



*Disaster  
Law*

# FROM ALERT TO ACTION

**Legal and Policy Frameworks  
for Effective Early Warning  
Early Action**



## INTRODUCTION

In an age marked by increasing climate variability and natural disasters, the need for effective disaster risk management has never been more critical. Research has consistently shown that timely intervention can drastically reduce the impacts of disasters on communities, proving to be both more effective and cost-efficient than reactive measures. By understanding and acting upon disaster risks before they escalate, community resilience can be strengthened.

**The Early Warnings for All Initiative (EW4ALL)**, launched by the United Nations in 2022, represents a global commitment to protect every person on Earth from hazardous weather, water, and climate events through life-saving early warning systems by 2027. At the

heart of the EW4ALL initiative lies the principle of Early Warning Early Action (EWEA). This proactive approach emphasizes the importance of anticipating the impact of disasters and taking pre-emptive actions to prepare and warn communities, thereby saving lives and livelihoods.

Legal and policy frameworks play a vital role in the establishment and implementation of effective disaster risk management systems, including EWEA. By empowering local actors and dictating who takes action, when, and how, they ensure that these systems function effectively. Despite significant improvements in recent decades, many countries still need to strengthen their disaster laws to effectively manage disaster and climate risks, including for EWEA.

## THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE EW4ALL INITIATIVE

The EW4ALL initiative is built upon **four foundational pillars**: disaster risk knowledge and management; detection, observation, monitoring, analysis, and forecasting; warning dissemination and communication; and preparedness and response capabilities. Each pillar plays a vital role in the development of people-centred multi-hazard early warning systems and is spearheaded by an organization with specific expertise on the topic.



## LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS AS ENABLERS OF EWEA

Legal and policy frameworks form the often-invisible foundation of disaster risk management, protecting and preparing communities all around the world. They underpin every DRM activity from prevention and mitigation to preparedness, response and recovery. As such, legal and policy frameworks serve as the backbone of EWEA, establishing the necessary institutions, structures and guidelines for developing disaster risk knowledge; observing, monitoring, analysing and forecasting hazards; disseminating warnings and strengthening preparedness and response capabilities.

**Comprehensive legal and policy frameworks are critical for:**

### 1. Assigning clear roles and responsibilities

In times of crisis, swift and coordinated decision-making is crucial. Laws, policies, strategies and plans should establish clear roles and responsibilities to ensure the right information reaches communities, and swift action is taken before disasters strike. Laws, policies, strategies and plans should clearly set out roles, responsibilities, standards and procedures for hazard mapping, risk assessments, monitoring and forecasting hazards, and generating and issuing warnings. Clear protocols help avoid confusion, conflict, duplication and ensure that all stakeholders know their roles and responsibilities when a disaster strikes.

### 2. Establishing sustainable funding mechanisms

Robust legal and institutional frameworks can help to ensure the necessary resources for establishing and operating people-centred, multi-hazard early warning systems are put in place. Legislating for EWEA can enhance sustainable domestic funding by establishing funding mechanisms and creating legal obligations for governments to allocate dedicated financial resources for all elements of EWEA. A strong legal framework can also ensure early warning systems and EWEA programs are prioritized in national budgets, reducing reliance on external aid.



Legal frameworks should specify triggers for release of funding before serious weather-related events for communities to prepare and respond before disasters strike. Funding for such action not only enables people to prepare before disasters happen, it ensures quicker more effective responses to these disasters as well. EWEA contributes to faster response to disasters by mapping activities and responsibilities in advance, pre-positioning items, and providing automatic funding. This quick, coordinated action is critical to save lives and reduce damage.



### 3. Fostering protection, inclusivity and community engagement to reach the last mile

EWEA must be inclusive to ensure that no one is left behind. Everyone must be involved in designing and implementing EWEA laws, policies and plans to ensure that these actions reach as many people as possible. This includes local governments, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, community leaders and the people most affected by disasters. Laws can ensure that communities, including persons with disabilities, women and older persons, actively participate in the planning and design of early warning systems. Only by allowing their needs and perspectives to shape the design and implementation of early warning systems, can the last mile be reached.

Legal frameworks are also essential for ensuring the protection and inclusion of persons in vulnerable situations within EWEA activities. By recognizing the specific needs

of persons in vulnerable situations, often including the elderly, persons with disabilities, women and children, laws can help to create targeted interventions that ensure no one is left behind in the face of an imminent disaster.



Warnings and information about weather-related events must be accessible and available for everyone. Law and policy should require the agencies that are responsible for issuing warnings to use a wide variety of communication channels to disseminate warnings; implement feedback mechanisms to ensure that the messages are going where they need to; and to implement plans to reach the most at-risk and remote populations.

## IFRC'S COMMITMENT TO STRENGTHENING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR EWEA

**Legal frameworks that facilitate EWEA save lives and keep communities safe. As we face the growing challenges of climate change and increasing disaster risks, the commitment to strengthening EWEA is more important than ever. It is critical that EWEA is a part of comprehensive laws, policies and plans to reduce risks and to respond to anticipated weather-related events.**

As the global leader in climate-smart disaster law, IFRC Disaster Law is ready to support governments to develop and implement laws, policies, strategies and plans for EWEA, supporting the implementation of the EW4ALL initiative.



IFRC's **Disaster Risk Governance 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, strategies, plans and Standard Operating Procedures — can collectively provide a strong framework for effective DRM. They address all key topics that need to be addressed in domestic disaster instruments, including the key components of EWEA.

To learn more about strengthening legal and policy frameworks for comprehensive disaster risk management, including EWEA, visit our website or contact us directly.

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