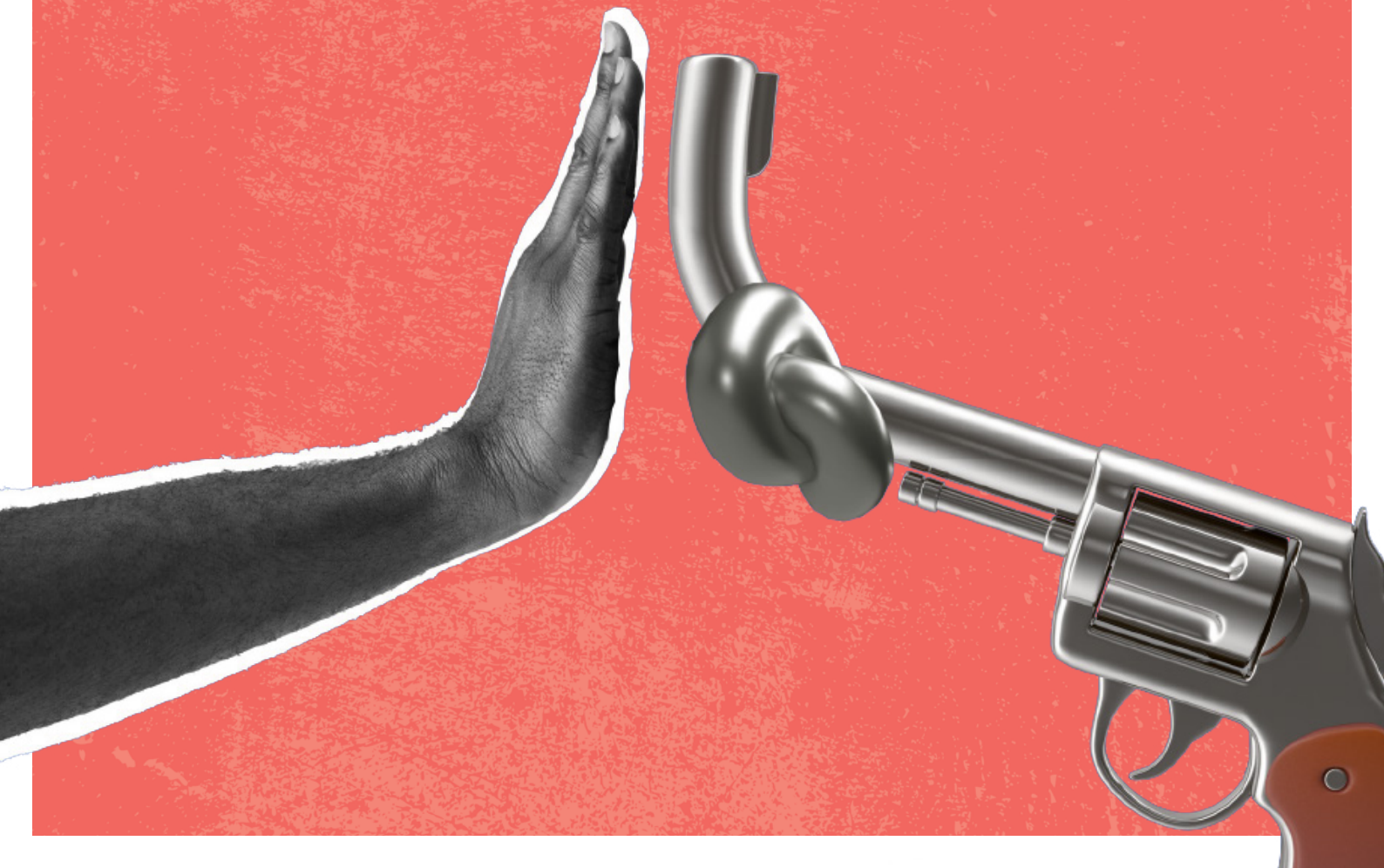




African Union Silencing the Guns in Africa

ACTIVISM GUIDE

Helping popularise the Silencing the Guns in Africa agenda for meaningful action to stop gun-related death, injury, trauma and suffering on the continent



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African Union Silencing the Guns in Africa: Activism Guide

First edition

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Author: Claire Taylor

Design: Nadia Joubert

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“The AU seems to be in the habit of assigning deadlines for overly ambitious goals and then struggling to meet them...It’s important to popularise the Silencing the Guns agenda afresh and ensure buy-in from member states.”

African Union Peace and Security Council, 2022¹

¹ African Union Peace and Security Council. 2022. Staying on target to Silence the Guns by 2030. ISS, PSC Report, 22 June. (Online). Available at <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/staying-on-target-to-silence-the-guns-by-2030> (accessed 5 March 2024).

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Acronyms

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| ACLED | Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project |
| ATT | Arms Trade Treaty |
| AU | African Union |
| BMS | Biennial Meeting of States |
| COP | Conference of the Parties |
| CSP | Conference of States Parties |
| ECCAS | Economic Community of Central African States |
| ECOWAS Convention | Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| Firearms Protocol | United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition |
| GENSAC | Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control |
| GFZ | Gun Free Zone |
| IANSA | The International Action Network on Small Arms |
| ITI | International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons |
| Kinshasa Convention | The Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and all Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly |
| Nairobi Protocol | Nairobi Protocol on the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States |
| NAP | National Action Plan |
| REC | Regional Economic Community |

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| RECSA | Regional Centre for Small Arms and Light Weapons |
| RevCon | Review Conference |
| SADC Firearms Protocol | Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community Region |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SALW | Small arms and light weapons |
| SARPCCO | Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation |
| SE4U | UNODC Civil Society Unit project Stakeholder Engagement for UNTOC, its Review Mechanism and Related Activities |
| UN PoA | United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNHRC | United Nations Human Rights Council |
| UNIDIR | United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research |
| UNODA | United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs |
| UNODC | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| UNREC | United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa |
| UNTOC | United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto |
| WAM | Weapons and Ammunition Management |
| WILPF | Women's International League for Peace and Freedom |

Background

Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want was adopted by the African Union (AU) in 2015 to positively transform the lives of Africans by the AU's 100th anniversary. It holds the aspiration that by 2063 Africa will have an entrenched and flourishing culture of human rights, democracy, gender equality, inclusion and peace. However, criminal, interpersonal and socio-political violence continues to devastate communities and increase humanitarian needs across the continent. Driven by militarised masculinities that legitimise the use of violence and fuelled by guns, this violence is gendered and often deadly.

This activism guide was developed to support the realisation of Agenda 2063 through civil society engagement. It arose from a Sonke Gender Justice, MenEngage Africa and WILPF convening in Abuja, Nigeria in December 2023, which agreed to engage with the AU's Silencing the Guns agenda.² The guide builds on a 2020 Gun Free South Africa publication on the initiative.³

² Sonke Gender Justice. 2023. Joint advocacy planning session aimed at engaging male allies for feminist peace in Africa, 18 December. (Online). Available at <https://genderjustice.org.za/news-item/joint-advocacy-planning-session-aimed-at-engaging-male-allies-for-feminist-peace-in-africa/> (accessed 21 March 2024).

³ Gun Free South Africa. 2020. How South Africa can help silence the guns in Africa. Firearms Control Briefing 1, 10 March. (Online). Available at <https://gfsa.org.za/download/gun-policy-brief-1-of-2020-how-south-africa-can-help-silence-the-guns-in-africa-2/?wpdmdl=2963&refresh=667bb6d6bfaed1719383766> (accessed 26 June 2024).

Overview and Ideas for Action

Africa is the only region in the world in which homicide rates are rising, with the situation predicted to get worse without meaningful action.

Despite Agenda 2063 having been adopted almost ten years ago, the latest data show that Africa is the only region in the world in which homicide rates are rising and that the situation is predicted to get worse. This is due to three factors: A young population, persistent inequality and the effects of climate change. A further risk factor is the availability of guns: Although gun-related homicide in Africa has not reached the levels seen in South America (which has countries with some of the highest levels of gun violence in the world), if guns are not silenced, this will change.

In support of civil society activism to help silence the guns in Africa, this guide includes information to understand the context and extent of the gun problem in Africa, as well as key actions.

PART 01

Summarises data on guns and gun violence in Africa, providing information on gun violence, stocks and trade as well as a summary of some of the drivers of gun violence in Africa.

PART 02

Summarises the AU's Silencing the Guns agenda.

PART 03

Summarises key global and regional protocols that support Silencing the Guns in Africa.

IDEA FOR ACTION:

To support activism are incorporated throughout the document. These include opportunities to lobby decision-makers for change. See [Box 1](#) for more information.

Lobbying involves persuading decision-makers to make change happen.

Box 1: Lobby for Change

Lobbying involves persuading decision-makers to make change happen. Decision-makers include those making and enforcing policies at a global, national and local level.

To be effective, lobbying for change means persuading the right people. The first step is to identify who you need to lobby: Members of parliament or legislatures who are responsible for making laws and overseeing the work of state institutions? And/or government officials tasked with implementing laws and undertaking day-to-day governance duties?

There are different ways you can lobby decision-makers, and you'll often need to use a combination of approaches to be more effective:

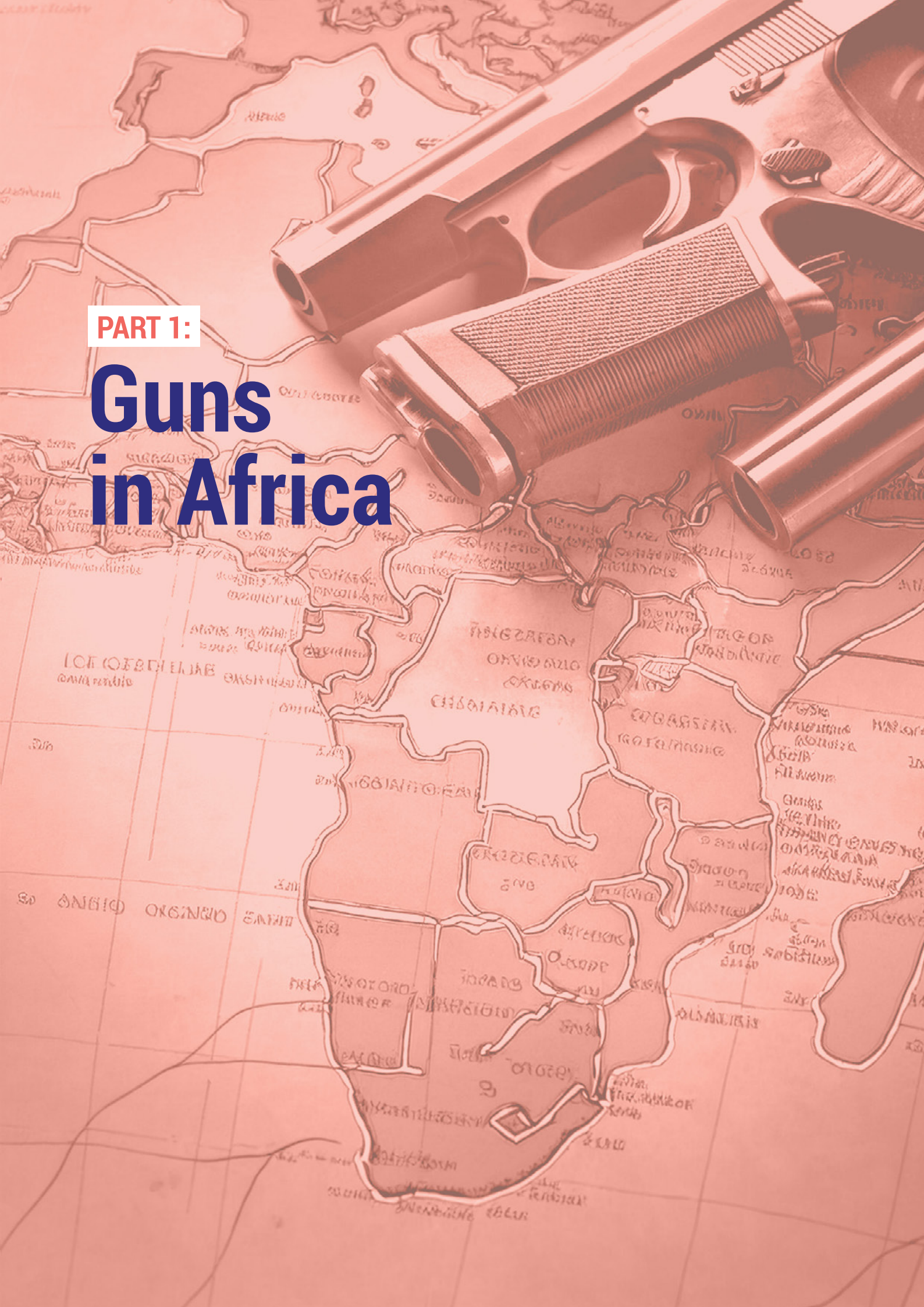
- You can contact decision-makers directly, e.g. face-to-face, via emails or phone calls or through their social media accounts.
- You can contact them indirectly by using traditional media channels and social media to raise awareness on an issue.
- It's often a good idea to work with other civil society organisations and influential individuals – locally, nationally or regionally – to strengthen your voice.

A wealth of information on lobbying can be found in *Policy Advocacy Toolkit: How to Influence Public Policy for Social Justice and Gender Equality in Africa*,⁴ available at <https://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Policy-Advocate-Toolkit-MenEngage-Africa-Sonke-UNDP.pdf>

⁴ Sonke Gender Justice Network, MenEngage Africa and the United Nations Development Programme. 2013. *Policy Advocacy Toolkit: How to influence public policy for social justice and gender equality in Africa*. (Online). Available at <https://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Policy-Advocate-Toolkit-MenEngage-Africa-Sonke-UNDP.pdf> (accessed 21 March 2024).

PART 1:

Guns in Africa



Gun Violence

High murder rates across the world are associated with a high percentage of murders committed with guns, suggesting that gun murder rates are the driver of overall murder rates.⁵

Forms of Gun Violence

While gun violence across Africa always involves a gun, it takes different forms across the continent and within countries. Categorising gun violence by motivation is one way to help better track, understand and respond. The latest global homicide report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has identified three types of violence in which guns are used:⁶

- Criminal killings, which are killings related to another crime such as a robbery or assault as well as organised and gang-related crimes.
- Interpersonal killings stemming from personal conflict; intimate partner and family-related killings are included here.
- Socio-political killings, such as those resulting from political disputes, inter-ethnic violence and terrorist attacks. See [Box 2](#) for more information on this type of violence.

These different forms of violence are not neatly separated, but flow into one another. [Box 3](#) describes how armed groups involved in socio-political conflict in the Sahel have become increasingly involved in criminal violence.

Box 2: Tracking Socio-Political Killings

- Africa comes second in the number of armed conflicts per region, with more than 35 non-international armed conflicts taking place in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.⁷ Several armed groups – fighting against government forces and/or against each other – are involved in these conflicts.⁸

5 Paraphrase of the following quote, “an observation that can be drawn across all regions is that high homicide rates are usually associated with a high percentage of homicides committed with firearms...”, which may suggest that firearm homicides could be a driver of overall homicides on an aggregate level.” Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. Global Study on Homicide 2023. New York: United Nations. (Online). Available at https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/2023/Global_study_on_homicide_2023_web.pdf (accessed 6 March 2024), page 133.

