RESTORING FAMILY LINKS: STRATEGY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT 2020–2025
INCLUDING LEGAL REFERENCES
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STRATEGY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL
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MOVEMENT 2020–2025
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COMPONENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

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.

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.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies embody the work and principles of the Movement in 192 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.
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FOREWORD

The present Restoring Family Links (RFL) Strategy for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025 follows up on the previous RFL Strategy for the Movement 2008–2018. All components of our global Movement recognize the crucial importance of the RFL services for people in need around the world, the unique contribution our network can provide to respond to these needs and the challenges the Movement is facing. The Strategy was developed by National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) through a three years consultation and drafting process, chaired by the Central Tracing Agency of the ICRC.

The resolution of which this Strategy forms part was adopted by the Council of Delegates (CoD) 2019 as CD/19/R6 “Restoring Family Links: Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025”. The text of the resolution figures below in this foreword. In addition to the resolution of the CoD, the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent 2019 adopted Resolution 33IC/19/R4 on “Restoring Family Links while respecting privacy, including as it relates to personal data protection”. It underlines the crucial importance of the protection of personal data for RFL services. The text of this resolution is included in the annex on Legal references in this publication.

In the plenary session of the CoD, 25 leaders of National Societies, speaking in the name of 50 National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC, expressed their overwhelming support for the RFL Strategy. Both resolutions were adopted anonymously by members of the statutory meetings, paving the way for their successful implementation.

SPEECHES INTRODUCING THE RFL STRATEGY FOR THE MOVEMENT TO THE 2019 COUNCIL OF DELEGATES (EXTRACTS)

“This resolution is about a historical activity of the Movement, as relevant today as it was a century ago. Remaining in touch with family members is a need we witnessed throughout our history and is often amongst the very first needs expressed by people affected by humanitarian crises. The uncertainty about the fate of a loved one is cause for great suffering and heightened vulnerability. Humans are simply more resilient and better protected when able to remain connected with their loved ones. Restoring family links is also the one Movement activity where we truly function as a global network. In this age of digitalization and increasing movement of people across the world, the family links network is as relevant as ever, but also facing important challenges.

Working towards our common goals with harmonized practices will enable us to leverage the power of our network. We are proud that this RFL strategy was developed through a highly participative process, with National Societies from all regions, the International Federation and the ICRC. The Movement has also established the Restoring Family Links Leadership Platform and expressed strong support to the work of the Application Group on the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection. I would like to extend here my profound thanks to each of the National Societies and the International Federation who made this possible.”

Florence Anselmo
Head of the Central Tracing Agency
Chair of the RFL Strategy Implementation Group
“As a group of leaders of the Movement, we have had very substantive discussions on our collective vision for the future of our Family Links services. We came to the conclusion that this vision consists in four essential elements that shape our ambition:

Firstly, we place much stronger emphasis on our collective efforts to protect the family unity, to help prevent family separation and main family links.

Secondly, we have to ensure that our service is accessible to all persons who are in need of it.

Thirdly, we collectively have to increase our capacity to provide answers to families who are living in anxiety about the fate and whereabouts of their missing loved ones.

And finally, conscious of how essential the personal interaction is between our Movement’s staff and volunteers and the people who are missing or separated from a loved one, that we need to reinforce this support to the families while also ensuring that it is much more valued and understood by all stakeholders.”

Asha Mohammed
Secretary General, Kenyan Red Cross
Member of the RFL leadership platform

“Indeed, Restoring Family Links is a service of our Movement as a whole, and it is our National Societies around the world who offer the bulk of this service to the people in their respective countries and cooperate within this unique network. The previous RFL Strategy 2008–2018 has allowed the IFRC to make significant achievements in the integration of this essential service into our disaster preparedness and response mechanisms, as also reflected in our IFRC Disaster Management policy. Numerous emergency operations to large-scale natural disasters coordinated by the IFRC in the past decade have shown a consistently well-coordinated, multi-disciplinary response.

The RFL Leadership Platform allowed us to explore very interesting avenues to create synergies between the IFRC’s National Society Development policy and the strengthening of technical RFL capacities.

While modern digital technologies offer to us unprecedented opportunities, we need to stress that the people must be at the center of all our services and that protection of their personal data by all components of the Movement is of crucial concern and therefore also a key dimension in the new RFL Strategy.

Finally, we have been working very closely together on jointly addressing through an integrated approach, the needs arising in the context of migration, and to do so also as part of our humanitarian diplomacy efforts. In this regard, RFL services are an important element in the IFRC Global Migration Strategy.

I am confident that our RFL Strategy for the Movement will enhance cooperation, coordination and the harmonization of practices among the components of the Movement across the globe.”

Jagan Chapagain
Secretary General, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Member of the RFL leadership platform
During several decades of my life working on restoring family links, I have directly witnessed how much in my home country Bangladesh armed conflicts, disasters, other emergencies and migration gives rise to a situation when people are missing or become separated from their loved ones. The uncertainty of the fate and whereabouts of a loved one causes great suffering and can be extremely distressing for the families of missing.

The Restoring Family Links Strategy 2020–2025 for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement reiterates the commitment of the Movement’s components to undertake RFL activities whenever required by the families of the missing and separated persons.

I express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all members of the team who have given their best to develop this Restoring Family Links Strategy. It is an excellent document where all the important points related to the vision, the mission, the scope of RFL services and RFL operating principles are outlined clearly.

I earnestly request the ICRC and the IFRC to extend their cordial cooperation with the National Societies to include RFL in the priority area of the respective National Societies’ Strategy and Development Plans and thus help to establish a strong and efficient RFL national and international network.

I wish all members of RFL Network could be rewarded for their outstanding performance in the field of restoring family links services.

Ms Monowara Sarker
Former Director, RFL Services of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
Laureate of the Henry Dunant medal of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in 2015.
Dhaka, Bangladesh. The ICRC and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society fill tracing requests for families from Myanmar who have lost contact with their relatives.
Preah Vihear Province, Cambodia. The Cambodian Red Cross Society and the ICRC lead an information session for villagers on Restoring Family Links.
RESOLUTION: RESTORING FAMILY LINKS: STRATEGY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT 2020–2025

The Council of Delegates,

deeply concerned about the suffering endured by those who have lost contact with, have no news of or are separated from their loved ones as a consequence of armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies as well as in the context of migration,

stressing the importance of clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons, highlighting in this regard the right of families to know the fate and whereabouts of their relatives, as provided by international humanitarian law (IHL), recalling other relevant international obligations, as applicable, and taking into account the important role of States in this respect,

further stressing the importance of restoring contact between separated family members and recalling other relevant obligations, including international humanitarian law obligations, as applicable, to facilitate, in every possible way, the reunion of families dispersed as a result of armed conflict and to allow for the exchange of family news,

recalling the respective mandates of the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement), based on the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977, the Statutes of the Movement and resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, including the role of the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the auxiliary role of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies) in providing support to their respective public authorities in the humanitarian field,

recalling the Restoring Family Links (RFL) Strategy 2008–2018 adopted in Resolution 4 of the Council of Delegates in 2007 and noting with satisfaction the achievements made during the course of its implementation, while recognizing that further efforts are required to strengthen the capacity of the Family Links Network to assist people who are without news of or separated from members of their families and acknowledging the need to deliver Restoring Family Links within a broader framework of protection activities conducted by the Movement,

recalling the RFL resolution adopted at the 2017 Council of Delegates and the Background report which outlined the preliminary main orientations of the new draft RFL Strategy, expressing appreciation for the efforts and commitment of the ICRC and the RFL Strategy Implementation Group in developing the RFL Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025 and recalling the Global Strategy on Migration adopted by the 2017 General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC),
1. adopts the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025 (annexed to this resolution);

2. calls upon all National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC to:
   a. promote knowledge and understanding of this Strategy at all levels of their respective organizations
   b. implement the measures outlined in this Strategy as part of their organizational strategies
      and plans at national, regional and international level and
   c. allocate the necessary resources to carry them out;

3. encourages the ICRC and the IFRC to enhance their cooperation with a view to supporting National Societies in their efforts to implement the Strategy and encourages National Societies to establish partnerships to support each other in building their RFL capacity;

4. requests the components of the Movement to bring the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 to the attention of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent with a view, in particular, to encouraging the member States of the Conference to support the RFL activities carried out by the Movement and its efforts in aspects concerning privacy, including as it relates to personal data protection;

5. invites the ICRC to continue to chair the RFL Strategy Implementation Group for the purpose of supporting and monitoring the implementation of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025;

6. commends the work undertaken by the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection Application Group, encourages it to continue to support the application of the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection and calls upon the components of the Movement to provide expertise and resources for this process, including a dedicated resource to assist National Societies with implementing the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection;

7. commends the establishment of the RFL Leadership Platform and calls upon it to continue to address critical issues for the future of RFL services, to steer the implementation of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 and to encourage other leaders in the Movement to champion it;

8. welcomes the proposal to create a Movement RFL Medal for outstanding services in the field of RFL and invites the RFL Leadership Platform to develop regulations and conditions for the Medal, in consultation with all the components of the Movement, and submit them to the 2021 Council of Delegates for adoption, together with the nominations of the first recipients of the Medal;

9. invites the components of the Movement to report to the 2023 Council of Delegates on the results achieved through the implementation of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 and the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection.
Bozoum, Central African Republic. Patrice, a volunteer for the Central African Red Cross Society’s Restoring Family Links programme, shows a boy an information pamphlet.
RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT 2020–2025

Document prepared by the Central Tracing Agency of the International Committee of the Red Cross together with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, September 2019 (Original: English)

INTRODUCTION

Clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and ensuring contact between separated family members is first and foremost the responsibility of the State authorities. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), however, has a crucial role to play. Restoring Family Links (RFL) lies at the origin of the Movement and at the heart of the work of its components. RFL is the embodiment of the principle of humanity, and it is in this domain that the unique character of the Movement’s global network is truly demonstrated. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people benefit from the Movement’s RFL services.

The Family Links Network comprises the Central Tracing Agency (the CTA), the RFL units at the International Committee of the Red Cross (the ICRC) delegations and the RFL/tracing services of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies). RFL can only be successful if the Family Links Network can count on each of its members. All the components – the ICRC, the National Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the IFRC) – have a shared responsibility to maintain and strengthen this Network and its services. To this end, the Movement adopted the first Restoring Family Links Strategy for the Movement 2008–2018 at the 2007 Council of Delegates. The present RFL Strategy 2020–2025 builds on and follows up on the first Strategy, ensuring that RLF is fit for purpose and taking into account the important new challenges of today and the developing complexities of the future.

1 “While there is no legal definition of a missing person under international law, the ICRC understands missing persons as individuals of whom their families have no news and/or who, on the basis of reliable information, have been reported missing as a result of an armed conflict – international or non-international – or of other situations of violence or any other situation that might require action by a neutral and independent body. (Definition based on ICRC, Missing Persons: A Handbook for Parliamentarians, Geneva, 2009, available at: www.icrc.org/en/publication/1117-missing-persons-handbook-parliamentarians). This includes disasters and the context of migration ... There is no element of time and no presumption of death included in the ICRC’s definition of a missing person. Hence, the ICRC considers persons to be missing from the moment their families report them missing, meaning there is no ‘waiting period’ before considering a person missing. At the other end of the spectrum, a person is considered no longer missing when the family has received sufficient, reliable and credible information on the fate and whereabouts of their sought relative.” (“The Missing”, International Review of the Red Cross, Vol. 99, No. 905, 2017, pp. 536–537).
2 The duration of the RFL Strategy 2008–2018 has been extended by the RFL Resolution of the 2017 Council of Delegates until the adoption of the new RFL Strategy by the Council of Delegates in 2019.
3 In view of the rapidly changing environment, it was deemed preferable to set the duration of the present RFL Strategy at six rather than eleven years.
Osh, Kyrgyzstan, on border with Uzbekistan. Uzbek refugees return home in their thousands. Many have family waiting for them and are reunited.
PART I: RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY

1. VISION
• All people are able to maintain links with their loved ones and are protected from separation and going missing.
• All people are able to access Restoring Family Links services and interact with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network wherever they are.
• All people without news of their family members receive answers about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones as rapidly as possible.
• Throughout the time of search and separation, the families of missing persons and separated families are supported by the Movement to ensure their dignity and well-being and, where possible, to restore family unity.

