



SHRINKING SMALL ARMS

A SEMINAR ON LESSENING THE DEMAND FOR WEAPONS

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CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Working Where it Hurts	3
Participant Projects	13
Agenda	19
Participants	22

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INTRODUCTION

The effective control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons requires a host of measures across a wide variety of institutional sectors and involves a very diverse range of actors. The complexity of this effort has been daunting. In an effort to bring some order to the dialogue on small arms issues, observers have commonly divided controls into those concerned with supply issues and those concerned with demand. This distinction has been helpful. Governments and the multilateral system already have considerable experience in arms control and national justice systems which deal with the technological, institutional and diplomatic means to control the supply of weapons. But it is clear that no amount of supply-side effort alone will be able to effectively control the transfer of small arms, if there is sufficiently strong demand. The weapons themselves are small, cheap, easily hidden, produced and stored all over the world and often are easily available to non-state actors.

Looking at Demand Issues

The issue of the demand for weapons must be addressed, but as diplomats often note, this opens a whole new area of issues in conflict resolution, community development, justice reform, youth programming, postwar peacebuilding and attitude change that is far beyond the experience of the ministries of defence and foreign affairs which normally deal with weapons control. Fortunately, these demand-side issues are being addressed by other institutions, notably by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) around the world. Some of these operate locally, others within regions and still others on a global basis. What is lacking among them is a consistent

effort to collect the lessons learned by those who are working to curb the demand for small arms and to organise this practical information in a way that would be useful to policy planners, funders and other interested actors.

It should also be remembered that much of this demand-side activity is not focused intentionally on weapons control, but is conducted to end wars, control violence, increase development or empower marginalised populations. Weapons control, for these organisers, is a side effect, albeit a very important one. By identifying the weapons control benefits of such work, there is a greater possibility that these effects can be more easily optimised by organisers and that coalitions can be built between those who seek to control weapons supply and those who can work to curb demand.

The Seminar in Durban

Starting with this analysis, staff at the Quaker United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva decided to identify some of what is known about effective NGO work on demand-side issues. Along with partners in the American Friends Service Committee and drawing on networks such as the Peace to the Cities programme of the World Council of Churches, QUNO invited experienced organisers from mature anti-violence programmes around the world to a six-day lessons learned seminar in Durban South Africa, from 19 through 24 November, 1999. Sixteen organisers took part, representing projects in nine cities stretching from Phnom Penh to Managua and from Durban to Belfast. The seminar location itself

was important, as the Durban area was itself affected by inter-group and criminal violence using firearms. Durban was also the site of many local and regional programmes focused on conflict management, reconciliation and economic and social renewal. This troubling history and positive record were both evident to the seminar participants during their visit to the Kwa Mashu township outside Durban.

The lessons that the participants took from their six days of presentations, reflection and discussion are noted at length in this report. The categories under which the lessons were organised included:

- empowering the community to act;
- identifying a wide range of actors and collaborators;
- embedding the work in a wider national and international context;
- reworking research so that it is integrated with community organising goals;
- recognising the crucial importance of economic development issues;
- addressing the need for personal and group change in attitudes and identity; and
- being open to engaging “unlikely” actors such as gang members and former combatants.

Other Directions

This first seminar was not designed to tackle all possible aspects of weapons demand. It focused on addressing the problems faced by urban communities which experience extreme violence and social disintegration below the threshold of actual warfare. Some of these effects came as the result of recent wars, for example, in Cambodia or Nicaragua, but none of the organisers present were working to end violent conflicts involving large armed groups. Resolving these larger armed conflicts is an important aspect of weapons demand, but will need to be approached through the experience of a different group of organisers and interveners.

Although the primary goal of the seminar was to collect lessons that could be transferred to donors, policy makers and others, the event also linked the participants in a supportive process. They were able to share new ways to approach their work, to find informal partners and to end some of the isolation that they felt in their own communities. The organisers who took part had once been child soldiers, paramilitary foot soldiers, angry parents, anti-apartheid workers, witnesses of genocide and liberation fighters. Now they recognised their unity in a new, and as yet unnamed, profession that was transforming their experience of armed violence into the creation of communities at peace.

WORKING WHERE IT HURTS: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD ON SMALL ARMS DEMAND

The last several years have brought much attention and analysis to the international, regional and local realities created by the unrestricted flow and wide availability of small arms and light weapons. Efforts aimed at controlling small arms proliferation and availability have emphasised supply and transfer issues on the one hand and demand issues on the other. There is growing understanding that multi-faceted approaches on both the supply and demand fronts are necessary if the negative social impacts of small arms and light weapons are to be reduced. Despite this, however, regional and international efforts to date have focused far more on supply and transfer processes than on demand processes.

