

Gender Perspectives on WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

1
briefing
note

What are the linkages between gender perspectives and weapons of mass destruction?

Weapons of mass destruction include nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Member States of the United Nations have sought to ban or limit the use of these weapons through international conventions and treaties. Activities in this area involve complex and politically sensitive processes of national, regional and international politico-military security. They also impinge upon the fields of diplomacy and international law; the manufacture, stockpiling, deployment and policies for the use of such weapons; weapons testing; advocacy by individuals, campaigns and organizations; technical verification and political assessments of compliance.

What gender perspectives are important when looking at weapons of mass destruction?

The idea of identifying gender issues when dealing with weapons of mass destruction may initially seem irrelevant. After all, an essential quality of weapons of mass destruction is the indiscriminate nature of their destruction. Nuclear holocaust or an attack by chemical or biological weapons are equally overwhelming for women and men. Yet there are issues that could be considered for further investigation.

Gender perspectives on weapons of mass destruction draw attention to issues of power, inequalities, cultural expectations, divisions of labour and family reproduction, as well as biological differences. These perspectives are the concern of men and women. They raise issues about how people (and which people) mobilize and organize for change.

- **Advocates for change:** Women have played an important role in the nuclear disarmament movement, as individuals and within women-specific organizations. Many women have found it more effective to mobilize within such women-specific organizations. The views of women tend to be less visible and less a part of mainstream discussions. This has forced women to mobilize in women-specific organizations in some cases.

Women, for example, played an important role in the anti-nuclear movements of the 1980s. A global women's Peace Movement spread across Europe, the US, Canada and Australia, with women's peace camps, modelled on the Greenham Common experience, in at least 11 countries (Roseneil, 1995 and 2000). Although women's peace organizations in Europe and North America received most of the publicity, there have been strong women's movements in other parts of the world. For example, in the Pacific women organized against nuclear testing and Japanese women set up a peace camp at the base of Mount Fuji.

Although statistics do indicate that women are less likely to be combatants or to engage in military planning, research and development than men, the statistics do not provide reasons for this difference between women and men. Women's roles and socialization in different societies often lead them to have different priorities, needs and interests than those of men. Many women peace and disarmament activists have drawn on their experience as mothers as both the justification and the motivation behind their activism. There is no consensus that women are more innately non-belligerent than men.

Women's Forum 2000: Away with Nuclear Weapons

On opening the door of the 21st century, we the women of Japan make a sincere appeal for women and peoples around the world to unite in efforts to abolish nuclear weapons to save the human race from destruction.

On 5 August 2000 more than 1800 women met in Hiroshima to call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. They heard testimonies from women around the world on the implications of the use and testing of nuclear weapons.

The Campaign has called for all member States of the United Nations to take the courageous decision to eliminate nuclear weapons.

- **Women's and men's access to political decision-making:** Diplomacy between and among states is marked by the under-representation of women. To a large extent, women are seriously underrepresented in many key forums where decisions on disarmament and weapons proliferation are made.
- **Women's and men's access to technical decision-making and technical expertise:** Given educational patterns and social attitudes in many societies, women are not equitably represented among arms control experts.
- **Reproductive health issues:** Given biological differences, women and men are often affected differently by weapons testing and fallout.

Although a gender analysis tends to focus on social, economic and political differences and inequalities between women and men, this is one case where the biological differences are relevant. In the 1950s, traces of strontium 90 were not only found in cow's milk, but also in breast milk. This became an important issue for women anti-nuclear testing protesters at that time.

- **War, weapons and masculinity:** Activists and researchers are attempting to understand how gender roles (in particular masculinity) contribute to the development of conflict and arms proliferation. This may be a useful avenue to explore when attempting to understand the complex causes of arms development and military expenditures.

Concrete implications

In developing a mainstreaming strategy in disarmament the following issues could be investigated:

- **Developing expertise among women.** Men have long dominated security studies and the technical field of arms control. More women could be encouraged to develop professional expertise in the technical areas related to nuclear weapons and the political skills involved in arms negotiations. There tends to be more women experts in the developed than in the developing world, as a result of differences in social, economic, educational and political opportunities. In order to improve women's expertise in the developing world, the constraints to their involvement need to be identified and addressed.
- **Establishing better contact with women researchers and those working on the gender dimensions of nuclear weapons.** In recent years, different professional specializations have begun to look at gender perspectives in weapons of mass destruction, peace studies and disarmament. Some of these researchers may not be part of the traditional network drawn on by UN agencies. Special efforts may be required to reach out to them and tap their expertise. Development of a roster could facilitate efforts.
- **Involving women as technical experts more equitably in discussions and technical events.** Gender balance on bodies working on these issues should be a priority. Ensuring that women's voices are heard in a wide range of discussions can require specific efforts. The value-added of

increased involvement of women need to be identified. Men, for example, may benefit through exposure to ways of working that may not be familiar to them.

- **Building links with women's NGOs.** There are numerous international and national women's organizations that focus explicitly on building support for peace and nuclear disarmament. Ways and means need to be sought to increase the links between NGOs and researchers working on gender and weapons of mass destruction and the United Nations. (See the Briefing Note in this series on *Women's Advocacy for Peace and Disarmament*)
- **Reaching out to women.** There are often significant divisions on issues such as nuclear disarmament along gender lines. These general divisions among the population could be documented and analyzed to determine if there are strategic opportunities to build greater public support for concrete measures to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Outreach materials and publicity campaigns should take into consideration the need to reach all groups in society, particularly those positively disposed to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

A 1993 study on differences in attitudes towards foreign policy and defense issues between Swedish women and men showed considerable gender differences. Women tended to support foreign aid and cuts to defense budgets at a greater rate than men. (Brienes, 1999)

- **Researching the links between masculinity, violent conflict, weapons and nuclear proliferation.** Can a gender analysis help us understand the politics of nuclear weapons? Some researchers are drawing links between the structure and formation of masculine identities and militarism (See, for

example, Cockburn, 1999, Enloe, 1993 and Roseneil, 2000 and 1995). They argue that a better understanding of this element of militarism could contribute to the development of alternative visions of security and a more peaceful coexistence of states.

Resources

Books and articles

Breines, I. (1999). "A Gender Perspective on a Culture of Peace" in Breines et al. (eds.) *Towards a Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace*. Paris: UNESCO.

Cockburn, Cynthia (1999). *Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*. Background paper for Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence. World Bank Conference.

de Ishtar, Zohl (1997). "A Broken Rainbow: Pacific Women and Nuclear Testing" in: R. Lentin (ed.) **Gender & Catastrophe**. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Enloe, Cynthia (1993). **The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War**. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jacobson, Ruth *et al.* (2000). "Introduction" in Jacobs, Susie *et al.* (eds.) **States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance**. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Roseneil, Sasha. (2000). **Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham**, London: Cassell.

Roseneil, Sasha. (1995). **Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham**. London: Open University Press.

Vickers, J. (1993). **Women and War**. London: Zed Books Ltd.

International Commitments that highlight the gender dimensions of weapons of mass destruction

Strategic Objective E.2 (Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments) of the **Beijing Platform for Action** (1995) outlines numerous agreed actions for governments including:

Para 143: (a) *Increase and hasten, as appropriate, subject to national security considerations, the*

conversion of military resources and related industries to development and peaceful purposes;

(b) *Undertake to explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production and acquisition, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women.*

This theme received additional attention in the discussions at the **twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on follow-up to the Platform for Action** (June 2000). The outcome document (A/S-23/10/Rev.1) outlines the achievements and obstacles encountered by governments and international organizations in moving to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. One obstacle identified in the discussion of women and armed conflict was:

Excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production, taking into consideration national security requirements, direct the possible allocation of funds away from social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women. (Para 17)

The document also identified "actions to be taken at the national and international levels, by Governments, regional and international organizations, including the United Nations system, and international financial institutions and other actors as appropriate" including:

98 (k) *Strengthen efforts toward general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, based on the priorities established by the United Nations in the field of disarmament, so that the released resources could be used for, inter alia, social and economic programmes which benefit women and girls.*

98 (1) *Explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures and the arms trade and investment for arms production and acquisition, including global military expenditures, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, inter alia, for the advancement of women.*

Finally, the Commission on the Status of Women: Agreed Conclusions on the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (UN Sales No. E.00.IV.6) mentions weapons of mass destruction. Under actions to be taken by governments there is:

Encourage as appropriate the role of women in the peace movement, working towards general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control including disarmament of all types of weapons of mass destruction.

Campaigns and Organizations

International Alert has launched a campaign entitled *From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table*. “The aim of the campaign is to engage as many women’s groups and organizations as possible in a process aimed at enhancing their voices, sharing experiences and promoting more effective dialogue between women and governments.”

