

NEWSLETTER

ICRC – OCTOBER 2010

FAMILY LINKS NETWORK



CAMBODIAN RED CROSS REUNITES VICTIM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING WITH FAMILY

Van had last seen his wife and two children four years ago when, like so many other Cambodians, he was forced by poverty and high unemployment to make the risky move of crossing into Thailand to seek greener pastures there. Unfortunately, Van fell into the clutches of a human trafficking network and did forced labour for three years. He eventually made his way to Malaysia, but there was arrested and sentenced to seven months in jail for illegal entry. Helped by the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, Van filed a tracing request with the Cambodian

Red Cross to find his wife and to secure his repatriation. The Red Cross managed to restore contact between him and his family and to help him return home to Cambodia. In May 2010, Van was reunited with his loved ones.

Cross-border migration was a central issue for the Cambodian Red Cross in its recent assessment of RFL needs. Among other things, the assessment identified vulnerable migrants and victims of human trafficking as groups that would particularly benefit from RFL services.

RED CROSS SOCIETY OF CHINA INCLUDES RFL IN ITS STATUTES



中国红十字会
Red Cross Society of China

RFL has been established as an activity in the amended **Statutes of the Red Cross Society of China**, the first time that RFL has been one of the Society's official responsibilities during peacetime.

The National amendment, which passed during the Chinese Society's 9th National Convention, stipulates that the National Society has a responsibility "to provide social assistance and related services; assist vulnerable groups, and provide services to the needy; establish Red Cross service stations in communities and rural villages; provide services in favour of the masses, carry out information and training, fund-raising and rescue activities; engage in other humanitarian services such as helping search for separated family members and restoring family links".



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NEW RESTORING FAMILY LINKS BROCHURE

The ICRC is about to publish a new brochure on Restoring Family Links. It replaces the brochure called *Waiting for news*. The new brochure explains how the Movement provides Restoring Family Links services and why these services are so important to so many people. It describes the different situations in which family separations often occur and the Movement's various activities responding to the needs of separated families as well as families with relatives missing. The brochure is called *The need to know* (ref.: 4037/002) and can be ordered at shop@icrc.org.

RECENT RFL GUIDELINES

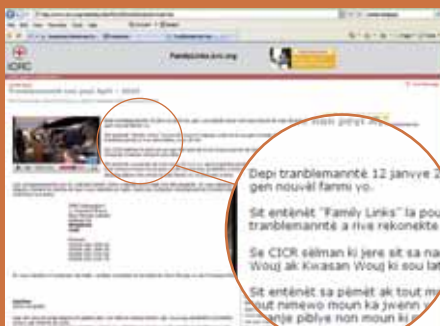
Working together with a number of National Societies, the ICRC has drawn up guiding documents aimed at enhancing the Movement's work in the field of RFL.

- **Restoring Family Links in Disasters: Field Manual** – A printed version in English has been distributed to all National Societies and ICRC delegations.
- **Assessing Restoring Family Links Needs: Handbook for National Societies and the ICRC** – An electronic version is available in English and has been shared within the Movement.

- **Guidelines on providing RFL Services to Persons Separated as a Result of Migration: An internal document for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement** – An electronic version is available in English and has been distributed to all National Societies and ICRC delegations.

All these publications will shortly be available in Spanish, French and Arabic and are set to be translated into Russian. ICRC delegations and National Societies can download the RFL tools from the Tracing Activities Extranet. ICRC delegations can order printed versions of the RFL Field Manual by sending a requisition order to COM_PROD_DIST. National Societies can order it by sending an email to shop@icrc.org (price 15 Swiss francs).

THE NET – FAMILY LINKS WEBSITE



- Contact details of units and protection Division in Geneva (chapter 2)
- Overview of RFL activities per country
- RFL Emergency Updates on the website
- Guidelines, forms, examples (chapter 3)

WWW.ICRC.ORG/FAMILYLINKS

The Family Links website is a ready-to-use public site that helps people restore contact. It has recently been improved through a new multilingual service. In the case of Haiti, for example, it serves people in Creole, English, French and Spanish. There are other improvements in the search options, the layout and the registration process.

IMPROVED TRACING ACTIVITIES EXTRANET

The extranet available for the National Societies and ICRC delegations has lately been improved in both its content and technical performance. Apart from providing information about approximately 160 situations, the extranet regularly posts information about the National Societies' experiences in areas such as

capacity-building, assessing needs, and outreach. Guidelines recently issued by the ICRC are also available on the extranet, e.g. on children separated from their families and assessing RFL needs.

