

Module Six

# Restoring Family Links (RFL)

Total hours needed – 06 hours

Total days needed - 01



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2. RFL experience from the field
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3. Planning RFL activity
  - a. Preparation for RFL
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# **Restoring Family Links**

## **Objective of this session:**

- To understand various terms used as synonym to restoring family link
- To discuss restoring family link services during disasters
- To understand how RFL is conducted in India

## **Session Plan:**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Methodology</b>
15 minutes	Restoring Family Links	Brainstorming
60 minutes	Concept and steps in RFL	Power Point and Discussion
45 minutes	Experience sharing from India	Power point and Plenary Discussion
45 minutes	Key learning from RFL in India	Sub-group

## **Tools and Resources required**

LCD projector, white board, flip chart and pens

## **Key Messages**

- Understanding RFL in disasters
- Need of RFL at the time of disasters
- Experiences of providing RFL services in recent disaster/emergency in India

## **Content**

### **What is RFL in disasters?**

The participants will be asked to write down what do they understand by Restoring Family Links. One participant from each table (maximum of four) will be asked to share what is RFL.

Definition - Activity aiming to reduce the distress caused by separation of family members as a result of conflicts, natural or other disaster, migrations and other situations of Humanitarian needs. Terms like RFL, FNS (family news service) and tracing will be explained. Tracing needs in India are for Refugees, Internally Displaced Population, Migrants, Stranded foreigners, Unaccompanied Minors, Populations affected by natural and manmade

Tracing is a core activity performed worldwide when the family members are separated without news on each other's fate and when traditional means of communication are interrupted or are not sufficient for locating a missing person.

Whenever natural disaster or other situations requiring a humanitarian response cause people to be separated from their loved ones, or to be unable to get in touch with them, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement takes rapid, effective action to restore links. It consists on Tracing people unaccounted for, exchanging family news through various means of communications (messages, phones, internet, etc...) and reuniting family members or specific vulnerable groups whenever needed.

Communication systems may break down, preventing people from contacting their relatives inside or outside the affected areas. Many people are anxious to get news of and restore contact with their loved ones, especially if they were not at home when the disaster struck. RFL aims to reduce the distress caused by separation of family members as a result of natural or other disaster, migrations and other situations of humanitarian need and provide beneficiary with answers related to their missing relatives.

The work includes tracing people, exchanging family messages, reuniting families and seeking to clarify the fate of those who remain missing. Proper steps to manage dead bodies accordingly are also a process to successfully identify individuals and alleviate moral suffering of their beloved ones.

Red Cross messages (RCM) is very important source of communication in an effort to reunite family members. There is a specific form which is to be filled for sending message by the family member, whose another family member is missing. Since the partition between

India and Pakistan, 1959 tracing services delivered to Tibetans that fled to Nepal and North India and 1971 Bangladesh Conflict 150,00,000 ( 15 million ) of RCM exchanged between the families .

Currently 988 Red Cross Messages exchanged and 379 tracing cases handled, 35 tracing cases successfully closed since 2002. Five staff members of IRCS trained abroad and there are more than 750 volunteers trained in RFL. The IRCS considers RFL as one of its core activities.

Legal basis for Tracing is the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, Article 25. It states

*All persons (...) shall be enabled to give news of a strictly personal nature to members of their families, wherever they may be, and to receive news from them.*

In disasters impact of RFL can be assessed in terms of means of communication disrupted, People moved from affected area (displaced and refugees), Injured persons evacuated, vulnerable individuals separated, information about the Dead, missing persons and anxious families outside affected area. The purpose of tracing in disasters is real time restoring family links, tracing of missing persons, management of dead bodies for vulnerable groups in India.

As part of disaster preparedness the staff and Volunteers are trained on FNS, FNS activities included in Disaster Plan, maintain relationship with key stakeholders, develop training material and keep the material, guidelines and keep equipment handy. So that when the disaster strikes there is availability of staff and volunteers, they are trained in assessment of needs, deliver quickly and efficiently and able to prioritize vulnerable groups and liaise with other actors/stakeholders. At all time, FNS activities should be disseminated.

As separation from a family is a traumatic experience, Psycho-social activities are linked with FNS for the family of missing people, for the staff or volunteers working with family members of lost relatives.

The IRCS is the only organization with the capacity to follow up cases on the mid and long-term basis. With its network of staff and volunteers it helps in re-contacting the enquirers

once the families return to their places of origin. The ICRC is also involved in conducting active tracing.

