



Power of humanity

Council of Delegates of the International
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Extension until 2030 of the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Extension until 2030 of the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adopted at the 2019 Council of Delegates, the Restoring Family Links Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025 (RFL Strategy 2020–2025) provided a clear mission for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (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.”

As the end of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 approaches, it is acknowledged that the current strategy is still relevant in terms of its objectives and substance. The implementation of the strategy was, however, slowed down and delayed mainly because of the impact of COVID-19 in the years 2020–2022 and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)/Central Tracing Agency (CTA) data breach in 2022, which affected the Restoring Family Links (RFL) services of the Movement’s Family Links Network.

The main consultations on extending the current strategy were carried out by the RFL Strategy Implementation Group and the RFL Leadership Platform, with a clear endorsement to extend the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 until 2030.

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework that was developed to implement the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 provides a solid basis for the Movement to continue monitoring progress on the objectives and enablers of the strategy.

This background document concludes with a recommendation for members of the 2024 Council of Delegates to adopt the proposed resolution to extend the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 until 2030, paving the way for and supporting its continued implementation.

1) INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of thousands of people around the world are missing or separated from their families as a result of armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies, including in the context of migration. This represents a global humanitarian tragedy on a large scale and the figures do not convey the true extent of the issue or the suffering of each and every family.

RFL covers a broad spectrum of services provided by the Movement’s Family Links Network, including preventing family separation, maintaining and restoring family contact, , tracing missing persons and providing answers to families on the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones, and supporting families and family reunification.

With more than a hundred years' experience and expertise in this area, the Movement is uniquely placed to deliver this humanitarian service. The value of the Movement's global network, which crosses borders and continents and is rooted in communities around the world, is demonstrated through the delivery of this core, interconnected humanitarian service.

Even though 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 Movement's Family Links Network continues to increase.¹ The RFL services provided by the Movement remain relevant and critical in many contexts.

At the 2019 Council of Delegates, the Movement adopted its second RFL strategy for the years 2020 to 2025 in Resolution 6, "Restoring Family Links: Strategy for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 2020–2025".

An M&E framework for the implementation of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 was developed by the RFL Strategy Implementation Group² during 2020, which, since then, has served as a good and solid basis for the Movement to monitor progress on the objectives and enablers of the strategy. The M&E framework also includes Regional Plans of Action that have been developed with the aim of contextualizing regional priorities for implementing the strategy.

As the end of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 approaches, it is acknowledged that the current strategy is still relevant in terms of its objectives and substance. The implementation of the strategy was, however, slowed down and delayed because of the impact of COVID-19 in the years 2020–2022 and the ICRC/CTA data breach in 2022, which directly affected the RFL services of the Family Links Network. More time is therefore needed to realize and achieve the intended outcomes of the strategy beyond 2025.

Furthermore, the importance of synergies between the operationalization of the extended RFL Strategy and the forthcoming and anticipated adoption of the first-ever migration strategy for the Movement 2025–2030 is recognized, as is the need to ensure coherence and complementarity with the provisions of the forthcoming proposed resolution on protection in the Movement, in particular the overall framing and scope of protection in the Movement, of which RFL is also a part.

2) BACKGROUND

Resolution 6 of the 2019 Council of Delegates adopted the Movement's second RFL Strategy for the period 2020–2025, providing a solid vision and mission for RFL within the Movement.

A global framework to support implementation of the RFL Strategy already exists through the RFL Strategy Implementation Group and the RFL Leadership Platform. In 2020, the membership of both groups was reconstituted in order to spearhead the implementation process for the period 2020–2023. Both groups are composed of representatives from a geographical spread of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the ICRC. The RFL Strategy Implementation Group held 14 meetings between June 2020 and December 2023, and the RFL Leadership Platform held 11 meetings between June 2020 and September 2023.

¹ The number of new cases registered by the Family Links Network since 2019 continues to increase on a yearly basis. By 2022, more than 195,000 missing persons were registered with the Family Links Network around the world.

² The RFL Strategy Implementation Group is chaired by the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency and comprises 35 National Societies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the ICRC.

