Editorial

Reducing firearm deaths and injuries iv
Guy Lamb and Douglas Tuttle

Features

From fieldwork to facts to firearms control: Research and advocacy towards stricter firearm control legislation in South Africa 2
Maylene Shung King, Paula Proudlock and Lori Michelson

Using public health information to inform, build support and implement policies for gun violence prevention: A case study from the gun ban referendum 16
Jessica Galeria and Luciano Phebo

Jumping the gun? Reflections on armed violence in Papua New Guinea 38
Nicole Haley and Robert Muggah

Finding the evidence: The links between weapon collection programmes, gun use and homicide rates in Cambodia 57
Christina Wille

Africa Watch

Somalia: Distorting reality? 76
Richard Cornwell

Slow military reform and the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo 79
Stephanie Wolters and Henri Boshoff

Essays

Mapping the use of guns in violence against women: Findings from three studies 86
Lisa Vetten

Achieving positive reform of firearm control laws through information use: The Tasmanian case study 93
Roland Browne

Contextualising the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria’s Niger Delta: Local and global intersections 108
Godwin Onuoha

Commentaries

Big battles over small arms: But progress at the United Nations is too slow 116
Frida Berrigan

The failure of the UN Review Conference and implications for global efforts to prevent small arms violence 120
Guy Lamb

Book Reviews

The global gun epidemic: From Saturday night specials to AK-47s 126
Wendy Cukier and Victor W Sidel

Internationalizing and privatizing war and peace 129
Herbert Wulf

The African AIDS epidemic: A history 133
John Iliffe
EDITORIAL
Reducing firearm deaths and injuries
Guy Lamb and Douglas Tuttle*

Firearms result in hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of injuries worldwide each year, with guns being responsible for between 60 and 90 per cent of all deaths during armed conflicts. In late March 2006 the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), in collaboration with the International Physicians Against Nuclear War (IPPNW) and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), hosted a conference titled: Driving Change: Firearms Policy for Safer Societies in Durban, South Africa. This conference was linked to the 8th World Injury Prevention Conference, which took place at the same venue.

* Guy Lamb is the head of the Arms Management Programme at the Institute for Security Studies. At the time of writing, Douglas Tuttle was a research fellow with the Arms Management Programme, as part of the Monterey Institute of International Studies’ International Professional Services Semester Programme.

The aim of the conference was to examine how accurate and relevant data can assist stakeholders to develop intervention strategies and policies geared towards the prevention and reduction of firearm-related deaths and injuries, and to explore ways in which the social, political and economic environment inhibits or facilitates the effective implementation of policy relating to firearms violence reduction and prevention. Sixty experts from the public health, development, humanitarian, law enforcement, criminal justice, and arms control communities from more than 15 countries were in attendance. This issue of the African Security Review presents a sample of the papers that were presented at this conference.

During the course of this conference it became evident that the public health sector can play a vital role in the prevention of firearms violence. The reason for this is that public health practitioners see the first hand effects of firearms violence, and are generally required to employ scarce resource to address the devastating consequences of gun shot injuries. As a result of this, public health practitioners have become leaders in the global campaign against firearms proliferation and misuse.

Africa is arguably the continent that is the most afflicted by the misuse and proliferation of firearms. However, publicly available (and reliable) datasets on firearm injuries and deaths in most African countries are not readily available. Hence, with some exceptions, such as South Africa and Kenya, meaningful research and analysis of this problem in Africa has been exceedingly limited. Even though there is a dearth of relevant data in the majority of those African countries affected by firearms violence, governments are obligated to proactively address the deaths of their citizens. Problems related to firearms are a global phenomenon, and international experiences and data can better inform African interventions. As such, drawing on the experience of those countries outside of Africa, where research on firearms violence has been undertaken, African governments in collaboration with civil society organisations may be able to devise strategies and programmes to reduce firearms injuries and deaths.

The case studies presented in this issue of the African Security Review are as follows: Australia, Brazil, Cambodia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea and South Africa. Firearms violence either was or continues to be extensive in these countries, and the authorities have, with varying degrees of success, designed and implemented measures aimed at reducing firearm injuries and deaths in a sustainable fashion.

A myriad of small arms control and disarmament strategies have been implemented in Africa at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. These control measures have generally been guided by a combination of international and regional small arms agreements. The most prominent have been the Bamako Declaration (2000), which represents a common African position on the trafficking and proliferation of illicit small arms, and the UN Programme of Action (UNPoA) on the illicit use, trade and proliferation of small arms (2001). The UNPoA is the world’s first agreement on controlling the proliferation of small arms. Arms
control agreements have also been negotiated at the sub-regional level, usually through regional economic communities, such as the Southern African Development Community and the Economic Community of West African States.

The UNPoA and other arms control and disarmament agreements have provided some impetus for many African governments to review, and where necessary amend, their national small arms control legislation and policy. Consequently, this issue of the African Security Review provides commentary and analysis on the dynamics and processes of negotiating and implementing international firearms control agreements, both from an African and non-African perspective.

The editors trust that policy-makers, researchers and health practitioners will find this publication useful and insightful with respect to their efforts to combat the devastating effects of firearms proliferation and misuse.
From fieldwork to facts to firearms control: Research and advocacy towards stricter firearm control legislation in South Africa

Maylene Shung King, Paula Proudlock and Lori Michelson*

Children have special protection under the South African constitution, including the right to safety, health and an environment conducive to their wellbeing and optimal development. Yet, firearms contribute significantly to the high incidence of deaths and injuries among South African children and in young males in their late teens. This case study is about the participation of the Child Health Policy Institute (CHPI) in a law reform process ultimately aimed at reducing firearm injuries and deaths in the country by exercising stricter gun control through legislation and other reforms. This feature briefly describes the political context in which the project was initiated, the research findings and how these were distributed, the law reform process, advocacy strategy, and reflects on lessons learnt.

Introduction

Firearm injuries and deaths are a major contributor to the high incidence of deaths and injuries in children in the 5-18 year age group in South Africa, and firearms are also the leading cause of death in young males in their late teens. These statistics need to be understood and addressed within the broader context of the history of gun violence in South Africa.

In the early 1990s the high incidence of firearm deaths and injuries in South Africa gave rise to vigorous campaigns from civil society organisations for stricter firearm control, as well as a national government policy and law reform process towards stricter firearm control. This policy reform process culminated in a new Firearms Control Act (No 60 of 2000), which replaced the ineffective and outdated Arms and Ammunition Act (as amended) (No 7 of 1995).

This paper considers the role and impact of a research and advocacy project of the Child Health Policy Institute (CHPI) within the context of this national firearm law reform process in South Africa. It describes the political context within which the project was initiated, the research findings and how these were distributed, the law reform process, advocacy strategy, and reflects on lessons learnt.

Background to gun violence in South Africa

South Africa’s Firearms Control Act came into effect on 1 July 2004. This marked the culmination of a lengthy law reform process that spanned a ten-year period and was notably informed by contributions from numerous stakeholders within government, the private sector and civil society. The process of law reform began in 1994 with a civil society-initiated campaign which urged people to hand in their guns to the authorities for destruction. The Minister of Safety and Security declared a 24-hour amnesty period in response to the campaign and a total of 900 guns were handed in at police stations across the country. This campaign was the first event that put the issue of gun control squarely on the South African socio-political agenda.1

Since the new Act came into effect on 1 July 2004, applications for firearm licences have dropped drastically. Where there were previously about 14,000 new firearm licence applications per month, the number of applications per month is now averaging in the hundreds rather than in the thousands.2 These statistics reflect a major shift in attitude in South Africa from the very loose controls around gun ownership in the 1990s towards more responsible gun ownership and stricter gun control. In 2005 the Department of Safety and Security instituted a nationwide firearm amnesty for a three-month period, and 46,190 illegal and legal guns were handed into police stations. Given the success of this amnesty process it was extended for a further three months.3

* Maylene Shung-King is the acting director of the Children’s Institute at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Paula Proudlock is the Child Health Policy Institute advocate at the Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town, South Africa. Lori Michelson is a project manager at the Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town, South Africa.
South Africa has a long history of political and criminal gun violence. In the colonial era guns were used to govern and control the indigenous peoples of South Africa. Under apartheid, racial segregation and racially based laws were often enforced by violent methods, including the use of firearms. Many civilians, including young children, were killed and maimed during this period. The African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress employed firearms – primarily from illegal sources – in their armed struggle against the apartheid regime. Elements within South Africa’s national security apparatus were involved in gun-running to various counter-insurgency groups and pariah states. Apartheid and the liberation struggle had the effect of not only militarising much of South Africa, but also victimising and brutalising South African society. The major consequence of this was the emergence and persistence of high levels of violent criminal activity.

Under the previous gun control law, obtaining a licence to legally own a gun was relatively easy if you were white and improbable if you were black. There was no limit on the number of firearms that one person could legally possess and no proper assessment of a person’s psychological fitness or propensity to violence. There was also ineffective monitoring and enforcement of the safe storage regulations. This contributed to a high degree of loss and theft of firearms. Many of these were used in criminal acts.

Much of the politically motivated gun violence in South Africa abated after 1994, but rising rates of poverty, unemployment (especially among young men) and the illegal drug trade have resulted in a reported increase in criminally motivated gun violence. During the 1990s an increasing number of children were injured or killed through violent acts involving firearms. This apparent increase was reported extensively in the media, but no empirical evidence was available to support the media speculation.

From 1994 Gun Free South Africa (GFSA), a civil society organisation, campaigned for more effective firearms control legislation. The founders of GFSA were members of the religious sub-committee involved in implementing the peace accord which paved the way for democracy in South Africa. In response to this campaign the South African government initiated a process of examining the existing firearm control legislation, as well as considering a process by which the law could be amended to bring about more effective control of firearms in order to reduce their unchecked proliferation and misuse. It is at this point that the contributions from numerous gun control advocacy groups started to influence the direction of the changes in South Africa’s firearms control legislation.

**Multi-sectoral advocacy for stricter gun control**

The work of the CHPI towards stricter gun control was one of many efforts by individuals and organisations from across the country within the process towards stricter gun control through law reform, including representatives from government, civil society and the private sector. Major actors from the state’s side included the Secretariat for Safety and Security, the National Crime Prevention Centre, the South African Police Service, and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Safety and Security. From 1997 until the end of 1999 the Secretariat for Safety and Security led the state in the policy and law reform process towards stricter gun control. The major players from civil society and the private sector were the Gun Control Alliance (GCA) and the South African Gun Owners Association.

The GCA is a broad alliance of individuals and organisations that support a stricter gun control agenda in South Africa. It includes churches, youth groups, women’s groups, community-based organisations, human rights organisations, academic institutions and service providers. At the forefront of the GCA was Gun Free South Africa. Academic and research institutions, individually and as members of the GCA, made a variety of contributions to the campaign, ranging from research to drafting of the law to advocacy. These included the Institute for Security Studies, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, the Medical Research Council of South Africa (MRC), the Institute of Criminology and the CHPI.

**Role of the Child Health Policy Institute**

The CHPI was a university-based research institute initiated specifically to span the area between the research and policy environment. The mission of the CHPI was to ensure that sound research findings inform and support health policy, legislative and programme development for children. Its ultimate purpose was to improve the health of children in South Africa, thus contributing to realising their right to health, among others. Each research project was followed by an explicit set of communication and advocacy activities to enhance the potential impact of the research on the policy process.

The South African government has signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and children’s rights are enshrined in the South African constitution.

**The research agenda within the legislative process: The role of the Child Health Policy Institute**

In 1994 the initiators of GFSA recognised that largely unrestricted access to guns and the excess of guns in South Africa were two of the biggest threats to the emerging democracy and set about campaigning for the South African government to treat it as a priority issue. When the campaign got off the ground, the need for reliable statistics and studies on the proliferation of guns and the effects of gun violence was identified. In order to gather and analyse the necessary information, government and civil society initiated a number of research projects from 1997.
While these research studies were under way, the number of media reports on children injured by firearms appeared to be escalating and doctors treating children at Red Cross Hospital – the principal children's hospital in Cape Town – reported a noticeable increase in the number of children with gun-related injuries since the early 1990s. This prompted researchers at the CHPI to identify the need for a more in-depth investigation of this apparent trend in the Cape Town metropolitan area. The researchers were also aware that there was a national policy and firearm law reform process under way and that the research therefore would be useful to inform decision-makers.

This decision by the CHPI coincided with the research needs of the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) within the Secretariat for Safety and Security. The NCPS identified the need for research on the impact of violence against women and children as a priority. The MRC, a statutory research body, received funding from the NCPS to set up a national injury surveillance system. The MRC subcontracted the CHPI to research the epidemiology of firearm injuries in children in the Western Cape, one of the provinces with the highest violent crime rates in the country. The study was intended to provide baseline information for future trauma surveillance.

The CHPI researcher involved in this study was in constant communication with the GCA structures and with key government officials to ensure that the research methodology and findings would be relevant and useful to the policy formulation process. In 1998 the CHPI released the findings of its research project. The report confirmed the speculated increase in firearm-related injuries in children living in the Western Cape. The research results were presented in various formats, from academic publications to popular media articles, in order to make it accessible to the different roleplayers and stakeholders involved in the policy reform process. Once the firearm law reform process had begun in earnest, the CHPI researcher became an active GCA member and took on the task of representing the children's sector within the alliance.

The research findings

The key research findings elicited from the primary data collected and from collateral sources are summarised in Table 1. The findings confirmed a rising number of firearm injuries in children, the majority of whom were adolescent males living in areas where poverty, drugs and gang-related activities were rife. However, a significant number of injuries were in younger children caught in the crossfire of disputes either within or outside their homes. The research report suggested the need for a set of criteria to determine eligibility for gun ownership in order to prohibit children from owning guns, and to prevent anyone with a history of, or inclination towards, violent behaviour from obtaining a firearm license. Collateral information confirmed that a significant portion of illegal guns came from the pool of legally owned guns through theft. Therefore it was plausible that a reduction in the number of legally owned guns would result in a reduction in the number of illegal guns.

Table 1: Summary of research findings, 1992–1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main findings from primary data collection</th>
<th>Main findings from collateral sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- A total of 1,736 children and youths were victims of firearm-related incidents (these only included children that were seen at hospitals or were identified in mortuaries). Of these, 322 (18.5%) died. One out of five of the victims either died or was permanently disabled</td>
<td>- Thirty thousand legal weapons were stolen in South Africa each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Firearm-related injuries in children and youths (ages 0–19) increased from 142 (20.2/100,000 person years) in 1992 to 421 (58.1/100,000 person years) in 1996, thus depicting a three-fold increase</td>
<td>- There had been a proliferation of illegal handguns to the tune of one legal to every four illegal firearms. Many of these had been stolen from legal gun owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Most victims were ‘coloured’ males, from specific residential areas and in the 15–18 years age group. Their injuries were related to gang activity</td>
<td>- An increasing number of gun-related trauma cases were seen in the paediatric emergency section of the Red Cross Children’s Hospital in Cape Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A quarter of the victims aged 15–18 years had blood alcohol levels that indicated intoxication</td>
<td>- Major problems involved the criteria for firearm ownership and the unlimited number of firearms that one person could own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ninety-three per cent of deaths were due to homicides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In 52% of cases seen at hospitals the place of injury was unknown. The most common known places of injury were the road or pavement, or inside the children’s own homes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Most victims in the younger age group had been caught in the crossfire of gang-related or interpersonal feuds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research method

The study design was a cross-sectional descriptive study that covered the period 1992 to 1996. This time interval was chosen as the escalation in firearm injuries were first noted in the early 1990s. Records were reviewed of children admitted with firearm-related injuries or deaths to all the major hospitals in the public sector in the Western Cape metropolitan region. All firearm-related injuries and deaths at these hospitals during the period of review were identified and described. Additional mortality cases that did not present to hospitals first were collected from mortuary data. In addition a number of key informants were interviewed to obtain collateral information to augment the study findings.
Key research messages

The escalating incidence of firearms injuries and deaths in children was of concern, particularly among adolescent males. They place an unnecessary burden on health care facilities and the South African economy in general. Such injuries are preventable, however.

Areas that required further exploration, but for which no data existed, were the long-term costs of treating children with serious injuries and permanent disabilities and the ‘hidden’ costs to children, their families and their communities when losing breadwinners and caregivers.

Communication and advocacy strategy

A crucial part of any policy research process is to ensure that the research approach and findings are supported by a carefully constructed dissemination and advocacy process to facilitate maximum impact of the research findings. This requires that researchers at the outset identify the potential impact of the research and the relevant audiences to whom the research results should be disseminated. The main strategies used in translating the research findings on firearm injuries to children for the policy domain were based on ensuring the effective packaging and dissemination of the research results and forging strategic collaborations with other academic and civil society organisations. This included the identification of allies in the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Safety and Security as well as in other parliamentary bodies (such as the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women and the Portfolio Committee on Justice) that could apply pressure on the Portfolio Committee on Safety and Security to engage with researchers and the anti-gun advocates.

The principles underlying the CHPI’s communication and advocacy strategy were the following:

- Accurate data from a credible academic institution has the potential to influence decisions by parliamentarians.
- Collaborating with health professionals who treated children with gunshot injuries would complement the research results.
- Highlighting the plight of children as innocent victims of violence was an effective approach to influencing decisions by parliamentarians.
- Actively participating in the GCA would increase the probability of the research findings and key messages being used as advocacy tools by partner organisations, thus ensuring wider dissemination and use.

- Emphasis should be placed on children’s rights and specifically on their right to life, health and safety.
- Focusing on a limited number of key messages relating to areas in the Bill, such as those that could potentially benefit children and their caregivers the most, would be more effective rather than trying to cover all the areas in the Bill superficially.
- The four areas of the Bill that the CHPI focused on were:
  - The age at which firearms could be acquired (the CHPI called for the age to be increased from 16 to 25 years);
  - The criteria applied for approving a firearm license application. The CHPI recommended that these be made stricter to ensure the disqualification of persons with a tendency towards violence (including domestic violence and sexual violence), alcoholism or drug abuse;
  - The number of firearms that an individual could own, by recommending that it be restricted to one per individual; and
  - Improving the manner in which firearms are stored at the homes of owners.

By making legal amendments to reflect these recommendations, firearm injuries to children could be reduced by reducing the pool of civilian-owned guns (which would contribute to the reduction in the pool of illegal guns acquired through theft of legally owned firearms), and by preventing guns from being kept outside safes, where children had easy access to them.

The research findings were communicated widely to the range of stakeholders in order to increase the available information on this issue and to ensure that the findings could be used directly to inform the gun control policy reform process. The research findings were distributed in different formats during the different stages of the legislative process.

Stage 1 (March 1998 – July 1999)

The CHPI finalised the research report on firearm-related injuries and deaths among children in March 1998. At that stage, government officials were in the process of finalising the policy that would inform the drafting of the law. This involved the collection of statistics and research necessary to back up the policy shift towards stricter gun control. During this stage of the process, the CHPI concentrated on communicating with the researchers and civil society stakeholders that were working with the executive, as well as with the executive policy-makers themselves. The following communication products were distributed:

- The formal research report was distributed to an academic audience. It was also distributed to key organisations involved in anti-gun advocacy.
During this stage the executive was in the process of finalising the Bill, and therefore it was important to continue engaging with the relevant policy-makers in the executive, while at the same time working with relevant civil society organisations and parliamentarians to prepare for the parliamentary phase of the law reform process. The focus of this stage was on developing key law reform recommendations linked to the research findings and continuing to produce publications related to gun control for wider distribution.

As the law reform process gained momentum, the CHPI advocate began networking with the GCA to develop and strengthen the CHPI’s key law reform recommendations. GCA meetings were held every two weeks. The meetings concentrated on co-ordinating the work of the various GCA members and allowed for discussions on key law reform recommendations and issues of concern, as well as brainstorming on appropriate responses to the latest developments in the law reform process.

During this time the CHPI advocate packaged the research findings and key law reform recommendations into a clear and concise format to make them more accessible to civil society stakeholders, health professionals, the media, the general public and members of parliament. These communication outputs included:

- Two articles were published in the *South African Medical Journal*, a peer-reviewed journal. One of these articles is referenced in the government’s *Fact book on firearms* that was launched at the start of the Firearms Control Act process in Parliament.
- A two-page fact sheet on the research results was distributed to academics, service providers, parliamentarians and other decision-makers.

**Stage 2 (July 1999 – May 2000)**

During this stage the executive was in the process of finalising the Bill, and therefore it was important to continue engaging with the relevant policy-makers in the executive, while at the same time working with relevant civil society organisations and parliamentarians to prepare for the parliamentary phase of the law reform process. The focus of this stage was on developing key law reform recommendations linked to the research findings and continuing to produce publications related to gun control for wider distribution.

During this stage the CHPI advocate encouraged individuals that attended the workshop, colleagues and their children to write short letters to Parliament expressing their support for stricter gun control.

**Stage 3 (June 2000 – September 2000)**

This stage entailed the period from which the Bill was introduced to Parliament and debated by the Portfolio Committee on Safety and Security. A key moment was the week of public hearings on the Bill where Parliament invited and heard submissions from over 30 individuals and organisations. During this stage the CHPI presented a written and oral submission to the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Social Development (June 2000). The research, along with two other studies and case studies from media reports, formed the core of the CHPI’s submission.

The written submission was complemented with an oral submission that concentrated on presenting findings from the CHPI research and the two other studies, as opposed to anecdotal or emotional motivations, which tended to form the basis of some of the pro-gun submissions. At the end of the CHPI’s oral submission, the committee chairperson expressed his thanks by pointing out that “this is the first submission that is clear and coherent and based on some facts, rather than filled with a lot of emotional waffling”.

Given that professionals like medical doctors have considerable credibility in the eyes of parliamentarians, the CHPI formed an alliance with the head of the Trauma Unit of South Africa’s internationally renowned Red Cross Children’s Hospital (Professor Sebastian van As) and provided support to his oral submission to the portfolio committee. The presentation included visual material of children injured by firearms. This scientific evidence of the damage that a bullet can cause to a child’s bones and muscles made a noticeable impression on the MPs.

The CHPI’s contribution to the public hearings on the draft Firearms Control Bill received wide media coverage. Extracts of the CHPI oral submission featured in the prime time news bulletin on the public hearings at Parliament on one of the country’s major television stations. The study and key advocacy messages were reported in several newspapers. During the week of the public hearings the GCA also issued media releases that included...
key quotes from individual alliance members, thereby maximising the CHPI’s exposure in the daily media that were following the law reform process.

As the parliamentary deliberations progressed, it became clear that the parliamentary members and drafters of the Bill, who were predominantly men, were struggling to understand the submissions from the children’s and gender sectors, specifically in relation to the need to restrict domestic violence and sexual offenders from qualifying for a gun license. Thus a strategic alliance was formed with gender activists, namely the Commission on Gender Equality and the Women’s Legal Resource Centre, whom the CHPI alerted to the fact that the Bill was not strict enough on prohibiting domestic violence offenders from obtaining firearm licences. In response to this, the three organisations made a joint submission to the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women, a gender watchdog committee within Parliament. This resulted in the chairperson of this committee joining the Portfolio Committee on Safety and Security to ensure that the necessary improvements were made to the draft legislation.

The impact

Evidence of the positive impact of the research and advocacy

The evidence that the CHPI research and advocacy successfully contributed to the policy process is based on a number of outcomes. As mentioned above, the research findings were used in the government’s Fact book on firearms that was launched alongside the government’s new policy on stricter gun control. The research findings were also used in several submissions by other academic and civil society organisations. Furthermore, the research findings and key law reform recommendations received extensive media coverage.

However, the most important outcome was that 80 per cent of the GCA recommendations were incorporated into the Bill. These included increasing the age at which a person can legally own a gun from 16 years to 21 years, introducing a strict firearms license application process whereby people with tendencies towards violence (including sexual and domestic violence) and drug abuse are prohibited from owning a gun, and limiting ownership to one hand gun per person. The credit for this success must go to the phenomenal co-ordination and mobilisation strategy of the GCA and the research and advocacy contributions from its members.

The timely availability of the research data was crucial. As no research on firearm injuries and deaths of children was available at the time, the CHPI data became the ‘cutting edge’ data on the health effects of gun violence on children. In addition, the availability of several ‘custom-packaged’ products catered for the wide range of target audiences. The contribution of the CHPI advocate, who had knowledge and experience of engaging with parliamentary processes and who devoted considerable time and effort to advocate for the research recommendations to be incorporated into the new law, was invaluable.

The strong strategic alliance with a credible social movement, led by the GCA, was another reason for the successful impact on the legislative process. The reason for aligning the CHPI with the GCA was that research – and indeed policy research – is seldom neutral. Given that the CHPI selected and conducted its research with an explicit agenda of applying the research to policies and laws that can ultimately improve the lives of children, it required taking strategic and calculated positions, on condition that is was based on methodologically sound and credible evidence.

In this case, the proliferation of guns in South Africa was clearly a threat to children’s safety and health, and hence the evidence had to be strongly articulated within a gun control stance.

It is important to note that the successes of the CHPI cannot be attributed to its work alone, as the entire GCA was working towards the same recommendations. The work of the CHPI was therefore an important contribution alongside a range of other important contributions by many organisations and individuals committed to stricter gun control.

Lessons learnt

We learned a number of valuable lessons during and beyond this process. These can be summarised as follows:

- Accurate and timely research can have a significant impact on the policy- and decision-making process.
- Such research has to be coupled with effective communication and advocacy strategies aimed at influencing the policy and law reform processes.
- Providing research results through conventional means such as a 100-page research report or a peer-reviewed article is not sufficient to initiate change. Substantial dissemination and innovative ways of communication are required to be effective.
- Strategic alliances with other researchers and academics, as well as credible civil society organisation, lead to an effective synergy.
- Advocacy supported by sound research evidence is an effective combination for influencing the process of policy-making and the drafting of legislation.
Conclusion

The Firearms Control Bill was passed in 2001, but it took a further three years to draft the regulations, and it was finally enacted in July 2004. Given that the Act has been in effect for a relatively short period of time, the success of its implementation cannot yet be properly gauged. However, a follow-up study of firearm injuries to children between 1996 and 2004 at the Red Cross Children’s Hospital indicated that the number of firearm injuries admitted to this particular hospital had decreased dramatically between 2002 and 2004. The 2003 and 2004 numbers of injuries are down to 1991 levels.

