response in natural or man-made disasters, and ensure appropriate training for all first responders.
- 2.1.2 ➤ In national disasters, call on the ICRC without delay for support where the need for RFL outstrips their capacity.
- 2.1.3 ➤ In accordance with the *Framework for Deployment of International RFL Specialists during Disasters*, provide the ICRC/CTA with trained RFL specialists for rapid deployment.

Such specialists for rapid deployment will be taken from a predefined pool only with the agreement of each National Society.
- 2.1.4 ➤ Assess, by 2011, the need for, and feasibility of, establishing National Society sub-regional focal points for RFL response in natural or man-made disasters. If deemed useful, establish such RFL focal points.

The **ICRC/CTA** will:

- 2.1.5 ➤ Systematically deploy RFL specialists in conflict or other situations of violence to assess the situation and plan action. Ensure that RFL is included as part of the general rapid-response approach.
- 2.1.6 ➤ Help National Societies, in cooperation with the International Federation, to incorporate RFL in emergency-preparedness training programmes.
- 2.1.7 ➤ Launch and guide, by 2008, the development and management of an international disaster-response mechanism for rapid deployment of RFL specialists and devise a *Framework for the Deployment of International RFL Specialists during Disasters*.
- 2.1.8 ➤ Activate, according to established criteria and at the request of the National Societies, the disaster-response mechanism in natural or man-made disasters.
- 2.1.9 ➤ Ensure suitable training for staff to be deployed and monitor and evaluate both the deployment and RFL response.
- 2.1.10 ➤ When coordinating the RFL response in natural or man-made disasters, deploy RFL specialists to assess and plan an action strategy, and disseminate information through the Family Links Network. Ensure cooperation with the International Federation disaster response teams.
- 2.1.11 ➤ Help National Societies, by 2011, to assess the need for, and feasibility of, establishing sub-regional RFL focal points for natural or man-made disasters, in collaboration with the International Federation and other National Societies. Support the establishment of such focal points if deemed useful.

The **International Federation** will:

- 2.1.12 ➤ Support National Societies, in cooperation with the ICRC, and help them include RFL in their disaster-preparedness and -response plans in accordance with ICRC guidelines for RFL response in natural or man-made disasters.
- 2.1.13 ➤ Ensure that any RFL-relevant information gathered by emergency-response teams will be shared with the host National Society and the CTA to ensure optimum RFL response.
- 2.1.14 ➤ Incorporate RFL requirements in Emergency Appeals where requested by the ICRC.
- 2.1.15 ➤ Encourage National Societies to share with the ICRC/CTA best RFL practices in natural and man-made disasters.

Action 2

Strengthen coordination within the Family Links Network

Harmonizing the Movement's work to provide an internationally consistent response over the short, medium and long terms requires participation by all components. This should not be a static exercise – coordination requires increased interaction, exchange of information, identification of issues and building and retention of RFL knowledge. Employing a specific regional focus, enhance services and make better use of existing knowledge and skills within the Family Links Network.

- Expected results**
- Information exchange is stronger, leading to better building and coordination of organization-wide RFL knowledge.
 - Regional interaction is increased and issues identified. Consistent action is taken to address existing and emerging RFL needs.
 - The role of the ICRC as the facilitator and coordinator of the Family Links Network is strengthened and National Society participation is increased.

Implementation The **National Societies** will:

- 2.2.1 ➤ Contribute to greater regional coordination in RFL by prioritizing this subject in regional forums, strengthening exchange of information and best practices with other National Societies and the ICRC/CTA, and building stronger links with other National Societies in their respective regions.
- 2.2.2 ➤ Seek to harmonize criteria for the acceptance of RFL cases, ensuring that they take into account regional particularities.

The **ICRC/CTA** will:

- 2.2.3 ➤ Devise, by 2010, a new interactive *Family Links Network Extranet* that provides on-line training tools, exchange of best practices, data, tracing criteria and development issues, among other things.
- 2.2.4 ➤ Explore, by 2011, the establishment of new regional ICRC/CTA RFL units that act as focal points for networking and information exchange, professional development training and capacity building in restoring family links. If deemed useful, set them up.
- 2.2.5 ➤ Commencing in 2009, conduct biennial regional RFL meetings for National Society practitioners, ICRC staff and representatives of the International Federation to coordinate and develop consistency in RFL policy, implementation and methodology.

The **International Federation** will:

- 2.2.6 ➤ Incorporate RFL in regional meetings with National Societies, when needed to improve coordination.

