



Model Emergency Decree for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network. With our 190 member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide, we are in every community reaching 160.7 million people annually through long-term services and development programmes, as well as 110 million people through disaster response and early recovery programmes. We act before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. We do so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions.

Guided by Strategy 2020 – our collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade – we are committed to saving lives and changing minds.

Our strength lies in our volunteer network, our community-based expertise and our independence and neutrality. We work to improve humanitarian standards, as partners in development, and in response to disasters. We persuade decision-makers to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people. The result: we enable healthy and safe communities, reduce vulnerabilities, strengthen resilience and foster a culture of peace around the world.

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Cover photo: This relief flight landed in Port-au-Prince two days earlier than initially planned after Hurricane Matthew, thanks to new customs rules (10/2016). Isabelle Granger/IFRC

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Introduction

Research and consultations over the last ten years have demonstrated that managing international disaster assistance operations has become increasingly complex. The absence of specific domestic procedures can make it difficult for affected states to effectively oversee, regulate and facilitate the entry of life-saving relief. Ad hoc approaches, hastily devised in the wake of a catastrophic disaster, have often led to a loss of state control and the arrival of inappropriate or poor quality relief. They also frequently result in unnecessary restrictions, delays and expenses hampering the right aid, just when it is most urgently needed.

This “Model Emergency Decree for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance” is intended as a reference tool for voluntary use by states faced with a major disaster and the possibility of a large influx of aid providers.

Key points:

- Managing international disaster assistance is becoming increasingly complex
- Solid domestic procedures are needed
- While normal legislation is preferable, this model can be used in an emergency to address some of the most common problems in international operations

Origins of the Model Emergency Decree

In November 2007, the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (gathering the state parties to the Geneva Conventions and the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) approved the *Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance* (also known as “the IDRL Guidelines”).¹ These are a set of recommendations to governments on how to prepare their disaster laws and procedures for the most common regulatory problems in international disaster operations. The IDRL Guidelines were based on seven years of country case studies, legal research, and consultations with governments and relief specialists, carried out by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies’ (IFRC) “International Disaster Response Laws, Rules and Principles” (IDRL) Programme (now the Disaster Law Programme).

Key points:

- The Model Emergency Decree is based on internationally-accepted guidelines
- It responds to requests for sample legislative language
- It has benefitted from the research assistance of several international law firms

Starting in 2008, and annually thereafter, the UN General Assembly has adopted resolutions encouraging states to make use of the IDRL Guidelines². To date, the IDRL Guidelines have influenced national laws and regulations in 30 countries³, 3 treaties⁴ and many inter-governmental strategies and resolutions⁵. The reports of the Special Rapporteur of the International Law Commission on the *Draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters* have also made reference to the IDRL Guidelines⁶.

Since the approval of the IDRL Guidelines, further consultation and training has been conducted in all regions of the globe, to raise awareness and provide

1 Available in multiple languages at <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/idrl/idrl-guidelines/>

2 The most recent language can be found in UN GA A/RES/71/127 and A/RES/71/128 of 2017.

3 Details available here:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/embed?mid=1xr9uo9VsTpKmbbANVIsU29vHxrE&ll=20.055931517490002%2C-1.4062490000000025&z=1>

4 2005 ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response; 2015 Trans-border Agreement between Panama and Costa Rica; 2017 SICA Special Customs Procedures for Relief Goods.

5 IFRC, “Ready or Not, Third progress report on the implementation of the Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance”, November 2015. [http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Photos/Secretariat/201506/IDRL%20Progress%20Report%20\(final\).pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Photos/Secretariat/201506/IDRL%20Progress%20Report%20(final).pdf)

6 The most recent reference can be found in the Eighth report of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Eduardo Valencia-Ospina (68th session of the ILC (2016) http://legal.un.org/ilc/guide/6_3.shtml#srapprep

technical assistance to states wishing to implement them. During this process, lawmakers have frequently requested model legislative language to assist them in implementing the IDRL Guidelines in their domestic law and procedures. In response to these requests, in 2009 the IFRC partnered with OCHA and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to develop a Model Act based on the IDRL Guidelines.⁷ During the consultation and piloting of the Model Act, some stakeholders expressed that an emergency decree would be better-suited to some states and contexts. This Model Emergency Decree has therefore been developed as a complementary tool to the IDRL Guidelines and the Model Act.

