

Controlling small arms: practical lessons in civilian disarmament and anti-trafficking

Faltas, Sami

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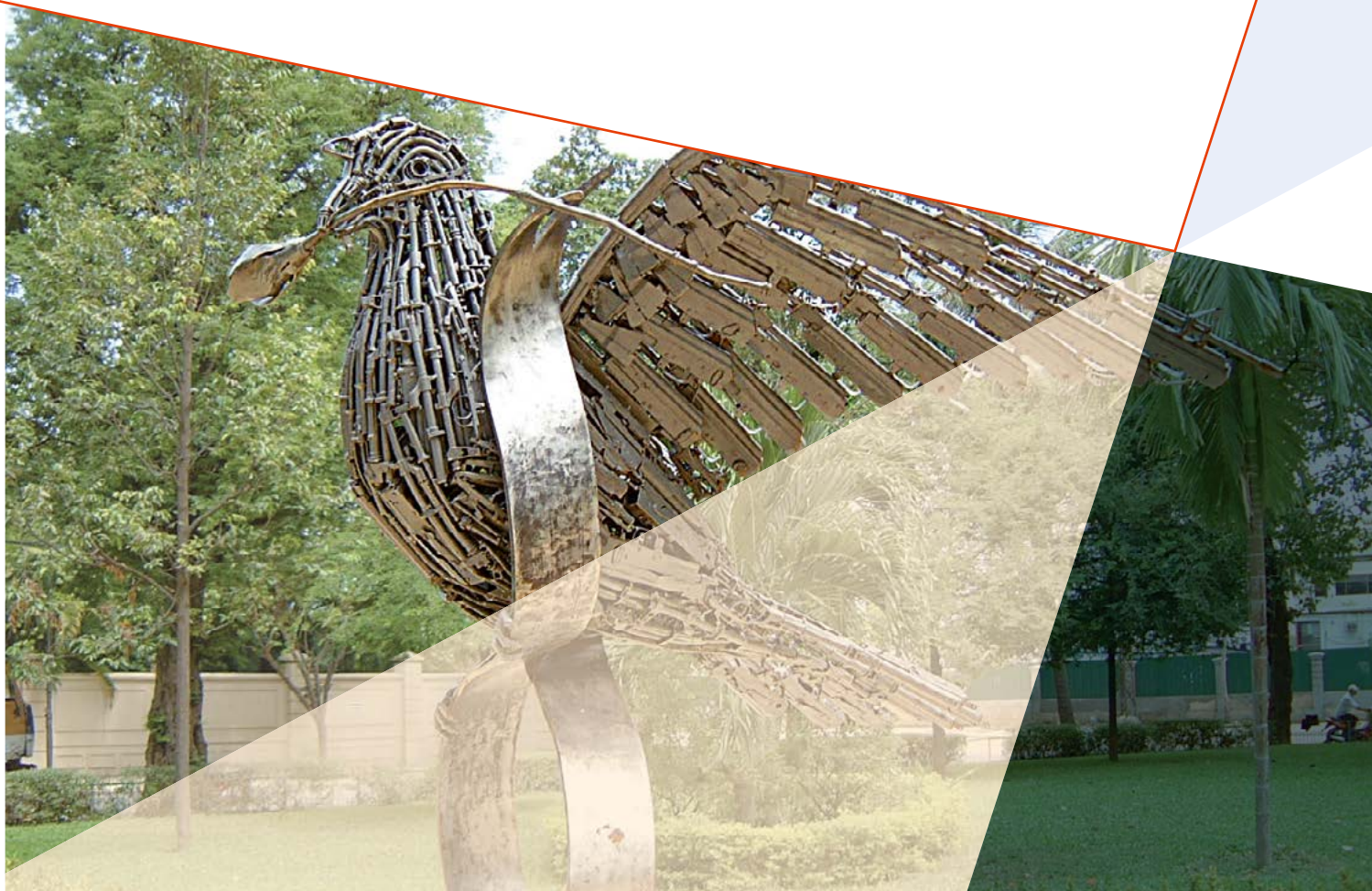
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Controlling Small Arms: Practical lessons in civilian disarmament and anti-trafficking

Sami Faltas



SUMMARY

This *Knowledge Note* is an outcome of a practitioners' workshop held at the German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin on 26/27 February 2018. Among its 29 participants were 19 practitioners from West and southern Africa, United Nations organizations, European Union institutions and EU member states as well as 10 leading researchers and consultants. The present publication aims to identify practical lessons learned in civilian disarmament and cooperation across borders to stop trafficking in firearms. It draws on the knowledge and experience of practitioners at the Berlin workshop in order to help other practitioners. Its intended audience consists of people who plan, design and manage projects to control small arms, as well as officials involved in making policy.

Bearing this audience in mind, this *Knowledge Note* begins with the lessons learned in civilian disarmament and the trafficking in small arms and light weapons (sections 2 and 3). It then focusses on points raised during the workshop that illustrate the lessons or adds to them (section 4). Section 5 reflects on the difference between gun control and arms control.

In its conclusions (section 6), the *Knowledge Note* shows that lessons learned will only make a real difference if they are widely shared, taught and applied.

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Inventory files and smoke grenades within a local armory \ Nikhil Acharya, BICC

Introduction

This *Knowledge Note* was commissioned by the German Federal Foreign Office and builds on a practitioners' workshop held on 26 / 27 February 2018 at the German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin. This section of the publication provides an overview of the purpose, contents and findings of this publication with regard to civilian disarmament, which is commonly defined as the removal of firearms from the population, largely through voluntary compliance. It also discusses cross-border efforts to combat the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons (SALW). In both areas, the report identifies what practitioners have found to work well or not.

Practitioners stress that with regard to civilian disarmament (section 2), careful and purposeful planning is needed to ensure that the disarmament effort does not cause harm; that it is usefully connected with other efforts to build peace or improve public security; and that its goals, deliverables, inducements and performance indicators are in line with the ultimate purpose of the programme. Like all security and development efforts, civilian disarmament programmes must take account of the different needs and perceptions of women and men, and how to promote equal rights and opportunities for women. What is more, it is important to look closely at the causes of insecurity and the reasons that lead people to want to have guns. Unless these are addressed adequately, civilian disarmament is unlikely to improve security.

Destruction and transparency are of great importance in civilian disarmament programmes. The destruction of collected small arms¹ and ammunition ensures that they will never be used again. Providing maximum publicity to civilian disarmament and weapons destruction also demonstrates that an effort is being made to reduce violence and insecurity. The impact of civilian disarmament lies not only in the hardware it removes, but also in its symbolism.

Finally, civilian disarmament cannot be effectively carried out by peacekeepers, the military, the police, civil society or traditional leaders alone. For practical, legal and political reasons, it requires a broad coalition of state and non-state actors.

As to trafficking in small arms and light weapons (section 3), this is commonly taken to mean unlawful moving and trading across international borders. This is how the term is used in this *Knowledge Note* as well. The first lesson focuses on the fact that in countries with a high level of gun violence, firearms are often so widely available that there is little need for new imports. In such cases, fighting the trafficking in guns makes little difference in the short run. This does not necessarily apply to ammunition, which needs to be replaced when a gun is fired. Both here and in civilian disarmament, ammunition is sometimes more important than weapons.

Often the main sources of proliferation are domestic. Guns and ammunition are captured, traded commercially and stolen or otherwise illegally obtained from government arsenals. Better physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) is essential both to prevent unintended explosions and to stop pilfering.

