

IDRL Emergency Fact Sheet

JAMAICA

Update June 2025

This International Disaster Response Law (IDRL) Emergency Fact Sheet is intended to provide key information to international humanitarian actors, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement operations and network, relating to the regulatory and policy environment applying to the entry of incoming disaster relief.

This document provides an IDRL Snapshot of Jamaica, followed by information on the recent disaster context as well as more detailed information on key issues related to international disaster assistance.

Visit the [IFRC Disaster Law website](#) to know more about our work on IDRL.

Disclaimer:

- *This update was produced on June 9, 2025, and does not take into account changes in circumstances beyond that date.*
 - *Where documents were not available online, information was taken from secondary sources.*
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IDRL Snapshot for Jamaica

	Issue	Status	Comment
1.	Legal framework for IDRL	Partial	The DRM Act 2015 refers to procedures for cooperation with international organisations and foreign governments. The National Disaster Relief Policy and the Relief Clearance Policy provides more detailed procedures on receiving assistance from overseas.
2.	Focal point for coordination	✓	ODPEM is identified in the National Disaster Relief Policy as a focal point for coordinating with foreign missions.
3.	Roles and responsibilities of key actors relating to international disaster assistance outlined	Partial	Roles of some key actors such as the Director-General of ODPEM are outlined in the DRM Act. Some responsibilities specifically related to international assistance are outlined in the National

			Disaster Relief Policy although not comprehensively.
4.	Process for requesting, welcoming, terminating assistance	Partial	Some procedures are outlined in the National Disaster Relief Policy, but not comprehensively.
5.	Legal facilities for international actors	Partial	ODPEM is entitled to seek waiver of duties from Ministry of Finance and provide authorisation/certification to other agencies for relief items being imported. See National Disaster Relief Policy.
6.	Quality standards for international actors	✗	
7.	Eligibility requirements for international actors to receive legal facilities	✗	
8.	Specialised unit for expediting assistance	✗	
9.	Provisions for transparency, safeguards and accountability mechanisms	✗	
10.	Procedures for the sending, transit, and re-exportation (unused goods, equipment) of international disaster assistance	✗	

Recent Disaster Impacts

- **(2024) Hurricane Beryl:** Category 5 Hurricane which passed south of the island as a Category 4 storm, flooding roads, damaging buildings including Kingston's Normal Manley International Airport and killing two people. The hurricane affected approximately 160,000 people, displacing 1,876 and severely damaging infrastructure, homes, and essential services. The storm disrupted access to clean water, electricity, and healthcare, with agricultural and fishing communities suffering significant losses.¹

Legal and Institutional Framework

- Government authority for managing disasters in Jamaica is the **Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM)**.

¹ IFRC, Initial Assessment Report: Hurricane Beryl: Jamaica, 19 August 2024, available at <
<https://reliefweb.int/report/jamaica/ifrc-initial-assessment-report-hurricane-beryl-jamaica-19-august-2024>>

- The legislation governing disaster management, and which established NEMO is the [Disaster Risk Management Act, 2015](#).
- The DRM Act provides for:
 - S. 14 Exemption of customs duty, general consumption tax for ODPEM regarding any article imported into Jamaica for use in performance of its functions.
 - S. 16 Establishment of a National Disaster Risk Management Council.
 - S. 17 Preparation of a National Disaster Response Coordination Plan which includes procedures for cooperation with international organisations and foreign governments.
 - S. 26 Gives the Prime Minister the power to declare a disaster area or threatened area.
 - See Disaster Risk Management (Declaration Of Disaster Area) (Hurricane Beryl) Order, 2024
 - S. 26(6) Where Prime Minister has declared the whole or any part of Jamaica a disaster area, the Director General of ODPEM or persons authorised by him have the power to enter any premises (with or without owner's consent) if necessary in the performance of his functions.
 - S. 27 – In relation to the declared area, the Director General may exercise certain powers, including controlling movement, ordering evacuation etc.
 - S. 37 – Establishment of a National Disaster Fund.
- **Hurricane Beryl:** *In preparation for an in response to Hurricane Beryl in 2024, the Prime Minister of Jamaica declared the whole of Jamaica a disaster area. See [Disaster Risk Management \(Declaration Of Disaster Area\) \(Hurricane Beryl\) Order, 2024](#). Various enforcement measures were issued in preparation for the passage of Hurricane Beryl. These included measures to shelter in place (till July 4) with exceptions for certain essential services.*
 - [See Disaster Risk Management \(Enforcement Measures\) \(Hurricane Beryl\) Order, 2024](#)
 - [See Disaster Risk Management \(Enforcement Measures\) \(Hurricane Beryl\) \(No. 2\) Order, 2024](#)
- There is a [National Disaster Action Plan](#) for Jamaica available on ODPEM's website. The parts of the plan accessible include:
 - [Terms of Reference for Committees, Agencies and Individuals with Disaster Functions – Part 2](#)
 - [National Emergency Operations Centre \(Standard Operating Procedures\) Part 4](#)
- There is a [National Damage Assessment Plan \(2001\)](#)
 - This is a sub-plan of the National Disaster Plan, which outlines the process for inspecting and investing the damage of either a specific facility and/or a particular area, to aid disaster managers in deciding on the type and amount of assistance required to restore a sense of normality to the affected area. The result of this inspection is to be recorded and assessed at the National and/or Parish levels by the appropriate agencies.
- There is a [National Disaster Relief Policy](#). This policy outlines:
 - Agencies and their roles in dispensing assistance to victims.
 - Red Cross as one of the distributors of relief.
 - Disaster Relief Policy flow chart
 - Procedures for dispensing relief
 - Emergency Shelter/Welfare Action Plan

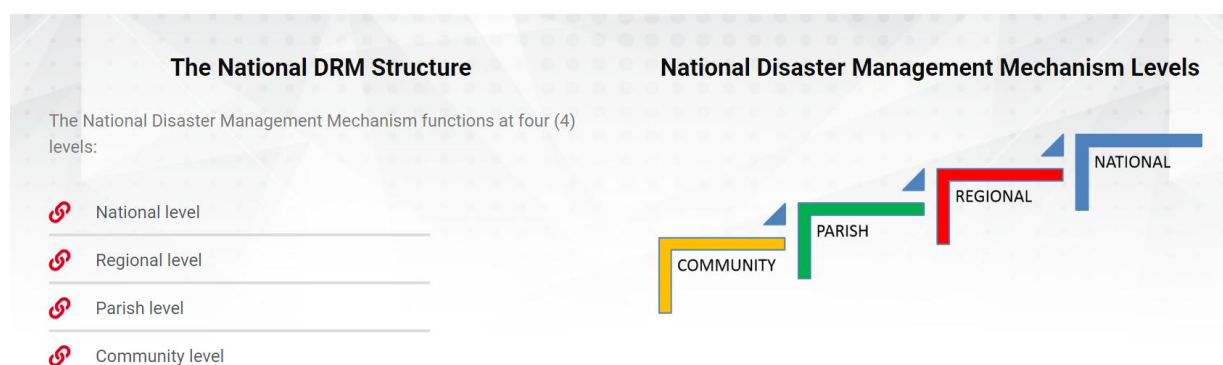
- **Relief Clearance Policy** → procedures for receiving assistance normally from overseas, for persons displaced by emergencies or disasters. See p. 22-26.
- There is a **National Emergency Relief Clearance Plan (2021).*** This plan outlines procedures for post-disaster clearing of personnel, equipment and supplies at ports of entry. It includes information on:
 - Approved ports of entry for emergency relief.
 - Institutional framework for relief clearance (including guidelines for donations of relief items from assisting states and organisations.
 - One-Stop Shop for emergency relief clearance
 - Roles of entities in relief clearance and governing legal/policy instruments/ frameworks
 - Standard Operating procedures for the clearance of relief
 - Guidelines for exemptions for charitable organisations.

