

Women at Work: Preventing Gun Violence



Disarm Domestic Violence is the first international campaign to protect women from gun violence in the home.

The main goal is to ensure that anyone with a history of domestic abuse is denied access to a firearm, and has their license revoked.

- Campaign aims and objectives;
- Disarm Domestic Violence launches worldwide;
- How to get involved.



Bulletin No. 19

The danger within: guns in the home

The problem of guns in the home is fundamentally linked to the wider issue of disarmament. Of the nearly 900 million small arms in the world today, 75% are in the hands of private individuals — most of them men.

The disarmament community must begin to address one of the most serious aspects of small arms proliferation - the deaths and injuries caused by guns in the home. For example, in France and South Africa, one in three women killed by their husbands is shot; in the USA this rises to two in three.

To date, most of the research available on what increases the risk of a woman being killed in the home has been conducted in countries of the global North. These studies have found that access to a gun can increase the risk of death by up to five times. Another has compared female homicide rates with gun ownership levels in 25 high-income countries, and found that where firearms are more available, more women are killed.

When considering violent crime, it's natural to focus on the role of illegal small arms. But, actually, most firearms used in domestic homicides are legal. It is also important to consider the misuse of guns by the security sector, including police officers and soldiers when off-duty.

The phenomenon also affects those in post-conflict contexts, when guns circulate in the community, and post-conflict stress, limited economic prospects and a reduction in basic services combine to exacerbate the problem of domestic violence.

The law can help. Australia, Canada, South Africa and Trinidad & Tobago are among the handful of countries that have harmonised their legal frameworks on gun licensing and on domestic violence. This means the gun law prohibits ownership by

domestic violence offenders, and the domestic violence law requires the removal of guns. In addition to strengthening gun control legislation, domestic violence legislation may include prohibitions against perpetrators of domestic violence from purchasing or possessing a firearm.

In fact, such a prohibition is included in the 1996 United Nations recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women for legislation on domestic violence. In 2008, an Expert Group organised by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women recommended that protection orders for victims of domestic violence include prohibitions on the purchase, use or possessing a firearm or any such weapon specified by the court.

Through the Disarm Domestic Violence campaign, IANSA members are pushing for this harmonisation to be replicated in many more countries. At a minimum, police should be required to consult the spouse or former spouse before approving a gun license application. This is crucial because in many cases, the man who kills a woman has previously threatened or committed violence, without coming to the notice of police.

The goal is ambitious, but recent successes demonstrate that such changes are possible. Several countries have reformed their gun laws over the past decade and have begun to see the benefits, especially for women.

In Canada, spousal notification is already

the norm, and the Canadian government has established a toll-free telephone number that a spouse can call to express any concerns about an applicant, or report alleged crimes that may not be in the legal records. Similarly, in Australia and South Africa, weapons are removed if a restraining order is made for domestic violence.

These laws are making a real difference, and reducing gun deaths. Canada tightened its gun laws in 1995. By 2003, the gun murder rate dropped by 15 per cent overall, and by 40 per cent for women. Australia overhauled its gun law in 1996. Five years later, the average gun murder rate was 45 per cent lower than it had been before the reforms. Again, the effect was more pronounced for women.

Canada and Australia reformed their gun laws more than a decade ago, but few countries have followed, despite these successes. More women will be protected if other countries respond in a similar way with gun laws that take domestic violence into account.

These shootings are so often preventable, if the policymakers and police respect the knowledge and instinct of those closest to the gunmen. We must all consider how gun violence affects our lives and communities, and demand from our governments and legislators policies and practices to protect women in the home.

Campaign aims and objectives

Disarm Domestic Violence is the first international campaign to protect women from gun violence in the home. The main goal is to ensure that anyone with a history of domestic abuse is denied access to a firearm, and has their license revoked.



**Where did the gun
come from?**

Many people do not realise that the greatest risk of gun violence to women around the world is not on the streets, or the battlefield, but in their own homes.

