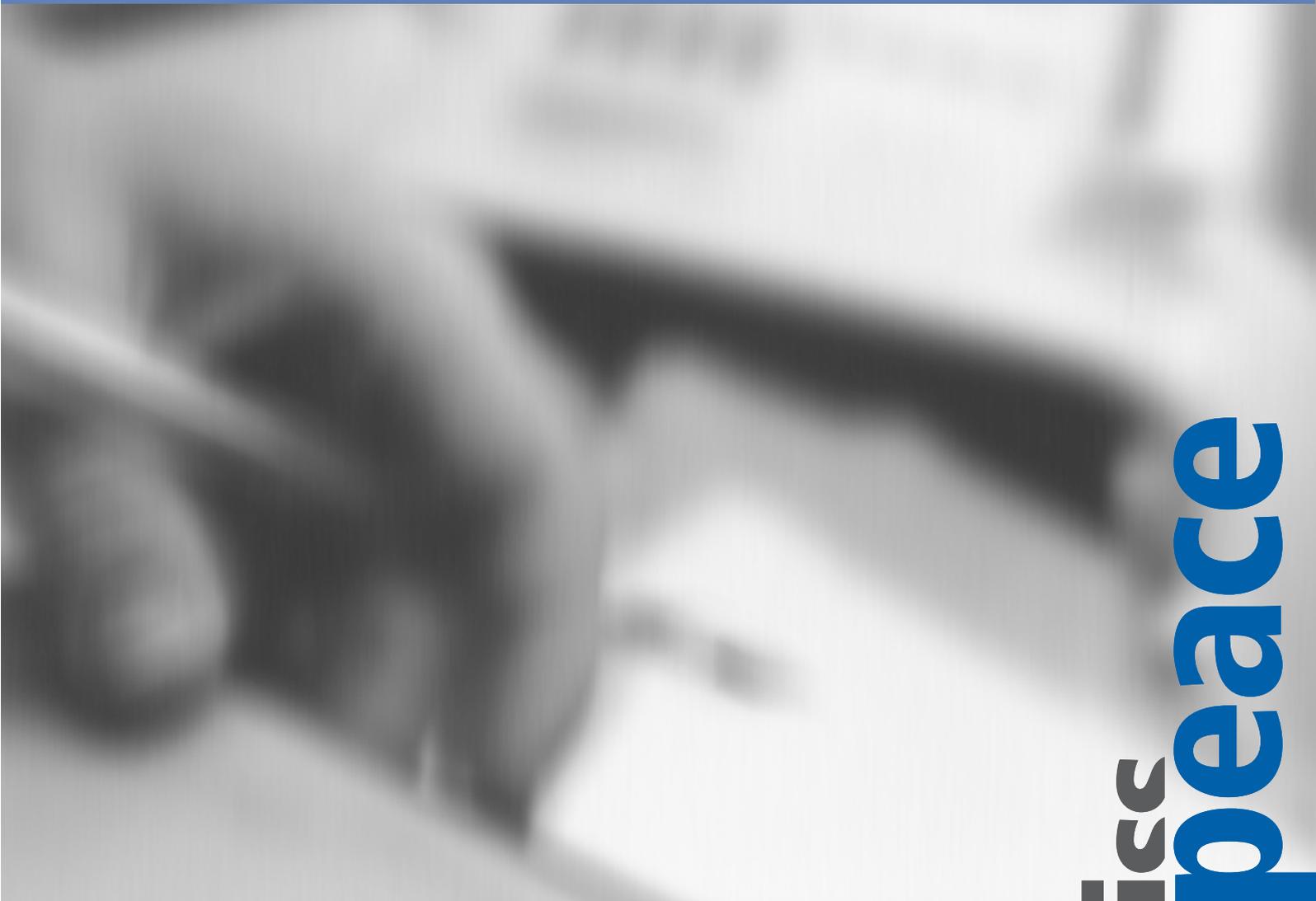


**Working Paper**

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Swiss Peace Foundation



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**Gender Awareness in Research on  
Small Arms and Light Weapons**

A Preliminary Report

**Emily Schroeder, Vanessa Farr and Albrecht Schnabel**

# swisspeace

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Emily Schroeder  
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January 2005

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## Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APD	Somaliland Academy for Peace and Development
CAR–Nord	La Consolidation des Acquis de Réinsertion des Ex-combattants du Nord du Mali
CTB	Coopération Technique Belge
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration
EU–ASAC	European Union’s Assistance on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IANSA	International Action Network on Small Arms
INTERFET	International Force in East Timor
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NACCOF	National Advisory Council on the Control of Firearms (Somalia)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRA	National Rifle Association
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PoA	UN Programme of Action
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RNA	Royal Nepal Army
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SAS	Small Arms Survey
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UNIDIR	United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UWOM	Union of Women’s Organizations of Macedonia



## Abstract/Zusammenfassung/Résumé

A more multi-disciplinary approach to research on small arms in recent years is looking beyond simply "counting the weapons," focusing also on the devastating human suffering facilitated by arms proliferation. Unfortunately, a discussion of how gender ideologies might influence people's attitudes to small arms has been largely absent in this discourse. Yet, gender shapes and constrains the behavior and attitudes of women and men, including creating differences in their approaches to and use of small arms. Because these differences have not yet been widely – or only inadequately – researched, we have little scientific evidence with which to influence the development of gender-mainstreamed programs to curtail the impacts of small arms and light weapons. This Working Paper reports on the preliminary findings of a collaborative project on "Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons," which aims to contribute to existing efforts to fill this research gap. Drawing on experiences and data from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, South America, the South Pacific, Europe and North America, the Working Paper identifies common themes, questions, challenges and recommendations that have so far emanated from the research project.

In jüngster Zeit beschäftigt sich ein zunehmend interdisziplinär ausgerichteter Forschungsansatz zu Kleinwaffen mit mehr als nur dem Zählen von Waffen, sondern auch mit dem durch die Verbreitung von Kleinwaffen ausgelösten menschlichen Leid. Leider kam dabei bisher die Frage, wie "Gender"-Ideologien die Einstellung von Frauen und Männern zur Kleinwaffenthematik beeinflussen, zu kurz. "Gender" beeinflusst das Verhalten beider Geschlechter, und es beeinflusst ihre Einstellung zu und Benutzung von Kleinwaffen. Da diese Unterschiede bis jetzt kaum – und wenn, dann nur höchst ungenügend – erforscht wurden, fehlt es an wissenschaftlichen Daten für die Entwicklung von "Gender"-sensitiven Programmen, die die negativen Auswirkungen von Kleinwaffen begrenzen könnten. Das vorliegende Working Paper berichtet über die vorläufigen Ergebnisse eines Gemeinschaftsprojektes zum Thema "Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons." Dieses möchte dazu beitragen, diese Forschungslücke zu füllen. Aufgrund von Erfahrungen und Ergebnissen aus Afrika, dem Mittleren and Nahen Osten, Asien, Südamerika, Südpazifik, Europa und Nordamerika präsentiert das Working Paper gemeinsame Themen, Fragen, Herausforderungen und Empfehlungen, die sich bis jetzt aus dem Forschungsprojekt ergeben haben.

Dans les années récentes une approche plus interdisciplinaire s'est imposée dans la recherche sur les armes légères. Celle-ci ne se borne plus à "compter" les armes, mais elle prend en considération la douleur humaine induite par la prolifération d'armes légères. Malheureusement, une discussion de comment les idéologies de genre influencent l'attitude des acteurs envers les armes légères manque dans ce débat. Pourtant, le genre forme et restreint le comportement et l'attitude des femmes et des hommes et crée des différences dans leur utilisation des armes légères. Puisque ces différences n'ont pas été étudiées – ou seulement de manière insuffisante – nous avons peu de preuve scientifique dans le développement de programmes sensibles à la dimension genre lesquels pourraient restreindre les conséquences négatives d'armes légères. Le présent cahier de travail rapporte les résultats préliminaires d'un projet de recherche collectif sur le intitulé "Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons," qui vise à combler cette lacune. Sur la base des expériences et des données empiriques émanant de l'Afrique de l'Asie, du Moyen-Orient, de l'Amérique de Sud, du Pacifique de Sud, de l'Europe et de l'Amérique du Nord, ce document identifie des thèmes, questions, problèmes et des recommandations communes qui sont ressortis de ce projet de recherche.

# 1 Preface

This workshop report summarizes the revised and updated findings of the first contributor meeting of a project on Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), jointly undertaken by the United Nations University (Tokyo) and swisspeace (Bern). The meeting was held from 28 February to 2 March 2004 in Cape Town, South Africa. The project, initiated in 2002 by Vanessa Farr and Albrecht Schnabel, brings together representatives from academic and policy communities in different parts of the world who have been commissioned to situate their work on gender within ongoing discussions in the research community on small arms and light weapons. Beyond the creation of a network of specialists, the project results are distributed through this working paper, conference presentations, and the eventual publication of an edited book. The geographical areas of research covered by this project include South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Israel, Brazil, Nepal, Macedonia, Northern Ireland, Papua New Guinea, East Timor, the United States and Canada. The contributions to this project focus primarily on three issues: (1) gendered implications of weapons collection; (2) gender in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; and (3) the gendered implications of the proliferation and misuse of small arms in society more generally.

In order to explore the policy relevance of the project findings to date, immediately following the author meeting, a Public Policy Day was held on 3 March 2004, in collaboration with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and the Small Arms Survey (both Geneva), and the Cape Town-based Center for Conflict Resolution. The meeting involved presenters from local and international academic and policy communities. The final section of this report examines the policy implications arising from the overall meeting and this public event.

The entire project group is grateful to our funders, the United Nations University (Tokyo) and the Asian Women's Fund (Tokyo). We would also like to express our gratitude to Ms. Yoshie Sawada from the UNU's Peace and Governance Programme and Ms. Lizél de Villiers, Cape Town, without whose invaluable support this project meeting would not have been possible. We thank Tobias Hoeck for his assistance in formatting the manuscript of this Working Paper.

Finally, we would like to note that the views expressed in this Working Paper are those of the authors and the contributors to the research project on Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and do not necessarily represent those of the organizations they are affiliated with.

## 2 Introduction

As norms and policies on preventing the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) are evolving at local, national, regional and international levels, discussions in academic and policy circles are also becoming more informed and complex. This discussion is receiving further impetus from academic and policy debates in the new field of human security (a conversation which has arisen, in some measure, to oppose the traditional focus on state/national security). Current work on small arms is now looking beyond simply “counting the weapons” and is increasingly focusing on the devastating human suffering facilitated by these widespread weapons. Yet, a noticeable gap in this discourse has been a discussion of how gender ideologies, which shape and constrain the behavior of women and men, might influence people’s attitudes to small arms. Gender differences in approaches to and use of small arms have not yet been widely researched, and inadequate data has been collected on how males and females are differently impacted by prolific weapons. A combination of a lack of political interest and will, scarce resources, and the sheer difficulty of keeping track of firearms-related injuries in places with poor infrastructure and record-keeping capacities underpin this lack of quantitative gender-disaggregated data and qualitative information on the experiences, views and actions of women and men in gun-prolific societies, both those that are at war and those which are not. As a result, we have little scientific evidence with which to influence the development of gender-mainstreamed programs to curtail the impacts of small arms and light weapons.

