



16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign Advocacy Sheet

25 November – 10 December 2022

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence aims to engage people around the world and disarm all forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are used to perpetrate or facilitate GBV and cause serious violations of human rights. GBV involves the use and abuse of power and control over another person and is perpetrated against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness of the scope of gender-based violence and gun violence by urging officials to take effective measures to address these issues.

IANSA's theme this year is **"Challenge norms: Stop gender-based gun violence!"** It aims to challenge hegemonic masculinity norms and abusive masculine behavior that negatively impacts women, girls, and members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as boys and men. These norms often characterise men as aggressive, independent, and dominant, and women as weak, dependent, and submissive. These harmful norms combine with the proliferation of firearms and other factors to fuel gender-based gun violence because SALW can be used to assert power and put-lives in danger of those targeted and discriminated against because of their gender. Critically engaging with and transforming conception of masculinities that could lead to such violence is essential for effective arms control and disarmament.

IANSA has chosen to focus on four key policy points to advocate for this year's campaign. It is important for State governments and parliamentarians, civil society, and all significant stakeholders to work together to stop gender-based gun violence!

POLICY POINTS TO ADVOCATE:

Governments must develop gender-responsive controls to prevent the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons and to ensure the full and equal participation of women in those efforts.

Strategies for arms control must respond to the different risks that men, women, girls, and boys face and for women to play an active role in the strategies' design and implementation. Arms control and disarmament discussions and activities are in most places still dominated by men. States must demonstrate the political will to undertake targeted efforts to ensure the full and effective participation of women in discussions and solutions relating to strong small arms control at local, national, regional, and international levels, and formal disarmament initiatives, as part of peace processes and negotiations. We must ensure all voices are heard in the fight against gun violence!

It is important for States to collect sex and age-disaggregated data on SALW and support research to have a better analysis of the gendered impacts of SALW and their effects on diverse individuals, communities, and economies to properly inform policy responses. Implementing gender-responsive SALW control when addressing issues related to weapons availability, proliferation, and misuse can make a difference in protecting communities from violence.

Establish public awareness and education programs to prevent gun violence and abusive masculinities.

There is a complex relationship between masculinity and gun violence, one that has been systemically, culturally and politically shaped with deep roots in the patriarchy. Pervasive gun violence usually occurs when masculinities expressed violently combine with other factors such as persistent poverty, state repression, widespread injustices, organized crime and, especially, the easy access to guns. The construction of hegemonic masculinity has been normalised all over the globe and this has caused women and girls to be significantly harmed and disadvantaged. Abusive masculinity norms enforce aggression and violence, and when combined with uncontrolled SALW, such norms heighten the danger of gender-based violence.

These ideas about feminine weakness/vulnerability and masculine strength/protection easily expose girls and women to more violence and reinforce the belief in masculine superiority which is central to patriarchal masculinities. The amount of violence that follows from this is truly staggering, especially when guns are brandished or fired, even though most men and boys do not possess guns.

What it means to "be a man" is learned in childhood: boys are often told by others around them that they are not "real men" or are not "man enough," challenge this norm! This can be done by engaging children and youth in awareness and education programs. It is vital to give a meaning to manhood and masculinity that is not equated with violence and aggression but rather with the state of maturity of becoming a man, promoting courage, strength, self-awareness, and caring about yourself and others. Also, parents and guardians should not encourage boys to play games with toy guns or violent video games unless it is part of a closely supervised peace education exercise to make children aware of the danger of guns.

All States must implement strict controls to ban civilians holding military specification weapons and keep civilian-held guns to a minimum.

The control of civilian-held guns is a cross-cutting issue. As such, it is vitally important to ensure that these policy proposals and their implementation include everyone affected by the misuse of these weapons. Historically underrepresented groups have included women, youth, victims and survivors, refugees, displaced persons, the elderly, and communities with high levels of poverty, crime, and violence.

Organised crime and arbitrary force by the State which often affect vulnerable communities fuel patterns of gun violence, and as such, guns must be removed from the streets and not used abusively by law enforcers. National-level controls on small arms have a strong effect on the viability of controls at regional and global levels. Allowing small arms to move freely and be diverted across national borders, for example, makes regional and global controls difficult – if not impossible – to accomplish.

Parliamentarians play a central role in preventing gun violence given their legislative mandate to introduce new laws and review existing ones. Cooperation between CSOs and legislators can therefore have a catalysing effect by creating a robust legal framework to regulate firearms and to bring perpetrators of gun violence to justice. States must prohibit civilian-held firearms and ammunition unless the applicant demonstrates a compelling reason, and ensure the applicant has no previous involvement in illicit trafficking or violence, has completed a recognised firearms training course for civilians, and can keep the firearms and its ammunition in separate safe storage units and to file annual reports to the authorities.

Disarm and end gender-based and intimate partner violence by implementing legislation and programs to remove guns from homes.

A huge danger of gun violence to women globally is when guns are present in their own homes and in the hands of an intimate partner. Women in non-conflict settings are estimated to be three times more likely to die violently if they live in a home with a gun. Domestic violence and intimate partner violence are made much more lethal by easy access to guns. In addition, gun violence greatly affects women and girls in numerous armed conflicts where they are killed, injured, tortured, raped, detained and displaced from their homes usually by men with guns who commit grave violations of their fundamental human rights and war crimes.

Ensuring national laws and regulations on the possession and use of firearms conform to the highest standards can be done by contacting relevant legislators to discuss potential law reform for domestic gun control to remove guns from the hands of perpetrators of domestic violence.

States must implement and support comprehensive laws and reforms to protect survivors of gun violence and fund gun violence prevention programs. This should include the enforcement of extensive background checks that consider an individual's history of domestic and other violence when approving or denying gun license applications and renewals, and when recruiting persons to the law enforcement agencies and armed forces. States should promote UN standards in the use of force and firearms, and enact provisions in their national regulation to remove guns when there is a threat to a woman's safety in her home and to other members of the household. It is important for States to also provide a safe and inclusive society for survivors of gun violence and refugees, and take targeted measures to increase the participation of other excluded or marginalised social groups, including youth and people with other gender identities and sexual orientations.