THE ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE BEGINS WITH SILENCING THE GUNS
The Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence is an annual campaign launched by IANSA in 2003, and this year the theme was “The Road to Development and Peace begins with Silencing the Guns.” I am so proud of the actions taken by our members around the world to address the proliferation and misuse of small arms.

As a result of the Week of Action, child soldiers and an ex-combatant joined the movement against gun violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The voluntary surrender of firearms increased by 150 percent in Brazil. Women were given a platform to speak about how gun violence affects their lives, and to demonstrate their leadership on arms control. A gun-free zone was established in a community affected by violence in South Africa. Community members from Senegal and neighboring Guinea-Bissau were able to meet and hold cross-border talks on how to address the thefts and violence perpetrated by armed thieves. Young people in Nepal spoke out about gun violence claiming members of their families. Parliamentarians called upon their fellow legislators to strengthen measures against SALW. Radio programs helped to educate listeners about the financial and social costs of gun violence, as well as about international agreements such as the UN Programme of Action on small arms and the ATT. Juveniles in detention in Mexico for weapons offenses learned about the impact of gun violence and joined efforts to end it. Peacebuilding activities and training were provided to educators and young people in the Philippines and Guatemala. A call to end the local production of unmarked and unregistered guns was made in Sierra Leone. Peace walks were held to demonstrate support for forging societies free of armed violence, and much more.

Close to 100 media articles were generated as a result of the Week of Action, and tens of thousands of people heard interviews on the topic of small arms and gun violence through radio and television programs our members joined. Many groups did social media work, which also reached thousands of people. Our collective output was truly impressive.

We are grateful to everyone who participated in the Week of Action, which could not have been as successful without the support of the UN Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation (UNSCAR) and its donor countries. We are also grateful for the many years of support for the Week of Action from the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the statement provided by the High Representative, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu.

Though the Week of Action has wrapped up, our work continues as we look toward the next major meeting of the UN small arms process in June 2018 – the Third Review Conference on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects or RevCon3.

On behalf of IANSA, I am honored to continue this work with you and to keep reaching for a world where peace and development prevail over armed violence.

Baffour Dokyi Amoa,
Chair
International Advisory Council
IANSA
Argentina

Red Argentina Para El Desarme/ INECIP

INECIP (part of a disarmament network in Argentina) met with Parliamentarians and technical teams to discuss the threats of weapons in the country and to give them a booklet they made containing INECIP’s analysis of Argentina’s Arms Control Agency and Disarmament Plan. They also discussed the importance of the 2018 Review Conference of the Programme of Action on small arms with Parliamentarians and technical teams, and agreed to work together to prepare for the event.

INECIP also carried out a graphics campaign to spread awareness of the main local problems with the implementation of the new law that created the Arms Control Agency, as well as awareness of the lack of implementation of the country’s Disarmament Plan. Without implementation of the Disarmament Plan, Argentina’s program of accepting tens of thousands of surrendered weapons has been stalled for nearly a year, a delay that INECIP is working to close in order to reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms.

Throughout the entire week of the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence, APP produced and distributed leaflets to members of Parliament. The leaflets contained information about SDG 16.4, which aims to significantly reduce illicit arms flows by 2030, SDG 5.2, which aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, and general information about gun violence. “We cannot complete the objectives of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals without #SilencingTheGuns” the leaflets read. Through APP’s efforts, two declarations of interest were presented by Parliamentarians at both the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate in Argentina. The declarations noted the importance of the 2018 Review Conference on the Programme of Action on small arms and of fulfilling the 2030 SDGs. They also addressed the growing problem of organized crime in Argentina and the increasing use of armed violence in organized crime, while calling on Parliamentarians to do more to control SALW proliferation and misuse within the country. “No society can grow nor develop in the midst of violence, fear and disparities that are manifested in the indiscriminate use of firearms,” the declaration emphasized. APP also created a social media campaign that daily distributed photos and messages regarding SALW and gun violence throughout the week.

HEWAD

HEWAD celebrated the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence through a conference held at the Hazrate Maryam Girls High School in which civil society representatives, cultural personalities, community members, teachers and students participated. The Director of HEWAD and other participants spoke about the importance of committing to peace, non-violence and disarmament. The conference gave students the chance to present essays, speeches and exhibitions on the topic of ending gun violence. At the end of the event certificates of appreciation were awarded to several female civil society members who actively advocate for peace and disarmament. The event concluded with a shared vision of peace and stability for Afghanistan and the hope for a world free of the devastating impact of arms.