Our hope is that the collaborative project on “Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons” will significantly contribute to existing efforts to fill this research gap. This Working Paper reports on the earliest version of the project findings, drawing on experiences and data from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, South America, the South Pacific, Europe and North America. The Paper begins with the identification of common themes, questions and challenges arising from the research of the contributors to this project, and shares some of the general recommendations to which they give rise.

### 2.1 Methodological Challenges

As this research area is fairly new, the group as a whole recognized several challenges related to our research methodology:

1. In gendered research on small arms, feminist theories and methodologies offer the best approaches to research design and implementation, as well as the best insights into how to process the data, describe the findings, and develop policy. This research intends to challenge the existing exclusion of women’s perspectives and activism on small arms, but more than that, it aims to support a broader political claim that women have the right to participate in this and all other aspects of security-related decision-making in all corners of the world. The importance of using feminist approaches to advance these goals was frequently remarked in the methodology discussion. We also understand that feminist theories offer the best means to address other issues of difference that are of concern to us, such as race, ethnicity, class, age, ability and location (rural/urban).

2. There is a lack of gender-differentiated data on small arms. Much of the official data on small arms and light weapons is not disaggregated by gender, and women have been inadequately consulted when research is planned and data collected. This poses difficulties for researchers as they attempt to measure and assess the different impacts of small arms –in their use and proliferation – on women and men, girls and boys. In our view, alternative ways have to be found to describe, in detail, communities affected by readily available arms. Where possible, researchers collected gender-disaggregated data themselves. More commonly, they employed interdisciplinary research methodologies to identify alternative indicators than exclusively numbers of people killed by guns or numbers of weapons collected. Qualitative data was collected by diverse methods including interviews, focus groups, oral accounts of experiences, art, and each researcher’s personal observations.

3. It is important to consider issues of difference between the people being researched and the researcher. When conducting their research, writers asked questions such as: are those interviewed going to be safe if they talk to me? Will they benefit from these interviews? Are women and men differently informed about debates on small arms in their own context, and is this difference recognized in the corridors of power? To reflect on such issues, researchers included local voices, stories and experiences; and through our active engagement with the development of public policy, which will hopefully improve the design and implementation of future weapons collection processes, we hope to facilitate the greater involvement of informed citizens in the important political discussions that are currently underway on the subject of arms control. Funding constraints aside, we hope that future project meetings and/or activities will be timed to coincide with significant international meetings on this problem. In this way, the research team hopes that, rather than serving merely as subjects, the women and men we interviewed will take over joint ownership in the research towards achieving social change in regard to the role of small arms and violence in their communities.

4. Several conventional dichotomies must be acknowledged when undertaking gendered research on small arms. Many of the contributors highlight their struggle with contradictions and speak of the ambiguities that arise in the course of undertaking this research. Such dichotomies demonstrate the need to explore stereotypes and question readily accepted concepts and definitions. Some dichotomies include:

- Conflict/post-conflict;
- War/peace;
- Public spaces/private spaces;
- Human security/state security;
- Real security/perceived security;
- Small arms as protection/as threat;
- Imposed solutions/local or indigenous solutions;
- Women as peacemakers/as fighters or inciters of violence;
- Men as powerful/as threatened.

## 2.2 Gender Difference in the Formation of Identities: Some Findings

1. Masculinities and femininities. There are many different ways of “becoming a woman/man” and expressing “masculinity/femininity.” It is important, therefore, to be subtle when looking at how prolific arms impact the social construction of male and female roles. Issues related to masculinities and femininities include such challenges as 1) the stigma borne by women associated with armed groups (for example, female ex-combatants are often seen as too “manly” and therefore unmarriageable, or as “spoiled goods” who have been sexually active, even if this is due to the fact that they have experienced sexual violence); or 2) the problem that all men are assumed to endorse positive perceptions of guns. Such exclusionary stereotypes make it more difficult to find, and celebrate, alternative understandings and expressions of masculinity and femininity that contribute to the success of peacebuilding and other human security initiatives.

2. Multiple roles. Women and men play a myriad of roles in peace, conflict, and post-conflict situations. These have to be kept in mind when discussing small arms, violence, conflict, power, and security. There are many women active in disarmament work, but women are also combatants and gun users; and women are all too frequently victimized when guns proliferate. Women can occupy these multiple roles and subject positions – as activists, violators and victims – at the same time.

During the transition from conflict to peace, opportunities may arise for unequal gender relations to be transformed, giving women new opportunities for fuller participation in political, social and cultural affairs. It is important to facilitate these opportunities by questioning the habit of stereotyping and compartmentalizing women and men according to perceptions of appropriate male and female characteristics. Gender roles are a social construct and can, like all cultural structures, evolve in a positive direction. While researchers in this project describe the roles that women and men are currently playing with regard to small arms, they also attempt to understand the roots of these roles and, in exposing them, suggest that, even in relation to violence, gender roles are adaptable and capable of change over time.

3. Sites of difference. Researchers discussed broader problems than the exclusion of women from disarmament processes and analysis, including the marginalization of other groups. It was observed that sex-role stereotyping is not the only source of exclusion from security decision-making, but that cultural influences, class, location, age and ability are also important determinants of how individuals relate both to small arms and to disarmament processes. Sometimes men and women of a certain class or ethnicity will have more in common with each other than with people of the same sex who are from a different social groupings. Thus, when discussing the issue of small arms, the implications of gender difference cannot be examined in isolation from other social categories. In this context, the difficult question was repeatedly raised of how to work with marginalized men.

## 2.3 Key Findings in Research on Gender Perspectives on SALW

### Weapons Collection Programs

Historically, post-conflict weapons collection programs and disarmament projects have not taken the interests of men and women into account equally. As a result, the success of such projects may have been compromised. Women can play a significant role in encouraging men in their families and mobilizing communities through peace movements to give up their weapons.

Weapons collection programs implemented by international agencies or foreign governments often do not carefully consider local realities, traditions or concerns. This negligence may end up alienating the communities who are the intended beneficiaries of such programs.

When communities are offered development aid incentives in return for giving up their weapons, women (if they are consulted at all) may request very different projects than men. Evidence was offered that men tend to request large-scale, prestigious projects such as major new roads. Women, by contrast, ask for projects that will have a direct impact on alleviating their workload and reducing their poverty. There is even some evidence that women will hand in weapons for no other reward than that of having proactively contributed to making their personal and community spaces safer, which raises important questions for those who believe weapons cannot be collected without material incentives.

### Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and other UN initiatives such as the Department for Disarmament Affairs Gender Action Plan promote and commit member states to include gender considerations in post-conflict DDR and other disarmament exercises. However, the findings of this research project are that gender concerns have been blatantly ignored in the planning and execution of such processes.

Increasingly, conflicts include both female and male combatants. Often armed groups have recruited women as fighters, sometimes by force. Evidence shows that leaders either do not give females their own arms, or prevent them from keeping arms after peace accords are signed. As a result, many female ex-combatants are not included in disarmament programs. Even if they are still armed, DDR

processes have primarily addressed male combatants. Women and girls are forced to self-demobilize and reintegrate as best as they can, often with devastating impacts on themselves and their children.

Researchers in this project are confirming that women and men have different needs in DDR processes. For example, whereas both women and men may have been combatants and have suffered separation from their families and other forms of trauma, there are situations where women have only played a role in supporting male fighters, by being forced to do domestic work or enslaved into sexual servitude. However, DDR processes are not adequately addressing these differences in the way women and men experience conflict – and are therefore not as effective as they hope to be in promoting peace and social change through the re-integration of ex-fighters into society.

### **Weapons in Society**

Many cultures link guns with expressions of “masculinity.” The media, childhood toys, and the militarization of society all contribute to prioritizing this association. Alternative masculine behaviors that do not uphold violence are less obviously explored and frequently appear to be less validated.

Other social inequalities, such as those exemplified in class and race difference, are also exacerbated when small arms are prevalent. For example, as the case study of South Africa shows, small arms in houses in which domestic workers are employed create an insecure working environment. In this particularly feminized, privatized and exploited sector of labor, workers lack many forms of protection: for example, they face the threat of violence, rape and death if intruders attack the house in which they work.

While men are often killed by strangers with guns, women are more at risk of armed violence from intimate partners or other men known to them. The presence of a gun in the home increases the likelihood that domestic violence will result in death. However, in many countries national legislation does not address this issue.

Civil society research, advocacy and campaigning, with a focus on the gender-specific impacts on reducing gun violence, can make significant contributions to new national gun control laws. Such is the case in Brazil, which, like South Africa, is among the countries most affected by peacetime gun violence. Since 2001 Brazilian women – especially family members of victims – have organized a disarmament campaign called “Choose Gun Free! Its Your Weapon or Me,” which contributed to passage of tough new national gun laws in December 2003.

## **2.4 Key Policy Recommendations Related to Gender Perspectives on SALW**

1. Urgently and actively implement the Beijing Platform of Action (1996) and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2001): both give a clear mandate to countries around the world, and the international agencies and local NGOs that carry out disarmament work, to promote women in positions of leadership in defining post-conflict constitutions and elections, and in incorporating gender perspectives in security-related decisions and the implementation of security sector reform.

2. Promote gender-equal participation. It is important to involve meaningfully both women and men in the development of disarmament policy that will directly or indirectly affect their lives. For example, in the planning of a disarmament process it is important to consider whether both men and women were consulted in threat assessment surveys, or to identify incentives for weapons collections programs. Based on this information, public awareness strategies must be identified that would actually resonate with the people being disarmed.

3. Disaggregate data by gender. All organizations, researchers, and relevant actors collecting data should gender-disaggregate it and also use gender as a category of analysis in processing data. This will make their research, findings, and resulting recommendations more convincing, broader, and likelier to facilitate the advancement of more effective means to control weapons. In addition, the development of indicators to measure the impacts of gender difference in the uptake and use of small arms is a useful contribution to both academic analysis and policy development.

4. Promote local voices and solutions. Externally imposed solutions to reduce violence may be less effective when they counter or ignore already existing local practices. Therefore, the implementation of community-based solutions should be prioritized by tapping into local knowledge, resources and effective traditions.

5. Prioritize gender-aware research on small arms. Further research is urgently needed on questions such as the alienation of young men and women from employment opportunities, the glorification of gun possession, and the impact of interventions to end gun violence against women. Sustained institutional and funding support for such research has not, to date, been forthcoming.

6. Update national legislation and security-related institutions to address better the needs of women. Much current national policy does not adequately address cases where gun owners are perpetrators of domestic violence. Further, guns in the homes can increase the lethality of insecure environments. This is particularly true in situations of domestic abuse, but is also the case in armed robberies or other altercations in the home, which are often more likely to result in death or injury if a gun is available. An audit on national legislation on gun laws should be conducted to explore areas for potential improvement. One possibility is to require a person seeking a gun license to obtain permission from his or her partner to keep it at home, a measure that has been implemented in Australia. The security sector and the judiciary should be better trained to effectively and sensitively respond to all forms of violence against women.

7. Problematize arms proliferation in civic space. In many conflict zones, growing numbers of small arms in the hands of security agencies are assumed by both government and the public to be a protective factor, targeting enemies. However, these guns pose real risks to civilians – in particular to women and children – through their exacerbation of both domestic and indiscriminate violence. It is vital to involve local authorities and organizations in conflict zones in disseminating pertinent information and organizing towards arms reduction in the civic sphere.

