



# **SEXED PISTOLS**

THE GENDERED IMPACTS  
of SMALL ARMS &  
LIGHT WEAPONS

Edited by

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**& ALBRECHT SCHNABEL**

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# Sexed pistols: The gendered impacts of small arms and light weapons

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Edited by Vanessa Farr, Henri Myrtilinen and  
Albrecht Schnabel

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## Sexing the pistol: The gendered impacts of prolific small arms

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*Vanessa Farr, Henri Myrntinen and Albrecht Schnabel*

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Every day, small arms and light weapons (SALW) kill, maim, wound and threaten millions of adults and children, whether combatants and civilians in war zones or gangs and communities in degraded “peacetime” environments characterized by large-scale violence. Due to their widespread availability, mobility and ease of use, prolific SALW have become central to maintaining social dislocation, destabilization, insecurity and crime in the build-up to war, in wartime and in the aftermath of violent conflict. Small arms are misused within domestic settings as well as in public spaces, and they impact on everyone in the community without regard to sex or age.

However, although the impacts of these weapons can be vastly different for women and men, girls and boys, a careful consideration of gender and age is rare in the formulation of small-arms policy, planning small-arms collection or control, or even in small-arms research. In our view, one important means to counter their effects is to increase our understanding of the role played by prolific SALW in reinforcing and maintaining gender- and age-specific violence before, during and after conflict. In this book, theorists and practitioners from around the world have collaborated to close existing research and policy gaps by presenting global perspectives on the problem. *Sexed Pistols: The Gendered Impacts of Small Arms and Light Weapons* collects a wealth of experiences and insights on the nexus of gender, age, violence and small arms in developing and developed countries on five continents.

## Context

In the early 1990s, at the beginning of the small-arms policy and research debate, the humanitarian and human rights perspectives of the issue received significant consideration. After 1998, as the debate moved into international forums, this concern was slowly eroded until most of the international and regional documents on small arms – the majority crafted after 1998 – failed to mention humanitarian issues specifically at all. Research and policy on the problem of small-arms (mis)use, and discussions of the human beings responsible for it, were conspicuously absent. As conversations on small arms and light weapons have continued, however, the voices of non-mainstream actors who question the absence of analysis on the people behind the guns have become more audible, assessments of the problem are becoming more descriptive and complex, and more questions are being asked about why civilian demand for such weapons remains so high.<sup>1</sup> Norms and policies on preventing the proliferation and misuse of small arms have continued to evolve at local, national, regional and international levels, and discussions in academic and policy circles are also becoming more informed and complex – partly because of the impetus from academic and policy debates in the field of human security, a conversation which has arisen, in some measure, to oppose the traditional focus on state/national security. Current work on small arms has begun to look beyond simply “counting the weapons” and is, instead, increasingly focusing on the devastating human impact of their misuse.

Yet a noticeable gap in this discourse has been a discussion of how gender ideologies, which shape and constrain the behaviour of women and men, are influencing people’s attitudes to small arms. Remarkably little attention has focused on the fact that gun ownership and misuse are highly gendered phenomena and brutally reinforce unequal social hierarchies that not only give men dominance over women and other men, but also exclude young people from access to social, political and economic power – and they exacerbate race and class tensions in violence-prone communities, as well as often perpetuating the repression of sexual minorities.<sup>2</sup> Although rates of gender-based violence are universally high, there continues to be a general lack of political interest in the underlying causes of such violence. Rather, there remains a tendency to see “domestic” violence as a problem that can be overlooked because it so often occurs in the private domain, a perspective that frequently provides impunity for its perpetrators.<sup>3</sup> Gender differences in approaches to and use of small arms have not yet been widely researched, and inadequate data have been collected on how males and females are differently impacted by these prolific weapons. A combination of a lack of political

interest and will, scarce resources and the sheer difficulty of keeping track of firearms-related injuries in places with poor infrastructure and record-keeping capacities underpins this lack of quantitative sex- and age-disaggregated data and qualitative information on the experiences, views and actions of women and men, girls and boys in gun-prolific societies, both those that are at war and those that are not. As a result, we have little scientific evidence with which to influence the development of gender- and age-responsive programmes to curtail the impacts of small arms and light weapons.