In part this is because supply and transfer processes fall within the traditional areas of interest and aptitudes of diplomats and governmental agencies dealing with disarmament, security and crime issues. In addition, steps to control supply and transfer seem to offer more immediate effects on actual weapons availability, depending, of course, on how tough such measures are and the numbers of supplier states that can actually be brought to agree on such measures. On the other hand, reasons why people and groups actually wish to have such weapons vary widely, as do the social conditions and settings in which light weapons are a factor. Measures that address demand-related issues, therefore, will of necessity have to be various and may be concerned far less directly with the weapons themselves than with the complex of social and economic conditions that shape demand. Just what to do may be far less obvious and the nature of what needs to be done far less amenable to distinct forms of regional or international agreement than is the case with efforts aimed at supply and transfer. It is also true that, to date, development and post-conflict reconstruction programmes are only beginning to effectively incorporate small arms realities into their design and implementation.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations on the demand side, demand-related initiatives come

well within the actual areas of expertise and experience of a wide range of NGOs dealing with such areas as community development, empowerment and peacebuilding processes. NGOs across the world, operating at the community or national level, have been organising programmes that deal with rising violence by tackling, among other things, the social and economic problems in which the violence is rooted. The evolution of effective international, regional and national policies and programmes aimed at reducing demand for small arms requires that this expertise and experience be listened to and incorporated in appropriate ways.

An Early Effort at “Lessons Learned”

It was from this perspective that the Quaker United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva sought a means for beginning to pull together the experience that has been gained by individual NGO programmes working at local levels in violence-prone settings in different parts of the world. We aimed to design a methodology that could provide a basis for dialogue on lessons learned, identify practical successes and pitfalls, outline common themes and problems, and, finally, share conclusions with policy-shapers at the regional and international levels. As part of this effort, we, along with the Quaker International Affairs programme in southern Africa, organised the “Shrinking Small Arms” seminar.

The groups that took part in this event did not represent a scientific sample of programmes around the world. And the information and general findings resulted more from dialogue and conversation than from a systematic effort at data gathering. Nevertheless, it is our feeling that even the preliminary findings offered here should be of interest and use to those seeking to understand better “demand” factors in the small arms problématique and to evolve effective policies and programmes.

We succeeded in gathering for this encounter representatives of 13 NGO programmes from

North America, Central America, South America, Western Europe, Central Africa, Southern Africa and South-East Asia. Most of these were urban, community-based programmes. Some had the gun problem as the central issue in their programmes. Most were engaged in work that sought to reduce violence and increase community well-being and thereby indirectly to affect the gun problem in their settings. One was concerned with designing methodologies for community firearms reduction programmes through scientific information gathering in violence-affected communities. Three were especially concerned with a particular constituency in violence-affected communities, i.e., groups of ex-combatants. One was seeking to develop a constituency for peace-building across communities in a setting where violence on a nation-wide scale had become almost the norm. Another was working on pieces of work designed to assist in the realisation of the benefits of the peace process now in place between divided communities. All were working in settings where violence, insecurity and fear were common features, where criminality, mistrust of the police, unemployment and lack of economic opportunity, drugs and gangs were frequent factors. In each of these settings, firearms made up an integral part of the landscape of violence that the communities were facing.

Our methodology for discovering common experiences and perspectives amongst this diverse group was to allow each participant to tell his/her story and to give much time for exchange of experiences and discussion. The quotes that appear in italics below come from the individual programme presentations. The discussion was then deepened around core themes that seemed to emerge from the initial exchange. Below we present, in abbreviated form, some of the common elements that surfaced in the form of “lessons” and “recommendations” from the seminar participants within each of these core themes.

Engaging the Community

“We need to use the local stories. We need to learn how the community itself has dealt with the issue.”

“We have to develop indigenous resources. We have to be able to meet people’s needs in terms of peacebuilding from our own community, from our own area, building on our own experience.”

“But how do you define peace? How are we going to speak about this? Let’s elicit the ideas of the community ... about what they think peace is. In doing this, we came to the issue of small arms.”

“... you only know what the problem is when the people have input. We developed things to give us pride. We utilised what we have the most of — people.”

“By mobilising the young people, we can save them from being used. The young people need to learn to say no.”

