



SNAPSHOT

Climate-smart disaster law in Malawi

In Malawi, the Department of Disaster Management Affairs together with Malawi Red Cross Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are working together to review and integrate the country's climate and disaster risk management legal frameworks for a stronger and more efficient climate-smart disaster risk management system that can reach and engage the people most at risk.

This snapshot looks at the review and how the ongoing work in Malawi connects with the Risk-informed Early

Action Partnership (REAP), a global initiative bringing together stakeholders from climate, humanitarian and development communities to make 1 billion people safer from disaster by 2025. REAP Target 1 encourages countries to review and integrate their disaster risk management and climate adaptation laws, policies and/or plans to ensure that they reduce climate change impacts and exposure on people and the environment.

Our call to action

There is a need for greater coherence across climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and development agendas at national and international levels. To implement the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, governments should adopt a coherent approach, and integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in laws, policies, strategies and plans, including national planning processes.

IFRC calls on governments and key stakeholders to:

- Develop and implement effective climate-smart disaster-related laws. This includes aligning laws and systems across the humanitarian, development, environment and climate sectors to ensure coherence, stronger coordination, and enable concrete impacts on the ground.
- Address the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised people and communities in legal frameworks, including people in crises and those displaced, so that they are reached, informed and included in global, national and local decisions and plans, and their needs are met.

Disaster law review in Malawi

Malawi faces substantial disaster risk from floods and droughts as well as earthquakes, fires, epidemics and landslides. Further exacerbating the frequency and severity of disasters in the country is climate change. With half the population living below the poverty line, the impact of disasters on already vulnerable communities is significant.

Through its auxiliary role to Government, Malawi Red Cross Society advocated for review of the legal framework for international disaster response in 2013. The review culminated in a report, International Disaster Response Law in Malawi, recommending legal provisions be adopted to guide national authorities in requesting, vetting and accepting international humanitarian assistance and clearly outlining the role of the Malawi Red Cross Society in disaster risk management.

Malawi Red Cross Society then further advocated to the Government to provide technical support to implement

the IDRL report recommendations and was entrusted by the Government to support the revision of the Disaster Preparedness Relief Act of 1991.

The result of this process is a Disaster Risk Management Bill, which is now under review by the Ministry of Justice and, when passed into law, will provide a comprehensive legal base for the disaster risk management institutional framework and its implementation in Malawi, and will enable the Department of Disaster Management Affairs to effectively coordinate disaster risk management in the country.

Malawi Red Cross Society is currently advocating for the adoption of the Disaster Risk Management Bill and, once it is passed, will support dissemination at both national and community level. The positioning and relationship that the Malawi Red Cross Society has with the Government through its auxiliary role has been invaluable to Malawi's disaster risk management legislative review process.

Through the law revision process, Malawi Red Cross Society has been contributing to the enhancement of the country's risk governance. Importantly, the whole process has been designed to include a wide range of local actors, from the Red Cross to government to civil society and communities.

Bringing climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction together

As the Disaster Risk Management Bill awaits final approval, Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs has embarked on a review of the Climate Change Policy and National Adaptation Plan.

The review of the National Adaptation Plan aims to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change by building adaptive capacity and resilience while integrating climate change adaptation into relevant new and existing national development policies, programs and activities. A National Adaptation Plan Framework, which provides guidance on the development and implementation of the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), was developed in 2020.

The development of this Framework and the implementation of the NAP are linked to both national and international development strategies and goals such as the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy



Representatives from Malawi Red Cross Society, Malawi Department of Disaster Management Affairs and supporting partners at the report launch event.

I, II and III, Vision 2020, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the 2063 Agenda of the African Union.

Leaving no one behind

The development of the new Disaster Risk Management Bill in Malawi has involved extensive participation and stakeholder engagement, providing opportunities for people's voices to be included in disaster law decision-making, both collectively and individually. The working group for the Bill has involved women's groups, older people, children, people with disabilities, and minority groups in Malawi. This targeted approach helps to ensure that protection, gender and inclusion are key components of the new disaster law and that no one is left behind.

Malawi's National Adaptation Plan Framework was also prepared following national-level consultations with government, academia, civil society, youths, and faith-based stakeholders involved in climate change adaptation. It is designed to guide various actors and stakeholders to address medium to long-term adaptation planning while providing maximum benefit to vulnerable communities and sectors in Malawi.

Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP)

The Risk-informed Early Action Partnership (REAP) brings together stakeholders across the climate, humanitarian and development communities with the aim of making 1 billion people safer from disaster by 2025.

REAP also aims to facilitate intergovernmental collaboration and knowledge exchange. This aligns with the objectives of the Adaptation Action Coalition, given that activities support peer-to-peer learning between countries and regions, and enable showcasing of successes and learnings about taking to scale risk-informed early action in a tangible and action-focused way.

REAP Target 1

Target 1 focuses on the necessity to better connect the complementary goals of disaster risk reduction/management and climate change adaptation.

GOAL: 50 countries have reviewed and integrated their crisis/disaster risk management and climate adaptation laws, policies, and/or plans to ensure that they reduce climate change impacts and exposure on people and the environment.



A community engagement session in Malawi, allowing people most affected by disasters to be included in developing the draft DRM Bill.

Activities under the REAP project in Malawi are supported by the following partners:



About IFRC Disaster Law

IFRC Disaster Law works with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and governments to strengthen disaster risk governance, through the development and implementation of climate, disaster and emergency-related legislation, policies and procedures.

With 20 years of experience supporting the development and implementation of disaster law and policy around the world, we are the global leader in disaster law technical advice to governments.