What are the benefits of a good Disaster Law?

- Increased safety and reduced vulnerability of people and infrastructure
- States are empowered to lead and coordinate disaster response operations in their country, including international assistance, and facilitate efficient and effective response to people affected by disasters
- Creates a legal enabling environment for strong disaster risk management, with clear roles and responsibilities assigned across agencies from national to local level
- Adequate funding, accountability and engagement mechanisms for disaster risk reduction decision-making are ensured
- Ensure engagement of communities, civil society, the private sector and scientific institutions in disaster risk management decision making and activities

Asia Pacific is the world’s most disaster prone region. In the past 45 years, 88% of all people affected by natural disasters have lived in Asia Pacific. These disasters have resulted in an economic loss of over US$1.15 trillion.

Every year, 26.4 million people globally are displaced by natural disasters. Women, boys and girls are 14 times more likely to die during a disaster than men. 70% of countries in the Asia Pacific remain legally underprepared to manage a large scale disaster.

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The Disaster Law Programme is created by a resolution of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Council of Delegates.


ASEAN States rally the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

The 30th International Conference adopts Resolution 4, reiterating the urgency to bring laws in line with IDRL Guidelines and requests states to review their national legislation in terms of disaster risk reduction and regulatory barriers to shelter after natural disasters. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) sign the Agreement on Rapid Response on Natural Disasters.

The 31st International Conference adopts Resolution 7, requesting international assistance and legislative frameworks for disaster risk reduction.

IFRC and UNDP embark on a joint initiative aimed at supporting the strengthening of domestic legislation for disaster risk reduction. The IDRL Guidelines are endorsed at the 43rd Pacific Island Leaders Forum.

The 32nd International Conference adopts Resolution 6: Strengthening legal frameworks for disaster response, risk reduction and first aid.

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A Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance is launched.

Without an adequate legal framework to facilitate international assistance, challenges can arise that negatively impact the disaster response:

**Nepal:** “Business as usual” customs procedures led to bottle-necks in the 2015 earthquake response.

**Samoa:** Unsolicited goods sent during the 2009 tsunami are still being disposed of at cost to the Government.

**Vanuatu:** Demonstrated the necessity to clearly request international assistance based on national needs.

**Vietnam and Bangladesh:** Both Vietnam and Bangladesh have made a legislative ‘paradigm shift’ from a response driven model to a greater focus on DRR. This shift has had a startling impact in both countries and dramatically reduced mortalities from disasters.

**Philippines:** The Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 recognises that vulnerable and marginalized groups face higher exposure to disaster risk and poverty. The Act ensures that women, social welfare representatives, as well as Philippine Red Cross have a seat at the table and can take an active part in the decision-making in national and local councils.

**Cook Islands:** With technical input from Cook Islands Red Cross, their government adopted standing operating procedures and a model emergency decree drawing on the IDRL Guidelines in 2014. This experience will soon be replicated in Tonga who are embarking on a similar process.

**Indonesia:** The experience from the 2004 earthquake and tsunami triggered radical changes in Indonesia’s legal and institutional framework for disaster response. The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) has been instrumental in this process and worked closely with Indonesia’s government to improve preparedness for international assistance as well as DRR in its law. As a result, Indonesia is now considered a global leader on disaster risk management.

**New Zealand:** Strict quarantine rules hindered the entrance of some urban search and rescue dogs following the 2011 earthquake.

**Philippines:** The experience from the 2004 earthquake and tsunami triggered radical changes in Indonesia’s legal and institutional framework for disaster response. The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) has been instrumental in this process and worked closely with Indonesia’s government to improve preparedness for international assistance as well as DRR in its law. As a result, Indonesia is now considered a global leader on disaster risk management.

**Learning from experience:** the Red Cross Red Crescent supporting governments on disaster law.

**Extra support in times of disaster:** The Disaster Law Programme can provide additional support in-country during times of disaster through emergency deployments to provide legal and policy advice to in international disaster response. Such support was provided in Typhoon Haiyan (Philippines), Tropical Cyclone Pam (Vanuatu), the Nepal earthquake and the Myanmar floods.
How the IFRC supports development of disaster law:

Resources and Tools

- The IDRL Guidelines
- Model Act on IDRL & Model Emergency Decree
- Effective law and regulation for disaster risk reduction
- The Checklist on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction
- The Handbook on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction

Further Resources

- Rapid tenure assessment
- Minimum elements for community-based land mapping
- Gender-sensitive approaches for Disaster Management
- Minimum standard commitment to gender and diversity in emergency programming

For more information, please contact:

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