NB. Under this plan, the Jamaica Red Cross and IFRC qualify for exemptions. However, the activation of the exemption waiver will be based on whether the Ministry of Finance announces its activation.

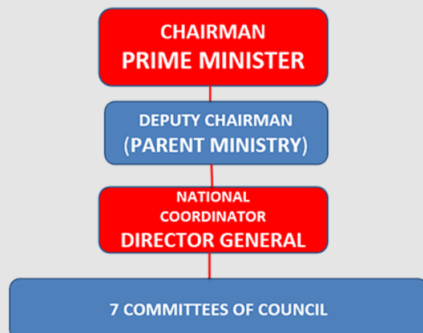
***The National Emergency Relief Clearance Plan (2021), although available through a Google Search, however it is not readily available on ODPEM's website. Therefore, it is not clear whether this plan is currently enforced or approved.**

The Relief Clearance Policy under the National Disaster Relief Policy is what is currently posted on ODPEM's website.

Disaster Management Structure



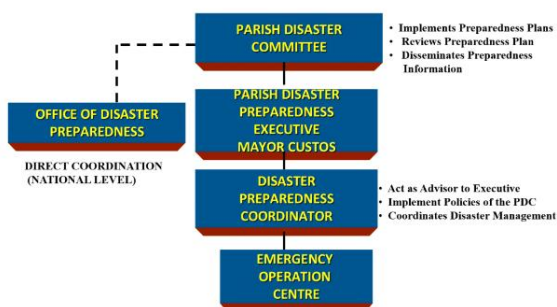
National Disaster Risk Management Council



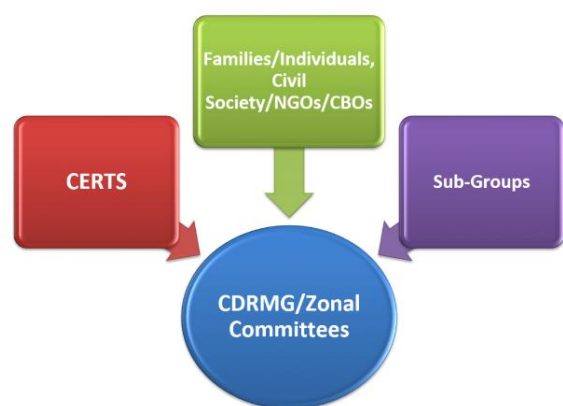
National Disaster Risk Management Council



Parish Disaster Committee



Community Level



(Taken from [ODPEM's website](#))

Entry of Foreign Humanitarian Personnel

- There are no special visas – or visa arrangements – for disaster relief personnel.
- Entry visas are not required from citizens of the Caribbean, most Commonwealth countries, USA, or most Western European countries. Personnel from these countries may enter Jamaica for short periods without prior application. Visits will typically be approved for a 30-day period, and the cumulative number of visits should not exceed 180 days in a calendar year.
- To see the full regime of visa requirements for entry into Jamaica see the [Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency website](#).
- For longer visits, a work permit or work permit exemption will be needed from the Ministry of Labour.

Requirements for International Actors

No clear provisions explicitly provided for:

- Registration of international actors
- Determining eligibility of international actors to qualify for legal facilities
- Monitoring international actors to ensure compliance with minimum standards or obligations and guidance set out by the Government.

Customs duties and tax waivers

- Goods used in rehabilitation or relief activities may be entitled to a waiver from import duties. See pg. 24 of [the Jamaica Customs Agency – Customs Procedure Codes](#).
- **NOTE:** Jamaica Red Cross does not currently benefit from the tax waivers under the Charities Act. It usually received assistance from ODPEM to have its goods cleared. Since 2022, Jamaica Red Cross has been working on revising its Jamaica Red Cross Society Act, to address this issue.

Other Legal Facilities

No clear provisions explicitly provided for:

- Expedited procedures for recognition of foreign professional qualifications.
- Freedom of movement for international actors to access a disaster-affected area during a disaster response.
- Safety and security of international actors.

Contact

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