

Chapter 5

Solutions at all levels



UNAMSIL disarmament programme in Sierra Leone. A container-load of destroyed weapons from rebels and anti-government groups.

5: Solutions at all levels

‘Arma Não! Ela Ou Eu’
– *‘Choose gun free!*
It’s your weapon or me.’

Slogan of the women’s anti-gun
campaign in Brazil

Solutions exist – but what about the political will to apply them?

- ▶ In some regions, arms policy has improved, but practice is still disastrously inadequate.
- ▶ The UN small-arms process is taking two steps forward and one step back.
- ▶ To prevent further abuses, it is necessary to stop the flow of new arms and to drain the pool of arms already in use in suffering communities.
- ▶ An Arms Trade Treaty is desperately needed, in order to ban all arms transfers which could lead to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.
- ▶ National and regional arms controls also need to be strengthened in order to stop such transfers.
- ▶ Governments need to be more accountable to their citizens in their provision of protection from armed violence.
- ▶ Governments and civil society need to work together to improve safety at the community level.

The world has reached a critical point. Millions of arms are in circulation. They can be found in almost every corner of the world. They are often used to commit gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Millions of people are suffering the consequences. Government action is required now. Governments have an obligation to protect their own citizens, but also to do what they can to prevent human rights abuses and war crimes abroad. This must involve working to stem the flow of arms and to stop arms abuse.

Some steps in the right direction

Over the last five years, the problem of the *illicit* proliferation of small arms has been acknowledged, and the political landscape has begun to change at the international level through the initiative of the UN. However, progress has been patchy, and the state-sanctioned arms trade has been ignored.

- ▶ Almost 10 years ago, 52 of the world’s most powerful arms-exporting states signed up to the **Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers**. However, the practices of these states – all participants in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – fall far short of their agreed benchmark.

- ▶ More recently, the **European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports** stipulated that arms should not be exported to countries where there is a clear risk that they might be used for internal repression, external aggression or where serious violations of human rights have occurred. However, evidence cited in many independent reports suggests that this promise is not being fully kept.
- ▶ Since 2001, OSCE countries have been developing '**Best Practice Guidelines**' for the export and control of small arms and light weapons.²⁸⁶

There are still no binding laws or regulatory requirements that oblige arms-exporting states to respect international human rights or humanitarian law when authorising the transfer of arms or military, security, and police training services to other countries. Even where human rights criteria are referred to, they are often loosely interpreted. In particular, when governments consider proposed exports, inadequate attention is paid to the long lifecycle of most types of arms and security equipment and technology – and hence to the prolonged risk of abuse.

What is needed is a genuine commitment by all governments to enact powerful new arms-control laws, consistent with international human rights standards and humanitarian law, which will bring an end to their complicity in the abuse of small arms.

The UN and small arms

There have been two steps forward towards international controls on small arms since 2000, both addressing the illicit trade in arms. First, the UN Firearms Protocol has been agreed. This is concerned with the illicit manufacture and trafficking of firearms by criminal organisations. As of March 2003, the Protocol had been signed by 52 states but ratified by only three, hence it is unlikely to enter into force for some years.²⁸⁸ Second, a Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects was agreed at a UN conference in July 2001. After an implementation meeting in 2003, where there was no consensus on moving forward, there will be another in 2005, followed by a review conference in 2006.

The Programme of Action contains several positive provisions, such as specific measures against which to monitor progress on issues such as the collection and destruction of arms, and the management of stockpiles. However the 2001 UN Conference did not achieve more than very general commitments, and it was in many ways a wasted opportunity. The US and Russian governments joined with

'[Small arms and light] weapons have prolonged or aggravated conflicts, produced massive flows of refugees, undermined the rule of law and spawned a culture of violence and impunity. In short, the excessive accumulation and illicit trade of small arms is threatening international peace and security, dashing hopes for social and economic development, and jeopardising prospects for democracy and human rights.'

Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, 2002²⁸⁷

those of China and some in the Non-Aligned Movement to weaken the UN Programme of Action significantly. Specifically, they prevented the conference from addressing the misuse of arms, especially when referring to state agents, despite overwhelming evidence of the problems caused by such misuse.²⁸⁹ The Programme of Action does not mention human rights, and there are few references to international humanitarian law, nor does it provide any mandate for the negotiation of a binding instrument.

In relation to the global threat, the progress is proceeding at a frustratingly slow pace. The UN's first step towards reform of the trade in small arms and light weapons must not remain the only step to control the global flow of conventional arms.