6 Categories have been drawn from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. Global Study on Homicide 2023. Op. cit.

7 Geneva Academy. n.d. Today’s armed conflicts. (Online). Available at <https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts> (accessed 26 June 2024).

8 Ibid.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) collects information on all reported political violence and protest events around the world. ACLED recorded 60,751 socio-political fatalities in Africa in 2023, of which 19,417 (32%) were civilians who were killed in various ways including shootings, explosions, machete attacks and fires.⁹

IDEA FOR ACTION:

💡 Monitor ACLED's reports to both collect and monitor information and ensure that socio-political killings in your country are included in its tracking reports. See <https://acleddata.com/data/>

Box 3: Firearms in Sahel Enable Crime and Conflict¹⁰

Armed groups in the Sahel (which includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) involved in socio-political conflict have increasingly become involved in various forms of criminal violence including cattle rustling, robberies and kidnappings. These groups require firearms and ammunition, and as their numbers have increased, so too have business opportunities for arms traffickers. The result is a vicious cycle of firearms trafficking and increasingly lethal conflict, as conflict enables firearms trafficking and firearms trafficking enables conflict.

Evidence suggests that most firearms trafficked in the Sahel are obtained within Africa, although some weapons are procured along long-range trafficking routes, including by air from France and from Turkey via Nigeria. Addressing the cycle of firearms and violence requires a regional response and not one bound by national borders.

Gun-Related Murder

Because they are designed to kill, guns make violence significantly more deadly.

It is very difficult to get updated information on gun-related murder in all regions of Africa. The most recently comparable data is from 2011 to 2016 and is summarised in [Table 1](#). This shows that the estimated firearm-related murder rate in Africa was 3.8 per 100,000, though there were regional variations: At 5.5, Southern Africa topped the list, while Eastern Africa ranked lowest at a rate of two per 100,000.

⁹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. 2024. Database: 2023-01-01-2023-12-31-Eastern_Africa-Middle_Africa-Northern_Africa-Southern_Africa-Western_Africa. Downloaded on 27 June.

¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. Global Study on Homicide 2023. Op. cit.


Table 1: Firearm-Related Homicide Rate in Africa per 100,000 Population (2011-2016)

| Firearm-related homicide rate in Africa per 100,000 population (2011-2016)¹¹ | 3.8 |
|--|------------|
| Southern Africa Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland | 5.5 |
| Middle Africa Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo Republic, São Tomé and Príncipe | 4.5 |
| Western Africa Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo | 4.5 |
| Northern Africa Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and Western Sahara | 2.5 |
| Eastern Africa British Indian Ocean Territory, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, French Southern Territories, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Réunion, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe | 2 |

More recent data on how many murders are from gunshots were not available for most African countries. For instance, the 2023 UNODC report on homicide globally notes that there were not enough countries in Africa with data to enable effective tracking of regional weapon-related patterns and trends.¹² Nevertheless the UNODC report notes that gun-related homicides in Africa are likely to be lower than in the Americas, which has countries with some of the highest gun death rates in the world.¹³

While we don't know how many people killed in Africa are shot dead, we do know that guns are four to seven times more deadly than other weapons, which means that more guns in Africa will mean more murders, as shown in [Box 4](#) (which describes how the cultural practice of cattle raiding in South Sudan has become increasingly lethal as guns are used) and [Box 5](#) (which summarises the increasing lethality of criminal violence in Kenya). Country-specific data show that in some countries – such as Nigeria and South Africa – firearms are already the leading murder weapon.¹⁴

IDEA FOR ACTION:

 Updated information on gun-related violence and murder in Africa is extremely sparse. Find out whether your country collects this information by asking law enforcement agencies and health and civil registration departments. Request information that is collected, keep records of any data you access and use it in your lobbying work to push for change.

11 Mc Evoy, Claire, and Gergely Hideg. 2017. *Global Violent Deaths 2017*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. (Online). Available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/global-violent-deaths-2017-time-decide> (accessed 29 March 2024).

The authors note that 45 African countries had "poor or scattered reporting" and that multiple sources of data were used to fill gaps. The Africa average of 3.8 per 100,000 in Table 1 was calculated based on averages from the five African regions listed.

12 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. *Global Study on Homicide 2023*. Op. cit.

13 Ibid.

14 Nigeria: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. *Global Study on Homicide 2023*. Op. cit.; South Africa: Gun Free South Africa. 2022. *Using the principle of limits to stop SA's gun violence epidemic*. Firearms Control Briefing 3, 27 October. (Online). Available at <https://gfsa.org.za/download/briefing-3-of-2022-using-the-principle-of-limits-to-stop-sas-gun-violence-epidemic/?wpdm-dl=4356&refresh=6609350baf7a81711879435> (accessed 31 March 2024).

Box 4: The Militarisation of Cattle Raiding in South Sudan¹⁵

Cattle raiding is a longstanding cultural practice among pastoralists in South Sudan. While raiders were traditionally armed with spears, they are now heavily armed with guns. This includes weapons from the South Sudanese state, as guns collected during disarmament programmes end up back in the hands of civilians, whether through direct provisioning or via patronage networks with access to weapon depots.

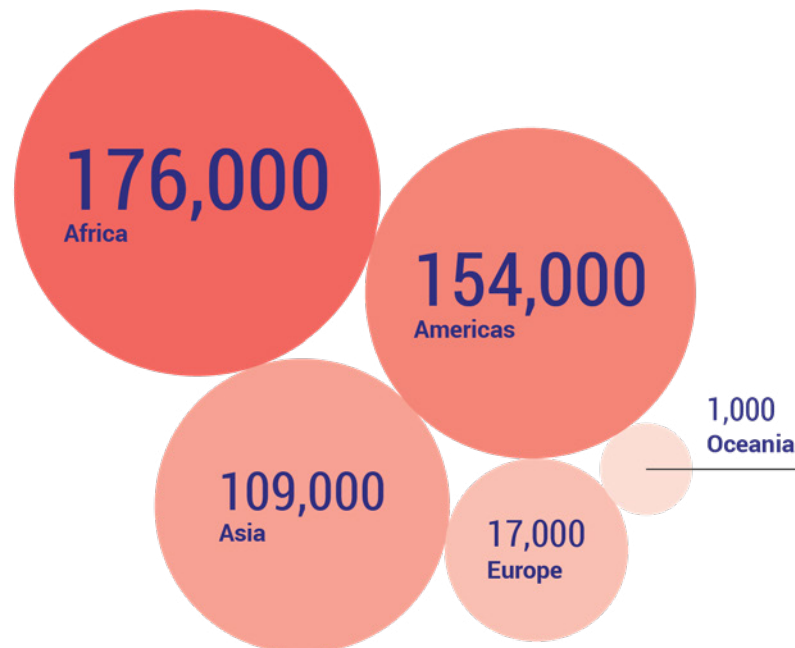
Beginning in the early 1990s political leaders have strategically manipulated customary raiding practices and local conflicts to mobilise armed herders, especially young men, for their political movements. Military-style attacks can claim dozens, if not hundreds, of lives at a time.

Murder

While updated information on weapons used in murder is not available for much of Africa, there is overall information on murder. The UNODC's 2023 global homicide report shows that:

- **Africa had the highest number of murder victims compared to other global regions.** Approximately 176,000 people were murdered in Africa in 2021 followed by 154,000 in the Americas (which includes North and South America). See [Figure 1](#).¹⁶
- **Africa is the only region in the world where homicide rates increased between 2015 and 2021.** All other regions bar Oceania (which stayed constant) saw a decline in homicides in this period. See [Figure 2](#).¹⁷

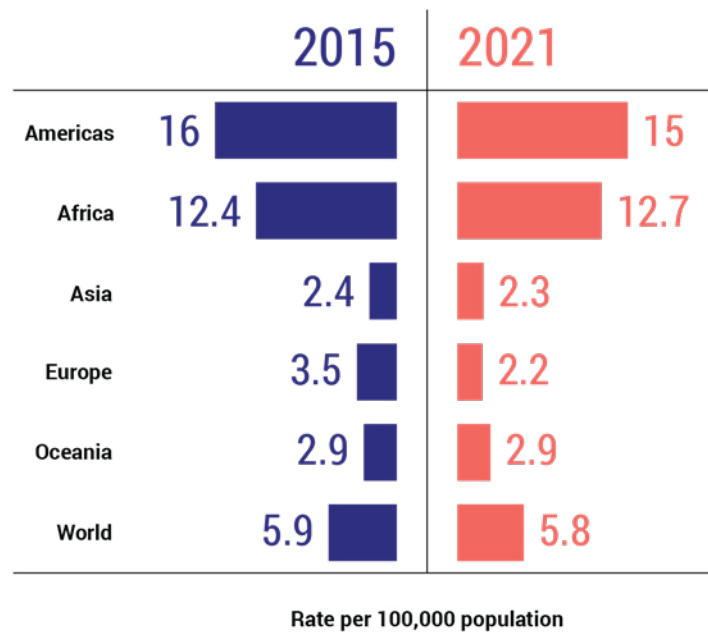
Figure 1: Number of homicide victims by region in 2021



¹⁵ Wild, Hannah, Jok Madut Jok, and Ronak Patel. 2018. The militarization of cattle raiding in South Sudan: how a traditional practice became a tool for political violence. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, Vol. 3, No. 2.

¹⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. *Global Study on Homicide 2023*. Op. cit., page 9.

¹⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. *Global Study on Homicide 2023*. Op. cit., page 10.

Figure 2: Global and regional homicide rates in 2015 and in 2021

However, murder rates in Africa vary significantly:¹⁸

- Three African countries – Lesotho, Nigeria and South Africa – feature in the top 18 countries in the world that have murder rates above 20 per 100,000.
- A number of countries have seen increases in murder rates: South Africa's rising murder rate, which increased by 47% between 2015-16 and 2022-23, is fuelled by gun violence (41% of all murders in 2022-23 were gun-related, up from 29% in 2015-16)¹⁹; Kenya has seen a dramatic increase in murders since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (see [Box 5](#)); and, while remaining at significantly lower levels than other countries in Africa, homicide rates in Algeria and Morocco have been steadily increasing over the past decade.
- In contrast, some countries, notably Tanzania and Uganda, have recorded reductions in murders in recent years.

Box 5: Guns and Banditry in Kenya²⁰

Banditry and the proliferation of illegal firearms – estimated to be over 650,000 and mostly concentrated in pastoral counties – are critical drivers of murder in Kenya's North Rift Region. In 2023, around 100 civilians and 16 police officers were killed, while over 2,000 families have been displaced.

- In February 2023, the government launched Operation Maliza Uhalifu in the area to counter bandit networks, but armed disputes continue.

18 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. Global Study on Homicide 2023. Op. cit.

19 South African Police Service quarterly and annual national crime statistics.

20 Owino, James. 2024. Northern Kenya's disarmament dilemma. ISS Today, 30 January. (Online). Available at https://issafrica.org/iss-today/northern-kenyas-disarmament-dilemma?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=ISS_Weekly&utm_medium=email (accessed 13 March 2024).

The wide availability of guns is a key driver of insecurity, yet Kenyan efforts to address the spread of illegal guns are woefully inadequate: Between 2016 and 2021, Kenya recovered and destroyed around 23,000 guns, just 3.6% of the total number of illicit guns estimated to be in circulation.

The poor rate of recovery of illegal guns in pastoral communities points to numerous problems with arms control policy and strategy at national and regional levels:

- Despite Kenya's 2006 arms control action plan, the country lacks a national gun policy. As a result, arms reduction initiatives are poorly coordinated and ineffective.
- Kenya's focus on national security interests limits its ability to tackle problems regionally, and given that arms smuggling is a transnational problem, regional action is vital. Kenya's proximity to volatile East African countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan increases the risk of illicit arms flows into the country. While the region has various policies and legal frameworks, such as the Nairobi [Protocol on Small Arms](#), low rates of ratification and implementation limit their effectiveness.
- As discussed more in the section [exploring demand for guns](#), in the absence of state protection and action, vulnerable residents are reluctant to give up their guns. This in turn undermines disarmament interventions aimed at ending banditry and the lethality of conflicts.

Predicted to Get Worse

Although murder rates are already extremely high in Africa (which accounts for 38% of all homicide victims globally), levels of violence are predicted to get even worse. Three factors make Africa particularly vulnerable:²¹

- **A young population** (aged 15-29) which is projected to increase until 2035.
- **Persistent economic inequality**, which is itself a risk factor but also drives rapid and irregular urbanisation, which in turn is associated with higher murder rates.
- The effects of **climate change**, which means increased urbanisation and increased disputes over scarce resources such as land and water. For instance, in the North Rift counties of Kenya, deaths from cattle rustling surged by 170% from 2020 to 2021 among pastoralist communities facing increased competition due to droughts, while over 1,700 violent deaths in Nigeria in 2018 were due to conflicts between farmers and pastoralists over water and land.

Being designed to kill, the availability of guns makes violence associated with these vulnerabilities significantly more deadly.

²¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. Global Study on Homicide 2023. Op. cit.

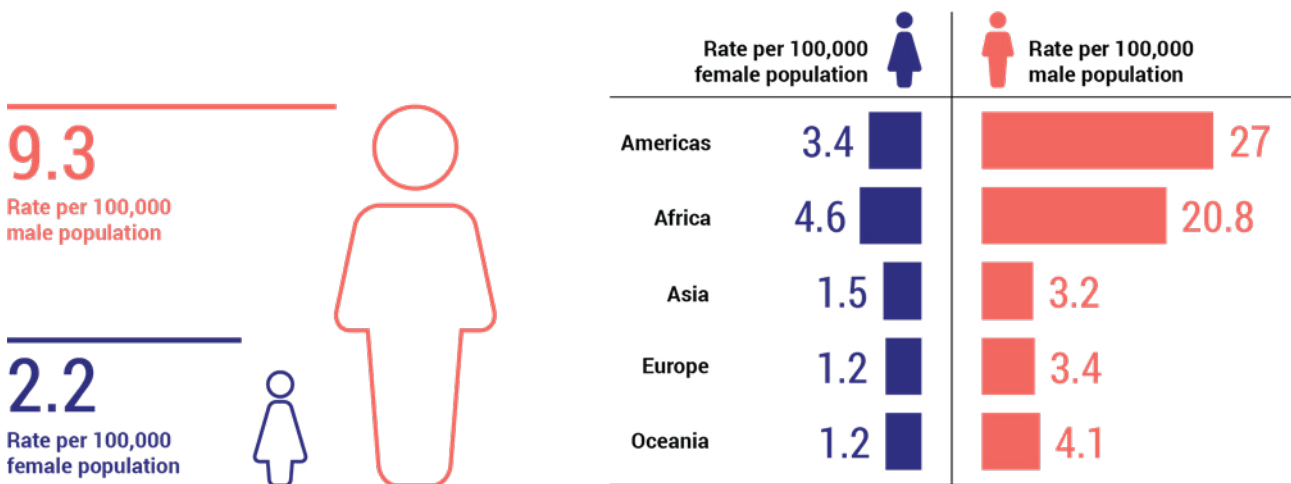
Gender

Throughout the world, young men between the ages of 15 and 29 are particularly vulnerable to murdering each other as well as women and children.