All over the world, in every class, race and caste, in every religion and region, there are men who subject their intimate partners to physical or psychological violence, or both. Family killings are the only category of homicides where women outnumber men as victims.

When a woman is killed in the home, it is her partner or male relative who is most likely to be the murderer, often with a prior record of domestic abuse.

Gun violence can be part of the cycle of intimidation and aggression that many women experience from an intimate partner. For every woman killed or physically injured by firearms, many more are threatened.

Why are guns so deadly in domestic assaults? One reason is the severity of the wounds caused by gunshot which is highly destructive of human tissue. Another reason is that the presence of a firearm, with its threat of lethality, reduces a woman's capacity for resistance or escape.

The trauma of being threatened by a husband or partner is all the greater when he brandishes a gun and there is a very real danger of being killed. The wife of a US soldier told researchers: "He would say, 'You will do this, or...', and he would go to the gun cabinet".

IANSA women from over 20 countries are already involved and collecting information about the scale of the problem in Argentina, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, DR Congo, El Salvador, Haiti, Liberia, Macedonia, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Portugal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uganda, and Venezuela.

"While male-dominated societies often justify small arms possession through the alleged need to protect vulnerable women, women actually face greater danger of violence when their families and communities are armed."

Barbara Frey, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, 2006

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Campaign Goals

Goal 1

Develop an international network of advocates for women's rights, who are committed to ending armed domestic violence.

Goal 2

Contribute to developing comprehensive and holistic legislation for prevention of domestic violence and protection of victims.

Help each organisation in advocacy to take guns out of the hands of actual or potential abusers. This will require the passage of laws and/or regulations including:

- Consider an individual's history of domestic violence when dealing with gun licence applications and renewals;
- Police should discreetly consult current and former spouses/partners when an individual applies for a firearm licence;
- Where there is a threat to safety guns should be removed and licences suspended or cancelled;
- Improve the communication links among police, courts, prosecutors' offices, and centres for social work/shelters, including the collection, storage and exchange of information;
- Police should make available statistics for use in the analysis and monitoring of armed domestic violence incidents;
- Health professionals and social workers must be authorised to disclose information to the police if they have concerns about an individual in possession of a firearm.

Goal 3

Support organisations to develop common strategies, strengthen their advocacy, build capacity and solidarity, including the sharing of 'good practice' in policy development, media engagement, fundraising and campaign promotion.

Goal 4

Lobby at the international level to ensure that the governments fulfill their international commitments to prevent violence against women; and take full advantage of key events and meetings on the international calendar.

Disarm Domestic Violence

The Disarm Domestic Violence Campaign launches around the world

Disarm Domestic Violence is the first international campaign to protect women from gun violence in the home. The main goal is to ensure that people with a history of domestic abuse are denied access to firearms, and have their licenses revoked. Here are some highlights from the launch:

THE AMERICAS

Argentina

Argentine parliamentarian Deputy Luciano Fabris raised awareness about the campaign by introducing a bill, and promoting it on the congress website. Asociación para Políticas Públicas gained the support and commitment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which has agreed to promote future activities.



Outreach activities in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Brazil

The campaign was launched as part of the Disarmament Convoy, led by Viva Comunidade and the Disarm Brazil Network – with the support of Viva Rio and the Brazilian government. The Convoy has traveled through 14 cities.

Canada

The campaign jointly coordinated by Project Ploughshares, Peacebuild and the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children was launched at the opening of the 1st Annual Canadian Conference on the Prevention of Domestic Homicides.

Colombia

Colectivo Dignidad Humana held public events in Santiago de Cali, at a health centre, a school, and the University.



Outreach activities in Santiago de Cali, Colombia

El Salvador

CEMUJER launched the campaign at the Monument to the Constitution in San Salvador. The Parliamentary Commissions on Public Security and Narcotics and the Commission on Family, Women and Childhood are now discussing CEMUJER's proposals.



Campaign launch in San Salvador, El Salvador

Mexico

In San Cristobal de las Casas the group COLEM spoke about the campaign in their radio programme Aquelarre on Frecuencia Libre 99.1.