Purposes of the Model Emergency Decree

This Model Emergency Decree, like the IDRL Guidelines and the Model Act, is intended to help states address some of the legal and regulatory issues that commonly arise concerning international assistance following natural and manmade (non-conflict) disasters. These issues relate to the entry of international goods and personnel and the operation of assisting international actors, and also to the coordination of their assistance, especially in the relief and initial recovery period. This model is specifically directed to those situations where a clear legal framework is not in place before the onset of a large-scale disaster, or where the adoption of more comprehensive legislation is not practicable.

Uses of the Model Emergency Decree

This Model Emergency Decree assumes that a more general declaration of emergency has already been issued in the wake of a disaster. This model could then serve as reference for drafting a subsequent decree, based on the special powers of the state of emergency, to provide specific rules for managing international disaster assistance.

Given the diversity of legal systems around the globe, and especially the different domestic approaches to disaster management, it is well understood that this model will need to be adapted to local circumstances. In addition, it may be necessary to add relevant references to other existing instruments which may be implicated or modified by an emergency decree, such as legislation or regulations concerning disaster management, immigration, customs, taxation, health, telecommunications or transport.

Drafting notes

Italicized text within brackets is meant to be replaced with the appropriate domestic equivalent (for example, the name of the country or the name of the national disaster management agency, if one exists), or with the context-specific details of the disaster for which the decree is enacted.

Text within brackets that is not italicized is either proposed as a choice between several options (for example, “President/Prime Minister,” “regional/provincial”) or is an element considered to be especially subject to differing choices between countries (such as the precise length in time of certain deadlines).

Key points:

- The Model Emergency Decree seeks to limit delays, restrictions and costs while ensuring adequate oversight
- It calls for certain legal facilities to be provided to chosen international providers
- It requires those providers to abide by clear standards

Key points:

- This model can and should be adjusted to the circumstances of each country
- The model assumes that a more general emergency declaration has been separately issued
- The model refers only to international assistance – it assumes that other instruments will govern domestic response

⁷ The *Model Act for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance*, developed by IFRC, OCHA and the IPU, was launched at the IPU Assembly in Quito in March 2013. The IPU is not a partner in the Model Emergency Decree project, as it is by its nature not addressed to parliamentarians.

Model Emergency Decree for the Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance

WHEREAS, [description of events precipitating the disaster, e.g. time, magnitude and place of an earthquake],

WHEREAS, [description of disaster effects, e.g. resulting loss of lives, property and numbers affected],

WHEREAS, the [President/Prime Minister or other authority] under the authority of [relevant constitutional or other provision providing the authority for the declaration] declared a state of emergency covering [territory covered, whether the entire state or certain areas or districts],

WHEREAS, in recognition of the extent of humanitarian needs generated by the disaster, and with a view to responding to these needs expediently and adequately, the [head of state/government, ministry of foreign affairs, or other authority] welcomed international assistance [on date] to complement domestic response efforts ([reference the relevant communication, if appropriate]),

WHEREAS, the expediency, effective coordination and quality of the disaster response operation will be enhanced by clear procedures for the facilitation and regulation of incoming international assistance,

NOW, THEREFORE, I, [name], [title], under the authority set out in [reference to the relevant constitutional, statutory or other law granting this authority], hereby declare that the following rules and procedures shall apply [during the period of the state of emergency or a determined period of time]:

Coordination of international disaster assistance

1. The [disaster management authority] shall serve as the central focal point agency in-country for liaison between the government and assisting international actors, in order to promote the effective facilitation, coordination and oversight of international disaster assistance. The [disaster management authority] shall also serve as the main counterpart in-country for any applicable regional or international coordination mechanisms.
2. The [disaster management authority] shall maintain and [electronically] publish a regularly updated account of the humanitarian needs of the affected population, including the location and scope of needs as well as a list of goods, services and equipment required for the disaster operation.

