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GENDER PERSPECTIVES

A gender perspective is essential in understanding fully all the themes in this book. Weapons, wars and violence affect women in different ways than men, girls differently from boys. How money currently allocated to the military could be spent on development depends on how one sees development, which is a many-sided process that females experience - and contribute to - differently from males. The same is true of disarmament.

Human security and power relations

There can be little security for the community as a whole without security for women. Yet until recently there was relatively little awareness among those developing and implementing policies that specific action was required to deal with insecurities faced by women and girls.

Most analysts of human security give recognition to the threats to women's security arising from conflict, poverty and other sources. But not all view the problem as systemic. However human societies have been patriarchal for thousands of years and the struggle to bring about an equal society is a monumental one. Sexism (institutional and behavioural) is putting women's lives at risk in a whole series of contexts, and limiting their potential and power in countless ways. Commentators frequently point out that women and other unarmed civilians are often the primary victims of modern armed conflicts; women are usually at the bottom of the economic pile and yet may be shouldering the double burden of child- and house-care as well as productive work outside the home. The idea of 'empowerment' will mean little if women are not included equally in the process.

Violence and abuse

That women are subject to abuse – verbal, sexual, physical – on a wide scale has been long recognised by charitable, humanitar-

ian and human rights organisations. In early 2004 Amnesty International released a major report stating that one-third of all women suffer serious violence, often at the hands of the partners or family members – a shocking statistic. In Russia, 14,000 women die every year from violence inflicted by their partners. In the US, a woman is battered every 15 seconds. In conflict regions the figures are particularly high. Amnesty calls for a whole raft of measures to be taken by competent authorities and for drastic changes in attitude, not only by men but in fact by the whole of society. Particularly encouraging in this report are examples of grass roots efforts to combat abuse, such as the 80,000 women in Senegal who have come together to denounce female genital mutilations.

Women and war

The relationship of women to war and conflict is a complex one, which cannot simply be reduced to a 'Men are from Mars, Women from Venus' approach. However it must be noted that surely at least 95% of the violent acts performed in armed conflict or situations of human rights abuse are carried out by males. But women do participate in wars: as nationalist cheerleaders, munitions workers, prostitutes, and members of armed forces, both governmental and rebel. Nevertheless surveys of attitudes to war and killing, even in defence of 'national security', do often show marked differences in attitude according to gender. This can be explained – apart from many other reasons – by the fact that women are so frequently the victims of modern wars, be it as direct casualties, as refugees or displaced people, as rape survivors, or as the bereaved and/or maimed. Furthermore women are prominent in peace activism and humanitarian work. The gender lens reveals that even where women are fully integrated, military forces operate not only on a hierarchical basis but also as highly male institutions, embodying strict adherence to masculine codes of behaviour.

Women for Peace, Finland

The Finnish Women for Peace started in 1980. We are not traditionally organised, we only act in spontaneous groups. This makes us more flexible and enables us to react at short notice and on an equal basis within the group.

We arrange non-violent actions

- for peace, social justice and equality
- to protect life on Earth

We oppose

- development, production and spreading of all kinds of weapons, especially arms for mass-destruction
- nuclear power, being conducive to nuclear arms
- the militarization of women in all different forms as well as the militarization of society at large

We demand

- the means that are being used for the arms industry to be used for education, development and public health projects

We reject

- the concept of enemy, as we know that people don't become enemies just because they live in different countries have a different religion or think differently

We create

- women's networks across borders

We do not forget

- that environmental work is a most important part of peace work



Women for Peace Sweden

Why was the organization born

A seminar in Stockholm on women's fight against war; in general to build up an opinion campaign for the dismantling of nuclear power in Sweden. For a nuclear free zone in the Nordic countries and against all nuclear weapons.

Aims

Global peace. Nuclear free zone in the OSCE area. For disarmament against production and export of weapons (conventional, chemical, biological, nuclear, etc.) conversion to civil production.

