



BACKGROUND

The UN Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA) launched its 46-page [Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan](#) (Action Plan) on 15 April 2003. The Action Plan was inspired by previous efforts to integrate gender issues into the daily work of the DDA, such as the [Gender Perspectives on Disarmament Briefing Notes](#), along with an extensive corpus of mandates including UNSC Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" and the Beijing Platform for Action. The Action Plan is the first of its kind within the UN Secretariat. It was developed as an internal, user-friendly working document through an extensive consultative process with DDA staff. Two consultants, Merav Datan and Beth Woroniuk, facilitated the drafting of the plan over a four-month period.

To ensure implementation, a built-in monitoring mechanism has been devised: responsibility for carrying out the Action Plan is included in every staff members Performance Appraisal System; activities related to the implementation are reported in DDA's Monthly Activity Reports; the Action Plan is incorporated into the annual work plan of each Branch; survey questionnaires have been distributed; and a review process will be carried out in early 2006.

OVERVIEW

The primary assumption of the Action Plan is that disarmament work – at all levels – can be strengthened through both the equitable participation of women in decision-making processes and the integration of gender perspectives into disarmament debates, decision-making and actions.

The Action Plan is divided into four chapters with two annexes:

1. Overview, Mandates, Definitions, Reporting and Monitoring
2. Action Plan Goals
3. Branch by Branch Initiatives
4. Checklists

Annex 1. Gender and Disarmament Themes: How gender mainstreaming can further disarmament goals.

Annex 2. Gender and Disarmament Linkages.

EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

As much as the focus of the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan is 'gender mainstreaming' rather than 'gender equity,' encouraging the further participation of women within disarmament is a theme that runs throughout the Action Plan.

Sub-Goal 4 of the Action Plan reads "Support equitable participation in disarmament discussions. DDA will reach out to gender equality activists, women's organizations and individual women in order to expand their knowledge of disarmament issues and the convergence of interests between gender equality and global disarmament."

THEORY

DDA's Vision Statement, UNSC Resolution 1325, the Beijing Platform for Action etc. are all cited within the Action Plan as mandates calling for the increased participation of women. In an attempt to implement these mandates, the Action Plan includes theoretical arguments calling for further participation of women as well as concrete suggestions for DDA in Chapter 3 & 4.

Within the introductory Chapter as well as the Annexes, the question of **who** the players are in disarmament is highlighted:

“Whose experiences (in combat or in the community before, during, and after conflict) are most visible and therefore influential, who has access to policy – and decision-making, and who has the technical expertise, or access to it, in order to participate in weapons-related policy-making?”

The Action Plan also briefly addresses different arguments for the need to include women in the sphere of disarmament: that personal safety has different implications and limitations for women and men; that women need to be included in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) efforts; and that there exists an inequality around decision-making in small arms and light weapons (SALW) and therefore women's participation needs to be encouraged.

CONCRETE TOOLS

Chapter 3 on Branch by Branch Initiatives, goes through each Branch within DDA¹ describing past work on gender issues and detailing potential future actions and projects to fulfil each of the 4 sub-goals of the Action Plan.

Quick Examples:

A few of the suggestions under Sub-Goal 4 for the various Branches include:

- **Develop** – together with OSAGI, UNIFEM and DAW² – **a roster** of women, experts in a variety of disarmament issues, preferably from developing countries, who could be drawn on to speak at events and panels, and/or contribute to the many aspects of DDA's work.
- At the end of UN or regional meetings, panels, etc. **look for opportunities to reach the 'women's press' and women's non-governmental organizations** – invite representatives of women's magazines to a specific press conference, hold a debriefing exclusively for women's organizations, etc.
- Continue the **recruitment of female participants in the Disarmament Fellowship Programme** and incorporate 'gender and disarmament' into the Fellow's agenda.

Chapter 4, Checklists, are for actions commonly undertaken by DDA: Organizing a panel; Fact-finding Missions; Public outreach; Hiring consultants; Preparing briefing/speaking notes; Formulation of project proposals; Fellowship programmes; and Studies and reports.

Quick Examples: 4.1 Organizing a Panel

<p>What to ask?</p> <p>What is the gender balance of the panel participants (how many men and how many women?)?</p>	<p>Why ask this question?</p> <p>Although this may be considered a superficial question, the 'optics' of 'who speaks' is important.</p> <p>Is it possible to identify female experts in this area?</p> <p>As well, although female panellists may be harder to find, they may bring a slightly different perspective that can enrich the discussion.</p>
<p>Who is invited to attend the panel? What is the target group? Is it possible to reach out to women's organizations?</p>	<p>One common concern is that there is a shortage of qualified women and/or women's organizations with capacity to participate in disarmament dialogues. An invitation to attend panels and discussions is a way of building their awareness of these issues and their capacities.</p>

¹ Branches include: Conference on Disarmament and Conference Support; Weapons of Mass Destruction; Conventional Arms; Regional Disarmament; Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa; Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and Pacific; Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean; Monitoring, Database and Information; and Executive Direction and Management.

² All part of the United Nations: Office for the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, United Nations Development Fund for Women, Division on the Advancement for Women.