Website: <http://www.international-alert.org/women/default.html>

May 24: International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament - Spearheaded by the International

Fellowship of Reconciliation and the International Peace Bureau, this day focuses attention on peace and disarmament. Recent actions include radio broadcasts about women’s contributions to peace, fundraising for landmine victims, petitions for the abolition of nuclear weapons and street action against militarism.

Website: <http://www.ifor.org/wpp/index.htm#>

Organizing Committee of the Women’s Forum 2000 - Away with Nuclear Weapons - In mid-2000, this forum, with headquarters in Japan, called for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. They launched a campaign to “urge the United Nations, the nuclear-weapons states and national governments to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons”.

Email: njwa@mb.infoweb.or.jp

WILPF - Founded in 1915 to protest the war then raging in Europe, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom aims to bring together women of different political and philosophical convictions, united in their determination to study, and make known and help abolish the political, social, economic and psychological causes of war and to work for a constructive peace. WILPF is a coordinator of the *Reaching Critical Will* campaign.

Website: <http://www.wilpf.int.ch/~wilpf/>

Women Lead the Way to Peace Initiative. Linked to the Hague Agenda for Peace, this initiative released a statement, Women’s Global Actions for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence, on the occasion of the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference, 11-15 May 1999.

Website: <http://www.ifor.org/wpp/hague.htm>

Women's Advocacy for PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

2
briefing
note

Women mobilizing for peace and disarmament: a long history

For more than a century women and women's organizations and movements have mobilized in support of peace and disarmament. In addition to participating in organizations alongside men, many women have found it more effective to organize separately.

There are numerous examples of national, regional and international women's organizations and movements with a primary focus on peace or disarmament. For example, during World War I, nearly 1,200 women from warring and neutral countries came together to protest the conflict. They eventually formed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The organization continues today and advocates internationally for a range of issues from nuclear disarmament to human rights.

Women's Forum 2000: Away with Nuclear Weapons

On opening the door of the 21st century, we the women of Japan make a sincere appeal for women and peoples around the world to unite in efforts to abolish nuclear weapons to save the human race from destruction.

On 5 August 2000 more than 1800 women met in Hiroshima to call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. They heard testimonies from women around the world on the implications of the use and testing of nuclear weapons.

The campaign called for all member States of the United Nations to take the courageous decision to eliminate nuclear weapons.

During the cold war, women lobbied against the stockpiling and possible use of nuclear weapons. In 1959 the newly formed European Women Against Nuclear Armament organized a conference on the responsibility of women in the atomic age in Brunate, Italy, bringing together women from both east and west. In the 1980s a global Women's Peace Movement spread across Europe, the US, Canada and Australia, with women's peace camps, modelled on the Greenham experience, in at least 11 countries (Roseneil, 2000 and 1995). The women's peace movement was also strong in German Democratic Republic and contributed to the fall of the Berlin wall.

Although women's peace organizations in Europe and North America have received most of the publicity, there are organizations in all parts of the world. For example, in the Pacific women have organized against nuclear testing and Japanese women set up a peace camp at the base of Mount Fuji. Women's groups in Africa have been actively involved in advocating for peace and reconstruction, for example, in Angola, Burundi, Somalia and Niger.

In the last decade, a women's peace petition gained over 150 organizational sponsors and hundreds of thousands of signatures (mostly from the south). This petition called for governments to transfer a minimum of five percent of their military budgets over the next five years to health, education, employment and peace education programmes. The petition also called for the de-legitimization of war as an acceptable form of social behaviour, in the same way that slavery, colonialism and apartheid have been de-legitimized.

Recently, organizations and campaigns have been developed to promote women's equitable participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction. Women's groups and networks are also advocating for the development of a culture of peace.

Why have women mobilized around disarmament and peace?

Why do so many women believe that it is important to organize specifically as women in support of disarmament and peace?

Numerous organizations have built on women's roles as mothers. Women have often organized to protect their children as in the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo protesting the "disappearance" of their children in Argentina. Another example is the *Russian Committee of Soldiers' Mothers*.

During the war in Chechnya, this organization urged an end to hostilities, demanded that their sons be sent home, and called for a seat on their country's security and defense councils.

There is, however, no consensus on the assertion sometimes made that women are "by nature" more peaceful than men. Just as many men have organized for peace, there are numerous examples of women supporting arms build-ups and actively participating in wars.

A more promising entry point to understanding why women have organized in favour of disarmament is the link many women have made between gender equality and peace. For example, the 1915 meeting of women in The Hague saw that a “permanent peace could be built only on the basis of equal rights, including equal rights between women and men, of justice within and between nationals, of national independence and of freedom.” (Karl, 1995)

Women’s organizations have often argued that peace is more than the absence of war. They have sketched out a continuum of violence, linking violations of human rights, violence against women and structural violence in economic disparities to the violence seen during wars.

Some women have worked to establish cross-conflict ties with other women, finding common cause despite tensions, cultural divides and different nationalities. A good example is the *Coalition of Women for a Just Peace* which brings together Israeli and Palestinian women. Another example from Liberia is contained in the following box.

Whatever the motivation of their founders and members, these women’s organizations and movements have been, and continue to be, an important international force.

UN conferences, women and peace

At the **first UN Conference on Women, held in Mexico City** in 1975, the three inter-linked goals of equality, development and peace were established. Disarmament was part of the focus on peace. The **third UN Conference on Women in Nairobi** (1985) reaffirmed the commitment to disarmament issues by highlighting the key role women can play, including in nuclear disarmament, and calling for greater support of women’s efforts.

In 1995 at the **Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing**, governments agreed to Strategic Objective E.2: *Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments*. Women’s organizations found it important to link disarmament and the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons with women’s empowerment. They made the case that expenditures on arms divert resources from education, health and other initiatives that could improve women’s lives.

The discussions at the **twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on Follow-up to the Platform for Action** (June 2000) also reaffirmed the links between peace, disarmament and gender equality. The outcome document (A/S-23/10/Rev.1) identified “actions to be taken”, including to:

98 (k) Strengthen efforts toward general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, based on the priorities established by the United Nations in the field of disarmament, so that the released resources could be used for, inter alia, social and economic programmes which benefit women and girls.

98 (l) Explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures and the arms trade and investment for arms production and acquisition, including global military expenditures, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, inter alia, for the advancement of women.

Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, adopted in October 2000, specifically mentions the need to incorporate gender perspectives in all areas of peace support operations, including in disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation initiatives (para 13).

Liberian Women's Initiative

In 1993, in the midst of the war in Liberia, Mary Brownell found it intolerable to watch people suffer as regional peace talks went nowhere. The retired schoolteacher was particularly struck by women's silence. "For five years the war was going on, but there was nothing being done in terms of speaking out, making our voices heard. We had women's organizations, but they were largely concerned about relief." Brownell discussed the idea of a women's pressure group to speak out against the war with several friends.

The group ran an advertisement on national radio appealing to women to attend a public meeting in Monrovia's city hall. From there, the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI) was formed in January 1994. The movement was open to all women, regardless of ethnic, social, religious or political background.

They adopted the strategy of taking a unified stance on issues that affected everyone and chose “disarmament before elections” as their primary advocacy point. The LWI targeted all parties involved in the peace talks and started a programme to assist in the collection of small arms. Their aim was to attend the regional peace talks and advocate grass roots perspectives directly to the faction leaders. Although they were never official participants in the peace talks, they proved to be influential consultants during the process and also acted as monitors to ensure that promises were kept.

Adapted from Anderlini (2000).

Alva Myrdal was a significant influence on the disarmament debate of her time, was instrumental in founding the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1982. As Member of Parliament and part of the Cabinet of the Government of Sweden in 1967, she was entrusted the task of promoting disarmament and became familiar with the scientific and technical aspects of the arms race. She was a highly respected figure in the Geneva negotiating committee on disarmament where she emerged as a leader of the non-aligned countries. She summed up her experience in the field in the acclaimed book "The Game of Disarmament".

