



**MEETING REPORT**

# **WILPF, GENSAC, Pathfinders, and Small Arms Survey Meeting on Militainment, the Arms Industry and the Marketing of Militarised Masculinities**

*15 - 17 July 2024, Geneva*

**Report prepared by Anna Antonakis and Dean Peacock**



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## Acknowledgements

This report was drafted by Dr. Anna Antonakis and Dean Peacock with significant input by Callum Watson, Claire Taylor, Luisa Portugal, Mike Kane, Daniel Friedman and Dragan Bozanic. The meeting itself would not have happened without the administrative and logistical support of Roberta Nardi and the joint resources provided by the Canton of Geneva, Pathfinders, Small Arms Survey and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The co-hosting organisations thank Global Affairs Canada and the German Government for their ongoing support. We also thank each of the participants who travelled from near and far and spent three days in rich and generative discussions which, despite the difficult content, inspired optimism, connection and a sense of new possibilities.

## Executive Summary and Key Takeaways

### Purpose of the Meeting

For three days, from 15 to 17 July 2024, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC) and the Small Arms Survey brought together 40 participants from the United Nations, policy think tanks, civil society and academia in Geneva, Switzerland. The idea for the meeting was developed over the course of a year and came about at a 2023 peer exchange meeting joined by organisations working on masculinities, violence and peacebuilding in Tbilisi, which was co-organised by WILPF’s Mobilising Men for Feminist Peace initiative in collaboration with PAX for Peace, the Dutch peacebuilding organisation.



In preparation for the Geneva meeting, a desk review was prepared by WILPF identifying five areas of inquiry which served as the basis for the thematic focus and structure of the meeting: 1) Militainment, or the



behind the scenes collusion between militaries and film and television; [DP2] 2) Video games, product placement and military recruitment; 3) Gun advertising; 4) Social media, guns and platform governance; and 5) Fear-based marketing by the gun lobby.

The meeting also drew on a 2023 research report commissioned by WILPF and GENSAC and authored by Henri Myrntinen and Mia Schöb titled [Men and Masculinities in Gender Responsive Small Arms Control](#). While not its main focus, the 2022 report included analysis of the gun industry's advertising practices and the ways in which they and the ad agencies working for them exploit and reinforce harmful ideas about manhood to sell their products. The report argues that the “real and symbolic links between masculinities and small arms are reproduced in popular culture and are also reinforced by arms manufacturers, almost always owned and run by men.”

Hence, the meeting's objective was to “understand and explore strategies to counter widely used marketing practices that exploit ideas about manhood and masculinities to increase demand for weapons and normalise their misuse.” By bringing together academics, practitioners and UN agencies, the meeting sought to unmask links between the gun industry, the military, and the marketing and entertainment industries and foster dialogue about joint advocacy, empower societal change, advance gender equality and contribute to a safer and more peaceful world.

The meeting did not aim to arrive at consensus positions or generate shared commitments to any joint advocacy. Instead, participants were encouraged to share insights from a range of different disciplines, explore and debate research findings, understand current and proposed advocacy strategies and establish new connections.

While the meeting's initial focus was quite broad and aimed to explore a wide range of issues that included not only guns, but also the military and arms industry, cultures of militarisation and nuclear weapons, a significant part of the meeting focused on small arms and light weapons, reflecting the primary interests of the majority of participants. However, there is still a need for additional discussions on other weapons and on the normalisation of war more generally.

The meeting stimulated learnings on different levels, bringing together intellectual discussions and emotional exchanges in a respectful and collaborative environment. The three-day programme featured expert insights through ten different panels of 90 minutes each, with three speakers and a moderator per panel. It also included open



sessions which were used to review key themes, identify knowledge gaps, explore potential joint research and discuss a spectrum of possible next steps.

More detailed information on the background, overarching goals and objectives of the meeting, the detailed programme and participants can be found in Annex 1.

## **Key Takeaway: Understanding Gender Exploitative Marketing Strategies**

This section summarises session presentations and discussions. The analysis presented here is not intended to suggest the group reached consensus on these issues. The focus was on open discussion and no effort was made to establish whether or not participants reached agreement on the points discussed.

- **Manipulation and exploitation of gendered cultural values**
  - To address the growing global demand for guns and arms, we must understand the role of gender exploitative marketing which manipulates ideas about gender to link manhood with gun ownership.
  - Marketing strategies exploit deeply rooted gender norms and emotions, such as pride and protection, and tailor their messages to different audiences.
  - The gender exploitative marketing of guns has proven powerful and adaptive, and attempts to harness narratives about women's empowerment and right to self-defence in the context of pervasive sexual violence and assault, just as other industries have done historically.
  - The marketing of guns, arms and the military has multiple cultural avenues, many of which link stereotypical notions of men and manhood to gun ownership, including via film, television, video games, gaming platforms and online social media platforms, usually adapted to specific geographical context.
- **Lack of regulations**
  - The spread of content by extremist groups, as well as hate speech and disinformation – which often play a role in perpetuating stereotypes and justifying violence – currently lack a set of coherent transnational legally binding content moderation mechanisms. Proposed mechanisms will need to balance the sometimes competing imperatives of freedom of expression and safety.

- The online space is under-regulated in most parts of the world, and platform policies are not clear or consistently enforced, especially with regards to the acknowledgement of sponsorship by gun industry actors of “gunfluencers,” as well as to gender stereotypical advertising of guns more generally.
- The gun lobby in the United States actively undermines multilateral efforts to regulate the gun and arms industries while also exporting its marketing and lobbying strategies to other countries around the world, including Canada, Brazil and South Africa, where US-originating arguments about citizens’ rights to gun ownership are now being used to normalise civilian gun ownership.
- **Research gaps and difficult dissemination of research**
  - There is a lack of transnational approaches to understanding the marketing strategies used by the firearms industry in different jurisdictions and geographic areas.
  - Knowledge, expertise and analysis about the relationship between violence, masculinity and misogyny is usually not present in mainstream media.
- **Lack of funding**
  - Project-based work structures and short-term funding make it difficult to establish long-term strategies. This is particularly difficult in view of an industry that has established powerful transnational marketing strategies and employs forecasts of ten to 20 years.
- **Supply**
  - Besides the trade in legal weapons and official advertisement, corruption, illicit trade and unofficial marketing practices are also gaps. Here, digital perspectives and the so-called dark web pose particular risks and challenges and need further investigation.
- **Working on the supply side includes**
  - Holding supply actors responsible (manufacturers, distributors, retailers, lobbying groups, advertising agencies).
  - Monitoring and regulating mechanisms that enable and facilitate illicit supply online (regulations, social media algorithms).
- **New developments in marketing strategies**
  - With the high rates of gun ownership in traditional US markets, advertising targeting women and people of colour is now increasing in order to expand sales.
  - Marketing has shifted to online spaces, where "gunfluencers" have millions of active online followers across the world. Many gunfluencers



are not explicitly associated with the gun industry that pays them, but they glorify gun culture and violence and equate guns with manhood.

## Key Takeaway: Understanding Current Opportunities to Address Exploitative Marketing Strategies

Successful strategies tackling the marketing of militarised masculinities have taken a multi-layered approach, combining regulatory and cultural approaches (addressing shared values, beliefs, norms, practices and symbols and their various forms of mediatisation).

- **Development and use of regulatory mechanisms and strategic litigation**
  - Affected nations are increasingly utilising their regulatory frameworks to pressure the US government and its firearms industry. This includes pushing for stricter export controls, demanding transparency in arms deals and using strategic litigation to enforce international and regional human rights standards.
  - Internal policies by platforms restricting and prohibiting content are increasing (and need to be applied throughout).
  - National, regional and international regulations for platform governance represent important opportunities for holding tech platforms and their advertisers accountable. This includes, for instance, the European Union's new Digital Services Act.
- **Mobilising the multilateral system**
  - There is momentum at the multilateral level where international norms can be utilised to address gender exploitative marketing by the guns, weapons and defence industries. In particular, these include the Resolution adopted by UNHCR on 11 July 2024 on Human Rights and the [Civilian Acquisition, Possession and Use of Firearms](#) and the [Impact of Arms Transfers on Human Rights](#).
  - The [Arms Trade Treaty \(ATT\)](#) addresses the impact of arms transfers on human rights as well as the link between conventional weapons and gender-based violence (GBV).
  - The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda can be mobilised on different levels, i.e. WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) constitute an entry point to address gender exploitative marketing strategies.



- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) contains important links between gender and gun violence.
- **Changing narratives through popular media**
  - Cultural and social interventions: Targeted interventions, including educational programmes and media campaigns, can address the cultural and social factors that drive demand for firearms. These need to be context relevant to be effective.
  - Creating counternarratives can contain reframing messaging and appeal to opposite emotions. This may be a particularly important strategy as research and data evidence often appear insufficient to popularise knowledge and change narratives or behaviour. Examples include:
    - Centering community and belonging instead of isolation.
    - Shifting brandings of guns and weapons as providing safety to identifying it as “the risk.”
    - Disrupting narratives around militarised pride and strength.
    - Protecting children from militarism and gun violence can be regarded as a common denominator that can be successfully mobilised to generate action on gun violence.
    - Representatives of film, TV and video industries can depict weapons differently and change cultural narratives about their acceptability, as has been done in the case of cigarettes.
- **Potential strategies that engage with, boycott and/or disrupt the private sector**
  - Leverage the clear language increasingly used in UN Human Rights Council resolutions on civilian acquisition of firearms and their accompanying reports to hold the gun industry accountable for its marketing strategies, especially including those that distort and manipulate gender stereotypes.
  - Public pressure, awareness raising and strategic litigation can cause investors divest from gun manufacturers.
- **Identify research gaps and opportunities for collective learning**
  - Learn from experience: In order to create collective learnings, other (successful) social movements and global health advocacy can serve as effective examples and models. For example, AIDS activism for access to antiretroviral medication or successful multi-country efforts to regulate the tobacco industry.



- A community of practice that brings together diverse expertise in marketing, lawyers, researchers, advocacy specialists, computer engineers and others creates potential opportunities for collective learnings, research, advocacy, litigation and civil society engagement related to gender-exploitative marketing.
- **Media and education approaches**
  - Work with different actors and members of society: Focus should be placed on training journalists on how to report on guns and working with doctors to address the issue of guns in the home, including how they should be stored and the health risks they pose. Marketing experts can help create counter-narratives and support civil society organisations' advocacy work.
  - Increase media and information literacy, including by placing awareness-raising advertisements in harmful online spaces.
  - Engage with schools and communities to design and deliver learning and prevention programmes.

## About This Report

Bringing together participants from different disciplines and backgrounds to address the global problem of militarised masculinities and the “pandemic” of gun violence, the meeting demonstrated the importance of sharing knowledge and making available information that might not be accessible or familiar to different actors engaged with the topic.

This report aims to contribute to bridging some of these gaps by providing many references and different entry points into the topic, so that academics, practitioners and activists can draw on further reflections, references and resources.

This report also provides an opportunity to showcase the mix of different approaches, ideas and perspectives present at the meeting. Through a selection of key examples, it also aims to illustrate the topicality, interdisciplinarity and engagement of participants in the room and highlight different sets of knowledge and positions.

The meeting took place under Chatham House Rules, which allowed participants to speak frankly knowing that comments and opinions would not be attributed to individuals without their explicit permission. All attributions made in this report that



link presentations and comments to individuals have been approved by the individuals identified.

The report largely follows the structure of the panels and sessions, but has been edited for clarity and the flow of (emerging) themes and arguments.

At the time of the finalisation of this report, there are four other related outputs: a desk review by WILPF, short interviews with participants at [WILPF's Knowledge Hub](#), Ray Acheson's piece published by Counterpunch on [Gun Violence and the Marketing of Militarism](#), and a [blog about the meeting written by Reem Abbas and Dean Peacock](#).

## Political Context and Objectives of the Meeting

During opening remarks, Angelica Pino from WILPF's Mobilising Men for Feminist Peace initiative set an optimistic tone, citing a number of developments that offered opportunities for joint advocacy. She identified six:

1. Wars and conflicts are generating a sense of urgency to halt the normalisation of war and weapons.
2. Emerging international and regional commitments offer leverage for advocacy, including at the UN Security Council, the Human Rights Council and the African Union, amongst others.
3. A growing body of restrictions on gender stereotyping in advertising are now implemented in a number of countries around the world and offer potential insights.
4. Creative legal strategies are being used to hold industry and governments accountable and offer potential lessons for the use of strategic litigation to address the marketing of weapons.
5. There is a growing awareness of the extent of collusion between militaries, arms and gun manufacturers and various parts of the entertainment sector. Pioneering work with the film and television industry is underway to challenge this.
6. There is a growing interest in addressing the forces driving demand for guns and weapons amongst civil society and multilateral actors.

Angelica also shared inspiring news about the adoption of [Resolution 56/9 on Human Rights and Civilian Acquisition, Possession and Use of Firearms](#) just the previous week, which calls on member states and businesses to adhere to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in marketing weapons and



acknowledges the importance of engaging men and boys as allies, partners and agents and beneficiaries of change.

In their opening statements, the members of the co-hosting organisations outlined their approaches and hopes for the meeting.