When asked if children were perhaps treated elsewhere, hence the decrease, the head of the Trauma Unit at the hospital, Professor Sebastian van As, pointed out that “This is the result of our combined campaign! They are not treated elsewhere, [there are] just fewer gun shots.” This suggests that one of the possible ‘unintended outcomes’ of the intense advocacy campaign through the media to influence the draft law might have resulted in greater community awareness of gun-related injuries and deaths – and thus fewer injuries to children. The large number of illegal firearms handed in at police stations during the 2005 firearms amnesty period and the decrease in firearm licence applications could also indicate a positive shift in South Africans’ attitudes towards responsible gun ownership.

The ultimate indicator of success will be a reduction in the number of both legal and illegal firearms in South Africa and a concomitant decrease in firearm injuries (in both children and adults) across the country. Given the multiple variables that could influence this scenario, it would be near impossible to ascribe a decrease in firearm injuries to the impact of the research and advocacy per se. It is therefore not known to what degree the actual research and advocacy ultimately swayed the policy-makers. What is known is that the research and advocacy definitely contributed greatly to informing the debate on the legislation and provided the anti-gun lobbyists with additional, evidence-based information on which they could base their arguments in their own submissions and advocacy activities.

The cardinal message is that research on its own is unlikely to influence the policy process. It has to be encased within a broader strategy if it is to maximise the potential impact of research on policy and law reform.

Notes

4 A Kirsten, The role of social movements in gun control: An international comparison between South Africa, Brazil and Australia, Centre for Civil Society Research Report No 21, Durban, 1998.
5 In 1998, the Western Cape had the fourth highest number of murders committed with a firearm.
7 Ibid.
Using public health information to inform, build support and implement policies for gun violence prevention: A case study from the gun ban referendum

Jessica Galeria and Luciano Phebo*

Introduction

Gun violence constitutes one of the most serious health, development and security issues in Brazil. Information on gun deaths and injuries is collected by the Ministry of Health in two systems, the Mortality Information System (Sistema de Informações sobre Mortalidade, SIM) and the Hospitalisations Information System (Sistema de Informações sobre Hospitalizações, SIH). The information produced in these systems has been used very successfully to inform, build support for, and design public policies for preventing gun violence. These efforts came to a head in recent years, resulting in strict new national gun laws being passed in December 2003. As part of these measures, most civilians were prohibited from carrying guns, a federal gun buy-back and amnesty was launched (some 470,000 guns were collected in a period of one year and three months), and a national referendum to decide whether to end the sale of guns and ammunition to civilians was declared for October 2005. Between July and October, intensive campaigning around the referendum was based heavily on public health data.

This article will analyse the use of public health information by researchers and activists, as well as government officials and the media, to reveal the severity of the firearm injuries in Brazil and to gain consensus on the need for reforms to national gun laws. It also assesses the resounding ‘no’ vote in the recent disarmament referendum to decide whether to prohibit the sale of guns and ammunitions in the country, in terms of recognising the limits of public health information in campaigning. The results of the Brazilian referendum are a lesson to other countries struggling to deal with high levels of gun violence, showing that it may not always be enough to have data and information to back up efforts to change policies – as people’s decisions around gun ownership and use, as well as their choices regarding security policies, are motivated by a complex interaction of factors.

Data to action: Introduction to public health data and gun violence in Brazil

In 2002, 38,088 people in Brazil died by guns – the highest recorded number of any country in the world, including countries at war. Clearly, then, gun violence is one of the most pressing health, development and security issues facing the country today.

Public health information has been the principal measure of the impacts of these high levels of violence over time. In spite of some limitations, public health data in Brazil is seen as a more credible source of information on violence (less subject to distortions and more apolitical) than others, for example the police, and is certainly more readily available. In a telling example, the Health Ministry’s Mortality Information System (SIM) is the only databank capable of comparing systematised information on rates for each city in Brazil over a period of 25 years. Further, health systems are available online, nearly universally accessible and published within a reasonably short period. Using a health perspective (data)
to frame discussions on armed violence makes the problem a question of public health, and not the exclusive domain of public security.\textsuperscript{2} To some extent, this ‘democratises’ the issue of human security and bolsters the message that preventing gun violence is a collaborative – and urgent – responsibility for everyone.

**Overview of public health information on gun deaths and injuries**

While the collection of public health data in Brazil is still somewhat limited, relative to other developing countries the systems are quite advanced, systematised, transparent and accessible. The Mortality Information System (SIM) and the Hospitalisation Information System (SIH) are part of DATASUS, the database of the Ministry of Health. DATASUS are national in scope, with detailed information on Brazilian states and cities. Data collection, information flow and data processing are nationally standardised in the SIM and the SIH. However, the quality of information among Brazilian cities varies. There is an average delay of two years for SIM and six months for SIH for releasing data, which limits their utility in documenting current epidemiological patterns and developing prevention strategies based on this information. The SIM started in 1979, which allows us to build a historical series over 25 years. The SIH is much more recent and records on injuries leading to hospitalisation were only kept from 1998.

Based on the World Health Organisation’s International Classification of Diseases (ICD), these databases contain information on the cause of death and/or hospitalisation, as well as on the medium or instrument involved (poisoning, drowning, sharp or pointed object, firearm, etc). The Ministry of Health adopted the 10\textsuperscript{th} revision of the ICD in 1996, and information on the cause of death contained in the SIM has been using these classifications from that year on. Since the SIH database was created in 1998, all the information it contains uses the ICD-10 classifications. The codes used to classify external causes in this study are organised according to intent.

The contextualisation of the death or injury informed by ICD-10 is limited to the intent of the act (if it was homicide, suicide, or unintentional injury). There is no information on, for example, whether the homicide occurred as a result of domestic violence. This type of information can only be conclusive when public security data are included – but these are the hardest to gain access to. Access to information on the use of alcohol and drugs is also extremely irregular – some legal medicine offices analyse the level of these substances, while for others this is not methodologically possible. Even when this information is available, it is not always shared with other relevant sectors.

ICD-10 is only classified by the calibre of gun (small or large calibre) used in deaths or injuries. We know, however, that characteristics such as firepower and the trajectory of the bullet also impact on the gravity of the injury. More detailed information on the circumstances of the deaths or injuries can contribute to understanding the facts. For example, unintentional firearms injuries could be the result of stray bullets or accidents caused by mishandling. Because stray bullets are a recurring problem in some urban centres, this could be introduced as a separate category in the Brazilian classification.

**Mortality Information System**

One of the problems with the data contained in the SIM is undefined or unknown causes of death. This occurs, for example, when a person dies without receiving medical assistance and a cause of death cannot be attributed. Undefined or unknown causes are the second largest category in death statistics in Brazil. Another problem occurs when the intent is unknown – that is, when it is impossible to determine if the death can be attributed to unintentional injuries, homicide or suicide.

These problems vary in intensity according to the region, state and city in which they occurred, as well as over time – though, on average, they have tended to decline, particularly from 1990 onwards. In 1999, 14.4 per cent of deaths were classified as undefined or as injuries where the intent was unknown. This percentage had fallen to 13.0 by 2002. In 2002 the state of Maranhão had the highest percentage (40.1) of undefined deaths and Paraná had the lowest (3.7). Using international comparisons, UNESCO defines six per cent as an acceptable limit.\textsuperscript{3} A clear example of improvements in the quality of data can be found in Rio de Janeiro city. Until 1995 the State Health Department for Rio de Janeiro was responsible for managing the mortality database. From 1995, when the Rio de Janeiro City Health Department took over the responsibility for managing the mortality database, the number of violent deaths where intent was unknown dropped from 46 per cent to 16 per cent – and these numbers continue to fall. Rio City Health Department technical staff now actively seeks to fill in incomplete information by working, for example, with the police to obtain more precise information about the cause of death.

On the other hand, it is also possible to classify intent – for example, death as a result of suicide, homicide or unintentional injuries – and not register the instrument or method used. According to the National Report on Firearms Violence in Brazil,\textsuperscript{4} in the 1990s 15 per cent of all homicides were committed with an unknown weapon, which means that the percentage of firearms in homicides and the gun homicide rates are actually even greater than those presented in this article.

The SIM has quite broad coverage because it records data for every individual who dies and for whom a death certificate is issued. In exceptional cases, such as clandestine burials, data is not recorded in the SIM. In the SIM it is possible to filter data to look at deaths among people who reside in a particular area, or deaths that occur in a particular area. Like the
majority of researchers, we used information organised by residency to determine rates. Sometimes the cause of death cannot be determined. Other times, information by family members, police, paramedics, doctors, or coroners which could contribute to determining a defined diagnostic is not shared.

Another limitation, classification of external causes where intent is unknown, could be reduced if there was more exchange of information among those who work in the fields of security, health, civil defence and the media. The government has suggested that city health departments seek to complement data through conferring with coroners, though in practice this has been sporadic.

The variable ‘colour/race’ was included in the SIM records in 1997 and is based on categories developed by the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatísticas, IGBE). The categories used are branco (white), preto (black), pardo (brown, or of mixed African and Caucasian descent), amarelo (yellow, or of Asian descent), and indígena (indigenous). While in life these categories are self-denominated, in death they are defined by the coroner. Different interpretations of ethnicity, then, can also confound the data.

**Hospitalisation Information System**

The impact of firearms on health in the Brazilian population has historically been measured mainly through mortality rates. This data is easy to access, of good quality, and allows for comparisons over 20 years’ time. On the other hand, limiting oneself to death statistics mainly though mortality rates. This data is easy to access, of good quality, and allows for comparisons over 20 years’ time. On the other hand, limiting oneself to death statistics makes it possible to compare costs of firearm-related injuries with other injuries leading to hospitalisation.

The SIH also contains information about the total cost of the hospital stay. It is important to note, however, that these figures refer only to funds that the Health Ministry distributes to hospitals. Because there are other allotments at the state, municipal and other levels, the real cost of hospitalisation is underestimated in data in the SIH. On the other hand, this information makes it possible to compare costs of firearm-related injuries with other injuries leading to hospitalisation.

Another relevant issue is that the hospitals in this database are either public or linked to the public system. Because of these limitations, the SIH does not provide a total figure for hospitalisation costs. However, comparisons between different types of hospitalisations can be made, which aids in the analysis of the gravity of the problem. For example, hospitalisation for unintentional injuries and violence cost on average 37 per cent more than other hospitalisations, because these injuries are generally more serious and require more complex treatment. Besides, 70 per cent of hospitalisations that are due to injuries or poisoning are classified as surgical, while this proportion constitutes 22 per cent of total hospitalisations. Using the same logic, we can arrive at the conclusion that hospitalisations that are due to firearm-related injuries cost 16 per cent more than hospitalisations that are due to traffic and motor vehicle injuries.

Whenever hospitalisation data is analysed, we should also consider access to hospitals and quality of treatment. These parameters will determine the rates of hospitalisation, lethality, resources, length of hospitalisation and other variables used to understand the gravity of the cases. Therefore, data on mortality and morbidity in the SIM and SIH should always be analysed in the context of these other variables. Mortality in hospitals could be considered an indicator of access; though if a person makes it to hospital but then dies, that could also be seen as a negative indicator of the speed and quality of treatment. Although we do not have standardised information on pre-hospital treatment, we know that the growing lethality of firearm-related injuries means more deaths occur before arrival at the hospital.

**Focus on guns: Informing and building support for armed violence prevention**

Although public insecurity has been a growing concern in Brazil since the 1980s, civil society groups have been putting forward a specific focus on guns and gun violence from just over ten years ago, around the mid-1990s. The first objective was to isolate guns and gun violence within the broader context of violence and insecurity in Brazil; organisations worked to raise public awareness to the fact that guns were involved in most crime and homicides, and then to show that gun-related death and injury rates were both growing and expanding geographically – so intervention was necessary.

Official health data shows that the risk of dying by guns in Brazil is 2.6 times higher than in the rest of the world and the great majority of these deaths (90 per cent) are homicides.
Further, gun violence rates have tripled in the past twenty years, from 7.2 per 100,000 residents in 1982 to 21.2 per 100,000 residents in 2002 (Graph 1).

At the same time, gun violence has spread geographically throughout the country – the number of cities with elevated levels of gun violence has increased over the period (Map 1).

Activists used public health data from the outset, but also public health language: guns came to be seen as a ‘vector’ of the ‘epidemic’ of violence, making it more lethal and prolific.

The public health approach also allowed policy-makers, activists and researchers to start to characterise the impacts of the gun violence and unpack the different ways that different segments of the population are affected by the problem. As elsewhere in the world, the vast majority of deaths and injuries are among men, and especially young, poorer men.

In Brazil the risk of a young man between 20 and 29 years dying by firearms is five times higher than for the rest of the population and two times higher than for the rest of the male population. The risk of death for these young men is 38 times higher than that of the female population and 20 times higher when compared to the female population in the same age group (Graph 2). These data made it very evident that gun violence was a serious problem that would have important demographic impacts in the future if it continued unchecked. Campaigners have used this data to appeal to the public to halt the trend of ‘missing men’ in the country.

No bacterium, virus or motor vehicle kills more adolescent males in Brazil than guns. Among adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age that died in 2002, 39.1 per cent were killed by guns (Graph 3).

In nine state capitals in Brazil, guns caused more than half of the external deaths in this age group: Vitória (70 per cent), Recife (63 per cent), Rio de Janeiro (58 per cent), Salvador
In the period 1997-2002 gun death rates among the black population were the highest, followed by those among black and white mixed-race (pardo) and, finally, whites. If we analyse the black and pardo categories together, we see a 40 per cent increase in the mortality rates. In 2002 the mortality rate among whites was 16.6 and among blacks nearly two times higher – 30.1 per 100,000 residents (Graph 4).

The lack of perspectives for personal, professional and social status – the impossibility of having dreams and making them come true – generates a sense of impotence and low self-esteem, mainly among young men, who may resort to armed violence to express these frustrations. If there were a way to measure the value of a life, certainly in Brazil this would be inversely related to the firearm-related death rates. Life expectancy among youth goes down in tandem with lowered life expectations. The availability and misuse of firearms to deal with these feelings of impotence are the reasons behind this extremely worrying situation.

Public health data – both the SIM and the SIH – were extremely important in these initial phases to characterise the problem, providing an accurate and (perhaps more importantly) credible assessment of the human impacts of gun violence in terms of deaths and injuries. This information was used by civil society groups and by the government to design interventions aimed to protect the specific groups considered most at risk.

Building the case for tighter gun laws: The Disarmament Statute

As we can see, the the SIM and the SIH made it possible to isolate and analyse guns in the general context of violence and establish the need for specific research, campaigning and policy work on this issue. Once guns had been placed firmly in the centre of the debate on violence and public insecurity, activists and researchers turned their attention to lobbying for relevant changes in the legislation.
Already by the late 1990s, civil society groups had begun pushing the government to address these spiralling rates of violence by tightening gun laws. In order to build public support for this, civil society groups had to focus next on correcting misinformation – myths – on gun ownership and gun violence. Perhaps the most important myth in this context was that which equated guns with self-protection or safety. Accordingly, civil society groups worked to build consensus on the idea that having a gun in the home or carrying one actually puts a person more at risk to die as a result of firearm injuries.

For this, it was important to have access to good information on hospitalisations, which reveals victimisation characteristics that are different to those who are killed. When analysing the intent of injuries of those who are hospitalised, researchers found that in Brazil, for every three people hospitalised for gun-related injuries, one was wounded unintentionally. This information tended to be overlooked in the media, which focused on more sensationalistic shoot-out stories – cops and robbers, tragic stray bullets, etc – than on families in the home. The national data was also complemented by international studies (such as Kellermann), although domestic data is generally more useful in mobilising public opinion, as international studies may be seen to have only to do with a certain (different) social context. This difference is particularly important in comparing two countries with very different socio-economic and developmental levels, such as the United States and Brazil, so it was quite important to generate national data as well.

Further, data from the SIH showed that unintentional injuries were the main causes of hospitalisation of girls and boys of 0-14 years of age with firearm injuries. Every day, nearly two children/young adolescents are hospitalised as a result of unintentional firearm-related injuries and one due to aggression. Aggression (intent to wound or kill) was the leading cause of hospitalisation in all other age groups, though unintentional injuries were pronounced in all of them. Of the total hospitalisations due to firearm-related injuries in 2002, 42 per cent were youth between 15 and 24 years of age. In this group, aggression was involved in 63 per cent of the cases (Graph 5).

Public health data was seen as a truthful scientific analysis of what actually happens when one attempts to use guns for self-defence, or to protect families or property. This was quite important in stemming a building argument that was in danger of becoming a ‘common-sense’ approach to the problem of insecurity (i.e. justifying the desire to own guns as a measure of protection or defence). Following this gradual shift in opinion, the next step was to convince people that controlling guns would help save lives.

This can be done by using health data to demonstrate the lethality of armed violence. In the context of Brazil, this argument was well supported by public health data. The discussion was framed by the argument that while removing or controlling guns would not completely end violence in Brazil, it would certainly reduce the number of lethal cases of violence. Reducing the number of firearms in circulation and being used by the population, then, would reduce the number of deaths.

Armed violence in Brazil is highly lethal, with nearly double the number of deaths compared to injuries (38,088 deaths versus 19,519 hospitalisations in 2002). For every four people who are wounded intentionally with firearms, three die. In other words, guns kill far more people in Brazil than they wound.
Acts of aggression are the most frequent cause of both death and hospitalisation: 61.5 per cent of gun-related hospitalisations were the result of acts of aggression (intent to wound or kill), but among deaths, this percentage was considerably higher, at 90.0 per cent (Graphs 6 and 7). In other words, when a person has the intention of hurting himself or herself or another using a gun, the chance of killing is high. We should note that many people who make it to hospital might still die during or after hospitalisation as a result of complications from the original injury.

Among hospitalisations for firearm injuries, attempted suicides were the most lethal: 13.4 per cent (Graph 8).

Another way that health data can be used to emphasise the lethality of firearms is to compare hospitalisations and deaths by guns compared to other instruments. Owing to the highly lethal nature of gun violence, the percentage of assaults with firearms (30 per cent) is lower than the percentage of assaults with other types of weapons (39 per cent) (Graph 10).
than in homicides where firearms are used (63.9 per cent), as shown in Graphs 9 and 10. Injuries from other, less lethal, weapons are more likely to result in hospitalisation (39 per cent) than death (19.8 per cent).

While 2.8 per cent of people hospitalised as a result of firearm-related injuries had attempted suicide (Graph 7), 3.6 per cent of firearm-related deaths were suicides (Graph 6). These low percentages could be due to two factors: Brazil has a relatively low suicide rate, especially compared to homicides (in 2002, the rates were 4.6 and 32.5 per 100,000 residents, respectively); and firearms were used less often in suicides than in homicides. Because guns are so lethal, the percentage of guns used in attempted suicides (5.2 per cent, Graph 12) was lower than in suicides (17.7 per cent, Graph 11). Self-poisoning, usually through ingesting large amounts of medicine or insecticides, which are easier to access, accounted for 74.1 per cent of hospitalisations among attempted suicides (Graph 12). Easy access to the method or instrument used to attempt suicide is an important risk factor, as is shown in the international literature.10

One specific comparison that was particularly useful in influencing public opinion was between armed violence and motor vehicle injuries. Death and injuries due to traffic incidents have been assimilated as a public health issue by the general population, and it has also been clear that policies such as enforcing traffic codes or making it law to wear a seatbelt have had a significant impact in reducing traffic-related deaths and injuries. Brazil is one of the few countries in the world where guns actually kill more than traffic injuries, as can be seen in Graph 13.

Although there are more hospitalisations for traffic or motor vehicle injuries, firearm injuries are more lethal, require a lengthier period of hospitalisation and cost more. The average time of hospitalisation for a firearm-related injury was seven days – for traffic or motor vehicle injuries it was six days. The lethality of people hospitalised for firearm-related injuries was 8.9 per cent, while for traffic or motor vehicle injuries it was 4.4 per cent (Graph 8). Considering that 64.3 per cent of the firearm-related injuries requiring hospitalisation were inflicted intentionally (aggressions and suicide attempts) and traffic or motor vehicle injuries were generally unintentional, we could expect that the gravity of the injuries would be lower for traffic or motor vehicle injuries than for firearm injuries. In addition, the introduction of the Brazilian Traffic Code (Código de Trânsito Brasileiro) has brought a notable decline in death rates due to traffic and motor vehicle injuries, while the injuries sustained are also less serious. It is our hope that a preventative approach to public security policy – the Disarmament Statute – can help bring positive changes in this area.

In Brazil, most firearm-related deaths are homicides, and the victims of most fatal traffic and motor vehicle injuries are pedestrians. By contrast, in more developed countries most firearm-related deaths are suicides and traffic deaths occur mainly among those inside the car (the driver or passengers). As, symbolically, guns and cars represent power over others, this was an important piece of information for understanding the more deep-rooted and cultural issues surrounding violence in Brazil.
Implementing public policies for gun violence prevention

Using the above strategies, researchers, activists, government officials and the media were able to reveal the severity of the problem in Brazil and reach consensus on the need for reforms to national gun laws. After nearly a decade of organising, these efforts came to a head in late 2003, resulting in strict new national gun laws – known as the Disarmament Statute – being passed on 22 December. As part of these measures, most civilians were prohibited from carrying guns, a federal voluntary weapons collection and amnesty was declared, and a national referendum to decide whether to end the sale of guns and ammunition to civilians was set for October 2005.

While the Disarmament Statute was approved in December 2003, it was not until 15 July 2004 that the federal government officially promulgated the law – this meant that the mechanisms to implement the law had not been decided on and put in place until then. The pro-gun lobby had battled to attempt to revert the process – they especially contested the voluntary collection campaign and the referendum to end gun sales – but ultimately they were defeated by pressure from civil society. On 15 July 2004 the National Disarmament Campaign was launched, created to encourage a voluntary weapons handover throughout Brazil. During the campaign, the population had the opportunity to turn in firearms with an amnesty and receive compensation. Those who turned in weapons received between R$100 and R$300 (US$45 and US$135), according to a federal government table, independent of which state the person was in or whether the gun was legally registered or not.

Civil society groups which had participated over several years in the disarmament debate were active in the campaign. Viva Rio, a Rio-based NGO at the forefront of this work, participated in the national committee of the campaign led by the Justice Ministry and participated actively in collecting weapons in Rio de Janeiro state, as well as in capacity-building workshops for state disarmament committees in all Brazilian states. It also provided technical assistance and training to other civil society organisations that wished to collect firearms, mainly churches. The experience of involving civil society institutions in the collection and destruction was relatively new internationally.

The Voluntary Weapons Collection Campaign was scheduled to end on 23 December 2004, but its success led Justice Minister Márcio Thomaz Bastos to extend the campaign, first for six more months, until 23 June 2005, and then again until 23 October 2005, when the referendum on the banning of gun sales was held. The first collection post was opened on 4 August and from then until 23 October Viva Rio collected nearly 12,000 guns in 59 posts throughout the state of Rio de Janeiro. One of these posts was in the NGO itself. Two mobile posts operating out of trailers circulated throughout the state, one in partnership with the civil police and the Radio Globo and the other in partnership with the federal police. Together, these mobile posts received 1,681 guns.

Health data is also used as a tool to measure the impact of gun violence prevention measures. In 2004, DATASUS registered an eight per cent drop in gun deaths from 2003, representing some 3,234 fewer deaths than the previous year and providing evidence for the effectiveness of gun control – in this case, specifically the Disarmament Statute and the Voluntary Weapons Collection campaign – as part of a strategy to mitigate the impacts of gun violence. This information was heavily used by NGOs and the media during the run-up to the referendum.

Another important statistic – this one from police data, which was used at this phase to complement health data – was that, in Rio de Janeiro, the majority of crime guns had been legally purchased and registered. A report released just before the referendum, on 3 October 2005, by the Rio de Janeiro state government with information from the state civil police found that in Brazil, most of the crime guns seized by police were once legally owned. A commonly held belief in Brazil is that guns used to commit crimes were either acquired on the illegal market or diverted from state security forces. In reality, it was found that 72 per cent of crime guns were once legally owned and that 65 per cent of registered guns used in crime once belonged to civilians. It also found that guns that had once been legally owned were used in 78 per cent of armed theft, 67 per cent of rapes at gunpoint, 58 per cent of gun homicides, and 32 per cent of kidnappings at gunpoint.

At this stage then, in terms of organising for support for disarmament, civil society groups felt the timing was right to make the arguments a bit more sophisticated, to focus on...
impacts and use public health data complemented by other sources, in order to convey the urgency of action. It was important to show that changing gun laws had made significant advances in reducing gun violence in other countries and in Brazil as well. This use of information became increasingly relevant in the run-up to the referendum in order to mobilise people to vote to end gun sales in Brazil. The message – conveyed largely using public health information and disseminated now on a massive scale by the Brazilian media – had become: guns are a problem that affect all of us, and we can no longer afford to stand by and do nothing.

Lessons from the gun ban referendum

On 23 October 2005 there was a nation-wide referendum to decide whether to end gun and ammunitions sales throughout Brazil. The radical move represented the first time Brazil had ever held a national referendum, and the first referendum anywhere in the world to decide national gun laws. On that day registered Brazilian voters (voting is mandatory in Brazil) answered the question: “Should the sale of guns and ammunition to civilians be prohibited?” An incredible amount of work went into campaigning around the issue, both on the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ sides. Public health data featured largely in the ‘yes’ campaigners’ arguments, as part of the strategy highlighted in the previous sections of this article. However, in spite of having data on the ‘yes’ side, the referendum was defeated, with 64 per cent of the population voting ‘no’.

The important lesson was that data alone was not enough – especially in the context of an intense national campaign like that for the Brazilian referendum. Several factors influenced the outcome of the vote; among the most important we can count:

■ Unfavourable political climate: corruption scandal and high levels of police brutality. With the Lula government (which had been for many hope of a new political era of social justice) in the midst of one of the worst and most highly publicised corruption scandals in recent history, the populace may have felt that a ‘no’ vote was a way to express dissatisfaction with the government. Further, 2005 was a year of intense – and high-profile – police corruption, with the largest police massacres of all time occurring in March, resulting in the deaths of 29 innocent people in the outskirts of Rio. Thus, the sentiment of many voters was that the referendum would take guns out of the hands of ‘honest citizens’ and leave them all with the criminals and with the untrustworthy and violent police. In essence, the ‘no’ vote became tantamount to a ‘no, I don’t feel safe’ and ‘no, I don’t trust the government or the police to keep me safe’ – rather than a ‘no’ to the idea of gun control itself.