### **3 Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons Collection Programs**

The remaining sections of this report on the findings generated so far by the project, offering brief overviews of the key arguments observations of each researcher. Several overarching themes emerge: how gender difference impacts SALW collection programs (section 3); how gender difference affects disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes (section 4); how gender difference influences attitudes and the use of SALW in society more generally (section 5); and how to change the attitudes of international agencies so that men and women will be included equally in disarmament work (section 6).

#### **3.1 Just a Matter of Practicality: Women's Usefulness in Weapons Collection Programs**

Through illustrative examples from three case studies, Albania, Cambodia and Mali, Shukuko Koyama argues that the capacities of women as actors in small arms collection programs are not fully recognized nor utilized by relevant stakeholders, and that women have much more potential to contribute to such projects. Koyama's study focuses on weapons collections programs that have been linked to development initiatives. These voluntary approaches to disarmament, known as "weapons for development" (WfD) or "weapons in exchange for development" (WED) programs are increasingly attracting attention from donors and implementing agencies. The goal of such initiatives is to collect weapons from a community in exchange for development, commodities and services ("incentives") that benefit the whole community. Those encouraged to hand over their weapons are usually civilian community members, and not ex-combatants.

Koyama examines three early WfD initiatives. The first was implemented in Albania in 1997 with funding from several EU countries, the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The second, in Cambodia, has been ongoing since 2000 under the auspices of the European Union's Assistance on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons (EU-ASAC), as part of overall security-building assistance in Cambodia, and through a Japanese assistance agency (JSAC), which runs weapons collection projects in Northern Cambodia. In both countries, donors' emphasis has shifted from weapons collection activities to institutional reform and capacity building of law enforcement bodies. Her third case study, Mali, is the site of weapons collections implemented by Coopération Technique Belge (CTB) in the Timbuktu region, providing TV antennas, water pumps and other social infrastructures. In Gao, such programs were initiated by UNDP and succeeded by CAR-Nord (Consolidation des Acquis de la Réinsertion des ex-combatants), which now leads a community-based weapons collection program. Discussions for such initiatives in Menaka are now underway but not yet implemented.

Between 2002 and 2004, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) carried out in-depth field assessments of small arms disarmament programs in the three countries. The assessment employed a qualitative research approach known as participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). The aim was to assess past and ongoing weapons collection programs to measure the impact of weapons collection. As action-oriented research, the final objective of the evaluation was to provide implementing agencies and donors with lessons about best practices with regard to weapons collection and weapons for development projects.

Above all, the case studies demonstrate that women tend to contribute to weapons collection projects because they want to get weapons out of their community. They motivate male family members to give up weapons and are the biggest mobilizers for disarmament.

In the case of Albania, women noted that the discussions with UNIDIR permitted them to talk freely about small arms for the first time. Yet, women were not aware of who was coordinating the development projects, why they were undertaken, or who the target for these projects was. They did

not relate the collected weapons to the collection incentives. The purpose of the program was not, therefore, effectively conveyed to the local community. Koyama observes that this confusion may arise because the ultimate goal of weapons collection initiatives is often not clear enough. For example, if the goal was to collect as many weapons as possible, the project in Albania could be considered a failure. However, if the goal was to raise awareness about the dangers of prolific small arms, it was reasonably successful. Despite the low numbers of weapons collected, it is important to note that, before this campaign, it was taboo to discuss small arms. After the campaign, there were debates on SALW possession on television, which in turn sparked discussions in the wider community.

In the initial stages of the weapons collection projects in Mali, there was a notable difference in the way women and men identified development incentives. Women were more likely to select incentives that had an impact on their immediate livelihood, such as water wells and mills (as often it was the women who would need to walk miles to fetch water). In contrast, men preferred larger projects, such as major infrastructure development. Once development incentives were decided on in favor of what men wanted, women's involvement in weapons collection programs decreased, and they were neither informed about nor invited to further community meetings on weapons for development programs. Koyama found that women were often marginalized in WfD programs as a result of community dynamics in which men tended to be – and were anyway perceived as by the program organizers – the primary decision-makers.

Koyama found that the roles of the women differed from community to community. For example, in Mali, women involved in weapons collection processes were primarily peace activists, whereas in Albania, a number of the women consulted possessed weapons themselves. Although Koyama had intended to speak to female ex-combatants in Mali, and had invited such women to attend the discussions, the community leaders refused to allow these women to participate. Unfortunately, the views of these women are therefore not included in her assessment.

Koyama concludes that, while the implementers of weapons collection programs may have the political will to include women's participation in such programs, they are not well equipped to do so. In the next draft of her study, she will offer some tools, rooted in the principles of participation, monitoring and evaluation, which show the impacts of including women in program development. In addition, approaches other than that of participation will need to be developed. For example, she believes that it is not adequate merely to hold a women's participatory workshop as this approach is too simplistic: the international assistance community needs to be aware of women's actual and potential capabilities, and to equip their assistance policies with instruments to utilize these capabilities as much as possible.

Equal participation in weapons collection programs should be promoted across all social groups and divisions and include men, women, youth and elders. The challenge of promoting women's role without excluding other social actors is real. Koyama warns that it is important to note that many men are also excluded from weapons collection processes due to differences in social status.

### 3.2 Gender Perspectives on SALW Proliferation in the Karamoja Sub-Region

In her study, Christina Yeung examines the gendered effects of weapons proliferation in Karamoja, an agro-pastoralist region in North-eastern Uganda. The Karamoja region is semi-arid, with one rainy season. Prone to food insecurity, the people live an agro-pastoralist way of life and are semi-nomadic. Women take care of the house, water, firewood, and agricultural production. The men are responsible for cattle, goats and livestock, and follow the cattle for pasture and water. As land availability declined, and the environmental situation deteriorated, dramatic social disruptions resulted. For example, the region has seen a commercialization of the practice of cattle raiding, which has dramatically altered prevailing cultural norms: today, counter to previous practices of cattle raiding, looting, rape, and other brutality now accompany the raids.

The most recent weapons collection program, launched on 2 December 2001, was linked to domestic politics. It followed a parliamentary motion on disarmament; the seventh attempt since the colonial period to disarm the Karamojong. Yeung analyses which social groups were targeted for and benefited from the program. She asks whether certain social groups were marginalized or ignored in the process and the distribution of in-kind benefits linked to the program, such as maize meal, ox ploughs and iron sheeting. She asks how successful the weapons collection program was at fully disarming households, to what extent women were involved in the decision to disarm or retain firearms, and whether the experience and perception of (in)security of men and women differed as a result of the de-commissioning of weapons. Finally, her study explores whether and how practical disarmament affected the demand factor for small arms, for example, whether cultural valuation of traditional expressions of masculinity and femininity have changed, whether socio-economic deprivation in the Karamoja cluster has become more clearly gendered, and whether the weapons collection program has made any positive or negative contributions to the long-term social, economic and political empowerment of women and men in the sub-region.

Her findings show that, although Karamojong women do not have formal access to traditional decision-making institutions, they play an ambiguous but often ignored part in the conflict dynamics of the region through their social roles as unmarried girls, wives, and mothers. Anthropological accounts show that many women have traditionally encouraged cattle raids by taunting men and insulting their manhood if they are not providing properly for their family. However, findings from Yeung's fieldwork suggest that the women are no longer encouraging the raiding. They are not offering their blessings before a raid, and men do not seek a blessing knowing they will not get it. Women engage in peace crusades and give anti-gun social messages through songs, the lyrics of which are well known to the community.

The role of women in the weapons collection program was important particularly during the first phase. The President was lobbied to promote the inclusion of women in the discussion and mobilization process. Women were involved in mobilizing men through family discussions at home. At the community level, women included the dangers of guns in songs and plays. Often, it was the role of the women to hand in the weapons, for if a woman handed in a gun, it was less likely that there would be further questions on the location of other weapons. In a sense, the women were protecting the men and their guns. Later on, when the disarmament process faltered, it was the women who were blamed: they were beaten by their husbands and sons for encouraging the disarmament process. As a result, during the second phase of forceful disarmament women kept quiet and thus lost their influence on the process. Women were also silenced during the phase of rearmament. Many women did not have access to offices that recorded human rights complaints during the disarmament, as those were placed in administrative centers often located far from villages. It was also found that most incentives for disarmament were not aimed at them.

Ironically, ordinary men, the primary users of guns, were also not targeted for the program. Disarmament benefits went to elite groups with political and economic power. There was very little impact on those who actually needed the benefits. In addition, men experienced emasculation through the disarmament program, in that the men who gave up weapons were called "women." Yeung identifies this as part of a "crisis of masculinity" in the community as fewer men are able to reach traditional markers of adulthood.

### **3.3 SALW and Gender in Macedonia**

Arms proliferation has not only been a grave consequence of the recent conflicts in and around Macedonia, but also a factor in their escalation to violence. Yet, in Macedonia (and also Kosovo), discussions on small arms were non-existent and the country was wrongly seen as an oasis of peace. In her study, Biljana Vankovska argues that this perception proved to be dangerous and that, in fact,

Macedonia still wavers between a state of uneasy peace and unfinished conflict. Despite some attempts at a disarmament process, the proliferation of small arms has not stopped.

When it comes to weapons collection, much time was wasted and hundreds of thousands of weapons were already in civilian hands before 1991. Nonetheless, the wars in Yugoslavia were prevented from spilling over into Macedonia partly as a result of the UN Preventive Deployment (UNPREDEP) mission. Following UNPREDEP's departure and the brief, six-month long, violent conflict in Macedonia in early 2001, the former rebels became part of the government and there was no further serious attempt at peacebuilding and de-legitimization of violence. The NATO-led mission "Operation Essential Harvest" was instituted to facilitate voluntary collection of weapons from the rebels, yet only collected 3,380 weapons. Instead of serving as a confidence building measure the action raised distrust among ethnic Macedonians who considered the process a farce, as the mission did not adequately consider the number of weapons in circulation before it began its campaign.

There were other attempts at disarmament by UNDP and an amnesty program by the government. The UNDP Weapons for Development program offered various rewards, and the government program offered impunity, anonymity and lottery tickets to those who turned in their weapons. Through these efforts, however, less than 2 percent of the weapons in circulation were collected, and the types of weapons turned in suggest that the most valuable arms are still in circulation. The action's results also proved that disarmament enjoyed little support from the citizens in the conflict region.

There has been no gender analysis in the development, implementation, or aftermath of this disarmament campaign. Women's organizations in Macedonia are divided along ethnic lines. Consequently, women in the region do not have a strong and common voice. Rather, men speak on behalf of women, while – in the Albanian communities – leaders speak on behalf of the clan.

Women's activities during the conflict period were of a symbolic nature, as war was considered to be the business of men. Women were also not involved in peace talks. The fact that a female intellectual and feminist became the vice-president of the Albanian party formed out of ex-rebels generated fewer advantages for women than expected. While women's rights were promoted in some small measure, it seems that a tremendous opportunity was missed to promote more gender equality. During the post-conflict period, women have taken a leading role in peace and disarmament activities, such as in raising public awareness. It is unclear how this has resulted in genuine, gender-based peacebuilding. Vankovska suspects that there has been pretence to include women in response to requirements and preferences by international organizations, and in order to improve the image of male-dominated government institutions.

