



UNIFEM Talking Points on Gender and Small Arms

1. The Impact of SALW on Women and Children:

- Prolific SALW increase the threat of intimidation and abuse and heighten the lethality of violence, both inside the home and in the public arena.
- Constrained by fear, 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.

UNIFEM recommends that all Member State initiatives in the area of SALW consider the particular impact on women and girls, while making provision to include them actively in disarmament activities.

2. The Impact of SALW on 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.

UNIFEM urges that Member States respect and promote women's human rights in accordance with international humanitarian law, including the right to live free of violence and the right to participate in and engage with decision-making processes at all levels. States should hold non-state actors accountable for violations against women.

3. SALW and Refugees

- 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.

UNIFEM recommends that Member States actively support programming to increase security in refugee and displacement camps. The special needs of women and girls must be planned for, and recognition and support must be given for the multiple roles they play.

4. 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.
- 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.

UNIFEM recommends that Member States design and support national and regional initiatives to eradicate violence against women. States should also recognize and support women's care giving work.

5. DDR

- DDR processes have, to date, excluded women and girls by failing to plan for their specific humanitarian and security needs whether they are combatants, camp followers, domestic workers, porters, slaves or caregivers.
- To address this problem, gender experts and women leaders must be present as peace talks begin so that they can contribute to the planning and implementation stages of DDR and other peace-building initiatives.
- Disarmament and reintegration are ongoing processes and require community support. Women's full participation will positively influence DDR and promote its long-term success.

UNIFEM urges that member states proactively institute DDR processes that recognize the specific needs of women and girls, and capitalize on and promote women's grassroots peace-building and disarmament initiatives.