1. **Madeleine Rees**, Secretary-General of WILPF, stated that a major objective for her and for WILPF was “Undoing the patriarchal system that is creating the violence of which guns and weapons are a manifestation.” She urged everybody in the room to take on a systemic approach and examine the political economies that are intertwined with the patriarchal system, both of which she said “need to be dismantled.”
2. **Callum Watson**, Gender Coordinator at the Small Arms Survey explained that the Survey’s focus is on conducting rigorous and impartial research. He expressed the hope that the meeting would identify and explore research gaps and blind spots and identify topics to be brought up with the Survey’s counterparts. Callum pointed out the need to understand gender as a system of power which can influence the demand for weapons
3. **Daniel Friedman**, Program Director, Halving Global Violence at New York University’s Center on International Cooperation (CIC), Pathfinders, stressed that arms control has been gender blind for too long and that the focus on “gender” has been synonymous with “women.” He highlighted the need for a masculinities lens since men and boys have been the focus of marketing, but not addressed in arms control policy as gendered subjects.

In addition, **Dragan Bozanic**, Gender and Research Specialist at SEESAC, a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), stressed their commitment to producing and engaging with research and emphasised the need for work on small arms control to be evidence-based and gender-responsive. He indicated that the meeting's objectives were in line with SEESAC’s priorities to address men and masculinities in their programming in the Western Balkans.

# Breaking Down the Marketing of Militarised Masculinities: A Need for a Systemic Analysis

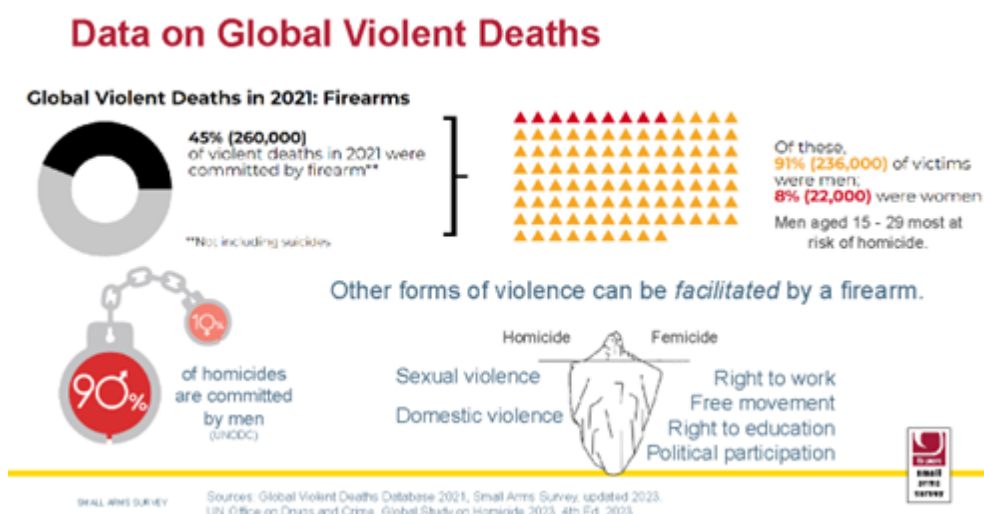
## Thematic Session One: Gender, Weapons and Conflict

**Session Objective:** provided an overview for participants on the ways in which gender, violence and arms intersect – including the exploitation of gender norms by the gun and arms industries and the devastating effect this has on people of all genders – and what we can do to address this.

The session was chaired by Callum Watson from Small Arms Survey. The panellists included:

- Nicole Hockley, Founder and CEO of Sandy Hook Promise
- Folade Mutota, Executive Director and Co-Founder of the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD), Trinidad and Tobago
- Ray Acheson, Director, Reaching Critical Will, WILPF and a former international steering group member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)

Callum introduced the topic by presenting data on global violent deaths that illustrate the links between gender, weapons and conflict. For example, with 90 percent of homicides committed by men, addressing masculinities is crucial.



*Data on Global Violent Deaths and Gender. Provided by Small Arms Survey.*



He also pointed out developments in international small arms control mechanisms that give reason for optimism. Callum indicated that he had felt a sense that the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza had given new impetus to popular discourse on arms control and proliferation. He also highlighted that the UN Secretary General's [New Agenda for Peace](#) originally made reference to nuclear weapons only, but the final version of July 2023 also mentions small and light weapons, stating that "Small arms and light weapons and their ammunition are the leading cause of violent deaths globally, in conflict and non-conflict settings alike." The [UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons](#) and new restrictions on advertisements in the US can be interpreted as further signs of a positive trend in small arms and light weapons control.

Panellist Nicole Hockley, CEO of the US-based [Sandy Hook Promise](#), recognised the role of the US in propagating arms as [the world's largest arms supplier](#) and the way the US arms trade has affected communities across the world. She spoke poignantly about having lost her youngest son in the Sandy Hook school shooting and described the long-term impacts this has had for her and other survivors of shootings. In the US context, she argued that the gun industry has succeeded in changing gun culture over the last 30 years through its marketing and lobbying practices. She said that while guns were previously mostly associated with sport and hunting, a new culture and community of "second amenders" now strategically deploys fear to drive sales of militarised weapons and tactical gear. In the highly polarised political climate of the US, Nicole indicated that she now believes inclusive and non-partisan approaches are the most effective way to strengthen school safety from gun violence.

In their statement, Ray Acheson, Director of Reaching Critical Will (WILPF) and board member of ICAN, raised the question of framing of expertise and impact of research. For instance, Ray said that the research shows that more weapons lead to more GBV and indicated that the association between guns and violence against women has sometimes been instrumentalised and exploited in the past. Ray stated that "GBV has been used as an excuse to send weapons, but not to NOT send weapons, such as in Saudi Arabia or Israel where GBV by the state and military is well documented."

Ray argued that for many countries, developing nuclear weapons offers an opportunity to demonstrate patriarchal power even in the face of illogical arguments that justify nuclear weapons with the claim that "causing mass death is the only way to protect from mass death." Citing Carol Cohn's work on masculinities within the



nuclear industry, Ray indicated that those who argue for disarmament are often “feminised” to denigrate their positions. At the same time, though, Ray found inspiration in the new generation of anti-war activists and students’ encampments against the war in Gaza worldwide.

Folade Mutota, Executive Director and Co-Founder of WINAD, brought in the perspective of the Caribbean Community, or CARICOM, in the opening panel. She touched on music as a vehicle of militarised cultures in which arms are prominently displayed and used to assert manhood. Folade problematised the description of various arms, glamourising gun possession and misuse in recent Trinidad and Tobago popular music that speaks in particular to marginalised youth. She stressed that “boys and young men are victims of the messaging.” Folade indicated that there is an urgent need to further understand and address these popular culture advertisements of gun culture.

Several **opportunities** were discussed in this first thematic session:

- A sense of urgency in the public discourse to address both demand and supply and the potential of global solidarity movements to increase pressure on governments to comply with international treaties and norms.
- Global coalitions centering affected communities and employing participatory approaches can create strong momentums.
- Including various media in analysis and strategic communication can help to popularise research-based messages.

## Thematic Session Two: Gender Norms and Small Arms Proliferation in the Balkans, West and Southern Africa and the Americas

**Session Objective:** Examine the specific ways in which the gun industry exploits gender norms to sell weapons in four different regions: the Balkans, West and Southern Africa and Latin America, and identify strategies for challenging harmful gender norms and delinking gun ownership from gender. Drawing on insights from experts in violence prevention and arms control, this panel aimed to underscore the significance of addressing underlying gender dynamics to mitigate small arms proliferation.

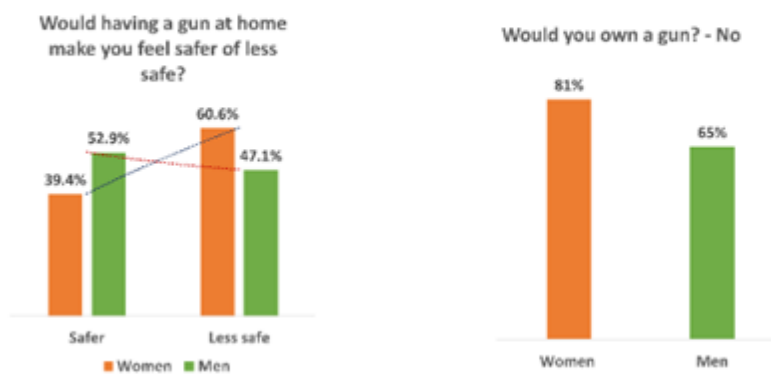
The panel was chaired by Angelica Pino, Coordinator, Mobilising Men for Feminist Peace at WILPF, and included:



- Dragan Bozanic, Gender and Research Specialist at UNDP SEESAC
- Guy Feugap, Programme Manager, Mobilising Men for Feminist Peace, WILPF Cameroon, and Africa Organiser for World Beyond War
- Natalia Pollachi, Programme Manager, Sou Da Paz, Brazil
- Claire Taylor, Gun Free South Africa

Dragan Bozanic stressed the need for societal and cultural change to take place alongside regulatory. He made the case that there are strict criteria for the acquisition of firearms, and advertising laws often prohibit or restrict the advertising of firearms in Western Balkans, but it is the “social conditioning between firearms and masculinities” that remains a root cause for (domestic) violence in the region. Pictures of influencers, boys’ toy collections and examples from modern music illustrate how social conditioning takes place through many different channels from a very young age. It is in light of this cultural socialisation that gender and consequently gender responsive programming can be regarded as a protective factor, as shown in a survey conducted by SALW Survey in 2019.

### Understanding protective and risk factors



Source: SALW Survey, 2019

*Protective and risk factors are gendered according to a study by SEESAC.*

Guy Feugap, WILPF Cameroon, and Africa Organiser for World Beyond War, brought the perspective of conflict affected regions into the overall discussion. He presented connections and impacts of the international arms trade on communities across Africa and especially in Cameroon. He said that since 2012, small arms-related violence in Cameroon has resulted in thousands of deaths, over 500,000 people being displaced internally and over 50,000 refugees from the Anglophone regions. The widespread availability of small arms has led to significant development issues,



including reduced access to healthcare, economic decline, decreased humanitarian and development efforts, the breakdown of social structures and increased militarisation. This situation has fuelled rebellions, gang activity, and terrorism, as seen with Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab. He explained that in societies with high crime rates, easy access to arms is linked to higher violence rates, especially in domestic settings, suicides and accidental deaths, and often involve young people. Additionally, the illegal movement of arms exacerbates organised crime, like drug and human trafficking, piracy and violent extremism, with severe humanitarian consequences for vulnerable populations.

Guy reminded the room of the issue of business-driven conflicts, critically pointing out what he described as an “unresolved hypocrisy” where corrupt military institutions have the state power to continue to glorify weapons. For the African context, he emphasised there is insufficient research on firearms availability and use. In Cameroon, he said, collecting figures on guns is prohibited and there is a lack of statistics on numbers and manufacturing procedures. Drawing on a small qualitative study prepared for the meeting based on focus group discussions with young men, Guy illustrated that firearm use is highly gendered, with only men considered appropriate for using firearms to care for the community and liberate themselves from potential “shame.” He also identified arguments rooted in essentialist claims about biology which assert that men use weapons because “they have the strength to do so.”

The importance of studying the internationalisation of gun cultures was stressed by Natalia Pollachi, Programme Manager at Sou Da Paz in Brazil. She presented the issue of norms diffusions from the US to Brazil: “Religious and civil rights actors argue that guns protect freedom and they frame the possession of firearms as a fundamental right. This is a legal culture that is transported from the US because Brazil does not have similar legislation, such as the second amendment.”

Similar observations were shared from the South African context, where Claire Taylor, a researcher with Gun Free South Africa, shared a gun advertisement promoting the “necessity for South Africans to lawfully arm themselves” as an example. Employing gender, race and power as strands to analyse advertisement in South Africa, she described ads in magazines such as *Tactical Guides*, a magazine focused on hunting and nature conservation. Her analysis of such magazines revealed gender exploitative marketing tactics which shape broader gun cultures. She clarified that advertisements targeting white men promote guns as a means of self-defence, and tactical and militaristic themes are dominant with guns representing “safety.” She also brought attention to the insurance company Firearms

Guardian, which provides a “legal safety net for firearms owners” and support to gun owners in case of hunting accidents or use of guns in self-defence.



*The role of magazines in advertisement of firearms and lobbying for the right to carry a gun.*

Claire then gave the example of marketing efforts targeting women like the “This Girls on Fire” campaign, which was launched in 2015 by the Gun Owners of South Africa (GOSA) in alignment with the United Nations' 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. It is intended to empower women through self-defence and gun ownership while (literally) weaponising women's empowerment language, breaking with the stereotype that weapons and guns are for men only. This observation on advertisements targeting women came up across different panels and discussions, emerging as a topic worthy of ongoing investigation.



*A campaign and invitation to a cocktail event by Gun Owners of South Africa to celebrate women's involvement in the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.*

**The discussion** picked up on the transnational influence of the US gun lobby. With regards to the stated influence of the US gun lobby on Brazil and South African discourse, participants pointed out that the US gun rights movement does indeed carefully monitor international efforts to decrease gun and arms-related violence. This includes participation in UN meetings where the National Rifle Association (NRA) has observer status and influences potential legislation even as the NRA claims it does not engage in advocacy outside the US. The discussion surfaced the need for transnational research to understand the reach and influence of international advocacy strategies employed by the US gun lobby.