Action 3

Strengthen Movement cooperation through the increased flow of resources and knowledge between National Societies.

High-quality RFL in both emergency situations and stable environments means involving different components of the Family Links Network at different times. The Network's resources are better utilized and cooperation strengthened if the National Societies play a greater role in RFL capacity building (within an agreed framework).

- Expected results**
- Strategic partnerships between National Societies and the CTA support long-term capacity development.
 - Sufficient RFL specialists are available for capacity-building programmes and operational deployment.

- Stronger relationships exist between RFL practitioners and there is an improved exchange of best practices.

Implementation measures

The **National Societies** will:

- 2.3.1 ➤ Contribute, by 2009 and in coordination with the ICRC, to a framework for partnerships for the international involvement of National Societies in programmes to build the capacity of tracing services.
- 2.3.2 ➤ Use, commencing in 2010 and for all international RFL, the ICRC's capacity-building framework for RFL together with National Societies.
- 2.3.3 ➤ Contribute, by 2011 and in cooperation with the ICRC, to the development of training modules for RFL capacity building.
- 2.3.4 ➤ Increase the availability and training of, and support for, experienced RFL staff to create a pool of capacity-building experts for international work.
- 2.3.5 ➤ Regularly engage in bilateral contacts with the tracing services of other National Societies, to improve RFL results and better share information.

The **ICRC** will:

- 2.3.6 ➤ Review and revise, by 2009 and in coordination with interested components of the Movement, the framework for partnerships for National Societies working internationally in programmes to build the capacity of tracing services.
- 2.3.7 ➤ Promote and support partnerships with National Societies working internationally to build the capacity of individual National Societies or across regions within the above-mentioned framework.
- 2.3.8 ➤ Maintain an overview of bilateral cooperation and exchanges between the tracing services of National Societies.
- 2.3.9 ➤ Create, by 2012, a pool of RFL capacity-building experts to work with National Societies, supervised and coordinated by ICRC at the regional and worldwide levels.
- 2.3.10 ➤ Adapt and further develop RFL capacity-building tools, including training modules, all by 2011.
- 2.3.11 ➤ Devise, by 2008, minimum conditions for commencing RFL capacity-building programmes with National Societies, and indicators to measure progress.
- 2.3.12 ➤ Support joint pilot initiatives by National Societies wishing to be involved in RFL for specific situations, particularly migration.

The **International Federation** will:

- 2.3.13 ➤ In conjunction with the ICRC, help National Societies incorporate RFL in organizational development programmes.
- 2.3.14 ➤ Work in cooperation with the ICRC to ensure best use of resources, programme planning and management for organizational development activities and capacity-building programmes.

Action 4

Increase interaction with authorities and with other organizations

Successful implementation requires a better integrated, more compatible and better coordinated approach when dealing with the various interested parties outside the Movement. To avoid duplication of effort and achieve better results, there must be greater understanding of the role and activities of non-Movement parties concerned with RFL, the development of common principles for RFL and improved consistency in selecting target populations, identifying areas of expertise and determining which activities are needed.

Expected results

- Common definitions and principles regarding RFL are applied by the various components of the Movement and other parties concerned with this work.
- Optimum interaction is achieved with authorities and other organizations, thus improving RFL response.
- State authorities comply with their obligations under international law regarding dispersed family members and missing persons and cooperate with National Societies and the ICRC on the basis of the Geneva Conventions and the resolutions of the International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Implementation

The **National Societies** will:

- 2.4.1 ➤ Regularly both remind State authorities of their responsibilities towards affected individuals and populations requiring RFL assistance and seek their increased support for that work.
- 2.4.2 ➤ Ensure they comply with national laws on the protection of personal data.
- 2.4.3 ➤ Develop a close relationship with governmental services in order to avoid delays in response. Consider memorandums of understanding with governmental bodies.
- 2.4.4 ➤ Establish and strengthen relationships with authorities and other organizations providing similar or related services at the local and national levels.
- 2.4.5 ➤ Review national legislation to ensure that family links issues are included in national disaster preparedness and response plans, and engage with State authorities for their inclusion where necessary. This should include ensuring that such plans set out the role of the National Society in restoring family links.

