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## Being part of the process: women and SALW control

Prepared for the  
Security Dialogue Session at the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC)  
on the topic of Gender-responsive Disarmament,

By

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28 October 2009



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### SALW control

- A 'technical' issue ?
- Civilian possession
- Legal and illicit SALW

## Direct consequences

Young men are the principle direct victims, but the indirect victims include everyone, especially women.

The presence of SALW facilitates and perpetuates violence against women. Such violence takes many forms, including:

- murder;
- intimidation;
- rape;
- torture;
- sexual abuse;
- sexual harassment;
- threats and humiliation;
- forced prostitution, and;
- trafficking of women and girls.



## Indirect consequences

- Disability, injury, intimidation, trauma;
- Psychological and economic burden as caregivers;
- Burden on health system means that their basic needs cannot be met.
- Displacement;
- Undermines development, employment;
- Erodes democracy and human rights;
- Legitimises use of force at all levels.



Camila Magalhaes Lima, Brazil.  
Paralysed by a stray bullet during a shoot out between armed robbers and a private security firm.

## SALW in the home

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- Women are at 3 times the risk of being killed by an intimate partner when a gun is in the home.
- The ownership of a legal firearm is one of the main risk factors in the murder of intimate female partners.

### Post conflict contexts:

- Guns circulate in the community;
- Post-conflict stress, economic prospects and a reduction in basic services contribute to the dynamics of domestic violence after war.

*A 2007 survey in Montenegro of 1500 women who sought assistance from a women's shelter, found that 90% were threatened with SALW by their partners.*

*Krkeljic, Ljiljana, Small Arms and Gender-Based Violence in Montenegro – A Research Study, Podgorica: UNDP, 2007*



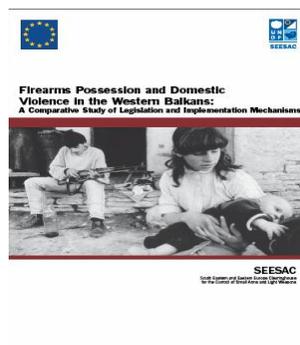
**Where did the gun  
come from?**

## Canada: harmonised laws

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- Gun law prohibits ownership by domestic violence offenders, and the domestic violence law requires the removal of guns.
- Canada tightened its gun laws in 1995. By 2003, the gun murder rate dropped by 15 per cent overall, and by 40 per cent for women.
- The 1995 Firearms Act requires a licence for possession, and acquisition, with screening and licence renewals every 5 years.
- Reports of domestic violence automatically trigger a review of a gun owner's licence.
- Current and previous spouses (past 2 years) will be notified of an individual's intention to acquire a firearm license.
- Spousal consent is not required for acquisition, however if a spouse has concerns, it will trigger a secondary review of the application.

- 2007 study in the six countries of the Western Balkans and Kosovo;
- Proposals for changes to legislation presented to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and training curricula for police, judges and prosecutors has been developed.
- The catalyst for the 'Disarm Domestic Violence' campaign, the first international campaign to protect women from gun violence in the home.
- Women's organisations from OSCE member states are collecting information about the phenomenon.



## SALW control: gender analysis

### **The United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA)**

- Only one reference to gender;
- At the 2006 Review Conference a large number of States supported the addition of a reference to gender to the PoA;
- States still have an opportunity to consolidate this progress in the next phase of the UN small arms process.

### **Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards**

- One of the 24 areas addressed in the IDDRS was the topic of Women, Gender and DDR.

### **UN entities – gender policies**

- UNDP and SEESAC have explicitly developed gender policies which aim to address the particular elements that normalise and perpetuate pro-gun and pro-violence behaviours.

### **UN Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA)**

- Is developing International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS), just as the UN system has done with landmines and DDR.
- Gendered aspects of SALW control programming will be incorporated in all modules of the Standards;
- Intended for policy makers and practitioners who do not necessary have a strong interest in gender.



## The case for gender sensitive SALW control in the OSCE

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OSCE Ministerial Council Decision MC 14/05 states that:

*'...the knowledge, skills and experience of both women and men are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability in the OSCE region.'* (OSCE, 2005, 1).