Areas of action

Peace, disarmament.

Past and present actions

Peace marches 1981 and 1983. Participation in the UN Conferences in Nairobi 1985, Vienna (on Human Rights 1994), the Preparatory committee for the UN Conference on Women in New York (1995) and the Beijing conference (1995) and many other actions.

Support from formal or informal sources

Government, membership fees, donations.

Women's budgets

One of the most interesting - and potentially far reaching - of feminist projects is the creation of 'women's budgets' at municipal or other levels of government. Women at the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing called for reductions of 5% in military spending in order to fulfil social - and especially women's and children's - needs.

Weapons of mass destruction

WMD by their very nature are indiscriminate and therefore can be said to threaten everyone equally in terms of their actual use. However, since radioactivity tends to cause, not only cancers and other illnesses, but also genetic malformations and effects on babies in utero and subsequent generations, it is no surprise that women, and health workers, have been particularly engaged with radiation and atomic weapons issues. It is certainly no accident that among the early protesters against nuclear weapons - apart from the scientists who were aware of the implications at an early stage - were women, in particular mothers, who feared the effects on their children of strontium 90 found in milk after atmospheric nuclear tests.

Women have been key participants in the anti-nuclear movements, for example the famous 1980s women's protests at Greenham Common in the UK. This is possibly because of their gut reactions against a massive and life-threatening weapon system, which for many feminists represents the most extreme example of masculine militarism. Possibly it is because they were less fascinated than men by the technology involved or the political justifications for nuclear armament. Other explanations would relate to the emergence of both a new type of peace movement, and a powerful environmental movement, at the height of 'second wave' feminism.

"Traditionally charged with birthing and assisting the dying, women have been generally more attuned than men to the signs of sickness and death in the earth's biosphere. A strong rallying cry was heard in *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. The theme has been elaborated and particularised by such internationally known leaders such Helen Caldicott of Australia (and later of the USA), Petra Kelly of Germany, Solange Fernex of France, Marie-Thérèse Danielsson of French Polynesia and many others.

Women, less hampered by society's economic and social censures because they have less in the first place to lose in these areas, are freer to speak and mourn for the dying earth system."

(Rosalie Bertell, *No Immediate Danger*, p307. The Women's Press, London, 1985).

Small Arms

In the matter of small arms and light weapons - which by some definitions includes landmines - the different experiences of men and women can be seen more clearly still. The Amnesty/Control Arms report *The Impact of Guns on Women's Lives* goes into this question rather fully.

"The relationship between women and guns is a complex one. Women are not only killed and injured by the use of weapons, they also play other roles - sometimes as perpetrators of armed violence, sometimes encouraging the use of guns, and sometimes as activists for change."

(*The Impact of Guns on Women's Lives*, p.3. www.controlarms.org)

The report highlights the prevalence of violence in the home and community - in all societies - as well as threats to women from the male-dominated gang culture and in armed conflicts and war. Rape and other forms of sexual crime at gunpoint is a specific and particularly disturbing phenomenon. The report also points out that women's attitudes can sometimes contribute to the 'powerful cultural conditioning' that regards gun abuse by men as normal; and that women and girls do also participate in some of the world's armed conflicts, either as government soldiers or as members of rebel groups. However even there their roles can be ambiguous: being both abusers and abused.

Female activists often point out that from a woman's point of view, whether weapons are legal or illegal is immaterial: the damage and suffering is the same.