As shown in [Figure 3](#), men are overwhelmingly the victims of homicide across the world. In Africa, the rate of male homicide is over double the global average, as is female homicide:²²

- Male homicide rate in Africa is 20.8 per 100,000 population; the global average is 9.3.
- Female homicide rate in Africa is 4.6 per 100,000 population; the global average is 2.2.

Figure 3: Global and regional homicide rates by sex in 2021



Although women and girls are much less likely to be murdered than men and boys, the UNODC’s 2023 global homicide report confirms that women and girls are most at risk of being murdered by a male intimate partner or family member. Intimate partner or family violence accounts for 56% of all female homicide victims.²³

Throughout the world, young men between the ages of 15 and 29 are particularly vulnerable to murdering each other as well as women and children. In response, the UNODC urges that violence prevention programmes focus on providing support to young men to prevent them from being lured into a subculture of violence, including organised crime or gangs, and that those already involved receive help through social work and rehabilitation programmes.²⁴

However, these programmes cannot operate or be implemented in isolation of bigger socio-political and economic contexts. This is because men’s involvement in violence is shaped by larger structural forces.

22 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. Global Study on Homicide 2023. Op. cit., page 10.

23 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. Global Study on Homicide 2023. Op. cit., page 33.

24 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2023. Global Study on Homicide 2023. Op. cit., page 23.

Understanding Demand

To silence the guns, we have to understand why boys and men in organisations like military and police forces, insurgent and guerrilla groups, security companies and gangs as well as individuals who own and use guns value guns so much.

The ready availability of guns increases the likelihood that violence, whether criminal, interpersonal or socio-political, will lead to murder, as shown in the case studies from South Sudan and Kenya ([Box 4](#) and [Box 5](#)). In South Africa too, guns are highly prized by rival gangs on the Cape Flats to better control territory and the drug market. When thousands of guns in police stores awaiting destruction were stolen by corrupt police members and sold to gang leaders on the Cape Flats, the real war began – as “gangsters with guns means much more violence.”²⁵

These case studies show that controlling the supply of guns through regulations dealing with their manufacture, trade, transport, storage, possession, use and destruction is one key component to reducing their availability and thus helping silence them. The second is understanding and addressing demand. Across the world it is boys and men in organisations like military and police forces, insurgent and guerrilla groups, security companies and gangs as well as individuals who own and use guns.²⁶ Why do boys and men want guns, and why do they value, seek, acquire and use guns?

A paper published in 2006 used country case studies to better understand demand for guns in different contexts. It identified four “deep preferences” that we all have and which, when absent, can be met with a gun. The four preferences, as well as a summary of how they are influenced and suggested policy responses, are summarised on the next page:²⁷

25 Shaw, Mark. 2021. Give us more guns. Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, page 98.

26 Peacock, Dean. 2024. A Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom concept note on militainment, militarisation, gender stereotyping and the marketing of militarised masculinities, June (unpublished paper), notes that “Reliable overall figures of firearms ownership are however difficult to come by, as databases on gun ownership are often not sex-disaggregated (using for example the household as a unit), and in many countries with high levels of unregistered weapons not reliable. Nonetheless, groups and individuals possessing illicit or unlicensed arms tend also globally to be mostly male, be it traditional hunting societies, cattle raiders, herders, gang members, insurgents or violent extremists.”

Additional data show that:

83% of gun owners in South Africa are male. Source: South African Police Service. 2023. Current number of registered firearms and owners in South Africa. Promotion of Access to Information Act response to Gun Free South Africa, 6 December.

70% of gun owners in the USA are male. Source: Berrigan, John and Matthew Miller. 2023. The Number and Type of Private Firearms in the United States. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 704, No. 1, pp. 70-90.

27 Deep preferences and possible policy responses are drawn from Attwood, David, Anne-Kathrin Glatz and Robert Muggah. 2006. Demanding attention: Addressing the dynamics of small arms demand. A joint publication of the Small Arms Survey and Quaker United Nations Office. (Online). Available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-OP18-Demand.pdf> (accessed 27 June 2024).

| DEEP PREFERENCE | INFLUENCED BY ²⁸ | POLICY RESPONSE |
|--|---|---|
| Personal security | Levels of crime and violence, availability of guns, trust in criminal justice system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Institute or strengthen community policing › Reform justice (courts, penal) and security (police, military) sectors › Take firearms out of circulation › Improve public infrastructure (e.g. street lighting) › Promote gun-free zones in schools, workplaces, churches, markets, shopping places and sporting facilities |
| Social and economic security | Education and employment opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Provide education and employment opportunities, particularly for youth › Stigmatise corruption › Support reintegration of ex-combatants and ex-criminals |
| Individual status and social identity | Interaction between an individual (e.g. their gender, age, race) and society (norms, values). Included here is the role of the media and entertainment: Box 6: Marketing Guns to Feed Demands identifies ways the gun industry shapes norms and values by exploiting the media to increase demand for guns. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Challenge norms of violent masculinity and offer alternatives › Reverse the role of media, entertainment and recreation in normalising and endorsing gun possession and misuse › Encourage social customs dissociating guns from power, pride and manhood |
| Political identity and representation | Participation in government processes, access to state resources and respect for human rights, including access to recourse in cases of abuse. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Increase capacity for non-violent conflict resolution › Improve public access to and participation in government at the municipal and national levels › Acknowledge and act to redress inequalities and injustice, which can influence recourse to (armed) violence and human rights abuses |

The concept of “deep preferences” helps us understand that while a young man can choose whether to act violently or to get or use a gun, his choice is shaped by bigger factors such as whether he lives in a country with an effective criminal justice system, whether he has access to employment opportunities, how men are expected to behave and the extent to which violence is accepted and guns are admired. These bigger factors or structural drivers are often rooted in history and include the impact of colonialism, entrenched and normalised socioeconomic inequality (and associated structural drivers such as poverty, unemployment, and chronic hunger), as well as patriarchy, racism, violence and trauma. [Box 7](#) summarises research showing how historical and contemporary structural factors shape conflict in Cameroon.

²⁸ Information on how deep preferences are influenced has been added by the author.

Box 6: Marketing Guns to Feed Demand

A new paper developed by WILPF documents the exploitative marketing used by the gun industry to drive sales.²⁹ Movies and TV shows, video games, advertising campaigns and social media platforms do two things: First, they use fear-based marketing to drive sales; in this narrative, guns are de-risked and men are portrayed as protectors. Second, they glamorise, sanitise and normalise guns, the military and armed violence. For example:

- The gun industry pays film production companies to place its products in movies, with rewards for frequent appearances on screen. For example, in 2010 the firearm company Glock won a “lifetime achievement award for product placement” after Glock guns appeared in 22 number one box office films that year.³⁰
- The US military and the US entertainment industry collude behind the scenes to produce “blockbuster films that celebrate and sanitise war, portray heroic versions of militarized masculinities and normalize US military interventions around the world.”³¹
- The massively influential video gaming market (which has 3.09 billion users globally and which generated an estimated US\$3.3 billion in 2023) is a powerful marketing tool. Militaries across the world both produce and use video games to recruit young men, and gun manufacturers pay video game producers to place “their” virtual weapons in the hands of young gamers, who are usually young men.³²

Despite evidence that exposure to guns in popular entertainment increases viewer aggression through what is known as the “weapon effect,”³³ gun violence in movies and television has increased dramatically over time, especially in movies accessible to teens. A study of gun violence in top-selling movies found that acts of gun violence in movies authorised for children over 13 years of age nearly tripled between 1985 and 2015, whereas the rate has doubled in prime time TV dramas between 2000 and 2018.³⁴

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 WILPF, Pathfinders, Small Arms Survey and the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC) have begun discussions to address “militainment,” militarisation, gender stereotyping and the marketing of militarised masculinities.³⁵ Monitor and support this initiative.
- 💡 Undertake research in your country to better understand how the gun industry markets guns to drive sales. Document what movies, TV series and video games are popular and how guns and masculinity are portrayed, research how guns are marketed and raise awareness with allies and stakeholders.

29 Peacock, Dean. 2024. A WILPF concept note on militainment, militarisation, gender stereotyping and the marketing of militarised masculinities. Op. cit.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 See: Bushman, Brad, Patrick Jamieson, Ilana Weitz, and Daniel Romer. 2013. Gun Violence Trends in Movies. *Pediatrics*, Vol. 132, No. 6, pp. 1014–18; Jamieson, Patrick, and Daniel Romer. 2021. The association between the rise of gun violence in popular US primetime television dramas and homicides attributable to firearms, 2000–2018. *PLoS One*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 1–10. (Online). Available at <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0247780&type=printable> (accessed 26 March 2024).

35 An international meeting to better understand and develop strategies in response to militainment, militarisation, gender stereotyping and the marketing of militarised masculinities was held in Geneva, Switzerland, 15–17 July 2024.

Box 7: Conflict in Cameroon Shaped by Historical and Contemporary Forces

Research into current armed conflicts in Western Cameroon shows they are rooted in the country's history of violent colonial land theft, admiration of violence by anti-colonial liberation movements and their violent suppression by the French. This continues today as corrupt political elites forcibly evict local communities in land grabs for extractive industries like mining, oil and agriculture, using armed force to suppress community resistance. This has led to the proliferation of weapons, which are sometimes illegally sold by security forces to local armed groups or by transnational arms dealers, thereby increasing the lethality of violence and retaliation and creating pressures on men to take up arms.³⁶

The power of historical and contemporary structural forces in shaping violence is clear from studies into intimate partner violence, which show that:

- Countries that were colonised are 50 times more likely to have a high prevalence of intimate-partner violence against women.³⁷
- Men's involvement in armed conflict increases the prevalence and severity of intimate partner violence.³⁸
- Patriarchal norms, trauma, chronic hunger, unemployment, alcohol outlet density and child abuse are all risk factors for men's use of intimate violence and engagement in conflict.³⁹

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 A gun makes domestic violence four to seven times more deadly. Lobby to strengthen your country's domestic violence prevention laws to include provisions requiring the immediate removal of guns from and prohibition of gun ownership by those accused of domestic violence. Ideas on guidelines to assess and address risks related to the misuse of firearms in domestic violence can be downloaded here: <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/Gender-and-SALW/Guidelines-for-Assessing-and-Addressing-Risks.pdf>.

36 Feugap, Guy, Sylvie Ndongmo, Michel Kitio, Laura Nfomi. 2022. Engaging Men And Boys For Peacebuilding In Cameroon. Geneva: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. (Online). Available at https://www.wilpf.org/mmffp_documents/engaging-men-and-boys-for-peacebuilding-in-cameroon/ (accessed 25 March 2024).

37 Mannell, Jenevieve. 2022. How colonialism is a major cause of domestic abuse against women around the world. *The Conversation*, 25 April. (Online). Available at <https://theconversation-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/theconversation.com/amp/how-colonialism-is-a-major-cause-of-domestic-abuse-against-women-around-the-world-179257> (accessed 30 March 2024); and Brown, Laura, Hattie Lowe, Andrew Gibbs, Colette Smith, and Jenevieve Mannell. 2022. High-Risk Contexts for Violence Against Women: Using Latent Class Analysis to Understand Structural and Contextual Drivers of Intimate Partner Violence at the National Level. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 38 cited in Genatio, Daphne, and Dean Peacock. 2022. Case study on the use and impacts of the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 35/10. Geneva: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. (Online). Available at https://www.wilpf.org/mmffp_documents/use-and-impacts-of-the-united-nations-human-rights-council-resolution/ (accessed 23 March 2024).

38 Kelly, Jocelyn, Elizabeth Colantuoni, Courtland Robinson, and Michele Decker. 2021. Quantifying the Ripple Effects of Civil War: How Armed Conflict Is Associated with More Severe Violence in the Home. *Health and Human Rights Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 75-89 cited in Peacock, Dean, Laura Pascoe, Patrick Welsh and Angelica Pino. Seeing the Forest for the Trees: The case for a more structural approach to countering militarized masculinities and mobilising men for feminist peace. Forthcoming chapter.

39 Gibbs, Andrew, Kristin Dunkle, Leane Ramsoomar, Samantha Willan, Nwabisa Jama Shai, Sangeeta Chatterji, Ruchira Naved, and Rachel Jewkes. 2020. New learnings on drivers of men's physical and/or sexual violence against their female partners, and women's experiences of this, and the implications for prevention interventions. *Glob Health Action*, Vol. 13, No. 1 cited in Peacock, Dean, et al. Seeing the Forest for the Trees. Op. cit.

- 💡 With the close association between alcohol consumption and violence, including intimate partner violence, lobby your government to institute alcohol control initiatives such as limiting availability and marketing. The World Health Organisation's SAFER campaign,⁴⁰ which identifies five areas of intervention at national and subnational levels to reduce alcohol related harms, is a useful guide and can be downloaded here: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/330053/9789241516419-eng.pdf?sequence=1>.
- 💡 Demand from your government and donors that violence prevention programmes respond to the specific socio-economic challenges of your community and country and that “copy and paste” intervention approaches are not used.

Unlike most regional and global small arms control interventions, the AU's Silencing the Guns roadmap recognises both supply and demand drivers.

An analysis of the AU's Silencing the Guns agenda shows that, in addition to recognising the importance of controlling the supply of small arms and light weapons (SALW), it also recognises (at least in part) some of the drivers of demand and has interventions to address these. For example, it recognises “deficits” in “democracy, good governance and respect for human rights” so calls for regular free and fair elections and upholding constitutionalism. It also recognises the impact of youth unemployment and calls for a range of interventions such as supporting public-private partnerships and creating conducive environments and incentives to ensure decent job creation for youth and women.

This inclusion of demand drivers contrasts with global and regional SALW protocols (see [Part 3: Gun Control](#)) that have been criticised for focusing on controlling the supply of guns without addressing demand.⁴¹ Described as “keeping in the comfort zone,”⁴² supply-side approaches are often technical, top-down and fail to recognise the impact of historical and contemporary structural drivers feeding demand for guns. With renewed calls to focus attention on understanding and addressing the demand for small arms,⁴³ civil society has a key role in pushing for this to happen – for example, by lobbying for protocols and resolutions to be strengthened. See the section on [strengthening language](#) for more information.

40 World Health Organisation. 2019. The SAFER technical package: five areas of intervention at national and subnational levels. Geneva: World Health Organisation. (Online). Available at <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/330053/9789241516419-eng.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed 8 August 2024).

41 Attwood, David, et al. 2006. Demanding attention: Addressing the dynamics of small arms demand. Op. cit.; Watson, Callum, and Aline Shaban. 2024. What Happened to Demand? Getting Small Arms Control Back on Track. Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers, No. 88, March. EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium. (Online). Available at https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/eunpdc_no_88.pdf (accessed 26 March 2024).