Because most of the programmes making up the seminar were community-based, the perspectives on the importance and dimensions of community engagement in the design and implementation of programmes aimed at reducing violence and at either directly or indirectly dealing with the issue of firearms reduction was a particularly rich part of the seminar. Although some programmes focused specifically on such things as projects for gun collection and public awareness activities related to firearms, for many programmes, guns were seen as a by-product of the problems the communities were encountering and an exacerbating factor. Below we present some of the conclusions of this discussion.

On “community empowerment”

- Most successful community programmes are directed by the residents themselves. This assures practicality, relevance to local needs, ownership by residents and participation by them. The result is a greater community capacity to solve its own problems.
- Communities need to say what they need, and community resources need to be used to the extent possible in providing for these needs. Key to successful community programmes are activities that emphasise “bottom-up” problem solving — for example, community-based justice programmes that bring perpetrator and

victim together; conflict resolution training for community residents and other civic ways of problem-solving; leadership development training.

- Outside intervention should be based on local needs. These should be ascertained via dialogue. External actors do have an important role to play in passing on expertise, but local people know their setting. The principle should be “outsiders” and “insiders” learning from each other.
- Programmes should meet individual training needs as well as community needs, for example, activities for ex-combatants or other specific groups in the community.

On “engaging different sectors of the community”

- Identify key actors in the community, such as indigenous groups, churches, ex-combatants. This will be different for different settings.
- Successful community programmes are often also directed at specific groupings, their needs and what they can contribute, for example, youth, women.
- In some communities, the church/temple/pagoda can be a keen partner in programmes such as conflict resolution, economic development, facilitation of community problem-solving, working with NGOs.
- It is important to encourage wide-spread participation and to seek to build partnerships within civil society generally. Activities that bridge community differences or re-connect alienated communities are often used.
- Don’t avoid the more difficult groups, for example, males. There is a strong link between perceptions of masculinity and firearms usage.
- If only certain groups are identified as problem groups, this in itself can batter self-esteem. For example, in South Africa, it has been important to bring in white youths as well as black: “It’s not a problem of black or white; the problem is your behaviour.” In Mozambique, it has been important to use cross-class experiences to show that the problem is not just with one group; attitudes about groups, such as ex-combatants, are

often based on prejudice rather than reality.

- Developing networks of groups (e.g., human rights, development and justice) can be important because they bring in a greater range of experiences and can provide a bigger voice.
- Successful programmes with poor, disaffected teenage youth involve attractive elements such as sports, food, music and dance, along with more serious elements such as job training, job placement, educational opportunities, life-skills training, conflict resolution training and community service opportunities. Young people make dedicated, energetic programme workers. In some circumstances, young people require more hands-on support and guidance.
- There is growing positive experience with the practice of involving former combatants — even those who fought each other — in peace promotion projects in post-war situations. These programmes are symbolically powerful and inspiring. They assist in the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life and can be very effective in practical efforts to find and collect landmines and other weapons and to advocate and carry out conflict prevention activity. (For more comments on ex-combatants, see below.)

On “transparency” and “sustainability”

- Programmes that elicit their focal areas from extensive dialogue within affected communities — for example, through focus groups, listening projects, surveys — have stronger potential for success. A focus on human relations will have an important long-term impact.
- Decision-making structures about community programmes should be open, inclusive, democratic and accountable. Resident-directed projects are more sustainable.
- Successful programmes will take fully into account local history and realities. For example, the needs of communities where social structures and lines of social integration have disintegrated will be very different from settings where these can still be seen to be intact.
- It is important to locate the project in a larger social framework and with wider strategic

objectives.

- It is important in the development of local projects to do it with an awareness of local power structures and to try to build relations between the community and legitimate structures. An understanding of how particular projects might be perceived in relation to local power relationships — including their possible perception as threats — is also necessary.
- Greater awareness must be created at the local level of what is happening elsewhere, including at the international level.
- Invest in the community at the local level, even if there is war at the national level.

Relating to External Actors

“People are building relationships. We’re playing our own small parts with the grass roots processes. The challenge is to bring this into the main political process.”

“A lot of the [current] initiatives are by governments, without the engagement of the local community organisations.”

In the context of community-based programmes, “external actors” can mean anything from local government to international development agencies. Discussion of the importance of such actors on local situations — positive and negative — and the relationship between local groups and outside actors revealed a number of useful observations:

- Work on small arms demand often requires co-ordination with national and local laws. Reform of policing and criminal justice systems is often an essential part of an effective control of weapons demand. Legal reform is often essential, but the focus of such efforts at the national and local level must be appropriate to the context.
- The impact of the law, of course, depends on how effectively the law is enforced. Often laws are not well enforced simply because local police/customs officers/border guards are ill-informed about the law. Therefore training and education are required. In other cases, corruption and abuse by officials actually

work to fuel demand for arms.

