
ARMS, GENDER AND SECURITY IN THE PACIFIC





Pacific
Small Arms
Action Group



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WHY DOES GENDER MATTER IN PACIFIC ARMS CONTROL AND SECURITY?

While the Pacific has so far escaped the widespread armed violence that has devastated other parts of the world, the Pacific experience has shown how only a small number of guns can have a very large impact. Not only have arms fuelled conflict in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji, but even in nations at peace, arms have fuelled crime, clan rivalry and domestic violence.

Women's experiences of armed violence in the Pacific, which have often related to violence in the private sphere, differ significantly from that of men. However, traditionally policies on arms control and security have failed to adequately recognise and incorporate gendered perspectives. This is because arms and security have been viewed as state-centric concepts framed within national security, military security and the institutions of central government. Women's structural disadvantage has further compounded the failures of arms and security policy to address women's particular security needs. Despite their integral role in arms control and security at local levels, women have largely been excluded from formal decision-making processes on these matters.

If efforts to tackle armed violence in the Pacific are to adequately address the concerns of all members of society, it is critical that arms and security policies and practices, fully mainstream gender and address human security concerns. These efforts must also ensure that women and men have equal opportunities to actively participate in articulating their security needs, in formulating arms and security policy, as well as participating in the provision of that security.

“THE ADVERSE IMPACT OF ARMS ON WOMEN CANNOT BE OVERSTATED. FACILITATED BY WEAPONS, POWER AND IMPUNITY, ARMED GROUPS OFTEN PERPETRATE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS WOMEN. GENDER VIOLENCE REMAINS A SERIOUS THREAT TO WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY, AS WELL AS TO PEACE AND SECURITY.”

Amanda Brydon, Advocacy and Government Relations Manager, Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARMS, GENDER AND SECURITY OUTSIDE OF CONFLICTS?

To better understand how arms impact the security of men and women in the Pacific differently, it is essential to look beyond traditional definitions of security, which are predominantly framed around military or national interests, to how security affects and is understood by individuals.

In the Pacific, men are more likely to be involved in gang violence,² and be victims of armed homicide.³ Men are also more likely to be the perpetrators of domestic violence than the victims of it. In the context of tribal fighting in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, men are more likely to be active combatants whether using arms or other weapons.⁴

On the other hand, women are more likely to experience domestic violence, which can include the use of arms. In post-conflict settings, the increased availability of arms can lead to more threats to women's personal security,⁵ as well as the normalisation of violence against women.⁶ Women are also more likely to experience sexual violence, and arms can be used to facilitate these acts.⁷ In Papua New Guinea, for example, the presence of arms has been linked to pack rape and the spread of HIV and AIDS.⁸ In the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, perceptions about women have seen them suffer from the indirect impact of violence including by being traded for weapons.⁹

“THROUGH WOMEN'S EYES, THERE IS A BROADER NOTION OF SECURITY – ONE THAT IS DEFINED IN HUMAN, RATHER THAN IN MILITARY, TERMS – ONE WHERE PEACE IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE ALL CITIZENS HAVE FAITH IN AND ARE ABLE TO FREELY PARTICIPATE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS OF INSTITUTION AND STATE BUILDING.”

Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Executive Director, femLINKpacific, Fiji

What is gender? Does it just mean “women”?

It is important that gender and women are not treated as one and the same. The United Nations (UN) defines gender as “the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female ... Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context ... Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context.”¹ This means that focussing on women alone is not sufficient. Gender responsive policy design therefore must be informed by analysis of the particular impacts on both men and women, and involve the active participation and perspectives of both genders.

WHAT'S THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARMS AND GENDER IN ARMED CONFLICTS?

Arms impact men and women differently during periods of conflict in the Pacific. Men are more likely to be active combatants and be killed by arms. During the conflict in the Solomon Islands from 1998–2003,¹⁰ of the 200 deaths recorded, all but six were men.¹¹ In contrast, while men were also vulnerable to sexual violence and rape, this was significantly more likely to be experienced by women. Of the 63 statements collected by the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Committee on rape and sexual violence, 50 were from women and 13 were from men.¹² The Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Committee found that women's bodies were both deliberately and opportunistically targeted during the conflict.¹³ Some of this sexual violence was facilitated through the use of arms.¹⁴

During the conflict in the Solomon Islands, the presence of arms meant women experienced security differently to men. Pregnant women faced restrictions in getting to hospitals due to security concerns.¹⁵ Women were particularly vulnerable to rape and sexual violence when travelling to their gardens.¹⁶ Helen Hakena from Bougainville has outlined the gendered impacts of the Bougainville conflict on women. These included rape, restricted freedom of movement and significant issues during childbirth. There was also an increase in the number of single mothers, due to women losing their loved ones in the conflict.¹⁷

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARMS, GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Arms fuel insecurity and hinder development by impeding people's livelihoods and access to essential services. Armed violence impacts public institutions, the economy, infrastructure and social cohesion.¹⁸

The World Bank has highlighted that people living in fragile and conflict-affected states are more than twice as likely to be undernourished.¹⁹ In the Pacific, armed violence in Papua New Guinea has restricted access to markets and hampered progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).²⁰ Currently, Papua New Guinea is not on track to meet any of the MDGs.²¹ In some parts of the Pacific, armed violence also contributed to a return to subsistence-based economies.²² Research has demonstrated that, in the Solomon Islands, Gross Domestic Product declined significantly during the armed conflict.²³

Women form the majority of the world's poor.²⁴ Where arms increase poverty or impede efforts to reduce poverty, this disproportionately affects women. In addition, because women have particular security needs, where these are not provided for within development programs — such as those aimed at maternal health or access to education — the programs will prove less effective.²⁵

HOW DOES GENDER IMPACT MEN AND WOMEN'S ROLES IN ARMS CONTROL, SECURITY AND CONFLICT?

Men and women's experience of armed violence, conflict and security differs in many ways. It is therefore important for both genders to have the opportunity to actively participate in decision making around arms, security and conflict. However, in practice women are often excluded from these processes. While women are active at a local level in peace building, conflict prevention and disarmament, the Pacific Regional Action Plan recognises that they lack sufficient support to participate in formal decision-making at national and regional levels.²⁶ This is exemplified by women in the Pacific having the lowest global rate of participation in national legislatures: they make up only four per cent of legislators²⁷ compared to 21 per cent globally.²⁸ Women, however, need to not only participate in decision making, they also need to be provided with equal opportunity to participate in the provision of security and in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs as well as in peace building and conflict prevention.

Although often excluded from formal decision-making processes, women in the Pacific have nonetheless played a crucial role in peace building, conflict prevention and disarmament. During the Bougainville conflict, women organised themselves to persuade armed actors to lay down their arms.²⁹ UNIFEM's study of disarmament in Bougainville found that despite this integral role, women were excluded from the formal disarmament and peace processes,³⁰ a conclusion shared by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.³¹ In Fiji, women played an integral role in advancing peace. For example, after the 2000 coup, women mobilised to organise peace and prayer vigils³² to ensure their voices were represented in the media.³³ It is essential to recognise women and ensure their active participation because policy that fails to include half the population will prove ineffective, unsustainable and inequitable.

"I'VE BEEN A WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCATE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE CAMPAIGNER IN MY HOME COUNTRY OF FIJI, THROUGH WHICH I BECAME A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. MY TIME IN OFFICE WAS SHORT-LIVED AFTER GUNMEN STORMED THE PARLIAMENT AND TOOK THE PARLIAMENTARIANS HOSTAGE, INCLUDING FIVE OF US WOMEN. EXPERIENCING FIRST-HAND THE DISPLAY OF ARROGANCE, HARASSMENT AND BULLYING BY GUN-TOTING YOUTHS, I VOWED THEN TO FOCUS ON THE IMPACT OF GUN VIOLENCE THROUGH ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT."

EMA TAGICAKIBAU, FORMER FIJIAN MP

Arms, gender-based violence and conflict in the Solomon Islands

"My daughter was also affected on that during Harold Keke's time here. There were several of them who were raped at gun point including my own daughter. We were under his rule and we did not have freedom of movement during that time." Statement N° 0474³⁴

"Most of what they [the militants] have caused [is] fear, especially for us mothers and children. They normally walked around openly with guns, discharging them around Auki town." ³⁵ "R", Auki

HOW CAN SECURITY SECTOR REFORM ADDRESS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARMS AND GENDER?