An oversupply of weapons to Afghan security forces as well as poor tracking and record keeping of these weapons has left Afghanistan even more vulnerable to gun violence in recent years, and has also prompted fears of a return of a “culture of guns” to the country if greater measures are not taken to control the flow of arms. Established in 1994, HEWAD is an NGO dedicated to women’s rights, as well as health and education support for women and children. They hold a number of events throughout the year to advocate for an end to both gun violence and gender based violence.
ChangeMaker Society organized a national roundtable on the topic, “The Road to Development and Peace Begins with Silencing the Guns,” which brought together human rights practitioners, members of civil society, government, the media, academics, and research institutions that are working towards achieving peace and development in the country.

Mr. Syed Tamjid ur Rahman, head of ChangeMaker, said that the ready availability of weapons and ammunition has led to human suffering, political repression, crime and terror among civilian populations. Irresponsible arms transfers causes regional destabilization, violates Security Council arms embargoes and contributes to human rights abuses. Firearms enter Bangladesh through black markets across borders. He urged Bangladesh to develop appropriate policies and guidelines together with civil society organizations to stop the illegal trade of firearms in the country, stating that, “guns should be silenced before it silences the development process.” Mr. Rahman also emphasized that Bangladesh is heading for fast economic growth, but could achieve even greater growth with peace and stability, which are preconditions to development.

Instituto Sou da Paz

Sou da Paz held multiple activities for the Week of Action, including working with the São Paulo Municipal Department of Urban Security and its Metropolitan Civil Guards to promote an intensive buyback campaign for the voluntary hand over of firearms. In Brazil, the buyback campaign is a permanent public policy and the public can anonymously give up firearms, without criminal charges, at authorized public stations anytime of the year and receive between $40-$125 USD. Nonetheless, this service is no longer properly publicized and the number of surrendered guns is decreasing annually. Therefore, Instituto Sou da Paz helped to intensively advertise the voluntary handover procedures and encourages the volunteer delivery of guns to four designated stations. As a result of the campaign, the number of voluntarily surrendered guns increased by more than 150 percent in June.

To drive attention to the voluntary firearms buyback efforts in a creative way, Instituto Sou da Paz launched the “Last Shot” campaign, produced by Havas, one of the largest global advertising and communication companies. The purpose of the campaign was to highlight the magnitude of armed violence in Brazil and the need to not passively accept this reality. It included a powerful video distributed on social media that shows a firearm that has been seized after being used in crimes performing a “last shot” (found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGgkZzAcTyM). Unlike previous shots fired with deadly ammunition, this gun’s last shot is a load of sunflower seeds discharged into a barrel of soil. As the seeds transform into beautiful flowers, they create a visual memory of the gun’s previous victims and promote the message of sowing peace instead of violence. The video also shows people’s reactions when they come across the exposition of the sunflower barrels with printed firearms and data about armed violence in Brazil. Sou da Paz reproduced this exposition on a smaller scale during the Week of Action and displayed three of these barrels with sunflowers to the gun buyback stations. Furthermore, Sou da Paz produced a short and practical video explaining the firearms handover procedure for dissemination through social media.

Sou da Paz’s campaign generated positive attention from major media outlets, and resulted in 19 media articles. Its social media work also had enormous outreach, with posts reaching more than 90 thousand people, its videos receiving more than 2,000 views and almost 3,000 thousand responses (comments, likes and shares).
Burundi

Femmes Unies pour la Paix dans la Région des Grands Lacs/ Women United for Peace in the Great Lakes Region

Femmes Unies pour la Paix organized a series of events for young people to educate them on the impact of SALW on communities as well as the importance of the voluntary surrender of weapons as it pertains to peace and security. The first event consisted of lectures for students to inform them of the problems related to SALW and to encourage them to resist the proliferation of small arms. The second event was a march to inform the public about the existence of the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence and the importance of reducing the proliferation and misuse of SALW in order to achieve peace and development. The march also raised public awareness about the need for the government to enforce stricter gun control regulations. The third event took place at the football field of Muzinda high school and focused on the misuse of weapons and the need for the public to demand greater measures for their reduction. The final event gave female victims of armed violence a chance to express themselves and showcased the harmful effects of the high availability of weapons as a living reality.