*'Most of the guns used
in crimes originated as
legally sold items.'*

Steve Steel, US Federal Bureau of Alcohol,
Tobacco and Firearms, Dallas, 1997²⁹⁰

Stop the flow and drain the pool

The excessive and uncontrolled proliferation of arms must be tackled by the following measures:

- ▶ Preventing the flow of arms used to commit abuses, by stronger controls on the movement of arms.
- ▶ Taking arms out of communities which are already awash with weapons, and reducing the availability of arms and the likelihood of their being misused.

Stop the flow of arms

Controlling the flow of weapons into a country is a critical step. The right of states to arm for self-defence comes with an international legal and moral responsibility to control the weapons and ensure that they are used appropriately. Similarly, the duty of states to regulate the sale of arms must be taken seriously.

It is vital that governments do not authorise the transfer of arms if there are grounds to believe there is a risk that they will be used for grave violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, or where the proliferation of arms undermines sustainable development.

Governments must also tighten controls to stop the flow of illicit weapons. This means ensuring that embargoes are not broken, that brokers are regulated, and that arms smuggling is prevented.

The primary responsibility for the flow of arms into a country rests with governments – *all* governments that export, re-export, or import arms.

We must turn off the irresponsible supply of arms...



... and drain the pool of existing uncontrolled weapons



Strong controls on arms are needed to reduce the likelihood of war, crime, and repression, to diminish their scope and impact should they occur, and to reduce the political and economic costs of armed violence.²⁹¹ Such controls already have a firm basis in existing international law and standards – human rights law, international humanitarian law, and norms on sustainable development. Oxfam and Amnesty International are calling for these controls to be applied directly and clearly to the transfer and use of arms.

However, in isolation, these critical measures will have little impact. Even if all irresponsible transfers ceased tomorrow, many state forces and communities already possess large quantities of arms, under such minimal control that the risk of abuse would remain high for years to come.

Drain the pool of arms

Armed violence is not inevitable. Arms must be strictly limited and controlled by establishing a rigorous system of accountability and training, and removing illegal and surplus weapons from communities gravely affected by armed violence. This is a simple concept, but arms can be strictly controlled and collected effectively only when an environment is created which fosters the peaceful resolution of conflict, the responsible and legitimate use of arms, and confidence in the prospect of non-armed security. Governments, security services, the judiciary, community leaders, and civilian users of guns must work together and take action to reduce the means and motive for armed violence.

That means, above all, that all state actors entitled to use arms must strictly follow the 26 provisions of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms and, when necessary, the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and other relevant international humanitarian laws. All of these provisions must be incorporated into domestic state laws in every country, and guaranteed by means of rigorous training and monitoring.

Although complex and challenging, the task of controlling the proliferation and misuse of small arms is not impossible, and models of good practice already exist:

- ▶ Programmes of weapons collection and destruction have developed significantly over the past 10 years. They now incorporate development-related incentives, whereby recompense for the surrendered weapons assists the rebuilding of communities.
- ▶ South African civil society has led the way in the designation of schools, hospitals, public buildings, and even towns as Gun Free Zones, thus reducing fear and armed violence.

‘If only the enemy would listen, it would have been wonderful, and the firing would stop and we would listen to each other, we would just talk and try not to use guns. I wish we could end all this violence and we could develop our country.’

Girl soldier, the Philippines, 2001²⁹²

- ▶ The Sierra Leonean government involved civil society in plans for reconstituting the armed forces and incorporating training and education on principles of democratic governance and human rights, and international humanitarian law.²⁹³

An international initiative: the Arms Trade Treaty

Arms producers have a right to sell, and others have a right to buy, but rights confer responsibilities and legal obligations.

The fact that an arms transfer is ‘authorised’ by state officials does not mean that it is necessarily a lawful act. A ‘legal’ arms transfer is often interpreted by governments to mean ‘lawful under national laws’. However, to be fully legal, a transfer must also be lawful under international law. The UN Disarmament Commission clearly recognises this distinction and has defined illicit transfers as ‘that international trade in conventional arms which is contrary to the laws of states and/or international law’. This was endorsed in July 2001 by the UN Conference on small arms.