- Community police and “restorative justice” programmes can often be effective approaches to arms demand reduction.
- At this stage of development, “international law” is perceived to have little impact on local situations. However, regional initiatives can be important influences on what goes on domestically in different national contexts.
- Celebrities are often useful as symbolic figures to legitimise and publicise community initiatives. However, the use of celebrities has to be appropriate to the local setting. A good example is the work of football star Pelé with poor youth in Rio de Janeiro. In some settings where national consensus is limited and violence has been great, such as Burundi, the use of celebrities will be less effective. Radio in many settings is still a highly useful medium for getting messages across to the public.
- NGOs may play an effective part in linking community programmes, national governments and the international community. This may assist co-ordination, amplify advocacy and aid the dissemination of research. Communication and co-operation between NGOs operating at the community and international levels is therefore important.
- Collaborative relationships between NGOs and government (national and local, such as police) could extend and sustain community work without lessening the distinctive qualities that NGOs bring to this work. Local gun “hand-in” programmes require co-ordination and trust between police and local populations. NGO participation is important, especially in the evolution of policies aimed at addressing the root causes of demand. However, NGOs in their relationship to government must guard against co-optation or being used simply as legitimisers of government policy.
- Arms demand work could be more effective if it were incorporated into the programmes of existing NGOs with wider mandates, such as humanitarian, human rights and development organisations. Firearms movements need to be more creatively linked, for example, with campaigns related to drugs, crime and illegal

trade in natural resources.

- At crucial times, solidarity actions by outside organisations and individuals can help a local initiative to succeed. Highly publicised examples from other settings can be an important positive influence for local initiatives. Exchanges can also be useful, although funding is often a problem.
- NGOs are not homogeneous. The role of outside NGOs acting in local settings is not necessarily positive. Outside NGOs must evaluate their attitudes and approaches when intervening in local settings.

The Importance of Research and Specialised Research Methodology

“We tried talking about the arms problem. But it is very difficult because we don’t have the data. NGOs are more involved in humanitarian aid than in doing research.”

“Statistics show that you need to target what people currently believe, and then focus on that.”

“When we started to work on this, we had no statistics on how many weapons, how many died, the relationships between money and weapons, so we had to spend a lot of time gathering information.”

“There are different manifestations of the way small arms are doing damage to the community, so probably the methodologies of addressing the small arms must be different.”

All of the programmes represented noted in one way or another the critical relationship between accurate information and the design and implementation of effective community-based pro-

grammes. The nature of what was perceived as necessary and the methodologies used to gather the information were wide ranging. For example:

- the use of a “listening project” in the Reservoir Hills district of the city of Baltimore, USA, aimed at eliciting perceptions of the problem and needs of the people in the community and designing specific projects related to these articulated needs;
- the use of opinion surveys to increase the accuracy of data on gun prevalence and to elicit perceptions about security in the design of gun reduction programmes in Cambodia; and
- the use of statistics about gun possession and use to inform citizens about the importance of small arms collection in Rio de Janeiro.¹

Participants also emphasised the importance of analysis of results of actual programme experience in the design of further programmes. Locally-based programmes stressed the importance of being able to have access to relevant information from outside sources for their own settings, but also felt that the validity of their own experience and methodologies and the information gathered therein should be more recognised and taken into account by outside agencies. Among the points agreed by the participants were:

On “research”

- For the appropriate design and implementation of programmes, access to reliable national and local statistics on firearms, their use and effects is necessary.
- Integrated community anti-violence programmes develop slowly. Such programmes

¹ As a part of the seminar, participants had the privilege of joining with a group of community leaders in the Kwa Mashu district of Durban, an area of more than 350,000 people, where the experience of poverty, unemployment, criminality, drugs, gangs, mistrust of the police, gun violence, disempowerment and alienation paralleled that of a number of the seminar participants. At this meeting, the results of a survey aimed at eliciting perceptions of Kwa Mashu citizens on a variety of factors related to violence in the community were fed back to these community leaders for the first time. The survey instrument, which had been designed by researchers at South Africa’s Institute for Strategic Studies and conducted by community residents themselves, had both community empowerment and promoting the design of programmes likely to be effective in the reduction of gun violence in the community as goals. This actual experience in Kwa Mashu later led to a rich discussion of the pros and cons of survey methodologies among the seminar participants.

need appropriate modes of evaluation of success, particularly at the early stages of programme implementation but also throughout the life of the programme.