NEW POSTER READY

The ICRC has just developed a new poster promoting Restoring Family Links activities. The poster can be used as it has originally been developed (available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) or it can be personalized by changing the photos as well as adding one or several National Societies' logo and adapting the RFL logo to local languages. Orders can be placed via following email address: shop@icrc.org mentioning the reference number (ref.: 4038) and the language version (or electronic version).



RESTORING FAMILY LINKS STRATEGY (2008-2018): WHERE DO YOU STAND?

Is the Family Links Network really getting stronger and the Movement's humanitarian response to separated families more effective?

At the 2011 Council of Delegates, the ICRC was tasked to report on the progress made so far by the Movement in regards to reinforcing its RFL activities. From September 2010 until May 2011, National Societies, the Federation and the ICRC will be requested to take an active part in the first round of the RFL Strategy's monitoring survey. It is led by the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency with support from the RFL Implementation Group (The RFL Implementation Group includes representatives from 18 National Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC).



MISSING LIVES

The wars that ravaged the Balkans in the 1990s took some 140,000 lives. A full quarter of those victims simply vanished and were reported missing by their families. In 2010, almost 15,000 people remain unaccounted for. A new book and photo exhibition entitled *Missing Lives* highlights 15 individual stories.

When conflict breaks out, people sometimes disappear and leave no trace. The stories told in *Missing Lives* illustrate some of the deepest scars of war: having loved ones suddenly disappear, having no way of knowing what has happened to them and, not knowing, being unable to give them a dignified burial and to start the mourning process. In such cases, the lives lost are those of the bereaved almost as much as those of the deceased.

The *Missing Lives* exhibition was produced by the ICRC with **two distinct objectives**:

- to pay tribute to the families of missing people in the conflicts of the western Balkans and to the organizations that have for years been working to help these families.

- to prompt national and international authorities to take further action to ensure that more cases are solved and that the families receive better support.

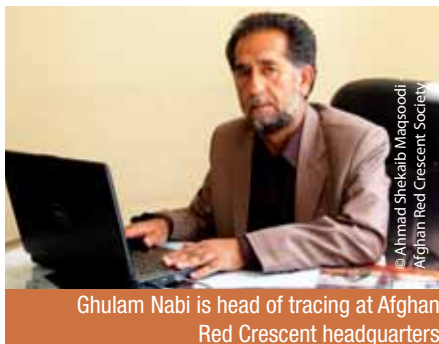
Margaret Lally, services-development director at the British Red Cross, was both moved and motivated by the exhibition: "The sad and powerful stories told through pictures and words lead the public to reflect on their profound suffering. For us in the Movement, they remind us of the importance of our work to restore family links and determine the fate of the missing."

The book has been published in three languages: English, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian and Albanian. It can be ordered from Dewi Lewis Publishing (www.dewislewispublishing.com).

After its launch in London in July 2010, the exhibition will run in Belgrade, Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Pristina, Zagreb, Brussels, Strasbourg, Ottawa and, finally, in Bern in August and September 2011.

BUILDING RFL CAPACITY: NEW PARTNERSHIPS IN AFGHANISTAN AND LIBERIA

AFGHANISTAN Afghanistan has endured armed conflict for the past three decades. As a result, many families have been torn apart. In 2009, the Afghan Red Crescent and the ICRC looked more closely at the RFL needs and at how cooperation between the Society and the ICRC could be strengthened. They devised a project to boost the National Society's capacity in this respect. The project is financed by the German Red Cross.



Why is the Afghan Red Crescent building its RFL capacities?

For the past three decades, Afghanistan has been ravaged by both war and natural disaster. During this time, many Afghans have fled the country, been displaced inside it or been detained. Still others

have emigrated. Many people have been separated from their families and many have gone missing. For this reason we need to offer more RFL services, both within Afghanistan and across its borders.

What are you doing to achieve this?

We are trying to learn from our National Society and ICRC colleagues who have more experience in restoring family links. We are interested in working with anyone in the Movement who can help develop our knowledge and capacity. For example, we would like to learn about technical tracing tools and tracing-service systems currently employed by the ICRC and by the National Societies.

We are also trying to improve internal communication procedures at all levels of our tracing service. We want to set up

systems that will enable us to correctly monitor expenditures and ensure that our tracing officers are given the resources they need to do their jobs.

What expectations do you have from your counterparts?

We expect honest cooperation from the ICRC and the National Societies currently helping us. We expect them to identify our weak points and then help us improve them. We expect their people to share their personal experience with us, which they have gained from their own National Society or from the ICRC. We hope that this experience will help us to boost the quality of our work.

What are the biggest challenges to this kind of partnership?