Colonne des Pionniers de Développement/ Colony of Pioneers for Development

Members of Colonne des Pionniers joined a radio show to speak with journalists regarding the harmful effects of illicit weapons and called on governments to prepare for the 2018 Review Conference on the Programme of Action on Small Arms. They also called on governments to make efforts and take action to demonstrate concrete achievements and guarantee the silencing of weapons that are undermining peace, security and development in Burundi and in Africa. Colonne des Pionniers members asked their government to step up efforts to recover and safely store illicit arms within civilian populations, in accordance with its commitments to implement the protocols of the Nairobi Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Kinshasa Convention on Arms Control, and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. They also called for all arms-producing states to speed up efforts to ensure that armed violence cedes to peace and development.

Cameroon

Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace (CAMYOSFOP)

In partnership with other civil society organizations, CAMYOSFOP took the lead in organizing media activities, including participation in radio and TV talk show programs, and distributing press releases on the topic of small arms. They also held a press conference on the progress made by Cameroon in universalizing and implementing the various international instruments on combating the illicit proliferations of arms. The first of these programs was the Cameroon Radio and Television Hello TV talk show with Mr Ngamil Eugine Nyuydine, Executive Director of CAMYOSFOP, appearing as a guest for the program. Discussions during this program focused on the ongoing campaign launched by CAMYOSFOP against war toys, firecrackers and violent films launched, and on the need for Cameroon to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty and to start the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention on SALW in Central Africa. The next talk show CAMYOSFOP participated in was the Siantou Radio interactive debate program to talk about the illicit proliferation of arms and the universalization and implementation of the various international instruments Cameroon is engaged with including, the Kinshasa Convention on SALW, the ATT and the UNPoA. They also discussed the contribution of civil society in mobilizing both the government and the public on the fight against the illicit proliferation and misuse of arms as a stepping stone to peace, security and the stability of Cameroon. The press conference CAMYOSFOP organized focused on these topic as well, and brought together media practitioners and civil society to brainstorm on SALW issues. Finally, CAMYOSFOP held a meeting to reorganize and strengthen the Cameroon Action Network on Small Arms (Cansa). Since 2004, CAMYOSFOP has taken an active lead in Cameroon in organizing activities for the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence.
Fundación Aria held a special seminar for police officials, including the Director of Preventative Police Programs, on the topic of violence, firearms and their impact and unlawful homicides taking place in the country. The seminar focused on gun violence in which the perpetrator and victim are known to one another. Based on a 2015 analysis of police reports, Fundación Arias found that a sizeable majority of malicious firearm homicides that year had been carried out by people who knew their victims. Fundación Arias classified the relationships between those who knew each other as either “licit” or “illicit” relationships, with licit relationships made up of spouses, dating partners, family members, drinking companions, neighbors, or rivals; and illicit relationships comprised of criminal gang members, rival drug traffickers, and members of companies involved in illegal activities. Fundación Arias analyzed which type of relationship formed the greatest number of homicides and the age breakdowns of victims. Through presenting their findings to police officials, Fundación Arias aims to help law enforcement better understand the realities behind gun violence in the country and identify at risk groups in order to foster prevention.

Red Nacional de Iniciativas Ciudadanas por la Paz y contra la Guerra/National Network of Citizen Initiatives for Peace (REDEPAZ)

REDEPAZ held a panel discussion featuring renowned national guests working to end armed violence that was livestreamed to more than 3,200 people. REDEPAZ also raised awareness of the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence by creating a mural with community members. The network created and distributed graphic art pieces to more than 1,000 people to help raise awareness on gun violence issues. Beleaguered by armed conflict for more than 70 decades, Colombia is in a new stage of peace talks with hopes that there will be a shift away from violent responses to problems facing the country. REDEPAZ works to mobilize wide support for peaceful and nonviolent processes, and its leadership includes former guerrillas who once took up arms and renounced them in favor of non-violent solutions.
Democratic Republic of the Congo

REFEADES-MAKOBOLA

REFEADES-MAKOBOLA hosted two theater plays aimed at raising awareness of the correlation between the use of illicit firearms and gender violence. Both plays illustrated how firearms are used in situations of sexual abuse, such as rape and forced prostitution of women. The purpose of the event was to encourage young people to become active participants in efforts against gender-based violence, as well to encourage local authorities to take a more active role in effectively addressing the problem. An ex-combatant and three child soldiers joined the movement against gun violence in DRC as a result of attending this event. Led by women, REFEADES has proven its ability over the years to mobilize and demonstrate male and youth-driven support for peace and an end to gun violence that has caused great suffering in the country.