It is not only the domestic impacts of SALW that are ignored – the drafters of international agreements on small arms and light weapons (while they may refer in passing to the “devastating” consequences of armed violence on women) have made little significant effort to align their work with documents such as Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), which calls for the inclusion of women in all aspects of peace-building, including small-arms control.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, as observed by Vanessa Farr in an early publication on this problem, “[al]though weapons proliferation is often culturally sanctioned and upheld by the manipulation of gender ideologies, gender goes entirely unremarked in all documents which were not explicitly conceived to focus on gender mainstreaming”.<sup>5</sup> The Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development (2006) is, however, an indication that attitudes are slowly changing, with its call to:

promote a comprehensive approach to armed violence reduction issues, recognizing the different situations, needs and resources of men and women, boys and girls, as reflected in the provisions of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1612.<sup>6</sup>

It is hardly surprising, then, that even in the very new field of research and activism on SALW and their impacts, a paucity of specific research on gender has meant an absence of broadly based surveys and data production from which to draw concrete conclusions. Despite the work of a few feminists in this field, it continues to be difficult to make incontrovertible claims about gender roles. Social stereotypes are shaped to support the use of violence, and no consolidated effort has been made to understand how actors in weapons-prolific contexts are driven by ideals about appropriate behaviour for males and females when it comes to small-arms possession and use.

## Structure and contents of the book

The decision to organize *Sexed Pistols* by theme rather than geography came about because we were struck by several similarities in the typology



of the gendered impacts of SALW and how comparable these are across the globe. The chapters in this book cover a range of analyses of how and by whom small arms are used in a range of different societies, from ones still in conflict or moving to a post-conflict phase to those which are considered to be at peace but nevertheless continue to experience high levels of violence. The case studies covered in this book exemplify in a stark manner how it is particularly the ubiquity of SALW which blurs the lines between “conflict” societies and those considered to be “non-conflict” societies but which are not at peace. We believe that this thematic structuring highlights the complexities of dealing with gender and SALW better than the more traditional but somewhat more arbitrary grouping by geographical regions or conflict/non-conflict societies.

The authors of this book come from a range of backgrounds, and the diversity of methodologies used and opinions expressed reflects the complexities of our theme. The chapters combine field experience and academic research, and approach the cases in a transdisciplinary manner. Our book is meant to initiate further debate and analysis as well as to expose a diverse readership to this multifaceted and pressing topic.

After a thematic and methodological introduction to the issues that need to be considered in order to understand better how the misuse of small arms is both shaped by and shapes gender ideologies, the book is divided thematically into four sections. Part I focuses on *sexualized violence, gender and small arms*, presenting examinations of the lives of girl soldiers in Sierra Leone and the legal framework of examining the systematic use of sexualized violence as a weapon of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In Part II, on *gender, small arms and violence in fragmented societies*, case studies of three violent islands, Haiti, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, are presented, building a comparative study of contexts in which armed gang violence and gender-based violence are seemingly unstoppable by weak state structures unable to provide services or safety to the population. In Part III, case studies of Northern Ireland, Israel and South Africa are used to examine the ways in which violence perpetrated with small arms in these conflict/post-conflict societies is *militarizing the domestic sphere*. The last three case studies, presented in Part IV, leave behind the domestic sphere to consider *gender, weapons collection and small-arms control* in a comparative study of Albania, Cambodia and Mali; small-arms control in Somalia; and the impacts of small-arms collection programmes in the Karamoja region of northeastern Uganda. Thus we cast light on four important thematic issues linked to gender and SALW: sexualized violence, the role of SALW in fragmented societies, SALW in the domestic sphere and the complexities of weapons collection.

