

MEDIA BRIEFING

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - 8 MARCH 2006

There are many threats facing women around the world - a significant number of these threats are caused or exacerbated by guns.

Ahead of International Women's Day, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) has prepared the enclosed fact sheets on the role small arms play in killing, threatening, maiming and impoverishing women.

Guns kill and injure more men than women. But women suffer disproportionately from gun violence, given that they are almost never the buyers, owners or users of firearms.

- In cases of domestic violence, a gun increase the risk of death by 12 times compared to other means of violence.
- In the US, which has 96 guns per 100 people, 66% of the women killed are shot.
- In South Africa, a woman is shot dead by her current or former partner every six hours.
- In the US, having a gun in the home increases the overall risk of someone in the household being murdered by 41%. For women, however, the risk of death is tripled.
- The law in most countries still does not require police to remove guns from perpetrators of family violence. .
- Women increasingly participate in conflicts fuelled by small arms, either against their will or voluntarily, as combatants, nurses, cooks, or sex workers.
- Women and girls are now recruited as a matter of course by armed groups in many countries.
- Sexual violence against women during conflict has reached epidemic proportions.
- Sexual violence is now frequently used as a deliberate military and political tactic.
- In societies where ethnicity is inherited through the male line, "enemy" women are raped and forced to bear children.
- Women are disproportionately affected by the damage to health, education and other social services caused by armed violence.

IANSA is a global network of more than 700 civil society organisations working to stop the proliferation and misuse of small arms. Members include women's groups, democracy campaigners, victim support groups, public health and humanitarian agencies.
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- Family violence increases during and after conflict.
- Guns are often used as a tool of intimidation to facilitate rape and other types of physical and psychological violence against women.
- Women across the world report that their partners use guns to scare them into submission.
- Across the world, women are driving peace processes and rallying to oppose small arms.
- The proliferation, spread and misuse of small arms is a global crisis.

It results in 1000 deaths a day and countless more injuries, disabilities and disruptions to lives and societies. It fuels conflicts, abuse by authorities, murders, suicides, intimidation and fear. No country in the world is immune to the violence wrought by readily available guns, yet so far this devastating problem has been sidelined and has not received the attention it deserves at global level.

2006 is a critical year in the quest to halt the flood of guns.

The United Nations will hold a global summit in June to address this issue. A minority of governments will try to make this just another talking shop. But many governments, and ordinary people around the world, hope that the international community will seize this opportunity for bold action to address this crisis - at least recognising it as such - as it has with malaria, climate change, nuclear weapons, HIV/AIDS or 'terrorism'.

Rebecca Peters, Director of IANSA (replace with local spokesperson) said: "If 1000 people died a day as a result of bird flu the international community would take action. Women know that whether it's guns in the home or guns in the community, people are more likely to die. Many women are already working in their communities against the scourge of guns, and now they want governments to take action at the global level."

Contact: (insert name and contact details of local spokesperson)

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