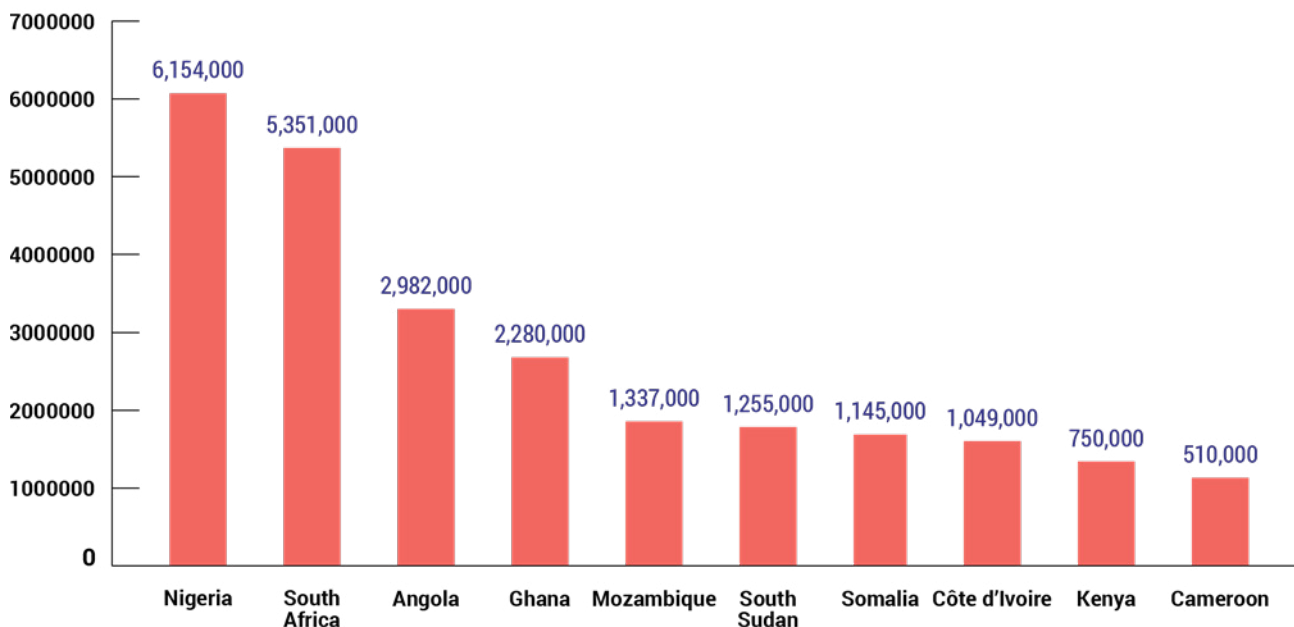
42 Watson, Callum, et al. 2024. What Happened to Demand? Op. cit., page 5.

43 Ibid.

Gun Stockpiles

According to the Small Arms Survey, a Swiss-based independent research institute, as of 2018 there were an estimated one billion firearms in circulation globally, of which almost 85% were owned by civilians, 13% by militaries and 2% by law enforcement agencies.⁴⁴ While accessing data on small arms stocks, production and trade in Africa is extremely difficult, [Graphs 1 and 2](#) show estimated weapon stockpiles in sub-Saharan Africa, including firearms held by civilians and the state.⁴⁵ As described in the discussion on [Gun Trade](#), poorly managed stockpiles enable the leakage of legal stocks into the illicit market.

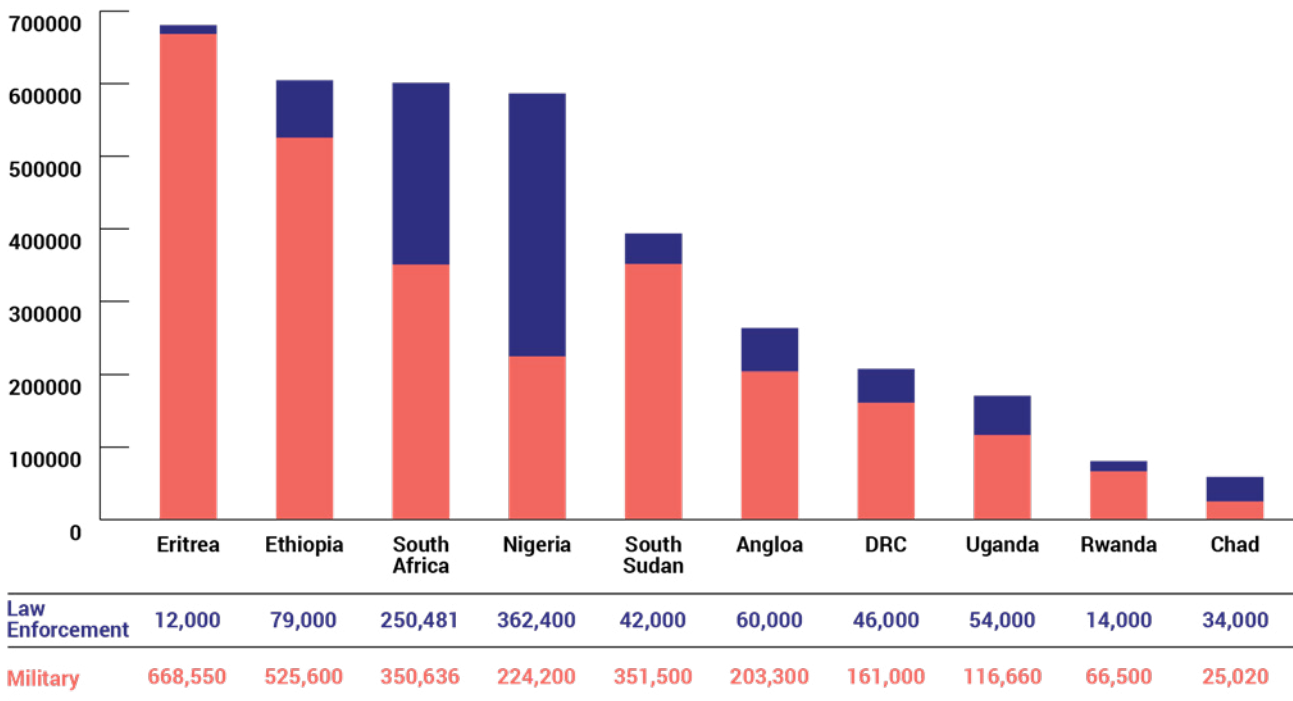
Graph 1: Estimated civilian firearm holdings in top ten sub-Saharan African countries, 2018



44 Karp, Aaron. 2018. Estimating global civilian-held firearms numbers. Briefing Paper, June. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. (Online). Available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/estimating-global-civilian-held-firearms-numbers> (accessed 29 March 2024).

45 Data in Graphs 1 and 2 sourced from: Holtom, Paul, and Irene Pavesi. 2018. Trade Update 2018: Sub-Saharan Africa in Focus. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. (Online). Available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/trade-update-2018-sub-saharan-africa-focus> (accessed 26 March 2024).

Graph 2: Estimated military and law enforcement firearm holdings in top ten sub-Saharan African countries, 2018



IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 The Small Arms Survey is a valuable source of information, collecting data and undertaking research on SALW in various African countries and regions. See what information on your country is available here: https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resources?combine=&sort_by=field_date_value&type=All&theme=All®ion=54&language=All.
- 💡 Use the Small Arms Survey's interactive map to see how many civilian, military and law-enforcement guns your country has. See: <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/database/global-firearms-holdings>.
- 💡 The Small Arms Survey will be publishing a new report on the number of firearms held globally by states (military and law enforcement agencies) and civilians in late 2024. Keep updated on this report and others and join the Small Arms Survey mailing list here: <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/news>.
- 💡 As described, updated information on small arm stocks, production and trade in Africa is difficult to access. Are you able to get updated data on gun and ammunition numbers in your country? Find out who keeps this data and approach them to access it. Keep records of any data you collect and share it with allies and stakeholders, including research organisations like the Small Arms Survey.

Gun Trade

South Africa is by far the biggest importer and exporter of small arms on the continent.

As with gun-related murder and gun stocks, information on the gun trade in Africa is also sparse. This section looks at available data on the legal and illegal trade in SALW and conventional arms (see [Box 8](#) for a definition of these), so is patchy and sometimes dated.

Box 8: Marketing Guns to Feed Demand

A new paper developed by WILPF documents the exploitative marketing used by the gun industry to drive sales.⁴⁶ Movies and TV shows, video games, advertising campaigns and social media platforms do two things: First, they use fear-based marketing to drive sales; in this narrative, guns are de-risked and men are portrayed as protectors. Second, they glamorise, sanitise and normalise guns, the military and armed violence. For example:

- The gun industry pays film production companies to place its products in movies, with rewards for frequent appearances on screen. For example, in 2010 the firearm company Glock won a “lifetime achievement award for product placement” after Glock guns appeared in 22 number one box office films that year.⁴⁷
- The US military and the US entertainment industry collude behind the scenes to produce “blockbuster films that celebrate and sanitise war, portray heroic versions of militarized masculinities and normalize US military interventions around the world.”⁴⁸
- The massively influential video gaming market (which has 3.09 billion users globally and which generated an estimated US\$3.3 billion in 2023) is a powerful marketing tool. Militaries across the world both produce and use video games to recruit young men, and gun manufacturers pay video game producers to place “their” virtual weapons in the hands of young gamers, who are usually young men.⁴⁹

46 Peacock, Dean. 2024. A WILPF concept note on militainment, militarisation, gender stereotyping and the marketing of militarised masculinities. Op. cit.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

Despite evidence that exposure to guns in popular entertainment increases viewer aggression through what is known as the “weapon effect,”⁵⁰ gun violence in movies and television has increased dramatically over time, especially in movies accessible to teens. A study of gun violence in top-selling movies found that acts of gun violence in movies authorised for children over 13 years of age nearly tripled between 1985 and 2015, whereas the rate has doubled in prime time TV dramas between 2000 and 2018.⁵¹

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 WILPF, Pathfinders, Small Arms Survey and the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control (GENSAC) have begun discussions to address “militainment,” militarisation, gender stereotyping and the marketing of militarised masculinities.⁵² Monitor and support this initiative.
- 💡 Undertake research in your country to better understand how the gun industry markets guns to drive sales. Document what movies, TV series and video games are popular and how guns and masculinity are portrayed, research how guns are marketed and raise awareness with allies and stakeholders.

Authorised Trade

“Africa has an uneven transparency record when reporting its small arms imports.” - Small Arms Survey

Small Arms and Light Weapons

As shown in [Table 2](#) below, in 2018, South Africa was both the largest exporter and importer of SALW in Africa. The country exported three times more than the combined total number of exports from the next top four countries, and imported more small arms than the next three top import countries combined.⁵³

50 Ibid.

51 See: Bushman, Brad, Patrick Jamieson, Ilana Weitz, and Daniel Romer. 2013. Gun Violence Trends in Movies. *Pediatrics*, Vol. 132, No. 6, pp. 1014–18; Jamieson, Patrick, and Daniel Romer. 2021. The association between the rise of gun violence in popular US primetime television dramas and homicides attributable to firearms, 2000–2018. *PLoS One*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 1-10. (Online). Available at <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0247780&type=printable> (accessed 26 March 2024).

52 An international meeting to better understand and develop strategies in response to militainment, militarisation, gender stereotyping and the marketing of militarised masculinities was held in Geneva, Switzerland, 15-17 July 2024.

53 Data sourced from: Holtom, Paul, et al. 2018. Trade Update 2018. Op. cit.

Table 2: Summary of selected data on small arms and light weapons trade in sub-Saharan Africa (2018)

| MEASURE | SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA | |
|--|--|--|
| Confirmed producers of small arms (does not include ammunition) | Nigeria South Africa Tanzania Zimbabwe | |
| Largest small arms exporters* | South Africa Côte d'Ivoire Namibia Central African Republic (2015) Kenya | 62.3m 11.4m 3.4m 3.0m 1.4m |
| | TOTAL: Top 4 exporters (SA excluded) | 19.2m |
| Largest small arms importers* | South Africa Côte d'Ivoire Malawi Namibia Niger (2014 & 2015) | 126.1m 52.0m 38.3m 32.2m 26.1m |
| | TOTAL: Top 4 importers (SA excluded) | 148.6m |

* Total amount reported to UN Comtrade for the years 2013–2015, amount in US Dollars

More recent data on SALW imports and exports confirms that South Africa remains the leading importer and exporter in Africa, being:

- The first of nine African countries on a global list of top and major SALW importers. The other countries (in order of expenditure) are: Morocco, Kenya, Angola, Sudan, Tunisia, Ghana, Senegal and Egypt.⁵⁴
- The only country on the continent on a global list of top and major SALW exporters.⁵⁵

54 South Africa is ranked number 33 out of 69 top and major small arms importers globally, source: Florquin, Nicolas, Elodie Hainard, and Benjamin Jongleux. 2020. Trade Update 2020: An Eye on Ammunition Transfers to Africa. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. (Online). Available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-Trade-Update-2020.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2024).

55 South Africa is ranked number 29 out of 38 top and major small arms exporters globally, source: Florquin, Nicolas, et al. 2020. Trade Update 2020. Op. cit.

Ammunition

In an analysis of ammunition imports to Africa, the top countries (listed alphabetically) are: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Morocco, Namibia, South Africa, Tunisia and Uganda.⁵⁶ However, the report notes that getting a true picture of ammunition imports to Africa is difficult for two reasons:

- African states don't regularly report on imports, with Africa described as "a region with an uneven transparency record when reporting its small arms imports."⁵⁷ To illustrate, while African countries provide limited data on their ammunition imports from China, China's reporting shows a sharp increase in ammunition exports to the continent in 2016 and 2017, largely due to significant transfers to just two countries: Namibia and Ghana. Morocco, Niger and Sudan are the other countries that have reported imports of ammunition from China. Together, these five countries accounted for 94% of declared Chinese ammunition imports to Africa between 2008 and 2017.
- Exporting countries don't report on sales. For instance, five of the ten least transparent states – Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Ukraine – have not reported any ammunition exports to Africa since 2008, despite some, such as Ukraine, being known to have exported ammunition to several countries in the region. Moreover, while China's ammunition export reports fill some gaps, they too are not fully transparent. China's data confirms that despite trade embargoes, African regions experiencing armed conflict, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, are significant importers of Chinese ammunition. Although there is no evidence that China directly supplies armed groups, Chinese exports are prone to diversion: Investigations show that Chinese ammunition imported for the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) are also diverted to non-state armed groups, with local FARDC commanders and soldiers intentionally selling small quantities or supplying proxy armed groups.⁵⁸

Box 9: Conventional Arms Trade in Africa

Data over the last decade show that imports of conventional arms by African states fell by 52%, which was mainly due to big decreases by Algeria (-77%) and Morocco (-46%); in this same period, states in Europe almost doubled their imports of major arms (+94%).⁵⁹ The main suppliers to Africa in the period 2019 to 2023 were Russia (accounting for 24% of African imports of major arms), the United States (16%), China (13%), France (10%) and Turkey (6.3% – specifically combat helicopters).⁶⁰

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid, pp. 52-53.

58 Ibid.

59 defenceWeb. 2024. African arms imports drop while European imports double, 22 March. (Online). Available at <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/daily-news/international-news/african-arms-imports-drop-while-european-imports-double/?referrer=newsletter> (accessed 25 March 2024).

60 Wezeman, Pieter, Katarina Djokic, Mathew George, Zain Hussain, and Siemon Wezeman. 2024. Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2023. SIPRI Fact Sheet, March. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (Online). Available at https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/fs_2403_at_2023.pdf (accessed 25 March 2024).