But what are these obligations under international law? The proposed Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) sets out principles based upon existing responsibilities of states under international standards.²⁹⁵ It pulls together relevant international laws and standards which should apply to international arms transfers – such as the Geneva Conventions, the Mine Ban Treaty, and the Convention against Genocide. It is a simple, clear document which defines the criteria against which any proposed transfer of conventional arms should be permitted. It would require states to incorporate these criteria into their national law and to make regular public reports of all arms transferred to an international registry. (See Appendix 1 for more details on international law and arms.)

The Arms Trade Treaty codifies the principle that arms exports are in breach of international law if the exporter has knowledge, or ought reasonably to have knowledge, that the arms will be used for violations of international human rights or humanitarian law.²⁹⁶ Knowledge by relevant state officials that arms are likely to be used for such grave violations introduces a responsibility to prevent such a transfer, especially from that state’s own territory or jurisdiction.²⁹⁷ Therefore any state exporting weapons – not merely newly manufactured arms, but re-exported, second-hand weapons too – has clear responsibilities to ensure that the weapons are used in a manner consistent with standards already agreed under international law. The exporting state would be required to monitor closely what happens once the arms leave its borders, since the manner in which the recipient state will use the weapons may affect the lawfulness of the transfer.

‘The availability and misuse of [small arms and light] weapons has an indisputable impact on the number, type and gravity of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by state and non-state actors.’

Barbara Frey, UN Special Rapporteur on Small Arms²⁹⁴

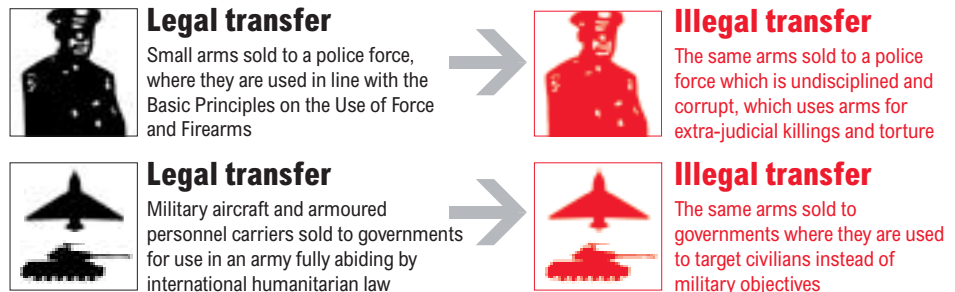
The Arms Trade Treaty – if widely accepted – will establish a firm and unambiguous international mechanism to prohibit the sale of weapons where there is a clear risk that those weapons will be used for serious abuses.

‘We’ve been working on arms issues in communities for years, and three years ago the idea of an Arms Trade Treaty seemed very distant from our work. But we now realise that our work on arms in communities will not be successful without addressing the inflow of arms.’

Fred Lubang, Gaston Z. Ortigas Peace Institute, the Philippines, 2003²⁹⁸

The Arms Trade Treaty would be an **international** means of control, to ensure that all nations are working to the same standard. National and regional systems are extremely important in combating illicit transfers; they provide a critical level of control and are the primary safeguard against irresponsible transfers. However, they are not mutually consistent, and some contain ambiguities and loopholes which make it easy for illicit dealers to ply their trade. For example, there have been numerous cases of questionable arms transfers through Slovakia, because there are no functioning controls over arms in transit;²⁹⁹ in the Netherlands, where there is little arms production but major arms transshipments, items from ‘friendly’ countries are exempted from certain mandatory licences, and items in ‘fast transit’ need no licence at all.³⁰⁰ The Arms Trade Treaty would also help to ensure that deals rejected by one supplier are not picked up by another, thus preventing a situation similar to that in late 2002, when, despite Germany’s refusal to sell rifles to the Nepalese government on human rights grounds, Belgium supplied them instead.

What would be legal and illegal under the ATT



The Arms Trade Treaty would be **legally binding**. The regional politically binding instruments that exist currently are not legally enforceable. Difficult decisions are, at the end of the day, merely subject to the judgement of political representatives or civil servants. The Arms Trade Treaty, however, fosters a culture of compliance by creating a permanent legal connection between arms and abuses; and it brings arms-export standards into line with existing responsibilities under international law.

Even though some countries are opposed to an ATT, this should not prevent other states from forging ahead. Although not all countries have signed the Mine Ban Treaty (prohibiting anti-personnel mines), a new international norm has been created by means of worldwide pressure and campaigning. Since this treaty came into force, not a single country has openly traded anti-personnel landmines, far fewer governments are using anti-personnel landmines, and even some non-signatories are broadly abiding by its principles.³⁰¹

Core principles of the Arms Trade Treaty

Article 1: Principle – All international arms transfers should be authorised by the appropriate state authority.