Thus the fight against the international trafficking in arms and ammunition starts within a country, even with a community. It requires government agencies, businesses and civil society to work together, which is never easy, least of all in fragile states with poor governance. It also requires international cooperation, which is even more difficult. Governments may not be keen to share critical information, and state agencies may not be allowed to engage directly with their foreign counterparts. And even if there are no political or legal impediments, there are often practical problems that prevent states from working together. International support for training and institutional development can help to overcome these shortcomings.

Trafficking in guns and ammunition is very often linked to other business activities, either legal or illegal. These include drugs, wildlife products and even the transport of humanitarian relief goods. When investigating such illegal business practices, it is often very useful to seek the information and help of communities living along trading routes.

Most findings of the Berlin workshop (section 4) have been included in the lessons learned outlined below. However, some other points were brought up, for example, that donor countries are keen to contribute to the removal of arms and the prevention of arms-smuggling, but often do this without carefully considering earlier efforts of a similar nature, without properly coordinating their efforts with each other and without the patience and long-term commitment needed to make a significant difference. Local ownership and sustainability are critical to the impact of programmes.

Like all efforts that aim to change a situation for the better, civilian disarmament programmes need a baseline measurement. Simply put, this provides an assessment of the critical factors before the programme, which will later be compared with the situation after completion of the programme. Here

there are two difficulties to be overcome. One might think that a civilian disarmament programme can measure its success by estimating the stock of guns in a community before and after weapons collection. But this will not suffice. Weapons do not equal insecurity. Other critical factors and performance indicators will be needed. And once these have been established, it may not be easy to obtain the required data.

It is hard for fragile states to combat illegal transfers of guns and ammunition, both at home and internationally. Chad and Sudan, for instance, are incapable of controlling their long borders. However, the Joint Border Patrol that they established is doing useful work on a limited scale, and its efforts are appreciated by the population on either side.²

Section 5 looks at differences between gun control and arms control in the common sense of the term. Arms control is international, whereas gun control is mostly domestic. Arms control is usually negotiated between states, whereas gun control is mostly legislated by governments. Arms control often seeks to ban or limit weapons that are considered to cause

disproportionate harm or to not discriminate among its victims, whereas small arms and light weapons can be proportionate and discriminatory because they are operated by people. Arms control seeks to limit military weapons and forces, whereas gun control mostly seeks to limit or regulate the possession and use of weapons by citizens. In view of these differences, it is not surprising to find that the only legally binding international agreement on firearms was negotiated in the framework of international efforts to combat organized crime. Unfortunately, many industrial states are not parties to it.

The sixth and last section of this *Knowledge Note* makes the point that identifying lessons learned is only the first step toward improved practice. Reports like this one will only make a real difference if they are widely read and heeded by policymakers and practitioners. Then the lessons learned need to be incorporated into guidelines and training courses for practitioners. Finally, of course, the lessons will amount to nothing if practitioners do not apply them.

1 This paper uses the terms “firearms”, “guns” and “small arms” interchangeably, although their definitions are not identical. In the context of arms control and development, the term “small arms and light weapons” (or SALW) is used, whereas in the context of law enforcement, “firearms” is more common.

2 Inhabitants of the Sudanese town of El Geneina (West Darfur) reported this to the author in late August 2013 (Faltas, 2014). According to them, people on the Chadian side of the border are also pleased.



Collected stockpiles of SALW \ Nikhil Acharya, BICC

Lessons in civilian disarmament

In the 1990s, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) became a major issue on the international political agenda, and efforts were made to remove firearms from society. This was mostly done in countries recovering from armed conflict (e.g. Cambodia and Mozambique), countries with high levels of gun crime (e.g. Argentina, Brazil and El Salvador) and countries that had been shocked by the mass murder of civilians (e.g. Australia and the United Kingdom). Various names were used: “weapons collection,” “weapons control,” “gun buy-back,” “practical disarmament,” “micro-disarmament,” and, most recently, “civilian disarmament”.

Definition

This report uses the term “civilian disarmament” and refers mostly to post-conflict countries, with a special focus on West Africa. It does not dwell on the disarming of combatants, for instance in a post-conflict project of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). Of course, people targeted in a civilian disarmament campaign may in some cases turn out to be full-time, part-time or former fighters. In today’s wars, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants is often fluid and unclear.

“Disarmament” suggests stripping reluctant people of all their weapons, but civilian disarmament never removes all targeted weapons, and it relies mostly on voluntary compliance. Obviously, the unlawful seizure of weapons is bad practice. If there is violent conflict between communities, it is also considered bad practice to forcibly disarm the civilians, even if the authorities have a legal mandate to do so. However, in more tranquil conditions, it is often appropriate for the government to offer holders of illicit weaponry a period of amnesty in which they can freely, safely and anonymously disarm. If they do not take this opportunity, they may then risk confiscation and prosecution. So there may be an element of coercion in civilian disarmament programmes.

Civilian disarmament is defined in this Knowledge Note as the removal of arms and ammunition from the civilian population. This is mostly achieved by voluntary surrender, sometimes motivated by the wish to avoid later confiscation and prosecution. It is common to also offer positive inducements, i.e. rewards, in the form of food, tools, wells, cinema tickets, vouchers, tokens of appreciation or cash.

The following reviews some lessons learned in civilian disarmament projects. They are taken from observations made during the Berlin workshop, publications of the Small Arms Survey (SAS)³, BICC and other think tanks, programme evaluation reports and discussions with practitioners in the field and at seminars around the world.

International commitments relevant to civilian disarmament

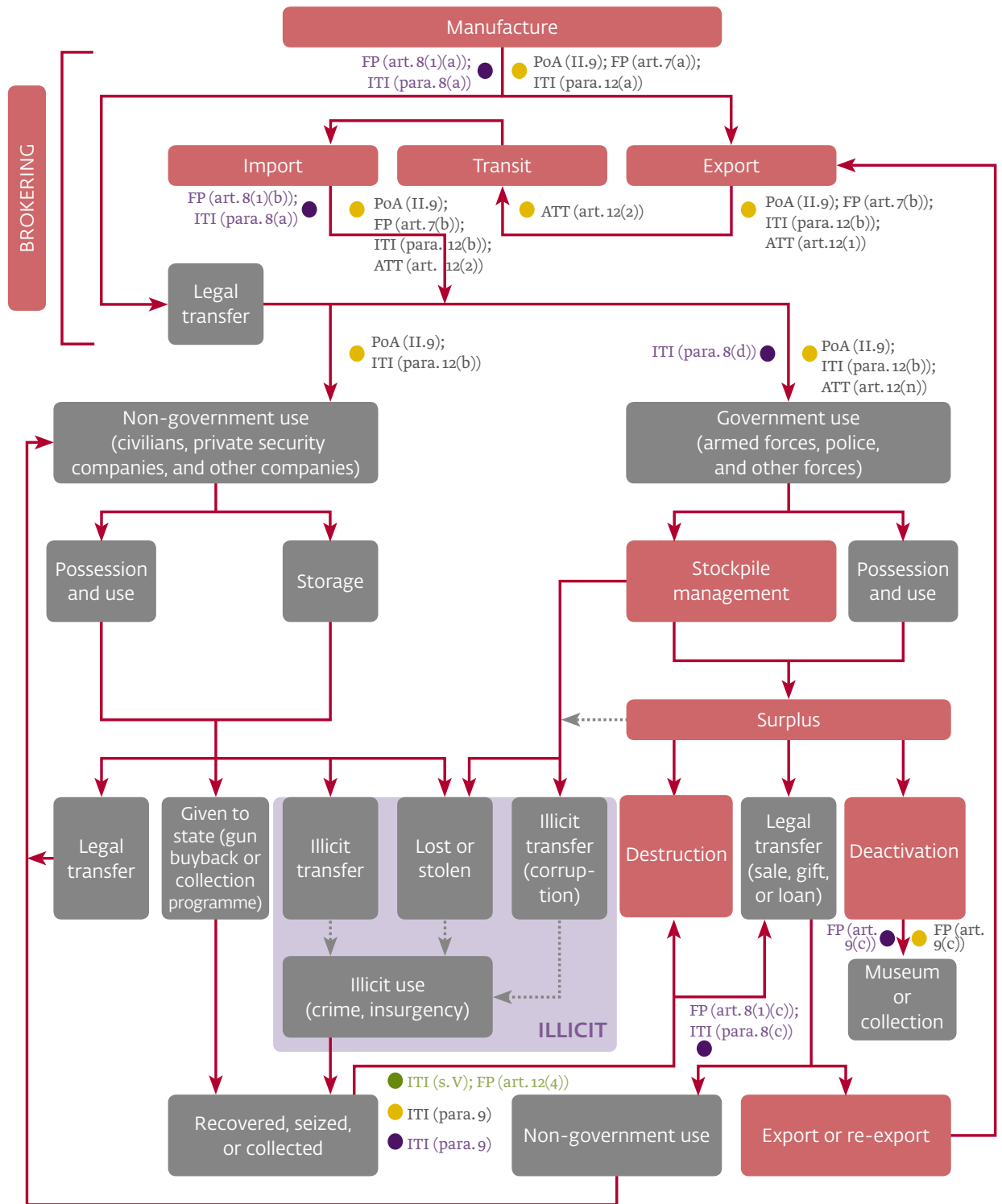
States zealously defend their right to regulate—or refrain from regulating—the possession, movement and use of firearms and ammunition within their borders. International agreements on SALW like the UN Programme of Action, the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) and the Firearms Protocol, as well as the more general Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), focus more on measures that facilitate the control of international trade. (See Parker and Wilson, 2016, for a detailed and up-to-date discussion of the various international agreements on small arms and light weapons.) The authors also provide a diagram that shows how international commitments affect parts of a firearm’s life cycle (see Figure 4 below).

