

GENDER RESPONSIVE SMALL ARMS CONTROL IN CITIES



PEACE
IN OUR CITIES

PATHFINDERS
FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES
HOSTED BY THE NYU CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

GEN  SAC
Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control

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The objective of the report is to provide a concise and practical analysis of how to understand the impact of a gendered approach in urban armed violence and how to address it. The report details the links between this violence, their impact on gender, and ways to promote gender-sensitive small arms control policies in urban settings.

About The Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control

The Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC) is a network that aims to make small arms control policies and practices more gender-sensitive. The Network endeavors to scale up the best international, regional, national, and local practices from those who have been doing small arms control “under the table,” including representatives of civil society organizations, women’s groups, conflict prevention, and development communities. In addition, it aims to foster cross-regional learning through the exchange of knowledge and experiences among regionally diverse groups of women’s rights advocates and technical experts on gender and/or small arms control. More information: www.gensac.network.

About Peace in Our Cities

Peace in Our Cities is a growing network of twenty-three cities and thirty-four community partners and international organizations working together to reduce urban violence by 2030. Our network creates evidence-based, interactive exchange platforms to reduce and prevent violence in member cities, while building a global advocacy movement for urban violence reduction. Together we are showing that change is possible, and that action is essential.

About Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies

The Pathfinders are a group of forty-three UN member states and more than one hundred international organizations, civil society, and private sector partners working to accelerate action to implement the SDG targets for peace, justice, and inclusion (SDG16). For more information: www.sdg16.plus. In 2020, Pathfinders launched the Movement to Halve Global Violence by 2030, inspired by the international community’s mandate to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and violence-related death rates everywhere” by 2030 (SDG16.1). We collaborate with at least one hundred partners to prioritize and improve specific and practical solutions that reduce multiple categories of violence and build innovative coalitions to address the pressing challenge of violence in its many forms. For more information: www.sdg16.plus/peace.

Introduction

Armed violence is an increasingly urgent global problem. Every year, the availability of firearms increases. Although violence affects the vast majority of countries, the problem is significantly greater in regions where there is more inequality: Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. These are regions where urban growth is also increasing in a disorganized manner, promoting marginalization, inequality, and different types of violence. In tandem, illegal markets—such as firearms—are gaining ground. According to the Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020, published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), it is estimated that 75 percent of homicides in the American continent are committed with firearms.

THIS STUDY WILL EXAMINE THREE CENTRAL TOPICS:

- 1. How gender perspective can help reduce gun violence in cities;**
- 2. How gender perspective is applied to gun control measures; and**
- 3. Good practices that can help reduce gun violence.**

The analysis of urban violence and violence committed with firearms has a historical deficit: the gender perspective. Many studies have focused on external or situational risk factors, ignoring the wide difference in participation between men and women in the life cycle of firearms; notably, manufacture and production, possession, use, transfers, illegal trafficking, storage, disarmament processes, and destruction.

Despite decades of evidence that nine out of ten victims of armed violence are men, and that, globally, men own 90 percent of legal weapons' licenses, the study of the causes of armed violence and most of the interventions lacked a gender perspective posing the question of whether being a man is a risk factor for gun violence. In addition, the greater presence of men in militias, the police, private security forces, and criminal groups that use weapons in organized violence demonstrates the necessity to understand the gender reasons that spurred them to join these groups. All these organizations function in a corporate and masculinized manner. Understanding the forms of interaction between men and women who live in exclusionary urbanizations can help us to design effective actions that interrupt violence and dismantle the risk factors of armed violence.

This document seeks to find the points where urban violence converges with firearms, and to understand why applying gender perspective to violence and small arms control can help reduce violence and improve the design of social interventions. Applying a gender perspective will help to better identify the factors that trigger and cause violence.

I. Small arms in the context of urban violence

Urban populations will grow in coming decades. According to the United Nations' projections, since 2007, more than half of the world's population has been living in cities. This number is expected to increase to 60 percent by 2030. The bulk of urban expansion will take place in Africa and Asia, as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean.

By 2050, the urban population will double, with seven out of ten people living in cities.¹ Despite a UNDOC study with data from sixty-eight cities suggesting no positive correlation between urban growth and increases in homicide rates (valid for all regions, especially Asia, followed by Europe²), the number of violent deaths perpetrated with firearms is still alarmingly high.

In general, when urbanization is more rapid and disorderly in countries with weak institutions, less infrastructure, or greater risk of conflict, it is more difficult for governments to meet the enormous challenges of providing adequate employment, transportation, medical services, utilities, and security.

People's perceptions about public spaces and infrastructure promote certain behaviors: in spaces with higher levels of abandonment, the presence of criminality increases; and accordingly, when criminal presence increases, public interventions aimed at recovering these spaces diminish.³ Additionally, crimes and illegal transactions increase, while firearms find easier entrance into illegal markets.

The lack of planning and institutional strength, corruption, and poor management in urban areas fosters the growth of criminal environments. According to UN-Habitat, urban population growth and the effects of globalization have enhanced both the manifestation and complexities of crime and violence in cities. At least 60 percent of urban residents have been victims of crime in those developing or transitional countries where rapid urban population growth is at its highest.⁴

Sociospatial inequality and exclusion are some of the main triggers of violence. Eighty-two percent of violent deaths occur in places that are not in a recognized war or armed conflict.⁵ They mainly occur in urban areas with the aforementioned characteristics, but more frequently in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, with homicide rates 300 percent above the global average.⁶

Almost 13 percent of the world's population lives in informal settlements. In eighteen of the twenty countries with the most violence globally, this type of urban violence is the main problem.⁷

During 2017, of the 589,000 people who were victims of global armed violence, 84 percent were men and boys,⁸ a figure that has remained stable in recent years and is sustained across different regions.

The relationship between youth, masculinity, and armed violence is a constant statistical factor. A study carried out in Latin America in 2012 concluded that more than half of homicide victims were under 29 years of age. In that region, "the homicide rate of male victims between the ages of 15 and 29 is four times higher than the global average for that age group"⁹ and 80 percent of these deaths are caused by firearms. Young men are also more likely to be victims of firearm accidents or to commit gun suicide, according to the study.