■ Data was confusing and not presented in a way that appealed in a fresh way to people’s emotions. It cannot be ignored that a large percentage of the Brazilian electorate is poorly educated and not accustomed to analysing or interpreting statistical data. For many, the presentation of numbers and percentages was unclear, and the pro-gun lobby exploited people’s natural mistrust of these numbers by saying that they were manipulated, that they did not add up, etc. At the end of the day, a discourse borrowed from the National Rifle Association (NRA) on the ‘right’ to have firearms was more convincing to the people. The pro-gun lobby was quite successful in utilising this approach, making impassioned pleas in a television campaign that harkened back to the military dictatorship, to Nelson Mandela’s struggle against apartheid, to women’s suffrage and other rights struggles. The main message transmitted in these ads was, “Even if you or I never want to own or use a weapon ourselves, don’t let the government take away this right for others or for our future.” Aside from the TV campaign, the pro-gun lobby invested in massive email and radio campaigning, translating images and publicity pieces from the US into Portuguese.

■ The pro-gun lobby had equal time in the media. Historically, the mass media in Brazil has been quite supportive of disarmament. However, as part of the referendum campaign, the federal government provided equal time to both sides of the discussion and the media was strictly forbidden to cover the issue in a way that could be interpreted as favouring one side or the other. This meant that in the months prior to the vote, the Brazilian population heard the pro-gun arguments more than ever before. The lobby also used women and victims to convey their message, while the disarmament campaign relied on famous stars and singers – a tactic which had worked well in the past, but was seen as out of touch with reality of the majority of Brazilians in this period of intense information exchange.

■ Finally, there was some confusion as the referendum itself, as Brazil is a new democracy and had never held a national referendum before. People found the question itself to be confusing and were also confused by the ballot methods, which involved relating a ‘yes’ vote to a number at the electronic ballot boxes.

A large-scale telephone survey conducted by campaigners in the weeks prior to the referendum mapped which arguments on both sides the population had assimilated most convincingly. The top three most widely accepted arguments from the ‘no’ side were: criminals should be disarmed, not honest citizens; the government is not doing its part to reduce crime and armed violence; and disarmament is useless because there will still be arms trafficking and contraband. Approval of these statements increased or remained constant over the period. In contrast, acceptance of the ‘yes’ arguments largely decreased. The three most widely accepted arguments from the ‘yes’ side were: the prohibition of the sale of firearms and ammunitions may not resolve all problems with violence, but it is an important step; if every ‘honest citizen’ wanted to be as well-armed as the criminal, violence would explode; and disarmament helps save lives and is worth the effort no matter how many lives are saved.
Conclusion

In spite of the disappointing results of the referendum, it is important to remember that some 33 million Brazilians did vote for the sale of firearms and ammunitions to be prohibited. These people were clear and sharply focused on one message: that disarmament could save lives. The ‘no’ voters made their choice based on a number of diverse factors – they did not, on the whole, disagree that guns and gun violence are a problem in Brazil, they took the vote as an opportunity to express dissatisfaction with the government and the state security apparatus. The consensus and consolidation of gun violence as an urgent concern for the Brazilian agenda can be seen as positive outcomes of the process, which can be built upon to further disarmament initiatives in the future. Public health data was instrumental in building this consensus: in isolating guns in the context of violence; in bringing truth to the myth that guns should be used for self-protection; in gaining support for the idea that fewer guns in circulation can result in fewer deaths; and in convincing the population that guns are a problem that affects everyone and no one can afford to do nothing about it.

Notes

1 Unless otherwise stated, all public health data cited is from the Brazilian Health Ministry, DATASUS, 2002. Information and health data used throughout this article are based on Luciana Phebo, The impact of firearms on health in Brazil, in R César Fernandes et al, Brazil: The arms and the victims, Small Arms Survey, Viva Rio, ISER, 2005. The complete report is available at <www.vivario.org.br>.
2 Brazil’s 17-year military dictatorship ended only in 1989, and a lethal legacy of that regime is the current police structures. Badly integrated, inefficient and corrupt, the military and civil police routinely compete and undermine the other rather than cooperate to guarantee public safety. Worse, they are notoriously violent and discriminatory, causing public security institutions to be largely mistrusted and discredited by civil society. Security and defence institutions have traditionally been shrouded in secrecy and characterised by a lack of transparency and low levels of cooperation with civil society.
5 Roberto Iunes, Revista de Saúde Pública 31(4), supl São Paulo, 1997.
6 Research developed between 12 September and 13 October 2005; during this month questionnaires to be filled by victims were left in eight DEAMs (Departamento Estadual de Administração de Material) of Rio de Janeiro’s metropolitan area: Belford Roxo, Campo Grande, Caxias, Centro, Jacarepaguá, Niterói, Nova Iguacu and São Gonçalo. We obtained answers to 615 questionnaires.
7 An 18-month research-action project, Women and girls in contexts of armed violence in Rio de Janeiro, a partnership between the Rio-based NGO and the Peace Studies Group at the University of Coimbra in Portugal and supported by the Ford Foundation, aims to fill this gap. Results will be published by August 2006. More information on the project can be obtained by writing to <jessica@vivario.org.br>.
8 The data from the SIM about race is classified based on ‘colour of skin’. The categories are black, white, pardo or mixed-race, yellow, and indigenous population.
10 It is 11 times more likely that a gun in the home will be used to commit suicide than to kill or wound someone in legitimate self-defence: Kellermann, op cit, pp 263-267.
Jumping the gun?
Reflections on armed violence in Papua New Guinea
Nicole Haley and Robert Muggah*

Firearms have played a significant role in exacerbating invidious forms of violence in Papua New Guinea. Victimisation rates in the National Capital District (NCD) are amongst the highest in the world. Port Moresby, the country’s largest and fastest growing urban centre, accounts for some 34 per cent of all nationally reported crimes, despite accounting for only 5 per cent of the country’s population. The Southern Highlands Province (SHP) is also rife with violent armed conflict. This feature reports on the findings from an armed violence assessment administered in NCD and SHP by the Small Arms Survey with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This assessment yields a number of critical and counter-intuitive findings that take issue with the conventional wisdom concerning armed violence in Papua New Guinea and should influence prospective interventions to mitigate insecurity and reduce arms availability and demand.

* Nicole Haley is a research fellow with the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project at the Australian National University. Robert Muggah is a senior researcher and project co-ordinator based at the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey (SAS).
conflict- and crime-ridden parts of the country. The two regions were primarily chosen because of their respective reputations and because the little objective crime data available made it evident that the urban centres of Port Moresby and Lae, as well as the Highlands provinces, were acutely affected by armed violence.

In all, 292 household surveys were completed at 12 survey locations in NCD: six suburbs (Gerehu, Ensisi, Waigani, Gordons, Tokorara and Hohola) and six settlements (Vadavada, Kaugere, Oro, Two-Mile, Morata and Nine-Mile). In SHP, some 235 household surveys were completed. They and the focus groups were administered in five of the province’s eight districts (Ialibu/Pangia, Imbonggu, Koroba/Kopiago, Mendi and Tari) and in 15 of its 30 local government (LLG) areas.

**Violence trends**

Papua New Guinea’s law and order situation has attracted much national and international attention. It is invariably described as deteriorating, with many commentators asserting that crime rates have increased steadily over the last 20 to 30 years. It is invariably described as deteriorating, with many commentators asserting that crime rates have increased steadily over the last 20 to 30 years. Indeed, local and international media reports suggest that criminal violence is rampant, small arms proliferation rife, and provinces are troubled by ethnic or tribal violence. The findings arising from this assessment made it evident that the urban centres of Port Moresby and Lae, as well as the Highlands provinces, were acutely affected by armed violence. Instead it suggests that overall crime levels and crime in Port Moresby are falling, and have been doing so since 2000.

**Table 1: Reported crime incidents, 2000–2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Capital District</td>
<td>5,205</td>
<td>5,132</td>
<td>4,161</td>
<td>4,650</td>
<td>3,262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coastal/Border</td>
<td>4,317</td>
<td>3,843</td>
<td>3,773</td>
<td>3,736</td>
<td>1,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>1,430</td>
<td>1,526</td>
<td>2,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islands</td>
<td>1,614</td>
<td>1,674</td>
<td>1,543</td>
<td>1,474</td>
<td>1,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>13,292</td>
<td>12,043</td>
<td>11,285</td>
<td>11,813</td>
<td>9,456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is difficult to analyse these figures. Officially crime is declining, but surveillance data, where it exists, is limited, incomplete, notoriously unreliable, and shows a marked urban bias. Massive under-reporting and under-coverage mean that less than half of all crime is now recorded. That said, this survey and the 2004 Port Moresby Community Crime Survey showed that reporting rates in Port Moresby are much the same as they were a decade or so ago, suggesting that crime in NCD might well be falling or at least stabilising.

The situation in the Highlands is much less ambiguous. In contrast to the national crime trends reviewed above, reported crime in the Highlands is at an all-time high. However, only a small fraction of actual crimes occurring in the Highlands are reported. To let one example stand for many, SHP’s Western Regional Administrator has revealed that there were more than 200 conflict-related deaths in Tari District in 2003/04, yet the National Crime Summary for 2004 has recorded only 38 murders for the entire province.

Despite the limitations inherent in Papua New Guinea’s criminal surveillance data, it is possible to make crude cross-country comparisons. For example, there were 97 reported murders (33 per 100,000) in NCD in 2004. By contrast, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) with a population of 324,000 – comparable to that of NCD – recorded no murders in 2004. The ACT also experienced far fewer armed robberies. In 2004 there were 862 reported armed robberies (294 per 100,000 persons) in NCD, whereas in the ACT there were only 106 armed robberies (33 per 100,000).

Prior to our assessment, three previous studies had considered victimisation and insecurity in Papua New Guinea. All three studies had an urban focus. They offer opportunities for comparison with this survey. For example, Papua New Guinea was one of 13 countries covered in the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) 1992 International Crime Victimization Survey. That survey involved 1,583 respondents in Papua New Guinea – 597 of whom were resident in Port Moresby – and revealed that the country’s prevalence rates with respect to assaults and threats (10.3 per cent), robbery (9.8 per cent) and sexual incidents (11.8 per cent) were higher than those reported in the other 12 countries/cities surveyed – Kampala, Dar es Salaam, Johannesburg, Cairo, Tunis, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Costa Rica, Beijing, Bonnay, Jakarta and Manila.

Unlike this assessment, which focused specifically on armed violence, each of the previous studies considered both violent and non-violent crime. Doing so, the Safer Port Moresby Initiative’s Youth and Crime Survey found that 38 per cent of crimes perpetrated in Port Moresby were accompanied by violence and that 61 per cent of offenders used a weapon. By contrast, the 2004 Port Moresby Community Crime Survey found that violent crime accounted for 46 per cent of victimisation events. It also found that two thirds of NCD households had been victims of crime in the last 12 months, 57 per cent had been the victims of multiple crimes, 33 per cent had been the victims of repeat crime, and one household in eight had been the victim of crime ten or more times.
Violence and victimisation

Far from being generalised and prolific throughout the country, armed violence in Papua New Guinea is geographically and demographically specific. This survey, for instance, revealed that NCN’s settlements and SHP’s western Hela region were disproportionately affected by armed violence. The assessment found that in NCN 60-65 per cent of the most prevalent types of violence – domestic violence, inter-group fighting, armed robbery and armed assault – occurred in the settlements. Offenders are also disproportionately represented in the settlements – accounting for 90 per cent of police arrests between 1996 and 1998. That the settlements were disproportionately affected by violent crime was also borne out by the Community Crime Survey.18

Though armed violence is concentrated in specific regions and among certain groups, the assessment found that overall victimisation rates among households in NCN and SHP are higher than previously reported. The reasons for this are two-fold: surveillance in Papua New Guinea – like in other underdeveloped countries – is extremely weak and most assessments to date have not brought to bear the kind of robust and multi-source diagnostic tools used by the Small Arms Survey. These findings have implications for researchers and policy-makers alike and alert us to the fact that surveillance data should always be analysed with caution, as it will not necessarily reflect violence trends or victimisation rates.

Table 2 above provides a typology of violence and comparative victimisation rates as reported in the two survey areas. It shows that domestic violence is the principal type of victimisation and the primary contributor to insecurity in both areas, but that social conflict and armed criminality are also important. It is important to review these victimisation trends in detail. Household surveys revealed that 50 per cent of NCN households and 51 per cent of SHP households were the victims of violent crime in the six months to May 2005. What is more, over one quarter of all households (26 per cent in NCN and 28 per cent in SHP) had been victimised more than once.

The survey also revealed that four out of five instances (80 per cent) of victimisation involved the use of a weapon, though not necessarily a firearm. Of those victimisation incidents where weapons were involved, bladed weapons and firearms were the weapons of choice. In all, 27 per cent of SHP households and 28 per cent of NCN households reported some form of victimisation involving a bush knife or axe in the previous six months, while 23 per cent of SHP households and 19 per cent of NCN households reported some form of victimisation involving a firearm. These findings are particularly important when reflecting on the relative utility of straightforward firearms collection or buy-back programmes in a context such as Papua New Guinea.

The household survey data concerning the typology of victimisation is confirmed by hitherto unpublished hospital and epidemiological data sourced from various hospitals and clinics. This data enables us to distil the role of firearms in victimisation as compared to other weapons. For instance, in-patient records and reports from Mendi and Tari hospitals in the Southern Highlands confirmed that victimisation involving bush knives and axes resulted in significantly more trauma admissions than victimisation involving firearms: at Mendi Hospital gunshot and bladed injuries resulted in 12 per cent and 41 per cent of all in-patient admissions respectively, while at Tari Hospital they accounted for 12 per cent and 25 per cent of serious trauma cases respectively.

Although bush knives and axes result in far more trauma admissions, firearm-related trauma is more likely to result in a lethal outcome. Indeed, while 82 per cent of the gunshot injuries treated at Tari Hospital between 2003 and 2005 proved fatal, only 30 per cent of the bush knife and axe injuries led to fatal outcomes. The Tari Hospital data also revealed that men are disproportionately affected by gunshot injuries – accounting for over 80 per cent of all cases of external injuries. There was no such bias in the case of bush knife and axe trauma. The Mendi Hospital data revealed similar patterns, although women accounted for a greater proportion of violence-related trauma admissions. Indeed, while women accounted for 47 per cent of all trauma admissions at Mendi Hospital between May 2004 and May 2005, they accounted for some 54 per cent of all violence-related admissions.25

Domestic and family violence

Domestic and family violence, including that between co-wives, emerged as the chief cause of victimisation and related insecurity across both surveys. Specifically, domestic and family violence were reported to have affected 18 per cent and 26 per cent of all households in NCN and SHP in the six months prior to the survey. Although survey and focus group participants were willing frankly to discuss the issue of domestic violence, we submit that victimisation rates are still most likely under-reported, as further qualitative investigations
indicated that only the most serious cases – those that resulted in injury or trauma of some kind – were being reported. This is not altogether surprising. Research undertaken by the Papua New Guinea Law Reform Commission (PNG LRC) in 1983/84 revealed that a third to two thirds of men in the country, 95 per cent of men in the Highlands and 57 per cent of rural women considered it acceptable for husbands to beat their wives.29 We note, too, that in many parts of the country cases of domestic violence only go before the village court if there is obvious trauma, such as broken bones.

Our assessment also revealed that domestic violence is likely to involve the use of weapons. Of those households reporting domestic violence, 63 per cent in SHP and 77 per cent in NCD reported the use of a weapon such as a firearm, bush knife, blunt instrument, fire or ‘red hot’ metal. These findings do not just confirm those of the PNG LRC survey on domestic violence (which evinced significant levels of victimisation involving the use of weapons) but also reveal increasingly high levels of serious domestic/family violence – something policy, advocacy and research communities will need to address more purposively in future.

Domestic violence is not, it seems, distributed evenly across all regions and households. In NCD, for example, a greater proportion of affected households were located in the settlements. We also found a correlation between province or region of origin and the likelihood that a household had been affected by domestic violence. Specifically we found that 24 per cent of households originally from the Highlands or Gulf Province and 23 per cent of Central Province households were affected by domestic violence. By contrast, no Momase or Islands households reported domestic violence.

Inter-group fighting

Inter-group fighting emerged as a key source of insecurity and the second most likely form of victimisation in both NCD and SHP. In the case of SHP, this finding was not particularly surprising, given the attention tribal fighting in the province has attracted. The prevalence of inter-group fighting in Port Moresby is, however, a worrying new trend. Our assessment found that in NCD, in the six months prior to the survey, 18 per cent of respondent households had been victims of inter-group fighting, 27 per cent of households included someone who had been involved in inter-group fighting as a combatant, and 15 per cent of households included someone who had changed residence because of inter-group fighting. The assessment further revealed that 65 per cent of victimised households and 75 per cent of households that included a combatant or someone who had changed residence because of inter-group fighting were located in the settlements.

These findings warrant further investigation, especially as ‘tribal’ or inter-group fighting in Papua New Guinea has tended to be viewed as a Highlands problem. Was it predominantly households that were originally from the Highlands that were affected by inter-group fighting? The answer, surprisingly, is no – though it remains the case that a significant proportion of households originally from the Highlands had been affected. Importantly, the assessment found that almost one third of victimised households, one third of households with combatants, and over half of households that included someone who had changed residence because of inter-group fighting were originally from the Central Province. It also found that households originally from the Central, Gulf and Highlands provinces were all disproportionately affected by, and involved in, inter-group fighting, and that as such tribal or inter-group fighting is not a Highlands-specific problem.

Intriguingly, inter-group fighting in SHP now appears to be less prolific than it is in NCD. Specifically SHP respondents reported that, in the previous six months, 17 per cent of households had been the victim of inter-group fighting, 24 per cent included someone who had been involved in inter-group fighting as a combatant, and 11 per cent included someone who had changed residence because of inter-group fighting. In the case of SHP, the assessment found that most households affected by and involved in inter-group fighting were clustered in the western end of the province.

Armed assault and armed robbery

Armed assault and armed robbery were the next most commonly experienced forms of victimisation in SHP and NCD. SHP households surveyed reported that in the six months to May 2005, 13 per cent had been affected by armed assault and eight per cent by armed robbery. By contrast, 12 per cent of NCD households had been affected by armed assault and 15 per cent by an armed robbery. In both cases victimisation events were clustered in specific geographic areas. In SHP four out of five reported events occurred in the Hela region, while three out of five events occurred in NCD’s settlements.

Murder and attempted murder

Households that had experienced a murder or attempted murder were similarly clustered. In SHP at least four out of five victimisation events had occurred in the western end of the province. Alarmingly, 13 per cent of households in the Hela region reported an attempted murder in the six months prior to the survey, while seven per cent of households reported an actual murder. This compared with just three per cent (attempted murder) and one per cent (actual murder) in the east. Overall victimisation rates in NCD were similar to those found in the eastern end of SHP. They were also clustered in particular areas, such that all households reporting a murder and almost three quarters of those reporting an attempted murder were located in NCD settlements.

Sexual assault and rape

Sexual assault and rape remain a major concern in Papua New Guinea. Over eight per cent of respondents in SHP and three per cent in NCD reported that someone in their
household had been the victim of sexual assault or rape in the six months to May 2005. In SHP one in twelve households had been affected. In both cases, reported victimisation events were geographically clustered – 89 per cent of reported SHP incidents occurred in the Hela region, while 60 per cent of NCD’s victimised households were located in the settlements. Alarmingly, our survey revealed that rapes and sexual assaults in SHP and NCD typically involve the use of weapons, particularly firearms and bush knives. Indeed, this was so in all but one case reported to us. The survey also revealed that the vast majority of reported rapes occurred in the village, and often in the home, and in most cases the assailant(s) were known to the victim.

Although our household survey did not obtain data concerning the age or sex of the victims or details about the contexts in which the assaults took place, we were able to obtain some supplementary data from Tari and Kainantu hospitals which suggest that young girls are disproportionately affected. When reflecting on possible intervention strategies, victim profiles are critical. Taken collectively, the Tari and Kainantu data suggest that three quarters of sexual assault and rape victims are under 20. By way of comparison, a survey undertaken by Riley et al (cited in the PNG LRC Report) found that girls aged between 11 and 15, 8 and 45 per cent were aged between 11 and 20. By way of comparison, a survey undertaken by Riley et al (cited in the PNG LRC Report) found that girls aged between 11 and 15, 8 and 45 per cent were aged between 11 and 20. By way of comparison, a survey undertaken by Riley et al (cited in the PNG LRC Report) found that girls aged between 11 and 15, 8 and 45 per cent were aged between 11 and 20. By way of comparison, a survey undertaken by Riley et al (cited in the PNG LRC Report) found that girls aged between 11 and 15, 8 and 45 per cent were aged between 11 and 20.

Where violence occurs

The home emerged as the principal location for victimisation in this violence assessment, just as it had in the 2004 Port Moresby Community Crime Survey. Indeed, 26 per cent of all victimisation events reported to the NCD assessment team occurred in the home and 18 per cent in the immediate vicinity of the home. A further 30 per cent of victimisation events were reported to have occurred within the home community. In the Southern Highlands, 40 per cent of reported victimisation events occurred in the home, seven per cent in the immediate vicinity of the home, and 29 per cent in the home community. In both cases, three-quarters of all reported victimisation events occurred within the home community.

Firearm-related violence

In order to isolate the role of firearms in armed violence and victimisation, the assessment explored community views on guns and the prevalence of firearms. It found that the demand for firearms is robust in both NCD and SHP – over 40 per cent of respondents indicated that guns made them feel safer, while 41 per cent and 34 per cent of those surveyed in NCD and SHP respectively claimed that they would acquire such a weapon if they could. Many already owned weapons, claiming to hold them, inter alia, for self-protection, enforcing compensation arrangements, and status.

Perceptions concerning the prevalence of firearms, however, varied between regions, and even within them. For example, in SHP half of respondents felt that gun ownership was on the rise, while 45 per cent felt that gun numbers were static. For the most part it was people in the western end of the province who felt that gun ownership was increasing. By contrast, only 21 per cent of those surveyed in NCD felt that gun numbers were increasing. Almost half felt that gun numbers were static and close to a third actually felt they were decreasing.

There are variations in the types of weapons and their prevalence in various parts of Papua New Guinea. For example, although the reported prevalence of homemade shotguns, factory-made shotguns, M16s and AR15s, SLRs, and .22 rifles was remarkably similar in SHP and NCD, there were differences with respect to pump-action shotguns, handguns and hand grenades – all of which were twice as likely to be seen in Port Moresby. There were differences, too, as regards the types of weapons being seen in different parts of SHP. For instance, respondents in the Hela region mostly reported seeing homemade shotguns, single-shot factory-made shotguns and – to a lesser extent – pump-action shotguns, and reported seeing them at least five times as often as M16s or AR15s. In the east, however, where people were claiming to see firearms relatively infrequently, high-powered assault rifles such as M16s and AR15s, or SLRs accounted for a greater proportion of weapons seen.

Just as there were reported differences with respect to the types of weapons seen in SHP, the frequency with which people in particular areas claimed to have seen firearms of various types also varied. Respondents in the Hela region claimed to be seeing guns, albeit predominantly homemade and single-shot factory-made shotguns, on a regular, if not daily basis, while people in the east claimed to see guns relatively infrequently. Although firearm sightings differed from region to region in SHP, no such variation was found in NCD.

Another indicator of firearm prevalence is market price. In SHP and NCD there was a strong relationship between the prevalence of particularly valued firearms and their market price. Predictably, the more sought after the firearm, the higher its price. Table 3 below lists reported firearm prices by type in mid-2005. Variations in price were evident in SHP, but not in NCD.

It was evident too that other forms of currency – particularly women and locally grown marijuana – are being used to acquire firearms and store-bought goods of various kinds in SHP’s remote areas where there is little cash and few income-earning opportunities.
Institute for Security Studies Features

Worryingly, the assessment revealed that ammunition supplies, previously thought to be tight, are in fact comparatively abundant and that prices are rapidly declining, especially in the Hela region, where new supply routes have opened up. As current pricing suggests, NATO standard ammunition (5.56 x 45 mm and 7.62 x 51 mm) is fairly abundant on the black market in SHP, but shotgun cartridges are increasingly hard to come by, relative to other ammunition types. This price differential has given rise to some quite innovative practices including the production of more sophisticated homemade firearms – ones that take 5.56 x 45 mm ammunition, ones that operate like traditional bolt-action rifles, and in some cases that are self-loading – as well as the production of modified ammunition, in which NATO standard ammunition is fitted into spent shotgun cartridges for use in homemade shotguns and pistols. Collectively these innovations represent potential catalysts for increased violence in the near future.

Causes of and responses to armed violence

This and past research has shown that there is no single cause of armed violence in Papua New Guinea. Micro-economic analyses of urban crime in the country have by and large taken the view that rapid population growth generates crime, suggesting that marginal youth are propelled into crime as a consequence of limited economic and employment opportunities. Papua New Guinean criminologist R Sikani concurs, pointing out that urban drift, the growth of large squatter settlements, the breakdown of traditional values, limited employment opportunities for high school graduates, structural inequalities between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, and contestation over resource ownership are all contributing to contemporary criminality. Anthropological accounts, however, have shown that other factors such as prestige and the desire to escape the expectations and demands of the ‘haves’ often come into play as well. They have also shown that fighting, both as a recurrent and legitimate means of prosecuting claims and seeking restitution in many PNG societies, has taken on a new dimension in many urban areas. As current research suggests, NATO standard ammunition supplies, previously thought to be tight, are in fact comparatively abundant and that prices are rapidly declining, especially in the Hela region, where new supply routes have opened up.