According to the United Nations Secretary General, security sector reform is a process with the goal of “the enhancement of effective and accountable security for the State and its peoples without discrimination and with full respect for human rights and the rule of law.”³⁶ Security sector reform includes defence, law enforcement, the judicial sector, ministries, legislative bodies and civil society.³⁷ It provides opportunities for a state to address the gendered impacts of arms and security as part of its security framework. In recent years, security sector reform has become an increasing priority for Pacific Governments and reform processes have been rolled out in countries including Papua New Guinea (see box below).

Ensuring a gender equitable process for security sector reform

Consultation must take place with women and men to ensure both genders have an adequate opportunity to raise their distinct concerns about arms and security. It involves seeking the active participation of civil society groups, including women’s groups, and addressing the systemic discrimination which often impedes participation by women and minority groups.

Ensuring the outcomes of security sector reform adequately address gender

Reform processes need to focus not only on national security but also on human security and the different ways that arms affect personal security for men and women. Human security offers a security framework that focuses on challenges that individuals face as they seek to live in freedom and dignity, with equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights.³⁸ Such an approach also looks beyond traditional state-centric and public sphere concepts of security. Security sector reform should include women’s participation and it should reflect international and regional commitments relating to arms and gender, such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The outcomes of security sector reform should also include women’s participation in the security sector.

GUN CONTROL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Stringent national gun laws can contribute to reductions in gender-based violence. Important elements include: partner or spousal notification when an individual applies for a gun; consideration of age limits for owning a weapon; weapon storage standards; waiting periods between getting a licence and purchasing a gun; police powers to confiscate weapons in situations of interpersonal violence; owner licensing and compulsory background checks which preclude purchasing a gun when an individual is subject to a domestic violence order or conviction. Such reforms can help to keep guns out of the hands of would-be perpetrators of interpersonal violence. In Australia, where these reforms were adopted, gun homicide rates for women dramatically reduced.³⁹

“TO UNDERSTAND THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT OF ARMED VIOLENCE ON WOMEN WE MUST STRIVE TO SEPARATE THE EVIDENCE, BOTH BY GENDER AND BY AGE. ONLY THEN CAN WE HIGHLIGHT THE RISKS FACED BY WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND BY YOUNG MEN IN GANG VIOLENCE, ARMED CRIME, SUICIDE AND WARFARE.”

Philip Alpers, Director, GunPolicy.Org

Gender and Papua New Guinea’s security sector reform process

PNG’s National Security Policy was produced as part of its security sector reform process and takes a broad definition of security. The policy defines security as “the protection of our citizens, national sovereignty, democratic rights, freedoms and values, strategic assets and resources, and the well-being and prosperity of our nation, and our people.”⁴⁰ The National Security Policy explicitly puts people at the focus of the policy and recognises that “since the legitimacy of a state depends on the mandate accorded by its citizens, their security and that of non-citizens should be of paramount importance.”⁴¹ The policy recognises the impact of gender-based violence on vulnerable members of society. While the policy could go further to address the relationship between arms and gender, the policy is an example of international good practice in broadening notions of security to include human security to better address the different gendered dimensions of security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that arms control and security policies are effective, inclusive and gender-responsive, Pacific Island governments should:

- 1 Ensure compliance with their obligations under international and regional commitments by mainstreaming gender considerations into all policy and practice relating to arms, security and conflict;
- 2 Promote the active participation of women in decision making in all issues relating to arms and security, including security sector reform;
- 3 Promote women's active participation in the security sector including in the police and defence forces;
- 4 Collect gender disaggregated data on the impact of arms, armed violence and security and work with regional bodies, civil society and multilateral institutions to enhance the collection of gender disaggregated data in the Pacific region;
- 5 Commit to the current Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and when the Plan expires at the end of 2015, commit to a new Regional Action Plan which incorporates obligations set out by the Arms Trade Treaty and the UNPoA;
- 6 Include reporting on women's inclusion in decision making related to arms, security and conflict and women's participation in the security sector into CEDAW national reports;
- 7 Adopt all the provisions of the Nadi Framework related to strengthening national gun laws to effectively link weapon registration and owner licensing to established criteria that take into account past convictions or current restraining orders for partner or family violence; and
- 8 Raise the issue of the gendered nature of arms and security through the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting and commit to regional cooperation on this issue.