Ghana

Ghana’s Deputy Minister of the Interior, the UN Resident Coordinator, and the Executive Secretary of the National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons and IANSA held a press conference on the dangers of the unabated proliferation of small arms in the world and on the 2.3 million illicit arms in private hands in Ghana. Speaking on behalf of IANSA, Baffour Amoa outlined priorities for the UN small arm process, including strong implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA); improving national legislation and strengthening National Commissions on Small Arms; mainstreaming gun violence prevention within global development, human rights, health and gender processes; and effective implementation of the International Tracing Instrument and the recommendations of the Groups of Governmental Experts. He also spoke on the importance of preparing for the Third Review Conference on the PoA to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Specific topics to be addressed as part of the PoA process, he noted, will include regulation of arms manufacturing; marking weapons and record-keeping; international cooperation in tracing of guns used in crime or human rights violations; stockpile management and disposal of surplus; weapons collection and destruction; regulation of international transfers of weapons – imports, exports, transit; regulation of arms brokers; public awareness; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration and international cooperation and assistance. The press conference generated multiple articles on the topic of illicit arms, and of the need to take greater action on the illicit arms in circulation.
In observance of the Week of Action Against Gun Violence, CPD hosted two events to raise awareness on the issue of the proliferation of SALW in Haiti. The first event included over 20 police officers and 3 Justices of Peace in which they discussed the regulations and procedures established by Haitian law regarding the ownership of SALW. In addition, the Crown Prosecutor of the Cayes Court delivered an outstanding presentation on various pieces of legislation, stressing that certain legislation should be revised as they are not adapted to current realities. The second event included several speakers working in public institutions, such as the Office for the Protection of Citizens, and included discussions about the harmful effects of SALW on children. In particular, they took the opportunity to explain the rate of children who are kept in detention centers and who are prosecuted for the use of firearms, thereby having an unfortunate impact on the future of the Haiti’s children.

Haiti’s strategic geographic location and its weak institutions make it an attractive setting for trafficking arms and other items. Moreover, local security forces and the justice system sometimes lack the capacity to adequately address the challenges posed by armed criminal groups. Fostering communication and cooperation between civil society and security forces is therefore a welcome step.
India

Indian Institute for Peace Disarmament & Environmental Protection (IIPDEP)

Political leaders, local government representatives, youth and women leaders took an active part in seminars held by IIPDEP during the Week of Action. Parliamentarian Dr. Bonde thanked IANSA, the Parliamentary Forum and IIPDEP for organizing an important public education and awareness seminar on gun violence and the role of Parliamentarians. In India, there are very few organizations working on the critical issue of gun violence. Today, locally made weapons are proliferating and readily available. Inexpensive arms are being used by anti-social groups for the extortion of money and gang violence. Proliferation of SALW hampers development and has negative impacts on children, women and girls. Women and children are in constant fear and experience profound psychological effects from gun violence. Political leaders and policy makers must be educated on these issues in order to address the detrimental effects of SALW on society, and to ask the government to take concrete steps to minimize this impact. Seminar participants urged the government to curb the illicit trade and proliferation of SALW. They also noted that these issues cannot be dealt with in India alone and must be tackled by all neighboring states in South Asia. This is a humanitarian issue that must involve the input of all states within the United Nations small arms process, IIPEP stated.

Iraq

Iraqi Organization for Rehabilitation Society and Environment

The Iraqi Organization for the Rehabilitation of Society and the Environment hosted three different events on peacebuilding as part of their Global Week of Action against Gun Violence efforts. The first event was a football match held for youth against gun violence to support peacebuilding efforts. The match encouraged university students, teachers and youths to renounce arms use and gun violence, and further educated the community about the dangers of armed violence. The second event was a symposium that took a clear stance on rejecting the toxic masculinity associated with violence and guns, and aimed to build a community consensus against armed violence and support legislative efforts to curb arms circulation. The third and final event was an art show held to promote peacebuilding and to support action on gun violence.
The Permanent Peace Movement hosted a community service workshop (HUMN200) attended by fifty invited guests from different sectors. The workshop primarily focused on the dangers of possessing firearms at home and methods to prevent armed violence. This event included a television interview with Mr. Fadi Abi Allam, the president of the Permanent Peace Movement, regarding the dangers of possessing and discharging firearms and subsequent methods to prevent armed violence. Members of civil society and government and military leaders launched a National Campaign on Reducing the Risk of Firearms, in which the following organizations and governmental departments were represented: the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Media and Security sectors, the Lebanese Army, the Representative of Islamic and Christian People, UNICEF, the EU, Red Cross, civil society organizations, political parties, public and private educational institutions, municipalities, mayors and members of the media. Furthermore, they established a focus group to meet on a monthly basis to ensure that the perspective and concerns regarding SALW are heard and addressed appropriately.

