Who Cares, Who Prepares?

GENDER AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS IN THE NORDIC REGION

Authors
Stine Chen, Norion Consult (Denmark)
Katrine Weber, Norion Consult (Denmark)
Kavya Michael, Chalmers University of Technology (Sweden)
Mari Teigen, Institute for Social Research (Norway)
Katja M Upadyaya, University of Helsinki (Finland)

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Executive summary

The Nordic region is widely associated with strong welfare institutions and well-developed crisis governance systems. These are important strengths in a changing risk landscape marked by climate-related hazards, energy insecurity, health crises, hybrid threats, digital vulnerabilities and renewed attention to civil preparedness, total defence and societal resilience. However, this report shows that strong equality commitments do not automatically translate into gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance.

The report examines the relationship between gender and crisis management in the Nordic region through three analytical lenses.

- How crises may affect women, men and gender-diverse groups differently in terms of exposure, vulnerability, safety, livelihoods, health, access to resources and recovery.
- Who participates in planning, decision-making, coordination and response, and whose knowledge and labour are recognised as crisis-relevant.
- Whether gender and intersectional perspectives in preparedness systems are translated into concrete mechanisms such as risk assessments, data practices, public communication, participation structures, training, exercises, evaluation and accountability.

The report is exploratory rather than exhaustive. It draws on literature review, illustrative Nordic cases and interviews with experts and practitioners. A central finding from the work is that consolidated Nordic knowledge on gender, intersectionality and crisis governance remains relatively limited. This is not only a research gap, but also a governance issue. If gendered and intersectional dimensions of crises are not systematically studied, measured, discussed or evaluated, they are also less likely to become visible in preparedness planning, crisis response and institutional learning.

The analysis builds on disaster risk and resilience theory, including the Pressure and Release model and gendered adaptations of vulnerability frameworks. A key premise is that crises are not produced by hazards alone. They emerge when hazards interact with social conditions, institutional arrangements, preparedness systems and unequal access to resources, protection and influence. Vulnerability should therefore not be understood as a fixed characteristic of particular groups. It is situational and relational. People who are usually understood as resourceful may become vulnerable in a specific crisis, while people often categorised as vulnerable may hold important forms of knowledge, networks and response capacity.

The cases examined in the report show that gendered crisis effects are produced through several pathways. During health crises, gender-segregated labour markets and unequal care responsibilities may shape both exposure and burden, particularly where women are overrepresented in health, care, education and social service sectors. During energy crises, household vulnerability is shaped not only by energy prices, but also by income, housing conditions, family situation and ability to absorb costs. Citizen preparedness guidance may assume that households have equal access to time, money, storage space, mobility, digital tools and social networks. Climate-related crises and wildfire response show how male-coded emergency tasks may be more readily recognised as formal crisis work, while coordination, communication, care and community support may remain less visible. Hybrid threats, disinformation and gendered harassment show that democratic participation and public leadership can also become crisis-relevant.

Across the Nordic countries, crisis governance is institutionally well developed and increasingly framed through whole-of-society preparedness, civil preparedness, total defence and societal resilience. National systems differ, but they share strong public authorities, sector responsibility, growing attention to

municipalities and local preparedness, and increasing involvement of civil society, private actors and communities. However, the analysis identifies a recurring operationalisation gap. Gender and intersectional perspectives are often visible in broad equality commitments or adjacent policy areas, but are less consistently embedded in core domestic preparedness systems.

Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans provide important entry points for gender perspectives in security-related policy across the Nordic region. Yet their translation into domestic civil protection, local preparedness, risk assessment, citizen communication, exercises, evaluation and accountability remains weak.

The Sámi case demonstrates that gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance cannot be reduced to including more groups within existing majority-population frameworks. It requires recognising Indigenous rights, knowledge systems, land-based livelihoods, language rights, territorial impacts, psychosocial harm and governance claims as part of preparedness itself. Sámi communities hold ecological, practical and community-based knowledge that is highly relevant to resilience, yet remain insufficiently integrated into national and Nordic preparedness systems. The case also shows how crises may be compound and slow-moving, as climate change, land-use conflicts, green transition pressures, militarisation, weak consultation mechanisms and psychosocial harm interact over time.

Several cross-cutting conclusions emerge from the report: 1) Formal equality commitments do not automatically produce gender-responsive crisis governance. 2) Universal preparedness systems may reproduce blind spots when they assume equal access to resources, mobility, information, time, safety, digital tools, language skills and trust in authorities. 3) Data limitations make differentiated risks and responsibilities difficult to identify. Crisis effects are often measured at household level or through aggregate population data, which can obscure within-household inequalities, unpaid care work, gender-based violence, access to services and the experiences of groups not captured by standard data collection. 4) Civil society and local communities are central to preparedness, but the coordination, care, communication and relational labour that sustain social resilience are often gendered and undervalued. 5) The Nordic region has strong potential to develop a more systematic shared approach to gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance if existing cooperation structures, research networks and policy frameworks are used to support practical learning and operational tools.

The report presents seven recommendations:

1. **Operationalise gender mainstreaming across crisis governance.** Gender mainstreaming is by definition a strategy for integration. The challenge in Nordic crisis governance is that it is often implemented as a general policy commitment rather than embedded in the ordinary tools of preparedness. Authorities should establish clear mandates, resources, gender-sensitive and intersectional risk assessments, data practices, participation mechanisms, monitoring, evaluation and accountability. Gender impact assessments should be used before new preparedness policies, communication campaigns, exercises, infrastructure projects, funding schemes or civil preparedness initiatives are launched.
2. **Recognise and resource civil society as a core part of preparedness.** Civil society should be understood as a core resource in crisis preparedness, not as a supplementary reserve. Local associations, volunteer organisations, neighbourhood networks, women's organisations, minority organisations and community-based actors can strengthen practical and social preparedness before crises occur. This work should be formally recognised and resourced through funding, training, clear roles, representation in preparedness planning and access to decision-making.
3. **Broaden the understanding of preparedness, crisis expertise and communication.** Preparedness should include prevention, psychosocial support, local coordination, communication, care, recovery and the ability to return to everyday life. Training, exercises, evaluations and leadership development should recognise communication, care, local knowledge and community organising

as crisis-relevant expertise. Citizen-facing preparedness communication should be tested with different user groups and assessed for social and gendered assumptions.

4. **Treat protection from gender-based violence as a life-saving component of crisis response.** Preparedness planning should include clear procedures for identifying and responding to increased risks of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, harassment, coercive control, exploitation and abuse during crises. Shelters, helplines, sexual and reproductive health services, psychosocial support, child protection, safe reporting mechanisms and referral pathways should remain accessible during emergencies, including during power outages, digital disruptions or displacement.
5. **Ensure meaningful inclusion of Sámi communities and other structurally marginalised groups.** Crisis preparedness should include Sámi communities and other structurally marginalised groups as knowledge holders, rights holders and governance actors. For Sámi communities, this requires meaningful consultation, respect for self-determination, relevant data practices and participation in planning, exercises, risk assessments, public communication and evaluation.
6. **Fund Nordic research and knowledge development on gender, intersectionality and crisis governance.** The report identifies significant knowledge gaps. Future research should examine how gender and intersectional perspectives are integrated into domestic preparedness systems; how household preparedness guidance affects groups with different resources and responsibilities; how civil society preparedness relies on gendered forms of labour; how gender-based violence risks change during crises; how hybrid threats affect democratic participation; and how conscription, defence reform and security-sector pathways shape access to preparedness roles and authority.
7. **Build a shared Nordic learning infrastructure for gender-responsive crisis governance.** The Nordic countries should develop shared tools, indicators, case examples, training materials, exercises and evaluation practices. This could include a Nordic case catalogue of gender-responsive and intersectional preparedness practices, a Nordic adaptation of the gendered progression of vulnerability framework, and mechanisms for feeding lessons from exercises, evaluations, research and local practice back into policy development.

Overall, the report argues that gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance is not only about recognising that crises affect people differently. It is about ensuring that preparedness systems are able to identify differentiated risks before crises occur, include relevant forms of knowledge and labour during preparedness and response, and learn from unequal effects afterwards. **For the Nordic region, the central challenge is to move from general equality commitments to practical mechanisms that make differentiated risks, responsibilities, capacities, forms of knowledge and types of crisis labour visible and actionable before, during and after crises.**

INTRODUCTION

The Nordic region is widely associated with strong commitments to gender equality, equal rights for LGBTIQ+ people and comparatively robust welfare institutions. At the same time, persistent inequalities remain, including unequal care burdens, gender-segregated labour markets, economic vulnerability and unequal exposure to violence, discrimination and exclusion. These tensions raise an important question for crisis governance: how do existing gendered and intersectional inequalities shape people's capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from crises in otherwise strong and formally egalitarian welfare states?

This question has become increasingly relevant as the Nordic region faces a more complex and interconnected risk landscape. Geopolitical tensions, intensifying climate-related hazards, energy insecurity, hybrid threats, digital vulnerabilities and broader societal transformations, including the green transition and growing demands for security and self-sufficiency, are reshaping understandings of preparedness and resilience. In this context, resilience, understood as the ability to anticipate, absorb, adapt to and recover from shocks, has become a key ambition in Nordic regional policy (Nordregio et al., 2019, 2025).

But what does resilience mean when people and communities do not have equal access to time, income, information, mobility, safety, social networks or institutional influence? Who is expected to prepare, care, communicate, coordinate and recover when crises occur? Whose risks are recognised in preparedness planning, and whose knowledge, labour and experience remain less visible?

International research shows that crises often have gendered effects. Women may face increased unpaid care burdens, economic insecurity or exposure to gender-based violence, while men may be affected by norms that discourage help-seeking or increase risk-taking. LGBTIQ+ people, older women, single parents, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and people living in geographically remote areas may also experience specific or compounded forms of vulnerability. However, these patterns are not fixed or automatic. They depend on the type of crisis, the organisation of preparedness systems, access to resources and support, and the social roles and responsibilities people are expected to take on during disruption (ActionAid, 2023; Nordic Council of Ministers [NCM], 2024b, 2024a).

This report therefore asks how disruptions such as floods, droughts, pandemics, power outages and hybrid attacks affect different groups in Nordic societies, and how gender norms and intersectional inequalities are reflected in preparedness practices. It also asks how crisis governance systems identify, respond to or overlook differentiated risks, responsibilities, capacities and forms of participation.

In preparing this report, it has become clear that consolidated Nordic knowledge on the relationship between gender, intersectionality and crisis governance remains relatively limited. This is itself an important finding. The limited evidence base points not only to a research gap, but also to a broader governance challenge: if gendered and intersectional dimensions of crises are not systematically studied, measured, discussed or evaluated, they are also less likely to become visible in preparedness planning, crisis response and institutional learning.

Existing studies suggest that crisis planning and response in the Nordic countries have often been gender blind. A study of Norway's COVID-19 management, for example, found that gender was not actively addressed, as equality was assumed rather than treated as an area requiring intervention (Teigen & Østbakken, 2024). Similarly, recent Nordic research shows that gender mainstreaming is not yet fully institutionalised and varies significantly across countries (NCM, 2024a). This gap is also visible in climate policy, where gender is often acknowledged in principle but less often translated into concrete measures.

Existing frameworks, such as the UNDP Gender and Crisis Preparedness Framework, also remain insufficiently adapted to Nordic conditions.

At the same time, Nordic studies point to important links between gender and resilience. Gender imbalances, demographic change, labour market segregation and unequal access to education can all act as stressors and weaken adaptive capacity (Nordregio et al., 2019). While such challenges may not always appear as acute crises, they may gradually undermine social cohesion and long-term resilience.

Against this background, the report explores how gender and intersectional perspectives can strengthen crisis preparedness and crisis governance in the Nordic region. Rather than assuming that Nordic equality commitments automatically translate into gender-responsive crisis governance, the report examines where such perspectives are reflected, where they remain weakly operationalised, and how preparedness systems might contribute to a more socially robust and inclusive form of resilience. Its central concern is therefore not only whether crises affect groups differently, but whether Nordic crisis governance systems are equipped to recognise, address and learn from these differences before, during and after crises.

Reading guide

The report is structured in six main parts. Chapter 1 introduces the purpose, scope, methodology and project partners. Chapter 2 provides the contextual and analytical foundation for the report. It briefly outlines the changing Nordic risk landscape, introduces the four crisis types examined in the report, and presents the analytical concepts used to understand how vulnerability, resilience and risk governance are shaped by gendered and intersectional inequalities.

Chapter 3 examines how such inequalities become crisis-relevant. Rather than presenting vulnerability as a fixed attribute of particular groups, it analyses the mechanisms through which crises may produce or intensify differentiated effects, including through care responsibilities, labour market position, household resources, access to information and support, recognition of crisis work, and exposure to harassment or exclusion from public participation.

Chapter 4 turns from crisis effects to crisis governance. It examines how gender and intersectional perspectives are reflected in Nordic cooperation structures and national preparedness systems, with particular attention to policy integration, institutional responsibility, participation, civil society, data practices and operational gaps. Chapter 5 brings together the report's key conclusions. Chapter 6 presents recommendations for strengthening gender-responsive and intersectional crisis preparedness, response, recovery and learning in the Nordic region. The bibliography is provided in Chapter 7.

Objectives and Scope of the Report

This report examines the relationship between gender and crisis management in the Nordic region through three analytical lenses:

- **Gendered impacts of crises**
- How crises affect women, men and gender-diverse groups differently in terms of exposure, vulnerability, access to resources, safety, livelihoods and health.
- **Representation, participation and recognition in crisis governance**
- Who participates in decision-making, planning, coordination and response; whose knowledge and labour are recognised as crisis-relevant; and the extent to which women and structurally marginalised groups are represented in leadership and operational roles.
- **Operationalisation of gender and intersectional perspectives in preparedness systems**

- Whether gender and intersectional perspectives are translated into concrete mechanisms such as risk assessments, data practices, public communication, participation structures, training, exercises, evaluation and accountability.

