

Review of

The ICRC and CTA capacity to act as
Coordinator and Technical Advisor in
Restoring Family Links (RFL)
Activities with National Societies and
Governments

Commissioned by ICRC

Final Report

February 2007

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Acknowledgments:

The evaluation team would like to thank ICRC staff members at headquarters and in the visited Delegations for kindly sharing their time and resources to support the review process.

In particular the team is thankful to Nadya Kebir Raoloson, DIR/GEN/EVAL for day to day management of the review and for guiding the process.

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List of Abbreviations

AP	Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions
CTA	Central Tracing Agency
DDR	Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration
FLN	Family Links Network (in ICRC documentation sometimes named Family News Network)
GC	Geneva Convention
HoD	Head of Delegation
HoRD	Head of Regional Delegation
HQ	Headquarters
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
The Federation	IFRC-International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ITS	International Tracing Service
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NIB	National Information Bureau
NS	National Society
PfR	Planning for Results
PNS	Partner or Participating National Society
PoW	Prisoner of War
PROT	Protection Division of the ICRC
OiC	Officer in charge
RFL	Restoring Family Links
ToR	Terms of Reference
UAC	Unaccompanied Children
UAM	Unaccompanied Minor
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USA	United States of America
WatSan	Water and Sanitation
WW	World War

I. Executive summary

1. Purpose and Methodology

As coordinator and technical advisor in Restoring Family Links (RFL) activities to National Societies (NS) and governments, the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) and Protection Division has asked for an assessment of its capacity to undertake this role in order to frame its recommendations as part of the newly developed global RFL strategy. According to the Terms of Reference (ToR), the purpose of present Review is:

„To provide the ICRC CTA senior management and staff with an independent review of the strengths and weaknesses of the capacity of the ICRC and the CTA to fulfil its role as coordinator and technical advisor in RFL activities to National Societies and governments; the review should also identify the gaps between policy and practice and give recommendations to facilitate improvements in policy, operations and methodology.“

The Review is intended to contribute to ICRC discussions over the elaboration of the "Global RFL Strategy for the Movement to address the humanitarian needs of those separated from, or without news of, their family members" and to frame its propositions and recommendations. The review is supposed to provide the ICRC element of the global mapping exercise of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Family News Network (FLN). Finally it will inform internal planning and, if necessary, reorient practice and procedure accordingly.

For this purpose the ICRC has recruited two external consultants from Channel Research in a competitive bidding process.

The methodology and scope of this review were first outlined in the Approach Paper and in the ToR to this project. During the Inception Phase of the review the scope was clarified and limited in the sense that the review would not be an assessment of ICRC's RFL activities as such. The assessment would only take RFL activities, instruments, and results into account as far as they were related to the CTA's capacity as a coordinator and technical advisor with National Societies and governments.

This report is based on:

- Interviews at ICRC, at NS, and with external actors
- Desk research
- Field Visits: Thailand and Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Angola plus Namibia and Harare, Ukraine, UK. The field locations have been selected based on a set of criteria agreed upon with the ICRC and based on consultations by GEN/EVAL with Operations.
- Feedback mechanisms with the ICRC through meetings in Geneva, telephone conversations and e-mail correspondence, and various mid-term reports
- Questionnaire to Delegations

For this review eight key review criteria were put forward in the ToR. Those criteria form the basis of the analysis, however are not followed through strictly in the

structure of this report, which has been set by the ToR. In order to ensure readability, the Review, in its main part, presents in the introductory section an overall analysis. It is followed by sections on issues that were considered most relevant for the capacity assessment.

The aim of this review is not to develop a definition of capacity for the ICRC/CTA. Nevertheless the review team would like to use some elements of capacity, which are of particular importance to ICRC/CTA to act as “coordinator and technical advisor” to NS. These elements are referring to the capacity to act in a network, and in complex and multi-stakeholder environments:

- Collective ability or the ability to act collectively
- Competencies: Among many others here will be highlighted: behaviours, communication skills
- Integrative ability: Ability to earn legitimacy, to adapt, to motivate, to influence
- The capability to work in a complex adaptive system
- Capability to achieve coherence

2. Background

One of the ICRC’s direct responsibilities deriving from the Geneva Conventions is the CTA. ICRC’s role in this context is to oversee the CTA as set up under the Geneva Conventions and the various decisions within the Movement. Together with the Tracing Services of the NS the ICRC undertakes RFL activities in situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence, in natural or other disasters and also in other situations of humanitarian need, such as migration, detention and social welfare.

The activities governed by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols can be grouped under four headings:

- Collecting, recording and forwarding information
- Forwarding family news
- Tracing missing persons
- Family reunification

For this purpose the global FLN is in place, comprising the CTA, ICRC Delegations and NS Tracing Services. The CTA has a central and leading role within the FLN. In situations of armed conflict or other situations of violence the CTA is responsible for deciding what action is to be taken.

In its role as coordinator and technical advisor to NS the ICRC is responsible for ensuring coherence within the network and providing methodology and guidelines to NS. The ICRC establishes working practices for NS Tracing Services to adopt, provides training as required, supports the development of NS Tracing Services, and coordinates the exchange of information for the purpose of pooling experience and consolidating common knowledge.

At present one of the major activities of the CTA is the undertaking of capacity building in NS Tracing Services and reinforcing the global tracing network. As part of the follow-up on various resolutions of the Movement and to the Agenda for Humanitarian Action, the ICRC has initiated a process aimed at strengthening the FLN over the coming years. Part of this exercise is to develop a 10-year global RFL

strategy for the Movement to address humanitarian needs of those separated from their family members.

Finally the CTA offers its assistance to authorities for setting up and running a National Information Bureaux.

3. Findings

In terms of its overall analysis, the present report will concentrate on a number of key issues, which are presented in the form of a strength and weakness analysis. This section will be followed by a short section of overall findings before going into the more detailed section about the analysis of some key issues of particular importance for CTA's role as coordinator and technical advisor.

3.1 Overall findings

In brief, the following strength and weaknesses of the CTA regarding its capacity can be summarized:

CTA's Strengths:

- Historical role, grounded in conventional and customary mandate
- Expertise in protection, tradition of confidentiality
- Expertise in filing and data management
- Capacity to mobilize resources in RFL

CTA's Weaknesses:

- Limited transformation of vision and policy into practice
- Limited capacity to be pro-active
- Limited capacity in Capacity Building

The interesting relation between the strengths and the weaknesses lies in the fact that despite this list of strengths, there are the named weaknesses. Especially the first and the second point are important. They show that the CTA is not only weak in implementing its visions and ideas, but is also weak in fully exploiting the potential of the CTA, which is reflected in the above mentioned list of strengths.

Interestingly enough, the third weakness is different from the other two. The CTA does not have a strong mandate in capacity building, nor is it a traditional task, nor is an expertise in protection and confidentiality important for it. Capacity building is comparably new for the ICRC and is not an operational activity in the first place.

3.2 Findings related to key aspects

Policy and Mandate

Regarding its **mandate**, the CTA's role is primarily defined for situations related to international and non-international armed conflict, internal disturbances and their direct results. Resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent do not entirely fill the policy gap, which exists outside situations of conflict.

In recent years all components of the Movement have recognised that migration, disasters, asylum seekers and separated families are of humanitarian concern. The policy development has not followed this development yet.

ICRC's policy mainly follows the mandate and has consequently a stronger focus on conflict related situations and does not differentiate enough between conflict and non-conflict contexts. Policy is understood here in the sense of explicitly formulated policy documents and the legal basis and legal framework for RFL and the CTA

Policies are not always implemented in practice as there is sometimes a gap between realities defined and described in policies or guidelines and the real situation. There is insufficient clarity in terminology and a lack of common understanding of terms and policies, and finally, there is insufficient capacity at central level to promote coherence within and outside the organisation.

Regarding the **importance given to RFL** there is a consensus among interlocutors that RFL is important and that it is a central activity of the ICRC. However this statement is often not in line with practice. A number of reasons contribute: the lack of clarity about objectives, target groups, terminology, results and policy. The merger of CTA and Protection has contributed as well as the strong emphasis on the issue of The Missing in recent years.

CTA and the Family Links Network

Regarding **CTA's role in the FLN** it is first worth mentioning that among interviewees the network as such has been questioned. CTA is de facto the leader in the FLN, less because of a clear mandate or because of the capacity, but more because of the absence of other network structures. One of the core functions of the CTA is to ensure coherence, which is presently limited in the FLN.

The Project 2.1 is an important initiative and there is need for an ongoing effort beyond the project. There are numerous needs to fully explore and 'exploit' the network's capacities and the CTA has in the past not been pro-active enough in this regard.

Capacity Building

Regarding **capacity building of NS Tracing Services**, the Review Team could not find the (legal) basis for ICRC's responsibility to do capacity building in RFL. Nevertheless this role seems to be widely accepted within the ICRC and within the Movement.

From the point of view of the NS, the distinctions in ICRC's capacity building approach (strengthening the capacity of NS, Operational Partnership with NS in their own country, and Operational Partnership with NS working internationally) is less relevant.

Already in countries with an ICRC presence, the ICRC often struggles with the capacity building process. Three of the cases visited (Thailand, Sri Lanka and Angola) were rather disappointing cases when thinking of a sustainable process or a full functioning tracing service. The process is even more challenging in countries with no, or almost no ICRC presence (e.g. in countries covered by a regional delegation).

When asked for the main factors influencing the success of capacity building, the big majority of delegations responded in the questionnaires with 'funds available at the NS', followed by 'ownership of NS' or 'lack of importance given to RFL within the NS'.

Responsibilities between HQ and Delegations

The **responsibilities between HQ and Delegations** are overall clear. The CTA has difficulties in ensuring coherence within the organisation. The entry point for the HQ for influencing RFL activities and to improve coherence within the ICRC in the response should be mainly: dialogue and documentations, reminder of principles and standards in RFL, training and offering technical advice, support and guidance

The support from the HQ was mainly appreciated in delegations. However some interlocutors reported certain disconnection between the HQ and the delegations.

Tools, procedures, and instruments

Regarding **tools and procedures** it could be observed that although instruments and tools are available, activities are started from scratch too often and tools are not used and in some cases not even known. There is not enough coherence in the network about tools, techniques, documents and methods. There is a variety of tools and data bases with a direct link to CTA's role but they are not updated, not very well connected, nor user-friendly.

In general it can be said that knowledge management within CTA is rather weak. There is a clear role for the CTA to become a 'centre of excellence' with access to knowledge, principles and tools for all those involved in the Movement's RFL response.

Documentation and tools made available to NS should be more tailor-made. The language issue is of crucial importance in this regard and the CTA should contribute to the mobilization of resources for as much translation as possible.

Within ICRC there seems to be a common sense that the ICRC is not up to date with the latest **technological developments**. The Review Team is of the opinion that if the ICRC is strong in being present in countries heavily affected by conflicts or other disasters; if the organisation is strong in getting access to individuals, and in being able to deal accurately with large numbers of individuals under difficult conditions, then this is more important than showing that the ICRC can operate according to the up-to-the-minute technological developments.

It should also be remembered that the demand for up-to date technologies within the ICRC context has implications for resources.

Measuring RFL results

Good **results in RFL** and the importance given to RFL within the ICRC are interrelated. At present there are no indicators for a successful RFL intervention. There are no systematic consultations with beneficiaries about results of RFL activities and there is no complaint mechanism in place.

ICRC's data collection on RFL cases is primarily focused on quantitative elements and less on qualitative aspects. This system does not allow for much quality assessment and does probably not reflect entirely the performance of ICRC's work in the world. Assessments -for examples in the form of a research undertaken into impact or a set of evaluations- will contribute to a better understanding of results in RFL.

Human Resources

In the questionnaires the **quality of personnel** working in RFL was most often stated for the main influence on the results of RFL activities. The CTA at HQ level would benefit from an increase in RFL experts. In the field the deployment of RFL specialists to an emerging RFL situation makes a significant difference in assessing the needs and planning the intervention strategy. Often the crucial decisions are taken at an early stage.

The Review Team could observe that the capacity of **local staff members** is not always paid enough attention to and might be neglected regarding its potential and the aspect of sustainability.

Timeliness

Regarding **timeliness** the ICRC is in RFL activities often too slow in the starting phase. Reasons are the rather re-active way of working, than being more pro-active. To use timeliness as quality criteria or indicator would make it necessary to include a contextual element into it.

Needs assessments

The victim's need should be the centre and the starting point for any **needs assessment**. At present the starting point seems to be rather the technical tool available (registration, RCM, website, etc.). Needs assessments need to take more into account the local population's coping mechanisms. Consequently an experienced RFL specialist should be involved in needs assessments. They should be given enough **time** to do assessments.

Coordination and Cooperation

Coordination and cooperation with external actors is sometimes hampered by too much strictness on confidentiality.

RFL and Natural Disasters

The ICRC has increasingly been involved in RFL in **natural disasters**, de facto playing the lead role, and this has not raised any eyebrows within the Movement, not even at the Federation. Indeed, the general thinking within the Movement has been that only the ICRC has both the capacity and the expertise with regard to RFL.

The Federation, on the other hand, has never built the capacity or the expertise in terms of RFL, not has it pretended that it had. Tracing in natural disasters varies in a number of ways from tracing in armed conflict and a stronger engagement of the ICRC would have implications for resources. As example can serve the requirements for disaster preparedness. Whether the CTA has the capacity for it is questionable and a view on HR might be an indication that it is not yet the case: It seems clear that the ICRC cannot yet count purely on its own (human) resources.

RFL and Migration

A number of NS have already begun to tackle the issue of **RFL and migration**. Clearly, one of the by-products of globalisation is increased migration, especially illegal migration (including human trafficking). This of course creates enormous humanitarian needs, including in terms of protection and RFL.

In terms of capacity, it is not clear at that stage how the CTA intends to meet the potential requests from the RFL network with regard to its role of “coordinator and technical adviser”. Indeed, the CTA has very little expertise and experience in questions related to international migration. It is somewhat difficult to see how the limited resources of the CTA could accommodate what could potentially become an enormous challenge.

4. Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall conclusion is that the CTA has a good capacity in its ‘traditional tasks’. It is just not fully exploited and the CTA should continue to concentrate internally on the improvement of key issues. Adjustments and additional resources are necessary in this regard but no major reforms or general questioning of the system are necessary.

The CTA should address these issues with priority so that they are not neglected while the ICRC -and the Movement- are engaging more in new fields and areas of responsibility (natural disasters, migration).

Secondly the CTA has a weak capacity in one of its central roles as coordinator and technical advisor, which is the capacity building with NS. The CTA should address this issue more comprehensively by improving the framework (mandate, resources) together with players outside the CTA (Cooperation, the Movement). This will need more investment and more fundamental changes within the CTA and ICRC.

II. Main Report

1. Introduction with background to the evaluation

According to its Mandate, the ICRC acts as a neutral intermediary between parties in war, civil wars, and internal conflicts. It endeavours to ensure that civilian and military victims of conflict are afforded protection and assistance and that the humanitarian rules set out in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are observed.

One of the ICRC's direct responsibilities deriving from the Geneva Conventions is the Central Tracing Agency (CTA). The CTA is the unique service of its kind in the world for locating and reuniting families, missing persons, and transmitting correspondence between members of families separated by international armed conflicts.

Together with the Tracing Services of the National Societies (NS) the ICRC undertakes Reestablishment of Family Links (RFL) activities in situations of armed conflict and internal violence, in natural or other disasters and also in other situations of humanitarian need, such as migration, detention and social welfare. For this purpose a global network is in place, named the Family Links Network. The FLN comprises the ICRC, its Delegations and National Society Tracing Services.

As part of the follow-up on various resolutions of the Movement and to the Agenda for Humanitarian Action adopted by the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2003, the ICRC has initiated a process aimed at strengthening the *Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network* over the coming years. This process -the so-called 2.1 project- is meant to “develop the capacity of the National Society Tracing Services and reinforce the Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network”. Part of this exercise is to develop a 10-year global RFL strategy for the Movement to address humanitarian needs of those separated from their family members.

In this context the CTA considered it appropriate to review its own capacities, as is stated in the approach paper for the present review:

“As coordinator and technical advisor in RFL activities to National Societies and governments, the CTA and Protection Division will undertake an assessment of its capacity to undertake this role in order to frame its recommendations as part of the global strategy.”¹

According to the ToR, the purpose of present Review is:

„To provide the ICRC CTA senior management and staff with an independent review of the strengths and weaknesses of the capacity of the ICRC and the CTA to fulfil its role as coordinator and technical advisor in RFL activities to National Societies and governments; the review should also identify the gaps between policy and practice and give recommendations to facilitate improvements in policy, operations and methodology.“

¹ “Draft Approach Paper” for this capacity assessment, given to the Review Team by ICRC.

Furthermore, the intended use of the Review is to:

“facilitate improvements of the ICRC and the CTA capacity to fulfil its role as coordinator and technical advisor to National Societies and governments on RFL activities and ultimately improvements in meeting the needs of persons requiring RFL services. In particular, the review will assist CTA deliberations over the elaboration of the "Global RFL Strategy for the Movement to address the humanitarian needs of those separated from, or without news of, their family members" and to frame its propositions and recommendations; it will also provide the CTA element of the global mapping exercise of the Family Links Network; furthermore, it will inform internal planning and, if necessary, reorient practice and procedure accordingly.”²

In parallel to the implementation of this review the drafting of a RFL strategy for the Movement was ongoing. The Review Team was not involved in this process but provided input through regular feedback mechanisms in the course of the review.

2. Description of methodologies and approach, scope and limitations

2.1 Methodology and Scope

The methodology and scope of this review were first outlined in the Approach Paper and in the ToR to this project. Channel Research has submitted an offer on 6 March 2006 with comments and suggestions relative to the methodology. Those led to the Inception Paper / Work Plan submitted to ICRC on 22 May 2006.

In this paper the scope of the review was clarified and limited in the sense that “the review will not be an assessment of ICRC’s RFL activities as such. The assessment will only take RFL activities and instruments into account as far as they are related to the CTA’s capacity as a coordinator and technical advisor with National Societies and governments.”³ It was also agreed that the issue of The Missing as such, as well as the services of International Tracing Service (ITS), will not be examined by the review.

This report is based on:

- Interviews: ICRC HQ and selected ICRC delegations, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Federation, actors outside the Red Cross Movement, governments, etc.⁴ All together 110 interviews in person and by phone have been conducted.
- Desk research: ICRC documentation, web sites, extranet, handbooks, guidelines, tool boxes, PfR reports, country and programme reports, evaluations, statistics, etc.
- Field Visits: The team could conduct eight country visits, either jointly or separated (Thailand and Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Angola, Namibia, Harare -as Regional Delegation-, Ukraine, UK). The field locations have been selected based on a set of criteria agreed upon with the ICRC, consultation of Pfr documents,

² Terms of Reference, section 4.

³ Channel Research Inception Paper / Work Plan, 22 May 2006

⁴ For details please see Annex 3.

consultations by DIR/GEN/EVAL with Operations and finally consultations with ICRC Delegations.⁵

Limitations were in some cases the security situation on the spot or the overlap with other studies (i.e. Evaluation on the Missing, Tsunami Evaluation). In spite of these limitations, the visits succeeded to cover: situations of conflict, peace and transition, situations of natural disasters, regions affected by population movements (refugees, IDPs, migrants, victims of trafficking, etc.), large and small RFL case loads, strong and weak NS, three continents, three regional delegations, ICRC Delegations with and without a tracing delegate, a delegation with a regional tracing delegate.

