

FOREIGN AFFAIRS CANADA
Policy Position Paper
Topic: NON PROLIFERATION, ARMS CONTROL, AND DISARMAMENT

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Name of Course: PAPM 4000

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Date Submitted: December 1st, 2006

Question: How can Canada's policy on SALW better address age and gender issues?

Issues Identified

- Children afflicted by the trafficking of illegal weapons.
- Women and landmine awareness.

Response to E-discussion Question

Firstly, focusing on children afflicted by the trafficking of illegal weapon should be of the utmost priority. In war torn countries, the international community must ensure that children are not left in the midst of conflicts where there only option is to pick up arms.

Secondly, Canada's policy should focus on the training and education of women regarding landmine awareness. The advancement and education of women in the developing world has shown considerable economic and social benefits for the community as a whole.

Policy Recommendations

Monitoring and reporting on these issues should be the main methods where Canada can produce results. Simple advocacy of these policies will not be sufficient to deter these detrimental activities. It has become increasingly important to implement a system of checks and balances, where reporting on the growth of issues such as gender disparity, violence against women and children affected by proliferation of SALW can be accomplished.

Canadian policy should initially be concerned with building consensus among the international community on the issue of children afflicted by illegal small arms and light weapons.(1) The Canadian human security program promotes United Nations Resolution 1612 and advocates the importance of its enforcement and monitoring mechanisms in areas where violations still occur. In order for Canada to eliminate children picking up arms, we must make them feel secure enough to make it unnecessary. Furthermore, making human security in areas such as Uganda, Burundi and Sri Lanka a primary concern is essential to remove the need for enlisting child soldiers. It has become

necessary to increase pressure on these countries to ensure children are not caught in the cross-fires of conflict. Lobbying this position in the United Nations is crucial in keeping this issue on the forefront of the international policy agenda, and using tactics such as naming and shaming has shown continual results curbing violations. (2)

In war torn countries, women and children continually fall victim to dangers that landmines pose. Education should be the primary outlet in which Canadian policy can be shaped to help address this issue. Awareness of the threat that small arms and landmines hold and the implications of their proliferation can be communicated by an intervening country such as Canada. Educational programs must be set up that directly target women and children in order for this information to be disseminated and so that the domestic population will understand that the threat of SALW will affect them post-conflict and for years to come. These programs will allow women keep their families safe and disseminate information to the domestic population.(3) Expanding program areas and funding is vital to developing these programs and adequately addressing the need for awareness. Canada, being the first country to ratify the Ottawa convention has shown tremendous leadership in this issue and should continue to be a model for the international community.

Finally, the continual support and work done using multilateral institutions such as the United Nations is important to the address SALW and gender and age issues. Although, the UN has come under considerable criticism recently concerning its implementation and enforcement capacities, it remains the most effective forum in which the international community can address humanitarian issues. Security Council resolutions 1325, 1612, 1539, 1460 call upon the international community to recognize the need to protect women and children from the proliferation of SALW and the desperate need to set up reporting and monitoring mechanisms for this issue. Canada must maintain its initiative by working through multilateral institutions and clearly advocate in this international forum the continual need to further this humanitarian cause.

1. Peter McKay, *Child Soldiers: Changing the Reality on the Ground*, (August 28, 2006) available at: http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/Minister%20MacKay%20-%20Address%20at%20Expanding%20the%20Dialogue.pdf
2. Ibid.
3. www.mines.gc.ca/IV/mine_action_africa-en.asp