Further research indicates that the reproduction of gender roles promotes the idea that men seek respect and protection through the possession and use of firearms,¹⁰ although there are no studies to affirm that the majority of those who have a weapon do so to comply with or accentuate this stereotype of hegemonic masculinity.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC),¹¹ factors that trigger urban violence include the extensive and fragmented growth of cities; the lack of sufficient public spaces and green areas; social segregation in the public space; the existence of uninhabited

houses and vacant lots; and, to a great extent, the insufficiency of resources and public services. Lower levels of well-being, which include reduced access to medical services, educational services, essential services, and justice systems, are the cause for the marginalization of groups and social inequality. These factors further increase social and political tensions in conjunction with the proliferation and easy access to firearms, whether legally or illegally.

The anonymity of urban areas allows violent behavior and early warning signals to go unnoticed and crimes to be committed without being reported. Rapid and disorganized growth also leads to lack of cohesion, the breakdown of social structures, poor community relations, and weak or nonexistent supportive social networks. This climate favors the operation of criminal groups and the proliferation of firearms.

Today's prevailing economic system, focused on consumption and the expansion of markets, permits multiple expressions of structural violence that increase the precarity of vulnerable groups and normalize interpersonal violence. It is generally assumed that poverty is an underlying cause of crime when, in reality, inequality and social exclusion are the most serious triggers. Similarly, the lack of institutional organization, access to justice, and the absence of the rule of law contribute to the existence of lethal violence in urban areas.¹²

A 2015 study published by the United Nations Regional Center for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC)¹³ also includes a lower police presence, the presence of private security agents, and the lack of electronic security systems and video surveillance as risk factors for armed violence in cities. Armed violence also increases when

organized crime groups permeate legal and political structures.

The Small Arms Survey in 2007 first estimated that there were 875 million firearms worldwide. Of these, 650 million were in the hands of civilians, while only 25 percent were in the control of the security and military forces, increasing the risks of criminal armed violence, domestic violence, suicides, or accidents.¹⁴ More than a decade later, that number exceeds one billion weapons in circulation around the world, of which 85 percent are in the hands of civilians outside the control of States, while only 23 percent are held by security agencies and 13 percent in military arsenals.¹⁵

The firearms feeding the illegal markets come mainly from the diversion of legal transfers through corruption, negligence, and theft of arms and ammunition from security forces, or the theft of registered weapons by civilians for personal use. Groups that carry out armed violence in urban contexts also obtain small arms through commercial transactions or services to larger organized crime, which provide them with firearms as payment for smuggling, piracy, drug dealing, surveillance, money laundering, and other criminal activities. The gang culture—which arose in the United States and was later exported to Central America, Mexico, some countries in the Southern Cone, and even Africa—has increased the rates of homicides and the use of small arms in urban communities to solve interpersonal problems and commit crimes.¹⁶

In territories and communities with the presence of gangs and organized defense groups (either by ethnicity or identity), armed violence has both complex expressions (e.g., confrontations over public space) and simpler expressions (e.g., partner violence or violence within the home).

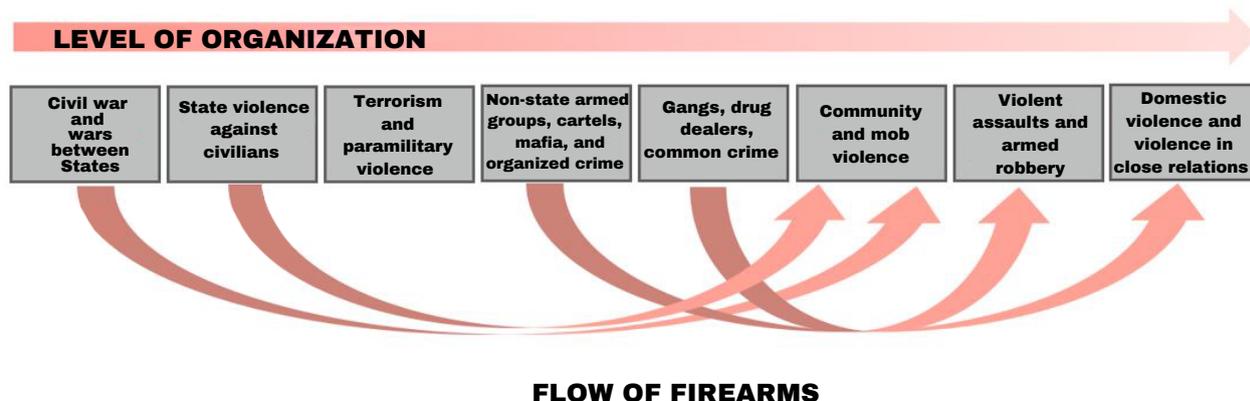


Image 1: Forms of armed violence based on the level of organization and flow of weapons to interpersonal violence¹⁷

The presence of more organized armed violence (e.g., violence between cartels, terrorist groups, nonstate agents, and gangs) increases the likelihood that community or interpersonal problems will also be solved with firearms.

Urban Marginalization and Gender

Urban marginalization generates pressures such as poverty and exclusion, as well as lack of access to basic services and other effects caused by the physical configuration of urban areas. This includes deforestation or overcrowding, both of which are risk factors for gender-based violence, particularly for violence against women.^{18,19} For example, women and girls in these conditions are typically forced to collect firewood for cooking, collect water, or move in alleys without lighting, paving, or transportation, increasing their risk of becoming victims of crime. Firearms amplify these dangers and may turn the existing risks into a lethal outcome.

The presence of gangs, organized crime, soldiers deployed in the streets, or private security agents—even in contexts where there is no war or declared armed conflict—makes public spaces more hostile to women and other vulnerable groups, such as boys and girls or people of nonconventional and diverse sexual or gender identities.

In most countries, access to public space under equal conditions is a prime goal of the feminist agenda. Armed violence in urban contexts has a regressive impact on the exercise of this right. Abandonment of public space is harmful not only for women, girls, boys, and young people, but also for communities as a whole: such spaces are more dangerous and disintegrate the social fabric. Urban violence also impedes other rights mainly affecting women and youth, such as free transit or safe travel to work and school, hindering the right to economic autonomy, equal opportunities, and education.