In 2022, consultations on the RFL Strategy beyond 2025 began at the RFL technical level, which took into account implementation constraints resulting from the impact of COVID-19 and the ICRC/CTA data breach on the Family Links Network. The status of the strategy's implementation was considered during a dedicated session of the RFL Strategy Implementation Group in February 2023, informed by the M&E framework results on the global indicators that had been developed to monitor implementation. Despite progress made in implementing the strategy, it was acknowledged that its implementation, as initially foreseen, had been slowed down and delayed by external factors, such as the impact of COVID-19 and the ICRC/CTA data breach of 2022, and that more time would be needed to fulfil the ambitions of the strategy.

The RFL Strategy Implementation Group considered that the vision, strategic objectives, enablers and expected results of the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 remained valid, relevant and should be retained. It concluded that it would be a better use of resources to build on the work already done and to continue working towards the existing strategic goals and enablers, acknowledging that they were intentionally ambitious and visionary, and that ten years would be a more realistic timescale for implementation.

The RFL Strategy Implementation Group also considered the fact that the dates of the Council of Delegates had moved from 2023 to 2024 and from 2025 to 2026. Not addressing the RFL Strategy at the 2024 Council of Delegates would leave the Movement without a valid RFL strategy beyond 2025.

In March 2023, the RFL Leadership Platform endorsed the recommendation by the RFL Strategy Implementation Group to propose extending the current RFL Strategy until 2030.

3) ANALYSIS/PROGRESS

A) M&E FRAMEWORK FOR THE RFL STRATEGY 2020–2025

In 2020, the RFL Strategy Implementation Group, under the leadership of a dedicated M&E working group, developed a comprehensive M&E framework for the RFL Strategy 2020–2025. The main purpose of the M&E framework is to monitor the progress made towards achieving the strategic objectives and enablers of the RFL Strategy. This is carried out by collecting data from the Family Links Network through an M&E survey, which creates a solid basis for consistent reporting on the results achieved and on the value and performance of the global Family Links Network. The M&E framework for the RFL Strategy helps strengthen the Movement's accountability, particularly towards affected people, and it fosters a culture of continuous learning.

In addition, Regional Plans of Action were developed to implement the RFL Strategy, providing specific priorities for regions. Together with the M&E survey and global RFL statistics collection, they form a sound basis for the ongoing monitoring of progress. They can be adapted until 2030 to align with implementation priorities.

Development of the M&E framework for the RFL Strategy

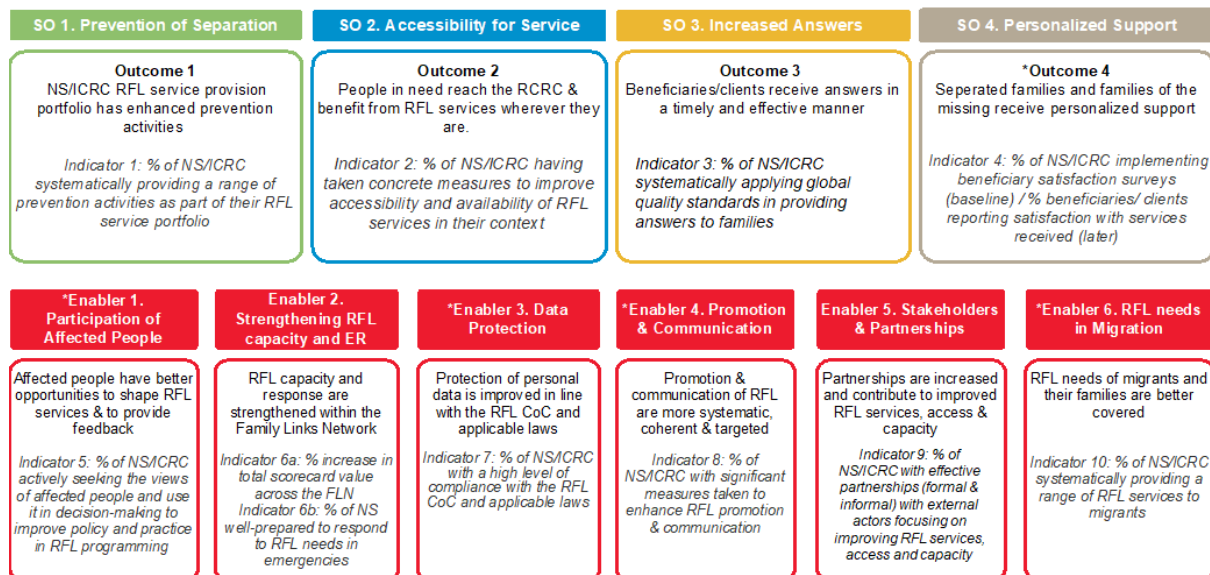
An outcome statement for each objective and enabler in the RFL Strategy articulates what the strategy aims to achieve. For each outcome, there is a global indicator. Eleven global indicators allow for a comprehensive analysis of the progress made in implementing the RFL Strategy, as outlined in the table below

