

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY

INCLUDING LEGAL REFERENCES



ICRC



ICRC

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RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY

INCLUDING LEGAL REFERENCES

COMPONENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT



ICRC

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 Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies embody the work and principles of the Movement in 186 countries. National Societies act as auxiliaries to the public authorities of their own countries in the humanitarian field and provide a range of services including disaster relief, health and social programmes. During wartime, National Societies assist the affected civilian population and support the army medical services where appropriate.



The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies works on the basis of the Principles of the Movement to inspire, facilitate and promote all humanitarian activities carried out by its member National Societies to improve the situation of the most vulnerable people. Founded in 1919, the Federation directs and coordinates the Movement's international assistance to victims of natural and technological disasters, to refugees and in health emergencies. It acts as the official representative of its member Societies in the international field. It promotes cooperation between National Societies and works to strengthen their capacity to carry out effective disaster-preparedness, health and social programmes.

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FOREWORD

When people are separated by conflict or disaster, everything possible must be done to establish their whereabouts, restore contact between them and if need be reunite them.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) has longstanding experience and expertise in this area.

The Movement's Family Links Network, which is comprised of the National Societies' tracing services, the tracing agencies in ICRC delegations and the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency, is particularly well placed to address the needs of people without news of their families by restoring family links (RFL).

Today, the work of RFL takes place in an ever-changing environment to which the Movement must respond and adapt. To ensure that the Family Links Network responds to the changing nature of armed conflict and other violence, the increase in the number of natural and man-made disasters, massive displacement and migration, and the emergence of new technologies, the Movement has developed a 10-year strategy.

This publication contains the RFL Strategy for the Movement (2008-2018) as adopted by the Council of Delegates as well as a selection of relevant legal references.



The suffering of those who have no news of their families touches the core of all of us within the Movement.

Restoring Family Links (RFL) is a key element of the ICRC's humanitarian mission and forms a vital part of our action and partnerships with National Societies.

Behind every single RFL activity there is an individual with a life and family – this is something of which we must never lose sight. The complex environment in which we all undertake our humanitarian work creates significant challenges in the field of RFL – from conflict situations to large natural disasters to international migration – we are struggling to provide efficient and effective services. Human suffering remains high and the Movement needs to do more to alleviate it. But to truly make a difference the ICRC is convinced that all components of the Movement must improve their action and commitment to RFL.

RFL is a responsibility that we all share. We have a unique role to play and it is time to do more about it.



Mr Olivier Vodoz
Vice-President of the ICRC

« Despite the significant and often unpredictable security constraints facing our staff and volunteers in the field, we have been able to operate across all parts of the country – creating essential humanitarian space for our activities. Restoring family links crosses any divide, any social, cultural or political affiliation.

It is a service that relies on the dedication and commitment of volunteers to reach out to people affected.

To be able to reach out and meet the needs of separated people we have to see ourselves in a broader context than only our own. How else can we reunite a family when some of them are in neighbouring countries or abroad? We rely on both the ICRC and other National Societies in this Movement network.

The importance of the RFL Strategy is multi-faceted and goes to the heart of the issues. It addresses the family needs of victims that are just as important as food and security. It covers all our situations of humanitarian action – from conflicts to natural disasters to the mass movement of populations. It calls for individual identification of family links needs within an environment of collective action. »

Dr Ahmed Hassan
President, Somali Red Crescent Society

« The essential human right of retaining links to one's family is of increasing importance to the International Federation and National Societies at a time when we are witnessing a dramatic increase in the number of natural disasters. Each of these disasters contains risks for family separation.

As we take up our responsibilities to further build capacity in restoring family links, let us look to mainstream this throughout our great network of National Societies. We need the front line Red Cross and Red Crescent responders in the community to understand how to mitigate the potential for family separation and how to respond when families have become separated. We have to recognise that for a family or individual the restoration of contact with family members is vital. We must ensure that from the national to the international level we recognise this need and build the capacity to respond to this need. »

Mr Shimelis Adugna
Vice-President, International Federation

Speeches introducing the RFL Strategy for the Movement to the 2007 Council of Delegates (extracts)

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY

(AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN)

2008-2018

RESOLUTION 4 OF THE COUNCIL OF DELEGATES¹ OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT, ADOPTING THE RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY GENEVA, 23-24 NOVEMBER 2007

The Council of Delegates,

recalling with deep concern the suffering endured by those who have lost contact with, or have no news of, their loved ones as a consequence of armed conflict or other situations of violence, natural or man-made disasters or other circumstances requiring a humanitarian response,

recognizing that families provide the basis for all individuals to cope with the consequences of these tragic events, and *reiterating* the responsibility of each component of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) to help in the restoration or maintenance of contact between members of families separated in such circumstances,

recalling the role which the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) plays as a coordinator and as a technical adviser to National Societies and governments and the specific responsibility of the National Societies in restoring family links and also *recalling* the importance for the Movement of relying on a sound international Red Cross and Red Crescent network in order to take effective action in restoring family links (RFL) as recognized in Resolution 16 of the 25th International Conference of the Red Cross,

recognizing and reaffirming the lead role of the ICRC in RFL within the Movement,

noting the need to strengthen the capacity of the Family Links Network to assist people who are without news of their families,

recalling further the Agenda for Humanitarian Action adopted in Resolution 1 of the 28th International Conference, in particular its General Objective 1 on respecting and restoring the dignity of missing persons and their families and General Objective 3 on reducing the risk and impact of disasters,

expressing appreciation for the efforts and the commitment of the ICRC to develop the Restoring Family Links Strategy (and Implementation Plan) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2008-2018 (RFL Strategy) as part of the implementation of the Agenda for Humanitarian Action,

noting with satisfaction the consultation process within the Movement that led to the successful development of the RFL Strategy, in particular the role played by the Advisory Group composed of 19 National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) and the ICRC and by the four regional RFL conferences attended by the leaders of National Societies in 2006,

¹ The Council of Delegates of the Movement constitutes the assembly of the representatives of the ICRC, the International Federation and the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It meets every two years to discuss and take decisions on all matters which concern the Movement as a whole, such as joint strategies, policies and positions in the humanitarian field.

1. *reaffirms* the commitment of the Movement to RFL and *reinforces* its resolve to stay the leader in this field;
2. *adopts* the Restoring Family Links Strategy (and Implementation Plan) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2008-2018;
3. *commends* the commitment expressed so far by all the components of the Movement to contribute to the implementation of the RFL Strategy;
4. *calls upon* all National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation to:
 - a promote knowledge and understanding of this Strategy at all levels of their respective organizations,
 - b implement the actions outlined in this Strategy as part of their organizational strategies and plans at national, regional and international levels,
 - c allocate the necessary resources to carry them out;
5. *recommends that* the ICRC and the International Federation further enhance their cooperation with a view to supporting National Societies in their efforts to implement the Strategy, taking into consideration the challenges that National Societies have identified and highlighted during the consultation process;
6. *encourages* partnerships amongst National Societies to support each other in building their RFL capacity;
7. *requests* the ICRC to bring the RFL Strategy to the attention of the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent with a view in particular to encouraging member States to better understand and support the RFL activities carried out by the Movement;
8. *welcomes* the ICRC's initiative to establish and chair an implementation group composed of National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC, to provide guidance and support in the implementation process as well as to develop the criteria for its success and indicators to measure that success;
9. *further requests* all the components of the Movement to carry out the required self-assessments on the implementation of the Strategy and provide this information to the ICRC for monitoring and reporting purposes;
10. *invites* the ICRC to report to the 2011 and 2015 Council of Delegates on the results achieved through the implementation of the Strategy.

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT (AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN), 2008-2018

Document prepared by the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross in consultation with National Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva, August 2007 (Original: English)

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 a 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 (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 family members and clarify the fate of persons reported missing. These activities are often interconnected with psychological, legal and material support for families and persons affected, resettlement or reintegration programmes and social-welfare services. Other activities include the management of human remains and forensic identification.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (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 and the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

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 of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (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;
- increasing cooperation between the ICRC and the International Federation to support both the development of National Societies and their RFL activities.

The RFL Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement builds on the Movement's Statutes and on resolutions of the International Conference and the Council of Delegates, 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,

Council of Delegates, November 1997) and its subsequent Supplementary Measures (Council of Delegates, 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 International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement recognizes 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 whose loved ones are unaccounted for or who are separated from them 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 a humanitarian response and 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 the authorities on the right of relatives to communicate with one another and be informed of each other's whereabouts or fate.