To raise awareness of SALW-fueled gun violence and the need for concerted efforts to combat and eradicate the illicit proliferation and trade in SALW, KANSA held a number of activities, including a procession through the streets of Mathare in Nairobi City, an area that is known to be a gun violence hot spot in the city. During the procession, a government official encouraged the young people, women and men in attendance to voluntarily surrender their weapons and to report to authorities in confidence those within their communities who are in possession of illicit SALW. She further promised the cooperation and leadership of government entities at the local level in fighting the challenges brought about by the proliferation of illicit SALW. Participants also had a chance to interact with local residents and get firsthand information on the prevalence of illicit SALW in the area and how they have affected businesses and increased instances of criminal activities such as handbag and mobile phone snatching, house robberies and burglaries. Speakers also called for peace and harmonious coexistence of communities within the area.

The procession culminated in a meeting to discuss the negative effects of gun violence, particularly among the youth. The meeting brought together representatives of civil society organizations working on SALW, peace activists, government representatives and other stakeholders. Participants discussed the current state of SALW proliferation in the country and the Great Lakes region, and the problems associated with SALW. It also highlighted priorities for government, CSOs and other stakeholders in eradicating the problem.

The meeting was followed by a press conference in which government and CSO officials addressed the media on key issues relating to the challenges of illicit SALW, and shared with the media the meeting outcome, particularly regarding priority initiatives that should be undertaken by governments aimed to control illicit SALW proliferation ahead of the Third Review Conference on the UN Programme of Action in 2018.
Malawi

People's Federation for National Peace and Development (PEFENAP)

PEFENAP organized a peace and anti-gun violence march between two major roads in Malawi’s capital city, Lilongwe. Private security companies who participated in the march visited victims of armed violence at the Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi’s second largest city. The Global Week of Action events were limited towards the end of the week due to complications arising from an unrelated teacher’s strike that prompted police to fire tear gas at hundreds of students who took to the streets in Blantyre to ask authorities to address their teachers’ grievances so that they could resume learning. Due to these security challenges and actions taken by the police and city council officials, a larger peace parade planned by PEFENAP in Blantyre was blocked. PEFENAP also created a documentary entitled “Speak Out,” which documented the march and spoke about Malawi’s efforts to maintain peace and prevent armed violence.

Mexico

24-0 Mexico

24-0 Mexico held a special workshop for young people between the ages of 14 and 20 years old who are currently in detention for the use of weapons. The workshop focused on the impact of firearms use, and the risks of getting involved in situations in which firearms are present. As part of the workshop, the young people helped to create an anti-gun violence mural inside the detention center while reflecting on violence in society and their own role as members of society. This creative and artistic project was also a chance for the youth to shift from negative to positive actions, and helps to support their eventual reintegration into society after serving their detention periods. 24-0 distributed a press release on the project and plans to continue working with youth in detention for weapons offenses after the success of this project. Mexico has been shaken by numerous death of young people in the country due to organized crime, as well as by a school shooting perpetrated by a student against his teacher and classmates earlier this year. Outreach to at-risk youth by organizations working on gun violence in the country is critical.
To help foster awareness of gun violence and of UN frameworks on small arms such as the Arms Trade Treaty amongst youth in Nepal, WPD Nepal chose 12 students from six different schools to participate in a speech competition in the presence of educators, classmates, and renowned community leaders. Based on their own research into SALW, students discussed how illegal small arms and light weapons are causing the deaths of innocent lives and stated that Nepal must ratify the Arms Trade Treaty in order to foster full implementation of the Treaty. The students also shared concrete examples of how their own family members have become casualties of gun violence, as well as how armed violence in other countries has led to more destruction and poverty than development. They further stressed the importance of education as a tool to raising awareness on the issue of the misuse of small arms, and emphasized that signing the Arms Trade Treaty is essential to ensuring peace and development in Nepal.

Nepal’s fragile peace has come at a tremendous human cost. The country’s decade-long armed conflict between 1996 and 2006 claimed more than 13,000 lives, and political, economic, and social violence continue to simmer across the country despite the signing of the 2006 Peace Accords. The face of armed violence in Nepal appears to be changing and taking on diverse characteristics, moving from political repression to crime-related violence. Between 20-100 armed groups are believed to be operating in the country, but relatively little is known about the instruments, perpetrators and institutions shaping armed violence in the country, according to Small Arms Survey.