Men face these same pressures of urban marginalization differently, dealing with greater risks of violence. Perceptions of being excluded, compounded by fights for territory or in defense of neighborhoods, lead young urban men living

Difference between Gender-Based Violence and Violence against Women

Gender-based violence “refers to harmful acts directed against a person or a group of people because of their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, abuse of power, and the existence of harmful norms.” Although structural differences make women and girls more vulnerable to certain forms of violence, men and boys can also be victims of gender-based violence. It particularly affects those who have a gender identity or expression different from the hegemonic one, since gender violence is related to attacking what is acceptable as feminine/masculine.

Violence against women and girls is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

Source: [UN Women. \(s.f.\). Types of violence against women and girls. UN Women.](#)

in poverty to try to belong to groups and gangs as a form of identity or survival, and even to join organized crime groups or cartels. In these groups, violence is part of the initiation rituals, a mechanism of loyalty and permanence or of climbing the social ladder within the group.

Armed violence is typically organized in a hierarchical manner in nonstate groups such as gangs, cartels, and organized crime, with a sense of belonging and ties to each other. Initiation rites are generally carried out, and loyalty and value to the “corporation” is continuously being tested. The hierarchy then “cuts through and intervenes in the realm of domestic gender ties, [and] introduces the surrounding violent order into the home.”²⁰ This also often occurs in a similar manner within security institutions, the police, and the army.

A gender perspective allows us to understand the differentiated way in which urban marginalization affects men and women, and how these differences are manifested in inequalities of opportunities and rights, in power differences, the subordination of one group over others, and how the population of young men is put at greater risk of being victims and perpetrators of armed violence.

Studies of gangs in Central America indicate that marginalization in cities increases the probability of young and poor men to join gangs or organized crime groups when they are exposed to the dynamics of drug or arms trafficking.²¹

The socioeconomic factor is not the only key to understanding the reasons why young men join nonstate groups that carry out violence. Although gangs can offer a perceived way out of exclusion, such motivations cannot be completely understood without addressing the dynamics of patriarchy, deeply embedded cultural norms, and the concept of masculinity.

Masculinities are socially constructed and are the values, definitions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that respond to ideas of what a man should or should not be or do, according to the patriarchal organization. In patriarchy, relationships of male dominance predominate. In turn, to maintain their power over other groups, these relationships promote hegemonic forms of masculinity that keep other forms subordinated.²²

In this way, many young people join violent structures in order to comply with this mandate of masculinity that offers them certain benefits for the simple fact of being men, to establish relationships of domination over women, and also over other groups of men who are considered weak. The domination of hegemonic masculinity is manifested not only in physical violence but also through economic discrimination, and cultural and symbolic violence.

Firearms—legal or illegal—have a special link with the ideal of hegemonic masculinity and the power that is acquired by targeting others who are considered dangerous or different. One of the predominant roles attributed to hegemonic masculinity is that of protector of the family and heritage. Angela Stroud, in her interviews with

men in the United States that have licenses for firearms, points out that for many of them, having a weapon corresponds to their perceived need to face potential threats from those outside the group they consider themselves part of.²³ At the other extreme, men who have shot others point to firearms as a way of gaining respect and making a place for themselves in societies from which they feel excluded.²⁴

For many men, unemployment and economic insecurity pose a threat to their masculinity, changing their attitude toward firearms. This is true mainly of men who are married or have children. The more symbolic notion of being protectors through the possession and carrying of a firearm can fulfill their need to function in a role of traditional and hegemonic masculinity that they may lack in other aspects, such as being the main economic providers in crisis scenarios.²⁵

Among the reasons why men choose to carry a weapon, “citizen-protectors” represent a role beyond personal, patrimonial, or family defense, responding to the traditional masculine duty to protect and emphasizing the role of protector as an appreciated form of masculinity. Perhaps the most serious result is that it redefines lethal shooting in certain circumstances as a morally acceptable response to a perceived threat.

When it is impossible to achieve this ideal of masculinity, some men resort to violence to gain a space that they believe they can only achieve through the use or threat of firearms. Many of these men reaffirm their positions of power through the use of firearms, thus generating a double inequality with respect to other people who are in more vulnerable situations in the hierarchy of sex-gender domination such as women, older adults, children, adolescents, or people of different sexual and gender identity.

The availability of firearms encourages these interactions of domination and subordination to become more violent and leads to a greater number of homicides. Although overall homicide statistics show a higher proportion of male victims, violence against women and gender-based violence increase significantly in cities where armed violence is a constant. This often happens

in militarized spaces or in war conflicts, and remains years after the armies have left.²⁶

Women and people who exercise a dissident (nonbinary) sexual identity or expression, or a subordinate masculinity (children, older adults) can be victims of violent hegemonic masculinity, but men are often the first victims. When firearms proliferate in the streets, vulnerable populations are limited in all their rights, opportunities for transit, economic autonomy, recreation, human and social development, and access to the most basic services such as water, education, and medical care. In addition, firearms in the home increase women's risk of being victims of femicide, since they are the most used instruments to kill and intimidate partners in countries with high rates of weapon possession. Firearms also serve other threats including intimidation and sexual violence. However, in many societies the presence of firearms is so normalized that it is not perceived as a lethal risk.

The increase in femicide violence has been observed to be directly related to the presence of weapons in urban areas, and also changes in the way these crimes are carried out. Rising rates of femicides on public roads, of transgender people, and with weapons assigned to the police or military, have been documented in countries such as Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela,^{27,28} as well as excessive force and misuse of firearms in countries such as Nigeria.²⁹

The differentiated effect of armed violence on women and men is also manifested in that while the majority of men tend to be killed by other men with whom they may or may not have a relationship, women and girls receive the greatest number of aggressions from people close to them such as their partners, ex-partners, and other male members of their family.

In 2018, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killings expressed concern that women's bodies are treated as a territory of "revenge and control" in clashes between gangs in El Salvador, saying that "Gangs are a male-dominated business, and girls and women are used as collaborators, messengers or as sex slaves."³⁰ However, despite their collaboration, women can also be killed as revenge against other members

of rival gangs or as punishment for their own members. This same phenomenon is repeated in the Central American region and other countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa, either between gangs or between drug cartels.