- Feedback mechanisms: Regular feedback took place with the CTA through meetings in Geneva, telephone conversations and e-mail correspondence, an Inception Report, a Preliminary Findings Report, feedback sessions in delegations, and Country Reports.⁶
- Questionnaire: In accordance with the ToR, a questionnaire was prepared (in consultation with DIR/GEN/EVAL and OP/PROT/CHF) and sent out to all ICRC Delegations. The response rate was adequate (50 responses received in total from ICRC Delegations and Regional Delegations) although overall not satisfactory as it represents about 2/3 of the delegations and a rate of ¾ would have been more representative. In one case (Sri Lanka) the questionnaire had been filled in during a session with one of the consultants. The quality of the answers to the questionnaire varied from delegation to delegation: replies ranged from poor to elaborate. The questionnaire was an opportunity to gather the perceptions of the ICRC Delegations and to get some detailed answers on specific aspects. The questionnaires are attached in annex (one format for Delegations, one for Regional Delegations).

2.2 Application of evaluation criteria

For this review eight key review criteria were put forward in the ToR: coherence, relevance/appropriateness, coverage, results achieved, effectiveness, efficiency, programme management/co-ordination and sustainability. These criteria, broadly speaking, derive from criteria used in the framework of evaluation. These apply primarily to studies looking at either accountability (e.g. relevance, effectiveness) or at learning (e.g. efficiency, coordination), and decision making of programmes⁷.

A capacity assessment of an institution such as ICRC (or CTA) does not necessarily have the same orientation; in practice, this may mean that central aspects (e.g. the capacity to be innovative or the capacity to adapt quickly in fast changing environments) might not be covered by the evaluation criteria. Furthermore, these criteria are not adequate to address aspects such as empowerment and identity, which are particularly important for networks (which grow, diversify and become more and more complex).

In order to ensure readability, the review does not strictly follow the evaluation criteria in the structure of the present report. Instead, the introductory section presents an overall analysis, followed by sections on issues that were considered most relevant for such a capacity assessment. However attention was given to ensure that all evaluation criteria be

⁵ For details please see Annex 4.

⁶ For country reports please see Annex 7.

⁷ DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance

http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html

covered in the document and that all questions contained in the ToR be addressed within the agreed scope.

2.3 Constraints

Overall it can be said that this review was a complex undertaking which required much flexibility from all involved both at the planning and implementation phases. Some factors limiting the review should be mentioned:

- The selection of field visits was influenced by a number of factors such as the security situation and limitations of access in some of the proposed countries (one country could not be visited at all (Haiti) and others were partly in-accessible: Angola and Sri Lanka). Consequently Latin America has not been visited for this review.
- Although a small part of the review concerned ICRC/CTA's roles towards governments, there was little meaningful encounter with governments. This may have been partly due to the field locations selected, where only limited contact with the governmental agencies responsible for tracing was possible (e.g. not possible to meet with them in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Angola⁸). In Ukraine, the Director of the State archives of the Kiev Oblast was interviewed, but his work concerned almost exclusively the WW II caseload. In Namibia an Officer of the Commissioner for Refugees was met, but the substance of the interview has little to do with RFL. In Thailand, the Team met with the head of the unit in charge of dealing with the identification of mortal remains. It was possible to meet with the government in London (National Information Bureau). Also during the interviews the interlocutors made little reference to the work with the government. We therefore feel that the aspect of the governments is under-represented in this review.
- The list of interlocutors reveals an imbalance between the number of ICRC staff and external staff (NS, government, other actors in RFL) interviewed. This is partly because of the nature of the review, which is considered as internal to ICRC. It does not reflect the preferred approach of the Review Team, which was interested in more consultations with external actors to get a more balanced view on the CTA's activities especially regarding coordination and cooperation with other actors. In any case, the team had meetings with external actors in the field (such as UNICEF, IOM) and at HQ level (such as THE FEDERATION and Save the Children).
- At NS level, the team met mainly with staff of the tracing services and with management/leadership of the society.

2.4 Approach regarding recommendations

Based on the experience that agencies usually cannot follow-up all recommendations, this report will be limited in the sense that only the most relevant recommendations will be developed and stated here. Recommendations related to policies might be already outdated as there is process going on to draft a RFL strategy for the Movement.

⁸ In Sri Lanka the conflict situation did not allow for a meeting. In Angola the consultant could meet with one representative of the government on provincial level only.

The recommendations are made at the end of the section they are related to. A concluding section of recommendations can be found at the end of the report. Recommendations are mainly addressed to the CTA in Geneva as this was the main counterpart of this review.

3. Description

3.1 Legal (and other) bases for RFL

The following section presents a summary of the legal (conventional, statutory, and those derived from resolutions of the International Conference) bases for RFL. Given that the present review is not focused on legal research, the text that follows is adapted from the ICRC publication entitled “Restoring Family Links.”⁹

The activities governed by the *Geneva Conventions* and their *Additional Protocols* can be grouped under four headings:

- **Collecting, recording and forwarding information** for the purpose of identifying prisoners of war or civilian internees, the wounded, sick or dead and others afforded protection. In an international armed conflict this information is obtained by National Information Bureaux.
- **Forwarding family news**; regarding in particular the right of prisoners of war and internees to send and receive letters and cards (GC III, art.71 and GC IV, art.107), and that of individuals to receive news from relatives (GC IV, art.25).
- **Tracing missing persons**; regarding in particular the right of families to know their relatives’ fate (AP I, art.32-34) and Parties’ obligation to provide all necessary particulars for the identification of protected persons when deceased and details on the whereabouts of their graves (GC III, art.120 and GC IV, art.130).
- **Family reunification**; in particular, measures for the evacuation of children (AP I, art.78), the reunion of dispersed families (GC IV, art.26 and AP I, art.74) and the transfer or repatriation of prisoners or other protected persons (GC III, art.119; GC IV, art.128, 134 and 135).

With regard to the restoration of family links, the Geneva Conventions define the roles of:

- **National Information Bureaux (NIBs)**: GC III, art. 122 and GC IV, art. 136. Upon the outbreak of a conflict and in all cases of occupation, the parties of the conflict are supposed to set up a NIB for PoW who are in its power. The NIB shall collect and make available to relatives all relevant information about the PoW, such as personal details, details for correspondence, information regarding transfers, releases, health status, etc. The NIB is also responsible for replying to all enquiries sent to it concerning PoW, including those who have died in captivity.

⁹ Source: *Restoring Family Links*, ICRC, November 2000.

- The **Central Information Agency** (the predecessor of the CTA) and the ICRC: GC III, art. 123 and GC IV, art. 140.¹⁰ The function of the Agency according to the GC is to collect all the information it may obtain through official or private channels respecting PoW, and to transmit it as rapidly as possible to the country of origin of the PoW or to the power on which they depend. It receives from the parties to the conflict all facilities for effecting such transmissions. Today the CTA is a unique service for locating missing persons, reuniting families, and transmitting correspondence between members of families separated by armed conflict.

The respective roles of the National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation are broadly defined in Articles 3, 5 and 6 respectively of the *Statutes of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*. The Statutes recognize the ICRC's right of initiative, whereby it can offer its services in situations which are not covered by international humanitarian law (IHL), such as internal disturbances (Articles 5.2d and 5.3). Article 5 of the Statutes reaffirms the ICRC's leading role with regard to the operation of the Central Tracing Agency.

The Agreement on the Organization of the International Activities of the Components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Seville Agreement, November 1997) re-emphasizes the crucial importance of coordinating the efforts of the Movement's components in order to optimize assistance for victims.¹¹ For a discussion of lead role, as define in the Agreement, refer to section 3.3 below.

A number of *Resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent* relate more specifically to persons who are reported missing or have died during armed conflict, dispersed families, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. Such resolutions are concerned with preserving the family unit through the tracing and reunification of family members and the transmission of personal details necessary for these two tasks. They also address the protection of unaccompanied children and minors in difficulties and consider what measures are necessary to reunite them with their families. Lastly, they call on governments to prevent forced or involuntary disappearances and stress the need to ascertain the fate of missing persons.

Several texts are relevant here. Resolution XXI of the 24th International Conference (Manila, 1981) and Resolutions XV and XVI of the 25th International Conference (Geneva, 1986) are of particular interest since they define the role of the Movement in the field of restoring family links and that of the CTA in providing coordination and technical advice. This role was reaffirmed in Resolution 2D of the 26th International Conference (Geneva, 1995). In 2003, in Geneva, the International Conference endorsed the recommendations of the Experts Conference on the Missing and their families (Geneva, 2002), and adopted the *Agenda for Humanitarian Action* which encourages increasing efforts by member States and all components of the Movement to take concrete action in order to resolve the problem of the missing persons, assist their families and prevent others from becoming missing.

¹⁰ In 1961 the Central Information Agency (also known as the Central Prisoners of War Information Agency), became the Central Tracing Agency (CTA).

¹¹ Article 1 (Scope of the Agreement), section 1.1 specifies that „The Agreement applies to those international activities which the components are called upon to carry out in cooperation, on a bilateral or multilateral basis, to the exclusion of the activities which the Statutes of the Movement and the Geneva Conventions entrust to the components individually.“

In recent years all components of the Movement have recognised that migration, disasters, asylum seekers and separated families are of humanitarian concern with needs that can be assisted through RFL services/programmes.¹²

3.2 Description of the Family Links Network

Together with the Tracing Services of the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (NS) the ICRC undertakes RFL activities in situations of armed conflict and internal violence, in natural or other disasters and also in other situations of humanitarian need, such as migration, and social welfare. For this purpose a global network is in place, named the *Red Cross and Red Crescent Family Links Network* (FLN)¹³.

The FLN comprises the ICRC, its Delegations and National Society Tracing Services. All NS are supposed to designate an officer responsible for tracing – this person is responsible for setting up or maintaining a network on national level for carrying out tracing and family reunification activities. In theory, therefore, the Movement can claim to have a worldwide network of tracing delegates, volunteers and designated tracing officers who can deal with tracing cases from a global level down to the grass root level:

“The main strength of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, particularly relevant to its task of tracing relatives and restoring family links, is that it consists of a single worldwide network that can apply the same principles and working methods in every country where needs arise.”¹⁴

The Approach paper for the present Review indicates that:

“The Family News Network comprises the ICRC, its Delegations and National Society Tracing Services. No matter the type of activity to restore and maintain family links, the network works closely together to provide assistance and support to those separated from their families. (...) The Family News Network works closely with the authorities, community organisations, other services and agencies in order to provide answers to families seeking information on their missing loved ones.”¹⁵

3.3 Description of ICRC’s role

ICRC’s role in this context is to oversee the CTA as set up under the Geneva Conventions and the various decisions within the Movement. In fact the ICRC and the CTA are usually used in equal terms and there is no distinction made in between. ICRC/CTA has the role of coordinator and technical adviser to National Societies and governments.

¹² See: VIth European Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, Berlin April 2002, XVII Inter-American conference of the Red Cross, Santiago de Chile, April 2003, VIth Asia and Pacific Regional Conference of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Manila 2002.

¹³ In ICRC the term *Family News Network* is used as well.

¹⁴ Restoring Family Links a guide for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ICRC, November 2000, page 17

¹⁵ Approach Paper, page 5

As will be shown later there is no clear definition and no common understanding of what the role as coordinator and technical adviser implies. However there is a consensus that the ICRC has a central and leading role within the FLN and the ICRC is responsible for deciding what action is to be taken in situations of armed conflict or internal violence. The coordination role the ICRC is playing in terms of international activities in emergencies, including natural disasters, is discussed in section 4.14 below. It may be useful here to recall that the Seville Agreement (article 4) define what is understood by the concept of „*lead role*“.¹⁶

It is also common understanding that the ICRC is in charge of ensuring coherence within the network and providing methodology and guidelines to National Societies. The ICRC establishes working practices for NS Tracing Services to adopt, provides training as required, supports the development of NS Tracing Services, and coordinates the exchange of information for the purpose of pooling experience and consolidating common knowledge.¹⁷

These responsibilities are taken up in various ways and on many different levels. They range from joint tracing operations in a single province in the field to the organisation of international fora in order to exchange information and experiences in RFL. Some NS are involved on a daily basis; some others only rarely get in touch with the CTA. Some activities are very punctual, whereas others are stretching over years.

At present a major activity of the CTA is the undertaking of capacity building in National Society Tracing Services and reinforcing the global tracing network.

Finally the CTA offers its assistance to authorities for setting up and running a National Information Bureaux.

4. Analysis

The analysis section of the report is divided into three sections:

- Introductory Section
- Overall analysis/conclusions
- More detailed analysis of selected topics to underline the overall analysis

For the analysis section the Review Team decided to first make a general analysis regarding the priority area of this review, i.e. ICRC and CTA capacity to act in its role in RFL towards National Societies. This section will concentrate on a few issues only and will follow the concept of a Strength/Weakness analysis.

¹⁶ Seville Agreement: „Article 4: Management Principles Implicit in the Statutes of the Movement are two organizational concepts which this Agreement defines as “the lead role” and “the lead agency”. A) *Lead Role* 4.1 The Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the Movement entrust specific competencies to each component which therefore plays a lead role in these matters. 4.2 The concept of lead role implies the existence of other partners with rights and responsibilities in these matters.“ The ICRC acts as lead agency in situations of international and non-international armed conflicts, internal strife and their direct results (see Art. 5.3); it then assumes general and specific responsibilities for the general direction and co-ordination of international relief operations (see Art. 6).

¹⁷ Among interlocutors the distinction whether the responsibility falls under the role of coordinator or under technical advisor is mostly not followed through consequently.

This section will be followed by a part about selected aspects related to this area. This part will underline the overall analysis, will give some examples, and will be complemented by sections about operational aspects and findings related to other actors (e.g. governments).

4.1 Introductory Section: The Concept of Capacity Building

Before undertaking a capacity assessment there should be some clarity about what is understood under the term of capacity.

As to our knowledge there is no explicit definition of capacity within the ICRC. In the introductory section of the Cooperation Handbook ‘capacities’ are loosely listed up as: Competencies, material and financial resources, networks and other assets.¹⁸ Furthermore the ICRC works with the *Capacity Building Pyramid*. This concept refers to ownership, structure and organisation, competences, framed by relationships, tools and working resources.

In fact the absence of a clear definition of ‘capacity’ is very common, also outside the ICRC. A widespread statement is: “I cannot define capacity but I know it when I see it.”

This approach works often on first sight. However the difficulties start when one works towards building up a capacity in a specific field (here tracing). The difficulties to plan for and to work towards a clear defined goal without knowing precisely what the desired state is, will be analysed later in this report.

Most practitioners in humanitarian aid (and to a lesser degree in development) have little interest in spending much time on formulating a more sophisticated definition of capacity than the one stated above. The concerns lie mainly in solving daily problems in implementation and management. This is where the role of a central body comes in. Within each organisation there should be “enough capacity to think about capacity.” Again, the report will come back to this point later.

Many continue to see capacity primarily as a human resources issue related to skill development and training at the individual level. Such an approach is usually combined with external interventions in the form of technical assistance and functional improvements.¹⁹

In today’s development aid literature, capacity is understood as encompassing much more and includes a wide range of concepts such as: commitment, ownership, innovation, partnership, learning, institutional development, decentralization, knowledge management, change, ability to scale up and down, sustainability, participation, accountability, etc.²⁰

The aim of this review is not to develop a definition of capacity for the ICRC/CTA. Nevertheless the review team would like to use some elements of capacity, which are of particular importance to CTA to act as “coordinator and technical advisor” to NS. They will be taken up later, when discussing specific aspects of the CTA’s role and responsibilities. These elements are referring to the capacity to act in a network (RC

¹⁸ 2.1.1. ICRC Cooperation Policy

¹⁹ When asked for the capacity building activities with NS, the overwhelming majority of the delegations responded ‘training’ in the questionnaire.

²⁰ The Concept of Capacity, Peter Morgan ECDPM, May 2006

Movement, Family Links Network), and in complex and multi-stakeholder environments:

- Collective ability or the ability to act collectively
- Competencies: Among many others here will be highlighted: behaviours, communication skills
- Integrative ability: Ability to earn legitimacy, to adapt, to motivate, to influence
- The capability to work in a complex adaptive system: Consciousness and awareness of each element of the system about its place within the system, ability to configure itself, develop its own identity and to act accordingly, even against the resistance or non-cooperation of others, confidence to change, ability to balance stability and change
- Capability to achieve coherence: shared vision , leadership, ability to create and maintain simple rules that govern operations

4.2 Overall analysis

For the overall analysis this report will concentrate on a number of key issues, which are presented in the form of a strength and weakness analysis. This approach has been chosen also because the ICRC is regularly doing Strength and Weakness Self-Assessments. This section will be followed by a short section of overall conclusions before going into the more detailed section about the analysis of some key issues with importance for CTA's role as coordinator and technical advisor.

CTA's Strength

➤ Historical role, grounded in conventional and customary mandate

As was briefly outlined earlier, ICRC/CTA's role in RFL is firmly grounded in its conventional and customary mandate. These strong legal bases, at least with regard to situation of armed conflict, undeniably provide a situation of strength unparalleled by that of any other actor in the field.

In addition, the depth provided by the historical role endorsed by the ICRC plays an important role in the perception of the ICRC by all stakeholders, and in particular NS. The reverence displayed by the latter is often striking. Such high esteem undoubtedly creates expectations which, when they are unmatched by the ICRC, breeds disappointment and thereby turn a strength into a weakness. The ICRC attitude and behaviour is said to sometimes verge on arrogance; this leads it sometimes to underestimate the fact that many NS look up to ICRC for guidance and leadership.

➤ Expertise in protection, tradition of confidentiality

The ICRC has a long tradition of confidentiality and impartiality in all matters pertaining to protection, as well as in issues related to RFL. This makes the organisation credible towards counterparts in governments and other organisations. The CTA has accumulated much expertise in dealing with data in a confidential and secure way. It is a competitive advantage in the field of RFL and often under-valued within the ICRC.

However this strength may lead to difficulties as well and in particular when the CTA is dealing with persons not working according to the same principles and with the same cultural background. These are for example local staff members, counterparts at NS and other organisations working in the same field. The consequence is often mistrust, an over interpretation of confidentiality and the tendency for isolation on the ICRC's side.²¹ This, in turn, may sometimes be perceived as aloofness, arrogance and over secrecy on the part of other stakeholders. Finally this strong sense for confidentiality, and the related fear of leaks, causes specific challenges with regard to technical issues such as the use of internet and online communication.

➤ Expertise in filing and data management

The CTA is strong in accuracy, has an ability to handle huge case loads, and does store and maintain data over decades – the importance of preserving personal data for future generations cannot be understated, not only for historians, but above all for the families and descendents of the individuals concerned. On first sight this might look obvious and trivial. In the end it relates to the core of the CTA's activities. The difficulties of other organisations in dealing with data show that it is not self-evident.

➤ Capacity to mobilize resources for RFL

The CTA is able to mobilize resources for large scale and long-lasting RFL operations. With few limitations²² this is also true for mobilizing resources in a short time and under difficult logistical circumstances.

This strength includes the ability to stay longer than others and opens the opportunity to work continuously and in the long-term – a possibility not always resorted to because of the planning and budgeting system of the ICRC, as well as because of a strong institutional culture more focused on addressing urgent, immediate needs rather than on longer-term development.

CTA's weaknesses:

➤ Limited transformation of vision and policy into practice

The CTA has a strong capacity (and willingness) to assess and recognize both its own weaknesses and strength. There is a good knowledge of what is going on in the CTA and what the problems are. At HQ level there is awareness of trends and changes. The leadership is not shy of getting involved in new areas and to face challenges. However, the transformation of this knowledge and analysis into practice is somewhat slow and limited. In other words, the capacity does not follow the idea.²³

The reasons lie often within the organisation's culture (e.g. decentralization, strong position of HoD and therefore in many instances dependence on the personality and interests of the latter). Other reasons lie more within the area of influence of the CTA and are closely related to capacity issues. The CTA at HQ level is, for example, understaffed – although efforts are underway to remedy to this shortcoming. Another reason

²¹ Reference is made to the above cited the capacity criteria: collective and integrative ability.

²² See for example the later section on timeliness or the Country Report Sri Lanka.

²³ Reference is made to the above cited capacity criteria: Integrative capability and the capability to achieve coherence

might be the fact that the CTA is not able to make the best use of the limited resources available: Resources in-house, resources within the Movement (e.g. PNS), and external resources (such as consultants).