Just as there were regional differences with respect to armed violence, victimisation, illegal firearm ownership and ammunition prices, the assessment has revealed that the attributed causes of armed violence differ from area to area. It is instructive, then, to compare the eastern and western areas of SHP, and the suburbs and settlements of NCD, in order to highlight the differentiated causes and responses to armed violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Firearm type</th>
<th>NCD range (PGK)</th>
<th>NCD (average)</th>
<th>SHP range (PGK)</th>
<th>SHP (average)</th>
<th>Kopiago District (average)</th>
<th>Tari District (average)</th>
<th>Mendi District (average)</th>
<th>Ialibu’ Pangia and Imbonggu districts (average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homemade shotgun</td>
<td>100-800</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>100-500</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemade shotgun No 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>700-1,500</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory-made shotgun</td>
<td>200-6,000</td>
<td>2,105</td>
<td>400-5,000</td>
<td>1,043</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>2,667</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pump-action shotgun</td>
<td>1,500-14,000</td>
<td>6,393</td>
<td>1,500-10,000</td>
<td>4,344</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>3,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M16/AR15</td>
<td>4,500-20,000</td>
<td>8,365</td>
<td>4,000-15,000</td>
<td>8,045</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,750</td>
<td>10,750</td>
<td>8,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLR</td>
<td>8,000-20,000</td>
<td>13,295</td>
<td>5,000-14,000</td>
<td>9,438</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8,125</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>10,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handgun</td>
<td>1,000-7,000</td>
<td>2,720</td>
<td>200-3,000</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,120</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand grenade</td>
<td>400-2,000</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1,000-1,800</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine-gun</td>
<td>12,000-30,000</td>
<td>23,625</td>
<td>20,000-40,000</td>
<td>27,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
violence as the most common and troublesome forms of violence in their communities. Women attributed domestic violence to polygamy and/or promiscuity and to drug and alcohol abuse, while men considered jealousy, gambling, alcohol, marijuana and adultery as causal factors. In the east, jealousy and sorcery accusations also emerged as key causes of violence, with sorcery being invoked to explain to explain motor vehicle fatalities and other accidental deaths.

There was also general consensus that local leaders in the east are strong and that they continue to command respect. Specifically, it was asserted that they are quick to attend to disputes and that they work tirelessly to see conflicts resolved quickly, so as to diffuse the likelihood of further conflict. It was also asserted that they take family conflicts seriously – intervening quickly before the extended family becomes involved. Because of this we found considerable respect for the rule of law, despite deteriorating confidence in the police and judicial systems. Communities in the east, for instance, were prepared to have matters dealt with by the village courts rather than take matters into their own hands.

Despite their willingness and desire to solve disputes peacefully without recourse to violence, people in the east felt that it is increasingly difficult to do so, because of inflating compensation demands. Many lamented the contradictory nature of compensation, pointing out that while it contributes to the management of disputes, it is also crippling local economies. Men and women alike felt something should be done to limit compensation payments before they become completely unmanageable. They noted that compensation demands in the event of a death are now routinely in the order of PGK40,000–50,000 (US$13,000–16,000) plus pigs and up to PGK100,000 (US$33,000) in the case of motor vehicle accidents. To put this in perspective: the average incomes in the Ialibu-Pangia and Imbonggu districts amount to less than 100 kina (US$33) per person per year.31 Local public servants at Ialibu also saw a correlation between the weakness of the state and these high compensation payments, saying: “The law is weak so we must pay more in order to maintain peace.”

Compensation was also found to be causing problems in the Hela region, where the rule of law is comparatively weak and local leadership undermined by young thugs with guns. They further explained that local leaders had become powerless because of the proliferation of weapons, and that with guns people are able to extract increasingly larger compensation payments. Clearly, then, there are variations in the respective capacities of local communities to manage conflict and maintain peace in their own areas.

Armed violence was of particular concern to people in the west – although men and women tended to envision the root causes differently. Women, for instance, saw escalating bride prices as a huge problem, pointing out that large payments kept them in bad marriages (because they could not possibly repay the bride price in the event of a divorce), causing them and their children to suffer. Women were also concerned about the growing incidence of domestic and family violence. They saw three key factors as contributing to the problems they were experiencing – polygamy, gambling and marijuana. They were most concerned about polygamy and promiscuity, and linked with it the risk of exposure to HIV and AIDS.

Men identified the same factors, but ranked them in the reverse order. They felt marijuana was the key cause of armed violence in their community. Indeed, village leaders, local mediators, and peace and good order committees complained over and over again that their attempts to maintain law and order were being undermined by ‘marijuana boys’ who turn up at village court cases and support one or other of the involved parties on a ‘no win, no fee’ basis. Because of this, local leaders feel compelled to arm themselves when hearing disputes. Indeed, throughout the province, but particularly in the west, we encountered the view that the law and order situation had deteriorated to the point where ‘good people’ were arming themselves ‘for their own protection’. That this demand appears to be growing more robust has real implications for potential disarmament.

In the Southern Highlands resource conflict emerged as a key contributor to insecurity and a reason for acquiring firearms – particularly in the west. It was generally agreed that the upsurge in fighting in SHP coincided with the advent of resource development. Certainly many of the ongoing conflicts concern the distribution of oil and gas royalties and access to the ‘benefits’ of resource development. Much of the current conflict can be attributed to state failure: the failure to provide basic services such as health and education; the failure to mediate land and royalty disputes; the failure to address existing law and order problems; the failure to quell unrealistic expectations; and a lack of accountability in relation to the expenditure of funds generated by resource development. Throughout SHP, but particularly in the Hela region, one regularly encounters the sentiment that the money being generated through resource development is not being channelled back into rural areas, and this is an ongoing source of discontent.

The state’s failure to maximise and equitably distribute the benefits of resource development or to provide essential services in the Hela region has led to calls for the establishment of a separate Hela province, with many suggesting that if the Hela people continued to be denied essential services and a more equitable share of the benefits of resource development, then SHP would go the way of Bougainville.32 Certainly this was the mantra the assessment team encountered in the Tari area.

There are no services here … We are ready for a fight. If they don’t give us a Hela province we will fight … If we don’t get our province forget about the gas pipeline project. It won’t go … We men and boys are gathering guns. If
we don’t get our own province by 2007 we will fight. It will be bigger than Bougainville. They had only a few guns we have plenty – not just homemade guns but high powered weapons. They had plenty of languages – we have only one. We will fight. It will be bigger than Bougainville. Bougainville was a small fight. We are ready to fight … We number 300,000. The government must hear us.

There can be no doubt that the Hela region issue presents as a potential source of conflict in SHP. Indeed, people in the Hela region are arming themselves with the express purpose of causing widespread civil unrest should the national government fail to respond to their calls for the establishment of a separate province prior to the 2007 elections.

The problems in the Hela region alerted us to the fact that service delivery failure contributes to insecurity in that it gives rise, among other things, to contestation over non-state resources and access to non-government service. In SHP service delivery failure has seen public services become privatised, creating yet another source of conflict. Increasingly, those without cash resources are finding it difficult to utilise the judicial system and to access non-violent solutions to their problems. As such there can be no doubt that state failure is contributing to armed violence in SHP.

As in SHP, the NCD focus group participants were asked to identify the types and causes of violence in their communities. A number of key causal factors were identified, including: unemployment, school drop-outs, alcohol abuse, drug-trafficking and abuse, financial difficulties, family problems, lack of funds to pay school fees and peer pressure. Across NCD, unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, was held to be the single most important factor contributing to violence. Financial difficulties and alcohol and/or drug abuse were also widely seen to be the next most significant factors contributing to armed violence. NCD focus group participants expressed particular concern about the availability and consumption of locally brewed alcohol such as ‘steam’.

Despite these grim findings, affected communities agreed that there were a number of pragmatic and immediate interventions that might alleviate these factors. These included employment generation, programmes to reduce alcohol consumption, restrictions on carrying weapons, increased police presence and law enforcement, and compulsory education. As in SHP, views concerning the causes of violence tended to be structured by gender, with men and women having different views about the most effective ways of combating violence. For instance, women in NCD advocated a total ban on the sale of alcohol, citing alcohol as a key cause of violence in their communities. Women, too, were most vocal about wanting to see the Vagrancy Act re-activated and about wanting to stop the rural-urban drift. Men, however, saw unemployment as the key contributor to violence. More than the women, they felt that the creation of employment and income-generating opportunities would see violence reduced.

NCD residents pointed out that their communities were actively involved in trying to improve the security situation in their respective communities. Many had established community groups, neighbourhood watch initiatives, and peace and good order committees to mediate minor conflicts. Such committees were found to be particularly active in the settlements. Although people generally felt that these peace committees had strengthened law and order, it was also felt that compensation was on the rise, with some communities meeting up to five times a week at local parks to solve disputes, to discuss how compensation monies could be raised, or to agree upon demands to be imposed on other groups. As in SHP, it was felt that compensation demands were steadily inflating such that current levels of compensation were held to be unsustainable. It was also felt that rising compensation payments were contributing to greater cycles of retribution and violence.

Clearly, any effort to enact civilian disarmament will be a challenging enterprise in Papua New Guinea. Despite the havoc caused by guns, concern about rising compensation payments, and recognition that they are crippling livelihoods and contributing to the escalation of violence, the vast majority of respondents claimed that they would be unwilling to give up their guns unless the law and order situation improved. Specifically, they rejected the idea of gun buy-backs or ‘weapons for development’ programmes, arguing that such schemes would not work unless everyone disarmed simultaneously. Instead of being seen as part of the problem, guns were seen by many to be offering a degree of protection, with respondents in both SHP and NCD asserting: “I need my gun, it is my protection. It is my bodyguard.”

That said, respondents in NCD felt that firearms reduction might prove more successful if people received payment for their firearms and were provided with employment or other income-earning opportunities. Significantly, it was repeatedly noted that one of the many motivating factors for the acquisition of firearms, is the need to make a living. Indeed, many NCD focus group participants reported that people in their communities had obtained guns with the express purpose of leasing them out or using them to eke out a living through crime. This suggests that economic factors are contributing to the proliferation of firearms in NCD in a way that they are not in SHP, and proposed interventions will need to take account of this.

Conclusions – looking forward

As Dinnen rightly notes, external interventions need “to be grounded in a thorough understanding of the socio-economic and political complexities of the recipient countries”. Given the sheer size of mainland Papua New Guinea, large-scale external interventions of the kind undertaken in the Solomon Islands and on Bougainville are unlikely to succeed or be financially viable. Further, there is as yet little local support for gun surrenders or weapon-reduction initiatives. Certainly past initiatives have either failed or have tended to
In sum, this article finds that weapons reduction initiatives such as a national gun amnesty demonstrate this. 

Note that such initiatives might well be replicated elsewhere and that properly targeted donor initiatives which have not only proved successful, but self-sustaining. We are of the view that weapons reduction initiatives are doomed or that they have no merit, but that they should proceed cautiously and that in the local context, alternate small-scale local interventions focused on violence reduction and support to the customary rule of law – as compared to straight-out gun collection – will most likely prove productive. This was particularly evident in NCD, where many communities had established neighbourhood watch patrols and peace and good order committees to mediate minor conflicts as a means of improving and taking back responsibility for maintaining security in their communities.

In the absence of a strong state, civil society groups are seeking to combat the growing law and order problems in their areas. As Dinnen and Thompson point out, “women’s and church groups have been particularly active in the area of peacemaking and conflict resolution.” While undertaking this assessment we encountered several small-scale local initiatives which have not only proved successful, but self-sustaining. We are of the view that such initiatives might well be replicated elsewhere and that properly targeted donor support would not only see them grow, but would most likely yield additional results. These successful projects share several key characteristics: they were designed and developed locally such that they value and draw upon local knowledge and cultural resources; they engage and gainfully occupy the local youth; they have empowered local leaders; and they have enhanced customary governance. The last feature is particularly critical, because when local leadership is strong, law and order can be maintained, even in the absence of effective police and judicial systems. The different prevailing security situations in SHP demonstrate this.

In sum, this article finds that weapons reduction initiatives such as a national gun amnesty has been recommended by the National Guns Control Committee are likely to yield comparatively limited results in Papua New Guinea’s most conflict-affected areas unless some degree of law and order is first re-established and the local demand factors addressed. In much of SHP and NCD the two are intrinsically linked. It is imperative then that future interventions be targeted; based upon robust local knowledge and a sound evidence-based diagnosis of how armed violence manifests itself from region to region; and informed by a deep understanding of how violence in general and armed violence in particular is positioned and understood as regulatory devices within local cultures. If they are to be successful, future interventions should likewise seek to enhance customary governance and address the locally specific factors fuelling demand. Priority should therefore be given to building upon local capacity and harnessing local structures so as to aggregate and replicate modest successes rather than adopting large-scale top-down national initiatives, for as this study has compellingly shown, conventional wisdoms, on which foreign-driven development and law and order programmes, including violence-reduction initiatives are all too often based, do not always stand up to the scrutiny of empirical research.

Notes


8 This assessment found that 48 per cent of the victimisation events reported to the NCD team and only 16 per cent of the violent crimes reported to the SHP team had been reported to the police. It also found that reporting rates are geographically and demographically differentiated, such that crimes occurring in areas where there is a police presence were more likely to be reported than those occurring in remote rural areas where there are no longer any police.


10 U. Zveckic and A. Alvazic del Frate, Criminal victimisation in the developing world, UNICRI publication No 55, Rome, UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, 1995.

11 N. Lewis, Forthcoming, Conflict vulnerability assessment, Southern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea, In N. Haley and R. May (eds), Conflict and resource development in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, Canberra, SSGM (eds), The Australian National University.


13 Ibid.

14 Zveckic and Alvazci del Frate, op cit.


16 NRI, op. cit.

17 R. Sikami, Live to steal, steal to live: Juvenile and
Finding the evidence: The links between weapon collection programmes, gun use and homicide rates in Cambodia

Christina Wille*

Cambodia is a typical example of a post-conflict country where the lack of easily available data to guide policy design is one of the fundamental challenges to be addressed. While Cambodia has benefited from sustained Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) collection and destruction programmes since 1998, these have not been accompanied by any data analysis on the impact of gun proliferation and use or on these destruction programmes. In 2005, the Small Arms Survey (SAS) collected data on firearm morbidity and mortality spanning the last ten years. The objective was to develop methods that can be used for data generation in countries without systematic data collection. Using hospital admissions records and a review of the main English newspaper, the data shows that collection and destruction programmes have made a significant difference to human security in Cambodia. The study also reveals that even where no official data is available in a country, researchers can often derive useful indicators.

* Christina Wille is a senior researcher with the Small Arms Survey, Geneva, Switzerland.
Introduction

This article presents gun use indicators from Cambodia and links them to changes in gun availability following gun collection, destruction and registration programmes. Since 1998 Cambodia has benefited from sustained small arms interventions that were undertaken by the government of Cambodia and supported by several international donors, notably the European Union (EU) and Japan. By March 2006 more than 130,000 weapons had been collected and 180,000 destroyed, and safe storage and registration facilities had been established for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) and the police. The process of weapon interventions has received much attention, but its impact has not yet been examined in terms of changes in gun use and gun crime.

A particular challenge encountered in researching the issues in Cambodia and many other post-conflict countries is that data on gun use and gun crime is incomplete. However, there are often opportunities to construct indicators using a variety of different sources, official and non-official. This article demonstrates the utility of using hospital admissions data and newspaper reports, in addition to official crime statistics, to assess the impact of small arms use. This example demonstrates that robust findings on the impact of weapons intervention programmes can be made even when data is incomplete. It is hoped that this example may inspire future gun intervention programmes to initiate impact assessments as part of their implementation monitoring.

This article presents the following findings:

- No single source provided a complete picture of gun violence in Cambodia, but by combining different data sources it was possible to construct and demonstrate changes over time. Three principal data sources in Cambodia were accessible and useful for constructing impact indicators.
- Firearm homicide has declined dramatically, from 4.0–5.4 per 100,000 in 1998 to 1.1–1.7 in 2003. The overall homicide rate has dropped from 6.9–9.0 per 100,000 in 1998 to 3.1–4.0 in 2003.
- The proportion of firearm use in homicide and crime has declined, pointing at a reduction in gun availability.
- These estimates indicate that Cambodia is no longer an exceptionally violent country. In all likelihood gun intervention programmes have made a significant contribution to the observed reduction in firearm homicides.

This article begins by providing a brief overview of the context of the Cambodian gun intervention programmes, the setting-up of the weapons collection and destruction initiative, and the key political characteristics that impact on the Cambodian government's ability to control gun use and address gun crime.

Background to the weapon intervention programmes in Cambodia

Weapon intervention programmes which focused on collection, destruction and safe storage and registration in Cambodia occurred within the context of a post-conflict stabilisation process following some 20 years of armed conflict. The peace process began with the Paris Agreements in 1991, but the civil conflict in Cambodia did not fully end until 1998 when the last remnants of the Khmer Rouge surrendered to the government. During the 1990s the Cambodian government was the main actor in organising weapons control. Previously the disarmament and demobilisation component of the United Nations peacekeeping mission (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, UNTAC) had been abandoned because of the Khmer Rouge boycott of the peace process.1

The first important measure in arms control was the creation of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), which combined two of the anti-communist opposition forces and the former government forces into one military. At the same time the national police force also incorporated former opposition forces. While there is evidence that many units from the different factions continued to operate in parallel structures based on wartime loyalties, the process resulted nonetheless in considerable numbers of the conflict weapons being brought under the formal control of the RCAF and the police. The various factions had an interest in bringing their men and weapons into the system to boost their own strength within it. Throughout the 1990s a number of individual Khmer Rouge battalions broke away from their old leadership and surrendered to the state. These men and their weapons were also officially integrated into the RCAF or police. Certain Khmer Rouge strongholds were integrated as entire administrative structures but were permitted to operate with a considerable degree of independence.

Following the surrender of the last Khmer Rouge insurgents and the government's decisive election victory in 1998, the Cambodian government made acquiring control of weapons that were outside of its formal structures one of its priorities. The reason for this was that significant numbers of weapons had leaked from the warring parties into civilian or criminal hands during the 1990s. In addition, there were some hidden weapons caches that some commanders from opposition factions chose to withhold from the official process presumably as a personal insurance policy in case the peace process failed. The government subsequently began to initiate legislative changes with respect to weapons control, such as the establishment of a sub-decree that restricted weapons ownership and use.

The first weapons collection programme was launched by the municipality of Phnom Penh in late 1998, and was later expanded by the Ministry of Interior. to cover the entire...
country. In 1999 Prime Minister Hun Sen initiated a programme of public weapons destruction. In the same year the Cambodian government approached the EU for support in controlling small arms, and in April 2000 the EU launched the EU’s Assistance on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons (EU ASAC) in Cambodia with a mandate to support SALW control processes in Cambodia. The ASAC programme was one of the first joint actions established under the European Common and Foreign Security Policy, and provided a framework for coordinated support by interested EU member states as well as the European Commission.  

The approach of the EU ASAC programme has been to focus only on civil war weapons. It was agreed that the government and EU ASAC would take on separate but complementary roles. While the Cambodian authorities were responsible for collecting weapons, the EU ASAC programme supported the process by promoting public awareness and supporting development schemes. One of the main activities of the programme has been to finance local projects (in particular well digging) in communities where sufficient numbers of weapons had been collected. The EU ASAC programme has also provided financial and technical support for the destruction of surplus military weapons, as well as collected and confiscated weapons. In 2003 an arms cache component was added to the EU ASAC programme. Of particular importance has been the focus on weapon registration and safe storage of the official government stockpiles held by the military and the police. As a result of the programme, systematic and uniform practices of weapons stockpile management have been introduced, which should reduce future leakages from these stockpiles.

Canada, and initially Japan, also opted to channel their funding through the EU ASAC programme. However, three years after the start of the EU ASAC programme the Japanese established a parallel programme called the Japan Assistance Team for Small Arms Management in Cambodia (JSAC), which included activities similar to those of EU ASAC but operated in provinces largely untouched by EU ASAC and focused on the police rather than the RCAF. Unfortunately, there has not been effective coordination between the EU ASAC programme and JSAC.

Scope of the weapons collection programmes

Estimating the numbers of weapons present in Cambodia during the 1990s is difficult to ascertain owing to uncertainty and inconsistencies with regard to the available data. A thorough review of available numbers and information on the processes at work suggests that the total number of weapons may have been between 319,000 and 462,000 in 1991. By 1998, through the process of creating the RCAF and opening the police to the former opposition forces, some 155,000–236,000 were brought under government control, leaving some 153,000–216,000 outside government’s control, that is, held by civilians and hidden in caches.  

According to official information available in March 2006, 130,000 weapons had been collected since 1998, which would suggest that this process has removed a large proportion of those weapons outside of government control. However, the government has not provided any information on the year or location of weapons confiscation. Today there may be some 21,000–84,000 civil war weapons remaining in Cambodia of the original 319,000–462,000. In addition, 180,000 weapons from the confiscated and government stockpiles have been destroyed. The weapons collection and destruction programmes have removed a large proportion of civil war weapons that were transferred into civilian hands.

Review of the available data sources in Cambodia

As in many other post-conflict countries, it is difficult to derive the desired indicators of small arms proliferation and armed violence for Cambodia because of the paucity of available government statistics. Consequently, indicators have to be derived from samples of available information, rather than a comprehensive dataset. However, careful consideration of particular biases of the sample makes it possible to draw useful conclusions. Biases are best examined by comparing different sources rather than relying on a single source. In Cambodia, three sources could be used: newspaper reports, hospital data, and official crime statistics.

In general, official crime statistics form a useful and informative data set, but in Cambodia they do not provide details on whether firearms were used in violent criminal activities, such as homicide. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that official crime statistics are incomplete.  

Comparison with the other two above-mentioned data sources provides insight into the reliability of government data. Newspaper reports and hospital admission data provide information on the extent of firearm use in terms of crime, injury and death. In general, newspaper reports tend to over-emphasise homicides and other acts of violence due to their perceived newsworthiness. Typically, hospital admissions data does not accurately reflect the extent of firearms injuries and deaths, as medical practitioners place the emphasis on the injury, rather than on the instrument that caused the injury. In addition, many firearm incidents result in immediate death and thus do not require admission to hospital. Hence, it is assumed that a realistic reflection of firearm misuse can be located at some point between the maximalist approach of newspaper reports and the minimalist nature of hospital admissions figures.

Newspaper reports

The Phnom Penh Post, a fortnightly English-language newspaper, was selected to be the main newspaper source for this study because it includes summaries of all incidents of violent crime that have been reported in the Khmer-language papers. A researcher collected
a comprehensive sample of reports of criminal incidents and classified them as follows: incidents that involved the use of a firearm (gun crime and firearm homicide); incidents of assault and murder that involved weapons or instruments other than firearms; and reports that did not mention the crime or murder weapon used. Data was collected and categorised (as per the above three categories) for the period 1994–2004, with a total of 3,699 incidents being reported. In a second stage of categorisation, homicides were separated from all other criminal incidents.

The following definitions were used during the assessment exercise:

- **Gun use in violence**: All reports where the use of a gun was mentioned, whether it was fired or used to intimidate or assault the victim.
- **Non-gun violence**: All reports where instruments other than guns, such as sticks, rocks, axes, hammers, and iron bars, were used in an act of violence against another person. Incidents where the tool could be deduced from the description of the manner in which the victims died (e.g. ‘stabbed’ or ‘hacked’ to death) were also included in this category.
- **Unspecified tools of violence**: Any incident where it was unclear from the report as to which tool was used in acts of violence against another person(s). A typical case is a report in which the victim was beaten to death. Most reported rapes appear in this category as very few of the reports mention whether any tool of intimidation was used prior to the rape.
- **Firearm, non-firearm and unspecified homicides**: Every reported death was classified as a homicide. The category of homicide is thus not used in a strictly legal sense because it includes cases where the police killed a suspect, which may legally not be classified as a homicide. Distinctions between firearm, non-firearm and unspecified-tool homicides followed the same categorisation as described above.

It was originally planned to make a distinction between the use of military-style weapons (such as AK-47s and M16s) and handguns as a way of determining the specific impact of the removal of civil war-type weapons from circulation. However, the available reports did not systematically record the types of guns used, and as a result no such category could be established.

The Phnom Penh Post contains three distinct sections: the main article section, the ‘news brief section’, and the ‘Police Blotter’ section, which covers a half-page in the total publication. The Police Blotter has been a regular feature in the Phnom Penh Post since 1999, and is based on police reports and two national Khmer-language newspapers: Koh Santepheap and Rasmei Kampuchea. The introduction of the Police Blotter made it difficult to determine reliable trends during the sample period.

The regular appearance of the Police Blotter has also contributed to greater congruence between official crime statistics and the newspaper reports. Figure 1 shows that while official statistics indicate more homicides than the number of reported homicide stories in the Phnom Penh Post, the gap in the number of reported incidents (in the Phnom Penh Post) has declined in recent years. Since 2002, the Phnom Penh Post has covered approximately half of all homicides in the police statistics.

### Hospital admissions data

Cambodia’s hospitals keep handwritten records on admissions that include the cause of a trauma, with ‘bullet injuries’ forming a distinct category. This data is not computerised, nor is it sent to a national central point for surveillance and analysis. To obtain this data, Small Arms Survey (SAS) researchers obtained the cooperation of ten provincial hospitals and were provided with access to the handwritten records. Only one hospital (the Referral Hospital in Pursat) had data for the period 1991–2004, while the other hospitals had records with starting dates that varied between 1993 and 2000.

As a result of the variable data sets of hospital admissions, reliable trends cannot be established. Recorded admissions for ‘bullet injuries’ obviously increased with an increase in the number of hospitals in the sample. However, it is possible to determine the number of admissions from bullet injuries as a percentage of all admissions. This measure is used to identify trends over time.
Official crime statistics

The National Police of Cambodia, under the Ministry of the Interior, has prepared crime statistics for the period 1996–2003. Broadhurst has published the crime trends reported by the Judicial Police for the period 1992–1999. Official statistics, however, have some serious limitations. Broadhurst has pointed to significant under-reporting in Cambodia’s crime rate and highlighted uncertainties regarding classifications, which cast some doubt on the accuracy of the data. A particular shortcoming is the absence of indication of the murder weapon. Based on a review of the coding and registration practices used in the official crime records, as well as a comparison between the official statistics and newspaper reports in the Phnom Penh Post, Broadhurst suggests that the official statistics should be adjusted upwards by a factor of 1.3. This adjustment was based on consideration of the official data for the period 1992–1995 and an analysis of newspaper reports for the period from 1 January to 7 July 1998. In this article, the recorded homicide rate and the adjusted rate according to Broadhurst are used to establish an estimated range of homicides.

