

GENDER AND DISARMAMENT

Fact-Sheet

WHY DOES GENDER MATTER IN DISARMAMENT?

- ❖ **Gender inequalities:** Armed conflict exacerbates gender inequalities. In conflict and post-conflict countries the percentage of women with legal titles to land is 10% lower than the global average for women, enrolment ratio in primary school for girls is 15% lower and women's share of seats in parliament is 4% lower than the global average for women.¹ Child marriage rates are among the world's highest in conflict-affected countries and maternal mortality is on average 2.5 times higher.² Furthermore, when men are killed or injured during conflict, women have to take on additional roles as income providers for their family often leading to impoverishment, exploitation and discrimination.³
- ❖ **Gender-based violence:** Women are differently affected by the proliferation and use of small arms and light weapons. While men tend to make up the most direct casualties of arms, women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence. The presence of a gun increases the likelihood of domestic violence turning into murder by 500% and small arms are frequently used against women to facilitate sexual violence. In war-torn Iraq, for example, 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence.⁴
- ❖ **Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR):** Women and men can be actors and victims in armed conflict. However, female members of armed groups are frequently overlooked in DDR programmes which often focus on exclusively young men. In order to not exacerbate gender inequalities, the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and of their dependants need to be considered.
- ❖ **Health:** Given biological differences, women and men are affected differently by testing, use and fallout of weapons. For instance, women exposed to ionizing radiation have 50% higher risk of developing and dying of cancer than men, and are at high risk of miscarriage and stillbirth leading to social stigma and discrimination.⁵
- ❖ **Military expenditures:** Military expenditures directly affect the availability of national resources that could be used for socially equitable development, social justice and peace initiatives, including those that could reduce gender inequalities. In 2016, there was a global military spend of \$1.69 trillion (SIPRI)⁶. Meanwhile, only 2% of peace and security aid was spent on gender equality.⁷ Global military expenditure increased approximately 60% from 2000 to 2015, while OECD data indicates funding for women in civil society dropped by about half during this time.⁸
- ❖ **Political decision-making:** Women diplomats and experts continue to be associated with "soft" themes, such as development aid and human rights. Despite the long and consistent history of women's organisations advocating for disarmament, these gender stereotypes lead to an underrepresentation of women in many key forums where decisions on disarmament are made. Research on the representation of women in multilateral disarmament forums has shown that only a quarter of official country delegates are likely to be women, and less than a fifth of statements are likely to be given by a woman. Almost half of all country delegations at any disarmament meeting are likely to be composed entirely of men.⁹

¹ UN Security Council (2015) [Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security](#), p. 10

² UN Women, [Infographic Women and Armed Conflict](#)

³ WILPF (2017) [Toolkit Weapons War and Women in the MENA region](#)

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ UN Women calculations based on data from [Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group estimates](#) and birth estimates of the [Population Division's World Population Prospects](#), cited in the [SG report, S/2014/693](#), p. 27

⁶ [SIPRI's military expenditure website](#)

⁷ UNWOMEN (2015) [Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace - A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325](#), 12 October 2015, p. 373

⁸ http://www.peacewomen.org/wilpf_and_sdgs

⁹ Article 36 (2015) [Women and multilateral disarmament forums: Patterns of underrepresentation](#)

- ❖ **Masculinity and militarism:** Armament and disarmament policies and practices are influenced by ideas about gender. The possession of weapons and the preparedness to use military action are linked with masculine characteristics of potency, control, power, domination and strength - a social construct which needs to be replaced with notions of masculinity associated with negotiation, cooperation and equality.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Knowledge-building

- ❖ Read publications and research papers on gender and disarmament. Resources are provided by [Article 36](#), [UNODA](#), [UN Women](#) and [Reaching Critical Will](#).
- ❖ Be familiar with the [UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\)](#). See also UN Women's useful [overview poster of all WPS resolutions](#).
- ❖ Attend panels and other discussions that offer opportunities to explore the links between gender and women and disarmament and the impact of weapons and armed violence on women and girls. Check regularly [the event's calendar](#) on GDP's website.
- ❖ Organize training and capacity-building for women and men delegates on issues related to gender and disarmament to enhance their knowledge of and responsiveness to these issues.

Integration in multilateral forums on disarmament

- ❖ Reach out and consult women civil society groups to ensure that disarmament decisions are addressed from multiple angles and take into account women's perspectives.
- ❖ Ensure that Women, Peace and Security issues are included in disarmament meeting and conference agendas.
- ❖ Organize and support side-events with an explicit focus on gender dimensions of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.
- ❖ Incorporate gender considerations and strong wording on gender equality and women's empowerment into remarks and interventions made in relevant UN forums on disarmament, including the UN General Assembly First Committee and the Conference on Disarmament.

Human resources

- ❖ Support efforts to ensure gender balance in your disarmament delegation to the United Nations and other international organizations.
- ❖ Identify and invest in career development and leadership of women colleagues, including through leadership training and mentorship programmes as well as recruitment targets.

Working practices

- ❖ Make a public commitment by joining the [International Gender Champions](#), adopt the panel parity pledge by refraining from participating in all-male panels and striving for gender balance and diversity in the panels and events you participate in and organise.
- ❖ Look for ways to increase the involvement of women diplomats, experts as well as women's organizations in disarmament discussions for instance through travel and capacity-building funding.
- ❖ Provide political and financial support to women civil society organizations and grassroots women's leaders who work on disarmament issues.
- ❖ Promote gender-sensitive disarmament initiatives, programmes and advocacy efforts such as the [#MoveTheMoney initiative](#) to shift government funding from war to gender equality and peace.
- ❖ Disseminate information on intergovernmental commitments, initiatives and best practices on promoting gender equality, women's participation and gender balance in disarmament to colleagues including in the capitals, and work towards their implementation including through a [National Action Plan \(NAP\) on Women, Peace and Security](#) with strong disarmament provisions.

Institutional changes

- ❖ Develop a gender-equality policy and action plan for your organization/office, drawing on the above steps, and identifying specific targets, activities, actors, deadlines and resources.