There are several provisions in international agreements that are relevant to civilian disarmament, but no clear and strict commitments regarding the central issue, the civilian possession of small arms and light weapons. In the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (2001) the signatory states promised to “establish as a criminal offence” the illegal holding of small arms (Article II.3). This is not a promise to regulate the civilian possession of small arms. It means only that if such laws do exist and are violated, this should be defined as a criminal act.

The UN Programme of Action (UN PoA) requires the signatory states to regulate the manufacturing of small arms and light weapons (Article II.9) and to store government stockpiles safely and securely (II.17). This latter commitment is important, because stopping the theft of guns and ammunition from state depots would usefully block a major source of proliferation. The UN PoA also says states should identify weaponry in their possession that is no longer required and dispose of such surpluses, preferably by destruction (II.18). Furthermore, it calls for the destruction of small arms seized or collected from the population, unless some other use has been officially authorized (II.16). Finally, the signatory states of the UN PoA undertake to raise public awareness of the dangers of gun proliferation and misuse (II.20).

While the UN PoA is merely a political agreement, the Firearms Protocol (FP) of 2001 is legally binding.

The life cycle of a firearm



- Marking provisions
- Record-keeping provisions
- Tracing provisions
- ... Illegal or illicit movement
- ATT Arms Trade Treaty (see Part 2.6)

- FP Firearms Protocol (see Part 2.1)
- ITI International Tracing Instrument (see Part 2.3)
- PoA Programme of Action (see Part 2.2)
- Stages at which relevant international commitments exist (ATT, FP, ITI, and PoA)

Note: Courtesy of Small Arms Survey
 Source: Parker & Wilson (2016).

Unlike the UN PoA, it includes provisions on ammunition as well as weapons. According to Article 8, every newly manufactured or imported firearm (but in this case not ammunition) must be provided with unique markings to enable their identification. According to Article 5, States Parties must criminalize the falsification of such markings. States are also required to keep records to be able to track firearms.

Further requirements for marking and tracing prescribed are to be found in the International Tracing Instrument of 2005.

**Lesson 1:
Do no harm**

Like any social intervention, civilian disarmament (CD) can have unintended harmful effects. CD may arouse suspicions that someone wants to strip the people holding the guns of their defences and empower their enemies. People who have given up weaponry may fear they will become targets. If this fear is well-founded, CD may have disastrous effects. But even if the fear is unfounded, it will have adverse effects. Poorly designed CD programmes can stimulate illicit trafficking and the hoarding of weaponry by enhancing the value of illegal arms. They can also create an illusion of greater security. If the weapons were being used, legally or illegally, to support livelihoods, then their removal can lead to greater poverty. Therefore, CD programmes need to be sensitive to the conflict environment and planned with great care.

**Lesson 2:
Civilian disarmament cannot stand alone**

The removal of firearms from civilians will not be useful unless it is part of a more extensive effort, and the public needs to understand and support this (Faltas, 2001, p. 229). As mentioned in Lesson 1, CD can even cause harm. The wider goal may be peacebuilding, reconciliation, crime prevention, law and order or human security. CD campaigns must be guided by a theory of change⁴ that explains how the various components and participants of the programme will together lead to the achievement of the programme's goal. A good theory of change will

help the designers detect and fix any faulty assumptions.⁵ It will enable them to create a well-reasoned design for the programme. Finally, it will show their superiors, their funding organizations, the government authorities concerned and the wider public what the programme aims to achieve, how it intends to do this, how it will measure its success, and which resources it will use.

**Lesson 3:
Define objectives carefully**

Even if there is ample support for the programme's ultimate goal, there may be doubts about the legitimacy and effectiveness of weapons collection. To inspire confidence, CD must have clear and realistic objectives and must yield convincing evidence of their attainment. Similarly, the programme must show how the achievement of its objectives will contribute to its higher goals. How will the removal of weaponry lead to better security? What kind of security? Being safer or feeling safer? Whose security? And measured in what way? As mentioned above, the theory of change needs to be clear and convincing.

**Lesson 4:
Choose indicators with care**

Indicators enable the programme to provide empirical evidence for the achievement of its objectives. If the programme aims to improve safety from firearm violence, then the amount of weaponry and ammunition removed is not, on its own, an appropriate indicator.⁶ A better measure of success would be a decline in the number of police reports of firearm wounds and deaths in the community concerned. To document such a decline, one needs to compare data collected before and after the programme. The first measurement is called the baseline. A third measurement some months after the programme may indicate how durable the improvement of security was. But even with three good data points, there will be no proof that it was the removal of weaponry that improved security. At best, one will be able to report: "The data suggest that civilian disarmament contributed to improved security".

Lesson 5:**Reflect on what to collect and why**

Consider the goals of the programme and decide what to collect accordingly. Pistols are the weapons of choice of criminals and are also used in self-defence. Guerrilla fighters and terrorists mainly use assault rifles. Hand grenades and other explosives are extremely dangerous in the hands of untrained people. Weapons collection campaigns in Albania, for instance, yielded unexpected types and amounts of hazardous explosives and were not equipped to deal with them safely.

If the ultimate aim of civilian disarmament is to improve security, CD programmes will need to look very closely at ammunition.⁷ Guns don't kill people, bullets kill people. Reducing the available stock of ammunition may do more to lower the incidence of armed violence than limiting the number of weapons (Muggah, 2018; Perlstein, 2013). The capacity to exercise gun violence depends on the available ammunition. Guns can only be fired if loaded with the right kind of bullets. And fired bullets need to be replaced.⁸ We can therefore expect that, all other things being equal, cutting off the supply of ammunition will have a greater effect on the incidence of armed violence than cutting off the supply of guns. Especially if guns are already as abundant as they are in Darfur, Yemen or El Salvador.