Illicit Trade⁶¹

Illegal guns in Africa were almost always once legally held before being leaked into the illegal pool.

The type of illicit SALW traded on the continent is “context and actor specific.”⁶² For instance, AU member states in Southern Africa report that handguns for use in robberies and rifles used in poaching are the primary type of weapon trafficked across borders. In contrast, states in Western and Eastern Africa have identified automatic AK-style rifles as the main weapon type smuggled across borders to fuel conflict and supply armed groups. While these military-style weapons were often produced decades ago, this is changing with comparatively newer weapons and ammunition being traded.

The size and level of organisation in weapons trafficking across borders ranges along a continuum. On the one end are dedicated convoys transporting significant numbers of weapons and ammunition rounds. At the other end of the range is the “ant trade,” small scale smuggling of weapons (usually less than a dozen at a time). Seemingly unimportant, the cumulative effect of this trade is nevertheless significant.

Weapons that are smuggled within and across countries were almost always legal before being diverted. [Table 3](#) summarises the three main ways in which legal weapons are diverted:

61 Unless indicated otherwise, all information in this section has been sourced from: Florquin, Nicolas, et al. 2019 Weapons Compass. Op. cit.

62 Ibid, page 33.

Table 3: Summary of mechanisms used to divert legal guns into the illicit market in Africa

| MECHANISM | AFRICA |
|--|--|
| <p>Transfer diversions Weapons and ammunition authorised for one end user are delivered to an unauthorised end user or are used in an unauthorised way by the authorised end user</p> | <p>UN monitoring shows that “Africa is not only a recipient of embargo-breaking arms transfers, but also at times a source of such transfers.”⁶³</p> <p>Very prevalent in the 1990s and early 2000s.</p> <p>Although less prevalent – as shown in the discussion of Chinese ammunition imports to Africa on page 20 – remains an important concern.</p> |
| <p>Diversion from state stockpiles The loss or theft of weapons and ammunition under the control of state defence and law enforcement agencies</p> | <p>Takes several forms, including theft by staff or external actors at storage facilities or during combat operations. Prevalent and facilitated by weak oversight and poor physical measures to protect stockpiles. Examples discussed in this report include cattle rustling in Sudan (Box 4), banditry in Kenya (Box 5), land conflicts in Cameroon (Box 7) and guns in police stores awaiting destruction that are sold by corrupt police officials to gang leaders in South Africa (page 19).</p> |
| <p>Diversion from civilian holdings The loss or theft of arms and ammunition owned by civilians</p> | <p>Includes diversion of arms and ammunition from manufacturers, wholesalers, gun shops, private security companies and civilians with firearms, such as for self-defence, hunting and sports-shooting.</p> <p>Data is scarce as few countries publish national statistics on loss and theft. South Africa does and its statistics starkly show the seriousness of the problem. For example, in 2022-2023 civilians reported the loss/theft of 8,241 firearms, while police reported the loss/theft of 742 firearms.⁶⁴ An analysis of civilian-police firearm loss over 21 years shows that, on average, for every one gun lost/stolen by the police, civilians lose seven guns through loss or theft.⁶⁵</p> |

Aside from the licit and illicit trade in SALW, craft or artisanal firearms are a source of guns in Africa. For example, craft weapons are deeply embedded in West Africa’s culture and history, being used for hunting, livestock protection and in traditional ceremonies. However, they are increasingly being used in crimes and civil disturbance.⁶⁶ [Box 10](#) describes how lucrative the trade is in Ghana and its impact on the country and region.

63 Ibid, page 49.

64 South African Police Service Annual Report 2022-2023.

65 South African Police Service Annual Reports from 2000/01 to 2020/21, hard copies and available online at www.saps.gov.za.

66 Joly, Julien and Aline Shaban. 2023. *Between Tradition and the Law: Artisanal Firearm Production in West Africa*. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. (Online). Available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/between-tradition-and-law-artisanal-firearm-production-west-africa> (accessed 29 March 2024).

Box 10: Craft Firearms Threaten National and Regional Security⁶⁷

Calls have been made to regulate the production and sale of craft firearms in Ghana in response to the growing threat they pose to both the country and region. Although illegal, the trade is highly lucrative: While each firearm costs US\$9 to produce, they sell for between US\$90 and US\$150. Blacksmiths produce approximately 200,000 of these illegal firearms a year.

Criminals use the guns in most of the country's home robberies, as well as in banditry, trafficking and reprisal attacks. Demand for these illicit weapons is also driven by ethnic youth groups formed to protect their communities.

In addition to threatening security in the country, Ghanaian craft weapons fuel conflicts in neighbouring countries such as Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. State officials' complicity in facilitating the illegal trade, especially at the borders, has led to calls for investigations and prosecutions for corruption.

In alignment with the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which requires member countries to mark firearms to facilitate identification and traceability, Ghana's Small Arms Commission recently initiated a coding system to ensure all guns belonging to security services and civilians are distinctively marked. In addition, calls have been made to legalise the craft weapons industry so that the trade can be regulated.

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 Find out more about trafficking of guns at <https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/en/education/tertiary/firearms/module-1/key-issues/framing-the-issue-of-firearms.html>.
- 💡 Monitor the work of Control Arms, a global coalition of non-governmental organisations working to reduce armed violence and conflict through strong controls on the international arms trade, with a particular focus on supporting the Arms Trade Treaty. Find out more here: <https://controlarms.org/>.

⁶⁷ Abderrahmane, Abdelkader. 2023. Ghana's sophisticated artisanal firearms trade needs regulating. ISS Today, 6 November. (Online). available at https://issafrica.org/iss-today/ghanas-sophisticated-artisanal-firearms-trade-needs-regulating?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=ISS_Weekly&utm_medium=email (accessed 27 March 2024).

PART 2:

Silencing the Guns in Africa



“We hereby declare our determination to achieve the goal of a conflict-free Africa, to make peace a reality for all our people and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters and violent conflicts, and to prevent genocide. We pledge not to bequeath the burden of conflicts to the next generation of Africans and undertake to end all wars in Africa by 2020.” – AU Heads of State and Government, 25 May 1963⁶⁸

The AU is a continental body consisting of 55 member states. It was officially launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).⁶⁹ To achieve its vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, the AU developed Agenda 2063.

Agenda 2063

Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework to positively transform the lives of Africans by the AU's 100th anniversary. It consists of seven Aspirations and related goals. Among its seven Aspirations is Aspiration 4, which speaks directly to Silencing the Guns in Africa:

Aspiration 4: A peaceful and secure Africa, which has as one of its goals, “Mechanisms for peaceful prevention and resolution of conflicts will be functional at all levels. As a first step, dialogue-centred conflict prevention and resolution will be actively promoted in such a way that by 2020 all guns will be silent.”⁷⁰

Silencing the Guns in Africa was initiated in 2013 on the 50th anniversary of the AU. Its original aim was “Ending all wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence, violent conflicts and preventing genocide in the continent by 2020”⁷¹, though this was extended to 2030.⁷² In January 2023 the AU appointed Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas as High Representative for Silencing the Guns. His task is to “promote and energise advocacy, mediation and preventive diplomacy...within the framework of implementing the AU Master Roadmap on Practical Steps to Silence the Guns.” See [Box 11](#) for more information on the Roadmap.⁷³

68 African Union. 2013. 50th Anniversary Solemn Declaration, AU Heads of State and Government meeting, Addis Ababa, 26 May. (Online). Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36205-doc-50th_anniversary_solemn_declaration_en.pdf (accessed 7 August 2024).

69 African Union. n.d. About the African Union. (Online). Available at <https://au.int/en/overview> (accessed 5 March 2024).

70 Aspiration 4, Goal 32 in African Union Commission. 2015. Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, September. (Online). Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf (accessed 5 March 2024), page 6.

71 African Union. n.d. Silencing the guns. (Online). Available at <https://au.int/en/flagships/silencing-guns-2020> (accessed 5 March 2024).

72 United Nations Development Programme. 2021. Silencing the guns: A developmental approach. (Online). Available at <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/germany/UNDP-Silencing-the-Guns-A-Development-Approach.pdf> (accessed 5 March 2024).

73 African Union. 2023. Press Release: Chairperson of the African Union Commission appoints Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas as High Representative for Silencing the Guns, 21 January. (Online). Available at <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20230121/appointment-mohamed-ibn-chambas-high-representative-silencing-guns> (accessed 25 March 2024).

IDEA FOR ACTION:

💡 Follow Silencing the Guns in Africa on X: @STGinAfrica

Box 11: Roadmap to Silence the Guns

The AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns (available for download at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/37996-doc-au_roadmap_silencing_guns_2020.pdf.en_.pdf), identifies political, economic, social, environmental and legal challenges to Silencing the Guns in Africa as well as steps to be taken by various stakeholders, including the AU and member countries.⁷⁴

One of the practical steps identified in the Roadmap is to mobilise member states to “sign, ratify, and domesticate” AU Protocols.⁷⁵ See Part 3: Gun Control on page 29 for more information on these. Another step is to hold firearm amnesties to recover illegal guns; to support this the AU has declared September as Africa Amnesty Month – see [Box 12](#).

While the Roadmap includes a range of practical steps, it has been criticised for lacking clarity and not including an implementation matrix with clear indicators to monitor progress. Consequently, the AU reported that a new monitoring and evaluation framework was adopted by the AU Assembly in February 2022, and that the “development of an implementation plan to guide the contribution of key actors is underway.”⁷⁶ No updates on this could be found.

IDEA FOR ACTION:

💡 Lobby to remove the term “master” in the name of the Roadmap, whose full title is *African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020*.

💡 Lobby for the Roadmap to be updated until 2030.

💡 Lobby the AU’s secretariat ([the AU Commission](#)) to update Silencing the Guns related information on its website including:

1. Updating the Silencing the Guns logo, which is still dated 2020.
2. Publishing relevant documents such as:
 - The monitoring and evaluation framework to assess progress, which was adopted by the AU Assembly in February 2022.
 - The implementation plan to guide the contribution of key actors in implementing the Silencing the Guns Roadmap, which was being developed in 2022.
 - Budget allocations for Silencing the Guns in Africa initiatives. See [Box 13: Funding Peace in Africa](#) for more information.

74 African Union. 2020. African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by Year 2020 (Lusaka Master Roadmap 2016), 4 February. (Online). Available at <https://au.int/en/documents/20200204/african-union-master-roadmap-practical-steps-silence-guns-africa-year-2020-lusaka> (accessed 5 March 2024).

75 Ibid, paragraph 20.

76 African Union Peace and Security Council. 2022. Staying on target to silence the guns by 2030. Op. cit.

3. Providing information on key campaigns, e.g. September, Africa Amnesty Month and new campaigns that support Silencing the Guns, such as [Gun Free Zones](#).
4. Giving information and updates on regional SALW protocols (see [Part 3: Gun Control](#)), including which countries have signed, ratified and complied with review mechanisms.
5. Publishing progress reports.
6. Publicising the contact details of important individuals such as Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas.

Box 12: September is Africa Amnesty Month

In 2017⁷⁷ the AU declared the month of September as Africa Amnesty Month, during which time illegal firearms can be surrendered without fear of “disclosure, humiliation, arrest or prosecution.”⁷⁸ Under the declaration, member states are called upon to “adhere to and promote the Africa Amnesty Month, September each year, and mobilise their citizens to actively participate in the efforts to silence the guns.”⁷⁹ Since then, the AU and United Nations Development Programme have worked with various African states to implement activities in support of Amnesty Month, including amnesties and technical support in managing weapons and ammunition stocks.⁸⁰

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 Lobby your government to hold a gun amnesty each September.
- 💡 This guide has examples showing how gun violence is fuelled by guns and ammunition leaked from legal stocks, including those owned and controlled by the state. Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM) has been developed as a “cradle to grave” approach to weapons and ammunition control, from point of manufacture, through sale, transport, use, storage and destruction. Raise awareness of and lobby for effective WAM in your country, including for:⁸¹
 - Proper standards regarding the safe storage of state-owned firearms and ammunition. The UN has guidelines available for you to assess your country's standards and lobby to close loopholes, see <https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/mosaic> for modules, including on weapons stockpile management and marking and record-keeping.
 - Proper mechanisms for reporting lost firearms and ammunition from all government departments that have stocks.

77 African Union. 2022. Press Release: AUPSC Commemorates the 2022 Africa Amnesty Month in Lomé, Togo, 2 September. (Online). Available at <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/press-release-aupsc-commemorates-the-2022-africa-amnesty-month-in-lome-togo> (accessed 25 March 2024).

78 African Union. n.d. September is Africa Amnesty Month. (Online). Available at <https://au.int/en/africa-amnesty-month> (accessed 25 March 2024).

79 Ibid.

80 African Union. 2022. Press Release: AUPSC Commemorates the 2022 Africa Amnesty Month. Op. cit.

81 Irish-Qhobosheane, Jenni. 2021. How to silence the guns: Southern Africa's illegal firearms markets. Global Initiative Against Transnational Crime, September. (Online). Available at <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/southern-africas-illegal-firearms-markets/> (accessed 25 September 2024).

- Allocating necessary resources to investigate negligence or corruption in the loss of state firearms and ammunition.
 - Support for organisations that investigate and deal with organised crime, this includes allocating resources to relevant stakeholders to enable them to track developments in different illicit markets involving firearms.
- ➔ Global recognition of the importance of controlling ammunition and not just small arms is the result of many years of lobbying by civil society organisations. In 2023 UN member states adopted a politically binding international instrument called the Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management.⁸² It contains 15 objectives and 85 concrete measures to prevent diversion, illicit trafficking, and misuse of ammunition; mitigate and prevent unplanned explosions at munition sites; ensure the safety and security of conventional ammunition throughout its life-cycle from the point of manufacture; and contribute to lasting peace, security and sustainable development. Raise awareness of the Framework in your country and lobby your government to implement its measures. Download the Framework from <https://disarmament.unoda.org/global-framework-for-through-life-conventional-ammunition-management/>.

Box 13: Funding Peace in Africa⁸³

- ➔ **Balance:** According to the AU's most recent audited financials, as of December 2022 its "Revitalized" Peace Fund had a balance of US\$394,310,000.
- ➔ **Expenses:** In 2022 the AU's Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security was paid an amount of US\$260,000, and an amount of US\$185,705,000 was spent on "peace support operations." There was no specific mention of expenditure related to Silencing the Guns in Africa in the 2022 financials.

82 United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. 2023. Global Framework for Through-life Conventional Ammunition Management. (Online). Available at <https://disarmament.unoda.org/global-framework-for-through-life-conventional-ammunition-management/> (accessed 8 August 2024).

83 African Union Board of External Auditors. 2023. Independent (sic) Auditors' Report On African Union (AU) Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2022, 26 May. (Online). Available at <https://africanlii.org/akn/aa-au/doc/report/2023-05-26/the-2022-au-consolidated-final-audit-report-and-financial-statements/eng@2023-05-26/source.pdf> (accessed 15 August 2024).