➤ Capacity to be pro-active

A pattern could be observed in many of the CTA's activities: The CTA is too often reactive instead of being pro-active. The organisation responds to situations, starts activities from scratch, does not learn enough from good and bad practice examples, and is lacking pre-set tools and procedures, which are known, accepted and tested within the organisation. As many, both within and outside, have put it, ICRC often "re-invents the wheel" for lack of awareness or understanding of the tools already at disposal.

➤ Limited capacity in Capacity Building

Capacity Building is said to play a central role in RFL and for the global Family Links Network. Within its rather technical focus, the CTA is not strong in this field. There is still only limited understanding of capacity building principles and concepts. The partnership approach is not followed through exhaustively enough, communication and soft skills of those in charge of RFL capacity building are still underdeveloped, and the organisation's set up and procedures, as well as its institutional culture, are not in favour of capacity building (strong link to operations, high staff turnover, yearly planning).²⁴

Regarding overall finding from this list of strength and weakness one is easily tempted to look at the number of strengths listed above and to conclude that there are more strengths than weaknesses. This would be misleading, as firstly the list is not drafted for the purpose of a quantitative analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

The more interesting relation between the strengths and the weaknesses lies in the fact that despite this list of strengths, there are the named weaknesses. Especially the first and the second point are important. They show that the CTA is weak in implementing its visions and ideas, and is also weak in fully exploiting the potential of the CTA, which is reflected in the above mentioned list of strengths.

The CTA has a strong mandate, has the capacity to mobilize resources, has a good self-analytical capacity, etc. Yet, the ICRC internal perception of CTA and the perception of the results in RFL are not very positive and the CTA itself is quite self-critical of the performance in RFL. This report will show in a number of examples that the CTA's capacity is limited in certain aspects. This contributes to the fact that the strong points of the CTA and the ICRC can not be brought into play to the full extend.

Interestingly enough, the third weakness is different from the other two. As will be shown later, the CTA does not have a strong mandate in capacity building, nor is it a traditional task, nor is an expertise in protection and confidentiality important for it. Last but not least, capacity building is comparably new for the ICRC and is not an operational activity in the first place.

²⁴ Reference is made to the above cited capacity criteria: Competencies and collective ability

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Consequently the overall conclusion is that the CTA has a good capacity in its 'traditional tasks'. It is just not fully exploited and the CTA should continue to concentrate internally on the improvement of key issues (such as knowledge management, human resources development - see later in more detail).

Adjustments and additional resources are necessary in this regard but no major reforms or general questioning of the system are necessary. The CTA should address these issues with priority so that they are not neglected while the ICRC -and the Movement- are engaging more in new fields and areas of responsibility (such as natural disasters, migration).

Secondly the CTA has a weak capacity in one of its central roles as coordinator and technical advisor, which is the capacity building with NS. The CTA should address this issue more comprehensively by improving the framework (mandate, resources) together with players outside the CTA (Cooperation, the Movement). This will need more investment and more fundamental changes within the CTA and ICRC.

4.3 Policies

4.3.1. RFL Policy²⁵

At the time of this review an explicit, stand-alone RFL policy existed neither within the Movement, nor within the ICRC. The drafting of a policy was going on in parallel to this review.

As described above, the starting point for policies is to be found in the Geneva Conventions and the Statutes of the Movement. The roles and responsibilities regarding RFL are reflected and re-affirmed in a number of Resolutions of the International Conference. These rules and statements give a clear framework for situation of armed conflict and internal disturbances²⁶. This framework becomes less clear when it comes to contexts outside the latter situations.

ICRC's role in RFL as described in the above regulations is primarily related to international and non-international armed conflict, internal disturbances and their direct results. The NS are given an important role as components of the international network for tracing and re-uniting families. They have a long term commitment to pursue their action as long as needs exist, a period which may extend well beyond the end of a conflict or natural disaster.

Resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent do not entirely fill this policy gap, which exists outside situations of conflict. The resolutions relate to persons who are reported missing or have died during armed conflict, dispersed families, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. Such resolutions are concerned with preserving the family unit through the tracing and reunification of family

²⁵ Policy is understood here in the sense of explicitly formulated policy documents and the legal basis and legal framework for RFL and the CTA.

²⁶ Resolution XVI of the XXVth International Conference (Geneva 1986) refers to natural disasters for the first time.

members and the transmission of personal details necessary for these two tasks. They also address the protection of unaccompanied children and minors in difficulties and consider what measures are necessary to reunite them with their families. Lastly, they call on governments to prevent forced or involuntary disappearances and stress the need to ascertain the fate of missing persons.

In recent years all components of the Movement have recognised that migration, disasters, asylum seekers and separated families are of humanitarian concern with needs that can be assisted through RFL services/programmes.²⁷ The policy development has not followed this development yet.

4.3.2 In how far is the mandate reflected in ICRC's policy?

As stated above, there is no explicit formal ICRC policy on RFL. Elements of policies and practices can be found in various guidelines and "tool boxes." References to RFL can be found in policy statements, which are reflected in documents such as:

- Cooperation Handbook
- Protection Toolbox
- ICRC Internal Operational Guide Lines on The Missing and their Families (there is no policy statement as such, but guidelines and check-lists regarding RFL and CTA)
- Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process (DDR), Institutional Guideline

These guidelines and procedures are in line with the above-described framework, which give the ICRC and the CTA its mandate. They further detail the roles and responsibilities of the CTA. An example is the Framework of ICRC/CTA Cooperation with Tracing Services of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies²⁸, which gives few additional details on the cooperation of ICRC with NS in RFL in times of conflict, disturbances and peace. Documents found in the Protection Toolbox are less comprehensive in this regard and do not refer specifically to these distinctions.²⁹

The ICRC's *Internal Operational Guide-Lines on The Missing and their Families* are also focused on conflict situations and do not differentiate well between CTA's role in conflict and in peace time.³⁰ This is done on purpose as they follow the expert conference on missing persons that focused on conflicts and other situations of violence and because it is the core of the ICRC mandate.

There is one check-list that refers in one sub-section to the ICRC's role after a conflict: "The ICRC may act as a neutral intermediary for the exchange of family news beyond the cessation of active hostilities, in the absence of a recognized NS in the country/territory concerned, or when no direct contact between NS is possible-which usually means absence of postal/telecom links."³¹ This check-list does not refer to the situation where the NS does not have the capacity to act in RFL, which is, as is known, often the case.

²⁷ See Section 4.15

²⁸ dated 6 May 2002

²⁹ See for example 11.1.1. Ligne – The mandate and role of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency (CTA)

³⁰ See 05. Guide-Line on preserving or restoring contacts between family members, page 171

³¹ 5.6 Check-list on the ICRC/RC family news network : role of different actors, page 189

The *Agenda for Humanitarian Action* (Resolution 1 of the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva 2003) includes pledges regarding RFL and the Family Links Network.

The internal *Institutional Guideline on DDR* process contains a short section on RFL in a DDR process. Given the fact that RFL plays a central role in DDR and is part of almost all processes³², this aspect is not taken enough into account in these guidelines. In most of the war-related contexts where the ICRC is operational DDR is an issue. Yet, the guidelines do not elaborate enough on RFL, which is an ICRC core activity. An example for an under-representation is Annex 2, which gives an overview about the main stakeholders in DDR but does not make reference to the agency's role in RFL only in the case of UNICEF.

The review's findings have shown that these policies are not always implemented in reality. Three factors might contribute to this problem:

- a) There is a gap between realities defined and described in policies or guidelines and the real situation.

Examples for this phenomenon are:

- The CTA coordinates an *existing* (meaning 'functioning') network
- The CTA ensures coherence in working practice

Documentation often refers to CTA's role in the FLN network or highlights the strength in RFL by having a worldwide network of tracing services. In reality there is no functioning network. The network exists in the sense that NS exist in all countries around the globe; but this, in and of itself, does not mean that a functioning tracing service exists in each NS. This is also one of the reasons for the lack of coherence in working practice. But there is not even coherence in working practice among the existing and functioning tracing services.³³ Nevertheless the role of the CTA is described as 'ensuring coherence' instead of for example developing coherence.

It is acknowledged that for political and communication purposes it might be necessary to talk about an existing (global) network. In practice however it might be better (or more realistic) to acknowledge the fact that parts of the network are not functioning or non-existent.

The RFL handbook for NS for example includes only one model of a national tracing service. It does not sufficiently acknowledge the wide variety of situations of NS and their tracing services. This contributes to the fact that the book is not situation-specific enough, which reduces its reach, application and legitimacy in practice.

- b) There is insufficient capacity at central level to promote coherence within and outside the organisation.

Within the organisation the lack of coherence is often because of reasons which lie within the organisation's structure (importance of Operations) and culture (e.g.

³² Annex 3 of the guidelines is a list of ICRC practice examples in DDR. Out of 16 examples 12 included RFL activities.

³³ Furthermore there is not even firm coherence within the ICRC's response in RFL. The analysis of the questionnaires revealed incoherent approaches and working practices in RFL activities. Furthermore this report will show the inconsistency in terminology and understanding of RFL within the ICRC.

decentralization, strong position of HoD and therefore in many instances dependence on the personality and interests of the latter).

There appears to be insufficient coherence in the Movement regarding the work in tracing. Although tracing is a unique task within the Movement with an obvious cross-border element this coherence and the cross-border cooperation are often found to be missing.³⁴

- c) There is insufficient clarity in terminology and a lack of common understanding of terms and policies.

A closer look at terms and definitions is not of ‘academic interest’ only. The reason why this review looks at definitions has practical implications and is an important part of the assessment of the capacity of CTA. This section will look at ICRC’s documentation as a starting point. The understanding of the terms by interlocutors met during this review will follow under 4.3.4.

Firstly, the clarity of a definition of terms used by an agency can be an indicator for the agency’s self-understanding and clarity about its mandate and role.³⁵ In the end, a clear definition can eliminate uncertainties about roles and responsibilities between different actors in RFL. If the definitions include the roles there is no longer a need to discuss or define them. In this sense, terminology is part of policy development.

Secondly, the relevance lies in communication (in the sense of dialogue and documentation). Clear terminology is one of the key factors for a common understanding and effective communication within an organisation and towards counterparts outside.³⁶ This is even truer for an organisation working with a decentralized approach and in an international context (language, culture differences, etc.). This is, of course, even more relevant for clarity of purpose within a network – what, if anything is the central part of a network, if not a common understanding of its own purpose?

In how far this is taken into account by the ICRC is an indicator for its capacity to set the right framework to fulfil its tasks and responsibilities. Generally the ICRC is strong on clear definitions and terms. This might be related to the solid legal foundation of the organisation and the legal background of many ICRC staff. With regard to RFL and CTA, however, this capacity is neglected, which will be shown in the following section about terminology and definitions.

Conclusions:

- The CTA has a strong mandate for situations of conflict and tensions. The framework is less clear when it comes to contexts outside the latter situations.
- ICRC’s procedures and guidelines follow this mandate and are stronger emphasised on conflict situations. In policy related documents and guidelines there is not always a clear distinction between situations of conflict and peace.

³⁴ See for more details Section 4.6

³⁵ Reference is made to the capacity criteria: Capability to work in a complex adaptive system (see above).

³⁶ Reference is made to the capacity criteria: Competencies (see above)

- Policies are not always implemented in reality because:
 - There is a gap between realities defined and described in policies or guidelines and the real situation.
 - There is insufficient capacity at central level to promote coherence within and outside the organisation.
 - There is insufficient clarity in terminology and a lack of common understanding of terms and policies.

Recommendations:

- RFL policies and guidelines should distinguish more clearly between conflict and non-conflict situations. There should either be a clear policy for all situations or there should be an explicit rule saying that conflict related policies apply in non-conflict situations.

4.4 Definition and understanding of RFL and CTA

4.4.1 Documentation

When looking at ICRC documentation there are different definitions of the term RFL. *The Missing and their Families: ICRC Internal Operational Guide-Lines* use the term “restoring contacts between family members”,³⁷ whereas a guide for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is called “Restoring Family Links”. It is possible to find a reference to the legal basis and a list of activities that fall under RFL, but no definition as such.³⁸ The ICRC website says: “Restoring family links means re-establishing contact between members of families split up by situations of armed conflict or internal violence and collecting information about people who are detained or have died. It involves organizing family reunifications and repatriations, taking steps to trace persons unaccounted for, and issuing travel documents and certificates of detention.”

The definition of CTA is not much clearer, especially when it comes to the individual elements of the definition of CTA. The *Protection Toolbox*, for instance, offers a definition of the role of “coordinator and technical advisor.” It differs from the check-list in the internal operation guide-lines on *The Missing*.³⁹

4.4.2 The understanding of persons met

The questionnaires revealed a broad variety of answers to the question about how CTA’s role is understood.⁴⁰ During interviews it was possible to have five persons around a table, all with different backgrounds (e.g. data base administrator, tracing delegate, protection delegate, cooperation delegate) and they would have five different opinions on what the CTA is. It is possible to meet with ICRC staff not knowing at all what “CTA” actually stands for.

³⁷ 4.E. Guide-line 5, page 21 and page 171

³⁸ See ‘Restoring Family Links, a guide for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies’

³⁹ 5.6 Check-list on the ICRC/RC family news network: role of the different actors, page 189 – Another version can be found in the Reference Documents for Project 2.1

⁴⁰ See 7 for a model of the questionnaire

For some people the CTA is everybody who is dealing with tracing. The expression “ces dames de l’Agence” is still heard, often meant as a slightly derogatory (and outdated) joke. Some younger delegates use the term “Agence” for all ICRC activities related to ICRC without realizing that the term relates to the Central Tracing Agency. For others only the Head of the Protection Division is the CTA. In one case it was said that the ICRC is the ‘supervisor and technical advisor’ instead of ‘coordinator and technical advisor’.

In other cases the term ‘controller’ came up. For operations this might probably often be closer to the reality than the correct term. Yet, it is a question whether this is the way it should be and whether problems could be avoided if the role is clearly defined and understood from the start.

The merger of the CTA and the Protection Division in 1997 has certainly contributed to some confusion. Today people have difficulties locating the CTA within ICRC. The open discussion about ICRC’s role in natural disasters further contributes to uncertainty among staff members, especially at delegation level. Finally the often reported loss of expertise in RFL is given as a reason why the definition and description of CTA’s role and responsibilities is not stated clearly.

To a certain extent, the same can be said of the perception and understanding by the NS representatives met in the course of the present review. In many cases the role of ‘coordinator and technical advisor’ is not seen at all by the NS, as this would imply that RFL activities are actually implemented by the NS itself. In situations where the ICRC is operational, this is *de facto* often not the case. In such situations, it is the ICRC itself which is implementing RFL. Even if this is (in some cases) built on capacities of the NS, and even if the ICRC has only a reduced role in the field, NS perceive RFL as ‘an ICRC activity’. Among many NS, the ICRC has grown the unflattering reputation of sidelining NS when and where it saw it fit, or of simply ignoring (actively or passively, on purpose or unwittingly) the existence of NS RFL capacities in a given operational context.

On various occasions interlocutors reported internal communication problems. These existed for example between different divisions at headquarters and between headquarters and the delegations. Terminology becomes particularly crucial in communicating with ICRC services that are not expected to have RFL expertise – e.g. communication between database administrators and the IT unit, or between the CTA and the recruitment unit. Communication problems can obviously never be avoided entirely, but a clear language and terminology can contribute to reducing these problems.⁴¹

Conclusions:

- The CTA has a strong mandate for situations of conflict and tensions. The framework is less clear when it comes to contexts outside the latter situations.
- ICRC’s policies follow this mandate and are stronger emphasised on conflict situations. In policy documents and guidelines there is not always a clear distinction between situations of conflict and peace.
- Policies are not always implemented in reality because:

⁴¹ They were also reported in documentation such as evaluations.

- There is a gap between realities defined and described in policies or guidelines and the real situation.
- There is insufficient clarity in terminology and a lack of common understanding of terms and policies.
- There is insufficient capacity at central level to promote coherence within and outside the organisation.

Recommendations:

- RFL Policies and guidelines should distinguish more clearly between conflict and non-conflict situations. There should either be a clear policy for all situations or there should be an explicit rule saying that conflict related policies apply in non-conflict situations.
- The ICRC should ensure clear terminology in all documentation and communication regarding the definition and terms related to RFL. It might be necessary to ‘scan’ all working documents in this regard for changes and adaptations. An option might also be to develop one compendium with the ‘essentials’ about ICRC and RFL, which can also serve as a reference tool for all working with RFL inside the ICRC.⁴²
- At the same time the ICRC should more adapt documentation and communication to realities and context. This makes it necessary to limit documentation from central level to the essentials. It is recommendable to work with ‘open’ documentation (e.g. module approach, or online resources), which can easily be changed, adapted and translated in selected parts.
- Documentation should less refer to the historical background of the CTA, but should more describe today’s realities and circumstances.

4.5 The standing of RFL within the ICRC

There is a consensus among interlocutors that RFL is important and is a central activity of the ICRC. However this statement is often not in line with practice. RFL is repeatedly not seen as a priority when considering operations (and budgeting thereof) and management. RFL is difficult ‘to sell’ to the management in Operations and to HoD.

A number of factors contributing to this lack of attention are stated in various places in this report:

- (Perceived) decrease in RFL needs globally
- RFL is often seen as a purely technical activity (management of databases and forwarding of RCM) and is still often the subject of a gender bias.
- Tracing is not seen as a wise career move within the institution; there is a perception that delegates working in detention activities (which are more “political”) will move quicker and higher (first as Protection Coordinators and maybe later as Head of Office/Delegation) than delegates working in tracing.

⁴² This document should be limited to essentials only and should not have the same scope and style as the Internal Operational Guide-Lines on The Missing and their Families. A ‘module-approach’, using module sections instead of one text body only, would facilitate local adaptation and translation of selected sections.

- When there is detention and tracing together the later will usually be treated as a second priority. RFL is seen as too expensive and complicated, and less “interesting”, as compared to detention visits for example
- Often the project of *The Missing* seen as more important and more visible than tracing itself.
- The importance given to RFL and the understanding of it, highly depend on whether an individual has done tracing him/herself or not. Having seen first hand the impact of tracing on the life of individuals, and the human benefit that derive from it, often motivated individuals to stay in that line of work.
- RFL activities have a number of specifications, compared to other ICRC sectors. These specifications are not always seen or understood entirely so that those dealing with RFL do not fully grasp what RFL is about and where the importance lies:
 - High dependency on global network
 - RFL is the only truly transversal activity of the Movement, because it needs all its components to work. This is not the case for other activities – e.g. assistance.
 - Special mandate from the Geneva Conventions (at least with regard to armed conflict)
 - Diverse target group
 - ‘soft character’ (unlike assistance and detention but like IHL dissemination)

In interviews it has been stated that the RFL file has still a tendency to be first a protection file then later a cooperation one (at the time to transfer activities to the NS) when both departments should work closely from the very initial stage. Some respondents understand the role of the CTA as coordinator and technical advisor in the sense that the CTA should promote a more integrated approach between Cooperation and Protection programs.