The Society of Nigerian Doctors for the Welfare of Mankind hosted a live talk show on a popular radio station in the country on the issue of armed violence and its effect on public health. They discussed topics such as the ownership of small arms, the effects of arms, and the medical implications of armed violence, including the financial and social costs on society. Gender-based violence and the role of doctors was also highlighted. They discussed the treaties designed to control arms proliferation, such as the ATT and the PoA, and Nigeria’s compliance to these international treaties. Finally, they answered questions from listeners and cleared up grey areas regarding SALW. To conclude, they held a football match between two local teams to inform people about the effects of armed violence and promote the message of nonviolent engagement and cooperation.
Pakistan

Blue Veins

Blue Veins, in collaboration with other organizations civil society organizations in Pakistan, organized a conference on the topic of “The Road to Development and Peace Begins With Silencing the Guns.” Participants included members from the media, lawyers, doctors, civil society organizations, labor unions, the transgender community, students, teachers and political activists. The participants expressed concerns about the proliferation and misuse of small arms and urged governments to take greater action. An estimated $134 million worth of small arms are imported into Pakistan annually, taking into account legal imports of small firearms, military grade weapons, hunting and sports equipment, pistols, revolvers, shotguns, and rifles along with ammunition. This does not account for the plethora of weapons smuggled through the porous Afghan border, where arms traffickers operate. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is a major security challenge currently faced by South Asia and Pakistan. The trafficking and ready availability of these weapons fuel communal conflict, political instability and pose a threat; not only to security, but also to viable development. Qamar Naseem, Program Coordinator for Blue Veins, explained that, “the issue of gun violence is complex and deeply rooted in our culture, which is why we must take a public health approach in ensuring our families and communities are safe. We must place a renewed emphasis on improving gun injury and violence research. Ongoing work is needed to ensure firearms do not fall into the wrong hands and to expand access to mental health services to those who need it the most.” The conference garnered widespread media attention and generated approximately twenty new articles, many of which made front page news.

Philippines

Center for Peace Education (CPE)

The Center for Peace Education organized numerous events in collaboration with civil society groups, including a training workshop in partnership with the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP) on peace education and non-violence; a peace education training at Miriam College attended by teachers from all over the country; a training workshop that was co-organized with the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao consisting of teachers and members of civil society; and a peace education training for teachers in partnership with Miriam College-Nuvali and Miriam College-Basic Education Unit.

In partnership with the National Commission on Culture and the Arts, CPE also held a youth camp for peace in Magalang, Pampanga that was attended by young people from various faith and ethnic groups in the Philippines. The event was a two-day training workshop that included discussions on peace, non-violence, interfaith relations, conflict resolution, and disarmament - specifically on issues of small arms proliferation and gun violence.

Throughout the week, CPE, along with Pax Christi Miriam College, shared Facebook photos and a video to raise awareness of the issue through social media. Among the posts were photos of supporters wearing orange as part of the Wear Orange against gun violence campaign, and an infographic about women and gun violence highlighting the role of guns in violence against women. The video focused on women, peace, and disarmament and provided statistical data on gun violence as well as illustrating women’s perspectives on gun violence and its impact over the years.

Finally, the Center for Peace Education and Pax Christi Miriam College organized the “Women March Against the Bomb and Women Walk Against Gun Violence” at the University of the Philippines to support the campaign against nuclear weapons and gun violence and the negotiations on the Nuclear Ban Resolution in the United Nations. The participants promoted slogans such as “Silence guns, not lives,” and “My life is worth more than a bullet.” Participants had their photo taken with an advocacy sign containing the messages and hashtags to spread awareness on social media platforms.
Amnesty International-Senegal organized a cross-border community event that brought people affected by armed violence in Karembeu. Karembeu is located approximately a dozen kilometers from the border of neighboring country Guinea-Bissau. It and neighboring villages have greatly suffered from armed violence linked to the Casamance conflict, an ongoing conflict that has been waged since 1982. Today, the weapons from this conflict are being used by thieves to raid the crops and livestock of farmers. On both sides of the border, communities have organized to protect themselves from armed thieves who terrorize them and take their property. This activity during the Week of Action allowed the Senegalese and the Bissau-Guineans to meet at Karembeu to reflect on the security on both sides of the border. State authorities and sub-prefects were present. The activity was covered by local radio stations such as Zig FM and Pukumel FM, as well as by TFM television of the renowned singer, Youssou Ndour, the first private television station in Senegal. The event reached millions of people through media platforms, and helped strengthen awareness of and the need for greater action against gun violence, as well as foster cross-border ties between affected communities.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone Action Network on Small Arms (SLANSA)