Lesson 6:**Choose the right inducements**

The choice of positive and negative incentives will affect the programme in various ways. What works well depends on local conditions. Bear in mind the standard of living, people's preferences, what the programme can afford, and what is cost-effective. A potentially powerful inducement is the threat that after a short amnesty, illegally held weaponry will be confiscated and the holders prosecuted. Also consider the side effects that inducements may have. Offering people cash may be easy, effective and cheap. In some cases, it works well. However, it suggests a commercial transaction and may lead to illicit inflows of arms if the sum paid is high. Agricultural tools, sewing machines, bicycles, cinema tickets and food vouchers have all been used successfully as incen-

tives. A symbolic gesture like a certificate of appreciation signed by the head of state may also do the trick. Finally, one may want to offer incentives to a collective rather than to individuals. Development projects are often attractive, but they make the programme much more complex and expensive. It may also be difficult to ensure local ownership and sustainability, which are essential to development.

Lesson 7:**Destroy the collected items**

Even before the arms and ammunition are collected, the programme needs to decide and announce their destination. They can be taken into service, stored, transferred to other users or destroyed. It will not always be feasible to destroy the weaponry, but for various reasons destruction is considered best practice. The people surrendering the arms and ammunition will want to be reassured that their former



Destruction of weapons, Cambodia \ Christine Bennett

possessions can never be used against them. The wider community will wish to see evidence that the items collected are no longer a threat to public security. The governments and organizations that sponsored the CD programme as an effort to push back the proliferation of small arms will in most cases welcome a decision to take the collected weaponry out of circulation forever. Register all items before they are destroyed and publish the list at the time of destruction. This invites people to hold the authorities accountable if the items show up later, although they had supposedly been destroyed. There are various guidelines for the safe and secure destruction of weapons, ammunition and explosives (e.g. United Nations, 2000; 2001).

Lesson 8:

Let everyone watch

The successful impact of CD programmes will lie not only in what they do, but also in how they are perceived. Transparency helps to allay suspicions, build trust and provide accountability. Monitoring by independent media and organizations will inspire confidence. The anonymous but public surrender of weaponry will demonstrate that the process has no secrets, but respects the privacy of participants. The registration and publication of the serial numbers of weapons to be destroyed will lend credibility to the guarantee that these arms have gone forever. Public destruction allows the viewers to verify its finality and provides an opportunity for public reconciliation. The *Flamme de la paix* ignited on 27 March 1996 in Timbuktu (Mali) showed how the symbolism of weapons destruction can be used to affirm the need for peace and reconciliation, and similar events have since been held in various parts of the world.

Lesson 9:

Consider why people want weapons

If people have weaponry in their possession, that does not always mean they have a particular purpose for it. In such cases, holders may part with their firearms quite easily. But in most cases, the possessors have a reason to want to have arms. If they regard the weaponry as merchandise, one could buy it off them, but if nothing else changes, this transaction

may encourage trafficking. If the weapons serve as symbols of power, prestige, manhood or maturity, it may be possible to ensure they cannot be fired, or to replace them by less dangerous symbols. If the guns are held for hobbies like collecting and sports shooting, it may be possible to limit the risk of loss, accident or misuse.

In all these cases, CD programmes will need to understand and address the demand for firearms before they can successfully mitigate the dangers associated with these weapons (Muggah & Bauer, 2006). The measures employed are likely to include information and awareness campaigns, legal restrictions and obligations, measures to improve public security and settle disputes peacefully, inducements for the surrender of weaponry and penalties for legal offences.

Lesson 10:

Engage various actors

Invariably, CD programmes involve various government agencies, as well as civil society and community organizations. Very often, they also involve foreign donors and international organizations that implement, support or evaluate the programme. This diversity of actors follows from the diversity of activities needed to carry out a CD programme and create favourable conditions for its success. For instance, media (newspapers, radio, TV, social media) may not be involved in the programme itself, but they play an essential role in informing the public about the programme, its achievements, its shortcomings and its problems. The better the programme can engage the media, the more successful it is likely to be. The theory of change and programme document must spell out a clear division of labour amongst all actors involved in the CD effort.

Who, then, will be responsible for the programme as a whole? This will vary from case to case, but probably there will be a need for state and non-state actors to share this responsibility. In other words, a public-private partnership will often be needed. In many cases, community organizations and NGOs will take the lead and be most visible. Government authorities will need to be involved when public funds are to be used and official permissions are required.

Besides, the programme will need state officials who are authorized and trained to handle firearms and ammunition. If state officials do not enjoy the trust of the population, they may need to keep a low profile, but their involvement is essential. As always, local ownership will be vitally important.

Lesson 11:

A gendered approach is needed

Generally speaking, physical security means freedom from fear of physical danger and harm. But fear and danger can mean different things to girls, boys, women and men. Designers of CD programmes must consider various fears and needs.⁹ This is best done by consulting these groups as early as possible. Men do not usually consider the gathering of firewood for cooking a security risk, but women in Darfur risk being sexually assaulted when they go out seeking fuel (Faltas, 2014). Women are not usually as sensitive as men to the symbolism of guns. However, in Sierra Leone, a social worker working with teenage boys found out that some carried rifles merely to be acknowledged as men. When asked if anything else

could serve the same purpose, one boy said: “Yes, a mobile phone”.¹⁰ In the course of a CD programme in rural Albania, men and women were asked what would promote security and development in their region. Most men wanted the roads between towns to be fixed so that the police could patrol the area and people could travel more easily, but many women asked for street lights, so that they could go out safely at night. Both wishes were granted, and each benefited security and development in its own way (van der Graaf, 2001).

Women and men should have equal rights and opportunities, but in practice, they do not. Today, development and security programmes are expected to empower girls and women to assert their rights to education, work, respect and security. This is not only an obligation for CD programmes, it will also make them more effective. At the Berlin workshop, we heard of a Cambodian CD programme sponsored by the European Union that discovered by coincidence that the wives of police officers (all were men at the time) could add considerably to the success of the disarmament campaign.

3 <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/regulations-and-controls/control-measures/weapons-collection-and-destruction.html>, accessed on 23 March 2018.

4 Also known as a logical framework or logframe.

5 For instance, if the goal of CD is better security, then the programme needs to address the causes of fear and insecurity and the reasons for which people want to be armed. Removing weapons from society will not always and automatically result in better security.

6 If the number of weapons collected is the main performance indicator of a CD programme, one can expect the staff of a CD programme to give priority to maximizing the amount of weaponry they collect, as in the adage “what gets measured gets done.” It is far from certain that this will lead to better security.

7 The Firearms Protocol and the Arms Trade Treaty cover ammunition as well as weapons, but the Programme of Action on Small Arms does not (c.f. Robinson, 2017).

8 American comedian Chris Rock says a bullet should cost 5,000 dollars. “What we need isn’t gun control, it’s bullet control.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZrFVtmRXrw>

9 There is popular anecdote of a European programme to aid the development of a coastal town in West Africa. The fishermen were happy to receive more durable nets, but the women were frustrated because they now had fewer opportunities to make money by fixing the nets. Planners had made the common error of mistaking the interests of the men for those of the whole community.

10 This was reported in 2000 by a Sierra Leonean social worker at a workshop in Montreal, Canada, attended by the author. In those days, mobile phones were still an exciting novelty.



Sudanese-Chadian Joint Border Force \ Nikhil Acharya, BICC

Lessons in cross-border cooperation to fight arms trafficking

This section looks at lessons that practitioners have learned about the trafficking of small arms, and how it can be tackled at the national and the international level. The dictionary definition of the verb “to traffic” means to deal or trade illegally. In the political discourse on restricted products, “trafficking” refers to illegal transfers of persons or goods across international borders. This is how international agreements like the UN PoA and the Firearms Protocol use the term. The same applies to agreements on the trafficking of drugs, wildlife products and cultural objects.