Women also played a minimal role in the weapons and amnesty programs (beyond the inclusion of the President of the Union of Women's Organizations of Macedonia (UWOM) on the program's coordination committee). Although UNDP played a dominant role in the program, there was no provision for local women to participate. In addition, the involvement of women's organizations did not mean that the right women were being included. As Vankovska points out, this is partly the fault of women's organizations, which did not assure that their representatives were well versed in disarmament issues, and thus were subsequently not taken seriously. As a consequence, they have undertaken a self-evaluation and are now in a better position to be integrated into similar processes.

Women's groups, which are caught between male-dominated national and international structures and constrained by a lack of funds, have also realized that their impact would have been greater if there had been an orchestrated approach with other women's organizations in the region. Women's peacebuilding activities have also proved only to be popular and sustainable if endorsed by the international community. Vankovska warns that the positive, yet limited, involvement of women's organizations might actually prove counter-productive since women's sparse and symbolic involvement can still be exploited by government actors to counter calls for greater gender equality.

## 4 Gender Perspectives on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration

In a post-conflict environment, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) are processes that are meant to break the cycle of violence by providing a viable way of life for former combatants. DDR is a comprehensive process in which the success of each component is essential for overall success. "Disarmament" refers to the separation of soldiers from their weapons. "Demobilization" describes the process of transforming fighters' identity from combatant to ex-combatant when they are brought together at cantonment sites, disarmed, often given tools and training, and then discharged. During the process of "reintegration" former combatants re-enter civilian life as members of a peacetime community. All project contributors shared the opinion that to date, DDR processes have inadequately, if at all, addressed gender issues in DDR processes.

There is an urgent need to incorporate gender perspectives in all areas of peacekeeping operations, including in DDR initiatives. Security Council Resolution 1325 specifically argues for the right of women to contribute to and benefit from DDR processes. In this context, a number of questions must be asked about the gender implications of DDR: Whose security is addressed by the DDR process? Are human security concerns (rather than primarily state, national and international security issues) properly reflected in the design of DDR processes? How can DDR be made more sensitive to the needs of women and girls? How can the development potential of reintegration be realized in a way that contributes to the quality of life of all war affected people? The contributions on DDR explore these questions along with possible solutions.

### 4.1 Gender Perspectives on SALW in East Timor

East Timor is Asia's poorest country: 40 percent of the population lives on less than 55 cents (US) a day. The population is fairly young, with an average age of 18. Armed violence, first between various factions within East Timor, and later with the Indonesian Army, broke out soon after independence from Portugal in 1974. In 1975, after a declaration of independence by the pro-socialist Fretilin party (Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente), the Indonesian Army intervened and began a bloody war against the armed wing of Fretilin, the Falintil. Within the next four years between 200,000 and 300,000 East Timorese (roughly one third of the entire population) perished in this war. After decades of continuing guerrilla war against Indonesian occupation, and following the downfall of the Suharto dictatorship in 1998, the Indonesian government announced that a UN-supervised referendum on the future of East Timor was to be held in 1999: the Timorese people were given the choice between special autonomy as a part of Indonesia or full independence. The 1999 Referendum was accompanied by a wave of militia violence, followed by the intervention of an Australian-led and UN Security Council-authorized multinational force (International Force East Timor – or INTERFET) and the establishment of a temporary UN administration (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor – UNTAET). On 20 May 2002, East Timor became independent. The UN remained with a follow-up mission, UN Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET).

In their study, Henri Myrntinen and Saleh Abdullah examine gender, violence and small arms in East Timor in the context of the nation's history and its current social, economic and political situation. They analyze the impact of small arms and light weapons (SALW), gendered violence and the role of ex-combatants after the East Timorese conflict, issues that have become serious concerns for the country's security. Their study examines how gender roles and expectations are being affected in the post-conflict moment. It looks at gendered notions of security in East Timorese society, which has experienced a dramatic upsurge in reported post-conflict gendered violence. They focus on the victims and perpetrators of violence, on combatants and civilians. In terms of the armed groups involved in violent conflict, the study considers primarily the pro-independence Falintil (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste) and the pro-Indonesian militia groups and, to a lesser degree, other non-Timorese armed groups that have played a role in the territory's recent history, such as the Indonesian security forces or international peacekeepers.

In East Timor, they explain, gender norms are in part defined by traditional patriarchy. Portuguese and Catholic influences have been compounded by 25 years of Indonesian occupation, influence of the presence of the United Nations and the international aid community, the long history of violence, and a conservative backlash. Various elements of this conflict have distinct gender dimensions. The Indonesian security forces and their militia proxies saw sexualized violence as a weapon, including rape, torture, mutilation, forced marriages, and sexual slavery. This continued in the post-conflict phase, with violence occurring in refugee camps and the continuation of high levels of sexualized and domestic violence. Little reliable data is available on the latter problem, but as an indication of the dimension of the problem, around 40 percent of crimes registered by the UNTAET administration fall into this category.

Some of the conflict parties' forces attempted to disrupt prevalent gender ideologies. For example, the Falintil, seen as legitimate freedom fighters, had their own "warrior code" that included women and, in the early years of the struggle, children's participation in both the armed struggle itself and in supporting the guerrillas. On the other hand, the pro-Indonesian militias manifested themselves by mobilizing violent enactments of the masculinity of the pemuda-activist (a glorified young, reckless political activist) and that of the preman (a glorified street thug).

The conflict in East Timor was carried out almost exclusively with small arms and light weapons. These included homemade firearms, old Portuguese weapons, Indonesian weapons, and offensive weapons such as machetes, swords and spears. The UNTAET mission organized the DDR program for the former pro-independence guerrilla, the Falintil. Gender issues were not taken into account at any point of the DDR process. The disarmament of the former guerrillas was not complete. In addition, the DDR process was seen as politicized, with few job opportunities for veterans. This led to the formation of vociferous veterans' organizations, criminal and political organizations, pooling those who felt marginalized by the process. The militias, the vast majority of whom fled to Indonesian West Timor, were not disarmed by the Indonesian authorities. They remain partially in West Timor, acting as a destabilizing factor both for East and West Timor, or have been active in setting up similar militia groups in Indonesia's other conflict areas.

The UNTAET mission is often considered to have been gender-aware, as it was the first UN mission with a separate gender affairs unit. This improvement over other missions was marketed as a success story. Nevertheless, as Myrtilinen and Abdullah argue, the DDR process notably did not take questions of gender into account, nor did it make use of activism on the ground, despite the opportunities offered by the presence of a strong women's movement and a new men's movement against violence.

## 4.2 Gender Perspectives on SALW in Afghanistan

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, the U.S. asked the Taliban regime to hand over Osama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qai'da terrorist network, which was deemed responsible for the attacks. When they refused, in early October the United States, the United Kingdom and a number of their allies began a military campaign. By early December the U.S.-led coalition forces and their Afghan allies, chiefly the United Front (Northern Alliance) controlled Kabul and most of Afghanistan as the Taliban regime collapsed. In a meeting held in Bonn 2001, anti-Taliban Afghan factions signed an agreement on provisional arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions. The Bonn Agreement produced a process allowing for the establishment of an interim authority and transitional governance once the Taliban left power. The Afghan Interim Authority under the leadership of Chairman Hamid Karzai was tasked with holding an Emergency Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) and give way to the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), which would supervise drafting a new constitution and holding elections. According to the Bonn Agreement all mujahedin (those who fought against the Soviet

invading forces and their client regimes in Kabul), Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country, whose total number was estimated at 100,000, should have come under the command of the Interim Authority. However, disregarding their pledges in Bonn, most of the armed factions continued to keep their militia intact. Even in Kabul, where some 5,000 international peacekeepers and the ATA have managed to establish authority, one particular armed faction continued to command its own militia, while officially being part of the ATA.

In an effort to allow the central authority (ATA) in Afghanistan to implement the provisions of the Bonn Agreement and guide the country towards statehood, a three-year DDR program was envisaged in a donor conference held in January 2002 in Tokyo. In October 2003 Afghanistan's New Beginning Program (ANBP), sponsored by the UN and Japan as the lead donor country, began its pilot phase. By August 2004 some 14,000 soldiers had entered into the ANBP program. Nearly 80 percent of those who have entered the DDR process have completed a retraining program, with some returning to occupations in the civilian sector, while others found positions in the nascent Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. However, major problems, including the insistence of some of the major warlords to hold on to their militias and arms, are threatening to derail Afghanistan from its peace process. Nevertheless, the country's first-ever presidential elections could be held as scheduled in October 2004.

In order to implement a successful DDR program, the ATA, UN, and countries involved in the current program must develop a multi-dimensional sensitivity to the impact of small arms and light weapons on the society, especially on women. Jennifer Green and Amin Tarzi hope to contribute to this process through the examination of how women's roles and perceptions of security and peace have developed in relation to the Soviet invasion in 1979, the subsequent civil wars, and today's conditions, which continue to be characterized by a "kalashnikov culture" – a culture dominated by the gun. They argue that the current DDR process can only help bring about greater security for Afghanistan if it involves men and women alike, both of whom are associated with the armed factions and play significant roles in the re-integration process, something that the ANBP has not addressed. They offer recommendations on how women can be better included.

Although the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs launched its Gender Mainstreaming Plan in April 2003 to take forward UN Resolution 1325, once the Afghan DDR program finally began the following October, no gendered initiatives were implemented. On the ground, women have attempted to engage in the disarmament process, yet with little voice and recognition. Although the ANBP has a "gender office," it employs only one young Afghan woman. From August to October 2003, the Afghan Women's Network created a campaign entitled "the declaration of women's NGOs," calling for Afghan society to be disarmed. They received no official recognition of their involvement and their recommendations were not incorporated into the planning of the official disarmament processes.

The complexities surrounding the post-conflict phase in Afghanistan demonstrate that many opportunities presented themselves to address the formation of new norms for a war-weary state, including opportunities for a substantial change in unequal gender relations. As this did not materialize, as Green and Tarzi note, renewed efforts must be made to prevent gender concerns from falling through the cracks in further DDR processes in Afghanistan and elsewhere. These lessons, and their policy implications, should be taken on board by UNDP and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (which are administering the ANBP), donor countries such as Japan, and countries offering assistance in police and military training, such as Germany and the United States.

### 4.3 Gender, Small Arms and the Northern Ireland Conflict

A specific feature of the Northern Ireland conflict, examined by Miranda Alison, has been the involvement of women in paramilitary activities and paramilitary violence. Like male combatants, female combatants in nationalist conflicts view themselves as fighting to protect the political, cultural, economic and military security of their nation, community or family. It is clear, however, that women have been more centrally and directly involved in paramilitary violence in republican organizations than in loyalist ones. Republicanism has constructed itself as a revolutionary movement whilst loyalism has been concerned with bulwarking the status quo, which includes the maintenance of patriarchal social systems and “traditional” gender roles. However, even in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) some male paramilitary members have not been comfortable with female comrades in arms. Moreover, as well as occasionally refusing to go out on an “operation” with female volunteers (the IRA’s term for their combatants), they seem to have maintained or developed conceptualizations of their masculinity that entail a certain relationship of status associated with guns. For example, an ex-IRA woman reported that such men would expect to be given a better weapon than a woman.

