

Sweden's 2024–2028 National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security:

Introduction

Today, approximately 1.2 billion people live in areas affected by conflict. The vulnerability of women and girls to various forms of violence and abuse increases substantially in conflict situations, including the systemic occurrence of sexual violence.

Gender equality is a Swedish core value and a prerequisite for equal rights, freedom and democracy. Women's influence and equal participation in peace and security are matters of rights, efficiency and freedom. A lack of gender equality between different groups of women and men, and girls and boys, may be a root cause of and a driving factor for instability and conflict. Research shows that gender equality, peace and democracy are mutually reinforcing and interdependent. Following a long period of developments towards increased gender equality, the world has recently seen major backsliding in this area. These negative developments go hand in hand with global democratic backsliding and many intense and prolonged armed conflicts. Support to Ukraine is one of the Government's most important foreign policy priorities. This must, therefore, also gain traction in the work on the women, peace and security agenda.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which was unanimously adopted in 2000, states that women's equal participation – in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, and in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction – is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable peace and security. Moreover, it states that women and girls have a particular need for protection in conflict situations. Since 2000, nine additional resolutions on this theme have been adopted. Together, the resolutions comprise the international women, peace and security agenda, and forms the basis for other efforts in this area, such as those by NATO, the UN and the EU. The agenda is mentioned in the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept. Sweden will help drive this work forward.

Sweden will highlight and support particularly marginalised groups, such as women with disabilities, LGBTI persons, young people and older people.

Since Resolution 1325 was adopted, Sweden has actively worked on the women, peace and security agenda. Sweden's first National Action Plan (NAP) was adopted in 2006 and two more were adopted in 2009 and 2016, respectively. As part of the work on developing Sweden's fourth NAP, an external evaluation was conducted, and the subsequent recommendations were considered while drafting the new action plan. Civil society organisations were also consulted during this process.

The NAP aims to guide Sweden's overall efforts to implement the women, peace and security agenda, both internationally and nationally between 2024 and 2028. National initiatives within the framework of implementation of the action plan also lay the foundation for international action. Relevant Swedish government agencies will be involved in converting the action plan's strategic direction into operational activities.

Strategic direction

The following prioritised areas, which are rooted in Resolution 1325 and the subsequent resolutions, will guide Sweden's work on women, peace and security.

1. Contribute to women's and girls' equal participation in conflict prevention measures.

Overarching objective: Sweden will contribute to equal participation of different groups of women and girls in conflict prevention measures.

Preventing armed and violent conflicts is a way to save lives and manage social resources. Sweden will therefore focus on conflict prevention and work to ensure that conflicts do not re-emerge. Investments in gender equality and women's and girls' rights are an effective way to prevent conflict. One way to achieve this is to promote women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights.

In recent years, the connection between climate change and conflict has become clearer. Climate-related security risks must therefore also be considered in conflict prevention efforts, both nationally and internationally.

2. Contribute to inclusive and equal peace processes and peacebuilding.

Overarching objective: Sweden will highlight and strengthen women's equal participation and influence in peace processes, and in broader peacebuilding and statebuilding, at all levels of society. This includes countries where Sweden and Swedish government agencies are involved in peacebuilding and stabilisation efforts, but also women's participation at national level in defence and security issues.

Gender-equal peace processes and long-term state building are prerequisites for sustainable peace and security. Research shows that peace agreements become more sustainable when women take part in peace negotiations, and that gender-equal societies tend to be more peaceful. There is also a link between increased democracy, gender equality and peace.

Promoting women's economic empowerment is a priority for the Government and particularly important in this context, as it is a prerequisite for women's equal and active participation in political decision-making processes.

Contributing to women's active participation in crisis management and the reconstruction of Ukraine will be a priority. Close cooperation with local civil society organisations is encouraged, both in Ukraine and in other conflict situations.

3. Increased protection of women and girls.

Overarching objective: Sweden will contribute to preventing and increasing the protection of all women and girls from all forms of violence and abuse, during and after an armed conflict, particularly in countries with some form of Swedish presence, through a mission abroad or within the framework of international organisations and initiatives. Capacity-building for staff who may be included in initiatives will be provided as part of regular activities.

Gender-based violence is a serious and unacceptable violation of human rights and international humanitarian law. Combating gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence is a high priority for the Government, and initiatives linked to this are expected to be implemented within the framework of the NAP. Sweden will continue to enhance its efforts against all forms of gender-based violence, including digital violence.