In the discussion, Folade Mutota shed light on the direct and tangible impact of guns on communities and countries. "We should focus on the relationships between states and the imbalances they create, as well as how societies experience violence. While the US economy is still growing, the spread of guns into other conflict areas negatively impacts the quality of life and services. Tourism, a major source of revenue in the Caribbean, suffers when rising crime rates make people avoid certain places."



From this perspective, Everytown has [published research](#) exploring how gun violence disproportionately affects historically marginalised communities in the United States.

With regards to firearms and racial inequality, a [report by Sou da Paz](#) investigating the impact of “armed violence on black and brown populations” in Brazil recommends developing policies to promote racial equality as Black people are disproportionately affected by firearm violence.

**Several opportunities** were identified during the session and included, for example:

- Transnational research perspectives can help identify commonalities in gun rights movements.
- Including a race and gender research lens helps
  - to identify institutional discrimination and policies that can address racial inequalities and ultimately reduce gun violence and
  - to decode marketing strategies in gun advertisements targeting women and other audiences.

## Thematic Session Three: Gender Exploitative Marketing of Guns and Arms: What Does It Look Like, What are the Consequences, and What Can Be Done?

**Session Objective:** Examine the role of gendered marketing in perpetuating harmful stereotypes and contributing to small arms proliferation, with a focus on the policy implications for addressing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality. By analysing how advertising often depicts weapons as symbols of power and masculinity, the panel aims to raise awareness about the gendered dimensions of the gun and arms trade.

The session was chaired by Laura Varella, Disarmament Associate, Reaching Critical Will (WILPF) and included:

- Susan Lavington, Chief Operating Office, Brady
- Nicole Hockley, CEO of the [Sandy Hook Promise](#) and author of *Untargeting Kids*

Susan Lavington, COO of Brady, made the case that in the US “stigmatising is counterproductive and respectful messages are needed to keep the target audience engaged.” She stressed the need for careful wording. For example, Brady frames their work as engagement in “gun violence *prevention*” rather than “gun *control*.” The



latter, she explained, has been co-opted and incorporated into defamation campaigns brought by the gun industry.

Nicole Hockley reminded the room that the purpose of marketing is to make money, and different actions need to be taken to tackle gender exploitative marketing, including regulatory reforms, changing narratives, engaging with parents who have guns and making clear the costs in profit to all actors involved in the gun trade – from banks to gun shops.

Nicole explained that Sandy Hook Promise has good experiences with engaging parents “with the wallet and a voice” by agreeing on the simple goal of protecting children. The material reality is defining their main objective as: “We already have all these weapons, so our aim is to not let them cause harm.” Here, promoting safe storage is regarded as one strategy allowing for buy-in by parents and a wider public. Parents, Nicole argued, tend to find irresponsible gun ownership and storage offensive. Therefore, stigmatising irresponsible gun ownership and storage would highlight the offence it poses and enhance the overall sense of safety. Building on this same lowest common denominator of youth protection, Susan shared Brady’s emerging efforts to engage Hollywood in a “children’s safety campaign.” Brady has urged the entertainment sector to agree on the following commitments in movies:

1. Stop showing guns in movies marketed to children.
2. If you show a gun on screen, also show safe gun storage.
3. Have internal meetings to decide whether you actually need to show the gun in a particular scene.
4. If you do show guns being used, show an accurate portrayal of their devastating effects.

Susan reported that [their open letter](#) has been signed and supported more widely in the Hollywood community after the mass shooting at Uvalde Elementary School in Texas in 2022. She also described other more recent changes, such as producers and directors calling for pre-production meetings on the issue, or safe storage appearing more often in movie scenes.

**In the discussion**, there was agreement among participants that research has not been translated into “snappy” and popular messages that problematise gender and militarism. Daniel Friedman mentions the example of “real men don’t need a gun to protect themselves”, as an idea for push-back messaging, while recognising that it still exploits gender stereotypes. Meeting participants indicated an interest in learning more about creating empowering, simple messages to reach wider audiences.



Claire Taylor reported on the positive impact of their [“bulletproof playgrounds” campaign](#), which was developed in close collaboration with marketing experts to call attention to children as victims of gun violence. The campaign drew on cynicism and the “utopian” idea of building a bulletproof park to keep children safe from gun violence, offering “outrageous solutions to outrageous problems.” The idea was partly taken seriously and heavily discussed in the media. In [interviews](#), Claire could then lay out the actual aim of the campaign which is not to build a bulletproof park but to support “the introduction and enforcement of stricter gun laws, and efforts to trace and destroy all stolen and misplaced guns to permanently remove them from circulation.”

There were several **opportunities** identified that included:

- Open letters formulating concrete steps for the entertainment industry to follow can help to raise the issue of the portrayal of guns and gun violence in movies.
- Using traditional marketing tactics and collaborations with marketing experts can help to popularise research and advocacy efforts.
- Leveraging the almost universal norm of wanting to protect children from gun violence and militarised cultures to advance gun violence prevention.

## Thematic Session Four: Understanding “Militainment” and the Marketing of Militarised Masculinities in Film, Video Games and Television

**Session Objective:** Provide an overview of militainment and masculinities and offer thoughts on potential advocacy strategies.

The panel was chaired by Reem Abbas, Communications Coordinator, WILPF and included:

- Jackson Katz, author and filmmaker of documentary films [Tough Guise](#) and [Man Card](#)
- Roger Stahl, author, academic and documentary filmmaker of [Theaters of War](#)

In the last session of day one, Roger Stahl and Jackson Katz joined the meeting virtually. Roger Stahl, a scholar who has explored the concept of “militainment,” made several key claims about the intersection of military culture and entertainment. He argued that the line between military activities and entertainment has



increasingly blurred, with war and military imagery being packaged and consumed as entertainment. This trend, he said, has led to the normalisation of military violence in everyday life. He highlighted how war is commodified through video games, movies and television shows, making military conflicts a product to be sold. He offered insights from his research on product placements in movies and video games and he detailed the longstanding strategy used by the Pentagon to provide technical, material or financial support in exchange for editorial influence and/or control. This commercialisation serves the interests of both the military-industrial complex and the entertainment industry. In advertisements, manufacturers successfully exploit the interlinkages between sex/emotions and cater to men's wish to be and feel powerful and desired.

Jackson analysed news coverage of the recent assassination attempt against former US President and current presidential candidate Donald Trump and made the case that very few people, particularly men, are willing to have honest conversations about white men, masculinities and gun violence. He reminded participants that there was relative silence about the fact that 86 per cent of participants in the 6 January insurrection in the US were men. Ray Acheson pointed out that queer and feminist circles do indeed focus on and draw attention to violence committed by white men but that this analysis is marginalised in mainstream media.

**The discussion** revolved around the fragility of masculinities that can be easily manipulated around victimhood, especially with queer and feminist movements and policies becoming more visible and powerful.

Here, Roger Stahl referred to the "lone wolf" figure that is mobilised in different media, including video games, and contrasts it to group dynamics and ideas of brotherhood that are essential to military recruitment, but also part of Daesh (ISIS) propaganda strategies. Advertisements and recruitment strategies appeal to the feeling of marginalisation of men that Katz summarised as: "We care about your needs, the majority hates you. Whereas we love and respect you."

Amongst those who offered reactions to Jackson and Roger's remarks, there was a sense that feelings of belonging and brotherhood can be more effective than gun lobby ideology and could also be explored to create effective counter strategies, portraying different forms of healthy and demilitarised communities. There was also some debate about whether the gun industry hijacks gender norms for their ends or whether it is in fact actively involved in shaping these norms.

**Opportunities** identified in the thematic session on militainment included, among others:



- Use positive examples of games that promote gender transformative values
- Create effective communication centring community and belonging to encounter marketing of militarised masculinities.
- Identify experts with different backgrounds to classify and comment on security policy issues.

## Manipulative Marketing, Transnational Extremist Groups and Current and Potential Avenues for Advocacy

The second day responded to the need to investigate digital spheres and the “manosphere” in particular in their entanglements with 1) advertising by the arms industry and 2) recruitment practices by extremist groups. The inputs centred different research approaches to investigate digital spheres and possibilities of content regulations of private companies through laws and public policies.

### Thematic Session Five: Making Sense of Social Media and Online Spaces: Sites for Gun Advertising and the Manosphere AND a Space for Connection and Intervention

**Session Objective:** Provide an overview of how social media and online spaces are used to market weapons, propagate gun ideology and construct militarised masculinities. It also aimed to explore strategies being used to counter this, including research on guns and social media, online interventions and platform governance.

The session was chaired by Dragan Bozanic from UNDP SEESAC and included:

- Mike Kane, Everytown for Gun Safety
- Caroline Hayes, Senior Strategic Initiatives Officer at Equimundo
- Anna Antonakis, board member of [Netzforma\\*](#) on potential policy interventions

Mike Kane from Everytown for Gun Safety presented Everytown’s research on gun advertising on social media. Everytown has repeatedly pressured YouTube on its content moderation; for example, in 2022 after the [Buffalo white supremacist shooting](#) in the US, they drew attention to the ways that the shooter used videos on the platform to inform his tactics in the shooting and that videos used by the



shooter were still on the platform – offering other extremist groups opportunities to educate themselves on how to use the firearms.

A shift of marketing efforts to online spaces was noted, a reality that exploits the potential of online “influencers.” Everytown’s study *YouTube AND /K/: Cross-Platform Firearms Content and its Influence on the Buffalo Shooter* shows the relationships between high profile firearms content creators and different brands “being a fairly common occurrence.”

Influencers are very important to the gun industry for political and financial reasons. Mike mentioned there are a few ways a gun company generally financially compensates an influencer:

1. Affiliate marketing programmes, including personalised promo codes or unique URL tracking. These tools allow the brand to track which customers made purchases after being directed to the brand by the specific influencer and pay the influencer a commission based on those sales.
2. Direct sponsorships for mentions in their videos and/or showing the products etc.

Additionally, social media influencers can circumvent internal and external regulatory mechanisms by not declaring their sponsorship and their role as advertisers as the platforms and national regulations require.

Analysing the “manosphere” (a term used to refer to a loose collection of predominantly web-based misogynist movements associated with the alt-right<sup>1</sup>) in digital spaces and masculinities in video games and the gaming community require new methodologies and innovative sets of methods.

Caroline Hayes, from Equimundo, presented their research on the manosphere, gendered representations in gaming and potential interventions. Equimundo’s reports, titled [The Double Edged Sword of Online Gaming](#), and [The Manosphere Rewired](#) point out the complexities of these online spaces, which she indicated offer connection, community and fun but also “create the enabling context for online misogyny to metastasise, increasingly cross-pollinated with far-right extremist movements.”

Discussing online opportunities to disrupt and redirect vulnerable users who easily fall for harmful and engagement-driven content by manosphere influencers, Hayes stressed that a lot of the content can be quite healthy and harmful at the same time. They can, for example, create solidarity around men who feel rejected by women and



then exert political influence by creating an “us versus them” narrative. Here, she said, feminism is seen as an ideology upholding a “men hating system.” The more radical spaces are defined by a glorification of guns and a normalisation of violence.

Consequently, the objective is to design innovative strategies that disrupt the harmful pathways in these digital spaces to reach men before they go to the more radical spaces. One strategy is the creation, broad circulation and strategic placement of more media literacy content, while another opportunity is working with moderators and content creators to equip them with strategic messaging skills. They also engage with platforms such as Tik Tok to redirect search optimisation, scaling up other approaches and targeted ads for more healthy masculinities content material, including mental health education, and placing it to more harmful online spaces. So far, they found that 40 to 45 per cent of users who were on these harmful spaces, as well as YouTube influencers, watch the whole advertisement while the usual rate is around 30 per cent.

For next steps, Caroline laid out three major fields of potential action: 1. Further research: deepen understanding of how narratives around masculinity are shaped across diverse platforms; 2. Pilot ideas: design innovative strategies that disrupt harmful pathways in digital spaces and offer communities of care; and 3. Evaluate & scale: test and amplify approaches that build healthy connections and relationships for men in digital worlds.

The research and cases presented all highlighted the need for stringent regulation and monitoring. Consequently, pressure for external content moderation of social media platforms was discussed as an important avenue to address the new forms of marketing. On this topic, Anna Antonakis, an independent political scientist and board member of the NGO [Netzforma\\*](#) (and co-author of this report) presented debates around the EU’s Digital Services Act, which was fully entered into force in April 2024 as an “external regulation mechanism.” It brings innovative and important regulations with regards to advertisement: First, it recognises “Advertising systems used by very large online platforms pose particular risks and require further public and regulatory supervision” and “ensure public access to repositories of advertisements displayed on their online interfaces” (Art 63). Second, the DSA introduces a complete ban on targeted advertising of children based on their personal data. And third, it introduces a ban on advertising based on sensitive data categories protected by the General Data Protection Regulation (sexuality, religion or race) (Art, 26, 3.).



Digital Service Coordinators are mandated to implement the DSA's regulations in the different EU member states. In the field of content moderation, “trusted flaggers” introduced by the DSA are experts in designated areas mandated to detect illegal content online, such as hate speech or terrorist content, and notifying it to the online platforms. The status of ‘trusted flagger’ shall be awarded, upon application by any entity (Art. 22) that can prove expertise in a specific field. This bears the opportunity of a formalisation of relation with civil society working in the field of gender exploitative and illegitimate and illegal marketing, discriminatory content and hate crimes and other.