These activities relate to other activities including:

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

Situations causing family separation

Conflict and other situations of violence, natural and man-made disasters, international migration and other situations requiring a humanitarian response

RFL activities

Prevent disappearances and separation
Restore contact between family members
Maintain contact between family members
Clarify the fate of missing persons



Activities related to RFL

Development and promotion of international and national law
Material, legal, psychological and other support for those affected
Forensic identification and the management of human remains
Social-welfare services
Resettlement and integration services

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 the 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 separated family members, 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, including its lead role within the Movement, is more precisely defined by the following instruments:

- the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols;
- the Statutes of the Movement, 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, those of the 25th and 26th International Conferences (Geneva, 1986 and 1995), which draw the attention of the States to the role of the ICRC's 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 the National Societies

The functions of the National Societies are set out in Article 3 of the Movement's Statutes. The National Societies 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 (Arts 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, 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.

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 Societies' 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

¹ Such as *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).

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 entailed 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;
- the 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 armed 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.

Armed conflicts and other situations of violence

- Today, internal armed 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 their bodies are 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. From 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 human remains is also one of the most difficult aspects of the response to natural and man-made disasters. Recent events – the continuing plight of relatives of persons missing in connection with the conflicts in the Balkans and the massive loss of life following the South Asian tsunami in 2004 and 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 taking place 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.

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 principles of humanity all contribute to an environment that encourages the smuggling and trafficking of human beings.

2 *Global Refugee Trends* (UNHCR, 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 Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

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

4 *Trends in Total Migrant Stock* (United Nations, Revision 2005).

5 People who crossed an international border.

6 "Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action", *Report of the Global Commission on International Migration* (October 2005).

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 a 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 in which 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 unaccompanied minors and/or minors separated from their families. The United Nations Children’s Fund, the Office of 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 interagency cooperation and coordination owing 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 Family Links Network is to help affected groups and individuals and if the service is not to be taken over by other humanitarian organizations.

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 a humanitarian response.

Specific situations require specific RFL responses. Before any services can be provided, 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 the 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.

of RFL activities. The Implementation Plan for the RFL Strategy focuses on the following actions:

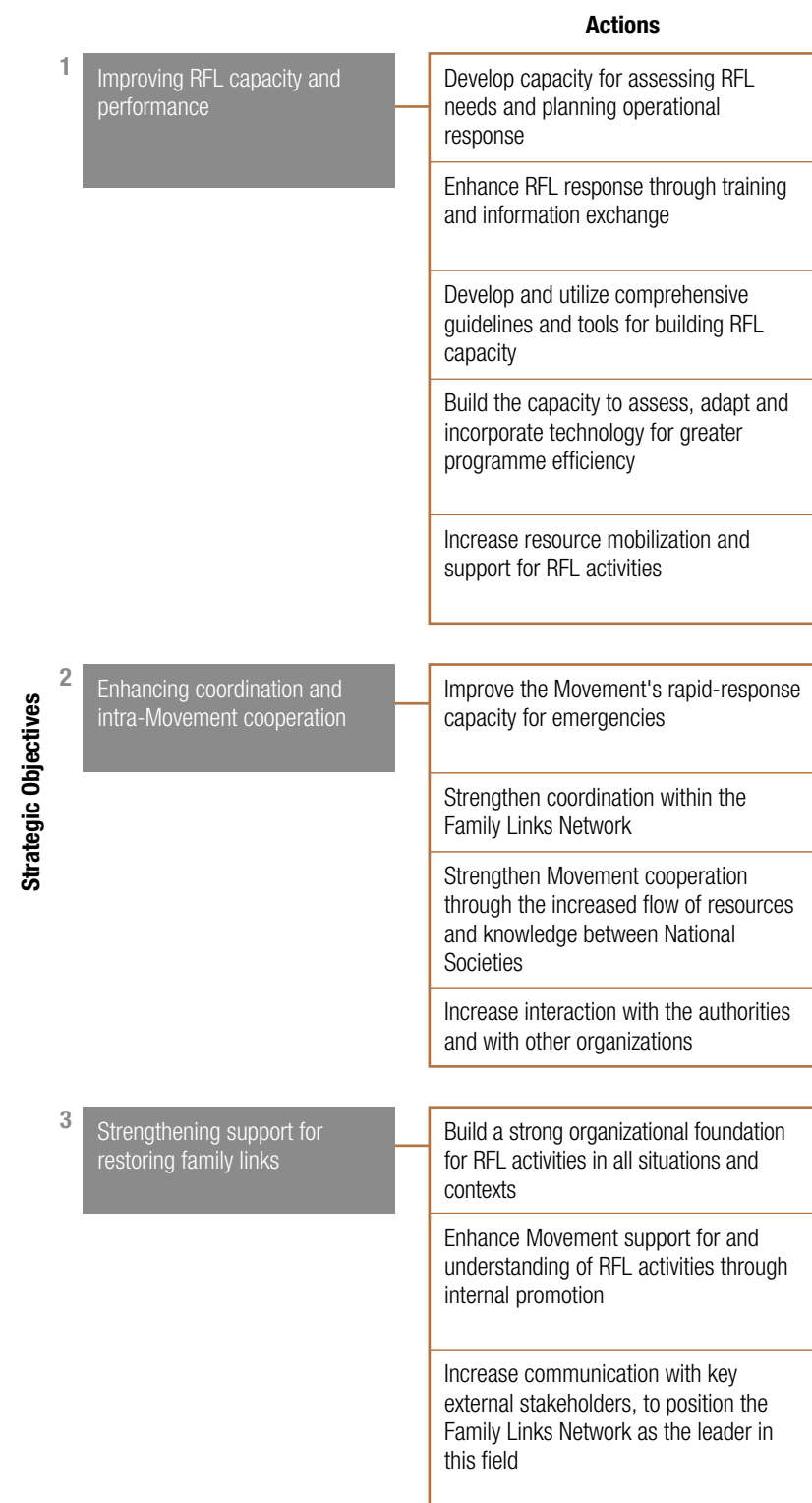
- understanding RFL and the related needs of separated and missing people;
- strengthening programme ownership for RFL activities;
- raising the profile of RFL and enhancing its positioning;
- improving RFL capability and services;
- improving cooperation between National Societies and across the Network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

For the Family Links Network, building capacity means investing in the development and strategic orientation

Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement – Summary chart

Vision

Whenever people are separated from their loved ones as a result of armed conflict and other situations of violence, natural disaster or other situations requiring a humanitarian response, the Movement responds efficiently and effectively by mobilizing its resources to restore family links.



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, and leadership and positioning in the field of RFL. The strategic objectives are all interlinked 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 outline a Movement-wide approach which recognizes that meeting RFL needs and building capacity is not only an ICRC responsibility but a responsibility for all the 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:

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 National Society 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, it is important to 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 situation 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 International 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 among 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 branches.

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 Societies, Conclusions and Recommendations of the Expert Conference on the Missing and their Families, Guiding Principles for Separated and Unaccompanied Children, Guidelines for Tracing in Disasters, Management of Dead Bodies after Disasters: A Field Manual for First Responders*, and the forthcoming *Field Manual for Restoring Family Links in 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 the 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 the ICRC, support National Societies in incorporating the ICRC's 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's 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 activities.

1.4.9 Continue to provide National Societies with space on the ICRC's 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 the 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 communication 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 in their efforts to ensure cooperation between their fundraising, communication and tracing services, and to include RFL as part of their overall fundraising policies.

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 the 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 conflicts 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 the latter's capacity during national disasters,

greater emphasis must be placed on a 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 the 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, the exchange of information, the identification of issues and the 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 the 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 and offers the possibility of exchanging best practices, data, tracing criteria and thoughts on 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 addressing 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 the 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 the 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 the 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 that 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 the 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 the 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, the 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 within 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 Strategy 2010.

3.1.10 Support, in conjunction with the ICRC, the National Societies in revising their Statutes and incorporating RFL in their development plans and strategies.

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;
 - an 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, the authorities and other organizations.

The **National Societies** will:

3.3.4 Devise, by 2013, a communication plan to support

RFL. National Society communication plans can be further strengthened on the basis of the *worldwide communication plan*.

The **International Federation** will:

3.3.5 Disseminate to National Societies, by 2009, the *Communication 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 the components.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation are individually responsible for incorporating the Strategy's contents 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 grassroots 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 a 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 the 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 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 the 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 online training tools, RFL information by context, films, photos, networking and information exchange.

Framework for deployment of international RFL specialists during disasters

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

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.

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

The 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 National Societies concerned.

Restoring Family Links (RFL)

Restoring Family Links is the generic term given to a range of activities aimed at preventing separation, restoring and maintaining contact between family members and clarifying what has happened to persons reported missing (see point 2.1 above).

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 a humanitarian response. The National Society tracing services form part of the Family Links Network. Each tracing service works in accordance with CTA guidelines. (N.B. In some countries tracing services may be named differently.)

RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY: LEGAL REFERENCES

This document aims to give the legal background underpinning the Restoring Family Links Strategy. It is not comprehensive and is limited to instruments related to international humanitarian law, as well as policies/resolutions adopted within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Consequently, it contains:

1. International humanitarian law instruments as well as rules of customary international humanitarian law
2. Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
3. Resolutions adopted by statutory bodies of the Movement such as the Council of Delegates and the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
4. Declarations/resolutions/plans of action adopted by regional statutory meetings of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

1. Provisions and rules of international humanitarian law

1.1 Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977

NATIONAL INFORMATION BUREAUX

Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949

Art. 122: "Upon the outbreak of a conflict and in all cases of occupation, each of the Parties to the conflict shall institute an official Information Bureau for prisoners of war who are in its power. Neutral or non-belligerent Powers who may have received within their territory persons belonging to one of the categories referred to in Article 4, shall take the same action with respect to such persons. The Power concerned shall ensure that the Prisoners of War Information Bureau is provided with the necessary accommodation, equipment and staff to ensure its efficient working. It shall be at liberty to employ prisoners of war in such a Bureau under the conditions laid down in the Section of the present Convention dealing with work by prisoners of war.

Within the shortest possible period, each of the Parties to the conflict shall give its Bureau the information referred to in the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraphs of this Article regarding any enemy person belonging to one of the categories referred to in Article 4, who has fallen into its power. Neutral or non-belligerent Powers shall take the same action with regard to persons belonging to such categories whom they have received within their territory.

The Bureau shall immediately forward such information by the most rapid means to the Powers concerned, through the intermediary of the Protecting Powers and likewise of the Central Agency provided for in Article 123.

This information shall make it possible quickly to advise the next of kin concerned. Subject to the provisions of Article 17, the information shall include, in so far as available to the Information Bureau, in respect of each prisoner of war, his surname, first names, rank, army, regimental, personal or serial number, place and full date of birth, indication of the Power on which he depends, first name of the father and maiden name of the mother, name and address of the person to be informed and the address to which correspondence for the prisoner may be sent.

The Information Bureau shall receive from the various departments concerned information regarding transfers, releases, repatriations, escapes, admissions to hospital, and deaths, and shall transmit such information in the manner described in the third paragraph above.

Likewise, information regarding the state of health of prisoners of war who are seriously ill or seriously wounded shall be supplied regularly, every week if possible.

	The Information Bureau shall also be responsible for replying to all enquiries sent to it concerning prisoners of war, including those who have died in captivity; it will make any enquiries necessary to obtain the information which is asked for if this is not in its possession. All written communications made by the Bureau shall be authenticated by a signature or a seal. The Information Bureau shall furthermore be charged with collecting all personal valuables, including sums in currencies other than that of the Detaining Power and documents of importance to the next of kin, left by prisoners of war who have been repatriated or released, or who have escaped or died, and shall forward the said valuables to the Powers concerned. Such articles shall be sent by the Bureau in sealed packets which shall be accompanied by statements giving clear and full particulars of the identity of the person to whom the articles belonged, and by a complete list of the contents of the parcel. Other personal effects of such prisoners of war shall be transmitted under arrangements agreed upon between the Parties to the conflict concerned."
	Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art. 136: "Upon the outbreak of a conflict and in all cases of occupation, each of the Parties to the conflict shall establish an official Information Bureau responsible for receiving and transmitting information in respect of the protected persons who are in its power. Each of the Parties to the conflict shall, within the shortest possible period, give its Bureau information of any measure taken by it concerning any protected persons who are kept in custody for more than two weeks, who are subjected to assigned residence or who are interned. It shall, furthermore, require its various departments concerned with such matters to provide the aforesaid Bureau promptly with information concerning all changes pertaining to these protected persons, as, for example, transfers, releases, repatriations, escapes, admittances to hospitals, births and deaths." Art. 138: "The information received by the national Bureau and transmitted by it shall be of such a character as to make it possible to identify the protected person exactly and to advise his next of kin quickly. The information in respect of each person shall include at least his surname, first names, place and date of birth, nationality, last residence and distinguishing characteristics, the first name of the father and the maiden name of the mother, the date, place and nature of the action taken with regard to the individual, the address at which correspondence may be sent to him and the name and address of the person to be informed. Likewise, information regarding the state of health of internees who are seriously ill or seriously wounded shall be supplied regularly and if possible every week."
CENTRAL INFORMATION AGENCY	Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art 123: "A Central Prisoners of War Information Agency shall be created in a neutral country. The International Committee of the Red Cross shall, if it deems necessary, propose to the Powers concerned the organization of such an Agency. The function of the Agency shall be to collect all the information it may obtain through official or private channels respecting prisoners of war, and to transmit it as rapidly as possible to the country of origin of the prisoners of war or to the Power on which they depend. It shall receive from the Parties to the conflict all facilities for effecting such transmissions. The High Contracting Parties, and in particular those whose nationals benefit by the services of the Central Agency, are requested to give the said Agency the financial aid it may require.

	The foregoing provisions shall in no way be interpreted as restricting the humanitarian activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross, or of the relief societies provided for in Article 125." Art. 124: "The national Information Bureaux and the Central Information Agency shall enjoy free postage for mail, likewise all the exemptions provided for in Article 74, and further, so far as possible, exemption from telegraphic charges or, at least, greatly reduced rates." Art. 125: "Subject to the measures which the Detaining Powers may consider essential to ensure their security or to meet any other reasonable need, the representatives of religious organizations, relief societies, or any other organization assisting prisoners of war, shall receive from the said Powers, for themselves and their duly accredited agents, all necessary facilities for visiting the prisoners, distributing relief supplies and material, from any source, intended for religious, educational or recreative purposes, and for assisting them in organizing their leisure time within the camps. Such societies or organizations may be constituted in the territory of the Detaining Power or in any other country, or they may have an international character. The Detaining Power may limit the number of societies and organizations whose delegates are allowed to carry out their activities in its territory and under its supervision, on condition, however, that such limitation shall not hinder the effective operation of adequate relief to all prisoners of war. The special position of the International Committee of the Red Cross in this field shall be recognized and respected at all times. As soon as relief supplies or material intended for the above mentioned purposes are handed over to prisoners of war, or very shortly afterwards, receipts for each consignment, signed by the prisoners' representative, shall be forwarded to the relief society or organization making the shipment. At the same time, receipts for these consignments shall be supplied by the administrative authorities responsible for guarding the prisoners."
	Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art. 140: "A Central Information Agency for protected persons, in particular for internees, shall be created in a neutral country. The International Committee of the Red Cross shall, if it deems necessary, propose to the Powers concerned the organization of such an Agency, which may be the same as that provided for in Article 123 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of 12 August 1949. The function of the Agency shall be to collect all information of the type set forth in Article 136 which it may obtain through official or private channels and to transmit it as rapidly as possible to the countries of origin or of residence of the persons concerned, except in cases where such transmissions might be detrimental to the persons whom the said information concerns, or to their relatives. It shall receive from the Parties to the conflict all reasonable facilities for effecting such transmissions. The High Contracting Parties, and in particular those whose nationals benefit by the services of the Central Agency, are requested to give the said Agency the financial aid it may require. The foregoing provisions shall in no way be interpreted as restricting the humanitarian activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the relief Societies described in Article 142."

FORWARDING FAMILY NEWS	Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art. 71: "Prisoners of war shall be allowed to send and receive letters and cards. If the Detaining Power deems it necessary to limit the number of letters and cards sent by each prisoner of war, the said number shall not be less than two letters and four cards monthly, exclusive of the capture cards provided for in Article 70, and conforming as closely as possible to the models annexed to the present Convention. Further limitations may be imposed only if the Protecting Power is satisfied that it would be in the interests of the prisoners of war concerned to do so owing to difficulties of translation caused by the Detaining Power's inability to find sufficient qualified linguists to carry out the necessary censorship. If limitations must be placed on the correspondence addressed to prisoners of war, they may be ordered only by the Power on which the prisoners depend, possibly at the request of the Detaining Power. Such letters and cards must be conveyed by the most rapid method at the disposal of the Detaining Power; they may not be delayed or retained for disciplinary reasons. Prisoners of war who have been without news for a long period, or who are unable to receive news from their next of kin or to give them news by the ordinary postal route, as well as those who are at a great distance from their homes, shall be permitted to send telegrams, the fees being charged against the prisoners of war's accounts with the Detaining Power or paid in the currency at their disposal. They shall likewise benefit by this measure in cases of urgency. As a general rule, the correspondence of prisoners of war shall be written in their native language. The Parties to the conflict may allow correspondence in other languages. Sacks containing prisoner of war mail must be securely sealed and labelled so as clearly to indicate their contents, and must be addressed to offices of destination."
	Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art. 25: "All persons in the territory of a Party to the conflict, or in a territory occupied by it, shall be enabled to give news of a strictly personal nature to members of their families, wherever they may be, and to receive news from them. This correspondence shall be forwarded speedily and without undue delay. If, as a result of circumstances, it becomes difficult or impossible to exchange family correspondence by the ordinary post, the Parties to the conflict concerned shall apply to a neutral intermediary, such as the Central Agency provided for in Article 140, and shall decide in consultation with it how to ensure the fulfilment of their obligations under the best possible conditions, in particular with the cooperation of the National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies. If the Parties to the conflict deem it necessary to restrict family correspondence, such restrictions shall be confined to the compulsory use of standard forms containing twenty-five freely chosen words, and to the limitation of the number of these forms despatched to one each month." Art. 107: "Internees shall be allowed to send and receive letters and cards. If the Detaining Power deems it necessary to limit the number of letters and cards sent by each internee, the said number shall not be less than two letters and four cards monthly; these shall be drawn up so as to conform as closely as possible to the models annexed to the present Convention. If limitations must be placed on the correspondence addressed to internees, they may be ordered only by the Power to which such internees owe allegiance, possibly at the request of the Detaining Power. Such letters and cards must be conveyed with reasonable despatch; they may not be delayed or retained for disciplinary reasons.

