

YOU GET WHAT  
YOU PAY FOR



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR  
**PEACE & FREEDOM**





## WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR **PEACE & FREEDOM**

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This publication is an update to 'You get what you pay for!' from 2006. A previously updated version of this paper was published in 2009. Both can be found at [www.wilpfinternational.org](http://www.wilpfinternational.org).

Cover photo: UN Photo/Patricia Esteve  
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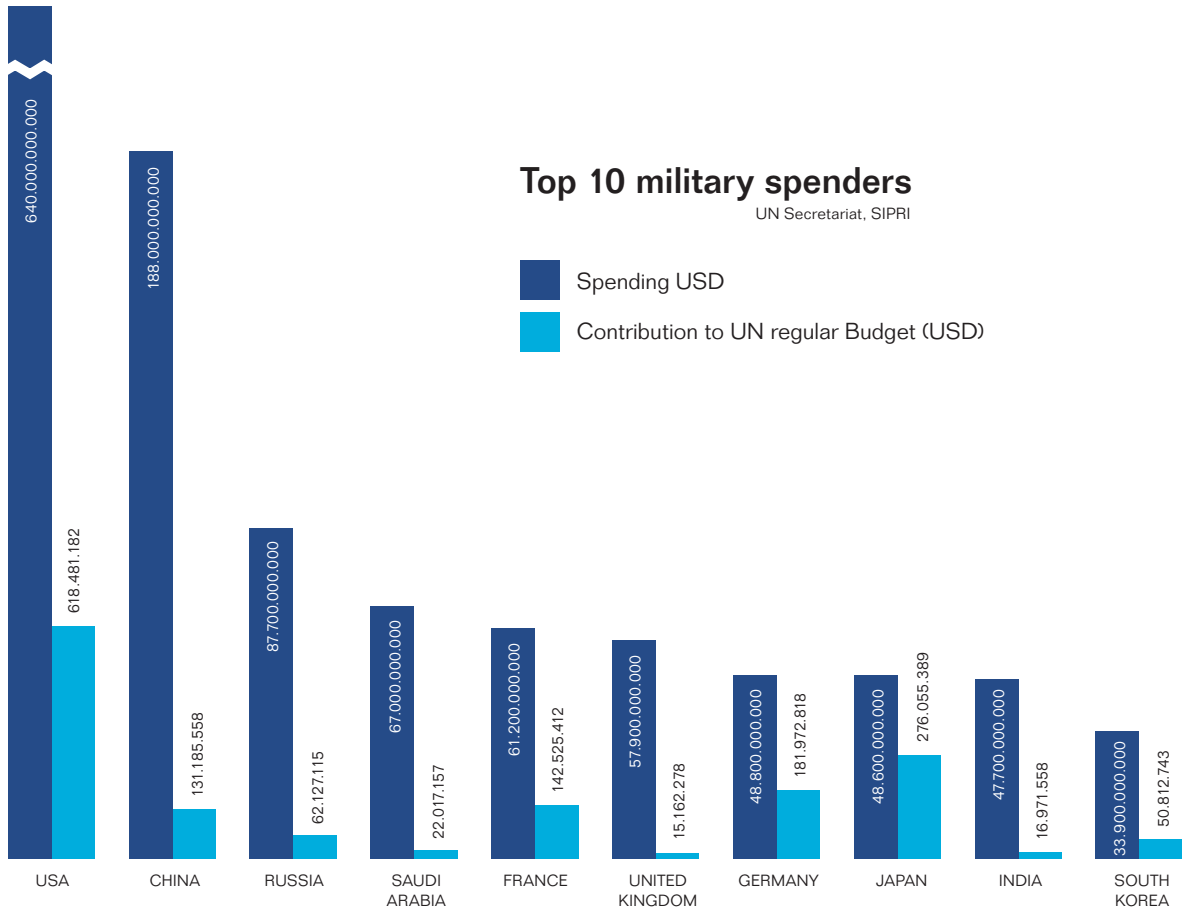
# Demilitarising for gender equality

Achieving gender equality requires examining root causes of inequality and finding ways to overcome them. One cause of inequality is militarism. Excessive global military spending feeds into a vicious cycle of societal instability, creating an unsuitable environment to pursue gender equality. We get what we pay for. An overtly strong military presence creates insecurity. Thus demilitarisation and disarmament are essential components for achieving gender equality.

**If you count, one, two, three, four ...  
two hundred... twenty two thousand  
and one... all the way to one million,  
it would take 11.5 days without  
stopping to eat, drink, or sleep.  
To count to one billion it would take  
32 years of nonstop counting.**

To address this situation, legislation needs to be changed, as well as social attitudes and norms. For this, there needs to be serious political and financial commitment. While vast sums are spent on militaries, weapons, and waging war, funding gaps still remain in crucial areas such as women's economic empowerment, family planning, Women, Peace and Security, and women's participation and leadership. In 2013 the world's total military expenditure was estimated to be 1.747 trillion USD. It is difficult to put an exact number on the cost of achieving gender equality, as many different aspects need to be factored in.

Some conservative estimates assume that funding gender equality, as set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), would cost only a small fraction of the world's military spending.



# Gender-aware budgeting

**Budgeting is not just a financial exercise; it is a method of planning, prioritising and decision making that has consequences for people and their environment. Gender budgeting is a tool that takes into account the rights and needs of women and men in their different social and economic positions and therefore helps determine how the prioritisation, allocation, and spending of resources can contribute to achieving equality between women and men.**

**As demonstrated here, the reallocation of the enormous funds allocated to militarism could enable the realisation of both gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals. To accomplish this, governments in all parts of the world need to introduce gender-aware budgeting and reallocate resources spent on the military towards activities that benefit women and humanity at large. Gender-aware budgeting can also help offset some of the negative effects on gender relations caused by militarised societies, by fostering alternative norms, perspectives, and attitudes.**

# Where does the money go?

There are many direct and indirect links between military expenditure, the arms trade, violent conflict, and the reduction of available resources for gender equality. Governments that spend excessive financial, technological, and human resources on their militaries divert resources from economic, social, and environmental programmes.

A state's military-industrial complex is composed of its armed forces, the government, suppliers of weapons systems and services (corporations), and academic institutions that conduct research on weapon systems and designs. It absorbs vast amounts of funding that could otherwise be spent on human security, including the achievement of the MDGs.

Besides the military-industrial complex consuming so many resources, funds initially reserved for

development initiatives are spent on emergency relief and rehabilitation operations to clean up after violent conflicts. Similarly, recent economic crises have resulted in cuts to social programmes, austerity measures, and consequently violent confrontation between states and their citizens.

These budgetary decisions stem from a belief that states' security can be guaranteed by threats of violence. It's an investment in war and conflict. And while governments use the language of security and protection to justify their excessive investment in the military, it is usually civilians that pay the highest price, with their lives, livelihoods, and human rights. The impacts and consequences of this violence have specific gender dimensions.

Given the numerous crises facing the planet, such as economic, environmental, food, water, health and energy, it is imperative to shift money wasted on overindulgent military spending to human rights and needs, including gender equality. We must challenge militarism by calling on governments to stop spending disproportionate financial, technological, and human resources on militaries and demand governments invest in peace.



# UN Charter, Article 26:

**In order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources, the Security Council shall be responsible for formulating [...] plans to be submitted to the Members of the United Nations for the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments.**



# Military spending, armed conflict, and development

The goal of increased gender equality is tightly connected to the other development goals; in fact, gender equality is integral to the achievement of each

