

Secretary-General's Report on Women and Disarmament
UN Women INPUT
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Background

It is a well-known fact that mostly men manufacture, sell, collect and use guns and that the majority of homicide victims are men. However, globally, the enormous majority of women who die as a result of gun violence are women who are victims of intimate partner violence. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the USA found that annually, women are more likely to be killed by a firearm in the context of intimate partner violence, than all female homicide victims together. According to the March 2011 issue of *Strategies: The Persecutors' Newsletter on Violence Against Women*, "Nearly two thirds of all women killed by firearms [in 2010] were killed by an intimate partner. Firearms are the most frequently used weapons to intimate partner homicide, eclipsing all other weapons combined." Yet, a gun does not always have to be fired to pose a threat. The sheer presence of a firearm in the home constitutes a serious and lethal risk. A study by Harvard School of Public Health found that "hostile gun displays against family members may be more common than gun use in self-defense, and that hostile gun displays are often acts of domestic violence directed against women."¹

A further problem is the largely under-reported phenomenon of spousal and marital rape, both in Western and non-Western countries. According to Mahoney & Williams (1998) [in the setting of peace] rape is most commonly done to a victim known to the perpetrator and that in fact, rape in marriage or intimate partnership is more common than rape by a stranger.² Victims of violence rarely seek help or report incidents. Many live in abusive relationships in which asking for medical care would raise suspicions of the partner, who may use violence against them." Again, the challenge for progress in women's and girls' rights is to develop research methods that can efficiently gather data on the amount of women who are raped in their own homes at gunpoint either by a husband, intimate partner or a relative. This type of data can then be used to push for more effective policy.

The main challenge of proving how small arms and light weapons exacerbate gender-inequality is the **lack of reliable, sex-disaggregated data** as well as the fact that even basic concepts and methods for data collection and analysis lack international standards. Thus it is not always clear what exactly is being measured and how. An example is the concept of *femicide*, which can mean both the killing of a woman because of her sex, or more broadly, any killing in which the victim is female. The latter definition is broader and allows thus for a focus on multiple forms of lethal violence against women,

¹ Violence Policy Center (2002): *When Men Murder Women: An Analysis of 2000 Homicide Data*.

² Mahoney, Patricia and Williams, Linda M. (1998) "Sexual Assaults in Marriage: Prevalence, Consequences and Treatment of Wife Rape" in Jana L. Jasinski, Linda Meyer Williams, David Finkelhor (eds.) *Partner Violence: A Comprehensive Review of 20 Years of Research*. Sage Publications: 1998.

not merely those cases where the intention is known.³ This difference is significant, since often law enforcement, such as the police or the militia, records neither the context of the incident nor the sex of the victim.

Femicide presents an extreme case of violence against women. However, women and girls are systematically and chronically oppressed through many other, non-lethal forms, with different challenges for sex-disaggregated, quantitative data collection. Threats, assaults and various forms of physical and sexual violence are harder to quantify mainly because so many of these cases go under-reported. In addition, in developing countries, countries undergoing armed conflict or countries where women are still fighting for basic rights, victims are often undereducated about their rights and where to seek for help. A study conducted in Jordan states that: "State institutions do not have sex-disaggregated data on victims and perpetrators of gun-related crimes"⁴. None of the women's shelters, hotlines and social workers working on violence against women, have integrated it in their work or asked victims if the perpetrator has access to a gun" (Gerome 2011, 19). Furthermore, proving threat by gunpoint constitutes a complex legal challenge, since the prosecution needs to establish among other things that the suspected perpetrator was in possession of a firearm and that the firearm was operable. Even if a proper legal defense system exists, victims can rarely afford a proper lawyer. In addition, women working to help victims are frequently equally threatened and harassed (Alvazzi del Frate 2011, 116).

