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SALW and Development Programmes: Issues and Priorities

Jeremy Ginifer and Mandy Turner

Centre for International Cooperation and Security, University of Bradford

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NOTE

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SUMMARY

It is recognized that the spread, possession and use of small arms and light weapons (SALW) have negative social, humanitarian and developmental consequences. However, mainstream development programming has not always fully engaged with armed violence issues including SALW. This paper elaborates in detail the impacts of SALW on development drawing upon a series of recent studies conducted by the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS), including 13 case studies, and makes suggestions as to how development programming can connect more with SALW issues, as well as identifies programming implications for the European Union (EU) and member states.

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SALW AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES: ISSUES AND PRIORITIES

Jeremy Ginifer and Mandy Turner

Centre for International Cooperation and Security, University of Bradford

INTRODUCTION

It is recognized that the spread, possession and use of small arms and light weapons (SALW) have negative social, humanitarian and developmental consequences. However, mainstream development programming has not always fully engaged with armed violence issues including SALW. This paper elaborates in detail the impacts of SALW on development drawing upon a series of recent studies conducted by the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS), including 13 case studies, and makes suggestions as to how development programming can connect more with SALW issues, as well as identifies programming implications for the European Union (EU) and member states.

The EU is a significant international actor in areas such as trade, aid and development and is increasingly an important player in conflict prevention, crisis management, security sector reform, arms control and disarmament. The EU, therefore, has a rationale to engage in the issues raised above in its programming, assistance, and policy. There are considerable opportunities for the EU and member states to become more engaged with some of the key shortfalls and opportunities in terms of alleviating the humanitarian, social and developmental consequences of SALW and connecting SALW with developmental programming.

Among the key areas of further potential engagement for the EU and member states that are explored in this paper are:

- Addressing the challenges of building partnerships among agencies and frameworks within the EU and member states in addressing SALW issues;
- Developing strategies to connect SALW programming and development, taking into account perspectives within member states;
- Integrating SALW considerations into conflict assessments and analysis of poverty reduction in an explicit fashion;
- Taking into account the transforming and often harmful impact of SALW on social capital and networks, and building provisions into programming to take this into consideration;
- Looking at whether SALW programming might benefit from being more directed at some of the root causes and motivations underpinning armed violence, such as exclusion, poverty and poor governance;
- A process of research and training on SALW–development issues, and planning and coordination among, for example, policy makers and programme officers that might be beneficial in terms of taking debates forward in the EU and among member states; and
- Mechanisms for establishing coordination between disparate SALW and development programming.

SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT: SALW AND THE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

Definitions of security and development have undergone a transformation. Until recently “security” in effect meant state/military security. However, in the past few years, there has been a broadening of the concerns to encompass human rights, access to education and health care, and freedom from want and fear. This has been called “human security” by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Commission on Human Security. The development of these concerns has been reflected elsewhere. For example, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has developed the concept of “comprehensive security” which includes, in addition to the military/state dimension, the protection of the rule of law and minorities, economic security and environmental protection. It is generally recognized that security, or rather its lack, has the capacity to impinge on this objective.

Small arms have only been articulated as a mainstream priority since the late 1990s. In the mid-1990s, a body of thinking and literature reflecting these issues was emerging on SALW, much of it articulated by non-governmental organizations and the UN. Key milestones in formalizing the importance of SALW were the UN Secretary-General’s adoption of the cause of light weapons and micro disarmament in 1995,¹ the UNDP Human Development Report of 1994, as well as work by organizations such as the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), which sought to draw attention to the consequences of SALW proliferation. During the latter half of the 1990s, there was an increased interest in the development and health implications of SALW. The development community began to re-think the complex relationship between armed conflict and social violence, and also small arms and development.²

Over the past four years or so, a broadly accepted framework and methodology for assessing the impacts of SALW on development and humanitarian issues has emerged through work undertaken in organizations such as Amnesty International, Oxfam, Saferworld, Small Arms Survey (SAS) and UNDP. However, more generally, as the Small Arms Survey notes, researchers have attempted to measure the socio-economic effects of armed conflict, rather than small arms, on development.³ Given the difficulty of disentangling SALW impacts from the impacts of armed conflict, this is not surprising. In addition, the causal relationship between the availability of SALW and violence is complex. Conflict and violence have many causes arising from political, socio-economic, cultural and ideological factors.

In the past few years, a number of reports and studies have attempted to assess the impact of SALW on development. The annual Small Arms Survey, particularly the 2003 edition, postulates that a number of impacts may be anticipated: a negative impact on social capital, particularly communal cohesion and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms; economic impacts such as infrastructure destruction and lost productivity; declines in local and foreign direct investment; declines in quality and access to social services; and the increase of armed criminality and corruption.⁴ In addition, the 2002 UNDP “Development Held Hostage” study identified a number of key linkages between small arms and development. It suggested that in Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, criminal violence perpetrated with widely available SALW has massive implications for the quality of life of citizens, costs of goods and services and property, and investment and tourism.⁵