Across these lenses, the report applies an intersectional perspective, recognising that the impacts of crises and access to preparedness and response are also shaped by factors such as age, ethnicity, functional ability, socio-economic position, geography, migration status, and family situation.

The report is exploratory rather than exhaustive. It also recognises that types of crises are often interlinked and that shocks originating outside the Nordic region may have significant consequences within Nordic societies.

Text box 1: Scope note

The analysis focuses mainly on four types of crises that are particularly relevant in the Nordic context:

- climate hazards.
- energy crises.
- health crises, including pandemics and epidemics, and
- hybrid threats, including cyber and physical attacks on critical infrastructure, disinformation and influence operations.

Methodology

This report draws on a combination of literature review, case studies, and interviews to examine how gender and intersectional perspectives are reflected in crisis impacts, preparedness, and governance in the Nordic region. Together, these methods provide both a broad analytical overview and more practice-based insights into how gender considerations are integrated, or overlooked, in crisis management.

The analysis includes literature and cases that meet the following criteria:

- gendered and/or intersectional patterns of exposure, vulnerability, or capacity;
- relate to institutions and systems for preparedness and response;
- concern one or more of the four selected crisis types; and
- relevant to the Nordic context.

Literature Review

An extensive literature review was conducted to establish a knowledge baseline on the relationship between gender, crisis experiences, preparedness, and resilience in the Nordic context. The review covers academic publications, institutional reports, and relevant policy documents, including crisis preparedness and crisis management plans, strategic frameworks, and national commission reports, such as evaluations of COVID-19 responses.

The literature review also draws on previous Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) publications and resources on gender, gender mainstreaming, climate policy and resilience, including work prepared or developed by Norion Consult, formerly known as PlanMiljø. This includes publications on gender and climate policy, as well as NCM's impact assessment tool for integrating climate and environment, gender equality, accessibility, children's rights and youth perspectives (NCM, 2022; NCM, 2024a; NCM, 2024c). These publications and resources were prepared or developed by Norion Consult, with central involvement from Katrine Weber from the present report team. They have informed the development of this project and the present report's focus on the gap between formal equality commitments and operational implementation in Nordic policy contexts.

The literature review serves three purposes. First, it establishes the conceptual and empirical foundation for the report. Second, it helps identify key gaps in existing Nordic knowledge on gender and crisis governance. Third, it informs the selection of case studies, stakeholder mapping, and the overall analytical framing.

Case Studies

The report includes a small number of illustrative cases from across the Nordic region. The cases are not intended to provide an exhaustive mapping of all crisis types across all countries or governance systems. Instead, they are used to show how gendered and intersectional dynamics become visible in different crisis contexts and preparedness settings.

Some cases primarily illustrate crisis effects, such as differentiated exposure, care responsibilities, household vulnerability, labour market effects, access to support or democratic participation. Other examples illustrate governance questions, such as participation, policy integration, institutional responsibility, civil society involvement and the operationalisation of gender mainstreaming. Together, the cases help connect the report's analytical framework to concrete Nordic experiences and emerging governance challenges.

Case studies were selected based on the following criteria:

- relevance to gendered and/or intersectional patterns of exposure, vulnerability, capacity or participation;
- relevance to one or more of the four selected crisis types;
- relevance to Nordic welfare-state, preparedness or governance contexts; and
- ability to illustrate broader analytical points rather than provide exhaustive national coverage.

Interviews

To deepen the insights from the literature review and stakeholder mapping, 9 in-depth interviews were conducted with experts and practitioners working with gender equality, crisis preparedness, resilience, or related policy areas in the Nordic region.

The interviews serve two main purposes:

- to complement the literature review with practical perspectives and reflections, and
- to provide additional insight into the selected case studies and broader governance dynamics.

The interviews contribute to a more grounded and practice-oriented understanding of how gender considerations are, or are not, integrated into crisis management. They also help identify barriers, enabling factors, and emerging opportunities for strengthening gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches in Nordic crisis governance.

The interviews were conducted with stakeholders from women's rights organisations, academia, government institutions, and international expert organisations across Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

An informed consent form was developed for the interviews, and all participants provided consent prior to participation. All interview material has been anonymised to protect participants' identities.

Project Partners

The project underlying this report was initiated by Norion Consult and developed with support from NIKK, Nordic Information on Gender. The report has been developed by a Nordic consortium bringing together expertise in gender equality, resilience, crisis governance and social vulnerability. The

consortium is led by **Norion Consult** (Denmark) and implemented in collaboration with **Chalmers University of Technology** (Sweden), **CORE – Centre for Research on Gender Equality, Institute for Social Research** (Norway), **University of Helsinki, Centre for Crisis Communication** (Finland), and **Örebro University** (Sweden).

The consortium is further supported by two knowledge partners: **Copenhagen Center for Disaster Research, University of Copenhagen** (Denmark), and **University College Copenhagen – Societal Safety and Security** (Denmark). These partners have contributed with expert knowledge.

The consortium combines expertise in gender equality, gender mainstreaming, climate and energy transitions, crisis preparedness, risk and vulnerability assessment, resilience, crisis communication and the social dimensions of disaster response. Together, the partners contribute to the report through literature review, stakeholder engagement, interviews, case study development, analytical input and dissemination activities.

Contributors
The report was developed by the authors listed on the front page. Additional contributions to the project and report development were provided by Emil Thunestvedt, Sofie Malm Henriksen and Caroline Tranberg Mortensen, Halfdan Ekins Mayland (Norion Consult), Åsa Martine Nygaard Wik (Institute for Social Research), Johanna Stenersen (Örebro University), Kristoffer Albris (University of Copenhagen), and Nina Baron (University College Copenhagen). Contributions included project development, literature review, interviews, research input and review.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides the contextual and analytical foundation for the report. It first outlines the changing Nordic risk landscape, including climate-related hazards, energy insecurity, health crises and hybrid threats. It then introduces the crisis types examined in the report and sets out the analytical concepts used in the following chapters. The chapter is not intended to provide an exhaustive account of all Nordic risks, but to establish why crisis preparedness and crisis governance must be understood as social and institutional processes in which gender and intersectional inequalities may shape both vulnerability and resilience.

Nordic Risk Landscape in 2025

The Nordic region is facing a more complex and interconnected risk landscape. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, geopolitical tensions, military rearmament, energy insecurity, hybrid threats and renewed attention to civil preparedness have become more prominent across the region. Security is increasingly understood not only in military terms, but as a broader question of societal resilience, including the protection of energy systems, digital infrastructure, transport, maritime domains, supply chains and essential public services (NATO, 2024). Finland and Sweden's accession to NATO has further strengthened Nordic defence integration and increased the strategic importance of the Baltic Sea area and the High North (NATO, 2024; Forsvarsministeriet, 2024).

Energy security and critical infrastructure protection have also become central concerns. Russia's war against Ukraine exposed the vulnerability of European energy systems to supply disruptions, price volatility and infrastructure risks (IEA, 2024), while the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipelines intensified concern about underwater and cross-border infrastructure (Reuters, 2024). At the same time, climate-

related hazards, digital vulnerabilities, health crises and geopolitical instability increasingly interact, making crises harder to understand as isolated events (IPCC, 2023; Tynkkynen et al., 2024).

Civil preparedness has re-emerged as a key policy priority. Across the Nordic countries, governments have renewed efforts to strengthen societal resilience and encourage citizens, households, local communities and civil society to prepare for disruption. Finland and Sweden have long traditions of total defence and whole-of-society preparedness, while Denmark now advises households to be able to cope independently for at least three days in a crisis (Beredskabsstyrelsen, 2024).

From a gender and intersectional perspective, this shift is important because resilience is not produced only by institutions and infrastructure. It also depends on care networks, household resources, local knowledge, civil society, access to information and trust in authorities. If citizens and communities are expected to contribute more directly to preparedness, inequalities in income, time, care responsibilities, health, mobility, language, social networks and institutional influence become directly relevant to crisis governance.

Crisis Types in the Nordic context

A crisis is understood here as a serious disruption of essential societal functions caused by hazardous events interacting with exposure, vulnerability and response capacity. Crises rarely occur in isolation. Disruptions in one domain may cascade into others, for example when extreme weather affects energy infrastructure, cyberattacks disrupt public services, or health crises affect labour markets, care systems and household responsibilities (IPCC, 2023; Kuhlmann et al., 2021; Tynkkynen et al., 2024).

This report focuses on four crisis types that are particularly relevant in the Nordic context: climate-related crises, energy crises, health crises and hybrid attacks on critical infrastructure. These categories are analytical rather than fixed. The purpose is not to map all risks in the Nordic region, but to identify the governance interfaces through which gendered and intersectional vulnerabilities may be recognised, addressed or overlooked.

Climate crises include sudden and slow-onset disruptions linked to climate change, such as floods, storms, heatwaves and other extreme weather events. From a gender perspective, climate crises may produce differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities shaped by labour market structures, local livelihoods, household responsibilities, mobility, health, housing and participation in decision-making. Key governance interfaces include climate risk assessment, adaptation planning, preparedness and public communication (IPCC, 2023; Erman et al., 2021; NCM, 2024a).

Energy crises refer to disruptions in the availability, affordability or reliability of energy services. Their gender and intersectional dimensions may emerge through household vulnerability, income distribution, housing conditions, care responsibilities and the gendered composition of the energy sector. Key governance interfaces include energy security planning, infrastructure protection, welfare measures, price regulation and crisis communication (IEA, 2023; Nordic Energy Research, 2024; Clancy & Feenstra, 2019).

Health crises include epidemics, pandemics and other large-scale disruptions affecting healthcare systems and public health governance. Gendered dynamics are particularly visible in occupational segregation, with women strongly represented in healthcare, care and social services, and in the increase of unpaid care work within households during crises. Mental health pressures can also have gendered effects, with anxiety disorders among adolescents and young adults increasing globally and showing consistently higher prevalence among females than males (Bie et al., 2024). These pressures may increase demand for health and social services and should therefore be considered in crisis preparedness and response.

Key governance interfaces include early warning, decision-making, public communication and continuity of essential services (Kuhlmann et al., 2021; UN Women, 2022; Simonsson et al., 2025).

Hybrid attacks on critical infrastructure include cyber operations, physical sabotage, disinformation and combined methods targeting infrastructure and societal systems. Such threats may have gendered and intersectional dimensions when disinformation, harassment or influence operations exploit social identities, target public participation or undermine trust in democratic institutions. Key governance interfaces include cyber defence, infrastructure protection, crisis communication, early warning and institutional coordination (Hybrid CoE, 2024; NATO, 2024).

International Policy Frameworks for Gender-Responsive Crisis Governance

The changing Nordic risk landscape is not only a technical or security challenge. It also raises questions about equality, participation, protection and accountability. International frameworks on disaster risk reduction, climate resilience, human rights, peace and security increasingly emphasise that crisis preparedness, response and recovery should take account of differentiated risks, vulnerabilities, capacities and patterns of participation.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Sendai Gender Action Plan, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37, the UNFCCC gender framework and the Women, Peace and Security agenda all provide relevant normative reference points. Together, they stress participation, non-discrimination, substantive equality, women's leadership, protection and accountability in disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation and security governance (UNDRR, 2015; UNDRR, UN Women & UNFPA, 2024; Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2018; UNFCCC, 2019; UN Security Council, 2000). UN Women's Women's Resilience to Disasters initiative and WRD Policy Tracker further underline the importance of monitoring whether gender-responsive and inclusive commitments are translated into practice (UN Women, n.d.). The report also contributes particularly to SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, SDG 13 on climate action and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, all of which include dimensions relevant to inclusive, accountable and resilient crisis governance.

For this report, the key point is that gender-responsive crisis governance is not only about recognising that crises affect people differently. It is also about whether formal commitments are translated into operational mechanisms such as gender-sensitive risk assessments, data practices, participation structures, consultation with affected communities, monitoring, evaluation and institutional accountability.

Analytical Framework: Gendered Vulnerability, Resilience and Risk Governance

Understanding crises requires more than describing the events that trigger them. Crisis and disaster research have increasingly moved away from viewing disasters as sudden natural disruptions and towards understanding them as socially produced processes. From this perspective, hazards such as floods, pandemics, or infrastructure failures only become crises or disasters when they interact with existing patterns of exposure, vulnerability, and limited response capacity.

The Progression of Vulnerability

This shift is reflected in the Pressure and Release (PAR) model developed by Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, and Davis (2005 [1994]). The model shows how disasters result from the interaction between hazards and socially produced vulnerability. It traces a progression of vulnerability from underlying *root causes*, through *dynamic pressures*, to *unsafe conditions* in which hazards can produce unequal impacts.

- **Root causes** refer to the deeper social, economic, and political structures that shape vulnerability over time, such as unequal access to power and resources.
- **Dynamic pressures** are the processes and institutional arrangements that turn these deeper structural conditions into more immediate forms of risk. Depending on the context, this may happen through weak institutions, poor coordination, insufficient preparedness planning, environmental degradation, limited access to information, or institutional practices that fail to recognise the different needs and capacities of affected groups.
- **Unsafe conditions** are the concrete situations in which people, communities, or infrastructures are exposed to hazards with limited capacity to prepare, respond, or recover. From this perspective, reducing risk is not only about managing hazards, but also about addressing the social conditions that make people vulnerable in the first place.