A self-assessment tool – the RFL scorecard – to measure the RFL capacity of individual entities in the Family Links Network has been integrated into the M&E framework for the RFL Strategy. It is part of the specialized assessment and development processes available to

National Societies.³ The Family Links Network has a duty to protect individuals by protecting their personal data, and to help them fulfil this commitment, the Application Group for the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection (as part of the M&E framework) developed key monitoring indicators to support compliance with the data protection requirements of the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection.

For the first time, the Family Links Network has set out to collect and collate global RFL statistics. The process is part of the M&E framework and includes defining and collecting standardized global RFL statistics.

Restoring Family Links Strategy Outcomes & Indicators



Data collection from the M&E survey on the RFL Strategy

Global monitoring data is collected annually by the CTA through a self-assessment survey of National Societies and ICRC regional delegations/delegations/missions. The survey is launched at the beginning of each year and collects data related to the previous year. A different mechanism is currently being finalized for the IFRC, in addition to the standard monitoring and reporting mechanisms; those reports demonstrate the technical support provided at national, regional and global level by the IFRC to the National Societies engaged in RFL activities, to ensure that they are safe and inclusive.

The response rate for the M&E survey has always been high – never falling below 80% and reaching a peak of 93% in 2023, when 175 National Societies and 101 ICRC delegations/missions responded to the survey.

The first M&E survey for RFL was rolled out between February and March 2021, collecting data relating to 2020. The data relating to 2020 then formed the baseline data and enables members of the Family Links Network to set targets and priorities, and compare data from year to year to see what changes have occurred overall. Data collections took place as expected in 2022 and 2023, and the next survey will be launched in March 2024 collecting data for the year 2023.

³ IFRC, [National Society Assessment & Development Processes: Guidance for National Societies](#), 2021.

In addition, the first RFL global statistics survey for National Societies was rolled out in 2020. National Society and ICRC data have since been aggregated and merged. The RFL global statistics collection and compilation will be conducted in 2024 for the year 2023.

The findings of both the RFL M&E survey and the RFL global statistics survey for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 have been shared with the leaders of all Movement components, as well as directly with National Society RFL/tracing services and the ICRC's Protection of Family Links programmes in delegations. Individual members of the Family Links Network also receive their RFL scorecards every year to monitor their annual progress and plan capacity-strengthening efforts in six dimensions of RFL capacity: ownership, structures, competencies, relationships, resources and tools.

B) IMPLEMENTING THE RFL STRATEGY: A PROGRESS UPDATE

As the Movement started implementing the RFL Strategy 2020–2025, it also began monitoring its progress with the support of the M&E framework. While progress has been made, it is recognized 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 their loved ones.

Brief analysis of the M&E survey results on the implementation of the RFL Strategy

The latest results of the M&E survey (reporting year 2022) show that 81% of the Family Links Network provides RFL services, of which 4% provides RFL services in emergencies only and 6% carry out RFL capacity-strengthening only. This figure has remained stable since 2020.

Strategic Objective 1: Prevention of family separation and people from going missing and maintaining family links

33% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions systematically provide a range of prevention activities as part of their RFL services provision. This figure has remained stable in line with the baseline data.

Strategic Objective 2: Accessibility and availability of RFL services

44% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions have taken concrete measures to improve the availability of and access to RFL services in their context. This figure has remained stable in recent reporting years and shows a slight decrease from the baseline data.

Strategic Objective 3: Provision of answers to families

Under the M&E framework, global quality standards⁴ on tracing activities have been established for the Family Links Network. 27% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions are systematically applying these standards in providing answers to families. This figure forms the baseline data and progress will be monitored in the coming years.