Another important opportunity presented by the DSA is related to research: The need to open the “black box” of algorithmic moderations on social media platforms was raised during the meeting several times. Anna Antonakis argued that the Digital Services Act offers a new [data access regime for researchers](#) affiliated with research institutions in Europe that can help them access data crucial to understanding dynamics around marketing practices.

Nevertheless, she resumed the discussion from the day before by highlighting the reciprocal relation of regulatory and cultural approaches. She argued that human and AI content moderation pose different challenges, such as with regards to contextual judging of content and the risk of overblocking – and often marginalising – emancipatory content. Here, she stressed the importance of teaching media and digital literacy or media and information literacy (MIL) in educational settings from a young age, and increasing public awareness on the effects of advertisements.

**In the discussion**, the need to scale up efforts was addressed. The need to pay attention to US biases and research gaps was also mentioned to understand and counter transnational digital spaces that “have no borders.”

The reach of social media influencers and connectedness of the gamer community was highlighted. Dean Peacock shared that Indonesia is at the top of the list of users worldwide who play video games, followed by the Philippines and Turkey. The US was not being even on that list, backing the argument that more studies from these regions are needed.

A concern was expressed that countering messages can be very difficult with regards to very low numbers of high quality content and the dramatic effects of algorithmic scaling up of harmful content. Here, regulatory mechanisms are regarded as the more effective way to counter high numbers of followers, shares and impactful interactions. However, lessons learned in the US show that regulations can enable dramatic changes, although changes can take years. Participants were



reminded that they need to engage with visions spanning ten to 20 years out. One idea was to engage the private sector and for-profit industries to carry messages forward and help to scale.

**Several opportunities** were discussed and debated in this thematic session:

- Build capacity of police forces to combat illicit arms production and distribution, including monitoring of online spaces.
- Raise awareness on “the manosphere” and engage parents and content moderators in understanding and monitoring risks.
- Warn platforms of dangers and hold them accountable based on their community guidelines.
- Media and information literacy (MIL) taught from a young age can increase public awareness on discriminatory gender norms and effects of advertisements in the online space.
- Employ the DSA framework. For example, use the new data access regime for researchers (Art. 40) to understand more about online spaces and marketing practices, AI curated content, technology-facilitated gender-based violence and dynamics of polarisation and radicalisation. The DSA framework can also be used to
- raise awareness and explore opportunities to apply as a trusted flagger entity.
- Engage platforms to include advertisements with media literacy content and concepts of healthy masculinities, in particular in the manosphere.
- Engagement with the private sector can help to scale up messaging, but this cannot be done without diluting the challenges of emancipatory concerns.

## Thematic Session Six: Militarised Masculinities, Online Spaces and Extremism:

**Session objective:** To surface and discuss the nexus between guns, online spaces and extremist groups, the algorithms and recruitment tactics that contribute to radicalisation, and what can be done to address it.

The session was chaired by Luisa Portugal from Pathfinders and included as speakers:

- Mike Kane from Everytown for Gun Safety
- Kelly Sampson, Director of Racial Justice at Brady
- Krisztina Huszti-Orban from the Geneva Academy

Chairing the session, Luisa Portugal reminded the room about different social media platforms and the so-called “dark web” whose role in illicit trade and marketing often remains out of sight, as illustrated by the “Social Media Iceberg” (see Illustration 6).



*The social media platforms used in the mainstream often constitute only the “Tip of the Iceberg.”*

The discussions around propaganda and extremist mobilisations gave participants insights into discourses happening mostly beneath the tip of the social media iceberg. Kelly Sampson looked at the intersections of online communities and white supremacist movements, drawing on Brady’s study [Origins of an Insurrection](#). Her intervention described marketing used by the gun industry that exploits racist stereotypes of Black men as threats. This portrayal, Kelly argued, is a key element for the gun industry, drawing on fear of Black and Brown people to sell guns to *white* Americans. This connection between race and conspiracy theories is evident in online discussions, where “dog whistling” is common. The term refers to coded language that conveys racist ideas without explicitly stating them. Understanding these dynamics helps to reveal how race and fear are manipulated in the context of gun rights and ownership and ultimately, advertising.

The link to extremist violence was laid out by Mike Kane from Everytown. Drawing on Everytown’s report [“Paranoia and Profit: Armed Extremism and the Gun Industry’s Role in Fostering It”](#), he stated that 40 percent of the perpetrators of the 25 deadliest mass shootings in the United States were motivated by, or previously expressed support for, white supremacist extremism or violent misogyny. The role of influencers is also relevant with regards to studying pathways to radicalisation

online. Mike drew on two other Everytown reports to illustrate that liaisons between influencers and the firearms industry “can create a dangerous feedback loop for individuals intent on committing mass violence, who consume this content in order to inform their firearms purchasing decisions.”

### How Guns Factor Into the Extremist Conspiratorial Mindset



Graphic provided by US-based Everytown on how guns factor into extremist conspiratorial mindset.

Transitioning from marketing to propaganda by extremist groups, Krisztina Huszti-Orban provided insights on “terrorism” and the effectiveness of Daesh (ISIS) propaganda techniques. While the spread of Daesh propaganda since 2013 has been facilitated by the use of various platforms, there has been a shift to more decentralised platforms and the dark web to remain undetected. She found that Daesh is very effective in incorporating gender perspectives into their strategies and the group's messaging varies according to their target audience. For example, messages directed at men often focus on themes of masculinity, prominently displaying guns, and emphasising entitlement to women and sex, while other messages target European women in particular. There are several characteristics of Daesh propaganda, relevant to understanding the marketing of militarised masculinities more broadly:

- Aesthetics of gaming: Daesh has utilised gaming aesthetics in their media, modifying first-person shooter games to appeal to potential recruits. They have adopted a gamified approach, suggesting that life with them is more exciting than popular games like Call of Duty.



- Militarised language and Arabic alphabet: The use of militarised language and the Arabic alphabet is evident in their communications.
- Portrayal of Mujahideen: Daesh uses social media handles to showcase the "soft" masculinities of the Mujahideen, tapping into Western culture by feminising the "others" (such as Christians and others).
- Cultural References: The overall message is about fighting the West by leveraging aspects of Western culture.

Kristina also examined various issues related to the regulation of violent extremist content online. Firstly, she emphasised a need for a human rights-based approach to content moderation but indicated that platforms have little guidance on how to implement human rights-based content moderation effectively. For example, it is difficult to distinguish between videos created by human rights organisations and terrorist propaganda. Automated moderation systems (AMS) and human content moderators face significant challenges in making these distinctions. The same is true for feminist content, where content moderation regimes can affect visibility and participation, as described by Anna Antonakis in the earlier session.

Secondly, Kristina explained that regulations can sometimes be used to crack down on minorities and those who are critical of political and economic elites, raising concerns about how regulations can be used to shut down dissenting voices, criticism and protest.

Third, there is an issue with archiving content that could be used as evidence in criminal proceedings. Ensuring that such content is preserved while being removed from public view is complex. Finally, Kristina raised the issue of content online that is "lawful but awful content" content that is legal but harmful or offensive. She finds that in the context of counterterrorism, addressing this type of content is crucial, and effective counter-narratives are needed to combat extremist messaging.

The discussion also highlighted a growing interest by US gun companies to sell guns to people of colour in the US context, fitting in with the observations already made on defining women as a new target audience in advertising.

The "gun influencers" were divided into three different categories in the discussion: "hyper-masculine", "female" or "child" influencers who promote a lifestyle with guns and have millions of followers. Further research on their ideological backgrounds, reach and tactics is important. The second category seemed particularly intriguing as it provides an entry point for framing gun rights as women's rights. The women

influencers in particular help sell a lifestyle that offers a narrative around safety and empowerment.



*Advertisement for cups posted on Instagram on 29 July 2022 by @stylemetactical.*

Women “gunfluencers” often draw on a romanticisation of guns that appeals to “feminine” stereotypes, such as soft colours like those depicted in an advertisement for cups with a gun that shoots a heart.- Participants argued that some women could be intrigued by the women’s empowerment narrative that is exploited in gun advertisements, especially by women influencers.

**Several opportunities** were identified in this thematic session:

- Researching the role of influencers can help to understand new marketing strategies.
- Analysing propaganda from a gender and race perspective helps to understand strategic messaging to different audiences.
- Engage with platforms by insisting on stringent application of content moderation policies and proper labelling of advertisements.
- Push for demonetisation of influencers sharing and creating harmful content.

## Opportunities for Litigation and the Multilateral Level

**Day three:** The third day centred discussions around commitments and opportunities on the multilateral level with regards to the triple nexus of gender, advertisement by the weapons and defence industry and militarised cultures. Discussions yielded many different approaches and concrete steps worth following up on with regards to mobilising the multilateral system and international norms.

### Thematic Session Seven: Exploring Opportunities for Litigation on Exploitative Marketing of Guns

Session objective: Explore the implications of the successful lawsuit brought against Remington Arms Company on the grounds of its exploitative marketing practices, as well as the case brought by the Uvalde families against Daniel Defense, Call of Duty, Activision and Meta, the case currently before the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) by the Oliver family, and the cases brought by the Government of Mexico, amongst others.

The session was chaired by Madeleine Rees, WILPF Secretary-General, and included the following panellists:

- Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise
- Natália Pollachi, Sou Da Paz
- Jonathan Lowey, Global Action on Gun Violence

Jonathan Lowey shared his assessment that in the current US context he finds it difficult to foresee significant legislative change, especially given the limited progress out of Washington, DC over the last 20 years. He pointed to the possibility of change through strategic litigation against gun dealers and manufacturers instead, especially for their marketing practices.

Jonathan provided an overview of the legal landscape in the US, saying that the US Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA), enacted in 2005 and reflecting close collaboration between the NRA and senior elected officials, gives special protection to the gun industry from civil liability in court and lawsuits over harm caused by the weapons they sell. However, gun violence prevention advocates have been able to make use of an unanticipated blind spot in the legal armament built by the gun industry. The case brought by Sandy Hook families was able to prove that



the marketing strategies used by Remington to sell the type of gun used in the Sandy Hook shooting violated Connecticut's law on unfair business practice.

Jonathan also shared GAGV's work on behalf of the government of Mexico to bring two cases against US gun manufacturers and gun sellers. While gun laws in Mexico are very strict, the country faces extraordinary gun violence, in particular with regards to drug cartels and gun trafficking. Jonathan shared data on the extent to which weapons used in Mexico emanate from illegal sales and smuggling coordinated by gun sellers in the US: "At the heart of the cartels are the guns, and 90% of guns in Mexico are trafficked from the US." Lowey highlighted that 50 per cent of all crime guns are sold by a small number of gun dealers, as few as 1 per cent, who market and sell to drug gangs.

Nicole Hockley presented the approach used by the Sandy Hook families against Remington. She reported that parents filed the case in December 2014, two years after the Sandy Hook shooting, and got other families on board, who were also affected by the shooting. She explained how they discovered the very niche law in Connecticut on unfair business practice. Besides having discovered this loophole, Hockley also stressed that "Anything can be winnable if you think about awareness and education as a way to create change." She explained that Remington had sales close to US\$1 billion but their investors started to leave as a consequence of pressure from the lawsuit. In 2018 their profits dropped to US\$159 million sales and they filed for bankruptcy in 2020. Ultimately, Remington paid out \$73 million to the Sandy Hook families.

Natalia Pollachi shared some details on litigation efforts from Brazil. One case involved [collective litigation against a gun manufacturer's advertisement on social media](#) which promoted discounts and advertising assault rifles. Sou da Paz and its partners in the case argued that these practices violated national regulations because 1) the advertisement promoted guns in an indiscriminate audience space (including teenagers) and 2) they promoted indiscriminate use and thus contradicted regulations in Brazil which state the obligation to present gun sales as a regulated market with specific requirements such as permits in advertising. The complainants secured a court ruling in their favour which required the manufacturer to pull their ads. Natalia stressed two details: First, they entered as a coalition of NGOs from different sectors, i.e. NGOs working on strategic litigation defending human rights defenders, freedom of speech and human rights and another specialised in consumer rights, amongst others. The different expertise helped strengthen the



case. Second, Natalia emphasised the role of media and the good practices by journalists covering the litigation.

Natalia also shared a second case from Brazil, where a police unit successfully brought a lawsuit to combat illegal arms production and marketing. This unit discovered over 80 YouTube channels that provided detailed instructions on how to manufacture firearms. Additionally, the comment sections of these videos were found to contain discussions and further details about arms, facilitating the illegal marketing of guns.

**The plenary discussion that followed** explored the ways in which the use of domestic law and international human rights mechanisms can shift the narrative about guns from a domestic policy issue to a global human rights concern. The pervasive impact of gun violence infringes on several fundamental human rights, including the right to life, security; and physical integrity. By litigating gun violence on an international stage, it can be asserted that states have an obligation to protect these rights under international human rights law.

CARICOM nations have been supportive of the litigation by Mexico and have filed an amicus curiae brief in support of the lawsuit. Similarities in the gun trafficking problem are evident.