Subsequent work has further emphasised that vulnerability is shaped not only by exposure to hazards, but also by the resources, protections, and governance arrangements that affect people's capacity to prepare, respond, and recover. Cannon (2008), for example, highlights that livelihoods, health, self-protection, social protection, and governance all affect how individuals and communities experience crises and recover from them. This is particularly relevant in welfare-state contexts, where public institutions, social policy, and crisis governance play a central role in distributing risk, providing protection and enabling recovery.

Gendered Vulnerability, Resilience and Risk Governance

Oxfam's gendered adaptation of the PAR model illustrates how the same structural pressures may affect genders differently, highlighting the role of inequality and discrimination in shaping vulnerability (Oxfam GB, 2012). In this report, the model is used as an analytical heuristic rather than as a direct empirical template. Adapted to context-specific Nordic conditions, it helps examine how root causes, dynamic pressures and unsafe conditions may produce differentiated vulnerabilities, capacities and impacts within the strong and formally egalitarian welfare states of the Nordic region.

In recent decades, crisis theory has also been informed by risk governance and resilience thinking. These perspectives emphasise that crises are part of complex and interdependent systems in which political decisions, institutional capacities, social values and everyday practices interact. In the Nordic context, effective crisis management depends not only on identifying hazards, but also on how societies organise responsibility, coordination and trust between authorities, citizens, civil society and local communities (Tynkkynen et al., 2024; Tierney, 2014).

Resilience and vulnerability are therefore not opposites, but interrelated conditions shaped by governance quality, social equity, institutional flexibility and the ability to respond and adapt over time (Folke et al., 2010; Mitra & Shaw, 2024). This is central to a gender analysis of crisis management. If vulnerability is produced through social structures, then gender relations, labour market segregation, care responsibilities, unequal access to resources and participation in decision-making become central to understanding how crises affect different groups. These vulnerabilities may be compounded by other factors, including migration status, socioeconomic position, language barriers and limited access to social networks and public services. An intersectional perspective is therefore important for identifying groups that may face particular barriers to information, support and protection during crises. The same applies to governance:

who is represented, whose needs are recognised, whose knowledge is valued, and how preparedness and response systems are designed.

This analytical framework structures the two chapters that follow. Chapter 3 uses it to examine how gendered and intersectional vulnerabilities, capacities and effects are produced in specific crisis contexts. Chapter 4 uses it to examine how crisis governance systems recognise, address or reproduce these dynamics through institutions, policies, data practices, participation mechanisms and preparedness arrangements.

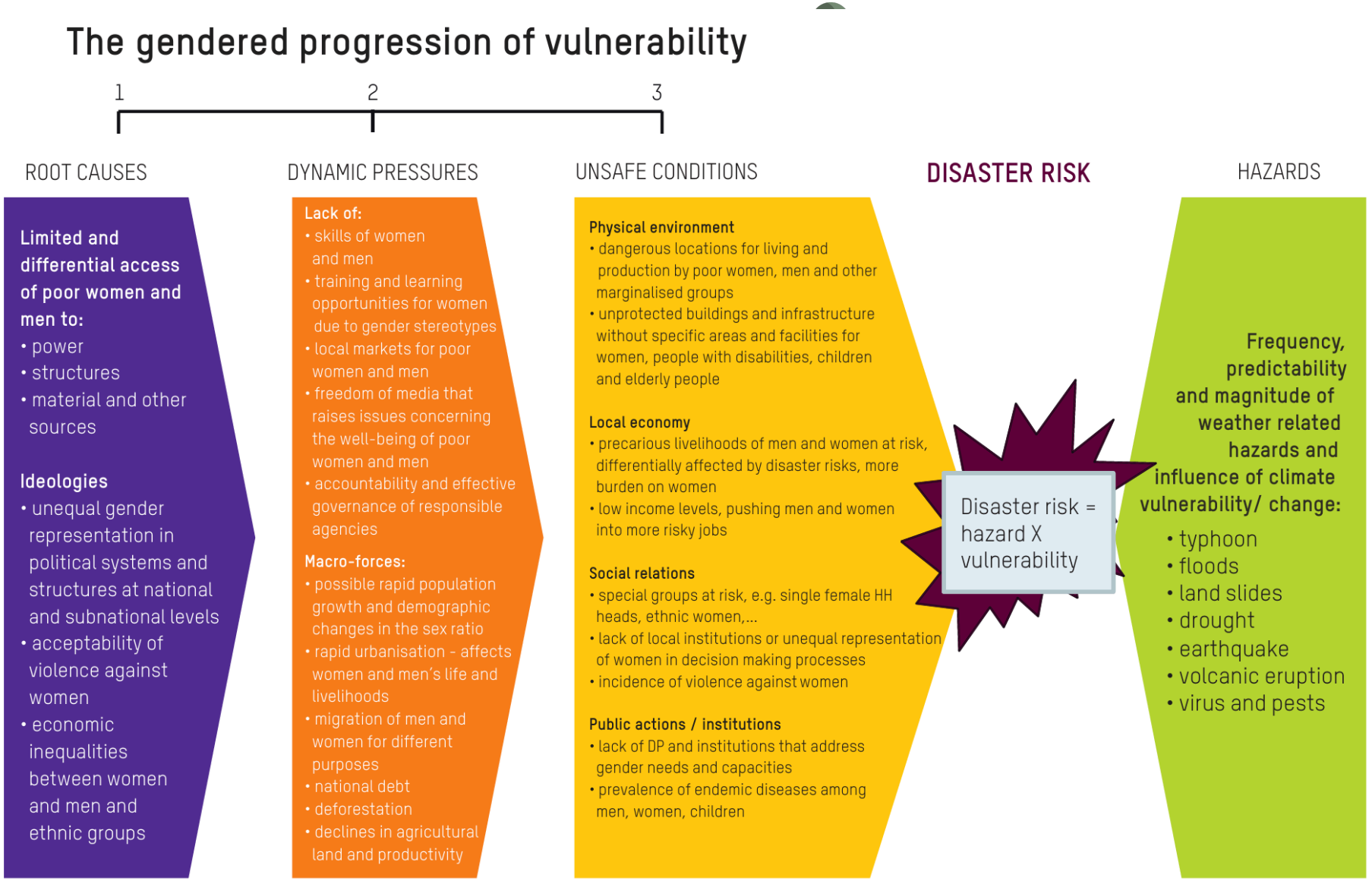

Figure 1: The gendered progression of vulnerability: Oxfam's adaptation of the Pressure and Release (PAR) model. Source: Oxfam GB, 2012.

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THE GENDERED EFFECTS OF CRISES

This chapter examines how gendered and intersectional inequalities become crisis-relevant in selected Nordic contexts. The chapter does not treat vulnerability as a fixed attribute of particular groups. Instead, it analyses the mechanisms through which crises may produce or intensify differentiated effects when hazards interact with social conditions, welfare-state institutions, preparedness systems and everyday responsibilities.

The chapter first applies the analytical framework introduced in Chapter 2 to the Nordic context. It then turns to selected cases that illustrate different pathways through which crisis effects become gendered: the recognition of crisis work, household energy vulnerability, unequal conditions for self-reliance, care responsibilities and labour market vulnerability, and gendered harassment and disinformation. Together, the cases show that crisis effects are shaped not only by exposure to hazards, but also by the organisation of care, work, income, housing, information, public participation and institutional support (Simonsson et al., 2025; Bogason & Slätmo, 2023; Madsen et al., 2024; Rozanova-Smith et al., 2025a).

How Inequalities Become Crisis-Relevant

Crisis management is not a neutral or purely technical field. It is also a political and institutional arena in which priorities are set, responsibilities are allocated, and some risks are recognised more readily than others. An interview conducted for this report with a lecturer in Emergency and Risk Management highlighted that vulnerability during crises does not always align with predefined social categories. People who are normally considered resourceful may become vulnerable in a specific crisis situation, while people often categorised as vulnerable may have strong informal networks, local knowledge or practical response capacity. Vulnerability is therefore situational and relational, rather than fixed within particular groups.

This underscores the need for a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach that avoids automatic assumptions about who is vulnerable and who is resilient. Crises do not affect all groups in the same way, and neither do they affect women, men or gender-diverse groups in one uniform pattern. Gendered vulnerability and resilience are shaped by socially constructed roles and responsibilities, and by how these interact with age, income, ethnicity, disability, geography, migration status, family situation and access to support (Doss et al., 2018, cited in Erman et al., 2021; UNDRR, 2023).

A feminist and intersectional perspective helps illuminate how crisis governance may reproduce or challenge structural inequalities. It directs attention to who is protected, who bears the burden of response, whose knowledge is considered relevant, and whose work is recognised as part of preparedness and recovery. This connects to the PAR model introduced in Section 2.4, where vulnerability is understood as produced through underlying structural inequalities, institutional and preparedness-related pressures, and concrete crisis situations in which these conditions become visible as differentiated risks and impacts (Wisner et al., 2005 [1994]; Oxfam GB, 2012).

Persistent Inequalities as Root Causes

Applied to the Nordic context, root causes are not primarily expressed as formal exclusion from rights or welfare institutions. Rather, they often take the form of persistent inequalities within formally egalitarian systems. These include gender-segregated education and labour markets, unequal pay, unequal

distribution of unpaid care, underrepresentation in decision-making, discrimination and harassment against LGBTIQ+ people, restrictive gender norms, health inequalities and gender-based violence (NCM, 2024b).

Labour market segregation is particularly important in crisis contexts. Women are strongly represented in health, care, education and social service sectors, while men remain overrepresented in many technical, infrastructural, security and emergency response fields. This shapes both exposure and recognition during crises: who carries frontline care responsibilities, whose work is treated as essential but undervalued, who enters operational preparedness roles, and whose expertise is recognised as crisis-relevant (Sand, 2025; Kuhlmann et al., 2021; UN Women, 2022; Alvinius et al., 2020).

These patterns are closely connected to unequal care responsibilities and economic vulnerability. Women continue to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work, while female-dominated occupations are often lower paid than male-dominated occupations of comparable value. In crisis contexts, such inequalities may shape who has time, income, flexibility, information and social support to prepare, respond and recover (Sand, 2025; NCM, 2024b).

Gender norms also shape vulnerability and resilience. Norms relating to masculinity may discourage help-seeking or reinforce ideals of self-reliance and risk-taking, while norms relating to femininity may naturalise expectations of care, emotional labour and household coordination. Gender-based violence is a further example of how a persistent equality issue may become crisis-relevant, as disruptions to services, mobility, income, housing, communication, policing or informal support networks may affect people's ability to seek help, report violence or access protection (Gracia & Merlo, 2016; Stubberud et al., 2018; Sand, 2025; NCM, 2024b).

Preparedness-Related Pressures and Gendered Responsibilities

These underlying inequalities become crisis-relevant when they interact with institutions, preparedness systems and everyday responsibilities. In the terms of the PAR framework, these processes can be understood as dynamic pressures: the mechanisms through which structural inequalities are translated into more immediate forms of risk. In the Nordic context, such pressures may include labour shortages and undervaluation in female-dominated care sectors, male-dominated preparedness and security fields, gendered expectations around household preparedness and care, territorial differences in access to essential services, digital exclusion, and preparedness measures that assume equal household resources, time, mobility, information access and response capacity (Oxfam GB, 2012; Simonsson et al., 2025; Stark et al., 2024).

Care work is a central example. Nordic welfare resilience depends heavily on healthcare and social care sectors, where women are strongly represented and where care is often gender coded as feminine. In crisis situations, women may therefore face competing demands from employers and households, especially where formal services are disrupted and informal care needs increase. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated these dynamics, but they are not limited to health crises. Similar pressures may emerge during energy crises, climate-related disruptions, infrastructure failures or situations where households are expected to be more self-reliant (Simonsson et al., 2025; Dahlqvist, 2021; Young Håkansson et al., 2022).

Preparedness systems may also reproduce gendered assumptions about competence and authority. Research from Sweden on wildfire response shows that women's contributions may be praised when they align with traditional support roles, while involvement in more male-coded response roles may be questioned or downplayed (Danielsson & Eriksson, 2022). Taken together, these dynamics show that gendered vulnerability is shaped not only by exposure to hazards, but also by labour market structures, care

responsibilities, social expectations, institutional recognition and assumptions about whose capacities count in preparedness and response.

Nordic Cases of Gendered Crisis Effects

During specific crises, structural inequalities and preparedness-related pressures can become concrete conditions of vulnerability. In the terms of the PAR model, these are the "unsafe conditions" through which hazards produce unequal impacts. For example, women's overrepresentation in frontline health and care work, household energy insecurity, precarious service work, limited access to crisis information, and uneven access to essential services may all shape how different groups experience and respond to crises (Simonsson et al., 2025; Bogason & Slätmo, 2023; Madsen et al., 2024; Rozanova-Smith et al., 2025a). This section presents selected Nordic cases that illustrate how such mechanisms become visible in different Nordic national and sectoral contexts. The cases are intended as illustrative examples rather than an exhaustive mapping of crisis effects across the Nordic region.

The cases should not be read as examples of one single pattern of gendered vulnerability. In many contexts, women's lower socio-economic status increases vulnerability and mortality in disasters. At the same time, some risks disproportionately affect men in high-income settings, for example due to overrepresentation in rescue roles or risk-taking behaviour during extreme events (Beegle et al., 2024). The cases should therefore be understood as differentiated expressions of gendered and intersectional vulnerability.

