



House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development Study on Women, Peace and Security

Submission by Mines Action Canada

3 May 2016

Mines Action Canada (MAC) is a Canadian non-governmental organization founded in 1994. MAC is an international leader working to eliminate the serious humanitarian, environmental and developmental consequences of indiscriminate and inhumane weapons. It is the Canadian partner of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the 1997 co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. MAC is also a founding member of the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

MAC worked closely with all parties in the Canadian Parliament first to create the 1997 Ottawa Treaty banning landmines and now to effectively implement and fully universalize it. MAC, then, worked closely with all parties in Parliament to create the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. We continue to work with all parties in Parliament to strengthen Canada's efforts to eliminate the harm indiscriminate weapons cause to civilians at the time of use and in the years following a conflict. We have found that the women, peace and security agenda contributes immensely to our work since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325.

MAC welcomes the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development's study of Canada's role in supporting the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. In an effort to support this study, MAC would like to draw the Committee's attention to three challenges we have seen in our work and provide four recommendations.

Challenge 1: Gendered impacts of weapons

Weapons, like armed conflict, have differing impacts on men, women, girls and boys. MAC works to limit the humanitarian impact of landmines, cluster munitions, explosive weapons used in populated areas and explosive remnants of war (ERW). Each of these weapons categories have differing impact on men women, girls and boys. For example, men and boys constitute the majority of casualties from landmines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, but women and girls are disproportionately disadvantaged by such incidents because they often face multiple forms of discrimination in accessing services and support.¹ Differing access to healthcare has led to a higher fatality rate for women and girls than men and boys.² When surveyed, women in an affected community perceived victim assistance services to be either completely absent or insufficient to addressing their needs.³

¹ ICBL, [Landmine Monitor Report 2015: Toward a Mine-Free World](#), November 2015

² Due to inequalities in victim assistance, women who survive explosions receive less health care resulting in a higher fatality rate for females (43%) than for males (29%). Source: Gender and Mine Action Programme www.gmap.ch

³ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, [Impact of Mines/ERW on Women and Children](#), November 2010



Mines/ERW widows provide a clear example of the gender-specific challenges faced by women. Few national laws, policies or victim assistance projects account for widows. Widows typically experience a significant decline in economic security following the death of a partner, compounded by social, economic, or educational barriers which impede their ability to successfully enter the workforce.⁴ Widows often lose their homes or agricultural land due to deficient land and property rights. Women's work is consistently undervalued in informal and subsistence economies, such as homes and farms, leading to an overall "undervaluing of the socioeconomic needs and contributions of widows" in their communities.⁵

The international community is working to gather more information on the gendered impact of mines/ERW as well as explosive weapons used in populated areas but this work is hampered by a lack of disaggregated data.

Challenge 2: Lack of disaggregated data

Women and children have been ignored and under-represented in reporting. Age and gender-sensitive disaggregated data is vital in providing effective services to victims of mines/ERW. Each State Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, 100 countries to date (including Canada), is required to "make every effort to collect reliable relevant data" on victims, of which their age and gender are crucial information.⁶

Though efforts to collect gender and age-sensitive data have recently improved, it remains the least measured and reported aspect of victim assistance.⁷ Such information, even when available, is often unreliable, and focuses on survivors, ignoring the significant impacts on women whose spouses have been killed or injured by mines/ERW.⁸ This lack of data skews the development of victim assistance policies and programs resulting in limited access to services for women and girls. Without age and gender disaggregated data, programs will not be able to reach the whole community nor fully address these lethal barriers to development.

Challenge 3: Representation and participation in disarmament forums

At the international diplomacy level, women are under-represented in disarmament forums. Our colleagues at Article 36, a UK-based civil society organization reviewed participant lists from meetings of 13 disarmament forums between 2010 and 2014. They found that only 10 out of the 195 countries and territories included in the study had equal numbers of men and women on their delegations on average. Overall 160 countries' delegations had more men than women on average and 5 countries did not include women on any delegations for the meetings in the study. Civil society delegations were slightly better than states at having gender balanced delegations

⁴ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, [Victim Assistance and Widowhood](#), June 2015

⁵ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, [Victim Assistance and Widowhood](#), June 2015, p. 4

⁶ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, [Victim Assistance and Widowhood](#), June 2015, p. 4

⁷ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, [The Impact of Mines/ERW on Children](#), November 2015

⁸ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, [The Impact of Mines/ERW on Children](#), November 2015



but equal representation was not achieved by either.⁹ Article 36 also examined the ratio of male to female speakers in these disarmament forums and found equally disappointing results.

The involvement of women in international discussions of disarmament is significantly lower than it should be after 15 years of implementing United Nations Security Council resolution 1325. There is no shortage of women with expertise on these topics or personal experience with weapons or armed conflict, however, they are often overlooked when speakers and delegates are selected. It is hard to effectively include women in peace and security work, like disarmament, if they are not in the room when these discussions happen. The inclusion of women on delegations, such as those to disarmament forums, is perhaps one of the most straight-forward action points listed in 1325 and yet much work remains to be done.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In light of the above three challenges, MAC makes the following recommendations to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development:

- Leverage Canada's reputation as a leader on disarmament to ensure increased funding to victim assistance programs with a gender perspective so that women and girls receive high quality services on an equal basis with other persons with disabilities or vulnerable groups
- Strengthen efforts to increase the collection of age and gender disaggregated data on the impact of weapons and armed conflict on men, women, boys and girls in order to improve policy and law making processes.
- Ensure that the new Canadian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and Canadian policies regarding disarmament is based on gender sensitive evidence across defense, diplomacy, and development spheres.
- Support the participation of women in international disarmament forums as members of civil society and government delegations through funding to civil society organizations and participation in sponsorship programs that ensure low-income states can participate in the meetings.

MAC has seen that including women and girls into disarmament, peace and security at the grassroots, national and international level can have a positive impact for all. However, the lack of participation of women and girls in disarmament remains problematic. Without a place at the table and information on how weapons have a gendered impact, women's voices are easily overlooked. Women and girls have been consistently silenced in studies on weapons and work on disarmament, though they remain disproportionately affected by these issues. Addressing this disparity is paramount if long-term, effective disarmament, peace and security is to be achieved.

Assessing Canada's role in global peace and security requires understanding the different challenges faced by men, women, boys and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings. Canada can become a world leader in ensuring a role for women in disarmament, peace and security work. It is time we do so.

⁹ Article 36, [*Women and multilateral disarmament forums: Patterns of underrepresentation*](#)