Some acts of armed violence have a very clear gender component. Examples are shootings that occurred in 2009 in a gym in the US state of Pennsylvania, and also in 2018 in Toronto, Canada, committed by a man armed with an assault rifle against female engineering students whom he attacked for considering them feminists, as well as other acts carried out by self-styled "incels." These so-called "incels," or "involuntary celibates," are members of an online movement of heterosexual men that promotes hatred of women. The group claims the superiority of men and assumes for themselves a role as victims of women's liberation and human rights, further blaming women for their own lack of sexual and social interaction. The incel movement has inspired at least eight mass shootings in the last six years that have left some sixty-one victims in the US and Canada. Some of these shootings have happened in schools, such as the École Polytechnique de Montréal in 1989, and in Isla Vista at the University of California in 2014. More recently there have been two cases in the UK. During investigations and trials, all of them have been linked with incel ideas and groups.

However, there is also gender-based violence that is not necessarily against women. The western model of male domination is a binary model where the center is constituted by the single, hegemonic subject. All those who do not identify with that subject (i.e., man, white, heterosexual) are the potential objects of binary violence: women, boys and girls, and people with sexual diversity. This can lead to hate crimes against transgender, homosexual, and bisexual people, among others. Such was the case with the 2016 massacre in Orlando, Florida, where a lone gunman opened fire on sexually diverse people at a nightclub, killing fifty and injuring more than fifty others.

Expressions of armed violence in urban contexts due to gender

As we have observed in the previous sections, urban and gender-based violence intensify when firearms proliferate. The following graph specifies the urban violence and gender violence that can occur at different levels of organization: social, economic, institutional, and political. It also illustrates the ways in which they are linked, inciting other acts of violence.

For example, when there are military deployments in urban contexts, the presence of armies not only limits transit freedoms or imposes curfews on the population as a whole; it also transforms social perceptions, impacting the stereotyped roles of boys and girls, and normalizing the presence of armed men. As discussed above, women and vulnerable populations may feel threatened in real or symbolic terms. Women and girls can be victims of street or sexual harassment, which can also trigger community organization by armed civilians or paramilitary groups to face threats by the military deployment. People from nonconventional gender and sexual identities may be harassed or pursued. Likewise, military personnel could increase femicides with service weapons.

In particular, the gender analysis makes visible the impact on the lives of women and gender nonconforming individuals, who are prevented

from accessing public spaces where military personnel are deployed without suffering from street harassment, sexual harassment, and rape. The impact is also clear on the lives of men who are called to confront this violence.

In all contexts, an increase in the level of armed violence leads to an increase in gender-based violence and femicide. The legal or illegal flow of arms transfers shifts from the most complex violence to individual violence, moving from organized crime and militarization to gender violence and violence against women and children. It is important to take this gender perspective into account when analyzing armed violence, as well as to strengthen capacities to apply it in the process of preventing new arms transfers. Only in this way will international agreements be fulfilled to guarantee women a life free of violence, nondiscrimination in any of its forms, control of firearms, human rights. and, particularly, the Arms Trade Treaty. Its article 7.4 requires consideration of the risk that arms transfers make weapons available to commit or facilitate serious acts of violence based on gender, or serious acts of violence against women and minors.

The next chapter will explain how to apply a gender perspective to firearms control measures, and how the design of public policies with a gender perspective can help reduce armed violence.

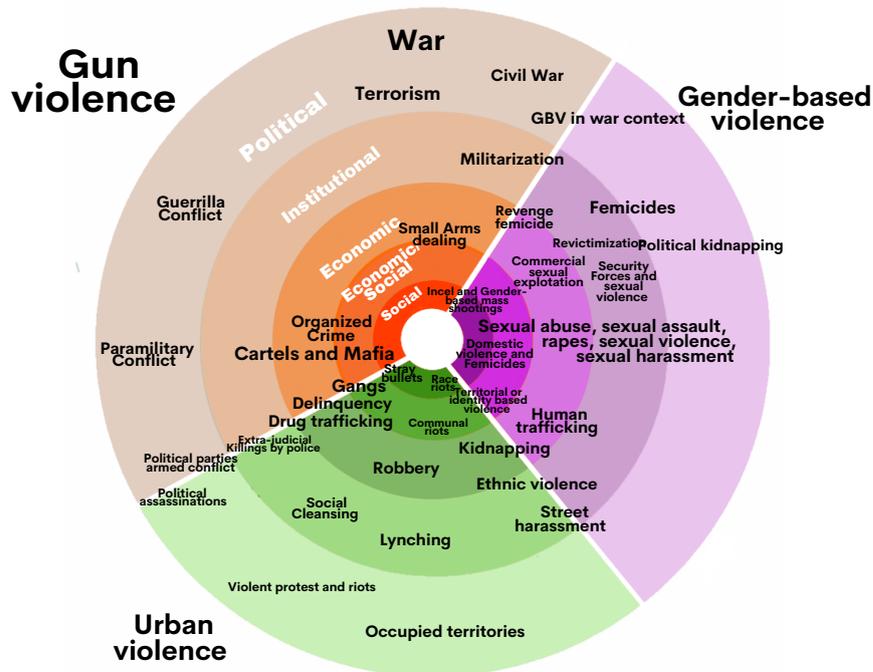


Image 2: Intersections of violence by M.Coss (2021) using categories of Moser and Winton, 2002.

II. The gender perspective and gun control

A gender perspective is an analysis tool that allows us to understand the power inequality between people, and the assignments of behaviors, opportunities, and roles that are culturally attributed to people based on their gender identity and expression. Applying a gender perspective in the creation of public programs and policies makes it possible to identify inequalities in terms of power, resources, access, and opportunities between women, men, and other populations with gender nonconforming identities.

The unequal opportunities between women and men are not determined by biology, but by social constructions. Therefore, they can be modified. Transforming social constructions that link masculinity to firearms is an important step in reducing gun violence.

Traditionally and historically, power relations between the genders have been more beneficial for men as a social group, to the detriment of women and other populations in vulnerable positions. These relationships are transversal and are linked to other aspects such as skin color, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, economic situation, or immigration status.

A gender perspective is a methodological tool for the elaboration of public policies, programs, or actions that enables identifying and analyzing experiences and different consequences, as well as the social relations of power between the masculine and the feminine. Applying a gender perspective in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and social spheres is essential to advancing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, to achieve gender equality, and to empower all women and girls. This in turn is an essential element of all dimensions of development. It is fundamental to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals established by the UN.