Climate-Related Crisis Response: Wildfires and the Gendered Recognition of Crisis Work (SE)

During the summer of 2014 and 2018, Sweden experienced some of the largest forest fires in its modern history. In 2018 an unusually warm and dry summer resulted in widespread wildfires across several regions, ultimately burning more than 25,000 hectares of forest. The scale of the disaster required international support through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and exposed limitations in Sweden's preparedness and response capacity, particularly in coordination, resource allocation, and the management of large-scale and complex incidents. In response, the fires led to a series of evaluations and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening coordination, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and improving overall resilience within the national disaster management system. The events have also been framed as indicative of a changing risk landscape, where climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of such extreme events (Climate ADAPT, 2024)

Disaster responses tend to reproduce gender norms, where male-coded tasks such as firefighting are more readily recognised as formal crisis response, while women's contributions are often recognised through traditional support and care roles or remain peripheral in formal accounts of disaster management (Danielsson & Eriksson, 2022). Research on wildfire discourse more broadly also shows how women's roles may be marginalised or overlooked altogether, reinforcing a pattern of "silences" around gender in disaster contexts (González-Hidalgo & Cabana Iglesia, 2025).

This dynamic is not limited to the distribution of tasks during wildfire response. Research from Sweden illustrates how gendered assumptions can be embedded in crisis management structures themselves. Alvinius, Deverell and Hede (2020) show that crisis management is often associated with command, hierarchy and urgency, while communication work is more closely linked to dialogue, collaboration and relational labour. Crisis communicators, a profession often coded as more feminine, may be brought into crisis processes late and assigned coordination, flexibility and emotional labour tasks rather than being recognised as central strategic actors. This shapes whose expertise is valued, how information circulates, and which roles are seen as authoritative during emergencies (Alvinius, Deverell and Hede, 2020).

The Swedish case therefore illustrates how a climate-related hazard becomes gender-relevant through the social and institutional organisation of crisis response. Read through the analytical framework introduced in Chapter 2, the gendered root causes lie in broader assumptions about preparedness, physical capacity, authority, and who is seen as naturally suited to operational crisis roles. These assumptions become dynamic pressures through response practices, role distributions, evaluation formats, and crisis narratives that make some forms of crisis work more visible than others. The resulting unsafe conditions are therefore not primarily about direct physical harm, but about whose contributions become visible, whose capacities are mobilised, whose expertise is recognised, and whose experiences inform future learning.

The case suggests that gender-responsive wildfire preparedness is not only a matter of asking whether women were more directly harmed by the fires. It also requires examining how the response system recognises, values, and learns from the different forms of work that make crisis response possible, including firefighting, command, communication, coordination, administration, care, and community support. In this sense, the case points to a broader issue across crisis governance: preparedness systems do not only manage hazards; they also define which forms of competence count as legitimate crisis expertise.

Energy Insecurity: Household Vulnerability during the 2022–2023 Energy Crisis (DK)

The energy crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 led to sharp increases in electricity and heating costs across Europe and raised new concerns about household vulnerability in Denmark. During the winter of 2022-2023, rising energy prices placed considerable pressure on household budgets and renewed attention to energy poverty and energy insecurity in a context otherwise characterised by relatively high energy efficiency and comparatively affordable energy services (Madsen et al., 2024)

Research on the Danish case shows that the crisis affected households unevenly. Financial stress related to energy costs was particularly common among low-income households, younger people, tenants, and families with children. Many households adjusted everyday practices, such as heating, electricity use, and other expenditures, to cope with rising costs (Madsen et al., 2024). In some cases, households reported having to reduce energy consumption to maintain financial stability.

The Danish case illustrates that energy vulnerability is shaped by the interaction between income, housing conditions, household composition, and everyday responsibilities in the home. These factors are not gender-neutral. Women's lower average earnings, their overrepresentation among single-parent households, and gendered patterns of care and household management can all shape exposure to energy vulnerability (Statistics Denmark, n.d.; Statistics Denmark, 2018; OECD, 2026; EIGE, 2016). The case shows how an energy price shock becomes gender-relevant through the everyday conditions that shape households' capacity to absorb, adapt to, or reduce energy use. The relevant *unsafe conditions* were not only high prices in themselves, but the situations in which households had to lower heating, reduce electricity use, or cut other expenditures in order to maintain financial stability. In this sense, the case shows how economic constraints, housing conditions, care responsibilities, and domestic energy needs intersect to produce differentiated experiences of energy insecurity, even within a welfare state with comparatively strong safety nets (Madsen et al., 2024; Robinson, 2019).

Thermal Comfort and Gendered Bodies

Thermal comfort may also have embodied and gendered dimensions. Research suggests that responses to cooler indoor environments vary with body size, metabolism, age, health, norms of clothing, activity and hormonal status. When energy-saving measures involve lowering indoor temperatures, these differences may shape how burdensome such measures become in everyday life.

Source: Karjalainen, 2012; Kingma & van Marken Lichtenbelt, 2015; Parkinson et al., 2021.

Energy insecurity is not only determined by whether households can afford adequate heating, but also by how reduced indoor temperatures are experienced physically. This adds an embodied dimension to household vulnerability, as illustrated in the text box.

Preparedness before Crisis: Unequal Conditions for Household Self-Reliance (NO)

In recent years, Norway has strengthened its focus on civil preparedness in response to climate-related events, geopolitical tensions, and lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection has promoted household preparedness guidance, encouraging citizens to be able to manage independently for several days during disruptions such as power outages, extreme weather events, or infrastructure failures (Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB), 2024).

Although Norwegian preparedness guidance mainly focuses on practical self-reliance, policy discussions have increasingly highlighted the need to integrate broader social and gender perspectives into crisis governance. The Norwegian example is therefore relevant not because of one specific crisis event, but because it illustrates how preparedness expectations may themselves distribute vulnerability unevenly. Household preparedness advice often appears universal, yet its practical feasibility depends on access to resources such as money, time, storage space, health, mobility, information, language skills and social support (Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB), 2024). From a gender and intersectional perspective, self-reliance is therefore shaped by household composition, care responsibilities, income, housing conditions, (dis)ability, age and access to local networks.

Experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated that crises can have gendered consequences. Women are overrepresented in healthcare and care sectors and carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, increasing their exposure to crisis-related burdens (Norwegian Human Rights Institution, 2023). At the same time, official assessments have found that gender perspectives remain insufficiently integrated into preparedness, including limited initiatives to address conditions in female-dominated sectors or develop gender-sensitive preparedness strategies (CEDAW, 2023).

In this sense, the case illustrates an important link between crisis effects and crisis governance: the ability to respond during a disruption is partly produced before the crisis, through the everyday conditions that shape whether preparedness advice can realistically be followed.

COVID-19, Care Responsibilities and Labour Market Vulnerability (FI, IS)

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed gendered and intersectional patterns of vulnerability across the Nordic region, while also showing the buffering role of strong welfare institutions. In Finland, the pandemic disproportionately affected women in several respects, particularly because many women were employed in service sectors that were strongly affected during the early stages of the crisis. Women also carried a large share of the increased care burden within households during periods of disruption.

At the same time, Finnish research suggests that many of the negative gendered effects were relatively short-lived (Mesiäislehto et al., 2025). Another study similarly finds that while the pandemic exposed longstanding gender equality challenges, the overall impact on gender equality was limited in duration. Factors such as relatively mild restrictions, a strong welfare state, and generally high levels of gender equality helped mitigate the gendered effects of the crisis (Elomäki and Mesiäislehto, 2022).

In Iceland, the pandemic similarly revealed differentiated impacts, particularly among immigrant women. Research shows that immigrant women were often employed in sectors heavily affected by lockdowns and economic downturn, including hospitality and cleaning services. They also faced barriers in accessing support services due to language constraints and marginalisation in the labour market (Rozanova-Smith et al., 2025a).

Taken together, the Finnish and Icelandic examples show that gendered crisis effects cannot be understood through gender alone. Labour market position, migration status, language skills, care responsibilities and access to services all shaped vulnerability during the pandemic. The cases also show both the strengths and limits of Nordic welfare states. While welfare institutions and relatively high levels of gender equality may buffer some crisis effects, general equality commitments do not automatically ensure that recovery measures, crisis communication and support services are designed in a gender-sensitive and intersectional way. The case therefore highlights the difference between mitigating gendered effects after they emerge and operationally integrating gender and intersectional perspectives into preparedness, response and recovery.

Hybrid Threats and Societal Resilience (FI)

Hybrid influence may operate cumulatively and below the threshold of an acute crisis. It is nevertheless relevant to crisis preparedness when disinformation and influence operations are used strategically to weaken societal trust, political participation and the functioning of democratic institutions. The relevant unit of analysis is therefore not online harassment as an isolated individual harm, but its use within or alongside broader attempts to polarise a target society.

An analyst from the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats interviewed for this report described how hostile actors may exploit existing divisions related to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and minority status. Women, gender-diverse people and people with intersecting marginalised identities in public roles may be targeted through trolling, hate campaigns, sexualised falsehoods, manipulated images or deepfakes, and reputational attacks. According to the interview, such tactics are shaped by prejudices already present in the target society. External influence may amplify domestic hate speech and existing political divisions rather than create them from scratch.

These attacks have personal and psychological consequences, but their crisis relevance lies in their potential cumulative effects on democratic resilience. Disproportionate exposure to sexualised narratives, harassment and reputational attacks may make people less willing to run for office, participate in public debate or assume visible leadership roles. Identity-based hostility may thereby affect political representation, institutional legitimacy and public trust.

The case raises concrete preparedness and governance questions: whether gendered and identity-based influence narratives are included in risk assessments and early-warning systems; whether authorities can distinguish coordinated influence operations from ordinary political contestation and domestic hate speech; how targeted public actors are supported; and how authorities, media organisations, digital platforms and civil society coordinate their responses. It illustrates how misogyny, anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment, racism and other existing forms of prejudice may function as societal vulnerabilities that hybrid actors can exploit to undermine participation, representation and democratic resilience.

Synthesis: From Gendered Crisis Effects to Crisis Governance

Taken together, the Nordic cases show that gendered crisis effects are rarely produced by the hazard alone. They emerge through the interaction between hazards and social organisation: who performs care work, who has access to income and secure housing, who is expected to be self-reliant, whose crisis work is recognised, and who can participate safely in public and democratic life. The cases also show that these effects do not take one uniform form. In some contexts, the main mechanisms relate to sectoral employment and care burdens, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic (Elomäki & Mesiäislehto, 2022; Mesiäislehto et al., 2025; Rozanova-Smith et al., 2025a). In others, they relate to household energy vulnerability (Madsen et al., 2024), preparedness capacity (Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB),

2024), recognition of crisis work (Danielsson & Eriksson, 2022; Alvinius, Deverell & Hede, 2020), or gendered harassment and disinformation in public life.

These findings reinforce the analytical framework set out in Chapter 2. A more gender-responsive and intersectional approach to crisis governance is needed not only in response and recovery, but also in preparedness, communication, data collection, participation and policy design. The next chapter turns to these governance dimensions. The question that follows is therefore whether Nordic crisis governance systems are equipped to identify these differentiated risks before crises occur, to include relevant forms of knowledge and labour during preparedness and response, and to learn from unequal effects afterwards.

GENDER AND CRISIS GOVERNANCE

This chapter examines how gender and intersectional perspectives are reflected in Nordic crisis governance. Whereas Chapter 3 focused on how crises affect people, communities and forms of participation, this chapter focuses on the systems that are expected to prevent, prepare for, respond to and learn from crises. The analysis considers Nordic cooperation structures, national preparedness systems, civil society involvement, citizen-facing preparedness guidance, Women, Peace and Security frameworks, gender mainstreaming mechanisms and selected examples of operational gender integration.

The central question is not only whether gender equality is mentioned in policy documents, but whether preparedness systems make differentiated risks, responsibilities, participation patterns and forms of expertise visible and actionable. The chapter therefore examines the gap between broad equality commitments and the operational integration of gender and intersectional perspectives in crisis governance.

Throughout the chapter, the analysis focuses on three cross-cutting governance questions. First, whether gender and intersectional perspectives are recognised in crisis-related policies, strategies and preparedness frameworks. Second, whether they are operationalised through concrete mechanisms such as risk assessments, data practices, participation structures, training, exercises, evaluation and accountability. Third, whether preparedness systems recognise the different forms of labour, knowledge and responsibility that make crisis response and recovery possible, including civil society work, care, communication, local knowledge and community-based support.

Nordic Collaboration on Crisis Management

Nordic cooperation on crisis management spans several layers, ranging from operational rescue cooperation to strategic civil preparedness, Arctic governance, and defence and security cooperation. These structures provide an important regional framework for managing cross-border risks, sharing resources and coordinating responses to crises that do not stop at national borders.

At the operational level, the **Nordic Rescue Services Agreement (NORDRED)** forms a core mechanism for cooperation between rescue services in the Nordic countries. It enables mutual assistance between responsible authorities and is designed to facilitate cross-border support at the local and regional levels in the event of accidents and emergencies. This gives the Nordic region a relatively strong operational basis for practical crisis cooperation (Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency, 2025a).

At the strategic level, the **Haga cooperation** provides a framework for Nordic collaboration on civil preparedness and societal security. It complements the operational focus of NORDRED by addressing

broader questions of crisis management, critical infrastructure protection and resilience (Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency, 2025b). In this sense, Nordic cooperation covers both immediate response capacity and longer-term preparedness planning.

The Arctic dimension is also important. **The Arctic Council** remains a distinctive governance platform because it combines intergovernmental cooperation with the formal participation of Indigenous Permanent Participants. This is particularly relevant for crisis governance in the Nordic region because climate change, infrastructure development, security tensions and land-use conflicts intersect with Indigenous rights, knowledge systems and livelihoods. At the same time, Arctic cooperation has been constrained since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, thereby reducing the Council's effectiveness as a pan-Arctic forum (Arctic Council, n.d.).

