



SNAPSHOT

# Strengthening disaster and climate risk governance in the Pacific

In the Pacific, National Red Cross Societies, governments and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) are working together to strengthen disaster and climate risk governance at national and local levels.

We support states strengthening disaster risk governance through the development of legal frameworks to address disaster and climate risks in a comprehensive manner.

This includes integration between general disaster risk management laws and those related to climate change adaptation.

A coherent approach at the domestic level is needed to meet states' closely related commitments under the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



## Strengthening disaster & climate risk governance in the Pacific

Pacific communities are at the forefront of disasters and climate change, and with the arrival of COVID-19 to their shores, supporting governments to strengthen their disaster and climate risk governance, is crucial for saving lives and keeping communities safe.

Since 2009, we have worked with 15 governments in the region and completed more than 16 country-focused disaster law research projects. In that time, 14 countries have had their disaster laws influenced or are in the process of influencing.

In Vanuatu, one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, the work of strengthening disaster risk governance started in 2009. In 2015, Tropical Cyclone Pam saw the country's legal preparedness put to the test, it was a catalyst for the country and the rest of the Pacific. Since then, a disaster risk management law supported by Red Cross has been adopted and has been effectively used during many disasters.

With the Government of Tonga and Tonga Red Cross, we supported disaster law capacity building for the legislative drafters in the Attorney General's Office and supported disaster-related legal policy and standard operating procedures, peer to peer with other Pacific Island countries through the Technical Working Group on Risk Governance and Resilient Development. We know Tonga's vast experience and expertise in this area came into play during recent cyclones and the volcanic eruption and tsunami in 2022.

Support was provided to the Kiribati National Disaster Management Office on the finalisation of their Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Act. Ongoing support is being provided to disaster law related processes in Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Regionally, we have strong and long-term relationships with Pacific agencies. With the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2014, we support technical reviews of national disaster legislation and climate-smart disaster training initiatives for Pacific legislative drafters and national disaster management offices or national emergency management offices.

IFRC's seat on the Framework for Resilient Development's Pacific Resilience Partnership Taskforce allows support to member states in the implementation of their regional risk governance commitments through domestic law and policy. We support co-chairing the Technical Working Group on Risk Governance and Resilient Development, under the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific the regional hub for risk governance for resilient development, that promotes best practices, and guides national policy and legislative development processes - focused on the development and implementation of climate-smart disaster risk management legal frameworks.

Through the Working Group, we have supported a study on Legal Preparedness for Regional and International Disaster Assistance in the Pacific, with a focus on 16 Pacific Island countries. We also supported a study on Law, Disasters and Public Health Emergencies in the Pacific

## Our call to action

In the face of a global climate emergency - it is clear - we need to strengthen disaster and climate risk governance through greater coherence across climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and development agendas.

We call on governments and stakeholders to:

- Prioritise and support the strengthening of disaster and climate risk governance. Strengthened disaster and climate risk governance at national, regional and local levels is critical to manage increased weather-related risks we are facing.
- 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, definition of roles and responsibilities of all actors, stronger coordination, and 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.

## Country profile: Fiji

After Tropical Cyclone Winston tore through Fiji in 2016, the need to update and strengthen disaster laws became clear.

The government approached Red Cross to assist, and in 2018, the Fiji National Disaster Management Office, Fiji Red Cross and IFRC signed a memorandum of understanding to review the 1998 Natural Disaster Management Act and the 1995 National Disaster Management Plan.

The review has supported the disaster risk management system to become proactive, and inclusive, taking a multi-risk and hazard approach and focusing on disaster risk reduction. Legislating for the Fiji Cluster System, provisions for strengthening coherence, coordination and regulation by the government of non-government organisations and international agencies and strengthening preparedness of all agencies involved in the response, have all been included.

The review occurred alongside numerous cyclones, climate-related events and the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing for the real-time application of strengthened disaster governance.

While the review of the Disaster Management Act was underway, a draft Climate Change Bill was developed and enacted into law. The shared themes of the Fiji Climate Change Act 2021 and the draft Disaster Risk Management Bill are: a people-centred approach, emphasis on risk-informed approaches and strengthening of Fiji's resilience. The NDMO and Climate Change Division continue to collaborate on addressing climate and disaster risks.





# Law and Public Health Emergencies

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for urgent action to strengthen domestic legal and policy frameworks for public health emergencies. Our global and Pacific research has found an overall lack of legal preparedness or strong legislation for public health emergencies.

In the Pacific, our research analysed laws, policies, and to the extent possible, practice between the level of integration and cohesion between disaster risk management and public health emergency frameworks, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, across eight Pacific countries: Fiji, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, and was carried out by IFRC in partnership with the Pacific Resilience Partnership's Technical Working Group on Risk Governance and Resilient Development.

As a follow on from the research, IFRC Disaster Law's Guidance on Law and Public Health Emergency Preparedness is an assessment tool to support the review and updating of laws, policies and plans relating to public health emergencies. The Guidance will assist domestic decision-makers to identify critical legal and policy issues for consideration and evaluating how well those issues are currently addressed by existing instruments.



## GUIDANCE ON LAW AND PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

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Disaster Law

## 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.