Concrete implications

- **Making alliances with women's organizations:** International networking on disarmament can benefit through an explicit strategy to seek out the participation of women's organizations and movements—both those specifically focused on peace issues and those with a general mandate. It may be useful to share information with women's organizations or target them in communications strategies. Women's organizations with a specific focus on disarmament and peace provide opportunities to reach the broader women's movement. For example, WILPF played an active role in bringing disarmament issues to the 1995 Beijing Conference. They lobbied to ensure that disarmament issues were part of the Beijing *Platform for Action* (PFA). The inclusion of Strategic Objective E.2 (*Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments*) in the PFA makes an explicit link between disarmament and gender equality and points out the relevance of disarmament issues for women's organizations and gender equality advocates around the world. The international women's movement is vibrant and diverse. Greater involvement of this important constituency could facilitate development of more effective disarmament strategies.
- **Supporting women's involvement and meaningful participation in discussions on disarmament:** In addition to involving women's organizations, it is also important to promote the participation of individual women in disarmament discussions - as technical experts, as representatives of civil society, as spokespeople, as decision-makers. Furthermore it may also be possible to support improved training and education (such as, specific scholarships, support for educational institutions, access to fellowship programmes) for women so that they are well positioned to assume these roles, especially the positions requiring technical expertise.
- **Supporting greater participation of women in peace negotiations:** The Beijing *Platform for Action* (1995) emphasizes the participation of women in conflict resolution decision-making (Strategic Objective E.1). Experience has shown, however, that increasing women's access to these discussions and opening the negotiations so that they encompass broad social concerns requires clear goals and concerted efforts.
- **Striving to achieve equal numbers of women and men on bodies working on disarmament issues and at conferences (both as participants and experts):** The development of a roster of women working on specific issues, or in appropriate sub-fields, would greatly facilitate the identification of relevant experts, speakers, decision-makers, and participants. Member States can be specifically encouraged to consider gender perspectives in making nominations.
- **Facilitating women's organizing around peace and disarmament issues:** In attempts to organize around disarmament and peace issues, women often face numerous obstacles. Efforts to provide legitimacy, information and resources to these organizations could contribute to their effectiveness and thus eventually to the broad goals and aims of peace and disarmament. Women's roles in peace education should be actively encouraged and supported.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and its Coordinator, **Jody Williams**, were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. The Nobel Committee thus recognized the achievement of the Campaign and its chief strategist and spokesperson in seizing the public conscience and building political pressure about the scourge of landmines. Within five years, the international community came together in a unique and unprecedented fashion to adopt the 1997 treaty banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines and the destruction of existing stocks.

Resources

Publications

- Anderlini, S. N. (2000). **Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference**. New York: UNIFEM.
- Bryden, M. (2000) **Somalia Between War and Peace: Somali Women on the Eve of the 21st Century**, Nairobi: UNIFEM. African Women for Peace Series.
- Breines, I. et al. (eds.) (1999). **Towards a Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace**. Paris: UNESCO
- Karl, M. (1995). **Women and Empowerment**. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Mazurana, D. E. and S. R. McKay (1999). **Women and Peacebuilding**. Montreal: International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development.
- Meyer, M. K. (1999). "The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: Organizing Women for Peace in the War System," in M. K. Meyer and E. Prhgl (eds.) **Gender Politics in Global Governance**. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Roseneil, Sasha. (2000). **Common Women, Uncommon Practices: The Queer Feminisms of Greenham**, London: Cassell.
- Roseneil, Sasha. (1995). **Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham**. London: Open University Press.
- Vickers, J. (1993). **Women and War**. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Campaigns and Organizations

International Alert has launched a campaign entitled *From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table*. "The aim of the campaign is to engage as many women's groups and organizations as possible in a process aimed at enhancing their voices, sharing experiences and promoting more effective dialogue between women and governments."

Website: <http://www.international-alert.org/women/default.html>

May 24th: International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament. Spearheaded by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the International

Peace Bureau, this day focuses attention on peace and disarmament. Recent actions include radio broadcasts about women's contributions to peace, fundraising for landmine victims, petitions for the abolition of nuclear weapons and street action against militarism.
Website: <http://www.ifor.org/wpp/index.htm#>

Organizing Committee of the Women's Forum 2000 - Away with Nuclear Weapons. In mid-2000, this forum, headquartered in Japan, called for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. They launched a campaign to "urge the United Nations, the nuclear weapons states and national governments to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons".

Email: njwa@mb.infoweb.or.jp

WILPF. Founded in 1915 to protest the war then raging in Europe, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom aims to bring together women of different political and philosophical conviction, united in their determination to study and make known and help abolish the political, social, economic and psychological causes of war and to work for a constructive peace. WILPF is a coordinator of the *Reaching Critical Will campaign*.

Website: <http://www.wilpf.int.ch/~wilpf/>

Women Lead the Way to Peace Initiative. Linked to the Hague Agenda for Peace, this initiative released a statement, Women's Global Actions for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence, on the occasion of the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference, 11–15 May 1999

Website: <http://www.ifor.org/wpp/hague.htm>

Women Waging Peace. Women Waging Peace is a multi-year collaborative venture of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government that connects women addressing conflicts worldwide. The initiative breaks new ground by recognizing the essential role and contribution of women in preventing violent conflict, stopping war, reconstructing ravaged societies, and sustaining peace in fragile areas around the world.

Website: <http://names.emc.com/>

For more information on the organization *Russian Committee on Soldiers' Mothers*, see <http://www.ipb.org/women/russia2.htm#prizes>



Gender Perspectives on SMALL ARMS

What are the linkages between small arms issues and gender perspectives?

In recent years, small arms proliferation has gained increased international attention. Although it is clear that small arms do not cause conflicts, there is consensus that they exacerbate conflicts and increase risks for civilian populations. Small arms facilitate the targeting of civilians during conflict, including in refugee situations. After a formal cease-fire, small arms proliferation can contribute to violent crime, instability and banditry. The abundance of small arms has, however, also been raised as an important issue in countries not at war, for example, the United States, South Africa, Australia and Canada (Cukier, 2000).

International efforts, including the “United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects” scheduled for July 2001, are now looking to limit the transfers, availability and use of small arms.

Although there has been little discussion of the links between gender and small arms, there are many relevant issues which should be raised. It is known, for example, that while firearm casualties among women and children are significant both in conflict situations and in peace, the vast majority of victims of gun violence are men (Gartner, 2000). At the same time women are targets of certain types of violence involving small arms, particularly domestic violence. Gender is also relevant to the discussion of small arms since a disproportionate percentage of the owners and users of small arms are men, both in conflict and non-conflict situations (Cukier, 2000).

A gender analysis draws attention to people, and raises questions about who distributes, who owns, who uses, and who is killed and wounded by small arms. Such an analysis highlights human rights aspects of small arms proliferation and use.

The fact that people in communities are divided into different groups has implications for those working to reduce small arms at the local level. Communities should not be treated as homogenous. It is important to understand how communities are constructed and how different groups, including women and men, perceive their situations.

A key insight arising from a concern for gender issues is that not only are there differences between women and men, but that there are also significant inequalities. Women tend to have fewer resources, often work longer hours, have more responsibilities (especially for families), and have less access to power and decision-making. Furthermore, women’s work, needs and capabilities are often overlooked and undervalued by international actors. A primary reflection of the unequal nature of the relationship between women and men is the global phenomenon of violence against women. The widespread availability of guns contributes to the fatality rate of domestic violence.

Relevant issues for those working on small arms in **conflict situations**, include:

- **Women and men (girls and boys) often participate in armed conflict in different ways.** Men tend to be the primary armed combatants, although there have been situations where a significant number of women joined armies. Women and girls often support combatants by assuming responsibility for such tasks as cooking, acting as couriers, carrying supplies—both voluntarily and forced. Further-more, gender-based violence and human rights violations often define women’s wartime experiences. It is important, however, to go beyond the facile equation of women as solely victims and men as active combatants.

Demographics shift as a result of a conflict. The number of women-headed households tends to rise, as does the number of “dependents”. Refugee camps tend to be dominated by women and children. The presence of small arms can significantly increase the insecurity of women in refugee camps, disrupting the work towards reconstruction.

- **Women and men often have different perspectives of ‘security’.** For many communities, violence does not end with the termination of formal hostilities. Given the prevalence of domestic violence in post-conflict situations and women’s greater overall vulnerability than men’s, women and men often have different priorities vis-à-vis disarmament.

- **There is often inequality in representation of women and men in peace building and reconstruction.** Despite the fact that gender roles and expectations are often in flux in post-conflict situations, given the changed roles and responsibilities during the conflict, the formal peace negotiations tend to be dominated by men and women often have less access to incoming resources for reconstruction, including training and credit.

Gender perspectives are also important to consider in relation to small arms in **non-conflict** situations.

- **Gender and advocacy.** Women have played a strong leadership role in many parts of the world in small arms and gun control. Women have mobilized and spoken out on the need to reduce small arms proliferation. They have often found it more effective to organize explicitly as women with women's organizations.

Recent demonstrations include the Million Mom March held in the United States on Mothers' Day (May 2000) and *Women Call for a Gun Free South Africa* (March 2000). Women have organized separate events and demands as part of the culture of peace initiative. As well, the international women's organization WILPF (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) was a primary founder of the Geneva Action Network on Small Arms (GANSA) and of the recently formed New York Action Network on Small Arms (NYANSA).