- It is important to link research organisations to organisations doing work on the ground.
- More extensive sharing of survey results, practical experiences, effective advocacy and relevant national laws would assist most weapons demand programmes.

On “lessons from practice”

- Many successful weapon demand projects are forms of community development, rather than criminal justice or arms control work. Successful projects require a comprehensive set of related initiatives, but the particular emphasis will depend on the situation.
- Gun collection programmes have a highly variable record of success. They must be carefully planned, monitored and verified if they are to have practical value and not produce negative side effects. The success of gun collection programmes depends on the degree of confidence and security people feel in the programme.
- Gun collection programmes should focus on rewarding the community, rather than the individual.
- It cannot be emphasised too much that all collected weapons must be destroyed — visibly and publicly — if a collection programme is to have a positive, long-lasting effect. Cheap and efficient gun destruction technology exists and efforts should be made to spread its availability.
- Successful community programmes make wide and sophisticated use of highly visual public education tools, which use carefully designed language and materials for the specific audience being targeted.
- Most demand projects involve some focus on change of identity and basic assumptions by participants. For this and other reasons, the process is often long and shows few results in the first years. Patience is required on the part of programme facilitators and their funders.

- Working with weapons issues in the midst of communities in conflict often involves risks to individuals. Programmes need to be designed carefully so as to protect the security of those involved.

Compelling Economics

“When we start talking about what real security is, then it’s possible to talk about why we have firearms.”

“Our children look at guns as power. ... It is difficult to focus on guns, because in the minds of youth, the gun is the way to instant money, an opportunity for them, where there is no other opportunity.”

“New boundaries of the conflict — economic — have to be addressed. They have to be addressed because they will affect everything.”

“The absence of an armed conflict in our society doesn’t mean peace. The more arms you have in a context of injustice, the greater the impact of these arms.”

For programmes operating at the “grass roots,” it is impossible to separate out the guns issue from the issues dividing or undermining the community. Many of the programmes that made up this seminar had a fundamental emphasis on tackling the conditions that feed the gun culture. Discussion at this level of work reveals well the extent to which it is necessary to have a good understanding of the complex of factors at work in local settings for gun reduction programmes to be successful. Our discussions also revealed how much can be done at the local level, even recognising that there are more general economic, social and political dynamics which can also impact heavily on local situations.

- Unemployment, poverty, youth alienation, involvement with drugs and other criminality are often issues linked to gun violence and declining community security. Guns exacerbate the existing levels of poverty and deprivation.
- Community activity related to lessening weapons demand often includes reconstruction, repair, maintenance and improvement of

community resources, such as housing, public buildings, parks, playgrounds, clinics, etc.

- There is a need to assess the economic impact of gun violence on communities, e.g., in terms of medical expenses, the privatisation of security, police/prisons, drug activity. Violence sucks economic activity away from communities; investment stays away.
- For some settings, the notion that guns are a by-product of economic injustice needs to be developed.
- The links between domestic gun proliferation and international weapons flows need to be understood in domestic gun control programmes.
- As we work on gun violence, we need to develop positive alternatives for youth, not only in terms of economic opportunity but also in terms of the positive dimensions of what gangs often offer — identity, purpose, group support, security.
- Often a shadow side of the military/security/justice institutions is revealed in their involvement in drugs and gun dealing.

Identity and Attitudes

“People have to be secure in their own identity. They have to know who they are before they can interact with the other. Our work is to educate people to have confidence.”

“We need a transformation of the mind. It is important that people come forward at their own pace.”

“The problem will be solved [in our country] when the young people come together. ... People have to change their mentality.”

The discussions in Durban underlined the fact that not only are economic and security facts on the ground important in shaping the environments in which gun violence is prevalent, but that societal and group values and norms are also important. The design of effective violence and gun reduction programmes require that these factors, too, be taken into account. But they are not immutable. Not only should programmes seek to build on the positive societal

elements that act to encourage social cohesion and problem-solving, but educational programmes and activities can also help to shift attitudes and social practice. A number of the programmes, for example, had political education and conflict-resolution and non-violence training as part of their package of projects. Generally the group agreed the following:

- The goal for lessening the demand for weapons is not to remove and eliminate weapons from the community, but to render them unnecessary by a change in the community’s perception of its identity and security.
- Highly visible activities, which express new relationships, new identity and new hope for change, can aid community transformation.
- The community’s definition of peace or security is crucial to understanding what kinds of projects are needed.
- A challenge is to learn how to incorporate race, culture and gender perspectives in education programmes.
- Although culture is not static, existing norms, values, beliefs, national or group experience, and social practices need to be understood and incorporated as starting points in programmes. When we look at a situation or enter a community, we must be aware of why things work the way they do. We have to understand and make use of the cultural dimensions, if we expect to encourage a change in values and to assist new norms to emerge.

Strategies that can be used to transform societal attitudes include:

- Programmes targeting women, which help create the conditions for women to participate and raise self-esteem in women, because the role of educated, economically empowered women is vital for social change.
- For some issues, it is necessary to target specific social sectors, such as older people/elders. For example, in traditional cultures, conflict resolution requires the engagement of the older people, because they will be listened to.
- Young people are more likely quicker to

change their attitudes to violence and investment in education is crucial to encouraging this process to occur.

- Programs that enable men to play constructive roles in anti-violence projects challenge some of the underlying structural causes of community violence. The prominent involvement of former combatants, mostly male, in peace promotion activities has been effective in changing community attitudes toward violence.

Focusing on the Positive Potential of Ex-combatants

“Reconciliation between ex-soldiers has been easier than between the higher up politicians. It’s the common problems that the ex-combatants have. Also, they know the costs of war.”

“As ex-combatants, we faced a stigma in our own societies. We asked ourselves, ‘How can we better our image?’ Peace promotion, conflict management, community building. We try to look at how other members of the community are living, rather than just promoting our own goals. You then become a leader and not just an ex-combatant.”

There is a growing recognition in international policy development that sustainable peace in post-war settings depends in part on the success of the demilitarisation of such settings. Of special importance is the disarming, demobilising and integrating back into society of combatants. Often in international programmes, this sector is looked at as a problem, and it is clear that slow political and economic progress in post-war settings can mean the engagement of former fighters in the rise in criminality, which often becomes a feature of such settings. Among the group in Durban were a number of ex-combatants, as well as a number from programmes in such settings as Northern Ireland, Nicaragua, Mozambique and South Africa with specific projects aimed at this sector of society. The following were among some of the perspectives offered by these representatives, indicating that it is important to look at groups of ex-combatants not only as actual or potential problems, or as groups only with particular needs, but also as

a potential resource to communities and societies seeking to emerge from violence:

- Ex-combatants from opposing sides face similar problems. This similarity should be recognised, as such recognition represents a positive factor for reconciliation. Ex-combatants from whatever side, being in the same situation, will come together. Their capability to do this should be recognised.
- Ex-combatants have positive qualities such as discipline and organisational skills that can contribute to the success of programmes, e.g., mine clearance and locating arms caches.
- Reintegration programmes for ex-combatants must include not only demobilisation and disarmament, but also development and democracy. Programmes that have only the first two are likely to be failures.
- Programmes aimed at ex-combatants should look at training and not just at “pay-outs.” This will promote sustainable re-integration. Ex-combatants can play positive roles for the implementation of practical projects in the community. Ex-combatants should be consulted to identify needs. Programmes for ex-combatants should aim to provide training in skills relevant to their communities. Training should be aimed at promoting sustainability and integrated development.
- Disabled ex-combatants have special training needs.

Ongoing Issues

The seminar identified a number of issues that were quite common among the programmes, issues that participants felt need further attention:

- Funding and funders: Successful projects require adequate and sustainable forms of funding. There are problems with the measurement of “success” and the speed of “results” demanded by funders, as well the dangers of having programmes co-opted by the priorities of outside funding agencies. As was noted by one participant: “How do you reconcile the need for patience and recognising the slowness of things with the demands of funders for tangible changes? We have to

educate the funders that this change doesn't happen overnight.”

- Co-ordination/coherence within programmes: How to ensure that you're addressing the different elements of the problem and the relevant constituencies?
- Containing the problem: How to ensure that your community “solutions” do not just “export” the problem to a neighbouring community?
- Strategies for integrating “small arms” approaches: How to include education, empowerment and economic justice, as well as ethical and moral elements, in the approaches to small arms?
- Ensuring programme continuity: How to deal with the vulnerability of programmes due to the inevitable departure of key individuals, so as to ensure continuity of programme effectiveness?
- Making sure “everyone leaves the place smiling”: There is a need to focus more closely on the dimensions of vulnerability of those cooperating with weapons collection programmes and on more critical understanding of types of incentives for weapons turn-in which lead to positive results.
- “Community-friendly” projects: Greater comparative study is needed on ways of addressing gun-related issues based on the characteristics of the setting itself (e.g., “peace” means different things in different places).