ANNEX I: INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS ADDRESSING GENDER, SECURITY AND ARMED VIOLENCE

A) International frameworks

There are many international frameworks that require states to adopt a gender responsive approach to arms and security. These frameworks also apply to security sector reform.

INSTRUMENT	WHAT IT REQUIRES
The Arms Trade Treaty	<p>Article 7(1)(a)(i)-(ii) requires that State Parties do not authorise an arms export, where there is an overriding risk that arms could be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international human rights law or international humanitarian law.</p> <p>Article 7(4) explicitly requires that State Parties take into account gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children as part of the analysis of overriding risk.</p>
Convention on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) and the Commission on the Status of Women	<p>Article 7(b) requires that states take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure women can participate on equal terms in the formation of government policy and holding public office. Article 8 requires that states take all appropriate measures to ensure women can participate on equal terms at the international level. These obligations apply in relation to decisions on arms, security and conflict.</p> <p>The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – the body established under CEDAW – has explicitly recognised the gendered dimension of the arms trade. It has also recognised the links between the arms trade and conflict-related sexual violence, domestic violence, violence against protestors and women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis equal with men.⁴²</p>
United Nations Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security	<p>United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 1820, 1889, 1960, 2106 and 2122 provide a framework for the women, peace and security agenda.</p> <p>The resolutions address issues such as protecting women’s rights in conflict, sexual and gender-based violence, equal access to justice and national legal reform. It also promotes women’s participation in peace processes and decision-making.</p> <p>The UNSCR Resolution 1325 also extends to women’s participation in decisions relating to arms and security outside of conflict.</p>
United Nations Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (UNPoA)	<p>The UNPoA expresses grave concern about the negative impact of armed conflict on women.⁴³ At the Biennial Meeting of States in 2014 to consider the UNPoA, states undertook to promote the role of women in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. States also recognised the importance of women’s participation and representation in international cooperation, and their assistance for the full and effective implementation of the UNPoA and International Tracing Instrument.</p>
The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development	<p>The Geneva Declaration recognises the different situations, needs and resources of women, men, boys and girls as reflected in UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1612. The Geneva Declaration adopts a broad view of the impact of armed violence and includes the relationship between armed violence inside and outside of conflict. By taking this view, the Geneva Declaration facilitates the inclusion of gender responsive policy to armed violence.</p>
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	<p>The Beijing Platform for Action recognises at paragraph 135 the gendered impacts of armed violence. It declares that, “while entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict and terrorism, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex.”</p>

“ADDRESSING THE GENDERED IMPACTS OF ARMED VIOLENCE IS EVERYONE’S BUSINESS – BOTH MEN AND WOMEN. IT IS ONLY BY WORKING TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT ARMS CONTROL AND SECURITY PROCESSES IN THE PACIFIC ARE GENDER-RESPONSIVE, THAT WE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IN OUR ULTIMATE GOAL OF SAVING LIVES AND ENSURING SECURITY AND FREEDOM FROM ARMED VIOLENCE FOR ALL PEOPLE IN OUR REGION.”

Ben Murphy, Humanitarian Advocacy Coordinator, Oxfam Australia

B) Regional frameworks

Regional commitments also necessitate adopting gender responsive policy-making in relation to arms, security and conflict. Below are key regional frameworks that address this issue.