The analysis of violence from a gender perspective allows a better understanding of the circumstances in which events of violence against women—one of the types of gender-based violence—occur. It also makes gender understood as a transversal category of the analysis that can help unravel the different contexts in which groups or individuals, men or women, are victims or perpetrators (and sometimes both) of gun violence. In addition, it makes it possible to identify the forms of violence used to maintain political power and economic structures, as well as those used in private spaces, and the ways in which they are interconnected.

How to apply a gender perspective in arms control

The first step is to analyze the differentiated way in which armed violence affects men, women, and other groups in vulnerable conditions. It is essential to collect data disaggregated by sex, age, gender identity and expression, and ethnic origin, among other variables. In addition, the power structures, relationships, and inequalities that allow a group to have more access to firearms and thus hinder the right of others to security must be analyzed, along with how weapons accentuate the situation of power over other people or groups.

It is also important to analyze the social constructions (roles and social assignments by virtue of sex and gender) that lead people to have firearms and create situations of armed violence.

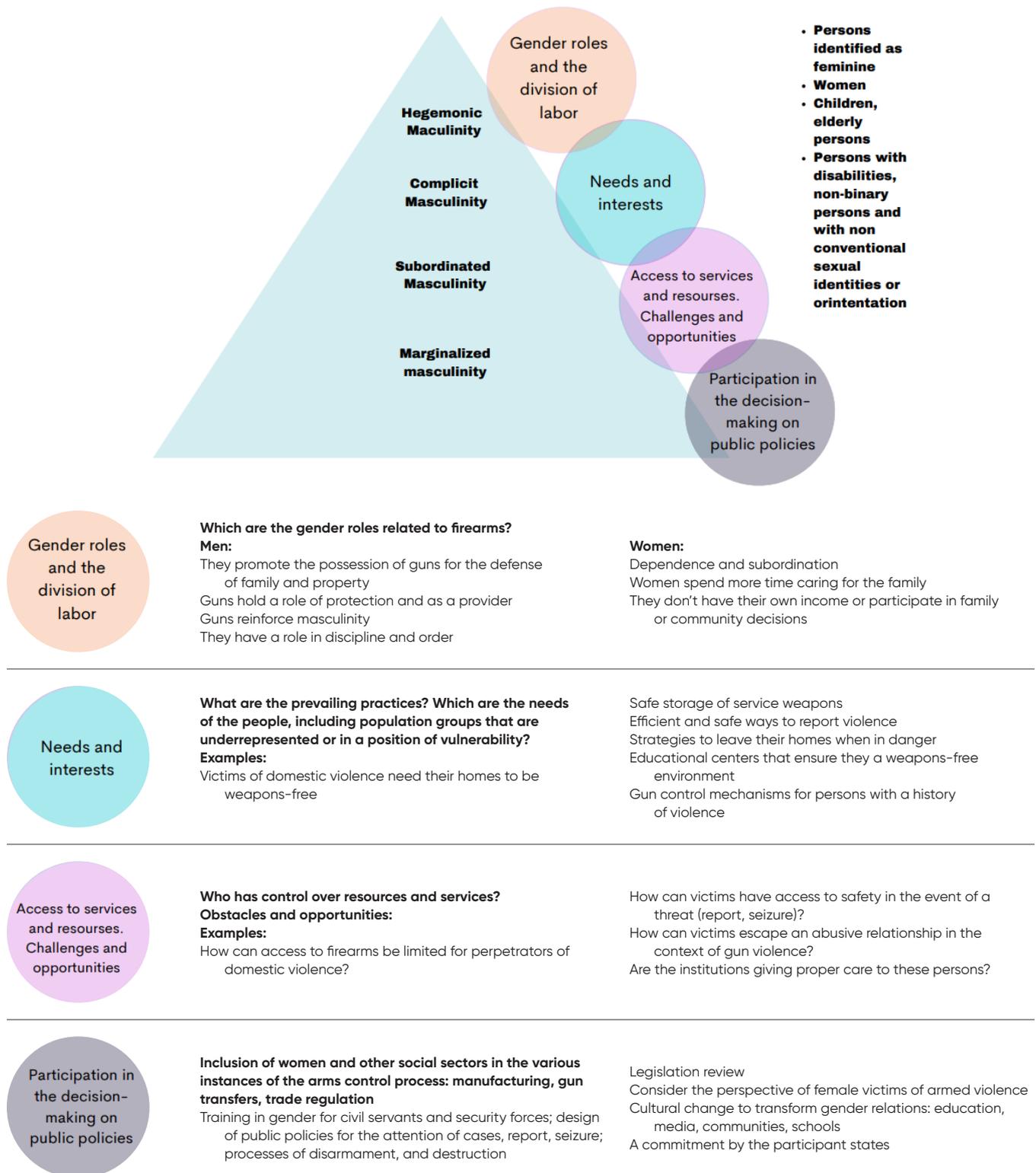
For example, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020), 54 percent of all homicides committed in the world occurred with firearms. In 2017, interpersonal homicides—those related to organized crime, delinquency, and gangs—claimed more victims than the violence of all armed conflicts and terrorism combined. The majority of victims and perpetrators of violence are young men, but women are especially at risk of firearm violence

within intimate relationships and in the home. Firearms can also contribute to sexual violence.³¹

When applying the gender lens for the analysis of gun violence in cities, the first factor to consider is the power structure between men, women, and racialized populations, people with disabilities, diverse sexual identities, children, low

socioeconomic levels, or populations marginalized by other conditions. Feminine subordination includes not only women, but all the people and groups that lack power, as well as other gender identities that do not match up to the dominant ideal.

In addition, applying the gender lens requires the analysis of four main variables:



Once there is a comprehensive diagnosis of the place that people and groups occupy in the social structure, the planning of public policies, actions, and programs moves on to the design and implementation stage. In this stage, a gender perspective requires the convening of different agents and a diversity of voices to achieve multisectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration, including women's organizations and other underrepresented groups.

