A photograph of a man with dark skin, wearing a red t-shirt and a grey baseball cap, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is standing in front of a background of debris, including a damaged red boat and a stone wall. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

# INTEGRATING CCA AND DRR LAWS AND POLICIES TOWARDS A CLIMATE-RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT

LESSONS FROM THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

*Executive Summary*

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network. With our 189 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 2030—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.

© **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**, Geneva, 2021

Copies of all or part of this study may be made for non-commercial use, providing the source is acknowledged. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies would appreciate receiving details of its use. Requests for commercial reproduction should be directed to the International Federation at [disaster.law@ifrc.org](mailto:disaster.law@ifrc.org).

The opinions and recommendations expressed in this study do not necessarily represent the official policy of the IFRC. The designations used do not imply the expression of any opinion on the concerning the legal status of a territory or of its authorities.

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
P.O. Box 303  
CH-1211 Geneva 19 Switzerland  
Telephone: +41 22 730 42 2

Front cover photo: © *Nina Svahn / Finnish Red Cross*

*Geroge Grell: "Lets rebuild. Lets try to start to live again. We have to come together, lets bring our country back". The village of Layou, home to 90 families, was badly destroyed along with rest of Dominica when hurricane Maria struck.*

Back cover photo: © iSAW Company

**Integrating CCA and DRR laws and policies  
towards a climate-resilient development**  
Lessons from The Commonwealth of Dominica

*Executive Summary*

2021

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was undertaken by IRC-MSCA CAROLINE Research fellow Dr Tommaso Natoli (UCC-IFRC) following his secondment to the IFRC Disaster Law Programme. It is part of the [Research Project](#) “Leave No One Behind—Developing Climate-Smart/Disaster Risk Management Laws that Protect People in Vulnerable Situations for a Comprehensive Implementation of the UN Agenda 2030”. As such, it does not necessarily represent the official policy of the IFRC or the view of IFRC members.

Technical and scientific advice, as well as editing support, were provided by Dr Dug Cubie (University College Cork, School of Law) and Isabelle Granger (IFRC, Global Coordinator, Legislative Advocacy). The author also wishes to thank Jessie Jordan (IFRC, Disaster Law Officer) for her support in all phases of this research and David Fisher (IFRC, Manager, Policy Research & Diplomacy) for his overall revision of the study.

### Project implementing partners



School of Law  
Scoil an Dlí

This project has received funding from the Irish Research Council and the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 713279.



CAROLINE  
Collaborative Research Fellowships  
for a Responsive and Innovative Europe



The IFRC also wishes to thank and acknowledge the support provided by the German Government for the completion of this project.



Suggested citation: IFRC, *Integrating CCA and DRR laws and policies towards a climate-resilient development: lessons from The Commonwealth of Dominica*, (authored by Tommaso Natoli) Geneva (2021).



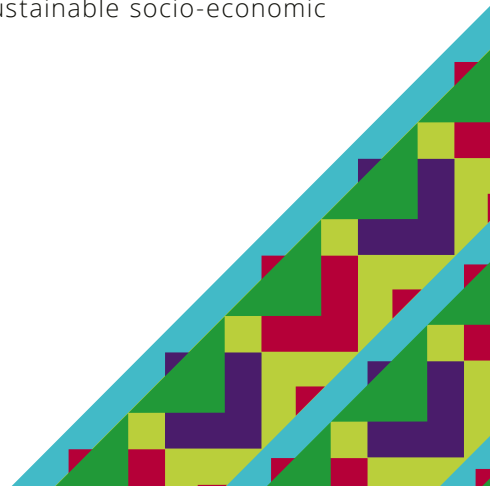
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Caribbean region is already experiencing the effects of climate change, and this is only expected to worsen. The link between climate change and disaster risk has become abundantly clear for the small island developing states of this region, as their high-risk profile for disasters has been compounded by increasing ocean temperatures (leading to increased wind speeds in tropical storms) as well as increased frequency and intensity of the yearly hurricanes affecting the Atlantic and the Caribbean Sea.

Among the most affected small island Caribbean states, the Commonwealth of Dominica is fast becoming a global standard in improving resilience through legislation and governance. In 2017, the

island was devastated by Hurricane Maria, a category 5 storm and one of the most destructive of the 10 consecutive hurricanes to hit the Caribbean during the hyperactive 2017 Atlantic hurricane season. This catastrophic event put every aspect of Dominica's government, economy and society under strain, wiping out entire neighbourhoods and crippling businesses and social services for months.