- **Masculinity and weapons.** Perceptions of masculinity and manliness are often interwoven with weapons and arms:

A complicating factor for disarmament is that in several parts of Africa, particularly in the Horn, ownership of arms is culturally accepted. In some areas a man without a gun is not considered a real man. (Kingma and Sayers, 1994).

To date, this issue has not been explored in much detail. One researcher, Jacklyn Cock (1996), briefly explores this phenomenon in her work on security and development in South Africa:

Many [actors] share a gender identity that involves a militarised masculinity. Many young South Africans understand weaponry as emblematic of manliness; this militarised masculinity cuts across diverse cultures, as the following statements:

"Buy weapons, collect weapons and clean your weapons. The Boer and his gun are inseparable" (Afrikaans resistance leader, Eugene Terre Blanche)

"The call to ban the bearing of weapons is an insult to my manhood. It is an insult to the manhood of every Zulu man." (King of the Zulus addressing a rally)

There is an increasing interest in understanding the relationship between masculinity and war or conflict in general. See, for example the work of Cynthia Enloe (1993). This broader analysis could provide starting points to explore the specific issues of men's identities and small arms.

Concrete implications

There are several possible entry points for mainstreaming gender perspectives into discussions of small arms reduction:

- **Ensure the gender breakdown of the casualties of small arms proliferation:** General estimates often place women and children as the primary casualties of small arms-related deaths and injuries in certain types of conflicts. Yet it is important to understand just exactly what the numbers are in specific situations. Good empirical data will increase the understanding of who is injured and killed and in what circumstances.
- **Improve the understanding of the role of masculinity in the culture of weapons.** More work

could be done to understand how gender roles and identities interact with ownership and use of weapons. Research could explore in specific situations whether or not and how masculinity is a relevant factor in individual decisions to retain weapons.

- **Carry out a gender analysis in practical disarmament measures:** Building on the analysis of masculinity and weapons, other gender dimensions of disarmament initiatives could be explored. The decision to disarm involves questions of security and identity. In post-conflict uncertainty male combatants may be reluctant to surrender their weapons, as it may be symbolic of surrendering power and male identity.

An individual's decision to disarm is influenced by the perception of personal and economic security. This makes microdisarmament a continuing process that is dependent on myriad factors such as the state's ability to protect its citizens, crime levels, economic opportunities and the degree to which the gun has become legitimized within society. (Pike, 1999).

The role of women in disarmament and mobilization against small arms - actual and potential - needs to be investigated as part of gender analysis. Women have played important roles in local disarmament initiatives. For example, in Bougainville women from all sides of the conflict organized an island-wide programme where trained women walked alone into the jungle to seek out and persuade guerrillas to lay down their weapons (Anderson, 1999).

Another example comes from the *Tools for Arms Project* in Mozambique. This initiative involves, among other activities, the collection and destruction of weapons and the exchange of weapons for tools. A project worker provided this anecdote: "A mother with her child came in the office one day last year. Her baby was wrapped in her capulana (to carry the child) on her chest. When she arrived she pulled out a pistol hidden between her chest and child. She refused any incentive saying that a family member hid the gun in the back yard of the house and she saw him take it out at night a few times. She was afraid he'd eventually use it, so she sneaked it out. She wanted nothing in exchange to avoid any questions at her returning to the house" (Email communication).

It is important to also improve understanding of how women's and men's perspectives on disarmament vary and whether or not there are policy and programmatic implications for these differences.

- **Promote women's expertise in small arms issues and increase gender balance in decision-making:** Security studies and analysis of weapons is a professional field dominated by men. There is need to promote greater participation and involvement by women at all levels. Greater openness to women professionals could be encouraged as well as support for increased specialization by women in this area of expertise. Increased participation of women in political decision-making could, for example, also improve domestic legislation on small arms.
- **Investigate whether or not the gender division of labour in the production of small arms is a relevant issue:** In looking at the supply side of small arms, are there issues to be addressed around who works in the factories and arms industries? Are there constituencies in arms producing countries of women and men who have a vested stake in continued arms production?
- **Integrate a gender perspective into the 2001 United Nations Conference on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (9–20 July 2001).** The upcoming United Nations Conference is an important opportunity to both draw attention to the gender dimensions of small arms and to advance the discussion. This process can be improved through new research, analysis and improved documentation.
- **More research and documentation on the gender dimensions of small arms:** There is little research and documentation on the gender dimensions of small arms. What little has been written is often based solely on the perception of women as victims of small arms violence. Research and analysis could strengthen the understanding of how these two issues are interlinked and provide an improved basis from which to develop effective small arms control and disarmament initiatives. Of particular importance are situation-specific case studies that document how these issues play out in concrete situations.
- **Investigate issues relating to girls, boys and small arms:** Discussions on small arms often highlight the involvement of children as both the victims and perpetrators of violence. Yet little is known about the separate or different experiences of girls and boys.
- **Expand public support for campaigns to limit small arms:** Women and women's organizations have been major supporters of arms control initiatives. General campaigns to stop the proliferation of small arms could be strengthened through an analysis of how best to involve and mobilize women and women's organizations - both in war-affected countries and in other areas.

Resources

Books and Articles

Anderson, S (1999). "Women's Many Roles in Reconciliation" **People Building Peace**. European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation. http://www.euconflict/pbp/4/2_intro.htm

Cock, J. (1996). The Link Between Security and Development: The Problem of Light Weapons Proliferation in Southern Africa. Published in **African Security Review** Vol.5 No. 5. Available at: <http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/ASR/5.5/Cock.htm>

Cukier, Wendy. (2000). *Gender and Small Arms. A Special Report for the Small Arms Yearbook Project, Geneva.*

Enloe, C. (1993). **The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War**. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gartner, Rosemary. (2000). *Cross Cultural Aspects of Interpersonal Violence: A Review of the International Empirical Evidence*, International Conference on Crime and Violence: Causes and Policy Responses, World Bank, May 2000.

Kingma, K. and Vanessa Sayers (1994) *Demobilization in the Horn of Africa*. Proceedings of the IRG Workshop, 4-7 December, Addis Ababa. http://www.bicc.de/demobil/brief4/chap5_7.html

Lorentzen, L.A. and J. Turpin (1998). **The Women and War Reader**. New York: New York University Press.

Pike, Claire (1999). *Facing the Challenges of Microdisarmament: A Case Study Review of Practices in Post-Conflict Countries*. Ottawa: DFAIT. Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada)

Saucier, Ginette (forthcoming). *Seizing the Advantage: Integrating Gender into Small Arms Proliferation. A Discussion Paper*. Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada).

Websites

The *International Action Network on Small Arms* (IANSA) website <http://www.iansa.org/> has a search facility. Possible key words include women and gender.

The *SAFER-NET - Small Arms/Firearms Education and Research Network* website: www.research.ryerson.ca/SAFER-Net

International resolutions, commitments, and agreements

Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions on the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action - UN Sales No. E.00.IV.6):

Join international efforts to elaborate international policies to prohibit illicit traffic, trade and transfer of small arms, and to control their excessive production, with a view to alleviating the suffering of women and children in the situation of armed conflict.

The themes of small arms and disarmament received attention in the discussions at the **Twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on Follow-Up to the Platform for Action** (June 2000 - A/S-23/10/Rev.1):

98 (k) Strengthen efforts toward general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, based on the priorities established by the United Nations in the field of disarmament, so that the released resources could be used for, inter alia, social and economic programmes which benefit women and girls.

98 (l) Explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures and the arms trade and investment for arms production and acquisition, including global military expenditures, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, inter alia, for the advancement of women.

Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, adopted in October 2000, specifically mentions the need to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and their dependents in DDR (disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation) initiatives (para 13).

Gender Perspectives on **DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION (DDR)**

4
*briefing
note*

How and why are gender perspectives relevant to DDR of former combatants?

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) are activities designed to facilitate disbanding military fighters and easing their transition back into society. They are often given priority at the cease of hostilities, as it is important to help former combatants settle into peacetime occupations.

These activities can involve the turning in of weapons and weapons caches, the physical relocation of ex-combatants (often first in camps and then to other locations), distribution of benefits packages for ex-combatants (this can include clothing, minimal amounts of food and cash settlements), and development of credit, training or other programmes to assist the reintegration of combatants into their communities.

Why are gender perspectives important to DDR?

Armed conflict affects women and men differently. Although each conflict presents specific dynamics, men may have been more active in organized fighting, while women may have had to flee to refugee camps, been subjected to violence, had to assume non-traditional responsibilities and seen their domestic responsibilities intensified in their efforts to secure food, shelter and security for their families. These different experiences need to be recognized in order to construct DDR programmes that respond to the actual (rather than assumed) needs of all those involved.