INSTRUMENT	WHAT IT REQUIRES
Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security	<p>The UN Secretary-General's report on the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 called on states to develop national action plans to implement UNSC Resolution 1325. The Pacific Regional Action Plan is the framework for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 across the Pacific. The plan has four key focus areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>prevention</i>: conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations are prevented; • <i>participation</i>: women participate equally with men and gender equality is promoted in peace and security-decision making processes; • <i>protection</i>: women and girls' rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations; and • <i>relief and recovery</i>: women and girls' specific needs and capacities are reinforced in relief and recovery. This takes place in humanitarian crises, in conflict situations and in post-conflict situations.
Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration, 30 th August 2012	<p>This declaration supports governments adopting gender responsive policy on arms issues. It includes leaders' support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the use of gender disaggregated data and gender analysis to inform government policies and programs; • strengthening consultation with civil society, including women's groups; • adopting measures to accelerate women's full and equal participation in government; and • enacting and implementing legislation regarding sexual and gender-based violence.
Nadi Framework Draft Model Weapons Control Bill ('Nadi Framework')	<p>The Nadi Framework provides a framework for Pacific Island governments to strengthen national gun laws by providing model provisions that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • require a person possessing a weapon to have a genuine reason for the possession which explicitly excludes self-defence (section 1.9); • require that a gun licence is not issued where someone has been convicted of an offence involving violence against another person, this includes partner and family violence (section 3.12); and • require that a gun licence is not issued unless the applicant for a licence is a fit and proper person (section 39(1)(b)). <p>The Pacific Draft Model Weapons Control Bill was unanimously adopted by all member states of the Pacific Islands Forum and provides a strong framework for strengthening national gun laws promoting the safety and the security of the public including protection from gender-based violence.</p>

Australia's National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security

This Plan recognises the important links between arms, women, peace and security. It highlights the "importance of involving women in the control of small arms and light weapons due to their specific impact on women and girls in conflict situations."⁴⁴ It also indicates Australia's support for arms control due to its link with the women, peace and security agenda.⁴⁵ Links between women, peace, security and arms need to be addressed across the region, including in the post-2015 Pacific Regional Action Plan in order to effectively implement the UN women, peace and security agenda, including UNSCR 1325.

"THE ARMS TRADE TREATY IS THE FIRST MULTI-LATERAL TREATY TO RECOGNISE THE LINKS BETWEEN THE INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV). WHERE AN ARMS TRANSFER COULD BE USED IN AN ACT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, THE TRANSFER WILL NOT BE AUTHORISED. PLACING GBV AT THE HEART OF AN ARMS AGREEMENT HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGING THE STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS THAT CONTINUE TO UNDERMINE WOMEN'S SECURITY BOTH IN THE PACIFIC AND GLOBALLY."

Allison Pytlak, Campaigns Manager, Control Arms

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- 45 Australian National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security 2012–2018 10.

ABOUT THE PACIFIC SMALL ARMS ACTION GROUP

Our Purpose

The Pacific Small Arms Action Group (PSAAG) was formed in July 2009 to increase coordinated civil-society action to reduce the deadly impact of small arms and light weapons in our region. While the Pacific has so far escaped the 'AK-47 plague' that so devastates other areas, small arms have already fuelled armed conflict in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Fiji. Bougainville, once the most prosperous province of PNG, after a decade of armed violence became one of the poorest. Even in nations at peace, the Pacific experience shows how only a small number of guns can have a very large impact, particularly in crime, clan rivalry and domestic violence.

Our Activities

To address this problem, we aim to encourage widespread Pacific implementation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA), the Nadi Framework for the regulation of firearms in the Pacific, and universalisation of the legally binding UN Arms Trade Treaty. We also use our civil society networks and expertise to support local initiatives that prevent armed violence in our region, especially where it undermines justice and human security, development, public health, gender equity, disability and human rights.

PSAAG engages in direct lobbying and information exchange with governments, UN bodies, NGOs and other stakeholders. We aim to expand Pacific civil society representation in international fora, disseminate evidence-based research and policy analysis, and support partners engaged in locally-based initiatives to reduce armed violence.

Our Members

PSAAG has a diverse membership made up of various organisations and individuals across the Pacific. As the only Pacific-based small arms coalition, our membership is constantly expanding, allowing for greater coordination of actions and information sharing while ensuring a strong Pacific voice and representation at the international level.

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For further information on the issues raised in this publication or for further information about PSAAG, please write to us at: psaag@avrmonitor.org

Cover: Eileen Kolma, holding up a sign to stop gun violence in Papua New Guinea. Photo: Jerry Galea/OxfamAUS.

Inside cover: Murals on fence of Murray Military Barracks in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Copyright: Amnesty International.

The logo for the Pacific Small Arms Action Group is located at the bottom center of the page. It consists of a black square containing the text "Pacific Small Arms Action Group" in a white, sans-serif font. The word "Pacific" is on the top line, "Small Arms" is on the second line, and "Action Group" is on the third line.

Pacific
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