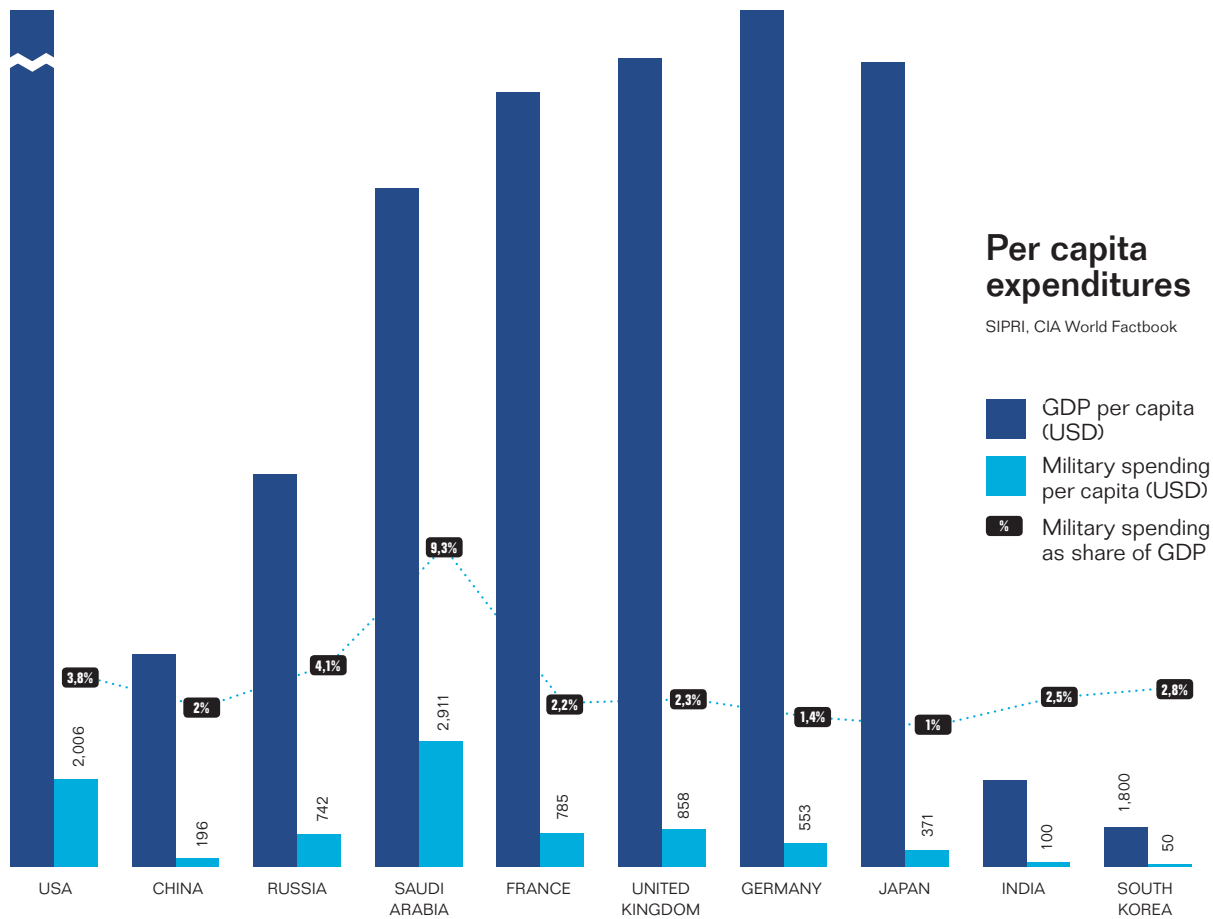
of the development goals. Now, with only one year left to achieve the MDGs, discussions are ongoing over the next set of sustainable development goals.



While military expenditures increase every year, investment in conflict resolution, peace building, and development lags far behind. Since the end of the Cold War, militarism has been growing in response to an increasingly unstable world, propelling the world even further into tension and war. Armed conflict and the constant threat of war or terrorism have become both the cause of and response to this growing militarism.

War and the threat of war destroy the lives and wellbeing of a state's citizens, as well as infrastructure, resulting in a culture of fear, violence, and instability. This impedes development by disturbing social programmes, education, transportation, business, and tourism, ultimately preventing economic stability, mental wellbeing, and sustainable livelihoods.







Above all else, weapons are tools of violence, repression, and financial gain by those who make, sell, and use them. The manufacture and use of weapons prevents sustainable ecological development and preservation, creating unequal access to resources and further impeding poverty reduction initiatives.

Global systems that were created to uphold the international law and secure human rights, however, they have been subordinated to the economic and political interests of governments and corporations. Consequently, the international arms trade is booming.

Many states promote themselves as advocates for international peace, justice, and security and claim to promote international disarmament. Despite that, the same states are often leaders in the international arms trade, which contributes to fuelling conflicts, human rights violations, and disrupting peace processes.

**Now is the time for governments to meet the challenges of eradicating poverty and achieving gender equality. They can either continue to invest in war and destruction, or they can invest in the future.**

# The bottom line

Cuts in military expenditure would not automatically lead to increased resources for gender equality and the advancement of women, or other socioeconomic development initiatives. However, by freeing up financial, technological, and human resources that are allocated to militaries (and therefore war and conflict), more resources could be diverted to economic, social, and environmental programmes. Furthermore, reallocating these resources helps create a context in which weapons and war are not always assumed to be the solution to every problem. By investing in alternatives to armed conflict, states create the space for alternative solutions to tension, resource scarcity, austerity, and conflict.







So the question is:

# What would you buy?

- One year of the world's military spending
- Over 650 years of the UN's regular budget
- Over 2500 years of annual expenditure on international disarmament and non-proliferation organisations\*
- Over 6300 years of the budget for UN Women

\*(UNODA, IAEA, OPCW, and CTBTO budgets combined)



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Charter of the United Nations (1945).

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