Next Steps

One other dimension of the Durban seminar not reported in detail here was a session in which global and regional efforts on the small arms/light weapons problématique were outlined. This was part of our understanding, reinforced by observations in the seminar, of the importance of actors from the local to the international levels being well informed about what is happening at other levels. Our next step in this respect, in addition to the dissemination of this report to national, regional and internation-

al policy networks, will be to bring individuals from some of the programmes participating in the Durban seminar to New York and Geneva and perhaps to other policy settings to meet directly with individuals engaged in programme development for violence-affected regions. In the year 2000 we shall also hold another seminar in a different setting in order to gain additional perspectives.

The Durban seminar demonstrated the importance of exchanges and encounters for those working in violence-reduction programmes at the local level. Not only did the seminar prove an important point of exchange and comparison of experiences, but each individual went back after the seminar to her or his setting with renewed strength and a sense of solidarity from other parts of the world.

Despite the many meetings that have been held on small arms-related concerns over the last several years, the demand-related issues have struggled to get on the agenda. A major effort in this direction was the Brussels Conference on “Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development,” held in October 1998. That meeting gave important visibility to demand-related questions. The thinking represented in this report indicates that a title of “sustainable development for sustainable disarmament” would be of equal importance. In its report, the working group on the “Analysis of different types of light weapons and their impact on society” at the Brussels meeting said: “The key challenge is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the way a wide range of factors relating to the conflict, development, governance and arms interrelate in a particular region and at a particular time, in order to develop an integrated response capable of breaking and reversing vicious circles of violence and decline.”² We hope that this report of the findings from our “Shrinking Small Arms” seminar will add to the gaining of this “comprehensive understanding,” particularly with regard to the local manifestations of the interaction of these factors. It is also our hope that perspectives of those “working where it hurts,” such as have been presented

² Report of the International Conference “Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development,” 12–13 October 1998, Brussels, Belgian Administration for Development Cooperation, 1999, p. 48.

here, will be given appropriate and adequate space in the upcoming 2001 Conference on the

Illicit Transfer of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its preparation.

PARTICIPANT PROJECTS

The following short descriptions are taken from the presentations each participant gave at the opening of the seminar. In the interests of brevity we have included only a small portion of the comments and discussion that was recorded. If you would like to know more about the work of these organisations, feel free to communicate directly with them. Contact information is included in the participant list appended to this report (page 22).

Joseph Dube, National Organiser Gun Free South Africa, Braamfontein, Republic of South Africa

After the change of government in South Africa, religious leaders came together to call for arms collection. This was not part of the settlement originally. Unfortunately, collection didn't achieve much, so Gun Free rethought its work and developed two strategies: policy level work focused on problems with the arms and ammo act of 1969; and gun-free-zone campaign work with youth, communities and churches.

We engage with youth out of school, for example, Youth against Crime in Soweto. We offer empowerment programmes and skills training. We helped to put firearms control into their vision of addressing crime. They then met with student leaders in schools, with teachers, included parents focused on developing Gun-Free Zones.

Working with communities at large, we seek to encourage communities to "tie the knot" (knot in the gun). We often work with churches. We now have a new bill against guns and the Catholic Church is preparing a programme to encourage public submissions in favour of the bill. Gun Free is training public groups on how to make a submission and how Parliament works.

Mapela is one of the successful community programmes. Mapela is a community of 40,000 residents in the Northern Province, one of the poorer provinces. A leader saw our advertisement and became interested. Gun Free sent him a manual on how to mobilise the community. He worked with the traditional leaders. The Queen gave her blessing. He went to schools, shabims

and shops and spoke about the issue. Today the community is a gun-free zone. Every person now thinks about the issue. One teacher made it a classroom education programme so that the kids feel they own it.

Gary Gillespie, Cleo Stewart Middle Atlantic Region, American Friends Service Committee, Baltimore, Maryland, USA

AFSC in Baltimore works closely with Johns Hopkins University's Centre for Gun Policy. Baltimore experiences 46 homicides per 100,000 population, and three times that number in terms of gun injuries. Every day there are homicides. Many neighbourhoods are affected and this results in withdrawal of economic institutions and a greater concentration of poverty. People finally are starting to focus on guns, but this has been difficult. Poverty groups see guns as a by-product of poverty, but really the issues of security and poverty are more directly inter-related. When we start talking about what real security is, then it's possible to talk about why we have firearms.

AFSC has 42 local offices in the USA. The Baltimore office is both a local and regional office. We used to focus on international issues with little connection to community issues. But our "Listening Project," which we began a few years ago, led to some new directions. We asked people what needed doing. They said there were few programmes in the inner city help to deal with violence. So we work on gun controls. We also work on teaching non-violence. Our "Help increase the peace" programme is based upon community building and social change. We've developed a number of programmes. If you don't have guns, you need to do work to reduce conflict and emphasise common security. We also work on economic issues. Poverty groups hold conversations about guns and link the demand to poverty and security issues.