Paraguay

Coordinadora para Asentamientos Espontáneos initiated a programme of media outreach to print and broadcast journalists.



Turks & Caicos Islands

The Gender Affairs Unit partnered with Women Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD) to hold a public rally and march.

The rally in Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands

USA

An opinion piece by the Executive Director of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WSCADV) was published in The Seattle Times. WSCADV linked the campaign to research and policy recommendations from the Washington State Domestic Violence Fatality Review.

Gladys Momanyi, a student at Nova Southeastern University in Florida, developed an outreach programme for the campaign, organised a conference and collected signatures for a petition urging Florida State to strengthen its gun laws to prevent domestic violence abusers from having guns.



Outreach at Nova Southeastern University, Florida

Disarm Domestic Violence

AFRICA

Cameroon

The Trauma Centre in Cameroon launched the campaign on 22 May with a month-long survey about guns in the home, interviewing more than 100 households in Yaounde. Women in Alternative Action Cameroon (WAA) led a training session on survey techniques using campaign questionnaires.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Over forty women's organisations participated in the launch in Kinshasa, organised by members of the IANSA Women's Network, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).



IANSA and WILPF women in the DRC

Kenya

IANSA Africa Coordinator Joseph Dube introduced the campaign at the meeting of the African Council of Religious Leaders.

Liberia

Liberians United to Expose Hidden Weapons (LUEHW) were interviewed by Patience Guanu on the UN Radio programme 'Coffee Break' and drew attention to the campaign. At a symposium in Monrovia, Youth for Community Academic & Development Services (YOCADS) urged campaigners to lobby the Liberian parliament to protect women against gun violence in the home.

Namibia

The campaign was launched on the radio during "The Ninth Hour" by the national Namibian Broadcasting Company (NBC). Interviews were also given to the Damara>Nama radio station. A letter and opinion piece were published in The Namibian newspaper, and The Republikein.



Pauline Dempers, NANGOF Trust

Nigeria

Women activists from the CAFSO-Women's Rights Action Group visited the parliament of Oyo State to ask members to support tough legislation to reduce gun violence. An Enugu based NGO, Women Information Network (WINET) appealed to both the Federal and State governments to support the campaign. The Women's Right to Education Programme met the Commissioner for Women's Affairs in Benue State to discuss how guns affect women.

Rwanda

SaferRwanda organised a seminar for community leaders in Kimonye Sector, Muasanze District, in the gun-affected north of the country. Participants discussed options for removing guns from circulation in the region, and disarming domestic violence within the community.

Senegal

In a public event organised by the Movement Against Small Arms in West Africa (MALAO) and WAANSA-Senegal in Dakar, Honoré Georges Ndiaye, Executive Director of MALAO urged the Senegalese government to amend the law to include spouses in the investigation process when an application for a gun permit is made.

Sierra Leone

The Sierra Leone Action Network on Small Arms (SLANSA) launched a media campaign. SLANSA members are pressing for the government to harmonise gun and domestic violence laws, and for spouses and partners to be consulted before a gun license is granted - an essential measure to protect women.

South Africa

Laura Pollecut of the Ceasefire Campaign led meetings in Pietermaritzburg, in the province of KwaZulu Natal including a meeting with staff and residents from The Haven, a women's shelter. Laura explained how South African law can be used to ensure that domestic violence abusers are denied access to guns. She stressed that more resources are needed to make sure that the law is implemented properly.

Sudan

Women Development Group (WDG) in Khartoum held a two-day workshop on gun violence in the home. WDG, in association with Sawa Sawa Women Association, Women Relationship, and Ekawia Association led a peace march to the Council of Ministers. Mary Rose Mariano, the Minister of Social Development, spoke about the impact of guns on women and gave examples of recent incidents where women had been killed by their husbands.