Offers and acceptance of international disaster assistance

3. Offers of international disaster assistance by states and intergovernmental organisations shall be directed to the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or other authority] [through the appropriate embassy or diplomatic mission]. The [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or other authority] shall promptly respond to all offers, after conferring with the [disaster management authority].
4. International disaster assistance by foreign non-governmental actors shall be notified directly to the [disaster management authority] no less than [** hours/days in advance of the planned shipment of goods or equipment or arrival of personnel] as a condition of eligibility for the legal facilities conferred by this decree.

Responsibilities of assisting international actors

5. Assisting international actors shall abide by the laws of [country] and cooperate and coordinate with national [regional/provincial] and local authorities. In particular, assisting international actors shall provide these authorities with any information available to them on the needs of the affected population, and on the location, type and extent of their disaster relief [and initial recovery] activities, to ensure a coordinated and effective response.
6. Assisting international actors shall:
 - a. comply with the principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality,
 - b. ensure that all goods and services they provide are appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the affected population and are in compliance with the requirements of this decree and all applicable laws and standards in [country],
 - c. make their best efforts, in light of all of the circumstances, to ensure that the goods and services they provide conform to the Sphere Project Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response [2011 edition]⁸.
7. The use of foreign military assets shall be guided by the *Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief* (the Oslo Guidelines).

Eligibility for facilities

8. For the purposes of this decree and the facilities granted herein, the following assisting actors shall be “Approved Actors”:
 - a. states and intergovernmental organizations whose offers have been formally accepted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
 - b. the [Country Red Cross/Red Crescent Society] and any components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement acting in support of the [Country Red Cross/Red Crescent Society],
 - c. foreign and domestic non-governmental organizations that are approved by the [disaster management authority] on the basis of their experience and capacity for providing effective relief and their continuing adherence to the conditions set out in paragraphs 5 and 6.

8 Or 2018 edition once available.

9. A regularly updated list of all Approved Actors pursuant to this decree shall be maintained and published by the [disaster management authority].

International relief [and initial recovery] goods and equipment

10. The importation of all relief goods and equipment [and initial recovery assistance] by or on behalf of Approved Actors to [port(s)], and clearly labelled as such, shall be expedited through the One-Stop-Shop[s] established there. Simplified documentation requirements shall be clearly detailed and published [by/on the website of] the [customs and/or other border authority].

[Alternate 10. The importation of all relief goods and equipment [and initial recovery assistance] [by or on behalf of Approved Actors and] clearly labelled as such, shall be facilitated by the [customs and/or other border authority] on a priority basis. Simplified documentation requirements shall apply as follows:

- bill of lading or waybill (accepted [electronically] in advance to facilitate immediate release),
- pro forma invoice or donation certificate,
- packing list,
- [biochemical / sanitary / phytosanitary certificates, as appropriate].

11. The importation of relief goods and equipment [and initial recovery assistance] by or on behalf of Approved Actors that are clearly labelled as such in conformity with the requirements published by the [customs and/or other border authority] shall benefit from exemption from all customs duties, taxes, tariffs, or governmental fees as well as a waiver of economic prohibitions, geographic and other restrictions, except as required for reasons of public health or security.

12. Ground, air and water transport of disaster relief goods and equipment [and initial recovery assistance] by or on behalf of Approved Actors shall be accorded priority of passage, including at any checkpoints and in air-traffic routing and landing permissions, and shall be exempt from all fees and tolls.

13. The [telecommunications authority] shall temporarily waive any licensing requirements or fees for the use by Approved Actors of telecommunications equipment that is necessary for their disaster relief [and initial recovery] operations. The [telecommunications authority] shall grant Approved Actors priority access to bandwidth, frequencies and satellite use for telecommunications and data transfer for the disaster operations, except over security forces, ambulance services and other domestic emergency responders.

