



Disaster Law



SNAPSHOT

Climate-smart disaster law in Panama

In Panama, the Panamanian Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are working with the Government of Panama to undertake climate change adaptation actions to implement the country's international commitments under the Paris Agreement.

This snapshot looks at the current work of the Government of Panama to articulate and integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into laws and policies, with support from the Panamanian Red Cross and IFRC.

The snapshot further connects this work 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 change 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 (Sendai Framework) 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 their 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 risk reduction and climate change adaptation legal and policy developments

Compared to its Central American neighbours, Panama experiences less extreme weather-related events. However, over the past decade, disasters caused by extreme weather- and climate-related events have been increasing in frequency and intensity. Rising sea levels are affecting the coastline, tropical storms are causing severe flooding and landslides are damaging infrastructure, homes and livelihoods. Last year, category 5 hurricanes Eta and Iota ravaged portions of the country.

As the impacts of natural hazards and climate change increase in Panama, so too does the need for strong

and coherent laws and policies for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Panama's National Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2011-2015 explicitly brings together climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, considered as one of the six priority thematic areas for action. The Plan highlights that environmental management is a tool for disaster risk reduction and provides for three operational objectives:

1. articulating disaster risk reduction approaches in frameworks, policies and strategies relating to climate change and water resources management;
2. strengthening capacities for climate change adaptation planning by taking into consideration aspects of disaster risk reduction; and
3. identifying priorities, formulating, and implementing disaster risk reduction proposals considering climate change adaptation aspects.

Under the Euroclima+ initiative, a regional cooperation programme between the European Union and Latin America focused on public policies to address climate change, Panama is currently working on a Climate Change Adaptation Framework Law Proposal that would strengthen institutional coordination and the regulatory framework for climate change adaptation. Also under the Euroclima+ initiative, Panama is engaging in a review of the current National Policy for Climate Change Adaptation for 2030-2050.

In addition, the country recently updated its environmental policy framework. In April 2021, the Ministry of Environment enacted a decree that modifies the Ambiental Law of 1998 setting the principles and norms for the protection and sustainable use of natural resources. To support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the decree creates several bodies tasked with monitoring progress on the National Policy for Climate Change Adaptation for 2030-2050 mentioned above.

Hurricane Eta brought heavy rains and flooding in Panama in November 2020. Homes, livelihoods and infrastructure were destroyed across Panama and Central America.

Panamanian Red Cross and IFRC action under REAP Target 1

With the recent disasters that have affected Panama, climate change adaptation has been identified as a top priority for the new leadership of the Panamanian Red Cross.

The Panamanian Red Cross and IFRC are working with the Government to ensure that the contents of both instruments that are being considered under the Euroclima+ initiative — the Climate Change Adaptation Framework Law Proposal and the National Policy for Climate Change Adaptation for 2030-2050 — address key aspects of the IFRC's [Checklist on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (DRR Checklist).

The DRR Checklist is a guidance document developed by IFRC to serve as a benchmark for the review and strengthening of domestic instruments relating to

disaster risk reduction. IFRC and Panamanian Red Cross are ultimately advocating for the key recommendations in the DRR Checklist to be reflected in Panama's legal and policy framework.

A gap analysis of Panama's disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation policy frameworks is being conducted, using the DRR Checklist as a benchmark. A national task force will soon be established to review the findings and recommendations.

The Panamanian Red Cross and IFRC are also currently engaging with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to put International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) back on the Government's agenda. The objective is to assess the prospect of adopting an IDRL Law Proposal based on the IFRC's [IDRL Model Act](#).



Regional impact

Through the Central American Integration System (SICA), the economic and political organisation for Central American states, Central American countries adopted in 2017 a Central American Policy for Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management, which translates the priorities for action in the Sendai Framework to the regional level. Activities under REAP Target 1 represent an opportunity to contribute to the national level implementation of the Policy.

Regionally, REAP is also expected to influence similar processes in other countries, through peer learning dialogues between Panama and its regional neighbours about successful practices in strengthening climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in legal and policy frameworks.

Reaching those most in need

The lack of disaster risk management culture at the community level, compounded by inequalities and poverty in Panama, affects how communities deal with natural hazards, further exacerbating existing vulnerabilities among communities with limited resources.

IFRC's DRR Checklist contains recommendations about the protection of vulnerable groups and community participation in early warning systems and contingency planning. By advocating for the implementation of these recommendations, the Panamanian Red Cross and IFRC are working towards a legal and policy framework that ensures no one is left behind, and communities are actively involved in building their resilience.

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.

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.

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