Afghanistan constitutes as specific case example of a country in which there is direct research data on the impact of small arms and light weapons on the safety of female students. According to a recent study, women and girls are targeted because of their desire to go to school and achieve an education. The study shows that "between January 2006 and December 2008, 1153 attacks or threats towards the education sector in Afghanistan were reported"⁵. These include arsons, explosions and armed attacks on student and personnel among others. Furthermore, threats in the forms of "night letters" (written letters delivered at night time) and written personal intimidation are common (ibid. 27). Between 2006 and 2008, there were 123 reported grenade, mine and rocket explosions in or near school buildings, 254 reported incidents of arson, 64 reported direct attacks on students and personnel, 5 reported incidents of looting and 24 reported incidents of other nature (breaking into buildings, as well as use of firearms to threaten as well as to open direct fire in schools) (ibid. 29). Of these attacks, 40% are targeted against girls' schools, 32% against mixed schools and 28% against boys' schools (ibid. 33). Based on the statistics, the report states that "it is clear that there is an attack trend against girls' schools, but this trend is magnified if one considers the number of actual girls' vs. boys' vs. mixed schools in existence across the country. In reality, boys' schools account to just short of 50% of all schools in nation-wide, mixed schools for almost 31% and girls schools for a mere 19%. Thus 19% of schools receive 40% of all attacks – a clear sign that girls' education is deliberately under fire" (ibid.).

³ Alvazzi del Frate, Anna (2011) "When the Victim Is a Woman." In Geneva Declaration Secretariat, pp. 113–144. http://www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/GBAV2/GBAV2011_CH4pdf

⁴ Gerome, Rebecca (2011) "Women, Gender and Gun Violence in the Middle East" IANSA (International Action Network on Small Arms) http://www.iansa-women.org/sites/default/files/newsvIEWS/iansa_wn_mena_paper_2011.pdf

⁵ Glad, Marit (2009) Knowledge on Fire: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan. Risks and measure for Succesfull Mitigation. Care International, Afghanistan.

UN Women's activities

In 2012, UN Women played a crucial role in supporting women to make their voices heard in the negotiations of the Arms Trade Treaty. UN Women supported women's civil society representatives from Cote d'Ivoire, Philippines and Nigeria to come to New York to lobby member states to include gender-responsive language in the treaty. The representatives participated in a one-day networking and capacity-building workshop organized by UN Women's partners, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). On Friday 19 July, UN Women hosted an event, "Women's Human Rights – The ATT (Arms Trade Treaty) and CEDAW." The event was attended by 100 participants including representatives of member States and civil society and five of the 23 CEDAW Committee members.⁶ After the panel, the CEDAW Committee issued a statement on the need to include a gender perspective in the ATT text. UN Women considered it highly strategic to be able to support women to articulate their opinions during the negotiations as well as to help forge a crucial link between two normative processes.

As the UN Member States continued the ATT-process in March of 2013, UN Women supported women's civil society once again to monitor and engage in the process. The support of UN Women enabled the participation of women's rights activists from 26 countries in an international preparatory ATT-meeting arranged by WILPF. It also supported the engagement by women's organizations on national and international levels to lobby their governments before the ATT-meeting in New York. As a result of civil society's efforts, the treaty text included strong provisions for gender-based violence amongst the criteria.

UN Women also supported the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 57), the priority theme for which was the 'elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.' The Agreed Conclusions resulting from the Member States' negotiations included recognition by the Commission 'that illicit use of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons aggravates violence, inter alia, against women and girls' (PP 25). The agreed conclusions also included a specific call to strengthen responses against femicide (PP 24 and OP (e)).

Recommendations

- As noted above, **lack of sex-disaggregated** data remains a key challenge to diagnosing the impact of armed violence on women, to identifying effective solutions and to harnessing women's capacities in violence reduction. Through their national arms control mechanisms, Member States should ensure that all information collected is disaggregated by sex.
- Member States must also ensure women are adequately represented in all decision-making forums related to disarmament and arms control.
- In line with the Secretary-General's Seven Point Action Plan on gender-responsive peacebuilding, UN entities must ensure that a **minimum of fifteen per cent** of all recovery spending, including disarmament, DDR and community security and arms control initiatives, be allocated to gender equality and women's empowerment.

⁶ A brief summary is available here: http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/ATT/side_event_att_and_cedaw_summary.pdf

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