	Internees who have been a long time without news, or who find it impossible to receive news from their relatives, or to give them news by the ordinary postal route, as well as those who are at a considerable distance from their homes, shall be allowed to send telegrams, the charges being paid by them in the currency at their disposal. They shall likewise benefit by this provision in cases which are recognized to be urgent. As a rule, internees' mail shall be written in their own language. The Parties to the conflict may authorize correspondence in other languages."
CLARIFYING THE FATE OF MISSING PERSONS	Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977 Article 32 – "General principle" "In the implementation of this Section, the activities of the High Contracting Parties, of the Parties to the conflict and of the international humanitarian organizations mentioned in the Conventions and in this Protocol shall be prompted mainly by the right of families to know the fate of their relatives." Article 33 – "Missing persons" 1. "As soon as circumstances permit, and at the latest from the end of active hostilities, each Party to the conflict shall search for the persons who have been reported missing by an adverse Party. Such adverse Party shall transmit all relevant information concerning such persons in order to facilitate such searches." 2. "In order to facilitate the gathering of information pursuant to the preceding paragraph, each Party to the conflict shall, with respect to persons who would not receive more favourable consideration under the Conventions and this Protocol: a) record the information specified in Article 138 of the Fourth Convention in respect of such persons who have been detained, imprisoned or otherwise held in captivity for more than two weeks as a result of hostilities or occupation, or who have died during any period of detention; b) to the fullest extent possible, facilitate and, if need be, carry out the search for and the recording of information concerning such persons if they have died in other circumstances as a result of hostilities or occupation." 3. "Information concerning persons reported missing pursuant to paragraph 1 and requests for such information shall be transmitted either directly or through the Protecting Power or the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross or national Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies. Where the information is not transmitted through the International Committee of the Red Cross and its Central Tracing Agency, each Party to the conflict shall ensure that such information is also supplied to the Central Tracing Agency." 4. "The Parties to the conflict shall endeavour to agree on arrangements for teams to search for, identify and recover the dead from battlefield areas, including arrangements, if appropriate, for such teams to be accompanied by personnel of the adverse Party while carrying out the missions in areas controlled by the adverse Party. Personnel of such teams shall be respected and protected while exclusively carrying out these duties." Article 34 – "Remains of deceased" 1. "The remains of persons who have died for reasons related to occupation or in detention resulting from occupation or hostilities and those of persons not nationals of the country in which they have died as a result of hostilities shall be respected, and the gravesites of all such persons shall be respected, maintained and marked as provided for in Article 130 of the Fourth Convention, where their remains or gravesites would not receive more favourable consideration under the Conventions and this Protocol."

	2. "As soon as circumstances and the relations between the adverse Parties permit, the High Contracting Parties in whose territories graves and, as the case may be, other locations of the remains of persons who have died as a result of hostilities or during occupation or in detention are situated, shall conclude agreements in order: (a) to facilitate access to the gravesites by relatives of the deceased and by representatives of official graves registration services and to regulate the practical arrangements for such access; (b) to protect and maintain such gravesites permanently; (c) to facilitate the return of the remains of the deceased and of personal effects to the home country upon its request or, unless that country objects, upon the request of the next of kin." 3. "In the absence of the agreements provided for in paragraph 2 (b) or (c) and if the home country of such deceased is not willing to arrange at its expense for the maintenance of such gravesites, the High Contracting Party in whose territory the gravesites are situated may offer to facilitate the return of the remains of the deceased to the home country. Where such an offer has not been accepted the High Contracting Party may, after the expiry of five years from the date of the offer and upon due notice to the home country, adopt the arrangements laid down in its own laws relating to cemeteries and graves." 4. "A High Contracting Party in whose territory the gravesites referred to in this Article are situated shall be permitted to exhume the remains only: (a) in accordance with paragraphs 2 (c) and 3; or (b) where exhumation is a matter of overriding public necessity, including cases of medical and investigative necessity, in which case the High Contracting Party shall at all times respect the remains, and shall give notice to the home country of its intention to exhume the remains together with details of the intended place of reinterment."
WILLS, DEATH CERTIFICATES, BURIAL, CREMATION	Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art. 120: "Wills of prisoners of war shall be drawn up so as to satisfy the conditions of validity required by the legislation of their country of origin, which will take steps to inform the Detaining Power of its requirements in this respect. At the request of the prisoner of war and, in all cases, after death, the will shall be transmitted without delay to the Protecting Power; a certified copy shall be sent to the Central Agency. Death certificates in the form annexed to the present Convention, or lists certified by a responsible officer, of all persons who die as prisoners of war shall be forwarded as rapidly as possible to the Prisoner of War Information Bureau established in accordance with Article 122. The death certificates or certified lists shall show particulars of identity as set out in the third paragraph of Article 17, and also the date and place of death, the cause of death, the date and place of burial and all particulars necessary to identify the graves. The burial or cremation of a prisoner of war shall be preceded by a medical examination of the body with a view to confirming death and enabling a report to be made and, where necessary, establishing identity. The detaining authorities shall ensure that prisoners of war who have died in captivity are honourably buried, if possible according to the rites of the religion to which they belonged, and that their graves are respected, suitably maintained and marked so as to be found at any time. Wherever possible, deceased prisoners of war who depended on the same Power shall be interred in the same place.

	Deceased prisoners of war shall be buried in individual graves unless unavoidable circumstances require the use of collective graves. Bodies may be cremated only for imperative reasons of hygiene, on account of the religion of the deceased or in accordance with his express wish to this effect. In case of cremation, the fact shall be stated and the reasons given in the death certificate of the deceased. In order that graves may always be found, all particulars of burials and graves shall be recorded with a Graves Registration Service established by the Detaining Power. Lists of graves and particulars of the prisoners of war interred in cemeteries and elsewhere shall be transmitted to the Power on which such prisoners of war depended. Responsibility for the care of these graves and for records of any subsequent moves of the bodies shall rest on the Power controlling the territory, if a Party to the present Convention. These provisions shall also apply to the ashes, which shall be kept by the Graves Registration Service until proper disposal thereof in accordance with the wishes of the home country."
BURIAL, CREMATION	Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art. 130: "The detaining authorities shall ensure that internees who die while interned are honourably buried, if possible according to the rites of the religion to which they belonged, and that their graves are respected, properly maintained, and marked in such a way that they can always be recognized. Deceased internees shall be buried in individual graves unless unavoidable circumstances require the use of collective graves. Bodies may be cremated only for imperative reasons of hygiene, on account of the religion of the deceased or in accordance with his expressed wish to this effect. In case of cremation, the fact shall be stated and the reasons given in the death certificate of the deceased. The ashes shall be retained for safe-keeping by the detaining authorities and shall be transferred as soon as possible to the next of kin on their request. As soon as circumstances permit, and not later than the close of hostilities, the Detaining Power shall forward lists of graves of deceased internees to the Powers on whom the deceased internees depended, through the Information Bureaux provided for in Article 136. Such lists shall include all particulars necessary for the identification of the deceased internees, as well as the exact location of their graves."
FAMILY REUNIFICATION / TRANSFERS / REPATRIATIONS	Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977 Article 74 – "Reunion of dispersed families" "The High Contracting Parties and the Parties to the conflict shall facilitate in every possible way the reunion of families dispersed as a result of armed conflicts and shall encourage in particular the work of the humanitarian organizations engaged in this task in accordance with the provisions of the Conventions and of this Protocol and in conformity with their respective security regulations." Article 78-3 – "Evacuation of children" 3. "With a view to facilitating the return to their families and country of children evacuated pursuant to this Article, the authorities of the Party arranging for the evacuation and, as appropriate, the authorities of the receiving country shall establish for each child a card with photographs, which they shall send to the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Each card shall bear, whenever possible, and whenever it involves no risk of harm to the child, the following information: (a) surname(s) of the child; (b) the child's first name(s); (c) the child's sex;