Key Stakeholders Helping to Silence the Guns in Africa

African Union

The AU consists of different structures including:

- The AU Commission, which is the AU's secretariat and undertakes its day-to-day activities. It is based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Commission is composed of a chairperson, deputy chairperson and eight commissioners. Commission members' terms are for four years, renewable once.
- The Peace and Security Council, which consists of 15 members with equal voting powers, is tasked with preventing, managing and resolving conflicts.⁸⁴

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 Follow the AU on X: @AfricanUnion.
- 💡 Monitor the work of the Peace and Security Council through its communiqués and statements, which are updated regularly at: <https://issafrica.org/themes/search?themes%5B%5D=f3a125ae-521a-46cf-bda5-b15b5d299203>.

Regional Economic Communities

There are eight regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa. While some RECs are more active than others, they are an entry point for civil society activism at a regional level as many have programmes or projects that deal with peace, security and good governance as well as gender equality and women's empowerment, including engaging men for gender equality.

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 Find out more about the REC(s) your country is part of, including key projects, initiatives and individuals involved in Silencing the Guns. The eight RECs are:

⁸⁴ African Union. n.d. The Peace & Security Council. (Online). Available at <https://au.int/en/psc> (accessed 8 August 2024).

| COMMUNITY | MEMBER STATES | WEBSITE |
|---|--|---|
| Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) ⁸⁵ | Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia | https://maghrebarabe.org/ |
| Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) ⁸⁶ | Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe | https://www.comesa.int/ |
| Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) ⁸⁷ | Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo and Tunisia | https://au.int/fr/node/127 |
| East African Community (EAC) ⁸⁸ | Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania | https://www.eac.int/ |
| Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) ⁸⁹ | Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo Republic, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Chad | https://ceeac-eccas.org/en/ |
| Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ⁹⁰ | Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo Three members – Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger – announced their withdrawal from ECOWAS on 27 January 2024 ⁹¹ | https://www.ecowas.int/ |
| Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) ⁹² | Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda | https://igad.int/ |
| Southern African Development Community (SADC) ⁹³ | Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe | https://www.sadc.int/ |

85 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. n.d. AMU – Arab Maghreb Union. (Online). Available at <https://archive.uneca.org/oria/pages/amu-arab-maghreb-union> (accessed 5 March 2024).

86 Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. n.d. Member States. (Online). Available at <https://www.comesa.int/members/> (accessed 5 March 2024).

87 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. n.d. CEN-SAD – The Community of Sahel-Saharan States. (Online). Available at <https://archive.uneca.org/oria/pages/cen-sad-community-sahel-saharan-states> (accessed 5 March 2024).

88 East African Community. n.d. EAC Partner States. (online). Available at <https://www.eac.int/eac-partner-states> (accessed 5 March 2024).

89 Communauté Économique des États de l'Afrique Centrale. 2023. ECCAS in brief, 28 May. (Online). Available at <https://ceeac-eccas.org/en/2023/05/28/eccas-in-brief/> (accessed 5 March 2024).

90 Economic Community of West African States. n.d. Member States. (Online). Available at <https://www.ecowas.int/member-states/> (accessed 5 March 2024).

91 Ezenwa, Olumba, and Olayinka Ajala. 2024. ECOWAS: West African trade bloc shaken as three member states withdraw and form their own alliance. The Conversation, 28 February. (Online). available at <https://theconversation.com/ecowas-west-african-trade-bloc-shaken-as-three-member-states-withdraw-and-form-their-own-alliance-224209> (accessed 26 June 2024).

92 Intergovernmental Authority on Development. n.d. IGAD Member States. (Online). Available at <https://igad.int/> (accessed 5 March 2024).

93 Southern African Development Community. n.d. Member States. (Online). Available at <https://www.sadc.int/member-states> (accessed 5 March 2024).

United Nations

This guide has referenced various UN agencies whose work supports Silencing the Guns in Africa, and which have regional and country offices on the continent. Idea for action: Find out more about these agencies, their offices and the work they do in your country, especially the following:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The UNDP is a long standing partner of the AU.⁹⁴ Through its Regional Bureau for Africa, it supports the AU, regional communities and member states to Silence the Guns and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (called Agenda 2030 – see [Box 14](#)).

- UNDP website: <https://www.undp.org/>
- Regional Bureau for Africa website: <https://www.undp.org/africa/about-us>
- Follow on X: @UNDPAfrica

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR)

As described in [Box 12](#), UNIDIR has been working with 12 African governments to support WAM, and has publications and updates on its work in Africa. It also has a gender and disarmament hub; see <https://unidir.org/tools/gender-disarmament-hub/>.

- Website: <https://unidir.org/>
- Follow on X: @UNIDIR

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

The UNODA has a wide range of useful information on its website. This includes a range of training materials that you can use to empower yourself and key stakeholders, such as online modular small arms control training compendiums: <https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/mosaic/> and a Disarmament Education Dashboard: <https://www.disarmamenteducation.org/courses/index.html>, including a module on gender mainstreaming small arms control (available at <https://www.disarmamenteducation.org/index.php?go=education&do=training-gendersmallarms>).

The UNODA supports the establishment of Gun Free Zones as islands of safety and to change social norms and attitudes towards guns (see [Box 15](#) for more information), and has a range of youth-focused resources as part of its Youth 4 Disarmament Initiative; see <https://youth4disarmament.org/>.

The UNODA's Africa regional centre, called the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC), is located in Lomé, Togo.

⁹⁴ United Nations Development Programme. 2021. Silencing the guns. Op. cit.

- UNODA website: <https://disarmament.unoda.org/>
- UNREC website: <https://www.unrec.org/>
- Follow on X: @ODAUNREC, noting that different regional (e.g. southern Africa) and country (e.g. Nigeria) UNREC offices may also have handles.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

PULL OUT QUOTE Across the world communal spaces have been declared as Gun Free Zones (GFZs) to both reduce armed violence and to challenge the acceptance of guns.

The UNODC undertakes research (e.g. the latest global homicide report referenced in this guide) and supports efforts to address transnational organised crime, including firearms and drug trafficking, corruption and terrorism. The UNODC has a Civil Society Unit which helps facilitate partnerships with civil society organisations. Find out more at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/ngos/cst.html>.

- Website: <https://www.unodc.org/>
- Follow on X: @UNODC

Box 14: Agenda 2030

In 2015 member states from across the world agreed to the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Consisting of 17 goals and 169 targets to achieve by 2030, Agenda 2030 calls for action around:⁹⁵

- **People:** To end poverty and hunger and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment.
- **Planet:** To protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of present and future generations.
- **Prosperity:** To ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.
- **Peace:** To foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

A key goal related to Silencing the Guns in Agenda 2030 is Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The latest update on the status of Goal 16 is “Not on track”; 2021 saw the highest number of intentional murders in 20 years, with 458,000 lives lost, with most – 9 in 10 victims – being male.⁹⁶

95 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. n.d. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (Online). Available at <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda> (accessed 26 March 2024).

96 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. n.d. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. (Online). Available at <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16> (accessed 26 March 2024).

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 The deadline to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals is 2030. Engagements are currently underway to agree on a new Pact for the Future to build on Agenda 2030.⁹⁷ This is an opportunity for civil society to push the Silence the Guns agenda. Find out more and get involved at <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>

Box 15: Gun Free Zones

Across the world communal spaces such as schools, businesses, places of worship, municipal buildings, parks, plazas and entire villages have been declared as Gun Free Zones (GFZs) as a strategy to both reduce armed violence and to challenge the acceptance of guns.

UN Guidelines on how to establish GFZs have identified a range of advantages, including that they:⁹⁸

- Can be easily implemented, as little technical knowledge is required.
- Deliver impact in a shorter period than most other arms control policies.
- Address issues of social norms related to guns and demand for them, which are rarely addressed by other arms control initiatives.
- Serve as a vehicle to mobilise communities to participate in a wider debate about gun control and armed violence reduction policy.
- Can promote dialogue among national and local authorities, police and communities on armed violence and safety issues.
- Empower communities to take charge of their safety.

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 Use the UN Guidelines to help establish GFZs in your community. See <https://disarmament.unoda.org/publications/more/gfz-guidelines/>

Gun Free South Africa has been working in various communities to establish GFZs in taverns and restaurants (because of the close association between alcohol and violence), as well as Early Childhood Development Centres. For additional materials and ideas see <https://gfsa.org.za/2018/12/12/make-your-space-a-gun-free-zone/>

97 United Nations Common Agenda. n.d. The Summit of the Future in 2024. (Online). Available at <https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda/summit-of-the-future> (accessed 26 March 2024).

98 United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. 2014. Guidelines: How to establish and maintain gun-free zones. New York: UNODA. (Online). Available at <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/publications/more/gfz-guidelines/gfz-guidelines.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2024), page 7.

PART 3:

Gun Control



Regional and global protocols help you hold your government accountable for commitments it has made.

All countries have some form of national firearms control system in place, though restrictions vary greatly. For example, in Japan firearms are virtually prohibited, while the United States has very weak controls. In recognition that countries are not isolated and that coordinated action is required to deal with economic, environmental, political and social issues, various treaties, called protocols, have been agreed upon by countries. These include protocols to strengthen control over SALW at a global and regional level. Protocols are an important mechanism to hold your government accountable; see [Box 16](#).

Box 16: How to Hold Your Government Accountable for Supporting Key Protocols⁹⁹

Regional and global protocols help you hold your government accountable for commitments it has made. The first step is to understand what a protocol is and its “stage of life”: has it been adopted, signed, ratified and entered into force?¹⁰⁰

- **Protocol:**¹⁰¹ Also called a treaty, agreement, covenant, convention or pact. Once a country (called a state party) has ratified a protocol, it is legally obliged to uphold its provisions.
- **Adopt:** The formal acceptance by a state party of a proposed protocol.
- **Sign:** When a state party signs a protocol it is showing its support; however, signatures are not legally binding.
- **Ratify:** When a state party ratifies a protocol it agrees to be legally bound to it under international law. After ratification, the state party is required to domesticate that protocol by passing national laws. Accession/acceded to are other terms used that have the same legal effect as ratification.
- **Enter into force:** This is the date at which a protocol “goes live”; often this is after a certain number of states have consented to it.
- Protocols have review mechanisms in place. These allow progress to be assessed and developments to be included; they are also an opportunity to lobby your government to take action.
- Some protocols are legally binding, which means that there are legal actions that can be taken under international law if a state fails to uphold a protocol it has ratified. Others are politically binding, which means that no legal remedy under international law is available for failure; instead, reputation is used as an incentive for action.

⁹⁹ Information drawn from: Sonke Gender Justice Network, et al. 2013. Policy Advocacy Toolkit. Op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Treaty Collection. n.d. Glossary of terms relating to Treaty actions. (Online). Available at https://treaties.un.org/pages/overview.aspx?path=overview/glossary/page1_en.xml (accessed 14 March 2024).

¹⁰¹ Sonke Gender Justice Network, et al. 2013. Policy Advocacy Toolkit. Op. cit.

Here are some questions to help you hold your government accountable for supporting regional and global protocols:

1. Has the protocol entered into force?

Once a protocol enters into force, it becomes legally binding (though sometimes it is politically binding) on states that have ratified it.

- For the status of UN protocols, visit: www.treaties.un.org
- For the status of AU protocols, visit: www.au.int/en/treaties

2. Has your country signed the protocol?

While there are no legal obligations on a state after signing a protocol, the act of signing shows a state's support for that protocol and means it is obliged to not act in ways that would defeat the objective and purpose of it.

3. Has your country ratified the protocol?

Ratification binds a country legally (or politically). The state must execute an instrument of ratification signed by the Head of State, Head of Government or Minister for Foreign Affairs. There is usually no time limit between signing the protocol and ratifying it.


4. Has your country implemented the protocol into its domestic legislation (domestication)?

It is a basic principle of international law that a state party to an international protocol must ensure that its own laws and practices are consistent with what is required by the protocol. In some countries a protocol that is ratified automatically forms part of that country's national law, which means it is enforceable by national courts and other implementing authorities. In other countries, the legislature might have to adopt an act of ratification to domesticate the protocol. However, even when parliaments ratify the protocol (national ratification), many provisions might still require legislative action before they come into force.

5. What monitoring mechanisms are available?

Many protocols have a monitoring component. Monitoring implies the right of individuals to complain and seek a remedy when a national authority has failed to fulfil their obligations. These mechanisms foster accountability and, over the long term, strengthen the capacity of state parties to fulfil their commitments and obligations.

IDEA FOR ACTION:

-  Check to see if your country has ratified the various SALW global and regional protocols listed below. If yes, lobby your government to uphold its obligations. If no, lobby your government to sign and/or ratify. As noted in [Box 1: Lobby for Change](#), the first step of effective lobbying is knowing who to persuade. Depending on the country and issue, this could be a policy maker or implementer at a national or local level.

Global Protocols

Global Protocols on SALW

| UNTOC United Nations Convention against | |
|--|---|
| Summary | <p>This is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organised crime. It is supplemented by three Protocols:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition ➤ The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children ➤ The Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. <p>Countries must become parties to the Convention itself before they can become parties to any of the Protocols</p> |
| Status | <p>Adopted by the UN General Assembly: 15 November 2000, by resolution 55/25</p> <p>Entry into force: 29 September 2003</p> |
| Legally binding | <p>Yes^{102s}</p> |
| Opportunities for action, including using review mechanisms | <p>IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Confirm if your country has ratified UNTOC at https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12&chapter=18&clang=_en 💡 Engage with the UNTOC review mechanism, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings every two years – see https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/organized-crime/intro/COP/cop-regular-sessions.html for information on these. COP 12 is taking place in Vienna, Austria from 14-18 October 2024 ➤ Country reports: In 2018, COP 9 adopted a mechanism to review the implementation of UNTOC and its Protocols, including the Firearms Protocol.¹⁰³ Under this mechanism, state parties need to complete a self-assessment questionnaire ➤ As part of this process, in 2019 the UNODC Civil Society Unit initiated a project called “Stakeholder Engagement for UNTOC, its Review Mechanism and Related Activities” or SE4U. The main objective of the SE4U Project is to facilitate the engagement of non-governmental stakeholders in the UNTOC processes. Find out more about SE4U, including support in developing national civil society alliances and civil society regional networks at https://www.unodc.org/unodc/ngos/se4u-main-page.html |

¹⁰² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. n.d. Twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. (Online). Available at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/untoc20/index.html> (accessed 14 March 2024).

¹⁰³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. n.d. Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. (Online). Available at <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/es/organized-crime/intro/review-mechanism-untoc/home.html> (accessed 14 March 2024).