*Thematic introduction*

In Chapter 2, “Gender, attitudes and the regulation of small arms: Implications for action”, Wendy Cukier and James Cairns explore small arms and cultures of violence, with particular emphasis on the gender dimensions of these themes. Much of the geographical focus of this chapter is on industrialized countries, in societies generally considered to be “at peace” but nevertheless experiencing high levels of SALW-related violence. Cultural norms are both contributors to and consequences of violence, and small-arms usage and proliferation sometimes figure largely in creating and normalizing cultures of violence because they facilitate violence and contribute to a cycle of violence, fear and further arming. While a wide range of factors fuel this cycle in many regions of the world, “gun culture” and the “culture of violence” are closely connected. Gun culture is also tightly linked to notions of masculinity and expressions of male identity. We see this in the fact that, worldwide, most small-arms owners and users are male. Men dominate the military and the police, but men also dominate domestic firearms ownership. While men die from gun violence in far greater numbers than women, the fact that women represent a very small proportion of gun owners means that they are disproportionately the victims of gun violence, including non-lethal violence.

The role of firearms legislation in promoting the safety of women has been well established. However, the extent to which violence against women is recognized as a crime varies from country to country. Laws of individual countries both shape and reflect social values, and gun control is made all the more complex because it seems to intersect with gender identity and other identities (e.g. national identities). Gender also shapes the formulation of policy regarding firearms. As men dominate political structures in most countries and global institutions such as the United Nations, notions of masculinity can have “invisible” effects on the ways in which policy debates and research are constructed. At the same time, gender has shaped the development of advocacy efforts for and against gun control as well as community-based initiatives in response to gun violence.

Cukier and Cairns argue that political decision-making (including donor behaviour) is shaped by national firearms cultures and reinforced by male-dominated institutions, policies and processes. Weak impact on policy processes has been a consequence of (but also causes) weak impact on research and policy formation on small-arms control. Cukier and Cairns find that it is still a challenge for women’s voices (and men’s gendered voices) to be heard in formal peace negotiations and SALW policy development.

*Sexualized violence, gender and small arms*

In Chapter 3, “Girls and small arms in Sierra Leone: Victimization, participation and resistance”, Myriam Denov and Richard Maclure’s study of girls in fighting forces is part of a larger research project that explores the experiences and perspectives of war-affected boys and girls in Sierra Leone. Once on the margins of violent conflict, the availability and easy use of small arms have now put children at the very heart of it. It is believed that tens of thousands of children in Sierra Leone actively participated in the armed conflict in that country. Traditionally, the term “child soldier” has evoked the image of a small boy with a gun, yet in Sierra Leone up to 30 per cent of child soldiers were girls – whose perspectives and experiences, both as victims and as combatants, have been largely ignored. While the women and girls of Sierra Leone were not invisible to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), as they were seen as assets and resources to be exploited, they were invisible to the government and the international community when it came to devising the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process and were thus once more victimized.

Girls’ initiation into the violence came about largely through forced recruitment – they were abducted by the RUF, often at a very young age, through extreme coercion and the force of the gun. They suffered not only from the violence of conflict, but also from displacement and separation from their families. Once abducted, girls fulfilled various roles in the armed groups, according to age, physical strength and the circumstances of the group they were forced to join. The culture of violence was apparent in the girls’ experiences of victimization and perpetration. Often, for survival’s sake, any command given would be obeyed: if the children did not do what they were ordered, they could be killed. The transition from victim to perpetrator and back was not, however, linear, as the girls continually drifted between perpetration of violence, including with small arms, and victimization by those same arms. Moreover, perhaps as a result of their lack of status in Sierra Leonean society, girls reported a sense of empowerment through the use of weapons and the supremacy they conferred over others, including civilians of both sexes who were not similarly armed.

