GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION ON MILITARY SPENDING 2013

FINAL REPORT

The third annual Global Day of Action on Military Spending was organised on 15 April 2013 with about 155 actions in 124 cities and towns in 24 countries covering all continents except Antarctica. GDAMS attracted extensive media coverage all over the world as well as on the internet.

GDAMS was purposely scheduled to coincide with the release of the 2012 global military expenditure data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the U.S. Tax Day.

The International Peace Bureau in Geneva, Switzerland was once again the international coordinator and Peace Action was this year the U.S. Focal Point. GDAMS relied on its usual allies in the peace and disarmament movements, NGOs, and popular organisations throughout the world. However, thanks in particular to our partnership with Peace Action, GDAMS was able to link up with grassroots organisations in other sectors, notably labour, economic and racial justice groups. The cross-cutting message was: Cut the military budget and fund human needs!

Preparatory Work

As in the previous years, the preparatory work was undertaken by convening an International Steering Committee (ISC). Most of the members of the ISC are local actors in the disarmament and peace movements and were organisers of the previous GDAMS. The planning, political messaging, and outreach were discussed through the regular online meetings.

Timely maintenance and updates of the GDAMS International website, Facebook and Twitter were performed to reach out to old partners and to connect with new ones. Our colleagues from the Coalition Against Arms Trade created a website dedicated to GDAMS UK. Planned actions were shared, background materials to support the actions were uploaded in the website and distributed through the various mailing lists and social media. Four issues of the newsletter which contained thought-provoking articles written by the GDAMS partners were compiled and released. IPB again facilitated the access to SIPRI's advance documentation.
The Actions

Initially, the GDAMS World Map contained about 130 planned actions but the organisers outdid themselves when the actual actions shot up to 155. The creative actions that took place around the world on the Global Day of Action were united in message but diverse in presentation. There were panel discussions and seminars, vigils, street performances, leafleting, name-and-shame exercises, concerts, marches, die-ins, video productions, online and print petitions, money polls, twitter and facebook posts, and many more. These various actions highlighted the unacceptable global military expenditure of $1.7 trillion in 2011 and linking this to regional, national and local issues like the Pentagon budget hearings in the U.S., militarisation and drug wars in Latin America, the economic crisis and austerity cuts in Europe, nuclear weapons modernisation, the tendency towards militarism in Japan, the growing tension between South and North Korea and other issues.

The action and events reports are compiled in the GDAMS website and the photos are in the GDAMS Facebook

A selection of highlights can be found below:

A Lecture, Picture-taking, Art Workshop and Flash Mob...at Sea

Peace Boat Japan's 79th Voyage was the setting for GDAMS as it traversed the Indian Ocean. A lecture was conducted onboard to raise the awareness of the participants about global military spending and as the 'big spenders' were revealed. The participants were astounded by the staggering cost which they said could be spent for other more productive projects. This led to a discussion of channeling the funds to realise the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Then the participants were given drawings of bombs and were requested to think of priority social issues and to transform the bombs. At dinner time, diners at the restaurant were surprised with a flashmob of GDAMS supporters holding signs that say---"I'd rather spend the money on...,(a social need)." The boat's hundreds of passengers belonged to different advocacy programmes and were sailing for 4 months from Japan to the Baltic States.
**Hidden Camera**

Some enterprising activists from Agir pour la Paix of Belgium dressed up as soldiers and in a busy area approached passers-by. They showed them a catalogue of military weapons and asked them to donate money in a piggy bank....not everyone saw the joke immediately!

**Living Graveyard**

Several activists were covered with white sheets as they lay on the ground while the names of people who died in Afghanistan and Iraq were recited in remembrance. Flyers appealing to the federal government to end the war in Afghanistan, to cut the defence budget and the F–35 fighter planes were distributed by the Ecumenical Peace Institute of Oakland, California.
'Will the Pacific Teletubbies Keep the Pacific Pacific?'

The People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) created this short film urging the North and South Korea and other stakeholders to end the threat of war as another war would destroy the people and solely benefit military weapon manufacturers.

'Thunderclap' Reaches 233,071

'Our Tax $ should go to the programs we need, not to Pentagon waste.' This was the Thunderclap twitter message which was circulated by major US coalitions The National Priorities Project, the American Friends Service Committee, Coalition on Human Needs, USAction, War Resisters League and Toolbox for Education & Social Action and Peace Action and reached 233,071 people on Facebook and Twitter.

Transformation From Within for Non-violence and Peace

Activists in Antofagasta, Maule and Aysén in Chile dressed up as “invisible peoples” paraded in the streets to campaign against military spending and to promote “non-violence from within” as the unseen but powerful force that will end the culture of violence and militarism. See their excellent power point!
Dear Mr President

The Coalition for Constitution Implementation (CCI) led a march and organised a petition-signing to appeal to Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta to withdraw the country’s military forces from Somalia, reduce its military spending and increase allocation to food production, housing and water provision, education and health care.

