

Power of humanity

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

8 December 2019, Geneva



**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Geneva, Switzerland
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**Restoring Family Links: Strategy for the International Red Cross
and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025**

Draft elements of resolution

March 2019

Background

The draft elements of the proposed resolution on the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025 seek to provide an outline of the possible substance of individual paragraphs, without providing a definitive text for the proposed resolution.

Each paragraph is followed by a rationale explaining why it would be useful to include such a paragraph in the resolution.

This document is being shared for consultation with the members of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in order to gather a first round of comments and feedback, and to gain an initial understanding of whether the proposed approach on the substance would be acceptable and garner consensus.

When providing comments and feedback on this document, please consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the proposed elements for the preambular and operative paragraphs of the resolution?
- Are there any elements that are missing or should be included in the resolution?

Detailed comments on the wording of the draft elements of this resolution are not expected at this stage. There will be an opportunity to comment on specific wording at a later stage, once the “draft zero” of the resolution is available.

Introduction

People endure tremendous anxiety and suffering when they are separated from family members and do not know where and how they are. For a parent, a child, a sibling, a wife or a husband, knowing what happens to their loved one is often more important than water, food and shelter. The family members of people who are missing will not stop searching until they know their fate and whereabouts. In trying to find an answer, they use up their resources and may put themselves and other family members at risk.

Despite the fact that we are living in a world that is more connected than ever, with exponentially growing internet access, mobile phone penetration and social media use, the number of missing persons registered by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network has significantly increased in recent years.¹

The impact of disappearances on individuals, families and communities at large is one of the most damaging and long-lasting humanitarian consequences of armed conflict, other situations of violence, migration and natural disasters. Disappearances not only represent immeasurable tragedies for the families and communities affected, but can also constitute an open wound for former parties to a conflict and an obstacle to reconciliation and stability.

The problem of the missing takes on a truly global dimension within the framework of migration. Thousands of people disappear every year along precarious migratory routes around the world, and numerous dead bodies found along these trails remain unidentified. Improving the response to these challenges in order to provide answers to the families of missing migrants requires coordination and the harmonization of practices among a wide range of actors across multiple countries, regions and even continents.

The Restoring Family Links (RFL) services of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network cover a broad spectrum, including preventing family separation, maintaining family contact, restoring family links, tracing and providing answers to families on the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones and supporting family reunification. When delivering RFL

¹ The number of new cases registered by the ICRC in 2018 has more than doubled compared to 2016.

services, the Family Links Network only acts with the full consent of the individuals concerned and in compliance with the principle of “do no harm”, including in relation to the processing of personal data and respecting the wishes of people who do not want to restore contact with family members. The Network provides RFL services in the context of conflict and violence, natural disasters, migration and other situations requiring a humanitarian response.

Restoring family links is a unique core service of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement), which is best placed to assume this task, with its more than one hundred years of experience and expertise in this domain, a network that stretches across all borders and continents and its rootedness in communities around the world.

At the 2007 Council of Delegates, the Movement adopted its first RFL Strategy for the years 2008 to 2018. It has now come to an end, and a new Strategy has been developed, which will be proposed for adoption by the Council of Delegates in 2019.

The development of the new RFL Strategy is driven by the RFL Strategy Implementation Group, chaired by the Central Tracing Agency and comprising 23 National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC. In its current version, the new RFL Strategy encompasses four Strategic Objectives:

- SO1: Prevention of family separation and disappearances and maintaining family links
- SO2: Increased accessibility and availability of RFL services
- SO3: Increased case resolution
- SO4: Personalized support to families of missing persons and separated families.

In addition, it contains six Enablers:

- En1: Participation of affected people in the development of RFL services
- En2: Investment in strengthening RFL capacity and response
- En3: Protection of individuals by protecting their personal data
- En4: Systematic and targeted RFL communication and promotion
- En5: Mobilization and partnerships with other actors
- En6: Focusing on RFL needs in the context of migration.

Consultations on the substance of the new Strategy took place at regional Movement meetings in all continents between 2016 and 2018. The full draft of the new RFL Strategy was shared with all components of the Movement in February 2019 for feedback, revisions and comments.

Preambular paragraphs (PP)

The preambular paragraph of this resolution could express deep concern about the suffering endured by those who have lost contact with or have no news of their loved ones as a consequence of armed conflict, disasters and other emergencies as well as in the context of migration.

It would further recall the RFL Strategy 2008–2018 adopted in Resolution 4 of the Council of Delegates and note with satisfaction the achievements made during the course of its implementation. It would, however, recognize 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.