14. Medications may be imported for direct medical use by foreign medical teams approved by the [Ministry/Department of Health] provided they are:

- a. legal for use in [country name] according to [appropriate law on pharmaceuticals],
- b. transported and maintained by the approved foreign medical team in appropriate conditions at all times to ensure their quality, and
- c. guarded against misappropriation and abuse.

15. Medications imported by Approved Actors intended for donation shall fulfil the conditions of paragraph 14 and shall also:
 - a. have no less than 12 months remaining before their expiration date unless otherwise specifically agreed by the [health authority], and
 - b. be accurately labelled in [official or widely understood language(s) in the country] with the international non-proprietary or generic name, batch number, dosage, concentration, manufacturer, quantity, storage conditions and expiry date.
16. Quarantine requirements shall be waived for search and rescue dogs, provided that the assisting actor responsible for the dog teams in country guarantees compliance with the applicable sections of the INSARAG Guidelines [2015 version].
17. The [transportation authority] shall temporarily waive local registration and license plate requirements for vehicles imported by Approved Actors for the disaster operation.
18. Assisting actors shall ensure that any goods or equipment they import for the disaster operation, which are or become unusable, as well as any other waste products produced by them in the course of the disaster operation, are destroyed, recycled or otherwise disposed of in a safe, environmentally sensitive and effective manner in compliance with [country] law.

Legal status and facilities for Approved Actors

19. Approved Actors shall be authorised to operate on the territory of [country] [for the duration of the state of emergency or up to ** weeks/months] without any registration or other similar obligation beyond that set out in this decree.
20. Approved Actors may engage staff or casual labour locally [for the duration of the state of emergency or up to ** weeks/months] in accordance with applicable labour and employment laws. During this period, Approved Actors shall be exempt from all related registration and contribution requirements, including in respect of taxation, social security and social insurance.
21. Approved Actors may operate bank accounts and hold and exchange funds of any currency without restriction [for the duration of the state of emergency or up to ** weeks/months].
22. The purchase and supply of goods and equipment for the disaster relief [and initial recovery] activities of Approved Actors during the [state of emergency] shall be exempt from all value-added tax (VAT), service taxes and fees and similar duties, levies and governmental fees. This exemption includes the purchase of goods and equipment for official use by the Approved Actor. The [tax authority] shall take all practical steps to ensure that local suppliers suffer no negative financial or administrative impact in providing goods and services to Approved Actors.
23. Approved Actors and their personnel (including staff, casual labour and volunteers) shall be permitted freedom of access to disaster-affected areas and populations, subject only to limitations based on national security, public order or public health, weighed in the context of the disaster needs. They shall be permitted to provide goods and services as disaster assistance directly to the affected persons.

International disaster personnel of Approved Actors

24. The international personnel of Approved Actors shall be entitled to a waiver of entry visa, work permit or residence permit requirements [for the duration of the state of emergency or up to ** weeks/months].
25. Approved Actors whose international personnel require legal recognition of their foreign professional qualifications (such as medical professionals, architects, engineers, etc.) shall certify to the [relevant authority] the validity of the foreign qualifications and the competence of such personnel for their work. On the basis of this certification, these personnel shall be exempt from registration [and/or compulsory membership requirements] and all associated fees or charges [for the duration of the state of emergency or up to ** weeks/months]. This temporary waiver may be revoked at any time upon any finding of misconduct sufficient to bar the individual from professional practice in [country].
26. The [relevant authority] shall grant temporary recognition of foreign driving licenses for the international personnel of Approved Actors [for the duration of the state of emergency or up to ** weeks/months].
27. The salaries and emoluments received by the international personnel of Approved Actors in connection with their participation in the disaster operation shall be exempt from all income and similar taxes. Provided they would not otherwise be subject to income or similar taxes in [country], international personnel of Approved Actors shall not be required to make any tax declaration or filing in [country].