2. THE RESTORING FAMILY LINKS MISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT
Whenever people are at risk of being separated or going missing, have been separated or are without news of their loved ones as a result of armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies or in the context of migration, the Movement responds efficiently and effectively by mobilizing its own resources and the authorities to prevent families from being separated and people from going missing, maintain and restore family links and family unity, clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and support the families left behind according to their needs.

3. THE SCOPE OF RESTORING FAMILY LINKS SERVICES
Our RFL services cover the full spectrum from prevention of family separation and disappearances and maintaining family contact, to searching for missing persons, providing answers to their families, restoring family links and providing support to families during the search and supporting family reunification.

We provide RFL services in the context of armed conflicts, disasters, emergencies, migration and other situations requiring a humanitarian response.

4. RESTORING FAMILY LINKS OPERATING PRINCIPLES AND APPROACH
1. We place people at the centre of our services; we develop and deliver our services together with affected people and ensure a personalized, long-term follow-up.
2. We ensure the protection of personal data and strictly abide by the Fundamental Principles and the mission of the Movement so that people are able to fully trust our services.
3. We are committed to systematically providing the full spectrum of RFL services to migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, regardless of their legal status, all along migration routes from countries of origin through countries of transit to the countries where they settle.
4. We operate on the basis of assessed needs, giving first priority to the most vulnerable groups and individuals, such as unaccompanied and separated children, detainees, the elderly, persons with disabilities and individuals with specific protection needs, including survivors of trafficking, torture, violence or other forms of trauma.
5. We integrate RFL services into a multidisciplinary response to the needs of the families of missing persons and separated families which may include mental health and psychosocial support and legal, administrative and socioeconomic assistance. This is a long-term process and requires a shared long-term commitment by all stakeholders both politically and in terms of resources.
6. We operate as a truly global and grass-roots network and invest in strengthening our response capacity and improving regional and supra-regional cooperation and coherence within the Movement.

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4 The Movement uses a deliberately broad description of migrants to include all people who leave or flee their place of habitual residence to seek safety or better prospects, which includes, among others, labour migrants, stateless migrants and migrants deemed irregular by public authorities as well as refugees and asylum seekers, notwithstanding the fact that they constitute a special category under international law (IFRC Policy on Migration, 2009, available at: https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/03/Migration-Policy_EN.pdf).
7. Notwithstanding the utilization and growing importance of technology and connectivity, we commit to maintaining personal contact and personalized searches as a core strength of our RFL services.
8. We invest in research and analysis and in the continuous development of modern technology across the Network. We monitor and leverage the means and tools offered by digital technology and integrate them into our RFL services.
9. We mobilize and engage in partnerships with all actors and stakeholders who implement a principled approach and can contribute to RFL services without compromising the security of the people concerned and the Movement’s identity and Fundamental Principles.
10. We maintain our independence from States, parties to a conflict and other stakeholders and cannot be instrumentalized.

5. THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT
This section attempts to take stock of new, emerging and fast-changing issues that have impacted the way we deliver RFL services globally since the previous RFL Strategy 2008–2018.

**Missing persons and their families**
The uncertainty associated with not knowing the fate and whereabouts of a loved one causes great suffering and can be extremely distressing. For a parent, child, sibling, wife or husband, knowing what has happened to their loved one can be even more important than water, food or shelter. The family members of people that have gone missing will not stop searching until they know their fate and whereabouts. In trying to find an answer, they exhaust their resources and might even put themselves and other family members at risk.

People go missing as a result of armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies as well as in the context of migration, and this has damaging and long-lasting humanitarian consequences. People going missing in situations of conflict and violence is not only an immeasurable tragedy for the families and communities affected but might also affect the peace process.

The problem of the missing takes on a truly global dimension in its overlap with migration. Thousands of people go missing every year along precarious migration routes around the world. The vast majority of people who die in such circumstances remain unidentified. Improving the response to these challenges in order to provide answers to the families of missing migrants requires the coordination and harmonization of practices among a wide range of actors across multiple countries, regions and continents.

**Internal displacement**
Armed conflicts, violence and disasters can force people to leave their homes, leading to accelerated and collective movements. Displaced people might seek assistance and protection within their own country or might find refuge across international borders.

Of the 70.3 million people displaced globally at the end of 2018, the majority – 41.3 million people – remained displaced within their own country due to conflict and violence. In 2018, an additional 17.2 million people were newly displaced by disaster.⁵

In situations of internal displacement, people face specific needs and vulnerabilities as they often live in precarious conditions, unable to meet their basic needs and at heightened risk of violence, including sexual violence or other forms of abuse. They often face obstacles in rebuilding their lives because they lack official documentation and adequate access to essential services, accommodation and employment. All these situations bring about complex assistance and protection needs, including those arising from family separation. Large numbers of people go missing and families become separated when displaced by conflict, violence and disasters.

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This is often due to the unplanned nature of flight, i.e. people might flee in different directions and have trouble finding one another again, or children and older or disabled people may remain behind and/or lose contact with their families and care-givers. Screening procedures carried out by the authorities upon arrival at the displacement location may separate families because women and children, who are not usually perceived as a security threat, are let go without being adequately informed as to the fate and whereabouts of their male relatives who are taken into custody. Concerns about family unity are sometimes disregarded when newly displaced people are accommodated in camps or during large organized returns carried out by the authorities. Unaccompanied children are particularly vulnerable to forced recruitment into armed groups, exploitation, sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking.

Protracted displacement due to conflict, violence or disaster often exacerbates the suffering of the families of people that have gone missing. These families find themselves in a “double limbo” because they do not know what has happened to their relatives and because they face uncertainty about whether or when they will be able to resolve their situation of displacement.

Migration
Migration is a complex phenomenon touching all parts of the world. Migration trails stretch across entire regions and continents, often through dangerous areas and countries affected by conflict, violence and adverse conditions. Routes change very frequently, making the response to humanitarian needs even more difficult. The United Nations estimated the number of migrants at 191 million in 2005 and more than 257 million in 2017. While many migrants arrive safely in a country of destination and integrate into new communities, others endure great hardships and face countless risks. Losing contact with family members is one of these risks. Children are especially vulnerable; some travel on their own, and others lose contact with their family during the journey.

There are many reasons why migrants might lose contact with family members, including incidents in their country of origin or as they travel through countries of transit to their destination as well as illness, injury, detention, trafficking, deportation and a lack of means, access or resources. A recent assessment has shown that migrants hardly ever anticipate or prepare for the possibility of being separated. Every year, thousands of migrants die or go missing on their journey, leaving their families waiting for answers about their fate. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recorded nearly 25,000 migrant deaths globally between January 2014 and July 2017, 14,500 in the Central Mediterranean alone. The real figure could be much higher, and for other regions few figures are available and there is less visibility. When migrants die, their bodies are not always properly cared for nor are steps taken to ensure they can be identified by the relevant authorities. In addition, in the context of migration, it is much more difficult to identify, contact and organize the families of missing persons as they may be dispersed across different countries.

Climate and the environment
Climate change is one of the most serious challenges of our and future generations. The frequency and severity of extreme weather events and climate uncertainty have increased and will continue to do so. Over the past decade alone, there have been around 3,000 weather-related disasters, not including other crises, such as conflicts or population movements, where climate may have been a threat multiplier. This amounts to one weather- or climate-related disaster almost every day.

Climate shocks are experienced acutely in coastal areas and some of the world’s poorest regions, including large parts of Central and South-West Asia, the Horn of Africa and North Africa, and these same countries and regions are consistently affected by recurring disasters. This results in the poorest and most vulnerable communities suffering the greatest consequences through loss of life, economic setbacks and livelihood erosion.
Armed conflict, unplanned urbanization, environmental degradation and social marginalization, together with factors such as disability, age, gender and social and economic inequalities, all exacerbate the impacts.

The expected future trends of more frequent and severe weather extremes and an increase in climate events will potentially contribute to growing population movements both within countries and across international borders, requiring a scaling up of humanitarian response, including the provision of RFL services.

The digital revolution

Rapid advances in digital technology and the exponential increase in mobile phone use, social media networks and access to the internet are having a transformative impact on all aspects of people’s lives and on RFL services. An ever-increasing number of people can keep in contact with family members and trace a missing relative through such means as well as find information and access services. Therefore, connectivity must be part of RFL services as it is one of the first things affected people ask to be assisted with.

However, digital technology cannot replace the multifaceted activities carried out by the Family Links Network. It is when people are unable to find their relatives and restore contact with them on their own that a personalized, active and sustained search by the Family Links Network becomes essential. This work is therefore also becoming more complex and difficult.

Technology offers tremendous new opportunities to the Family Links Network for leveraging enhanced proximity to affected people, searching for missing persons and improving collaboration with other stakeholders. On the other hand, new information and communication technology may lead to new risks which need to be carefully addressed, in particular through strict personal data protection standards.

The use of such new technology will have a substantial impact on internal work processes and require a fundamental overhaul and upgrading of the capacities of the Family Links Network.

Individuals may have limited means to search for their loved ones. Authorities and stakeholders may prevent access to communication or may monitor it as a means to exert control over a population – especially in situations of armed conflict. Modern technology exposes people to an increased risk of their personal data being used to harm them. These concerns may prevent individuals from using new technologies when searching for missing loved ones. The Family Links Network’s trusted RFL services, with their effective access and compliance with data protection standards, therefore remain an important and secure option for many individuals.

Data protection

Attention to personal data protection has grown substantially in the last decade, with the introduction of new data protection regulations in many countries to keep pace with the tremendous development of digital technology and the opportunities it offers. As the transfer of personal data across international borders is a core dimension of RFL services, these new legal frameworks and technologies have a fundamental impact on them. The cross-border nature of RFL activities and this evolving landscape in which the components of the Family Links Network operate require adherence to strict data protection standards as well as careful and regular assessment of the impact of new technologies on RFL.

The RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection has been developed to address this challenge and is the first such document applicable to all the components of the Movement. It serves as a guide, setting out minimum principles and commitments aimed at enabling the flow of personal data needed within the Movement to perform RFL activities while ensuring that personal data is collected and processed lawfully, fairly and only for humanitarian purposes. Such limitations are necessary to safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of affected people and maintain their trust in the Family Links Network. This is particularly true in the face of increasing data security risks and a concerning trend towards the adoption of legislation and measures at the domestic level to gain access to such data for non-humanitarian purposes.

South Kivu, Fizi territory, Lusenda Burundian refugee camp, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ICRC restoring family links programme. Refugees read the replies from their families in response to the Red Cross messages they sent.
6. THE FAMILY LINKS NETWORK

Roles within the Movement and the structure of the Family Links Network

The role of the ICRC

As a neutral, independent and impartial humanitarian organization, the ICRC has the role of protecting and assisting people affected by 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.

The part played by the ICRC in RFL, including its lead role within the Movement, is more precisely defined by the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977; the Statutes of the Movement, in particular Article 5.2(e) specifying the role of the ICRC in ensuring the operation of the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) as provided in the Geneva Conventions; resolutions of the Movement’s statutory bodies, in particular those of the 25th and 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (International Conference) (Geneva, 1986 and 1995), which recall and commend the role of the ICRC’s CTA as coordinator and technical adviser to National Societies and governments; and resolutions of the Council of Delegates, including the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures.

Based on these resolutions, in addition to its operational responsibilities, the ICRC, through the CTA, is tasked with coordinating, providing advice and strengthening the capacity of its partners within the Movement in RFL matters in all situations requiring a humanitarian response from the Movement. The CTA promotes consistency within the Family Links Network, provides methodologies and guidelines and builds information systems for the whole Family Links Network.

As coordinator, the CTA, in consultation with Movement partners, decides what action is to be taken in armed conflicts or other situations of violence, based on its mandate. In other circumstances requiring an international effort, it coordinates the international activities of other National Societies’ RFL services, when needed and in close consultation with the National Societies of the affected countries, to ensure the most effective response possible to RFL needs.