Women and men have unequal access to resources following conflict. Given existing gender biases and inequalities in most societies, men are often better positioned to take advantage of reconstruction initiatives. They may be better educated; they are often more confident in dealing with outsiders; and they tend to be more visible. DDR programmes often focus on “the young men with guns”. They are seen as the powder keg that must be diffused and tend to be the most visible. Special attention is generally required to ensure that women and girls are not excluded from programmes and that women also

benefit from reconstruction efforts. Without these efforts, DDR activities run the risk of widening gender inequalities.

Finally, the achievement of sustainable peace is a complex process that must involve all members of society. DDR activities that only focus on one segment of society (former male combatants), without considering how that group interacts with the rest of society, have had limited effect. Understanding how societies can rebuild (including the gender dimensions of this process) increases the possibilities for lasting peace (Kingma, 1999).

Gender perspectives within DDR initiatives

Although each situation must be understood on its own terms, here are examples of issues that arise when DDR initiatives are reviewed from a gender perspective:

Ex-combatants are a heterogeneous group. The group of ex-fighters can include women, men, boys, and girls. Each of these groups can be further divided: people with and without physical disabilities; fighters from various sides in the conflict; volunteers versus those forced to fight; people who served as commanders and those who participated in the rank and file.

Both women and men have taken up arms.

Although the percentages vary from situation to situation, women as well as men have often participated as combatants in armed struggles (especially wars seen as national liberation struggles). At times, DDR initiatives have failed to acknowledge women combatants. For example, the demobilization programme in Mozambique in the mid-1990s only granted resettlement allowances to men and only men’s clothing was issued (Baden, 1997).

Women ex-combatants may have specific needs (needs different from those of men) relating to children, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV-

AIDS, and difficulties obtaining skills to earn a living. Reports from countries as different as Namibia, Chad and Nicaragua recount similar experiences for female ex-combatants relating to domestic violence linked to their husbands' sense of insecurity due to unemployment or recent release from the armed forces. Demobilized women also faced resentment from local people and often downplayed their leadership skills to win acceptance (Sorensen, 1998). A study of ex-combatants in Eritrea found that women fighters found reintegration more difficult than their male counterparts, often because during the struggle they experienced relative equality with their fellow fighters. Following the end of hostilities, this equality was questioned (BRIDGE, 1996).

In other cases, demobilization activities did not recognize and build on skills gained by women combatants during the conflict. For example in Zimbabwe, although women in the armed forces were given considerable informal training as nurses, on demobilization they were often ineligible to qualify for the civilian nursing profession because of their lack of formal training (ILO, 1998).

There are groups of people who were directly involved with armed fighters but are not seen as soldiers. These groups, primarily women and girls, support combatants (voluntarily or forced) while not directly engaging in combat: carrying supplies, cooking food, washing clothes and providing sexual services. They are often not a focus of DDR activities, as they are not seen as security threats. These groups may not be eligible for DDR programmes, as they tend not to have weapons to trade in. Yet, their lives have also been disrupted and they too need to be reintegrated into society.

A broad perspective of the socio-economic situation is required. Although there may often be pressures to get the guns out of the hands of combatants, it is important to understand more than just the needs, interests and situation of combatants. There are at least two important pieces in a reintegration initiative: the combatant and the family/society into which they are to be reintegrated. Just as the combatant's life has changed during the conflict, so have the lives of non-combatants. Family members not directly participating in the fighting may have still been victims of violence: they may have fled their homes, had to take on new responsibilities and learn new skills, overcome harsh obstacles and be carrying their own war horrors.

These families also need support if they are to successfully receive and reintegrate ex-combatants.

Specific issues relating to gender roles and responsibilities can arise in this process. Family members may need to adapt to changed responsibilities or to renegotiate household resources. Many marriages do not survive. The gender-based and sexual violence which women and girls face in situations of armed conflict and displacement often continue in post-conflict transition periods, and in many cases the incidence of domestic violence increases. Men who have suffered physical disabilities may have trouble re-adapting to family life. Family composition often changes with an increase in the number of widows, orphans and dependents.

Psychological rehabilitation needs are important.

Reintegration programmes often focus on economic reintegration, providing food, allowances and skills training. Yet, ex-combatants and their families may also require other types of support, including psychological trauma counselling, to rebuild their lives. For ex-combatants the transition to peacetime can be stressful and difficult. There is a need to look at the psychological transition as well as the socio-economic. This is important from a gender equality perspective, as there are often high rates of domestic violence associated with returned combatants. There may also be different post-traumatic stress symptoms for women and men ex-combatants. Support for psychological trauma must be appropriate to the situation and culture. Western notions of therapy are not always relevant.

Human rights violations and persecution.

According to one analyst, "the confidence and security perceptions of people—including ex-combatants—depends to an extent on how past and ongoing human rights violations... are being handled" (Kingma, 1999). This issue can provoke dilemmas as the merits and impacts of persecution versus amnesties are hotly debated. Women's and men's perceptions of these issues may vary as may the profile of violations.

Women's NGOs have played important roles in the investigations of human rights violations in countries such as Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala and Sri Lanka. As well as healing personal wounds, addressing impunity and compensation can also help to restore confidence in authorities and regenerate a sense of community (Sorensen, 1998).

Concrete implications

A gender perspective in DDR activities raises the following questions:

- **What are the goals of the initiative?** Although there is often pressure to adopt a narrow focus, initiatives should be grounded in a careful understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics (including gender relations). This broad understanding will help to ensure that initiatives actually promote stability. Narrow goals and limited focus (for example, only including male combatants) often fail to promote peace. It is important to support combatants, their families, and all those affected by the conflict.
- **Who is eligible?** It is important to consider who will participate in the activity and ensure that eligibility criteria do not exclude important groups. Different groups to consider include: men and women, the spouses of combatants, boys and girls, armed and unarmed military members, and rural and urban combatants.
- **Who is consulted and involved?** Participatory processes can play invaluable roles in planning DDR initiatives. Specific attention may be required to ensure that the views of women and girls (as combatants, spouses, family members and generally as members of society) are heard and taken into consideration.
- **What is offered?** It is important to consider the package of benefits offered as part of the DDR initiative. Will women and men be offered the same package? Is the package equally attractive to women and men? Will women be eligible for access to land (if that is part of the reintegration package)? If agricultural tools are offered, are they tools that both women and men will use? Will women face specific barriers when trying to take advantage of support (for example, lower education levels which prohibits their participation in specific training initiatives, social opposition to women assuming non-traditional roles)? Does the package include socio-culturally appropriate trauma counseling (recognizing that needs may be different for women and men/girls and boys)?
- **How are others affected by the initiative?** Even if the DDR initiative is limited to ex-combatants, is there a clear view of how others will be affected (particularly the families of ex-combatants)? In many cases the success of reintegration depends on the rebuilding of family and social life. This

cannot happen if pressures continue to force families apart (domestic violence, alcoholism, continued separations). The importance of understanding family dynamics is particularly important when child soldiers are involved.

- **What is the timeframe?** Although there is often pressure to deliver immediate results, reintegration is a long process. Planning must begin early, include sufficient time for consultations, and anticipate developments. It is not enough to plan for dearming and disbursement as a one-time package. A longer timeframe holds more potential for success.
- **What is the legal, political, economic and social context of the initiative?** Are there barriers or obstacles specific to women or men that should be taken into account, for example, legal, social and economic obstacles to owning or managing land or property?
- **How can local capacities and organizations be strengthened?** Local NGOs, including women's organizations, can be important players in DDR initiatives, but capacity building or additional support may be required to maximize their effective participation.
- **How can greater learning and understanding of the gender dimensions of DDR be encouraged?** There is little documentation on the gender dimensions of DDR. More research and focused studies are required.

The outcome document from the **twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on Follow-up to the Platform for Action** (June 2000–A/S-23/10/Rev.1)) highlights the importance of a gender perspective in post-conflict reconstruction. Agreed actions include to:

- Address the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive and durable manner, as well as the differences in the impact of armed conflict on women and men, and take them into account in the relevant policies and programmes in order to, inter alia, enhance the protection of civilians, particularly women and children. (Para 98d)
- Provide support to and empower women who play an important role within their families as stabilizing factors in conflict and post-conflict situations (Para 98j).
- **Security Council Resolution 1325**, adopted in October 2000, specifically mentions the need to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and their dependents in DDR (disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation) initiatives (para 13).