Uganda

The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) and the Uganda Action Network on Small Arms (UANSA) co-sponsored the launch of the campaign in Kampala. The event featured expert panelists who spoke about the intersecting problems of domestic violence and small arms in Uganda.

Zambia

Charles Mulenga of the Action Network Advisory on Small Arms (ANASA) held a press conference with the Ministry of Defence. Charles stressed the need for a review of firearm laws, including those to tackle armed domestic violence.

Disarm Domestic Violence

ASIA

India

At a meeting of the Manipuri Women Gun Survivors' Network Mrs M Sobita, Secretary of Women's Action for Development, highlighted the difficulties faced by women. The meeting included moving testimonies from gun survivors, concluding with a resolution to stay vigilant and continue working towards curbing domestic violence in Manipur.

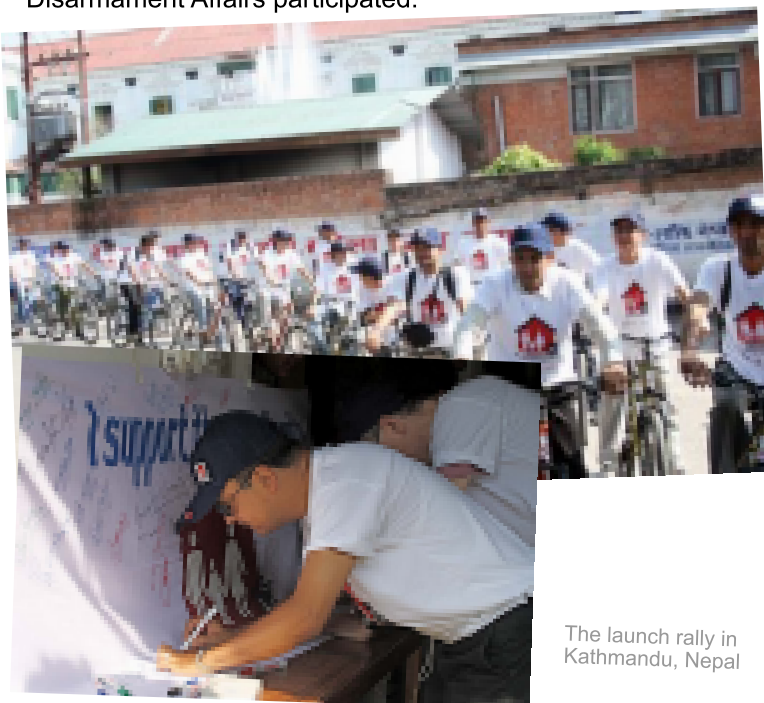


The Manipuri Women Gun Survivors Network

Nepal

Parliamentarians, policy makers and representatives of the police and army heard evidence about the impact of small arms on innocent people at a meeting in Kathmandu. The meeting, jointly organised by the Institute of Human Rights Communications Nepal (IHRICON), South Asia Peace Alliance (SAPA Nepal) and National Women Security Watch (NWS) featured a research paper highlighting the use of guns in domestic violence.

Sixty-one cyclists rode through the streets of Kathmandu to deliver a memo to all political parties in support of the campaign. The memo urged all parties to take action to prevent domestic violence committed with guns. The campaign launch was covered by Nepal TV, and in leading national daily and weekly newspapers. The event was organised by SAP-Nepal, SASA Net Nepal and Yatra, a youth organisation. Daniel Prins from the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs participated.



The launch rally in Kathmandu, Nepal

Pakistan

At a briefing in the Multan Press Club organised by the Awaz Centre for Development Services, Awaz chief executive Muhammad Zia-ur-Rehman launched the campaign. He pointed out that huge numbers of firearms were being used in violence against women, with rifles being used to beat women, as well as threaten them with shooting.



Posters by Awaz CDS (left) and Blue Veins (right)

Blue Veins, based in the North West Frontier Province made a poster on the danger of guns in the home and community.

In Peshawar, Community Initiatives Support Services (CISS) raised awareness of the problem of guns in the home and their link to family violence. CISS also held a community gathering with emphasis on youth involvement, and a walk through Peshawar.



CISS and supporters march through Peshawar, Pakistan

Sri Lanka

The South Asia Small Arms Network in Sri Lanka launched a mini survey on guns and domestic violence as part of the campaign. Questionnaires have been translated into local languages and are being used in three districts: Pollonnaruwa and Anuradhapura from the North Central Province - both on the border with the conflict zone - and Hanguranketha District in a peaceful zone.

The information from these districts will enable SASANet to identify areas for further research. They hope to extend the research to other districts as part of the international campaign.

Disarm Domestic Violence

EUROPE

France

On 20 June AP Peace Fellow Rebecca Gerome and fellow activists organised an event to publicise the Disarm Domestic Violence campaign in Paris.



Macedonia

Journalists for Children and Women Rights and Protection of Environment (JCWE) held a press conference at the Deputies Club in Skopje. JCWE launched their report on armed violence and women based on data collected as part of the campaign. 95 survivors of domestic violence were surveyed of whom 95% said the perpetrator had access to a gun; 91% believed the gun was held illegally; and 73% thought that their children were aware of a gun in the home.

Portugal



JCWE's press conference, Macedonia

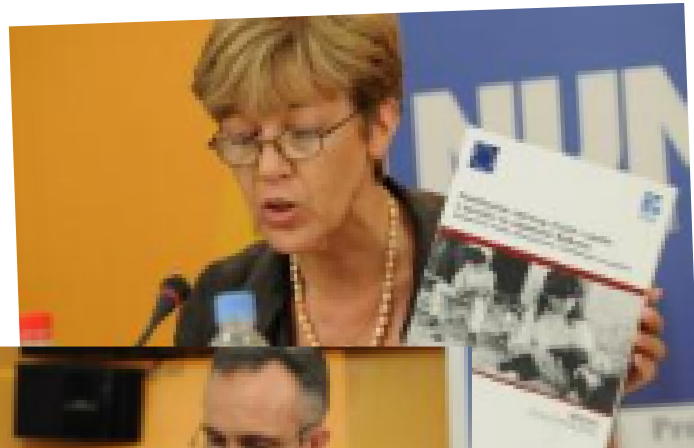
The Observatory on Gender and Armed Violence (OGAV) based at the Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra, launched the campaign and screened the premiere of the documentary 'Luto como Mãe' (Right to Mourn) directed by Luis Carlos Nascimento.



OGAV launch the campaign, Coimbra, Portugal

Serbia

Jasmina Nikolic of the Victimology Society of Serbia (VDS) was interviewed on Belgrade-based television network TV Pink in the morning news programme on 15 June. Jasmina highlighted the group's anti-violence campaign by stressing the link between the possession of small arms and domestic violence.



Dr Mirjana Dokmanovic



Professor Dr Zelko Nikac

Later that week VDS launched the campaign at the Belgrade Media Centre.

Speakers included: Dr Mirjana Dokmanovic who is an international lawyer, journalist, researcher and lecturer on human rights and women's rights, and President of the Women's Centre for Democracy and Human Rights in Serbia & Montenegro; Professor Dr Zelko Nikac, who is also a police officer; Professor Dr Vesna Nikolic Ristanovic; and Jasmina Nikolic, both from VDS.

UK

The Gun Control Network published a list of incidents in the UK in which guns are known to have been used in acts of domestic violence.

Women in Black (London) and the IANSA Women's Network held a vigil near Trafalgar Square to highlight gun deaths amongst women in domestic violence incidents in the UK. Legally-held weapons (rifles, shotguns, airguns) are used in murders of women in the home. In England and Wales, one in three women killed by their husbands is shot with a legally-owned weapon, and 64% of these murders involve shotguns. Since 2004, nearly three quarters of the 39 female gun homicide victims in Britain were killed in domestic incidents.



Women in Black London, UK

How you can get involved

We can all help to increase awareness, and prevent armed domestic violence.

