



# ADDRESSING SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES THROUGH INTEGRATED CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISK GOVERNANCE

Lessons from the Philippines

*Executive Summary*

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International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
P.O. Box 303  
CH-1211 Geneva 19 Switzerland  
Telephone: +41 22 730 42 2

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integrated climate and disaster risk governance:**  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The debate around the advantages of a coherent implementation of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 within the overall framework of the UN Agenda 2030 is no longer a novelty. During the 2010s, the rationale, requirements, challenges and benefits of harmonising climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk management (DRM) perspectives have been assessed by experts and practitioners, as well as by most relevant international organisations. In light of this, a general convergence can be acknowledged today around the greater efficiency, effectiveness and long-term benefits deriving from a more holistic approach in implementing what could be defined as the ‘Post-2015 Global Agenda on Climate Risk Governance’.<sup>1</sup>

This result is inevitably linked with the development of enabling governance systems and integrated regulatory frameworks in national and subnational contexts. However, the identification of coherent, viable and sustainable models for combining CCA and DRM in domestic law and policies appear to be progressing slowly. Likewise, the effective impact of such models, especially regarding their implications for at-risk communities, needs to be better investigated in most domestic contexts. Moreover, it is generally agreed that the full integration of CCA and DRRM agendas into a single law and/or policy instrument is not necessarily the best option and that different ‘degrees of coherence’ should be envisaged in light of country and local contexts.



The call for an inclusive, participative and ‘whole-of-society’ approach in dealing with CCA and DRRM decision-making is also generally uncontested. Nevertheless, comprehensive and in-depth analysis on how to address specific needs of vulnerable categories through law and policy reform processes is still missing. In this regard, the identification of reproducible patterns is not an easy task, primarily because of the differing and multifaceted elements arising from political, social, economic and environmental factors and conditions in every national and subnational context. Despite that, two facets can generally be considered: i) if – and how efficiently – representatives of vulnerable groups have been included in decision-making processes; and ii) if and in what manner the substantial content of adopted instruments effectively addresses their needs.

In light of the above, and within the broader framework of the [research project](#) on “Leave No One Behind. Developing Climate-Smart/Disaster Risk Management Laws that Protect People in Vulnerable Situations for a Comprehensive Implementation of the UN Agenda 2030” – this study is aimed to identify gaps and good practice drawing from findings and experiences collected in the Philippines. The rationale for the selection of this country as a case-study is multifaceted. First, it is one of the most exposed in the world to the impact of weather and climate-related hazards. This has led its authorities to consider DRRM and CCA as strategic priorities, and therefore to establish the articulated regulatory and institutional framework. The second reason is related to the country’s profile. The Philippines belong to the category of the newly industrialised countries, namely a subset of developing countries experiencing higher rates of economic growth, with direct socio-demographic

effects such as massive urbanisation and increasing social inequalities and marginalisation. This partially differentiates the research context from the previous study undertaken as part of this project, focussing on [Pacific Island Countries](#).

The Report results from a combination of desk-based analysis and empirical research conducted in the country via digital means through interviews with Key-informants (KIs), including governmental officials involved in DRM activities; parliamentarians; IFRC and Philippine Red Cross (PRC) staff; representatives of civil society organisations/associations active in relevant sectors; and academics with relevant expertise. Research participants provided informed insights and evaluations of regional and national normative processes, while also assessing the actual impact of relevant normative tools at different levels and the inclusion and consideration of vulnerable groups in the decision-making processes.

Research findings and lessons learned provided the basis for the development of a list of suggested improvements (below). Together with the results collected in other regions and countries (i.e. Pacific Island Countries, the Commonwealth of Dominica and Kenya), these will support the development of advocacy tools for the [IFRC Disaster Law Programme](#), whose main objective is to globally advocate for new and more effective normative frameworks that protect the most vulnerable against major hazards. This will also reflect the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement’s ambitions to address the climate crisis, which expressly include among its activities to “[a]dvise local and national governments in assessing and, as necessary, strengthening relevant disaster and climate-related laws and policies”.<sup>2</sup>



## Suggested Improvements for CCA-DRR Coherence in National Law and Policies<sup>3</sup>

The following suggestions come from the findings set out in the full report, the examples of good practice identified in the course of the research, as well as on a previous literature review on the topic.<sup>4</sup> While these suggestions draw specifically from and provide guidance for the current context of the Philippines, where efforts towards their full accomplishment

are ongoing, they should be considered as equally relevant for a range of countries with Philippine like characteristics.<sup>5</sup> This list of suggested improvements has been consolidated for facilitating discussion among stakeholders and for supporting governments in the identification of good practice and models on law and policy-making.



