

Integrating Small Arms Measures into Development Programmes

Recommendations from the Oslo international workshop

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The Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT) organised an international workshop on “Integrating Small Arms Measures into Development Programmes” in Oslo, 30 November – 1 December 2006. The workshop gathered over 60 participants from 30 countries (of which about 20 from developing regions) with the aim to share knowledge and experience of initiatives to redress the impact of small arms violence upon sustainable development. More specifically, the participants discussed ways to efficiently integrate measures for reducing small arms violence into development programmes.

The critical link between small arms violence and development has been widely acknowledged, but integrated strategies on armed violence and poverty reduction have yet to be designed. Thus, the Oslo workshop was a timely opportunity to make proposals for how to integrate efforts to reduce small arms violence at the various levels of development programming.

Participants at the workshop stressed the need for pragmatism, as many states are reluctant to include mentions of small arms violence in their national development plans, especially in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Furthermore, the participants underlined the role of regional and sub-regional organisations in ensuring the integration of armed violence reduction measures into regional development programmes. Finally, they put a strong emphasis on the importance for international financial institutions to engage with states in reducing small arms violence.

This policy brief highlights the main themes of discussion during the workshop and presents the key objectives and recommendations which were elaborated on by the organisers.

Key objectives

The integration of armed violence reduction into development planning should be an incremental process guided by key objectives, in particular:

Measurability involves assessing the various aspects of armed violence and their impact upon development. It entails monitoring the progress and evaluating the outcomes of development programmes that incorporate an armed violence component. Measurability also relates to the efficient use of assistance for integrated armed violence and poverty reduction initiatives.

Inclusiveness refers to reinforcing collaboration between all actors already working on small arms and development. It also entails actively pursuing collaboration with other fields of expertise which could be a good source of tools and knowledge. Finally, it refers to engaging with organisations and states that are reluctant to integrate armed violence reduction into development planning.

Effectiveness is best achieved through adequate management of knowledge and resources. Thus, it requires specific guidance and mechanisms to design and plan activities, to monitor capacity and assistance, to document and analyse experiences, and to disseminate findings. This will ensure that efforts to integrate armed violence reduction into development plans are maximised and sustained.

Ownership at the national level is indispensable. Governments and their civil society need strong support in order to develop the necessary and lasting conditions for integrating small arms violence reduction into their development plans. National ownership requires capacity building to enhance individual and institutional resources and subsequently to ensure long-term sustainability.

I. Researching small arms & development

A significant quantity of research activities have been conducted to examine how small arms possession and usage impoverishes individuals, communities and states in various contexts. The Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative at the Bradford Centre for International Cooperation and Security highlighted the experiences of and opportunities for small arms interventions to contribute to poverty reduction. Nonetheless, further action-oriented research is needed that will produce more evidence from the field, and to analyse the impact of integrating armed violence reduction measures into development plans.

Collaboration between research groups already focusing on small arms violence and development should be strengthened, especially with experts located in affected countries. For example, a group of European and African organisations held a researcher workshop in Kenya in October 2006 on capacity building for research on human security and small arms in signatory states to the Nairobi Protocol. Collaboration should also be reinforced between researchers and practitioners to ensure that experience on the ground feeds into research projects and that research findings inform field programmes.

Recommendations

- Mandate an international working group with the task of designing a research agenda on armed violence reduction and development.
- Conduct a review of initiatives on integrating armed violence reduction into development to highlight the benefits and challenges.
- Undertake further studies on the 'qualitative' dimensions of small arms violence, notably power, ethnicity, religion, and gender.
- Prioritise research proposals that include collaboration with local experts and activities conducted in affected regions.
- Develop framework agreements between research institutions and donors to ensure continuity in funding over several years.
- Undertake a review of the funding allocated to desk versus field-based research on small arms violence reduction and development.

II. Assessing risks, needs and vulnerabilities

The preparatory phase of small arms projects generally includes an appraisal of the risks caused by the availability and misuse of small arms as well as the needs and vulnerabilities of communities living in regions affected by high levels of small arms violence. However, it was suggested that existing assessment methodologies are based on language that limits our understanding of local security agencies, their problems and their solutions. In response, the UNIDIR has devised a Security Needs Assessment Protocol to generate interpretive and local knowledge that will more appropriately capture the dimensions and impacts of small arms violence within communities.

Violence perpetrated with small arms is a highly gendered phenomenon, but gender-disaggregated data about its impacts is still very scarce. Further, SaferAfrica underlined that assessing the roles and obligations of women and men in their own societies is an essential requisite to designing strategies on armed violence reduction. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is a key instrument to mainstream gender, in particular to ensure that armed violence reduction measures integrated in post-conflict reconstruction and development programmes are sensitive to gender aspects.

Recommendations

- Design assessment tools and methodologies based on field practice, local knowledge and experiences from other sectors of expertise.
- Ensure that all assessment teams include a gender component, and that gender aspects of armed violence are given full attention.
- Conduct baseline assessments of the impact of small arms violence in collaboration with all groups within the affected communities.
- Produce evidence-based analyses to support the integration of armed violence reduction measures into development programmes.
- Review and more actively disseminate tested techniques that could be used for the design of common assessment standards.
- Support national injury surveillance systems that monitor the impact of armed violence on boys and girls, men and women.