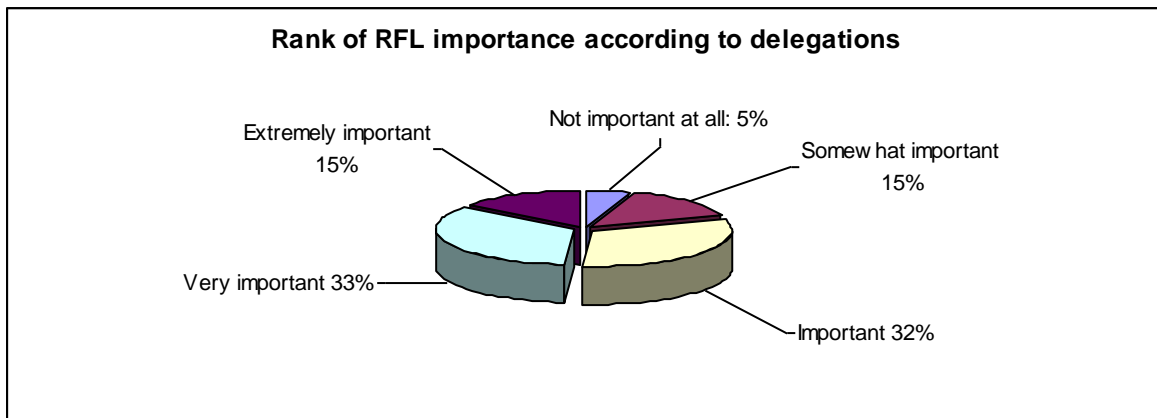
Clearly, the emphasis of the Movement has increasingly been over the issue of missing persons, rather than RFL as such (the latter by some seen as broader than the missing, but usually seen in a narrower way than the missing issue). The ICRC, for its part, initiated a very important project entitled “The Missing: Action to resolve the problem of people unaccounted for as a result of armed conflict or internal violence and to assist their families.”

The present review, however, focuses on RFL as such, and the question of the missing has been considered merely in passing. One of the reasons for this is the fact that a parallel evaluation was being conducted on the issue of the missing (more specifically in the Balkans) in parallel – see section 2.

As stated in the later section about RFL results there are deficits in presenting results, effects and impact of RFL. This might lead to the fact that in consequence RFL is not presented in the right light within the organisation. Important achievements of RFL might not be communicated to decision makers and decision taking bodies. Examples can be taken from the questionnaire, where ICRC Delegations responded to the question why RFL is important in their context:

- RFL is important as it shows that the ICRC is a reliable actor. (Iran)
- RFL is important to show visibility and allows exchange with local interlocutors. (Afghanistan)

- RFL activities represent the backbone investment for the future of the two RC Units active in Kosovo



A number of initiatives have already been launched to improve the profile of RFL and the CTA. Entry points for improving the standing of RFL in the organisation should be:

- Training
- Awareness raising (internally and externally)⁴³
- Achieving good results in ongoing operations and communicating the results within the organisation
- Showing the ability to work with up to date technology to raise the image of the organisation, where the context demands the application of modern technologies
- Ensuring best possible support to those in delegations who work in tracing

This report will come back to these issues later so that they are not further elaborated here. **Conclusions and Recommendations** in other sections will take up the above-mentioned points and will be more specific and detailed.

4.6 CTA's role within the Family Links Network

4.6.1 The Family Links Network

The CTA's leading role in the network in the past has been seen critically by interlocutors. This, however, appears to be changing rapidly. Until recently, CTA's influence on the network was seen as limited. The ICRC seemed to be rather distant from the network and did not have a full and timely understanding of its needs and its activities. This is true for the ICRC HQ and their knowledge about NS. Most delegations indicate that they have a good relationship with the NS and that the work can be fruitful for both sides. However this is often linked to individual persons. The good relationship and the knowledge about the NS is not necessarily institutionalised.

⁴³ The British NS has gained some recent experience in raising awareness for RFL internally and externally.

Some NS are not aware of their roles and responsibilities within the network. At the same time there seems to be a lack of ownership among several network members (“no thinking in network terms”), i.e. among some NS and a number of ICRC delegations also.

From the point of view of the Review Team, the first point to be ascertained was whether one could, in fact, truly speak of a “worldwide network”, of a “global network” or even of a “network”.

The question is whether the existence of gaps in this elaborate construction is sufficient to discard (or short-circuit) the whole system. In other words, how far is the fact that a large number of NS cannot be counted on to adequately (if at all) handle cases or requests sent to them by other components of the network (ICRC or other NS) a handicap?

The results of the capacity assessment of NS done in the framework of the 2.1 Project show that it may be an understatement to speak of “gaps” in terms of RFL capacity. As one PNS observer put it “In fact, we can speak of a myth of a global system: there is an inverse relationship between need and capacity.”

What makes the strength of the network is at the same time its main weakness: the network is unique because it can (or should be able to) count on the support of all components of the Movement. This co-dependency of all the parts of the network is crucial with regard to RFL: indeed, it is the ability of relying on a web of counterparts around the globe that can make tracing truly efficient. As one tracing expert put it:

„Tracing works only on the basis of a network. It is a no-brainer: no network, no tracing! It is a system; there is total interdependence: if one NS does not do tracing well, other NS cannot do it well.“

A number of PNS seem to consider the network more as a ‘club’ of the tracing services in Europe, USA, Canada, and Australia.

There appears to be insufficient coherence in the Movement regarding the work in tracing. NS have individual ways of dealing with requests, no standard forms, or standard procedures exist. However, the ICRC is a factor in coherence and there are standard RCM forms but the FLN is far from working with a globally accepted set of procedures. Although tracing is a unique task within the Movement with an obvious cross-border element this coherence and the cross-border cooperation are often found to be missing.

The fact that the Project 2.1 was initiated by ICRC could be seen as an indicator that there was a need to give a push to efforts of reinforcing the network. The initiative is today seen as an open statement for a will to improve the network’s performance. It is positively recognized that the ICRC is opening up towards NS. This can be seen as a pre-condition for a leading role in the network.

The ICRC is expected to take this leading role in the network, not because of a clear mandate or explicit decision, but because of the fact that nobody else seems to either be in a position, or even wish to lead and coordinate the network. Even if NS and their tracing services communicate, no forum exists for exchange or linkages that could carry a network.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Institutionalised fora only exists for some topics related to RFL: PERCO (migration), Network for Trafficking

Interestingly the network is identified as strength (see for example in the Approach Paper to this review) but a network, in and of itself, is not necessarily strength (and can in certain instances even be a burden). It is an opportunity or a potential rather than a strength at present.

The vast majority of the persons interviewed clearly stated that a network indeed existed, but that considered that calling it “global”, “unique” or “worldwide” reflected more wishful thinking than reality. It was widely acknowledged that the network has what was often referred to as “gaps.”

4.6.2 What CTA’s role could be

It will always be a difficult task to lead the network if the ‘leader’ does not have a straight forward authority in that respect. This is here in particular true for situations where the ICRC does not have a strong mandate deriving from the Geneva Conventions. But the network needs leadership and coordination also, or especially, outside conflicts. The lack of ‘authority’ could possibly be compensated by having the time and resources (constantly push, call and be present) to lead the network.

The need to take up the leading role in tracing comes partly from the fact that there is no other actor who could do it. The ICRC has to fill this gap and can do it only by being very present.

Consequently the ICRC can only coordinate or lead if ICRC:

- has a clear vision for the network
- thinks pro-actively, sees trends and developments
- has the resources to implement its vision
- creates and shows an atmosphere of openness and transparency
- has up-to-date concepts and tools ready (such as needs assessments, ownership for tracing at NS).

This does not mean that the ICRC should be or feel responsible for everything in the network. The role could rather be understood in the way that the ICRC is the one who is identifying actions to be taken and identifying the resources to respond to the need (either inside or outside the ICRC) and ensuring that the activity is taken up and implemented.⁴⁵

As a consequence, Project 2.1 should rather not be a project but a permanent position (or approach). The network needs continuous development, nurturing, coaching and observation. This can only be done by somebody who knows and maintains personal contacts to key persons within the network. The knowledge of the network must go far beyond the information, which is now available from the global needs assessment. The network is a very diversified group with very different potentials for roles of each member within the network.

The network should also be carried by a group of like-minded network representatives who have the capacity and authority to drive the network. In this regard the NS could be reminded continuously by the ICRC to take up this responsibility. A regional orientation will be necessary to create locally based sub-networks, which can join forces and

⁴⁵ This report will come back to this point when scenarios for capacity building in the regions are discussed.

contribute to the overall network. The engagement in local fora initiated by CTA is seen as positive and helps to strengthen the ICRC's role as leader.

In the past there have been annual meetings of NS in tracing. Their purpose was not always clearly given, and there was no proper follow-up. The new 'culture' established during the development of the RFL strategy should be an improvement in this regard.

4.6.3 'Exploitation' of the network

The CTA could do more to better understand the present state and the potential of the network. There are manifold options for initiatives in the network such as long-term partnerships of a PNS with one NS or with one region. In some regions there could be a kind of consortium of NS, which takes over the responsibility of capacity building and ensuring a functioning network.

There could be more peer exchange within the network, on all levels South-South, North-North, and South-North. The experience from past PNS projects must be analysed carefully and needs to flow into the planning of new initiatives so that good examples are repeated and bad examples are avoided.

All in all there needs to be a more systematic approach towards the promotion of support to the network and towards the exploitation of the network's resources.

There are various options to work on different models how best to exploit the capacities within the network. Two can be mentioned here:

- a) Capacity Mapping
- b) Contributions Assessment

a) A mapping of the capacities and potentials of key network members –ideally done in a participatory process, including different stakeholders from the network- could help to better understand and to better visualize the different actors in the network. This would differ from the capacity assessment as it has been done last year. In this regard the capacity to contribute to the network is referred to.

It might be combined with a map regarding the use of the network. An analysis of the exchange of RCM per country might show which country has a closer relationship to another country within the network.

b) The concept of *Contributions Assessment* can be used as a practical tool to seek to add another layer to needs assessment approaches.⁴⁶ One of the key issues for network projects and for those who coordinate networks is participation. How members participate, why some participate more than others, how to encourage greater participation, how to 'measure' participation.

Most working in development and human rights are used to the needs assessment approach, of establishing a base line of project end-user needs before the project starts. One can then evaluate the work against that baseline, seeing if needs have actually been met by the project. A Contributions Assessment aims to find out what people might contribute. It can then serve as a baseline for assessing if the network enabled its members to contribute over time, and how that contribution gave added value to the network.

⁴⁶ Based on "Participation, Relationships and Dynamic Change: New Thinking on Evaluating the Work of International Networks", Madeline Church et al, 2003

A contributions assessment maps what members believe they can contribute to a network project. Contributions not in the sense of financial commitment in terms of a grant, but human resources, activities, skills, and energy. Value is placed on the interest and willingness to contribute, not the size or extent of what members can contribute. It pays attention to power differences, and obstacles to commitment.

This kind of assessment is not a ‘heavy’ theoretical tool but can be done in a simple way, tailor-made and context specific. What is important is the orientation, which is the focus on the contributions. A contributions assessment enables the network as a whole to see what resources it can draw on and where it might need to seek extra members or resources. The assessment enables members to be realistic about what they can commit to – they are asked to think carefully about what such a contribution means for them in terms of time and energy and resources.

Finally, a contributions assessment gives baseline information against which one can evaluate. Evaluation can for example be done on how successful the network coordinator has been in lobbying for resources within the network and how far the facilitation structures of the network have enabled that exchange to occur.

Conclusions:

- The CTA’s standing and influence in the network is improving recently. Delegations mostly have a good relationship with NS.
- There is not enough coherence in the Movement regarding the work in tracing. This is a key responsibility of the CTA.
- The network needs leadership and coordination in particular in situations of peace. The mandate related lack of the CTA’s ‘authority’ in this regard could possibly be compensated by having the time and resources (constantly push, call and be present) to lead the network.
- The CTA does not work enough towards the full ‘exploitation’ of the potential of the network.

Recommendations:

- To fulfil its role the CTA has to have a clear vision for the network and has to think more pro-actively. The CTA needs to have the resources available to implement its visions and ideas. The CTA should not be overambitious with reform and pushing of RFL: both NS and ICRC staff might not be able to follow.
- The ICRC should exploit more systematically the potential of the Family Links Network. A starting point could be a more systematic and participatory assessment of the network’s potentials.
- The CTA should contribute more to creating and showing an atmosphere of openness and transparency within the network.
- The CTA has to improve in up-to-dating concepts and tools and needs to have resources available for this task.

4.7 CTA's role in Capacity building of NS

4.7.1 (Legal) Basis

According to the Resolution XXI of the 24th International Conference (Manila, 1981) the tracing services of the NS are CTA's direct partner. According to Resolution 2 D of the 26th. International Conference (Geneva 1995), the CTA is encouraged "to continue to coordinate, whenever necessary, NS activities in tracing and reuniting families, and to train NS staff in the principles and methods of tracing."

The Review Team could not find the (legal) basis for ICRC's responsibility to do capacity building in RFL⁴⁷. Nevertheless this role seems to be widely accepted within the ICRC and within the Movement.

According to the guidelines the ICRC "should involve the NS as much as possible in the decision making and in the management of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Family Links Network so as to cultivate a feeling of ownership required for a sustainable RLF service in the long term. The ICRC should envisage its partnership with the NS with the objective of a possible hand over of the overall responsibility at some stage in the transition period."⁴⁸

Capacity building with NS plays a very crucial role in the just cited framework. The approach and policy for capacity building are decided within the ICRC but in practice they are not followed-through exhaustively yet:

4.7.2 Types of Cooperation with NS in Capacity Building

Three types of cooperation are identified:

- Strengthening the capacity of NS
- Operational Partnerships with NS in their own countries
- Operational Partnerships with NS working internationally

In reality these three types are closely linked. In any case, from the point of view of the NS the distinction is less relevant. For the ICRC the second type is in reality often more focussed on 'operation' than on 'partnership'. The third is not applied systematically yet by the ICRC (see above). One reason is that this type of cooperation is significantly influenced by factors outside the influence of the ICRC (basically the autonomy of NS). The ICRC has not authority and limited influence to engage PNS into capacity building initiatives with other NS.

According to the Cooperation Handbook "from now on 'cooperation' means all types of relations the ICRC has with all National Societies, not solely in terms of SNS programmes for ONS".⁴⁹ Again, this policy is not yet fully implemented in the daily operations and relations with NS. Staff working in ICRC Delegations see 'cooperation' separated from operations. If a Cooperation Delegate is present her or his activities are seen as 'cooperation' and not all other relations the delegation has with NS.

⁴⁷ Art 5.2.f and 5.2.h of the Statutes of the ICRC could be seen as a basis but capacity building is not mentioned explicitly. <http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/icrc-statutes-080503>

⁴⁸ Internal guideline on The Missing and their Families: 5.6 Check-list on the ICRC/RC family news network: role of the different actors 2.B.c. page 190.

⁴⁹ 2.1.1. ICRC Cooperation Policy

4.7.3 Influence of ICRC's presence

In countries with an ICRC presence, the ICRC often struggles with the capacity building process. Three of the cases visited (Thailand, Sri Lanka and Angola) were rather disappointing cases when thinking of a sustainable process or a full functioning tracing service. If the ICRC already has difficulties in the countries with a presence how shall the process succeed in countries with no, or almost no ICRC presence (e.g. in countries covered by a regional delegation)?

Seen from the perspective of a PNS: “We need capacity-building and ICRC has a responsibility to ensure that the network works all around the world, including in Europe. ICRC should use PNS more to do capacity-building where it's needed. It looks like ICRC thinks it should do it all by itself. We are even willing to fund ICRC to do capacity-building, all we need is activity/financial reports for accountability purposes. But ICRC is overly secretive – but there is no need to be so outside a situation of armed conflict where there are not protection sensitive cases.“

ICRC's approach is not homogenous when one thinks in terms of capacity building from a global point of view. In some countries the delegation pulls out and scales down (also in capacity building) but at the same time initiates the 2.1 project.

4.7.4 Limitations in capacity building in RFL

A number of factors limit all capacity building efforts already by nature: As external actor the ICRC does not have any influence on key factors of capacity development within the NS: Recruitment of key positions, strategic orientation of the NS, the development of other NS services, corruption, etc.

When asked for the main factors influencing the success of capacity building, the big majority of delegations responded in the questionnaires with ‘funds available at the NS’, followed by ‘ownership of NS’ or ‘lack of importance given to RFL within the NS’.

This is a reality that should be faced and dealt with. The consequence is that first the problem should be named and secondly the programming and expectations should be adapted accordingly. The global capacity assessment of NS shed light on the reality of the actual capacity of national tracing services. It would be an illusion to talk about a functioning Family Links Network and as well to give the burden to the ICRC to build the capacity of all national tracing services worldwide.

4.7.5 Strategy for capacity building in RFL

A realistic strategy could go into two directions:

- a) A strategy to improve the ICRC's ongoing capacity building of NS
 - b) A strategy to do capacity building in countries not covered by ICRC's operation, or not sufficiently covered by regional delegations or not covered at all.
-
- a) Improve ICRC's ongoing capacity building

A number of factors can be improved in ICRC's ongoing capacity building:

- aa) Change of attitude/thinking in terms of partnership (including improved competences in capacity building, soft skills⁵⁰, knowledge of NS and THE FEDERATION procedures)⁵¹
- ab) Better definition of objectives and improved planning for the final aims of an intervention (especially regarding an exit strategy and sustainability)
- ac) Improved tools, knowledge management and sharing of experiences
- ad) Comprehensive and integrated approach with reduced separation of operation and capacity building

aa) Change of attitude/thinking in terms of partnership

The ICRC is an operational agency, often with a focus on technical aspects. Examples with relevance for capacity building are the yearly planning and the orientation in training of ICRC staff (the later is improving already). Cooperation and capacity building are still neglected aspects of the ICRC's work. The process is often reduced to 'training' and the provision of material and funding.

Often cooperation is left to the cooperation delegate only, but there is not always one in place and the cooperation delegate does not always have the expertise in RFL. In other cases the process was left to whoever was available (in one case the database administrator). Many staff members do not feel comfortable in working in capacity building although the especially personal factor is very crucial for the process. Two recent examples can be quoted: Albania and Sri Lanka

In both cases the personal factor was stated to be crucial for better results. The personal factors named in particular were: Cooperation attitude (soft skills) and good background in tracing.

ab) Better definition of objectives and improved planning for results

Even in countries with a long term presence of the ICRC there is often no clear vision and planning for the development of the NS's tracing service. For example in Sri Lanka it could be observed that the final goals of a capacity building process are not clearly defined and there is no exit strategy for ICRC's input. And this although for once ToR were established with objectives to reach.

The questionnaire confirms that the quality of the ICRC's cooperation strategy has a significant influence on the success of the capacity building with NS. It was the third most often quoted reply when delegations were asked for success factors.

ac) Improved tools, knowledge management and sharing of experiences

It could be observed that in too many contexts the capacity building process is started from scratch. It seems as if the "wheel is re-invented" over and over again. It is of course out of the question that each capacity building programme be based on a contextual analysis and adapted locally. But once this analysis has been completed, the programme should make use of existing tools and knowledge within the organisation.

There should be inspirational tools (lessons learnt in other contexts, training material, draft cooperation agreements, etc.) readily available. At the moment one can find

⁵⁰ Soft skills: social competencies e.g. ability to interact, cultural sensitivity, language skills, etc.

⁵¹ Many respondents to the questionnaire stated that the relationship between the delegation and the NS is of crucial importance for the results in RFL.

information on technical aspects in various toolkits but what is still lacking is tools, or at least indications on how to teach them. This leads to situations such as Angola's, where in each province a training programme has been developed so that there was not even coherence on national level, although some of the contents of the draft manual appeared to be of some use in preparing training sessions for NS.

ad) Comprehensive and integrated approach with reduced separation of operation and capacity building

Too often the operational partnership and the capacity building are separated. The separation is less relevant for the NS and influences the results in the capacity building process. For a NS the shift from operation in a situation of armed conflict to peace time (and sometimes back) has interruptive effects, which are not favourable for the capacity building process.

For operational partnership capacities are built up, mainly for the sake of effectiveness in the short term. But there is no strategy to integrate these capacities into a long-term capacity building approach. Examples can be the training of volunteers, local coordinators and ICRC field officers. Their capacity gets lost once the operation is closed and is rarely made available to the NS – positive examples do exist, however, such as the Namibian handover process.

There have been examples which showed that it is possible to do both, emergency response and little steps in capacity building.⁵² What it requires is a mindset for the capacity building approach, in the sense that it is planned for and not neglected, even during the emergency phase.