Within both loyalist and republican paramilitaries it is women who have had the primary responsibility for hiding and transporting small arms – indeed, in loyalist paramilitaries this has been one of their most significant roles. Although for loyalist paramilitaries this has in part been due to the sexual division of labor within these organizations along stereotypical gender lines, for both loyalist and republican groups it has also been a strategic tactic due to the fact that the state security forces have been more reluctant to body search women than men because of the negative publicity attached to searching women. This negative publicity is in itself attributable to societal notions of appropriate gender roles and of protecting women. Public relations concerns notwithstanding, however, there have been many cases of members of the security forces sexually harassing or molesting women and girls both during street searches and during arrest and interrogation. Intriguingly, while engaging in non-traditional gender roles by transporting arms, paramilitary women have at the same time sometimes utilized existing conventional notions of gender to their advantage, such as by hiding weapons under a baby in a pram.

Finally, an issue that many of us have been hesitant to face up to when examining armed conflict or gun-ridden societies is the question of the sexualization of violence and weapons from a women’s perspective. Although much is made of the sexualization of arms and violence *for men*, feminists have been more reluctant to address the question of women who are attracted to this form of masculinity, and what this says about constructed femininity. Within loyalism, which has become significantly a violent gun sub-culture, this is a genuine concern. A loyalist woman interviewed by Alison, not a paramilitary member herself but the wife of a paramilitary man, admitted that in her younger years she was attracted to the aura of power attached to armed paramilitary men. Although she personally has moved away from this, it remains a concern for her that she sees many young loyalist women in her community following the same pattern and becoming involved with violent young men and the sub-culture of guns, drugs and crime.

### 4.4 Small Arms and Sexual- and Gender-based Violence Against Women in Mozambique

Historically, “security” has been constituted by men carrying arms. For example, membership of the classical Athenian *polis* was defined in these terms, as certain categories of non-fighting men and all women were excluded from citizenship. Eventually, the evolution of the Western state saw the extension of universal citizenship. However, notions of political agency remain closely associated with the masculine capacity to “defend the realm.” The corollary of this construction of agency has been that women’s status is that of “the protected,” regardless of their actual experiences.

Although during recent decades, women have entered into the military, this dichotomous construction remains strong. It is only during recent years that there have been significant shifts in the andocentric nature of this conceptualization. The shift is associated with the increasingly globalized nature of conflicts, the growth in international intervention, and an emerging recognition of the “missing half” of the security paradigm. As a result, there is now an impressive range of international instruments, mandates and constitutions that nominally place obligations on the international regime, nation-states, civil society and funding bodies to work towards women’s human rights and the objective of gender equity. Regrettably, the gap between principles and implementation remains immense.

Ruth Jacobson examines some of the reasons for this gap in the context of a longitudinal analysis of armed conflict and its aftermath in Mozambique. Mozambique is particularly salient to security studies on several grounds. First, its history reflects the outcomes of the changing geo-political security frameworks, from Cold War bi-polarity to civil or internal conflict, and to a large-scale DDR process, and a decade of peacebuilding and reconstruction. Thus, the longer perspective is necessary to assess both the achievements and shortcomings of more recent developments, such as the new emphasis on civil-military alliances against weapons proliferation. Second, Mozambique is widely cited as a success story of international intervention and of DDR during the early 1990s. As a result, the political settlement of the conflict has been maintained and the country has enjoyed a decade of political and socio-economic reconstruction. It has experienced two significant post-war SALW control exercises (Operation Rachel and “Transformation into Hoes,” or TAE). There have been remarkable achievements in re-building the social fabric of communities that had been devastated by decades of war. However, the legacy of the war can be seen in the serious threats to social well-being and the threat of state capture by criminal elements, exacerbated by gross economic inequalities. This is the context of Jacobson’s gender analysis of the SALW-security nexus in Mozambique.

Jacobson finds that, regrettably, for women little has changed for the better since the war ended. Women’s agency has been denied, marginalized or relegated to a purely instrumental status by a succession of national and international programs, and there remains widespread gendered insecurity. In several areas, the extent of this process can be described as constituting an abuse of women’s human rights. The resistance to integrating gender has actually reduced the operational effectiveness of several security operations, including weapons collection – and even from an economic perspective it has been counter-productive.

On a wider level, the evidence from Mozambique is relevant to the shift towards integrating the impact of armed conflict on women into the discourse and mandates of the international humanitarian sector. Although the outcomes of actual DDR processes are vastly different, there is now a body of gender-aware “lessons learnt” that are in principle applicable to international security operations in general.

Human security must encompass contexts where weapons (whether legal or illegal) are closely associated with gendered violence in times of relative peace. This may encompass their use in violent assault of women within the private sphere or the appalling death rates of young men in Brazilian favelas. Sexual and gender-based violence against women is an everyday feature of life in Mozambique. However, unlike neighboring South Africa, the country is not characterized by an overt gun culture – violence is far more likely to come from fists, feet or machetes.

## 4.5 Girls and Armed Conflict in Sierra Leone: Victimization, Participation, and Resistance

Myriam Denov and Richard Maclure's study of girls in fighting forces is part of a larger study that is exploring the experiences and perspectives of war-affected boys and girls in Sierra Leone. Once on the margins of violent conflict, children are now in the very heart of it. There are an estimated 120,000 child soldiers in Africa alone (according to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as "every human being below eighteen years"). It is believed that approximately 48,000 children in Sierra Leone actively participated in the armed conflict. Traditionally, the term "child soldier" has invoked the image of a small boy with a gun, while girl combatants have been largely invisible. Yet, in the case of Sierra Leone, up to 30 percent of child soldiers were girls, whose perspectives and experiences, both as victims and as combatants, have been largely ignored.

### The Multiple Roles of Girls During the Conflict

In some conflicts, girls willingly join the struggle for liberation. However, in Sierra Leone, girls were largely apolitical and many did not know what the conflict was about. Girls' initiation into the violence came about largely through forced recruitment – girls were abducted by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), often at a very young age, through extreme coercion and the force of the gun. They suffered not only from the violence of conflict, but also from displacement and separation from their family.

Once abducted, girls fulfilled three major roles, according to age, physical strength and the circumstances of the group they were forced to join: In their domestic roles, they took care of other children, cooked, fetched water, and performed other gendered activities. If duties were not carried out in the way expected, violence – and sometimes death – ensued. All but one of the girls interviewed by Denov reported being sexually assaulted throughout the conflict, often in a gang rape situation. Through a "rebel marriage," "bush marriage," or "AK47-marriage," the girls were used as sex slaves. Often, girls preferred to be "married" to a particular rebel, as this sometimes offered them a degree of protection from sexual assaults by other men. For many girls, combat activities formed the crux of much of their involvement. Girl combatants went through extensive training. Many girls felt uncomfortable about combat and about carrying guns. Several of the girls interviewed by Denov reported being injected with drugs, including cocaine and gunpowder to lessen their discomfort, fear and encourage greater violence during battle. In administering these drugs, needles were often reused by a "doctor." As a direct result, the spread of AIDS through drug use and sexual violence is a key issue that must be considered in the aftermath of Sierra Leone's conflict.

The training of combatants included physical and technical training. Girls reported learning how to kill, cut throats, load guns, dismantle guns quickly, and to fire on people above the waist to ensure that their enemy was killed. The skill of committing amputations against civilians and the perceived "enemy" was not acquired through training, but rather through experience. In addition, ideological and de-sensitization training was conducted through rhetoric and preaching at both formal and informal meetings. Many children were promised money and power once the struggle was won.

The culture of violence was apparent in the girls' experiences of victimization and perpetration. Often, any command given would be obeyed for survival's sake. If the children did not do what they were commanded, they could be killed. Ironically, the girls who were initially the victims of these soldiers eventually became their allies. Importantly, however, the transition from victim to perpetrator was not linear, as the girls continually drifted between perpetration and victimization. Moreover, perhaps as a result of their lack of status in Sierra Leonean society, girls reported a sense of empowerment through the use of weapons and through power over civilians.

### **Individual Agency: Modes of Resistance and Solidarity**

Despite profound structural constraints, girls did demonstrate the capacity for agency. One method for girls to subvert male power was through solidarity: to form close relationships with other girls or women. Often secretive, the girls and women would meet to discuss escape plans and their own experiences. This provided a degree of comfort and a space from which men were excluded.

Denov and Maclure also describe what happens to the babies of girls who have children as a result of rape. Often the babies die, sometimes to the relief of their young mothers. Some girls were forced to deal with pregnancy on their own and would attempt self-abortion. It was common for a soldier to abandon a girl once she became pregnant. Yet in an example of female solidarity, once a girl was pregnant, the men would stay away for the baby's delivery, while the women would mobilize to take care of the birth. Such support created yet another space from which men were excluded.

### **DDR in Sierra Leone: A Success Story?**

DDR in Sierra Leone has been deemed as largely a success. Yet, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that girls were excluded from every aspect of the process. It was largely assumed that girls were not "real" soldiers. Moreover, girls report that their commanders often took away their weapons and gave them to family members or sold them to civilians who would later collect the DDR benefits. Often these young children were left with no resources. Even if they were allowed to demobilize, many of the girls would refuse to partake in informal processes, as they did not want to be associated with conflict or labeled as an ex-combatant – which often carries social stigmas and shame.

It is often assumed that the increased focus of DDR on boys is justified because girls are not seen as a potential threat in peacetime. This reasoning disregards the role of reintegration processes, which are supposed to emphasize reconstruction and take a human security approach that should focus on all child combatants as victims, and not only as potential threats to post-war society. Denov and Maclure's analysis provides stark evidence for the need to implement more actively UN Security Council Resolution 1325. While the women and girls of Sierra Leone were not invisible to RUF, as they were seen as assets and resources to be exploited, they were invisible to the government and the international community when it came to devising the DDR process.

## 5 Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Society

The wide presence of guns in all societies, be they peaceful, at war, or somewhere in between, has an impact on men and women in all kinds of communities. Following a largely theoretical discussion on the gendered implications of small arms in society, this section offers some insights from particular case studies that focus on both public and private spheres of society.

### 5.1 Gender and Attitudes to Small Arms: Implications for Action

Wendy Cukier explores the relationship between small arms, culture and violence with particular emphasis on gender dimensions. Cultural norms are both contributors to and consequences of violence, and small arms usage and proliferation sometimes figures largely into this culture. Small arms facilitate violence and contribute to a cycle of violence, fear and further arming. While a wide range of factors fuel this cycle of violence in many regions of the world, “gun culture” and the “culture of violence” are closely connected. Gun culture is also tightly linked to notions of masculinity and male identity.

#### Gender and Demand for Small Arms

While violence is not an exclusively male practice, it is linked, along with guns, to masculine identity. Conventional notions of masculinity may also, contradictorily, ascribe the role of protector and defender to men, and in many cultures this role has become symbolized by and synonymous with the possession of a gun.

In the context of domestic violence, women are affected differently by small arms. Some women are most at risk from their intimates: partners, fathers, brothers, sons. When firearms are accessible, the lethality of domestic abuse is heightened. Cukier shows that, according to a survey in Sierra Leone, 91 percent of women are worried about sexual violence, and 39 percent are quite or extremely worried about violence by non-combatants. In Canada, 85 percent of femicides are committed by partners, while this is the case in only 15 percent of male victims. In the examination of incidents of femicide with firearms, the leading country is the United States. In short, if guns are in the home, women are at greater risk of being killed.