III. Matching resources with needs

In order to avoid funding gaps or duplication, it is crucial to engage governments and international organisations in dialogue about the problem of matching resources with needs. While donors need to closely monitor the use of assistance, they should also ensure that recipients have the capacity to request and utilise the funds disbursed as official development assistance. The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness is the principal international instrument designed to ensure ownership, alignment, harmonisation, mutual accountability, and to manage results. It offers a good framework for development efforts aimed at preventing and reducing armed violence.

The Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) mechanism also provides important information about donors and partners to UN-led activities on small arms and development, but it needs to be reinforced and complemented by an online resource centre for all actors engaged in reducing armed violence through development planning.

Aside from financial and material means, human resources play a central role. Indigenous national and local capacity is often overlooked, or seldom included efficiently in field programmes. Valuable lessons can be learned from landmines action and disaster relief on national ownership and capacity building. Thus, the trend initiated by the UNDP towards the merging of small arms and landmines activities is likely to increase the utility and efficiency of resources available in these sectors.

Recommendations

- Map individual and institutional resources in recipient countries, and support training and capacity building as required.
- Strengthen the Coordinating Action on Small Arms mechanism, notably its web interface.
- Set up and maintain a global online resource centre, possibly labelled Small Arms Violence reduction Efforts in Development (SAVED).
- Create a roster of experts on armed violence reduction and development who could assist field programmes on an *ad hoc* basis.
- Undertake an assessment of funding allocated specifically to initiatives integrating small arms violence reduction into development.

IV. Measuring outcomes and results

There is a general consensus on the need to evaluate both the outcomes of stand-alone small arms initiatives upon development prospects, and the results of armed violence reduction measures mainstreamed into development plans. Evaluation should focus on both process and results. This includes actively monitoring the performance of a project throughout its duration, and measuring its impact after completion of the implementation. Evaluation is often a critical phase because it usually determines future funding. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue underlined that evaluation must not be a punitive, but rather a forward-looking tool to draw lessons and design more efficient programmes.

Despite exceptions such as the South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, there is a critical lack of guidance and tools to undertake evaluation. Evaluation is often sporadic and poorly realised. Evaluating armed violence reduction initiatives requires specific guidelines and standards, as for landmines action or disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. The Bonn International Centre for Conversion highlighted the importance of building a standing monitoring and evaluation capacity within affected communities.

Recommendations

- Incorporate local knowledge and practices in the design, implementation and evaluation of armed violence reduction projects.
- Conduct evaluation of small arms violence reduction programmes in collaboration with national and local actors in affected regions.
- Design assessment tools predicated on low cost and minimal use of technology, and train local groups to collect and analyse data.
- Include an evaluation of all projects, with some flexibility so that indicators can be identified or modified along the project cycle.
- Undertake regular evaluations in order to monitor progress and performance, and to capture intermediary and unforeseen impacts.
- Use a range of criteria to measure particular impacts, and include qualitative indicators to assess human security impacts.

V. Disseminating lessons learned

Over the last few years, valuable lessons have been identified by field managers working for the UN, the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as non-governmental organisations like Oxfam and Norwegian Church Aid. Experiences are often shared informally but lessons learned are rarely disseminated within the wider community of security and development actors. Furthermore, these lessons need further testing in order to be incorporated into a set of best practices which could support the design and planning of future activities or inform already existing programmes.

SAFER-Net at Ryerson University stressed that best practices should demonstrate, upon rigorous evaluation, sustainable success, as well as being replicable when adapted to different contexts. The definition and use of best practices must be refined by all actors working to prevent and reduce small arms violence through development planning. They should build on knowledge already generated in other fields of expertise like poverty reduction, landmines action and disaster relief.

Recommendations

- Identify a focus team, within the international working group on armed violence reduction and development, to work on best practices.
- Develop common guidelines for documenting and reporting lessons learned from initiatives on armed violence reduction.
- Set up and maintain a central database of best practices which could be hosted and publicly available on the SAVED web.
- Organise the dissemination of recorded best practices and support their mainstreaming into development programmes.

Concluding remarks

The integration of small arms violence reduction into development planning is central to several ongoing international processes, notably the UN Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, and the drafting of new guidelines on armed violence reduction by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Other important initiatives are also important for promoting the integration of the small arms issue onto the agenda of development organisations, such as the UN Millennium Development Goals, the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and the UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

These initiatives draw considerable attention to the role of development cooperation in curbing small arms violence. However, the multiplicity of international processes related to small arms and development could be detrimental to achieving any substantial results in the years to come. In order to ensure that opportunities to pursue an integrated approach to small arms violence are exploited, it is crucial for states to set, in consultation with civil society, clear goals and benchmarks in preparation for major multi-lateral meetings. A common strategy on armed violence and poverty reduction should be devised and incorporated by international organisations, such as the World Bank through the Comprehensive Development Framework.

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