## Enhancing CCA-DRRM Integration through Law and Policies

### Law and policies on CCA and/or DRRM should:

- Incorporate, as appropriate, CCA considerations in DRRM frameworks and/or governance systems and vice versa. This does not necessarily imply the abolishment of respective sectoral bodies which should, instead, keep acting in an integrated way. This could favour for instance: localised climate and disaster risk assessments and planning (especially at the *barangay* or 'local' level); integrated information systems and knowledge exchange platforms; capacity-building and technical assistance training programmes for government staff at different levels.
- Results from a careful cost/benefit assessment of any institutional integration between governmental agencies dealing with CCA and DRRM. While on one side agencies with merged responsibilities would strengthen the leadership and favour effective and concerted action, attention must be paid to not disperse their capacity to address specific issues on each sector.
- Mandate and regulate the involvement of governmental departments tasked with budget-management functions (e.g. Ministry of Economy/Finance or Ministry of Development) to ensure the appropriate prioritisation and allocation of funds to coherently support CCA and DRRM programmes and projects and to coordinate with other ministries/departments and territorial administrations for a clear identification of respective expenditures.
- Regulate the access, process, and use of data on hazards and climate information (or 'climate services') favouring their usability across governmental bodies and sectoral institutions. These should be integrated with data on social, economic, and environmental factors. Multi-stakeholder coordination and the removal of technical barriers (e.g. different methods for data processing, consolidation, and representation) is a prerequisite for holistic decision-making that enhances resilience and the protection of at-risk communities.
- Mandate the mainstreaming and operationalisation of CCA and DRRM measures in policies and secondary legislation (administrative rules and regulations) as well as in scaled-down development planning instead of the creation of sector-specific plans, programmes, and projects. This should be consistently applied at different levels of governance, especially at the municipal level and should foresee a proactive involvement of local CSOs.
- Favour the application of combined monitoring and reporting mechanisms for progress/flaws in the two sectors, especially from the lowest levels of government (e.g. LGUs). This would permit the optimisation of resources and reduction of burdens on already overstretched administrative units. Joint consolidation of lessons learned on CCA and DRRM integration would also favour and inform subsequent decision-making and review of laws.
- Create and ensure support to existing cultural and educational initiatives and joint capacity building on CCA and DRRM, especially at the local level. This could be developed in the form of dedicated academic courses, officials and practitioners' training. Annual awards initiatives are considered to be an effective way to motivate good practices and facilitate peer learning on common challenges among LGUs.
- Establish specific deadlines for the revision and potential update of relevant law and policies. This should be done in line with the advancements made at the international level in terms of international law and policies informing the global governance of the two sectors as well as new scientific advancements. The direct and effective involvement of CSOs, scientific and technical experts and other actors (i.e. through a 'whole-of-society' approach) should be mandated, regulated and implemented. The elaboration of new tools/annexes to combine in a subsequent phase are elements to be considered in this context.



## Addressing the specific need of vulnerable groups in climate and disaster risk governance<sup>6</sup>

### Law and policies on CCA and/or DRRM should:

- Be adopted after inclusive, transparent and effective consultations in which both public institutions and private organisations representing the needs of vulnerable groups can inform the decision-making and drafting processes. Representatives from the same institutions/organisations should be endowed with an effective role in established advisory or technical bodies.
- Explicitly identify the categories of groups/individuals considered as vulnerable in the relevant law and policies. The list(s) should systematically acknowledge their specific needs and rights (as enumerated and protected at both national and international level). In parallel, they should promote gender equality (e.g. defining a percentage for representation in decision-making forums) and encourage women and girls in leadership and decision-making roles.
- Create general or specific obligations and assign specific institutional responsibilities to take the needs of identified vulnerable groups into account. Relevant authorities and institutions should assess present and future risks and needs of each vulnerable group and identify dedicated planning processes and actions, as well as necessary resources for meeting their needs.
- Devote specific provisions and stipulate minimum standards for the prevention of any form of discrimination in climate and disaster risk governance strategies, planning and implementing activities. The legal changes should be accompanied by mandatory training for government actors and civil servants to sensitise them to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different groups, thereby promoting a cultural shift towards an inclusive approach to climate and disaster risk governance.
- Mandate the collection of disaggregated and localised data for each of the identified vulnerable groups (e.g. sex, age, disability, ethnicity/nationality/language/culture, rural/peri-urban/urban contexts) and the use of those data for the identification of different risks, vulnerabilities and needs.
- Ensure that CCA-DRRM activities are implemented and communicated in a manner that is accessible to people with physical, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial impairments (e.g. in a variety of languages, formats and media). Initiatives to raise awareness on the benefit of greater civil society involvement (e.g. through the organisation of public events, consolidated partnerships) appear to be decisive factors in such processes.
- Mandate the contribution and the participation of vulnerable groups in any monitoring and evaluation processes on the effective impact of adopted measures and programmes for both sectors.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 See Tommaso Natoli, *Compendium on the Post-2015 Global Agenda on Climate-Risk Governance*, Research Project - Centre for Criminal Justice & Human Rights (CCJHR), University College Cork (2020).
- 2 International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, *Ambitions to address the climate crisis*, Geneva (2020) 8.
- 3 The recommendations included in this section refers to both law and policy-making. Depending on their specificities, it may be most appropriate to implement these recommendations through policy and planning documents, rather than through legislation.
- 4 See Natoli T., *Literature review on aligning climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR)*, IFRC | UCC, Geneva (2019).
- 5 This is because the main objectives, methodologies and practices in law and policy reform processes can vary substantially according to the context (i.e. economic development, institutional setting, demographic and social dynamics, nature and level of exposure to weather and climate-related hazards, and types of vulnerabilities). This does not exclude that specific suggestions can be relevant for any other national system/authority that would find them useful and applicable.
- 6 This section takes as starting point and elaborates on the recommendation provided by previous IFRC Disaster Law Programme advocacy tools, such as the [IFRC-UNDP Checklist on Law and DRR](#) (2015) and related [Handbook](#) (2014) Chapter 9; as well as the [IFRC Checklist on Law and Disaster Preparedness and Response](#) and related [Multi-Country Synthesis Report](#) (2019) Chapter 9.
- 1 UNDRR, *Disaster Risk Reduction in the Philippines* – Status Report (2019) 11.