	(d) the place and date of birth (or, if that date is not known, the approximate age); (e) the father's full name; (f) the mother's full name and her maiden name; (g) the child's next-of-kin; (h) the child's nationality; (i) the child's native language, and any other languages he speaks; (j) the address of the child's family; (k) any identification number for the child; (l) the child's state of health; (m) the child's blood group; (n) any distinguishing features; (o) the date on which and the place where the child was found; (p) the date on which and the place from which the child left the country; (q) the child's religion, if any; (r) the child's present address in the receiving country; (s) should the child die before his return, the date, place and circumstances of death and place of interment."
REPATRIATION – DETAILS OF PROCEDURE	Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art. 119: "Repatriation shall be effected in conditions similar to those laid down in Articles 46 to 48 inclusive of the present Convention for the transfer of prisoners of war, having regard to the provisions of Article 118 and to those of the following paragraphs. On repatriation, any articles of value impounded from prisoners of war under Article 18, and any foreign currency which has not been converted into the currency of the Detaining Power, shall be restored to them. Articles of value and foreign currency which, for any reason whatever, are not restored to prisoners of war on repatriation, shall be despatched to the Information Bureau set up under Article 122. Prisoners of war shall be allowed to take with them their personal effects, and any correspondence and parcels which have arrived for them. The weight of such baggage may be limited, if the conditions of repatriation so require, to what each prisoner can reasonably carry. Each prisoner shall in all cases be authorized to carry at least twenty-five kilograms. The other personal effects of the repatriated prisoner shall be left in the charge of the Detaining Power which shall have them forwarded to him as soon as it has concluded an agreement to this effect, regulating the conditions of transport and the payment of the costs involved, with the Power on which the prisoner depends. (...) Parties to the conflict shall communicate to each other the names of any prisoners of war who are detained until the end of the proceedings or until punishment has been completed. By agreement between the Parties to the conflict, commissions shall be established for the purpose of searching for dispersed prisoners of war and of assuring their repatriation with the least possible delay."

DISPERSED FAMILIES TRANSFER OF INTERNEES – METHOD REPATRIATION AND RETURN TO LAST PLACE OF RESIDENCE COSTS FOR RELEASE, REPATRIATION AND ACCOMMODATION IN NEUTRAL COUNTRIES	Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949 Art. 26: "Each Party to the conflict shall facilitate enquiries made by members of families dispersed owing to the war, with the object of renewing contact with one another and of meeting, if possible. It shall encourage, in particular, the work of organizations engaged on this task provided they are acceptable to it and conform to its security regulations." Art. 128: "In the event of transfer, internees shall be officially advised of their departure and of their new postal address. Such notification shall be given in time for them to pack their luggage and inform their next of kin. They shall be allowed to take with them their personal effects, and the correspondence and parcels which have arrived for them. The weight of such baggage may be limited if the conditions of transfer so require, but in no case to less than twenty-five kilograms per internee. Mail and parcels addressed to their former place of internment shall be forwarded to them without delay. The commandant of the place of internment shall take, in agreement with the Internee Committee, any measures needed to ensure the transport of the internees' community property and of the luggage the internees are unable to take with them in consequence of restrictions imposed by virtue of the second paragraph." Art. 134: "The High Contracting Parties shall endeavour, upon the close of hostilities or occupation, to ensure the return of all internees to their last place of residence, or to facilitate their repatriation." Art. 135: "The Detaining Power shall bear the expense of returning released internees to the places where they were residing when interned, or, if it took them into custody while they were in transit or on the high seas, the cost of completing their journey or of their return to their point of departure. Where a Detaining Power refuses permission to reside in its territory to a released internee who previously had his permanent domicile therein, such Detaining Power shall pay the cost of the said internee's repatriation. If, however, the internee elects to return to his country on his own responsibility or in obedience to the Government of the Power to which he owes allegiance, the Detaining Power need not pay the expenses of his journey beyond the point of his departure from its territory. The Detaining Power need not pay the costs of repatriation of an internee who was interned at his own request. If internees are transferred in accordance with Article 45, the transferring and receiving Powers shall agree on the portion of the above costs to be borne by each. The foregoing shall not prejudice such special agreements as may be concluded between Parties to the conflict concerning the exchange and repatriation of their nationals in enemy hands."
1.2 Rules of customary international humanitarian law¹	
RESPECT FOR FAMILY LIFE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN REMAINS	Rule 98: "Enforced disappearance is prohibited." Rule 105: "Family life must be respected as far as possible." Rule 112: "Whenever circumstances permit, and particularly after an engagement, each party to the conflict must, without delay, take all possible measures to search for, collect and evacuate the dead without adverse distinction." Rule 113: "Each party to the conflict must take all possible measures to prevent the dead from being despoiled. Mutilation of dead bodies is prohibited."

¹ The following rules are extracted from the ICRC study *Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rules, Volume I*, 2005.

INFORMATION TO FAMILY MEMBERS ON MISSING PERSONS EXCHANGE OF FAMILY NEWS DISPLACEMENT OF CIVILIANS AND FAMILY SEPARATION	Rule 114: "Parties to the conflict must endeavour to facilitate the return of the remains of the deceased upon request of the party to which they belong or upon the request of their next of kin. They must return their personal effects to them." Rule 115: "The dead must be disposed of in a respectful manner and their graves respected and properly maintained." Rule 116: "With a view to the identification of the dead, each party to the conflict must record all available information prior to disposal and mark the location of the graves." Rule 117: "Each party to the conflict must take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing as a result of armed conflict and must provide their family members with any information it has on their fate." Rule 125: "Persons deprived of their liberty must be allowed to correspond with their families, subject to reasonable conditions relating to frequency and the need for censorship by the authorities." Rule 131: "In case of displacement, all possible measures must be taken in order that the civilians concerned are received under satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health, safety and nutrition and that members of the same family are not separated."
2. Statutes of the Movement²	
COOPERATION BETWEEN STATES PARTIES TO THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS AND THE COMPONENTS OF THE MOVEMENT	Article 2 – "States Parties to the Geneva Conventions"³ 1. "The States Parties to the Geneva Conventions cooperate with the components of the Movement in accordance with these Conventions, the present Statutes and the resolutions of the International Conference." 2. "Each State shall promote the establishment on its territory of a National Society and encourage its development." 3. "The States, in particular those which have recognized the National Society constituted on their territory, support, whenever possible, the work of the components of the Movement. The same components, in their turn and in accordance with their respective statutes, support as far as possible the humanitarian activities of the States." 4. "The States shall at all times respect the adherence by all the components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles." 5. "The implementation of the present Statutes by the components of the Movement shall not affect the sovereignty of States, with due respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law."
ROLE OF THE COMPONENTS OF THE MOVEMENT	Article 3 – "National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies" 1. "The National Societies form the basic units and constitute a vital force of the Movement. They carry out their humanitarian activities in conformity with their own statutes and national legislation, in pursuance of the mission of the Movement, and in accordance with the Fundamental Principles. The National Societies support the public authorities in their humanitarian tasks, according to the needs of the people of their respective countries."

² The Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement were adopted by the 25th International Conference of the Red Cross at Geneva in October 1986 and amended by the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent at Geneva in December 1995 and by the 29th International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent at Geneva in June 2006.

³ "In the present Statutes the expression "Geneva Conventions" also covers their Additional Protocols for the States Parties to these Protocols."

	2. "Within their own countries, National Societies are autonomous national organizations providing an indispensable framework for the activities of their voluntary members and their staff. They cooperate with the public authorities in the prevention of disease, the promotion of health and the mitigation of human suffering by their own programmes in such fields as education, health and social welfare, for the benefit of the community. They organize, in liaison with the public authorities, emergency relief operations and other services to assist the victims of armed conflicts as provided in the Geneva Conventions, and the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies for whom help is needed. They disseminate and assist their governments in disseminating international humanitarian law; they take initiatives in this respect. They disseminate the principles and ideals of the Movement and assist those governments which also disseminate them. They also cooperate with their governments to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and to protect the distinctive emblems recognized by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols." 3. "Internationally, National Societies, each within the limits of its resources, give assistance for victims of armed conflicts, as provided in the Geneva Conventions, and for victims of natural disasters and other emergencies. Such assistance, in the form of services and personnel, of material, financial and moral support, shall be given through the National Societies concerned, the International Committee or the Federation. They contribute, as far as they are able, to the development of other National Societies which require such assistance, in order to strengthen the Movement as a whole. International assistance between the components of the Movement shall be coordinated as provided in Article 5 or Article 6. A National Society which is to receive such assistance may however undertake the coordination within its own country, subject to the concurrence of the International Committee or the Federation, as the case may be." 4. "In order to carry out these tasks, the National Societies recruit, train and assign such personnel as are necessary for the discharge of their responsibilities. They encourage everyone, and in particular young people, to participate in the work of the Society." 5. "National Societies have a duty to support the Federation in terms of its Constitution. Whenever possible, they give their voluntary support to the International Committee in its humanitarian actions." Article 5 – "The International Committee of the Red Cross" (...) 2. "The role of the International Committee, in accordance with its Statutes, is in particular: (...) c) to undertake the tasks incumbent upon it under the Geneva Conventions, to work for the faithful application of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts and to take cognizance of any complaints based on alleged breaches of that law;
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d) to endeavour at all times – as a neutral institution whose humanitarian work is carried out particularly in time of international and other armed conflicts or internal strife – to ensure the protection of and assistance to military and civilian victims of such events and of their direct results;

e) to ensure the operation of the Central Tracing Agency as provided in the Geneva Conventions;"

(...)

