

Gender Mainstreaming Ammunition Through-Life Management

Working Paper submitted to the Open-Ended Working Group on Conventional Ammunition by Panama, Small Arms Survey and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

Summary

This paper summarizes key considerations and recommendations for the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Conventional Ammunition on how to incorporate gender perspectives in all stages of through-life management, in addition to ensuring women's meaningful participation across the ammunition life cycle in any future global framework on conventional ammunition management.

Why gender perspectives matter in ammunition through-life management

1. All phases of ammunition through-life management have gender dimensions, including decisions about ammunition needs, procurement priorities, stockpile management practices and guidelines for disposal and decommissioning. In addition, unplanned explosions at ammunition sites (UEMS) and the diversion, illicit trafficking and misuse of ammunition affect women, men, girls and boys differently.¹ Understanding and addressing these gendered dimensions and impacts by applying gender analysis is key to the effective implementation of a 'through-life management' approach to ammunition management.
2. Reducing the human suffering caused by ammunition diversion and UEMS involves recognizing their wider gendered implications for human security. Beyond the immediate consequences in terms of physical security and the increased risk of armed violence, such incidents have long-term humanitarian, socioeconomic, public health and environmental consequences, including for those not directly impacted by the blast, for example for young women and children when their partners or parents are victims or armed violence or conflict. In addition, diverted ammunition can be used to facilitate human rights violations such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including domestic violence.
3. Gender mainstreaming of ammunition through-life management contributes to cross-cutting objectives contained in other relevant international conventions and agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;² Women, Peace and Security Agenda;³ Arms Trade Treaty;⁴ UNSG's Disarmament Agenda and Our Common Agenda, and UN Programme of Action on small arms.

Why women's meaningful participation matters in ammunition through-life management

4. The UN General Assembly has recognized the need to facilitate women's participation in the field of arms control and disarmament, urging UN Member States to "promote equal opportunities for the representation of women in all decision-making processes with regard to matters related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control."⁵ It has also called for the "full involvement of both women and men in ammunition management policy and practice".⁶
5. The gender parity reached in the composition of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Problems Arising from the Accumulation of Conventional Ammunition Stockpiles set an important benchmark for full and effective participation of women in this domain, and suggests that there are sufficient numbers of women with expertise in ammunition management to ensure gender balance in the delegations at the OEWG and in the activities of any future global framework on conventional ammunition.
6. Gender equality among participants in these fora is highly desirable, as it has the potential to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of the processes and their outcomes. Women and men have the right to participate meaningfully in negotiations and shape the decisions that affect them. Furthermore, diverse teams are more innovative, take more sustainable decisions and are more effective in resolving impasses.

¹ For more details, see LeBrun, Desmerais, Djouhri and Florquin. 2022. *Extracting Evidence*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey.

² In particular, Target 5.1 (end all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere), Target 5.2 (eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls) and Target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities).

³ In particular, UN Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015) paragraph 15 calling for women to participate in small arms control.

⁴ In particular, the gender-based violence criteria in arms export assessments (Article 7.4).

⁵ General Assembly resolution 75/48, para 1. See also actions 36 and 37 of the Agenda for Disarmament.

⁶ UN General Assembly resolution 74/65, preamble.

Mainstreaming gender perspectives in ammunition through-life management

7. Ensuring gender mainstreaming, as well as the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women throughout the ‘through-life management’ process will involve ensuring that (a) women and men are equitably represented, and (b) staff with gender expertise are actively involved in each of the six function roles in through-life management (planning, acquisition or procurement, logistics, safety and security, surveillance, and user roles).⁷ It also involves mainstreaming gender across all of the eight capability enabling lines (doctrine and concepts, organization, training, material, personnel, finances, infrastructure, and safety and security).
8. Gender mainstreaming is essential at every phase of the process, from planning to decommissioning:⁸
 - (a) **Planning.** Competent national authorities, including parliamentarians, should ensure that cohesive ammunition planning reflect the actual gender-differentiated security needs of the state and its population as defined through inclusive, multi-stakeholder processes in which women meaningfully participate. Plans should also align with national laws and policies on gender equality. In conducting cost-benefit analyses and making budgetary decisions related to ammunition acquisition, utilization and decommissioning, national authorities should also consider the risks and costs associated with excessive ammunition stockpiles. This includes UEMS and diversion, as well as the impact of having less funding available for national plans on sustainable development, poverty reduction, and women, peace and security, which address root causes of insecurity.
 - (b) **Procurement.** Ammunition procurement regulations should require all potential vendors to have policies on gender equality. When defining technical requirements, national authorities should ensure that equipment is designed in a way that takes into account the physiological differences of women and men, including when it comes to transportation equipment, and that risk assessments related to safety and environmental aspects including hazard classification take account of the different risks posed to women, men, girls and boys. Furthermore, States may consider applying aspects of their gender procurement policies when buying ammunition from another State.
 - (c) **Utilization.** National authorities should undertake efforts to address the historical underrepresentation of women in all aspects of physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) by ensuring their full, equal, meaningful and effective participation in decision-making, planning and implementation. They can achieve this by actively working to identify and address gender-based barriers to staff recruitment, retention and professional advancement. Risk assessments made as part of PSSM practices should acknowledge the different roles and needs of women, men, girls and boys and address the gendered impact of UEMS and diversion. Notably, there is a risk of ammunition being used to facilitate acts of SGBV, including domestic violence, where individual security personnel are authorized to keep service weapons and small supplies of ammunition in their homes.
 - (d) **Decommissioning.** Assessments of possible decommissioning needs should consider different risks and opportunities for women, men, girls and boys. In the case of destruction, this would include ensuring equal access to new employment opportunities and mitigated the negative gendered impacts of destruction methods on civilian areas. Concerning the donation, sale or export of excess ammunition, States should consider gendered impacts in their risk assessments before authorizing any transfers, including, at a minimum, the risk of the ammunition being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of SGBV or violence against women and children.⁹ States should conduct the same risk assessment in relation to applications for brokering ammunition or transit/trans-shipment.

Meaningful participation in decision-making, monitoring and oversight and technical roles

9. Women are underrepresented in national, regional and international decision-making for a related to arms control, including ammunition management.¹⁰ They also face barriers to meaningful participation in technical roles, as well as in monitoring and oversight mechanisms.¹¹ Overcoming these could involve:
 - (a) **Addressing gender bias and stereotypes.** Women are sometimes excluded from discussions related to ammunition management due to a perceived lack of relevant expertise. In addition to gender bias, one

⁷ See UN SaferGuard. 2021. ‘IATG 01.35 Organisational Capabilities’. 3rd ed. New York: UNODA.

⁸ See LeBrun, Emile. 2021. [Gender-sensitive Ammunition Processes: Considerations for National Authorities](#). New York: UN.

⁹ As required by Article 7.4 of the Arms Trade Treaty when it comes to exports.

¹⁰ See, for example, Hessmann Dalaqua, Renata et al. 2019. [Still Behind the Curve](#). Geneva: UNIDIR.

¹¹ See for example Salama, Hana and Emma Bjerten-Gunter. 2021. [Women Managing Weapons](#). Geneva: UNIDIR.

reason is that the technical knowledge of security personnel, where men are over-represented, is prioritised over human security expertise. Addressing barriers to accessing technical positions and Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM) training opportunities and increasing the visibility of women in the field, while instituting gender training for institutions involved in ammunition management could address this.

- (b) **Addressing working culture.** Institutions involved in ammunition management may not have policies designed to promote diversity and inclusion, especially of staff with caregiving roles. Policies should be reviewed to reflect the needs of the whole workforce by, for example, restricting overtime, allowing flexible working hours and creating mechanisms to prevent discrimination and harassment.
- (c) **Ensuring transparency and oversight.** Ammunition management policies and practices do not always incorporate mechanisms that allow parliamentarians or at-risk civilians to hold those responsible for preventing UEMS or diversion to account. There may also be no standardized, inclusive, national or local mechanism for civilians to report suspected diverted, abandoned, or uncleared ammunition. Such mechanisms facilitate women's involvement in this field while improving policy implementation.
- (d) **Ensuring accountability and tracking progress.** Advancing gender equality in ammunition management, as in any other area of arms control, needs long term political commitment, time and dedicated resources. States should include mechanisms to review and track progress towards gender commitments made as part of any future global framework on ammunition.

Summary of recommendations to the OEWG

10. The OEWG should consider the following recommendations in designing any new global framework to address existing gaps in through-life management of conventional ammunition:
 - (a) Ensure the full, equal, meaningful and impactful participation of women in the design, implementation, monitoring and oversight of ammunition at all levels be incorporated into the global framework along with measures to ensure accountability and track progress;
 - (b) support a thorough assessment of the gendered impacts of UEMS and diverted ammunition from a human security perspective, including through the collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data, and that mitigation measures be included, developed in collaboration with women, men and youth, including from civil society;
 - (c) fully review current through-life ammunition management practices using a gender analysis¹² to establish baselines against which progress can be measured, as well as to identify entry points and develop concrete guidance for gender mainstreaming across all phases, functional roles and capacity enabling lines;
 - (d) identify complementarities with the gendered provisions of other arms control and disarmament mechanisms as well as ways in which ammunition management can support the objectives of other frameworks related to gender equality and sustainable development; and that
 - (e) support these efforts including through the sharing of relevant national good practices, subject matter expertise and with financial support by those States in a position to do so.

To ensure that the gender dimensions of ammunition through-life management are adequately addressed in the context of the OEWG, it should (a) be considered for special attention during the intersessional period and (b) appear as a dedicated agenda item in the third and final formal session of the OEWG.

¹² See LeBrun, Emile. (ed.) 2019. [Gender-responsive Small Arms Control: A Practical Guide](#), Geneva: Small Arms Survey, p. 25.