To mark the Global Week of Action, SLANSA launched a baseline survey report of blacksmiths in seven districts across the country, and urged blacksmiths to seek further training in livelihood skills as alternatives to crafting illicit weapons. SLANSA also called for a ban on scrap metals being used for the purpose of creating new guns, and reiterated its stance against gun violence in Sierra Leone. Addressing journalists, SLANSA representative Adenike Cole observed that as a post war country, Sierra Leone has suffered immensely from the use of small arms and physical scars still remain. SLANSA’s survey found that some blacksmiths were producing guns for commercial or security purposes, and many of these blacksmiths were willing to stop producing the arms if they found alternative livelihoods, but they oftentimes lacked the tools needed to do so. SLANSA also recognized the efforts that have been made by the Sierra Leone Small Arms Commission to register small arms, and urged blacksmiths who wish to continue to produce guns to obtain a Manufacturer’s Licence and register the weapons as well. SLANSA’s report and message of ending gun violence in the country was widely covered in the country.
South Africa

Gun Free South Africa (GFSA)

To mark the 2017 Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence, GFSA conducted a workshop with a community-based organization that works in a gun-violence affected area of The Western Cape to declare their premises a Gun-Free Zone (GFZ). They specifically developed a workshop package (that included GFZ signs, pamphlets and stickers) for the workshop, which will be replicated through GFSA’s strategic partnerships to communities affected by gun violence. Along with the Children’s Radio Foundation, GFSA also helped co-produce a Fact Sheet and Outreach Guide in relation to Gender, Guns, and Violence that was used to help conduct the workshops. They also launched a report that detailed GFSA’s input at the joint UNDP and African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) national consultation on 6-7 June, Monitoring the Implementation of SDG 16 (target 16.4) in South Africa. In addition, GFSA distributed a press release on the Global Week of Action that highlighted the deaths of 89 children directly linked to poor enforcement of the Firearms Control Act through corruption, thereby documenting the impact of poor enforcement of gun laws in South Africa.

South Sudan

Isis-WICCE
- Women’s International Cross-Cultural Exchange

Isis-WICCE, in partnership with the Association of Media Women of South Sudan and Organization for Nonviolence and Development, a member of the South Sudan Action Network on Small Arms, organized a Stakeholders Consultative Meeting to mark the Week of Action Against Gun Violence. The meeting included 35 participants, including women leaders, members of Parliament, peace activists, civil society organizations, media, and the police. It aimed to raise awareness on the current status of small arms and light weapons and to discuss the impact of SALW on conflict and human security in South Sudan. There are no laws to regulate the use and purchase of SALW in South Sudan and in several communities, armed youths have caused harm to populations because of the ready availability of SALW. The fact that there is no threat of consequence for their use further makes it easy for people to commit crimes. This is especially critical considering the fact that South Sudan is currently facing conflict. It is therefore imperative to put into effect a law that will hold all individuals accountable for the use of SALW.
EASSI participated in this year’s Global Week of Action against Gun Violence by hosting an hour-long discussion on Radio One FM 90. EASSI Acting Executive Director, Ms. Christine Nankubuge Ndawula and Uganda Police Spokesperson Emillian Kayima discussed gun violence and its consequences, especially for women and children. Mr. Emillian Kayima acknowledged that although police officers are doing all that they can to fight gun violence, it has been a challenge because Uganda has not yet ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Ratification of the treaty would allow the Ministry of Internal Affairs to draft a law on arms trade and gun violence, which could be sent to parliament for enactment. He urged EASSI and partners to push for the ratification of the ATT so that they in turn can push for a law on arms trade and gun violence. Such a law and its implementation would make the country safer in regards to gun violence.

PEACE BOAT

Since 1983, Peace Boat has been organizing regional and global voyages that traverse the oceans and connect people across borders for learning and cooperation. The ship not only carries not only thousands of people around the world, it’s also used to deliver humanitarian aid for disaster stricken areas, as well as sporting goods, musical instruments and medical supplies to communities in need. While participating in the UN Ocean Conference, Peace Boat’s sister organization Peace Boat US held a side event in which they spoke about how our ocean should be used to connect people through dialogue in peaceful ways—not to be used to transport arms and ammunition that will escalate conflict and lead to crime, and invited people to share that message. Sailing with the UN Sustainable Development Goals logo on its ship around the world, and committed to helping to achieve the SDGS by 2030, Peace Boat calls on people to reflect more deeply on the meaning of our world’s oceans, and to reject their use for violent purposes.