The security dimension of Nordic crisis governance has become more prominent since Finland and Sweden joined **NATO**, making all Nordic countries members of the Alliance. Although NATO's primary role is collective defence, its relevance to crisis governance has expanded in areas such as civil preparedness, resilience, hybrid threats and critical infrastructure protection (NATO, 2025; NATO, 2026). NORDEFCO complements this broader security framework by providing a more regionally tailored platform for Nordic defence cooperation, including joint exercises, procurement and operational coordination (NORDEFCO, n.d.).

Nordic crisis governance is also supported by knowledge networks and research cooperation, including institutions and university networks working on societal security, resilience, climate change and Indigenous knowledge systems. Such networks can contribute to evidence-based policymaking and capacity building, but their potential to strengthen gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance depends on whether gender, equality, and inclusion are treated as core knowledge dimensions rather than peripheral concerns.

Overall, the frameworks reviewed in this section point to a high degree of Nordic cooperation on crisis management, including operational collaboration, strategic preparedness, Arctic governance, defence integration, and regional security cooperation. From a gender and intersectional perspective, however, these cooperation structures do not in themselves ensure that differentiated risks, responsibilities and capacities are recognised in crisis governance. This remains a separate governance challenge. The material reviewed for this report suggests that Nordic cooperation is relatively well-developed institutionally, but that gender-responsive crisis governance is less clearly operationalised through shared data practices, impact assessments, consultation mechanisms, exercises, and evaluation frameworks.

Gender Perspectives in National Crisis Management

This section examines how gender and intersectional perspectives are reflected in crisis management arrangements across the Nordic region. It presents short governance profiles rather than exhaustive national analyses and is not intended to rank the countries. The profiles consider three main dimensions: how crisis management is institutionally organised; how civil society and citizen preparedness are positioned; and how gender and intersectional perspectives are integrated into, or remain weakly connected to, preparedness systems. Particular attention is paid to whether broad equality and security commitments are translated into domestic preparedness practice. The Sámi section complements the national profiles by examining Indigenous rights, knowledge systems and self-determination as governance questions that cut across national jurisdictions.

1.1.1 Denmark

Institutional structure

Denmark's crisis management system is based on the sector responsibility principle, meaning that each authority is responsible for preparedness and crisis management within its own area of responsibility at national, regional and local levels (Beredskabsstyrelsen, 2020). At national level, operational coordination in major crises takes place through the National Operational Staff (NOST), while the establishment of the Ministry for Societal Security and Emergency Management in 2024 signals increased political prioritisation of preparedness and societal security. Regions are responsible for health emergency preparedness, while municipalities play a central role in local contingency planning, including care services, social services, schools, infrastructure and local civil protection.

This decentralised structure means that gender and intersectional perspectives cannot be operationalised only through national policy statements. They must also be integrated into sectoral guidance, municipal preparedness planning, health emergency preparedness, citizen communication, exercises and evaluation.

Overview of key policy documents – Denmark

Beredskabsloven and the broader Danish crisis management system built around the sector responsibility principle.

Retningslinjer for Krisestyring, including the role of NOST in national coordination.

Forberedt på kriser, which provides guidance on household preparedness and signals increased attention to citizen and community resilience.

Planlægning af sundhedsberedskab and related guidance for municipalities and regions.

Denmark's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security 2025-2029.

Civil society and citizen preparedness

In response to increasing geopolitical tensions, hybrid threats and climate-related crises in Europe, Denmark has strengthened its focus on civil preparedness and societal resilience. Danish authorities have increasingly emphasised the importance of involving citizens, neighbourhoods and local communities in crisis preparedness. This has led to the development of guidance materials aimed at helping neighbourhoods organise themselves to respond to crises such as power outages, extreme weather events or disruptions to critical infrastructure.

An example is the guide for neighbourhood preparedness developed by the Danish Ministry for Societal Security and Emergency Management. The guide encourages residents to organise local preparedness networks that can support vulnerable groups, share resources and coordinate assistance during crises. Importantly, the guide explicitly highlights diversity and inclusion in local preparedness groups, including gender diversity (Styrelsen for Samfundssikkerhed, 2025).

From a gender and intersectional perspective, this opens space for a more differentiated understanding of preparedness. Community-based preparedness may strengthen local resilience by drawing on a wider range of experiences, capacities and support networks, including those linked to care responsibilities and everyday knowledge of local needs. In the Danish case, inclusion of civil society and communities appears to be framed primarily through neighbour support, shared responsibility and attention to different needs across the population.

An interview with a Danish lecturer in Emergency and Risk Management further points to the importance of understanding preparedness broadly. Preparedness is not only about emergency services, technical infrastructure or physical response, but also about local communities, homeowners' associations, sports clubs and other civil society actors. Disaster risk management also includes prevention, psychosocial support, recovery and the ability to return to everyday life.

The interview also shows how gendered expectations can become visible in local crisis response. In some situations, traditional roles may be reproduced, for example when men are expected to lay sandbags or

take on physically demanding flood response tasks, while women are asked to organise food or other support functions. At the same time, these roles are not fixed. During the October 2023 storm surge, experiences from South Funen indicated that all those who were physically able contributed, regardless of gender. This points to an important tension: when preparedness roles are defined too narrowly, they may reinforce gender stereotypes; when broader roles are made visible, more people may be able to see themselves as part of emergency preparedness before, during and after a crisis.

Gender integration and gaps

Within core domestic crisis management and preparedness frameworks, explicit gender integration appears limited. The Danish crisis management system is highly structured and cross-sectoral, but the reviewed domestic preparedness documents are primarily organised around institutional responsibilities, coordination and operational continuity rather than differentiated gendered impacts, participation or intersectional vulnerability.

By contrast, gender perspectives are more clearly institutionalised in Denmark's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security 2025–2029. The action plan builds on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and aims to strengthen women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in peace and security efforts. It also states that the agenda should be mainstreamed across relevant Danish efforts in defence, civil international peace and security work and the climate agenda, and that implementation should be strengthened within Denmark itself, including in the security sector and in the interaction between public authorities and asylum seekers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2025).

Gender inclusion in the Danish Armed Forces provides a concrete example of how formal equality reforms can strengthen preparedness while also revealing the limits of gender-neutral approaches. Denmark will introduce its first fully gender-equal conscription model in August 2026, bringing it closer to the gender-neutral conscription systems already used in Norway and Sweden. The reform expands access to national defence and crisis preparedness, but it also raises a broader operational question: what is required for equal access to become participation on fair terms? Although the Armed Forces are not the same as domestic civil protection, the case is relevant because defence, conscription and total preparedness increasingly shape who gains access to crisis-relevant roles, authority and training. The case box below examines this question in more depth. Drawing on interviews with the Danish Women's Society and KVINFO, as well as KVINFO's study of gender, minorities and culture in the Danish Army, it shows how

formal gender neutrality may leave practical, cultural and organisational barriers insufficiently recognised.

Case: Gender Inclusion in the Danish Armed Forces

Denmark will introduce its first fully gender-equal conscription model in August 2026, bringing it closer to the gender-neutral conscription systems already used in Norway and Sweden. The reform is a step towards broader participation in national defence and crisis preparedness. However, equal access does not automatically create equal conditions.

The Danish debate highlights the limits of the idea that "there is only one gender in the Armed Forces, and that is soldier". While this may be intended to promote equality, it can make gender-specific barriers invisible. KVINFO has recommended moving away from formal gender neutrality towards a broader idea of being a "soldier in many ways". This means recognising that soldiers may have different physical and social starting points, and that competence should not be measured only through narrow ideals of strength, toughness and endurance.

This also applies to military culture and everyday social life. The sense of community in Armed Forces is important for many, and humour is often described as a central part of what binds that community together. However, KVINFO's study shows that this community can also be shaped by a fixed culture that is difficult to change. Humour and tone are often hard, sexualised and marked by gender stereotypes, which can make the community exclusionary for women, men and minorities who are targeted by such comments. A recurring logic is that "if you cannot take it, you do not belong". In practice, this risks turning adaptation to a narrow cultural norm into an informal test of who is seen as fit for military service. The study also points to a broader pattern in which strength, robustness and decisiveness are valued highly, while qualities such as empathy, care and emotional intelligence are more easily overlooked.

For crisis governance, the issue is therefore not only representation, but participation on fair terms. Women and minorities must be able to take part without being expected to adapt to a system built around stereotypical male bodies and masculine norms. This requires functional requirements based on role-specific needs, more varied training exercises, equipment that fits different body types, and a working culture where different forms of competence are recognised.

For instance, a practical challenge is that much of military training, equipment and culture has historically been designed around male bodies and masculine norms. Uniforms, bulletproof vests, backpacks, marching standards and physical exercises often fit some men better than women. This can increase the risk of injuries, discomfort and unequal performance pressure.

The study shows that cultural change in hierarchical organisations requires strong internal leadership. Another central lesson is that instructors and trainers are key culture carriers. If gender-equal conscription is to strengthen defence and crisis preparedness, those educating new conscripts must help build a culture where different competencies are valued, where exclusionary humour is addressed as a governance issue rather than dismissed as social bonding, and where young women do not feel they must behave like men to be recognised as capable soldiers.

Based on interviews with Danish Women's Society and KVINFO – the Danish Center for Research on Women and Gender, and their study "KØN, MINORITETER OG KULTUR I HÆREN" on https://kvinfo.dk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/HaerrapportA230425.pdf

Key takeaways

The Danish case illustrates a gap between a highly institutionalised crisis management system and a comparatively weak operational integration of gender and intersectional perspectives in domestic preparedness. Gender becomes visible mainly through adjacent entry points such as Women, Peace and Security, defence and participation in crisis-relevant institutions, rather than through systematic gender-sensitive risk assessment, citizen preparedness, civil protection planning or evaluation.

1.1.2 Sweden

Institutional structure

Sweden's crisis preparedness is based on the responsibility principle, under which public authorities remain responsible for preparedness within their own sectors in both peacetime and crisis. This is embedded in a broader total defence framework, linking civil preparedness, military defence, municipalities, regions, state agencies and private actors. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) plays a central coordinating role by developing national guidance, supporting capacity building and strengthening civil preparedness across sectors and levels of government.

Overview of key policy documents – Sweden

Total Defence Bill (Totalförsvarspropositionen) – Government Offices of Sweden / Swedish Government

MSB institutional mandate and preparedness guidance – Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency

National Strategy for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) – Government Offices of Sweden / United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

Civil preparedness communication documents – Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (*Om krisen eller kriget kommer*, preparedness campaigns)

Sweden therefore provides an important case for examining how gender and intersectional perspectives are, or are not, integrated into a highly developed whole-of-society and total defence model, including citizen-facing preparedness communication and local civil society involvement.

Civil society and citizen preparedness

Civil society plays a central role in Sweden's preparedness system. The 18 voluntary defence organisations form a significant part of this structure, while a broader group of local associations, LEADER areas and community-based actors also contributes to local resilience and total defence (MSB, 2024). Willingness to contribute is high but unevenly matched by capacity: A Kantar Sifo survey for Volontärbyrån and Forum found that 93 per cent of Swedes could imagine volunteering during a crisis, while 56 per cent were unsure how to go about it or which organisation to approach (Volontärbyrån & Forum, 2022).

One example is Landsbygdsnätverket för Leader och hållbar Utveckling (LLUH), which coordinates LEADER areas across Sweden and supports local collaboration between municipalities, civil society and private actors. Initiatives such as the Volunteer Pool help translate citizens' willingness to help into organised action before public authorities are fully deployed. This strengthens local agency and ensures that networks are already established when crises occur.

At the same time, research and practitioner interviews suggest that much community-oriented preparedness work is carried out by women and associated with coordination, communication and relational labour. This work is important for local resilience, but remains insufficiently recognised in terms of formal responsibility, resources and policy attention.

Citizen-facing preparedness is a central part of Sweden's total defence approach. In 2024, the Swedish government updated and redistributed the national preparedness brochure *In case of crisis or war* to millions of households. The guide, produced by MSB, presents all residents as part of Sweden's total defence system and gives practical advice on preparing for emergencies such as war, cyberattacks, extreme weather events and disease outbreaks (The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2024).

From a gender and intersectional perspective, such communication is important not only because it reaches all households, but because it can shape assumptions about who is expected to prepare, care, organise and remain self-reliant during crisis. The case box below examines how apparently universal preparedness communication may carry gendered assumptions about household responsibility and the ideal resilient citizen.

Case 1: Gendering the Resilient Citizen: MSB Preparedness Campaigns and the 'Resilient Housewife'

In 2018, MSB distributed a revised version of the wartime household preparedness brochure "Om krisen eller kriget kommer" ("If crisis or war comes") to 4.8 million Swedish households, accompanied by a video campaign featuring spokesperson Heidi Andersson demonstrating domestic preparedness practices. Critical analysis of these materials reveals how gender is embedded in the construction of the 'resilient citizen.'

Kvarnlöf and Montelius (2024) analysed MSB's 2017–2018 campaign using feminist visual discourse analysis and found that women were systematically placed in the foreground — in kitchen settings, performing domestic tasks, managing household food supplies — while men appeared as secondary or absent figures. Women aged 45–64 were explicitly identified as a priority target group in the campaign strategy. The visual and rhetorical logic of the materials constructs what Kvarnlöf and Montelius call the "resilient housewife": a functional, caring and active female figure who manages household continuity during crisis. The "minor home" (the household) is cast as the foundation on which the "great home" (the nation) depends — and the management of that minor home is systematically feminised. The campaign presents this as gender-neutral civic responsibility; the effect is to reinscribe household preparedness as female labour.

Montelius and Kvarnlöf (2025), analysing four Swedish total defence policy documents from 2017 to 2022, identify the structural logic underpinning this at the policy level. Their analysis shows that total defence discourse constructs a "challenged society" as its problem and resilience as its solution. The ideal citizen is self-reliant, capable, active and responsible. Those who cannot conform to this ideal, i.e., elderly people, people with disabilities, and those in economic precarity, are constructed as "the vulnerable," rendered not merely as a welfare need but as a security problem. The authors show that the foundational logic of total defence reproduces gender-based social orders (Eriksson, Svenbro and Wester, 2022, cited in Montelius and Kvarnlöf, 2025), meaning that the apparent universalism of preparedness communications conceals a gendered architecture that naturalises the feminisation of household care labour.

Sweden's formal commitment to gender mainstreaming in crisis preparedness through MSB's institutional mandate and its WPS obligations has not yet translated into a reflexive engagement with the gendered assumptions embedded in its own citizen-facing communications. The 2024 reissue of the household preparedness brochure, distributed to all Swedish households (MSB, 2024), continues the same genealogy without addressing this tension.

Case 2: Before the Crisis: Gender and Participation in Local Preparedness Work (Volontärpoolen, Halland)

The case of Volontärpoolen (the Volunteer Pool), a volunteer coordination platform for rural Halland, bears on two of the report's central questions: who participates in preparedness work and whose contribution is recognised, and whether gender commitments reach the level at which that work is actually organised. The platform matches volunteers with associations, companies and municipalities, in everyday life as well as during disruptions. It is being built by Lokalt Ledd Utveckling Halland (LLUH) — a non-profit association and one of Sweden's 40 LEADER areas, with a programme of 26 network meetings across the county.

The root causes Volontärpoolen is designed to address, as LLUH sets them out, are social rather than technical: declining community ties, habituation to peace and welfare, the low status of practical skills such as farming, repair and building, and the absence of a preparedness structure used in everyday life. Among the consequences LLUH names are isolation, loneliness and deteriorating mental health. The analysis reaches relational and care-related factors but stops short of asking who performs the relational work, and gender appears nowhere in it. Inclusion is not otherwise absent from the project's method: it draws on published guidance for involving people with disabilities as active participants (Osvalder et al., 2025), and on youth-engagement material from Leader Södermanland, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Gender is the one axis for which comparable practical guidance is not in use.

Louise Klingmyr, who manages the project, names the consequence herself: participation patterns are visible in practice but are not captured as data at this level. Subject matter sorts who comes. A meeting on how a local energy community had been financed and built drew almost exclusively men; meetings on farming, food and household preparedness draw predominantly women, at other LEADER areas as well as her own. A meeting with village community centres drew a mainly elderly group, including older men presenting themselves as experienced in crisis matters, while a meeting aimed at people under 35 proved difficult to fill against a project indicator of eighty participants under 25, split evenly by gender. Both the energy and the farming meetings are preparedness work, but only one is treated as technical. Language sorts participation too. Preparedness language, she says, is "strict and formal, or military", robustness being her example, while sustainability language covers much of the same ground but attracts a different group of people — so she varies her vocabulary, one set of words for someone from the military and another for people in the climate and transition movements. It is a practical adjustment, but it points to something larger. If words decide what counts as preparedness, then much of the community work carried out under labels like sustainability, local development or social cohesion is preparedness in practice but never counted as such, and so never appears in preparedness mandates, budgets or statistics.

The obstacles Klingmyr identifies arise in dealings with public authorities rather than within the communities themselves: no clear institutional mandate — whose responsibility is this, and which municipal department does such a platform belong to; siloed communication within the public sector, where civil society is told it has an important role but given no route to collaboration; and municipal reluctance to accept spontaneous volunteers from outside trained voluntary defence organisations, on grounds of insurance and verification. That last filter excludes precisely the informal capacity the platform exists to mobilise.

Asked what would need to change for gender-responsive preparedness to move from aspiration to practice, she named clearer policy requirements with continuous follow-up, capacity-building, stronger participation of women in decision-making, and better data.

Based on project documentation from Lokalt Ledd Utveckling Halland and an interview with project manager Louise Klingmyr conducted for this report, April 2026.

Gender integration and gaps

Sweden has formal commitments to gender equality and inclusion in disaster risk reduction, including through the broader principles set out in the Sendai Framework (UNDRR, 2015). However, the material reviewed for this report suggests that these commitments are not always translated into systematic attention to gender in domestic preparedness practice, evaluation and institutional learning. The case above shows that gender is not only relevant in relation to who is directly affected by a hazard, but also in relation to the assumptions embedded in preparedness communication and the forms of responsibility it assigns to households and citizens.

MSB's *Gender Equality Handbook for International Assistance* provides a concrete example of how gender analysis can be operationalised in crisis response. The handbook gives practical guidance on integrating gender perspectives into international disaster response and humanitarian operations, including needs assessments, programme design, implementation and evaluation. It emphasises participation, gender-disaggregated data and attention to differences in access to infrastructure, mobility and safety (The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, 2019).

Key takeaways

The Swedish case illustrates how gendered assumptions may be embedded in total defence, citizen-facing preparedness and crisis communication, even where policies are formally universal. It shows that gender-responsive crisis governance requires attention not only to who is included in preparedness systems, but also to how responsibility, self-reliance, communication and crisis labour are socially coded.

1.1.3 Norway

Institutional structure

Norway's crisis management system is based on the principles of responsibility, proximity, similarity and cooperation. Authorities are expected to manage crises within their ordinary areas of responsibility and at the lowest effective level, while national coordination is strengthened through central government, directorates and sector ministries. The Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection (DSB) plays a key role in civil protection, risk communication and preparedness guidance, while municipalities are central to local preparedness and response.

Overview of key policy documents – Norway

Meld. St. 9 (2024–2025) – Total preparedness (Ministry of Justice and Public Security Norway, 2024).

Meld. St. 5 (2023–2024) – Civil protection and preparedness (Ministry of Health and Care Services Norway, 2023).

Norway's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2023–2030) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway, 2023).

Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (2017) (Ministry of Culture and Equality Norway, 2017).

Norway's preparedness model is also shaped by a strong total defence tradition, where public authorities, private actors, civil society and citizens are understood as part of national resilience. This makes Norway relevant for examining both formal policy links between gender and security, and the extent to which these links are translated into domestic preparedness practice.

Civil society and citizen preparedness

Norway's preparedness system is characterised by a strong total defence tradition and a high degree of civil society and private-sector involvement. Civil society organisations such as the Red Cross and voluntary search and rescue groups play formal and operational roles in emergency response, particularly in remote and rural areas. At regional and local levels, preparedness councils bring together public authorities, private companies, critical infrastructure providers and voluntary organisations to coordinate preparedness and response (Ministry of Health and Care Services Norway, 2023).

This inclusion of civil society and private actors reflects a broader understanding of preparedness as a shared societal responsibility. From a gender and intersectional perspective, it also raises questions about how voluntary preparedness work is organised, whose labour is relied upon, and whether different groups are represented in local preparedness councils, exercises and planning processes.

Gender integration and gaps

Gender is recognised in Norwegian crisis and security policy, although integration into domestic preparedness practice remains weak. This was visible during the COVID-19 pandemic. A study of Norway's COVID-19 management found that gender was not actively addressed in crisis response, partly because equality was assumed rather than treated as an area requiring specific attention or intervention (Teigen & Østbakken, 2024). The case illustrates a broader challenge in Nordic welfare states: strong equality orientations do not automatically ensure that gendered effects, care responsibilities or participation patterns are systematically addressed in crisis governance.

A policy entry point is Norway's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2023–2030, which calls for the integration of gender perspectives into national and local crisis preparedness and response systems (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway, 2023). The plan highlights that crises affect women and men differently and emphasises gender-sensitive risk assessments, inclusive decision-making and protection against gender-based violence. However, the WPS framework should be understood as a policy entry point rather than as evidence that these principles are systematically operationalised in domestic civil protection and preparedness. At the policy level, Norway has also committed to integrating gender perspectives into civil protection and total preparedness planning, including improving knowledge of the gendered effects of crises and promoting more inclusive participation in preparedness governance (Ministry of Justice and Public Security Norway, 2024).

Gender-based violence provides a more concrete example of gender-responsive crisis governance. Norway has promoted this agenda internationally through its leadership in the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. In a 2025 advocacy statement, the Norwegian government emphasises that protection from gender-based violence must remain a core priority in humanitarian reform processes and that GBV coordination and services should be recognised as life-saving elements of humanitarian assistance, rather than secondary or optional activities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Norway, 2025).

The initiative also calls for stronger support for women-led organisations and locally led humanitarian responses. It is relevant to this report because it shows how protection, participation and locally grounded response can be framed as central to crisis management, rather than as add-ons to technical or logistical emergency response.

Key takeaways

The Norwegian case shows a comparatively clear policy link between gender, security and preparedness, particularly through Women, Peace and Security and work on gender-based violence in emergencies. At the same time, the COVID-19 experience indicates that gender perspectives are not automatically integrated into domestic crisis management, even in contexts with strong equality institutions and explicit policy commitments.

1.1.4 Finland

Institutional structure

Finland's crisis governance is shaped by the principle of comprehensive security (*kokonaisturvallisuus*), a whole-of-society model in which public authorities, municipalities, businesses, civil society and citizens contribute to safeguarding vital societal functions. The Security Strategy for Society provides the main strategic framework, while the normalcy principle means that authorities operate under ordinary mandates for as long as possible, using emergency powers only when necessary.

Overview of key policy documents – Finland

Security Strategy for Society – Security Committee / Government of Finland

Comprehensive Security Model (Kokonaisturvallisuus / Comprehensive Security) – Security Committee / Government of Finland

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) – Government of Finland / United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

Preparedness Act (Valmiuslaki / Emergency Powers Act) – Ministry of Justice, Finland

National Risk Assessments and Preparedness Guidance – Ministry of the Interior, Finland

Household preparedness and crisis communication materials – National Emergency Supply Agency and Finnish authorities (*72 hours preparedness recommendations*)

The Finnish case is used here to examine how gender and intersectionality become relevant within a highly developed comprehensive security model, particularly in relation to citizen preparedness, gendered pathways into security and preparedness roles, care and continuity work, and the governance of hybrid influence as a threat to democratic resilience.

Civil society and citizen preparedness

Civil society is an integrated part of Finland's comprehensive security model. The whole-of-society approach recognises that preparedness depends not only on public authorities, but also on organisations, businesses, local communities and citizens. In rescue services, volunteer, institutional, industrial and military fire brigades can participate in rescue service duties through agreements with regional rescue departments (Ministry of the Interior, n.d.). Civil society organisations also contribute to preparedness through training, local safety work, psychological resilience, community support and public communication.

This broad understanding of civil society is important from a gender and intersectional perspective. It means that preparedness is not only about formal emergency response capacity, but also about everyday social infrastructure, trust, local knowledge, care, communication and mutual support. It also raises questions about whose labour and knowledge are recognised, how voluntary and community-based contributions are resourced, and whether women's organisations, minority organisations and other civil society actors are included systematically in preparedness planning, exercises and evaluation.

Finland has also strengthened citizen-facing preparedness through the national online guide Preparing for incidents and crises, published on Suomi.fi. The guide provides practical guidance on how citizens can prepare for disruptions such as power cuts, water outages, cyber incidents, information influence, storms and floods, pandemics, payment system disruptions and military conflict (Suomi.fi, 2024). It reflects Finland's whole-of-society approach by presenting preparedness as a shared responsibility between authorities, communities and individuals.

From a gender and intersectional perspective, such guidance should also be assessed for its assumptions about households, resources, care responsibilities, mobility, digital access, language and social networks. The Finnish approach usefully recognises citizens as active preparedness actors, but it also raises the question of who has the time, space, money, information and social support needed to prepare, and who is expected to support others during disruption.

Gender integration and gaps

At the policy level, Finland's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2023–2027 provides an entry point for connecting gender perspectives to security governance. The plan identifies security sector, crisis management and preparedness as one of its five main areas and includes cross-cutting themes such as strengthening women's participation, reinforcing a knowledge-based approach, strengthening partnerships and linking climate and environmental issues to the Women, Peace and Security agenda (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2023).

However, interviews conducted for this report suggest that the operational integration of gender perspectives in everyday preparedness and security practice remains weak. While there is awareness of the importance of women's representation in strategic planning and security organisations, interview material points to more limited evidence of systematic gender-specific data use, gender-sensitive risk assessment and direct collaboration with women's organisations or gender equality actors in day-to-day security work.

The Finnish interview material also points to the gendered pathways through which people enter preparedness and security roles. One respondent from an internal security organisation emphasised that much Finnish crisis management, civil preparedness and security work is connected to military service, which is compulsory for able-bodied men and voluntary for women. This gives many men earlier exposure to military and crisis-management logics and may create an advantage when pursuing roles in security and preparedness (Finnish Defence Forces, n.d.).

The interview material also suggests that crisis roles may reproduce gendered divisions already present in everyday society. Men may be more readily associated with defence, combat or physically demanding response roles, while women may be more readily associated with care, household continuity and welfare-related tasks. This raises questions about whether preparedness systems allow people to take on roles according to their skills and willingness, or whether crisis roles are shaped by pre-existing gender norms.

Hybrid influence provides a further test of how gender and intersectional perspectives are operationalised within Finland's comprehensive security model. As discussed in Section 3.2.5, gendered and identity-based disinformation may exploit existing social divisions and affect democratic participation, public leadership and institutional trust. Finland's comprehensive security model provides an institutional basis for addressing such cross-sectoral threats by linking cyber preparedness, public communication, critical infrastructure protection, supply security, social welfare, civil defence and citizen preparedness. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, based in Helsinki, also contributes to the wider knowledge infrastructure in this field.

The case nevertheless raises questions about operationalisation. It is not clear from the material reviewed for this report whether gendered and identity-based influence narratives are systematically incorporated into risk assessments, early-warning systems and strategic communication; how public actors targeted by such campaigns are supported; or how authorities coordinate with media organisations, digital platforms and civil society. This suggests that democratic participation and representation should be treated as components of societal resilience, rather than as concerns external to preparedness.

