

Young People are Part of the Solution of Gun Violence

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Gun violence and youth

Young people, overwhelmingly young men, are the demographic group most at risk from gun violence. Young men are also the most common perpetrators of gun violence.

During periods of both war and peace, young people are indoctrinated into armed groups. Youth are openly armed in parts of Brazil, Colombia, Nigeria and the Philippines, patrolling group territories. Armed groups in Uganda have abducted thousands of young people, including girls.

New research suggests that armed groups recruit very young people – most members of these groups are fully armed by the age of 14. These indoctrinated young people are victims, but when given a gun they can also become perpetrators of lethal violence. Armed groups recruiting young people have become more violent since the 1980s, due to growing involvement in the illicit drug trade, increased access to guns and persistent and often violent state repression.

Youth Network

Although young people are closely involved with the problem of gun violence they are rarely consulted as part of the solution. Traditionally they have not been invited to participate in discussions on the topic either at the regional or international level. Even at local level, youth participation has been reduced to cultural activities rather than allowing the young people to engage with policy issues.

This is all about to change with the new IANSA youth network. The network will aim to bring together young people around the world to speak in one voice about the impact of guns in their lives. We hope they will support one another to help those affected by guns to get out of the situation, sharing both experiences of gun violence and models that have been developed to assist young people.

We are seeking ideas to take the network forward.

What is IANSA?

The International Action Network on Small Arms is the global network of civil society organisations working to stop the proliferation and misuse of guns. World attention is increasingly focused on the humanitarian impact of these weapons, and IANSA brings together the voices and activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and concerned individuals across the world to prevent their deadly effects.

IANSA has more than 700 participant groups in over 100 countries, with representation from many gun-affected regions. We are composed of a wide range of organisations concerned with gun violence, including policy development organisations, national gun control groups, research institutes, aid agencies, faith groups, victims, human rights and community action organisations.

The Control Arms campaign

Organised by IANSA alongside Amnesty International and Oxfam international, the Control Arms campaign seeks to build support for an Arms Trade Treaty, a legal instrument that would prohibit arms from being exported to destinations where they are likely to be used to commit grave human rights violations. An Arms Trade Treaty would require countries to comply with international human rights and humanitarian law standards when authorising weapons transfers.

Control Arms also encourages governments to develop and strengthen national and regional arms controls measures and agreements, and to enforce them, and supports the strengthening of civil society-government partnerships to reduce small arms availability and demand at the local level.

2006: A critical year for stopping gun violence

In 2001, governments met at the UN in New York for the first time to discuss the problem of guns, or 'small arms' as they are called in diplomatic circles. The discussions resulted in an agreement called the Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA). This was the first initiative by governments to tackle gun proliferation on a global level.

Now, five years later, the PoA is due for review. In June 2006, the world's governments will gather again at the UN Review Conference on small arms – effectively the second world summit on guns. IANSA is pushing for the PoA to be strengthened to make a real impact and reduce the suffering caused by gun violence.

Join the Million Faces petition now!

Our Million Faces petition collects photos and self-portraits from around the world to support the Control Arms campaign. We are on track to reach our goal of one million faces by June 2006. We will deliver the faces at the Review Conference to send a powerful, global message to the world's governments about support for an International Arms Trade Treaty.

Be one in a million. Join us.

Join the youth network by sending an email to youth@iansa.org

In the next few months we will be focusing on collecting one million faces that will be submitted to the UN Secretary General, asking him and the world's governments to support global principles to control arms transfers. If you would like to help to collect the million faces you can contact IANSA on youth@iansa.org.

Young people are the victims, young people are the perpetrators, **now** young people can be the solution!