Lesson 12:**International trade may be irrelevant**

Often, it will make little difference in the near future if the smuggling of guns is stopped. In regions where the demand for weaponry is high, large stocks of weapons and ammunition have already accumulated, reducing the need for new supplies. The Small Arms Survey estimates that there are 875 million small arms and light weapons around the world, some 650 million SALW in the possession of civilians, 150 million in military stockpiles and 25 million in the hands of law enforcement agencies.¹¹ They can all change hands, legally or illegally, and domestic proliferation is likely to continue even if new supplies cannot be imported. Besides, some types of firearms can be made by local firms and craftsmen. Finally, as weapons are durable, their circulation inside a country may go on for a long time. However, ammunition is different. The more guns are fired, the sooner fresh supplies of ammunition will be needed. Besides, stored ammunition has a shorter shelf-life than weaponry and therefore needs to be replaced sooner.

Lesson 13:**The fight against trafficking begins within borders**

The practitioners at the Berlin workshop made it very clear that the struggle against the international smuggling of arms and ammunition begins at the national level. Governments that cannot control guns and ammunition on their territory can do even less to control illegal international flows. One of the first and most important steps towards weapons control is to ensure that government arsenals are safe and secure. This is vital not merely because the lives of government officials and neighbouring communities, as well as the effectiveness of the security forces, depend on physical security and stockpile management (PSSM). It will also block one of the primary sources of gun proliferation and trafficking. Large amounts of weaponry and ammunition are stolen from government arsenals.

In the example of the Chadian-Sudanese Joint Border Force (JBF), a speaker at the Berlin workshop described the useful achievements of the JBF that are much appreciated by the population on both sides

of the border. However, he pointed out that Chad and Sudan are unable to control their long and porous joint border.

Another practitioner at the Berlin meeting distinguished four levels at which states need to tackle violations of gun laws if they are to combat trafficking: Prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution. In most countries that suffer high rates of gun violence, there is a great need to build capacity in these four areas.

Lesson 14:**Interagency cooperation is difficult but necessary**

One of the practitioners at the workshop lamented the lack of cooperation between agencies, not only across borders but also within the country. It is imperative that various national agencies and non-state actors work together to detect, investigate and disrupt networks of arms smugglers. Unfortunately, government agencies do not work together naturally and smoothly. Some states enable, encourage and require their agencies to work together, but this does not always work well in practice. Other governments actually forbid their officials to contact colleagues in other state agencies without the explicit permission of their political masters. Border control is one of the areas that call out for interagency cooperation. If immigration officials, intelligence agents, customs officials and border guards do not work together (ideally, in the form of integrated border management), they will hardly be able to prevent trafficking. A lack of cooperation between national agencies within a state will also affect their ability to work with their counterparts in other countries.

Lesson 15:**International cooperation is difficult but necessary**

If they are to disrupt smugglers' networks, intelligence operatives, police detectives and prosecutors need to cooperate across national borders. However, they can only do this with the permission of their superiors, which may not be forthcoming. Regions that suffer from high levels of weapons proliferation and smuggling usually lack close collaboration between neighbouring states. This is unfortunate because working

together would benefit the countries both individually and collectively. It makes the story of the JBF (see Lesson 2) all the more remarkable. One of the first and most obvious areas in which neighbouring states can help each other to deal with gun smuggling is to allow the hot pursuit of suspects across national borders. That is to say, permit law enforcement officials who are pursuing suspects to continue their chase into the territory of a neighbouring state.

Lesson 16:
Train, equip and reform state agencies to tackle trafficking

Several practitioners at the Berlin workshop called on the international community to help developing countries to develop the capacity to tackle the trafficking in guns and ammunition. Rich countries have much to offer in the way of money, equipment and expertise. However, developing countries also need to help each other, especially if they share borders and challenges. Sub-regional associations of states like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in southern Africa are stimulating joint action and mutual aid among their members.

Lesson 17:
Seek the help of the population, e.g. in border communities

In the discussion on cross-border cooperation, an expert at the Berlin workshop described how much communities living near the border could contribute to the fight against the trafficking in arms, drugs and other contraband. People living near the border may have first-class knowledge on what is being moved and who is moving it. Leading a marginal existence, border communities may appreciate the interest and the help of the government. Hence there may be mutual benefits to cooperation. However, people may risk violent reprisals if they give the state information on smugglers.

Lesson 18:
The trafficking of guns is often linked to other business activities

As one of the speakers at the Berlin workshop pointed out, the trafficking of guns and ammunition is neither isolated nor unique. Gun smugglers may also be engaged in other business activities, either criminal or legal. They may use the same vehicles, crews, routes and techniques for the smuggling of drugs, guns and wildlife products. They have been known to ship their contraband on commercial flights mainly used for international aid. They may have links with corrupt state officials who assist them in several of their criminal and legal activities. There are many links between various forms of trafficking.

¹¹ <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/stockpiles.html>, accessed on 20 March 2018.



BICC expert discussing the storage of firearms with armourers \ Captain Budri Adobe, FARDC, BICC

Illustrations and practical experiences in civilian disarmament and cross-border cooperation

Germany has two reasons to help fight the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the Western Balkans, West Africa and other affected areas. It is good for European security, and it favours security and development in the regions concerned. As the German government prepares for new international efforts to combat the spread of firearms in West Africa, it wants to learn from practitioners who have been involved in such programmes around the world and know what works and what does not. This was the purpose of the workshop held at the German Foreign Office on 26/27 February 2018.

Defining concepts

When the UN PoA on Small Arms was adopted in 2001, there was a lively interest in greater control of these weapons. However, attention shifted to the wider trade in conventional arms, an effort that helped to produce the ATT of 2013. Another newly popular topic was the safe and secure storage and management of government ordnance (physical security and stockpile management, or PSSM).

The purpose of inviting practitioners to the Berlin workshop was to ask them which lessons should have been learned from efforts to remove the tools of war from society and to prevent the smuggling of small arms. In the interest of conceptual clarity, we need to distinguish between the removal, reduction or suppression of weapons in a civilian population. If there is a stock of 10,000 weapons in a community, then a collection programme may remove 3000 of these. But one would only consider this a real reduction of stocks by 30 per cent if one had evidence that the removed weapons have not been replaced. One might speak of suppression if authorities successfully engage in a drive to durably and comprehensively disarm the community, using rewards, amnesties, threats and penalties. However, this does not mean that partial and temporary successes are useless. In Latin America, there is an expression that says: “You can never kill all the mosquitoes, but you need to fumigate nonetheless”.

Massive programmes in Latin America

It is also important to clarify what is meant by trafficking. In the international agreements on SALW, it means unlawful international trade. They tend to rule out government-to-government transfers from their definition of trafficking.

In Latin America, programmes for civilian disarmament offer various types of rewards to people who voluntarily surrender weapons and ammunition. Cash incentives can have undesirable effects if they are too low to be effective, or so high as to encourage trafficking. But used judiciously, they can yield good results at a reasonable cost. Some of the largest collection programmes in recent history were suc-

cessfully conducted in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. Non-cash incentives included vouchers, food and tools.

Building capacity in Cambodia

Another massive programme of civilian disarmament, combined with other security and development goals, was carried out in Cambodia, with financial and technical support from the European Union (EU). The European Union's Assistance programme on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons (EU ASAC) in Cambodia was the only programme it ever directly executed. It supported the development of a new arms law, helped to build capacity for the safe and secure storage and handling of firearms (PSSM), funded development projects to encourage the surrender of weaponry, helped to destroy the collected arms and aided the government in its search for illegal arms caches.