**Several opportunities** were identified in the inputs and the discussion on the benefits of litigation on exploitative marketing:

- Encourage regional human rights commissions to adopt similar strategies to amplify the impact of relevant litigation. For example, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights or the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights could tackle regional gun violence issues by supporting, monitoring and implementing litigation by employing a marketing and masculinities lens.
- Policy reform campaigns: The outcomes of international litigation can be used to inform and drive policy reform campaigns at national and regional levels. This can help in creating more stringent gun control laws and ensuring better enforcement mechanisms.
- Litigating against gun manufacturers can be done by leveraging competition laws.
- Conducting research and maintaining an up to date database on different strategic litigation efforts around the world can help to identify good practices.
- Public pressure and grassroots mobilisations around litigation cases can contribute to successful charges.



- Pressure from lawsuits can make investors, insurers and financiers divest from gun manufacturing and sales.
- Coalitions of NGOs of different expertise can help to build robust cases against arms manufacturers.

## Thematic Session Eight: Commitments and Opportunities at the UNHRC (Including In Relation to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights) and the Language on Gender Stereotypes within CEDAW

**Session objective:** To explore international commitments that can be used for advocacy purposes, including at the Human Rights Council, the business and human rights agenda, the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), etc.

The session was chaired by Hine-Wai Loose, Interim Director at Control Arms and included:

- Patrizia Scannella, WILPF Human Rights Programme
- Daniel Quinones, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- Hana Salama, Researcher, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

Hine-Wai Loose chaired the session on “Commitments and opportunities at the UNHRC and with regards to the language of CEDAW.”. She discussed the [Arms Trade Treaty \(ATT\)](#), emphasising its importance in the context of Gaza since the ATT prohibits exporting weapons for genocidal purposes. She argued that the agenda of the ATT community has been conservative, with most officials focusing on export licences. There is a need to raise awareness among these officials about considering GBV in their evaluations and what information should be included in their considerations.

It was pointed out that the forum managing the ATT is highly micromanaged, with parties' focus on implementation of legislation and national control systems. Unfortunately, this has shifted the focus away from more serious cases of non-compliance under the treaty. At the same time, tensions have risen regarding the transparency of weapon transfers to conflict zones, highlighted by a case against the Dutch government, which some argue obligated it under the ATT to halt transfers of F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel. Also, it was noted that Nicaragua's push at the International Court of Justice in early 2024 for more transparency from Germany in



their arms trade to Israel could influence the functioning of the ATT in the future. Hine Wai highlighted that keeping track of developments at the multilateral level is essential for effective engagement with legal instruments.

Patrizia Scannella provided an overview of two key mechanisms for human rights. She highlighted the recent HRC resolutions on [Civilian Acquisition, Possession, and Use of Firearms](#) and indicated that these contained important language on marketing. Second, she also followed up on the ATT, where the impact of arms transfers on human rights is explicitly stated as well as the link between conventional weapons and GBV.

Patrizia mentioned the information [note by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights for responsible business conduct in the arm sector](#), which examines active involvement in the arms trade of a variety of actors, including brokers, shipping companies and others, and calls for defining the arms sector broadly.

Additionally, she pointed to the opportunities in using CEDAW to draw attention to the gender stereotypes in gun marketing. It remains, she said, a crucial entry point at the multilateral level, emphasising the link between weapons, GBV, and discrimination. Of particular note are:

- General recommendation No. 30 on “Women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations” ([UN document: CEDAW/C/GC/30](#), adopted in 2013). Among other things, it highlights the need for robust and effective regulation of the arms trade to prevent gender-based violence and encourages ratification of the ATT.
- General recommendation No. 35 on “Gender-based violence against women” ([UN document: CEDAW/C/GC/35](#), adopted in 2017). Among other things, it recommends that States parties: “Address factors that heighten the risk to women of exposure to serious forms of gender-based violence, such as the ready accessibility and availability of firearms, including their export (...).”

• Daniel Quinones explained his responsibility to follow up on two different strands of resolutions, one being Human Rights Impact by Arms Transfers, and the recent resolutions and debates related to the [HRC Resolution 50-12 of 2022](#) and [HRC Resolution 53/49](#) of 2024 on civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms.<sup>2</sup>

In this regard, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is mandated to issue [different reports](#). In his presentation, Daniel



summarised the reporting and showed upcoming works the OHCHR is doing, highlighting opportunities for engagement.

The impact of firearms on human rights is significant and multi-faceted, affecting various regions differently. The report highlights the direct and immediate effects of firearms violence and attempts to measure its consequences on individuals and communities. One of the key ways firearms are used is to commit human rights abuses, as evidenced by two reports that emphasise the discriminatory impact of such violence. It also finds that communities are affected based on their socioeconomic status, with firearms violence disproportionately impacting those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, there is a gender dimension to this issue, with men accounting for the vast majority of both perpetrators and victims. The OHCHR 2023 report on firearms demand also indicated that a major reason for their use is the fear of victimisation. This report explores not only the roles of manufacturers, distributors and spenders but also the influence of social media marketing platforms.

Some key findings and themes are:

- **Firearms and safety:** The marketing of firearms often highlights safety, appealing to those who feel the need to protect themselves.
- **Stereotypes and gender roles:** Marketing often portrays men as protectors, reinforcing gender stereotypes and the association of masculinity with firearms.
- **Accusation of tropes and tactical themes:** Military-style themes and references to movies are frequently used in marketing to sell weapons, capitalising on popular culture.

The OHCHR is currently working on a report on “Civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms and the underlying root causes and risk factors driving firearms violence and their impact on cultural participation particularly for individuals in vulnerable and marginalised situations.” They will submit this report to the 59th session of the Human Rights Council, taking place in June 2025, and hope to issue a call for inputs soon.

Daniel mentioned two more reports on the topic of arms transfers under Human Rights [Council Resolution 53/15](#).

1. A report focussing on access to information which was already presented to the Council and
2. A report currently in preparation and due in March 2025 that summarises gaps and future steps the Council should take on the matter of arms



transfers. It constitutes a broad mandate to explore pathways that have been underexplored. They are currently preparing an intersectional workshop taking place at the end of September/October 2024, inviting participants in the room to take part.

Hana Salama stressed that opportunities to engage at the multilateral level exist within the small windows available in arms control. She explained that UNIDIR is not bound by consensus but can write about controversial issues and aims to support member states with research to make informed decisions around regulations of weapon systems, including cybersecurity and AI.

Hana also pointed to a working paper regarding the ATT and the UN's Responsible Business Principles. The recommendation was to involve CSOs and businesses to develop guidance on human rights abuses, suggesting that marketing is part of that value chain. However, the ATT outcome document did not take this recommendation up.

**The discussion** recognised that the Human Rights Council is an important actor in addressing militarisation from a gender and international human rights perspective, and it is constrained by the need for consensus.

Some participants were also concerned with the arms industry's involvement in influencing policies, including at the multinational level and human rights responses. The arms industry holding close relationships with stakeholders was identified as an issue. Asked about the industry's involvement in the reporting, Daniel Quinones clarified that engagement with the arms industry involves reaching out to all relevant stakeholders during the preparation of reports. A footnote in the report highlights that attempts were made to contact several industry actors, but there was no response. Public calls for inputs were issued relatively early, well before the report was prepared, though no specific outreach to these actors occurred.

The role of experts and whistleblowers was highlighted with regards to providing information in the discussion.

Regarding the language on masculinities on the multilateral level, Chantal de Jonge Oudraat's study was cited for its analysis that WPS resolutions frame men either as allies or as victims but not as men that are in fact implicated in violence and wars. The focus of the conference has the potential to fill this gap as discussions revolved around the third category of men involved in profiting from the sale of the weapons used in war.



**Several opportunities** were identified in the inputs and the discussion on how to mobilise the multilateral system:

- The OHCHR's in-progress report noted above captures well the topicality of the meeting. A call for inputs will be issued soon.
- The OHCHR is currently preparing another report on the matter of arms transfers (due in March 2025) regarding gaps and future steps the Council should take. An online workshop will be taking place at the end of September/October 2024.
- UNIDIR has a gender programme and their research can support member states' initiatives around regulations of weapon systems.
- UN reports and analysis can be used for advocacy and often have steps underpinned.
- The WPS architecture can be used and WPS NAPs constitute another entry point to address gender exploitative marketing strategies.
- The WPS impact group created in Geneva, including diplomats, heads of NGOs and others, is working on framing the state resolution in terms of WPS.
- Asking questions and disclosing information through various communication channels can raise publicity on application of business and human rights principles.

## Thematic Session Nine: Commitments and Opportunities with Regional Bodies and National Action Plans

**Session objective:** To discuss the extent to which regional commitments like the African Union's Silencing the Guns Campaign include a focus on gendered marketing of weapons as well as the extent to which commitments to advance gender equality include a focus on guns (such as the 2021 Kinshasa Declaration on Positive Masculinities or HRC Res 35/10 on engaging men to end violence against women).

The session was chaired by Callum Watson from Small Arms Survey and panellists included:

- Claire Taylor for WILPF and Gun Free South Africa on the AU's Silencing the Guns Campaign
- Dragan Bozanic from UNDP SEESAC



- Nora Isabel Allgaier, Political Affairs Officer, UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, Geneva

Callum opened the session by stating that regional bodies can serve as an incubator for addressing shared challenges, such as the impact of firearms on LGBTQ+ individuals, fostering healthy competition between states through initiatives like WPS NAPs, and facilitating "baton passing," whereby momentum on innovative arms control practices can pass from one country to another as windows of opportunities open and close based on different political climates.

Shifting back to the international level briefly, Nora Isabel Allgaier emphasised that with the New Agenda for Peace, there is a need to strengthen and implement regional frameworks to allow states to make tailored recommendations for small weapons control. Integrating small arms control in peacebuilding efforts is crucial in this regard, addressing both the demand and supply aspects.

Recent regional initiatives have shown promise in raising awareness and commitments to addressing the links between masculinities and small arms. For instance, in the Asia-Pacific region there is the opportunity to tackle the demand side of weapons through sub-regional programmes. Nora explained that regional centres can serve as effective intermediaries for CSOs working on small arms control. Their mandate includes promoting human rights legislation and supporting regional approaches. These centres also focus on addressing masculinities and arms control, such as focusing on firearm awareness in schools. For example, in Honduras, youth networks focus on new masculinities, while the African Centre has collaborated with the "MenEngage" network. Additionally, a fellowship training programme has been established for small arms and light weapons control, providing a consistent opportunity to promote knowledge among government officials, which will help develop informed policies.

Two regional campaigns and mechanisms were presented and served as in-depth case studies to be discussed as examples.

## **"Silencing the Guns": What guns are we talking about?**

The "Silencing the Guns" initiative is considered a flagship project of the AU and was initially aimed at ending conflicts and promoting peace and security across Africa by



2020. Besides its importance, the campaign raised questions about setting ambitious goals, faced several challenges and yielded mixed results.

Of note is that the Silencing the Guns campaign includes a focus on gendered marketing of weapons and it assesses the extent to which existing international and regional commitments to advance gender equality include a focus on guns (such as the 2021 Kinshasa Declaration on Positive Masculinities or HRC Res 35/10 on engaging men to end violence against women).

The initiative sought to address both supply and demand aspects of firearms, recognising the complexities of the issue:

- Supply: The initiative targeted the reduction of the availability of firearms through measures such as disarmament and arms control agreements.
- Demand: It recognised the need to address the deep-rooted cultural and social factors that drive demand for firearms, including how individual status and identity are influenced by the entertainment industry. For example, analysing popular TV shows and other media can help identify cultural influences on firearm demand.

## UNDP SEESAC

Presenting the example of the UNDP's SEESAC, Dragan Bozanic pointed out in his interventions that small arms and light weapons control strategies and action plans are being developed across the Balkans region. He concluded: "We see that in the process of development of the action plans, there is an increasing effort by the authorities to integrate gender aspects, particularly concerning domestic violence." Some of the key points he made were:

- Research and data initiatives are improving the availability of data.
- There is an increase in the capacities of institutions to mainstream gender in firearms control, achieved through capacity building and awareness raising.
- The commitment to small arms control is being translated into daily operations by police working in the field, with guidelines for prevention of the misuse of firearms in domestic violence and for gender responsive firearms license approval and checklists provided.
- Within this context, guidelines include inquiries on social media and online presence, including training police officers to ensure the knowledge is applied.



In the **discussion**, Tarila Marclint Ebiede, Director of the [Conflict Research Network West Africa](#) raised the question: what are the existing policy levers we can target that will lead to different outcomes? He encouraged the participants to identify whether to engage more with regional level or member states and learn about other campaigns that were successful and could lead to progressive response in institutions. There was much agreement in the room that regional campaigns can be informed by and at best go hand in hand with local and transnational movements.

A critical question in the room with regards to the Silencing the Guns campaign was, "What weapons are we talking about?" This included highlighting the role of militaries or "legal authorities" in glorifying and using weapons against their own people. Claire emphasised the need to broaden the understanding of "silencing the guns" beyond interstate violence to include intrastate conflicts, gang violence and other forms of armed violence. Other recommendations included ensuring country and local levels are equally addressed, advocating for a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches and creating an activism toolkit to help people engage with the Silencing the Guns campaign.

The discussion centred on the issue of targets, funding and resources in implementing regional initiatives. It was highlighted that it is difficult to obtain funding for gun-free work, especially in South Africa. While there are a lot of ideas, leaving a big footprint depends on availability of funds. Furthermore, it was pointed out that resource limitations by regional organisations to support member states that have signed up to the regional initiatives are an issue.