"While male-dominated societies often justify small arms possession through the alleged need to protect vulnerable women, women actually face greater danger of violence when their families and communities are armed"

(*Barbara Frey, UN Special Rapporteur on the Prevention of human rights violations committed with small arms and light weapons*)





Small Arms and Women

Small arms have devastating impacts on women because:

- **Women deal with the consequences of small arms violence on a daily basis**
- **Sexual violence at gunpoint is used as a weapon of war**
- **Legal small arms are just as dangerous to women as illegal guns**

Every year thousands of women are shot, traumatised, intimidated, enslaved, robbed and raped at gunpoint around the world. However, men are more likely to make, sell, buy, own, use or misuse small arms. They are also more likely to be killed or physically injured by them. The damage that women suffer from the availability and misuse of guns is disproportionate to their own role as owners or users. For every woman who is killed or injured by a firearm there are many more who are threatened, both in domestic situations and in war zones.

In conflict and post conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the former Yugoslavia, sexual violence, used as a weapon of war, occurs at the barrel of a gun. Women and girls as young as ten have been abducted at gunpoint from their homes. While women are often the victims in conflicts they also participate as combatants, and in support roles providing information, food, clothing and shelter, as well as bearing the long-term burden of caring for the sick and injured.

The majority of internally displaced people and refugees are women and children. In refugee camps, which should be a place of safety, many women and girls are routinely gang raped and abused.

With the adult male population greatly diminished, women often become the main provider for their devastated families during and after a conflict. Despite this, women are frequently excluded from post-conflict decision-making, which means that their needs in disarmament and demobilisation processes are not adequately addressed.

In non-conflict zones women are much more likely to be shot by someone they know well, usually a husband or an intimate acquaintance using a legally held weapon. A gun in the home is significantly more likely to be used against a member of that household than against an intruder.

Women have taken leadership roles in organising locally, nationally, regionally and internationally to highlight the dangers of gun violence and to campaign for legislative change. Despite this, women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes. One step forward has been the Security Council's Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, passed in October 2000, which provides a platform for women's voices to be heard in war zones and the aftermath.

Organisations concerned with violence against women are at the forefront of small arms campaigns. The Women's Network of the International Action Network on Small Arms aims to support organisations to mobilise, energise, organise, and resist gun violence in their communities and to ensure that the experiences and views of women are adequately represented in decision-making forums.

Actions

There are a wide variety of civil society actions being taken specific to the issue of small arms and their effects on women. These include the following initiatives or groups, which are highlighted in the Amnesty/Control Arms report quoted earlier. However, many women also direct their peace efforts into mixed organisations or groups working on wider aspects of conflict prevention and resolution.

Brazil: Viva Rio's campaign 'Arma não! Ela ou eu' (Arms no! It's your gun or me') - large-scale poster distribution.

USA: The famous Million Mom March against Guns (2000) & Mothers against Guns (established 1994).

Solomon Islands - Women for Peace, who in 2000 physically confronted men and boys in the ethnic militias.

Bosnia: Media Infoteka, set up by women to help women victims of the war, is working to change attitudes, starting with police and judges.

Liberia - Mass Action for Peace campaign in 2003, which led to the involvement of women in the peace talks that prepared the peace agreement.

