

# Gender Perspectives on DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

## What are the linkages between disarmament, development and gender perspectives?

This note explores two dimensions of the development/disarmament discussion. First, it looks at the macro issue of national disarmament, primarily related to nuclear weapons and military expenditures. Second, it turns to issues in the micro perspective, primarily concerned with local development for disarmament initiatives.

### What are the linkages at the macro level?

*There is a vital link between people-centred development and the use of resources. Europe is a grossly over-armed region where a number of destructive conflicts are taking place. The colossal arsenals of weapons within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) region are destabilizing and constitute a serious threat to peace. Military expenditures directly affect the availability of national resources which should be used for socially equitable and ecologically sound development, social justice and peace.*

Barbara Lochbihler, former Secretary General of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

Disarmament advocates have long argued that resources currently devoted to arms production could have significant impact if they were redirected to development initiatives. International conferences such as the 3rd and 4th United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995), respectively, have pointed out that a concern for gender equality raises questions about how states make choices about where to dedicate resources. High expenditure on arms means fewer resources to devote to development initiatives, including those that could have a positive impact on women and could reduce gender inequalities.

As well, women have been significant advocates for peace and disarmament. Briefing note 2, *Women's Advocacy for Peace and Disarmament*, develops this theme and provides background information.

### What are the linkages at the micro level?

A recent trend in practical or local disarmament initiatives has been the "weapons in exchange for development" programmes which represent a new approach to voluntary weapons collection programmes. In these cases, the community as a whole benefits when arms are surrendered in exchange for development inputs.

This approach has been heralded as a promising avenue to explore disarmament at the community level. According to one analyst (Pike, 1999), this type of initiative recognizes the importance of community development by:

- Requiring the community to define the scope of the problem and the manner in which it is best addressed;
- Relying on the community to identify its most pressing and immediate development needs; and
- Depending on the full participation of the community in practical disarmament measures in order to realize the benefits of the development initiatives for which the arms are exchanged.

Perhaps the best known of these initiatives is the pilot project in Gramsh, Albania. The initiative developed:

*...an innovative approach based on advocacy and provision of development incentives to people at the community level, to encourage them to voluntarily return the arms in their possession. This approach consists of giving equal emphasis to five key elements: symbolism, advocacy, community involvement and reward, voluntary surrender and possible public destruction of weapons.*

Nora Kushti, Public Awareness Coordinator

To date, the Gramsh initiative has funded road construction, street lighting, and a radio telephone system. Close to 6,000 weapons and 137 tons of ammunition were collected. Women were particularly active in public information and awareness campaigns in the communities, including through rallies, and in training programmes.

In a recent burning of weapons ceremony in a disarmament for development programme in Bakan District in Cambodia, around 90 percent of the participants were women and children.

Although the driving force behind these initiatives is disarmament, the development side can benefit from important lessons learned by development cooperation initiatives on gender differences and inequalities. These lessons revolve around the importance of recognizing gender dimensions and using a mainstreaming strategy, i.e., integrating gender perspectives into all areas of work.

The push toward gender mainstreaming grew out of dissatisfaction with isolated women's initiatives. It was argued that all policies and programmes had an impact on women and gender relations, and therefore it was important to bring this perspective to the core of policies and programmes. The key questions that flow from such a perspective are: What are the policies and programmes trying to achieve? Do they have a different impact on women and men? Where is there potential to support women's empowerment?

Communities are not homogeneous. Where divisions along gender lines exist, it is important to take them—and such inequalities as there may be—into consideration.

In international development circles much has been learned about the complex inter-relationship between development, gender equality, community dynamics and peace, as illustrated below.

- **Gender issues are often overlooked.** Despite policy commitments to gender equality and the recognition that these issues are relevant across the entire range of development thinking and action, gender issues are often neglected. There is a need

for strong political will to ensure that they receive adequate attention and the requisite technical competence so that they are effectively addressed.

- **Gender issues are often misunderstood.** In many development initiatives, programmers and analysts often lose sight of the primary objective of a concern for gender, that is, to move towards more equitable relations between women and men. All too often gender issues are conceived as solely concerning the number of women participants or the development of marginal side initiatives for women within mainstream programmes.
- **Without an explicit recognition and understanding of gender inequalities and differences, development initiatives can worsen women's situation and gender relations.** Experience has shown that the assumption “both women and men will benefit equally” is false. The division of labour and responsibilities (who does what work), social attitudes, and unequal access to resources all contribute to a situation where policies and programmes have a different impact on women and men, (for example, education initiatives and poverty reduction strategies). Furthermore, these differences and inequalities influence how women and men participate in and respond to new initiatives.
- **Gender issues are relevant in understanding post-conflict dynamics.** Recent advocacy and scholarship have drawn attention to how and why gender differences and inequalities are relevant during and after armed conflicts. There is growing interest in understanding how gender issues interweave with disarmament initiatives. (See briefing notes 1 on weapons of mass destruction, 3 on small arms and 5 on landmines.)

### Concrete implications

At the **macro level**, the linkages among the three themes of disarmament, development and gender equality are very broad. Yet, there are guidelines to keep in mind:

- Ensure that all discussions of disarmament draw on the expertise and experience of women and men. Furthermore, any programmes for the use of a peace dividend that might arise from a decrease in military spending should promote the needs and interests of women and girls, as well as men and

boys (as is highlighted in the text in international commitments below).

- Look for ways to increase the involvement of women and women's organizations and movements in disarmament discussions.
- Promote women's capacity to participate in disarmament/development discussions at international fora.