As technical adviser, the CTA establishes guidelines and working procedures for RFL services in all situations. It helps organize and conduct training seminars and regional meetings for the purpose of sharing and consolidating knowledge and experience and planning and reflecting on progress in implementing the RFL Strategy.

The CTA manages the RFL Pool of Specialists and deploys it when required, in coordination and consultation with the National Societies, and with the IFRC in situations where the latter acts as Lead Agency.

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12 “Information system, an integrated set of components for collecting, storing, and processing data and for providing information, knowledge, and digital products.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica)
13 Any specific information system aims to support operations, management and decision-making. An information system is the information and communication technology (ICT) that an organization uses, and also the way in which people interact with this technology in support of business processes.” (Wikipedia)
14 A group of RFL specialists who can be deployed at short notice for RFL as an integral part of the Movement’s response. The RFL Pool of Specialists was created in 2009 as part of the implementation measures set out in the RFL Strategy for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2008–2018 and within broader initiatives to strengthen the Movement’s RFL rapid deployment capacities to provide a reliable and flexible response to RFL needs in disasters, conflicts or other emergencies. The RFL Pool of Specialists contains practitioners from National Societies and the ICRC and is led by the ICRC Central Tracing Agency, which is responsible for managing the pool and activating it at the request of the Movement component(s) in question, in accordance with clearly defined procedures.
The role of the National Societies

The functions of National Societies are set out in Article 3 of the Movement’s Statutes. National Societies must carry out their humanitarian activities in conformity with the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. They must act in accordance with their own statutes and national legislation and are recognized as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field. In particular, their role is to assist the victims of armed conflict, as provided in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols, and the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies who are in need of help (Arts 3.1 and 3.2 of the Movement’s Statutes). 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. The National Society Development Framework of the IFRC further develops this concept.

As outlined in Resolution XVI of the 25th International Conference, 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, disaster or other emergencies.

National Societies are also called upon to act in accordance with resolutions adopted at the statutory meetings of the Movement, resolutions of regional Red Cross and Red Crescent conferences and policy frameworks adopted by the IFRC covering migration and natural disasters.

In view of the Movement’s responsibility for helping to preserve or restore family unity, National Societies need to incorporate their RFL activities into an overall plan of action. They also draw the attention of the public, humanitarian agencies and governments to the existence and significance of their RFL activities. In addition, National Societies are responsible for setting up or consolidating an effective national RFL network. Depending on the circumstances, they work with the CTA, the relevant ICRC delegations and/or the tracing/RFL services of other National Societies. They decide what action is to be taken during disasters and may call on the ICRC to deploy the RFL Pool of Specialists where the RFL response required is beyond their capacity.

The role of the IFRC

The functions of the IFRC are defined in Article 6 of the Movement’s Statutes and in the Seville Agreement and its Supplementary Measures. Amongst other functions, the Secretariat has the lead role regarding the development of National Societies and the coordination of support for their institutional development.

Although the Movement’s Statutes do not specifically mention the part played by the IFRC in RFL, it strives, in coordination with the ICRC, to support National Societies in including RFL in their development plans and ensuring that disaster preparedness and response plans emphasize the role and importance of RFL.

In the event of a disaster,\textsuperscript{15} the Secretariat ensures that assessments 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 to support the CTA in its lead role in RFL and cooperating in the deployment of the RFL Pool of Specialists.

The RFL Leadership Platform, the RFL Strategy Implementation Group and the Application Group for the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection

Established on the basis of the RFL Resolution adopted by the 2017 Council of Delegates, the RFL Leadership Platform serves as a forum in which the leadership of the ICRC and its CTA, together with leaders from National Societies active in this field and from the IFRC, representatives of affected people and RFL experts, engage collectively to address critical issues with a view to shaping the RFL services of the future.


\textsuperscript{15} “Natural or technological disasters and other emergency and disaster situations in peace time which require resources exceeding those of the operating National Society” (Art. 5.1 B, Seville Agreement, 1997).
The Leadership Platform steers the implementation of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025, tackling obstacles encountered in this process and making any necessary adjustments. It identifies priority issues of common concern on which the group as a whole, a subgroup or individual members commit to follow-up and implement specific initiatives and work to be undertaken within the RFL Strategy Implementation Group.

Relevant external actors in the humanitarian, academic and private sectors are involved in the Platform to explore and follow up on the realization of relevant partnerships with a view to strengthening RFL operations and the capacity of the Movement to prevent family separation, help clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and support separated families and the families of missing persons.

The members of the group act as ambassadors of RFL services at the global and regional level internally within the Movement and also externally to enhance the recognition, coherence and strength of the Family Links Network.

In line with the provisions of the first RFL Strategy for the Movement 2008–2018, the Implementation Group, composed of National Societies from all the regions, the ICRC and the IFRC, was set up and has met regularly since 2008 to monitor the implementation of the RFL Strategy and provide guidance and support for this process. Between 2016 and 2019, the Implementation Group led the development of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025.

In follow-up to the development of the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection in 2015, the Application Group for the Code of Conduct (Application Group) was set up in 2016 with the participation of National Societies from the different regions, the ICRC and the IFRC. Its role is to support National Societies and the ICRC in the promotion and systematic implementation of the Code of Conduct internally within the Movement and externally. The mandate of the Application Group was confirmed by the RFL Resolution adopted at the Council of Delegates in 2017.

Status of the Family Links Network and implementation of the RFL Strategy 2008–2018

A considerable number of achievements have been made in the course of the last ten years, and sustained efforts are now essential to maintain and drive them forwards. They include the following:

• in-depth assessments of RFL needs and the capacity of the Family Links Network to respond to them have been carried out in more than 50 countries
• the Family Links Network has significantly increased its service provision, casework and operational cooperation amongst its members
• the establishment of regional RFL platforms in many parts of the world has provided the basis for growing exchanges on practices, cooperation and coordination and the development of RFL strategies at the regional level
• an RFL Pool of Specialists and a rapid response mechanism have been established for emergency situations and deployed 28 times since their activation in 2009 to support the local response
• advances have been made in integrating RFL into National Society strategic and development plans and emergency preparedness and response plans
• a series of important methodology guidelines have been produced for the Network

16 Main sources are the progress reports to the Council of Delegates in 2009, 2011 and 2015, a global survey carried out with National Societies in 2017, the background report to the 2017 Council of Delegates and numerous needs and capacity assessments conducted between 2010 and 2018.

17 Guidelines have been developed regarding, in particular, RFL needs assessments, RFL in disasters, RFL in migration and RFL communication plans. All guidelines can be found on the Family Links Extranet at: https://flextranet.familylinks.icrc.org/en/Pages/home.aspx.
• a key achievement in terms of digital technology has been the development of a web–based ecosystem with several components for the entire Family Links Network
• the development of the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection has been an essential step to ensure that all members of the Family Links Network are able to take the necessary measures to fulfil data protection requirements.

In some important areas of the RFL Strategy 2008–2018, progress has been limited or measures have only been implemented by parts of the Network:
• while the RFL services of some National Societies are strong, well–functioning and adequately resourced, many others remain weak for a variety of reasons, including lack of commitment by the leadership, organizational weaknesses and high turn–over of staff and volunteers
• an RFL performance management tool for the Network has not so far been developed; monitoring and evaluation is not standardized across the Family Links Network, and it is not yet able to consolidate global RFL statistics
• resource allocation for RFL remains limited in a large number of National Societies, and a majority are wholly dependent on the ICRC for funding; investment by the ICRC in some areas has also been lower than initially planned
• only about half of the countries’ disaster preparedness and response plans include a role for their National Society in RFL
• numerous assessments have shown that RFL services are not sufficiently known by affected people and other stakeholders
• the growing importance of RFL in relation to migration has exposed weaknesses in the standardization and harmonization of data collection and processing, intensified the need for transregional cooperation and coordination and further underlined the need for the Family Links Network to use unified ICT tools
• there is still only a limited awareness of personal data protection requirements, which need to be integrated into all the Network’s working methods, based on the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection, in order to guarantee that such requirements are adequately fulfilled; this will also require additional support in terms of expertise and resources for the Family Links Network.

Sustained efforts are needed to maintain the achievements made, to extend their reach and to continue implementing those measures identified in the RFL Strategy 2008–2018 that remain relevant. The RFL Strategy 2020–2025 therefore combines dimensions of continuity with important new areas that have become relevant and require urgent attention in today’s environment.

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18 The online tools comprise 1) a publicly accessible website which provides information on available services as well as an online tracing database where users can register people as missing or safe in relation to specific crises and consult photos of people searching for their family members, 2) information–sharing platforms restricted to members of the Family Links Network to transfer files and develop best practice, and 3) two databases used exclusively by the National Societies and the ICRC to manage individual cases (Family Links Answers and Prot6 respectively).
Kassab, Syria, Syria–Turkey border. The ICRC, in collaboration with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the Turkish Red Crescent Society, reunites two–year–old Reda with his father.
7. SUMMARY CHART FOR THE RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY 2020–2025

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# 8. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, ENABLERS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

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<td><strong>Strategic Objective 1</strong>&lt;br&gt; Prevent family separation and people from going missing and maintain family links</td>
<td>Preventing families from being separated and people from going missing is a cornerstone of RFL services and is systematically addressed through efforts aimed at mobilizing and persuading the authorities and direct action by the Family Links Network. &lt;br&gt; Affected people receive locally adapted information, means and tools from the Family Links Network to maintain or restore contact with their loved ones when they are unable to do so by their own means. &lt;br&gt; Affected people can securely upload, store, access and manage personal information and preventively register with the Family Links Network. &lt;br&gt; When communication systems have broken down or risk putting people in danger (particularly in situations of conflict and violence), people are offered connectivity by the components of the Movement, in cooperation with other stakeholders, to maintain and restore contact with their loved ones, obtain information and communicate with the Family Links Network.</td>
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<td><strong>Strategic Objective 2</strong>&lt;br&gt; Increase the accessibility and availability of RFL services</td>
<td>Affected people are aware of RFL services, trust them, know how to access them and, wherever possible, are able to make personal contact with staff and volunteers of the Family Links Network. &lt;br&gt; Affected people are able to interact with the Movement in real time and receive services safely and remotely wherever they are. &lt;br&gt; To the full extent possible, all affected people are given the possibility to receive RFL services from the Family Links Network, based on the information they are able to provide concerning the relatives they are searching for.</td>
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<td><strong>Strategic Objective 3</strong>&lt;br&gt; Increase the provision of answers to families</td>
<td>People receive answers about the fate and whereabouts of missing family members as rapidly as possible. &lt;br&gt; The authorities are mobilized to take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing and to provide families with an individualized response on the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives, particularly if they were deprived of their liberty. The authorities benefit from the support of the components of the Movement, including forensic expertise. &lt;br&gt; As a matter of priority, the Family Links Network collects information on missing persons as early as possible and explores all avenues to find answers through individual, long-term follow-up. &lt;br&gt; The Family Links Network maintains and develops its global, grass-roots level, personalized, exhaustive and sustained searches for missing persons as a unique feature of its RFL services. &lt;br&gt; The Family Links Network uses and further develops a unified, global, interconnected, coherent and secure system to collect, process and manage personal data. It develops technology and methods to efficiently search for potential matches in the data of the Family Links Network and the data of other organizations and relevant stakeholders in full respect for the protection of personal data. It also ensures that information is provided to families in an individualized and secure manner.</td>
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<td><strong>Strategic Objective 4</strong>&lt;br&gt;Provide personalized support to the families of missing persons and separated families</td>
<td>The emotional suffering of the families of missing persons and people separated from their families is relieved through the personal contact and mental health and psychosocial support provided by the components of the Movement. Families are supported in their efforts to be reunited with their relatives. The multifaceted needs of the families of missing persons and separated families are addressed without discrimination and through a holistic, multisectoral approach in collaboration with the authorities and other stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enabler 1 Participation of affected people and communities in the development of RFL services</td>
<td>RFL needs and capacities are assessed, and services are developed and delivered flexibly together with affected people and communities, taking into account the local context and the rapidly changing environment. In keeping with its commitment to transparency and accountability, the Family Links Network is in regular dialogue with affected people about their needs. People receive feedback on action taken, and the Family Links Network demonstrates its commitment to being influenced by those who have lived experience of family separation or a missing family member and involve them in decisions. The resilience of affected people is strengthened, and they are empowered to take action by themselves.</td>
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<td>Enabler 2 Investment in strengthening RFL capacity and emergency response</td>
<td>RFL is recognized as a core service of the Movement and is fully integrated into the operational response and adequately resourced to meet needs. The capacities of the Family Links Network and the sustainability of RFL services are strengthened to make it a truly global and efficient network that is able to respond rapidly to help prevent family separation and people from going missing, conduct searches, provide answers to families, address needs arising from family separation and support family reunification. Preparedness and surge mechanisms allow for a rapid and effective response in emergencies.</td>
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<td>Enabler 3 Protection of individuals by protecting their personal data</td>
<td>The safety, dignity and rights of affected people are protected through the way the Family Links Network protects their personal data, thus preserving and reinforcing the trust of people in the Movement. Personal data is collected, stored and otherwise processed by the Family Links Network in accordance with its RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection and applicable data protection laws. The risks and impact of the processing of personal data by the Family Links Network are systematically assessed. The principle of “do no harm” is upheld in all actions undertaken in relation to the personal data of affected people.</td>
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<td>Enabler 4 Systematic and targeted RFL promotion and communication</td>
<td>Affected people are aware of, understand and trust the RFL services of the Family Links Network. Through systematic, coherent, targeted and contextually adapted promotion and communication, the relevant stakeholders with whom the components of the Movement aim to cooperate and from whom they need political and operational support and financial and material resources understand the importance and value of RFL. They understand and respect the required independence and exclusively humanitarian purpose of RFL, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENABLERS</td>
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<td><strong>Enabler 5</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mobilization and partnerships&lt;br&gt;with other actors</td>
<td>Coordination, cooperation and partnerships with relevant stakeholders, such as State authorities, humanitarian organizations and private companies, are developed and strengthened at the global, regional, national and local level. This engagement is carried out in accordance with the respective mandates and working modalities of the components of the Movement, in full compliance with the Fundamental Principles and personal data protection standards, and increases access to people and data, improves the response to the needs of affected people and strengthens the capacity of the Family Links Network.</td>
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<td><strong>Enabler 6</strong>&lt;br&gt;Focus on RFL needs within&lt;br&gt;the context of migration</td>
<td>Migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, and their families are able, regardless of their legal status, to safely access the full range of RFL services along migration routes from countries of origin through countries of transit to the countries where they settle. The fate and whereabouts of missing migrants and the identity of deceased migrants is clarified by the authorities concerned through mobilization and active support by the Family Links Network. The Family Links Network realizes its potential through strong and active transregional cooperation among its components to ensure a coherent approach with harmonized systems, criteria and working modalities.</td>
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Tambacounda region, Senegal. Session of the ICRC and the Senegalese Red Cross Society support group.
Choucha camp, 7 km to Ras Jedir, Tunisia. Tunisian Red Crescent volunteers registering family details of men fleeing the internal armed conflict in Libya before getting in touch with their relatives by phone.
PART II: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: PREVENT FAMILY SEPARATIONS AND PEOPLE FROM GOING MISSING AND MAINTAIN FAMILY LINKS

Expected results
Preventing families from being separated and people from going missing is a cornerstone of RFL services and is systematically addressed through efforts aimed at mobilizing and persuading the authorities and direct action by the Family Links Network.

Affected people receive locally adapted information, means and tools from the Family Links Network to maintain or restore contact with their loved ones when they are unable to do so by their own means.

Affected people can securely upload, store, access and manage personal information and preventively register with the Family Links Network.

When communication systems have broken down or risk putting people in danger (particularly in situations of conflict and violence), people are offered connectivity by the components of the Movement, in cooperation with other stakeholders, to maintain and restore contact with their loved ones, obtain information and communicate with the Family Links Network.

Implementation
The National Societies and the ICRC will:

1.1 Systematically analyse the causes of separation and of people going missing, engage with the authorities and other stakeholders to raise their awareness of the risk and humanitarian consequences of family separations and people going missing, and advise them on implementing legislation and strategies, including contingency plans, disaster response plans, early warning systems and other means, to prevent families from being separated and people from going missing.

1.2 Develop and share updated information and messages with people to prevent family separation and help people maintain family links, and develop contextualized operational guidance, practices and tools and effective means to reach and engage with affected communities and people.

1.3 Register and follow up on specific vulnerable groups and individuals, such as unaccompanied and separated children, detainees, the elderly, persons with disabilities, injured and sick persons and vulnerable migrants, where appropriate.

1.4 Offer appropriate means to maintain family links (e.g. traditional means such as Red Cross messages and safe and well messages) in situations where there is no connectivity or where the use of communication technology poses a risk and for categories of people whose RFL needs cannot be covered using such technology.

The ICRC will:

1.5 Develop and offer, in cooperation with National Societies, online services to enable affected people to self-register and securely store their data with the Family Links Network as a safe depository and allow them to control and manage their personal data themselves.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:

1.6 Provide, to the extent possible, energy, connectivity and communication tools (charging stations, internet and Wi-Fi hot spots, airtime, mobile devices and free calls) as an integrated form of aid to affected people, while ensuring full compliance with the “do no harm” principle.

1.7 Explore public and private sector partnership agreements to provide a large-scale response to enable affected people to access the internet and other communication networks, and strengthen the Movement’s preparedness and response, particularly in emergencies, by ensuring a better and more timely use of available resources and better coordination with key stakeholders.
Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Family reunification whose members had been separated due to the conflict.
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: INCREASE THE ACCESSIBILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF RFL SERVICES

**Expected results**
Affected people are aware of RFL services, trust them, know how to access them and, wherever possible, are able to make personal contact with staff and volunteers of the Family Links Network.

Affected people are able to interact with the Movement in real time and receive services safely and remotely wherever they are.

To the full extent possible, all affected people are given the possibility to receive RFL services from the Family Links Network, based on the information they are able to provide concerning the relatives they are searching for.

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

2.1 Strengthen branch networks and outreach in areas of high needs so that the Family Links Network can interact personally with affected people, raise their understanding of RFL and offer RFL services.

2.2 Assess the feasibility of appropriate online services, contact centres and hotline solutions, integrate them into their respective contexts and evaluate and adapt business processes and human resources set-ups accordingly.

2.3 Ensure their acceptance criteria for requests to search for missing persons and help clarify their fate and whereabouts are aligned with the definition of missing persons\(^{19}\) and, in this way, allow families approaching the Family Links Network to receive all feasible RFL services.

2.4 Appropriately manage the expectations of enquirers by clearly explaining priorities in active casework and follow-up of tracing requests, the limitations, the timeframe and arrangements for re-contacting the enquirers and explore measures to mitigate loss of contact with enquirers.

The ICRC will:

2.5 Develop, together with National Societies, affected people and technology partners, a digital interface ("single-entry portal") and online services solution, through which people can provide and receive information and request, access and choose services digitally.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:

2.6 Regularly assess how and through which channels affected people search for information and communicate in order to identify the best ways to engage with them and enhance awareness of RFL services.

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\(^{19}\) See footnote 1.
Leros Island, Greece. An ICRC staff explains to a Somali woman the platform Trace the Face.
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASE THE PROVISION OF ANSWERS TO FAMILIES

Expected results
People receive answers about the fate and whereabouts of missing family members as rapidly as possible.

The authorities are mobilized to take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing and to provide families with an individualized response on the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives, particularly if they were deprived of their liberty. The authorities benefit from the support of the components of the Movement, including forensic expertise.

As a matter of priority, the Family Links Network collects information on missing persons as early as possible and explores all avenues to find answers through individual, long-term follow-up.

The Family Links Network maintains and develops its global, grass-roots level, personalized, exhaustive and sustained searches for missing persons as a unique feature of its RFL services.

The Family Links Network uses and further develops a unified, global, interconnected, coherent and secure system to collect, process and manage personal data. It develops technology and methods to efficiently search for potential matches in the data of the Family Links Network and the data of other organizations and relevant stakeholders in full respect for the protection of personal data. It also ensures that information is provided to families in an individualized and secure manner.

Implementation
The National Societies and the ICRC will:

3.1 Remind the authorities of their obligation to take all feasible measures to account for persons reported missing, assess the authorities’ capacities and willingness to provide answers to the families of missing persons and offer relevant support.

3.2 Whenever needed, take action as early as possible when people go missing by collecting all the relevant information available and reinforce personal, proactive, sustained and long-term searches and searches using digital technology.

3.3 Ensure the quality, standardization and coherence of data collected on missing persons across the Family Links Network and consistent individualized follow-up by each component.

3.4 Review work processes to ensure that quality casework is carried out in a timely manner, assess business processes\(^{20}\) and make any modifications required as a result of the integration of new technologies.

3.5 Mobilize and engage with all relevant authorities and institutions (e.g. health care, morgues, immigration and detention) and other stakeholders to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and provide answers to their families.

3.6 Ensure that National Society staff and volunteers who might be called upon to collect human remains possess the required know-how, equipment and psychological support.

\(^{20}\) Internal processes to carry out RFL work
The ICRC will:

3.7 Provide guidance to the Family Links Network to review work processes, with a view to improving the quality of casework and adapting work processes in line with new technologies, and encourage National Societies to adopt the new tools developed.

3.8 Ensure the relevance of existing RFL information and communication technology (ICT) services and tools within the ecosystem already developed for the Family Links Network, including roll-out, interoperability and integrated search mechanisms, using a service management approach to keep them in line with business needs and processes.

3.9 Explore, leverage and integrate digital technologies, such as facial, visual and pattern recognition technology, translation and transliteration technology, big data and satellite imagery, and research for tracing purposes with a view to identifying potential matches in databases.

3.10 Leverage the use of digital technologies which enable automatic, safe and secure cross-checking and matching of personal data between the databases of the Family Links Network, other humanitarian organizations, the authorities and other stakeholders.

3.11 Establish agreements with relevant stakeholders to enable secure cross-checking with their databases for solely humanitarian purposes and cooperate with the stakeholders concerned to ensure harmonization and quality of collected data to optimize digital searches.

3.12 Collect and centralize information about protected persons during armed conflict and transmit it, through the CTA, to National Information Bureaus or similar mechanisms, with a view to preventing such persons from becoming unaccounted for and helping ensure that families are informed of their fate and whereabouts.

3.13 Provide support, including technical advice, to authorities and, when relevant, National Societies, for the establishment of National Information Bureaus or similar mechanisms.

3.14 Offer its expertise and support, where needed, to reinforce the capacity of relevant authorities and structures, such as medico-legal systems and forensic services.
Huamanga, Ayacucho, Peru. Families of Accomarca participate at the recognition of clothes of their beloved ones who were victims of the violence.
Belgrade. Verica Tomanovic, Serbia. President of the Association of Kidnapped and Missing Persons in Serbia has been looking for her husband, a former doctor in Pristina, who went missing 15 years ago.
PART II: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: PROVIDE PERSONALIZED SUPPORT TO THE FAMILIES OF MISSING PERSONS AND SEPARATED FAMILIES

Expected results
The emotional suffering of the families of missing persons and people separated from their families is relieved through the personal contact and mental health and psychosocial support provided by the components of the Movement.

Families are supported in their efforts to be reunited with their relatives.

The multifaceted needs of the families of missing persons and separated families are addressed without discrimination and through a holistic, multisectoral approach in collaboration with the authorities and other stakeholders.

Implementation
The National Societies will:

4.1 Broaden their operational involvement to include multidisciplinary services for the families of missing persons, such as protection and legal, administrative and economic support, in collaboration with other actors, according to existing needs, contextual constraints and their strengths and capacities.

The National Societies and the ICRC will:

4.2 Maintain contact with the families of missing persons for the entire duration of the search and holistically assess their particular needs with them, including broader protection and assistance needs.

4.3 Provide emotional and mental health and psychosocial support to separated families and the families of missing persons as well as to Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and volunteers.

4.4 Ensure a contextualized division of roles between the ICRC and National Societies in addressing the needs of the families of missing persons and engaging with the authorities, based on their respective capacities.

4.5 Ensure a transfer of expertise and know-how and provide guidance to National Societies that are ready and have the capacity to engage in programmes to address the multifaceted needs of the families of missing persons.

4.6 Support the reunification of separated families, in line with the applicable legal framework and taking into account the specificities of each context and each individual case.

4.7 Conduct activities to support family reunification, such as:
   • provision of information, referral to qualified institutions and organizations, and legal, administrative and practical support
   • help with obtaining documents, including ICRC Emergency Travel Documents
   • facilitation of physical reunification
   • follow-up of and support to families after reunification in coordination with the relevant authorities, institutions and organizations.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:

4.8 Assess the capacities of the authorities and other stakeholders and mobilize, coordinate and engage with them to address the multifaceted needs of families.

4.9 Recognize and promote the right to family life and the principle of family unity.
Ayacucho region, Victor Fajardo province, Cayara village, Peru. Knitting marathon: families are knitting rectangles with the names of their missing loved ones.
ENABLER 1: PARTICIPATION OF AFFECTED PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RFL SERVICES

Expected results
RFL needs and capacities are assessed, and services are developed and delivered flexibly together with affected people and communities, taking into account the local context and the rapidly changing environment. In keeping with its commitment to transparency and accountability, the Family Links Network is in regular dialogue with affected people about their needs.

People receive feedback on action taken, and the Family Links Network demonstrates its commitment to being influenced by those who have lived experience of family separation or a missing family member and involve them in decisions. The resilience of affected people is strengthened, and they are empowered to take action by themselves.

Implementation
The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:
1.1 Conduct context analysis and assessments involving affected people and communities to understand the diversity of the RFL needs, priorities, preferences, vulnerabilities, capacities and coping mechanisms of affected people and communities.
1.2 Empower affected people and communities, including but not limited to volunteers, and use their knowledge, skills and capacities by enhancing their participation in all phases of the RFL programme cycle (assessment, planning and design, implementation and service delivery, monitoring, evaluation and learning).
1.3 Reach out and listen to affected people and communities, provide them with information on channels for submitting feedback, establish mechanisms to collect and respond to feedback and report back on how their feedback has been addressed.
1.4 Empower affected people at the strategic level through meaningful involvement in boards and other decision-making bodies and active participation in advocacy, research and strategy development.
1.5 Strengthen knowledge, skills and competencies in community engagement and the accountability of staff and volunteers.
1.6 Use, adapt and develop community engagement tools, integrate community engagement and accountability into RFL strategies, policies and procedures and share knowledge and experiences with other components of the Movement.
Lesvos, Greece. Teams from the Hellenic Red Cross and the ICRC working in Lesvos provide mobile phone charging stations and Wi-Fi access so that people can talk to their loved ones.
ENABLER 2: INVESTMENT IN STRENGTHENING RFL CAPACITY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Expected results
RFL is recognized as a core service of the Movement and is fully integrated into the operational response and adequately resourced to meet needs.

The capacities of the Family Links Network and the sustainability of RFL services are strengthened to make it a truly global and efficient network that is able to respond rapidly to help prevent family separation and people from going missing, conduct searches, provide answers to families, address needs arising from family separation and support family reunification.

Preparedness and surge mechanisms allow for a rapid and effective response in emergencies.

Implementation
The National Societies will:
2.1 Integrate RFL into their:
   • organizational structure at headquarters and at branch level
   • strategic and development plans and statutes
   • regular core budget allocations
   • performance management, financial management and reporting systems.
2.2 Integrate RFL into their contingency and operational plans and into multidisciplinary activities.
2.3 Optimize the recruitment and retention of RFL volunteers and staff through their inclusion in National Society human resources management systems.
2.4 Ensure that staff and volunteers have the necessary know-how, guidance and guidelines to respond to protection needs identified during the delivery of RFL services by referring such issues to a relevant protection actor or addressing them with the responsible authorities when possible.
2.5 Collect key RFL statistics, based on commonly agreed definitions, and transmit them to the CTA twice yearly.
2.6 Adopt processes, guidelines and tools for monitoring, reporting and evaluation, based on guidance from the CTA.

The ICRC will:
2.7 Develop, in consultation with National Societies, training manuals and guidelines, as required, including on data protection, the use of ICT tools and business processes, data literacy and data management.
2.8 Support, enhance and reinforce regular data collection and compilation of global RFL statistics, on behalf of the Family Links Network and based on agreed definitions, and analysis in relation to RFL Strategy implementation measures.
2.9 Develop, in cooperation with National Societies and the IFRC, a generic RFL performance management framework and tools, including indicators, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.
2.10 Manage the RFL Pool of Specialists, reinforce it at the global and regional level and ensure that it has the necessary means, resources and training.

The National Societies and the ICRC will:
2.11 Assess existing and potential RFL needs and their capacity to address them, making use of existing handbooks and guidelines and taking into account the capacity of other actors and coordination mechanisms, and integrate the results of the assessments into operational and development plans, including follow-up and implementation monitoring.
2.12 Conduct training of trainers and the training and coaching of staff and volunteers to ensure they possess the required knowledge of RFL methodology and processes (including data protection), the technical skills to use tools (including modern digital technology) and the interpersonal skills (such as empathy) necessary to build a relationship of trust with affected people and provide them with mental health and psychosocial support.
2.13 Mobilize and deploy the RFL Pool of Specialists, whenever needed and as early as possible, as part of domestic, regional and international emergency response, doing so in coordination with the IFRC when deployment occurs in disaster situations.

2.14 Develop regional plans of action to implement the RFL Strategy, based on contextualized needs and priorities, and identify appropriate indicators.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:

2.15 Revise their approach to capacity building and invest in targeted support to strengthen RFL services and related dimensions of National Society development, based on assessed needs and priorities and mutual commitments by the Movement partners.

2.16 Establish a pool of experts for supporting capacity building in RFL and strengthen bilateral and multilateral partnerships between National Societies and peer-to-peer learning to strengthen their capacities.

2.17 Conduct lessons learnt exercises following emergency operations, in cooperation with other stakeholders, integrate the findings into revised contingency plans and needs and capacity assessments and share them within the Movement.

2.18 Integrate RFL into multi-stakeholder scenario-building exercises as part of the contingency planning process at national level and identify capacity gaps and preparedness actions to improve future responses.

The IFRC will:

2.19 Promote the RFL Strategy internally, support its implementation at the national, regional and international level and put RFL on the agenda of relevant conferences and other fora, with a particular focus on emergency preparedness plans, strategic integration, National Society development, disaster management and training guidelines.

2.20 Integrate RFL into contingency planning mechanisms, including the training of rapid response personnel, standard emergency procedures and multidisciplinary coordination, assessment and response mechanisms and operations.

2.21 Integrate the RFL response into its funding mechanisms, such as the Disaster Relief Emergency Fund and emergency appeals.
Brasilia, Brazil. Seminar on Restoring Family Links (RFL) organized by the ICRC regional delegation. The participants attend theoretical presentations, analyze real cases and then put into practice the lessons learned.
Donetsk region, Gorlovka, Ukraine. The ICRC helps families find relatives. An ICRC employee is filling in a tracing request form for the missing son of a mother.
ENABLER 3: PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUALS BY PROTECTING THEIR PERSONAL DATA

Expected results
The safety, dignity and rights of affected people are protected through the way the Family Links Network protects their personal data, thus preserving and reinforcing the trust of people in the Movement.

Personal data is collected, stored and otherwise processed by the Family Links Network in accordance with its RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection and applicable data protection laws.

The risks and impact of the processing of personal data by the Family Links Network are systematically assessed.

The principle of “do no harm” is upheld in all actions undertaken in relation to the personal data of affected people.

Implementation
The National Societies and the ICRC will:

3.1 Integrate the provisions of the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection into their relevant policies, procedures, working methods and training.

3.2 Conduct Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) for all means, tools and partnerships considered for RFL service delivery and communication, analyse possible risks of harm and/or encroachments on the rights and freedoms of data subjects and the impact on the perception of the Movement and take into account additional considerations, where appropriate, in the context of conflict and violence and when processing the personal data of vulnerable groups.

3.3 Systematically assess and respect the principle of “do no harm” in any programme and action in relation to RFL and missing persons and their families, particularly when considering the sharing and processing of personal data.

3.4 Monitor and evaluate compliance with data protection standards by developing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and integrating them into existing instruments.

3.5 Undertake efforts to influence the development of domestic legal and regulatory frameworks to: (1) recognize and respect the exclusively humanitarian purpose of personal data processing by the Movement and the public interest and vital interest bases for such processing; (2) restrict access to personal data collected for RFL activities by the authorities or for purposes that are not exclusively humanitarian; and (3) allow the National Societies to obtain and process personal data, including cross-border transfers, and to store such data wherever it deems necessary in order to safeguard the rights of data subjects.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:

3.6 Systematically promote the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection.

3.7 Provide support in terms of expertise and resources to National Societies requiring such assistance to enable them to meet data protection requirements.
Arawa, Papua New Guinea. People take part in a procession for the International Day of the Disappeared.
ENABLER 4: SYSTEMATIC AND TARGETED RFL PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATION

Expected results
Affected people are aware of, understand and trust the RFL services of the Family Links Network.

Through systematic, coherent, targeted and contextually adapted promotion and communication, the relevant stakeholders with whom the components of the Movement aim to cooperate and from whom they need political and operational support and financial and material resources understand the importance and value of RFL. They understand and respect the required independence and exclusively humanitarian purpose of RFL, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles.

Implementation
The National Societies will:

4.1 Position RFL as a reference service in their domestic context and integrate RFL into their national communication and resource mobilization plans.

4.2 Develop and implement specific communication strategies for emergency and regular situations with clear objectives, key messages and means and tools adapted to the target audiences.

4.3 Provide regular and adapted information about RFL activities and results to affected people, donors, the authorities and other stakeholders.

The ICRC will:

4.4 Compile and share key global RFL statistics of the Family Links Network with all components of the Movement.

The National Societies and the ICRC will:

4.5 Produce communication and promotional tools with coherent key messages and guidelines that can be easily adapted to and implemented in different contexts.

4.6 Make use of social media and appropriate communication means and tools to promote RFL among affected people, other stakeholders and the general public.

4.7 Explore, develop and implement communication campaigns at the regional and global level.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:

4.8 Produce communication tools and share them across the Movement, making use of platforms such as the FLEXtranet, FedNet and the GO Platform.

4.9 Reinforce and facilitate interaction between communication, fundraising/resource mobilization and RFL departments and include RFL in related Movement and external fora.

4.10 Systematically promote the RFL Strategy at the global, regional and national level vis-à-vis the authorities and other relevant stakeholders and underline the independence of RFL services to prevent them from being instrumentalized.
South Kivu, Fizi territory, Lusenda Burundian refugee camp, Democratic Republic of the Congo. ICRC restoring family links programme. An employee of the Red Cross Society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo delivers Red Cross messages.
ENBLER 5: MOBILIZATION AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER ACTORS

Expected results
Coordination, cooperation and partnerships with relevant stakeholders, such as State authorities, humanitarian organizations and private companies, are developed and strengthened at the global, regional, national and local level. This engagement is carried out in accordance with the respective mandates and working modalities of the components of the Movement, in full compliance with the Fundamental Principles and personal data protection standards, and increases access to people and data, improves the response to the needs of affected people and strengthens the capacity of the Family Links Network.

Implementation
The National Societies and the ICRC will:

5.1 Engage with the authorities, civil society actors and other stakeholders able to help prevent separation and clarify the fate of missing persons, and advocate for the rights of affected people in order to ensure that their needs are met.

5.2 Mobilize the authorities to facilitate and contribute to the fulfilment of the role and mandate of National Societies and the ICRC in the field of RFL.

5.3 Systematically identify stakeholders and update and share stakeholder mapping at the regional and global level within the Network.

5.4 Devise appropriate operational agreements and partnerships with national and local authorities and organizations focused on shared standards, cooperation, complementarity and referrals, making use of global and regional framework agreements where they exist, and share practice within the Family Links Network.

5.5 Ensure that the authorities understand the personal data protection principles applied by the Family Links Network, so that it is permitted to operate freely, and conclude non-disclosure agreements for affected people’s data.

The ICRC will:

5.6 Devise, with the support of National Societies and the IFRC, appropriate common operational frameworks, framework agreements and partnerships with global and regional organizations focusing on shared standards, cooperation, complementarity and referrals, which can be adapted and implemented contextually.

5.7 Work with social media providers to explore mechanisms for referral and/or comparison of personal data from social media to facilitate follow-up by the Family Links Network when people are unable to contact their family members.

5.8 Invite relevant external actors to be part of the RFL Leadership Platform with a view to exploring and developing partnerships in relevant domains, e.g. research, technology and resource mobilization operations.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:

5.9 Explore private sector partnership schemes to develop and strengthen RFL service capacity, RFL technology, research and resource mobilization.

5.10 Develop guidance and establish global partnerships with telecommunication companies and operators and other relevant actors (e.g. Télécoms Sans Frontières, ITU and GSMA) to help frame locally adapted agreements, and share experiences involving local agreements with the other components of the Movement.

5.11 Develop cooperation with the media (radio, television, newspapers, etc.) for RFL communication purposes.

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21 Such operational agreements and partnerships should take into account relevant existing Movement policies, such as Resolution 10 of the 2003 Council of Delegates on Movement action in favour of refugees and internally displaced persons and minimum elements to be included in operational agreements between Movement components and their external operational partners, and Resolution 2 of the 2011 Council of Delegates on Movement components’ relations with external humanitarian actors.

22 See Resolution 10 of the 2005 Council of Delegates on Movement Policy for Corporate Sector Partnerships.
Benghazi, Libya. Family reunification operation. People on board of ICRC-chartered boat “Ionis” cheering and waving to their loved ones while waiting for the boat to dock.
ENBLER 6: FOCUS ON RFL NEEDS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

Expected results
Migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, and their families are able, regardless of their legal status, to safely access the full range of RFL services along migration routes from countries of origin through countries of transit to the countries where they settle.

The fate and whereabouts of missing migrants and the identity of deceased migrants is clarified by the authorities concerned through mobilization and active support by the Family Links Network.

The Family Links Network realizes its potential through strong and active transregional cooperation among its components to ensure a coherent approach with harmonized systems, criteria and working modalities.

Implementation
The National Societies and the ICRC will:

6.1 Strengthen transregional Family Links Network cooperation, communication, peer-to-peer learning, coordination and the exchange of relevant information and personal data along the migration routes from countries of origin through countries of transit to countries where migrants settle.

6.2 Harmonize their operational approaches, operational procedures, standards and acceptance criteria along migration routes.

6.3 Advocate for migrants in detention or detention-like settings to be able to maintain or restore family links, assess the need for family links services in such settings and, wherever relevant and feasible, provide such services.23

6.4 Reinforce their efforts to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing migrants through the collection and analysis of data from the families of missing migrants, survivors, witnesses, other organizations, the media, the authorities and other relevant sources.

6.5 Collaborate with forensic authorities and other institutions by exchanging relevant data with them, supporting the centralization of data and facilitating contact with families, under the necessary conditions and safeguards and for the exclusively humanitarian purpose of clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing migrants and helping identify the human remains of deceased migrants.

6.6 Develop and implement strategies to locate the families of deceased persons who have been identified.

The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC will:

6.7 Systematically include migrants in needs assessments, taking into account their communication and information needs and the communication means and tools available to them and paying special attention to vulnerable individuals and groups.

6.8 Strengthen cooperation and coordination on migration-related activities along migration routes and globally on migration-related issues.

6.9 Monitor the evolution of migratory flows, collecting, analysing and exchanging information rapidly to ensure agility and flexibility in their operational response.

6.10 Include RFL in relevant strategic and policy documents, including migration strategies.

The IFRC will:

6.11 Include RFL, to the extent possible, in its migration-related policies, advocacy, communication, training and other activities and liaise with the ICRC in this regard.

6.12 Include, with the support of the ICRC, the topic of RFL in the agenda of its Global Migration Task Force and other related platforms and fora and implement actions resulting from them.

6.13 Raise the profile of RFL in its contributions to the work of external national, regional and global migration-related fora, events and conferences.

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23 For further information on this subject, please see “Guidelines for National Societies Working in Immigration Detention” (2018), available at the ICRC.
Ciudad Serdán, Mexico. The ICRC and the Mexican Red Cross are helping migrants from Central America, including by setting up free phone call points along the migration route. Here, Selvin calls his family in Honduras after leaving over eight months ago.
The responsibility for implementing this Strategy is shared by all components of the Movement. The National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC are individually responsible for incorporating the Strategy’s content into their own strategies, plans and training programmes at the national, regional and international level and for enhancing awareness about it internally within the Movement, including at the leadership level, and externally among relevant stakeholders.

It is understood that National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC are not in a position to carry out every single implementation measure set out in this Strategy in every country. Rather, they will identify priority measures of particular relevance for a specific context and region, based on assessments of needs, their own capacities and those of other actors. While global coherence and harmonization is indispensable, contextual adaptation is necessary in relevant aspects.

The RFL Strategy will serve as the framework for developing contextual action plans. Regional RFL platforms will serve as suitable fora for establishing regional strategies and action plans based on this Strategy, driving forward its implementation and identifying appropriate indicators to monitor its implementation.

The RFL Strategy Implementation Group, the Application Group and the RFL Leadership Platform will, collectively and through their regional members, continue to support and monitor the implementation of this Strategy and report back to the Council of Delegates.

Acknowledging that adequate resourcing has been one of the challenges in implementing the RFL Strategy 2008–2018, the ICRC, National Societies and the IFRC will continue to explore and seek to establish innovative funding tools and mechanisms to secure the financial resources needed to support the successful implementation of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025.
Jonglei state, Old Fangak, South Sudan. A young girl is bursting with joy after she recognized the face of her mother in the Snapshot book edition from Juba Protection of Civilians camp.
Application Group for the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection
The Application Group for the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection (Application Group) was set up in 2016, and consists of the ICRC, the IFRC, and National Societies from various regions. The Application Group was established to follow up the development of the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection (Code of Conduct). It provides support for National Societies and the ICRC in promoting the Code of Conduct within the Movement and externally; it also supports the systematic implementation of the Code of Conduct. The Application Group’s mandate, as established by Article 6 of the Code of Conduct, was confirmed by the RFL resolutions adopted at the Council of Delegates in 2017 (CD/17/R9) and 2019 (CD/19/R6).

Capacity strengthening/Capacity building
Capacity building or capacity strengthening aims, as the name suggests, to develop or strengthen a specific capacity that already exists. It can be done either continuously or as a one-off project or campaign. It often means the strengthening of specific National Society programmes or activities that is undertaken with a view to expanding or extending a particular National Society’s scope or reach. It can also be used to describe the building of skills required to run an organization – or the development of specific areas within that organization – such as fundraising and volunteer or financial management, or to the development of the necessary systems, procedures and policies.

Central Tracing Agency
The Central Tracing Agency (CTA) is a permanent and integral part of the ICRC. It has a conventional mandate to prevent family separation and people from going missing; restore and maintain contact between individuals and their families; and search for missing persons and provide support to their families during the search. The CTA has traditionally served as a neutral intermediary, and as coordinator and technical adviser to the other components of the Movement and to States, in situations requiring a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian response to missing-persons cases and the needs of the families concerned. In consultation with the Movement partners involved, the CTA coordinates the various international activities undertaken during a response – in order to ensure the effectiveness of that response. It also promotes consistency and effectiveness within the Family Links Network (FLN); and provides guidelines and working procedures, and builds information systems, for the FLN. It conducts training and organizes meetings aimed at sharing knowledge and experience. The CTA also chairs the RFL Strategy Implementation Group and the Application Group, and supports the ICRC’s director-general in his capacity as chair of the RFL Leadership Platform.

Data protection
The term ‘data protection’ includes the principles and standards established to protect the privacy and dignity of individuals by safeguarding their personal data. Data-protection standards require, among other things, that personal data are collected and processed lawfully; they also seek to ensure that those who collect, share and store this data comply with certain guidelines. Basic data-protection standards emphasize the rights of data subjects and set out requirements for the processing of personal data (collecting, sharing, storing, archiving, or erasing data). These standards require the following: processing must be fair and limited to what is necessary for the specific purpose identified; there must be a legal basis for processing personal data related to an individual; and data subjects must be informed of their rights in connection with the personal data in question, including the rights to access that data and to challenge their accuracy. Rules and standards for protecting data related to humanitarian work also emphasize safeguards for vulnerable populations, the specificity of humanitarian mandates, and the complexity of humanitarian operations. Protection of personal data is crucial for the FLN, as its effectiveness and credibility, and the security of the individuals it seeks to protect, depend on the proper handling of personal data, which may contain sensitive information. The FLN has developed its own code of conduct for protecting personal data.
Family Links Answers
Family Links Answers (FL Answers or FLA) is a Web-based application for case management developed by the CTA to support National Societies’ RFL services. Available in English, French, Spanish and Russian, it enables National Societies to manage caseloads and record data and follow-up action on individual cases properly. It also enables the transfer of cases between National Societies and facilitates the extraction of data for monitoring and reporting purposes. FLA also has a detention module for National Societies that carry out visits to immigration detention centres. Members of the RFL Pool of Specialists use it during emergencies, especially disasters.

Family Links Network
The Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network (FLN, as already noted) consists of the CTA, the RFL/tracing units within ICRC delegations, and the RFL/tracing services of National Societies. The FLN provides essential humanitarian services to those separated from their families and/or to the families of missing persons. These services include restoring and maintaining family links, searching for missing persons, and supporting families during the search for their missing relatives. The FLN can mobilize its staff and volunteers throughout the world – in areas affected by conflict, disasters and other emergencies, and within the context of migration – to work in accordance with the same principles and methodology.

Family Links Network Extranet
The Family Links Network Extranet (FLExtranet) is an interactive online platform created by the ICRC as an internal tool for the FLN. It is a Web-based resource centre for RFL guidelines, practices, tracing tools, RFL service information, and communication and promotional materials; it also facilitates networking and exchange of information through interactive workspaces. Its specific aim is to enable guidance, procedures and practices to be shared within the FLN.

Family
There is no universally accepted definition of ‘family’ and the FLN deliberately interprets the term broadly. In this context, ‘family’ should be understood to include the following: children born in or out of wedlock, adopted children and stepchildren; lawfully wedded partners and unwed partners; parents, including step-parents and adoptive parents; and full or half, or adoptive, sisters and brothers. However, in many socio-cultural contexts, a family is more than this. It includes everyone living under the same roof or maintaining close relationships with one another. The concept of family must be understood in accordance with provisions of domestic law and with social and cultural traditions or usage. A lengthy period of emotional dependence and mutual recognition of a relationship: these are other factors that go to determine what is or isn’t a ‘family’.

Family reunification
Family reunification refers to the process of reuniting family members involuntarily separated by armed conflict or other violence, disasters, migration or other situations requiring a humanitarian response. This process is set in motion after contact has been restored and after families have formally consented to be reunited. It takes the following factors into account: the security conditions; the situation of the most vulnerable family members; the best interests of the child, when a child is involved; the relevant domestic and international legislation; and the nature of that specific case.

Family unity
Family unity is a right inherent in the universal recognition that the family is the fundamental unit of society and entitled to protection and assistance. The right is enshrined in numerous universal and regional human rights instruments – such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – and in various instruments of international humanitarian law, such as Protocol 1 of 8 June 1977 additional to the Geneva Conventions.

Internal displacement
The 1998 UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacements refer to internally displaced persons (IDPs) as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of
habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border. This is not a legal definition, but a descriptive notion. ‘IDP’, unlike ‘refugee’, is not a legal status: it is a factual description of a situation. Legally speaking, IDPs are, typically, citizens of the state within whose territory they find themselves, and as such are entitled to the same protection as other citizens of that state.

**RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection**
The RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection (Code of Conduct) was developed in 2015 by the ICRC, IFRC, and National Societies. It sets out the principles, commitments and procedures that members of the Movement must comply with – at a minimum – when processing data within the FLN. It seeks to comply with the most stringent data-protection regulations, particularly the European Union’s legislation on this matter. It has been incorporated in the Movement’s main sets of RFL guidance, where it functions as a reference document. The Code of Conduct is a tool that all components of the Movement can use to ensure respect for individuals’ right to privacy and to protect personal data, namely when processing such data for RFL purposes. By committing itself to the standards and principles set out in the Code of Conduct, the Movement aims to instil confidence – in the processing and sharing of data by Movement components – among people benefiting from RFL services, states, and other stakeholders.

**Mental-health and psychosocial support**
Mental-health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) refers to the wide range of activities that seek to address the psychological and psychosocial difficulties created or exacerbated by armed conflict and other situations of violence. As mental-health and psychosocial needs are inextricably linked, an effective activity ought to address both.

**Migrant**
There is no universally accepted definition of ‘migrant’ under international law. The Movement defines migrants as people who are outside of their country of origin or habitual residence: IDPs are therefore not covered by this definition. Workers, students and/or foreigners deemed ‘irregular’ by public authorities might be migrants. Refugees, asylum seekers and/or stateless persons entitled to special protection under international law may also be migrants. The Movement deliberately defines the term broadly, in order to include everyone who leaves or flees their home in search of safety or better prospects abroad, and who may be in distress and may need protection or humanitarian assistance. Migration typically involves a combination of choice and constraint. Even in the most extreme crisis, people make a conscious decision to leave or stay; it should be kept in mind, however, that ‘conscious’ does not necessarily mean ‘voluntary’.

**Minimum-protection approach**
The minimum protection approach consists of ensuring that all programmes and operations ‘do no harm’ and mainstream protection concerns, while building up measures – in advance – to address protection concerns as they are identified by staff, volunteers, community members or beneficiaries. These are the key elements of the approach: a) establishment of internal escalation pathways and protection focal points; b) referral of individual cases and issues to a relevant protection actor after securing the informed consent of the individual(s) concerned; c) dialogue and advocacy with authorities on individual or systemic protection concerns where possible and appropriate; and d) response – via service provision – to individuals’ needs arising from protection concerns.

**Missing persons**
International law does not provide a formal definition of ‘missing persons’. The ICRC understands ‘missing persons’ to mean individuals of whom their families have no news and/or who, on the basis of reliable information, have been reported missing as a consequence of armed conflict (international or non-international) or other violence or of any other situation – including disasters or migration – that might require action by a neutral and independent body (this definition is based on ICRC, Missing Persons: A Handbook for Parliamentarians, Geneva, 2009). The ICRC’s definition of a missing person is not limited in time and contains no presumption of death. Hence, the ICRC considers people to be missing from the moment they are reported missing by
their families: that is, there is no waiting period before someone can be considered missing. Persons are no
longer considered missing after their families have received sufficient, reliable and credible information on
their fate and whereabouts.

**National Society development**

‘National Society development’ (NSD) refers to the work done to create and maintain an organization that
delivers consistently and for as long as necessary – through volunteers and staff – relevant countrywide
services to vulnerable people (*2013 IFRC NSD Framework*), and that therefore also contributes to the strength­
ening of the FLN. Developing a National Society entails combining ‘hardware elements’ (funding, volunteers
and employees, materials, and technologies) with ‘software components’ (organizational and programmatic
capacity strengthening, organizational development, and leadership support). National Society development
is, therefore, the work done to improve one or several aspects of National Society services, such as relevance,
quality, reach and sustainability.

**Personal data**

‘Personal data’ means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person. An ‘identifiable
natural person’ is someone who can be identified, directly or indirectly, and in particular, by reference to an
identifier such as a name, audiovisual materials, a number, location data, online identifier or to one or more
factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that
person. It does not include ‘anonymous information’, which means information that does not relate to an
identified or identifiable natural person or that has been rendered anonymous in such a way that the data
subject is not or is no longer identifiable from it.

**PROT6**

Prot6 is the ICRC’s Web-based case-management system for protection activities. Available in English,
French and Spanish, it was developed to meet current and future protection needs and practices, and to reduce
the number of steps and the time required for processing and accessing data. It enables protection teams to
analyse data and follow up individual cases and events. It also makes it possible to centralize all protection­
related data in one tool, and provides direct, secure and faster access to such data. Prot6 can be used for
activities carried out by protection teams, and for those undertaken by other departments in connection with
protection programmes. It replaced the previous case-management system in 2014.

**RFL Leadership Platform**

The RFL Leadership Platform was established on the basis of the RFL Resolution adopted at the Council of
Delegates in 2017 (*CD/17/R9*). It serves as a forum in which the leadership of the ICRC and its CTA, together
with leaders from National Societies and the IFRC, external stakeholders, representatives of populations
affected and RFL experts engage collectively to address critical issues and shape the future of RFL services.
The Leadership Platform steers the implementation of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025; it tackles obstacles to
this process and advocates for the necessary adjustments. It identifies priority issues of common concern that
the group as a whole, a sub-group, or individual members commit to following up; in this connection, they
also commit to implementing specific initiatives and making proposals for action within the RFL Strategy
Implementation Group.

**RFL Strategy Implementation Group**

The RFL Strategy Implementation Group (Implementation Group) consists of RFL professionals in National
Societies from every region, the IFRC, and the ICRC. The Implementation Group was established to monitor,
guide and support the implementation of the RFL Strategy for the Movement 2008–2018; it met regularly
throughout that period. Between 2016 and 2019, the Implementation Group led the development of the RFL
Strategy 2020–2025. It will support, monitor and evaluate the implementation of that strategy throughout
the period from 2020 to 2025.

**RFL Pool of Specialists (for emergency response)**

The RFL Pool of Specialists is a group of people who can be deployed at short notice to incorporate RFL in
a specific response by the Movement. It was created in 2009 as part of the implementation measures of the
RFL Strategy for the Movement 2008–2018; the creation of the Pool was also part of a broader initiative to strengthen the Movement’s RFL rapid deployment capacities, particularly its ability to provide a reliable and flexible response to RFL needs during natural disasters, armed conflicts, or other emergencies. The Pool consists of professionals from National Societies and the ICRC; it is led and managed by the CTA, which is also responsible for activating it at the request of the Movement component(s) in question, in accordance with clearly defined procedures.

**Restoring Family Links**

Restoring Family Links (RFL) is a general term used to describe a broad range of activities carried out by the Movement to prevent family separation, restore and maintain contact between family members, and ascertain the fate and whereabouts of missing people. RFL activities include enabling the exchange of family news; tracing missing family members; identifying, registering and following up unaccompanied and separated vulnerable children and others; and arranging family reunification.

**Unaccompanied and separated children**

‘Unaccompanied children’ are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives, and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. ‘Separated children’ are those separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. They may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult relatives (these definitions are drawn from the *Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children*).
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

### 1. PROVISIONS AND RULES OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

#### 1.1 GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 1949 AND THEIR ADDITIONAL PROTOCOLS OF 1977

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL INFORMATION BUREAUX</th>
<th>Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 I 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.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WILLS, DEATH CERTIFICATES, BURIAL, CREMATION</th>
<th>Geneva Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art. 120:</strong> “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.</td>
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</table>

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BURIAL, CREMATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geneva Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, Geneva, 12 August 1949</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art. 130:</strong> “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.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>FAMILY REUNIFICATION / TRANSFERS / REPATRIATIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>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</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Article 74 – “Reunion of dispersed families”</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“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.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Article 78-3 – “Evacuation of children”</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>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:”</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) surname(s) of the child;</td>
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<td>b) the child’s first name(s);</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) the child’s sex;</td>
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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.”

**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.

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**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 LAW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESPECT FOR FAMILY LIFE</td>
<td>Rule 98:</td>
<td>“Enforced disappearance is prohibited.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN REMAINS</td>
<td>Rule 105:</td>
<td>“Family life must be respected as far as possible.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                               | 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.”         |
|                                               | 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.”                                                                    |
| INFORMATION TO FAMILY MEMBERS ON MISSING PERSONS | 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.”                           |
| EXCHANGE OF FAMILY NEWS                       | 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.”                                              |
| DISPLACEMENT OF CIVILIANS AND FAMILY SEPARATION | 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.”                                                                 |

The following rules are extracted from the ICRC study Customary International Humanitarian Law, Rules, Volume I, 2005.
## 2. Statutes of the Movement

### Cooperation Between States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and the Components of the Movement

**Article 2 – “States Parties to the Geneva Conventions”**

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. “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.”

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25 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.

26 “In the present Statutes the expression “Geneva Conventions” also covers their Additional Protocols for the States Parties to these 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;

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, *inter alia* 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, acknowledging 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,
recalling the role which the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) of the ICRC plays as a coordinator 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,

(…) recognizing 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. emphasizes the mandate entrusted to the CTA by the Twenty-fourth Conference, congratulates it on the initiatives already taken and encourages it to continue its efforts to co-ordinate activities, to harmonize operating principles and working methods, and to train responsible tracing personnel,

(…) 3. requests 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. asks 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) **urgently draws attention to** 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) **strongly condemns** deliberate killing and sexual exploitation of, and abuse of and violence against children, and **calls for** particularly stringent measures to prevent and punish such behaviour;

c) **also strongly condemns** 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 **demands** that those responsible for such acts be brought to justice and punished;

d) **recommends** that 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) **supports** 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) takes note 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 supports its practical action to protect and assist all children who are victims of conflict;

g) encourages 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) demands 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) appeals to States to do their utmost to solve the serious humanitarian issue of dispersed families without delay;

c) emphasizes 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) stresses the particular vulnerability of children separated from their families as a result of armed conflict, and invites 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) notes that the form of a family may vary from one culture to the other, recognizes the aspiration of separated families to be reunited and appeals 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) requests 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) calls upon 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) encourages 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) calls upon States to support National Societies in carrying out such tracing work and family reunifications;

j) commends the role of the ICRC’s Central Tracing Agency (CTA) in tracing and reuniting family members, and encourages 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) stresses the need and the right of families to obtain information on missing persons, including missing prisoners of war and those missing in action, and strongly urges States and parties to armed conflict to provide families with information on the fate of their missing relatives;

l) urges States and parties to armed conflict to cooperate with the ICRC in tracing missing persons and providing necessary documentation;

m) notes the increasing importance of the psychological and social aspects of the needs of victims of armed conflict, and encourages the International Federation to advise and train National Societies in this field;”

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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. calls upon States

(…)

d) to recognize 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.”

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**LEGAL REFERENCES**
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.”

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. welcomes the adoption by the Movement of its Restoring Family Links Strategy (2008–2018) in Resolution 4 of the 2007 Council of Delegates and calls upon 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. urges 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;

(...)”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>Resolution Title</th>
<th>Resolution Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31st ICRC</td>
<td>Resolution 3: “Migration: Ensuring Access, Dignity, Respect for Diversity and Social Inclusion”</td>
<td>1. requests States, […] to […] enable National Societies, in conformity with the Statutes of the Movement and, in particular, the Fundamental Principles, to enjoy effective and safe access to all migrants without discrimination and irrespective of their legal status; 2. calls upon States, within the framework of applicable international law, to ensure that their national procedures at international borders, especially those that might result in denial of access to international protection, deportation or interdiction of persons, include adequate safeguards to protect the dignity and ensure the safety of all migrants. States are also called on, in line with such relevant international law and national legislation, to grant to migrants appropriate international protection and to ensure their access to relevant services, such as Restoring Family Links. […]”</td>
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<tr>
<td>32nd ICRC</td>
<td>Resolution 7: “Strengthening the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement response to growing humanitarian needs”</td>
<td>3. recalls States’ commitment to respect at all times the adherence by all the components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles, and urges States and National Societies to maintain a constant dialogue regarding respect for and adherence to the Principles, to ensure that every country has the full benefit of a neutral and impartial auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, and one which remains autonomous in carrying out its humanitarian activities for the most vulnerable;</td>
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<tr>
<td>33rd ICRC</td>
<td>Resolution 4: “Restoring Family Links while respecting privacy, including as it relates to personal data protection”</td>
<td>3. recalls States’ commitment to respect at all times the adherence by all the components of the Movement to the Fundamental Principles, and urges States and National Societies to maintain a constant dialogue regarding respect for and adherence to the Principles, to ensure that every country has the full benefit of a neutral and impartial auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, and one which remains autonomous in carrying out its humanitarian activities for the most vulnerable;</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. calls upon States to take effective measures to prevent persons from going missing, to clarify the fate and whereabouts of persons who have gone missing, to restore family links and facilitate reunification of families, and to avoid, as far as possible, family separation, consistent with applicable legal frameworks, and encourages States to consider measures to protect men, women, boys and girls, in particular those in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities;

2. requests States to take all possible measures, consistent with applicable international obligations, to ensure the dignified treatment of people who have died as a result of armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies, as well as in the context of migration, and to centralize and analyse data in accordance with applicable legal frameworks in order to try to identify deceased persons and provide answers to their families, and welcomes the support provided in this process by the ICRC in the form of forensic expertise;

3. calls upon the components of the Movement to work closely with States, in line with their mandates and the Movement’s Fundamental Principles, and also calls upon States to make use of the services of their National Society, in its role as an auxiliary to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and to enable individuals and their families to establish, restore or maintain contact, including along migratory routes;

4. notes the adoption by the Movement of its Restoring Family Links Strategy 2020–2025 in Resolution 6 of the 2019 Council of Delegates, and encourages States to continue their support for the services of the components of the Movement in the field of RFL, as appropriate, in particular by:

   a) reaffirming and recognizing the specific role of the National Society of their country in providing RFL services, if applicable
   
   b) strengthening the National Society’s capacities, including through the provision of resources
   
   c) ensuring that the National Society has a clearly defined role in the context of the country’s overall disaster risk management laws, policies and plans
   
   d) exploring and establishing partnerships with the components of the Movement to provide connectivity to help separated families restore and maintain family links
   
   e) granting the components of the Movement access to places where there are people in need of RFL services
   
   f) cooperating with the components of the Movement, in accordance with their mandates and national, regional and international legal frameworks, by facilitating, if necessary, access to relevant personal data and responding to inquiries they may make in order to help establish the fate and whereabouts of missing persons;
5. recalls that the Movement processes personal data under the framework set out in the Restoring Family Links Code of Conduct on Data Protection;

6. recognizes the difficulty, and often impossibility, of acquiring consent in cases of missing or separated families, and the necessity that components of the Movement continue to rely upon alternative valid bases for processing of personal data, including as reflected in section 2.2 of the Restoring Family Links Code of Conduct on Data Protection, such as important grounds of public interest, vital interest, and compliance with a legal obligation;

7. welcomes the Movement’s efforts to proactively address and provide adequate safeguards against the risks associated with personal data processing, and encourages the Movement to continue to enhance the effectiveness of data processing practices;

8. recognizes that the misuse of data may result in violations of privacy obligations that are set out in national, regional and international legal frameworks, including as such obligations relate to personal data protection, and may have a serious impact on the beneficiaries of RFL services and be detrimental to their safety and to humanitarian action more generally;

9. also recognizes that it is of utmost importance to ensure that the processing and transfer of personal data between the components of the Movement for the particular purpose of providing RFL services remain as unrestricted as possible, consistent with the Restoring Family Links Code of Conduct on Data Protection, relevant international humanitarian law (IHL) instruments and the Statutes of the Movement;

10. further recognizes that, whenever any component of the Movement collects, retains or otherwise processes personal data in the performance of RFL services, it should do so for purposes that are compatible with the exclusively humanitarian nature of its mandate, and calls upon States to respect the humanitarian purpose of the Movement’s processing of personal data, in line with Articles 2 and 3 of the Statutes of the Movement;

11. urges States and the Movement to cooperate to ensure that personal data is not requested or used for purposes incompatible with the humanitarian nature of the work of the Movement, and in conformity with Article 2, including paragraph 5 thereof, of the Statutes of the Movement, or in a manner that would undermine the trust of the people it serves or the independence, impartiality and neutrality of RFL services;

12. welcomes the Movement’s Restoring Family Links Code of Conduct on Data Protection as an appropriate foundation for personal data protection;

13. requests the Movement to periodically review and update the Restoring Family Links Code of Conduct on Data Protection, and requests States to support the components of the Movement in their efforts to implement it.”
### Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

#### Resolution 5: “Children in armed conflicts”

"The Council of Delegates,

(…)

2. endorses the Plan of Action for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (…);

3. urges 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."

#### Resolution 8: “Children affected by armed conflict”

"The Council of Delegates,

recalling 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. takes note 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 thanks it for its work and contribution to actions taken in favour of children affected by armed conflict."

#### Resolution 4: “Movement Action in favour of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons”

"The Council of Delegates,

(…)

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**LEGAL REFERENCES  89**
1. calls upon 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. calls upon 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 Council of Delegates,

(…)

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 level,

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 with a view in particular to encourage 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.”

Resolution 5: “International Migration”

“The Council of Delegates,

(…)

3. welcomes 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. takes into account previous resolutions on restoring family links and its relevance to the field of migration;

5. requests 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. requests 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. requests 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.

Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 2009

Resolution 4: “Policy on migration International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies”

“The Council of Delegates,

(…)

1. welcomes the new Federation policy on migration, adopted by the Federation’s Governing Board on May 2009;

(…)

3. takes note that the policy has benefited from the expertise of the ICRC in restoring family link and other protection issues (…)”

Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 2015

Resolution 7: “Movement statement on migration: Ensuring Collective Action to Protect and Respond to the Needs and Vulnerabilities of Migrations”

“The Council of Delegates,

(…)

1. commits to increase and sustain our Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement response aimed at saving lives and improving the protection, health and dignity of migrants without discrimination and irrespective of their legal status, and, where possible, to restoring contact and reunification between separated family members, recording and promoting the search and identification of the missing and dead, and advocating to ensure that protection and humanitarian needs are met;

(…)”

Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 2017

Resolution 3: “Movement Call for Action on the Humanitarian Needs of Vulnerable Migrants”

“The Council of Delegates,

(…)”
We call on States to:

(…)

3. prioritize the most vulnerable:

- Take all feasible measures to prevent family separation and disappearance, including during management of border crossings, rescue operations and medical evaluations;

(…)

- Set up transregional coordination channels, communicate information about missing people to their families and improve coordination between forensic services to identify migrants who died along the way, in compliance with internationally accepted data protection standards;

4. use detention only as a measure of last resort:

(…)

- The special circumstances of certain categories of especially vulnerable migrants should be considered and their detention should be avoided. In particular, children should not be detained for reasons related to their or their parents’ migratory status. States should commit to ending the detention of children and family separation for immigration-related reasons – the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all measures concerning children. (…)

Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, 2017

Resolution 9 “Restoring Family Links strategy development”

“The Council of Delegates,

(…)

1. takes note of the report on the RFL Strategy development process presented to the Council of Delegates and welcomes the work undertaken;

2. welcomes the establishment of a working group for the implementation of the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection and calls upon all Movement components to integrate the provisions of the code into their regulations and working procedures;

3. expresses its support for the preliminary main orientations set out in the draft of the new RFL Strategy and for the establishment of an RFL leadership platform as presented in the report and discussed in the workshop;

4. encourages the RFL Strategy Implementation Group to continue its work and to submit the finalized new RFL Strategy for adoption at the 2019 Council of Delegates;

5. calls upon all National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to continue their efforts to implement the provisions of the current RFL Strategy until the adoption of the new RFL Strategy in 2019.”

(The full text of the resolution can be found on page 11 and 12 Resolution 6 of the 2019 Council of Delegates)

Resolution 8: “Adopting a Movement Statement on Migrants and our Common Humanity”

“The Council of Delegates,

(…)

2. recalls the Policy on Migration adopted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 2009 (which was also welcomed by the whole Movement in Resolution 4 of the Council of Delegates, Nairobi, 2009) and the IFRC’s Global Strategy on Migration 2018–2022;

(…)

3. Encourages the creation of national and cross-border coordination platforms for information sharing to strengthen collaboration, in line with best practice and international standards in protection of personal information and data protection, as outlined in the resolution on Restoring Family Links.

(…)

All migrants – including those in an irregular situation – have human rights, including the rights to life, liberty and security of person. They must be protected from torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, refoulement and threats to their lives, and they must have access to justice and essential services.

(…)

As auxiliaries to the public authorities in the humanitarian field, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are committed to supporting States to ensure that the humanitarian needs of migrants – as well as those of vulnerable persons in host communities – are met. While our areas of strength vary, we can help in a number of ways, from providing emergency relief and basic health services, supporting the ability of migrants to maintain family links, to supporting authorities in promoting longer-term social inclusion and fulfilling their obligations under international law.
### SELECTED POLICY AND REFERENCE DOCUMENTS: SHORT SUMMARIES

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<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>This public-policy paper outlines key recommendations for policymakers on ways to prevent missing-persons cases involving migrants and, when migrants do go missing, on ways to respond. It highlights the need for uniformity in how information about missing migrants and dead bodies is collected and processed in line with international rules and standards, and establishes clear humanitarian pathways for collaboration at national and transnational levels, including with families. The paper also draws attention to the challenges that the families of missing migrants face, and outlines ways to support them, including throughout the search process.</td>
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<th>IFRC NATIONAL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (2013)</th>
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<td>The purpose of this Framework is to set out some of the basic principles of National Society development. Its particular aim is to guide leaders of National Societies who have to make decisions and take action that will affect the future of their organizations. It is of pertinence to National Societies operating in resource-rich and in resource-poor environments.</td>
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<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>The Framework should also aid Movement leaders to reflect on what is currently in place to support National Society development, what needs to be more fully understood, and what approaches are required to accelerate and improve a process critical to the long-term health and reputation of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. This Framework draws on a broad range of experiences – collected from within and outside the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) – concerning the development of National Societies and other non-profit organizations.</td>
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<th>IFRC NSD COMPACT (2019)</th>
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<td>During its 2019 General Assembly, the IFRC reaffirmed through the adoption of the NSD Compact the commitment to National Society Development (NSD) as a means to maximize the collective humanitarian impact and the importance to align the NSD support of its members, leveraging their individual and collective strengths.</td>
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<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>The ICRC shared a support statement underlining the positive collaboration between the ICRC and the IFRC, welcoming the NSD Compact as an additional step towards coherent and complementary Movement-wide support to NSD and expressing its readiness to make its contributions to the implementation of the four commitments expressed in the compact.</td>
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<td><strong>Links</strong></td>
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The NSD Compact defines NSD support as: support provided by an external actor to a National Society, based on the request and priorities of that National Society, that purposefully contributes to helping that National Society to achieve and maintain a sustainable organization able to deliver relevant, quality, and accessible services while fully respecting the fundamental principles.

NSD support therefore includes all efforts by other actors to support a National Society’s work to increase the relevance, quality, reach and sustainability of its services. It includes what is commonly called ‘capacity building, strengthening, enhancement, or sharing’, ‘organizational development’, ‘peer-to-peer review’, and ‘material/financial investments’.

The compact consists of four commitments and sets out roles for National Societies, their partners and the IFRC secretariat.

| Commitment 1 – Better identification of NS priorities in NSD |
| Commitment 2 – Competencies that match the needs |
| Commitment 3 – Aligned effective NSD support |
| Commitment 4 – Learning and quality assurance |

**MOVEMENT POLICY ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT (2009, RESOLUTION 5)**

The Movement Policy on Internal Displacement proposes 10 principles for addressing forced displacement. The policy guidelines refer to the importance of national law and international human rights, while emphasizing that IHL is the strongest international legal framework applicable in times of armed conflict, both for preventing displacement and for meeting the most pressing assistance and protection needs of the civilian population, including IDPs.


**IFRC POLICY ON MIGRATION (2009, RESOLUTION 4)**

In engaging in the area of migration, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have the purpose – individually and together with the International Federation and the ICRC – to address the humanitarian concerns of migrants in need throughout their journey. They strive to provide assistance and protection to them, uphold their rights and dignity, empower them in their search for opportunities and sustainable solutions, as well as promote social inclusion and interaction between migrants and host communities.