The **ICRC/CTA** will:

- 2.4.6 ➤ Regularly remind State authorities, armed groups and security forces of their obligations under international law and commitments undertaken at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.
- 2.4.7 ➤ Support National Societies, where needed, in their discussions with State authorities on their responsibilities and the role of the National Societies and ICRC in RFL. Support adaptation of relevant national legislation if necessary.
- 2.4.8 ➤ Work for the development, by 2013, of common principles for RFL. Such principles would include common definitions, professional standards and ethical norms, compatible procedures and systems, definition of target populations, specific aspects of RFL activities (e.g. child protection), data protection and needed coordination mechanisms.

- 2.4.9 ➤ By 2010 collect examples of good practice in collaboration with international and national organizations, and draw up a list of factors contributing to success.
- 2.4.10 ➤ Draw up, by 2012, guidelines on how the Movement can cooperate with international and national organizations on RFL in emergencies, and disseminate those guidelines throughout the Movement and as appropriate with other international organizations.
- 2.4.11 ➤ Strengthen dialogue with international organizations with which the Movement seeks coordination regarding RFL and, where necessary, explore framework agreements aimed at better meeting needs.

Strategic Objective 3: Strengthening support for restoring family links

The Movement is in a unique position to conduct RFL since it is the only organization having a worldwide network with the potential to aid affected individuals and populations everywhere. To lead in the field of RFL, the Movement must place its work on a solid foundation, encourage and motivate staff and volunteers to adopt its vision and practices, and improve communication so as to assume a commanding position in the humanitarian sector. The Movement can enhance its leading role in RFL by strengthening its components.

Action 1

Build a strong organizational foundation for RFL activities in all situations and contexts.

The Movement's ambition is to lay a solid foundation for RFL. Much remains to be done for its components to shoulder their responsibility in this field. The process of revising both National Society statutes and the policy frameworks of the various components to reflect RFL signals a commitment to improving RFL activities and working toward a consistent response to needs. So too does the effort to improve service development and management.

Expected results

- National Society statutes and policy frameworks reflect the legal basis for RFL, its objectives and the specific tasks involved.
- National Society strategic and development plans specifically address RFL commitments made at statutory meetings of the Movement.
- National Societies have management structures that support and develop RFL activities.

Implementation

The **National Societies** will:

- 3.1.1 ➤ Define their precise RFL roles and functions in the different situations that may arise, taking into account the Movement's resolutions.
- 3.1.2 ➤ Revise their Statutes, in accordance with the International Federation's 'Guidance for National Society Statutes', to reflect their RFL roles and responsibilities as defined in the Movement's Statutes and resolutions.
- 3.1.3 ➤ Create or revise national strategic and development plans to include national and international RFL activities.
- 3.1.4 ➤ Establish operational links between tracing services, disaster-preparedness and disaster-response programmes, volunteer management and other relevant units such as dissemination and information.
- 3.1.5 ➤ Develop an internal system to support RFL, including management, service development and involvement of volunteers.

The **ICRC** will:

- 3.1.6 ➤ Coordinate with the International Federation in supporting revision and amendment by the National Societies of their statutes, development plans and strategies.
- 3.1.7 ➤ Review, by 2009, internal policies and guidelines in situations of violence (including conflict) and other situations to ensure that RFL activities are included.

The **International Federation** will:

- 3.1.8 ➤ Review and revise, by 2011, policy and strategic documents, tools and guidelines for inclusion of National Society RFL activities across all programme areas.
- 3.1.9 ➤ Support, and actively promote, the inclusion of RFL in the revision of the Strategy 2010.
- 3.1.10 ➤ Support, in conjunction with the ICRC, the National Societies in revising their statutes and incorporating RFL in development and strategic plans.
- 3.1.11 ➤ Undertake, by 2009, a mapping exercise with National Societies for organizational development and work closely with the ICRC to ensure the incorporation of RFL.

Action 2

Enhance Movement support for and understanding of RFL activities through internal promotion

Making RFL responsibilities and action better known among the Movement's components will increase both understanding and support. Since RFL needs are inadequately communicated within the Network, continuous effort is required to raise awareness and pool information. This will lead to National Society leaders feeling a greater sense of direct responsibility for RFL activities and to volunteers and staff better identifying needs, and to a more integrated response.

Expected results

- All governance representatives, volunteers and staff understand the importance of RFL and the respective roles of the Movement's different components.
- National Societies have a consistent approach to promoting their RFL activities.
- Knowledge and understanding of RFL is strengthened across organizational departments and programmes.