Within **micro-level** initiatives, specific entry points can be identified:

- Ensure that programmes are based on a clear understanding of gender roles, relations and inequalities, to both facilitate the effectiveness of the initiative and ensure that opportunities to support more equal relations between women and men are maximized.
- Develop strategies to ensure women's participation in decision-making and eliminate the obstacles that work against their equitable participation.
- Understand and incorporate the lessons from development programming on gender mainstreaming strategies and the linkages between gender equality and different sector areas.
- Ensure that sector-specific programmes that link inputs to disarmament learn from lessons in those sectors. It cannot be assumed that initiatives will have the same impact on women and men as well as boys and girls. Some examples follow:

*Arms for education* projects should look at both questions of education access (who is taught) and quality (what is taught). For example, if a school is to be built, will girls benefit as well as boys from this new school? Or will there be social obstacles to girls attending classes? Will adult men have access to the literacy classes as well as women? If

new educational initiatives will be provided, will these be relevant to women and men. If evening classes in accounting are provided, – is this a priority for only one group or both?

*Arms for agriculture* projects should be based on an understanding of who does what work. Are women recognized as farmers? Are the tools provided suitable for women and men in the light of who performs what tasks and who grows what crops? Will inequitable access to land bias who can benefit from the programme?

*Arms for health* projects should take gender differences in health status and responsibilities into account. Women often have different health needs than men. As well, caring for family members who are not well is not always a task shared equally between women and men.

Many resources (such as checklists and handbooks) on these sectors and others are available from UN agencies and development cooperation organizations.

Peace education should be a critical element in all disarmament for development initiatives. It is important to recognize the key role women can play in supporting the development of a culture of peace among younger generations.

## Resources

For background on gender mainstreaming strategies in development which can be applied to disarmament for development initiatives, see:

- The United Nations WomenWatch website: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>
- The UNDP Gender in Development website (in particular the resources pages) <http://www.undp.org/gender/>
- The homepage for the Gender Equality Working Group of the OECD/DAC. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender/>

In particular the *DAC Source Book on Concepts and Approaches Linked to Gender Equality* provides background, definitions and references.

For resources on gender, women and disarmament see:

- The website of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - <http://www.wilpf.int.ch/~wilpf/>
- The website for The Women Peacemakers Programme, part of the International Fellowship of

Reconciliation: <http://www.ifor.org/wpp/index.htm#>

- The website for UNESCO's Women and a Culture of Peace programme: <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/projects/gender.htm>
- Breines, Ingebord et al. (eds.) (1999). **Towards a Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace**. Paris: UNESCO

For information on practical disarmament measures, see:

- Claire Pike (1999). *Facing the Challenges of Microdisarmament: A Case Study Review of Practices in Post-Conflict Countries*. Ottawa: DFAIT
- For information and background on the Gramsh project see [http://www.iansa.org/documents/un/gramsh/update\\_undp.htm](http://www.iansa.org/documents/un/gramsh/update_undp.htm)
- Nora Kushti (2000). *Weapons in Exchange for Development Albania*. See [http://www.iansa.org/documents/un/gramsh/update\\_undp.htm](http://www.iansa.org/documents/un/gramsh/update_undp.htm)

## **International documents and commitments linking disarmament, development and gender equality**

- **The Beijing Platform for Action (1995)**

Para 138: *Those affected most negatively by conflict and excessive military spending are people living in poverty, who are deprived because of the lack of investment in basic services. Women living in poverty, particularly rural women, also suffer because of the use of arms that are particularly injurious or have indiscriminate effects... The negative impact on development of excessive military expenditures, the arms trade, and investment for arms production and acquisition must be addressed. At the same time, maintenance of national security and peace is an important factor for economic growth and development and the empowerment of women.*

Strategic Objective E.2 (*Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments*) outlines numerous agreed actions for governments including:

Para 143: (a) *Increase and hasten, as appropriate, subject to national security considerations, the conversion of military resources and related industries to development and peaceful purposes;*

(b) *Undertake to explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditure... so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women.*

- **The outcome document from the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on Follow-up to the Platform for Action discussions (2000, A/S-23/10/Rev.1):**

*Excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures, trade in arms and investment for arms production, taking into consideration national security requirements, direct the possible allocation of funds away from social and economic development, in particular for the advancement of women. (Para 17)*

98 (k) *Strengthen efforts toward general and complete disarmament under strict and effective inter-*

*national control, based on the priorities established by the United Nations in the field of disarmament, so that the released resources could be used for, inter alia, social and economic programmes which benefit women and girls.*

98 (l) *Explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures and the arms trade and investment for arms production and acquisition, including global military expenditures, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to permit the possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development, inter alia, for the advancement of women.*

**Security Council Resolution 1325** on women, peace and security, adopted in October 2000, specifically mentions the need to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and their dependents in DDR (disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation) initiatives (para 13).

**The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice in the 21st Century** (1999) Available at: [http://www.hague-peace.org/agenda/agen\\_eng.html](http://www.hague-peace.org/agenda/agen_eng.html)

This process brought together thousands of individuals and organizations and outlines challenges facing states, institutions, organizations and individuals in building peace. Points highlighted by the document include:

*Human security: It is time to redefine security in terms of human and ecological needs instead of national sovereignty and national borders. Redirecting funding from armaments to human security and sustainable development will establish new priorities leading to the construction of a new social order which ensures the equal participation of marginalized groups, including women and indigenous people, restricts the use of military force, and moves toward collective global security.*

The **Agenda** also supports the Women's Peace Petition, an international initiative that called for a five percent reduction per year for five years in military spending to be reallocated to human security programmes and peace education.