

case  
study

# Viet Nam Red Cross: Vietnam champions disaster law

For several years, the Viet Nam Red Cross Society (VNRCS) has been working together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' (IFRC) Disaster Law Programme (DLP) to raise awareness on the importance of being legally prepared for disasters. As a result of this collaboration, Vietnam has adopted a progressive new law for disaster management and is now considered a regional leader for disaster law.

The collaboration started in 2009, when the DLP (then known as the IDRL Programme) commissioned a study on legal preparedness for international disaster assistance in Vietnam, analysing Vietnam's legal framework against the *Guidelines for the domestic facilitation and regulation of international disaster relief and initial recovery assistance* (the IDRL Guidelines). The final report, which pulled together extensive research and consultations, identified areas of good practice and provided a set of recommendations for strengthening Vietnam's laws and policies for the entry and coordination of international aid.



*Working with local communities to conduct hazard mapping exercises is an integral part of disaster preparedness and prevention*



*Vice President / Secretary General Mr. Doan Van Thai has led VNRCS's contribution to the development of the new law for disaster management*

Partly stimulated by the recommendations of the 2009 study, the government embarked on a process of drafting a new 'Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control' in 2010-2011. VNRCS, as a member of the Central Committee on Flood and Storm Control, played a crucial role in influencing the development of the law by providing advice and comments to the government and participating in several workshops. At a National Assembly workshop in August 2012, VNRCS and IFRC together made presentations advocating the importance of prioritising disaster risk reduction (DRR), addressing international assistance in the new law and highlighting the role of VNRCS in disaster preparedness and response in Vietnam.

The new law was officially adopted by the National Assembly in June 2013. VNRC's efforts had paid off. The groundbreaking law contains a whole chapter on the management of incoming international assistance. It also integrates a comprehensive risk reduction approach into its national legal and policy frameworks. For citizens and organisations, the law clearly outlines their rights and obligations related to disaster preparedness and response.

"The adoption of the new law on disaster preparedness and response ... is a significant step for Vietnam to prepare our people to reduce risks and impacts of disasters, especially in the context of climate change," remarked Mr. Doan Van Thai, Vice President and Secretary General of VNRC.

"In line with the provisions on international assistance contained in the law, ... all international assistance will be received with favourable conditions, in accordance with key principles of the IDRL Guidelines. In terms of DRR, the new law encourages the participation of citizens, civil society, community leaders and the private sector in DRR/community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) policy making processes at all levels."

These provisions for DRR have also been highlighted in a case study commissioned by VNRC and IFRC in 2012, which looks at how a range of laws across different sectors can support DRR measures. A good practice enshrined in the country's DRR-related legislation is the early warning system for floods and storms, with a committee system to ensure that the initiative is implemented at national, provincial, district and commune levels. Other mitigation methods spelt out within the law include building protective structures in coastal areas, be they man-made water reservoirs as mandated by the Dyke Law, or natural mangroves as mandated by the Forest Law.

In the coming months, the DLP will also continue to support VNRC to provide input into the development of implementing decrees for the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control. At the same time, VNRC looks forward to sharing its own success story and supporting other National Societies to engage with their governments in the law drafting process.



*Vietnam's coastal communities are highly vulnerable to storms and floods; the early warning system mandated in the law enables communities to adequately prepare for evacuations*



*This group of primary school students in Thuy Xuan are the ultimate beneficiaries of improved legal frameworks to facilitate humanitarian aid*

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