



Issue Brief on *Small Arms and Light Weapons*

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Introduction

Small arms deeply affect women because women and other civilians are the primary victims of conflict, the presence of small arms interferes with the provision of basic needs and, women are playing greater roles in peace-building and peace-making operations. In wars and communities saturated with weapons, such arms are used to terrorize women and empower armed individuals and gangs to commit heinous crimes directed specifically at women. Women are often forced to endure rape and other sexual abuse and violence, as well as abductions and forced slavery, including prostitution at the point of a gun. From Sudan to Sierra Leone, women as young as 10 have been abducted at gunpoint from their homes. Women in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons are routinely gang raped and abused. Powerless in the face of armed groups, women must also endure the kidnaping and killing of their children, as they watch. After a conflict, small arms may become instruments for other forms of violence, such as crime and banditry, disruption of economic or foreign aid, and interference with efforts to deliver food, medicine, and supplies to people in dire need of relief. Refugees are often afraid to return to their homes because of the large number of weapons still in the hands of the population. With the adult male population greatly diminished, women often become the main provider for their devastated families during and after a conflict. The presence of small arms makes this task increasingly difficult. In post-conflict societies today, women are playing a greater role than ever before in the peacekeeping and peace-making process. For example, women are integral to reintegration and rehabilitation projects for former combatants. Women manage the consequences of small arms proliferation on a daily basis. Women must be included in all aspects of a society's post-conflict reconstruction process and their special needs - psychological, social, and economic - addressed.



Defining Terms

- **Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW):** 1. Small arms and light weapons are used by all armed forces, including internal security forces for, inter alia, self-protection or self-defence, close or short-range combat, direct or indirect fire, and against tanks or aircraft at relatively short distances. Broadly speaking, small arms are those designed for personal use and light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew. While small arms and light weapons are designed for use by armed forces, they have unique characteristics that are also of particular advantage for irregular warfare or terrorist and criminal action. Specifically, and drawing from the 1997 report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms: a.) An Individual can carry small arms for personal use, while light weapons can be handled by two or more people serving as a crew, a pack animal or a light vehicle. They allow for highly mobile operations; b) Mortars, rockets and grenade launchers or mounted anti-aircraft guns often constitute the main armament of light forces, providing them with high firepower that often causes heavy casualties among the civilian population if used indiscriminately; c) Their relative low cost in comparison to other conventional arms make them affordable to many actors beyond the State; d) Since many small arms require little, if any, maintenance, they can essentially last forever. They can be hidden easily and even young children can use them with minimal training.

2. The Panel of Governmental Experts (A/52/298) contains definitions for the following categories of small arms and light weapons, including ammunition and explosives: a) Small arms: revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine-guns; assault rifles; light machine-guns. b) Light Weapons: heavy machine-guns; hand held, under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers; portable anti-aircraft guns; portable anti-tank guns and recoilless rifles; portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems; portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems; mortars of calibres of less than 100mm. c) Ammunition and explosives: cartridges (rounds) for small arms; shells and missiles for light weapons; anti-personnel and tank grenades; landmines; mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems; explosives.¹

- **Arms Transfers:** Arms transfers include all forms of movements, including aid and free gifts, in addition to commercial sales, brokered sales and licensed production.
- **Arms Brokering:** Arms brokering includes activities designed to facilitate or arrange or conclude an arms deal. It is also used to refer to those supplying transportation and financial services to complete an arms deal. [more...](#)
- **Marking and tracing:** According to Small Arms Survey 2003, at the first UN Conference on SALW, "ninety-five states advocated marking weapons in order to determine the origin of, and transfer routes taken by, small arms thus preventing their diversion from legal to illicit markets. Specific approaches differed widely, however, with some states emphasizing that regulations for marking were a national responsibility, others favouring 'agreed minimum standards,' and a third group advocating the negotiation of legally binding international instruments. The issue of marking was sometimes mentioned in isolation, sometimes in conjunction with the related areas of record-keeping and tracing." [more...](#)

Fact Sheet

- Small Arms Survey estimates that 7.5 to 8 million firearms are produced per year. In 2002, the value of small arms production was valued at USD7.4million.