#### Gender, Experience and Attitudes to Small Arms

The psychological trauma associated with small arms and their actual disruption of social cohesion and family safety often affects women much more profoundly than men, given their roles in society and in the family. Attitudes on firearms have shown that even in high-crime areas in South Africa, where more women are killed by guns than men, women are more fearful of guns. In Canada, those who live with gun-owners support tighter gun control legislation. In some countries like the USA, however, the intensity of opposition to firearms legislation and small arms regulation is underpinned by notions of masculine identity.

#### Small Arms, Gender and the Role of the Media

The link between “guns” and masculinity is (re)produced with particular intensity by media representations of weapons in industrialized countries in which the media is one of the principal conduits of culture. American media, in particular, tend to portray heroes as using violence as a justified means of resolving conflict and prevailing over others. The association between masculinity and guns has been reproduced by a variety of cultural practices worldwide (guns in entertainment, video, commercial ads). This is important in understanding the demand for guns and ways to address this demand.

The gun lobby tends to launch gender-based attacks on gun control advocates. Definitions of who can claim “expertise” about guns tend to exclude women. Gun control advocates are described in terms that are usually used to denigrate women – as “strident, emotional, and irrational.” Yet all the same, there are efforts to market guns and the National Rifle Association (NRA) itself to women.

### **Gun Laws and Culture**

Worldwide, most small arms owners and users are male. Men dominate the military and the police. Men also dominate domestic firearms ownership. Women represent a very small proportion of gun owners, but tend disproportionately to be victims of gun violence. This imbalance has been one of the arguments advanced by feminists for positioning the gun control debate in the context of human rights and equity, which asserts women’s equal right to live in safety.

The role of firearms legislation in promoting the safety of women has been well established. However, the extent to which violence against women is recognized as a crime varies from country to country. Laws of individual countries both shape and reflect values, and gun control is made all the more complex by the relationships between gender identity and other identities (e.g. national identities): in general, whatever the impact of gender difference is, racial or cultural impacts always tend to be greater.

### **Gender and Policy Development**

Gender shapes the formulation of policy regarding firearms. As men dominate political structures in most countries and global institutions such as the UN, notions of masculinity can have “invisible” effects on the ways in which policy debates and research are constructed. At the same time, gender has shaped the development of advocacy efforts for and against gun control as well as community-based initiatives in response to gun violence. Social gender constructions are used by peace groups, especially those led by women, such as “The Million Mom March.” Of course, while there are dangers in adopting the motherhood framework, its efficacy depends on the context. For example, in the Marshall Islands, the notion of motherhood has been useful as a peace tactic. Cukier notes that it is important to keep in mind that masculinity and femininity only exist in relation to, not in isolation from, each other.

Cukier argues that political decision-making (including donor behavior) is shaped by national firearms cultures and reinforced by male-dominated processes. Weak impact on policy processes has been a consequence of (but it also causes) weak impact on research and policy formation. The lack of gender-disaggregated data in official data is a case in point. This leads to distortions in national and UN policy processes and debates, including for instance at the 2001 UN conference on small arms and light weapons. It is still a challenge for women’s voices (and men’s gendered voices) to be heard in formal peace negotiations and policy development.

## **5.2 Securing Private Spaces: Gendered Labor, Violence and National Transformation**

Jennifer Fish explores the linkages between individual/personal security, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the heavily gendered institution of paid household labor. Through in-depth analyses of domestic labor in South Africa – a nation that continues its struggle to realize a non-violent, non-racist democracy – the particular relationship between gender and personal security is illustrated in the most private and protected domain, the household.

In post-apartheid South Africa, there is rampant structural inequality in labor and domestic work, reflecting a first/third world economic divide within the country. Despite a vibrant women’s movement, the transition to democracy, increased international relations, and access to the global economy, poor women are still locked into domestic work, with serious challenges to collective

mobilization. It is difficult to classify the violence against domestic workers as an apartheid/post-apartheid or conflict/post-conflict phenomenon. In addition, and compared to most other industrialized countries, in South Africa hiring domestic workers is considered quite normal, and not only reserved for elite sectors of society. Therefore, the violence that women experience in this highly feminized occupation underscores the need for specific gender analyses as South Africa continues its democratic transformation.

### **Domestic Work and Home Security in South Africa**

Fish found that workers often feel vulnerable in their workplace, the homes of wealthier employers. In contrast, employers felt that having domestic workers present in their homes contributed to the security of their property. While female domestic workers primarily do household work, men work in the gardens. As a consequence, women tend to be much more vulnerable if a house is attacked.

In South Africa, the institution of domestic labor is often referred to as “the last bastion of apartheid.” It emphasizes the existence of divisions among women of their race, class and location. Domestic labor is the largest sector of women’s employment and women migrate from rural to urban areas in search of domestic employment, which reinforces cycles of poverty, unemployment and workers’ limited access to education. Locked in a household in a country characterized by high levels of crime, women workers are vulnerable to rape and sexual harassment from their employers, and to crime from outside the private household. Moreover, there is a large degree of alienation of black woman working in wealthy homes. Workers put their own security at risk while protecting their employers’ homes from external threats – which are generally perceived as connected to black men.

The institution of domestic work embodies a striking polarity in relation to perceptions of safety in post-apartheid South Africa. For example, domestic workers are often aware of and threatened by the presence of guns inside the private households where they are employed. Moreover, as Fish argues, workers’ fears tend to increase when they are unaware of the specific location of such weapons. Yet an assumed expectation of this particular occupation is the protection of employers’ private households from outside threats. This often requires knowledge of the operation of high-technology security systems and continual monitoring of household security risks. Incompliance with these assumed security roles often results in immediate job loss. Therefore, workers are required to risk their own safety to maintain employment, whereas employers consider the presence of domestic workers to be a strong enhancement of their own security through the human barrier created between “outside” threats and the interior private household space.

### **The Global Context**

The exploitation of domestic workers is a widespread – and growing – problem. In some countries (for example, in the Philippines) domestic workers represent the largest export item in the service sector. Women are sent into private homes, often without legal work permits, which leads to even greater vulnerability because of illegal resident status and the loss of corresponding rights and protections.

In Cape Town, groups of domestic workers and gender activists have aligned with an international campaign to increase access to rights within this highly gendered institution. South Africa’s national labor union is gradually recognizing the centrality of domestic workers within the national movement to increase labor rights in alignment with the human-rights foundation of the continually emerging democracy.

### **Implications for Small Arms Policy**

In South Africa’s current transitional phase – characterized by extremely high rates of small arms and gender-based violence – domestic workers provide a critical service that is rarely acknowledged as part of the formal labor contract. In addition to the assumed work of household reproduction, domestic workers literally provide a human barrier against the threat of violence and small arms in

the protected private spaces of privileged sectors of society. They are in essence live-in human security systems whose bodies mediate the threat of violence in their employers' private households while reifying the race and class divides of the apartheid era. Their economic privilege allows employers to buy a certain "peace of mind" from the threat of the severe proliferation of small arms and violence in South African society.

The case of domestic work illustrates the urgent need to create protective measures for women who continue to face the threat of violence, including rape, and even death in this particularly feminized, exploited sector of labor.

### **5.3 A Growing Twilight Zone: Private Policing Companies in Israel Endangering Women through Accelerated Militarization and Small Arms Proliferation**

In Israel, the presence of guns in public space is totally normalized and therefore invisible. In her research, Rela Mazali focuses on the highly accelerated proliferation of privately owned and operated "security guard" companies, better known in international terms as "private policing" companies. She argues that the spread and growth of such companies deepens Israeli militarization in a variety of ways, including through the acceleration of small arms proliferation. Prolific small arms, she argues, further intensify existing gender discrimination and violence against women.

#### **The Problem and its Dimensions**

Between 2000 and 2003, private policing companies were the fastest growing segment of Israel's economy, with a wide prevalence of predominantly male security guards guarding all entrances to public spaces. Since the second *Intifada*, the demand for Israeli private policing has increased in response to new suicide bombings and due to government policies prioritizing and servicing capital and property, realizing a "market" ideology that leads to increased privatization and shifts from social services to the public to services for the business sector. The private policing industry has accordingly contributed to an economic crisis involving repeated government budget cuts.

Mazali argues that the growth of the private policing industry has accelerated the proliferation of small arms. The education system can be considered a "litmus test" to provide corroborating statistics. Several years ago, the guards of schools did not carry guns and parents would often rotate on guard duty. More recently, there has been a shift to armed guards in the schools. This is a dynamic central to the militarization of Israeli society. While the practical capacity of these guards to serve as a deterrent to potential attackers is seriously questionable, parents and the community feel the need for this kind of protection and perceive them, almost automatically, as a protective factor. Many teachers also carry personal guns. Additionally, there has been further naturalization of organized violence and war through the mundane presence of guards. The political culture is, in other words, becoming increasingly militarized, complemented by a population that has accepted militarization as normal and necessary.

The growth of private policing has resulted in irregularities in the processes of awarding government contracts and in breaches of labor law with government support. The Israeli government has allowed the employment of security workers on a temporary status and does not control the payment of below-minimum wages. Exploited and unorganized workers – often from the former USSR and Ethiopia – in the private policing sector are facing poverty, with few other job prospects on the horizon. Efforts to organize are quite weak as yet.

#### **A Gender Perspective on Private Policing**

There are a number of gendered aspects visible in the discriminatory practices of the private policing labor market. First, there are unequal hiring practices that come from pre-existing discrimination in the militarized labor market. This is seen in such advertised requirements as, "workers must have

combat experience," a tactic that is likely to exclude women. All the same, most of the guards hired are recent immigrants without clearly documented combat experience. As private security companies are loosely regulated, there is little transparency and weak enforcement of equal opportunity laws. Second, in a depressed job market, the private security sector has been the only site of growth for some years. Since they cannot access jobs in it, women make up an increasing portion of the unemployed. Third, women's own perception of employment in private policing is a significant obstacle, as many women do not associate themselves with guns or guarding. As stereotyped gender roles are prevalent in Israeli society, this has resulted in self-exclusion: most women do not, anyway, apply for jobs in this sector.

Mazali notes that broader army and police cultures have been incorporated into the private policing sector. Among other things, this has led to higher levels of sexual harassment. There has, however, been little public monitoring of harassment in private companies. Moreover, unlike the police and the army, which have policies in place, private security companies are not required to have sexual harassment policies. The military and police have actually conducted exhaustive internal surveys of misconduct, which, however, receive little media attention. No such surveys are known in cases of private policing companies.

These conditions contribute to generally high levels of insecurity for women in Israeli society. In recent years, there has been an increase in gun use in murder cases of women by intimates. In 2003, 25 women were killed by intimate partners. 11 of them were shot, four with guns signed out to security guards. Five of the killers were security guards, and one had been recently laid off. Ironically, security guards are perceived to be protective agents who are supposed to avert danger. Yet, for many women in Israel the private policing industry brings discrimination and danger into their private lives – their families and homes.

Parallels can also be drawn to cases in the United States. For example, studies in the U.S. have shown that women with limited proficiency of the majority language due to immigration or minority identity are taken less seriously by police when they complain of abuse. In addition, they have less access to resources that would help them escape threatening conditions. Additionally, women who are poor and less employable have great difficulty in establishing an independent existence. A final parallel is that domestic violence is two to five times more likely in military than in non-military families.