The Plane That Ate Canberra is Broken and Cannot Be Repaired in the US nor Elsewhere

The American Friends Service Committee, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Action in the U.S. and Just Peace Queensland in Australia advocated for the junking of the F-35 Strike Force Fighter plane as the most expensive and unnecessary weapons system.

Far From the Fast Lane to Demilitarisation

Activists of the Scrap Trident Coalition with some members of political parties in Scotland peacefully blocked entrances and chained themselves to the Faslane naval base gates to protest the UK's Trident nuclear weapons. They called for the huge cost of the Trident budget to be redistributed to health, education and welfare programmes. About 50 activists were arrested. So far, it was the biggest GDAMS single onsite gathering in the UK, and the one which garnered the most media coverage.
The third annual If I Had a Trillion Dollars Youth Film Festival sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee and The National Priorities Project culminated in Washington, DC. The winning video, 'Dear Congress Invest in Us' was nominated for People’s Choice Award. At the conclusion of the festival, 65 young people made 24 Congressional visits on Capitol Hill delivering the summary of the GDAMS report and then did an action on the National Mall. A delegation went to meet with the Department of Education.

Taking the Message to the United Nations

In Geneva, the International Peace Bureau coordinated the following events:

A PHOTO OPPORTUNITY with custom made banners in front of the United Nations, supported by local activists.
A SEMINAR entitled 'Military and development spending in an era of austerity' which highlighted:

- The continuing support of the UN, both for the Global Day of Action itself, and for the UN’s own transparency instrument, the annual Report on Military Expenditures.

- Clear evidence from SIPRI’s new data release that the global total for military expenditure has dropped, for the first time in real terms since 1998 – even though the absolute dollar figures are slightly higher than in 2011.

- Spending has dropped mainly in Western countries, while most of the increases are in Russia, China and other developing states.

- The importance, from the IPB point of view, of raising the issue of military spending within the ongoing consultations on the UN’s Post-2015 Development Agenda, i.e., the successor process to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

A similar seminar was held at UN Headquarters in New York the same day:
Side Event: “Global military expenditures”, Co-sponsored by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, and the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations. These were the remarks by Ms. Virginia Gamba, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The Impact


“In 33 states and 86 cities and towns, peace, economic justice, faith based groups used Tax Day and GDAMS to continue grassroots pressure on the U.S. Congress to change national spending priorities and end the austerity drive to cut jobs and human needs to balance the federal budget.” Read the excellent report from Peace Blog on activities in the US, written by our U.S. Focal Point, Judith Le Blanc, Peace Action.

We were able to reach far and wide through the GDAMS and its partners' websites and social media where we were able to connect to young people. New issue and activity-based partnerships and coalitions were formed. For example, among peace advocates and trade unions on the defence budget cuts in the U.S., opposition to the F-35 in (among others) Australia, Canada and the U.S., the joint statement of 39 Korean and Japanese civil society organisations to appeal for peace in East Asia. A tremendous awareness-raising and outreach was done through the tens of thousands of leaflets and information materials distributed.
Follow Up

We would like to echo Judith Le Blanc's post-GDAMS assertion, “We need a movement that is global and grassroots, that will take action, educate and generate an alternative vision for global economic security for all.”

The International Steering Committee had agreed to continue meeting throughout the year to sustain the momentum and continue supporting each other. Ideas for extending GDAMS in both time and space are always welcome!

Acknowledgements

IPB's special thanks go to Judith Le Blanc of Peace Action and her team for the wonderful field work done in the U.S., to the International Steering Committee (listed below) and to Sam Perlo-Freeman and Stephanie Blenckner of SIPRI. Annette Willi, Aude Feltz, Marion Loddo, Susana Pimiento and Stephanie Schrage for the translations. Many, many thanks to all GDAMS partners for your time, expertise and efforts. We feel so fortunate and enjoyed working with you.

GDAMS 2013 International Steering Committee Members

Annette Brownlie, Just Peace Queensland, Australia
Celine Nahory, Peace Boat, Japan
Colin Archer and Mylene Soto, International Peace Bureau, Geneva CH
Cora Fabros, Stop the War Coalition–Philippines
Cyrille Rolande Béchon, Nouveaux Droits de l’Homme (NDH), Cameroun
Dave Webb, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, UK
Derek Brett, Conscience and Peace Tax International , Geneva
Edwina Hughes, Peace Movement Aotearoa, New Zealand
Huisun Kim, People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, South Korea
Javier Garate, War Resisters International, UK
Jordi Calvo, Centre d'Estudis per a la Pau JM Delàs, Spain
Judith Le Blanc, Peace Action, USA
Mary Zerkel, American Friends Service Committee, USA
Paul Lansu, Pax Christi International, Belgium
Reiner Braun, International Assoc. of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, Germany
Susana Pimiento, Fellowship of Reconciliation USA