Resources

The following studies and articles provide some information on gender perspectives and DDR:

Baden, Sally (1997). **Post-Conflict Mozambique: Women's special situation, population issues and gender perspectives to be integrated into skills training and employment promotion.** ILO Action Programme on Skills and Entrepreneurship Training for Countries Emerging from Armed Conflict. Geneva: International Labour Office (Training Policies and Systems Branch).

Ibañez, Ana Cristina (1999). **Combatientes y Género: Implicaciones para la Reintegración.** Paper presented at Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence, The World Bank, Washington, DC, June 1999.

ILO (1998). **Gender Guidelines for Employment and Skills Training in Conflict-Affected Countries.** Geneva: Training Policies and Systems Branch, International Labour Office.

Kaffel, Hasebenebi (1999). **The Reintegration Efforts of Demobilized Fighters in Eritrea: Gender Perspective.** Paper presented at Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence, The World Bank, Washington, DC, June 1999.

Shikola, Teckla (1998). "We Left Our Shoes Behind," in M. Turshen & C. Twagiramariya (eds.) **What Women Do in Wartime.** London: Zed Books Ltd.

Sorensen, B. (1998) **Women and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources.** The War-Torn Societies Project, Occasional Paper No. 3. UNRISD. <http://www.unrisd.org/wsp/op3/toc.htm>

For general resources on gender issues in post-conflict situations see:

BRIDGE (1996). Issue 3: Conflict and Development. **Development and Gender In Brief.** Institute of Development Studies.

ICRC (2000). **Women and War.** Geneva: Available at: <http://www.icrc.org/eng/women>

International Alert (2000). **Mainstreaming Gender in Peacebuilding: A Framework for Action.** Women Building Peace Campaign.

Mooney, Erin (1998). **Internal Displacement and Gender.** Notes for a presentation to Humanitarian Principles Workshop: Focus on a Child Rights Approach to Complex Emergencies and Internal Displacement. Brussels, October. http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/Internal%20Displcmt_Gender.htm

UNCHS (1999). **Women's Rights to Land, Housing and Property in Post-Conflict Situations and During Reconstruction: A Global Overview,** United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, Land Management Series No. 9. http://www.unchs.org/tenure/Publication/Womrights/pub_1.htm

Woroniuk, Beth (1999). **Gender Equality and Peacebuilding: An Operational Framework.** Ottawa: Canadian International Development Agency. Available at: <http://w3.acdi-cida.gc.ca/peace>

For an overview of demobilization, reintegration and peacebuilding see:

Kingma, Kees (1999). **Post-war demobilization, reintegration and peace-building.** Paper presented at the International Conference and Expert Group Meeting, The Contribution of Disarmament and Conversion to Conflict Prevention and its Relevance for Development Cooperation. Bonn 30-31 August 1999. Available at: <http://www.bicc.de/>

Global Information Networks in Education (GINIE) and UNESCO (1999). **Child and Young Adult Soldier: Recruitment Prevention, Demobilization Procedures & Reintegration.** Electronic document available at: <http://ginie1.sched.pitt.edu/childsoldiers/recruitment.html>

Gender Perspectives on LANDMINES

5
briefing
note

How and why are gender perspectives relevant to reducing the scourge of landmines?

Despite significant international mobilization around landmines in recent years, landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) remain a daily threat in more than 60 countries. They kill or maim thousands of men, women, boys and girls every year. The United Nations, through its Mine Action Service, works in close partnership with Governments, civil society, business and individuals to tackle this crisis. The five pillars of UN mine action are:

- **Mine Awareness** - Populations at risk must be educated and local authorities trained to deal with landmine problems.
- **Demining** - The time-consuming, difficult and expensive work of disposing of the emplaced landmines.
- **Victim Assistance** - Thousands of maimed, blinded and crippled victims of landmine explosions need to be cared for and rehabilitated.
- **Advocacy for a Global Ban** - The United Nations works with civil society and Governments to promote universal adherence to the Convention banning the use, production, stockpiling, sale, transfer or export of anti-personnel landmines (Mine Ban Convention) and its effective implementation.
- **Stockpile Destruction** - The Mine Ban Convention provides for the destruction of stockpiles landmines within four years of entry into force of the Convention for a State Party and for the destruction of emplaced landmines within ten years of entry into force for a State Party.

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the organization to which many subscribe the success of the mobilization of the international community on the issue, have reported recently that there is some room for optimism. The use of landmines appears to be declining and production has dropped off. On the other hand, new landmines continue to be placed (for example, in Chechnya) and there are concerns that insufficient resources are being devoted to mine action programmes including mine clearance, mine awareness and victim assistance programmes.¹

¹ Landmine Monitor Report 2000. International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/landmines/>

What gender perspectives on landmines are important?

To date, the international community has paid very little attention to the gender dimensions of landmines. There are numerous rhetorical statements about women and children as innocent victims of landmines, but little documentation, research and analysis. This note provides initial thoughts on how a gender perspective could be beneficial in looking at landmines.

In assessing the gender dimensions of landmines it should be stressed that each situation should be looked at on its own merits, as generalizations do not always apply across all situations.

Women and men tend to do different work and have different responsibilities. In many parts of the world affected by landmines, women and men tend to spend their days differently. Women tend to hold primary responsibility for household work and for the health care of family members and the care of dependents. Women are often the ones who care for the victims of landmines.

Women and men may be concentrated in different economic sectors or have different roles in the same sector. In particular there is often a marked gender division of labour in agriculture. Women and men often grow different crops and have responsibility for various tasks within the crop cycle (for example, weeding is often a “woman’s chore”). This in turn may influence who has worked land that is now mined.

It is often pointed out that different mobility patterns for women and men, related to their roles and responsibilities, may influence their vulnerability to landmines. For example, women may face dangers when gathering fuel or water while men may be in greater danger on public roads, given their greater mobility relative to women.

Women’s work is often not valued and can be invisible to outsiders. Without a conscious effort to understand what women and girls do, what they need, the resources they can mobilize and their specific experiences, these dimensions can be forgotten in post-conflict initiatives, such as de-mining activities.

Social attitudes to women and men are different. In every culture there are different perceptions of what is appropriate and valued behaviour for women, men,

girls and boys. Although these social norms may change during times of conflict, in almost all situations, women face inequalities relative to men: less leisure time, less education, less mobility, less respect for their human rights and fewer economic resources. Thus women and men often have differential access to resources when attempting to support their families. When there are landmine injuries in families, these can have different implications for women and men.

Post-conflict life has different implications for women and men. Women and men participate differently in conflicts and the dynamics of a post-conflict society are also marked by gender differences and inequalities. Most obviously, the demographics have changed with a higher proportion of widows and dependents than before the conflict. The specific experiences and circumstances in post-conflict situations thus vary for women and men. It is important to understand the economic, social and political situation in communities and households along gender lines.

International agreements, conclusions and commitments

The **Beijing Platform for Action** (1995) recognizes that women and children are particularly affected by the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. It urges the ratification of international conventions that would prohibit landmines. Actions to be taken by Governments include:

- *Undertake to promote assistance in mine clearance, notably by facilitating, in respect of the means of mine-clearing, the exchange of information, the transfer of technology and the promotion of scientific research...*
- *Undertake to encourage further international efforts to seek solutions to the problems caused by anti-personnel landmines, with a view to their eventual elimination, recognizing that States can move most effectively towards this goal as viable and humane alternatives are developed. (Para 143).*

From: the **Commission on the Status of Women: Agreed Conclusions on the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action** (UN Sales No. E.00.IV.6) - actions to be taken by Governments include:

- *In order to alleviate the suffering of women and children caused by landmines, work towards the objective of eliminating anti-personnel landmines; and in this regard take due note of the conclusion of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and its implementation by those States that become parties to it;*
- Provide landmine awareness campaigns or classes in close cooperation with communities and community leaders formally and informally, making them accessible to women in afflicted areas, and provide resources and assistance for landmine clearance and share technology and information so that local populations can engage effectively in the safe clearance of landmines.
- Support programmes for the rehabilitation and social integration of women victims of anti-personnel landmines, and demining and mine awareness activities.