In Chapter 4, “Small arms and rape as a system of war: A case study of the Democratic Republic of Congo”, Felicity Szesnat examines several case studies, the national and international legal frameworks and the international community’s response to the widespread use of sexual violence in the two Congo wars of 1996–1997 and 1998–2003, respectively, and the continuing violence in many parts of the country. As Szesnat points out, armed conflict in the DRC has been fought mostly with small

arms. All of the nine states directly involved in the conflict, as well as the non-state armed groups, have been primarily armed with small arms. There are an estimated 500,000 illegal weapons in the DRC; in addition, many civilians in the DRC keep small arms at home.

It has also been mainly small arms which have been used systematically to perpetrate tens if not hundreds of thousands of cases of sexualized violence in the DRC, including various kinds of rape, sexual slavery, mutilation and other forms of gender-based brutality, against both women and men. Szesnat analyses the role of the international community in the post-conflict phase, especially in the context of the UN MONUC mission, which has failed to stem the widespread occurrence of sexualized violence. In fact, even members of the MONUC mission have been involved in cases of sexual exploitation.

Szesnat concludes that, based on her research on the DRC, there is strong evidence that rape has been used by all sides in the conflict as a system of war, and that small arms have played a vital role in the scale of violence, including men's use of small arms to threaten and intimidate women into submitting to rape; using small arms themselves to penetrate women's bodies; and using small arms to kill or injure women either before, during or after raping them. Szesnat concludes that the use of small arms in committing systematic rape should be further studied and documented. Based on her research, she draws a range of recommendations for the national authorities in the DRC, the MONUC mission and other international actors to address the widespread use of sexual violence as a system of war.

### *Gender, small arms and violence in fragmented societies*

In Chapter 5, "Haiti: The gendered pattern of small-arms violence against women", Nadine Puechguirbal, Wiza Loutis and Natalie Man examine the role of women as both victims and perpetrators of small-arms-related violence in the country. As the authors point out, while efforts have been made to disarm and reintegrate various armed elements in Haiti, until recently little was known about whether women are involved in armed violence other than as victims and, if so, about their motivations for association. In order to get a better understanding about their association and how women are affected by violence, the authors look into the varying behaviour of Haiti's armed gangs. Despite the fact that contemporary Haitian women have often proved themselves capable of armed violence, a stereotype of the gentle and benevolent Haitian woman remains quite strongly in place today, thus hiding women's participation in armed violence and complicating responses to such violence.

The authors analyse attitudes of various armed groups towards women and women's participation in such groups, against the backdrop of Haiti's history, political situation and socio-economic framework. They explore gender and class differences, and how these impact upon attitudes to SALW in communities, the perception of security and the different gender norms that appear to motivate the use of SALW in perpetrating violence. In their conclusions, the authors urge both national and international actors, such as the UN MINUSTAH mission in Haiti, to go beyond stereotyped notions of gender and violence in order to find more realistic approaches to problems of small arms and violence, including sexualized violence, in the country.

In Chapter 6, "State, society and the gender of gun culture in Papua New Guinea", Sinclair Dinnen and Edwina Thompson explore important gender differences in perceptions of security and the gendered nature of gun ownership and violence. Situating the proliferation of small arms in the context of culture, power and security in Papua New Guinea (PNG), Dinnen and Thompson's study considers how the social and political history of PNG has been impacted by a changing pattern of conflict and violence, in particular after the influx of firearms and the cultural, political and economic changes which have affected traditional gender relations. The prevalent gun culture of the past 10 to 15 years can be described as creating an enduring situation of disorder, rather than one of outright conflict; and gender-based violence in PNG is also widespread. Continued low levels of violence, expressed through "*raskolism*" (gangsterism), tribal fighting and election-related violence, have a day-to-day impact on the population. Today, PNG as a "state" is still largely a fiction, and the government is profoundly weak or absent in large parts of the country. Much of the oral evidence indicates that the various communities have always engaged in cycles of warfare and peacemaking – a practice which has, however, become increasingly lethal and difficult to pacify since the advent and proliferation of small arms.