Among the achievements of the project were an extremely strict weapons law, water wells installed to encourage the surrender of weapons, the removal and public destruction of over 200,000 arms and a much greater awareness of the dangers of firearms. Various lessons were learned in the course of EU-ASAC:

- \ In major programmes, quality and continuity will suffer without long-term planning and funding.
- \ Local ownership is essential, especially in view of the political nature of security programmes.
- \ The results of the programme will be more sustainable if connected with security-sector reform for the long term.
- \ An “exit strategy” is needed: What happens after weapons collection?
- \ Collected weapons must be destroyed to ensure and show that they will never cause problems again.
- \ Awareness campaigns should accentuate the link between security and development.
- \ The ultimate goal of civilian disarmament is better physical security.

Building capacity in West Africa

In West Africa, the sub-regional association Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is working with the European Union in a small arms project for eight states in West Africa. The EU/ECOWAS project was launched to fight proliferation, make the population better aware of the dangers of firearms, enhance local capacity to combat proliferation and meet urgent development needs. Some of its experiences may contain lessons for other projects:

- \ Find out about similar efforts in the past before embarking on a new one.
- \ Check whether the people who will lead community action are trusted.
- \ You need the support and leadership of local and national leaders.
- \ You need capable and trusted institutions as partners.
- \ “Weapons for development” makes for complex programmes.
- \ Both state and non-state actors are needed. They must work together.



Storage of weapons before the improvement of stockpile management \ Nikhil Acharya, BICC

Weapons in exchange for development in Albania

In Albania, the idea of “weapons in exchange for development” was first tried out in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 1997, the country had narrowly escaped civil war when violent protests broke out around the country, and the population looted arms depots all over the country. For the pilot project, the government selected the rural district of Gramsh, where the population was believed to hold some 10,000 military weapons and an unknown amount of ammunition. The communities in and around Gramsh gave up some 6000 weapons and huge quantities of ammunition and explosives. As a reward, roads were fixed, the police were given patrol cars, and street lighting was installed in the town, an improvement much appreciated by the women of Gramsh. At the time, no other rural town in Albania had such a luxury.

The staff and evaluators of the Gramsh project made some interesting observations:

- \ The government had initially asked for foreign aid to buy back the weapons, but the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs successfully recommended a community-based approach using development incentives.
- \ People tended to surrender what they considered dangerous and useless. Very few pistols were handed in.
- \ A large part of the looted weaponry was not collected, but trafficked to ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, for political or commercial reasons, or both.
- \ “Weapons for development” is expensive. Programme cost per weapon recovered ranged from about US \$200 in Gramsh to about US \$500 in a later project.
- \ The concept “weapons for development” is ambiguous. Development is not a reward, but a process driven by the community concerned, often with some external support.

- \ Local people appreciated the development projects, and this led them to consider “weapons in exchange for development” a great success, even outsiders suspected that the real security gains of weapons collection were modest.
- \ The project staff were very poorly prepared and equipped to deal with ammunition and explosives, especially in the large quantities handed in. Later projects also paid little or no attention to ammunition and explosives.
- \ You need a baseline to be able to assess the success of your programme.
- \ The Gramsh project should have been part of a more comprehensive government policy.
- \ The weapons should have all been publicly destroyed.



Example of a marked weapon. \ Nikhil Acharya, BICC

Baselines

Participants at the Berlin workshop agreed that it was necessary to have an estimate of the stock of weapons in the community where the project is to be held. This can later be compared with the number of weapons recovered. But this runs up against three types of problems.

- 1 \ It is often difficult and costly to obtain a good estimate of the stock of weapons. It is even harder to estimate the total amount of ammunition that could potentially be collected. The project will often need to make do with educated guesses, which may suffice.
- 2 \ The number or percentage of weapons collected tells us very little about improved security. Are people really safer now? Do they feel safer? How useful is it to know whether there are 2.8 million or 3.2 million SALW in Darfur? Perhaps it is enough to know that the region is full of guns. In any case, there will be a need for additional performance indicators to assess improvements in objective security (being safe) and subjective security (feeling safe).
- 3 \ The government, the donors and the media are likely to want clear and measurable results, even if project staff and evaluators know that the numbers do not really mean very much in terms of safety and security.

Incentives and actors

There was also an exchange of views on individual and collective incentives at the Berlin workshop. People may be motivated more by something offered to them personally, but collective rewards encourage communities to work together. A combination of both may be best.

All present agreed that it is best for government officials trained and authorized to handle weapons and ammunition to take delivery of the weapons handed in, store them and destroy them. In practice, however, the soldiers and police officers may not have been

trained properly for this job. What is more, they may be viewed with such suspicion by the population that people are unwilling to surrender weaponry to them. In such conditions, there will be a need for foreign weapons experts. Besides, representatives of civil society may monitor and inspect the work of soldiers and police officers. Finally, government officials may be more effective if they work in civilian clothes, together with civilians.

Disarmament can lead to war

Coercive campaigns for the confiscation of guns in South Sudan have shown that ill-conceived civilian disarmament can lead to disaster. Lacking conflict sensitivity, these efforts disarmed some communities which were then attacked by others, which had not disarmed. The local disarmament initiatives that followed were more successful. The lesson to be learned here is that coercive disarmament only leads to improved security in exceptional circumstances. Even campaigns for voluntary disarmament can lead to disaster if they are not well informed, locally owned and carefully designed to be appropriate to local conditions.

Lacking capacity for cross-border cooperation in Mali

In African countries with extremely long and inaccessible borders, border posts are very rare and usually not manned by the state. Sometimes, they are manned by rebel groups that generate revenues illegally.

Participants of the Berlin workshop noted that in Mali, there is a lack of co-ordination in capacity-building. There are many different local and foreign actors, each doing their own thing. However, a national border policy was developed. The next step would be to create a national border security strategy.

In the absence of an overall strategy, donor states are helping Mali to train officials to guard the border

posts and teaching them to control arms flows. There is a good collaboration with the German development agency GIZ, the five-country West African counter-terrorism force G5 and others.

There were attempts at civilian disarmament in Mali, but the United Nations steered clear of them because they seemed to be aimed at stripping communities of the capacity to defend themselves.

In Mali, cross-border cooperation includes agreements on hot pursuit. ECOWAS agreements ensure the freedom of people and goods within the region, and there are bilateral agreements with Algeria and others. There is a very successful Malian unit that combats poaching, even across national borders. In contrast, morale is so low in the armed forces that many units are on the edge of mutiny. Mentoring is a good way to boost morale.

There is a need for donor countries and international organizations to help build the capacity of state authorities that face the difficult task of combating illicit trafficking and disrupting terrorist networks. States with major trafficking problems should set up independent anti-trafficking authorities with clear competencies and a budget of their own. International partners should work closely with these national institutions to better understand and successfully disrupt illicit trafficking networks. Moreover, donors should invest in the creation and maintenance of teams that detect and clear improvised explosive devices. It is cheaper and more efficient to invest in such national organizations than to send in a multilateral mission.

Police cooperation in southern Africa

The police services of the countries belonging to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) collaborate in the field of small arms control, on the basis of a SADC Firearms Protocol. The police forces of the region regard firearms primarily as an enabler of crime, while in other parts of Africa, firearms are often regarded as tools of political and ethnic violence. Police services need to gather relevant data methodically and carefully. Unfortunately, there is a lack of close cooperation between government

agencies even within the countries of the region. Law enforcement agencies need to work together and train together, and their work should be guided by the analyses of national intelligence agencies.

Concrete problems with regard to small arms control in southern Africa include the porosity of borders, the lack of adequate facilities at border posts, unsatisfactory stockpile management, lack of a firearms database and the absence of information-sharing on SALW.