COLLECT INFORMATION

- contact us for questionnaires you can use to find out how it is affecting your community.

TALK

- to friends and colleagues;
- to local clubs and societies and in schools, colleges, workplaces, places of worship;
- to unions or professional organisations.

PHONE

- any relevant radio phone-in show – be heard!

JOIN

- with like-minded people; form a local group to raise awareness;
- with an existing local group to organise meetings and demonstrations;
- a national or local demonstration.

WRITE

- letters to local community and elected representatives and urge them to ask your government to harmonise gun laws and domestic violence laws;
- inform your local domestic violence group, helpline or shelter about the campaign;
- press releases for distribution to local or national media about your organisation's activities;
- letters and articles, and submit them to local newspapers, or make suggestions to journalists and editors on how they could develop a strong and constructive story on guns in domestic violence.

ORGANISE

- a roundtable meeting;
- a radio program and interviews by contacting program producers and proposing interviewees who can promote and discuss the issue.

DISPLAY a poster — make your own or see www.iansa-women.org for ideas.

WEAR a badge or make stickers to raise awareness and show your support. Contact us to obtain the design for the campaign so you can produce your own.

ENGAGE in non-violent direct action — organise a public event or demonstration involving women against gun violence.

COPY this Bulletin and give it to someone else.

REMEMBER you don't have to spend a lot of time. Small personal actions count — but do take action.



The Advocacy Project (AP) is an NGO based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to produce social change by partnering with advocates around the world. We are delighted to receive campaign support from AP through the Peace Fellows programme. Our Fellows are:

Argentina: Asociación para Políticas Públicas

Althea Middleton-Detzner

Canada: Project Ploughshares

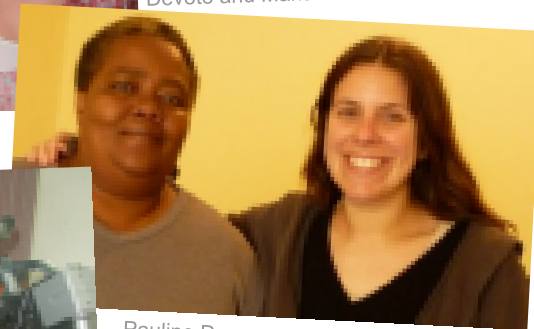
Elizabeth Mandelman



Althea Middleton-Detzner with Maria Pia Devoto and Maria Paula Cellone of APP.



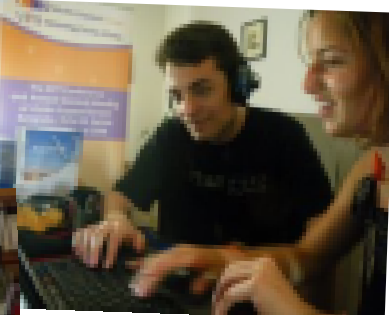
Maribel Gonzales of Project Ploughshares, and Elizabeth Mandelman



Pauline Dempers of Breaking The Wall of Silence, and Johanna Wilkie



Martha Lucia Atehortua, of Asopropaz, Rebecca Jerome, and Dario Valencia, host of "Magazin Juridico: La Otra Cara del Derecho".



Nikola Petrovic of VDS, and Fanny Grandchamp.



Courtney Chance, and Dorothy Alowo, CECORE

Colombia: Colectivo

Mujeres Pazificas

Rebecca Jerome

Namibia: Breaking the Wall of Silence

Johanna Wilkie

Nepal: SAP Nepal

Isha Mehmood

Portugal: Centre for Peace Studies/OGAV

Aaron Fuchs

Serbia: Victimology Society of Serbia

Fanny Grandchamp

Uganda: The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CECORE)

Courtney Chance



The IANSA Women's Network (WN) is the only international network focused on the connections between gender, women's rights, small arms and armed violence. It was formed in 2001 as a women's caucus at IANSA events and now links members in countries ranging from Fiji to Senegal, Argentina to South Africa, Canada to Sudan. We are grateful to the Government of Norway for its support.