Although fatalities have increased because of gun-related violence, it is not only gun misuse that characterizes the kinds of violence people are experiencing on a daily level. In addition to *raskolism*, tribal fighting and election-related violence, the authors point out that other forms of aggression, such as gang rape, are growing rapidly. Moreover, both men and women experience sexual violence: in a fairly new development, sexual violence against men and boys is particularly widespread in prisons. However, Dinnen and Thompson found that, while it is considered shameful for sexual violence to occur against men, it is not considered shameful for such violence to be directed against women. Disputes in which a woman is raped are still settled by the affected families themselves without recourse to the state. Official responses (or lack thereof)

are part of the problem, and new solutions, using local resources and knowledge, must urgently be found.

In Chapter 7, “‘Now they have guns, now they feel powerful’ – Gender perspectives on small-arms violence in Timor-Leste”, Saleh Abdullah and Henri Myrntinen examine gender, violence and small arms in the context of this nation’s history and its current social, economic and political situation. They analyse the impact of small arms, gendered violence and the role of ex-combatants after the East Timorese conflict – issues that have become serious concerns for the country’s security. Their study examines how gender roles and expectations are being affected in the post-conflict moment. It looks at gendered notions of security in East Timorese society, which has experienced a dramatic upsurge in reported post-conflict gendered violence, continued political instability and gang violence.

After a bitter and bloody 24-year armed struggle against Indonesian military occupation and two years under UN administration, Timor-Leste gained its independence in 2002. Socio-economic and political instability has, however, dogged the nation, with events coming to a head in a violent implosion of state structures in 2006, followed by two more years of constant crisis, culminating in a coup attempt in 2008. Much of the instability and insecurity in the new nation can be linked to gangs, organizations formed by disgruntled veterans of the struggle and problems in the security sector. In short, violent expressions of masculinity, facilitated by prolific small arms, lie at the heart of the nation’s security problems. Participation in violence-prone organizations has become both a socio-culturally acceptable way for men to address legitimate socio-economic and political concerns and a key means for young men to build their identities. At the same time, women’s space in society has been reduced and the country continues to suffer from very high levels of gender-based violence.

As Abdullah and Myrntinen point out, the international community has played a central role in Timor-Leste in the post-conflict years, and thus needs to refine its stabilization policies further, especially with regard to the way in which the DDR and security sector reform (SSR) programmes have been carried out, paying special attention to the needs of both men and women in these processes.

### *Militarizing the domestic sphere*

In Chapter 8, “‘That’s equality for you, dear’: Gender, small arms and the Northern Ireland conflict”, Miranda Alison examines a specific feature of the Northern Ireland conflict: the involvement of women in paramilitary activities and paramilitary violence. Like male combatants,

female combatants in nationalist conflicts view themselves as fighting to protect the political, cultural, economic and military security of their nation, community or family. It is clear, however, that women have been more centrally and directly involved in paramilitary violence in republican organizations than in loyalist ones. Republicanism has constructed itself as a revolutionary movement while loyalism has been concerned with bulwarking the status quo, which includes the maintenance of patriarchal social systems and “traditional” gender roles. However, even in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) some male paramilitary members were not comfortable with female comrades in arms. Moreover, as well as occasionally refusing to go out on an operation with female “volunteers” (the IRA’s term for its combatants), they seem to have maintained or developed conceptualizations of their masculinity that entail status associated with guns.

Within both loyalist and republican paramilitaries it is women who have had the primary responsibility for hiding and transporting small arms – indeed, in loyalist paramilitaries this has been one of their most significant roles. Although for loyalist paramilitaries this role for women came about in part due to the sexual division of labour within these organizations along stereotypical gender lines, for both loyalist and republican groups it has also been a strategic tactic because broadly accepted social stereotypes of women as “peaceful” meant that they were rarely subjected to the same scrutiny as men.

A further issue explored by Alison is the question of the sexualization of violence and proliferation of weapons from a women’s perspective. Here she takes up a contradictory pattern: while there were many cases of members of the security forces sexually harassing or molesting women and girls both during street searches and during arrest and interrogation, women nonetheless participated in non-traditional ways in furthering the violence. Alison challenges the fact that, although much is made of men’s violence in militarized societies, feminists have been more reluctant to address the question of women who are attracted to and support such violence, and what this says about constructed femininity.

In Chapter 9, “The gun on the kitchen table: The sexist subtext of private policing in Israel”, Rela Mazali focuses on the highly accelerated proliferation of privately owned and operated security companies in Israel in the past decade. She argues that the spread and growth of such companies deepen Israeli militarization in a variety of ways, including through the domestication of small-arms proliferation. While she observes that prolific small arms intensify already existing gender discrimination and violence against women, analyses of race and class are also important because a large part of the private security sector consists of exploited and unorganized workers who are often from socially and eco-

nomically marginalized sections of society, with few other job prospects on the horizon.

As private security companies are loosely regulated and efforts to organize themselves as a segment of the labour market are not very advanced, there is little transparency and weak enforcement of equal opportunity laws. In a depressed job market, the private security sector was the only site of growth for some years. Women's own perception of employment in private policing as inappropriate for females is a significant obstacle to their participation in this growing sector, as many women do not associate themselves with guns or guarding. As stereotyped gender roles are prevalent in Israeli society, this has resulted in self-exclusion: most women do not apply for jobs in this sector.

Mazali notes, furthermore, that broader army and police cultures have been incorporated into the private policing sector. Among other things, this has led to higher levels of sexual harassment. There has, however, been little public monitoring of harassment in private companies. Moreover, unlike the police and the army, which have preventive policies in place, private security companies are not required to address the problem of sexual harassment.

These conditions contribute to generally high levels of insecurity for women in Israeli society. In recent years there has been an increase in gun use in murders of women by intimate partners, with a significant percentage shot with guns signed out to private security guards. Ironically, security guards are perceived to be protective agents who are supposed to avert danger. Yet for many women in Israel the private policing industry brings discrimination and danger into their private lives – their families and homes.

In Chapter 10, "Securing private spaces: Gendered labour, violence and democratization in South Africa", Jennifer Fish and Pumla Mncayi offer an in-depth analysis of domestic labour in South Africa – a nation that continues its struggle to realize a non-violent, non-racist democracy. They explore the linkages between individual/personal security, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the heavily gendered institution of paid household labour. Like Mazali, they show how the particular relationship between gender and personal security is played out in the supposedly most private and protected domain, the household.

With its emphasis on the existence of divisions among women according to their race, class and location, the institution of domestic labour is often referred to in South Africa as "the last bastion of apartheid". Domestic work embodies a striking polarity in relation to perceptions of safety in post-apartheid South Africa. For example, domestic workers are often aware of and threatened by the presence of guns inside the private households where they are employed. Moreover, as Fish and Mncayi



argue, workers' fears tend to increase when they are unaware of the specific location of such weapons. Yet an assumed expectation of this particular occupation is the protection of employers' private households from outside threats. Non-compliance with these assumed security roles often results in immediate job loss. Thus workers are required to risk their own safety to maintain employment, whereas employers consider the presence of domestic workers to be a strong enhancement of their own security through the human barrier created between "outside" threats and the interior private household space.

In South Africa's current transitional phase – characterized by extremely high rates of both small-arms and gender-based violence – domestic workers provide a critical service that is rarely acknowledged as part of the formal labour contract. Their economic privilege allows employers to buy a certain "peace of mind" from the threat of the severe proliferation of small arms and violence in South African society. Domestic workers thus become in essence unarmed security guards whose bodies mediate the threat of violence in their employers' private households while reifying the race and class divides of the apartheid era.

### *Gender, weapons collection and small-arms control*

In Chapter 11, "Just a matter of practicality: Mapping the role of women in weapons for development projects in Albania, Cambodia and Mali", Shukuko Koyama argues that the capacities of women as actors in such programmes are not fully recognized nor utilized by relevant stakeholders, and that women have much more potential to contribute to such projects. Koyama's study focuses on weapons collection programmes that have been linked to development initiatives. These voluntary approaches to disarmament are increasingly attracting attention from donors and implementing agencies. Those encouraged to hand over their weapons are usually civilian community members, and not ex-combatants. The case studies demonstrate that women tend to contribute to weapons collection projects because they want to remove weapons from their communities. They motivate male family members to give up weapons and are major supporters of formal disarmament programmes.