Key takeaways

The Finnish case illustrates both the strengths and the potential blind spots of comprehensive security. The model creates strong structures for whole-of-society preparedness and cross-sectoral coordination, but access to crisis-relevant roles, authority and expertise may still follow gendered pathways. It also raises the question of whether the social divisions exploited through hybrid influence are systematically recognised in preparedness practice. Citizen preparedness, continuity of care and democratic

participation should therefore be understood as interconnected dimensions of societal resilience, requiring attention to resources, representation, risk assessment and institutional support.

Iceland

Institutional structure

Iceland's civil protection system is organised through cooperation between the state, municipalities and specialised agencies. The state is responsible for civil protection on land, sea and air, while local authorities are responsible for civil protection within their municipalities in cooperation with national authorities. Iceland's risk landscape is strongly shaped by volcanic, seismic, avalanche and weather-related hazards, giving monitoring, early warning and local response capacity particular importance.

Overview of key policy documents – Iceland

National Security Policy for Iceland (Þjóðaröryggisstefna fyrir Ísland) – Parliament/Government of Iceland

Civil Protection and Emergency Management Act – Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management / Ministry of Justice, Iceland

National Risk Assessment for Iceland – Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management, Iceland

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) – Government of Iceland / United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325

Climate Action Plan (Aðgerðaáætlun í loftslagsmálum) – Government of Iceland

Because Iceland has a small population and relies significantly on local civil protection structures and volunteer organisations, the case raises questions about how gender and intersectional perspectives are translated into domestic preparedness, volunteer response, public communication and evaluation.

Civil society and citizen preparedness

Civil protection services are often supported by volunteer organisations such as the Icelandic Association for Search and Rescue and the Icelandic Red Cross. These organisations contribute trained personnel, vehicles, rescue equipment, relief materials and specialist knowledge (almannavarnir.is, n.d.-b). Private and critical infrastructure actors are also embedded in the system through the Civil Protection and Security Council, which includes heads of critical infrastructure sectors (European Commission, 2019).

From a gender and intersectional perspective, Iceland's reliance on volunteer organisations and local civil protection structures raises questions similar to those found elsewhere in the Nordic region: whose labour is mobilised in preparedness and response, how volunteer capacity is recognised and resourced, and whether different forms of expertise and community knowledge are included in planning and evaluation.

Gender integration and gaps

Iceland has embedded gender perspectives in its foreign, security and development policies through its fourth National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2025–2030 (Government of Iceland, 2025). The plan emphasises the gendered impacts of conflict and the importance of women's participation in peace and security processes, positioning Iceland as an active international advocate for the WPS agenda.

The plan also directs attention to achieving greater gender balance within national security and defence institutions, as Iceland aims to "lead by example". This includes goals for equal gender ratios and zero-tolerance policies on gender-based violence and harassment within government ministries and agencies.

Of particular relevance to this report, the plan also sets out a goal of integrating gender perspectives into policies and plans relating to security and defence at relevant ministries and government agencies.

Key takeaways

The Icelandic case primarily illustrates a translation gap. Gender perspectives are visible in Women, Peace and Security and security policy, but the reviewed material provides limited evidence of how these commitments are operationalised in domestic civil protection, local preparedness, volunteer response, public communication or evaluation. The Icelandic case therefore points less to a clearly documented domestic model of gender-responsive civil protection than to a knowledge and translation gap. Gender perspectives are visible in Women, Peace and Security and security policy, but it remains less clear how these commitments are translated into domestic civil protection, local preparedness, volunteer response, citizen communication, exercises or evaluation.

Sámi and Indigenous Perspectives in Crisis Governance

Governance context and structural position

Crisis preparedness in the Nordic region cannot be fully understood without attention to Sámi communities, whose structural position produces a distinct experience of compound crisis that sits outside the majority-population frameworks most preparedness policy assumes. The Sámi are the only recognised Indigenous people of the Nordic region, with a homeland, Sápmi, divided across four national jurisdictions by borders drawn without Sámi participation (Josefsen & Saglie, 2024). Sámi communities therefore navigate overlapping layers of governance across Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia, while holding distinct land rights, cultural practices and forms of ecological knowledge accumulated over generations of managing environmental uncertainty.

Scope note: Inuit perspectives

Inuit perspectives are highly relevant to Nordic and Arctic crisis governance, particularly in relation to climate adaptation, food security, infrastructure vulnerability, Indigenous knowledge, self-government, security politics and colonial legacies. Existing Arctic research and policy literature also shows that Inuit perspectives require specific attention to Arctic governance conditions and ethical engagement with Inuit communities and knowledge holders (Oddsdóttir & Ágústsson, 2021; Inuit Circumpolar Council, 2022; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2019)

This project is limited to the five Nordic countries and selected national preparedness systems, and does not assess self-governing areas in the Arctic region. Inuit and Greenlandic perspectives should therefore be treated as a priority for future work on gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance.

Reindeer herding Sámi, a minority within the broader Sámi population, bear particular exposure to the intersecting pressures discussed below, as holders of the only formally recognised land-related rights in Swedish and Norwegian law (Rennäringslagen, 1971; Reindriftsloven, 2007; Harnesk et al., 2023). Their situation illustrates how crisis governance, land rights, climate adaptation, infrastructure development, security policy and Indigenous self-determination intersect in ways that are not easily captured by national preparedness frameworks.

Civil society, Indigenous knowledge and community-led preparedness

Kristina Sehlin MacNeil (Umeå University / Várdduo Centre for Sámi Research), interviewed for this project, describes reindeer herding communities as having been “the canary in the coal mine” for climate change in the Nordic region. For thirty to forty years, she notes, these communities were raising concerns that went largely unheard by the states and institutions now speaking urgently about resilience: “They have been saying: we are experiencing something. This is crazy. This is really strange. Lakes aren't freezing over anymore. It's affecting the way we herd reindeer” (Sehlin MacNeil, 2026).

The connection between lake ice and herding is direct. Frozen lakes serve as crossing points between pasture areas during winter migrations, and snow conditions need to be right for reindeer to dig through to the lichen underneath. When lakes freeze and thaw unpredictably, migration routes close off. When freeze-thaw cycles deposit a hard crust of ice over grazing land, reindeer cannot reach their food. Harnesk et al. (2023) document this in northern Sweden, showing how climate change and large-scale forestry encroachment on winter pasturelands have worked together to degrade grazing conditions over time, giving research backing to what communities had been observing for decades.

Against this backdrop, Sámi communities are also generating their own responses to crisis. Reindeer herding communities possess well-developed practical preparedness: knowledge of how to navigate land without infrastructure, store food without electricity and sustain livelihoods under conditions of extreme uncertainty. These are capacities that Nordic policymakers are only now beginning to name as resilience (Bennett, 2025). Youth-led educational initiatives, such as Sámi Nuorat's Nuoras Nuori programme, bring young Sámi people into secondary schools to teach about Sámi society, rights and land. A wider cultural resurgence in Sámi literature, film and television is also creating new infrastructures of identity and advocacy.

At community level, organisations such as the Vindel Älven Juttodahka biosphere area in northern Sweden are developing Indigenous-grounded approaches to civil preparedness that connect ecological knowledge with community cohesion. Harnesk (2024) traces how community-level responses have translated into sustained political mobilisation, documenting a decade of reform efforts and coalition building around reindeer pastoralism in Sweden as evidence of organised Indigenous agency in the face of structural pressure.

Gender integration and policy gaps

Despite this knowledge and capacity, Sámi perspectives remain weakly integrated into mainstream crisis preparedness. Sehlin MacNeil points out that the latest wave of Nordic total defence documents and citizen-facing preparedness materials have not meaningfully consulted Indigenous groups: "None of these documents that have come out recently have, as far as I'm aware, consulted Indigenous groups. The crisis preparedness material that's going out to citizens does not reach reindeer herding communities in any meaningful way" (Sehlin MacNeil, 2026). This stands in tension with the whole-of-society framing of Nordic preparedness, which assumes that all parts of society are recognised as relevant preparedness actors.

The exclusion is particularly visible in relation to security and the green transition. Sámi communities face compounding pressures from militarisation, infrastructure development, mining, wind energy and climate change. As European states accelerate extraction of minerals required for renewable energy infrastructure, reindeer herding territories are increasingly subject to competing land-use claims. Research by Össbo (2023, 2025) frames these dynamics as a structure of "green sacrifice zones", where territories already affected by historical dispossession are targeted again under the banner of climate transition. Research on wind energy development in Sámi territories further shows how consultation processes may reproduce colonial knowledge hierarchies by devaluing Indigenous expertise and reindeer herding knowledge while maintaining the appearance of participation (Fjellheim, 2023).

This produces what Junka-Aikio (2025) describes as a "subaltern security dilemma": Sámi communities face compounding threats from both militarisation and the green transition, yet remain structurally absent from the security governance processes shaping both. Sehlin MacNeil describes the double bind in similar terms: the external geopolitical threat creates political cover for military and industrial expansion into Sápmi, while the internal logic of the green transition compounds dispossession under a different frame.

These pressures also have gendered and psychosocial dimensions. The compound effects of colonial structures, land dispossession and cultural erosion produce forms of crisis that are largely invisible in mainstream preparedness frameworks. Sehlin MacNeil identifies lateral violence and psychosocial ill health as pervasive but often unspoken consequences in communities navigating sustained oppression. Kuokkanen's work on Sámi governance and gender similarly documents how colonial structures shape both Indigenous women's vulnerability and political agency in crisis contexts, including the ways in which land dispossession and gender-based violence are structurally linked (Kuokkanen, 2019).

No dedicated Nordic framework currently exists for Indigenous inclusion in crisis preparedness. The Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans of Norway and Sweden reference Indigenous women, but without operationalised consultation processes or data collection requirements. The forthcoming update to Norway's High North Strategy presents one potential vehicle for integration. The Norwegian Sámi Parliament has articulated clear demands for inclusion in NATO structures and for joint wartime scenario planning, and called on Sweden and Finland to follow suit (Lin, 2025). Yet these demands have not been translated into formal consultative mechanisms in any of the three states.

Key takeaways

The Sámi case shows that gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance cannot be reduced to including more groups within existing majority-population frameworks. It requires recognising Indigenous rights, knowledge systems, land-based livelihoods and governance claims as part of preparedness itself. The case also shows how crises may be compound and slow-moving rather than singular events: climate change, land-use conflicts, green transition pressures, militarisation, psychosocial harm and weak consultation mechanisms interact over time.

For Nordic crisis governance, the central gap is not only representation, but institutional recognition. Sámi communities hold forms of ecological, practical and community-based preparedness knowledge that are highly relevant to resilience, yet remain insufficiently integrated into national and Nordic preparedness systems. The absence of disaggregated data on Sámi experiences of crisis further renders structural exclusion difficult to address through evidence-based policy. This makes Sámi and Indigenous inclusion a core governance question for the Nordic region, not a marginal or sector-specific concern.

Synthesis: Gender, Inclusion and the Operationalisation Gap

Across the Nordic countries, crisis governance is institutionally well developed and increasingly framed through whole-of-society preparedness, total defence, civil preparedness and societal resilience. The national systems differ, but they share strong public authorities, sector responsibility, growing attention to municipalities and local preparedness, and increasing involvement of civil society, private actors and local communities.

The chapter shows a recurring gap between broad equality commitments and the operational integration of gender and intersectional perspectives. Gender is not absent from Nordic crisis-related policy frameworks. Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans provide important entry points for gender perspectives in security-related policy, but their translation into core domestic preparedness systems remains weak (NCM, 2024a; NCM, 2024b).

A key part of this operationalisation gap concerns data, recognition and risk assessment. Preparedness systems are often presented as universal, but may assume equal access to time, income, mobility, digital tools, language skills, social networks and institutional trust. This risks overlooking how preparedness capacity is shaped by care responsibilities, disability, migration status, Indigenous identity, housing

conditions, economic insecurity and geographic location (Stark et al., 2024; Madsen et al., 2024; Norwegian Human Rights Institution, 2023).

Civil society and local preparedness form a second cross-cutting pattern. Local associations, volunteer organisations, neighbourhood networks and community-based initiatives strengthen both practical and social capacities before crises occur. However, this work is not gender-neutral. Much of the coordination, care, communication and community-oriented preparedness work is carried out by women or associated with feminised roles. If these contributions are not recognised through responsibility, resources and policy attention, crisis governance risks relying on gendered labour while leaving it undervalued (Alvinius et al., 2020; Simonsson et al., 2025).

The Sámi section further shows that Indigenous knowledge, land-based livelihoods and compound forms of crisis may fall outside majority-population preparedness frameworks. The central challenge is therefore not only to include more actors, but to ensure that preparedness systems recognise the differentiated risks, responsibilities, forms of knowledge and types of labour that shape preparedness, response and recovery in practice (Harnesk et al., 2023; Josefsen & Saglie, 2024; Kuokkanen, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

This report shows that gender and intersectional perspectives are relevant to crisis management in the Nordic region in two closely connected ways. First, crises may produce or intensify differentiated effects through care responsibilities, labour market position, household resources, access to information and support, exposure to violence, recognition of crisis work, and participation in public life. Second, crisis governance systems shape whether such differentiated risks, responsibilities, capacities and forms of knowledge are recognised, addressed or overlooked.

The Nordic countries have strong welfare institutions and well-developed crisis governance systems. These are important strengths. However, the analysis also shows that formal equality commitments do not automatically translate into gender-responsive crisis preparedness, response, recovery or learning. A recurring pattern across the report is that gender and intersectional perspectives are often acknowledged at the level of policy, but less consistently operationalised through risk assessments, data practices, participation mechanisms, training, exercises, evaluation and accountability.