We have not had any problems so far with the partnership. Of course, for any changes that we decide to make we will need the support of our own management. ➤

➤ BUILDING RFL CAPACITY: NEW PARTNERSHIPS IN AFGHANISTAN AND LIBERIA

LIBERIA Since the signature of the 2004 peace agreement, the Liberian Red Cross focuses its activities on health and care, disaster response as well as humanitarian values. During the years of conflict, the Liberian Red Cross was an operational partner for the ICRC and had a vast network of volunteers handling tens of thousands of Red Cross Messages.

Today the Liberian Red Cross, supported by a staff member from the Canadian Red Cross Society, is assessing needs among people separated from their families in order to reorient its RFL activities and adapt those activities to future needs in a more peaceful setting.

Christiana Wilson is the RFL coordinator at the Liberian Red Cross headquarters in Monrovia.

Why is the Liberian Red Cross reorienting its RFL capacities, and how?

During the crisis in Liberia, we were very active collecting and distributing Red Cross messages and doing photo tracing. Now that the crisis is over, we have to adapt to the new needs of the population and go beyond war to help people benefit from recovery and development. By conducting this assessment of needs, we hope to achieve our goal of building a tracing service able to



Mrs Christiana Wilson, RFL coordinator, Liberian Red Cross, at work on the needs assessment.

deal with RFL cases in a way similar to work we have seen in other countries at peace.

What expectations do you have of your partner in this endeavour?

Our expectations are numerous. We expect her to put to use her experience with the Canadian Red Cross and the 10-year RFL Strategy for the Movement to help us collect and analyse data and to recommend how best to improve our work. We expect her to help us support and build tracing capacity in the individual chapters and to aid us in developing training and new RFL services to equal those we have seen in other National Societies, such as the Netherlands, which we visited recently. Finally we expect her to liaise with other National Societies to enhance our work with them.

What are the biggest challenges to this kind of partnership?

I really don't find the partnership between the Liberian Red Cross, the ICRC and the Canadian Red Cross difficult at all. Our main challenges in the project have been to coordinate well enough to make the assessment of needs a success, working hard to help humanitarian values officers in the local chapters mobilize their communities and to develop and field-test the questionnaires within a short time. Finally, it has also been a challenge having the only two members of headquarters staff in the field at the same time without access to internet. So any needs that arise in Monrovia while we're gone remain unmet.

JAPAN: PREPARING FOR RFL IN FUTURE DISASTERS



On Tuesday, January 17 1995, an earthquake of magnitude 7.2 struck the region of Kobe and Osaka in south central Japan. Over 5,000 lives were lost and nearly 180,000 buildings were badly damaged or destroyed. Some 300,000 people were left homeless.

Disaster-preparedness is one of the biggest challenges for the Red Cross in Japan, a country where small earthquakes occur almost daily and where the risk of a major quake is high. In December 2009, the Japanese Red Cross Society organized two

days of comprehensive disaster drill to test its readiness. More than 200 staff from its headquarters and some local chapters took part. The drill was held under the assumption that a magnitude-8.0 quake had struck central Japan, killing about 2,600 people, injuring nearly 40,000 and heavily damaging or burning down more than 20,000 houses. Known in Japan as the "Tokai Earthquake", experts say such a large-scale disaster may happen at any time.

During these occasional drills, scenarios are presented one after the other and the participants have to decide on their responses without undue delay. In the event of such an earthquake, the Japanese Red Cross plans to send medical teams from its hospitals to the affected areas, to collect blood for the injured and to distribute relief at evacuation sites. It also plans to support tracing activities especially regarding any

non-Japanese living in the area. Following the devastating Kobe earthquake in 1995, the Society received more than 1,800 tracing requests from other countries. This time, the main aim of the RFL exercise was to examine how well the Society's headquarters could respond to acute RFL needs when a disaster hits an area in which there are many foreigners. In December's exercise, tracing inquiries arrived by phone and fax from Brazil, China, the Philippines and even from embassies in Japan. Local chapters contacted headquarters for instructions. In all, the RFL team successfully handled more than 500 tracing requests. However, feedback from the participants and observers showed that there were still many areas in need of improvement. For example, there were strong demands for more simplified but effective procedures to enable the Red Cross to act quickly in a chaotic situation, and there were calls for more trained staff and volunteers familiar with RFL methods and tools. In addition, more effective information-sharing and coordination with other agencies were judged crucial for RFL. These observations should help the Japanese Red Cross to improve its RFL planning and work.



ICRC

International Committee of the Red Cross
19, avenue de la Paix
1202 Geneva, Switzerland
T +41 22 734 60 01 F +41 22 733 20 57
E-mail: shop@icrc.org www.icrc.org
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