FIREARMS PROTOCOL

United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition¹⁰⁴

| | |
|--|--|
| Summary | <p>This is the first legally binding instrument on small arms at the global level. It promotes, facilitates and strengthens cooperation among states to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. States ratifying this Protocol make a commitment to domesticate three key provisions by establishing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A system of criminal offences related to the illegal manufacturing of, and trafficking in, firearms ➤ A system of government authorisation or licensing to ensure legitimate manufacturing of, and trafficking in, firearms ➤ A system to mark and trace firearms |
| Status | <p>Adopted by the UN General Assembly: 31 May 2001, by resolution 55/255 Entry into force: 3 July 2005</p> |
| Legally binding | <p>Yes</p> |
| Opportunities for action, including using review mechanisms | <p>IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Confirm if your country has ratified the Firearms Protocol at https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-c&chapter=18&clang=_en 💡 Engage with the UNTOC review mechanisms described above |

¹⁰⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. n.d. United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto. Op. cit.

| UN POA United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects ¹⁰⁵ | |
|---|---|
| Summary | Through a series of specific provisions, the UN PoA places the primary responsibility for curbing the illicit trade in small arms on governments. These provisions concern issues such as national controls on production and transfers; criminal offences; marking, tracing and record-keeping; stockpile management; surplus disposal; brokering controls; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); and public awareness programmes. ¹⁰⁶ The International Tracing Instrument (ITI – see below) was adopted in support of the UN PoA. |
| Status | Agreed to at a UN Conference on small arms in July 2001. It was at this meeting that a call was made to assess the feasibility of an international tracing instrument ¹⁰⁷ |
| Legally binding | No – politically binding |
| Opportunities for action, including using review mechanisms | <p style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 2px;">IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Engage with the UN PoA and ITI review mechanism, under which state parties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Voluntarily submit national reports every two years. Check to see if your country has submitted biennial reports at https://smallarms.un-arm.org/national-reports ➤ Monitor/attend biennial meetings (called Biennial Meeting of States (BMS)) to consider national, regional and global implementation of the UN PoA ➤ Monitor/attend review conferences (RevCons). These are held every six years to evaluate progress made in the implementation of the UN PoA. Four RevCons have already been held (the most recent took place in New York from 17-28 June 2024). See statements made by the AU and NGOs here https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/67936/documents. RevCons offer an opportunity for civil society organisations to share their experiences, express their views and urge governments to take broader action on the proliferation and misuse of small arms (for instance RevCon4 saw the inclusion of important gender-advancement language ➤ See the Outcome Document here: https://docs-library.unoda.org/Programme_of_Action_on_Small_Arms_and_Light_Weapons_Review_Conference_(2024)/CRP.1.Rev3_RevCon4_Draft_Outcome_Document_Orally_Revised_CLEAN_0.pdf. RevCons are also a chance for civil society to organise their own side events or exhibitions, and network with representatives of other civil society organisations around the world. The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) has valuable information on how civil society can engage with BMS meetings and RevCons and identified seven priority areas to focus advocacy on at RevCon4, including mainstreaming gender; engaging with youth; setting national and regional targets; and controlling the civilian possession of SALW. Find out more, become a member of IANSA and join the IANSA mailing list at https://iansa.org/what-we-do/ ➤ The Small Arms Survey has developed a podcast series on RevCon4 (available online at https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resources?combine=RevCon4&sort_by=field_date_value&type=53&theme=All&region=All&language=All) and has a dedicated page with thematic information (see https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/projectrevcon4) |

¹⁰⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. n.d. Programme of Action on small arms and its International Tracing Instrument. (Online). Available at <https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/salw/programme-of-action/> (accessed 14 March 2024).

¹⁰⁶ Parker, Sarah, and Marcus Wilson. 2016. Handbook: A Diplomat's Guide to the UN Small Arms Process. Geneva: Small Arms Survey. (Online). Available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/guide-un-small-arms-process-2016-update> (accessed 29 March 2024).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

| ITI International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons ¹⁰⁸ | |
|--|--|
| Summary | In 2005 states adopted the ITI, which requires states to ensure that weapons are properly marked and that records are kept. It also provides a framework for cooperation in weapons tracing, fulfilling one of the commitments governments made in the UN PoA. Improving weapons tracing is now part of Agenda 2030 (see Box 14). |
| Status | Adopted by the UN in December 2005 |
| Legally binding | No – politically binding |
| Opportunities for action, including using review mechanisms | <p style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 2px;">IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Engage with the UN PoA and ITI review mechanism, under which state parties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Voluntarily submit national reports every two years. Check to see if your country has submitted biennial reports at https://smallarms.un-arm.org/national-reports ➤ Monitor/attend biennial meetings (called Biennial Meeting of States (BMS)) to consider national, regional and global implementation of the UN PoA ➤ Monitor/attend review conferences (RevCons). These are held every six years to evaluate progress made in the implementation of the UN PoA. Four RevCons have already been held (the most recent took place in New York from 17-28 June 2024). See statements made by the AU and NGOs here https://meetings.unoda.org/meeting/67936/documents). RevCons offer an opportunity for civil society organisations to share their experiences, express their views and urge governments to take broader action on the proliferation and misuse of small arms (for instance RevCon4 saw the inclusion of important gender-advancement language) ➤ See the Outcome Document here: https://docs-library.unoda.org/Programme_of_Action_on_Small_Arms_and_Light_Weapons_Review_Conference_(2024)/CRP.1.Rev3_RevCon4_Draft_Outcome_Document_Orally_Revised_CLEAN_0.pdf). RevCons are also a chance for civil society to organise their own side events or exhibitions, and network with representatives of other civil society organisations around the world. The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) has valuable information on how civil society can engage with BMS meetings and RevCons and identified seven priority areas to focus advocacy on at RevCon4, including mainstreaming gender; engaging with youth; setting national and regional targets; and controlling the civilian possession of SALW. Find out more, become a member of IANSA and join the IANSA mailing list at https://iansa.org/what-we-do/ ➤ The Small Arms Survey has developed a podcast series on RevCon4 (available online at https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resources?combine=RevCon4&sort_by=field_date_value&type=53&theme=All&region=All&language=All) and has a dedicated page with thematic information (see https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/projectrevcon4) |

108 United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. n.d. Programme of Action on small arms and its International Tracing Instrument. Op. cit.

| ATT United Nations Arms Trade Treaty ¹⁰⁹ | |
|---|---|
| Summary | <p>Aims to improve the effectiveness of national controls on the “transfer” – meaning the export, import, transit, transshipment and brokering – of conventional arms, including SALW and their ammunition, in a more concerted manner. The objective of the transfer controls is to stop arms from reaching those who would misuse them to, inter alia, undermine peace and security, violate international human rights and humanitarian law or divert them into the illicit market or for unauthorised end use.¹¹⁰</p> <p>The ATT sets out criteria to determine when the potential consequence of an export would pose an overriding risk. It also lists the circumstances for when a transfer of the items included within the scope of the Treaty (including SALW) must be prohibited, for example if the transfer would violate UN sanctions or if the state knows the arms would be used for international atrocity crimes.</p> <p>The ATT is also the first global treaty on arms control to include gender considerations, in that it expressly requires state parties to consider the risk of arms exports “being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children.”¹¹¹</p> |
| Status | <p>Adopted by the UN General Assembly: 2 April 2013¹¹²</p> <p>Entry into force: 24 December 2014</p> <p>Number of states that have: Ratified: 113 (29 from Africa)</p> <p>Signed: 28 (11 from Africa)</p> <p>Not joined: 54 (14 from Africa)</p> |
| Legally binding | Yes |
| Opportunities for action, including review mechanisms | <p>IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Confirm if your country has ratified the ATT at https://thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-status.html?templated=209883 <p>As “weapons trading is a sensitive subject,” the ATT does not have a review mechanism.¹¹³</p> <p>Under the ATT, state parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Voluntarily submit annual reports by 31 May each year 💡 Monitor/attend annual Conference of States Parties (CSP); CSP10 took place in Geneva from 19-23 August 2024. More information can be found at https://thearmstradetreaty.org/csp-10.html 💡 Control Arms, a global coalition of NGOs, is actively involved in using the ATT to mitigate the human suffering resulting from irresponsible arms transfers and has a range of resources. See https://controlarms.org/# to find out more about their work and to become a member |

109 United Nations Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is available at <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-text.html?templated=209884> (accessed 23 August 2024).

110 da Silva, Clare. 2023. The Africa Region: Complementarities in Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Instruments. IANSA Briefing Paper, May. International Action Network on Small Arms. (Online). Available at <https://iansa.org/the-americas-region-complementarities-in-small-arms-and-light-weapons-control-instruments-may-2023/> (accessed 26 March 2024).

111 da Silva, Clare. 2023. The Africa Region: Complementarities in Small Arms and Light Weapons Control Instruments. Op. cit.

112 Arms Trade Treaty. n.d. Treaty Status. (Online). Available at <https://thearmstradetreaty.org/treaty-status.html?templated=209883> (accessed 14 March 2024).

113 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime. 2018. A treaty with a difference, 2 August, (Online). Available at https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/arms_trade_treaty/ (accessed 30 March 2024).

UN Resolutions

“UN resolutions can advance language and concepts into areas where law becomes codified into treaties and national laws, and therefore more enforceable.”¹¹⁴

UN resolutions help shape global and regional treaties and national legislation. The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is the main intergovernmental body within the UN system responsible for “promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner.”¹¹⁵

The UNHRC has passed resolutions and adopted reports that are relevant to Silencing the Guns in Africa, including:

1. **Resolution 35/10 of 2017:** *Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls, which is the first resolution to call on state parties to engage men and boys in addressing and preventing violence against women and girls.*
2. **Resolution 49/41 of 2022:** *Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth, which notes the responsibility that states have to protect their populations, especially children and youth, from the human rights violations resulting from civilian firearms. It also calls on states to reduce the number of firearms held by civilians.*
3. **Resolution 53/49 of 2023:** *Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms, which calls on states to focus attention on reducing demand for guns, for example by recognising and addressing the role of masculinity and exploitative marketing used by the gun industry (described in [Box 6: Marketing Guns to Feed Demand](#)) to drive sales.*

See [Box 17](#) for more information on each of these resolutions.

IDEA FOR ACTION:

- 💡 Raise awareness of UNHRC resolutions with your government and civil society allies and stakeholders in your country and regional networks.
- 💡 Use these resolutions when lobbying for local or national policies or programmes by demonstrating that there is agreement at an international level to, for example:

¹¹⁴ Genatio, Daphne, et al. 2022. Case study on the use and impacts of the UNHRC 35/10. Op. cit., page 9.

¹¹⁵ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. 2006. Human Rights Council to hold first session from 19-30 June, 16 June. (Online). Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/human-rights-council-hold-first-session-19-30-june> (accessed 23 March 2024).

- Take measures to reduce the number of guns held and lost by civilians.
- Take measures to prevent advertising that misrepresents the relationship between guns, masculinity and safety.
- Address conceptions of masculinity and engage men and boys in preventing violence against women and girls.

Box 17: Key UN Human Rights Council Resolutions

Resolution 35/10¹¹⁶

In 2017 the UNHRC adopted Resolution 35/10.¹¹⁷ Titled *Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls*, it is the first resolution to call on state parties to engage men and boys in addressing and preventing violence against women and girls.

Resolution 49/41¹¹⁸

In 2022 the UNHRC adopted a Report titled *Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth*. It documents the “devastating” effects of firearms on human rights, noting that “children and youth, the world’s future generations, are the hardest hit” and that “states have a responsibility to act to protect their populations, particularly their children and youth, from the human rights impacts caused by the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms.”¹¹⁹ Actions states must take include:

- ➔ Address conceptions of masculinity in society that contribute to firearms deaths and injuries.¹²⁰
- ➔ Take measures to reduce the number of firearms held and lost by civilians. These include:¹²¹
 - Adopt and enforce requirements for gun manufacturers and dealers consistent with the UN’s Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/720245?ln=en>.
 - Adopt stricter requirements for the legal acquisition and possession of firearms.
 - Prohibit the acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children.

116 Information summarised from Genatio, Daphne, et al. 2022. Case study on the use and impacts of the UNHRC 35/10. Op. cit.

117 United Nations Human Rights Council Office of the High Commissioner. n.d. *Accelerating efforts to eliminate violence against women: engaging men and boys in preventing and responding to violence against all women and girls*. (Online). Available at https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/35/10 (accessed 23 March 2024).

118 United Nations Human Rights Council. 2022. *Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms by children and youth: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 19 January, UN Doc A/HRC/49/41. (Online). Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3976008?ln=en&v=pdf#files> (accessed 24 March 2024).

119 Ibid, paragraph 48.

120 Ibid, paragraph 47.

121 Ibid, paragraph 50.

Resolution 53/49¹²²

In 2023 the UNHRC adopted a report titled *Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms*, which notes the following as drivers of gun buying and use:

- The role of gender stereotypes: Demand for guns “appears...linked to cultural perceptions of masculinity... studies on the justification for the acquisition of firearms suggested that a gendered notion of protection was the most prominent reason.”¹²³ In this regard the report notes that states “have an obligation to take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices that are based on stereotyped roles for men.”¹²⁴
- Marketing of firearms: “Protection and self-defence messaging in advertising often associates the acquisition and possession of firearms with masculinity.”¹²⁵ The report urges states to “take appropriate measures to prevent marketing practices that promote racism or violence, or which encourage demand for firearms through advertisements misrepresenting the relationship between firearms possession and safety.”¹²⁶

122 United Nations Human Rights Council. 2023. *Impact of the civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 5 May, UN Doc A/HRC/53/49. (Online). Available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4012464?ln=en&v=pdf> (accessed 23 March 2023).

123 Ibid, paragraph 19.

124 Ibid, paragraph 43.

125 Ibid, paragraph 28.

126 Ibid, paragraph 55c.

African Protocols on SALW

In addition to global SALW protocols, there are four key regional African protocols. These are summarised below, including an analysis of whether they are legally binding, as well as whether they address supply and demand side drivers of SALWs and support gender advancement.¹²⁷

| SADC FIREARMS PROTOCOL Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community Region ¹²⁸ | |
|--|--|
| Summary | In addition to complementing various global instruments, this compels SADC governments to include in their national laws “the regulation and centralised registration of all civilian owned firearms” and mechanisms that will facilitate “the monitoring and auditing of licences held in a person’s possession.” |
| Status | <p>Adopted in 2001, in force in 2004.¹²⁹ Though an agreement amending the SADC Protocol was adopted by SADC member states in 2020, which has yet to be signed by all states to come into force.</p> <p>16 member states:¹³⁰ Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.</p> <p>The Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARPCCO) is responsible for coordination and oversight of implementation. Limited information on SARPCCO is available at https://www.sadc.int/pillars/police-sarpcco</p> |
| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Legally binding: Yes › Address supply of SALW: Yes › Address demand for SALW: No › Include gender: No |
| Opportunities for action | <p>IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Engage your government to find out if it has signed and ratified the amended SADC Protocol 💡 Engage SARPCCO to make information on actions to Silence the Guns publicly available, including the amended protocol and updates on which countries have signed and ratified, as well as progress reports 💡 Work with partners in neighbouring countries to pressure member states to strengthen requirements, particularly in relation to demand drivers and gender advancement, and to act on their obligations |

127 Gender-related assessment sourced from: Pathfinders and GENSAC. 2022. Opportunities for Action on Gender Responsive Small Arms Control in Existing Regional Commitments. Issue Brief 3, July. (Online). Available at https://gensac.network/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GENSAC_Issue_Brief_3_V2.pdf (downloaded 29 March 2024).

128 Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the Southern African Development Community Region. (Online). available at <https://www.sadc.int/document/protocol-control-firearms-ammunition-and-other-materials-2001-0> (accessed 8 August 2024).

