

# Effective SALW control in Kenya: community-driven approaches

Linking local initiatives to national processes

## SALW control and Kenya

**In many communities where Saferworld and partners have been working, widespread prevalence of small arms and light weapons (SALW) has been identified as key to their security concerns. Danger from armed and under-occupied youth, in particular, is a commonly articulated threat to communities. In recent years, these concerns have not been mitigated by local level security provision, leading to illegal possession of SALW for personal security by individuals within communities.**

One of the formal attempts to deal with the longstanding security issues, especially among the pastoralists, was the establishment of the voluntary police service, the Kenya Police Reserves (KPR), by the colonial government primarily to police rural communities. In the post-colonial period the KPR evolved within the Kenya Police Service, without effective overall management of their operations and the firearms they held. With the transformation of the Kenya Police to the National Police Service (NPS) in recent times, and change of KPR to National Police Reserve (NPR), the same challenges around accountability in arms handling still persist, leading to unauthorised possessions by NPR and increased mistrust between the community and police service providers. This unauthorised possession, coupled with misuse of small arms, have consistently undermined governance capacities – capacities that are required for broader development endeavours to work.

This briefing demonstrates that Saferworld's approach of community-driven SALW control provides a constructive template for enhancing security for local communities.

Arms control remains one of the most critical issues on the international agenda.<sup>1</sup> Despite strong international policy commitments to make progress on these issues - including the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT),

which entered into force on 24 December 2014 - and the commitments made in the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms (PoA) in 2001, Saferworld remains concerned that such assurances have not shown a direct impact on improving the lives of people. An example of the limitations of existing approaches to the small arms problem is provided by Kenya.

At the formal level, Kenya qualifies as a champion of SALW control. It ratified the UN Firearms Protocol in 2005 and was one of the co-authors of the ATT process in the UN General Assembly; it also hosts the Regional Centre on Small Arms and was instrumental in the agreement of the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. Despite all this, there is ample evidence that SALW interventions in Kenya have not addressed the problem sufficiently, especially in pastoralist areas where nomadic communities have to seek out and share limited pasture and water resources, bringing them into conflict with each other.

Ongoing work by Saferworld in Kenya around SALW control demonstrates that placing communities at the heart of local-level security initiatives are more effective, especially when all stakeholders are involved. It is against this background that Saferworld, in collaboration with the Kenya National Focal Point on SALW, Security Research and Information Centre, Isiolo Peace Link and SIKOM Peace Network have been working with police and communities in Isiolo and West Pokot to implement community-driven arms control initiatives. These are aimed at improving NPR management by the police while at the same time increasing the accountability of arms use by the NPR and reducing illegal possession of arms for improved community security.

<sup>1</sup> In 2011, the *Global Burden of Armed Violence* showed that some 526,000 people die violently each year.

## ***SALW proliferation and misuse in Kenya***

The increased availability of small arms in recent years has made communal conflicts more deadly, often sparking revenge attacks and endemic cycles of violence which leave hundreds of people injured or dead. A history of mistrust between communities and the police as well as the absence of effective security services in the northern frontier locations have also played a role in perpetuating this violence and insecurity. Through Saferworld's support for increased prioritisation of community security needs, communities identified that the lack of accountability of government-supplied firearms and ammunition was a key security challenge. Furthermore, respondents highlighted the lack of positive engagement between communities and security providers in arms reduction as a key factor undermining efforts to build trust and confidence between the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and communities. The LEAs commonly relied on measures such as forced disarmament in an attempt to address the influx and misuse of SALW.

## **Improving community security through accountable arms management practices**

Increasing the effectiveness and, crucially, accountability of local security services is paramount in tackling the challenges related to the proliferation and misuse of SALW. This also requires supporting communities and security providers to work together to identify and address problems. This can be achieved by ensuring that affected communities are at the heart of the prioritisation, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of programming. As there was a concern around the ineffectively monitored NPR and the weapons in their possession, Saferworld and partners supported local police stations in Isiolo and West Pokot to develop and operationalise electronic databases to record and effectively monitor their stockpiles. Additionally, systematic training of the NPR on arms management-related laws and protocols as well as facilitation of accountability forums between the NPR, local authorities, and communities have been key approaches in enhancing transparency and accountability at the local level. Communities are able to participate through arms monitoring teams, which should lead to more accountable and effective stockpile management and the reduction of the misuse of state-owned weapons.

