



Weapons in the home and in society reinforce power structures through intimidation and the threat or delivery of violence. Where traditional gender norms subordinate women, the presence of arms intensifies unequal relationships. While balancing gender norms will take time, immediate efforts to reduce the circulation of arms can help to reduce intimidation and threat, thereby foster a stronger environment in which this balancing can take place.

Stating it clearly, fewer weapons in circulation will lower levels of armed violence and create room for development. This can also help to break cycles of violence that perpetuate over time, which often help to reinforce the very negative gender norms that undermine equality. Where the presence of weapons undermines women's rights, our collective values in the fundamental rights of all people must prevail.

The group emphasized that women tend to think in ways that are multifaceted and interconnected. Harnessing this perspective can valuably contribute to making the direct connection between the presence of weapons – particularly illicit weapons – and broader community and individual wellbeing. Current narratives that defend the presence of weapons to ensure “security” do not address how these same weapons can undermine broader peace and the rights of all to live free from fear of violence.

Generally, the group expressed that the time is past due to state clearly how the presence of small arms and light weapons (SALW) can undermine collective safety, from homes to streets to seats of government. The following are concrete ideas explored by the group for how to take this work forward:

### Data

- Establish clear data collection priorities around the SDGs, and in particular target 16.4 on illicit flows of arms, to help foster greater investment in understanding gaps and prioritizing investments.

### Trainings and Hiring

- Provide trainings for women in civil society to help them integrate arms control into their work.
- Provide more and better trainings for security sector personnel on issues of sexual violence, victimization and re-traumatization.
- Integrate more women into security forces, including through recruitment and taking steps to make sure the workplace provides a safe and productive environment for women.
- Mentor young colleagues to become experts in arms control. Many women come into this field, but then go on to other work. Mentoring and support can help with retention of expertise.

### Technical

- Invest more in end user certification to be able to track weapons flows once they have been issued and are in circulation as the conversion from licit to illicit ownership remains a significant challenge.
- Place greater priority on ammunition storage and circulation. Tracking ammunition flows can tell a more dynamic story of violence as a spike in ammunition purchase can be an acute warning sign of violence and also an indication of usage.
- Emphasize the marking of weapons, both in manufacturing and upon entry into the country of operation.
- Strengthen National Experts capacities on weapons marking techniques.

- Advocate for the Government and manufacturers to digitize weapons to facilitate tracing,

### Networking

- Create a sub-group within the Women, Peace and Security community focused on disarmament and arms control. As a first point of action this group could create guidance on how to implement WPS Agenda with a focus on small arms light weapons. This work is timely as we near twentieth anniversary of UNSC resolution 1325 in 2020.
- Map existing NGOs engaged in arms control across Africa and work on building a sustained exchange and engagement among them.
- Create and protect advocacy space for women's rights groups to engage national commissions responsible for implementing arms control protocols.
- Foster more meaningful engagement between civil society and government through capacity building to help draft and implement legislation.

### Regional cooperation on arms control

- Conduct a gap analysis to understand the distance between national legislation and regional and international instruments. Include regional entities in this analysis.
- Consider a color-coded index to assess progress in harmonization of the legislation. Something easily accessible and for advocacy use.
- Women often have significant untapped knowledge regarding weapons flows, particularly in border areas. Accessing this knowledge presents real security risks to women and should not be undertaken without significant risk analysis. However, with precautions in place, harnessing this knowledge can help to address illicit flows and reduce the presence of arms in communities.
- While weapons in the home present particular high risks to women, there is often no safe reporting mechanism for women to engage authorities to obtain illicit weapons. Through very careful civil society engagement, greater learning in how to provide protective factors that can increase reporting should be an area for further research.
- In a similar way, share further knowledge about community reporting, including the concept of witness protection.

### Other

- Much more attention should be focused on the way in which violent images in the media contribute to desensitizing people – particularly children and youth. Youth and children need to be made aware of the dangers of SALW from a young age.
- Across Africa the physical security for armaments remains a major problem. Concrete investments in armory security must be made to prevent circulation of arms from government holding to illicit use.
- All arms control programming should include effective gender analysis. The forthcoming Small Arms Survey Handbook on Gender and Arms Control (2019) was acknowledged as an important guidance contribution and provides an example for ongoing collaboration
- Borders – particularly ones with little state presence and authority – represent a unique challenge within arms control. Invest in better understanding possible options for better tracking and addressing weapons flows along borders and providing safe options for programmatic engagement in these areas.