The report also highlights that vulnerability should not be understood as a fixed characteristic of particular groups. Vulnerability is situational and relational. It is shaped by the interaction between hazards, social conditions, institutional arrangements, household resources, care responsibilities, access to support, trust, geography and participation in decision-making. This means that preparedness systems need to identify differentiated risks and capacities in practice, rather than relying on general assumptions about who is vulnerable, who is resilient and who is able to act in a crisis.

A further conclusion is that universal preparedness systems may reproduce blind spots if they do not examine the social conditions on which preparedness depends. Citizen preparedness, crisis communication, early warning systems and local response arrangements may assume equal access to time, income, mobility, digital tools, language skills, social networks and institutional trust. Without attention to these differences, formally universal systems may fail to reach or support those whose preparedness capacity is shaped by care responsibilities, disability, migration status, Indigenous identity, housing conditions, economic insecurity or geographic location.

Civil society, local communities and everyday forms of care, communication and coordination are central to crisis preparedness and societal resilience. However, these contributions are not gender-neutral. Much of the work that sustains social resilience is carried out by women or associated with feminised roles, and may remain undervalued unless it is formally recognised, resourced and included in preparedness planning, responsibility structures and learning processes.

Finally, the report shows that the Nordic region has strong potential to develop a more systematic shared approach to gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance. Existing Nordic cooperation structures, research networks, equality commitments and policy frameworks provide a strong foundation. The central challenge is to move from general commitments to practical mechanisms that make differentiated risks, responsibilities, capacities, forms of knowledge and types of crisis labour visible and actionable before, during and after crises. The following chapter translates these conclusions into recommendations for strengthening gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance across the Nordic region**.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the conclusions presented in Chapter 5, this chapter outlines practical steps for strengthening gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance in the Nordic region. The seven recommendations focus on moving from broad equality commitments to operational mechanisms embedded in preparedness, response, recovery and learning. They address gender mainstreaming, civil society, preparedness expertise and communication, protection from gender-based violence, meaningful inclusion of Sámi communities and other structurally marginalised groups, research and knowledge development, and shared Nordic learning infrastructure.

Operationalise gender mainstreaming across crisis governance

Target actors: Nordic co-operation bodies, national governments, sector ministries, crisis management agencies, municipalities, regional authorities, national statistics offices and evaluation bodies.

Gender mainstreaming is by definition a strategy for integration. The challenge in Nordic crisis governance is that it is often implemented as a general policy commitment rather than embedded in the ordinary tools of preparedness. It should be operationalised through clear mandates, resources, gender-sensitive and intersectional risk assessments, data practices, participation mechanisms, monitoring, evaluation and accountability. Preparedness systems should systematically recognise differentiated risks, responsibilities, participation patterns and forms of expertise across prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and learning.

Relevant authorities could establish cross-sectoral working groups dedicated to gender mainstreaming and inclusion, appoint gender mainstreaming coordinators with sufficient mandate and resources, and involve internal or external gender equality experts, women's organisations, diverse civil society organisations and affected communities throughout planning, implementation and evaluation.

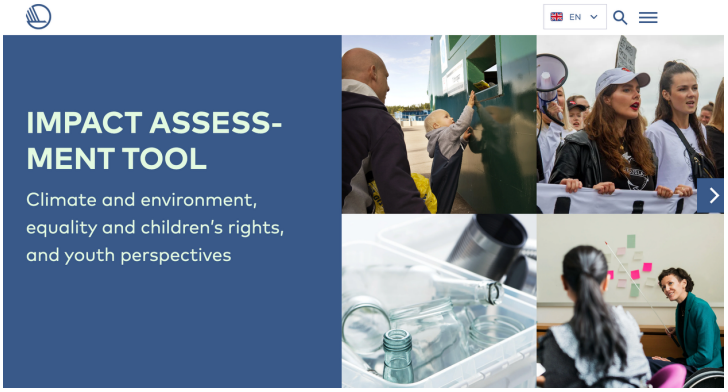
Relevant tools for implementation

Authorities can draw on existing Nordic and international tools, including the Nordic review of UNFCCC Gender Action Plan implementation (NCM, 2024a), the Sendai Gender Action Plan, UN Women's Women's Resilience to Disasters Policy Tracker, CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37, and MSB's Gender Equality Handbook for International Assistance. Together, these resources provide guidance on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction, climate resilience, participation, needs assessment, implementation and evaluation.

Conduct gender impact assessments

Impact assessments are one practical way of operationalising gender mainstreaming in preparedness governance. They should be used systematically before new preparedness policies, public guidance, communication campaigns, exercises, infrastructure projects, funding schemes or civil preparedness initiatives are launched. These assessments should examine who is likely to benefit, who may be overlooked, and whether the initiative risks reproducing unequal responsibilities or barriers. A useful guiding question here could, for instance, be: Who can most easily maintain or resume everyday life during and after a crisis? This should be followed by more specific questions, such as who has the resources, time, information and networks needed to prepare; who carries care responsibilities or depends on regular access to services; who is expected to help others; who may face increased risks of violence, harassment, isolation or exclusion; and who is represented in planning, exercises, evaluations and decision-making.

Impact assessments should be treated as learning tools, not as administrative checklists. Their findings should be used to adjust priorities, allocate resources, formulate indicators and improve implementation. Authorities can draw on the NCM's Impact Assessment Tool: Climate and environment, equality and children's rights, and youth perspectives (2024), developed by Norion Consult, as practical support for assessing how policies, programmes, projects and funding schemes may affect gender equality, accessibility, sustainability and children's and youth perspectives: https://pub.norden.org/nord2024-027/



Data, monitoring and evaluation

Operationalising gender mainstreaming also requires better data, monitoring and evaluation. Crisis preparedness and evaluation should be supported by data on how risks, responsibilities, resources and recovery conditions are distributed across the population. Where legally and ethically appropriate, data should be disaggregated by sex, age, disability, geography and other relevant factors, and combined with qualitative knowledge about care responsibilities, household composition, migration status, Indigenous identity, language access, economic vulnerability and social networks.

Crisis evaluations should not only assess operational efficiency, but also examine who was reached, who was overlooked, whose work was relied upon, and whose knowledge informed response and recovery. Particular attention should be given to within-household dynamics, unpaid care work, gender-based violence, access to services, and the experiences of groups that are often invisible in aggregate data, including Sámi communities and other groups whose experiences may not be captured through standard data collection or evaluation formats.

Recognise and resource civil society as a core part of preparedness

Target actors: National governments, municipalities, regional authorities, civil society organisations, volunteer organisations and funding bodies.

Civil society should be understood as a core resource in crisis preparedness, not as a supplementary reserve. Local associations, volunteer organisations, neighbourhood networks, sports clubs, homeowners'

associations, women's organisations, minority organisations and other community-based actors can strengthen both practical and social preparedness before crises occur. This is important because crises are not managed by formal authorities alone; they also depend on trust, local knowledge, everyday relationships and organised forms of mutual support. Community-based preparedness can therefore help mobilise resources that may be overlooked in formal risk assessments, including social networks, neighbourhood support, multilingual communication, local knowledge and practical experience among people and communities that may otherwise primarily be framed in terms of vulnerability.

However, this work must be formally recognised and resourced. Much community-oriented preparedness work involves coordination, care, communication and relational labour, which is often carried out by women or associated with feminised roles. Authorities should move from ad hoc reliance on civil society to formalised collaboration, including funding, training, clear roles, representation in preparedness planning and access to decision-making. Local preparedness initiatives should help turn willingness to help into organised action, ensuring that networks, responsibilities and channels of communication are established before crises occur. This also requires attention to who carries the practical and relational work of local preparedness, so that crisis governance does not depend on unpaid or under-recognised gendered labour.

Broaden the understanding of preparedness, crisis expertise and communication

Target actors: Crisis management agencies, emergency services, defence institutions, municipalities, training institutions, evaluators, crisis communication units and civil society partners.

Preparedness should not be understood only as emergency response, technical infrastructure, physical capacity or command structures. It also includes prevention, psychosocial support, local coordination, communication, care, recovery and the ability to return to everyday life.

Crisis governance should therefore recognise a broader range of crisis expertise, including communication, coordination, care, emotional intelligence, local knowledge, community organising and psychosocial support. Training, exercises, evaluation formats and leadership development should make these forms of expertise visible and valuable, alongside operational command, technical capacity and physical response. This broader understanding should also inform citizen-facing preparedness communication. Preparedness guidance aimed at citizens should remain practical and accessible, but it should also be assessed for its social and gendered assumptions. Communication materials should avoid presenting a single ideal type of "resilient citizen" and instead recognise that people have different resources, responsibilities, living conditions, and support needs.

Preparedness communication should be available in relevant languages and formats, accessible to people with disabilities, and adapted to different household types, housing conditions, digital access levels and care responsibilities. Visual and rhetorical framing should be reviewed to avoid reproducing stereotypes, such as assuming that household preparedness is primarily women's responsibility or that operational response is primarily men's work. Preparedness communication should be tested with different user groups before and after launch, including people with different household situations, language needs, disability-related needs, digital access levels, care responsibilities and levels of trust in authorities.

Treat protection from gender-based violence as a life-saving component of crisis response

Target actors: Humanitarian actors, ministries, crisis management agencies, health and social services, municipalities, shelters and civil society organisations.

Protection from gender-based violence should be treated as an essential and life-saving component of crisis response, not as a secondary or optional concern. Preparedness planning should include clear procedures for identifying and responding to increased risks of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, harassment, coercive control, exploitation and abuse during crises.

This includes ensuring continuity of shelters, helplines, sexual and reproductive health services, psychosocial support, child protection, safe reporting mechanisms and referral pathways during emergencies. Gender-based violence prevention and response should be integrated into preparedness plans, humanitarian assistance, emergency accommodation, evacuation planning, public communication and recovery support.

Authorities should also ensure that crisis communication about support services is accessible, confidential and available through multiple channels, including during power outages, digital disruptions or displacement. Planning should take account of the fact that some people may be isolated with perpetrators, lack private access to phones or digital tools, or face additional barriers linked to disability, migration status, language, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or lack of trust in authorities.

Ensure meaningful inclusion of Sámi communities and other structurally marginalised groups

Target actors: Nordic governments, Sámi Parliaments, regional authorities, crisis management agencies, total defence institutions and research funders.

Crisis preparedness in the Nordic region should include Sámi communities and other structurally marginalised groups as knowledge holders, rights holders and governance actors. For Sámi communities, this requires meaningful consultation, respect for self-determination, relevant data practices and participation in planning, exercises and evaluation, not only general references to inclusion.

Preparedness systems should recognise Indigenous knowledge, land-based livelihoods, language rights, territorial impacts, psychosocial harm, and the compound pressures created by climate change, militarisation, infrastructure development and the green transition. Sámi institutions and communities should be involved in scenario planning, civil preparedness exercises, risk assessments, public communication and recovery planning where relevant.

Fund Nordic research and knowledge development on gender, intersectionality and crisis governance

Target actors: NCM, national research councils, universities, sector ministries, preparedness agencies, municipalities, foundations and Nordic knowledge institutions.

The report identifies several knowledge gaps that should be addressed through targeted research, evaluations and pilot projects. Future research could examine:

- how gender and intersectional perspectives are integrated into domestic crisis preparedness systems;
- how household preparedness guidance affects people with different resources, care responsibilities, housing conditions and social networks;
- how civil society preparedness relies on gendered forms of labour, including coordination, care, communication and community support;
- how gender, disability, migration status, language, rurality, age, socio-economic position, Indigenous identity and LGBTIQ+ status shape preparedness, response and recovery;
- how gender-based violence risks change during different types of crises in Nordic welfare-state contexts;
- how hybrid threats, cybersecurity and disinformation affect democratic participation, public leadership and representation;
- how conscription, defence reform and security-sector career pathways shape access to preparedness roles and institutional authority.

Research funding should prioritise interdisciplinary, comparative and practice-oriented projects involving researchers, authorities, civil society and affected communities.

Build a shared Nordic learning infrastructure for gender-responsive crisis governance

Target actors: NCM, national preparedness authorities, municipalities, research institutions, civil society organisations, Indigenous representative institutions and relevant Nordic cooperation bodies.

The Nordic countries should establish a shared learning infrastructure on gender-responsive and intersectional crisis governance. Existing Nordic cooperation structures, including NORDRED, the Haga cooperation, Arctic governance platforms, NORDEFCO and Nordic research networks, could be used more systematically as arenas for developing shared tools, indicators, exercises and evaluation practices.

This infrastructure could include a Nordic case catalogue of gender-responsive and intersectional preparedness practices, including tools, pilot projects, evaluations, research findings, training materials and examples of institutional learning across countries, sectors and governance levels. The catalogue should be made accessible across Nordic languages and governance levels, and could support authorities, municipalities, civil society actors and researchers in identifying practical examples of how gender and intersectional perspectives can be integrated into preparedness, response, recovery and learning.

It could also include a Nordic adaptation of Oxfam's PAR model of the gendered progression of vulnerability, supporting authorities, municipalities and civil society actors in analysing how gendered and intersectional vulnerabilities are produced before, during and after crises.

A Nordic learning infrastructure should support practical training and peer learning on gender mainstreaming, impact assessment, inclusive risk communication, data collection, civil society involvement and intersectional evaluation. Joint Nordic exercises and scenario-based learning could be used to test how preparedness systems identify differentiated risks, responsibilities and capacities in practice. To be effective, such an infrastructure would need a clear institutional host, regular updating, resources for translation and accessibility, and mechanisms for feeding lessons from exercises, evaluations, research and local practice back into policy development.

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