The complicated issue of funding was raised with regards to programmes strengthening physical security from a humanitarian perspective. While the development field oversees large budgets, strengthening the link between small arms control and the development field – such as in NAPs – can be tricky when development funds are being diverted to be spent on military equipment.

In the discussion the availability and design of logframes and targets were discussed. Dean Peacock reminded the group that HIV campaigns 25 years ago also had no funding, and nowadays, the global fund alone disperses US\$5 billion a year. Setting targets and clear indicators were very important in achieving these successes.

**Opportunities** identified during the thematic session included:



- Enhance collaboration by simplifying information and engaging key stakeholders. Develop robust and enforceable mechanisms to ensure compliance with disarmament agreements and peace accords.
- Learn from social movements and pull lessons in from successful regional campaign, such as HIV prevention in African countries, where campaigns were structured around clear targets.
- Regional centres can serve as effective intermediaries for CSOs.

## Reflections on Strategies: Connecting the Small and the Big Dots

The following section attempts to present and regroup strategies to comprehensively examine and address the various mechanisms in which militarised masculinities get marketed that were discussed during the three days of the meeting. This section is by no means exhaustive; many different ideas were exchanged by the participants during sessions, discussions and coffee breaks. Like all the other sections of this report, the discussions presented here do not reflect consensus positions amongst the many different organisations in the room, some of which are independent research entities and do not engage in any advocacy.

### The Need for Holistic Approaches: Addressing Supply and Demand

While the priorities of participants and organisations in the rooms varied, there was a shared enthusiasm for comprehensive approaches that consider both the supply and demand side at the individual and state levels, and use gender as an analytical framework that also takes into account global inequalities. There seemed to be agreement that efforts should also address illegal and illicit arms trades and unofficial forms of advertisements and marketing.

#### 1. Potential Strategy: Development and Use of Regulatory Mechanisms and Litigation

##### 1.1. Leveraging legal mechanisms and accountability

The US plays a significant role in the global arms market, and its firearms industry has far-reaching implications, both domestically and internationally. The inputs and discussions revealed that many governments affected by US arms exports and gun

culture are increasingly taking action to push back against the negative effects caused by the growing availability of US guns. These governments are leveraging various regulatory frameworks and mechanisms to enforce accountability and draw attention to the issues at hand. Three different possible entry points were discussed and debated:

- **Regulatory pressure from affected governments:**  
Affected nations are utilising their regulatory frameworks to pressure the US government and its firearms industry. This includes pushing for stricter export controls, demanding transparency in arms deals, and enforcing international human rights standards. These efforts highlight the need for the US to consider the broader implications of its arms exports and to ensure that its weapons do not contribute to corruption or human rights abuses abroad.
- **Drawing attention through strategic litigation to enforce accountability:**  
By using strategic litigation to enforce accountability, these governments are drawing significant attention to the issue of foreign corruption linked to the US firearms industry. This attention is crucial as it can help catalyse change by highlighting the consequences of lax regulatory practices and the need for more robust oversight. It underscores the importance of aligning US arms export policies with international anti-corruption and human rights standards.
- **Utilising the law to enhance accountability:**  
The US has several legal mechanisms at its disposal to address the accountability of the firearms industry. These include the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), which prohibits US companies and their employees from engaging in bribery and corruption abroad.

On utilising litigation against the industry as a strategy, Madeleine Rees asked, "What sort of litigation should we be looking at, and what are the risks?" She reminded everyone to "be strategic and draw on lessons learned from previous cases."

Several responses to this question were discussed, including litigation targeting the social media platforms that allow these channels to proliferate. The risks discussed include potential backlash from powerful corporations and the challenge of proving negligence or complicity. However, past cases have shown that strategic, well-documented litigation can compel media platforms to enforce stricter content controls.

Another idea that was discussed is litigating against gun manufacturers by leveraging competition laws that could expose unethical practices and create a divide among manufacturers. Highlighting cases where certain manufacturers profit



from illegal arms trade while others comply with regulations can drive industry-wide reform.

There were some participants who agreed that this strategy of creating internal competition can be effective. Using public opinion and law enforcement endorsements can amplify pressure. Additionally, forming alliances with other advocacy groups can strengthen campaigns and provide broader support.

## 1.2. Content moderation and platform governance

Participants shared enthusiasm on regulatory mechanisms. The EU's Digital Services Act was seen as a good example to follow and encourage mutual learnings. The DSA's explicit mention of GBV as a systemic risk that the very large online platforms must tackle can constitute an important entry point for further research, monitoring and advocacy given the association between gun ownership and domestic violence.

In the discussion, experiences from Brazil were brought in, where more [general regulatory efforts were blunted because of Google's and Telegram's virulent reaction](#). While national legislation is being increasingly enacted around the world in an attempt to hold platforms accountable and regulate advertisements online, they often do not explicitly mention gendered advertising and the marketing of guns and weapons.

In the framework of regulatory mechanisms, the UN's [Global Digital compact](#) (currently under its third revision) represents an opportunity for advocacy for the integration of research and knowledge on gender and masculinities and advertisement of guns in the digital realm.

## 1.3. Opportunities discussed related to regulations on gender stereotypical advertising

Another approach discussed was the introduction of regulating advertising. As an example, participants mentioned the advertising [bans on weapons in Brazil](#) as a successful strategy.

However, several attempts to legislate against sexist advertising have received pushback on the grounds of protecting freedom of speech. One solution could be to not tackle national legislation, but introduce regulations on sexist advertising at the city level. For example, in 2014, the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg district council in Germany set up a working group to combat sexist, discriminatory and misogynistic advertising, which drew up a catalogue of criteria under the leadership of the



women's department. In their guide [“Sexism shouldn’t sell,”](#) militarism or weapons are not addressed specifically, but prohibit advertisements that exploit gender stereotypes, including the portrayal of men and boys as more aggressive, obsessed with power, technically gifted/playing with technology, strong and autonomous.

The need for clear language in advertising regulations is exemplified by Gun Free South Africa. When they raised concerns about adverts from [Gun Fun](#), particularly those targeting children, published online and in publications, the response from the Advertising Regulatory Board was that its Code of Practice makes no reference to advertising of guns or shooting ranges, so it “didn’t have an issue with such advertisements.” It would only investigate adverts that breached the Code, “for example, condoning illegal or violent behaviour, or (if) the prices were wrong.”

## 2. Potential Strategy: Mobilising the Multilateral Systems

Madeleine Reese emphasised that Geneva is an ideal place to bring together different stakeholders, including staff from different UN agencies, representatives of the International Gender Champion’s Women Peace and Security Impact Group and diplomats from a range of countries.

Dean Peacock mentioned [UNHRC Resolution 35-10 of 2017 on men’s involvement in ending all forms of violence against women and girls](#) as a potential tool for advocacy. He noted that the resolution has a strong focus on gender norms but lacks adequate attention to the structural drivers of men’s violence. It also does not include mention of guns.

Madeleine highlighted the importance of understanding how the Human Rights Council can be utilised to frame resolutions in terms of gender, prevention and inclusion, and stressed that it is crucial that advocates engage in a fulsome way with the Council. She indicated that it is vital that new language in international instruments addressing gender stereotypical advertising should then be adopted at the regional and national levels.

The discussion around mobilising different UN resolutions and frameworks to tackle gender exploitative marketing of weapons, war and militarised masculinities included mention of concerns that the WPS Agenda has lost much of its initial anti-militaristic stance by focusing primarily on integrating women into armed forces.

Participants discussed UNSCR 1325 and the WPS NAPs that signatories have committed to as another entry point to work on gendered gun and arms advertising.



We heard that WPS NAPs are increasingly recognising the role of digital media and gender perspectives on peace and security, and this was identified as a good entry point to inform consortia working on consulting or elaborating NAPs.

In the frame of the WPS architecture, the Istanbul Convention on Gender-Based Violence, which includes multiple references to GBV and firearms, was mentioned as another potential engagement point for states. For example, Article 51 on risk assessment and risk management requires states to ensure that competent authorities carry out risk assessments in cases of violence against women in order to evaluate the lethality and seriousness of the situation. The assessment includes evaluating the risk of the use of firearms, which are identified as a significant factor in the lethality and severity of domestic and gender-based violence.

### **2.1. Use the momentum already evident at the Human Rights Council**

The inputs and discussions showed several positive signs pointing to momentum at the Human Rights Council that needed to be exploited by the different actors present at the meeting. It was stated that “A resolution is only as good as what you make of it.” For example, Resolution 53/49, includes addressing gender stereotypes and the impact of marketing. Regional organisations like ECOWAS and initiatives such as the Kinshasa Declaration on Positive Masculinities have included gender-sensitive language in their frameworks.

Daniel Quinones encouraged participants to consider taking part in an intersectional workshop that will be held online in September or October, replacing the previous in-person format with a fully online meeting conducted in English. Written submissions are currently accepted in all official UN languages.

Jonathan Lowy's submission to OHCHR that they appoint a Special Procedure on gun violence was discussed and participants were encouraged to consider providing input into the report mandated by the 2024 resolution on civilian acquisition of guns.

### **2.2. Work with UN ODA to improve coordination of UN agency efforts**

The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UN ODA) was understood as a crucial actor for coordinating efforts. Tasked with promoting nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the regulation of conventional arms, their work includes supporting disarmament efforts globally, providing policy guidance and fostering international cooperation. For instance, the briefly presented [Saving Lives Entity, a trust fund under the Peacebuilding Fund](#), emphasises the importance of analysing



the drivers of both supply and demand for small arms and feeding this analysis into development programmes.

The UN ODA often facilitates meetings that bring together various agencies to discuss common challenges and develop joint strategies. Participants stressed the need to first establish clear objectives and identify relevant agencies (with the support of the ODA). With regards to countering gendered marketing of weapons, regular communication channels could be established with the UN ODA and other UN agencies to ensure ongoing coordination and collaboration on gender exploitative marketing of weapons, war and militarised masculinities. This can include:

- Regular meetings and briefings: Schedule regular meetings and briefings to discuss progress, challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.
- Information sharing platforms: Utilise information-sharing platforms and databases to exchange information and best practices.
- Work with UN ODA to establish a UN Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT).

### **2.3. Strengthen language in guiding principles on business and human right**

Hine-Wai Loose and others stressed that engaging in multilateral forums requires careful consideration of language, as it will be translated and interpreted.

Patrizia Scannella shared that news from the previous week (July 2024) includes a new paragraph on ownership linked to dynamics of control, power, domination and strength, recalling the guiding principles on business and human rights, which also cover manufacturing and marketing – an area where WILPF has successfully advocated in the past and could further be explored in the future.

## **3. Potential Strategy: Changing Narratives through Popular Media**

Some participants discussed the ways that transforming gendered cultures can, under certain circumstances, bring about change by challenging the deep-rooted gender norms on which marketing practices can thrive. Changing the powerful narrative that suggests guns can fulfil emotional and physical needs by providing strength and safety was stated as an important potential approach.

Some participants shared their interest in and experiences with producing alternative narratives that redefine notions of masculinity and safety, and encourage ideas about masculinities that emphasise community, empathy and non-violence and pointed to research that demonstrates the effectiveness of such approaches.



Other participants argued that marketing practices themselves generate novel configurations of gender norms and do not simply manipulate existing ideas about manhood. They argued that interventions focused on shifting norms amongst men are one of many strategies that might be used but that the regulatory frameworks might be more effective at producing change at scale.

### 3.1. (Counter) Marketing and messaging

Nicole Hockley and Susan Lavington indicated that their strategy in the US is to avoid stigmatising and shaming gun owners. They argued that successful marketing would not function through confrontation, but through simple messaging that avoids demonising and demeaning gun owners. The public health lens and the (common and universal aim of) protection of children constitute ideal entry points, they said. The use of neologisms such as “family fire” to refer to the effects of weapons unsafely stored in homes, can be a good tactic.

Some participants advanced another approach by exploring more confrontational messaging to alert audiences, asking: How do we learn to stigmatise violence and guns, including from the military?

Generally, effective counter messaging requires a careful analysis of gendered marketing strategies in the first place. For example, numerous discussions during the meeting revealed the instrumentalisation and “weaponisation” of feminist messages presenting the firearms industry as an actor aiming to empower women, with the messaging becoming “We are the ones who protect women.” The theoretical framework of “adaptive patriarchy” by Cynthia Enloe was cited to underline this new marketing strategy addressing women. A way to counteract this would be to popularise research indicating that more weapons usually also lead to more GBV.

Another element for effective counter messaging that was discussed repeatedly were calculating and popularising the risks and costs of violence. Daniel Friedman refers to their report on [Costing Violence and Returns on Violence Prevention/Reduction](#), which gives an overview on how studies that quantify the costs of violence can be conducted. He noted Pathfinders has developed a guide on costing violence, which outlines both the tangible and intangible costs. There are two key components to consider: 1) The cost of violence and 2) The cost of solutions. For instance, Switzerland opened up to this study, revealing that violence – especially domestic and gender-based violence – costs the country eight per cent of its GDP. In contrast, in South Africa, this costing exercise demonstrated how



relatively inexpensive solutions can be effective. He noted that such studies have proven to be helpful in engaging governments.

Darine Atwa from Small Arms Survey reminded the room about the crucial [role of emotions](#). Emotions can be regarded as a key entry point to analyse the field of gun/weapons marketing. Campaigns need to appeal to the individual's emotions in order to make a change in their behaviour. For example, analyse marketing strategies to keep the household safer from an emotional perspective or explore the idea of fear and masculine pride.