Trends in the available data sources: Homicide rates

Official statistics on recorded ‘murders’ provide the basis for the calculation of the homicide rate per 100,000 people. A closer comparison between the official recorded homicides and other sources shows that the records since 1998 appear to be more reliable than those prior to 1998. Hence, only the trends between 1998 and 2004 could be established and analysed.

All three data sources show a clear decline in assaults and homicides after 1998. Consistency between the sources lends credibility to this finding. Some uncertainties remain as a result of the changes that took place between 2000 and 2002. Official statistics suggest a small rise in murders from 2000 to 2001 and a decline in 2002. The Phnom Penh Post suggests a decline in 2001, while hospital admissions indicate a significant rise in assaults in 2002. These differences cannot easily be explained. However, these statistical variances are relatively small and do not affect the general observation that the overall trend in homicides has been declining since 1998.

The trend in homicide rates prior to 1998 is uncertain. The three sources appear to be affected by biases in the data collection. Official statistics record a doubling in murders between 1994 and 1996 and suggest a drop by half in homicides from 1996 to 1997, before murders reach an unprecedented high in 1998. The reduction in recorded homicide incidents in 1997 compared to the previous year may be due to political disturbances surrounding the ‘coup event’, which may have negatively affected the collection and recording of statistics. The Phnom Penh Post data, by contrast, indicates no significant changes in the homicide rate between 1994 and 1996, but points to an upward trend until 1998.

Hospital admission data suggests a general rise in firearm and non-firearm assaults between 1992 and 1995, a drop in 1996, and then a peak year for violence in 1997.

In the absence of more detailed information we can make only informed guesses, based on the known biases of the data and general political developments, of the likely reasons for the differences in these trends. It is likely that hospital data is the most accurate indicator for
developments in 1997 and that official records suffered the most bias during that year. The year 1997 was politically unstable as the coalition between the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) and Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif (FUNCINPEC) came to an end following violent clashes between the two parties. The clashes ended with Prince Norodom Ranarridh, the leader of FUNCINPEC, going into exile. It is likely that this political upheaval affected the ability of the police and Ministry of Interior to collect homicide data. We may therefore assume that the apparent halving of homicides between 1996 and 1997 is a reflection of political instability rather than an indication of a genuine reduction in homicides. Hence it is highly probable that the homicide rate in 1997 was much higher than the official data suggests.

On the basis of available data it is not possible to tell whether the homicide rate increased between 1992 and 1997 as all three data sources suggest. The apparent rise in homicides between 1996 and 1997 is visible in the counts of the events reported in the Phnom Penh Post appears to be the result of the changes in the regularity of the Police Blotter section, as discussed above, rather than an increase in the number of incidents.

While it is possible that the hospital admission and official crime data indicate a real rise in violence between 1992 and 1997, other factors could be responsible for this observation. For example, more admissions from assaults in hospitals could reflect increasing numbers of victims not being killed instantly due to a reduction in the lethality of violence. The trend could also reflect increasing numbers of people being able to access to medical care because of improvements in roads and transport systems. The increase in recorded murders in the official data could also simply be the result of the improved competence of the state administration and state response to violence. The rise in recorded crime incidents could also indicate an increase in police activity compared with the period of armed conflict, when the opposing armed factions rather than the state police force responded to incidents of violence, robbery and killings. However, it is equally possible that the number of assaults increased from the signing of the peace accords until 1998 when the weapon collection programmes started. No certain conclusions, therefore, can be drawn on the trend prior to 1998.

**Trends in firearm homicides**

The official crime statistics do not provide any information on the instruments used in crime. The data from the Phnom Penh Post and hospital admissions indicates that the use of firearms in violence has continuously and quite dramatically declined over the period since 1996. It is possible to use data prior to 1998 for this assessment, as under-reporting of events should not necessarily affect the proportion of firearm incidents.

The use of firearms among all violent incidents reported by the Phnom Penh Post declined from 80 per cent in 1994 to 30 per cent in 2004. The findings are similar when the analysis is restricted to homicides rather than all reported violent incidents. In 1994, 69 per cent of the reported homicides were committed with the use of a gun. In 2004 this figure had dropped to 30 per cent. There is also no difference in the general trend between the data from Phnom Penh (a drop from 81 per cent to 47 per cent) and that from the provinces (a
drop from 66 per cent to 29 per cent). The data therefore clearly indicates that firearm use declined considerably over the ten-year period.

The hospital admission data shows a similar trend. In 1993, 65 per cent of victims of assault that were admitted to hospital suffered from bullet wounds. By 2004, this figure had dropped to 2.6 per cent. As two independent sources show the same trend, there is a clear indication that firearm use has declined and that this had a positive impact on homicide in Cambodia.

The continuous downward trends of firearm incidents as reflected in hospital data are particularly interesting as they differ from the overall trends discussed above that indicated a discernable peak in violence in 1997/98.

The information from the *Phnom Penh Post* can be used to determine the firearm homicide rate by applying the firearm homicide ratios reported this newspaper to the official homicide data following 1998. As firearm homicides may be over-represented in the media due to their newsworthy nature, the percentage may be better applied to the non-adjusted official crime data to arrive at a more conservative figure in the range. The data is presented in Table 1. In order to factor the bias of this data a relevant percentage is added to both the unadjusted and the adjusted data to provide a more realistic range of firearm homicide rates.

This data suggests that in Cambodia the firearm homicide rate has declined from 4.0–5.4 per 100,000 in 1998 to 1.1–1.7 per 100,000 in 2003.

---

**Figure 6: Percentage of incidents involving a firearm: Homicides, acts of violence, and hospital admissions due to assaults, 1991-2004**

**Table 1: Estimated homicide and firearm homicide rates in Cambodia, 1998–2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of homicides in official crime statistics</th>
<th>Homicides per 100,000</th>
<th>Adjusted number of homicides (0.75 x)</th>
<th>Percentage of firearm homicides in <em>Phnom Penh Post</em> committed using a firearm, 1994-2004</th>
<th>Estimated total number of firearm homicides based on rate observed in <em>Phnom Penh Post</em> and official figures (B x E/100)</th>
<th>Estimated total number of firearm homicides based on rate observed in <em>Phnom Penh Post</em> and adjusted official figures (C x E/100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>11,437,656</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>6.9–4.0</td>
<td>1031</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>11,643,534</td>
<td>811</td>
<td>5.0–6.5</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>12,573,580</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>4.0–5.2</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>12,802,982</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>3.3–4.2</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>13,040,668</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>3.1–4.0</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>13,287,053</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>3.1–4.0</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Homicides, firearm homicides and substitution

The data indicates that both the firearm homicide rate and the overall homicide rate declined in Cambodia between 1998 and 2003. The decline in the homicide rate may reflect the fact that fewer firearms are used in attempted murders, thus reducing the lethality of violence. Analysis of the tool used in reports on all violence in the Phnom Penh Post shows that since 2000 more assaults have been carried out with tools other than firearms, such as axes, knives and other items.

The same trend is even more evident in the data from hospital admissions, and supports the assumption that one of the reasons for the continuous decline in homicide rates has been the substitution of other instruments in the place of firearms to commit violent acts (Figure 9). As early as 1995 assaults with instruments other than guns resulted in more hospital admissions for assault than assaults due to firearm misuse. Since 1999 firearm injuries as a cause of hospital admissions have rarely been noted. As discussed earlier in this article, hospital admissions from assaults rose in 2000. The data suggests that the decline in homicides may to some extent be the result of a reduction in the lethality of violence (namely firearms).

Official crime statistics also reflect incidents of armed robbery and other types of theft. There is evidence of a shift from armed robbery towards theft that does not involve firearms. Changes in the quality of police record-keeping might result in changes in the absolute numbers of recorded armed and non-armed robberies, but should not affect the proportion of the two categories. Both categories increased dramatically after 1997 when police records show higher numbers of total recorded incidents. In 1996, the police recorded 870 armed robberies and 848 thefts among the total of 2,670 recorded crimes. In 1998, 7,072 crimes were recorded of which 1,822 were classified as armed robbery and 1,871 as theft.

Figure 8: The use of firearms and other tools in assaults resulting in hospital admissions, 1991-2004

Figure 9: Robbery with and without firearms as percentages of officially reported offences, 1996-2004
The impact of small arms programmes in Cambodia

It is difficult, if not impossible, to prove definitively that the observed changes in the homicide and the firearm homicide rates are the direct result of the disarmament and arms control programme described earlier in this article. Many factors other than gun availability determine homicide rates. In addition, there is no precise information on the location and point in time that guns in Cambodia were removed from the population. However, 1998 marks the beginning of the Cambodian government’s efforts to disarm civilians. This coincides with a noticeable reduction in both the homicide and the firearm homicide rates. Given the timing and size of the reduction in gun availability, it is probable that small arms control in Cambodia has helped to reduce homicides and particularly firearm homicides. It is reasonable to conclude that the sustained small arms action over the past nine years has had a considerable impact on firearm homicide in Cambodia. In fact, the proportion of firearm use has declined more dramatically than overall violence. The removal of firearms seems one of the most plausible explanations of this phenomenon. However, it must be noted that changes in the political and social context in Cambodia have also played an important role in this regard. The end of the Khmer Rouge insurgency in 1998 and improved governance by the ruling CPP following the elections in 1998 created a climate that was conducive both to small arms control and a decline in homicide and firearm homicides.

Conclusion

Firearms morbidity and homicide data in Cambodia shows that the weapons collection, destruction and storage, and registration programmes have made a significant difference to human security in the country. This data is important in terms of justifying the interventions, and potentially influences similar programmes elsewhere.

The study shows that, even where no official data is available in a country, useful indicators can often be constructed if official crime statistics are used together with newspaper reports and hospital admission data.

Few small arms projects collect such impact data. Notable exceptions are the small programmes in the SEESAC (the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons) countries, which work in a much more data-rich environment. Small arms programmes in developing countries and post-conflict countries rarely provide impact data.

This article shows that even in the absence of good quality official data it is possible to construct indicators from a variety of sources that provide a robust means to assess programme performance. Such indicators are essential to justifying donor spending and identifying the most effective approach.

More data from other countries undertaking small arms control programmes will be required to assess which approaches are most effective in different contexts. In Cambodia, the small arms reduction process was government-driven, had the support of local NGOs and the international community, and took the form of weapons for development, safe storage initiatives and surplus stocks destruction. This approach seems to have worked well for Cambodia, but may not be suitable everywhere. Other post-conflict countries have seen a different set-up with UN peacekeeping missions or specialised UN agencies initiating and implementing small arms control. More comparable data from different countries will be required to advance our understanding of what works in different contexts.

Notes

6 Flärd, op cit, p 1.  
7 UNDPKO, op cit.  
8 Broadhurst, op cit, p 10.  
10 Ibid, p 15.  
Somalia: Distorting reality?
Richard Cornwell

Slow military reform and the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
Stephanie Wolters and Henri Boshoff
Somalia: Distorting reality?

Richard Cornwell*

The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG) came into being in 2004 as the result of protracted negotiations conducted under the auspices of the Inter-governmental Authority for Development (IGAD). In many respects the TFG was the brainchild of Ethiopia, whose government had long decided that a resuscitated state in Somalia, which had been without an effective government since the fall of Siad Barre in 1991, would have to be kept weak or dependent in order to prevent it renewing its irredentist claims to the Ogaden regions of Ethiopia. The new president of the TFG was Abdullahi Yusuf, who had previously ruled the autonomous territory of Puntland, in north-east Somalia, with considerable Ethiopian military and financial assistance.

A previous attempt to form a Somali administration had been made in Arta in 2000, sponsored by Djibouti and the Arab League. This had resulted in the formation of a Transitional National Government (TNG), which had never extended its rule effectively beyond Mogadishu, and found its pretences steadily undermined by Ethiopian backing for its domestic enemies. The TNG had also had recourse to Islamic courts in a vain attempt to shore up its dwindling power, and this provided Ethiopia with part of its pretext for its spoiling role, as Islamic militants under the banner of al-Ittihad had also threatened Ethiopian domestic security in the past. Elements of the largely Hawiye-clan based TNG can still be identified among the supporters of the Islamic courts of Mogadishu.

Disagreements within Abdullahi Yusuf’s Darod clan-centred TFG over the location of the seat of government – Mogadishu having been deemed too politically hostile and physically dangerous – led to severe rifts in his camp, and certain of the TFG’s Mogadishu warlords opposed the decision to locate the government temporarily in Baidoa, determining to make Mogadishu safe by their own efforts and thus promote their own interests within the TFG. Abdullahi Yusuf’s pleas for foreign military assistance to allow him to establish a secure base for his government met with no more than a rhetorical response, even though the TFG had been recognised by the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN) and IGAD. These appeals also gave ammunition to the Islamic courts and their associated militias, which were able to depict Abdullahi Yusuf as a foreign pawn willing to bring infidel troops into the country to further his personal ends.

Beyond the Horn, the US had retained a surreptitious interest in Somalia, which it regarded as a ‘failed state’ unable to resist the efforts of al Qaeda’s associates seeking shelter. Washington had no intention of repeating the domestically damaging efforts that led to the killing of its troops in 1993, and sought instead to use proxies to carry out intelligence and snatch missions within Somalia. Some of these missions were launched from Ethiopia, which was keen to be of service to the US in its ‘war against terror’ and others from Kenya, with the connivance of certain Somali warlords. By February 2006, the Mogadishu warlords opposed to the Islamic court militias (and, to an extent, to Abdullahi Yusuf) had set themselves up as the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT). They were almost certainly receiving financial support from Washington, and allegations to this effect were being used effectively by the Islamic militias to discredit the warlords further in Somali eyes.

There is no doubt that the Islamic militias themselves were also receiving foreign assistance, from the Saudi peninsula but, more particularly, from Eritrea, which saw this as a way of discomfiting Ethiopia and of reinforcing Asmara’s support for insurgent movements among the Ethiopian Oromo. All of this related to Eritrea’s strategy of diverting Ethiopian forces away from their disputed mutual border.

By May 2006, the Islamic militias had routed the Mogadishu warlords, a development welcomed by Abdullahi Yusuf until he realised that the militias were expending their hold

* Richard Cornwell is a senior research fellow with the African Security Analysis Programme at the Institute for Security Studies.
rapidly beyond Mogadishu, and had seized Jowhar within days. He then paid a quick visit to Addis Ababa for consultations with his patrons, and by the middle of June a measure of consternation was also detectable in Washington, where efforts were made to pin down the ideological credentials of the Islamist militias, whose spokesmen had been at pains to emphasise their aversion to al Qaeda and similar violent movements.

At this stage, and with both sides apparently arming for a showdown, the Arab League intervened and brokered a temporary ceasefire in which, at a meeting in Khartoum on 22 June, the Islamic courts and the TFG recognised each other’s existence and undertook to continue more substantive negotiations on 15 July. The agreement was welcomed widely, even in Washington, which presumably saw this as a way of drawing any militant radical sting the Islamic courts might harbour.

Within days, however, sudden developments within the Islamic court movement had created a new atmosphere of uncertainty, both for the TFG and for the international observers. The Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) convened a meeting of like-minded leaders from other clans and regions and reconstituted itself as a more broadly based grouping ominously titled ‘The Somali Supreme Islamic Courts Council’. Though the ‘moderate’ spokesman for the UIC remained head of the new eight-man executive, the new body’s 88-strong legislative council was headed by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, who for many years was prominent in al-Ittihad and since the early 1990s has been a sworn enemy of Abdullahi Yusuf, and is wanted in Washington in connection with terrorist acts. The relative powers of the legislature and executive of this new body were unclear.

This turn of events threw into question the 22 June agreement, since the UIC was now evidently setting itself up as a rival legislature, and alarmed Western governments and the Ethiopians, who now saw their worst fears realised.

Interpretation of events must wait upon developments on the ground. In the meantime, it is worth noting that viewing the world, and particularly so complex a part of it as Somalia, through an anti-terrorism lens is likely to cause distortions. A pessimist would argue that recent developments are all too likely to trigger an ‘anti-terrorist’ response that may well prove totally counterproductive, in that it will give comfort to those on both sides who seek to radicalise the situation and seek military rather than political solutions. An optimist would say that the victory of the Islamic militias in Mogadishu and their constitution of a countervailing force to the TFG might offer the possibility of agreements that would result in the reconstitution of the Somali state in a manner likely to be of benefit to the Somalis themselves.

---

Slow military reform and the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
Stephanie Wolters and Henri Boshoff*

Introduction

After nearly three years and a number of delays, the transition period in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is now set to come to an end by 31 July 2006. A new constitution was adopted by a referendum held in late 2005, paving the way for presidential and legislative elections which are now set to take place on 30 July.

This will be the first Congolese government to have been elected in free and fair elections since the first post-independence government of Patrice Lumumba in 1960. It is not only

* Stephanie Wolters is a freelance journalist and currently writes the Economist Intelligence Unit’s DRC Quarterly Country Report. She is a consultant to the African Security Analysis Programme at the Institute for Security Studies. Henri Boshoff is a military analyst with the African Security Analysis Programme at the Institute for Security Studies.
Institute for Security Studies

for this historical reason that expectations are high, however; over 4 million people have died over the last eight years of war and turmoil, most of them because they had been displaced from their homes, were too poor to pay for proper medical care, or because the health infrastructure has simply collapsed. Millions of people are displaced or living in refugee camps in neighbouring countries; the formal economy has disintegrated and is not yet sufficiently recovered to absorb the country’s vast unemployed population. Life has been unbearably difficult for most Congolese and they are waiting desperately for things to finally take a definitive turn for the better. Unfortunately, the holding of elections – however free and fair they may turn out to be – is unlikely to usher in the new era of peace, stability and economic recovery that the country and its people so desperately need.

On 30 June 2006, it will have been exactly three years since the transition government embarked on its assigned task of guiding the country to national elections. According to the All-Inclusive Peace Agreement signed by all parties in December 2002, the transition government had a period of two years to organise elections, but could, if necessary, extend this by two additional six-month periods. In early 2005, it became clear that neither the transition government nor the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) had taken any of the necessary steps to organise elections by the original June 2005 deadline, and the election timetable was postponed. The announcement of the postponement was met with widespread popular disapproval and, for the first time, there was real pressure on the transition government to take concrete action.

The organisation of elections has not been the only transition objective to be delayed significantly. Another key task of the transition process was the creation of a new, unified national army out of the various armed groups that had fought one another during the five-year war. While it was stressed consistently that this was a priority, in reality the transition government did almost nothing to move this process forward until early 2005. Although the former belligerents have been sitting in the same government in the capital, Kinshasa, the animosity between them remains largely intact, and they have made few real efforts to cooperate with one another. This is not really surprising, as there is little reason for them to do so; as long as they maintained their military power in the areas they controlled during the war, they could happily play at ruling the country for the sake of the international community and the Congolese general public without relinquishing any real power.

This piece addresses a number of serious problems that will impact on the military integration process. These activities will be discussed against the background of the upcoming election and the threat to the transitional process.

Overview of the status of military reform

It was not until May 2005, nearly two years after the inauguration of the transition government, that the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) elaborated a strategic plan for the military integration process. In its first phase, the plan envisaged the creation of 18 light infantry brigades, which would help to secure elections. The second phase would involve the formation of a rapid reaction unit, and the third phase, due to be finalised by 2010, would see the formation of a new defence force.

During phase one troops were to be transported to one of six integration centres in the country: Kisangani (Orientale province), Kitona (Bas Congo province), Kamina (Katanga province), Mushaki and Nyaleke (North Kivu) and Lubero (South Kivu) where they were to be disarmed, undergo retraining and regrouped into standard-size brigades composed of 4,200 troops. According to the May 2005 plan, a total of 12 integrated brigades were to have been formed by late 2005, three integrated brigades were to be deployed to Ituri, three to North Kivu, three to South Kivu, one to Kinshasa, one to Bas Congo province, one to Mbuji Mayi, the capital of Kasai Occidental province and one brigade as a reaction capability. Unfortunately there have been additional delays, and to date only three brigades have been formed and deployed.

In addition, the entire integration process has been severely abridged as a result of organisational and financial constraints. According to the original plans, combatants were supposed to be regrouped in 25 orientation centres around the country, where they would have undergone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waves</th>
<th>Brigades</th>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Deployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st wave</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>January–June 2004</td>
<td>Ituri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd wave</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>January–May 2005</td>
<td>North Kivu (Rutshuru)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd wave</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>February–June 05</td>
<td>South Kivu (Bukavu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th wave</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>April–August 2005</td>
<td>Ituri (Bukavu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th wave</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>July–September 2005</td>
<td>To be re-deployed, deployment area not yet decided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th wave</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>July–September 2005</td>
<td>Ituri mining areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd wave</td>
<td>7th, 8th and 9th</td>
<td>May 2006</td>
<td>Ready and awaiting deployment, no equipment to deploy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10th, 11th and 12th</td>
<td>May 2006</td>
<td>Not yet decided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd wave</td>
<td>Next six brigades</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Not yet decided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
an orientation and selection process. As a result of capacity constraints, however, the orientation centres were never set up, and combatants have instead been channelled directly into regroupment centres. However, these centres, which the FARDC has been setting up gradually since 2004, were severely under-funded and lacked basic hygiene and medical facilities, as well as food supplies and proper shelter. As a result, between March and August 2005, several thousand troops deserted from the Mushanki and Luberezi camps alone.

Since then, the Belgian and Dutch governments, as well as the European Union (EU), have provided funding for upgrading facilities and payment of salaries to the troops in the centres. South Africa, Angola and Belgium are also providing military training.

Additional training will be provided by the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) once the brigades have been deployed to their areas of operation. MONUC will engage in six-week training exercises with nine brigades, which will subsequently engage in joint operations with MONUC. This has already been the case in Ituri, where the first integrated brigade is now regularly involved in joint operations with MONUC against recalcitrant militia. It is hoped that the training and subsequent joint operations will enhance these elements’ tactical skills, as well as improve overall respect for the civilian population.

At the same time, however, the FARDC faces serious logistical and organisational hurdles, which further complicate the integration process and negatively affect military operations. These problems include inadequate food distribution, poor water supplies, poor medical care, inadequate shelter, insufficient vehicles and the irregular or non-payment of salaries.

**Completing DDR and starting SSR**

It is clear from the evaluation of the current status of the FARDC and the integration process that the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process will not be completed before the election, planned for 30 July. At most, nine brigades can be deployed based on the level of training and equipment available. In the interim the rest must be kept at the *brassage* centres and under control. The daunting task after the elections is to complete the process of DDR and security sector reform (SSR). For this to happen there needs to be political will and commitment from the new government. The coordination between all role players needs to improve. The FARDC must take responsibility to lead the process. The planning and structures for the DDR process are in place and must be completed after the election. Security sector reform is one of the most important outstanding reforms that any country emerging from conflict should implement to align all security related structures and instruments with that of governmental vision and policies undertaken to build peace. The generic strategy of SSR is easier explained than implemented, but a proper understanding of SSR reform and what this entails is required.

A strategy for SSR in the DRC must be addressed by generic business principles: to evaluate the current and future situation internally as well as externally; then to plan and design an appropriate and affordable solution to the situation; to structure to task; to implement, coordinate and monitor progress; and finally to evaluate progress and implement change where required. These activities must take place in an environment where the DRC government agencies accept responsibility and the donor community provides technical support (knowledge and financial support) to the process to enhance capacity and to establish international principles.

**Conclusion**

It is very clear that difficult tasks await the new DRC government and the international community. The DDR process is incomplete and will not be completed before the election. The DRC government, MONUC and the international community must manage this situation in the interim until after the election to ensure that the integrated brigades do not become a threat to the election process. After the election, DDR of the military groupings must be completed as soon as possible. The existing structures and plan of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration must be used for that. It is vital that immediately after the election the new government appoint officials from the Department of Defence and the FARDC to be part of the MONUC SSR planning and coordination structure. The Congolese government must take the lead and in cooperation with all the role players, MONUC, the European Military section, the Contact group and bi-lateral partners start working on an SSR strategy.

If these very important activities, that of DDR, are not completed and SSR do not start, the new government may soon find itself facing serious challenges. The international community must take note of these crucial issues. This will need a medium- to long-term commitment from the new Congolese government and the international community.
Mapping the use of guns in violence against women: Findings from three studies
Lisa Vetten

Achieving positive reform of firearm control laws through information use: The Tasmanian case study
Roland Browne

Contextualising the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria’s Niger Delta: Local and global intersections
Godwin Onuoha
Mapping the use of guns in violence against women: Findings from three studies

Lisa Vetten*

This article explores the role of firearms in acts of violence against women in South Africa, drawing on three datasets: one investigating the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA), the second exploring gang rapes, and the third documenting intimate femicide. In relation to domestic violence, it was found that while guns were referred to in one in four applications for protection, their removal was ordered in only two per cent of applications. Both a provincial femicide study and a national female homicide study found guns to be the leading cause of death for women killed by their intimate male partners and found that in the majority of cases, the gun was legally owned. In contrast, in the gang rape study it is more likely that the guns were illegally owned. The involvement of a firearm in gang rapes highlights the fact that guns not only fulfill the functional purpose of intimidation and injury, but also communicate power and masculine display. The three studies point to the need to train magistrates around the necessity to remove firearms in cases of domestic violence and that it is essential to challenge the symbolic associations between masculinity and power.

* Lisa Vetten is the gender project co-ordinator at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) in South Africa.
the victim, in 14 per cent of cases it was used both to threaten and injure the victim. The study found that the greater the number of rapists involved, the greater the likelihood that at least one of the assailants was armed with some sort of weapon. Approximately one in four of the lone perpetrators were armed, compared to one in three of the rapist pairs and one in two of the rapist groups.\textsuperscript{8} The use of guns was also most likely in cases involving group rapists. Fourteen per cent of both the lone and pair rapists were armed with guns, compared to 25 per cent of the group rapists. It is unknown whether the guns involved in these cases were legally owned.

While the majority of victims (59 per cent) were dragged, pushed or shoved to the site of the rape, abduction at gunpoint was more typical of the cases involving group rapists. Of the 29 per cent of victims abducted by car, 40 per cent of such cases involved three or more perpetrators, as opposed to 20 per cent of cases involving two perpetrators and 19 per cent of cases involving one perpetrator.

