

REINFORCING THE FAMILY LINKS NETWORK



Gustavo Ramírez (Internacional Federation), Nivea García de Meerhoff (Uruguayan Red Cross), Valeria Gamboni (ICRC) and José Gómez (Venezuelan Red Cross).

"Poverty, migrations, natural and man made catastrophes, as also armed conflict and situations of violence are common problems in our region. National Societies cannot restore family links alone. We need to work in networks."

These words of the Ecuadorian Red Cross President, Juan Nicolás Cueva, summarize the spirit of the debates during the second day of the Conference. The participants, divided into three working groups, carried out an in-depth analysis of the main challenges that must be faced by the Red Cross Movement in the Americas



Gerald Robert Price (Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross Society)

and the Caribbean to implement the strategy project for Restoring Family Links (RFL), once it is validated by the Council of Delegates in November 2007.

"Internet places before us the dilemma of rapid response and victim privacy".

Carlos Alberto Giraldo, Colombian Red Cross

In spite of certain criticisms on the vision of the future in its current form, there was consensus about highlighting the use of all possible technologies, while at the same time guaranteeing confidentiality of collected data.

Several participants pointed out that migration, and also people trafficking, are the main sources of disruption of contact between families in the region. Some highlighted that, on many occasions, migrants without documents resort to the Red Cross, because it is an organization they trust.

Carlos Freaner Figueroa, Mexican Red Cross Vice-President, said that: "we cannot be indifferent to migrants risking their lives daily".

Privileging synergies

The working group that debated how to improve the capacity and results of actions to restore family links pointed out the need for setting more precise limits to the field of action of the strategy.

The participants agreed that there is a need to achieve synergies amongst all Movement components. It was held that the International Federation should play a more important role in support of RFL activities of National Societies in relation to the preparation for disasters.

As to the difficulty of ensuring the availability of permanent resources for RFL activities, regardless of donations received in emergencies, Melinda Wells, of the Canadian Red Cross, spoke of "creating awareness amongst the donors that these activities are basic for any humanitarian response in cases of disaster".

Objectives of the RFL strategy

- Improving capacity and performance in restoring family links.
- Enhancing coordination mechanisms and the effectiveness of Movement cooperation.
- Strengthening responsibility of the Movement in restoring family links.

Restoring Family Links Regional Conference



Print advertisement by BBDO Argentina, Bronze Lion Winner at the Cannes Publicity Festival.

Creatives working for mankind

One of the challenges of the Movement is to make its RFL activities more visible. At the 53th Cannes International Publicity Festival, in June 2006, a group of promissory talents faced the challenge to create, in just 24 hours, a print advertisement on RFL for the ICRC.

Some of the most compelling ads were presented during the Conference. The issue seems to be a never-ending source of inspiration.

Be Ready

"The key to the success of our intervention consists in being prepared to act rapidly in crisis situations. Without a strong organized local structure, we cannot respond," maintained Gustavo Lara, representative of the Dominican Red Cross, during the discussions in the working group that addressed the consolidation of coordination mechanisms and the efficacy of cooperation within the Movement.

Amongst the main aspects that must be reinforced to ensure a more effective response, networking, based on successful experiences in the region, was mentioned.

Likewise, factors such as RFL training and the need for ICRC and International Federation leadership were highlighted, as well as a higher participation of the National Societies in the Family Link Network. The need to foster not only the Network's

coordination mechanisms in the interior of the Movement but also external strategic associations was also highlighted.

Within the group debating how to strengthen the Movement's responsibility as regards RFL, it was stated that it is a great opportunity to work jointly towards human dignity. The Vice-President of the Haitian Red Cross, Edith Lataillade, underlined the importance of prioritizing the right to know the whereabouts of their loved ones in the Movement's public communication.

"Reuniting families is the Movement's engine"

Cédric Piralla, ICRC



Michel Minnig and Sophie Graven (ICRC) together with Estela de Carlotto, President of the Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo.

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