Drawing from Mazali's findings, there may be international implications to the case of private security in Israel. Often, private policing companies have been a means of exporting violence through transnational military organizations. For example, half of the operational forces of Iraq are sub-contracted from security companies from other countries, such as South Africa. As Israel is very active in this field, a consideration of the domestic impact of private security companies is quite relevant. To keep them in check, international standards such as the UN Code of Conduct on Law Enforcement should be examined for policy implications for private security companies.

#### 5.4 The Role of Women in Gun Violence in Rio de Janeiro

Jessica Galeria focuses on the varied roles of women in violence-riven parts of Rio de Janeiro, a city plagued by extremely high gun death rates and widespread insecurity in a context of drug trafficking and police corruption. She finds that women are key to advocacy efforts to contain this violence, both because of the complex roles they play in, as well as their reactions to, intra-communal violence in this mega city. She analyzes gender approaches to reducing gun violence in the work of Viva Rio, an active civil society organization.

### **The Brazilian Context**

Viva Rio, a civil society movement to reduce violence in Rio de Janeiro, was formed after the Candelaria church massacre in 1993, when eight street children were killed by the police. As an international tourist destination and a national media center, the case of Rio shines a spotlight on Brazil's problems with armed violence, which has produced gun deaths and injuries equal to or higher than many countries that are engaged in officially declared wars. In the context of organized armed violence related to drug trafficking, the "battlefields" are densely populated areas in large cities, and the "soldiers" are mainly poor and uneducated young men living in urban shantytowns or *favelas*. Galeria point out that because men and boys are the main direct victims of gun violence, policy research to date has not considered the situation of women and girls in these communities. When gender issues are considered at all, researchers on small arms in Rio de Janeiro mainly point out that women do not generally use or die by firearms. Some work also considers – if briefly – women as "secondary victims" of gun violence, that is, as those who bear the brunt of economic and psychological consequences of high levels of structural violence and high deaths rates among men.

### **Gender Implications**

Why do men in Rio want to possess guns? Frequent responses to this question include self-defense against violence, in the context of ineffective and/or violent police forces and high crime rates. There are economic reasons for gun ownership, as the gun might be used to secure one's livelihood. There are also power and status issues at play: the gun may be used as a tool to impose individual will when there is no other means for many men to assert themselves.

Interestingly, as Galeria notes, many men believe that guns help them to impress women. Does the gun make them more attractive to women? Galeria found that narco-traffickers in particular are viewed with a certain sense of "bad boy" romanticism, even though most women and girls are aware that the gun violence that is implicit in their work makes them more likely to be maimed or killed. The attractiveness of this stereotype is not visible to poorer women only, but permeates other social classes as well. She concludes that, as a primary focus of disarmament work one should therefore work towards presenting viable social and cultural alternatives to the macho gun-toting man.

Undertaken as part of her research on the symbolism of guns, Galeria's discussions presented many women with the first opportunity to share their perspectives on guns. In her interviews, Galeria noticed that, because firearms are so visibly present in *favela* communities, her respondents tended to articulate their feelings towards guns more as a status symbol than as a killing device. For example, a common expression in these communities, "the bullet eats you up," seems to indicate that bullets, rather than the weapons used to fire them, are seen as the culprits in shootouts. Bullets are seen all too often in the bodies of victims, in walls and on streets after bloody gun battles; guns on the other hand are ostentatiously brandished – and sometimes even borrowed just for that purpose – to command respect and show that the person who holds it has a certain amount of power, wealth or sex appeal in the community.

Differences can be seen in how people understand their relationships with regard to prevalent guns. For example, mothers generally do not want their sons to use guns or become involved in organized armed violence, but young men often see "getting girls" as a big motivator to obtaining a gun. Galeria asked young women whether they feel safer with a boyfriend who has a gun. Interestingly, for some, weapons possession is seen as desirable because of the status or economic kickbacks they may bring, but most respondents were aware that they were actually less secure if their boyfriend had a gun. In this context, women occupy different roles – they can be both victim and active supporter of gun possession. Their support can also go beyond encouragement of male gun ownership – some women participate directly or indirectly in gun-related violence, such as by hiding drugs or guns for others, or using guns themselves in criminal activities.

### The Role of Civil Society

There has been a social transformation at the grass-roots level in the city regarding small arms and light weapons. There are now more efforts to get guns out of the household, and some 150,000 crime guns have been destroyed in public ceremonies in the last decade. Well organized in victims support groups or women's rights movements, women have been at the forefront of a national disarmament campaign, which resulted in new federal gun laws. Among other measures, the 2003 Disarmament Statute makes it illegal to carry firearms and sets a nation-wide referendum to ban commercial gun sales in 2005.

Viva Rio, the main reference point for Galeria's study, covers a broad spectrum of activities from political advocacy, to training for women police officers, to public awareness campaigns to change social perceptions of guns, to efforts to disseminate its message through existing sports and recreation programs. In the latter case, the male-dominated "Fight for Peace" boxing club, which works to provide alternatives to armed criminal activities for young people in *favelas*, now also includes women. A major component of Viva Rio's efforts is their communications work, which uses slogans that often involve lighter approaches (such as "only small guys need big guns") or the involvement of soap opera stars in the anti-gun movement. These approaches help in getting the message out to a mass audience. Similarly, alternative models of masculinities are offered in the media: for instance, a very popular rap artist from the *favela* City of God (made famous in a recent movie with the same title), comes across as tough and macho, even though he does not carry a gun and promotes an anti-violence message in his lyrics.

## 5.5 Small Arms, Gender, and Oral Poetry in Somalia

Zeinab Mohamed Hassan and Katrin Kinzelbach explore the roles of women's oral poetry and political activism in Somalia as they relate to small arms. They provide an analysis of the socio-political and security context in which the poems are recited. Overall, the data available on small arms in Somalia is limited and little is known about the gender dimensions of small arms proliferation. Their study relies on two main sources: a review of quantitative data collected through surveys financed by international agencies, and poetry composed by Somali women. The aim of this dual approach is to generate analysis that is relevant to the work on gender and small arms, while assisting the women, who have been excluded from most small arms related surveys, to speak the messages they wish to communicate. In addition, Hassan and Kinzelbach access a GTZ (German Technical Cooperation) database on security forces and combatants, producing a gender-sensitive quantitative analysis on the small arms problem in Somalia. Although the data is limited, it constitutes the first set of quantitative data on the issue that is disaggregated by gender.

### Background on Arms Proliferation in Somalia

When the Somali Army disbanded in 1991, some 40,000 weapons were abandoned. From then on, clan militias ruled over much of the country. In 2002, the UN Panel of Experts Report on Somalia Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1425 noted that, despite the existing arms embargo, the arms market in Somalia was supplied both by external and internal sources. Arms and ammunition often substituted for cash. An AK-47 assault rifle could be sold for US\$ 120-250. Somalia is the classic "failed state" with no central government and, thus, no gun control laws. In the self-declared state of Somaliland in the northwest, UNDP is supporting the National Advisory Council on the Control of Firearms (NACCOF), which is in an early stage of activity. To this date, the traditional system of the *xeer* remains the dominant justice and security system, which also regulates the use of force and includes grades of compensation for various crimes.

### **Available Data**

The limited data available on small arms in Somalia is gender insensitive. For example, in the Somaliland Academy for Peace and Development (APD), UNDP and Small Arms Survey (SAS) baseline assessment conducted in Somaliland, only male heads of household were interviewed. In fact, the survey design itself suggests that all respondents were presumed to be male. One of the questions, for instance, read: "who do you turn to for protection?" Likely choices for women, such as "husband," were not included. The local researchers who conducted the assessment (all men) reasoned that women did not need to be included in the interviews, as women did not have access to small arms and, therefore, did not know much about them. Moreover, it was claimed that it would be culturally inappropriate to interview women. However, as Hassan and Kinzelbach note, at a UNDP-sponsored workshop of the women umbrella organization NAGAAD (Somali for "peaceful resting place") in Hargeisa, Somali women themselves reported on their involvement in the small arms trade. Hassan and Kinzelbach suggest, therefore, that strategies need to be developed on how to respond to local resistance to the inclusion of women in professional research, and how to support women in their own attempts to participate in a societal dialogue on security issues.

In a UNICEF Protection Study, 50 percent of the population argued that violence is common in daily family life. Although the small arms data included in the GTZ registration of security forces and combatants is limited, a number of questions on security and guns were quite useful. For example: when asked if guns serve the function of protecting families, or if guns pose more of a danger, a higher percentage of people responded that guns pose more danger. It is significant to note that even armed women and men felt that way.

### **The Role of Oral Poetry**

As essentially all of the available studies and surveys have been gender insensitive, it is important to ask what role women have played in security-related issues, and how relevant evidence of their input can be generated. Hassan and Kinzelbach find one answer in the gender analysis of the GTZ data. A second answer lies in Somalia's strong poetic and oral tradition. There are separate poetic traditions for men and women; while men use it for political discourse, women consider it as an instrument for transmitting female culture.

In the context of the civil war, women have used their poems to communicate with men. For instance, at the 1993 Borama Conference, which established a national security framework and mechanisms for DDR in Somaliland, women recited poems. Through their poetry, women commented on power relations in society. Although some of the women's poems encourage raids and fights, many of the poems appeal for peace, often through direct confrontation, with statements such as "you men, lay down your arms." Women's aspirations, such as political empowerment, are also reflected in the poetry.

The emotional power of women's poems is linked to the personal experience of loss and the struggle for life. Women are empowered through their poetry, which, in turn, affects the emotions of men, some of whom have laid down their arms in response. Through poetry, women remind men of the war experience, asking them, for instance, why they are still fighting.

The mobilization of women, whether as fighters or as peace promoters, has policy implications. In a tradition of debate through the recitation of poetry, this is one way in which women can use their voices publicly, and in a positive and effective way. Their tradition highlights the importance of attending to customary forms of debate when undertaking consciousness-raising work.

As statistical data (if at all available) can easily disguise reality, other indicators and methods may be more useful in examining the roles played by women in issues such as gun control. The study notes, in fact, that women are not always working in favor of peace. Some poems even incite fighting, or approve cultural values of a belligerent masculinity. Many Somali women have become small arms experts and are involved in the arms trade (due to their ability to move amongst clans).

They are typically also responsible for small arms storage at home, making them not only responsible for safety in the household, but also a participant in decision-making on when guns should be unpacked. The ambiguous roles that women play in advocating peace or war is a useful finding of the research, and emphasizes their agency.

## 5.6 SALW and Gender in Papua New Guinea

In spite of growing acknowledgment of the need for gender mainstreaming in the international framework of small arms and light weapons, international efforts to combat the spread of small arms often have only a nominal impact on those directly affected by gun violence. Sinclair Dinnen and Edwina Thompson show that this is certainly the case in Papua New Guinea (PNG). They argue that it is important to give more serious consideration to PNG, where the international community – and even the state itself – constitutes a remote presence in the lives of the majority of the population.

Fieldwork in PNG uncovered both important gender differences in perceptions of security, and the gendered nature of gun ownership and violence. Situating the proliferation of small arms in the context of culture, power, and security in PNG, Thompson and Dinnen's study considers how the social and political history of PNG has been impacted by a changing pattern of conflict and violence, in particular by the role of firearms and changes in gender relations. The prevalent gun culture of the past 10 to 15 years can be described as creating an enduring situation of disorder, rather than one of outright conflict. This has had a day-to-day impact on the population, through "raskolism" (gangsterism), tribal fighting, and election-related violence. Gender-related violence is so common that it over-shadows all three of these.

