

Disaster Laws

Fact sheet: IDRL

Legal preparedness for international disaster response

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In November 2011, the state parties to the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will come together to discuss the key humanitarian issues of the day at the 31st International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. High on their agenda will be the question of how legal issues impact whether and how urgent humanitarian needs are met after a major disaster.



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 six resolutions of the UN General Assembly, as well as numerous resolutions, declarations and statements by other inter-governmental bodies.

Developing model legislation

Still, much more remains to be done. In order to further assist governments to integrate the IDRL Guidelines into their domestic laws and systems, the IFRC is cooperating with OCHA and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to develop model legislative elements that could help interested countries in translating the recommendations of the IDRL Guidelines into effective laws.

The 31st International Conference provides an important opportunity to build on the progress already made, and to renew momentum in the spread of legal preparedness for international assistance. It also presents an occasion to discuss new tools supporting countries' preparedness for international disaster cooperation, such as the pilot version of the model domestic legislation that is currently being developed.



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

For more information

- available at www.ifrc.org/idrl -

- [Disaster in the Americas: the case for legal preparedness](#)
- [Disasters in Asia: the case for legal preparedness](#)
- [International Disaster Response Law in Uganda](#)
- [IDRL Annual Report](#)



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