Sexual violence in conflicts is common and a deliberate tactic that perpetrators use among warring parties in conflict contexts with little risk of repercussions. Sweden will therefore, where possible and in line with the Government's prioritisation of this issue, contribute to the prevention of and accountability for all types of sexual violence and abuse against women and girls, and men and boys, in conflict situations.

Female human rights defenders and women in political positions in countries affected by conflict are particularly vulnerable groups. Sweden will continue to help support and provide protection to these groups.

Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) remains particularly important to enhance the protection of women and girls – before, during and after a conflict. Access to SRHR services is not only a fundamental right, but a prerequisite for women's and girls' economic empowerment and active participation in society.

4. Leadership and expertise.

Overarching objective: Measures that contribute to implementing the women, peace and security agenda will be integrated into all relevant national and international activities.

A crucial factor in advancing the women, peace and security agenda is clear and active ownership on the part of the senior management of participating actors, including within civil society, and at both national and international level. This requires leadership that ensures that gender equality expertise, research and analyses are integrated into ordinary activities as a knowledge-enhancing tool. Secondments to other organisations are important tools in this

context, as is support to various types of expert roles at international organisations. Swedish experiences and Swedish expertise in the area of gender equality have clear added value here. Moreover, relevant rights and influence aspects will be taken into consideration in the conflict analyses conducted by Sweden and international actors.

As part of these efforts, Sweden will consistently work to ensure that, when possible, all statistics related to international initiatives are disaggregated by sex and age.

National military service has been gender neutral since 2018. By extension, a broad recruitment base is also expected to lead to concrete results such as equal distribution of women and men in senior positions in the Swedish Armed Forces and other Swedish government agencies. Gender equality also increases expertise and leads to more effective military and civilian crisis management operations, which is why gender-equal recruitment to Swedish government agencies is important.

Government agencies that work within the framework of total defence will continue to integrate a gender equality perspective into their national and international activities, including research, contingency planning, exercises, collaboration and coordination, and act in accordance with the women, peace and security agenda.

Geographical priorities

The participating government agencies will contribute to initiatives in countries and contexts they consider relevant, based on needs and an assessment of Sweden's ability to provide added value and expected, concrete results. However, special priority will be given to Ukraine and countries affected by Russia's full-scale invasion of the country. This aggression has created additional threats and risks for women and girls, and to democratic values and human rights. The women, peace and security agenda is a part of Sweden's engagement in Ukraine and its neighbourhood, including by considering the particular risks that women and girls are subjected to, such as conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking of persons. An additional priority is to promote women's participation in the reconstruction of Ukraine. Sweden's missions abroad must be able to contribute to the action plan for women, peace and security where possible, based on the activities of the participating government agencies.

The government agencies that will take part in implementing the action plan must be given the chance to adjust to a changing world, and be able to engage in both existing and new conflict situations.

Actors and partnerships

The Swedish National Courts Administration, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, the Swedish Defence University, the Swedish Armed Forces, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Swedish Coast Guard, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, the Swedish Police Authority, the Swedish International Development

Cooperation Agency, the Swedish Defence Research Agency and the Swedish Prosecution Authority are involved in the implementation of the NAP.

Sweden will promote broad partnerships in the implementation of the NAP. Work in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries will be adjusted according to the conditions of each country, but be based on promoting women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights. The Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda and their clear objectives for gender equality and peaceful and inclusive societies are key starting points for joint international engagement in promoting the women, peace and security agenda.

In the implementation of the agenda, Sweden will cooperate – through relevant government agencies – with regional and multilateral actors, such as the EU, NATO, the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Nordic governments, the Council of Europe, the African Union and the International Criminal Court. Close cooperation and partnerships with civil society organisations at local, national, regional and global level are also important to the implementation.

Governance and implementation

Implementation of the women, peace and security agenda will be an integral part of activities, and funding will take place within the framework of ordinary budget allocation. The Government will use ordinary agency governance to determine the roles and tasks of the Swedish government agencies helping to implement the NAP.

The government agencies must report annually on the operationalisation of the NAP. The forms of these reports will be determined in a special procedure between the government agencies and their respective ministries, with the aim of simplifying the current reporting structure. The reports will focus on results rather than implemented activities. The agencies will coordinate this work amongst themselves to ensure as much efficiency and coherence as possible in the reports.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in consultation with relevant ministries, will coordinate a working group of agencies and civil society tasked with implementing the NAP. The working group's meetings will be an opportunity to exchange experiences related to the implementation of the action plan, and for discussions on and learning about broader issues related to the women, peace and security agenda. Collaboration between the participating actors is key to implementation of the NAP.