The FEDERATION told the Review Team that the ICRC was taking a much too technical approach to RFL, one inspired by analogy to situation of armed conflict. Rather than concentrating on the creation of tracing services in NS, it would be wiser to look more towards who is actually involved as first responder in relief work, i.e. emergency teams, first aid workers.

These are the people handling the victims, whether they are alive (in a hospital, in a first aid post, in a transit or evacuation camp, etc.) or dead (hospitals, morgues, recovery of bodies or body parts on-site, etc.). They, therefore are the ones whose RFL capacity (and first of all awareness) should be addressed. In the view of the Federation, therefore, RFL should be looked at in a much more transversal perspective.

b) Capacity building outside of ICRC's operations

Capacity building requires medium to long-term commitment and presence. Experience has shown time and again that one-off training seminars rarely lead to genuine capacity-building. Constant presence, or at least availability to be present alongside of the NS is much more effective. Such an approach may be best coined as coaching. This type of activity is clearly resource-intensive, both in terms of financial commitment and human resources. Skills (not only technical but just as importantly human) on the part of the "coach" are also crucial.

⁵² E.g. West Africa and Bosnia

The tracing service of the Ukrainian Red Cross clearly indicated that the presence for a few years of a regional tracing delegate based at the Moscow Delegation had been a great asset. In the context of the Harare Regional Delegation, the presence of a regional tracing delegate had not been effective until recently, not least because of a high turnover (because the position is not easy to staff). The number of countries covered (six) and their size, as well as the low level of development of most NS in the region, appeared to turn the challenges of the regional tracing delegates into a never ending work. By the time the last NS had been trained, it was likely that training would be necessary again with the first.

The ICRC should therefore develop scenarios for long-term capacity building efforts, which can be applied in different regions. In this regard options might be:

- The ICRC could initiate the creation of a **pool of (local?) capacity building- and RFL experts** who can work independently with NS, not integrated in delegations, who are supervised and coordinated either on regional level or from ICRC HQ.
- The ICRC should promote more systematically **partnerships of PNS with NS** or with whole regions to build up and ensure capacity building. For this purpose scenarios and background information on NS capacity, as well as inspirational tools and guidelines should be developed further and made available for discussions with PNS.
- The ICRC should develop scenarios and models for increased **peer exchange** between NS. Capacity building done by expatriate ICRC staff can be sometimes perceived as patronizing, paternalistic. The experience learned in other fields has shown that horizontal exchange of best practices, sharing of knowledge and passing on of skill is often much more effective (and cheaper). For instance, replication of training, exchange of staff (field visits, internships, etc.) among services in a similar situation often creates bonds and synergies, ownership and ingrained skills that vertical capacity building can never dream of achieving. In capacity building, identification is key to ownership and sustainability
- It is acknowledged that the ICRC does not have unlimited resources and therefore has to make choices and set **priorities**: which SN should be supported? The strategy for the future should be that NS that have enough resources and technical capacity should work in the longer term with NS in need. Such an approach already exists, although on a small scale (e.g. with the British RC in Sierra Leone and the American RC in Liberia). The question should be allowed whether it is realistic to bring all NS at same level. An option might be to develop and promote a **core group**, which can later move on to others. Even if a NS has a capacity it does not mean that it can be a specialist in everything (such as tracing).

Finally the question should be allowed whether capacity building efforts should be undertaken at all with all NS. As obvious as it may seem, it is worth pointing out that any capacity building, to have any chance of success, must be initiated on the basis of a certain level of ownership of the process on the part of the NS, or, at the very least, a minimum of interest in this regard.

The example of the Thai Red Cross is a case in point: following the Tsunami, a tracing delegate was graciously seconded for a period of one year to the NS with the aim of

building its RFL capacity. After two initial weeks of apparent interest, it quickly became painfully obvious that there was in fact literally no wish to pursue the experience further. The priorities of the Thai RC clearly lie on other sectors. Understandably, after only six months the delegate packed up and ended the effort. The option might here be to name the case and to be prepared to work on an operational basis only in case of larger needs. Mobile teams could come in, would scale-up and down quickly in case of need. In times outside emergency the service would work as it does at present.

Conclusions:

- It seems to be widely accepted within the ICRC and within the Movement that the ICRC has the responsibility to do capacity building in RFL, although there is no explicit legal basis for this mandate.
- There are concepts and tools for capacity building at ICRC. The distinction in ICRC's approach between conflict and non-conflict situations in this regard is from the point of view of the NS the less relevant. The ICRC focuses too often too much on 'operation' than on 'partnership'.
- There is a need to improve the ongoing capacity building efforts, through:
 - Change of attitude/thinking in terms of partnership
 - Better definition of objectives and improved planning for results
 - Improved tools, knowledge management and sharing of experiences
 - Comprehensive and integrated approach with reduced separation of operation and capacity building
- The CTA needs to improve in contributing to better capacity building outside ICRC operations.

Recommendations:

- The ICRC should follow a more coherent approach on global, as well as on local (operational) level in capacity building in RFL.
- The ICRC should have clear models and scenarios developed for the capacity building. They should include all NS in need of capacity building and all regions with RFL relevance. These models should inspire discussions in the FLN. These models could for example be partnership projects, regional consortia, systematic peer exchange, etc.
- The CTA must ensure that the resources are in place and accessible for operations and for NS (human resources, both in terms of quality and in terms of quantity, concepts, tools and guidelines, and finally as much as possible: funding).
- The ICRC should be clearer and more open about limitations in capacity building in its documentation and in its communication (dialogue). It should be more open about 'failed cases'.
- The ICRC should further exploit the value of local ICRC Field Officers for the capacity building process.

4.8 Responsibilities at ICRC HQ and in field

Regarding the roles in ICRC HQ and in the field the following two points are of particular importance for this review:

4.8.1 Central or De-central?

The fact that the ICRC is working with a decentralized approach -and the fact that a wide margin of appreciation is left to HoDs whose personality and interests to some extent sometimes dictate the strategic choices of Delegations- contributes to the fact that not all visions and policies of the ICRC HQ are actually implemented in the field. However the consequence should not be a stronger influence of ICRC HQ on field operations. The knowledge of needs and the context, which should be the basis for decision taking, are best kept at the level of delegations.

The entry point for the ICRC HQ for influencing RFL activities and to improve coherence in the response should be mainly⁵³:

- Dialogue and documentations: reminder of principles and standards in RFL
- Training
- Offer technical advice, support and guidance
- Offer information and knowledge
- Support in mobilizing resources
- Promotion of RFL internally
- Provision of technical guidelines

The ICRC HQ's role can be improved regarding continuity in the RFL response. It is desirable to have less staff turnover at CTA level so that for example lessons learnt from past operations are taken more into account in new operations. There is also a need to follow up on good practice examples from the field and to further develop and apply first time tested innovative approaches. At the moment this continuity seems to depend mainly on individuals but is not institutionalised enough.

4.8.2 Disconnection between ICRC HQ and ICRC Delegations

The support from the ICRC HQ was mainly appreciated in delegations. However some interlocutors reported certain disconnection between the ICRC HQ and the delegations. It was reported that ICRC HQ has to a certain degree an insufficient level of knowledge and understanding of the situation in the field. This has been said with reference to ICRC HQ as such as well as with reference to CTA. It is partly related to the fact that the CTA does not have the resources to follow all situations with the same attention. Secondly it depends on individuals. Not all Chef de Secteur have the same background or interest in RFL so that they deal with the subject differently from those who have a higher interest in this matter.

On the other side, the fact that Delegations act quite independently and that the importance given to RFL in some Delegations is not always satisfactory, does not favour a coherent RFL response.

⁵³ It is difficult to order these aspects by priority as they are closely linked. In the Executive Summary only the first three points are stated as they are seen as the most relevant ones.

The responsibilities between ICRC HQ and Delegations are overall clear. There is a different perception of roles in ICRC HQ and in the field regarding ICRC HQ's role in quality assurance. Whereas interlocutors in ICRC HQ claimed to be responsible for quality in RFL operations, interlocutors in the field stated that the ICRC HQ is not well-informed enough about field activities and primarily interested in quantitative analysis of RFL activities⁵⁴.

Regarding added value to RFL activities, in the ICRC HQ the position of *Chef de Secteur* seems to be the weakest part in the chain⁵⁵. Their knowledge and interest in RFL depends a lot on the individual person and in particular on whether this person has previously worked in RFL before or not. In certain cases their regional responsibility and the priorities of other sectors in this region do not allow them to follow the RFL activities as it should be.

In certain occasions the ICRC HQ promotes decisions, which are not well enough based on context specific knowledge. These can be for example technical issues (such as push for the use tracing websites in contexts where internet access is very limited).

4.8.3 Perception of the 2.1 Project

The presently ongoing Project 2.1 is known among those in the field working in RFL. The initiative is followed with interest but also with some scepticism regarding the ambitious approach of the project.

Conclusions:

- CTA's capability in ensuring continuity and coherence within the organisation is limited.
- The CTA in its attempt of being present and active in cases of major needs pushes delegations to assess the needs quickly and identify the HR and tools needed to respond adequately. From the point of view of the delegations this is sometimes seen as overambitious in promoting CTA's own agenda, which is in the interest of RFL, but not always in line with the given context.
- The Project 2.1 is an important initiative, also internally, and creates a lot of expectations.

Recommendations:

- The CTA HQ should in general strengthen its role in working towards more coherence internally and externally. However the context specific analysis of Delegations should not be ignored because of the striving for more coherence.
- The CTA HQ should first take a decision where the entry points are for creating more coherence and where the limited resources can be invested into the most influential factors (e.g. improving dialogue, documentation and training).

⁵⁴ See chapter about measuring results.

⁵⁵ Chain in the sense of support staff in the HQ incl. regional desk, specialist advisors

- The CTA HQ should strengthen its role in quality assurance by first clearly defining what the desired results in RFL are, by improving measuring of results (see later), and by improving knowledge management.
- The CTA should continue on a permanent basis the activities of the Project 2.1, involving the Delegations. Delegations should have more trust in these initiatives and should provide support. It is worth to discuss the permanent existence of the Advisory Board to have legitimacy in the network and to have some kind of representation towards the outside.

4.9 Tools, methods and procedures, technical expertise, knowledge management

Tools, methods and procedures are discussed here only as far as they are relevant to the CTA's role as coordinator and technical advisor. There are so many instruments, means and resources within ICRC with a link to RFL that not all of them could be assessed.

4.9.1 Coherence in working procedures

It could be observed that although instruments and tools are available, activities are started from scratch too often and tools are not used and in some cases not even known. The quantity and complexity of guidelines and procedures has been questioned by some interlocutors. Some frustrations have been reported in this regard. There is a need for streamlining these instruments, but without creating what was coined by some as a new 'monster-guideline' such as the Guidelines *The Missing*.⁵⁶

There is not enough coherence in the network about tools, techniques, documents and methods. Activities to develop them are sometimes doubled. Where some delegations find a tool very useful others do not know about it. In one case a tool was seen as useful but not used nevertheless; instead a new tool was been developed and applied. Even within ICRC's operation in one country there is sometimes no coherence. Training tools and documentation are developed from scratch on provincial level.

There is a variety of tools and data bases with a direct link to CTA's role but they are not updated, not very well connected, nor user-friendly. There are for example the tool boxes on protection and cooperation. Both seem to be rather ad hoc compilations than well structured and streamlined working tools. The Protection Toolbox for example is sometimes seen as too heavy and some interlocutors asked for a compendium or a 'book of essentials'. The Protection Toolbox is very much oriented to conflict situations and does not reflect enough the role of the ICRC/CTA in peace time.

A central role plays Prot5. The majority of the interlocutors were rather satisfied with this tool.⁵⁷ Often it was stated that it could improve on the analysis side. As it is very focused on quantitative analysis it does not allow for contextual and qualitative analysis. Given the fact that the ICRC invests quite an effort into this tool it should be exploited to a maximum.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Capacity criteria: Capability to achieve coherence

⁵⁷ This might be surprising given the fact that Prot5 is quite a sophisticated tool and not easy to apply in context such as conflict affected countries in Africa.

⁵⁸ Capacity criteria: Competencies

There are some tools where it is not clear which purpose they really have or should have. They do not seem to be well maintained and used in practice. The extranet data base on tracing for example has a section for statistics, which contains a global overview of the CTA and Protection Division but nothing more or nothing in detail. Other sections of the data base were not accessible for the Review Team because of technical problems.

Apparently activities in development and maintaining of tools (and in particular training) are weak. It is hard to tell in how many countries training guides have been, or still are developed. Usually these activities are started from scratch and do not base on already existing guides or formats readily available. And this despite the fact that probably about two thirds of all the training guides produced are of similar content and purpose.

In general it can be said that knowledge management within CTA is rather weak.

There are extranets and databases, which are partly accessible for NS (e.g. the Tracing Database). None of them are easy to handle (at least were not for the Review Team, who were granted access) from a technical point of view. The issue of language plays an important role and should not be under-estimated. If someone wants to have access to all documentation, this person would need to be able to read French as some of the key documents are available in French only. The translation of written material should not be underestimated for the work within the network.⁵⁹

There is a clear role for the CTA to become a ‘centre of excellence’ with access to knowledge, principles and tools for all those involved in the Movement’s RFL response. Modern technologies make it possible to run inter-active, easily accessible platforms, tools and communication boards. The CTA should focus on tools and guidelines that are inspiring for those who are entrusted with operations.

Good guidelines and knowledge management will effect also on timeliness (see later). Especially during the start-up phase of operations already existing check-lists and guidelines were useful.

The quality of methods and tools, and whether they are kept up-to-date, are also of importance for the profile of ICRC in RFL. NS and external actors will accept ICRC’s role in RFL more if methods and tools are up to date and of outstanding quality.⁶⁰

4.9.2 Context specific documentation and language issue

Documentation and tools made available to NS should be more tailor-made. Again, as mentioned above the language issue is of crucial importance in this regard and the CTA should contribute to the mobilization of resources for as much translation as possible.

As an example the RFL Handbook for NS can be quoted. It is mainly available in French and English. In Sri Lanka the process of translation was slow. In Angola the RFL Guide is available at the NS but only in English. The National Tracing Coordinator does only speak Portuguese.

⁵⁹ Capacity criteria: Collective ability and capability to achieve coherence

⁶⁰ Capacity criteria: Integrative ability

Some documents in toolboxes are only available in French and in some cases the translation from French to English is not of very high standard.

The RFL Handbook for NS could be made more tailor-made in the sense that at present it addresses NS as if they were all the same or on an equal level. It does not acknowledge the huge differences in capacities of NS's tracing services existing worldwide.

4.9.3 Dissemination of tools and procedures

In certain cases lessons learned were not done or not finalized. Sometimes guidelines are in place but they are not known or not used in the field.

As stated before the DDR Internal Guidelines do not reflect enough the importance of RFL in DDR processes so that there is a risk that they will not be used among those who are in charge of RFL.

This phenomenon is to a certain degree also true for non-internal ICRC guidelines. An example are the Inter-Agency-Guidelines on Child Protection, which are not systematically integrated into ICRC's operations. A further example is given in the section about needs assessments.

4.9.4 Technological developments

Within ICRC there seems to be a common sense that the ICRC is not up to date with the latest technological developments. Whether this statement is true could not be verified in this review as field visits were limited and as the Review Team could not compare with the technical level of other actors in the same field. As in general this report deals with this issue only as far as it is of relevance for the CTA and RFL. It refers mainly to the use of mobile and satellite phones and the use of tracing web sites.

RFL has a lot to do with communication, which is in today's world very much in the focus of the technological development. Interlocutors repeatedly criticized the ICRC's backlog in the application of modern technologies. It has been reported that other agencies (e.g. UNHCR, Danish Refugee Council) work with programmes based on cell-phones (distribution of phones or SIM cards), whereas ICRC does not. Another common example for criticism in this regard was the fact that 'still today' the ICRC is transmitting paper Red Cross Messages.

If the ICRC is strong in being present in countries heavily affected by conflicts or other disasters; if the organisation is strong in getting access to individuals, and in being able to deal accurately with large numbers of individuals under difficult conditions, then this is more important than showing the Western public that the ICRC can operate according to the up-to-the-minute technological developments.

It should also be remembered that the demand for up-to date technologies within the ICRC context has implications for resources. For example the costs for satellite phones are obviously higher than for radio communication. It is certainly possible to run wireless satellite based internet services in all places of the world but to a certain price only. It would be a political decision to demand these standards, followed by the mobilization of resources for it. In our point of view the importance of applying the latest technologies is less a priority than providing the best possible services in the respective contexts.

Therefore the insisting on the application of latest technological developments in RFL should be modest and context specific. The above-mentioned internal criticism contribute to the rather negative image of RFL within the organisation. This underlines

the need for internal promotion of RFL combined with better information about RFL activities, constraints in operations and about results.

However, what has to be mentioned is that -as in other cases within the organisation- the capacity of the ICRC regarding modern technical appliances seems to depend largely on individuals, who have an interest for new technologies or not. If a delegate is interested in testing new tools (such as the electronic transmission of RCM) he or she will pursue the case.

Conclusions:

- The capacity of the CTA in knowledge management is rather weak. There is room for improvement in the promotion of good practice, tools and experiences. This is a central role of the CTA and is crucial for credibility and coherence within the Movement.
- The importance of the language issue is not recognized enough.
- The importance of up-to date communication technology is sometimes over-emphasised and leads to over-expectations and finally to a negative image of the CTA's performance in cases the expectations are not fulfilled.

Recommendations:

- The CTA should streamline RFL related tools and documentation regarding: language, user-friendliness, updates and duplications.
- The CTA should consider a 'compendium' or 'book of essentials' summarizing the most relevant policies, guidelines and tools regarding RFL.
- The ICRC should pay more attention to the language issue and should invest enough resources into translation and dissemination of documentation.
- The ICRC should apply tools and techniques based entirely on the need and the context and not based on the ambition of being in the forefront of technical developments. In this regard the ICRC should be clear in communication and documentation about decisions and constraints regarding the application of modern technological appliances, as this aspect seems to have a significant influence on the ICRC internal image of RFL.

4.10 Results, measuring and reporting on results

As stated in the introductory section of this review, the aim of this review was not assess the results of RFL activities as such. One of the aims of this review is an assessment of the CTA's capacity to measure results, to have the knowledge about the results and to assess the capacity how results are presented within and outside the organisation.⁶¹

Good results in RFL and the importance given to RFL within the ICRC are interrelated. Good results can only be achieved if RFL is seen as important within the ICRC and only if resources and support is granted to RFL activities. The same relation applies vice versa: Good results in RFL contribute to a better standing of the sector within the organisation.

⁶¹ Capacity criteria: Competencies

It is therefore important to achieve good results (obvious) but at the same time also to present rightfully the results achieved (less-obvious). Regarding the last point we see room for improvement within the ICRC.

- Firstly, this issue goes in line with the question of what the ICRC actually wants to achieve with RFL. What is the overall aim, to what needs does the organisation want to respond to, and who are the potential beneficiaries?

Importance of having indicators

At present there are no indicators for a successful RFL intervention. Often large numbers of RCM transmitted or big numbers of families re-united are stated as a success indicator. But these numbers do not say anything about the quality of the individual cases and about the overall impact of the intervention.⁶² Some delegations try to make reference to the ‘indicators’ used in the PfR documentation. A comment in a questionnaire about these indicators states that there are “no credible, efficient and well defined indicators for tracing activities.”

There is a need to define indicators for RFL, which can be applied and adapted situation specific. These indicators should for example take into account elements such as time (time needed to travel, time needed to transmit a message, time between the separation of a child from its family, etc.). The indicators should also include context specific aspects, in particular aspects, which are for example strongly influencing the exchange of family correspondence (access, road conditions, ordinary post, and telecommunications network).

To identify a set of applicable indicators would make it necessary to look into a sample set of RFL activities in selected contexts worldwide. This exercise should not be a desk based review but should actually involve beneficiaries and specialists with good knowledge of local contexts and needs and particularities of families in the specific countries. A further exercise could be undertaken to develop and test mechanism for systematic consultations with beneficiaries and complaint mechanisms.