In this study, the greatest proportion of rape cases involving guns was likely to involve three or more perpetrators. One would expect that force of numbers alone would be considered more than sufficient to subdue the victim, without the additional threat of a gun being necessary. However, the multiple perpetrators involved in group rapes may also be fulfilling the function of an audience. Thus the use of firearms in these situations may be as much to coerce and intimidate the victim, as it is to demonstrate toughness and power to male peers.

**Firearms and domestic violence**

This section presents findings from two studies of domestic violence. The first is a retrospective, random review of applications for protection orders in terms of the Domestic Violence Act (No 116 of 1998) (DVA) registered in 2000 and 2001 at Alberton magistrate’s court, an urban court east of Johannesburg (1,537 applications) and Temba, a semi-urban court outside Tshwane Metropolitan Area (671 applications). A total sample of 2,208 applications were captured.\textsuperscript{9}

Weapons were referred to in 813 (37 per cent) of the applications for protection orders. In at least one in four (25 per cent) cases a gun was used, in one in five applications (20 per cent) a knife was the weapon of choice, and in two per cent of cases a sjambok was referred to. Multiple weapons were used in one in eight cases, while a miscellany of weapons (including household items) accounted for the remaining 36 per cent of cases.

When guns featured, they were primarily used to threaten applicants (88 per cent), while knives were more likely to be used both to threaten and injure applicants (32 per cent of cases) than guns (10 per cent). This may be due to the fact that those who own knives may be more willing to injure than those who own guns. It is also possible that merely displaying a firearm is sufficient to intimidate victims and force compliance; there is no need to act on the threat – as may be the case with knives. Nonetheless, although weapons were used in more than one in three cases, orders for the police to remove those weapons were made in a scant two per cent of cases. To a large degree this low number of orders may be attributed to the fact that very few applicants (three per cent) actually asked that the weapon be removed.

Our findings corroborate those of a study of protection orders granted in Cape Town, Mitchells Plain and George in the Western Cape.\textsuperscript{10} The authors found that magistrates rarely ordered seizure of weapons in comparison to the number of times applicants referred in their applications to the use of weapons against them. It was also noted that applicants did not often request the seizure. The study also suggested that the lack of detail in the protection order forms around what constitutes a dangerous weapon may have made it difficult for police officers to confiscate the weapons in question.\textsuperscript{11}

The second study with findings relevant to describing the use of firearms in domestic violence was conducted at the three prisons in Gauteng which house female prisoners: Johannesburg, Pretoria and Heidelberg.\textsuperscript{12} When the study began, 565 women (525 adults and 40 juveniles) were held at Johannesburg prison, 146 (137 adults and 9 juveniles) at Pretoria and 57 at Heidelberg. The total population across the three prisons was 768. Through random, proportional sampling of both adult and juvenile female prisoners a sample of 569 female prisoners in Gauteng was selected for the study, calculated at a 99 per cent confidence interval and three per cent margin of error.\textsuperscript{13} Questions around violence were adapted from the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) Questionnaire on Emotional, Physical and Sexual Violence. Adaptations were based around the need to tailor the questionnaire to the unique circumstances of imprisonment.

Sixty-three per cent of women in the sample had experienced physical abuse in their last relationship. Just over one in four of the women (26 per cent) who had experienced intimate partner abuse reported fractures or dislocations of their bones, and a further 15 per cent reported gunshot and stab wounds as a result of the violence. While the method of injury in the majority of cases was unrecorded, 17 per cent reported that a sharp object like a bottle or knife was used to injure them, while four per cent reported that a gun was used.

**Firearms and intimate femicide**

Internationally, the murder of women by their intimate partners accounts for between 40 and 70 per cent of all female homicides.\textsuperscript{14} In South Africa approximately 50 per cent of female homicides in 1999 were perpetrated by an intimate partner.\textsuperscript{15} This section highlights findings in relation to firearms made by two studies exploring intimate femicide.

Vetten, Ngwane and Isserow (in progress) undertook a ten-year retrospective study of men’s killing of their intimate female partners in the period 1990-1999. A census was conducted...
of all cases reported at 106 police stations in Gauteng. These records were cross-referenced with information from the 17 regional courts, as well as the inquest court records kept at the regional courts. Research was also conducted at the two high courts, Johannesburg and Pretoria, as well as the National Archives. A search of all these sources identified a total of 941 cases having occurred during this period. This is likely to be an undercount, given that records had been destroyed at a number of courts and police stations, or were still with the investigating officer, pending finalisation.

In this study, blunt force (including hands and feet and blunt objects) accounted for 35 per cent of women’s deaths. Sharp force (in the form of knives and other sharp objects) brought about 29 per cent of women’s deaths. The same percentage of deaths was caused by guns. Notably, gun use increased overall for this ten-year period from 23 per cent of cases in 1990 to 41 per cent of cases in 1999. This is an increase in gun use of 78 per cent in real terms over this period.

In 11 per cent of cases, others such as adult family members, children, friends, work mates and passers-by were also attacked and/or killed. Guns were used in 47 per cent of attacks, followed by knives (23 per cent). In a further 14 per cent of cases (one in seven) men committed suicide afterwards, while a further three per cent attempted suicide. Guns were used in 71 per cent of suicides. As the number of firearm killings increased over the period studied, so did the number of homicide-suicides. Further research is required to test whether or not this increase may be attributed solely to the increasing availability and use of guns during this period.

The study also identified a number of factors associated with a gun-killing. These included being a white man (three times increased risk), being younger (risk decreased by 4 per cent each year), being employed and working in the security industry – including police and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) (nine times increased risk) and working as a professional (four times greater risk) or working in a semi-skilled occupation (three times greater risk). Being married (90 per cent increased risk compared to other relationship types), as well as wanting to end the relationship (risk increased six times) also increased the likelihood of a gun homicide.

The second study discussed in this section was national and retrospective and collected data on female homicides in 1999 of women aged 14 and over. Data were collected from a proportionate, random sample of 25 mortuaries, yielding a sample of 951 female homicides. Initial information was gathered from mortuary records and then followed with either a review of the docket or an interview with the investigating officer.

Women who died at the hands of their intimate partners were more likely to be killed by a legal firearm than women killed by non-intimates. One in every five perpetrators of an intimate femicide owned a legal firearm compared to 3,5 per cent of non-intimate perpetrators. The study also provides insight into aspects of the relationship between the use of firearm in homicides and criminal justice system processes. Longer sentences of imprisonment resulted in both the intimate and non-intimate homicides when the perpetrator used a legal firearm.

**Implications for policy and practice**

Firearms are clearly implicated in rape, domestic violence and intimate femicide. However, the risk they pose to women appears to be contingent upon a range of factors such as the perpetrator’s age, class and occupation, as well as the state and status of his relationship to the victim. Gun use even within the same type of crime would also appear to vary, as the study involving multiple rapists suggests. Thus, while controlling and regulating possession of firearms may well play a role in combating such violence, the effect of such policies on combating violence against women is also likely to be variable.

This review also points to a number of issues around the implementation of existing policy and law. First, that so few women request the removal of guns despite their frequent use in cases of domestic violence is cause for concern – particularly in light of the findings of the Gauteng femicide study and the national female homicide study. Can this be attributed to an insufficient number of women knowing of that clause in the DVA which allows for the removal of weapons? Or, within a context of fear of crime generally, do women believe the protective value of a gun in the home outweighs the personal danger to themselves? Or are they simply too fearful of their partner’s reaction to having his gun removed? Further, if women are not aware of this clause, are they any more likely then to be aware of Chapter 12 of the Firearms Control Act, which permits them to make submissions around their male partners’ competence to own firearms?

Whatever the answers to these questions, the findings underscore the need to train magistrates to order the removal of guns in cases of domestic violence as well as clarifying some wording in the DVA which may obscure the procedures for removing firearms. Additionally, it is necessary to finalise and publicise policy regulations regarding SAPS, SANDF officials’ and prison warders’ off-duty access to guns.

Finally, further study is required to better understand the meanings attached to firearms. As the gang rape study suggests, firearms serve more than an instrumental, functional purpose. It is entirely possible that they are also essential to performances designed to impress male peers with the protagonist’s masculine power and control. Further, as the Gauteng femicide study highlights, some groups of men are considerably more likely to value and own firearms than others. Thus it is also crucial to identify the kinds of masculinity most likely to be associated with gun use, as well as to embark on strategies designed to challenge these associations.
Notes
1 N Abrahams, R Jewkes and R Laubscher, I do not believe in democracy in the home: Men on relationships with and abuse of women, Medical Research Council Technical Report, Tygerberg, Medical Research Council, 1999. A 1997 study conducted in three of South Africa’s nine provinces found that 27 per cent of women in the Eastern Cape, 28 per cent of women in Mpumalanga and 19 per cent of women in the Northern Province had been physically abused in their lifetimes by a current or ex-partner. The same study investigated the prevalence of emotional and financial abuse experienced by women in the year prior to the study. This was found to have affected 51 per cent of women in the Eastern Cape, 50 per cent in Mpumalanga and 40 per cent in Northern Province (ibid). A study of 1,394 men working for three Cape Town municipalities found that approximately 44 per cent of these men were willing to admit to the researchers that they abused their female partners. The prevalence of abuse increased with age, rising from 29 per cent among men aged 18–24 years to 73 per cent among men aged 50 or older. A 1997 study of 1,394 men working for three Cape Town municipalities found that approximately 44 per cent of these men were willing to admit to the researchers that they abused their female partners.
2 K Dunkle, R Jewkes, H Brown, J McIntyre, G Gray and S Harlow, Gender-based violence and HIV infection among pregnant women in Soweto, Gender and Health Group, Men on relationships with and abuse of women, Medical Research Council Technical Report, Medical Research Council, Tygerberg.
3 H Ludsin and L Vetten, Spiral of entrapment: Battered women in conflict with the law, Johannesburg, Jacana, 2005.
4 S Mathews, N Abrahams, L J Martin, L Vetten, I van der Merwe and R Jewkes, Every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner: A national study of female homicide in South Africa, MRC Policy Brief No 5, June 2006.
7 L Vetten and S Haffejee, Urban predators, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation Gender Programme, Policy Brief No 01, January 2005.
8 This refers to those cases involving three or more rapists.
11 Ibid.
12 S Haffejee, L Vetten and M Greyling, Violence and abuse in the lives of women and girls incarcerated at three Gauteng women’s prisons, CSVR Gender Programme Research Brief No 3, February 2006.
13 Ultimately, 348 women were interviewed with a further 28 refusing to be interviewed and the remainder of interviews lost to releases. To account for the difference in sample size and the number of interviews ultimately completed, data was weighted to account for instances of over- or under-representation, taking into account the relative sizes of the prisons and the number of juveniles, and was thus proportional to size.
15 Mathews et al, op cit.
17 The archives keep records of all high court matters completed prior to 1993.
18 Ibid.

Achieving positive reform of firearm control laws through information use: The Tasmanian case study

Roland Browne*

The defining moment for gun control in Australia and in its smallest state, Tasmania, was the April 1996 massacre at Port Arthur when 35 people were shot dead and 18 injured. By 1998 each state had enacted tighter laws with respect to licensing, compulsory registration and storage requirements, together with bans on military and military style rifles and shotguns. Surprisingly there was little data or published studies available justifying the introduction of these new laws. Australia is thus in the curious position where policy change and law reform occurred before data collection and analysis. Subsequently, there have been two major studies: The first, released in 2004, concluded that dramatic reductions in firearm-related deaths had been achieved as a result of the legislative reforms. In 2005, the Tasmanian Auditor-General produced a Special Report which examined hospital admissions for gun trauma, thefts of firearm, and statistics regarding the use of firearms to commit violent crime and suicide. While these studies have been used to ensure that the laws are not watered down, they have also identified some areas where enforcement and compliance can be improved, providing fertile ground for further public interest advocacy by gun control groups in Tasmania.

* Roland Browne is a lawyer and the chair of the National Coalition for Gun Control in Tasmania and Australia.
Introduction

Tasmania is the smallest of Australia’s states, with a population nudging 500,000 people. It is famous for its wilderness, special fauna and flora, and for the mass shooting of 54 people at a historical site named Port Arthur in 1996.

Despite Australia’s constitutional structure in many ways mirroring that of the United States, the country’s constitution never provided that the federal government could have control over firearms.1 Australia is also unlike Great Britain and New Zealand, those countries having no intermediate level of government. Coordinating gun control has been a difficult process, left to a body named the Australasian Police Minister’s Council (APMC).

The public debate about gun control in Australia gained much momentum in the late 1980s as a result of public mass shootings, even though there was an ongoing gun death rate of over 700 persons per year. The debate has been informed, unsurprisingly, by academics within the public health and criminological fields and gun control advocates. However, unexpected contributions to the debate have come from a national committee set up in 1990 by all Australian governments and also from a special report by the Tasmanian auditor-general in 2005.

In the 1980s and first half of the 1990s reforms were piecemeal and reactive to particular incidents in Australia. There was little effective coordination through the governments, but this changed markedly after 1996.

The Australian position

Australia’s firearms control laws are a product of the nation’s constitutional arrangements. Australia consists of six states and two territories. The states and territories (‘the states’) are responsible for virtually all firearms control, such as licensing, registration and bans on particular weapons. However, the federal government has certain areas of responsibility, including exclusive control over the import of firearms and ammunition into Australia and the use of firearms for defence purposes.

Australia has tackled this jurisdictional matrix through the APMC, which comprises police ministers from each state, the federal minister having responsibility for firearm-related issues (usually the Minister for Justice and Customs), together with the New Zealand police minister.2 The role of the APMC has been to reach agreement across all Australian jurisdictions and then for each minister to take that agreement back to his or her jurisdiction and move for implementation, either through legislation or subordinate legislation. However, because the APMC relies upon a consensus of ministers to achieve anything, it has often been ineffective.

There have been two critical periods in the development of Australian gun laws. The first period was 1987–1995, when a number of public mass shootings occurred in different parts of Australia, leading to legislative change in some of the Australian states and also at a national level. Shootings in Hoddle Street and Queen Street in Melbourne, Victoria, in 1987–1988, and subsequently in Strathfield in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW), in 1991 were a catalyst for the introduction of some controls by some states over high-powered weapons – but Australia lacked uniformity and comprehensive controls. The second period commenced soon after the Port Arthur massacre in 1996 and was the beginning of uniformity in regulation of firearms across Australia.

The Tasmanian position

Until the Tasmanian parliament enacted the Guns Act, 1991 (which came into force on 1 January 1993) regulation of firearms in Tasmania was virtually non-existent. Under the regulatory regime prior to the introduction of the 1991 Act, a person merely needed to be over 16 to purchase any longarm, and was otherwise not permitted to fire the weapon within a town boundary. The Tasmanian Firearms Act, 1932 – repealed by the Guns Act, 1991 – only regulated pistols. Firearms other than pistols were subject to a few miscellaneous provisions in the Police Offences Act, 1935.

Even by the standards of 1993 the Guns Act was impotent. Certainly, it was the first legislation in Tasmania to require licences for longarms. However, it required little more. It failed to require registration of longarms or prohibit high-powered semi-automatic longarms, or even to require a person to have a good reason (or any reason) to use or possess a firearm. Shooters were even given life-time licences.

What the 1991 Act did achieve was the creation of offences for firearms misuse and the enactment of penalties for such misuse. It also mandated registration of fully automatic firearms and gave a power to the police minister to ban categories of firearms.3 The Guns Act, 1991 was an example par excellence of policy engendered by the law and order model of firearm control. Availability of firearms was not restricted in any meaningful way by these laws.

In Tasmania there was no further legislative change until 1996, following the Port Arthur massacre.

Historical data on firearms in Australia

Historically there has been a dearth of information on firearms in Australia. While handguns (referred to as pistols in most legislative regimes) have been subject to registration, until the
changes introduced as a result of the Port Arthur massacre in 1996 there was no uniform system of registration of firearms in Australia. Some states had systems of registration (eg Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Victoria and South Australia), but other states such as Queensland, NSW and Tasmania had previously (and bitterly) resisted the introduction of such systems. With no system of registration there was no record of firearms sold or owned in the more gun rich states. With no reliable data, or perhaps no data, as to the number of firearms (rifles and shotguns) in Australia and the types of firearms in Australia, public debate in the fifteen years to 1996 depended largely upon estimates of longarms.

One of the major contributions to the gun law reform debate came not from the universities or the Institute of Criminology, but from Australia’s political leaders. Following the two public mass shootings in Hoddle and Queen streets in Melbourne in 1987, the governments of all Australian jurisdictions came together and appointed a committee of people to examine causes of violence in Australia. The committee – entitled the National Committee on Violence – comprised community representatives, government representatives, police and experts from the Australian Institute of Criminology.

The National Committee on Violence published its report in 1990. Its analysis of firearms was compelling yet brief, comprising just two and a half pages of the whole report. However, what was particularly significant was that the committee recommended a series of changes to Australian firearm laws which were to have a profound impact upon lawmakers. Those recommendations could be summarised as follows:

- The enactment of uniform legislation throughout Australia to regulate the acquisition and possession of firearms;
- The development of a national gun control strategy aimed at reducing the number of firearms in Australian society and preventing access to those weapons by individuals who are not fit or proper persons;
- The prohibition on the sales of military weapons and the import of such weapons in Australia;
- Rifle clubs established under the Defence Act were to be brought under the states’ licensing and registration regimes;
- Prohibition on automatic longarms and the restrictions on the availability of semi-automatic rifles;
- Restriction on ammunition sales;
- A national computerised database for registration of all firearms;
- Licensing to be dependent on a minimum age limit of 18 years, a ‘fit and proper person test’, 28-day cooling-off periods, restrictions on handgun licences, and compulsory training and competency demonstration; and
- Stricter storage requirements for all firearms.

These resolutions, being the unanimous product of a unique inquiry set up by all Australian governments, set the scene for gun control in Australia for the next six years.

Tasmanian and Australian advocacy for change

It was only a year after the delivery of the National Committee on Violence report that eight people were shot dead in Strathfield in NSW, at a suburban shopping centre in 1991. In the aftermath of the shooting, the National Committee on Violence report was promoted as a benchmark for adequate gun control in Australia. It provided a basis for gun control advocates urging significant change, and because the committee was made up of representatives of every jurisdiction in Australia, in at least a moral sense, all governments were tied to the recommendations of the committee.

In October 1991 the APMC held a special meeting to discuss gun control. The APMC considered and adopted recommendations for uniform gun laws that in many ways mirrored the National Committee on Violence recommendations, apart from a lack of agreement on registration. They were:

- A ban on the sale of all military and military-style semi-automatic firearms, except for ‘government and government approved’ purposes;
- A special licence to be required for possession of other centre-fire semi-automatic and self-loading shotguns, for example the more expensive (but equally deadly) weapons made for hunting. A ‘stringent’ (but totally undefined) test of ‘need’ was agreed to;
- A ban on sale of self-loading weapons with detachable magazines holding more than five rounds;
- Licensing for other classes of long guns based on a genuine reason to own;
- National character checks on licence applications;
- Licences to be based on ‘appropriate qualifications and training’;
The period immediately prior to the Port Arthur massacre in April 1996

In the period 1991–1996 the Australian gun control mantra continued to be one of a ban on semi-automatic military style rifles, tight licensing controls and registration of all guns. The responses from the various states, territories and federal government in Australia was benign. Some police ministers appeared to be listening, but no response was forthcoming. Public

licences to last six years, except for the lowest class of licence in Queensland and Tasmania, which would still be issued for life;

A 28-day cooling-off period between application and issuing of the licence;

Guns and ammunition to be stored separately and securely; and

Compulsory confiscation of guns on domestic violence call-outs or breach of licence conditions.

Despite the shortcomings of the recommendations, this meeting demonstrated how the National Committee on Violence recommendations had permeated political and public thinking. It meant that the state and federal governments had recognised a problem with gun violence – one that needed to be addressed.

Between 1990 and 1996 the mantra of organisations such as the Coalition for Gun Control (NSW), the Tasmanian Coalition for Gun Control and Gun Control Australia was the implementation of the recommendations of the National Committee on Violence. Annual meetings of the APMC continued to have as agenda items the introduction of the recommendations made by the National Committee on Violence.

Against this background there was a process of compilation of data. Gun Control Australia began producing a series of publications examining weapons and violence and gun massacres in Australia.7 These publications broadened the debate and examined the range of issues surrounding insufficiently controlled firearms, such as violence towards animals, influences on children, the political process of gun law reform, the gun lobby itself and the costs of violence in Australia. The publications on gun massacres in Australia brought together information surrounding the perpetrator, the victims and, significantly, the type of weapon used in the course of each event. This particular publication led to a focus on military style semi-automatic rifles, which were being used in most of these massacres.

At an academic level, publications on firearms law reform were rare before 1996 and in fact continue to be so. By 1996 gun control advocates and decision-makers had available a range of statistics regarding the national gun death rate, the results of some other studies and the results of the Australian Institute of Criminology’s homicide monitoring programme.8 The latter was not of great use in the scheme of the gun control debate. However, by 1996 all decision-makers in Australia were well aware of the recommendations of the National Committee on Violence. Whilst those recommendations were not strictly ‘data’ in terms of statistics or facts or figures, they were a powerful springboard for political action. All that was missing was the political enthusiasm. That enthusiasm crystallised in April/May 1996, only six weeks after the mass killing of 16 primary school children and their teacher at Dunblane, in Scotland.

The Port Arthur massacre

A young Tasmanian man with no history of prior convictions or mental illness obtained two high-powered semi-automatic military rifles and a semi-automatic shotgun. He did not have a gun licence. However, Tasmania’s regulation of firearms was sufficiently rudimentary that the purchase of such weapons was not difficult. Further, whilst the perpetrator did not have a gun licence, by the standards in place at the time he was undoubtedly eligible for a licence.9

Port Arthur is a convict settlement about one hour’s drive south-east of Hobart. April is late autumn at Port Arthur and a reasonably busy time for tourists. The perpetrator randomly shot a large number of people, killing 35 and injuring 18. Apart from the massacres of Australian aborigines in the first one hundred and fifty years of white settlement in Australia, this was the largest mass shooting in Australia. As a popular tourist destination there were significant numbers of tourists present, not only from around Australia, but also from overseas. The list of those killed or injured reflected the disparate geographic distribution of the victims and survivors – it meant that the political repercussions reverberated around Australia.

Those repercussions were greater in Australia because of the temporal proximity of the shootings at Dunblane, where the perpetrator was armed with two high-powered semi-automatic handguns. The massacre at Dunblane was in many ways the prism through which the Port Arthur massacre was experienced by the Australian community. People in Australia who had only recently seen the images of grieving parents waiting outside Dunblane Primary School were now being confronted by the images of grieving Australian (and other) families as the reality of the Port Arthur massacre became apparent.

For politicians, there is never a good time to deal with gun laws. But some times are safer than others. In April 1996 the Federal and Tasmanian governments were newly elected,
and all other governments in Australia were in mid-term. In other words, no government faced an imminent election.

Political action was swift, driven not only by the Tasmanian cabinet (which in turn was driven by the leader of the Greens, Mrs Christine Milne) but also by the federal government. The newly elected prime minister of Australia, John Winston Howard, was clearly horrified by the Port Arthur events. He announced that national uniform gun laws were to be put on the agenda of a specially convened meeting of the APMC which took place in Canberra on 10 May 1996, only 12 days after the shootings.

From the time of the massacre, gun control advocates repeatedly asserted the need for national uniform gun laws in Australia. Reference was made back to the National Committee on Violence and also to problems with the availability of high-powered semi-automatic rifles. These calls had been made many times before, but this time it seemed that these statements were no longer falling on deaf ears. It also became apparent that much of the work carried out by gun control groups in the preceding five years had not been in vain. For now, tight uniform gun laws were being advocated by, among others, the Australian prime minister. Further, most other political leaders – and the media in general – was well behind the prime minister.

On 10 May 1996 the prime minister and Australia’s police ministers jointly announced in Parliament House, Canberra, that Australia was to have national uniform gun laws. The terms of those gun laws generally followed the recommendations of the National Committee on Violence. It was a historic agreement by any standard, but one that came at enormous cost.

After the 1996 shootings, the public health perspective came to the ascendancy, and continues to be so. That perspective has dominated, and the ascendancy of that argument can be seen from an examination of the Tasmanian position since 1996.

In short, the reform was driven by and based upon a desire to reduce firearm availability. It harked back to the writings of Richard Harding and to the National Committee on Violence report.

The Tasmanian auditor-general’s report

In May 2005 the Tasmanian auditor-general released Special Report No 55. The catalyst for the audit were many and varied, identified to be in line with the state government’s goal of achieving safer communities.

This was not the first time an auditor-general in Australia had examined firearms legislation. In September 2000 the Western Australian auditor-general produced a report looking at firearm management in Western Australia. The scope of the Western Australian audit was more limited, looking primarily at police administration of the firearms legislation.

The Tasmanian auditor-general went much further, posing two critical questions to be answered in the audit. These were:

- Is the Tasmanian community safer since the Firearms Act 1996 came into force?

- Are there problems enforcing the Firearms Act, 1996?

The auditor-general in Tasmania answered the first question with a resounding ‘yes’ and also found that problems existed in the enforcement of the Act, although overall, Tasmania police’s enforcement of the Act had been effective.

This paper is concerned not with the second question but the first, and particularly how that question was answered by the auditor-general.

The auditor-general identified what were described as ‘audit criteria’ for the purpose of achieving the audit objective which was, specifically, finding answers to the two questions posed. The audit criteria were listed as follows:

- Did the Firearms Act 1996 result in reductions of:
  - gun-related crimes;
  - gun-related suicides;
■ accidents and injuries;
■ thefts of firearms;
■ the population of firearms through other strategies;
■ level of prosecutions for firearms offences;

■ The existence of estimates of the number of unregistered firearms; and

■ The cost of police resources involved in gun control.

The significance of these audit criteria is that they provide a rather excellent road map for gun control advocacy. Whilst we are only limited by our imagination in the identification of criteria to demonstrate the efficacy of firearms control legislation (or lack of it), the quantitative data referred to above have a high capacity to demonstrate either efficiency, inefficiency or neutrality in the way firearms laws limit the impact on gun crime and gun trauma.