Other reports have added to the damning evidence. In Oxfam’s “Under Fire: the Human Cost of Small Arms in North-East Democratic Republic of the Congo”, the impact of SALW in terms of health care (particularly on internally displaced persons), education and economic effects

is documented.⁶ And in “Conflict’s Children: the Human Costs of Small Arms in Kitgum and Kotido, Uganda”, Oxfam argues that SALW have played a major role in helping armed groups to create the “devastating poverty and misery” experienced by the majority of civilians in these districts; armed groups there have deliberately engaged in activities, including killings, destruction of property, abductions, physical displacements and arson, that impoverish civilians and ruin lives.⁷ Some writers have investigated the possibility that SALW might sometimes be a necessary instrument of protection in an insecure environment, and that certain groups might benefit from SALW possession in a number of ways including enriching themselves or securing access to development.⁸

These findings confirm the body of literature that examines the political economy of war, asking important questions relating to how violence shapes societal dynamics. A leading argument of this literature is that it is important to understand the economic causes of war to avoid a reconstruction of the pre-war economy, which might have had much to do with the origin of the conflict.⁹

THE IMPACT OF ARMED VIOLENCE ON DEVELOPMENT

In this section, the extent to which armed violence impoverishes individuals, households, communities, national economies and societies in various contexts is examined. Here “armed violence” is given a particular meaning—as a rubric to include SALW availability and the social and political environment in which they are used. In addition, the term “armed violence situations” is employed; this embraces more than simply the availability of arms and violent acts carried out with them, embracing rather the totality of a social situation in which armed violence is persistent and endemic. Different elements of an armed violence situation each have distinct implications for development and all may have immediate and long-term impacts.¹⁰

DIRECT IMPACTS OF ARMED VIOLENCE

Casualties and disability

The human cost of armed violence spreads far beyond combatants, criminals and state security forces. The deliberate targeting of civilians by rebel forces and the state security sector was witnessed to devastating effect in Algeria, Somalia and Southern Sudan. It continues to be men, particularly young men, who are the most common perpetrators and victims of armed violence. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for example, young men are 24 times more likely than women to be killed by armed violence, while men between the ages of 15 and 29 are twice as likely to die from armed violence as the rest of the male population.¹¹ In Colombia, men are 14 times more likely than women to die of gunshot wounds.

The removal of large numbers of men from the population has major effects on society as a whole. The development and poverty implications are many. Generally, it denies countries labour power and skills. In some situations, such as in the case of southern Sudan, the high number of male casualties has had a huge impact on gender demographics. In Bahr-el-Gazaal and Upper Nile, for example, there are more than two women to every male. The huge numbers of female-headed households in many countries (such as Algeria, Somalia, Southern Sudan and Sri Lanka) is the result of the over-representation of men in the casualty figures.

Armed violence not only creates widows, it also creates disability. This has an impact on the ability to earn a livelihood, and it also impacts on health and social services. In addition, medical costs can have an impact. In South Africa, a significant proportion of non-fatally injured patients go into debt to pay medical expenses resulting from firearms injuries.¹² The direct medical costs did not affect the victims as much as the indirect costs of closing down their businesses. All victims claimed that not only their health, but also their economic status, had been irrevocably damaged as a result of being shot.¹³

Direct impact: refugees and displacement

Apart from injury and fatality, the biggest direct impact of armed violence is the creation of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) global figures for refugees stood at over 17 million as of 1 January 2004. In 2003, overall numbers of IDPs were estimated to have remained constant from the year before at around 24.6 million. While there are no disaggregated figures for conflict-induced displacement, agencies such as UNHCR regard armed violence as the key driving force behind most refugee flows. In some cases, displacement has been the outcome of people fleeing a violent situation, such as Sierra Leone and Somalia; on other occasions it has been the result of a deliberate policy by parties to the conflict, such as targeting and displacement along ethnic, religious or other fault lines, such as in Algeria, north-east India and Southern Sudan. The poverty impacts of violence-induced displacement are discussed below.

The most immediate and devastating impact of violence-induced displacement, whether cross-border or internal, in many countries (such as Algeria, Chechnya, northern Kenya, north-east India, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Southern Sudan and Sri Lanka), was the consequent loss of access to land, property, jobs, assets and therefore means of livelihood. This impoverishment extends to lack of access to health services and education, food insecurity, and increased disease and mortality. In Somalia, IDPs account for over 50% of the Somali population identified as chronically food insecure. The displaced are also more vulnerable to infectious and communicable diseases. Amongst the Chechen displaced, for instance, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS have been spreading rapidly because of inadequate living conditions.

In refugee/IDP camps, employment opportunities are sporadic or non-existent and opportunities outside of camps depend on relations with the local community and whether their skills match local demand. IDPs and refugees living in host communities also often have limited economic opportunities. Overall, the experience of violence-induced displacement is impoverishment—in some cases this can be long term. There are many examples like the case of Southern Sudan where many returnees arrived home too late for the planting season or lacked seeds or tools. In some situations, for example because of ethnic cleansing, it was not possible for the displaced to return to their communities. The intensity or reversibility of the poverty experienced by the displaced will depend, to a large extent, on the length of displacement. In addition, refugees and IDPs fleeing from violence often experience further violence through abductions, killings and sexual assaults, particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Vulnerable groups: the impact on children

Between 1990 and 2000, over two million children were killed in intra- or inter-state wars.¹⁴ In addition, approximately six million have been wounded or disabled, and one million have been orphaned.¹⁵ Many of these deaths and injuries have been caused by SALW. In the case