4 \ Prosecution: By the same token, there is a lack of capacity, knowledge, skills and tools that would allow prosecutors to effectively initiate trials of suspected offenders against anti-trafficking laws. Here too, there is an inadequate understanding of relevant law, especially on firearms.

One of the best ways to address these deficiencies is training, with tailored technical support.

From national to international control

Border control must not start at the border. Nor should the fight against gun trafficking. Instead, border communities should be actively consulted to obtain information on trade routes, etc. even before illicit trafficking actually occurs. Officials from the law enforcement sector may be trained to enhance the capacity of border communities to help in the struggle against trafficking.

There are four steps in the struggle against trafficking:

- 1 \ Prevention: If states do not have an effective system of firearm control within their borders, they will fail to prevent illegal imports and exports. This is the case in most parts of Africa.
- 2 \ Detection: Similarly, many developing countries lack the skills and tools to detect violations of the laws against arms trafficking. One of the best ways to tackle this problem is to start sharing information on crimes and suspects, first between state agencies at the national level and, second, between states that are neighbours or major trading partners.
- 3 \ Investigation: Here again, the necessary skills and tools are lacking in Africa. Law enforcement officials do not even have adequate knowledge of the laws they are supposed to enforce.

Joint Border Force between Chad and Sudan

Sudan and Chad are two countries that have more than once been in conflict in recent years and are unable to patrol the length of their porous border. Nevertheless, they have been working together now for some years and established a Joint Border Force (JBF) that is obtaining useful results (also see Lesson 13 above).

The achievements of the JBF are largely due to its pragmatic and practical nature. Unable to patrol all 700 kilometres of the border, it focusses on the southern area with the main centres of population. Sometimes, it is able to arrest traffickers of arms, wildlife products and other contraband and to provide some medical and educational assistance to the population on either side of the border.

Its modest but worthwhile successes can be attributed not only to realism, but also to good local knowledge and full local ownership.



Disarmament sculpture at the United Nations in New York \ Nikhil Acharya, BICC

Reflections on firearm control and arms control

This section shows that while it is appropriate to regard the control of small arms as arms control in a wide sense of the term, it is actually very different from arms control as the term is commonly understood. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are, of course, technically different from weapons of mass destruction and major conventional weapon systems like warships, artillery, tanks, jet fighters and guided missiles. They are smaller, cheaper and easier to operate, carry and hide. Consequently, they are more difficult to observe, count and control.

The problems related to the spread and misuse of firearms are mainly discussed in two different contexts. One is law enforcement and crime prevention. The leading organizations are international police agencies and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The other context is peace and security, and within that framework, disarmament and arms control. Here the common term is not firearms, but small arms and light weapons (SALW). There are many relevant types of international organizations that deal with the consequences of SALW proliferation for peace and security: UN bodies like the Security Council, departments like the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), UN-related agencies like UNDP, regional organizations like the African Union or the Organization of American States, and sub-regional associations like ECOWAS in West Africa and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the Horn of Africa.

In his 1995 Agenda for Peace, Boutros Boutros Ghali advocated controlling SALW (Boutros Ghali, 1995), and such efforts are often conceived of as arms control. There are good reasons for this, but it can be misleading. Arms control usually refers to “any international control or limitation of the development, testing, production, deployment, or use of weapons.”¹² Its purpose is to reduce the risk of war or limit its destructiveness. However, small arms are unlike other categories of weapons that are the object of arms control agreements. This makes their control both difficult and different.

Unlike weapons of mass destruction and anti-personnel landmines, firearms are not considered inherently evil. Most people consider guns, used properly and legally, important to maintaining public and human security. In many countries, the law also allows citizens to have and use guns. Nor is it generally true that firearms have particularly cruel¹³ or indiscriminate effects. Automatic weapons may cause unintended deaths and injuries, but the bigger problem is that in the ‘small wars’ of today, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants has become blurred. Hence, the problem of indiscriminate armed violence lies more in the nature of war than in the nature of the weapons.

Another reason to pursue arms control is the wish to tackle the potentially destabilizing effect of arms

and arms races. Arms control in the common sense of the term is international. Typically, opposing states negotiate on arms control, seeking to limit armaments in their common interest. However, gun control is mostly domestic. The spread of small arms can indeed destabilize the political situation, not so much between states, but rather within them. It is rarely the object of internationally negotiated agreements. Rather, it is an attempt by the state to restrict the trading, possession and use of guns by citizens and typically involves the use of the law. There are huge differences between states in the degree to which, and the ways in which, they seek to control guns.¹⁴ If there are differences in gun control between neighbouring states, weapons may leak into the one with the stricter regime. While gun control is mostly a state responsibility, it is undermined by the international trafficking in firearms—hence the need for international agreements to combat this trafficking.

Arms control usually deals with weapons held by military forces. Here again, small arms are different. About three-quarters of the estimated 875 million small arms in the world today are in the hands of civilians, and this share is rising.¹⁵ Many of the firearms now held illegally by civilians were at some time stolen or captured from the military or police—hence the importance of better stockpile management.

An effective state can decide which of its officials are allowed to carry weapons, and how these may be used. Controlling firearms held by civilians is more difficult. Civilians hold firearms for various reasons, which are often poorly understood.¹⁶ People may want to have guns to protect their families and property. They may want to be armed for political reasons or criminal purposes. Others seek weapons as symbols of power, prestige, manhood or maturity. To some, arms and ammunition are simply merchandise. Finally, some people come into the possession of guns, for example by inheritance, without having any use for them. One can hardly expect to successfully limit the spread and the misuse of firearms without understanding demand. Various social, economic, cultural and political factors influence the demand for guns. Good opportunities for the peaceful settlement of disputes and adequate public security can potentially reduce this demand.

Despite all these differences, two important international agreements on the control of SALW were successfully negotiated in the UN administrative framework for arms control, under the first committee of the General Assembly. These are the UN Programme of Action (2001) and the International Tracing Instrument (2013) (Wilson, 2016, p. 26). However, the Firearms Protocol (2001) was negotiated in the framework of transnational efforts to tackle organized crime, as one of three protocols to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).¹⁷ Beyond those, there are various regional and sub-regional protocols on small arms.¹⁸

In sum, it is clear that while small arms control is a general form of arms control in the broadest sense, limiting its proliferation and misuse is very different from the established practice of arms control.

12 <http://www.britannica.com/topic/arms-control>, accessed on 19 March 2018.

13 However, there have been efforts to ban hollow-point (dum-dum) bullets.
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/dec99-03.asp, accessed on 29 March 2018.