When carrying out monitoring and evaluation, sufficient disaggregated information is necessary to permit comprehensive monitoring of the intervention.^{32,33} The analysis must intersect with other conditions of discrimination and inequity that permeate people's lives and that deepen inequality and exacerbate vulnerability. For example, in this sense, some studies from the US and other countries on the American continent indicate that men have greater risks of being victims of a violent crime than women, but that among them, young men under thirty-five, Blacks, or Latinos are even more likely. These crossed inequalities are what is defined as intersectionality.

A gender perspective allows us to establish a framework of interpretation that places inequalities due to gender at the center of the analysis and gives a more appropriate dimension to the problem. In this way, it is possible to more immediately identify violence that is exercised against women for the fact of being women, as well violence that occurs because of identity or sexual orientation. Such analysis makes clear that we cannot understand armed violence or urban violence without addressing its gender reasons, since violence is executed differently and has different impacts on men, women, youth, and people of different sexual and gender identities, among other groups.

Security institutions frequently maintain that the incorporation of women as part of their labor force is sufficient to integrate a gender perspective. However, including a gender perspective in the design of public policies and in the implementation of programs goes beyond the incorporation of women. It requires long-term analysis and planning for the construction of transformative strategies and social change, in addition to considering the particularities of diversity among women and men such as age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

Introducing a gender perspective to the analysis and implementation of public policies must involve deepening our understanding of the role of men in violence, and what it means in symbolic and cultural terms. Although there is no evidence of biological differences between women and men that justify inequality, our cultures grant them different opportunities, giving greater value to the masculine and leaving the feminine in a place of subordination.³⁴

III. Good practices in arms control for security in cities

In the search for solutions to mitigate violence in urban areas, private and public institutions as well as civil society can contribute from their own spaces to build paths that improve prevention and address existing problems. However, dialogue and alliances with those state agencies that oversee public policy and arms control is also essential to reduce armed violence and illicit trafficking. No armed violence prevention policy is possible without the political will of these authorities.

As a medium- and long-term strategy, actions that have a gender perspective transform the culture that reproduces stereotypes or prejudices based on gender and propose new forms of social interaction that reduce existing inequalities. A gender perspective can also be useful for modifying social structures, the ways in which institutions work, laws, social practices, and communications that reproduce structural inequalities.

Undoubtedly, one of the main strategies is awareness, training, and capacity building in various areas:

- Training at the political level and aimed at decision makers. This group includes legislatures, such as officials who have the authority to apply the laws and programs to regulate firearms and ammunition, as well as courts and public ministries, personnel in charge of investigating crimes committed with firearms, forensic teams, and first responders to emergencies and to reports of incidents involving firearms. Training is particularly relevant at all stages of the weapons' life cycle for manufacturers, officials involved in arms transfers and trade, customs agents, security forces, and police officers. Strengthening storage and safekeeping measures for service weapons has a special impact on reducing violence in the homes of military service members, and public and private security personnel.
- Training for the general public is a cornerstone for violence prevention and knowledge of the risks of having firearms in homes.
- Training for men and boys through schools and workplaces addressing the links between the use of firearms and the construction of masculinity can be preventive, and also directed toward young people who have already been in contact with gangs or organized crime groups and who have committed minor crimes. This training for the deconstruction of so-called masculinity and the eradication of gender stereotypes that drive them to violence must be seen as ways to interrupt violence and generate new life projects.
- Training in general in the gender perspective for all institutions involved in dealing with violence against women and gender-based violence, to seek innovative solutions and improve the articulation that responds to threats of armed violence in a preventive manner.

Following on the violence addressed in the first chapter, strategies are proposed based on interviews with activists, experts, academics, and officials from various countries.

Organizations that have made recommendations to promote arms control based on research and interventions in the field include, among many others: the Small Arms Survey, Amnesty International, the International Action Network on Small Arms, Control Arms, Gun Policy, GENSAC, and United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), as well as the Sou da Paz Institute in Brazil, the Keen and Care Initiative in Nigeria, and Fundación Arias in Costa Rica.

The following table brings together some of the good practices that are suggested to reduce armed violence, and strategies to include analysis with a gender perspective.

CATEGORIES, TYPES, AND MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN URBAN AREAS

Violence Category	Types of violence by perpetrators and/or victims	Manifestations	Analysis with a gender perspective	Arms control strategies with a gender perspective
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and nonstate violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guerrillas • Paramilitary conflict • Political assassinations • Armed conflict between political parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this context, the most common gender-based violence is sexual violence and rape as a tactic of war • Political violence and gender-based murders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of security and military forces • Strengthening of national and local laws • Reduction of impunity for acts of political violence because of gender
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State violence and other "informal" institutions • Including the private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extrajudicial killings by police • Physical or psychological abuse by health or education personnel • "Social cleansing" directed by state or community vigilantes toward gangs and homeless adults or minors • Lynching of alleged criminals by members of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the needs of men, women, and vulnerable groups in state investment in basic health, education, water, electricity, transportation, and security services • Change in the perception of ineffectiveness of institutions through actions • Individuals or groups may be taking on the role of "protectors" or avengers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State investment in basic services • Measures against corruption and impunity to prevent diversion of firearms • Inclusion of women in organizations that are deployed at the service of the community • Improvement of the forms of weapon storage and assignment, in addition to the registry of the loss of weapons in the local police • Imposition of effective forms of reporting loss or theft of service weapons to prevent their misuse • Training and building gender awareness for police forces, educators, and health workers • Clear protocols and greater controls for collective private firearm licenses • Gender training for first responders to report acts of violence.
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized crime • Business interests • Delinquency • Thefts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimidation and violence as means to solve economic problems • Assault, robbery and delinquency • Kidnapping • Armed robbery • Drug trafficking • Auto theft and other contraband activities • Small arms trafficking • Aggressions such as murder and rape in the course of economic crimes • Trafficking of people who engage in sex work • Conflicts due to shortage of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the security needs of women and other groups of the population in positions of vulnerability and knowledge of the incidence of crimes disaggregated by sex • Analysis by age, gender, location, demand for human trafficking, drugs, and firearms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time georeferenced monitoring of crimes committed with a firearm • Alerts for the prevention of armed violence • State investment in infrastructure, cities, and spaces • State investment in public security • Development of eco-technologies • Training for first responders in reporting • Specific public policies to combat trafficking and protect people who perform sex work
Economic/ Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gangs • Homeless children and adolescents • Ethnic violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Territorial or ethnic violence, robbery, plunder • Petty crime • Community disturbances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics disaggregated by sex • Identification of the specific risks faced by the homeless or immigrant population due to their gender • Interventions for the interruption of violence and the creation of life projects, linked to masculinity and the reproductive role attributed to women. Sexual rights of women and girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State investment in safe spaces and cities • Strategies for the reconstruction of the social fabric through disarmament • Recovery of safe spaces free of weapons • Community organization for the prevention of armed violence • Identity and disarmament campaigns • Social reintegration • Social bonding programs
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intimate partner violence within the home • Sexual violence (including rape) in the public area • Child abuse: boys and girls • Intergenerational conflict between fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters • Everyday violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical or psychological abuse of men and women • Physical and sexual abuse, especially that which involves step-parents or relatives • Lack of civility in areas such as street traffic, bar fights, and street confrontations • Arguments that get out of control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the conditions of domestic violence considering long-term interventions • Analysis of the needs of women and access to services, resources, and opportunities for economic autonomy, and the time they spend on care work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and cultural transformation for the elimination of negative stereotypes of masculinity and its link with weapons • More restrictive legislation for access to firearms • Bans on gun licenses for people with a history of domestic violence • Awareness campaigns about the risk of having firearms, emphasizing the negative aspect of gun ownership • School campaigns • Voluntary disarmament campaigns • Social cohesion strategies through schools, churches, community centers, support networks, women's networks