### **What have been experiences of providing RFL services in recent disasters?**

RFL services aimed at reducing moral suffering of the local population and reduce the distress inflicted by separation. It has a positive impact on local population even if it is sometimes not an obvious need to be assessed.

In recent past there were two very important disasters where IRCS RFL services were provided. These were Leh cloudburst in 2010 and Sikkim earthquake in 2011.

This presentation is about Leh cloudburst. In August 2010, cloudburst occurred in Leh. As you know Leh is the northern most part of India, it is in Himalaya region in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and a very popular destination among tourist both from India and abroad.

The cloudburst happened on the 5-6<sup>th</sup> August night. The Ladakh Red Cross volunteers being trained on disaster management and family news service by a team from the Red Cross state branch of Jammu and Kashmir in Leh. The cloud burst was followed by the flash floods devastated in Leh and its surroundings.

This caused a great deal of disruption mainly infrastructure causing great discomfort in the lives of local people, tourists, migrants from other parts of India and breakdown of transport system.

The cloudburst caused death of 186 people, about 700 missing people and thousands affected in the area. As the whole area was affected, the target groups for RFL were defined as stranded tourist (both foreigners and local), labourers and local population.

The local authorities and Red Cross swung into action and assisted the authorities in management of dead bodies after recovering from debris and transported. Soon the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) took over the job, together with other Army

Personnel, bodies were identified and stored until claimed, more than 150 bodies claimed.

It must be noted that the NDRF was previously trained by the ICRC

For RFL, Volunteers visited spots to reach the target population, IRCS team members were present at different strategic locations (Hospitals, police station, airport, district office, monasteries and so on), ICRC was liaising with the Embassy representatives present in Leh (foreigners issues).

The IRCS disseminated service was disseminated to potential beneficiaries - especially at hospitals and clinics and other place where big number of affected people gathered for assistance. **53 family news service cases were successful.**

**Resource Material:**

1. PowerPoint Presentation '1. RFL activities in Leh'
2. Screening of Movie 'Where are they now'

# RFL - Planning RFL activity

## Objective of this session:

- To understand various steps involved in RFL services
- To practice providing RFL services during disasters

## Session Plan:

Time	Topic	Methodology
30 minutes	Recap – steps in RFL	Discussion in Plenary
15 minutes	Planning RFL services in an emergency situation – A scenario	Discussion in Plenary
60 minutes	Providing RFL services	Role Play
30 minutes	Lessons learned	Discussion in plenary
30 minutes	RFL in armed conflict	Video
15 minutes	Lessons learned	Discussion in plenary

## Tools and Resources required

White board, flip chart and pens

## Key Messages

- Steps involved in providing RFL services.
- Planning RFL service
- Lessons learned from RFL activities

## Content

### Recap and steps required to plan RFL services

- As the group to mention various steps involved in providing RFL services. List these steps on a flip chart/white board. Ask the participants to elaborate about each step.
- Ask the group to demonstrate (through a role play) as to how they will plan RFL activity in an emergency situation.

#### A Scenario of Conflict

In early 2012, conflict flared up in the border areas of the village X (give contextual name) and village Y (give contextual name). The people from X village burnt houses in village Y and also looted the property. Since the houses were burnt at night, people from X village ran to save their lives.

An assessment team who visited village X came back with the following findings:

- Village has a population of app 800
- After the conflict, villagers are accommodated in a nearby school (camp)
- Out of 125 houses in village X, 90 have been completely burnt
- Remaining 35 houses partially burnt
- Five persons (one child, two women, one labourer and one physically handicapped person lost life and their bodies were recovered)
- Seven families reported missing persons from their house. These are two infants, two elderly male, one woman, one labourer from another village and one guest who was staying night in that village.
- Even on the 5<sup>th</sup> day after the conflict there is no news about these missing persons.

- Nominate a person as NS RFL Coordinator.
- Nominate a person as Govt representative.
- Nominate a person as ICRC RFL Manager

Ask group to demonstrate through a role play keeping in mind the following:

How will you plan the RFL services in this situation?

What support is required from the NS?

What support is required from the Govt.?

What support is required from the ICRC?

At the end of the role play discuss the lessons learned.

#### **A movie on RFL**

Show a movie on RFL entitled *where are they now?* It is a 18 minutes movie which shows various aspects of RFL in international armed conflict situation.

Discuss the lessons learned from this movie on RFL.

**Resource Material:**

3. PowerPoint Presentation '3. Tracing in Disasters'