HOW DO WEAPONS CONTRIBUTE TO GENDER BASED-VIOLENCE

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This presentation covers

• About Cameroon and WILPF Cameroon
• Prevalence of GBV in Cameroon
• Universalization of the ATT to prevent GBV
• The Gendered impacts of the arms trade
• What to consider in arms transfers?
About Cameroon

- **LOCATED IN CENTRAL AFRICA**
- **10 REGIONS**
- An African colony of the German empire from 1884 to 1916 and then France and Great Britain
- Independence in 1960
ABOUT WILPF Cameroon

• **Creation**: 2014

• **Mission**: End conflicts through women peacebuilders, build a sustainable peace for a world where men and women have the same social, economic and political rights.
WILPF Programs

Disarmament (RCW)

Crisis Response

PeaceWomen (WPS)

Human Rights
Prevalence of GBV in Cameroon

• 56.4% of women experienced at least one of these forms of violence: rape, sexual abuse, domestic violence, denial of resources or opportunity, psychological abuse, physical violence or early marriage. Young women, aged 15 to 35, are most at risk.

• Gender-based violence has increased since the beginning of the crisis: A consultation in the South-West shows that 85% of respondents think that women and girls face violence.

• Sexual violence by armed groups or other men is a reality that is sometimes faced by boys and men.
Universalization of the ATT to prevent GBV

- Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are the most accessible, easily concealable, and transportable type of weapons in Cameroon.
- The government authorises transfers of other categories of weapons within the scope of the ATT such as aircraft, tanks, and ships.
- The weapons used by the fighters in the conflict are difficult to trace and debate exists on their source. Some are produced locally in contravention of national law; others may have been obtained from legal stocks.
- These weapons contributed in the increase of violence; they are used to commit serious acts of gender-based violence.

WHY DO THIS?
Universalization of the ATT to prevent GBV

• Participation at the ATT CSPs and events
Universalization of the ATT to prevent GBV

• WILPF’s Side Event at CSP 2
Guidelines on the implementation of ATT Article 7.4
Geneva, August 2016
Universalization of the ATT to prevent GBV

• At the national and regional levels, Workshops, advocacy, campaigns and surveys on illicit arms trade and the need to ratify the ATT

• The ATT was ratified in June 2018
The Gendered impacts of the arms trade

• The arms trade has a gender dimension, as the ATT recognized in its preamble:
  “The vast majority of people affected by armed conflict and armed violence are civilians, and in particular women and children”

• The impact on women is tragic for some reasons including: the violation of their physical integrity and the serious impact on their ability to contribute to the well-being of their families and communities.
The Gendered impacts of the arms trade

• WILPF Cameroon examined the current conflict and found that the presence of weapons is making it easier to commit gender-based violence.

• Many examples demonstrate the multi-faceted ways in which the presence of weapons can have diverse gendered impacts that go beyond immediate use of a weapon in an act of physical or sexual violence.

• There are socio-economic ramifications of armed violence and conflict, in which existing gender norms and societal roles are exacerbated and create vulnerability among both women and men.
THE CONFLICTS IN CAMEROON
Some gendered effects of weapons (testimonies in the NW conflict region)

• In March 2019, two girls decided to attend classes and were attacked by men armed with rifles. While it would have been possible for bystanders to intervene, it was said that because the fighters were armed, they were unable to rescue the girls.

• In May 2019, three women were punished by armed secessionist forces for allegedly disobeying their “ghost” Labour Day. The women were arrested and molested. This incident was filmed and shared on social networks.

• Men and boys also suffer GBV in relation to their societal roles and the increasing militarized masculinities. Some have been forced to take up weapons to become fighters or join the national army; others have been forced to abandon their activities that help to regularly watch over their families.
When exporting arms to a country, states should:

• Employ a more holistic understanding of gender-based violence when assessing the potential impact of an arms transfer and consider how weapons can be used to facilitate GBV in all its forms.

• Look at past issues on femicides, rate of past acts of domestic violence, the security context involving forced displacements.

• Look at existing studies on the impact of armed violence on women, with a particular focus on the resolutions and actions that have been taken as result of the recommendations from those studies.
Exporters could also:

• Look at whether the arms-receiving state is implementing the WPS Agenda, which means if it has a NAP on UNSCR 1325,

• Look at whether this state has a gender policy and allows women’s civil society organization activities.

➢ Empty measures would therefore expose women and men, more in the event of any non secured context, particularly when states fail to ensure difficult access to weapons, or when they rely more on military options in conflict resolution.