Implementation

The **National Societies** will:

- 3.2.1 ➤ Keep governing bodies, volunteers and staff informed about the RFL roles of the National Society and the Family Links Network.
- 3.2.2 ➤ Incorporate RFL news in meetings and other means of disseminating information within the organization.
- 3.2.3 ➤ Strengthen relationships between communication departments and tracing services and draw up plans of action for publicly promoting this work.
- 3.2.4 ➤ Regularly communicate to governing bodies, staff and volunteers the outcomes and commitments regarding RFL of the Movement's statutory meetings.

The **ICRC** will:

- 3.2.5 ➤ Undertake, by 2009, an inventory of guidelines and communication tools, and revise them to ensure clear terminology regarding the definition of RFL-related terms.

- 3.2.6 ➤ Regularly remind all staff of the importance of RFL and the role played by the ICRC and the Family Links Network.

The **International Federation** will:

- 3.2.7 ➤ Undertake, by 2009, a knowledge inventory, both within its Secretariat and together with field staff, of RFL activities across all programming areas and draw up action plans to fill gaps.
- 3.2.8 ➤ Regularly remind all staff of the respective roles of the Movement's components regarding RFL.

Action 3

Increase communication with key external stakeholders, to position the Family Links Network as the leader in this field

To be more effective in RFL, the Movement's components must disseminate information and raise public awareness of the needs of people separated from their families. The Movement must promote a strong and consistent image of this unique and very human service, raising its profile and ensuring that the general public, governments, donors and others all view the Movement's RFL activities as a vital humanitarian service.

Expected results

- A consistent image of the Family Links Network is projected to key external stakeholders concerned by this work.
- The Movement's components take clear positions on the need for RFL, highlighting its impact on affected individuals and populations.
- Those concerned recognize and support the RFL role played by the National Societies and the ICRC/CTA.

Implementation

The **National Societies** and the **ICRC** will:

- 3.3.1 ➤ Draw up and share with the Family Links Network, by 2009, a *worldwide communications plan* to support implementation of the RFL strategy. This plan will include:
- key messages on RFL activities adapted to the various target groups and contexts
 - communication tools to explain and promote RFL activities, the role of the Network and the plight of people left without news of loved ones
 - increased focus on RFL in the various promotional activities.
 - devising a visual identity for the Family Links Network
 - exploring the concept of “goodwill ambassadors,” to raise awareness of the impact of family separation and to promote RFL activities
 - identifying promotional opportunities
 - engaging media representatives in raising awareness of RFL needs and promoting RFL itself.
- 3.3.2 ➤ Undertake regular meetings with affected individuals and populations to promote RFL and the Family Links Network.
- 3.3.3 ➤ Give regular information on RFL to donors, authorities and other organizations.

The **National Societies** will:

- 3.3.4 ➤ Devise, by 2013, a communications plan to support RFL. National Society communications plans can be further strengthened on the basis of the *worldwide communications plan*.

The **International Federation** will:

- 3.3.5 ➤ Disseminate to National Societies, by 2009, the *Communications Guide* for use in promoting RFL.

All **components of the Movement** will:

- 3.3.6 ➤ Use existing forums, meetings and networks to spark interest about individuals and populations affected by family separation and to promote the Movement's RFL work.

4. Monitoring Implementation of the Strategy

Responsibility for implementing the RFL Strategy for the Movement is shared by all components.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation are individually responsible for incorporating the strategy's content in their own strategies, plans and training programmes at the national, regional and international levels.

Each action defined in the Strategy has expected results and implementation measures. It will be possible to achieve some of the expected results via the annual operational plans of the various components, while others can be achieved through the capacity-building programmes of the ICRC, the organizational development or disaster-management programmes of the International Federation, or in partnership with National Societies working internationally. Regional meetings that the ICRC organizes for RFL practitioners constitute further opportunities for implementation, as do regional disaster-preparedness and -response meetings conducted by the International Federation. Additional opportunities exist within the Movement's regional statutory meetings.

As the Movement's RFL coordinator and technical adviser, the ICRC will supervise the strategy's implementation in cooperation with other components. It will set up an Implementation Group, including National Societies and the International Federation, to provide guidance and support for the implementation process. The Group will, as a priority, clarify what success would look like if the Movement were to achieve the strategic objectives and individual actions, and devise guidelines to measure that success. Indicators will be developed at the global, regional and national levels to measure performance and progress in implementing the strategy. Given the considerable differences in criteria for success across the Network, different degrees of implementation should be expected and varying practical targets aimed at as a result. The emphasis will be on the grass-roots level (including branches and volunteers) in order to build on existing practical examples.