Bereavement and other consequences of attacks on males

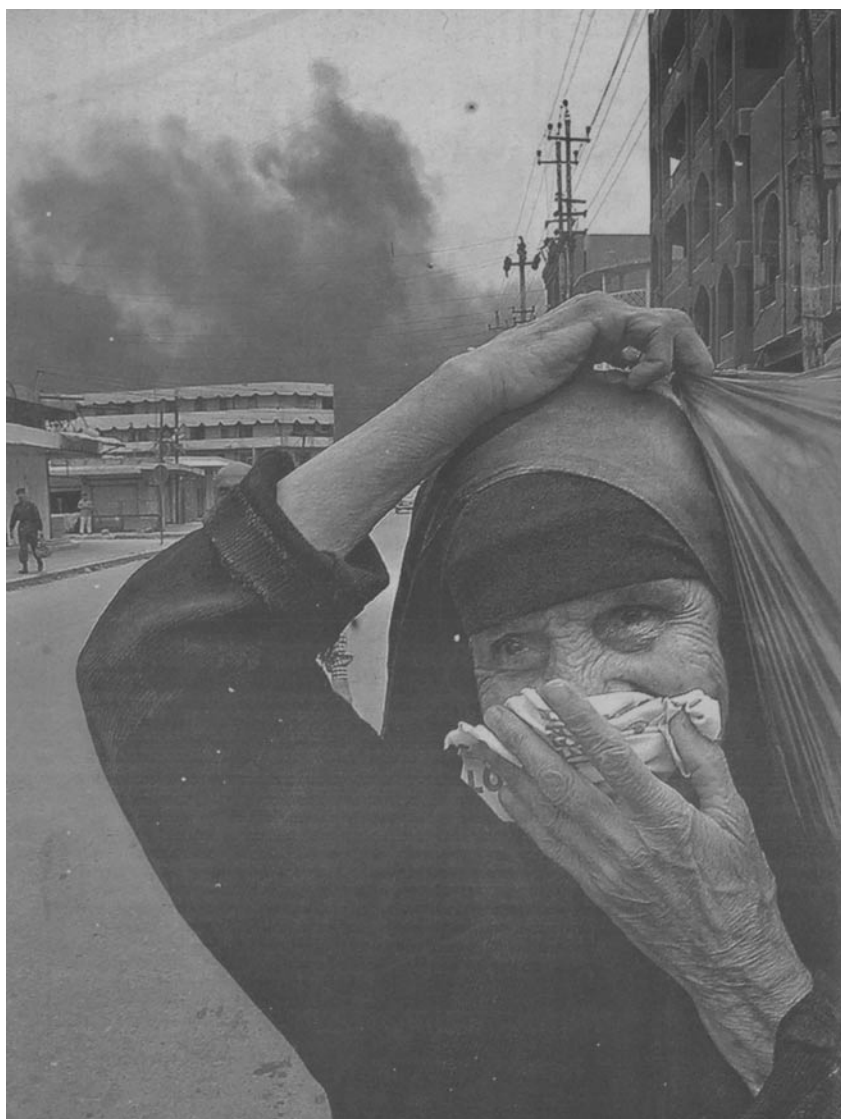
If a man is murdered by a handgun or a landmine, his wife will suffer in ways that are quite different from the ways he would be affected if it were his wife who was killed. In most societies it is women who bear the primary responsibilities for caring for children (and the wider network of dependants) and in many more traditional societies there are taboos against re-marriage or even against women going out to earn a living when the breadwinner is dead or incapacitated. Such rules reinforce women's dependence on male relatives and have severe consequences for the economic and social development of poor communities.

Victims, survivors, internally displaced/refugees

Women make up the bulk of today's internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. As such they are often the key activists and organisers in refugees camps and other temporary communities, even if they are not always the political leaders.

Prostitution around military bases

see chapter on military bases



Baghdad under bombardment.

Photo: Jérôme Delay, AP

Worldwide: Amnesty International's Stop Violence against Women campaign

Worldwide: Work on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 - on involvement of women in peacekeeping and processes

Worldwide: International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) women's network



Women in development

It is a story of nearly-universal oppression and exclusion. Patterns of inequality and discrimination against females are enshrined, explicitly or implicitly, in most religious and cultural traditions. Thus in terms of access to the labour market or to public political power, women are in most societies at a disadvantage. These patterns can be analysed for example on a country-by-country basis in the UNDP's annual Human Development Report and its Gender-related Development Index. Despite enormous efforts over the years by women's organisations, governments and international agencies, the facts remain stubborn – discrimination, especially in the poorer and more traditional cultures, remains a structural feature of society – with the notable exception of life expectancy where almost everywhere women have the edge.