At the same time, the passage of hurricane Maria also provided the country with a unique opportunity to review its regulatory and infrastructure systems, with the integrated goal of advancing climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in a wider strategy to ensure sustainable socio-economic



development. Since 2017, the country has made significant choices designed to have a long-term impact on its governance model, including the adoption of laws, strategies and plans, and the establishment of a Climate Resilience Execution Agency.

This study provides an in-depth analysis of such advancements with a specific focus on how integrated regulatory instruments across different sectors can enhance effective and consistent action. In doing so, it builds on previous reports drafted within the broader framework of the [research project](#) on “Leave No One Behind. Developing Climate-Smart/ Disaster Risk Management Laws that Protect People in Vulnerable Situations for a Comprehensive Implementation of the UN Agenda 2030” which respectively addressed the intra-regional alignment to international frameworks by the [Pacific Island Countries](#) and the protection of vulnerable groups against climate and disaster risks in the [Philippines](#). It results from a combination of desk-based analysis and empirical research conducted in the country via digital means through interviews with key-informants (KIs), whose names and affiliation are

provided in Annex 1. KIs include IFRC and Dominica Red Cross staff; representatives from regional IGOs; representatives of civil society organisations/associations active in relevant sectors; and researchers with relevant expertise. Participants provided informed insights and evaluations of regional and national normative processes, while also assessing the actual impact of relevant normative tools at different levels and the inclusion and consideration of vulnerable groups in the decision-making processes. The interviews, based on a set of thematic open-ended questions, reflected their specific expertise in respective fields and focused on their personal evaluation/experiences.

This research was carried out after ethics approval was confirmed by the UCC Social Research Ethics Committee. All participants received and signed an ‘informed consent form’ where they acknowledged and specified the conditions of their participation. Privacy considerations were given the utmost importance, in line with the highest EU standards for secure data storage.

## LIST OF SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

The following suggestions are primarily, but not exclusively, addressed to decision-makers in countries – like Dominica – that are geographically small and/or economically fragile. This is because such conditions, together with other socio-economic factors, make law and policy-making in key governmental sectors highly dependent on climate change patterns and extreme weather events. The macro-economic effects of multiple climate-related shocks on these countries’ national economic activity, development and production capacity can be large, and often aggravated by high levels of debt

and underdeveloped private insurance markets. A more integrated legal framework constitutes a critical component of any resilience strategy, and a synergic combination of climate and disaster risk-management, economic development and social protection systems is, therefore, a necessary objective of any law and policy reform or revision. Of course, every system of governance needs to be considered on the basis of its own characteristics, both physical and societal. In this sense, understanding respective national historical and cultural factors represents a necessary starting point.

Taking into account the considerations above, and also suggestions provided by KIs, effective climate resilience law and policies that comprehensively link risk reduction and adaptation plans to longer-term sustainable development ambitions should:

- Be based on a comprehensive strategy that provides a ‘roadmap’ for their design, sequencing and implementation. This can be obtained mainly by ensuring sufficient funding, levels of expertise and human resources, equipment and information management systems, including online opendata to facilitate monitoring and inter-institutional coordination.
- Build on transparent consultations with citizens (including young people, vulnerable groups and hard-to-reach populations), as well as with the widest array of other stakeholders including the private sector and relevant CSOs. Local governance and project implementation mechanisms have a critical role to play to facilitate effective community engagement.
- Ensure no discrimination and be grounded in a clear assessment of localised socio-economic vulnerabilities. This can happen by strengthening climate perspectives in existing social protection systems; government cash transfer programs for livelihoods requalification; microinsurance initiatives and stimulation of local and sustainable economies.
- Favour *ex-ante* planning and investment in structural resilience, e.g. reforming building codes and planning and zoning laws; the consideration of existing technologies for safe building with lower cost materials; and new climate-informed testing and certification systems. This should also include professional education reform that adequately prepares people for entrepreneurship that combines sustainability, growth and innovation.
- Favour the improvement of environmental practices that build climate resilience (i.e. utilize the natural environment and its assets to manage risks while recognising its potential future economic, social and cultural value) through the use of incentives and disincentives. This can happen by highlighting the economic opportunities and benefits of ecosystem-based programmes on, among others, integrated water resource management; waste management; land use; sustainable agriculture and forestry management practices.
- Improve financial resilience, i.e. the capacity to cope with and manage fiscal/financing shocks by favouring the creation and use of risk-transfer instruments, and developing the insurance market including targeting low-income households. This can be facilitated by coordination with external development partners and the catalysation of donor support, climate funds, and other financial resources. The identification of immediate co-benefits and dividends of long-term resilience programmes can help make these investments more attractive.
- Benefit from, and contribute to, peer learning and experience-sharing among similar countries (primarily through the SIDS partnership) and regional intergovernmental agencies. These agencies can support the development and replication of good models of governance across the regions.