At the 2011 and 2015 Council of Delegates, the ICRC will present the results achieved based on the self-assessment of the Movement's components. In this way the actions and/or objectives may be adjusted where needed. On each occasion, the report presented will include a brief overview of any new external trends, together with recommendations for any modifications to the strategic approach.

In 2016 the ICRC will undertake a reassessment of the global mapping of the Family Links Network, as a means of measuring progress and generating recommendations for changes to the Strategy.

5. Resources for Implementation

The resources needed to implement the strategy go beyond the realm of fundraising. Human resources, various skills, different kinds of knowledge, greater cooperation and participation by all components of the Movement – all play a role in ensuring successful implementation.

The key is a sense of direct responsibility and commitment.

As a first step toward ensuring that sense, RFL must be recognized as a core activity at all levels, first and foremost by the leadership. Recognition and ownership will ultimately lead to RFL being incorporated in the National Society structures. This is indispensable for sustainability. To successfully raise funds and mobilize resources for RFL, emphasis must therefore be placed entirely on further promoting recognition, which will lead to a sense of responsibility and commitment, to incorporation of RFL and, ultimately, to sustainability.

Regarding fundraising, in its lead role for RFL within the Movement the ICRC will explore the establishment of funding tools.

Since developing the capabilities of National Societies and strengthening the Family Links Network are long-term commitments, the ICRC and participating National Societies will establish partnerships to support the capacity development within the Network.

All National Societies are responsible for helping people without news of their families, so individual Societies will include RFL activities in national fundraising plans as a means of supporting self-sustaining RFL.

Glossary

Contributions assessment

A contributions assessment across the Family Links Network will gather information on the skills, resources, tools, time and interest that exist in RFL within each National Society, and maximize the use of those resources to address needs within the Network.

Family Links Network

The Family Links Network comprises the ICRC (CTA and tracing units in the delegations) and the National Society tracing services. Also referred to as "the Network".

Family Links Network data-collection tool

Data-collection tool used jointly by all National Societies and ICRC to gather standardized information on RFL.

Family Links Network Extranet

An interactive Extranet for Restoring Family Links. The Extranet is a web-based resource centre incorporating on-line training tools, RFL information by context, films, photos, networking and information exchange.

Global Mapping Exercise

A global mapping of the status of the Family Links Network was undertaken between 2005-2006 by the ICRC and National Societies. It comprised three assessments: (i) capacity of National Society tracing services, (ii) capacity of the ICRC/CTA to act as coordinator and technical advisor on RFL to National Societies, and (iii) an initial RFL needs survey.

Framework for deployment of international RFL specialists during disasters

The framework will incorporate information on the mechanism for deployment, human resource management and training.

International disaster-response mechanism for RFL

To mobilize Movement resources for rapid response where needed at national, regional or international levels.

Performance-management tools in RFL

Such tools would include: performance indicators (incorporating tools to measure timeliness of action and contextual analysis), monitoring and evaluation, and impact assessment.

Regional ICRC/CTA units

ICRC will explore the establishment of regional ICRC/CTA units to act as focal points for capacity building, professional development, networking and information exchange in RFL. Such units would explore RFL-related issues from the regional perspective and develop plans to address these issues with the NS concerned.

RFL (Restoring Family Links)

Restoring Family Links is the generic term given to a range of activities aimed at preventing separation, restoring and maintaining contact between families and clarifying what has happened to persons reported missing (*see pages 4 & 5*).

Restoring Family Links manual for the Movement

A comprehensive handbook covering a wide range of situations in which the Movement must take action. Such a manual would contain training modules and case studies, explain how to provide emotional support for beneficiaries, staff and volunteers, give advice on community networking and referral models, teach presentation skills, and present guidelines for different beneficiary populations.

Sub-regional National Society focal points for natural or man-made disasters

Consortiums of National Societies within a sub-region might designate one Society as the focal point for RFL response in disasters. The focal point could provide RFL assistance to the Society of the affected country.

Tracing services

Tracing Services are units within National Societies that help to restore or maintain contact between members of families separated as a consequence of armed conflict or other situations of violence, natural disasters or any other situations requiring humanitarian response. The National Society tracing services form part of the Family Links Network. Each tracing service works in accordance with CTA guidelines. (*NB. in some countries tracing services may be named differently*)