The Impact of SALW on Women



- Prolific SALW increase the threat of intimidation and abuse of women and heighten the lethality of gender-based violence, both inside and outside the home.
- Constrained by fear of violence exacerbated by the easy availability of SALW, women's political participation, as well as their capacity to perform daily household functions such as food provision, water and fuel collection and other family sustenance activities, is severely curtailed. In a climate of fear and intimidation, women's participation in all public sphere activities is constrained. Education, access to markets and formal employment all become more difficult under the threat of SALW violence.

The Impact of SALW on Women's Human Rights

- The prevalence of SALW facilitates violence, harassment, displacement and other abuses of women's human rights in violation of the ICC Rome Statute, the Geneva Conventions, CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW). DEVAW holds states responsible for deterring violence against women, even if non-state actors perpetrate it.
- Excluding women from the planning and implementation of peace-building initiatives violates their right to participate in the design of institutions and mechanisms that will directly affect their lives and their communities.

SALW and Displacement

- Prolific SALW increase civilian displacement as the most vulnerable are forced to flee potentially lethal attacks.
- The threat of violence caused by a large presence of SALW in refugee camps renders women's survival, networking and sustenance activities more difficult.

SALW and Public Health

- Gender-based violence is made more likely, and more severe, when SALW are readily available. The adverse consequences for women's physiological and psychological well-being has an impact beyond their immediate lives, since it negatively affects their dependents, increases costs to health services, and compromises their economic, political and social activities.
- Widespread proliferation and use of SALW affects the availability of health resources for women. If weak, underfunded and understaffed health infrastructures must constantly deal with emergencies caused by SALW injuries, reproductive and preventive health become lower priorities, thus worsening women's health and well-being.
- Women carry the greatest burden of caring for the injured, the sick, the traumatized, the elderly and the orphaned, and prolific SALW compound the difficulties they face in their care giving work.

SALW and Masculinities

- Small arms have a particular impact on men as well. In fact, men make up the majority of victims of SALW. This fact highlights the gendered nature of small arms. They impact men and women in fundamentally different ways. Men are much more likely to be killed and injured by guns; men are more likely to kill and main with guns. However, women make up a greater proportion of gun victims in relation to their proportion of gun owners and uses.
- Gun ownership is often closely related to conceptions of masculinity in society where SALW and gun violence is pervasive. In some cultures, boys receive guns as a part of coming of age rites. According to a 2003 report published by Amnesty International and Oxfam



International, entitled [Shattered Lives](#), “the power of guns is inextricably linked with the notion of masculinity in both industrialized and traditional cultures...The power of guns is both symbolic and actual.” Furthermore, the glamourization of gun violence in conjunction with hyper masculinity has spread to many conflict zones and influences the way young men see themselves in the context of ongoing fighting, poverty and despair. Nonetheless, women also can play roles that are conducive to SALW proliferation by smuggling, arming themselves and encouraging their men to arm.

Treaties and Institutions

- [The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons](#) (CCW) comprises four protocols which restrict the use of certain kinds of weapons that maim and kill indiscriminately, including mines, booby traps and weapons that leave undetectable fragments in the body. Ninety member states have signed the convention. The Convention dates from 1980 and was reviewed in 1996 and 2001.
- [The Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects](#). Member states included the following preambular paragraph at the 2001 meeting: “Gravely concerned about its devastating consequences on children, many of whom are victims of armed conflict or are forced to become child soldiers, as well as the negative impact on women and the elderly, and in this context, taking into account the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children.” The Programme of Action, which sets forth key parameters for reducing illegal transfers of weapons, was followed up in 2003 at the [Biennial Meeting of States](#).

Tools and Checklists

- The Department of Disarmament Affairs “[Briefing Note on Gender and Small Arms](#)”
- UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery: [Small Arms Primer](#)
- [Gendering Disarmament as a Peace building Tool](#). Dr. Vanessa Farr. The Bonn International Centre for Conversion. 2002.
- [Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Regional and International Concerns](#). Vanessa A. Farr, Kiflemariam Gebre-Wold (editors). Bonn International Centre for Conversion. July 2002.
- International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) [Women's Portal](#)
- [Activist's Toolkit](#) IANSA
- Control Arms, a joint campaign by Oxfam International and Amnesty International
- [In the Line of Fire: Gender Perspectives on Small Arms Proliferation, Peace Building and Conflict Resolution](#). The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)



UNIFEM Action

Between 2000 and 2002, UNIFEM worked in conjunction with UNDP in Gramsh, Albania, to reduce the number of illicit arms in civilian hands following unrest and disturbances in the late 1990's. Activities of the project included:

- A workshop entitled "Women's Role in the Weapons collection program in Diber: Relations between Development and Disarmament" was held. The workshop provided training to NGO and political representatives, who discussed and developed strategies for weapons collection.
- Capacity building workshops for civil society leaders were held.
- Over 200 women participated in a local conference called "Women of Diber Say 'No to the Guns, Yes to Life and Development'."
- Posters were designed focusing on women's role in the disarmament process.
- A live call-in radio programme was produced on local TV about women's involvement in the Weapon's Collection programme in Diber.