BUT, the Decision does not contain guidance on how to do this in practice.

- However, there are some examples which provide recommendations which can inform weapons collection initiatives. These include:
  - A comprehensive assessment which maps the attitudes and perceptions of those who may possess SALW;
  - The involvement of civil society including women's organisations;
  - The creation of a national network of civilian actors to plan and implement the collection;
  - Support for local and national actors in the design of the campaign.



## Women's participation

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**Is critical particularly in relation to post-conflict contexts and civilian possession.**

- Women are active in many areas, from grassroots actions, to campaigning, to policy development and research. This includes:
- The development of gun laws, and/or strengthening existing laws in their country;
- Working with the security sector and/or judiciary;
- Using UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in their work on disarmament.
- Involvement in the international campaign on armed domestic violence.

## Involvement in weapons collection

**Important to place the emphasis on gun free homes created – focus back on family, community and peer group.**

- Argentina: Last year's gun buyback was an enormous success. 70,000 weapons and 450,000 rounds of ammunition were collected, and over 50,000 destroyed.
- 95% of gun owners are male but women handed in 50% of SALW;
- National opinion poll prior to the buyback - more women than men consider that having a gun in the home is dangerous; and more men than women think that a gun provides security.



## Campaigns

Challenge attitudes, the link between SALW and violent masculinity and make use of the power that women do have in many situations.

- Viva Rio in Brazil used the fact that 'gun' is a feminine noun in Portuguese, as part of their strategy. They developed the slogan, aimed at boyfriends and husbands, 'Choose her [the gun] or me.'
- In many societies women do have a very large degree of power in the domestic sphere of the home, so some campaigns appeal to those women.
- In Uruguay there is a campaign based on the slogan, 'If you have a gun, you have a problem', which highlights the danger that a gun in the home creates for everyone who lives there.
- The success of collection initiatives depends on the clarity of the message, and for women that is proven to be that women are safer in a gun free home.





## Stockpile Management

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- Closely linked to choosing appropriate locations and facilities while minimising the risks;
- Risk assessment should include the exposure to the consequences of explosion;
- Women can be more exposed to this than men by their more frequent presence in certain places (markets, roads that lead to water, etc);
- However, also need to consider long term impacts on the mental health of survivors;
- Symptoms include disorientation; difficulties in concentration; aggressiveness; sleep disorders; fear and irritability; and flashbacks.



## Weapons destruction

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- Confidence building through public destruction events, whether they are with surplus, confiscated, voluntarily surrendered weapons;
- Most methods fall into one of three categories: crushing, burning or cutting;
- The UN and OSCE have developed technical guidelines for destroying weapons;
- The OSCE has best practice for the identification of and destruction of surplus SALW.

### **Gender considerations**

- Destruction of ammunition or rocket fuel (melange), can lead to chemical exposure with varying effects depending on the length of exposure. Women and vulnerable groups may be at higher risk.
- It may be necessary to raise awareness of the effect on human health and on the environment.
- Participation of women and vulnerable groups in policy-development and decision-making processes can help to reduce the risks.
- Chemical pollution may have different social and economic implications on men and women.



## SALW demand and SSR

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- Men generally obtain guns to protect their family, especially if they believe that the security sector will not provide that protection;
- Security Sector Reform (SSR) is essential to reduce demand for SALW;
- SSR opens a window of possibility to transform security policies, institutions and programmes, creating opportunities to integrate gender issues.

### **Gender & Security Sector Reform Toolkit, OSCE et al**

- Gender as a key to operational effectiveness, local ownership and strengthened oversight;
- Women as a resource base for improving all aspects of human security in the post-conflict period;
- Build on the experiences and public standing acquired by those women who played peace-building roles.
- Training: focus on prevention and intervention to stop armed violence, particularly gender-based violence.
- Private military and security services: standards for the use of weapons and storage whilst off-duty.



## Recommendations

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- Incorporate a gender perspective in any future agreement and document on SALW;
- Ensure and increase participation of women in decision-making and other activities at national, regional and international levels (rosters, committees, recruitment,...);
- Fully address the community dimension in the OSCE Document on SALW;
- Install screening mechanisms for the acquisition of legally owned guns



Thank you

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