Strategic Objective 4: Support to families of missing persons and separated families

18% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions are implementing beneficiary satisfaction surveys. This figure has increased by 7% from the baseline data.

Enabler 1: Participation of affected people in the development of RFL services

14% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions actively seek the views of affected people and use them in decision-making to improve policy and practice in RFL programming. This figure has slightly increased from the baseline data.

Enabler 2 (a): Strengthening RFL capacity

⁴ Global quality standards for the provision of tracing services were set for four timeframes that the Family Links Network should strive to meet when providing tracing services.

The RFL capacity of the Family Links Network is measured through the RFL scorecard results, with a score given on a scale of 1 to 4. The global result is 3.0. This figure has remained stable in line with the baseline data and shows a slight improvement.

Enabler 2 (b): Emergency response

64% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions are partially prepared to respond to RFL needs in emergencies and 7% are well prepared. These figures have remained stable in line with the baseline data and show a slight improvement.

Enabler 3: Protection of individuals by protecting their personal data

19% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions have a medium compliance with the RFL Code of Conduct and applicable laws; 5% are highly compliant, meeting the requirements of all key monitoring indicators. These figures have increased from the baseline data.

Enabler 4: RFL promotion and communication

36% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions have taken significant measures to enhance promotion of and communication about RFL services. This figure has remained stable in line with the baseline data.

Enabler 5: Mobilization and partnerships with other actors

39% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions have effective partnerships that contribute to improved RFL services, access and capacity. This figure has increased 12% from the baseline data.

Enabler 6: Focus on RFL needs within the context of migration

28% of National Societies and ICRC delegations/missions systematically provide a range of RFL services to migrants. This figure has remained stable in line with the baseline data.

Priorities to continue implementing the RFL Strategy

While there has been progress in implementing some areas of the RFL Strategy, more concrete efforts are needed to address key enablers of the strategy, namely strengthening RFL capacities, preparedness for and response to emergencies and data protection. The RFL Implementation Group has identified these as priorities for the coming years and will invest time and resources to address them.

These are also priorities that are reflected in the Regional Plans of Action for Africa, Americas, Asia Pacific, Eurasia and Near and Middle East. The Application Group for the RFL Code of Conduct on Data Protection will continue to support the Family Links Network, strengthening its compliance with data protection through a dedicated plan of action. The RFL Leadership Platform will continue to strategically steer the implementation of the strategy, including continuing to address the issues of strengthening RFL capacities, resource mobilization for the Family Links Network and humanitarian diplomacy related to RFL.

A comprehensive progress report on the implementation of the RFL Strategy and the RFL Code of Conduct will be submitted to the 2024 Council of Delegates as requested in Resolution 6 of the 2019 Council of Delegates.

4) RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

By adopting the resolution to extend the RFL Strategy until 2030, Movement components reaffirm their commitment to allocate resources, within the scope of their capacity and operational needs, to implement the outlined measures. The implementation and resource allocation for these measures will depend on the existing RFL programmes and activities of individual components, stressing the importance to move forward with collective efforts aimed at increasing them.

The proposed resolution also calls upon the Movement's components to support one another's efforts in implementing the strategy, which may also include strengthening the development of sustainable partnerships, including among National Societies, so that they can support each other in strengthening their RFL capacities.

5) IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

All Movement components will implement the resolution in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities, which are set out in the RFL Strategy 2020–2025 Implementation Plan. They will implement the measures outlined in the strategy as part of their organizational strategies and plans at national, regional and international level.

All Movement components contribute to the monitoring of the RFL Strategy implementation by taking part in the M&E survey developed by the RFL Implementation Group.

The progress on the implementation of the RFL Strategy will be communicated to the members of the Council of Delegates in 2028.

6) CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Movement will continue to have a solid mission and vision to respond efficiently and effectively to prevent families from being separated and people from going missing, maintain and restore family contact and family unity, clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons and support the families left behind according to their needs.

By extending the RFL Strategy to 2030, and emphasizing the ongoing relevance of the strategy's substance, the proposed resolution paves the way to continue implementing the strategic objectives and enablers set out by the Movement in the RFL Strategy 2020–2025.