3. "The International Committee may take any humanitarian initiative which comes within its role as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary, and may consider any question requiring examination by such an institution."

4. "a) " It shall maintain close contact with National Societies. In agreement with them, it shall cooperate in matters of common concern, such as their preparation for action in times of armed conflict, respect for and development and ratification of the Geneva Conventions, and the dissemination of the Fundamental Principles and international humanitarian law.

b) In situations foreseen in paragraph 2 d) of this Article and requiring coordinated assistance from National Societies of other countries, the International Committee, in cooperation with the National Society of the country or countries concerned, shall coordinate such assistance in accordance with the agreements concluded with the Federation."

5. "Within the framework of the present Statutes and subject to the provisions of Articles, 3, 6 and 7, the International Committee shall maintain close contact with the Federation and cooperate with it in matters of common concern."

Article 6 – "The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies"

1. "The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies comprises the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It acts under its own Constitution with all rights and obligations of a corporate body with a legal personality."

2. "The Federation is an independent humanitarian organization which is not governmental, political, racial or sectarian in character."

3. "The general object of the Federation is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by the National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering and thereby contributing to the maintenance and the promotion of peace in the world."

4. "To achieve the general object as defined in paragraph 3 and in the context of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement, of the resolutions of the International Conference and within the framework of the present Statutes and subject to the provisions of Article 3, 5 and 7, the functions of the Federation, in accordance with its Constitution, are *inter alia* the following:

a) to act as the permanent body of liaison, coordination and study between the National Societies and to give them any assistance they might request;

b) to encourage and promote in every country the establishment and development of an independent and duly recognized National Society;

c) to bring relief by all available means to all disaster victims;

d) to assist the National Societies in their disaster relief preparedness, in the organization of their relief actions and in the relief operations themselves;

e) to organize, coordinate and direct international relief actions in accordance with the Principles and Rules adopted by the International Conference;

f) to encourage and coordinate the participation of the National Societies in activities for safeguarding public health and the promotion of social welfare in cooperation with their appropriate national authorities;

	g) to encourage and coordinate between National Societies the exchange of ideas for the education of children and young people in humanitarian ideals and for the development of friendly relations between young people of all countries; h) to assist National Societies to recruit members from the population as a whole and inculcate the principles and ideals of the Movement; i) to bring help to victims of armed conflicts in accordance with the agreements concluded with the International Committee; j) to assist the International Committee in the promotion and development of international humanitarian law and collaborate with it in the dissemination of this law and of the Fundamental Principles of the Movement among the National Societies; k) to be the official representative of the member Societies in the international field, <i>inter alia</i> for dealing with decisions and recommendations adopted by its Assembly and to be the guardian of their integrity and the protector of their interests; l) to carry out the mandates entrusted to it by the International Conference." 5. "In each country the Federation shall act through or in agreement with the National Society and in conformity with the laws of that country."
3. International Conference of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent	
	24th International Conference of the Red Cross, Manila, 1981 "International Red Cross aid to refugees statement of policy" (...) 9. "The Central Tracing Agency of the ICRC is also always ready in cooperation with National Societies to act in aid of refugees and displaced persons, for instance by facilitating the reuniting of dispersed families, by organizing the exchange of family news and by tracing missing persons. When necessary, it offers its cooperation to the UNHCR, as well as its technical assistance to National Societies to enable them to set up and develop their own tracing and mailing services."
	25th International Conference of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1986 Resolution 16: "The role of the Central Tracing Agency and National Societies in tracing activities and the reuniting of families" "The 25th International Conference of the Red Cross, <i>acknowledging</i> the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's responsibility in helping to re-establish or maintain contact between members of families separated as a consequence of armed conflicts, tensions or natural disasters, <i>recalling</i> the role which the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) of the ICRC plays as a co-ordinator and technical adviser to National Societies and governments, as defined in the report presented by the ICRC and the League and adopted by the Twenty-fourth International Conference of the Red Cross, (...) <i>recognizing</i> that, in order to take effective action, the Movement must be able to rely on a sound network composed of all the National Societies' tracing services and the CTA, in liaison, when necessary, with the League Secretariat, 1. <i>emphasizes</i> the mandate entrusted to the CTA by the Twenty-fourth Conference, <i>congratulates</i> it on the initiatives already taken and <i>encourages</i> it to continue its efforts to co-ordinate activities, to harmonize operating principles and working methods, and to train responsible tracing personnel, (...)

	3. <i>requests</i> all National Societies to carry out to the best of their capacity the role which they are called upon to play as components of the international network for tracing and reuniting families, 4. <i>asks</i> governments to facilitate the work of the Movement in this domain by giving it all the necessary support."
	26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 1995 Resolution 2: "Protection of the civilian population in period of armed conflict, with regard to children and to the reunification of families" "The 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, C. With regard to children: (a) <i>urgently draws attention to</i> the obligation to take all requisite measures to provide children with the protection and assistance to which they are entitled under national and international law; (b) <i>strongly condemns</i> deliberate killing and sexual exploitation of, and abuse of and violence against children, and <i>calls for</i> particularly stringent measures to prevent and punish such behaviour; (c) <i>also strongly condemns</i> recruitment and conscription of children under the age of 15 years in the armed forces or armed groups, which constitute a violation of international humanitarian law, and <i>demand</i>s that those responsible for such acts be brought to justice and punished; (d) <i>recommends that</i> parties to conflict refrain from arming children under the age of 18 years and take every feasible step to ensure that children under the age of 18 years do not take part in hostilities; (e) <i>supports</i> the work being done by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on the involvement of children in armed conflicts with a view to adopting an optional Protocol to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the purpose of which is to increase the protection of children involved in armed conflicts; (f) <i>takes note</i> of the efforts of the Movement to promote a principle of non-recruitment and non-participation in armed conflicts of children under the age of 18 years, and <i>supports</i> its practical action to protect and assist all children who are victims of conflict; (g) <i>encourages</i> States, the Movement and other competent entities and organizations to develop preventive measures, assess existing programmes and set up new programmes to ensure that child victims of conflict receive medical, psychological and social assistance, provided if possible by qualified personnel who are aware of the specific issues involved. D. With regard to the reunification of families: (a) <i>demand</i>s that all parties to armed conflict avoid any action aimed at, or having the effect of, causing the separation of families in a manner contrary to international humanitarian law; (b) <i>appeals</i> to States to do their utmost to solve the serious humanitarian issue of dispersed families without delay; (c) <i>emphasizes</i> that family reunification must begin with the tracing of separated family members at the request of one of them and end with their coming together as a family;

	(d) <i>stresses</i> the particular vulnerability of children separated from their families as a result of armed conflict, and <i>invites</i> the ICRC, the National Societies and the International Federation, within the scope of their respective mandates, to intensify their efforts to locate unaccompanied children, to identify them, to re-establish contact and reunite them with their families, and to give them the necessary assistance and support; (e) <i>notes</i> that the form of a family may vary from one culture to the other, <i>recognizes</i> the aspiration of separated families to be reunited and <i>appeals</i> to States to apply criteria for family reunification in such a way that they take into account the situation of those family members who are most vulnerable; (f) <i>requests</i> that the legal status of family members in a host country be determined swiftly and in a humanitarian spirit, with a view to ensuring the facilitation of family reunification; (g) <i>calls upon</i> States to facilitate the tracing activities of their respective National Red Cross or Red Crescent Societies by granting them access to the relevant data; (h) <i>encourages</i> National Societies to maximize their efficiency in carrying out tracing work and family reunifications by strengthening their tracing and social welfare activities and maintaining close cooperation with the ICRC, government authorities and other competent organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in such work; (i) <i>calls upon</i> States to support National Societies in carrying out such tracing work and family reunifications; (j) <i>commends</i> the role of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency (CTA) in tracing and reuniting family members, and <i>encourages</i> the CTA to continue to coordinate, whenever necessary, National Society activities in tracing and reuniting families and to train National Society staff in the principles and techniques of tracing; (k) <i>stresses</i> the need and the right of families to obtain information on missing persons, including missing prisoners of war and those missing in action, and <i>strongly urges</i> States and parties to armed conflict to provide families with information on the fate of their missing relatives; (l) <i>urges</i> States and parties to armed conflict to cooperate with the ICRC in tracing missing persons and providing necessary documentation; (m) <i>notes</i> the increasing importance of the psychological and social aspects of the needs of victims of armed conflict, and <i>encourages</i> the International Federation to advise and train National Societies in this field;"
	26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 1995 Resolution 5: "Strengthening national capacity to provide humanitarian and development assistance and protection to the most vulnerable" "The 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, 1. <i>calls upon</i> States (...) d) <i>to recognize</i> the specific role of the National Society of their country in disaster preparedness and tracing services, ensuring that it has a clearly defined role in the context of the country's overall disaster preparedness plans,"
	28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 2003 Resolution 1: "Adoption of the Declaration and Agenda for Humanitarian Action" "Agenda for Humanitarian Action" (...)