Women participated in jobs skills training courses on languages, computers and tailoring as an extension of the programme. Feedback from participants in various workshops indicates that informal information exchanges were more successful in raising awareness than were some of the larger awareness campaigns conducted by the UN system in Albania. This re-enforces the value of raising awareness first amongst civil society and service providers before launching any public awareness campaign. The survey conducted showed that results of weapons collection programmes have been better when women are targeted with public awareness campaigns. The stakeholders survey conducted clearly showed that 62% of respondents believed that women have influenced their families' decision to surrender weapons.

UNIFEM was very involved in the Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eliminate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July 2003. . In addition to contributing to the inter-agency report and statement, UNIFEM highlighted the disparate impact of SALW proliferation on women through an exhibit in the neck area in the basement of the Secretariat Building. UNIFEM also facilitated the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) Women's Network exhibit, which brought further attention to women and small arms. UNIFEM actively supported the IANSA Women's Network planning sessions, helping the various NGO actors to consolidate their platform and launch a campaign hinged on the next Biennial Meeting in 2005. During the thematic debate on "women, children and the elderly," UNIFEM successfully lobbied several Member States to make statements emphasizing women's roles in peace building, grassroots disarmament efforts and community education. These statements marked a significant departure from the "women as victims" discourse that had heretofore dominated the Meeting. Capitalizing on the presence of so many world authorities on SALW, the Peace and Security team co-hosted an expert group meeting on Gender and SALW on the Saturday following the BMS. Academics, NGO representatives and various UN staff members engaged in fruitful discussions regarding gender and SALW with a particular emphasize on defining a research agenda.

In March 2004, UNIFEM Central Africa Office participated in a regional meeting in the Great Lakes on SALW. Parliamentarians from Rwanda, Burundi and DR Congo met in Bujumbura, Burundi to discuss means to implement the Nairobi Declaration to curb the illicit flow of SALW in the region.

In April 2004, UNIFEM participated in a meeting held in San Salvador, El Salvador geared towards



training researchers in SALW. UNIFEM's intervention comprised of sensitizing the researchers from every country in Central America on gender perspectives of SALW and presenting the findings of UNIFEM's Expert Group Meeting on Identifying the Research Gaps in Gender and SALW held in July 2003.

UN Resources

- The Department for Disarmament Affairs "[Briefing Note on Gender and Small Arms](#)"
- The Department for Disarmament Affairs "[Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan](#)"
- World Bank Fact Sheet on [Conflict, Peace-Building, Disarmament and Security: Gender Perspectives on Small Arms](#).
- Secretary-General's Report to the Security Council (15 November 2000) on the Destruction of Small Arms, Light Weapons, Explosives and Ammunition (I SHARE)
- Department for Disarmament Affairs [Small Arms Page](#)
- Department for Disarmament Affairs [Educational Resources](#)
- UNICEF's "[Taking Aim at Small Arms](#)" Campaign
- UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery [Small Arms and Demobilization Unit](#)

UN Documents:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>SYMBOL</u>	<u>TITLE / ITEM</u>	<u>REFERENCES</u>
25 March 2004	S/PRST/2004/7	Presidential Statement on the issues in West Africa	
12 March 2004	S/2004/200	Report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat sub regional and cross-border problems in West Africa	Paragraphs 10-12; recommendations 7, 8, 9 Paragraph 19; Recommendations 31, 32, 33
19 January 2004	S/PRST/2004/1	Presidential Statement on small arms	
31 December 2003	S/2003/1217	Secretary General's report on small arms	
18 March 2003	S/RES/1467 (2003)	Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons and mercenary activities: threat to peace and security in West Africa	S/PV.4720 S/PV.4720 Resumption 1 Press release SC/7694