Koyama concludes that while the implementers of weapons collection programmes may have the political will to include women's participation, they are not well equipped to do so. In addition, approaches other than that of ensuring participation will need to be developed. For example, she believes that it is not adequate merely to hold, as is often done, a women's participatory workshop, as this approach is too simplistic: the international assistance community needs to be aware of women's actual and potential capabilities as agents of arms control, and to underpin its

assistance policies with instruments to utilize these capabilities as much as possible.

Equal participation in weapons collection programmes should be promoted across all social groups and divisions, and include men, women, youth and elders. Yet while the challenge of promoting women's role without excluding other social actors is real, Koyama warns that it is important to note that many men are also excluded from weapons-collection processes due to differences in social status.

In Chapter 12, "Poems against bullets? The role of Somali women in social gun control", Katrin Kinzelbach and Zeinab Mohamed Hassan explore the roles of women's oral poetry and political activism in Somalia and how they relate to small-arms control. Although data on this subject are limited, they produce a gender-sensitive quantitative analysis of the small-arms problem in Somalia. They also provide an analysis of the socio-political and security context in which women's disarmament poems are created and recited. The aim of their approach is to generate analysis that is relevant to the work on gender and small arms, while recognizing that women who have been excluded from most small-arms-related surveys find their known ways to convey the messages they wish to communicate.

In the context of the civil war, Somali women have used their poems to communicate with highly militarized men. Through their poetry, women comment on power relations in society. Although some of their poems continue to encourage raids and fights, as is traditional, many appeal for peace. They often confront men directly in exhortations such as "you men, lay down your arms". Women's aspirations, such as political empowerment, are also reflected in the poetry.

The emotional power of women's poems is linked to the personal experience of loss and the struggle for life. Women are empowered through their poetry and are often able to appeal to the emotions of men, some of whom have laid down their arms in response. Through poetry, women remind men of the horrors of war and ask why they are still fighting. The authors believe that mobilization of women, whether as fighters or as peace promoters, has policy implications. By paying attention to the tradition of debate through the recitation of poetry, women can be supported to use their voices publicly and in a positive and effective way. Their practice highlights the importance of attending to customary forms of debate when undertaking consciousness-raising work.

In Chapter 13, "Missing men, lost boys and widowed women: Gender perspectives on small-arms proliferation and disarmament in Karamoja, Uganda", Christina M. Yeung examines the gendered effects of weapons proliferation in this agro-pastoralist region in northeastern Uganda. She explores how the demand for small arms is underpinned by gender

ideologies and how, in turn, gender identities and relations are shaped and impacted by violence and the use of firearms. Particular attention is paid to the experiences of male youth and women, both married and unmarried. Yeung discusses the 2001–2002 weapons collection programme in Karamoja, examining whether certain social groups were marginalized or ignored in the process. She asks how successful the weapons collection programme was at fully disarming households, to what extent women were involved in the decision to disarm or retain firearms and whether the experience and perception of (in)security of men and women differed as a result of the decommissioning of weapons. Finally, her study explores whether and how practical disarmament affected the demand factor for small arms, for example whether cultural valuations of traditional expressions of masculinity and femininity have changed, whether socio-economic deprivation in the Karamoja cluster has become more clearly gendered and whether the weapons collection programme has made any positive or negative contributions to the long-term social, economic and political empowerment of women and men in the subregion.