General objective 1 – "Respect and restore the dignity of persons missing as a result of armed conflicts or other situations of armed violence and of their families"

"The aim is to resolve the problem of missing persons, assist their families and prevent others from becoming missing, by increasing efforts by governments, the military, and national and international organizations — including the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent network — to take concrete action and to reaffirm, reinforce and steadfastly respect and implement the protection afforded by international law, in order to ensure accountability on the part of the authorities responsible for resolving these issues."

Final Goal 1.1 – "Prevent persons from becoming missing"

"In armed conflict or other situations of armed violence, all persons are protected from becoming missing, without distinction as to the deliberate or incidental character of the event."

Actions proposed

1.1.1 "State authorities take effective measures to provide means of personal identification, at a minimum identification discs, for all members of armed and security forces and to ensure their compulsory and proper use."

1.1.2 "State authorities take effective measures to provide means of personal identification for minors at risk and to make such means readily available to all concerned persons."

1.1.3 "State authorities and other concerned actors, in particular National Societies, take effective measures to increase knowledge among civilians on how to protect themselves from becoming missing. These concerned actors and the ICRC take measures to gain access to all civilians and to register those at risk of becoming missing."

1.1.4 "State authorities and other concerned actors, in particular National Societies and the ICRC, take effective measures to ensure that during armed conflict or other situations of armed violence all persons are allowed to maintain contact with their relatives."

1.1.5 "State authorities take effective measures to immediately notify families, counsel and any other person with a legitimate interest in the matter, of the situation of persons deprived of their liberty and to prevent extra-judicial executions, torture and detention in secret locations."

Final Goal 1.2 – "Ascertain the fate of missing persons"

"Article 32 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I refers to the right of families to know the fate of their relatives. In this spirit, families are to be informed of the fate, including the whereabouts, and, if dead, the cause of death of their family members who are missing as a result of armed conflict or other situations of armed violence. Families and communities receive acknowledgement of the events leading to persons becoming missing, and the perpetrators of violations leading to such situations are held accountable."

Actions proposed

1.2.1 "State authorities and other concerned actors, in particular National Societies and the ICRC, take effective measures to ensure that families know the fate, including the whereabouts, of their missing relatives. In case of death of these relatives, family members should know the cause and circumstances of death, in order to facilitate acceptance of their death and the commencement of the mourning process."

1.2.2 "State authorities take effective measures to set up, whenever necessary, appropriate mechanisms for responding to the need of families for information, official acknowledgement and accountability."

Final Goal 1.3 – "Manage information and process files on missing persons"

"The collection and sharing of information by all those concerned is properly and actively undertaken and coordinated, thereby strengthening the effectiveness of actions taken to ascertain the fate of missing persons as a result of armed conflict or other situations of armed violence."

	Actions proposed 1.3.1 "State authorities and other concerned actors, in particular National Societies and the ICRC, take effective measures to properly compile, manage and process files on missing persons and to properly centralize personal information that may serve to ascertain their fate." 1.3.2 "State authorities and other concerned actors, in particular National Societies and the ICRC, take effective measures to respect relevant standards and principles regarding the protection of personal information wherever such information, including medical and genetic information, is collected, managed and processed." Final Goal 1.4 – "Manage human remains and information on the dead" "Information is provided on those who have died in connection with armed conflict or other situations of armed violence so as to reduce the number of missing persons, help ascertain the fate of those who are missing and put an end to the uncertainty and anxiety of their families." Actions proposed 1.4.1 "State authorities and other concerned actors, in particular National Societies and the ICRC, take effective measures to properly search for, collect, identify and dispose of human remains without adverse distinction, while respecting the dead and the secular and religious mourning practices of the individuals and communities concerned." 1.4.2 "State authorities and other concerned actors take effective measures to agree upon a framework for exhumation and identification before beginning any such process, and ensure that forensic specialists, whenever possible, carry out all procedures to exhume and identify human remains." Final Goal 1.5 – "Support families of missing persons" "While the families of missing persons undergo much the same experiences as the rest of the population affected by armed conflict or other situations of armed violence, in addition, they have unique needs associated with the disappearance of a relative, which vary according to the context and are specifically addressed." Actions proposed 1.5.1 "State authorities and other concerned actors, in particular National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation, take targeted measures to protect and assist the families of missing persons, paying attention to the particular needs of women and children." Final Goal 1.6 – "Encourage organized armed groups engaged in armed conflicts to resolve the problem of missing persons, assist their families and prevent others from becoming missing" "State Parties to the Geneva Conventions and other concerned actors, in particular the ICRC and, where possible, National Societies, encourage organized armed groups to fulfil general objective 1, including its final goals and the corresponding actions." General objective 3 – "Minimize the impact of disasters through implementation of disaster risk reduction measures and improving preparedness and response mechanisms" "The aim is to protect human dignity, lives and livelihoods from the devastating impact of disasters, by fully integrating disaster risk reduction into national and international planning and policy instruments and implementing appropriate operational measures to reduce risks, and by implementing appropriate legal, policy and operational measures to facilitate and expedite effective responses to disasters, in order to reduce the risks and effects of disasters on marginalized and vulnerable populations."
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	30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, 26-30 November 2007 Resolution 1: "Together for humanity" "The 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, (...) 6. <i>welcomes</i> the adoption by the Movement of its Restoring Family Links Strategy (2008-2018) in Resolution 4 of the 2007 Council of Delegates and <i>calls upon</i> State authorities to continue their support for the activities of the components of the Movement in the field of restoring family links, particularly by strengthening National Societies' capacities, in conformity with their role and mandate; (...) 10. <i>urges</i> all members of the Conference to continue and intensify their efforts to implement the 2003 Agenda for Humanitarian Action as a relevant and comprehensive framework for action to address: - the suffering caused by family separation and the persistent tragedy of persons missing in connection with armed conflict or other situations of armed violence; (...) - the risk and impact of disasters and the improvement of preparedness and response mechanisms; (...)."
4. Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement	
	Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Geneva, 1-2 December 1995 Resolution 5: "Children in armed conflicts" "The Council of Delegates, (...) 2. <i>endorses</i> the Plan of Action for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (...); 3. <i>urges</i> all National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC to implement or support the implementation of the Plan of Action." Plan of Action concerning children in armed conflict Objective 2.2 "Address psychological as well as physical needs of unaccompanied children. (...) The ICRC and National Societies have a long tradition of tracing family members in times of armed conflict, exchanging family messages and eventually reunifying families. (...) Tracing and reunification activities need to be accompanied by follow-up, support and evaluation, both in the case where a foster-family is found and where the child is reunited with her or his close family."
	Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Geneva, 29-30 October 1999 Resolution 8: "Children affected by armed conflict" "The Council of Delegates, <i>recalling</i> previous Resolutions adopted by International Conferences and Councils of Delegates, in particular Resolution 5 of the 1995 Council of Delegates, and Resolution 8.1 of the 1997 Council of Delegates relative to the protection of children in armed conflict and the role and action of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in their favour, (...)

	1. <i>takes note</i> of the report "Children Affected by Armed Conflict" and the other work of the International Co-ordinating Group, set up to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action of the Movement, and <i>thanks</i> it for its work and contribution to actions taken in favour of children affected by armed conflict."
	Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Geneva, 11-14 November 2001 Resolution 4: "Movement Action in favour of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons" "The Council of Delegates, (...) 1. <i>calls upon</i> the ICRC, the International Federation and national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), in accordance with their respective mandates, to seek to ensure at all times that the Movement's response adopts a global approach, addressing both the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons – whenever possible, by appropriately addressing all stages of displacement, from prevention to return – and also the needs of the resident population in order to ensure respect for the Principle of Impartiality at all times. In particular, such a response should take into account: • the need for protection, assistance, tracing, family reunification and durable solutions such as return, local settlement or resettlement in a third country; (...)."
	Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Geneva, 30 November-2 December 2003 Resolution 10: "Movement action in favour of refugees and internally displaced persons and minimum elements to be included in operational agreements between Movement components and their operational partners" "The Council of Delegates, (...) 1. <i>calls upon</i> the components of the Movement to continue to pursue and develop their activities for refugees, IDPs and migrants, in accordance with their respective mandates and in respect of the Fundamental Principles, striving always to adopt a global approach addressing all stages of displacement – from prevention through displacement to return, resettlement and re-integration – as well as the needs of resident populations in accordance with the Principle of Impartiality; (...)."
	Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Geneva, 23-24 November 2007 Resolution 4: "Restoring Family Links Strategy (and Implementation Plan) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (2008-2018)" The full text of this resolution can be found on page 13, Resolution 4 of the 2007 Council of Delegates. Resolution 5: "International Migration" "The Council of Delegates, (...) 3. <i>welcomes</i> the decision by the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (International Federation) to develop a policy on migration for National Societies, noting that it will benefit from the specific role, experience, and expertise of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in restoring family links and other protection issues, in particular regarding persons deprived of their liberty, (...)

	4. <i>takes into account</i> previous resolutions on restoring family links and its relevance to the field of migration; 5. <i>requests</i> the ICRC, in close consultation with the International Federation and National Societies, to develop guidelines for National Societies working or wishing to work in places where migrants are being detained, basing itself on the work already initiated by the ICRC and several National Societies in this respect, and to report back on this to the next Council of Delegates in 2009; (...) 7. <i>requests</i> the ICRC and the International Federation, in accordance with their respective mandates, to support the efforts of National Societies to gain access and provide impartial humanitarian services to migrants in need, regardless of their status, and to do so without being penalized for such action; (...) 11. <i>requests</i> the International Federation, National Societies and the ICRC, in accordance with their respective mandates, to cooperate closely and coordinate within and beyond the Movement to support the provision of the necessary services and protection to vulnerable persons throughout the entire migratory cycle, including return and reintegration."
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5. Decisions and policies of the International Federation

5.1. Decisions of the General Assembly and Governing Board

	12th Session of the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, October 1999 Decision 18 – "Social Welfare Policy" "The General Assembly (...) Adopts the International Federation's Social Welfare Policy, Urges all National Societies: • To disseminate this Policy widely among staff and volunteers as well as government bodies and independent bodies working in tandem with the International Federation and/or the National Societies in social services, • To ensure full compliance with the letter and the spirit of this policy to the extent possible and where applicable, in all social welfare programmes and interventions, • To ensure that competent and professionally qualified staff are in existence both at the Headquarters and at branch level and that the volunteers involved in social programmes are adequately trained and competent for delivering the services or the tasks assigned to them, making a difference in the social development of their communities," Annex 2 – "Social Welfare Policy" "The International Federation and each individual National Society shall: (...) • strive to establish and/or enhance the capacity for conducting Tracing in Disasters and/or restoration of family links with the aim of alleviating the sufferings caused by such situations and to incorporate this capacity to the extent possible, not only as part of Social Welfare, but in the other relevant Red Cross and Red Crescent programmes, in particular disaster preparedness and in disaster response operations;"
	Extraordinary Session of the Governing Board, Geneva, 27 November 2003 "Refugees and other displaced people Policy" "The International Federation and each individual National Society shall: be ready at all times to protect and assist all victims of displacement in accordance with their mandate and existing Movement policy.

	recognise that the causes of displacement are complex and varied and thus, resultant need and vulnerability must be addressed within their specific context using best practice and taking into account relevant aspects of international law (Refugee Law, Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law). (...) promote and engage in the activity of tracing in order to facilitate the exchange of family news and information, encourage and support the reunification of dispersed family members, assist in locating missing persons, provide support to the families of the missing."
	16th Session of the General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva, 20-22 November 2007 Decision 12: "Migration" "The General Assembly (...) <i>requests</i> the Governing Board, and subsequently the Reference Group, in close consultation with National Societies, to develop a Federation policy on migration, to be adopted in 2008, which should also benefit from the expertise of the ICRC in the areas of protection and restoring family links. The policy should address amongst others: - The mission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to provide necessary humanitarian assistance and protection in accordance with the Fundamental Principles, in particular the principles of humanity and impartiality, and the Movement's humanitarian commitments and duty to meet the needs of all vulnerable people regardless of their legal status without restrictions, - The role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies as humanitarian actors in the field of migration, i.e. as humanitarian agent, auxiliary to government, or service provider, (...) Main activities: (...) 2. Protection Provision of information and of legal and administrative advice on action against exploitation and deception of migrants and on restoring family links. In the new policy, special regard should be given to: - the role of National Societies in assisting and protecting detained migrants and restoring family links (this should benefit from the expertise of the ICRC) - assistance to returnees by supporting sustainable return and reintegration; - prevention of trafficking and support to trafficking victims. (...)."
5.2. Regional Conferences	
	5th European Regional Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Copenhagen 17-20 March 1997 "In our countries, vulnerability is individualised and changes over time. (...) Not all ethnic minorities are vulnerable, but asylum seekers and migrant workers may be so. (...) To do this, each National Society will assess, on a continuing basis, who the most vulnerable are in their country, and what services the Society is most suited to deliver."
	6th European Regional Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Berlin 14-18 April 2002 Resolution - Adoption of the Berlin Charter, the Plans of Action on Migration and Health, and the Follow-up Process

	"The Sixth European Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference in Berlin 14-18 April 2002, <i>recalling</i> Resolution 15 of the 25th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent on tracing and family reunification;" The Berlin Charter 13. "We will also use our global tracing network and our unique position in providing first aid, psychological support and emergency health to address the urgencies identified in this conference." Plan of Action – Migration "Protection" "Provide information and assistance, through the ICRC, to National Societies to further enable them to address the needs of detained migrants and asylum seekers." (...) "Humanitarian Response" "Provide tracing services to maintain family communication." (...) "Tracing and Family Reunification" "European Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies emphasize: Knowing the fate of a loved one is basic human need like the need for food, medical assistance, shelter, etc. (...) Recalling the Resolutions of the 25th International Conference in relation to tracing activities, European Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies will, in cooperation with one another, with National Societies beyond Europe and with the ICRC, ensure their services and assistance to the most vulnerable. This includes migrants who are separated from their relatives and have no news of them. All persons in need of these services should be able to access them without consideration to their own legal status. European National Societies will put into practice all the guidelines, as agreed upon by National Societies and the ICRC in an effort to restore family links. (European National Societies will endeavour to indicate to each other the relevant sections of the guidelines, as appropriate, when dealing with enquiries.) European National Societies must respond to the psychological impact on people of having no news from relatives. They will therefore give attention to psychological needs in their training programs for tracing staff and volunteers, as well as in the design and delivery of services."
	6th Asia and Pacific Regional Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Manila 24-28 November 2002 The Manila Action Plan 2002 – "Uniting for Human Dignity" Task Two: "Population Movement" "Each National Society will: (...) • Improve co-ordination, co-operation and communication between and within National Societies, the International Federation and ICRC. (...)" Task Three: "Disaster Management" "Each National Society will: • In conjunction with its Government, determine its clear role and legal mandate in relation to disaster management responsibilities.

	(...) National Societies will support each other to: • Share information, experiences and best practices through active participation, (...) • Ensure they maintain up-to-date databases of resources and capabilities for sharing with others. • Develop existing networks to maximize operational capability in times of disaster. (...) • Develop, at the regional level, relationships with international organizations and other stakeholders."
	17th Inter-American Conference of the Red Cross, Santiago de Chile, 23-26 April 2003 Plan of Action 2003-2007 Objective 3 "National Societies are mobilizing volunteers, civil society and governments in order to achieve more equity in health and greater public health impact." (...) Expected Results: 3.6 "National Societies are advocating in favour of, and assisting, migrants and displaced populations." (...) Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values 1.3 "Promote the alleviation of the difficulties experienced by migrant and displaced populations and affirm that all individuals are entitled to basic human rights including the right to health." Objective 4 "National Societies are promoting the Fundamental Principles and Humanitarian Values both internally and externally." (...) Expected Results: 4.2 "National Societies have carried out new initiatives to promote tolerance, non-violence and non-discrimination with a special focus on HIV/Aids-related stigma, the defence of the rights of migrants, displaced people and minorities as well as social violence, particularly youth and gender violence." Conclusions of the Simultaneous Seminars "Sharing Experiences" "The National Society participants after analysing the speeches and proposals presented and sharing experiences concerning humanitarian action in favour of the most vulnerable migrant population (...) Recommend (...) 4. With ICRC support, to strengthen the tracing and family reunification programmes, in order that to ensure an effective component in the humanitarian activities and services provided (or to be provided) by the National Societies to the most vulnerable migrant population."

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 Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



ICRC