			"SC calls for strengthened cooperation in West Africa to counter small arms trafficking"
March 2003	No symbol	Non-Paper from the President (Guinea) to Council members for the Open Debate of 18 March 2003	"Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the phenomenon of mercenaries: threats to peace and security in West Africa"
31 October 2002	S/PRST/2002/30	Presidential Statement on Small Arms	SC/7554 "Security Council seeks limitation on illicit trade in small arms, noting harmful impact, especially on vulnerable groups"
18 October 2002	S/2002/1172	"Non-paper for the Consideration of the Issue of Small Arms" dated 8 October 2002 annexed to the letter addressed to the President from the PR of Colombia	
11 October 2002	S/PV.4623 S/PV.4623 Resumption 1	Open debate of the SC on small arms	SC/7528
8 October 2002	Fair copy faxed to members on 8 October 2002	Issues Paper for the open meeting on 11 October 2002: The role of the Council in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons	 small arms.pdf Information note from the President of the Security Council
20 September 2002	S/2002/1053	SG's report on small arms	
31 August 2001	S/PRST/2001/21	Statement by the President of the Security Council	On the question of the "small arms"
2 August 2001	S/PV.4355 S/PV.4355 Resumption	Provisional verbatim of the Security Council's open debate on small arms	SG/SM/7902-SC/7715 SC/7114
25 July 2001	S/2001/732*	Letter dated 9 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the UN	Encloses a document entitled "Issues for the open debate on the



		addressed to the President of the SC	question of small arms"
21 July 2001	SG/SM/7896 DC/2796	Press release: "SG congratulates conference on 'important first steps to combat small-arms scourge'"	United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (9-20 July 2001)
15 November 2000	S/2000/1092	Report of the Secretary-General on methods of destruction of small arms, light weapons, ammunition and explosives	
19 July 2000	S/2000/712	Report of the SG on children and armed conflict	Para. 15 Recommendation 8 (page 6) Section D (pp. 7-8) Para. 77
7 September 2000	S/RES/1318 (2000)	Resolution 1318 (2000) ministerial declaration on ensuring an effective role for the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly in Africa	Part IV, first paragraph
20 July 2000	S/PRST/2000/25	Role of the SC in the prevention of armed conflicts	Page 4, paragraphs 3-5
5 July 2000	S/RES/1306 (2000)	Resolution 1306 (2000) on the role of diamonds in the Sierra Leone conflict and the link between trade in Sierra Leone diamonds and trade in arms and related <i>materiel</i> in violation of resolution 1171 (1998)	
19 April 2000	S/RES/1296 (2000)	Resolution 1296 (2000) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict	Operative para. 21
23 March 2000	S/PRST/2000/10	Presidential Statement on the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building: the role of UN peacekeeping in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration	Page 2, paragraph 2



11 February 2000	S/2000/101	Report of the Secretary General on the Role of UN Peacekeeping in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration	Paragraphs 42-47 (The disposal of arms and ammunition) Paragraphs 48-52 (Illicit arms flows) Paragraphs 54-57 (Longer-term measures)
24 September 1999	S/PV.4048	Provisional verbatim of the SC	
24 September 1999	S/PRST/1999/28	Presidential statement on Small arms	
17 September 1999	S/RES/1265 (1999)	Resolution 1265 (1999) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict	Operative paragraph 17
8 September 1999	S/1999/957	Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the protection of civilians in armed conflict	Paragraphs 23, 55, 59, 65 Recommendations 26, 38
25 August 1999	S/RES/1261 (1999)	Resolution 1261 (1999) on children and armed conflict	Operative paragraph 14
8 July 1999	S/PRST/1999/21	Presidential statement on the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peace-building: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment	Paragraph 3, page 1 Paragraph 6, page 2
12 February 1999	S/PRST/1999/6	Presidential statement on the protection of civilians in armed conflict	Paragraph 3, page 2
19 November 1998	S/RES/1209 (1998)	Resolution 1209 (1998) on the situation in Africa (illicit arms flows to and in Africa)	Operative paragraphs 1, 10, 12 and 15
16 September 1998	S/RES/1196 (1998)	Resolution 1196 (1998) on the situation in Africa (strengthening the effectiveness of arms embargoes)	Operative paragraph 2 (adoption of legislation making the violation of arms embargoes established by the Council a criminal offence)