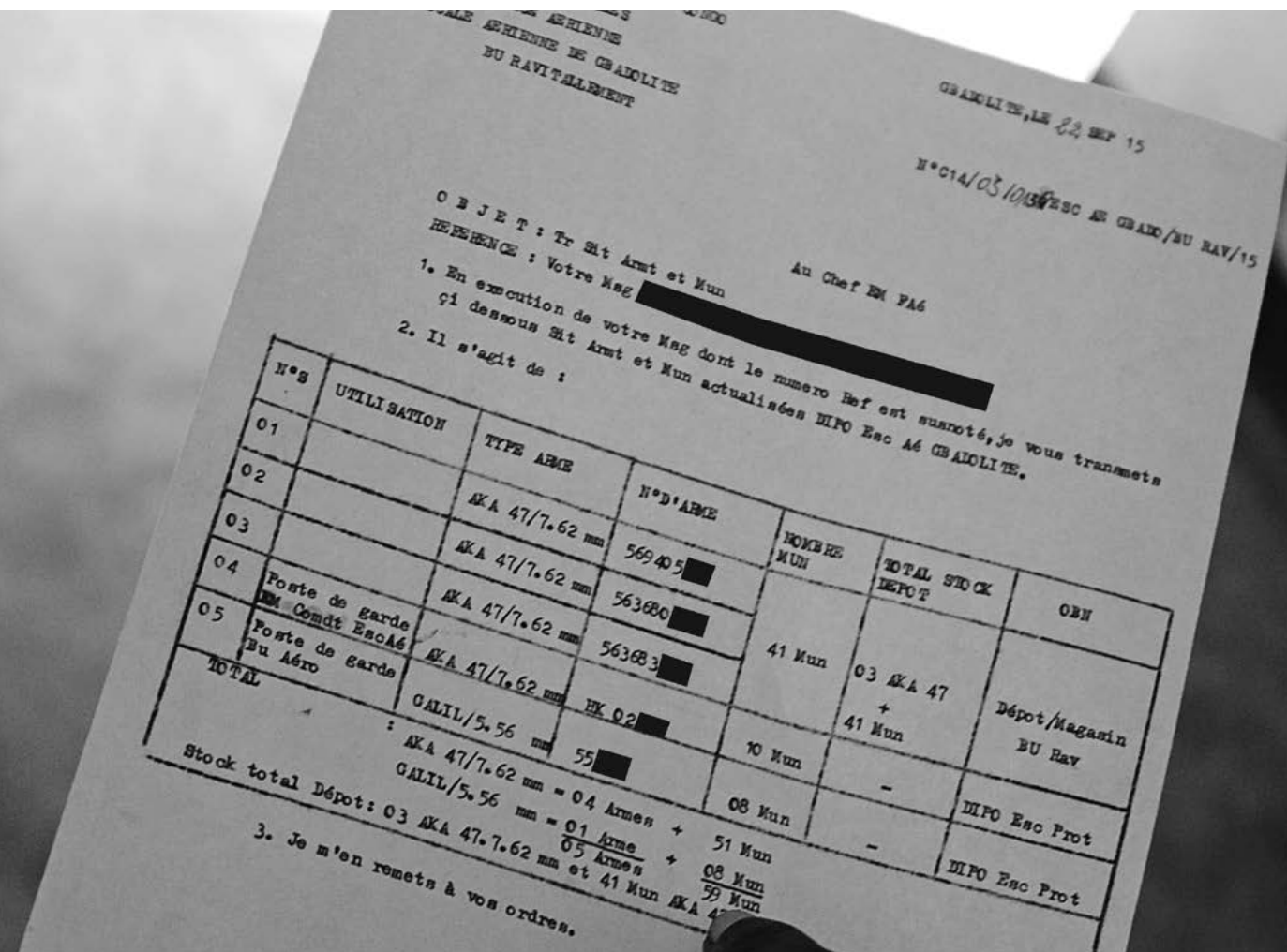
14 In federal states, there can be huge differences between regions. In the United States, Massachusetts has strict gun laws, whereas its northern neighbours Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine have very few. https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/national/assault-weapons-laws/?utm_term=.85c1755d50bf, accessed on 26 April 2018.

15 <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/weapons-and-markets/stockpiles.html>, accessed on 20 March 2018.

16 There is a need for more serious study of the demand for firearms, as in Brauer and Muggah, 2006.

17 This the only legally binding international agreement on small arms. It entered into force in 2005, but many influential states are not, or not yet, parties to it. They include the permanent members of the UN Security Council, as well as Australia, Canada, Germany and Japan.
Source: https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-c&chapter=18&clang=en, accessed on 19 March 2018.

18 These are documented on <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/regulations-and-controls/levels-of-action.html>, accessed on 20 March 2018.



The weapons inventory is transmitted regularly to superiors in Kinshasa \ Nikhil Acharya, BICC

From lessons learned to better practice

The last section of this *Knowledge Note* argues that it is not enough to understand lessons learned in some 20 years of efforts at civilian disarmament and fighting the trafficking in firearms. Lessons must also be shared and, most importantly, applied. For the application of these lessons, endurance is key as civilian disarmament intervenes in the way of life of the local population.

When the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) decided to organize the workshop of 26 and 27 February 2018 and commissioned this *Knowledge Note*, it aimed for a better understanding of lessons learned in civilian disarmament. The GFFO hopes these insights will be applied in new projects to fight the proliferation of arms in West Africa. The previous sections of this *Knowledge Note* described some lessons that seem relevant.

But it is not easy to learn from experience and then use this knowledge to become more effective. It is difficult for individual people, more challenging for groups, organizations and states and hardest of all for what we casually call the international community. The international community is actually a loose collection of states that offer or receive foreign aid, government agencies, organizations whose business is to carry out state-sponsored projects and groups of citizens.

There are three basic and distinct steps to complete in order to benefit from lessons learned by practitioners the world over.

Identify and interpret the lessons

First, identify experiences that are worth remembering because they contain lessons for future practice. They may not be immediately obvious, but good project evaluations and media reports may reveal them. This may be the first time they are put into words. Once identified, such experiences need to be interpreted. If they were failures, it would be useful to point out what went wrong and why, and what future practitioners need to bear in mind to avoid repeating the problem. Failure is a better teacher than success, but it is often not acknowledged and analysed. Individual professionals may be willing to admit and discuss their mistakes, but often their superiors will not allow it. Project evaluations are not always critical enough.

Share the lessons

The second essential step is to share lessons learned. Project and policy evaluations will teach the wider community of practitioners nothing if they are not published. Grave errors, like the coercive disarmament



The main armorer presents a small stockpile of weapons \ Nikhil Acharya, BICC

programmes in South Sudan described in the Berlin workshop, should be discussed in training courses for practitioners, from Bosnia to the Solomon Islands. Unfortunately, this does not happen frequently enough.

Most importantly, apply the lessons

Third, unless what is learned is actually applied, future work will not benefit from lessons learned. There is a considerable body of literature on civilian disarmament and the fight against arms-trafficking, much of it available from open sources online. To date, the website of the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) is the only place where practitioners can seek clear, concise and evidence-based guidelines on good practice. More of this type of application of lessons learned is sorely needed.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty	ATT
BICC	Bonn International Center for Conversion	BICC
CD	Civilian disarmament	CD
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (of former combatants)	DDR
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	ECOWAS
EU ASAC	European Union's Assistance on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons in Cambodia	EU ASAC
FP	Firearms Protocol	FP
GFFO	German Federal Foreign Office	GFFO
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development	IGAD
ITI	International Tracing Instrument	ITI
JBF	Chadian-Sudanese Joint Border Force	JBF
NGOs	Non-government organizations	NGOs
PSSM	Physical security and stockpile management	PSSM
SADC	Southern African Development Community	SADC
SALW	Small arms and light weapons	SALW
SAS	Small Arms Survey	SAS
UN PoA	UN Programme of Action on Small Arms	UN PoA
UNODA	UN Office of Disarmament Affairs	UNODA
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime	UNODC
UNTOC	UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime	UNTOC

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**bicc **

Internationales Konversionszentrum Bonn
Bonn International Center for Conversion GmbH

Pfarrer-Byns-Straße 1, 53121 Bonn, Germany
+49 (0)228 911 96-0, Fax -22, bicc@bicc.de

www.bicc.de
www.facebook.com/bicc.de

bicc Bonn
International Center
for Conversion \

Director for Research
Professor Dr. Conrad Schetter

Director for Administration
Michael Dedek

AUTHOR

Professor Dr Sami Faltas,
Consultant and senior lecturer of International Relations
(retired) at the University of Groningen, NL

COPYEDITOR
Heike Webb

SUPPORT
Matthias Krötz

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