129 Parker, Sarah, et al. 2016. Handbook: A Diplomat’s Guide to the UN Small Arms Process. Op. cit.

130 Southern African Development Community. n.d. Member States. Op. cit.

NAIROBI PROTOCOL

Nairobi Protocol on the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States¹³¹

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Summary</p> | <p>Unlike the SADC Protocol, which focuses on SALW, the Nairobi Protocol provides a definition for “firearms” and explicitly includes these within the scope of “small arms” (Article 1).</p> <p>It regulates manufacturing, possession and use of SALW, marking and record-keeping. It also defines obligations of states towards state-owned weapons, and contains detailed provisions on SALW transfers and brokering. The provisions of the Nairobi Protocol are supplemented with Best Practice Guidelines, which provide detailed policy and practice recommendations to assist states in the Protocol’s implementation.</p> |
| <p>Status</p> | <p>Adopted in 2004, in force in 2006.¹³²</p> <p>15 member states:¹³³ Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Congo Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.</p> <p>The Regional Centre for Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA) is responsible for coordination and oversight of implementation. Detailed information on RECSA is available at: https://www.recsasec.org/</p> |
| <p>Assessment</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Legally binding: Yes ➤ Address supply of SALW: Yes ➤ Address demand for SALW: Partly ➤ Include gender: No |
| <p>Opportunities for action</p> | <p>IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Engage your government to find out if it has signed and ratified the Nairobi Protocol 💡 Engage RECSA to make updates available, for example on which countries have signed and ratified as well as progress reports 💡 Subscribe to RECSA Insights, RECSA’s monthly newsletter at https://www.recsasec.org/nairobi-protocol 💡 Work with partners in neighbouring countries to pressure member states to strengthen requirements, particularly in relation to demand drivers and gender advancement, and to act on their obligations |

131 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. n.d. SHERLOC: Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime. UNODC Teaching Module Series: Firearms; Module 5: International Legal Framework on Firearms (Online). Available at <https://sherloc.unodc.org/cld/en/education/tertiary/firearms/module-5/key-issues/multilateral-and-regional-instruments.html> (Accessed 17 March 2024).

132 Parker, Sarah, et al. 2016. Handbook: A Diplomat’s Guide to the UN Small Arms Process. Op. cit.

133 Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons. n.d. RECSA. (Online). Available at <https://www.recsasec.org/> (accessed 13 March 2024).

ECOWAS CONVENTION

Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials¹³⁴

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Summary | <p>Has key provisions relating to transfer, manufacture, civilian possession, state-owned weapons, law enforcement and institutional arrangements. For example, it prohibits the transfer of weapons with limited exceptions; requires that state parties prohibit the possession, use and sale of light weapons by civilians; and requires that the possession, use or sale of small arms by the same is regulated. Requires that state parties establish systems of stockpile management and safe storage of state-owned weapons; and requires that state parties review their legislation and cooperate with other ECOWAS states to strengthen border controls.</p> |
| Status | <p>Adopted in 2006, in force in 2009.¹³⁵</p> <p>16 Member states:¹³⁶ Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.</p> <p>The ECOWAS Commission's Small Arms Unit is responsible for coordination and oversight of implementation.¹³⁷ Limited information on the Convention and implementation is available at https://www.ecowas.int/</p> |
| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Legally binding: Yes ➤ Address supply of SALW: Yes ➤ Address demand for SALW: No ➤ Include gender: Yes |
| Opportunities for action | <p>IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Engage your government to find out if it has signed and ratified the ECOWAS Convention 💡 Engage the ECOWAS Commission to make information on actions to Silence the Guns publicly available, including updates on which countries have signed and ratified as well as progress reports 💡 Work with partners in neighbouring countries to pressure member states to strengthen requirements, particularly in relation to demand drivers and gender advancement, and to act on their obligations |

¹³⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. n.d SHERLOC: Firearms; Module 5. Op. cit.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Economic Community of West African States. n.d. Member States. Op. cit.

¹³⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. n.d SHERLOC: Firearms; Module 5. Op. cit.

| KINSHASA CONVENTION The Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and all Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly | |
|---|--|
| Summary | <p>Broader in scope than both the SADC and Nairobi Protocols, this includes detailed provisions for the manufacture, distribution and repair, marking and tracing, registration, collection and destruction of SALW, and also regulates possession of SALW by civilians. Measures include providing for stringent border control measures, the establishment and maintenance of national and regional electronic databases on SALW, and strengthened cooperation to prevent and combat corruption, money-laundering, terrorism and drug trafficking associated with the illicit manufacturing of, trafficking in, trade, possession and use of SALW.</p> |
| Status | <p>Adopted in 2010, in force in 2017.¹³⁸</p> <p>11 member states. Ratified by: Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe.</p> <p>Signed and not ratified by: Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.</p> <p>The Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) is responsible for coordination and oversight of implementation. Limited information on the Convention and implementation is available at https://ceeac-eccas.org/en/</p> |
| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Legally binding: Yes ➤ Address supply of SALW: Yes ➤ Address demand for SALW: Partly ➤ Include gender: Yes |
| Opportunities for action | <p>IDEA FOR ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 💡 Engage your government to find out if it has signed and ratified the Kinshasa Convention 💡 Engage the ECCAS Secretary-General to make information on actions to Silence the Guns publicly available, including updates on which countries have signed and ratified as well as progress reports 💡 Work with partners in neighbouring countries to pressure member states to strengthen requirements, particularly in relation to demand drivers and gender advancement, and to act on their obligations |

138 United Nations Treaty Collection. n.d. Disarmament: Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and all Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly. (Online). Available at https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XXVI-7&chapter=26&clang=_en (accessed 15 March 2024).

African Protocols

While most global and regional SALW instruments don't advance gender, most gender protocols don't recognise the importance of controlling SALW to support gender equality and women's empowerment. Pathfinders and GENSAC's publication *Opportunities for Action on Gender Responsive Small Arms Control in Existing Regional Commitments*¹³⁹ (available at https://gensac.network/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GENSAC_Issue_Brief_3_V2.pdf) summarises a range of regional instruments, including gender-focused protocols and frameworks. As summarised below, most include no mention of SALW:

| LEVEL | INSTRUMENT | MENTION SALW |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| African continent | Maputo Protocol Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa | No |
| | African Union's Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) 2018-2028 | No |
| | Kinshasa Declaration on Positive Masculinities Declaration ¹⁴⁰ | No |
| | DRAFT African Union Position Paper on Positive Masculinity and Leadership to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa ¹⁴¹ | No |
| African sub-region | Cairo Declaration for Arab Women and the Strategic Plan of Action for the Development of Women in the Arab Region 2030 | No, armed violence is referred to only in the context of armed conflict |
| | East African Community Gender Policy (2018) | No |
| | DRAFT ECOWAS Regional Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence | Draft not publicly available |
| | SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008, revised 2016 to align objectives with global targets such as SDGs) | No |
| | SADC Regional Strategy and Framework of Action for Addressing Gender Based Violence 2018-2030 | No |
| | SADC Regional Strategy on Women, Peace and Security (2018-2022) | Mentions the proliferation of SALW as one of many human security challenges confronting women and the region |

139 Pathfinders and GENSAC. 2022. *Opportunities for Action on Gender Responsive Small Arms*. Op. cit.

140 African Union. 2021. Kinshasa Declaration and Call for Action of the African Union Heads of State on Positive Masculinity in Leadership to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa, 25 November. (Online). Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/pressreleases/41226-pr-Declaration_Mens_Conference_English.pdf (accessed 30 March 2024).

141 Not included in Pathfinders and GENSAC. 2022. *Opportunities for Action on Gender Responsive Small Arms*. Op. cit. Following the 2021 Kinshasa Declaration on Positive Masculinity (see African Union. 2021. Kinshasa Declaration. Op. cit.), the AU developed a draft position paper on "positive masculinity to end violence against women and girls Africa (sic)" to "lead to the elaboration of the Common Africa Position (CAP) on Positive Masculinity, which will be adopted by AU Policy Organs and will guide the development of the AU Convention on ending VAWG (violence against women and girls) and the work of the High-Level Presidential Initiative on Positive Masculinity." Source: African Union. n.d. Validation of the Draft Position Paper on Positive Masculinity Concept Note (unpublished).

Engaging with Protocols and Resolutions

Global and regional protocols, conventions and resolutions, as well as their review mechanisms like meetings and reports, are opportunities for activism.

IDEA FOR ACTION:

Strengthen Language

The language used in global and regional instruments is contested and changes over time. Lobby your government to support new and stronger language – and commitments – to:

- Boost SALW control efforts, for example by recognising that gender advancement requires SALW control or by closing loopholes by better controlling ammunition stocks.
- Include and address drivers of SALW demand. This includes acknowledging and addressing the structural drivers of armed violence, such as racism, patriarchy and poverty – which in turn support interventions like calls for debt relief.¹⁴² It also includes recognising that values and norms are shaped, which requires, for example, controls on the marketing of guns and the entertainment industry, which glamorise and idealise guns and masculinity to boost sales.
- Support and strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment.

Two valuable resources to help are:

- Pathfinders and GENSAC's *Opportunities for Action on Gender Responsive Small Arms Control in Existing Regional Commitments*¹⁴³ at https://gensac.network/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/GENSAC_Issue_Brief_3_V2.pdf.
- Small Arms Survey's *Meaningful Partners: Opportunities for Collaboration between Women, Peace and Security, and Small Arms Control at the National Level*¹⁴⁴ at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-2024-WPS-EN.pdf>.

¹⁴² De Kluiver, Jana. 2024. Debt relief should be the African Union's focus at the G20. ISS Today, 5 June. (Online). Available at https://issafrica.org/iss-today/debt-relief-should-be-the-african-union-s-focus-at-the-g20?utm_source=BenchmarkEmail&utm_campaign=ISS_Weekly&utm_medium=email (accessed 8 August 2024).

¹⁴³ Pathfinders and GENSAC. 2022. Opportunities for Action on Gender Responsive Small Arms. Op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ Watson, Callum. 2024. Meaningful Partners: Opportunities for Collaboration between Women, Peace and Security, and Small Arms Control at the National Level. Briefing Paper, February. (Online). Available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-2024-WPS-EN.pdf> (accessed 29 March 2024).

Publicise Developments and Your Work

Raise awareness of existing protocols, conventions and resolutions and the work you are doing to both strengthen these and hold your government accountable by:

- Engaging local NGOs to get buy in and to help translate general language into concrete actions.
- Using traditional and social media to raise awareness and call for meaningful action.

Domestication

National Action Plans are an opportunity to assess a government's commitment to meeting its international commitments.

Confirm your country has domesticated global and regional SALW protocols that it has ratified into its national legislation. A helpful guide, *National Implementation of Selected Arms Control Instruments* (available at <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ISS-ATT-UNSCAR-Legislative-Guide-A5-12Dec0930-Web.pdf>), gives clear guidance on the obligations African states have to ensure effective implementation of three global instruments: UN PoA, ITI and ATT, and two regional instruments: SADC Firearms Protocol and Nairobi Protocol.

In addition, *Meaningful Partners: Opportunities for Collaboration between Women, Peace and Security, and Small Arms Control at the National Level*¹⁴⁵ (available at <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-2024-WPS-EN.pdf>) looks at ways to harmonise country-level SALW and women, peace and security National Action Plans (NAPs). NAPs are policy documents in which a government articulates its priorities, the actions it will take and stakeholders it will involve to support the implementation of international, regional or national obligations and commitments.¹⁴⁶ Governments draft and adopt NAPs on various policy areas or topics, including human rights, women's rights, peace and security, children's rights and climate change.

The Small Arms Survey recently mapped how many states had incorporated gender-related small arms control measures from international instruments and forums into NAPs.¹⁴⁷ It found:

- Only 16 publicly available NAPs on small arms control, 13 of which were from African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda).
- Substantial gaps in references to gender in these plans.

While the mapping process found 105 published NAPs on women, peace and security, it highlights a clear **IDEA FOR ACTION**: Confirm if your country has developed NAPs on both SALW control and women, peace and security. If no, lobby your government to develop NAPs on these issues. If yes, use these to assess and strengthen your government's priorities and planned actions.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ National Action Plans on Business and Human Rights. n.d. What are National Action Plans? (Online). Available at <https://global-naps.org/about/> (accessed 30 March 2024).

¹⁴⁷ Watson, Callum. 2024. Meaningful Partners: Opportunities for Collaboration. Op. cit.

Conclusion

“To silence the guns, we must raise the voices for peace.” – António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General¹⁴⁸

Togolese social justice activist Farida Nabourema has described Africa’s Silencing the Guns agenda as “one of the most unsuccessful campaigns ever. It’s an epic failure.”¹⁴⁹ Two major reasons account for this: First is that Silencing the Guns in Africa is understood to refer to silencing guns used in socio-political conflicts; thus, for example, South African leaders regularly proclaim their support for Silencing the Guns in Africa without ever acknowledging the role that South Africa plays in contributing to gun violence on the continent. The second reason is that the Silencing the Guns initiative is not binding. Both reasons are opportunities for civil society activism.

This guide identifies different ways that civil society can support and push for meaningful action to silence the guns in Africa, particularly at a local, national and regional level. A further **IDEA FOR ACTION** is that civil society organisations from across the continent should work together through existing networks like IANSA, MenEngage and WILPF to:

148 United Nations. n.d. “To silence the guns, we must raise the voices for peace,” Secretary-General António Guterres. (Online). Available at <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/update-secretary-general%E2%80%99s-appeal-global-ceasefire> (accessed 22 August 2024).

149 Interview, 2 April 2024.

CONCLUSION

- Lobby donor countries and organisations like the UN to help the AU turn its Silencing the Guns initiative into a binding protocol with clear goals, targets, key performance indicators, action plans and monitoring and evaluation systems. In this regard the United Nations has been helping the Balkans develop and implement a *Regional Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and Their Ammunition in the Western Balkans*.¹⁵⁰ Download the Roadmap here for ideas on how the AU's Silencing the Guns initiative can be strengthened: <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf>.
- Empower key government officials in countries across Africa to become champions for Silencing the Guns in Africa, for example by hosting inter-parliamentary dialogues such as those that have been taking place in South America to promote an arms control agenda with a gender perspective in the region.¹⁵¹

The AU's Peace and Security Council has noted, "The AU seems to be in the habit of assigning deadlines for overly ambitious goals and then struggling to meet them."¹⁵² It goes on to note, "It's important to popularise the Silencing the Guns agenda afresh and ensure buy-in from member states."

With over 40 Ideas for Action, the purpose of this guide is to give activists across Africa and beyond ways to popularise the initiative by empowering themselves and others, collecting evidence, raising public awareness and lobbying to stop the death, injury, trauma and suffering on the continent – which is predicted to get worse – by Silencing the Guns in Africa.

¹⁵⁰ The United Nations Development Programme and South-Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, with funding from Germany and France, developed a SALW control roadmap for the Western Balkans. Download the Regional Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024 from <https://www.seesac.org/f/docs/publications-salw-control-roadmap/Regional-Roadmap-for-a-sustainable-solution-to-the.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ As an example of this type of initiative, see: Arms & Gender. Towards a regional agenda of parliamentary control. Third meeting report, 6 October 2023, Santiago, Chile. (Online). Available at https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/98c6dc90-096f-4389-9309-f1a33c-0cad73/SAS%20Report_compressed.pdf (accessed 8 August 2024).

¹⁵² African Union Peace and Security Council. 2022. Staying on target to Silence the Guns by 2030. ISS, PSC Report, 22 June. (Online). Available at <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/staying-on-target-to-silence-the-guns-by-2030> (accessed 5 March 2024).

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Author: Claire Taylor

Design: Nadia Joubert

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