

# **Integrating Gender Equality in the Prevention of Armed Violence, A Critical Issue in the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

**by Mavic Cabrera-Balleza\***

## **Normative framework on gender equality, women and peace and security and gender and disarmament**

At the global level, there is a strong normative framework on gender equality, women's empowerment, and gender and disarmament. The UN has adopted a mainstreaming strategy and gender balance in its pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Beijing Platform for Action, the 1997 Secretary-General's report to the Economic and Social Council on Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system and various other policies have been adopted in the last two decades. The UN Security Council have adopted and called for the implementation of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in October 2000. This resolution transformed the common perception that women are only victims of war. It recognised the active role that women play in peacebuilding and decision-making, and demanded Member States to ensure women's full and equal participation in all peace processes at all levels. UNSCR 1325 was followed by six more WPS resolutions: 1820 (June 2008), 1888 (September 2009), 1889 (October 2009), 1960 (December 2010), 2106 (June 2013), and 2122 (October 2013). These resolutions address the issues of sexual violence in conflict; strengthen the UN's commitment to women's inclusion in peace negotiations, in governance and financing of post conflict recovery; led to the development of indicators to track and monitor the implementation of the WPS commitments; and put women's leadership and participation at the center of all efforts to resolve conflict and promote peace.

UNSCR 2106 and 2122 particularly acknowledged the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty and noted the provisions in Article 7(4) of the Treaty that "exporting States Parties shall take into account the risk of covered conventional arms or items being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children."

With a focus on gun violence and its "disproportionate impact on violence perpetrated against women and girls, and exacerbating sexual and gender-based violence" the Security Council adopted Resolution 2117 in September 2013. The Resolution also calls for further measures to facilitate women's full and meaningful participation in all policy making, planning and implementation processes to combat and eradicate the illicit transfer,

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destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. It also called on those involved in planning disarmament initiatives to engage with women and provide for their full access to these programs through consultation with civil society, including women's organizations.

The IANSA Women's Network and the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders firmly believe that there is no longer a shortage of policies on gender equality, women and peace and security and gender and disarmament. What is urgently needed now is effective implementation.

### **Gender-Sensitive Approach to Preventing Armed Violence Achieving MDGs**

A gender-sensitive approach to preventing armed violence is not exclusively about women. It is about analyzing gender more broadly and integrating it fully in disarmament and awareness raising efforts. This approach factors in the special needs and capacities of women and men, and girls and boys, in the formulation of appropriate responses to issues of gender and weapons. For example, global research still shows that young men suffer disproportionately from the direct impacts of the use of small arms and light weapons. 90% of gun homicide victims are men, while women tend to be victims of the indirect, longer-term consequences such as caring for the victim, tending to the children and to the economic, psychological, social needs of the family, among others.

It is inaccurate to identify women solely as victims of violence perpetrated by armed men. Such an approach neglects the active role that women play globally, regionally, nationally and locally in civil society-driven as well as government-led disarmament initiatives as well as their broader roles as peacebuilders, community organizers, activists and decision-makers.

We can insist on the full and equal participation of women in the small arms process but we must also recognize that men and boys need programs to help them reject armed violence. There is also an urgent need to fully address the community dimension of small arms control, and to support the importance of local initiatives, many of which are led by women.

There are examples of communities that have been in the forefront of small arms control. Liberia- "disarmament before elections" as women's primary advocacy point. Women in the communities started a program to assist in the collection of small arms. In Albania in the late 1990s, the proliferation of small arms created a great deal of insecurity in communities and in homes. Women were being threatened by guns during domestic arguments. This experience prompted Albanian women to play an active role in raising awareness about the need for weapons collection. They handed in weapons belonging to their husbands and other relatives, and persuaded their family members to put down their weapons. Argentina's 2007-2008 gun buy-back scheme allowed anyone with a firearm to hand in weapons in exchange for cash and the firearms were then rendered unusable in front of the person who handed them in. Women in communities led this initiative. Though 95% of the gun owners in Argentina are men, 50% of those who handed in guns were women. The scheme resulted in the collection of 70,000 weapons and 450,000 rounds of

ammunition. In Cambodia, women in communities helped dig up weapon caches and gave local authorities information on weapons. These experiences demonstrate that the involvement of local communities, especially women is one of the effective strategy in weapons collection, disarmament and prevention of armed violence.

### **Gender objectives for combating the armed violence**

Addressing the gender, poverty and development dynamics behind illicit trade and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, sexual exploitation and human trafficking in collaboration with national, regional and international development partners will enhance the effectiveness of the implementation of Programme of Action on Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons by:

- Strengthening control of the illicit trade in weapons
- Eliminating opportunities for traffickers to exploit the vulnerability of the poor and other marginalized populations;
- Addressing the human rights and security and livelihoods needs of women and girls drawn into trafficking (human and arms) networks and offer livelihoods alternatives to men who rely on trafficking to make a living;
- Increasing the engagement of social and economic development actors in arms control;
- Improving knowledge of criminal network mechanisms in order to better address the problem of trafficking;
- Encouraging and supporting participatory enabling mechanisms and the concomitant capacity to identify and respond to potential conflict situations; and
- Combating the drivers of illicit trade in weapons.

An inclusive approach that fully integrates a gender perspective will help in ensuring ownership and effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, Resolution 2117 and related policies. Only this can lead to the eradication of illicit weapons trade and prevention of gun violence.

In conclusion, I would like to present the following recommendations:

- 1) Implement an inclusive approach that recognizes the impact of armed violence on development and integrate this in the post-2015 agenda;
- 2) Support local community initiatives on armed violence prevention especially those that involved women; and
- 3) Support peace education—a fundamental step in raising awareness of armed violence and in promoting a culture of peace.