Specialized unit to expedite the entry of incoming international assistance

28. A One-Stop-Shop[s] [or Single Window International Facilitation Team], specialized unit of the [Emergency Operations Center] of the [Disaster Management Authority], shall be established and activated in accordance with this article. The purpose of the One-Stop-Shop[s] will be to consolidate and expedite the legal requirements concerning the entry of incoming international personnel, goods, equipment and transport of international relief in case of disaster and international initial recovery.
29. The One-Stop-Shop[s] is composed of representatives of relevant ministries and agencies, including:
 - a. The Secretariat of the [Disaster Management Authority],
 - b. [Ministries, agencies and / or appropriate government departments such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Economy and Finances, Ministry of Interior or National Security, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Infrastructure, Transport and Communications, Ministry of Defense and/or National Armed Forces, National Agency for Customs, Civil Defense Agency, as well as other institutions that are considered necessary, according to the organization and regulations of the country.],
 - c. The [Country] Red Cross or Red Crescent,
 - d. Other members that the [Disaster Management Authority] may invite to participate, including, but not limited to, relevant officers from [provincial / regional/ district] local government offices, other national strategic actors, as well as relevant

organizations, regional organizations, foreign NGOs or foreign components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

30. Within the [*Emergency Operations Center*], the One-Stop-Shop[s] is responsible for:
 - a. Ensuring complete processing and management of international humanitarian aid and assistance, under the responsibility of [a coordinator who is a member of the Disaster Management Authority],
 - b. Advising and supporting the responsible agencies for airports, seaports and land border crossing points, on the coordination or facilitation of international cooperation,
 - c. Applying the relevant provisions of this decree.
31. [For the duration of the state of emergency or up to ** weeks/months], the One-Stop-Shop[s] shall be deployed to primary points of entry for international disaster assistance such as the relevant airports, ports and border crossing points, depending on the circumstances. In the absence of a One-Stop-Shop[s] team at a particular border crossing, officials involved in regulating the entry of international personnel, goods, equipment and transport shall nevertheless apply the relevant provisions of this decree.
32. The One-Stop-Shop[s] is activated with the declaration of a state of emergency and therefore the mechanism is temporary, covering the international relief period [and the initial recovery period].

Oversight

33. The [*disaster management authority*] shall monitor the compliance of Approved Actors with their responsibilities under this decree. To facilitate this oversight, the [*disaster management authority*] may require Approved Actors to furnish periodic reports about their activities and the assistance they have provided. These reports shall be consolidated and published [electronically].
34. If the [*disaster management authority*] suspects that any Approved Actor has failed to materially comply with its obligations as set out by this decree, it shall consult with the actor to seek clarification or explanation and, where appropriate, may provide an opportunity to come into compliance. If, following consultation, the [*disaster management authority*] determines that an Approved Actor has failed to materially comply, it may suspend or revoke the entity's entitlement to the facilities granted by this decree and remove its name from the list of Approved Actors. Such revocation shall take effect after a reasonable period of notice and shall not be applied retroactively. Decisions to suspend or revoke legal facilities may be appealed to [*appropriate authority*].
35. The [*disaster management authority*] may refer suspected cases of fraud or other criminal conduct by Approved Actors or their personnel to the appropriate authorities. Nothing in this decree precludes prosecution for criminal offense or the imposition of civil liability under the laws of [country].

Transparency as to international financial donations

36. International donations to the Government of [country] as financial assistance for the disaster response operation shall be directed to and received by the [relevant governmental body] for deposit to the [special disaster fund established for this purpose]. The [fund] shall be audited by the [relevant authority] no later than [1 year] from the date of this decree, and the audit report shall be published [electronically] and available to the public.
37. Financial donations received by domestic assisting actors for the disaster response operation, including those from international sources, shall be maintained in a dedicated account for this disaster operation. All such dedicated accounts shall be audited by a nationally-recognised independent auditor no later than [1 year] from the date of this decree, and all such audit reports shall be published [electronically] and available to the public.

This decree shall not limit or reduce any existing rights, privileges or immunities of any assisting actor as separately determined by other laws or agreements, including the [international organisations act and the diplomatic/consular relations act] and any status or headquarters agreement in force in [country].

The present decree shall come into force immediately and shall expire on [date], [**weeks/ months] from the date of this decree [or the end of the state of emergency].

[signed]

[date]

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity / The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality / It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality / In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence / The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary service / It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity / There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality / The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



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