

Women in the Crossfire: UN SCR 1325 and Small Arms

31 October 2008 marks the eighth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This landmark resolution brought women's participation and gender mainstreaming issues to the forefront of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding.

SCR 1325 has also proven to be a decisive mandate for the field of small arms policy and practice. The resolution and the following UN Secretary-General Reports call for women's increased involvement in decision-making; support to local women's small arms initiatives; ending violations of women's human rights including gender-based violence; and women's full inclusion in disarmament, demobilisation, reinsertion, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes (DDRRR).

In order to fully implement SCR 1325, small arms policies and practice must include women in decision-making and take gender issues into account.

SCR 1325: "Reaffirming also the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts"

Preventing Gender-Based Violence through Disarmament

SCR 1325: "Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse"

According to the UN Secretary-General's 2002 Report on Women, Peace and Security: **A proliferation of small arms increases the risk of interpersonal violence, including domestic violence, which often continues after the conflict.**

The presence of a weapon within the home can escalate the threat and intensity of violence, as has been thoroughly documented in studies of femicide.

The rates of domestic violence often soar in a post-peace accord climate. Failing to disarm combatants facilitates this escalation of gender-based violence against women. Successful disarmament, demobilisation, reinsertion, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRRR) processes, community-based disarmament campaigns, and national arms education initiatives are crucial to preventing gender-based violence.

UN Secretary-General's 2002 Report on SCR 1325: **disarmament activities are of great importance to women and girls because of the heightened threat to their personal security owing to the proliferation of weapons in post-conflict situations.**



Protection of Women's Human Rights

Misuse and easy access to weapons are serious threats to the human rights of women. As small arms have become the weapon of choice in most of today's armed conflicts, they are directly linked to women's death, injuries, rape and forced displacement both during conflict and post-conflict.

To ensure protection and respect for the human rights of women and girls, measures need to be taken to reduce small arms misuse and regulate access to weapons. Examples of key measures: creating and enforcing laws regulating possession; disarmament initiatives; education and training on women's human rights for legal arms owners including police and military.

UN Secretary-General's 2002 Report on SCR 1325: **an understanding of the vulnerability of women and girls in camps, particularly where there is a proliferation of weapons, should inform all management and operational decisions and should lead to the establishment of adequate protection mechanisms.**

Women in the Crossfire: UN SCR 1325 and Small Arms continued...



Supporting Local Women's Small Arms Initiatives

SCR 1325: "Calls on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including inter alia:

(b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution"

Local women's organisations are often the first to initiate micro-disarmament projects under the banner of creating peace and security. These projects often include awareness-raising and weapons collection components. Unfortunately, according to the 2002 UN Secretary-General Report, the essential work of these women's groups and networks has **not always been sufficiently recognised and supported.**

Measures need to be taken to support local women's small arms initiatives through increased capacity-building, provision of resources, and funding.

For further information see:
IANSA Women's Portal
www.iansa.org/women/

Equal Participation of Women in Small Arms Policies and Programmes

SCR 1325: "Urges Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict"

Creating effective policies and programmes that prevent and respond to gun violence is an essential component of the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. When SCR 1325 stresses the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all peace and security initiatives, it is effectively demanding an increase in women's representation in small arms policy and programmes.

This can be achieved through reform of recruitment policy and practice; implementation of gender-balance requirements; consultation and collaboration with women's organisations; and small arms policy training and education for women.

UN Secretary-General's 2002 Report on SCR 1325: **Because of their [women's grassroots organisations] active interest in and support of disarmament processes, consultations with women's groups and networks can provide important information regarding perceptions of the dangers posed by the number or types of weapons, the identification of weapons caches and the transborder weapons trade.**

Including Women in DDRRR

SCR 1325: "Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants"

According to the UN Secretary-General's 2004 Report on SCR 1325, specific actions need to be taken to strengthen the involvement of women and women's groups in all aspects of DDRRR programmes: **Increased attention must be paid to procedures that verify eligibility of women and girls associated with fighting forces. Separate procedures should be established to ensure that women and girls who have been involved in armed conflict receive medical care and psychosocial support.**

In addition, the UN Secretary-General's 2002 Report calls upon all Member States, United Nations entities and civil society organizations to incorporate the needs and priorities of women and girls in the design and implementation of DDR programmes; to increase the number of programmes for child soldiers, fully incorporating the needs of girl soldiers; and to develop programmes on the prevention of domestic violence for male ex-combatants.