This approach has seen improved accountability<sup>2</sup> and professionalism by the police on arms management

<sup>2</sup> See box below on *Improving accountability in local policing*

and use in Isiolo and West Pokot, and is expected to improve security among communities.

## ***Building public confidence in the police: a community security model***

A number of firearms were successfully recovered between July and September 2014 (seven in Isiolo and four in West Pokot) as a result of community partnerships with the police and communities volunteering information to LEAs. Using a community security approach – where community members, government officials, and security sector actors work together to identify and resolve security and safety issues – arms monitoring teams have successfully been established in Isiolo and West Pokot. Representation for the teams is drawn from members of the community who have experience in local security issues, as well as the LEAs responsible for providing security. The teams currently consist of at least 10 community members, representing local civil society organisations, youth, women, elders, business representatives, along with representatives from government agencies, including five police officers and two county government representatives. Using this model, communities are now actively engaged in monitoring the use and management of government-owned SALW, particularly those held by NPR. The arms monitoring teams have created a forum for police–community partnerships; this collaboration has begun to improve relations and trust between communities and the police on the management of SALW in the two project sites. The recovery of the firearms was noted as a confidence-building measure by both the police and communities as compared to coercive or forceful acquisition of illegal firearms through police or military-led disarmament operations.

## **Linking local initiatives to national processes**

All too often decision makers fail to prioritise community security needs because communities have not been sufficiently involved in identifying problems arising from SALW.

Saferworld's experience in various contexts indicates that national and international approaches to community security that incorporate local security needs and dynamics have the potential to enhance security at the community level in Kenya.<sup>3</sup>

Local communities have the right to play a major role in identifying and articulating their needs and to work closely with relevant service providers to address them. Where this does occur, and where

<sup>3</sup> See Saferworld (2014) *Community Security Handbook*, London, Saferworld.

communities are involved in holding local government institutions to account, community access to security services is typically enhanced. In Isiolo and West Pokot counties, we are working to support communities and security providers to develop a collective understanding of the problems in their communities underpinning insecurity and misuse of firearms and develop joint strategies for overcoming the drivers of conflict that promote reliance on SALW.

As well as being of immediate benefit to the target communities, by developing credible evidence from these practical efforts, the programme creates a basis for informing national and international processes, particularly within the context of the PoA. For example, Saferworld in cooperation with the governments of Kenya and Finland introduced the project at the fifth Biennial Meeting of States to the PoA in the UN in June 2014. In addition, the project has contributed to the Government of Kenya's security strategies aimed at securing the country's development goals. These include measures to improve stockpile management; institutionalising national and inter-community dialogue through a community security approach; and enhancing the policy, legal, and institutional reforms for improved enforcement of law and order.

### ***Improving accountability in local policing***

Increased expectation of the National Police Service to contribute to improved security through accountable and effective service delivery to communities has led to a significant achievement: police partnering with local communities. The application of stockpile management systems, particularly proper record keeping, through the adoption of electronic arms registers has improved police accountability and effectiveness in the management of firearms. In both sites manual registers of arms have been replaced with new electronic registers to help police monitor arms movement, management, and use within their respective jurisdictions.

LEAs have demonstrated ownership of local small arms management initiatives as their primary responsibility. In both Isiolo and West Pokot Police Divisions, commanding officers have actively led their junior officers in ensuring proper use and management of arms. Commanding officers have also led and facilitated training and awareness-raising of police officers and reservists on prevailing arms protocols, guidelines, and procedures in the country. Maintaining proper arms management standards of the NPR and working together with communities has led to increased adherence and willingness to observe these regulations in the two project sites. This is significant as the communities and LEAs have

taken the responsibility to work together to effectively improve accountability on the use of SALW, as well as to improve the overall security and safety of the community.

## **How can community-driven security initiatives be more effective in arms control?**

Since 2001 a huge amount of work has been done under the umbrella of the PoA at the national level. But frequently, the actual impact of all this work on the lives of those in the villages, towns and cities suffering the consequences of SALW proliferation and misuse is a lot less than it could be. In fact, all too often, the very notion of impact on people's lives goes missing.

Part of the problem is that affected communities do not have a proper say. **SALW control happens around them and to them, not with them, by them or truly for them.** It is therefore important that arms control initiatives engage fully with communities. On this understanding, projects should therefore:

- **Take into consideration real needs, concerns, knowledge, and understandings of the communities** for whose benefit this work is being carried out. This should happen right from the design stage through to implementation and monitoring and evaluation, involving all concerned local partners and local authorities. For example, the project being undertaken by Saferworld and partners started with a joint analysis of the problems and the context, with communities at the centre of these consultations. This ensured that as the project developed it was concentrating on key issues identified by and affecting the communities.
- **Promote ownership by both the communities and LEAs.** This should entail allowing genuine community participation on the one hand and allowing the LEAs to carry out their official duties and functions without interference on the other. For example, in the two pilot sites, communities are full participants in arms control initiatives and support police in carrying out their duties, including: maintaining arms records, conducting technical and tactical training related to arms management, and doing the actual recording and profiling of state-owned firearms.
- **Monitor impact and develop clear targets** so that milestones and progress towards results can be identified as the projects are being implemented. All community security projects should be monitored and evaluated throughout the programme cycle for how well they address the issues identified, to ensure value for money and maximum impact. The current project has

developed outcome-harvesting tools<sup>4</sup> that are simple for partners to use and apply. Project-review meetings with partners and communities have also been helpful in monitoring progress towards results in a systematic manner. This has ensured that milestones and lessons are properly captured and recorded.

- **Clarifying the purpose and objective of the project** at the local and national level with the key stakeholders is critical. All of those involved in the project must be clear about what the project can provide and what it cannot. More importantly, having clear partnership agreements that are based on open and transparent sharing of information about the project, including the M&E frameworks, budget, and work plans, is crucial if the full potential benefits of interventions are to be realised. For this project, Memoranda of Understanding have been agreed with all the implementing partners to ensure that each is aware of the project objectives and outcomes. The consequent understanding of targets and timeframes has helped to build partners' and communities' confidence in the project.

#### ▪ **Recommendations**

As in other parts of Kenya, in Isiolo and West Pokot the availability of illicit SALW is a key factor contributing to insecurity, thereby undermining the attainment of the country's development goals.<sup>5</sup> We therefore recommend that:

1. A **community-oriented approach** should be adopted in order to ensure local security needs, concerns, and dynamics inform both local and national SALW management processes. National efforts to address the proliferation of SALW and their misuse should therefore ensure inclusive processes that put people at the centre of addressing their security challenges in order to have a demonstrable positive impact on the ground.
2. The **National Police Service** should prioritise and promote the development and operationalisation of effective arms-monitoring systems in local police stations to improve arms accountability. This will contribute to wider efforts of institutionalising overall accountability of official government firearms and ammunition as well as tackle the proliferation of illicit firearms.
3. **Security agencies** should enhance their coordination and harmonisation efforts at the local and national levels to maximise impact.

This is critical in building synergies and collaboration between local and national security actors, and in ensuring that efforts are complementary, not duplicative.

4. **Security actors** – state and non-state – should continue to enhance and support the inclusion of **women, youth, and other marginalised groups** in the planning and implementation of SALW control initiatives. Support to initiatives that integrate and allow genuine participation of both women and youth is crucial in not only addressing the specific issues affecting them, but in promoting inclusive and active participation by all members of the community.

### About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> These include activity monitoring logs, templates for developing activity reports and capturing key milestones. Information captured using these is then fed into results-based framework of the project log-frame to monitor progress towards results.

<sup>5</sup> Government of Kenya's Sessional paper no. 10 of 2010 on Kenya's Vision 2030.