

Legal frameworks for early warning early action in Africa

The African continent is uniquely vulnerable to a variety of disasters, including droughts, floods, and locust infestations, with climate change intensifying these risks. The implementation of early warning early action (EWEA) strategies within disaster management laws is critical for enhancing resilience and reducing the impact of these disasters.

Early action based on warning means taking steps to protect people before a disaster strikes. It is critical for saving lives and livelihoods and helps prevent or reduce the potential impact of a disaster. The rationale for EWEA, is that pre-emptive, rather than responsive actions, are generally more effective at reducing the impacts of disasters, while also being more cost-efficient. EWEA starts with legal frameworks which can detail what actions will be taken, when they happen, and who is responsible for them.

Legal frameworks enable governments to allocate resources for EWEA measures, such as establishing early warnings systems, planning for anticipatory action, and ensuring emergency response funds are available. Legal frameworks can streamline decision-making processes during critical periods, and are key for ensuring community engagement as well as the protection and inclusion of marginalised and at-risk groups in EWEA processes.

Early warning early action is known as anticipatory action, anticipatory humanitarian action, forecast-based financing, forecast-based action, early action or risk-informed early action. Terminology depends on the actor and the context, but it all means building upon climate services to forecast extreme weather events and their impacts and to facilitate action.

Early Warnings for All #EW4ALL

The UN's Early Warning for All Initiative aims to ensure every person on earth is protected from hazardous weather, water, or climate events through life-saving early warning systems by the end of 2027. It includes a commitment to strengthening law and policy for early action, which IFRC Disaster Law will work alongside National Societies and governments to achieve.



How do we legislate for early warning early action?

IFRC's **Disaster Risk Governance Guidelines** (DRM Guidelines) are designed to assist law and policy makers by serving as a benchmark for assessing domestic instruments and identifying strengths, weaknesses and gaps. The Guidelines adopt a holistic approach, identifying how different types of instruments — laws, regulations, policies, plans and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) — can collectively provide a strong framework for effective DRM. They address all key topics that need to be addressed in domestic disaster instruments, including EWEA.

Listed below are the four key components of EWEA, with a sample of guidance for the development of legal frameworks based on the DRM Guidelines. For a more comprehensive list of guiding questions, check out **IFRC's DRM Guidelines**.

Developing disaster risk knowledge

- Laws and policies should mandate and allocate responsibility for:
 - collecting and analysing information about exposure to hazards, vulnerability and capacity;
 - preparing multi-hazard maps; and
 - conducting multi-hazard risk assessments.

Detection, monitoring, analysis and forecasting hazards

- Laws and policies should mandate relevant actors to:
 - monitor and forecast hazards,
 - develop and implement standard procedures for monitoring and forecasting which reflect accepted scientific methodologies; and
 - share information and provide technical advice to the government entity responsible for generating and issuing early warnings.

Warning dissemination

- Laws and policies should identify which actor is responsible for generating and issuing early warnings, and assign responsibility to this actor to develop and implement standard procedures for early warnings.

Ensuring preparedness and response capabilities

- Laws and policies should require disaster authorities to develop and periodically update a detailed plan (or plans) for anticipating and responding to hazardous events; and
- Laws and policies mandate and assign responsibility to relevant actors to organise regular training, drills and simulation exercises, both for disaster responders as well as the general public.

Examples of EWEA in law

Early warning and alert systems

Governments can enact laws that mandate the establishment and operation of comprehensive, multi-hazard early warning and alert systems. These laws should clearly outline roles and responsibilities and regulate a procedure for issuing warnings and disseminating information to the public. Mandating early warning and alert systems ensures they are active and effective, giving communities and responders as much time as possible to prepare before a disaster.

Planning for anticipatory action

The law can require disaster authorities to develop and periodically update detailed plans for anticipating and responding to hazardous events. The law can further require these plans to address: the types of anticipatory actions that may be implemented; the trigger for anticipatory actions; the types of actions that may be implemented; the roles and responsibilities of all actors in anticipatory action; and the coordination and funding mechanisms that will be activated for anticipatory action.

Early action funds

The law can mandate funding for early action before serious weather-related events. Legal provisions can specify the sources of funding, the allocation process, and the conditions under which funds can be activated, as well as mechanisms for oversight and accountability. Funding for early action enables people to prepare before disasters happen and ensures quicker more effective responses to these disasters as well. This quick, coordinated action is critical to save lives and reduce damage.



Community engagement and inclusivity

Laws and policies for EWEA must protect people with vulnerabilities. Frameworks must protect the most vulnerable - women, the elderly, the young, the displaced, people with disabilities, and marginalised groups, who feel a greater impact of disasters to ensure they are provided the information and support needed to take early action. For example, domestic laws, policies and plans should mandate evacuation assistance for people unable to evacuate independently.

Laws and policies for EWEA must be people-centered and involve everyone. They need to be inclusive and developed with the end-users in mind. Standard procedures should address how warnings will be disseminated, for example, through communications channels, mediums, languages, and provide dissemination methods for populations that are hard to reach.



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 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.

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