



Disaster Law



SNAPSHOT

Climate-smart disaster law in Uganda

In Uganda, the Office of the Prime Minister and national authorities are working with the Uganda Red Cross Society and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to strengthen disaster law in Uganda.

This snapshot looks at disaster- and climate- related legal and policy developments in Uganda, and how they connect 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 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.

The need for law and policy reform in Uganda

Uganda experiences a wide range of disasters, and with the emerging dimensions of climate change, weather-related disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity.

Uganda has made significant progress on implementing the Sendai Framework, having established a National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, functional Disaster Management Committees at district level, and a functional National Emergency Coordination and Operations Centre (NECOC). To this day, Uganda has not, however, enacted a comprehensive law to deal with disasters, and there is a need for legislation to further strengthen the established institutions and to increase accountability.

An [International Disaster Response Law Report \(IDRL Report\)](#), published by IFRC and the Uganda Red Cross Society in 2011, provided an analysis of Uganda's legal and policy frameworks, with a particular focus on common legal issues related to receiving international disaster assistance.

The report recommended that a comprehensive law on disaster risk management and health emergencies should be enacted to solidify Uganda's institutional framework for disaster management and that it should include key elements of international disaster response law.

The IDRL Report prompted the government to review and adapt its legal framework for disaster risk management.





Gideon Kipurah a Ugandan Red Cross volunteer stands where Bulembya Primary School once stood after floods tore through Kasese in 2020.

A new Disaster Risk Management Bill

In 2018, the Office of the Prime Minister embarked on the development of a Disaster Risk Management Bill with the support of relevant stakeholders including the Uganda Red Cross Society. The aim of the new Bill will be to institutionalise a legal framework for disaster risk management that represents an integrated and coordinated approach, focusing on prevention, risk reduction, as well as effective response.

The Disaster Risk Management Bill will also seek to set guidelines for key stakeholders in relation to disaster preparedness, mitigation and management. The Bill is currently in drafting, with various national stakeholders involved in the process.

A new climate change law

The recent development of a new climate change law in Uganda, the National Climate Change Act 2021 has provided a platform for public dialogue in Uganda about climate change and disaster risk management.

Before the Act was passed by Parliament, a policy dialogue was held to help local communities and other key climate change actors fully understand the bill and prepare for implementation once it was passed into law. Having heard from representative groups for women, students, academia and local people, it is clear that this dialogue approach is intended to help implement the new climate change law at the grassroots level and to ensure that protection, gender and inclusion are key components of the new law, so that no one is left behind.

The conclusion of the dialogue was that climate mitigation and adaptation activities at the community level are critical in building a sustainable, adaptive and resilient society. It is expected that the principles of the National Climate Change Act 2021 will act as a reference point in the drafting of the Disaster Risk Management Bill.

A National Adaptation Plan

The Ugandan Ministry of Water and Environment and the Climate Change Department have agreed on a road map for the National Adaptation Plan that includes developing sector specific adaptation plans and then integrating these into one National Adaptation Plan. While the adaptation plan for the agriculture sector is well developed, those for disaster risk management, health, water, environment and forestry require more substantive input.

The development of the National Adaptation Plan will contribute to the implementation of various national commitments relating to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and also complement the functionality of the National Climate Change Act 2021 and the anticipated new Disaster Risk Management Act.

A new Red Cross law

Consistent with its ongoing effort to strengthen its legal framework for climate-smart disaster risk management, the Government of Uganda has recognised the important role and responsibilities of the Uganda Red Cross as auxiliary to its government in the humanitarian

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, national frameworks for climate services and/or plans to ensure that they reduce climate change impacts and exposure on people and the environment.

Activities under the REAP project in Uganda 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.