Participants discussed shaming as a tool in reframing the messages of pride associated with possessing arms on the state and individual level. For example, influencers who promote firearms while endorsing luxury products, like a bottle of Moët, often tarnish the brands' reputations that do not want to be associated with such activities. Using shaming as an online strategy can change cultural attitudes towards firearms and disrupt the reach and activities of gunfluencers.

Another effective advertisement cited during the meeting draws on the same strategy: [Save the Children's ad](#) ending with the slogan "Made in Britain, dropped on children" was very effective in the UK in mobilising citizens to put pressure on their government to stop arms exports to Saudi Arabia. The strategy of naming and shaming has been used for broader divestment as Ray Acheson mentioned, saying: "It is important in relation to Palestine, where Norway's pension funds have started being divested from nuclear weapons producers."

There was consensus in the room that effective campaigning can attract public support and increase pressure on governments and companies alike.

### **3.2. Active re-framings: Gun violence and militarised masculinities as a public health issue**

The recent landmark US Surgeon General's Advisory on Firearm Violence, declaring firearm violence in the US to be a public health crisis and calling for a public health approach to reduce gun violence was regarded as an ideal entry point to further strategise around this framing. There was consensus that a public health framework could be used and linked to the emerging body of work on commercial determinants of health. In Brazil, a recent [report on the public health costs of armed violence](#) estimates it at 41 million Brazilian Real (around US\$7.5 million) per year.

The public health framework can also help to shift the focus on the "risk side," deconstructing the usually advertised "glamour and safety side" of guns. Parallels



can be drawn to public health campaigns around introducing seatbelts in cars or smoking, that have successfully introduced cultural changes in many parts of the world.

The multilateral level can also help in reframing efforts: Collaborating with public health organisations to integrate human rights-based approaches in their advocacy efforts can strengthen the link between health, gender and human rights. There was also shared enthusiasm from numerous participants and ideas to include the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF in general, and in particular in the framework of gun violence and militarised masculinities as a public health issue. Specifically, they could support these efforts by acknowledging the harmful impact of gun marketing on children.

Hana Salama presented the successful initiative by the Philippines in the [4<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons](#). It includes a paragraph (134) stating the public and mental health impacts of armed violence that was presented by the Philippines and accepted without contestation: “To fully assess the intricate linkages between armed violence associated with illicit small arms and light weapons and the health of women, men, girls and boys, which constitutes both a **public and mental health** concern. Addressing the mental health impacts of such violence requires strategies and programmes aimed at prevention while also providing comprehensive social safety nets for victims and survivors.”

In the discussion, Ioli Filmeridis, from the Violence, Inequality and Power Lab at the University of San Diego’s [Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice](#), warned that the argument framing gun violence as a public health issue could contribute to “depoliticising” it and losing sight of the actors involved in making business from it.

In efforts to reframe armed violence as a public health issue to counter the marketing of militarised masculinities, it is important to thoroughly incorporate a gender analysis, including the role of masculinities, and responsibilities of the industries and their marketing strategies.

### 3.3. The right not to be shot!

Another powerful reframing entry point constitutes the discussion on rights: While the right to carry a gun is at the core of the Second Amendment narrative in the US and beyond, the legal cultural messaging can be reframed to “a right to live” (while it has been noted that this slogan has already been exploited by the anti-abortion movement).



In their article "[The Right Not to Be Shot](#)," Jonathan Lowy and Kelly Sampson argue that the right to live is a fundamental human right that should take precedence over any right to own guns. US policy choices regarding gun rights are often framed as purely domestic issues. However, this perspective is flawed for two main reasons. First, US policies must not violate human rights legislation. Second, these policies have cross-border effects, contributing to violence in countries like Canada and Mexico.

The "Lawsuit for Survival" on behalf of Joaquin, Manny and Patricia Oliver against the US government also uses counter messaging for the "right to live free from gun violence."

With regards to the professional marketing strategies and plans that usually encompass five- to 20-year plans, participants raised the more systematic issue of the project-based work the organisations in the room usually operate on. These shorter time frames make it difficult to plan and provide a longer term strategy to change narratives. Here, actors such as the WHO can help to transform narratives in the long term.

### **3.4. Training journalists**

As a more sustainable solution to involve media and media reporting in addressing militarised masculinities, the training of journalists was raised by several participants. Journalists should be trained in analysing subtle gender exploitative marketing messages and actively counter them. For example, training on coverage of war and conflict could include naming gun manufacturers in the articles. Also, in reporting on conflict and security issues, context and commentary are usually given by police or military experts. Journalists could be trained on integrating multiple voices to make sure the diversity of perspectives as an integral part of ethical journalism is respected and implemented during the editing process.

With regards to understanding more about the manosphere, technology-facilitated (gender-based) violence and radicalisation to violence, journalists could focus more on asking questions about what social media channels shooters followed and what online communities they engaged with. These investigations could also help from a litigation perspective.

There were already several initiatives by participants regarding training of journalists: Claire Taylor is currently working on a manual for journalists with Gun Free South Africa. Natalia Pollachi referred to an example from Brazil where journalists are



trained to report on guns by naming the manufacturers for more transparency and increasing public pressure.

#### 4. Potential Strategy: Engaging with (and/or Boycotting) the Private Sector

A range of views and strategies in the room concerned the question of whether or not and how to engage with the private sector, including the arms and weapons industry, but also tech companies. While some organisations would at some point engage in strategic partnerships with gun manufacturers, other organisations and individuals would decline any cooperation or partnerships with the industry.

The OHCHR issues recommendations to companies. In their 2023 report, they provided a general recommendation for companies to adhere to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Specifically, they suggested that the firearms industry should reassess and modify their marketing strategies and discontinue marketing practices targeted at youth.

Another strategy mentioned was to mobilise gun owners in the US who are frustrated with gun violence. Encouraging them to boycott unethical brands can exert economic pressure and push for industry reform.

Regarding the sphere of influencers, the demonetisation of YouTubers and members of the manosphere can be a way to disrupt financial profits associated with unethical marketing of violence. Also, in light of the discussions on content moderation systems, algorithms that can serve to amplify accounts should be under closer investigation.

Furthermore, tracking commitments and evidence of harm were suggested as strategies to tax and regulate the industry.

There was much agreement by many participants on the need to consider boycotts of not only the industry itself but actors around it, such as investors, suppliers and marketing companies. For example, Norwegian pension fund divested from [Caterpillar](#).

The question raised by Guy Feugap from Cameroon on how to work with governments that are glorifying their military and the arms industry were left unaddressed and would constitute a potential entry point for further discussions and research.



## 5. Potential Strategy: Identify Research Gaps and Opportunities for Collective Learnings

The meeting's discussions underscored the importance of coordinating learnings, utilising each other's work and focusing on specific topics to address gun violence and its broader implications. Callum Watson emphasised the role of research in giving visibility to good practices that are often localised. Isabel Käser, University of Bern, stressed the need for academic space to open up to broader discussions and dialogue. While academia can provide the space for in-depth theoretical research and conceptualisations around different forms of masculinities, they also need to be applied and translated to the policy fields.

### 5.1. Research gaps

Numerous research gaps were identified over the course of the three-day meeting, touching on diverse contexts. For example, Guy Feugap shared that in Cameroon, there is little to no data on actual weapons in the country and the households, representing a major issue for further analysis, monitoring and advocacy. The discussion also touched upon 3D printed guns and the need to research numbers of guns already in circulation.

Participants discussed the availability of quantitative research on the direct link between cultural factors, such as consumption of video games and gun violence. While such (experimental) quantitative research is sometimes difficult to conduct for ethical reasons, especially with regards to understanding the impact on children, it was also raised that there needs to be a major rethink of research methods and the credibility of studies that go beyond purely quantitative methods.

The format of the meeting allowed bringing together different perspectives from the US, Brazil, Europe, Africa and CARICOM and to foreground transnational and comparative perspectives. Discussions revealed that Eurocentric and North American centred biases have led to major research gaps in understanding global and context-specific gendered militarised cultures. These can be addressed by strategically financing, promoting and incorporating more knowledge and research from the Global South.

The role of influencers was addressed repeatedly during the three days. It certainly represents an important field of investigation for the topic of marketing of militarised masculinities that requires more in-depth research.



The discussion also highlighted the importance of archiving and digitising information. For example, a team working on the Remington case at [Sandy Hook Promise](#) would be open to receiving support in their digitisation efforts to store the high number of files related to the case. The digitally prepared case could then be used as an example for further litigation efforts.

## 5.2. Cross-regional and comparative perspectives

Transnational and comparative research perspectives can help to identify common patterns in marketing strategies and reveal shifts in dynamics of dominant discourses. This gains new importance with regards to digital connectedness and the development of communities such as the manosphere.

With regards to cross-regional learnings, Luisa Portugal shared the idea to connect SEESAC with the African Union to identify challenges and best practices. Dragan Bozanic welcomed the idea and indicated that his organisation had previously been in touch with members of the African Union's Silencing the Guns campaign.

A shift in gendered marketing of guns and weapons has been stated whereas guns are not necessarily only attached to notions of masculinities but exploit women's empowerment narratives that certainly require further investigation. How do these marketing strategies reflect cultural change? To what extent do they themselves influence cultural change? With regard to the co-optation of progressive language and the framing of carrying guns as an emancipatory practice, it is also worth noting and exploring the similarities with the advertising campaigns by the tobacco industry targeting women. Here, cigarettes became a sign of independence, attractiveness and women's emancipation.

## 5.3. Learning from social movements and campaigning

Studying and learning from other social movements and global health campaigns constitutes another important entry point for further research. Here, HIV or tobacco advertising bans came up as examples over the course of the meeting. It has been found that comprehensive advertising bans are effective in reducing exposure to marketing and consequently consumption.

Furthermore, social movements give various learning opportunities for connecting and bridging different actors and creating impact on a global scale. For example, Argentina's Ni Una Menos campaign utilised new legal powers to confiscate firearms after gender-based violence, allowing good practices to move from one country to the next.



#### 5.4. Strengthen interdisciplinary dialogue

In order to provide the research on militarised masculinities and advertisement in digitised media environments, it became evident to many participants that the field needs to engage with IT specialists, computer scientists, engineers and designers to implement research drawing on various methods. Participants argued that this interdisciplinary dialogue needs to be fostered at an early stage and ideally integrated into the curricula of universities of applied sciences, where more fields and materials around navigating and building information and communication technologies are taught. Anna Antonakis gave the example of teaching students gender and intersectional perspectives to help them understand their role in creating technologies that can foster and increase biases and inequalities on a global scale.

### 6. Potential Strategy: Educational Approaches

#### 6.1. Engaging youth and educational institutions

Nicole Hockley from Sandy Hook Promise shared that they have very good experiences in working at schools and educating youth in the US context, which was met with great enthusiasm from many participants during the meeting. They work on prevention of gun violence, in particular at schools, including by educating children and teachers about the signs that someone may be planning a shooting (see their list of 10 critical warning signs [here](#)). She explained how kids in particular are influenced by advertising and shaped by peer-pressure, and emphasised the need to build resilience, because many kids don't have that skill due to the lack of healthy role models and healthy communities. However, she cautioned against viewing youth solely as a constituency, advocating for co-creation of programmes centred on youth.

Several US participants working with educational systems concluded that it would be necessary to also incorporate more global dimensions in their teaching materials, including impacts of US arms trade on foreign cultures and economies. So far, the teaching material is very US focused and lacks transnational perspectives.

The Silencing the Guns initiative places a strong emphasis on engaging youth, recognising their crucial role in peace and security. The framework of Youth, Peace and Security was highlighted as an essential component of the initiative's strategy and can be explored for further engagements.



## 6.2. (Digital) Media and information literacy

Media and information literacy (MIL) was discussed as another approach focusing on education that enables individuals to critically analyse and challenge stereotypes in advertisements. By fostering skills to deconstruct media messages, MIL can help users identify how ads often reinforce harmful gender norms. MIL skills are also crucial to implement the stated need to change narratives and actively create counter narratives. For example, individuals can use their media skills to “talk back” or create campaigns and content that highlight the negative impact of gendered stereotypes in advertising more generally. Alternative ads that are more inclusive and non-violent can strategically be placed in more harmful online spaces or the manosphere.

