What is Militarism?

Militarism is Not Just About Conflict!

Militarism is not merely the presence of war or military institutions, nor is it confined to the battlefield or to large and wealthy states. It is pervasive. Militarism comprises a set of values rooted in rigid patriarchal constructions of gender, through which men and boys are socialized to believe that violent masculinities are ideal. Cultures of militarism allow States and non-State actors to act with impunity on their misogynistic, racist, homophobic, transphobic, classist, and xenophobic agendas to maintain power and control. They not only normalize physical and sexual violence against women in war, but also compromise their human rights in peace.

Militarism Affects Human Security and Development!

Spending for arms, paramilitary training, defense programs, and military operations obstruct human security and come at the cost of development. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global military spending in 2011 had reached record highs, exceeding an estimated $1.735 trillion. In 2010, the International Peace Bureau calculated that the extra annual cost needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 came only at a fraction of military spending at $329 billion. Goals that could have been achieved were:

- Child mortality and improving material health: $10 billion
- Ensuring environmental sustainability: $155.6 billion
- Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger: $102 billion
- Developing a global partnership for development: $40 billion
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases: $14.2 billion
- Achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, and empowering women: $7.2 billion.

In addition to its enormous opportunity costs, this prioritization of military spending further closes doors for women to pursue their educational and professional goals as States slash social welfare budgets with the expectation that women will make up for lost care and services to their families. Neglecting to address social inequalities in favor of funding conflict, States also provoke instabilities within their borders. Large and sustained military spending exacerbates poverty and economic instability and prolongs conflict—key drivers behind abuses such as human trafficking, early and forced marriage, and intimate partner violence.

Militarism Harms the Environment and Consumes Our Resources!

Militarism degrades environments—the effects of which are most heavily felt by women and girls. In peace, military activities continue to consume a tremendous amount of land, energy, and resources. For example:

- **Large oil consumption by a military contributes massively to global warming, affecting the environment, including human access to renewable resources and animals' natural habitat.**[i]
- **Not including land belonging to arms producing companies, it was estimated in 1981 that between 750,000 and 1.5 million square kilometers of land in peacetime were in direct military use globally.**[ii]

Overwhelming figures such as these combine with global warming and the destruction of wide swaths of land used in war games to intensify food and water insecurity and the spread of disease. This disproportionately affects rural and indigenous women, whose livelihoods are dependent on the environment's well-being. Militarism consumes human resources, women and girls are forced to become family breadwinners, and often in environments that already restrict their social and economic rights, such as access to land rights and inheritance.

Militarism Endangers Women Human Rights Defenders!

Around the world, Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) play an important role in advocating for the rights of women affected by militarism's consequences. In subverting traditional gender roles and challenging States and non-State actors, WHRDs themselves are targets for threats, assault, and even murder. Militarism's effectiveness stems from its ability to cast budgeting for war as necessary and peacetime mobilization as normal at the expense of investing in women's human rights. In order to ensure women and girls' equality in all aspects of their lives, it is vital to support WHRDs and to challenge militarism as a paradigm.

To further explore the linkages between gender, militarism, and other social justice issues, please read the following publications:

- Burke, Colleen. (1998) "Women and Militarism."
  http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/daphnetoolkit/files/projects/1998_043/women_and_militarism_1998_043.pdf
- Enloe, Cynthia. (2000) *Maneuvers: The International Policies of Militarizing Women's Lives.* Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press. http://www.ucpress.edu/book.php?isbn=9780520220713
- Erturk, Yakin. (2013) "The quest for gender-justice peace: from impunity to accountability."
  http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/yakin-erturk/quest-for-gender-just-peace-from-impunity-to-accountability
- International Peace Bureau. (2012) "Opportunity Costs: Military Spending and the UN's Development Agenda."
  http://www.ipb.org/uploads/tbl_noticies_web/169/documents/Opportunity%20Costs%20web
- International Peace Bureau. (2011) "What Does Development Cost?"
  http://www.ipb.org/uploads/tbl_contingut_web/210/documents/What%20does%20development%20cost.pdf
- Ostling, Kristen. (1992) "The Impact of Militarism on the Environment." in Peace Magazine.
  http://www.peacemagazine.org/archive/v08n3p08.htm
- The Women Peacemakers Program's "Gender & Militarism: Analyzing the Links to Strategize for Peace" campaign:
  https://www.womenpeacemakersprogram.org/gender-and-militarism-campaign

For more resources, visit http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu/resources

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[i] Karbuz, S. (2007). US military oil pains. *Energy Bulletin*. Retrieved from http://www2.energybulletin.net/node/26194http://www2.energybulletin.net/node/26194

[ii] Levy, B. S., & Sidel, V. W. (2008). *War and public health*. New York: Oxford University Press.