It would then recall the RFL Resolution adopted at the 2017 Council of Delegates² and the background report which outlined the preliminary main orientations of the new draft RFL Strategy and express appreciation for the efforts and commitment of the ICRC and the RFL Strategy Implementation Group in developing the RFL Strategy for the International Red

² <http://rcrcconference.org/resolutions-and-reports-cod-2017/>

Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025. Finally, it would recall the Global Strategy on Migration³ adopted by the 2017 General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Rationale: It is essential to situate the new RFL Strategy to be adopted through this resolution in the context of the needs of affected people which the Movement must address in order to establish the link with previous efforts undertaken by the Movement and to recall the resolution of the 2017 Council of Delegates, which requested this new Strategy to be submitted for adoption at the 2019 Council, and the Global Strategy on Migration, which includes a clear commitment to reinforce RFL in Strategic Aim 1.

Operative paragraphs (OP)

OP1: The first operative paragraph could adopt the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025.

Rationale: The adoption of the new RFL Strategy by the Movement is the primary purpose of the resolution.

OP2: The second operative paragraph could call 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 measures outlined in this Strategy as part of their organizational strategies and plans at national, regional and international levels, and c) allocate the necessary resources to carry them out.

Rationale: It is essential for all components of the Movement to be aware of the new Strategy and integrate its implementation into their own plans. Resource allocation by all components will be essential to successfully implement the Strategy.

OP3: The third operative paragraph could encourage the ICRC and the International Federation to enhance their cooperation with a view to supporting National Societies in their efforts to implement the Strategy and encourage partnerships amongst National Societies for them to support each other in building their RFL capacity.

Rationale: Efforts to strengthen RFL capacities must be integrated into broader National Society Development led by the International Federation, making close cooperation between the two Geneva-based institutions essential. At the same time, peer-to-peer support is often the most effective way to strengthen capacity, and the need for solidarity is more evident than in any other service, since the efficiency of each National Society depends on the response capacity of sister Societies.

OP4: The fourth operative paragraph could request the components of the Movement to bring the RFL Strategy to the attention of the 33rd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent with a view, in particular, to encouraging member States to support the RFL activities carried out by the Movement, including in aspects related to data protection.

Rationale: In intensive discussions within the RFL Leadership platform and the RFL Strategy Implementation Group, the need to bring the new Strategy to the attention of States has been recognized and underlined, taking into account that the primary responsibility for clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons lies with States. The components of the Movement are very well placed to assist States in this task but also depend on support and cooperation from the authorities to carry out their work effectively. The data protection

³ https://media.ifrc.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/12/IFRC_StrategyOnMigration_EN_20171222.pdf

dimension is of particular importance in this respect (ref. proposed draft elements of the resolution on RFL and data protection for the International Conference).

OP5: The fifth operative paragraph could invite the ICRC to continue to chair the RFL Strategy Implementation Group for the purpose of supporting and monitoring the implementation of the RFL Strategy.

Rationale: The Implementation Group, chaired by the ICRC, has accompanied the entire process of carrying out the RFL Strategy 2008–2018 and proven to be a useful mechanism to support the implementation of the Strategy at the regional level. In their role as “ambassadors” of the Strategy, the group’s members have contributed to raising awareness and prepared two major implementation reports for the Council of Delegates in 2011 and 2015.

OP6: The sixth operative paragraph could commend the work undertaken by the working group on the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection, encourage it to continue to support the application of the Code and call upon the components of the Movement to provide expertise and resources.

Rationale: The RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection represents a crucial tool to ensure that the transfer of personal data, the core business of RFL, will continue to be possible for the Family Links Network. To this end, it is, however, essential for the provisions of the Code to be implemented, with the support of the working group, whose creation was welcomed by the 2017 Council of Delegates RFL Resolution. For effective implementation, expertise and resources will be needed.

OP7: The seventh operative paragraph could commend the establishment of the Restoring Family Links Leadership platform and invite it to continue to address critical issues for the future of RFL services and steer the implementation of the RFL Strategy.

Rationale: The RFL Leadership platform was established on the basis of the RFL Resolution adopted by the 2017 Council of Delegates as a means to engage the senior leadership of the Movement and provide more participatory leadership in the Family Links Network’s RFL services. It met twice in 2018 and started to address strategically important issues relating to RFL.

OP8: The eighth operative paragraph could invite the components of the Movement to report to the 2023 Council of Delegates on the results achieved through the implementation of the Strategy and the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection.

Rationale: With the mechanisms mentioned in OP5, OP6 and OP7, the Movement is very well equipped to ensure that the RFL Strategy and the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection are meaningfully implemented in the six years covered by the Strategy. Accountability is required to demonstrate the results after four years to the Council of Delegates, including possible adjustments which might be required.