### Background of PNG

PNG's colonial history was marked by the presence of Indonesians, a German company, Australians and Christian missionaries. It is a very fragmented society in which communication between communities is difficult. In a population of only 500,000, more than 800 languages are spoken. Today, PNG as a "state" is still largely a fiction, and the government is profoundly weak or absent in large parts of the country. Much of the (oral) evidence indicates that the various communities have always engaged in cycles of warfare and peacemaking, both integrally connected like two sides of the same coin.

The communities were relatively egalitarian as far as men were concerned, but unequal when it comes to relations between the sexes. Deep-seated separation has characterized gender relations in the Highlands. While men and women lived and slept separately, the level of rape was low. The notion that the presence of women pollutes men used to inhibit sexual violence. However, when missionaries encouraged new patterns of living, far higher levels of sexual violence began.

### Principal Contexts of Firearms Use

The three principal contexts of firearms use in PNG include raskolism, tribal fighting and election-related violence:

1) Raskolism. The formal economy of PNG is tiny and largely dominated by mining. The fact that land is held in customary ownership, and the presence of some of the most powerful transnational corporations in the world, has served as a recipe for disintegration and violence. In the absence of a functioning state, alternatives have sprung up, including raskolism. Gun violence is symptomatic of the marginalization of young men. Violence against women is very high, especially among intimates (this is not confined to gangs).

2) Tribal Fighting. Tribal fighting flared up just before independence in 1975, with people resorting to self-help strategies due to the lack of state presence or perceived inadequacy of state processes of dispute resolution. Today, prolific small arms have led to more targeted violence. According to many women, guns have increased the level of fear and insecurity. Often, homemade guns are used against women and children. Many children have suffered the trauma of seeing mothers raped. Gang rape has also increased with the increase in tribal fighting. Traditionally, during times of war, men would not sleep with women (due to the “polluting” factor). Now, it is routine for the warring neighbors to rape women in the community they attack.

3) Election-related violence. Elections are often the catalyst for the revival of dormant tribal fights and the generation of new ones. Election-related violence is on the increase in Papua New Guinea, particularly in parts of the Highlands where formal electoral competition has been grafted on to highly competitive indigenous political systems.

In addition to raskolism, tribal fighting and election-related violence, there is much day-to-day violence that does not involve gun use. Although fatalities have increased because of gun-related violence, it is not gun misuse that characterizes the kind of violence people are experiencing on a day-to-day level. Other forms of aggression, such as instances of rape, are growing rapidly. Women sometimes commit suicide after they are raped. Their bodies are simply buried, without much talk. Local and community-based women’s groups are trying to combat this problem. Moreover, both men and women experience sexual violence: In a fairly new development, sexual violence against men and boys is particularly widespread in prisons. However, Thompson and Dinnen found that, while it is considered shameful for sexual violence to occur against men, it is not considered shameful for sexual violence to happen against women. Disputes in which a woman is raped are still settled by the affected families themselves without recourse to the state. Official responses (or lack thereof) are part of the problem, and new solutions, using local resources and knowledge, must urgently be found.

## 5.7 SALW and Gender in Nepal

Chhaya Jha, Geeta Sinha, Shobha Gautam and Subodh Pyakhurel analyze the impact of small arms use on women and men in Nepal. They assess the policy and institutional environment from a gender, social inclusion and psycho-social perspective and identify possibilities for small arms control.

### **The Context of Conflict in Nepal**

With the collapse of the ceasefire and peace talks between the government and Maoist insurgents, Nepal has quickly plunged back into violence that has killed around 10,000 people since February 1996. Both the Maoists and the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) are at present determined to use battlefield gains to secure leverage for future talks. Their positions have hardened. With the Maoists moving to hit-and-run tactics and increasingly taking the war into Kathmandu, and the RNA using their newly upgraded Western weapons and training, the conflict has entered a highly confrontational stage.

Among the root causes of the Maoist insurgency is political and socio-economic discrimination, based on caste, ethnicity and gender. The military response to the insurgency has resulted in widespread abuse of human rights. To compound the situation, while the Maoists portray themselves as the voice of the people, they are often targeting communities with violence. As a result of this volatile situation, many political parties are advocating the restoration of state power.

### **Gender Relations in Nepal**

Compared to men, the status of women continues to be low. This is largely the result of social, political, legal and economic structures that, through policy and practice, discriminate against

women from birth. Women face inequality not only due to social and cultural norms, but also through the law. Women of socially excluded groups such as the lower caste (Dalits) and indigenous people (Janajatis) face further discrimination. Despite a lack of gender mainstreaming in Nepal, there has been a continuing struggle to reduce gender inequality and increase women's meaningful participation in all sectors through policy reform and program interventions in most sectors. Since the 1995 Beijing Conference, the situation of women has been monitored by different governmental and nongovernmental agencies.

### **Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nepal**

When Nepal joined with the British Army, firearms were introduced. Traditionally, firearms were owned by the elite level of society for hunting purposes only. Some studies have shown that by the 1990s, guns started to become connected to the illegal drug trade. The Government of Nepal has received arms from the United States, United Kingdom and India.

Policies on small arms do not include a gender perspective. Women and women's organizations are excluded from the policymaking process, as they are not considered to be stakeholders when it comes to military matters. In reality, the conflict between insurgents and local communities has meant that ordinary women are often caught between the Maoists and security forces.

### **The Socio-Psychological Impact of Conflict**

The ongoing conflict in Nepal has manifested itself in the socio-psychological state of the society. According to Jha et al., 35 percent of women are depressed, sad, and unsure about the future. Men are also depressed and consume increasing amounts of alcohol. However, some gender differences exist, as, for example, 15 percent of the women express psychosomatic symptoms, while only six percent of the men had done so. 38 percent of the women shared that they had increased suicidal feelings while only 16 percent of the male respondents expressed those feelings. 10-20 percent of members of the security force experience aggressive emotions and distress. The phenomenon of depression is alarmingly common. And yet, no proper treatment, such as counseling, is offered.

The psychological dimension is a useful indicator of the hidden impact of weapons. Yet, how can one measure it? Questions raised by the Nepalese team were seen to have great relevance for other societies as well. For example, in post-conflict Somalia, demobilized combatants were to be integrated into a new national army. However, half of these combatants were not mentally fit to serve in the newly formed armed forces.

### **The Gendered Impact of Small Arms**

The escalating Maoist insurgency has forced thousands of women and children to leave their communities. The use of SALW in the armed conflict has disrupted basic services, limited development assistance and broken down family and community networks as men have either joined the conflict or migrated to seek alternative employment to support their families. In many cases, women have been left alone in areas abandoned by men and are solely responsible for the care of children and financial survival. They are experiencing increased psycho-social stress. Other women are professional fighters who support the Maoist faction. Although women have been active in promoting peace, no significant attention has been paid to their efforts. This represents lost potential for local peacemaking capacities, which should be tapped into by state and international programs.

## 6 Recommendations for Policy Strategy

### 6.1 Public Policy Day on Gender and Small Arms and Light Weapons

Less than a week prior to International Women's Day (8 March), on 3 March 2004 local and international activists and researchers gathered in Cape Town for a Public Policy Day. The goal was to generate recommendations to governments about how and why they should take gender considerations into account in the measures they take to reduce the lethal impact of gun proliferation on society. The participants came from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, with experiences offered from South Africa, Israel, Brazil, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Angola, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Canada.

Pregs Govender, former African National Congress Member of Parliament, addressed the participants in a keynote speech about her protest against the authorization of a significant arms deal in South Africa. Women are disproportionately affected by gun violence both in conflict zones and in countries that are supposedly at peace, she said. Describing the impact of what she called "wars seen and unseen," Govender, who was an MP from 1994 to 1999, said: "I applaud the work of these courageous women from around the world. Women need to work across the continuum of violence. Unless we see the whole picture, our actions and our strategies will be useless."

In the subsequent meetings, the participants generated a number of policy-related suggestions and recommendations, with the aim to begin a process that could advance the discussion of the gendered impact of weapons collection programs and DDR processes within activist, academic, policy, funding, and donor communities. The following points summarize our suggestions.

### 6.2 Key Recommendations

Suggestions related to context:

- Reframe the small arms problem as a human security issue. This creates space to undertake activism and research from broader perspectives including development, human rights, health, and humanitarianism.
- Local context matters – be aware that in many contexts, recourse to asserting traditional justice methods can be problematic for women's rights.
- Develop role models for younger women who want to work on security issues, and promote women who can be spokespersons for media/conference opportunities.

Suggestions related to action-oriented research:

- Prioritize action-oriented research that gives emphasis to qualitative approaches.
- Value non-academic input, and activist approaches to generating information and evidence for policy change.
- Prioritize the education of young men and women from violence-affected communities, who can then undertake research and advocacy work themselves.
- Avoid "parachute research" where an expert "drops in" on a community – we need to build networks to appreciate the depth of issues and to develop local/national capacity to present solutions to problems.
- Prioritize gender-disaggregated data and use gender as a category of analysis.
- Increase money management skills to promote sustainable research and activism.

- Encourage the development of a network for researchers to exchange methodologies on working in violent contexts; on the arms trade and its impacts; and on “alternative” perspectives.
- Identify standard questions and criteria for gender-aware small arms investigative work.

Suggestions related to national governmental action:

- Identify best practices with regard to spousal notification for gun licenses.

Suggestions for the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA):

- For guidance on awareness-raising, look at other campaigns that have successfully dealt with multifaceted issues, e.g. anti-smoking campaigns.
- Strengthen communication to ensure the best outcomes from the UN process on small arms and light weapons.
- Develop a women’s rights component to the Control Arms campaign.
- Support thematic networking, particularly related to gender-based gun violence.
- Be instrumental in re-messaging anti-gun campaigns to reach out to NGOs that work on violence prevention, but not necessarily on the arms trade.

Suggestions related to activities after violent conflict:

- Ensure that women’s participation and expertise is actively drawn on in decisions related to DDR processes, transitional justice strategies, and the formation of legislative/decision making forums.

Suggestions related to general small arms programming:

- Involve women in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects.

Suggestions related to the UN Programme of Action (PoA):

- Undertake an audit of national legislation on the UN PoA “red lines,” using a gender lens. For instance, what has happened to ensure greater regulation of weapons in a national context? Has this improved the safety of women?
- Develop model language/phrases for the 2005 and 2006 meetings.
- Identify practices that can enhance gender mainstreaming.

Suggestions for donors:

- Revisit the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) guidelines on disarmament, and pay attention to its subsequent coordination problems.
- Emphasize security rather than disarmament alone.
- Re-assess the focus on “gun counting” projects: Weapons collection and destruction might also be a productive exercise.

Potential advocacy or research themes:

- The expendability of young men and subsequent alienation of this population in many parts of the world.
- Gender-based armed violence and its links to structural violence.
- The comprehensive inclusion of women in DDR.
- Programming needs for DDR related to girl and boy soldiers.

The outcomes of the author meeting and public policy day demonstrated the practical effectiveness of empowering the international community to work with both women and men to reduce the number of arms and to realize more effectively development aspirations worldwide.

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Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue: <http://www.hdcentre.org/>

Human Rights Watch, Women and Armed Conflict: <http://www.hrw.org/women/conflict.html>

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