Beneficiary consultations

There are no systematic consultations with beneficiaries about results of RFL activities and there is no complaint mechanism in place. This instrument is increasingly becoming the standard in other humanitarian sectors. The logic consequence from the fact that the victim should be in the centre of the ICRC activities would be to give the victim a voice and to listen to the victim about his need in RFL and in how far the ICRC has responded to it.

A better understanding of RFL results might contribute to fewer situations where the ICRC was too be overambitious in its response and did maybe create many expectations, which could later not be fulfilled (examples reported are Angola, Sri Lanka). Especially when big numbers of people are registered as cases the final aim is a crucial issue. In

⁶² One illustrative example is the Monthly Tracing Report format of the agreement between the ICRC and the Namibian NS (Annex 5a): It does not contain any element of analysis of the results. It focuses on the census and the quantity of work but excludes reporting on individual cases. Examples could also be taken from the yearly PfR Situational Analysis, which refers to numbers of RCMs collected and distributed, phone calls, new registrations, etc.

Angola there are at present many people registered and published in a magazine. What will happen with this list is open at the moment.

The above-said is equally true for the capacity building activities with NS. As stated earlier (for example in the case of Sri Lanka) there is often no clear target formulation and there are not clear benchmarks or indicators for a successful process. In this field further options for measuring results could be exploited further, such as peer reviews between NS.

- Secondly the question is how the information should be collected and presented internally and externally.

Data collection

ICRC's data collection on RFL cases is primarily focused on quantitative elements and less on qualitative aspects. Statistics from field delegations, antennas, sub-delegations and offices are prepared and administered with quite an effort. Without doubt, as part of ICRC's global data administration and as a means of monitoring and cross-checking this work is important.

Additionally to the statistics and the running of databases with Prot5 there are regular narrative reports, which however are also quite focused on figures. Finally there is regular communication between the field and the delegations and few direct meetings to discuss results and performance. In the questionnaires the field visits, joint field activities and participation in meetings are stated as the most important monitoring tools besides statistics. Usually there is not much differentiation between monitoring and measuring results.

This system does not allow for much quality assessment and does probably not reflect entirely the performance of ICRC's work in the world. The statistics show for example a clear trend of a decrease of tracing cases and family reunifications in Angola since 2003.⁶³ However the statistics do not reflect that the number of open cases might in fact require more effort because of more difficulties than in earlier cases. Statistics do also not reflect the time element in implementing the RFL activities (time needed to travel, geographical distance in family reunifications).

Finally the statistics do not reflect that family reunifications are getting more and more complex and sensitive the longer the separation between the family and the child dates back. In Angola RFL in 2006 is no longer 'RFL in conflict' or 'RFL in post-conflict'. Reuniting children with their families has become more complex as children stayed for years with host families or in orphanages. Some parents did not expect to live with their children again.

The system also does not allow systematic reporting on side-effects of RFL interventions. It is known that RFL is often a 'door-opener' to key persons or groups of beneficiaries. Tracing can be a reason to get access to regions and population groups, which otherwise would not be possible.

It cannot be excluded that this reporting system does contribute to the sometimes reported lack of information exchange between sub-delegations/offices and the delegations, as well as between the delegations and ICRC HQ in Geneva. As stated

⁶³ ICRC General Statistics for Angola, mid-term 2006

above, CTA HQ claims to have the responsibility for overall quality and a coherent approach, whereas quality assurance and relevance of programmes have foremost to be performed by delegations. It can be doubted that the number focused system provides the right information for quality assurance by delegations and overall oversight by CTA HQ.

Need for more in-depth analysis

There is need for more systematic assessment of results in a broader sense. Assessments –for examples in the form of a research undertaken into impact or a set of evaluations– will contribute to a better understanding of results in RFL. They should be part of a continuous learning process within the organisation. Recent RFL reviews/evaluations undertaken in Africa had quite an impact on the organisation and show that there is a potential for systematic improved learning through evaluations. It is acknowledged that resources are often seen as limited for these exercises and that they are ranked low priority. But they do not necessarily need to be large-scale.

A few evaluations of RFL operations were made available to the Review Team. None of them included a systematic assessment of all forms of impact of RFL interventions. The assessment of positive and negative impact, as well as of intended and unintended impact could lead to better knowledge about RFL and related activities. The evaluation of the UAM Programme in West Africa for example is important for a better understanding of RFL involving children. It showed gaps in the response and illustrates that a better knowledge of effects and consequences of RFL interventions is needed for future activities.

In-depth studies on the impact of RFL can also contribute to a better standing of RFL within the organisation. Presenting positive impact of RFL interventions, which goes beyond numbers, will show staff, donors and the public how important and valuable RFL is in our times.

It might also be helpful to highlight more the constraints faced in RFL. The questionnaire showed that among the three reasons stated for the main influence on the results of RFL, two were outside the direct influence of the ICRC:

- Mostly stated: Quality of personnel working in RFL (in delegation and in NS)
- Second: Importance given to RFL by the NS
- Third: Access

Conclusions:

- Aims and objectives of RFL are not clearly enough defined. There are no indicators, which would allow proper monitoring, measuring of results and better lobbying for RFL.
- The ICRC is not in the forefront of applying standards in Humanitarian Aid, in particular systematic beneficiary consultations. This would contribute to better accountability, better result measuring, and finally to better results and a better standing of RFL within the organisation.
- The CTA is too focused on quantitative data collection and there is need for more in-depth analysis.

Recommendations:

- The CTA should develop indicators for measuring RFL results. The process should ideally be participatory, involving Delegations and beneficiaries. This exercise will contribute to a better understanding of RFL needs.
- The ICRC should do beneficiary consultations more systematically to give beneficiaries a voice and to learn more about their needs and expectations.
- The ICRC should extend its monitoring system from quantitative to qualitative data and in the sense that more context analysis is introduced more systematically.
- The ICRC should undertake more systematically in-depth analysis of RFL responses for example through (quick) impact evaluations. These exercises do not need to be large-scale but can be done tailor-made and context specific according to the need of the programme.

4.11 Human resources

This section starts with a statement confirming the important of Human Resources (HR) for results in RFL. The statement from the evaluation of the West African UAM Programme can be quoted: “The ICRC Tracing Programme in the West African Sub-region was considerably short of adequate resources (human resources in terms of quantity, quality, training, procedures and tools) for a significant period of time, impacting on the results of the programme.”

In the questionnaires the quality of personnel working in RFL was most often stated for the main influence on the results of RFL activities.

There is room for improvement on both sides, the quantity of staff and the quality:

Quantity

The CTA at HQ level would benefit from an increase in RFL experts.⁶⁴ If there is the momentum now for additional staff than this should be taken up as much as possible. The present staffing situation could be improved if there would be a better hand-over and fewer/shorter periods with vacant positions. The consultants were in some occasions confronted with absent job descriptions –a situation, which is not uncommon at ICRC-, and in some cases with unclear responsibilities. At present there are positions with rather unrealistic portfolios in the sense that too many tasks are combined within one position.

There is a need to recruit and develop experienced staff, which is able to think about alternative/innovative solutions and to prevent the repetition of mistakes and to learn from good practice cases.

It is acknowledged that a number of constraints exist, including for example:

- A position in RFL is not seen as a career position, but often seen as temporary post.

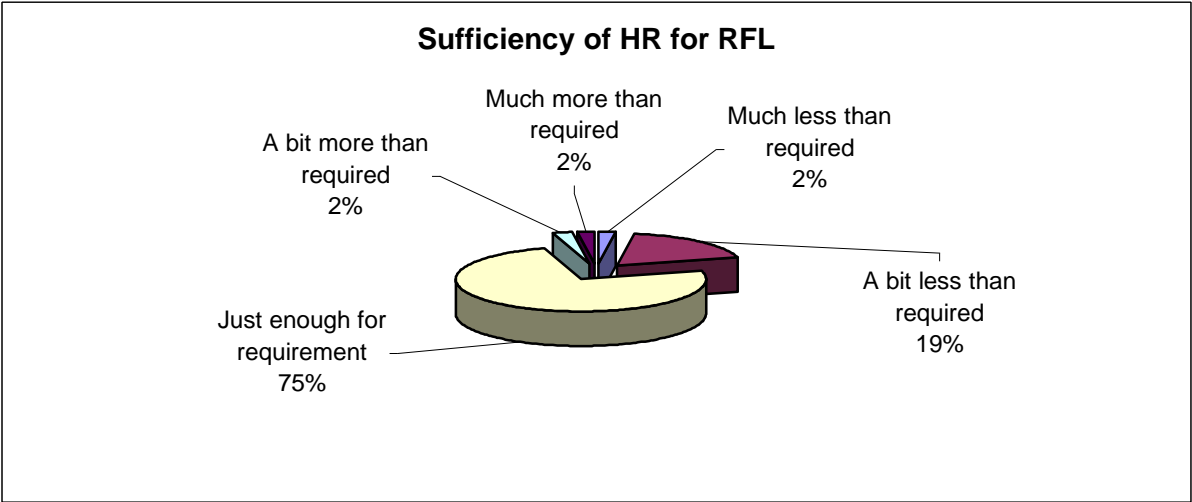
⁶⁴ This is a known fact and is already partly addressed by re-organising the division and including new posts.

- It is difficult to find qualified and experienced staff for leadership positions in RFL.
- The general high staff turnover and the short duration in one position are not in favour of RFL activities.

To properly fulfil the role of coordinator and technical advisor as it is defined at present the division would require:

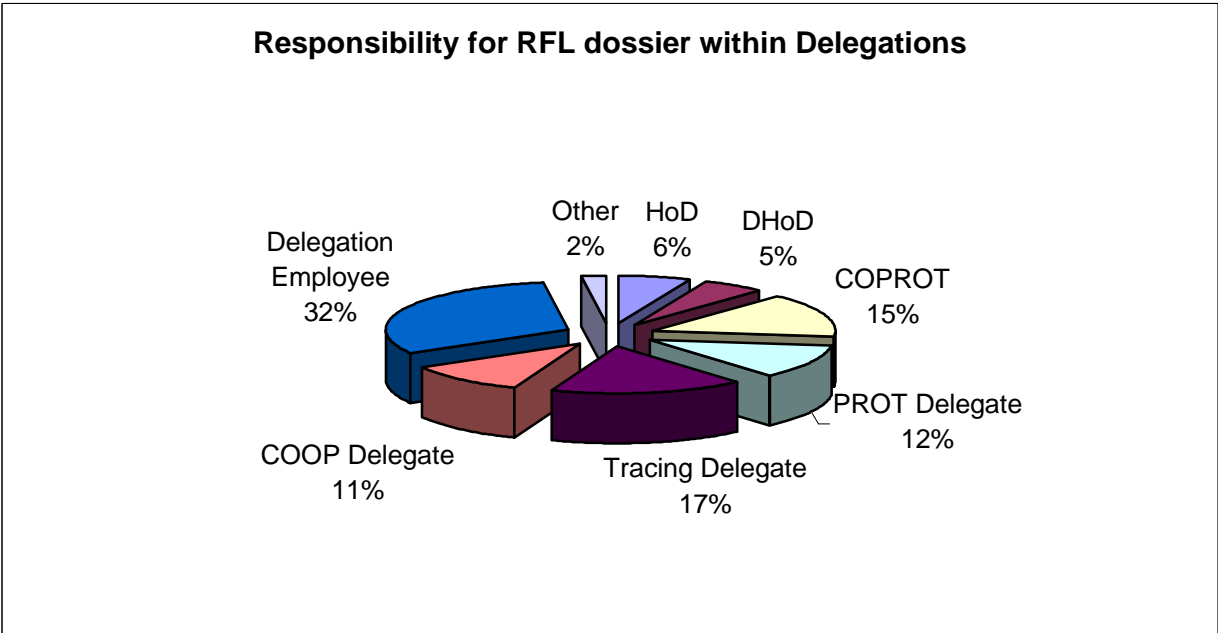
- Head of CTA – as today
- Deputy Head of CTA – with a clear focus on leadership and supervision, strategy and policy development.
- Seven specialists:
 - One full time position to liaise and coordinate within the Family Links Network and to push the process of capacity building with NS.
 - One position for ‘client-relations’, meaning NS, governments and external actors.
 - One full time position for knowledge management, tools and guidelines.
 - One full time position for quality assessment, monitoring and evaluation.
 - One position for human resource development in RFL (training, expert pools).
 - One full time position for *The Missing*.
 - One position dealing with RFL and special groups, such as children.

On delegation level the staffing situation is according to the questionnaire seen as following:



It is remarkable that according to the questionnaire in about 1/3 of the cases a delegation employee has been named as being in charge of RFL. Even if this person is not exclusively in charge of the dossier -in about 80% of the cases more than one staff member was in charge of RFL- but it is an indication for the importance of the local staff members.⁶⁵

The division of labour in some delegations can be seen as an indicator that RFL is within the ICRC often treated as a technical task first. The direct contact to beneficiaries is left to local staff and NS volunteers, whereas the delegates concentrate on issues such as data base management and proper transmission of RCM.

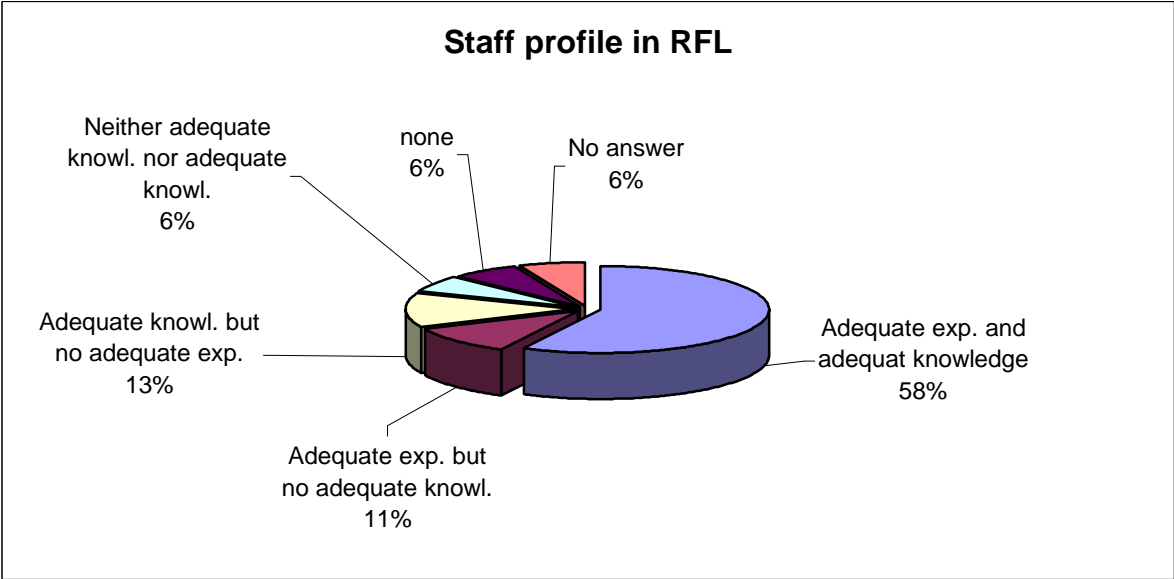


⁶⁵ See the section below about local ICRC staff

The deployment of RFL specialists to an emerging RFL situation makes a significant difference in assessing the needs and planning the intervention strategy. Often the crucial decisions are taken at an early stage. However, too often the right person at the right place seems to depend from chance rather than from proper HR management. There is no pool of RFL experts readily deployable at any time to any place in the world.

Quality

It is difficult to say whether staff is sufficiently trained or not. On the one hand more training is often requested in interviews, on the other hand it has been reported that the experience and knowledge of staff working in RFL is sufficient (about 60% of the answers).



What can be said is that there is a lack of high profile RFL experts able to work in the development of activities, policies and services. It is less a lack of technical expertise but more a lack of the expertise in technical capacity building.

There is an insufficient coherence in knowledge and experience among those working in RFL. As RFL is not represented in the ‘standard’ training for delegates to the level necessary to run an RFL operation in all contexts, the level of expertise largely depends on the experience of the delegates. The above described deficit in knowledge management plays a role as well.

This shortfall is already partly addressed. The new training/seminar for advanced tracing delegates is well perceived but is still mainly dealing with technical aspects of tracing and less with required ‘soft skills’ (see above). A gap has been reported between the introductory course and this training. Whereas the introductory course gives the basics for working in RFL the new training course addressed those who worked in RFL for some time and who have a good level of knowledge and experience. But there is no course on intermediary level for those who are neither ‘beginners’ nor very experienced.

Specialists vs. Generalists

Within this review we could include a long debate about the question whether RFL needs specialists or should rather be implemented by generalists. The answer is: It

depends of the situation. There are specific situations where a specialist should be in charge. This is in particular during needs assessments, strategic decision taking in evolving situations and programme planning. This also applies to capacity development with NS.

The actual implementation of RFL activities can usually be done by generalists who have a sound knowledge of the principles and basic working procedures. Their need for specialist advice could be addressed by providing guidelines, tools, technical support and supervision.

Local ICRC staff

A further example for the deficit in training is the lack of formal training for local staff members. The Review Team could observe that the capacity of local staff members is not always paid enough attention to and might be neglected regarding its potential and the aspect of sustainability.

They learn mainly on the job (which is not necessarily a disadvantage). The on the job training has the disadvantage that staff members are less confronted to principles and concepts but learn more the technical implementation of their work.

Staff members with long-lasting experience are generally well informed about the principles and concepts. What they sometimes miss is the appropriate application in their work. Consequently, even if local staff members are of crucial importance for field operations it should be remembered that it still makes a very significant difference whether an international delegate is present or not. This is especially true for situations with sensitive cases.

A statement is quoted from one of the questionnaires: “Most of the tracing local staff have been involved for several years in tracing activities. They normally have a good working experience but lack sometimes some technical/institutional skills how to handle difficult or specific cases. Additional courses reserved so far to delegates would be one of the solutions to improve the situation.”

The increased inclusion of local staff members into the capacity building process and into regional liaison and exchange should be considered.

Very experienced local staff members might be potential trainers or could at least participate in regional experience exchange fora so that expertise remains in the region. Such an approach has clear advantages. Apart from the obvious saving on costs, another advantage is that NS or national ICRC staff may be, in certain situations, be more ready to listen to one of their colleagues, who has first hand experience not only of tracing, but also of what it represents, implies or mean to do tracing when one is a member of a NS or a national staff of the ICRC.

A pre-condition is that this person works entirely in line with ICRC’s principles in RFL, which makes it so important that the ICRC stresses its values and principles all the time and includes into training and coaching of local colleagues. This is why in some contexts recipients may be more inclined to listen to an ICRC expatriate trainer, as they may consider that the mere fact of being an international brings credibility and expertise. For this reason the ICRC has to be present in the regions from time to time. It does not mean that a permanent presence is necessary.

The case of Namibia gives an example of good continuity and best use of local staff: The ICRC field officer was recruited as National Tracing Coordinator (a wise choice), as was the tracing field officer.

Another example can be quoted from the Country Report Ukraine: “The consultant was truly impressed by the dedication expertise, skills (including languages) of the tracing team. Most of the 11 women who work in the service have been there for more than 10 (many 14) years. Turnover has therefore not at all been an issue. They have, with the financial help of ICRC, set up an impressive tracing database, which they have improved over the years.

The URC tracing service could probably be used as a positive example to be quoted in other contexts. Some of their staff could become resource persons in a variety of ICRC projects – e.g. training of other NS, or with regard to setting-up tracing databases.”

Conclusions:

- The CTA would benefit from both more and better qualified staff.
- HR are of crucial importance during the start up phase of RFL interventions.
- The role and potential of local staff working in RFL is not acknowledged enough.

Recommendations:

- The CTA should continue to reinforce its human resource capacity at HQ level.
- The CTA needs to ensure that RFL specialists are available during start up phases of new RFL operations, as well as for ongoing technical field support upon request.
- The CTA should investigate more into and should promote more the potential of local staff members with sound experience in RFL. They should be integrated more into RFL training and regional exchange.