Concrete implications

Taking these general insights into gender differences and inequalities and applying them to all aspects of landmine programmes and initiatives highlights numerous issues:

- **Assessing landmine and monitoring the landmine threat.** The presence, or perceived presence, of landmines and UXO has the potential to disrupt an entire community. Gender perspectives need to be taken into account when determining mine clearance priorities and mine awareness education programmes. Socio-economic impact analysis of landmines must also include gender perspectives in relation to such items as land use and access to water, firewood, housing, services and infrastructure. Simply counting the number of victims says little
- **Tracking landmine injuries.** Given the gender division of labour, women and men (girls and boys) often have different risks of exposure to land-mines. Given that it is often women and girls who are responsible for gathering fuel or fetching water, they may run greater risks in some areas. Men's responsibilities and greater mobility may, however, put them at greater risk in other areas. For example, the United Nations Mine Action Service has reported data from Kosovo for June 1999 to November 2000 indicating that there were 393 injuries from

landmines, of which 28 were women and 103 deaths, including 3 women. A survey carried out in Afghanistan indicated that 3.6% of victims were women (July 1998), and figures from Cambodia indicate that 9% of casualties were female (February 1999). There is also anecdotal evidence that women tend to pay attention to signs indicating that a certain area is not safe, while men do not. The implication is that all information collected on landmine injuries should be broken down by sex and age (as is data produced by the UN Mine Action Service).

- **Designing assistance programmes for victims of landmine injuries.** Programmes to support those injured by landmines (loss of limbs, blindness, deafness and other serious disabilities) could benefit by looking at the following issues:

Who receives immediate assistance? Quick care is important for saving lives and reducing disability. Are there biases in who is treated? Is priority given to military personnel (most often male) while civilian casualties often take longer to reach medical services?

Who cares for victims of landmines? Are they getting adequate support? It is often women and girls who care for the injured immediately following the injury and provide long-term support. In relation to the longer-term care implications: "Evidence from Cambodia illustrates the gender dimension of disability as disabled men relied on their wives for support, while disabled women were abandoned by their partners or had difficulty in finding one." (ILO, 1998)

What are the gender differences regarding the social and economic impact of landmine injuries? The loss of a limb can affect women and men differently. Being an amputee can affect a woman's potential marriage chances. In many cases, married women with disabilities face immediate divorce and are left with the sole responsibility for children and the risk of poverty. While women and men both face enormous obstacles to earning a living, families devastated by landmine injuries must face different challenges depending on whether or not it is a male or female family member who has been injured.

How can women's organizations be involved and strengthened? In some circumstances women's organizations may be the best vehicle to deliver services to women. There have been examples of international organizations duplicating services that could have been provided more effectively through existing local women's organizations. If this option

is chosen, however, it is important to ensure that it does not lead to a further marginalization of women's interests and needs.

- **Targeting and designing local mine awareness campaigns.** In order to reach specific populations it may be more effective explicitly to target women or men (or girls or boys), rather than the general population. Different messages and communications strategies are required to ensure that all people are aware of the dangers of specific areas. Women's organizations may be effective vehicles to communicate such information.

Mine awareness education can also be part of a DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) campaign for ex-combatants. In such cases it is important to ensure that women and girls have access to these programmes. If the focus is entirely on former male combatants, women and girls may not participate in the mines awareness initiatives. Female instructors may be needed to reach women and girls in some situations where it is difficult for men to interact with women.

- **Designing and implementing humanitarian mine action/community-based programming around landmine removal.** Recent thinking on community-based mine action programming has argued for a shift away from a focus that is primarily technical (how many mines removed) to an approach more clearly grounded in socio-economic analysis and criteria. "This goes back to more basic issues about a general reorientation of mine action, de-mining in particular, from being primarily occupied with mines to being primarily occupied with people." (Millard & Harpviken, 1999)
- **Understanding the broad implications of landmines, including non-arable land.** Landmines leave large tracks of agricultural land unusable. This has implications for farmers - both women and men. It might be especially important for farmers of subsistence crops (often women) given the importance of re-establishing the local food supply. Landmines can also make collection of firewood and gathering wild vegetables difficult and dangerous for women.
- **Public support for international anti-landmine campaigns.** Women have been significant actors in the international campaign against landmines. Are there ways that the anti-landmine messages could strengthen women's participation in this movement (or draw in more men)? Are there links to the international women's movement that could be strengthened to ensure that women's voices are heard in campaigns and international conferences?

- **De-mining initiatives.** There can be gender issues in de-mining programmes. How are priorities set for specific areas to be de-mined? Are these women's priorities or men's? Are there significant differences between women's and men's priorities? Women may place higher priority on de-mining land previously used for subsistence agriculture, for example.

Do de-mining initiatives offer employment and skills development for women as well as men? Are

specific steps taken, if necessary, to encourage and facilitate women's participation in these initiatives?

- **More research and documentation are required.** Much work remains to be done to understand and document the gender dimensions of landmines. It will be important to carry out case studies and context-specific research in order to understand how these issues play out in concrete situations.

Women working in demining: Kosovo

In 1999 a team of ethnic Albanian women began clearing landmines in Kosovo. The women received five weeks of training (where they were allowed to bring their children) and then were paid a monthly salary.

The project manager with Norwegian Peoples Aid was quoted as saying: "In Scandinavia, we believe that it is important to show there are a lot more equalities than differences between women and men. Demining is one area where you can see that clearly. With women, you don't get Rambo types."

Although there was some opposition to the teams, reports indicate that the participants felt their actions were important. "When I told them at home what I am doing my brother shouted at me that I was sick and didn't know the meaning of the word danger. But my husband was killed by the Serbs. I like this job. I help the people of Kosovo and most of all I help the children."

Source: "Housewives Join First All-Woman Mine-Clearing Team In Kosovo." London Daily Telegraph by Julius Strauss, November 17, 1999. Available at: <http://www.minesactioncanada.com/documents/r108.html>

Resources

There are few, if any, specific resources, research or documentation on the gender dimensions of landmines. These resources focus on landmines in general.

- The *International Campaign to Ban Landmines* is a good general resource (with lots of links) on landmines. <http://www.icbl.org/>
- The *United Nations Mine Action Service* provides a starting point for UN-related documents and sites. <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/mine/>
- The *Landmine Survivors Rehabilitation Database* includes a listing of programmes that specifically target and offer services/support to women. <http://www.lsndatabase.org>
- *Mines Action Canada's* website offers a searchable database on news and documents relating to landmines. Keyword: gender issues. http://www.minesactioncanada.com/document_search.cfm

- The *Assistance to Mine-Affected Communities* (AMAC) project undertakes studies of mine-affected communities, with the aim of further exploring the opportunities to build on local resources and local competence in Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA). <http://www.prio.no/amac/>

One useful study is: Millard, A.S. and K.B. Harpviken (1999). *Reassessing the Impact of Humanitarian Mine Action: Illustrations from Mozambique*. Oslo: PRIO. Available at: http://www.prio.no/publications/reports/Reassessing_the_Impact_of_Humanitarian_Mine_Action/default.asp

One resource that looks at gender issues in post-conflict situations that deals briefly with landmines is: ILO (1998). **Gender Guidelines for Employment and Skills Training in Conflict-Affected Countries**. Geneva: Training Policies and Systems Branch, International Labour Office.

**The Department for Disarmament Affairs and
the Department of Peacekeeping Operations - Mine Action Service
in collaboration with**

**the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women
United Nations**

March 2001

Gender Perspectives on DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

What are the linkages between disarmament, development and gender perspectives?

This note explores two dimensions of the development/disarmament discussion. First, it looks at the macro issue of national disarmament, primarily related to nuclear weapons and military expenditures. Second, it turns to issues in the micro perspective, primarily concerned with local development for disarmament initiatives.

What are the linkages at the macro level?

There is a vital link between people-centred development and the use of resources. Europe is a grossly over-armed region where a number of destructive conflicts are taking place. The colossal arsenals of weapons within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) region are destabilizing and constitute a serious threat to peace. Military expenditures directly affect the availability of national resources which should be used for socially equitable and ecologically sound development, social justice and peace.

Barbara Lochbihler, former Secretary General of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Disarmament advocates have long argued that resources currently devoted to arms production could have significant impact if they were redirected to development initiatives. International conferences such as the 3rd and 4th United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995), respectively, have pointed out that a concern for gender equality raises questions about how states make choices about where to dedicate resources. High expenditure on arms means fewer resources to devote to development initiatives, including those that could have a positive impact on women and could reduce gender inequalities.

As well, women have been significant advocates for peace and disarmament. Briefing note 2, *Women's Advocacy for Peace and Disarmament*, develops this theme and provides background information.

What are the linkages at the micro level?

A recent trend in practical or local disarmament initiatives has been the "weapons in exchange for development" programmes which represent a new approach to voluntary weapons collection programmes. In these cases, the community as a whole benefits when arms are surrendered in exchange for development inputs.

This approach has been heralded as a promising avenue to explore disarmament at the community level. According to one analyst (Pike, 1999), this type of initiative recognizes the importance of community development by:

- Requiring the community to define the scope of the problem and the manner in which it is best addressed;
- Relying on the community to identify its most pressing and immediate development needs; and
- Depending on the full participation of the community in practical disarmament measures in order to realize the benefits of the development initiatives for which the arms are exchanged.