Source: Own elaboration based on interviews, compilation of study recommendations, and Moser's categories of violence ECLAC^{35, 36}

There cannot be substantial reduction in armed violence without a profound cultural transformation. Cultural constructions about what men and women should be require dismantling: such constructions render women as victims unable to appropriate their space and autonomy, and men receive a mandate in which they must constantly demonstrate their masculinity. When men do not find the spaces to do so, they may resort to violence.

It is essential that disarmament processes are accompanied by strategies of cultural transformation and collective well-being. Better informing of the public regarding the problems that arise from patriarchal cultural structures can help to engage young people in the discussion and redirect their behavior by raising awareness. To this end, work must be done on several fronts, including education, training, and effective social communication promoting a powerful and simple message that demystifies the use of firearms.

To reduce gun violence, in 2020, Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies proposed “Seven Strategies to Reduce Small Arms Violence in a Decade of Action for the SDGs” that work holistically and would save lives and move toward safer cities and more peaceful and inclusive societies.³⁷ Following are good practices that would help consolidate these seven strategies:

Legislation

These are just some of the examples of standards and laws with a gender perspective in terms of control of small arms and light weapons:

- Restrict the carrying of firearms for people with a history of gender-based violence, including members of the security forces
- Introduce precautionary measures to remove weapons from people against whom there are complaints of gender violence
- Limit the carrying of weapons for law enforcement personnel so that they only carry them during work hours and cannot take them home
- Limit the possession and number of firearms in homes

The strengthening of legal frameworks, international agreements, and public policy regulations that combine the objective of reducing armed violence with that of eradicating violence against women and gender-based violence can lead to actions that advance significantly the disarmament agenda, as well as the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Disaggregated data and information

Analyzing armed violence from a gender perspective makes it possible to identify inequalities and political, economic, and social power structures that generally privilege some male elites more than other groups. Frequently, however, research and statistical data collections continue to neglect considering the different gendered impacts of armed violence, and therefore neglect the public policies that are required to prevent it. In this sense, carrying out effective prevention measures requires reliable quality information regarding the different moments of the useful life of firearms, with emphasis on the collection of data on homicides and violent incidents with firearms disaggregated by sex, age, relationship with the victim, place, and circumstances.

An example of this good practice is the study carried out by the Sou da Paz Institute (Brazil) published in 2021: “The role of firearms in violence against women: analysis of armed violence in Brazil from 2012 to 2019 based on health data.”³⁸

Transparency

Any public policy that seeks to reduce the proliferation of small arms requires increased transparency and improved information on legal transfers of small arms and light weapons. A good practice is issuing official petitions to audit the institutions in charge of the production, imports, exports, seizures, storage, and destruction of firearms.

Training

Following the recommendations of GENSAC’s seven prevention strategies toward small arms control with a gender perspective requires that all officials involved in measures to control and reduce violence be aware of gender equality and its importance in all areas, in addition to deepening the knowledge and understanding of inherent

gender dimensions. It is also necessary to build training with greater gender mainstreaming in policies dedicated to small arms control.

It is crucial to integrate more personnel into arms control trained with a gender perspective, paying particular attention to the training of women so that they are able to participate at all levels of action.

Greater inclusion of women in decision-making spaces

It is important to continue working to achieve parity in women's representation in gun control leadership and in positions involved with public safety.

Mapping of good practices

The systematic mapping of good international practices and the standardization of good local practices at national levels will make it possible to adapt them to local situations. Several good practices coincide with the strategies recommended by Pathfinders³⁹ to mitigate small arms-related violence and accelerate progress toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and also comply with the three essential principles for reducing armed violence: 1) Focus on people. The best policy is the one that reduces injury or damage to persons. 2) Construct inclusive alliances with the participation of women and communities. 3) Build relationships with other violence prevention fronts. Arms control policies will have to be linked to broader areas of prevention.

Attention to gender-based violence

The involvement of strategic agents in the eradication of GBV has proven to be effective. In addition to continued focus on efforts to eradicate violence of all kinds, understanding and addressing the root causes of conflicts (irregular migration, human trafficking, drug trafficking and consumption, unemployment, etc.) is an important component of gun control.

In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it is essential to advance on Goal 5 for the substantive equality between women and men, which advocates a greater participation of women in all areas. With regard to the reduction of armed violence, the participation of women in security tasks and decision making is essential. However, their participation does not necessarily guarantee a gender perspective, which is why it must be part of the initial design and also respond to a transversal public policy.

The presence of women in decision-making positions is not just important for their representation, which is still below 30 percent worldwide.⁴⁰ The evidence in recent years has shown that the presence of women in the political sphere generates progress in terms of mainstreaming the gender perspective. It has also been shown that the presence of women in politics generates a greater probability of progress in terms of access to medical services, education, and other essential development indicators, on which the construction of lasting peace directly depends.