4.12 Timeliness

The ICRC is in RFL activities often too slow in the starting phase. Reasons are the rather re-active way of working, than being more pro-active. Another factor is the lack of clarity about aims and objectives and in certain situations the missing clarity in the mandate (situations outside conflicts). In fact, in some situations the decision taking process is the time hampering factor and not the logistical set up or scaling up of capacities.

The recent Pakistan earthquake evaluation confirms that the ICRC could do better in the starting phase of interventions: “The majority of interviewees felt, however, that ICRC’s overall response in RFL could have been more relevant and effective, given previous successful experiences in emergencies and traditional institutional knowledge. The response in October was not sufficiently focused while a more structured approach was developed in November-December.”⁶⁶

What is often overseen by interlocutors is that the ICRC is fast in setting up a new data base in a newly emerging RFL context. This is an example for the ICRC’s experience and knowledge. It could also be observed that existing guidelines saved time in the starting phase of an operation as they served as a reference point and gave orientation in planning.

⁶⁶ Evaluation of ICRC Rapid Deployment in Pakistan, Channel Research November 2006, page 21

From the technical point the ICRC is also fast in setting up a new website. What takes longer in this regard is the decision to do so. But setting up a website as such is no reliable indicator. Everybody can do so within minutes. What is crucial is the structure behind the website to follow up cases. Here again the ICRC has a competitive advantage, which is the experience and the potential in having a network on the ground.

In some cases the RFL response might have been started very soon after the causing event or before a proper assessment has been taken out (Chad in 2004, Angola in 2002 immediately after the conflict was over and areas became accessible, in Sri Lanka). In the interest of showing early results and immediate action the required proper needs assessments were not done. Contextual and (ideally) participatory needs assessment need time.

In any case operations under emergency situations should include continuous needs assessments and 'breaking points' in programming so that the response can be adapted to the situation. A problem in RFL is that once a case is opened (a person is registered) it is 'a case' that has to be followed up. In situations where populations are moving fast and the need for RFL changes with their displacement, it might be necessary to think about alternative programming, for example including 'expire dates' of registrations or the obligation for re-registration after a given time.

Timeliness as an indicator for results

The timeliness factor has been stated frequently in interviews as a quality criterion. However the time factor as such does not say much without the contextual background. An example can be quoted from Rwanda: "With delays in transport, censoring and the delivery of messages, a Red Cross Message crossing a country border with the region is estimated to take an average of over 3 months from dispatch until the reply is received. Messages to and from detainees take even longer because of the censoring by the detaining authorities."⁶⁷

To use timeliness as quality criteria or indicator would make it necessary to include a contextual element into it. It might be worth thinking about a kind of index or calculating factor, which makes it possible to use timeliness as a comparative element in quality analysis.

It could be observed that factors not directly linked to CTA are often hampering the RFL process. These were for example in the field of logistics (delivering of laptops) or deployment of staff in time.

Conclusions:

- Timeliness is an important factor in RFL but should not be emphasised over proper assessments.
- The ICRC is in RFL activities often too slow in the starting phase. Reasons are the rather re-active way of working, than being more pro-active.

Recommendations:

⁶⁷ 12.2.8. Protection Toolbox: Evaluation of the RCM Network in the Rwandan context (Great Lakes 1996)

- The CTA should develop timeliness as a systematic indicator for RFL results. The indicators should include a contextual element. It might be worth investigating into an index-system for timeliness in certain types of contexts.
- To avoid false expectations constraints regarding timely delivery should be highlighted enough in internal and external communication. The development of an indicator with a contextual element would help in this regard.

4.13 Needs assessments

During the start-up phase of this review it has been agreed that the focus, setup and the resources available for this review do not allow undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the coverage⁶⁸ of ICRC's activities in RFL. In any case, it has been made clear by ICRC that this is not expected and that the question of coverage should be understood as measuring how far needs assessments are undertaken, in which way, and what they include.

For this section we would like to differentiate two fields where the ICRC is undertaking needs assessments: The one are needs assessments for RFL operations in the field, the second are needs assessment of the capacities NS.

The capacity to undertake needs assessments for RFL operations in the field is closely linked to the above-described problem of lacking clarity regarding the understanding of what RFL is and what the ultimate goal of the activities is. Additionally the assessments of needs are suffering under the lack of importance given to RFL.

RFL needs in the first place

To define a need makes it necessary to think about the term 'family' and their context specific situation. Only with good contextual knowledge you can respond to the family's need for family contact. The victim's need should be the centre and the starting point for any assessment. At present the starting point seems to be rather the technical tool available (registration, RCM, website, etc.). Contexts are assessed regarding their options for applying the tools available to the ICRC. Rather than looking for needs in tracing the assessments should look for needs of the victims, of which one could be RFL.⁶⁹

This finding can be complemented by an observation which is linked to beneficiaries of RFL. There seems to be a tendency to treat beneficiaries as a homogenous group, without looking enough at specifications in local contexts. It could be observed that sometimes there is not enough reflection about and analysis of who the (potential) beneficiaries of RFL are and what characterizes them. This is confirmed in the evaluation of the West Africa RFL response:

“A systematic, analytical profile of the beneficiaries based on their vulnerability would contribute to a greater understanding and could provide important elements for planning.”⁷⁰

According to the questionnaires families with family members abroad (refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, victims of trafficking) are stated most often to be the main beneficiaries of RFL activities. This group is followed by populations affected by

⁶⁸ ToR, section 6.3: „Coverage is the extent to which the target population is reached”.

⁶⁹ This observation goes in line with the analysis with the “Programme de Direction 2003-2006 Février 2003 Document interne”

⁷⁰ Page 5

conflicts or other situations of violence and on third place by families with detainees. This is in so far remarkable as the ICRC has the strongest mandate for the second group (see above).

IDPs, UAC, WW II related cases, and social welfare cases are groups of beneficiaries which came up frequently and are worth mentioning here.

By looking at all answers it seems to be indicated that ICRC is providing RFL services where it sees humanitarian needs, and not strictly where it has a mandate to act. This is a reality which has to be looked at straight on, as it seems to indicate a trend towards opening up with regard to criteria. As we will see, this may indeed be one way of ensuring that RFL capacities are kept alive and operational within NS, even in situation unrelated to armed conflict or violence.

Not a single respondent to the questionnaire mentioned the NS or the government as beneficiaries of RFL activity. However, this might be because of the positioning of the question outside the section about cooperation with NS.

In planning documents needs are sometimes described in the form of results: The 2007 PfR Situational Analysis describes the RFL need in Africa by referring to numbers of RCMs collected and numbers of newly opened cases.⁷¹

The response should focus on those cases and on those activities where the ICRC has a real added value (see section about strength). This will often be the case where families either do not have access to the technical means to get in contact during crisis situations, because of lack of means (poverty) or because of missing or destroyed infrastructure in the country/region (ICRC's added value is then the ability to mobilize resources and to provide access by providing technical means to overcome these problems) or because of a politically sensitive environment, for example the need for contact between Taiwan and the mainland, or in Myanmar (the ICRC's added value is its positions as impartial organisation with a reputation for confidentiality).

Involvement of RFL specialists in needs assessments

Today, where mass communication is available in almost all countries, RFL needs are more difficult to identify than in the past where one could assume that every displaced person in a development country is lacking access to communication means just because of the fact that this person was on the move. Needs assessments need to take more into account the local population's coping mechanisms.

Consequently an experienced RFL specialist should be involved in needs assessments. They should be given enough time to do assessments. Proper analysis has to be the priority over the need to show activism. The expert should ideally be accompanied by a local resource person with knowledge about families and local customs. Needs assessments should be more integrated and coordinated with other ICRC sectors and should also include what other agencies, which are present in the region, can offer.

Lack of coherence in needs assessments of NS

The assessment of the NS capacity regarding tracing is a good example of why there is no coherence and why knowledge and good practice in the organisation is often not applied in the delegations. This can be shown by looking at the use of the capacity assessment tool for NS:

⁷¹ 2007 GVA Annual Exercise page 2

According to the questionnaire the assessment tools available to delegations are seen as useful by about 50% of the respondents. Among the rest some surprising answers were given in the questionnaire of which one should be quoted here:

“The assessment tool under the Lotus Notes database "Tracing Activities" is the only tool available in Afghanistan. It is a wonderful tool; but unfortunately, it has never been used here. Our assessments are based on day to day observations and delivering the necessary recommendations to the ARCS. Although, there has never been a thorough assessment made, a global idea of the capacity of the ARCS in regards to carrying out RFL does exist among the key tracing staff of the ICRC and the ARCS. The delegation has developed its own tools for assessing the capacity of the NS Tracing activities (...)"

In another questionnaire there was no knowledge of any assessment tool available within the ICRC. In many answers this section was left blank..

This lack of coherence should not be misunderstood in the sense that ICRC HQ should be stronger in centralizing. But in cases where a tool is developed and made available it should at least be known to all delegations and there should be an acceptance of this tool of a large majority of those working with the tool. If this is not the case this should be taken as a reason to question this tool.

To achieve this any tool should be reduced to basic principles and to provide guidance. Any tool should serve as an inspiration rather than a strict format but should highlight minimum criteria. Tools not used should be removed from tool boxes and regular updates are necessary. All in all, an active knowledge and tool management is necessary.

Needs assessments in natural disaster

The Review Team did not emphasize on needs assessments in natural disaster but the findings from the ICRC Pakistan earthquake evaluation show that the above described findings were mainly confirmed in the case of Pakistan:

“The needs assessment was not undertaken systematically, was too labour intensive and insufficiently precise and did not form a solid basis for the development of an effective RFL response in October. Problems cited include:

- Lack of experienced staff at a delicate and crucial stage
- Unavailability of an adapted methodology and needs assessment tool for natural disasters
- Too few external contacts by RFL staff in the first days, in particular in hospitals and displaced camps, and lack of access to affected zones in PAK by tracing delegates during two weeks - therefore lack of direct observations- due to conflicting priorities in the use of ICRC helicopters
- Minimal existing relationships with key government sectors and other actors due to previous ICRC restricted tracing role in Pakistan
- Partial knowledge about socio-cultural organisation in the affected regions and insufficient attention given to coping strategies of the populations
- Limited attention given to RFL needs by field delegates during initial assistance assessments and guarded consideration and trust given to their findings resulting in very few needs being stated.”⁷²

⁷² Page 22

Conclusions:

- Needs assessment are rarely done systematically and in a coherent way.
- There is no systematic or coherent planning for needs assessments (re-active instead of pro-active).
- There is sometimes not enough contextual, local knowledge for proper needs assessments.
- There is not enough review of needs after time.
- There are often not enough resources given to do RFL needs assessments or often teams need to compete with other sectors which are given a higher priority (first medical aid, WatSan).

Recommendations:

- Needs assessment need to be done systematically, in a coherent way, and with enough time. There should be more planning for needs assessments. This includes planning for resources for needs assessments. They should ideally involve a RFL specialist and someone with in-depth local knowledge (knowledge of family structures and their coping mechanisms).
- Needs assessments should be more integrated and coordinated with other ICRC sectors and should also include what other agencies (NS, PNS and agencies outside the Movement), which are present in the region, can offer.
- Needs should be reviewed systematically after time and RFL programmes should in some cases include pre-defined 'breaking points', in the sense that a programme might come to an end because a situation has changed significantly.

4.14 Coordination/cooperation with other actors

Some respondents to the questionnaire understood CTA's role as coordinator in the sense that the CTA should improve the network of contacts with all agencies active in tracing. At present ICRC "coordinates" mainly within the Movement but does not "coordinate" enough with the activities of other actors that provide tracing services (though it does participate in overall coordination efforts). Contributions to this observation could be:

- The ICRC follows a too rigid interpretation of the need for confidentiality.
- Most of those external actors are not francophone (such as SCF, IRC), which might be a reason for a 'cultural barrier', which often hampers cooperation.

As in other cases as well, the cooperation/coordination seems to depend often from individual persons, their attitudes and approach. In Liberia for example there was said to be good cooperation with Save the Children (SCF) because of a good personal relationship between the SCF staff and ICRC responsible staff member. But cooperation and coordination is not yet institutionalised enough.

The internal Guidelines on *The Missing* formulate one dilemma of ICRC when working with actors outside the RC Movement:

“The ICRC/RC family news network makes use of other persons and organisations **who accept its working rules and principles** and who are in a position to make an effective contribution (e.g. local religious or community leaders, UN organizations, such as UNHCR and UNICEF, international, national or local non-governmental organizations) by participating in collection/distributing messages from/to populations with which they are in contact.”⁷³

The dilemma is that first not all actors know, understand and accept the rules and principles of the ICRC. For many persons the ICRC is still a ‘strange animal’ operating in secrecy and outside coordination and discussion fora. ICRC’s principles on confidentiality make the cooperation with some actors in some contexts difficult.

The Manila Resolution is very focussed on refugees and IDPs.⁷⁴ Cooperation with other actors is only mentioned with reference to UNHCR. In reality the ICRC is dealing not only with displaced persons and more actors than just UNHCR are of importance in tracing today (IOM, UNICEF, Save the Children, etc.). Resolution 2D of the XXVIth. International Conference (Geneva 1995) encourages the NS (but not the ICRC as such) to maximize their efficiency in carrying out tracing work and family reunification in close contact with government authorities and other competent organizations. UNHCR and IOM are directly referred to in this resolution.

Conclusions:

- ICRC principles and procedures hamper good cooperation and coordination with other actors.
- Good cooperation and coordination depend too much from individual skills (attitude, knowledge of a language).

Recommendations:

- The ICRC should continue its change in attitude and should go on to open up as far as its principles and its status allow. To support this, regulations and rules should be reviewed in this regard to assess whether they are not too rigid in terms of confidentiality. To support this further, the ICRC could collect cases of good practice examples of collaboration with other actors in the field, including a list of factors contributing to the successful cooperation.

⁷³ ICRC Internal Operational Guide-Lines on The Missing and their Families: 5.6 Check-list on the ICRC/RC family news network: role of the different actors, section 3. Role of other (non-RC) actors, page 190 (highlighting by the authors)

⁷⁴ Resolution XXI of the XXIVth. International Conference (Manila 1981), Art. 8

4.15 CTA and natural disasters

ICRC interventions have always focused on situations of armed conflicts and other situations of violence. Historically the ICRC has not undertaken RFL actions in response to natural or other disasters. However, in 1988 the ICRC provided assistance in response to the earthquake in Armenia, and again in 2003 the ICRC provided assistance in response to the earthquake in Bam, and then in 2005 assistance and coordination were provided in response to the tsunami in Asia, Hurricane Katrina in North America and the earthquake in South-East Asia in Pakistan.⁷⁵

While most stakeholders consider this development as natural, since these interventions responded to obvious humanitarian needs unmet by others, a number of observers consider such an approach as a „mission creep.“ It nevertheless appears that the traditional ICRC approach to stick to its conventional and statutory mandate and intervene only in situation of armed conflict or other situations of violence was outdated. The present practice of intervening in natural disasters only when the disaster occurs in situation of violence where ICRC was already present appears to have been meant to put a consensual varnish on the new approach.

The FEDERATION and the mandate

Neither the Geneva Conventions nor the Statutes specifically mention the part played by the International Federation in RFL. Nevertheless, the report submitted by the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies to the XXIVth International Red Cross Conference (Manila 1981) delineated some tasks of NS Tracing Services within the province of the Leagues of Red Cross Societies – e.g. when natural disasters occur – while others lie within the competence of the ICRC.⁷⁶

The Seville Agreement does give some guidelines, and it is often quoted. With regard to RFL, however, the demarcation lines have brought the debate only that far. To be in a position to ascertain the reality on the ground, one needs to see who has actually been at the forefront of RFL in relief operations, as well as analyse how the respective mandates have played out on the field.

In 2003, the International Conference adopted the Agenda for Humanitarian Action, which includes the following objective:

“G.O. 03: 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.”⁷⁷

Interestingly, RFL is not mentioned in this text.

⁷⁵ Approach Paper – Section 5.2.

⁷⁶ Source: *The Role of the Central Tracing Agency as Co-ordinator and Advisor to National Societies and Government*, Report submitted by the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, XXIVth International Red Cross Conference, Manila, November 1981

⁷⁷ http://www.icrc.org/Applic/p128e.nsf/va_navPage/POA?openDocument

De facto involvement of the ICRC in natural disasters

The ICRC has increasingly been involved in RFL in natural disasters, taking the lead role, and this has not raised any eyebrows within the Movement, not even at the Federation. Indeed, the general thinking within the Movement has been that only the ICRC had both the capacity and the expertise with regard to RFL.

The Federation, on the other hand, has never built the capacity or the expertise in terms of RFL, not has it pretended that it had. Tracing has somehow never been on the map of the FEDERATION, and it has been reasonable enough never (as far as we know) to pretend that it could play a leading role in that respect.

The question is then whether, in addition to its *de facto* lead in natural disaster, ICRC should seek a more formal endorsement from the Movement. Here, opinions seem to diverge, some thinking that clarity of purpose and mandate could only bring more efficiency, other believing that this should be left to unspoken rules – rather in the sense of the saying – “do not wake the sleeping dog”, i.e. do not provoke the Federation to react negatively to a formal take-over.

This role should be better integrated in natural disaster relief in general. The recent evaluation of ICRC’s emergency response to the Pakistan October 2005 earthquake confirms: “ICRC led the RFL Movement response in Pakistan. Therefore, it had a larger responsibility and potential scope of operations than those foreseen in the ICRC-IFRC Joint Statement and in the delimited geographical areas for ICRC assistance. This created additional challenges for framing an adapted response, particularly for needs assessment and definition of priorities.”⁷⁸

Giving the ICRC a lead role in natural disasters will sooner or later have the implication that the ICRC is responsible for disaster preparedness as well. This will require additional resources and needs another approach and an awareness of it. Again, *de facto* this is happening already, as the example of Nepal shows:

In Nepal, the NS has been very active with ICRC, but the workload has been decreasing with the end of the conflict, and the NS RFL capacity is in the process of disappearing. Natural disasters are expected to happen in the near future (in particular earthquakes) and preparations are underway to be ready to react. The NS, however, is totally forgetting to include RFL in these plans. ICRC is promoting change in this regard.

Distinctions between tracing in conflict and in natural disasters

Tracing in natural disasters varies in a number of ways from tracing in armed conflict. Questions of confidentiality and access are usually less stringent in the former situations. In principles, NS are better equipped to deal with such situations, since, at least in principle, they have prepared contingency planning – which may or may not have included preparedness for tracing. From the point of view of the ICRC the two types of situations have one major difference in that armed conflict tend to be protracted and thereby require that the ICRC be involved in a particular context for months (rarely), years (most often) or sometimes even decades. In case of tracing, the ICRC may be required to stay involved virtually eternally – think for example of the continued importance of WW II files.

⁷⁸ Page 22

Natural disasters normally require much shorter involvement on the part of ICRC, which can be generally counted in days, weeks or months. They also involve a much more rapid reaction capacity, as natural disasters, as a rule, come unannounced, and require massive and urgent mobilisation of resources.

Capacity to fulfil a leading role in natural disasters

Does the ICRC have the necessary capacity to react appropriately? The answer to this question is not straightforward. Indeed, as we have seen, the number of tracing specialist within ICRC is far from enormous. The rapid organisation of a tracing service in a situation of natural disasters requires specific expertise. Choices made in the first few hours of the response may affect the rest of the operation in terms of tracing. This is particularly true in terms of the means and methods of handling human remains. Mistakes can easily be done – for example in discarding remains rapidly, without proper identification.

One of the issues mentioned very often in this regard is the question of *ante mortem* data. The technical aspects of the question naturally go much further than the focus of the present review. Enough to say that it is generally felt (notably among tracing services of PNS) that the ICRC had not truly played its role of technical advisor, or technical leader, in this respect. It appears that it was expected that the ICRC would take a stance in this regard, which would have given a cleared sense of direction to the RFL Network.