Article 2: Express limitations – Governments have a responsibility to ensure that transfers do not directly violate their obligations under international law: This includes:

- a. transfer of particular types of weapon – if they are indiscriminate or are of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering;
- b. transfer to particular countries – if covered by embargoes.

Article 3: Limitations based on anticipated use – Governments have a responsibility to ensure that the weapons they transfer are not used illegally. The transfer must not proceed if there is knowledge that the arms will be:

- a. used for breaches of the UN charter, particularly the use of force in international relations;
- b. used for serious violations of human rights, international humanitarian law, genocide, crimes against humanity; or
- c. diverted and used to commit any of the above.

Article 4: Other issues to take into account – Governments have a responsibility not to transfer arms if the arms are likely to:

- a. be used for or to facilitate the commission of violent crimes;
- b. adversely affect political stability or regional security;
- c. adversely affect sustainable development; or
- d. be diverted and used to commit any of the above.

The current form of the treaty addresses only government-authorized transfers, but protocols for brokering and licensed production will also be produced. These will apply the same principles, ensuring that government authorisation for brokering and licensed production are based on the criteria for arms transfers outlined above.

Consensus is already growing in support of the Arms Trade Treaty:

- ▶ It has a compelling **legal basis**: the proposed text draws on existing and emerging obligations of states under international law.
- ▶ There is a powerful **moral justification** to refuse some arms deals. It is never right to supply weapons which will be used to commit atrocities, even if other less responsible countries are willing to do it. Establishing this principle internationally would put the onus on non-compliant arms exporters to justify their practices.

‘Getting a commitment through international law made a real difference over landmines. It made governments responsible for change.’

Comment from a participant in an NGO workshop on small arms in Nairobi, 2001³⁰²

'If traders are selling the rebels these weapons, they also have responsibility for the bullets that were fired and put me in this hospital.'

Bacary Biaye was shot and lost the use of his legs, Casamance, Senegal, 2000³⁰⁷

As this report shows, when it comes to arms control, too often this protection is not provided. Lack of effective arms control by a state may result in a direct threat by force of arms to a person's safety, or a threat to his or her means of survival or security. A change of state policy and practice to control the flow and use of arms is vital if this threat is to be removed.

Arms transfers

Governments must lead the way in implementing national export controls which are based on international human rights and humanitarian law. The criteria as defined in the Arms Trade Treaty provide the benchmark for such controls. In addition to export controls, concerted steps should be taken to close two of the main international loopholes exploited by arms manufacturers, dealers, brokers, and traffickers.

- ▶ There should be strict national registration of each arms manufacturer, broker, transporter, and financier, even if they operate only through 'third countries'. Those convicted of criminal offences involving money laundering, trafficking, and firearms-related violence should be removed from the register.³⁰⁸
- ▶ Licences for export, transit, and import should be controlled on a case-by-case basis, and should include full details of the brokers, transporters, and financiers involved. They should be issued by the sending, receiving, and transit governments after direct consultation with each other and with the home governments of any brokers, transporters, and financiers involved, and they should be issued only if the arms transfers proposed will not reach anyone likely to violate international human rights and humanitarian law.

Civilian arms ownership and violent crime

The UN has expressed its concern about the high incidence of crimes, accidents, and suicides involving the civilian misuse of firearms, noting the lack of appropriate regulations in many countries for their possession and storage, and the lack of training in the use of firearms.³⁰⁹ Among the countries identified by the UN as having very high firearm deaths per 100,000 people were Colombia (55.85), Brazil (26.97), Jamaica (18.72), and the USA (14.05). These contrast with much lower rates in Japan (0.07), the UK (0.46), Spain (0.70), the Netherlands (0.74) and Denmark (0.80).³¹⁰

There is growing pressure to hold states accountable for violent crimes, and to punish any state's failure to establish reasonable regulation regarding the private ownership

of small arms; failure to protect individuals from domestic violence; and failure to protect individuals from organised crime, including kidnapping for ransom.³¹¹

Under international human rights law, every person has a duty to respect another's right to life.³¹² More importantly, states have a duty to take positive measures to prevent acts of violence and unlawful killings, including those committed by private persons.³¹³ There is growing recognition that states' duties under international human rights law include exercising due diligence to ensure that basic rights – certainly the right to life and security of the person – are not abused by private actors.³¹⁴ Where a foreseeable consequence of a failure to exercise adequate control over the civilian possession and use of arms is continued or increased violence, then states might be held liable for this failure under international human rights law.

In situations where civilian possession and abuse of firearms is controlled weakly or not at all, police officers have expressed concern that it is difficult to protect the public.³¹⁵ According to international standards, law-enforcement officers should 'as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms' and then 'only if other means remain ineffective'. This task becomes increasingly difficult where possession and use of guns is spiralling out of control.³¹⁶ The UN Basic Principles also require states to establish a legal framework and effective system to regulate the control, storage, and issuing of firearms and ammunition to law-enforcement officers.

In addition, the Basic Principles require states to 'prohibit the use of those firearms and ammunition that cause unwarranted injury or present an unwarranted risk', which in many countries is taken to mean that military-specification weapons should not normally be used for policing. It would appear to follow logically that such weapons should certainly not be in civilian possession.³¹⁷

Even governments with minimal resources have begun to take concerted action to combat violent crime, including measures to strictly control the civilian possession of firearms. In Malawi, for example, the Chamber of Commerce and other civil-society organisations publicly criticised the government in 1999 for not doing enough to stem the rise of armed crime, and the government has since, with UK aid, expanded its national programme to reform the police and has engaged community organisations in Community Policing Forums to help to fight violent crime and counter the illegal possession of firearms.³¹⁸

'Please remember my son Matthew and all the children and young people who have died or been injured and traumatised around this world. Remember that they were denied the basic right to live their lives.'

Mary Leigh Blek, President of the Million Mom March, USA, speech to the UN conference on small arms, 2001

'I am a victim. I have had my cattle stolen. We had no choice but to get guns to protect our livestock and our families from raiders... Surrendering arms is not a problem, as long as you can assure me that our neighbours are disarming also, and that you can assure me my protection.'

Villager in Kina, Isiolo, northern Kenya, 2002²¹⁹

Local initiatives: building safer communities

Increasing safety at the community level is inextricably bound up with the reasons why people hold and resort to arms. The primary reason for villagers in Afghanistan, Yemen, and Switzerland to hold weapons will differ radically: respectively, to protect themselves against armed groups, as a cultural symbol and an expression of their constitutional right, or to defend their country from armed attack. But there will be other aspects too – and these multiple and interconnecting motives for bearing arms must be fully understood.

Building government capacity to protect citizens in Kenya

In Kenya, particularly northern Kenya, armed violence is widespread. This problem cannot be solved without major changes in policy and practice at the government level, supported by community action and advocacy. Weapons collection and durable disarmament have little chance of succeeding when communities feel the need to arm themselves to maintain their security.

Many NGOs, including Oxfam and Amnesty International, are campaigning at the national level to promote a comprehensive, inclusive, and participatory process of security-sector reform. The state's capacity to protect its citizens based on international human rights standards must be developed; immediate measures should include the following:

- ▶ the development of community-based policing, with local consultation on the nature and quality of policing and security, and community oversight over existing structures;
- ▶ a review of existing local security structures, such as police reservists and other militia, in order to assess their appropriateness, effectiveness, and degree of accountability;
- ▶ most critically, reasonable remuneration and benefits for the police and other security forces, along with effective training, accountability, and civilian oversight, to reduce corruption and increase professionalism.

Therefore measures to address community safety cannot be generalised. They may be concerned less with the weapons themselves and more with the complex web of social, cultural, political, and economic conditions that shape demand and use. Work at the local level must include specific programmes to improve community safety, in the following ways.

1. Rebuilding confidence in the possibility of non-armed security through
 - ▶ reducing the quantity of arms in circulation, by means of weapons collection and destruction programmes, the establishment of gun-free zones, and removing illegal arms which could contribute to violations of human rights and humanitarian law;
 - ▶ building relationships and trust between differing communities and between communities and police;
 - ▶ delivering civic education and awareness-raising programmes;
 - ▶ introducing the culture and tools for peaceful conflict resolution; a model is provided by the NGO Viva Rio in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which, together with the Justice Department, has implemented ‘Civil Rights Counters’, which provide free legal assistance and support for conflict resolution.
2. Providing assistance to the victims of armed violence. There is no system for support to victims of armed violence, unlike the case of landmine victims, yet gun-related injuries and deaths damage the economy and well-being of whole families.
3. Developing sustainable livelihoods as alternatives to armed violence. Too often the possession of arms is perceived as a route to economic survival.