Feminisation of poverty

Key indicators of women's position in the economic system can be seen in the traditional low paid, low status roles so many take up: nurses, secretaries, cleaners, child-carers, sex workers and of course homemaker/housewife, which in some sense combines all of these roles. Of course there are also millions of successful professional women, but a glance at the numbers of women at the higher levels of the major institutions, even in so-called advanced societies, reveals the huge gender gap still to be bridged. Government leaders, military top brass, captains of industry, bankers, scientists, engineers and judges...where are the women? Add to the problem of attitudes and the 'glass ceiling' the problems of unequal pay for equal work, and legal barriers in many societies to equal ownership of property and land, or to a fair inheritance -- and the explanations for the feminisation of poverty begin to become clearer. Other factors would include lack of adequate family planning facilities, and poor access to education (especially higher education).

Empowerment and mainstreaming

Most contemporary social development programmes – be they local, national or run by UN agencies - now tend to pay at least lip service to the concept of women's empowerment, be it through education and training, confidence building or career

development. Equal emphasis is (or should be) put on mainstreaming the insights of a gender analysis – ensuring that women's needs are analysed and services provided that take them into account, and that women have an equal chance to participate – either as programme staff, decision makers or through consultation. Little of this can be gained at grass roots level so long as discriminatory legislation remains in force. But the relationship between changes in public attitudes and legislation is a two-way one, with much depending on the nature of the political system. While more has to be done everywhere, societies are at very different stages in bringing in modern forms of gender equality.

New roles for men

At the same time as the development of programmes to promote women, there is a slowly growing awareness, not only in the rich West, that work has to be done to tackle the male side of the equation: in terms of developing alternative, non-macho roles and role-models for young (and older) men. This includes, for example, provision by employers of paternity leave and support for fathers at home. Important work is also being done in some men's groups to examine and reverse violent and abusive behaviour, including attitudes to guns. Only by males challenging their own position in the patriarchal system can the enormous gains made by women's movements be consolidated.

(see: UN Commission on the Status of Women, 2004)

Women in peace making

Much work is currently going on in the area of conflict transformation and peace processes; however women are noticeable by their absence from formal negotiations, with very few exceptions. It was to rectify this glaring and wasteful imbalance that an effort was launched to get the United Nations to engage systematically with the problem. The result was the now-celebrated **UN Security Council Resolution 1325**, passed on 31 October 2000, which calls for women's full participation in all aspects of prevention and resolution of conflicts and also in post-conflict peacebuilding.

NOTE: The IPB itself has been running, since late 2004, a programme to strengthen women's peacemaking efforts, notably in Central and Eastern Europe. (see: www.ipb.org)

Women for Peace Switzerland

Spurred on by the engagement of Women for Peace in Northern Ireland during the conflict there, and alarmed by the nuclear arms race and arms fair, women from different parts of Switzerland decided to publicly raise their voices in protest. One of the main aims of Women for Peace is, and has always been, to try and change people's idea of the enemy and so reduce conflicts. In 1994 the regional groups united to form Women for Peace Switzerland.

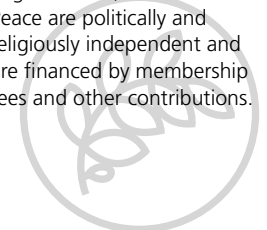
"Whoever intervenes and tries to change the world around him or her notices that it is his or herself who is changed, but it is only through such intervention that change is possible at all". (Dorothee Sölle)

Women for Peace pledge to work:

- toward a peaceful and just world in which the fundamental needs of all people are guaranteed in dignity;
- for a world in which conflicts are settled through mediation and negotiation and not through violence;
- for equality, in all fields, between women and men and
- for the inclusion of the women's point of view taking into consideration their different backgrounds and their own specific experiences.

This means that:

- Women for Peace launch and support initiatives and petitions and take part in their promulgation.
- They initiate silent protests in public and take part in demonstrations and manifestations.
- They make their views known to politicians, write to newspapers and send readers' letters
- They organize meetings and lectures, edit books and produce media programmes.
- They work together with national and international NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations). Women for Peace are politically and religiously independent and are financed by membership fees and other contributions.



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