The auditor-general set up a committee to provide input into the audit methodology. That committee consisted of the auditor-general, Tasmania police and the Faculty of Law of the University of Tasmania. Gun control advocacy groups, victims groups or shooters groups were not invited to participate in the committee.

The significance of this report from the point of view of gun control advocacy has been summed up by the auditor-general himself, as follows:

Is the Tasmanian community safer since the Firearms Act 1996 came into force?

The impact of the Firearms Act 1996 has been positive. Tighter legislation, backed by determined law enforcement, has reduced the population of firearms in Tasmania and limited access to those firearms. Statistics that we examined indicated that substantial reductions have occurred in the use of firearms to commit violent crime and suicide. There has been a similar lessening of hospital admissions for gun trauma, particularly as a result of accidental shootings. Thefts of firearms have also been lowered with an upswing in the proportion of stolen firearms recovered. Since 2001, almost 6,000 firearms have been surrendered to police and subsequently destroyed.15

The report went on to consider problems in enforcing the 1996 legislation, directed at failure to adequately assess the mental condition of licence applicants, inadequate inspection of storage conditions and the identification of inadequacies in the operations of the Firearms Services Branch of Tasmania police and the firearms database.

In terms of public advocacy, the effects of the positive findings of the report were significant. Auditors-general are highly regarded in Australia and are perceived as being independent, ensuring the accountability of the actions of government. Special Report No 55 was instigated by the auditor-general and presented to the parliament of Tasmania. As such, the report was beyond reproach.

Of course, this did not prevent the Sporting Shooters Association of Tasmania embarking on a critique of the auditor-general’s methodology, and a novel one at that. The association proclaimed that the “Gun report poses risk to health and safety”16 and criticised the auditor-general’s work as the result of “flawed analysis methods [sic]”.

Gun control groups were able to use the report as a springboard to call for tighter controls over handguns. This is part of a broader campaign for handgun controls that has been running in Australia since 1998. The most recent research on this issue in Australia is a report by Samantha Lee on tackling handgun crime in Australia.

One of the alarming findings of the auditor-general’s report has been a steady increase in the number of firearms in the Tasmanian community. In the 1997/98 period, there were approximately 90,000 firearms in Tasmania. By 2003/04, the number had increased to almost 120,000. Yet, during the same period the number of firearm licences had dropped to its lowest level in eight years, down to 38,000 from a high of 45,000. This means that whilst there are fewer licensed firearm owners in Tasmania, each firearm owner is holding more and more firearms (on average).

**Gun control advocacy is a matter of ongoing vigilance**

The Tasmanian auditor-general highlighted the issue of increases in gun numbers. In 2001 Tasmania had the highest number of licensed shooters per capita in Australia17 at a rate of more than twice the national average. So, despite tighter gun controls, firearm availability continues to increase. Given Tasmania’s relatively static population, this trend is of concern. The gun lobby is not powerless, and never gives up. It is well resourced. Although there has been a general acceptance of the uniform laws, there is a constant push to minimise levels of regulation.

In Tasmania in late 2002 to early 2003 the shooting/hunting lobby succeeded in convincing the police minister to embark on a review of the Firearms Act, 1996. Because of the political sensitivity of issues relating to firearms, the commencement of the review was never formally announced. Rather, the existence of the review was revealed in parliament by the police minister in the course of a debate about amendments to the Firearms Act which were aimed at imposing further restrictions on the use and possession of handguns. During that debate
on 17 April 2003 the minister referred to "a review that we are currently going through" and an intention to "have a review of existing legislation".

In August 2004 the police minister revealed in correspondence that the review included as its terms of reference the following:

… to examine and make recommendations on matters that will allow for the more effective administration of the provisions of the Firearms Act 1996. Matters to be considered include:

- issues such as penalties
- storage of firearms and ammunition
- the cooling off period for the purchase of second and subsequent firearms
- minors permits
- rebate for pensioners
- access for primary producers to use handguns for humane purposes
- a fee for replacement licence cards and
- the ability to renew a firearms licence

The review clearly contemplated a movement by the Tasmanian government away from the National Firearms Agreement and represented a lobbying success by the gun lobby. Any change to the cooling-off period for the purchase of second and subsequent firearms could only have involved the abandoning of that requirement, in contravention of the agreement.

Further, the notion of access by primary producers to use handguns for humane purposes is also likely to be in breach of the National Firearms Agreement.

Despite ongoing public criticism of the review and its conduct by the police minister, no meaningful response was elicited from the government. This changed when a siege occurred at New Norfolk, west of Hobart, in March 2005. The man and his girlfriend had police at bay and the Special Operations Group were in attendance at the scene. It was a perfect time to call on the minister to affirm his commitment to the 1996 National Firearms Agreement and to criticise the minister (and government) for proposing to water down the National Agreement. That public criticism drew a response from the minister, who said, much to the horror of many shooters, that the government would not be watering down the National Firearms Agreement.

This may well mean that the effect of the review is that the government will not be moving to permit the use of handguns by farmers, or the abandonment of the 28-day cooling-off period for the purchase of second or subsequent firearms. It is difficult to tell. At the time of writing (February 2006) the results of the review are unknown. The minister has confirmed that the review was completed in August 2005 and has said that the results of the review were to be considered by the government early in 2006. However, an election has been called for 18 March 2006 and the results of the review may never be known.

The government will shortly be called upon to explain, in the context of the forthcoming election, exactly what policies it proposes to pursue in relation to the Firearms Act. Not only are gun control groups anxious to prevent the 1996 agreement being watered down, but these groups are still pushing for tighter controls on handguns in Australia. Future advocacy work will be directed to this end.

Further, aspects of the 1996 Firearms Agreement have never been implemented. For example, the minimum age for a firearms licence was stipulated in the agreement to be 18 years. There was no mention in 1996 of any gun use by persons below the age of 18 years. However, when the laws were enacted across each of the Australian jurisdictions, the concept of minors permits popped up whereby people down to the age of 12 years have been able to get permits to go shooting with a person who holds a full firearms licence. This was never contemplated by the National Firearms Agreement and is regarded as being a breach of that agreement.

### Conclusion

Further research into the efficacy of firearms control legislation in Australia is not only useful, but necessary. While a number of studies and reports have concluded that recent changes to firearm laws before and following the Port Arthur massacre have been successful in reducing indicators of gun misuse, there is much work to be done. An example is the steady increase in the number of firearms per licensed shooter in Tasmania, which calls for an examination of how police are exercising their discretion to grant licences for more than one firearm. As of 2004, there are still significant rates of firearm theft in Australia, whilst the menace of handguns has not been addressed. This latter issue is critical.

Handguns need further study. A series of reforms were introduced in 2003 following a meeting of the Council of Australian Governments. Sporting shooters were prohibited from importing, purchasing, possessing or using a handgun which has:
A calibre that is greater than .38” (unless the handgun is used to participate in a specially accredited event, in which case a handgun of up to .45” calibre will be permitted);

A barrel length of less than 120 mm for semi-automatic handguns and 100 mm for revolvers and single-shot handguns; and

A magazine/shot capacity that exceeds ten rounds.

But even these reforms are unsatisfactory. In Australia we have reached a position where a person is not able to obtain a licence for target shooting with a semi-automatic rifle, but such a licence can be granted for target shooting with a semi-automatic handgun. That handguns in Australia can have magazines of up to ten rounds means that handguns present themselves as a significant potential problem in Australia.

In any event, the shooting lobby will continue to pump out its often superficial research, attempting to encourage a public debate about rights and levels of violence in the community. It is easy to raise levels of community apprehension about crime and violence, and this can provide an all too easy opportunity for the shooting lobby to suggest that further firearm availability is a solution to the problem. Such superficial argument need to be addressed by comprehensive and, if possible, independent research. Only then can gun control activists make ground to achieve tighter regulation.

Notes

1 As in Canada.
2 The New Zealand Minister for Police, despite attending APMC meetings, apparently takes no part in APMC debates about firearm control within Australia.
3 Regrettably, this power was not utilised until May 1996.
4 Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
5 Given the catalyst for the inquiry was the misuse of firearms, the brief consideration of firearm issues is surprising.
6 For a critique of this meeting and its outcome, see Sandra Egger and Rebecca Peters, Firearms law reform: The limitations of the national approach. The paper was presented to a conference held by AIC on 12-14 May 1992.
8 See for example JHarrison, JMoller and SBordeaux, Injuries by firearms 1994, Flinders University, 1996.
9 Which monitors all causes of homicide in Australia.
13 There were also numerous audits of the firearms buyback scheme, which was implemented as part of the National Firearms Agreement.
18 This is a meeting comprising the prime minister of Australia and leaders of each state and territory.
Contextualising the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria’s Niger Delta: Local and global intersections

Godwin Onuoha*

Introduction

In Africa, the sources of small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation are many and varied. They include the manufacture and supply of new weapons both inside and outside the continent to the remnants of weapons shipped into Africa in the 1970s and 1980s by the former Soviet Union, the United States, and their allies to facilitate different inter-state and intra-state proxy wars. Intra-state armed conflicts, such as in the case of Nigeria’s Niger Delta region, has however expanded the frontiers of the gun trade in Africa by creating considerable demand for these weapons of war.

The violent conflicts that are currently taking place in the Niger Delta region, the most densely populated area in Nigeria, emerged in the early 1990s, the result of unresolved tensions between local communities (which are mainly impoverished ethnic minorities, such as the Ogoni and the Ijaw), the Nigerian state, and oil-extracting multinational corporations over the allocation of oil revenues. Community resistance to the extraction of oil from the Niger Delta region typically includes social movements, youth groups, women’s groups, community development associations, and insurgent groups. Oil multinationals often meddle in local politics by providing financial support to certain local leaders, elites and youth factions. As a result, the groups in conflict often engage in complex, and at times contradictory, alliances.

In this essay, the proliferation of SALW in the Niger Delta will be analysed within the context of the interplay between the internal governance process and external forces. Changes at the global level have contributed to an erosion of state power and sovereignty and also accounted for unprecedented political, economic, social and cultural changes within Nigeria. This in turn has impacted negatively on the post-colonial state-building project in Nigeria. In addition, the paper identifies the sources of SALW in the Niger Delta. It also makes recommendations on how to address the proliferation of SALW in the Niger Delta and the causes of violent conflicts in the region.

Marginalisation of minorities and inequitable oil extraction

Nigeria is a former British colonial territory. Prior to the advent of colonialism, Nigeria was comprised of various kingdoms, empires and ethnic groups. These groups had developed their own indigenous systems of administration, as well as their own political arrangements and formations. The modern Nigerian state emerged in 1914, the consequence of the forced merger of the Northern and Southern British protectorates due to economic and administrative motivations. The colonial state subsequently became arbitrary, all-powerful and absolute.

The creation of the Nigerian state resulted in the economic and political marginalisation of many minority ethnic groups, which was the case in the Niger Delta region. This was
achieved by means of a regionalisation exercise set out in the Richards Constitution of 1946, which divided Nigeria into three unequal administrative units. Nigeria achieved independence from Britain in 1960 and adopted the Westminster parliamentary system of government and a federal approach to governance. The former proved to be problematic in Nigeria as well as other multi-ethnic societies that adopted it, as it tends to over-amplify the role and influence of the majority political parties, allows for elites to exploit ethnicity as a modality for mobilising mass support in the pursuit of political power, and contributes to the marginalisation (and eventual militarisation) of minority groups. In Nigeria, there were campaigns for the creation of states for minorities, for example a cross-ethnic coalition, the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers Movement, in the south-east and Delta areas of Nigeria.

The marginalisation of minority groups in the Niger Delta was particularly severe during the 1960s, and was exacerbated by the hostile approach of Nigeria’s ruling party (federal government), the Northern People’s Congress (NPC), to opposition political groups, the global collapse of the price of cash crops particular to Nigeria, and the rising significance of petroleum exports from the Niger Delta. In February 1966 a small group of Ijaw activists (the Niger Delta Volunteer Force) led by Isaac Adaka Boro, Sam Ovonara and Nottingham Dick attempted to secede the Niger Delta region from Nigeria through the force of arms and proclaimed the Niger Delta a republic. However, their insurgency was short-lived as it was crushed by federal troops after 12 days.

Minorities in the oil-rich regions of Nigeria became further estranged from the Nigerian state after the Nigerian civil war (1967-1969). Derivation, the system of government’s regional allocation of revenue, which had been pursued under colonial rule, was rapidly phased out after the civil war. This system of resource allocation was based on the principle that funds and other resources would be disbursed and employed in those regions from which they were derived. In March 1978 the Land Use Decree was passed by the federal government, which had the aim of establishing a standardised land tenure system in Nigeria, where Nigerians required certificates of occupancy from the government for land held under customary and statutory rights, and had to pay rent to the government. An addition, this decree sought to make land available for development by corporations, institutions, and governmental authorities. The decree gave government the authority to acquire and assign undeveloped land. Occupancy or possession of undeveloped land by individuals was restricted. In the Niger Delta region, indigenous people were alienated from the land, while corporations, particularly multinational oil conglomerates, were empowered. This led to the degradation of the fragile delta environment, with a direct adverse impact on biodiversity and the livelihoods of the people.

From 1970 until the early 1980s dramatic appreciations of global oil prices significantly boosted the value of Nigeria’s total exports, but also distorted the national economy. In 1970 oil constituted 26 per cent of government revenue, but by 1973 it had risen above 60 per cent. The result was the over-valuation of the Nigerian currency, which undermined agricultural exports. Both the Nigerian government and the economy struggled to adapt to this rapid growth, and corruption and economic mismanagement were by-products. Major decreases in the global oil price in 1977, and again in 1981, sent shockwaves through the Nigerian economy, with massive public debt and dysfunctional economy being the result. The economic crisis set the tone for a fundamental change in the outlook of the minority movements of the Niger Delta. Polarisation occurred within these movements, which occurred at two levels: those who benefited from and supported the extractive state-corporate oil alliance, and those who were critical of the inequities embedded in that alliance, and the consequent exploitation.

After several attempts at economic restructuring by successive governments, the military administration of General Ibrahim B Babangida adopted structural adjustment economic reforms in 1986. These reforms brought an end to price-fixing in the agricultural sector, a reduction in fuel subsidies, the deregulation of the banking sector and limited liberalisation of the exchange rate. However, the adjustment package failed to reverse the economic decline. According to Obi, the theoretical underpinnings were faulty and this engendered an inappropriate approach to economic reform in Nigeria. More so, this economic strategy contributed to misery, insecurity, tension and conflict within the country. This trend was noticeable in most parts of Nigeria, but it was overwhelmingly concentrated and sustained in the Niger Delta.

Sources of SALW in the Niger Delta

In broad terms, the sources of SALW in the Niger Delta are international, regional and sub-regional.

After the conclusion of the Cold War, the deregulation of former state arms industries in Eastern and Central Europe led to an aggressive search for new arms markets in the developing world. Through the activities of states, arms brokers and mercenaries thousands weapons have been transferred into the Niger Delta region and used by state security forces, the security factions of oil companies and insurgent groups.

In the West African sub-region, Guinea-Bissau, with a long history of being a reservoir for leftover Soviet-supplied weapons, is a key source of illegal trafficking into conflict zones in the sub-region. Weapons are also being transferred from the troubled states of the Mano River Basin into the Niger Delta. In addition, smugglers from Gabon and Cameroon use high-speed boats to transport arms and ammunition from ships originating from Eastern Europe and Asia that anchor off the coast of West Africa. Moreover, weapons from the Great Lakes conflicts are recycled into the Niger Delta. Boats carrying arms are reported to offload at Warri and Bonny, towns in the Delta and Rivers states of Nigeria. Those weapons that are traded include semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, machine-guns, and shoulder-fired
Armed insurgents have been known to steal or purchase small arms from government soldiers. Sometimes, state security personnel double-up as arms dealers. However, other reasons that account for the leakages from official sources include: the breakdown of state structures, lax controls over national armouries, and poor service conditions of security personnel. The industrial zones in the south-east of Nigeria, like Aba and Awka, are also home to the manufacture of arms.

Measures, policies and control options

In the Niger Delta, SALW have been used to exacerbate conflicts, to engage in criminal activities such as banditry, theft of crude oil (known as ‘oil-bunkering’) and kidnapping, and to intimidate opposition groupings. Given the availability of SALW in the Niger Delta region, sustainable peace is difficult to achieve in this poverty-stricken and densely populated area.

Concerted efforts should be made to reduce the proliferation and misuse of SALW in the Niger Delta region. Such an approach should address both the demand and supply aspects of the SALW problem. In terms of supply, a multi-tiered approach is required, from targeting the major global arms manufacturers and suppliers in order to encourage them to show greater restraint in the sale of weapons to African countries that are experiencing armed conflict, to establishing stiffer internal arms transfer controls, to regulating the activities of arms brokers and private security companies.

In practical terms, it is impossible to place a ban on the production and transfer of SALW in the country. According to Musah, apart from the fact that they perform some legitimate functions in the governance process, they are widely used in hunting to supplement the predominantly starch-based diet in the rural communities of the country. In addition, SALW are sturdy, durable and reusable, and hence are difficult to eliminate. Government must consequently improve and strengthen national SALW laws and regulations, impose licensing requirements, and carefully restrict their manufacture and transfer.

Addressing the demand side of the SALW problem can only be achieved if local conditions are taken into account. In the case of the Niger Delta region, the manner by which the Nigeria is governed is one of the major root causes of violence as it distributes resources inequitably, which directly contributes to underdevelopment. This is particularly stark in the case of the Niger Delta region, which is one of the poorest in Nigeria, but is the largest generator of foreign exchange earnings in the country. Possible solutions can be found in the Ogoni Bill of Rights, Addendum to the Ogoni Bill of Rights and Kaiama Declaration, which articulate the core needs of minority ethnic groups in the region, such as greater regional autonomy and equitable access to oil revenue and land for the communities of the Niger Delta.

There have been some positive developments in terms of arms control and disarmament in Nigeria. For example, in October 1998 the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of SALW. One of its aims was to institute a voluntary freeze on arms trade and eliminate existing illegal stocks from society. The agreement also calls for the creation of a national commission drawn from the state and civil society structures to supervise disarmament within each individual state. In May 2001 the Nigerian government inaugurated a national committee on the ECOWAS moratorium on SALW. The Nigerian government has also established a national committee to investigate and report on the proliferation and illicit trafficking of SALW within as well as into the country. Its members include representatives of the Army, Navy, State Security Services, Nigerian Immigration Service, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency and Ministry of Defence.

In September 2003 the federal government announced an ‘arms surrender’ policy to recover weapons being used by ethnic militias in the Niger Delta. Although it recorded a modest success, no real long-term strategy for recovering SALW seems to be in place. Conversely, on the civil society platform, a coalition of non-governmental organisations in the Niger Delta launched a ‘mop-up the arms’ campaign in June 2003.

In spite of these developments, practical action remains limited. First, the moratorium is voluntary and is not legally binding. To this extent, only a demonstration of confidence-building measures and political will by the government can tackle the instability caused by SALW in the region. Second, there is a growing tendency for these agencies and commissions to be incorporated into the corrupt and inept state bureaucracies, hence, rendering them ineffective.

Conclusion

The prevalence of poverty, unequal access to resources, large youth populations with limited access to education or jobs, and other socio-political factors contribute to conflict and instability in the Niger Delta region, as well as other parts of Nigeria. Nevertheless, it is the presence of SALW that escalates conflicts from situations of tension to high levels of violence, as is currently taking place in the Niger Delta. Thus, this scenario results into an internal arms race, hinders development and stifles conflict resolution efforts.
This crisis cannot be addressed in isolation. It must take into cognisance of the developments at the global, regional and national levels. The state in Nigeria must critically address the welfare and developmental needs of its people. The proper articulation of state policies to address these issues will ward-off unrest and resolve conflicts in the region. If the Nigerian state is to be guaranteed a meaningful future in the 21st century, it must critically address the problems of governance, oil revenue distribution and identity and class. Anything short of democracy, development and meaningful federalism is only cosmetic approach and will further intensify the conflicts in Nigeria.

Notes

1 The term ‘small arms and light weapons’ refers to any weapon that can be manoeuvred and manipulated by one or two persons. ‘Light weapons’ comprise heavy machine-guns, mortars of up to 100 mm, and portable anti-craft/aircraft systems, while the term ‘small arms’ denotes a sub-category of light weapons comprising automatic/semi-automatic weapons of up to 20 mm (eg self-loading pistols, revolvers, carbines, rifles and machine-guns). Ammunition and explosives are also subsumed under this term.


5 Obi, op cit, p 20.

6 Okpu, op cit, p 136.


8 Obi, op cit, p 41.


17 Obi, op cit, pp 118-125.

18 Musah, op cit, p 247.


20 The Warri crisis, op cit.

Another document, 'Targeting ammunition', features a glossy full-color photo of golden bullets against a blue woven fabric of indeterminate ethnic origin. Produced by the Center for International Cooperation and Security and project partners, the document outlines a plan to "provide comprehensive framing, profile and analysis of the ammunition issues" for the research and policy-making communities.

IANSA – the International Network on Small Arms, which includes more than 700 civil society groups throughout the world – distributed a CD compilation of more than 1,000 documents on proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. It comes in a cardboard sleeve with a lurid photo of child soldiers casually brandishing big guns.

Proliferation of paper, not progress

This is just a sampling of the many documents available to UN delegates discussing the big problem of small arms. Despite the hard work, attractive literature and dedicated campaigning by the NGO community, the January 2006 meeting ended with a fizzle. It was intended to set the agenda for the second world summit on small arms in June 2006, called the Review Conference, or RevCon. In June, delegates will review the Programme of Action on small arms – the world's first agreement on controlling the proliferation of guns, signed in 2001.

Delegates at the June 2006 conference will discuss global principles to control the arms trade and to prevent guns from being transferred to places where they could be used to violate human rights, fuel conflict or hinder development. The RevCon will also tackle the tricky issue of how to strengthen national firearm laws, because civilian guns constitute a major supply source for the illegal traffic.

IANSA says that the conference in June will be the only opportunity before 2012 for governments to make the commitments to protect people from gun violence.

What's at stake?

“"There is nothing small or light about small and light weapons," said Canadian delegate Earl Turcotte in his opening presentation. He is right. There are 639 million of these weapons in circulation and 8 million more are produced every year. More than half a million people each year – or 10,000 each week - are killed by guns, and Turcotte notes that most of those people are civilians and at least a third of them are killed in countries at peace.

Sarah Margon, the humanitarian policy advisor of Oxfam America, is blunt about the need for strict controls on small arms sales, saying that "no one but a criminal would
knowingly sell a gun to a murderer, yet governments can sell weapons to regimes with a history of human rights violators or to countries where weapons will go to war criminals”. Oxfam, along with other larger humanitarian organisations and IANSA, are pushing for an International Arms Trade Treaty that would create legally binding arms controls and ensure that all governments control arms to the same basic international standards.

Progress is being made in organising for an Arms Trade Treaty – so far 43 of the UN’s 191 members have stated their support for the idea. But overall, advancement towards curbing small arms has been slowed by the actions of a number of key states. For example, in July 2005 a week-long small arms meeting ended with a voluntary agreement on tracking small arms that IANSA called “toothless and riddled with holes”. The United States, Iran and Egypt opposed a legally binding treaty that covered ammunition as well as weapons.

**US opposition: Simply supply and demand**

The United States, the world’s largest supplier of small arms and light weapons, takes the awkward position that if the demand for weapons dried up, the problem would go away. Manufacturers of guns, ammunition and semi-automatic weapons are just making a product, and should be allowed to continue doing so. They see the problem as resting with the demand – conflict countries should end their wars and stop buying weapons. So far, US delegates have not dealt with the fact that gun manufacturers flood the market with too many weapons. In a further contradiction, US diplomats have thwarted efforts from other countries to link issues of supply and demand. The US’s anti-Arms Trade Treaty stance is strengthened by the active participation of the gun industry and the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the UN meetings – on the same level as IANSA or Oxfam, as if these special interest groups were just any other NGO.

**The NRA in the house**

The decorous environment of the assembly rooms has become a battle royale for the Charlton Hestons of the world as the NRA and gun industry representatives set up camp at the UN to protect the right of Americans to ‘bear arms’. In May 2005 the cover story in *The Shooting Industry* was entitled ‘The future of handguns’ and started off with this exuberant line: “battered but better, that handgun market is back”. While the article celebrated the renaissance of the handgun, it warned of the threat posed by “anti-gun zealots” at the UN “who do not intend to abandon their gun-banning cause”.

‘Standing guard’, a July 2004 *American Rifleman* article, notes approvingly that “of all the efforts by the Bush administration to support the Second Amendment, none have been more important than slamming the door on UN plans to impose international gun controls on American soil”.

What their overheated rhetoric ignores is that there is nothing in the UN proposals about taking legally procured weapons away from licensed owners. But the presence of pro-gun ‘zealots’ certainly spices up the staid UN environment.

**Next steps?**

Representatives of the countless NGOs that clustered at the UN for the last two weeks must now return home to prepare for the next round of talks. The gun industry and the NRA can break a champagne bottle on another successful rout. Between now and the next UN meeting on small arms more than 50,000 people will be killed by guns around the world. This fact alone should be enough to move the countries of the world to more serious action. Will it?
The failure of the UN Review Conference and implications for global efforts to prevent small arms violence

Guy Lamb*

At the entrance to the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York stands a solitary bronze sculpture: that of a .45 calibre revolver with its barrel twisted into a knot. This sculpture aptly symbolises the vision of the UN: “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. It is estimated that the misuse of firearms result in hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of injuries and disabilities each year, with armed violence being responsible for between 60 to 90 per cent of all deaths during armed conflicts.

For a two-week period straddling June and July this year, the UN hosted a key meeting of UN member states to review and debate the way forward for the UN’s Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA). This meeting is more commonly referred to as the Review Conference (or RevCon). This non-binding global framework, which was formulated in 2001, represents an important milestone in tackling the illegal trade in small arms, which is estimated to be a quarter of the overall US$4 billion legal trade in small arms.

