

**CASE STUDY**

# Integrating early warning early action within disaster legislation in Asia Pacific

Asia Pacific faces significant challenges due to its susceptibility to disasters such as cyclones, floods and earthquakes with the impact of climate change further exacerbating these. The integration of early warning early action (EWEA) within domestic disaster legislation is crucial for enhancing preparedness and mitigating the impact of disasters.

This case study explores how countries like Bangladesh and Timor-Leste, with the support of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and IFRC Disaster Law are pioneering in embedding EWEA into their legal frameworks, setting a precedent for disaster risk governance.

**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 events and their impacts and to facilitate action.**

## Early warning early action in law

Early action based on a 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 underlying rationale for early warning early action, is that pre-emptive, rather than responsive actions, are generally more effective at reducing the impacts of disasters, while also being more cost-efficient.

Early action starts with legal frameworks and mandating early action into laws, policies and plans, ensures that they happen. Legal frameworks can detail what actions will be taken, when they happen, and who is responsible for them. Legal frameworks enable governments to allocate resources for preparedness and early action measures, such as establishing early warnings systems, pre-positioning emergency supplies, or ensuring emergency response funds are available. Legal provisions can also streamline decision-making processes during critical periods.

## Legislating for early warning early action in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world and routinely suffers the devastating impact of cyclones and flooding. Worsened by climate change and amplified by the countries' funnel-shaped bay, the frequency of such events is increasing putting lives and livelihoods at risk. With support from Bangladesh Red Crescent and IFRC, Bangladesh has integrated early action within its legal frameworks.



## Funding for disasters

In 2019, the Government of Bangladesh integrated forecast-based-financing systems (FbF) within its official disaster management guidelines. FbF's are a form of pre-arranged finance. They are designed to automatically disburse funds for disaster response based on predetermined forecasts and triggers. 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. Given the prevalence of flooding and cyclones in Bangladesh, the mandated FbFs have initially been designed to be triggered during these events.

## Forecast based financing in practice

The FbF was triggered for the first time in May 2020, prior to the arrival of Cyclone Amphan. With Early Action funding Bangladesh Red Cross, were able to establish shelters, begin evacuations and reach 36,500 people with dry food, safe drinking water, soap and COVID-19 prevention supplies to help them mitigate the impact of the cyclone. Funding also provided resources to evacuate livestock.

Similarly, when the FbF was triggered for flooding later in 2020, an assessment found that those who had received early warning actions activated by the funding were more likely to have evacuated. They were 11% less likely to experience flood -related health problems, reported better mental health than those that hadn't been reached and were economically better off in aftermath of the flood.

## Building the foundation for early warning early action in Timor-Leste

Considered one of the world's least developed countries and ranked 129th out of 182 countries in vulnerability to climate change, Timor-Leste is no stranger to disasters. These include floods, storms, typhoons, droughts, and extreme temperatures.

After 25 years of conflict, Timor-Leste is in the process of rebuilding its government systems and infrastructure. This reconstruction phase provides a unique opportunity to integrate early action within its legal framework.



## A roadmap to disaster resilience

In February 2023, a workshop focused on anticipatory action (AA) was organized in Timor-Leste, with IFRC Disaster Law invited to support the integration of EWEA into Timor-Leste's disaster risk management framework. The outcome of the workshop was the development of an Anticipatory Action Roadmap which aims to expand and integrate anticipatory action strategies, including within legal frameworks over the next five years.

The roadmap includes an assessment of existing disaster plans to identify improvement areas, outlines a detailed plan of action for future strategies, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration and partnerships between government ministries, NGOs, and international organizations to implement effective disaster management measures.



## Leaving no one behind

Critically, the roadmap outlines plans to ensure community involvement in disaster management planning. This approach guarantees that the development of EWEA legal frameworks is not only inclusive but also responsive to the unique needs of those most affected by disasters including women, the elderly, youth, the displaced, and those with disabilities. By prioritizing community input, the roadmap facilitates the creation of policies and plans that are truly people-centred.

Whilst it is not yet fully integrated within disaster Law, the roadmap provides a step-by-step plan for ensuring EWEA initiatives are at the forefront of disaster management. Timor-Leste's vulnerability to climate-related disasters calls for proactive and innovative solutions and the roadmap represents a promising step towards building resilience and reducing the impact of disasters.

## Our call to action

In light of the increasing frequency and intensity of disasters in the Asia-Pacific region, there is an urgent need for a more integrated and proactive approach in to EWEA. The integration of EWEA into disaster law should be collaborative, learning from disaster responders and community stakeholders to develop plans that save lives and reduce the impact of disasters.

IFRC calls on governments and key stakeholders to:

- Integrate EWEA within plans, laws and policies governing national disaster management, establishing robust early warning systems, pre-financing and outlining roles and responsibilities of government, responders and communities ahead of disasters.
- 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.

# How do we legislate for early warning early action?

The IFRC's Checklist on Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response offers comprehensive guidance for strengthening legal frameworks in disaster management. It emphasizes the importance of establishing robust institutional structures, ensuring clear mandates and resources for preparedness, and creating effective early warning systems. The Checklist also advocates for laws that support disaster risk financing strategies and address the unique needs of vulnerable groups.

By focusing on these key areas, the Checklist assists in the development of laws and policies that are resilient, inclusive, and adaptable to various disaster scenarios, ensuring a comprehensive and effective approach to disaster preparedness and response. For a comprehensive list of guiding questions, check out [IFRC's Checklist](#).

## 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.

In Asia Pacific, IFRC Disaster Law is also a member of the Asia Pacific Anticipatory Action Technical Working Group and leads the sub-group on anticipatory action law and policy.



## Early Warning 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.

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