Gays Against Guns (GAG)

Formed shortly after the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida that left 49 innocent people dead and 58 others wounded, Gays Against Guns is an inclusive direct action group of LGBTQ people and their allies committed to nonviolently advocating for stronger gun laws in the United States. The organization is experiencing rapid growth and established chapters in multiple cities to ensure safety for all individuals, particularly vulnerable communities such as people of color, women, people who struggle with mental health issues, LGBTQ people and religious minorities. During the Week of Action, GAG held a large memorial rally in New York City on the one-year anniversary of the mass shooting in Orlando to both remember victims and to speak out against the gun violence that cut short their lives.
As part of the Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence, IANSA’s youth volunteers launched a new IANSA Youth Ambassador Program to help give young people a chance to participate in efforts to end the proliferation and misuse of small arms. Internationally, firearms have a devastating impact on the lives of youth people—in the United States alone gunfire is becoming the leading cause of death of young people aged 15-24. With an estimated one billion guns in the world and millions more added annually. The proliferation of small arms continues to fuel conflict, crime, suicide, and sexual violence, and hinder the development of communities; all of which negatively impact the lives and futures of young people. Moreover, firearm injuries too often leave young people permanently incapacitated; restricting their mobility, employment, and other opportunities. Through the IANSA Youth Ambassador program, participants will help educate other youth about small arms issues, gain an understanding of UN small arms processes, and create materials supporting SDG 16.4 and campaigns such as International Gun Destruction Day.

The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons

On the occasion of its 15 year anniversary and to mark the Global Week of Action, Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons highlighted the problem with small arms and light weapons-related violence around the world through the launch of a new campaign (in English, French and Spanish) called “Words over Bullets.” The objective of the campaign is to contribute to raising global awareness of the importance of reducing and preventing small arms and light weapons-related violence. It includes short films, photos and messages on this subject from parliamentarians, civil society and other relevant actors that represent different regions of the world.

The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons is an international organization gathering parliamentarians globally across party lines. As established in the Strategic Plan 2016-2018, it aims to contribute to the achievement of more peaceful and developed societies through parliamentary action against armed violence for increased human security. The Forum is the only global organization to gather parliamentarians with the purpose of reducing and preventing armed violence, by specifically targeting small arms and light weapons.
Every day, guns wreak havoc across the world as women, men and children suffer from the scourge of gun-related violence. It is a problem not limited to situations of armed conflict – it affects all societies. The destructive illicit trade in small arms and the ammunition which make them lethal is one of the primary obstacles preventing communities from achieving the sustainable peace and development they deserve.

The Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence is an opportunity to remind the world about this stark reality. However, it is also an opportunity to remember how much can be achieved through collective action. This year’s theme, “The Road to Development and Peace Begins with Silencing the Guns”, comes at a time when the international community is beginning to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an ambitious roadmap of seventeen concrete goals intended to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. The Goals form the basis of a universal, transformative and integrative agenda.

Goal 16 of this agenda acknowledges the inextricable link between development and peace, specifically highlighting the need to reduce illicit arms flows. We must remember that development is given a chance to flourish when States effectively control their national arsenals; businesses are given a chance to succeed when weapons do not flow into the wrong hands; men, women, girls and boys are given a chance to pursue their dreams when their lives are not cut short by a bullet. Our duty to “silence the guns” is part of our common quest to build healthy and prosperous communities. Armed violence aggravates poverty, inhibits access to social services and diverts energy and resources away from the bedrock elements of sustainable development such as infrastructure, education, health, clean water and sanitation. It contributes to the displacement of communities and the loss of livelihoods. It exacerbates inequalities and impedes women’s empowerment.

During this Week of Global Action Against Gun Violence, I urge all stakeholders, Governments, regional and international organizations and civil society alike, to rally around the cause inherent in the SDGs—building a safer, more prosperous and more peaceful world for all. In 2018, the international community will convene at the United Nations in New York for the third review conference of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons – the weapons of choice for armed violence across the globe. The conference will be a prime opportunity to strengthen efforts to silence the guns for a better world, an opportunity to use the Programme of Action to transform gun control policies into concrete outcomes. The Sustainable Development Goals have made clear that promoting peace, providing access to justice and building effective institutions necessarily include actions that contribute to a significant reduction in illicit arms flows. Communities awash in weapons cannot achieve the prosperity, justice and security we all deserve.

Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs,
United Nations
WOMEN WALK AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE

Funding provided by:

United Nations Trust Facility
Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation