

Fact sheet: IDRL

Legal preparedness for international disaster response

Legal preparedness for international disaster response

In November 2011, the state parties to the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement came together in the course of the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, to consider, among other challenges, the impact of legal issues on whether urgent humanitarian needs are met after a major disaster. In particular, the Conference took stock of progress in the implementation of the IDRL Guidelines and renewed the commitment made by states to use the IDRL Guidelines to strengthen their legal and policy frameworks.



Aid after floodings in Uganda, 2007.

Why prepare for international response?

When major disasters strike, international assistance can mean the difference between hardship and recovery for affected communities. But aid unfortunately does not always reach those in need as effectively as it should.

Bureaucratic bottlenecks related to entry visas, personnel registration, customs clearance, taxation, and transport permissions for example often slow down relief efforts.

Similarly, the incapacity to monitor and coordinate the action of aid providers often translates into poor quality goods, duplication of efforts, or even lack of respect for the beneficiaries.

These problems are getting worse over time, in part because the number and variety of international responders are both increasing. Affected states in a number of recent large and medium disasters have found themselves ill-prepared to handle a flood of well-intentioned but not always uniformly effective international responders.

Developing rules and procedures in advance of a disaster can go a long way to avoiding the most common problems.

Facilitating and regulating international relief

To help governments address these issues, the IFRC and its members led a global consultation process that led to a set of recommendations on how to prepare their disaster laws and procedures for the common regulatory problems in international disaster relief operations.

These recommendations – the ‘Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international relief and early recovery assistance’ (also known as the “IDRL Guidelines” because they were facilitated by the IFRC’s “International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles (IDRL) Programme) – were adopted at the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 2007.

Since then, the IFRC and many National Societies have been working hard to ensure that the IDRL Guidelines are well disseminated and used, and much progress has already been made:

At the domestic level

- In order to implement the suggestions of the IDRL Guidelines, new legislation has already been adopted in Indonesia, Peru and several other states.
- Moreover, twenty other governments are undertaking intensive reviews of their laws and procedures, with technical assistance from the IFRC and National Societies.

At the regional and global levels

- A number of regional organizations, ranging from ASEAN to CAPRADE, from SOPAC to NATO, and from SADC to the European Union, have made use of the IDRL Guidelines in developing their own regional mechanisms for improving legal preparedness for cross-border disaster response.
- The IDRL Guidelines have been recognised in no fewer than nine resolutions of the UN General Assembly, as well as numerous resolutions, declarations and statements by other inter-governmental bodies.

Model legislation as a tool for legal preparedness

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), together with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), launched the pilot version of their “Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance” at the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which welcomed their efforts.

The Model Act is designed to assist lawmakers interested in implementing the recommendations of the IDRL Guidelines into domestic legislation. The project partners consulted with legal and disaster management experts globally over two years to develop a strong text and detailed commentary for the Model Act. Further consultations with states and other stakeholders will consider the use of the model act as a reference tool.



IFRC plane being uploaded with pre-positioned relief items to send to Haiti, 2010.

For more information

-available at www.ifrc.org/dl -

- [IDRL Guidelines](#)
- [Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance](#)
- [Resolution 31IC/11/R7 from the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent on “Strengthening normative frameworks and addressing regulatory barriers concerning disaster mitigation, response and recovery”](#)



For further information,
please contact:

Disaster Law Programme
disaster.law@ifrc.org
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Chemin des Crêts, 17 | 1211 Petit Saconnex | Geneva | Switzerland
<http://www.ifrc.org/dl>

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives, changing minds.