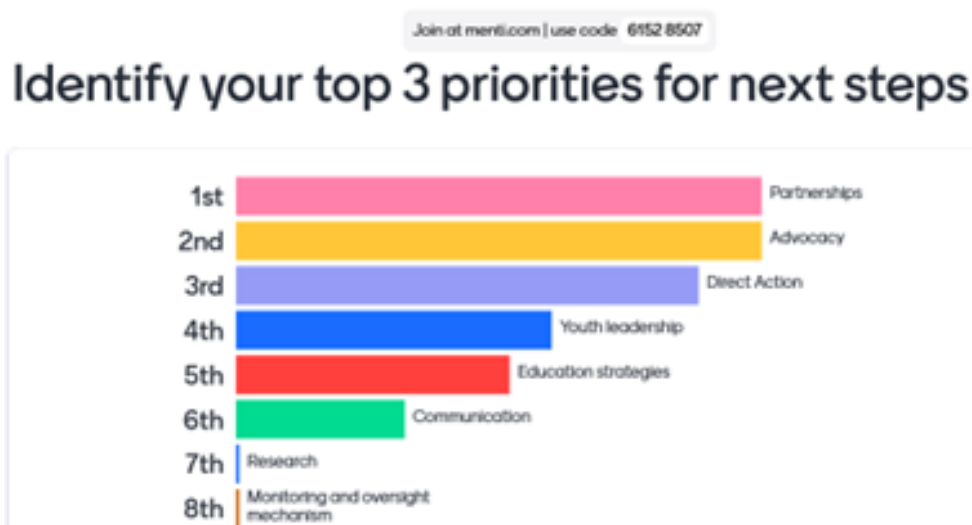
## 6.3. Community based and city based strategies

Changing cultures and encouraging learnings on the community level was discussed as a potentially important strategy to create resilient communities that would not easily be manipulated by marketing of militarised masculinities. The focus here can be set on different members of society, for example “parents who have guns,” but also doctors by training them to ask about guns in the house and their storage during regular check-ups. Equimundo have had good experience in engaging with fatherhood groups and stay at home dads to create healthy communities through shared fatherhood bonding. Gun Free South Africa works on projects implementing Gun Free Zones, for example in collaboration with taverns due to the connection between gun violence and alcohol consumption.

US participants also mentioned community violence intervention programmes playing a crucial role in addressing violence beyond traditional policing methods. Unlike the police, who often intervene only after shootings have occurred, these programmes focus on prevention and early intervention. By changing narratives and shifting perspectives within communities, these programmes aim to tackle the root causes of violence and employ various strategies, including cognitive behavioural therapy, to reshape the mindset of at-risk individuals. Additionally, they offer job training and employment opportunities as part of a comprehensive effort to redefine violent associations with masculinity and encourage positive behaviours. By integrating these approaches, community violence intervention programmes seek to transform societal perceptions and reduce reliance on firearms as a means of asserting strength and control.

## Discussions on next steps

The sessions on the third day were intense and enlightening, with many strategies and concrete steps to follow up. The group reflected on and discussed the approach for the next steps and key insights gained using Menti. Partnerships, Advocacy and Direct Actions were voted as top three priorities as indicated in the table below.



Next steps proposed in the discussion of this last session included:

- Operationalise the different strategies identified.
- Identify entry points and advocacy strategies, focusing on research gaps and data analysis.
- Organise meetings around using multilateral spaces effectively.
- Work on legal accountability for the industry, understanding advertising levers and increasing national laws for business due diligence.
- Develop programmatic work and counter-messaging to suppress demand, with research on the role of women.
- Address supply by direct actions and divestment initiatives.
- Organise concrete briefings on small arms on the multilateral level.
- Advocate to redirect resources to health effects and small arms control.

In the face of multiple challenges, the Menti survey on the third day also revealed that the meeting provided a crucial resource and driving force for the organisations and individuals in the room: Hope.

# How are you feeling at the end of the day?

60 responses



## Meeting Evaluation



## Annex 1 Full Set of Menti Responses on Next Steps, Key Insights & Research Gaps

### Top three priorities for next steps

24 of 25

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Review work / recommendations in Human Rights bodies on marketing of weapons.

advocacy, movement building, solidarity

Make explicit the connections between the different areas (masculinities, marketing, violence) to build consensus and understanding (and raise awareness) among the uninitiated.

Connect evidence base and costs analysis of harmful health impacts of gun violence

Building solidarity and awareness of those working on international advocacy, national/international lawsuits, direct action, and divestment from gun industry actors

1. Engage Anna and Natalia on Journalist handbook content. 2. Work with Dean and Angelica on op-ed for Daily Maverick. 3. Speak to Steph about WHO involvement.

Explore opportunities for a set of case studies or special issue of a journal

Follow-up with US NGOs on mapping relevant advocacy entry points within the UN HR system regarding US human rights reviews/arms industry-related accountability advocacy

Briefing for Control Arms Members, reconsideration of strategy on firearms to include dialogue with US grassroots organisations, and advocacy to include arms industry's use of gender stereotypes

Movement-building - via a robust community of practice that continues to bring on new actors/organizations to keep the flow of information moving and to support in identifying collective actions

Agree on knowledge management system, such as trello or email list for this community to thrive

Hub with resources on strategic litigation around marketing of guns

Research Alliance building Project design

Connect with partners met here for ongoing exploration and collaboration.

1. Define research needs 2. Define intersections of common visions/goals/needs with the various organizations in the room 3. Connect and brainstorm on possibilities of cooperation/joint action

assuming the long term goal is preventing gender based violence, perhaps identify goals for 6, 12 months so that we know what we are aiming for in the short term?

Research mechanisms for potential gun industry legal accountability in the national or international contexts

1. Establishing a research-practice agenda on the demand for firearms. 2. Develop clear key messages for use in policymaking. 3. Bringing human rights resolutions in the arms control space.



<p>1- Approval of a report 2- Follow up with local actors for a concrete project 3- Follow up meeting</p>	<p>Continue exchange of research, educational, and other resources and information. Further define needs to practically address links between militainment, masculinities, and small arms proliferation</p>
<p>List serve or email list connecting everyone to stay updated on work streams Look at coordinated global litigation actions Sharing of effective intervention/narrative change efforts</p>	<p>Strengthening capacity and leadership at the local and regional level to draw from context-specific cases across research, advocacy, and monitoring/evaluation</p>
<p>Strategic partnership building: honing in on target audiences to influence for certain sub-sections of this group and identify who else needs to be part of that</p>	<p>Database with strategies and results from litigation cases in several countries</p>

## Second priority

17 of 25 25

<p>research</p>	<p>Coordinated advocacy from national to regional to global level - fed by the research, evidence-base and experiences of those carrying out grassroots work</p>
<p>If engaging journalists, provide a guide on how to report on violence, masculinities (learn from climate change and political violence efforts).</p>	<p>Focus on demand factors in upcoming SG reports to the GA and elaborate recommendations on firearms marketing and masculinities to GA processes; engage civil society in this.</p>
<p>educate other US colleagues such that international components of gun violence register in domestic conversations</p>	<p>Campaigning - adjustment of strategy</p>
<p>Tackling the mansphere and online radicalization of men and boys via innovative strategies that can be scaled - including with changing narratives</p>	<p>Expand knowledge on US-firearms activity/transport/culture that impacts other countries and include that wider thinking in US policy/regulations/advocacy work.</p>
<p>Draft and implement a concrete project on the field</p>	<p>Explore civil society action to address the dismantling of the advertising standards authority in South Africa</p>
<p>Follow up on exchange/sharing of experiences between SEESAC and other regions road maps on small arms. Le African Union Silencing the Guns campaign with specific emphasis on marketing; youth engage</p>	<p>Less work, more emotional appeal, building a counter narrative that can go head to head with the firearms industry's marketing approach and manipulation of 'facts' and fear.</p>



Clarify how/whether the issue of militainment/marketing of arms plays out in different national/regional contexts & whether there are other important determinants driving supply/demand to tackle.	Assess and analyze the power dynamics, who and how to target more deliberately key actors and how they contribute to violence dynamics.
Bringing key findings/information from this meeting into UN disarmament forums where appropriate, i.e. First Committee, UNPoA, ATT, etc. in order to raise awareness among diplomats and activists	the playbook for getting a health res/treaty WHA - based on: 1. Evidence of harm, 2. Cost of harm - and then actions for resolution/action: 1. Fiscal 2. Marketing first to kids then all w examples
design and launch a good report as an output of this meeting, maybe engage with artists/illustrators to reach more ppl. get a name for this group	Have a working group to explore bringing cases in international treaty bodies on the basis of right to life
Report to my colleagues with expertise in public health on the potential engagement of WHO	Begin shifting narrative on what it means to be safe and what it means to be strong, by authentically engaging youth voice and action. Find the ambassadors, including Dads, and mobilize Mothers.
Establish sub group on marketing of SAW and masculinities in WILPF community of practice on men, gender equality and peacebuilding	Work with other experts including from public health, youth movements, tech people, anti-tobacco/climate change campaigners to learn from effective strategies
The transnational nature of marketing of gun culture and associated masculinities/gendered power dynamics	an example of effective litigation to go after "impossible" foe used a masculinities lens to be successful
That creative strategies in litigation can be applied in other countries	

## What have been the key insights you have gained?

20 of 25 20

How what goes on in USA on guns ripples through the world

The online world is so much more important than i had understood and there are some hugely influential actors i had never heard of.

Importance of constructive engagement with gun owners on safety as part of a comprehensive approach.

Extensive work exploring the issue from different angles, but needs to come together to effectively pursue - perhaps a smaller working group representing POVs?

Understanding of the interplay/profit and propaganda around militainment

Learnt on the role of social media as the new channels for marketing guns + linkages with the manosphere and extremist groups

Transnational nature of marketing of gun culture and masculinities

That there is a global approach to this reducing gun violence I have so much to learn!

- the importance of closely monitoring cultural change and responding to it accordingly - relevance of US experience is important for all

Challenges on the ground being confronted in other regions and countries in regulating firearms and a more overall perspective on marketing strategies of the arms industry

The "weaponization" of militainment for the aims of weapons manufacturers, their longterm strategic tactics, and what it can mean to seek to push back on them

Importance of exploring similarities and differences in the motivations and drivers behind gendered use of gun violence across national and local jurisdictions, as well as race, class, and politics

create demand

What is militainment, how it works, vast pool of resources available for collaboration

there seem to be as many commonalities as there are differences and this issue is even more intersectional that I realized

-context matters for gender exploitative marketing of guns  
- regulatory and cultural approaches need to be balanced out - we need an international community to take on these big issues

1. Need to understand better the online spaces to develop counter messages, particularly for children/young people.  
2. Need to use different/combined strategies 3. Strategic litigation possibilti

Existing policies, laws, regulations that restrict/ control gun marketing and militainment that can be referred to.

Effect of US outside of the US. Gaming/digital community as a new opportunity to engage and support men/youth. Creative approaches abound. Funding support can be crafted.

baseline analysis of what narratives are used to market guns in different contexts around the work - in order to effectively measure progress on narrative change/impact

## What will you do differently as a result of this meeting?

5 of 25 5

Outreach to academics to access human resources for research and analysis

integrate particularly weapons, guns, and warfare as a specific technology in my classes and analyse them from a feminist socio-tech perspective

Power dynamics, who controls resources/narratives

Possible "causal" links between video games / movies / online influencers and armed violence. "Rapid" research on the effect of very recent social influencers / games / movies today.

Factors that drive the demand of weapons/ammunition that are fueled by marketing practices; this research could support the formulation of interventions

## What research gaps you have identified?

21 of 25 25

Research on the proliferation of SALW in Africa, as well as research on gun marketing

How other movements (anti-tobacco etc) and what we can learn from them

Region specific data and analysis on use and impact of online platforms

Need to move the masculinities and masculinized structural power research forward so as not to get stuck on taxonomy and move beyond behavioral drivers

Marketing practices of the gun industry; how to disrupt the industry; men's motivations for use of guns besides the usual answer of for protection; online spaces and impact on men's choices around gun

What are effective marketing/ programmatic interventions that are reducing the demand for guns

What works in steering men and boys away from (and losing allegiance to) the mansphere, online far right radicalization, violent content and narratives, gunfluencers.

Interesting to explore theme of "protection" as it relates to national interests and how that ripples into everyday manipulation of gender norms and other forms of discrimination to justify violence

Which gun manufacturers, financing entities, or others should we focus on in terms of a coordinated campaign

whether exposure to firearms and gun violence in video games makes children more likely to identify with toxic gun culture

Analyze the reach and transnational influence of the gun lobby/ies 2. Effects of regulations on gender stereotypical advertising 3. Compendium of litigation and lessons learned globally.

- beyond US, research is limited - research on the manosphere in other region would be precious - impact of US industry, gunfluencers and NRA beyond US	Flow of weapons from the US into other countries (and possible strategies for action that can result from that)
what exactly does male gun violence look like in countries. is it shootings after arguments between gangs? carjacking? extremism? DV?	Research on SALW proliferation in certain regions (e.g. Africa) to 'know which guns we are silencing'. Research on marketing of firearms in different contexts
Militainment in other regions	More work needed on determinants of violence. More analysis on pathways for disruption. More research on firearms/violence channels followed and engaged with by people that commit violence with a fi
the link between video games and violence	Research on number of guns and gun homicides in Africa
the degree to which U.S. gun influencers are making inroads outside of the U.S. or the existence of homegrown gun influencers in countries with more developed gun traditions	what would it take to get a mass, activist movement around this?
definitions and correct translations of weapons, guns, heavy artillery? When do we speak about state owned guns and guns in private hands	Research on "causal" links between video games, movies and influencers on the one hand, and armed violence. "Rapid" research on the impact of today's influencers, games and movies on risk of violence
I believe that set of indicators for early warning for cultural change should be developed	Impacts of new technologies more from a mental health perspective and how this plays out in the pull towards violence/gun acquisition

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#### **Human Rights Council** <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/home>

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- Previous resolutions on firearms adopted by the Human Rights Council
  - A/HRC/RES/26/16
  - A/HRC/RES/50/12
  - A/HRC/RES/45/13
  - A/HRC/RES/38/10
  - A/HRC/RES/29/10
- The UN Human Rights Council has included arms related concerns in some of its country resolutions, see for example:

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### **Annex 1 List of Participants**

### **Annex 2 Meeting Agenda**