



Introduction to the IANSA Public Health Network

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and IANSA have teamed up to address the public health aspects of small arms through the new ***IANSA Public Health Network***.

Objective: To increase the strength and effectiveness of work to reduce international gun violence, by providing the public health perspective. We will organize our activities around the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms meetings in 2005 and 2006, and the 8th World Injury Conference in South Africa in 2006.

Priorities of the IANSA Public Health Network

- **Health representation on National Commissions for small arms.** This is needed to ensure that information on deaths and injuries are considered in the development of national action plans, and that public health approaches are included in those plans.
- **National collection of data on gun deaths and related costs.** This is needed to guide prevention planning, identify high risk groups and areas, and to monitor the effects of interventions. The cost of this should be included in budgets for National Commissions.
- **Support for hospital research projects to provide details on gun-related injuries.** Local-level data collection is needed to provide details on injury events and medical effects, which are needed to assure proper prevention and management of victims.
- **Education of the medical community, students, the media, the public, and policy makers about the public health burden of gun-related injuries.** These steps are needed to develop a comprehensive effort to reduce gun-related deaths and injuries.
- **More involvement of the international injury prevention community in gun-related injury prevention.** This group can help to apply decades of experience with public health approaches to the prevention of injuries from small arms and light weapons.

Contacts: Maria Valenti, IPPNW mvalenti@ippnw.org, Dr. Robert Mtonga, IPPNW/Zambia robertmtonga@yahoo.co.uk.

Worldwide, small arms are involved in wars and crimes, suicides and accidents that result in hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of injuries each year. A **public health approach to small arms injury** focuses on the health effects of gun violence. Public health groups work with many sectors of society promoting a variety of measures that can reduce the frequency and severity of shooting injuries. The methods used are ones that have been developed and refined in preventing infectious and chronic diseases and injuries, such as polio and malaria. Public health strategies eliminated smallpox and have reduced automobile fatalities in many countries. These approaches can also reduce gun deaths. Public health methods begin with information gathering, to guide the identification of the risk factors that contribute to these injuries. Possible interventions can then be developed that address those factors, tested for feasibility, and evaluated for effectiveness. When evaluations demonstrate which interventions are most successful, those can be disseminated and monitored for their ongoing effects on deaths and injuries.

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) is a Nobel Peace Prize-winning global federation of medical organizations in 58 countries dedicated to research, education, and advocacy relevant to the prevention of nuclear war, and to preventing injuries and death from firearms. IPPNW is a founding member of IANSA and is the coordinator of IANSA's **Public Health Network**.

The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) is the global network of more than 500 civil society organisations working to stop the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW).