

# Faroe Islands and climate change adaptation

## - securing remote communities against future storms



### Key recommendations

The following recommendations are informed by a long-term research project, which for the past three years has investigated the relationship between people, places, and storms on the Faroe Islands. We see the results as highly relevant to regional and national efforts to build resilience towards future climatic changes amongst remote Faroese communities.

The recommendations are:

- Increased collaboration across administrative levels and sectors is essential in order to ensure support for small remote communities exposed to increasingly frequent and intense storms
- Greater preventative action must be taken holistically and sustainably, so that local efforts to adapt can keep up with the increasing risks posed by climate change
- Local preparedness plans must be enhanced so that the impact of climate change on future storm frequency and intensity is accounted for

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**For those inhabiting the Faroe Islands, storms are not an uncommon occurrence. Here, tales of stormy weather date back centuries. However, as future climatic changes threaten to increase both the intensity and frequency of storms in this region, a storm is no longer just a storm.**

Over the past six decades, there has been a notable shift of Atlantic cyclone activity towards the north-east Atlantic region. On the Faroe Islands, this means that especially wintertime storms are expected to occur more often and with greater strength, than ever before. Already now, those involved in emergency response operations report that they are called upon more frequently to assist with storm-related incidents.

In the remote regions of the Faroe Islands, small communities surrounded by rough terrain often have to rely on their own knowledge and resources to navigate and recover from the impacts of severe weather events. While there is a lot of focus on how larger cities are preparing for a future with climate change, these remote communities tend to be forgotten in larger regional and national efforts to secure people and places against threats related to climate change.

Due to a general lack of resources, these communities face more challenges when it comes to implementing robust adaptation strategies, and tend to implement highly individualized adaptive measures. In the face of escalating climate change impacts, such small-scale measures will no longer be sufficient to confront the anticipated intensity of future storms.

This underscores the need for targeted support and tailored solutions to ensure the resilience of smaller, more isolated communities in the face of climate change on the Faroe Islands. To achieve this, it is crucial for authorities, and community stakeholders to collaborate in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the increasing occurrence of adverse weather events.

## Key Findings

- People living in remote communities on the Faroe Islands know how to deal with storms, and tend to have a high level of self-sufficiency
- Predictions indicating an increase in storm frequency and intensity mean that smaller, individualized measures to cope with storms are highly likely no longer sufficient
- Because of strong connections to place, people living in remote locations will stay, even if they are increasingly threatened by severe storms
- Smaller communities often lack the resources to implement larger and more robust adaptation measures
- Collaboration between local and regional actors has the potential to spur more widespread, yet locally informed, adaptation efforts



## Moving Forward

It is crucial to include and support small remote communities in wider climate change adaptation strategies to ensure a more equitable and sustainable transition to a future shaped by climate change. While it can be difficult for emergency services to reach these communities during extreme weather events, there are a number of measures that should be taken to build resilience towards the increasingly pressing effects of climate change within these communities.

## Increased regional and sectoral collaboration

To properly integrate remote communities into regional and national climate change adaptation efforts, stronger networks and communication channels between different stakeholders, such as local communities, authorities, and civil society organizations, are required.

Due to high levels of social cohesion, collaboration between people within small remote communities already helps the community cope during extreme events. However, local administrations cannot handle the increasing pressure of storms alone.

Collaboration across sectors and levels, including involvement from regional and national authorities, as well as expertise from various outside fields, is required.



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## Greater preventive action

As storms become more frequent and intense due to the changing climate, the preventive measures in place to cope with them must be adapted and upscaled in order to keep up with increasing pressures. When it comes to whether or not these measures are implemented, societal preferences and economic feasibility are key factors that need to be considered.

Deliberative methods like citizen assemblies can help rally support for necessary adaptation measures on-site. Meanwhile, resources must be directed at more comprehensive adaptation efforts that are effective and sustainable in the long run.



*Crisis management exercise lead by CliCNord with community members and emergency services in Klaksvik, March 2022*

## Enhanced preparedness plans

It is important to have well-functioning preparedness plans in place to respond effectively to new challenges and threats, including those related to climate change. Therefore, the resources, plans, and systems in place to respond to storms must be updated to ensure that they can cope with the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

This can include training and educating personnel, acquiring extra equipment and resources, establishing regional communication channels, and conducting exercises to ensure that preparedness plans function optimally in the event of an emergency.



### The CliCNord Research Project

The research, which has informed this brief, is part of the project Climate Change Resilience in Small Communities in the Nordic Countries (CliCNord). The project investigates how places far from the larger cities in the Nordic countries can adapt to and withstand future challenges related to climate change. In doing so, the project explores the following questions:

- How do small Nordic communities understand their own situation regarding climate change?
- How do they currently handle adverse events?
- How can they build resilience towards climate-related hazards?

Read more at: <https://www.clicnord.org>

### Conclusion

Overall, the impact of climate change on the Faroe Islands, primarily regarding the increased frequency and intensity of storms, necessitates a concerted effort to increase resilience amongst small remote communities. This is an issue that requires greater collaboration between small communities and surrounding social systems at the regional and national levels.

### References

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