Perhaps the best known of these initiatives is the pilot project in Gramsh, Albania. The initiative developed:

...an innovative approach based on advocacy and provision of development incentives to people at the community level, to encourage them to voluntarily return the arms in their possession. This approach consists of giving equal emphasis to five key elements: symbolism, advocacy, community involvement and reward, voluntary surrender and possible public destruction of weapons.

Nora Kushti, Public Awareness Coordinator

To date, the Gramsh initiative has funded road construction, street lighting, and a radio telephone system. Close to 6,000 weapons and 137 tons of ammunition were collected. Women were particularly active in public information and awareness campaigns in the communities, including through rallies, and in training programmes.

In a recent burning of weapons ceremony in a disarmament for development programme in Bakan District in Cambodia, around 90 percent of the participants were women and children.

Although the driving force behind these initiatives is disarmament, the development side can benefit from important lessons learned by development cooperation initiatives on gender differences and inequalities. These lessons revolve around the importance of recognizing gender dimensions and using a mainstreaming strategy, i.e., integrating gender perspectives into all areas of work.

The push toward gender mainstreaming grew out of dissatisfaction with isolated women's initiatives. It was argued that all policies and programmes had an impact on women and gender relations, and therefore it was important to bring this perspective to the core of policies and programmes. The key questions that flow from such a perspective are: What are the policies and programmes trying to achieve? Do they have a different impact on women and men? Where is there potential to support women's empowerment?

Communities are not homogeneous. Where divisions along gender lines exist, it is important to take them—and such inequalities as there may be—into consideration.

In international development circles much has been learned about the complex inter-relationship between development, gender equality, community dynamics and peace, as illustrated below.

- **Gender issues are often overlooked.** Despite policy commitments to gender equality and the recognition that these issues are relevant across the entire range of development thinking and action, gender issues are often neglected. There is a need

for strong political will to ensure that they receive adequate attention and the requisite technical competence so that they are effectively addressed.

- **Gender issues are often misunderstood.** In many development initiatives, programmers and analysts often lose sight of the primary objective of a concern for gender, that is, to move towards more equitable relations between women and men. All too often gender issues are conceived as solely concerning the number of women participants or the development of marginal side initiatives for women within mainstream programmes.
- **Without an explicit recognition and understanding of gender inequalities and differences, development initiatives can worsen women's situation and gender relations.** Experience has shown that the assumption “both women and men will benefit equally” is false. The division of labour and responsibilities (who does what work), social attitudes, and unequal access to resources all contribute to a situation where policies and programmes have a different impact on women and men, (for example, education initiatives and poverty reduction strategies). Furthermore, these differences and inequalities influence how women and men participate in and respond to new initiatives.
- **Gender issues are relevant in understanding post-conflict dynamics.** Recent advocacy and scholarship have drawn attention to how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant during and after armed conflicts. There is growing interest in understanding how gender issues interweave with disarmament initiatives. (See briefing notes 1 on weapons of mass destruction, 3 on small arms and 5 on landmines.)

Concrete implications

At the **macro level**, the linkages among the three themes of disarmament, development and gender equality are very broad. Yet, there are guidelines to keep in mind:

- Ensure that all discussions of disarmament draw on the expertise and experience of women and men. Furthermore, any programmes for the use of a peace dividend that might arise from a decrease in military spending should promote the needs and interests of women and girls, as well as men and

boys (as is highlighted in the text in international commitments below).

- Look for ways to increase the involvement of women and women's organizations and movements in disarmament discussions.
- Promote women's capacity to participate in disarmament/development discussions at international fora.

Within **micro-level** initiatives, specific entry points can be identified:

- Ensure that programmes are based on a clear understanding of gender roles, relations and inequalities, to both facilitate the effectiveness of the initiative and ensure that opportunities to support more equal relations between women and men are maximized.
- Develop strategies to ensure women's participation in decision-making and eliminate the obstacles that work against their equitable participation.
- Understand and incorporate the lessons from development programming on gender mainstreaming strategies and the linkages between gender equality and different sector areas.
- Ensure that sector-specific programmes that link inputs to disarmament learn from lessons in those sectors. It cannot be assumed that initiatives will have the same impact on women and men as well as boys and girls. Some examples follow:

Arms for education projects should look at both questions of education access (who is taught) and quality (what is taught). For example, if a school is to be built, will girls benefit as well as boys from this new school? Or will there be social obstacles to girls attending classes? Will adult men have access to the literacy classes as well as women? If

new educational initiatives will be provided, will these be relevant to women and men. If evening classes in accounting are provided, – is this a priority for only one group or both?

Arms for agriculture projects should be based on an understanding of who does what work. Are women recognized as farmers? Are the tools provided suitable for women and men in the light of who performs what tasks and who grows what crops? Will inequitable access to land bias who can benefit from the programme?

Arms for health projects should take gender differences in health status and responsibilities into account. Women often have different health needs than men. As well, caring for family members who are not well is not always a task shared equally between women and men.

Many resources (such as checklists and handbooks) on these sectors and others are available from UN agencies and development cooperation organizations.

Peace education should be a critical element in all disarmament for development initiatives. It is important to recognize the key role women can play in supporting the development of a culture of peace among younger generations.

Resources

For background on gender mainstreaming strategies in development which can be applied to disarmament for development initiatives, see:

- The United Nations WomenWatch website: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>
- The UNDP Gender in Development website (in particular the resources pages) <http://www.undp.org/gender/>
- The homepage for the Gender Equality Working Group of the OECD/DAC. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender/>

In particular the *DAC Source Book on Concepts and Approaches Linked to Gender Equality* provides background, definitions and references.

For resources on gender, women and disarmament see:

- The website of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - <http://www.wilpf.int.ch/~wilpf/>
- The website for The Women Peacemakers Programme, part of the International Fellowship of

Reconciliation: <http://www.ifor.org/wpp/index.htm#>

- The website for UNESCO's Women and a Culture of Peace programme: <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/projects/gender.htm>
- Breines, Ingebord et al. (eds.) (1999). **Towards a Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace**. Paris: UNESCO

For information on practical disarmament measures, see:

- Claire Pike (1999). *Facing the Challenges of Microdisarmament: A Case Study Review of Practices in Post-Conflict Countries*. Ottawa: DFAIT
- For information and background on the Gramsh project see http://www.iansa.org/documents/un/gramsh/update_undp.htm
- Nora Kushti (2000). *Weapons in Exchange for Development Albania*. See http://www.iansa.org/documents/un/gramsh/update_undp.htm

International documents and commitments linking disarmament, development and gender equality

- **The Beijing Platform for Action (1995)**

Para 138: *Those affected most negatively by conflict and excessive military spending are people living in poverty, who are deprived because of the lack of investment in basic services. Women living in poverty, particularly rural women, also suffer because of the use of arms that are particularly injurious or have indiscriminate effects... The negative impact on development of excessive military expenditures, the arms trade, and investment for arms production and acquisition must be addressed. At the same time, maintenance of national security and peace is an important factor for economic growth and development and the empowerment of women.*

Strategic Objective E.2 (*Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments*) outlines numerous agreed actions for governments including:

Para 143: (a) *Increase and hasten, as appropriate, subject to national security considerations, the conversion of military resources and related industries to development and peaceful purposes;*

(b) *Undertake to explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditure... so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women.*

- **The outcome document from the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on Follow-up to the Platform for Action discussions (2000, A/S-23/10/Rev.1):**

Excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production, taking into consideration national security requirements, direct the possible allocation of funds away from social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women. (Para 17)

98 (k) *Strengthen efforts toward general and complete disarmament under strict and effective inter-*

national control, based on the priorities established by the United Nations in the field of disarmament, so that the released resources could be used for, inter alia, social and economic programmes which benefit women and girls.

98 (l) *Explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures and the arms trade and investment for arms production and acquisition, including global military expenditures, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, inter alia, for the advancement of women.*

Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, adopted in October 2000, specifically mentions the need to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and their dependents in DDR (disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation) initiatives (para 13).

The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice in the 21st Century (1999) Available at: http://www.hague-peace.org/agenda/agen_eng.html

This process brought together thousands of individuals and organizations and outlines challenges facing states, institutions, organizations and individuals in building peace. Points highlighted by the document include:

Human security: It is time to redefine security in terms of human and ecological needs instead of national sovereignty and national borders. Redirecting funding from armaments to human security and sustainable development will establish new priorities leading to the construction of a new social order which ensures the equal participation of marginalized groups, including women and indigenous people, restricts the use of military force, and moves toward collective global security.

The **Agenda** also supports the Women's Peace Petition, an international initiative that called for a five percent reduction per year for five years in military spending to be reallocated to human security programmes and peace education.