Although it is impossible to prescribe solutions to increase community safety, experience reveals some **guiding principles for work at the community level**.

1. *Detailed analysis and understanding* of the community and its governance are essential, in order to identify the main reasons why people bear arms. The research should include all stakeholders, and particularly people in power and authority, such as the police.
2. A *holistic view* of the situation must be taken, which will probably involve addressing all human rights issues, including poverty, justice and the problem of impunity for offenders. Reform of, or at least collaboration with, policing and criminal-justice systems based on international human rights standards are necessary. Alternatives to using guns to establish livelihoods must be considered.
3. *Genuine engagement of the community* is imperative. Initiatives must be driven by local people, to ensure relevance, ownership, participation, shared responsibility, and understanding. Political representatives and the police must be representative, accountable, and responsive to the community as a whole.
4. The needs, perspectives, and talents of *all members of the community* need to be incorporated. This includes men, women, girls, boys, older people, people with disabilities, and people of different ethnicities and religions. For example, former

‘Apartheid policing broke down community trust of the state. Under the new democratic government, crime escalated – we saw running gun battles between gangs – until community-based policing took root. After four years, we have solved over 500 murder cases, recovered stolen vehicles and confiscated illegal weapons – AK-47s, handguns, shotguns, rifles and home-made pipe-guns. Police officers are responding rapidly to community reports, trying to avoid the use of firearms.’

Captain Pillay, Police Special Investigations Task Team, Edendale, South Africa, 2002²⁰⁰

combatants and gang members from different sides may have much in common and can act powerfully for change in challenging ‘machismo’ values and gun culture, while for young people, alternatives must be found to substitute for the benefits of gang membership, such as a sense of identity, purpose, group support, and security.

5. *Partnership between civil society and government* is a key factor. Civil society is essential for achieving constructive change, but sustainable change of policy and practice also requires government involvement. Governments can be strong allies – endorsing, strengthening, and sustaining the movement for reform – but civil society should be careful to avoid co-optation and inducements to legitimise inappropriate government policy. Effective flows of information are critical to ensure effective co-operation.

Building relationships between communities in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has experienced an unmanageable proliferation of arms – including sophisticated weapons on sale at low prices – in its communities. Armed violence, triggered by freely available weapons, has resulted in forced displacement and a drastic decline in socio-economic status, income sources, expenditure patterns, and health care. One major impact is fear – fear of attacks by the security forces or armed opposition groups.

The current ceasefire between government forces and rebel groups has created new opportunities and challenges for building peace. Oxfam is working with neighbouring communities to rebuild community relationships. Safe space must be provided in which people can interact peacefully, building trust and understanding, and addressing tensions without resorting to armed violence. There is a particular need to focus on the young, who until now have been exposed almost exclusively to military ideologies and aspirations; this can be achieved through innovative social programmes, building relationships among young people from different ethnic groups.

Improved weapons management in Cambodia

(based on the experience of the Working Group for Weapons Reduction, Phnom Penh)

Arms have diffused into communities in Cambodia during almost 30 years of internal armed conflict. Handguns and military assault rifles in private hands are common in both rural and urban areas: numbers are estimated at between 500,000 and one million. According to a 1998 survey, at least two thirds of households in Phnom Penh possessed illicit weapons. The proliferation of weapons has contributed to widespread public fear and insecurity, and the culture of violence is increasingly evident as weapons are used with impunity in domestic disputes, traffic incidents, and attempts at self-protection.

A key priority is weapons management. Weapons from earlier collections were stored in poorly secured and unsafe state warehouses, from where they were illegally sold and re-circulated. More effective weapons-storage depots and tight monitoring must be provided for the police at provincial and district levels, so that all collected arms and those in police hands will be stored safely and responsibly. Secondly, the registration and control of police weapons must be improved to prevent 'leakage' from security forces into civilian hands. The process of issuing licences through the Ministry of the Interior, and particularly the police, must also be restricted.

However, all these local initiatives are far more likely to succeed if the flood of weapons from abroad is replaced by an effectively controlled supply of arms which are genuinely needed and will not fuel further abuses. In other words, actions at all levels – from local to global – must reinforce each other. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council must control their own supplies; former Soviet Bloc countries must control the dispersal of their surpluses, and all countries must agree the Arms Trade Treaty as the new global measure to control all arms transfers.