Recommendations

The UNIFEM appointed Independent Experts called For:



United Nations Development Fund for Women

WomenWarPeace.org

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- **Recognition of special health needs of women who have experienced war-related injuries, including amputations, and for equal provision of physical rehabilitation and prosthesis support.**

Explanation of the Recommendation: Studies of the health effects of conflict have rarely focused on women (with the exception of reproductive health) and most of the data on conflict mortality and morbidity (illness) are not broken down by gender. Women are seldom mentioned as a special group, but are lumped together with children as 'vulnerable groups'. Yet women have particular experiences and exposure to circumstances that affect their health. They also have patterns of access to health care that are different from those of children and men. Recognising this will better prepare health programmes to equally deliver what women and men need.

Entities Responsible: National governments, Donor governments, UN agencies especially the World Health Organization, UNFPA, UNMAS, UNICEF, Doctors and health professionals, Health-focused NGOs

Ideas for Implementation: WHO, with support from other agencies including NGOs, should review the implications of conflict and displacement on specific women's health issues and develop guidelines for the provision of adequate relief emergency and long-term services.

- **The Security Council to formulate a plan for the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources. Sixty years after being assigned the task, the Security Council should implement Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, taking into account the Women's Peace Petition, which calls for the world's nations to redirect at least 5 per cent of national military expenditures to health, education and employment programmes each year over the next five years.**

Explanation of the Recommendation: The founders of the United Nations understood that the prevention of war was inextricably tied with the reduction and control of armaments. In Article 26 of the Charter, the Security Council together with the Military Staff Committee is asked to generate a plan to divert as little of the world's human and economic resources to armaments as possible. The Military Staff Committee effectively ceased to function 29 months after the founding of the UN, perhaps the reason why this plan has never eventuated. The Independent Experts feel that the plan called for by Article 26 is needed more than ever as military spending surpasses what was considered absurd Cold War levels of investment in military solutions to security, many of which are demonstrably not working.

Entities Responsible: Security Council member states, Military Staff Committee, UN Agencies working in the field of disarmament, arms control and demilitarization. NGO and academic disarmament, arms control and verification experts could provide technical support.

Ideas for Implementation: Security Council to convene expert level internal working group to make recommendations on compliance with the UN Charters' 26th Article. Military Staff Committee members to provide advice and technical support to the Security Council Working Group. Various UN agencies working in the field of disarmament and arms control could also provide advice, technical support and background documents. Academic and NGOs could contribute expertise and broad civil society input to the Security Council.



- **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives to equitably benefit women ex-combatants and those forced to service by armed groups. Resettlement allowances and other forms of support should be provided on a long-term basis.**

Explanation of the Recommendation: Each of the DDR processes involves and has implications for women, whether they participated in combat, have family members who did, or are members of a community trying to integrate former combatants. While some women joined armed groups of their own free will, large numbers were abducted into combat and/or forced to become sexual and domestic slaves. But no matter how they came to military groups, almost all of them are neglected during the DDR process.

Entities Responsible: UN peacekeeping operations working with host governments, UNDP Regional organizations working in weapons collection and destruction, demobilization and reintegration, NGOs working in DDR.

Ideas for Implementation: All organizations working in the area of DDR should integrate gender perspectives into the process, providing separate camp facilities for women and the wide range of health and psychosocial support needed by women former combatants and sexual and domestic slaves. Education and training packages, as well as other financial and concrete support in getting work and a home, should be part of the DDR work. Those agencies responsible for DDR should request support from relevant UN agencies to support this work, for example UNFPA could provide invaluable support in demobilization camps. HIV AIDS issues are increasingly important to address in the demobilization phase of wars. Testing and support services for those with HIV/AIDS should be considered a routine part of the process.

The Secretary-General in his 2000 Report on Women, Peace and Security Recommends:

- Identify and utilize local sources of information on the impact of armed conflict, and the impact of interventions – peacekeeping, peace-building, humanitarian operations, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration – on women and girls, and on the roles and contributions of women and girls in conflict situations, including through the establishment of regular contacts with women's groups and networks.
- Recognize and utilize the contributions of women and girls in encouraging ex-combatants to lay down arms, in weapons collection programmes and ensure that they benefit from any incentives provided for such activities

¹ Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Methods of Destruction of SALW, Ammunition and Explosives. 15 November 2000