The role of local authorities in urban centers to improve gun control by applying a gender perspective to their policies/laws

Improving controls on the storage and safekeeping of service firearms, as mentioned above, is one of the best practices in urban centers to prevent the diversion of service firearms from local police forces and reduce their black market demand or misuse.

In addition to proper storage of service weapons, training and linking local police and first responders to a report or request for help can help prevent firearms incidents and interrupt this type of violence. In this regard, for example, in South Africa, the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act (DVA) and the Firearms Control Act (FCA) makes it possible to declare a gun owner "unfit to own a firearm" through a hearing at the local police station. The person in danger (or a relative or friend) can file a report. The police must seize the pistol and keep it secure while the investigation is carried out. Through this measure, the authorities encourage women to take firearm threats seriously, and to become more aware of the risks of having a weapon in the home.⁴¹

Another good practice along similar lines in Brazil is legislation that facilitates the precautionary seizure of weapons when it comes to aggressors against women. This allows the police to verify if the aggressor has proof of possession of the weapon. If so, a notification must be sent to the institution responsible for granting the registration. Another modified point of the law now allows the court, after receiving the victim's request, to determine the immediate seizure of the aggressor's firearm.⁴²

Legislation in Japan allows investigation of relevant people connected to the applicant before issuing a license; e.g., people who live in the same household, or even work colleagues who could have access to the weapon. The background of the person requesting the license is also investigated, including criminal, mental health, addiction, and domestic violence records. If the case of a history of domestic violence, the law stipulates that the license must be denied or revoked. In addition, the law establishes that theoretical and practical training is required.⁴³

In Argentina, the law establishes that the carrying, possession, and transport of the supplied weapon can be restricted to personnel of the federal police and security forces in cases where there is a complaint of gender violence and/or domestic violence.⁴⁴

From the analysis of the legislation in Latin America, general recommendations emerge to link the laws for the regulation of firearms with the laws for the prevention of gender violence, as well as to create and strengthen observations that link the study of firearms with gender violence.⁴⁵

International standards that promote the consideration of gender in arms control

It is important to highlight the importance of international cooperation. When states and international organizations coordinate, great strides can be made in arms control. This requires that countries and institutions share information and exchange knowledge. A good example of this was the operation carried out by Interpol in the first months of 2021, and announced in April.⁴⁶ According to the organization, the international operation throughout South America made it

possible to detect and dismantle an extensive arms trafficking network that operated in the thirteen countries of the Southern Cone. In addition, the operation facilitated the apprehension of traffickers and police officers in collusion with criminals. These officers provided access to weapons to be resold on the black market, demonstrating why weapons in security institutions require strict control in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of civilians either through corruption or simple carelessness.

What the arms industry can contribute to reduce the illegal arms market and trafficking

On August 4, 2021, the Government of Mexico filed a civil lawsuit against eleven of the major arms manufacturers in the United States. The lawsuit demands compensation for the damages caused by American weapons in Mexico, in particular homicides. A large part of the Mexican government's argument is that arms producers know that many of their products will end up in the hands of criminal groups in Mexico, and that they have sought strategies to benefit economically from arms trafficking. Thus, the lawsuit states that these manufacturers produce weapons that are coveted by cartel leaders, as well as light weapons that can easily be converted into assault weapons.

The arms industry can help with significant reduction in illicit trafficking in firearms, ammunition, and components by establishing protocols for the responsible sale of their products. To this end, it would be important in principle that they participate in the verification of end users. It is also essential that they penalize their distributors who violate international law, and that they collaborate with authorities to improve the tracking and traceability systems for firearms involved in criminal acts.

Other actions relevant to reducing the armed power of criminal groups include cultural change to counter the promotion of military-type weapons among the civilian population. Examples would be stopping targeted advertisements or the creation of products that glorify criminal subcultures. Mafias and criminals respond to the cultural stereotype of the mandate of violent masculinity.

Conclusion

To reduce armed violence in urban environments, it is essential not only to address the conditions that foster acts of violence or the use of firearms, but also their structural causes. These can include unemployment, lack of opportunities for young people, lack of education and information, and deficiencies in public security policies, health institutions, transportation, politics to address irregular immigration, and cultural transformation, among others.

A gender approach is an essential addition to public policies for arms control, along with making it clear to institutions and societies how such policies affect women and children differently. The necessity of implementing measures aimed at their protection is key to advancing their security.

The inclusion of more women in arms control and disarmament measures is paramount, not only as a matter of equity, but also because of the proven impact women have on peacebuilding efforts. Women have proven to be powerful agents of change in the protection of human rights and in the construction of peace processes. Arms control policies must consider multiple and diverse points of view that reflect women's experiences, perspectives, and capacities in order to definitively advance the global Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Greater participation of women in security, pacification, and disarmament tasks, along with the participation of minorities, people of sexual diversity, and other groups that are vulnerable due to their gender condition, is crucial to ensure inclusion of other points of view, amplify the voices of victims, and implement innovative actions in prevention. Building sustainable peace, moreover, requires the capacity of all people.

Cultural transformation is essential in redirecting those behaviors of the patriarchal society that promote or tolerate the use of violence, and that promote the use of firearms to get a place, show power, or obtain something. Such transformation is also crucial to empowering young people to resist peer pressure. The mandate of masculinity evinces facets of competition and destruction that, when combined with firearms, are dangerous for the safety and well-being of others. Transforming the sociocultural standards of masculinity is therefore a major factor in curbing the social acceptance of violence. No type of violence should be tolerated.

In the long term, we must bet on substantive equality policies that seek to close the gaps between women and men and guarantee the rights of all people. We must also establish economic and political systems that put people's lives at the center and focus on their care. Promoting greater participation of men in these tasks is one of the main drivers of cultural transformation to work toward the prevention of violence.

Reducing armed violence in urban environments requires the joint efforts of all humanity and all countries. It is the collective responsibility of industry and government, international agencies, civil society organizations, and institutions. It requires awareness and training of security forces, states, women, men, and gender nonconforming people. It demands new forms of social relations and the breaking down of stereotypes that promote a masculinity mandate that puts not only women at risk, but all of society.

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