



SNAPSHOT

# Strengthening disaster and climate risk governance in the Caribbean

In the Caribbean, 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.

## 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. This includes involving communities in the design and implementation of laws and solutions that enable urgent climate action and facilitating climate finance to enable them to do this critical work.
- 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.

## Strengthening disaster and climate risk governance in the Caribbean

Every year, the Caribbean is hit by disasters – from tropical storms and hurricanes to COVID-19, a dengue outbreak, the La Soufrière Volcanic eruption and floods. Supporting governments to strengthen their disaster and climate risk governance in the region is crucial for saving lives and keeping communities safe.

Since 2012, we have been working with National Societies in the region to advocate to their governments on disaster law, through the development of more than 16 country-focused disaster law research projects, which provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening laws and policies on disaster risk management.

Regionally, we have partnered with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) to launch a Caribbean International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) Working Group, which is responsible for advancing the development of Caribbean protocols and regulatory standards for the strengthening of the existing regulatory framework in international humanitarian assistance.

The idea for this Working Group was conceived during the Caribbean IDRL Workshop in November 2021, where Caribbean States acknowledged the devastating effects of climate change and the increasing vulnerabilities of its populations. It was agreed that increasing resilience, also meant enhancing the capacities of States to respond and receive international humanitarian assistance during disasters by strengthening laws and policies to effectively facilitate and regulate the entry of international disaster relief.

CDEMA plays a central role in disaster coordination and cooperation at the regional and national levels. Through the IDRL Working Group, IFRC is working with CDEMA and its Participating States to enhance existing regulatory frameworks in disaster governance..







## Country profile: Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago is a Small Island Developing State, comprising of two islands located in the Southern Caribbean. The islands are exposed to a wide range of hazards including earthquakes, hurricanes, storms and extreme rainfall which gives rise to flooding and landslides. Trinidad and Tobago was also hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and has had outbreaks of vector-borne diseases, such as dengue and chikungunya.

The *Disaster Measures Act 1978*, which is the existing law governing disaster management in Trinidad and Tobago, is outdated and does not address many of the key issues of the disaster management cycle. There is also a need to establish the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) in legislation, as the coordinating agency for disaster risk management and provide it with the necessary capacity to carry out this mandate.

Recognising the need to strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's legislative framework in disaster risk management, the ODPM convened a Technical Review Committee in 2020 to conduct a legislative review process. Through its auxiliary role, the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society, together with IFRC Disaster Law, provided technical support to the Committee to guide the review process.

Over the course of nine months, IFRC Disaster Law conducted seventeen workshops with the Committee who undertook a legislative gap analysis which utilized IFRC Disaster Law's key benchmarking tools.

The recommendations arising out of this gap analysis are currently informing the development of the new Comprehensive Disaster Management law and policy.

Some of the key recommendations include:

- Establishing in law, a National Disaster Management Authority (for example the ODPM) with the mandate to deliver comprehensive disaster management.
- Defining in the legislation the role and responsibilities of state and non-state agencies in all stages of DRM from disaster risk reduction to recovery.
- Promoting mechanisms that allow for the meaningful participation of vulnerable and minority groups in DRM planning and decision-making.
- Adoption of an "IDRL" specific regulation that outlines procedures for regulating, facilitating and coordinating international disaster assistance.

## 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.