Civil society organisations, both gun control and pro-gun advocates, from all regions of the globe also attended the RevCon. Their main objective was to influence government positions on the PoA. The International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), an umbrella body that represents the majority of gun control entities and has more than 700 organisational members, had five priority issues: assistance to survivors of small arms violence; international arms transfer controls; the integration of development into the small arms control agenda; the strengthening of national firearms control legislation; and post-RevCon activities for the UN small arms process.

However, in stark contrast to the message that the twisted gun sculpture portrays, the RevCon was a failure, with governments being unable to reach consensus on a final outcome document, which both reflects the progress on implementation of the UN PoA, as well on priority issues for its future implementation. This commentary seeks to provide an explanation of why the RevCon was unsuccessful, and speculate about future opportunities for small arms control action.

Problematic process

As reflected in the commentary by Frida Berrigan in this issue of the African Security Review, the RevCon was procedurally disadvantaged even before the actual conference took place, as the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meeting in January 2006 had not been able to secure consensus from UN member states on what would be the key discussion points at the RevCon. Consequently, the chair of the conference, Sri Lankan Ambassador to the UN in New York, Prasad Kariyawasam, spent considerable time between February and June travelling the globe to consult with various member states and other stakeholders in an attempt to garner some form of consensus prior to the RevCon. Ambassador Kariyawasam subsequently produced a ‘non-paper’, a draft outcome document that has no official UN status, which reflected the result of these consultations. This non-paper formed the basis of the discussions and debates during the RevCon.

Outside the UN process certain groups sought to undermine the RevCon and the UN. In the preceding three months, pro-gun organisations, especially the US-based National Rifle Association (NRA), engaged in a disinformation campaign against the RevCon, claiming that the fundamental aim of the meeting was to establish an international prohibition on gun ownership. In addition, the NRA called on gun owners to write to the UN in protest. According to a statement by Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president of the NRA, which
was published on the NRA website in early 2006: “dictatorships, terrorist states and so-called ‘free’ nations of the world plan to meet on our home soil to finalize a UN treaty that would strip all citizens of all nations of their right to self-protection … If millions of gun owners speak with one thundering voice of outrage, we’ll stop the global gun ban treaty before it destroys our firearm freedoms.” As a result, the UN received approximately 80,000 form letters from gun owners and NRA sympathisers prior to the RevCon. This compelled the UN to widely disseminate a document it produced titled: ‘Setting the record straight’ in which the modest objectives of the PoA and the RevCon are highlighted. This essentially resulted in a more cautious approach on the part of the RevCon chair.

The RevCon commenced with representatives of UN member states making speeches on their progress in implementing the PoA and their priorities for the RevCon. By the beginning of the second week of the RevCon it became evident that the conference was in danger of running out of time before a formal outcome document could be finalised. Occasions arose where the direction of the deliberations became ambiguous, and the process was stalled due to the objections of certain uncompromising government delegations. In both cases substantial periods of time were devoted to exasperating discussions about how the RevCon process should proceed. At one point the RevCon appeared to be literally ‘lost in translation’, as the text of the non-paper was only available in English, which prompted protests from some Francophone countries. This resulted in further delays. This problem was resolved when IANSA agreed to facilitate the translation of the non-paper into French. However, at this point in time the document in question had already been revised.

On the contentious issues within the non-paper, such as follow-on mechanisms after the RevCon, measures to more effectively implement the PoA, as well as international assistance and cooperation, separate processes to the plenary session were established, each chaired by a government representative. However, many government delegates were critical of the manner in which these processes were facilitated, claiming that they were not designed to achieve consensus. As a result little meaningful progress in finding common ground on these three issues was secured.

**Football and fire drills**

There appeared to be a distinct lack of urgency on the part of a number of delegations throughout the conference to achieve a meaningful outcome. During the opening session of the RevCon certain member states made lengthy rhetorical statements, emphasising their apparent successes in implementing the PoA. As a result, the opening session took almost a day longer than anticipated. Over the two-week period the start of a number of sessions was delayed, particularly after the two-hour lunch break. The overall lack of any sense of immediacy only changed in the latter part of the second week, when deliberations were allowed to continue past the official closing time of 6pm, although only on an unofficial basis.

With the benefit of hindsight, the timing of the RevCon was perhaps inconvenient, as it took place in the final stages of the FIFA World Cup. During key matches there were as many people huddled around the televisions in Café Austria as there were in the conference venue.

During the RevCon the fire alarm in the UN complex was set off by a small electrical fire in an administrative office, but was largely ignored by the UN staff and RevCon delegates. Fortunately the fire was quickly extinguished and did not spread to other parts of the UN complex. However, this prompted a UN fire warden to stage a fire drill during the second week in which he assertively lectured UN staff and present RevCon delegates on the dangers of fires, and provided tips on fire safety at home. One cannot help wondering that had a similar style of lecture on the dangers of firearms and firearms injury prevention been provided to the government delegations, the outcome of the RevCon might have been very different.

**National interest rules**

Inter-state rivalries and national interests coloured the discussion during, and the outcome of, the RevCon. This was particularly evident in the interactions between member states from the Middle East, as well as between the US and Iran.

In the aftermath of the RevCon, many conference delegates and observers have fingered the behaviour of the US government as a major contributing factor to the demise of the conference. According to Rachel Stohl from the US-based Center for Defence Information: “US intransigence significantly contributed to the collapse of the conference.” Ambassador Kariyawasam was more diplomatic in his assessment of the role of the US government delegation to the RevCon by labelling it “unique”.

The US government clearly publicised its position on the RevCon in the period leading up to this meeting and openly stated that it was not prepared to compromise on a number of issues, and was particularly opposed to the holding of UN follow-on processes. The US delegation was true to its word and did not budge on any of its major positions.

The US delegation was not alone in its prioritisation of national interests. For example, securing agreement on global standards for international arms transfers was primarily blocked by Cuba, India, Iran, Israel and Pakistan.

**Out of time, what direction for the future?**

By lunchtime on the final day of the conference, government delegations had been unable to achieve meaningful agreement on the substantive issues in the RevCon chair’s non-
paper, which had been extensively revised over the two-week period. Concern was widely expressed that the RevCon would end without a consensus ‘outcome document’, especially since Ambassador Kariyawasam had announced that the conference would not be permitted to proceed beyond 6pm. In addition, there was no contingency plan should the allocated time period prove to be insufficient to reach consensus.

The delegation from the United Kingdom, with the support of a number of other delegations, sought to salvage the RevCon by requesting the RevCon chair to identify what he perceived to be the consensus positions in order to move the meeting towards formulating a final ‘outcome document’ that was acceptable to all delegations. However, the remaining time proved to be insufficient for the government delegations to reach consensus.

In the closing session of the conference, Ambassador Kariyawasam went to great lengths to suggest that the RevCon had not been a failure, emphasising the positive sentiment of member states to proactively confront the proliferation and misuse of illicit small arms. However, many government delegations and civil society organisations disagreed. The UN Secretary-General has publicly expressed his disappointment at the failure of the RevCon.

The outcome of the RevCon (or the lack thereof) is a setback for the global movement towards greater small arms control and disarmament, as it has resulted in uncertainty about the future of the UN PoA. Nevertheless, governments and civil society organisations that are concerned about small arms violence and its impact are looking to reinvigorate the UN small arms process by means of a resolution in the UN General Assembly. This will be initiated and debated at the UN First Committee (on disarmament and international security) meeting, which will be chaired by the government of Norway, starting in October this year.

In addition, there are a number of other international initiatives that are geared towards small arms control and disarmament. For example, the Control Arms Campaign, which is being coordinated by the Amnesty International, IANSA and Oxfam with the support of several governments, is actively pursuing a legally binding global ‘arms trade treaty’ which seeks to establish global standards for, and regulation of, the international arms trade.

Civil society bodies, particularly IANSA, will continue to pursue practical proactive approaches to arms control and disarmament. IANSA is likely to focus on issues relating to: strengthening national small arms legislation; the provision of assistance to the survivors of small arms violence; the gender dimensions of small arms violence; and the mainstreaming of development into the small arms debate.
The global gun epidemic: From Saturday night specials to AK-47s*

Wendy Cukier and Victor W Sidel

Since their creation in the 14th century, small arms have been employed to kill, maim, commit suicide, repress populations and engage in criminal activities. From the mid-17th century, following dramatic improvements to the lethality, accuracy and efficiency of these devices, small arms began to revolutionise the manner in which wars were conducted and conflicts resolved. The main outcome of this development was the exponential escalation of violence, injuries and deaths by small arms.

In the late-1990s, following the success of the landmine ban campaign, a global movement for more effective international small arms control emerged. From 2001, with the formulation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, and its subsequent implementation, the scope and range of this movement accelerated, as did its popular following. To date, this programme of action is the only global agreement that seeks to control the illicit trade in small arms.

Concurrent with the growth of this global small arms control movement has been a discernable increase in proliferation of small arms literature. Until recently, this body of literature could be divided into three broad categories: arms control activism, pro-gun propaganda, and neutral academic analysis. Of late a fourth category has emerged, that of academic activism. This category encompasses a comparative and action-oriented approach to research on small arms issues, and is typically undertaken from an arms control perspective. Cukier and Sidel’s book falls squarely into the fourth category.

With the exception of Small Arms Survey’s yearbooks, The global gun epidemic is one of the only currently available macro compendiums of the research on the demand, supply and transfer of small arms, as well as the associated impact and implications small arms proliferation. It also details a range of possible interventions that may reduce the death and injury tool, and considers the emergence of a global movement for stronger controls on firearms. It is a ‘must have’ for small arms policy-makers and is a key reference tool for researchers.

The global gun epidemic has been diligently compiled and eloquently written. The authors have made considerable efforts to organise and present a wide range of research of variable quality in a coherent and accessible manner. It is a sobering read, as it presents some distressing information, such as: approximately 200,000 people are killed annually in homicides, suicides and accidental death, and thousands more in military-related conflicts; the victims of gun violence are usually the youngest and healthiest members of the population; and there are more firearms in the possession of civilians worldwide than are held by governments. However, no original primary research has been undertaken by the authors. Rather it reconsiders available research on small arms-related issues from a public health perspective. As a result it makes a unique contribution to our accumulated knowledge about how to effectively control the proliferation of small arms and their destructive consequences.

An abridgment of Cukier and Sidel’s assessment of the public health perspective is as follows: the prevention of a particular problem area (namely a disease or illness) can be achieved by means of manipulating and/or controlling the problem itself and the phenomena that directly contribute to the problem. In particular, the public health perspective looks to positively shape the environment within which the problem occurs; modify the problem by means of various measures, systems and processes in order to make it less problematic; and implement educational and targeted control processes geared towards preventing the problem and/or its escalation.

The authors substitute disease for gun violence by arguing that “weapons are bad for people’s health”, an articulation of centuries-old public sentiment. In fact, Cukier and Sidel...
expand this comparison by sensationally asserting that the production, trade and use of small arms are tantamount to an ‘epidemic’. As the authors accurately state, the proliferation and misuse of small arms globally is highly problematic. However, the use of the term ‘epidemic’ appears to be misplaced, as an ‘epidemic’ in health terms refers to an outbreak of a disease that spreads more quickly and more extensively among a group of people than would normally be expected.

Small arms are not organic in nature, and do not have the ability to replicate themselves and inflict violence at an exponential rate. In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that they are infectious. However, given that bullets are the leading cause of death in many countries, describing the small problem in sensationalist terms may be justified if it raises public and political awareness about the proliferation of small arms and gun violence.

Guy Lamb

Internationalizing and privatizing war and peace*

Herbert Wulf

Herbert Wulf’s *Internationalizing and privatizing war and peace* poses two critical questions about the current state of war, peace and the various militaries of the world. First, what does the internationalisation of armed forces mean for their democratic control? Second, how does privatisation affect and impact on militaries and their democratic control? Each question is in itself a topic for a substantial publication, yet Wulf manages, succinctly and coherently, to marry the two related analyses into a mere 214 pages.

During the Cold War numerous armed forces throughout the globe were expanded to mammoth proportions. The past decade and a half, however, has seen a dramatic reduction in the size of these militaries. Thus, these armed entities have taken on new roles as peacekeepers, peacebuilders and humanitarians. In order to pursue these new tasks and

functions, national militaries have often been incorporated and reconfigured into supranational forces coordinated by international, regional and sub-regional bodies such as the United Nations (UN), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), European Union (EU) and African Union (AU). What Wulf’s book reflects is that the increase in these supranational interventions have been accompanied by an amplification of challenges and difficulties, with the effect that it appears as though national militaries are attempting to ‘put a square peg through a round hole’.

Not only are militaries confronted with new threats and challenges, well-resourced professional armed forces are often obliged to collaborate with ill-equipped and ill-trained national forces during multinational peace support operations. Wulf’s book details some of these problems, but much of the focus is on how these relationships affect the democratic control of national armed forces in their new missions. He argues that the internationalisation of national armed forces has decreased democratic oversight and control of the militaries. “Democratic control, if exercised at all, takes place at the national level as in the past, but not internationally” (p 20).

Chapters 3 and 5 offer significant insight into the issue of democratic control within those international organisations that deploy military troops, by highlighting the experiences of the UN and the EU. Wulf details the struggle of these international organisations to reconcile their commitment to the competing obligations of non-intervention and the promotion and protection of human rights. He also identifies quite prominently the apparent selectivity, contradictions and inconsistencies of such interventions. In this regard, a number of key questions are raised: why did the UN deploy military forces to Somalia in 1992 and not to Rwanda in 1994, when there were clear indications that there would be mass violence? Do the internal politics and motivations of individual states undermine the notion of democratic control of militaries within international organisations?

“Globalisation has changed the basic concept of the nation state” (p 197). And in doing so the case studies of the UN and the EU really make a case for national armed forces and international organisations now dealing in peacebuilding to create real strategic investments and implementations within their structures with a global vision in mind.

Terrorism, although far from new, has recently captivated the US armed forces, arguably the most powerful in the world. Wulf’s analysis of the US and their military response to terrorism is exceptionally thought provoking. It is rather obvious that the events of 9/11 have widened the scope of military interventions, as armed forces are now tasked with counter-terrorism activities. His chapter on terrorism draws on lessons of the past and present, such as military counter-terrorism activities in Libya, Afghanistan and Iraq, and argues that although military interventions in counter-terrorism activities might be necessary in limited, qualified scope (ie evacuations, limited intelligence gathering, logistical support and protection of installations), that eliminating the root causes of terrorism through military means is a futile exercise. He asserts, “to successfully fight terrorism what is required first and foremost in not a military but political strategy in which the armed forces need to play a supportive role” (p 167).

Internationalisation and privatisation are brought together seamlessly in Chapter 6, which addresses humanitarian interventions. The complications of humanitarian interventions are characterised in great detail and questions are raised regarding the rolls and relationships of IGOs and NGOs (such as the International Committee of the Red Cross), militaries, either on a national mission or with an international organisation, and private contractors used to provide security or support. Wulf argues that the involvement of these three external actors in humanitarian missions breeds complicated relationships among the actors. And although these organisations are there to assist in war and crisis situations, each has its own interests and each uses their own methods. This can lead to policies and interventions which are not only uncoordinated, but often counter-productive.

What was disappointing was the lack of space devoted to the privatisation of militaries. As stated before, this in itself is easily the subject of numerous books in the future, but here occupies a mere two chapters. However, what Wulf is able to do in those two chapters is to surgically frame the debate related to private industry in war-type activities. As Kofi Annan stated in 1996, “The world may not be ready to privatize peace” (quoted on xi), but it seems many nations are doing it anyway. National armies are outsourcing increasing numbers of functions, complicating legislative oversight of militaries and undermining state monopoly of force. The subject of military privatisation as presented is worthy of note and calls for continued research.

The US seems to be leading the way in privatisation. Not only are most of the private security companies in the world housed within their borders, but globally, they appear to be the single biggest employer. The Iraq War is glaring proof that the US is neither against nor ashamed to contract out traditionally military rolls. Contracted firms are being used for everything from laundry to combat. The reality of a market economy has finally caught up to the military, and perhaps this could have been anticipated. Private firms are able to fill gaps and arguably save militaries (and taxpayers) money, but at what cost? Lack of democratic control and limited oversight pose potentially serious ethical, structural and economic problems if privatisation of militaries is left unchecked.

One of this book’s many strengths is its rational approach to the privatisation of military functions, which are broken down into seven categories: economics, military, peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions, international crises, technology, policy, and law.

Specialised private companies are often more qualified to take on traditionally military roles than the militaries themselves. And more and more often militaries and governments are contracting these roles out to firms which specialise in logistics, economics, policy
policing, and even combat. But as more contracts are awarded to private firms, what becomes increasingly problematic is that these companies are less regulated than yoghurt production in most countries. They are not officially combatants according to the Geneva Conventions, yet often engage in combat roles. Are these men and women beholden to the rules of engagement? How is democratic control exercised over these companies and their employees? Who governs them? Does their existence and growth take from the states’ monopoly of power? Who is responsible for their actions? The questions continue, and will for a very long time until the international community finds the will and the means to regulate these companies.

As the delineation between war and peace changes, so must our responses, and although the international community is working towards some kind of military cohesiveness, there are holes that have not been filled. Thus we are experiencing a proliferation of contract military companies. What needs to be done is a redefinition of the roles, goals and responsibilities of militaries throughout the world to incorporate and engender the changing realities on the ground.

What would have been interesting in an examination of this kind would be a look into the changing nature of violence. Wulf states that conflict deaths have been reduced as a result of international interventions by the UN. Yet he also admits that more people are killed outside of armed conflict than within them. This can be seen on the streets in Brazil’s *favelas* where murder rates raise above those of some conflict zones. This type of urban armed conflict, although not included in the Geneva Conventions, cannot be left out of the framework for analysis and discussion involving peace and war. As violent deaths are moving away from war zones to urban centres, it is important that sociologists and academics examine what private security companies have meant in those situations.

Wulf’s analysis of this complicated web of actors and actions is well constructed and superbly presented. The only disappointments in this work were its omissions, such as a lack of discussion of South America or Asia and an analysis of the blurring of lines between war and peace, but considering its manageable length, a comprehensive examination of the subject and all of its actors would be impossible. *Internationalizing and privatizing war and peace* works the subjects of internationalisation and privatisation into a manageable, readable and thought-provoking book.

* Douglas Tuttle

The African AIDS epidemic: A history*

John Iliffe

John Iliffe is Professor of African History at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of St John’s College. He is an African historian of international repute and one of his seminal works is the well-known text *Africans: The history of a continent* (1995).

This study on the history of HIV/AIDS in Africa is no less impressive and benefits immensely from Iliffe’s years of research and writing on the continent. Meticulously researched and clearly written, this is a sensitive and nuanced account of a disease that has brought untold suffering to millions of Africans.

Iliffe traces the development and history of the two forms of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), HIV-1 and

HIV-2, from the first accurately documented case, that of an unnamed African man in Leopoldville (today named Kinshasa) in 1959. Clearly this was not the start of an epidemic that has infected millions of people across the world, albeit the first scientific evidence of its existence.

For more than a decade the disease remained a silent and unrecognised epidemic during which sub-groups of the virus were carried from the epicentre to infect eastern, southern and western Africa, each sensitively and incisively described in a separate chapter. Eventually different sub-groups of the group M HIV-1 virus came to dominate the epidemic in eastern Africa (sub-groups A and D), western Africa (sub-groups A and G), and finally in southern Africa and Ethiopia (sub-group C). The impact of each region was shaped by its patterns of communications and mobility, its gender relationships and sexual networks, its disease environment and socio-economic arrangements. The virus initially established itself silently within the general heterosexual population before any steps were or could have been taken to check it.

Iliffe sets out to address four issues:

First, he attempts to answer the question why Africa had such a unique and terrible HIV/AIDS epidemic – and responds eloquently and comprehensively that while other factors – including gender and poverty – played a contributing role, Africa experienced the worst epidemic because it had the first epidemic. Whatever part of the world had the first such epidemic would have suffered as severely, for the virus had established itself in the general population before anyone knew that the disease existed. The unique character of the virus – mildly infectious, slow acting, incurable, fatal – decisively shaped the epidemic and human responses to it, writes Iliffe. In dealing with this question he effectively dismisses South African President Thabo Mbeki’s notions of the linkages between HIV and AIDS, as well as the view that there is a global conspiracy behind the HIV/AIDS pandemic that seeks to depict Africans as particularly depraved and sexually promiscuous.

Second, his historical approach highlights the evolution and role of the virus as it spread from its earliest documented existence in western equatorial Africa, probably in the broad area of Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In his analysis Iliffe relies upon evidence from medical science that has distinguished in great detail between the various strains in order to reconstruct their genetic relationship. HIV-2 is the less virulent and infectious of the two forms and is confined to the West African coast between Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire. By 2005, HIV-2 infections had been divided into eight groups, each believed to have resulted from a separate transmission from monkeys in West Africa over a long period and perhaps less frequent transmissions of a rarer chimpanzee virus in western equatorial Africa. Only two of these groups, A and B, had established themselves as human epidemics, suggesting that many unsuccessful transmissions may have taken place in the past.

Three groups of HIV-1 have been identified. Each group, the author argues, must have resulted from a separate transmission of simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV), because on a family tree of the virus they are separated by intervening SIV strains. Of these, group M is responsible for the global epidemic that by 2005 had infected about 60 million people, and has in turn evolved into ten sub-groups. All the various strains are only found in western equatorial Africa – a powerful argument for this to be the origin of the epidemic.

Third, Iliffe locates the continental spread of the epidemic within a broader context, pointing to the fact that although the virus arose from human penetration of the natural ecosystem (the most continuous theme of the African past), its continental spread was a consequence of Africa’s massive demographic growth, urbanisation, and social change in the later 20th century. Hence, “AIDS is a by-product of the human mastering of the natural environment that has been the core of African history” (p 4). A particular factor – much discussed in previous studies – is the rapid passage of HIV through African populations during the 1950s owing to the introduction of supposedly disposable, but often re-used syringes, to inject penicillin and other medication. Eventually AIDS emerged from Africa’s long history of human habitation – from its 20th century history of demographic, social, commercial and intellectual change, and from its most recent history of economic and political crisis.

Finally, Iliffe documents how the African epidemic itself has changed over time, evolving as it did from explosive expansion to reaching maturity in much of Africa. Initially most African regimes sought to distance themselves and their countries from the epidemic. Before the more recent bird flu scare “[t]he suggestion that HIV had originated from African monkeys was regarded as a particularly insulting form of racism by national politicians and many African physicians” (p 66). As the epidemic matured, so the balance of infection shifted from men to women, from richer to poorer. Despite predictions that the pandemic would not peak before 2050 or 2060, this was not inevitable, in the author’s view: “Although the means to eradicate HIV/AIDS did not yet exist, the means to contain it were already at hand. The virus no longer held the initiative that had explained its success” (p 159).

Beyond presenting a persuasive interpretation of the social and geographical spread of HIV/AIDS across various African regions, a considerable portion of the book is devoted to responses to the disease, first from African governments (Chapter 8 – Responses from above), ordinary people (Chapter 9 – Views from below) and NGOs (Chapter 10 – NGOs and the evolution of care). Additional chapters are devoted to the social impact: “HIV/AIDS was not one epidemic but four: first the virus, then disease, next death, and finally societal decomposition, each superimposed upon its predecessor” (p 112).

This fine book concludes by reviewing the maturity of the epidemic in the 1990s – a function of success against the virus but perhaps more so arising from its own dynamics, and a final chapter on the international response.
This is a serious, excellently researched book with 41 pages of endnotes and an additional section for further reading. Despite its depth, Iliffe’s style makes his writing extremely accessible. It is probably the most comprehensive text yet to emerge on the disease as it affects Africa and will undoubtedly become widely used a source of reference and probably as textbook for many years to come.

Jakkie Cilliers
If you would like to subscribe to ISS publications, please complete the form below and return it to the ISS with a cheque, or a postal/money order for the correct amount, made payable to the Institute for Security Studies (marked not transferable). Please note that credit card payments are also welcome. You can also deposit your payment into the following bank account, quoting the reference: PUBSPAY.

ISS bank details: ABSA, Brooklyn Court, Branch Code: 632005, Account number: 405 749 8921

Please mail, fax or email this form to:
ISS Publication Subscriptions, PO Box 1787, Brooklyn Square, 0075, Pretoria, South Africa.
ISS contact details: (Tel) +27 12 346 9500, (Fax) +27 12 460 0998, Email: pubs@issafrica.org
Website: www.issafrica.org

**PERSONAL DETAILS**

Title: ............  Surname: ...................................................  Initials:  .........................
Organisation: .......................................................................  Position:  ......................................................................
Postal Address: ...........................................................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................  Postal Code:  .................. ..............................................
Country: .......................................................................................................................................................................
Tel:  ...................................... Fax:  .....................................  Email:  .............................. ............................................
Method of Payment:  Visa □  Master Card □  Other □  Specify:  ...........................................................................................
Card Number:  ......................................................................  Expiry Date: ................./ ..............................................
Cardholder Name:  ........................................................................................................................................................
Signature:  .....................................................................................................................................................................

**PUBLICATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>SOUTH AFRICA</th>
<th>AFRICAN COUNTRIES*</th>
<th>INTERNATIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Security Review (4 issues per year)</td>
<td>R 200.00</td>
<td>US$ 40.00</td>
<td>US$ 55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISS Monographs (Approx. 15 per year)</td>
<td>R 370.00</td>
<td>US$ 75.00</td>
<td>US$ 95.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISS Papers (Approx. 12 per year)</td>
<td>R 150.00</td>
<td>US$ 30.00</td>
<td>US$ 40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA Crime Quarterly (4 issues per year)</td>
<td>R 115.00</td>
<td>US$ 25.00</td>
<td>US$ 35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive subscription (African Security Review, Monographs, Papers and SA Crime Quarterly)</td>
<td>R 800.00</td>
<td>US$ 160.00</td>
<td>US$ 210.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscription</th>
<th>INDICATE COST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Security Review only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISS Monographs only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISS Papers only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA Crime Quarterly only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive subscription</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Angola; Botswana; Burundi; Congo-Brazzaville; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Gabon, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar; Malawi, Mauritius; Mozambique; Namibia; Reunion; Rwanda; Seychelles; Swaziland; Tanzania; Uganda; Zambia; Zimbabwe (formerly African Postal Union countries).

The mission of the ISS is to conceptualise, inform and enhance the security debate in Africa.