Yeung suggests that we are still a long way away from micro-disarmament initiatives that are truly situated in a demand-side logic. During the conception of the 2001–2002 Karamoja programme, as in many other disarmament programmes, there was little attempt to address the material and security needs of the various stakeholders in a sustained manner, including both the gun users and the more vulnerable sections of society, such as rural women and orphans. Disarmament benefits went to elite groups, and there was very little impact on those who actually needed the benefits. In addition, men experienced emasculation through the disarmament programme, in that the men who gave up weapons were called “women”. Yeung identifies this as part of a “crisis of masculinity” in the community, as fewer men are able to reach traditional markers of adulthood.

## Conclusion

From the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995 to the Windhoek Declaration in 1999, and the passing of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 to the Geneva Declaration of 2006, we have found increasing ways in which to hold governments and international agencies responsible for the gender-based violence that small arms underpin.<sup>7</sup> All of these resources allow analysts and policy-makers to focus on identifying how ideologies of masculinity and femininity are constructed to support the misuse of small arms in societies that are war-afflicted or suffering from elevated levels of social violence and/or severe underdevelopment – or which are

merely highly tolerant of the presence of individually owned firearms. To further the effectiveness of such work, in the concluding chapter the editors tie together a number of the findings from the various case studies and draw out a number of recommendations for future policy formulation, programme implementation and research designed to illuminate more fully and counteract the “sexed pistol” that is so often fired.

## Notes

1. The Small Arms Survey estimates that nearly 60 per cent of weapons are in private hands. See Small Arms Survey (2002) *Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the Human Cost*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. See Schroeder, Emily and Lauren Newhouse (2004) *Gender and Small Arms: Moving Into the Mainstream*, ISS Monograph 104, October, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, for a discussion of the lack of analysis of gender in small-arms-related UN discussions even up to the 2003 Biennial Meeting of States on the Programme of Action.
3. Several accounts of violence against women with guns that has gone unpunished are recorded in Control Arms Coalition of Amnesty International, IANSA and Oxfam (2005) *The Impact of Guns on Women's Lives*, Oxford: Alden Press; see also [www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org).
4. Available at [www.un.org/events/res\\_1325e.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf).
5. Farr, Vanessa (2002) “A Gendered Analysis of International Agreements on Small Arms and Light Weapons”, in *Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Regional and International Concerns*, Brief 24, Bonn International Center for Conversion, Bonn, p. 17.
6. Available at [www.genevadeclaration.org/geneva-declaration.html](http://www.genevadeclaration.org/geneva-declaration.html).
7. Available at [www.undp.org/fwcw/plat.htm](http://www.undp.org/fwcw/plat.htm); [www.reliefweb.int/library/GHARKit/FilesFeb2001/windhoek\\_declaration.htm](http://www.reliefweb.int/library/GHARKit/FilesFeb2001/windhoek_declaration.htm).

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# Sexed Pistols: The Gendered Impacts of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Edited by Vanessa Farr, Henri Myrntinen and Albrecht Schnabel

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Every day, small arms and light weapons (SALW) kill and maim, wound and threaten millions of adults and children, whether combatants and civilians in war zones or gangs and communities in degraded "peacetime" environments that are characterized by large-scale violence. Due to their widespread availability, mobility and ease of use prolific SALW have become central to maintaining social dislocation, destabilization, insecurity and crime in the build-up to war, in wartime and in the aftermath of violent conflict. Small arms are misused within domestic settings, as well as in public spaces, and they affect everyone in the community without regard to sex or age. Although the impacts of these weapons can be vastly different for women and men, girls and boys, a careful consideration of gender and age is rare in the formulation of small arms policy, of planning small arms collection or control, or even in small arms research. To counter the effects of prolific SALW, their role in reinforcing and maintaining gender- and age-specific violence must be more deeply analysed and the results applied at the policy and operational levels. This work should be undertaken in war-afflicted contexts, in societies suffering from elevated levels of social violence and/or severe underdevelopment, and in those tolerant of the presence of individually owned firearms.

Contributors to the book draw on experience and research from around the world on the nexus of gender, age, violence and small arms in developing and developed countries. Their findings feed into a number of recommendations for future policy formulation, programme implementation and research designed to further illuminate and counteract the firing of the "sexed pistol".

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