Within ICRC, there was a feeling that such aspects had more to do with the issue of the missing, and in particular the question of identification of human remains found in mass graves. Again, this aspect might be an example for a lack of clarity in terminology, followed by uncertainties in responsibility. An indication could also be the fact that positioning of the recently appointed technical expert for *ante mortem* data within ICRC's HQ, was not straight forward and followed by some changes.

Coming back to the question of rapid response, from an operational point of view, it seems clear that the ICRC cannot count purely on its own (human) resources. It is not always in a position to send large teams of RFL experts within hours on the site of a natural disaster, although exceptions do exist, as the Pakistan evaluation showed. It therefore needs to (and increasing should) count on the capacity of National Societies – not only PNS but also NS which have acquired specific expertise and capacities because they themselves have been confronted to natural disasters in their own country. Such an endeavour has been initiated – see below the mention of the specialists' pool.

In terms of strategy, RFL should be made much more present, mainstreamed, in emergency/contingency planning. Rapid response should include RFL as a general rule. The Federation would welcome increase support in achieving this, with the help of the ICRC. One of the “quick wins” in this respect would be for the ICRC to systematically take advantage of the many trainings and workshops organised by the Federation to include an RFL module. In this way, emergency/first aid personnel could be easily accessed. The ICRC, as a first step, should put together a training module for that purpose – and maybe even a “tracing kit”, similar to those that exist for other aspects of emergency work.

As we have seen, therefore, ICRC has been involved on a case-by-case basis in RFL in natural disasters. A more systematic approach (in the sense that ICRC would formally commit itself to lead RFL in all natural disasters) would apparently raise objections in some quarters within ICRC although it would be welcome within the network, including

by the Federation. Indeed it is recognised that ICRC has the technical knowledge and has been playing the main role in recent disasters.

The issues raised above have prompted a number of initiatives already. Several long-term projects concerning a Movement rapid response for RFL in emergencies have been undertaken but were delayed, apparently because of the mobilisation of skilled staff to the Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina operations. These included:

- Finalization of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for RFL in natural and other disasters
- Development of a RFL specialists' pool for rapid deployment to major disasters
- Revision and development of RFL emergency kits.

Conclusions:

- The ICRC, responding to obvious humanitarian needs, has increasingly been involved in RFL in natural disasters. This has been welcomed by most stakeholders, although there are those, within ICRC, who believe that such interventions should remain the exception and not become the rule.
- One of the consequences of intervening in natural disaster on a case-by-case basis has been that insufficient investments have been made to prepare ICRC capacity, and that of others, to respond.

Recommendations:

- The ICRC should make it clear that it intends (or does not, as the case may be) to play a systematic role in RFL in natural disaster. This does not mean the ICRC ought to commit to involving itself in *all* such emergencies, but rather that others can be assured they can count on it in terms of preparedness and up-to-date, reliable technical support.
- The ICRC ought to be more active (and in fact also pro-active) in including RFL in disaster preparedness and contingency planning, including by cooperating more closely with the Federation in terms of training and training module formulation.
- However, the CTA should address internal issues related to its core function as coordinator and technical advisor in RFL with priority so that they are not neglected while the ICRC -and the Movement- are engaging more in new fields and areas of responsibility (natural disasters, migration).

4.16 CTA and migrants

The ICRC Directorate took on 25 April 2005 a decision entitled “*Proposed ICRC support to National Societies deploying tracing and/ or detention activities in favour of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.*” So far, out of a total of five planned pilot cases, only the UK and Switzerland

have been officially selected. The Kiev Regional Delegation is at the testing stage of its migrants project with the Ukrainian NS.

The Ukrainian Red Cross offers RCM, telephone calls and notification to consulate/embassies to irregular migrants in detention. The main result of these activities is to reduce the detention period of detained migrants, and not so much to address traditional RFL needs as such (RCM, for instance, have yielded very few results). The activities of the NS in terms of visits to places of detention may also have a protection element, but the discussion thereof would go beyond the scope of the present review.

In any case, what should be understood is that especially regarding countries in Africa, European governments are interested in information about refugees/asylum seekers in Europe, which applies a certain risk for NS and for the RC Movement as such. With the information about the origin of the asylum seekers the governments –who presently mainly apply a restrictive asylum policy- can decide about the application for asylum or can organize the reunification of families. By facilitating information exchange or contact between family members the Red Cross risks to become ‘footman’ of the governments in a restrictive asylum policy.⁷⁹

Clearly, one of the by-products of globalisation is increased migration, especially illegal migration (including human trafficking). This of course creates enormous humanitarian needs, including in terms of protection and RFL. A number of NS have already begun to tackle the issue. Given the geographical position the Spanish Red Cross is very active in this areas and has reached a critical mass in terms of operations, funding and influence. The question for the ICRC is whether it should get involved in this issue, and how.

Needless to say this is a highly debated (if not contentious) issue within the organisations. While the “traditionalists” argue that such an endeavour would clearly fall outside of the mandate of the ICRC, others claim that the humanitarian needs created by migration (and likely to increase in the future) fully justify ICRC involvement. The middle road is to propose that the ICRC deal only with migrants who originate from countries at war.

In terms of capacity, it is not clear at that stage how the ICRC intends to meet the potential requests from the RFL network with regard to its role of “coordinator and technical adviser”. Indeed, the ICRC has very little expertise and experience in questions related to international migration. It is somewhat difficult to see how the limited resources of the CTA could accommodate what could potentially become an enormous challenge.

Within ICRC, a number of pragmatists see a real chance for reinforcing the capacities of the network through activities related to migrants. Indeed, the reasoning goes, the real problem of maintaining tracing services in most NS is insufficient caseload. As we have seen, most NS have more urgent concerns/priorities that to engage in RFL contingency planning (by maintaining alive a tracing service) in case an armed conflict erupts or a natural disaster strikes their country. Dealing with migrants, on the other hand, would provide a caseload sufficient to justify the existence of a tracing service. In encouraging, and supporting NS to become active on this issue, the ICRC would in fact further its RFL agenda and not, as some may pretend, dilute it.

⁷⁹ This has happened for example to IOM in Switzerland. The organization has been criticized heavily in the press for its role.

These policy issues obviously go beyond the scope of the present review. The point can nevertheless be made that the strategy outlined above is not without risk: does the ICRC have the capacity (or at least the intention of building it) to translate this approach into action and resources? Indeed, a number of NS may come and knock on ICRC's door, requesting technical advice and support in terms of RFL for migrants. Disappointing them would obviously be counterproductive in terms of the planned strategy to reinforce the RFL network

Conclusions:

- The issue of migration, and in particular illegal migration, has already become an important issue not only for governments, but also for some within ICRC. The latter is struggling with the question whether or not it should be involved in the issue, especially when it is not linked to a situation falling within its conventional/statutory mandate.
- Apart from meeting humanitarian needs, involvement in RFL in migration has the obvious advantage of creating a caseload in countries where NS may not otherwise maintain a (traditional) tracing service or a tracing capacity.

Recommendations:

- The ICRC should support (at least as pilots) initiatives of NS that wish to be involved in RFL, not only with a view to strengthening their tracing services (whose existence may depend on such involvement in migration), but also to safeguard RFL operational standards.
- Adapting classical RFL tools to use in migrations should not mean jeopardizing humanitarian standards and ethics – and therefore keep in mind the best interest of the beneficiaries.
- The CTA should address internal issues related to its core function as coordinator and technical advisor in RFL with priority so that they are not neglected while the ICRC -and the Movement- are engaging more in new fields and areas of responsibility (natural disasters, migration).

4.17 National Information Bureau

Regarding RFL governments have the responsibility to ensure the rights of families, in particular by:

- setting up an Information Bureau to collect and transmit information on victims of conflicts and to answer to requests from families,
- facilitating the exchange of news between family members,
- searching for persons unaccounted for,
- collecting and identifying the dead, ensuring that the human remains are treated with respect and returned to the families,
- supporting the families of missing persons,
- facilitating the work of the CTA and of the NS.

For this review only one National Information Bureau has been visited⁸⁰. Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 the British forces have invested in forging good relationships with the CTA. As there is no defined protecting power for PoW in Iraq, the ICRC carries out this role. There are regular meetings in Geneva and elsewhere.

Overall it can be said that the cooperation is good and fruitful. However the initiative in the process to maintain contact and to regularly meet and exchange about the subject seems to lie rather on the side of the British MoD than on ICRC's side. The ICRC did not contribute to an ongoing contact after previous wars in the past so that a contact and lessons-learned had to be re-established from almost zero.

The fact that the British are kind of leading in running a NIB comes from the fact that they are regularly involved in military operations, where PoW were taken under the responsibility of the British forces (starting in the Falklands in 1982, Kuwait 1991, Afghanistan, and Iraq from 2003).

The ICRC is important in providing guidance related to

- proper and precise registration and filing,⁸¹
- clarification regarding terminology,
- advise regarding confidentiality and PoW rights
- promotion of medical care policy,
- promotion of good conduct during arrests.

The ICRC is also involved in the training of UK forces in humanitarian law and gave introductions into RFL related to PoW.

In the current Iraq war the British forces have registered 6523 individuals. The MoD uses its own software to run a data base with many details about each individual case. The data base also contains cases from other invasion forces as they do not have their own system in place (e.g. Denmark). Data is submitted in a simple format using a simple spreadsheet which is extracted from the data base.

The MoD would appreciate more feedback on the use of data from ICRC's side. A better knowledge about the value of this process would encourage continuous effort.

The ICRC on field level and ICRC HQ are integrated into the reporting system ('Reporting Relationships') of the forces.

Overall there is the impression that the running of a NIB depends more on the good will of a government. CTA's role in promoting for NIB does not seem to be very strong and there is no systematic approach. A need for development is the fact that today's wars are usually involving coalitions so that the entry point for raising awareness and for promoting responsibility are coalition leaders or institutions (such as NATO).⁸²

⁸⁰ Precisely the UK PW Information Bureau (PWIB), which has handled a much lower number of cases than the American forces.

⁸¹ e.g. provision of the standard Arabic name gazetteer

⁸² It is acknowledged that a number of activities to promote further NIB is brought on the way already (e.g. guidelines planned for 2007/2008)

Conclusions:

- The CTA has a good relationship with the British NIB.
- CTA's role in promoting for NIB does not seem to be very strong and there is no systematic approach.

Recommendations:

- The CTA should provide some kind of feedback (as far as confidentiality allows) about individual cases to governments who have provided data to the CTA. By knowing more about the development of the cases the governments have opened and referred to the ICRC their motivation to engage in this issue might increase and it would help to hold up the dialogue.
- The CTA could be more pro-active in offering support and tools to governments.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions:

The section about conclusions follows the structure of the report and are grouped according to key issues of this review.

Mandate and implementation of ICRC's policies

- The CTA has a strong **mandate** for situations of conflict and tensions. The framework is less clear when it comes to contexts outside the latter situations. ICRC's policies follow this mandate and are stronger emphasised on conflict situations. In policy documents and guidelines there is not always a clear distinction between situations of conflict and peace.
- **Policies** are not always implemented in reality because:
 - There is a gap between realities defined and described in policies or guidelines and the real situation.
 - There is insufficient clarity in terminology and a lack of common understanding of terms and policies.
 - There is insufficient capacity at central level to promote coherence within and outside the organisation.
 - The CTA is sometimes overambitious in promoting its own agenda, which is in the interest of RFL, but not always in line with the given context.

The CTA, the Movement and the Family Links Network

- There is not enough **coherence in the Movement** regarding the work in tracing. This is a key responsibility of the CTA. The CTA's standing and influence in the network is improving recently. Delegations mostly have a good relationship with NS.
- The **network** needs leadership and coordination in particular in situations of peace. The mandate related lack of the CTA's 'authority' in this regard could possibly be compensated by having the time and resources (constantly push, call and be present) to lead the network.
- The CTA does not work enough towards the **full 'exploitation' of the potential** of the network. The CTA needs to improve in contributing to better capacity building outside ICRC operations.

Capacity building

- It seems to be widely accepted within the ICRC and within the Movement that the ICRC has the responsibility to do **capacity building** in RFL, although there is no (legal) basis for this mandate.

- There are concepts and tools for capacity building at ICRC. The distinction in ICRC's approach between conflict and non-conflict situations in this regard is from the point of view of the NS the less relevant. The ICRC focuses too often too much on 'operation' than on 'partnership'.
- There is a need to **improve the ongoing capacity building efforts**, through:
 - Change of attitude/thinking in terms of partnership
 - Better definition of objectives and improved planning for results
 - Improved tools, knowledge management and sharing of experiences
 - Comprehensive and integrated approach with reduced separation of operation and capacity building

Knowledge management, language and technologies

- The capacity of the CTA in **knowledge management** is rather weak. There is room for improvement in the promotion of good practice, tools and experiences. This is a central role of the CTA and is crucial for credibility and coherence within the Movement.
- The importance of the **language** issue is not recognized enough.
- The importance of up-to date communication **technology** is sometimes over-emphasised and leads to over-expectations and finally to a negative image of the CTA's performance in cases the expectations are not fulfilled.

Results, standards and result measurement

- Aims and **results** of RFL are not clearly enough defined. There are no indicators, which would allow proper monitoring, measuring of results and better lobbying for RFL.
- The ICRC is not in the **forefront of applying standards** in Humanitarian Aid, in particular systematic beneficiary consultations. This would contribute to better accountability, better result measuring, and finally to better results and a better standing of RFL within the organisation.
- The CTA is too focused on quantitative **data collection** and there is need for more in-depth analysis.

Human Resources

- The CTA would benefit from both more and better qualified staff. **Human Resources** are of crucial importance during the start up phase of RFL interventions.
- The role and potential of **local staff** working in RFL is not acknowledged enough.

Needs assessments and timeliness

- **Needs assessments** are rarely done systematically and in a coherent way. There is no systematic or coherent planning for needs assessments (re-active instead of pro-active). There is not enough review of needs after time. There is sometimes not enough contextual, local knowledge for proper needs assessments.

- There are often not enough **resources** given to do RFL needs assessments or often teams need to compete with other sectors which are given a higher priority (first medical aid, WatSan).
- **Timeliness** is an important factor in RFL but should not be emphasised over proper assessments. The ICRC is in RFL activities often too slow in the starting phase. Reasons are the rather re-active way of working, than being more pro-active.

Cooperation and coordination

- ICRC principles and procedures hamper good **cooperation and coordination** with other actors. Good cooperation and coordination depend too much from individual skills (attitude, knowledge of a language).

RFL in natural disasters

- The ICRC, responding to obvious humanitarian needs, has increasingly been involved in RFL in **natural disasters**. This has been welcomed by most stakeholders, although there are those, within ICRC, who believe that such interventions should remain the exception and not become the rule.
- One of the consequences of intervening in natural disasters on a case-by-case basis has been that insufficient investments have been made to prepare ICRC capacity, and that of others, to respond.

RFL and migration

- The issue of **migration**, and in particular illegal migration, has already become an important issue not only for governments, but also for some within ICRC. The latter is struggling with the question whether or not it should be involved in the issue, especially when it is not linked to a situation falling within its conventional/statutory mandate.
- Apart from meeting humanitarian needs, involvement in RFL in migration has the obvious advantage of creating a caseload in countries where NS may not otherwise maintain a (traditional) tracing service or a tracing capacity.

CTA and National Information Bureaus

- The CTA has a good relationship with the British **National Information Bureau**.
- CTA's role in promoting for NIB does not seem to be very strong and there is no systematic approach.

Recommendations:

Recommendations are grouped by type and put in order with a suggested rank of priority:

Recommendations concerning the clarification of guidelines and policies

- The ICRC should ensure clear **terminology** in all documentation and communication regarding the definition and terms related to RFL.
- RFL **Policies** and **guidelines** should distinguish more clearly between conflict and non-conflict situations.
- **Capacity building**
 - The ICRC should follow a more coherent approach on global, as well as on local (operational) level in capacity building in RFL.
 - The ICRC should be clearer and more open about limitations in capacity building in its documentation and in its communication (dialogue). It should be more open about ‘failed cases’.
 - The ICRC should further exploit the value of local ICRC Field Officers for the capacity building process.
- **CTA and the network**
 - To fulfil its role the CTA has to have a clear vision for the network and has to think more pro-actively. The CTA needs to have the resources available to implement its visions and ideas. The CTA should not be overambitious with reform and pushing of RFL.
 - The CTA should continue on a permanent basis the activities of the Project 2.1, involving the Delegations. Delegations should have more trust in these initiatives and should provide support. The Advisory Board might be established on a permanent basis to increase authority and to have a body for outside representation.
- The CTA HQ should in general strengthen its role in working towards more **coherence** internally and externally. However the context specific analysis of Delegations should not be ignored because of the striving for more coherence.
- The CTA HQ should strengthen its role in overall quality assurance by first clearly defining what the desired **results** in RFL are, by improving measuring of results, and by improving knowledge management.
- RFL in **natural disasters** and related to **migration**
 - The ICRC should make it clear that it intends (or does not, as the case may be) to play a systematic role in RFL in natural disaster.
 - The ICRC should support (at least as pilots) initiatives of NS that wish to be involved in RFL and migration, not only with a view to strengthening their tracing services (whose existence may depend on such involvement in migration), but also to safeguard RFL operational standards.
 - However, the CTA should address internal issues related to its core function as coordinator and technical advisor in RFL with priority so that

they are not neglected while the ICRC -and the Movement- are engaging more in new fields and areas of responsibility (natural disasters, migration).

Recommendations concerning resources and organisation

- The CTA should continue to reinforce its **human resource capacity** at HQ level.
- The ICRC should do beneficiary consultations more systematically to give beneficiaries a voice and to learn more about their needs and expectations.
- The CTA should investigate more into, and should promote more the potential of local staff members with sound experience in RFL.
- The CTA must ensure that the resources are in place and accessible for operations and for NS (human resources, both in terms of quality and in terms of quantity, concepts, tools and guidelines, and finally as much as possible: funding).

Recommendations concerning methodology

- **Needs assessments** need to be done systematically, in a coherent way, and with enough time. There should be more planning for needs assessments. This includes planning for resources for needs assessments. They should ideally involve a RFL specialist and someone with in-depth local knowledge (knowledge of family structures and their coping mechanisms for example).
- Needs should be reviewed systematically after time and RFL programmes should in some cases include pre-defined 'breaking points', in the sense that a programme might come to an end because a situation has changed significantly.
- The ICRC should have clear models and scenarios developed for the capacity building. They should include all NS in need of capacity building and all regions with RFL relevance.
- **Measuring results**
 - The ICRC should extend its monitoring system from quantitative to qualitative data and in the sense that more context analysis is introduced more systematically. The CTA should develop indicators for measuring RFL results.
 - The CTA should develop timeliness as a systematic indicator for RFL results. The indicators should include a contextual element. It might be worth investigating into an index-system for timeliness in certain types of contexts.
- The ICRC should apply **tools and techniques** based entirely on the need and the context and not based on the ambition of being in the forefront of technical developments. In this regard the ICRC should be clear in communication and documentation about decisions and constraints regarding the application of modern technological appliances, as this aspect seems to have a significant influence on the ICRC internal image of RFL.

- The ICRC ought to be more active (and in fact also pro-active) in including RFL in disaster preparedness and contingency planning, including by cooperating more closely with the Federation in terms of training and training module formulation.
- The CTA should provide some kind of feedback (as far as confidentiality allows) about cases to **governments/NIB** who have provided data to the CTA. This would increase their motivation and would hold up the dialogue. The CTA could be more pro-active in offering support and tools to governments.

Annexes:

1. TOR
2. Work plan / itinerary
3. List of interviewees
4. Selection Criteria and assessment grid for selection of field missions
5. References/documentation/databases
6. Some words on the evaluators' background
7. Country Reports
8. Questionnaires (Delegation/Regional Delegation)
9. Comparison table: Lessons Learned from ICRC experiences