A Listening Project was focused on Reservoir Hill community, a ten-block urban neighbourhood where 7,200 residents live in poverty. Violence there is based on the illegal drug trade, which is seen as a way out of poverty. There are

no legitimate businesses left in the neighbourhood. Children see guns as power. A gun allows them to have some money and security. The Listening Project surveyed 500 households over 18 months. The project allowed neighbours to talk about issues that they shared. Over 80 people were trained to do the surveys. People from neighbouring communities came to help and this changed the perceptions of all the communities involved. Out of the Listening Project we've developed 15 different projects: a volunteer programme—for example going shopping for your neighbour; sanitation projects; a community mural based on community drawings; playground occupation to keep drug dealers away; clean sweep project by police against drug dealers; open air community meeting with more than 100 people; a food cooperative. The community has changed drastically in only two years.

Antônio Rangel Bandeira
Viva Rio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Viva Rio works on community violence issues in Rio de Janeiro and also on national gun control issues. Small arms and light weapons are available in Rio in large numbers and come from a variety of sources: narco-traffickers, security agencies which lose weapons often because of connections with gangs. The State government in Rio is trying to control weapons and violence but there is complicity between police and criminality at the national level. Legal arms are regulated by very liberal norms and even these are not respected. A Federal project is aimed at prohibiting gun commerce. Meanwhile, well-behaved citizens distrust the police. Viva Rio is trying to convince people of the great risk of carrying a gun. Statistics prove that those who have guns die. This is the reason for Viva Rio's small arms collection campaign.

Viva Rio has many projects working with poor youth, some of which are more successful than others. One that is going well is "the peace games," which challenges the attractiveness of drugs with activities focused on sport (Coca Cola and McDonald's provide material support), music and dance, and employment. Sports competition for kids 14–17, male and female, are organised with local police districts in cooperation with community bodies. This is a training in

how to live in solidarity. 40,000 youth in Rio participate: rich kids with poor kids, black kids with white kids, police with kids from the slums. It is an extraordinary way to break these barriers.

One programme that is not working well is aimed at developing mutual support groups for victims of violence. Few people are looking to this as a place to help themselves. This programme has had difficulty in being known. Viva Rio is starting to work with women, for example, by organising a march in front of Congress for women who have lost their sons to gun violence.

Neb Sinthay, Coordinator
Working Group on Weapons Reduction,
c/o AFSC, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

There is a long history of violent political conflict in Cambodia, which has left behind a devastated state and society. The radical social experiment of the Khmer Rouge led to the systematic destruction of the population.

Cambodia has never had an arms industry, yet today 1 to 3 million arms are available in the country. In the early 90s, the UN was to demobilise and disarm the former combatants to lay the groundwork for an atmosphere in which people could take part in elections. The UN couldn't complete disarmament activities, although 50,000 weapons were collected. The military unilaterally turned the weapons back over to civilians. There have been a few disarmament efforts. 65,000 guns were collected from militias and 30 percent were destroyed. The majority of these weapons were seized rather than voluntarily turned in.

A little over a year ago, 20 NGOs got together. Everyone knew that no other work was possible without the collection of weapons.

Groundbreaking work was done by the landmine campaign. NGOs were widely involved in mines work and opened the way for NGOs to be involved in security matters. The Working Group for Weapons Reduction (WGWR) was established in 1998. It is a group of NGOs working on peace, women's issues, development and conflict resolution. WGWR is committed to reducing the number of guns in Cambodia. Its 20+ members include international and local NGOs and individuals. Our mission statement

includes the following directions:

- to transform the desire to own and use weapons into commitment and skills for non-violent problem solving;
- to reduce the number of small arms and light weapons;
- to promote the proper control of weapons which do exist;
- to work so that all weapons removed from society are destroyed so that they are never used anywhere again;

For this year, we have a number of activities:

- a research and public education consultant team collects information on weapons use, justice and human security, including a critical look at the judicial system;
- a group develops public education materials for youth/students, local authorities, general population, police and soldiers, NGOs;
- WGWR encourages networking to broaden the coalition to include more development organisations and to encourage them to consider the weapons problem as it affects them;
- WGWR raises awareness and support by building relations with organisations outside Cambodia;
- advocacy and cooperation with the Cambodian government, including feedback to the government on how people feel about government programmes, sharing experiences from other countries, advocating for effective policy.

WGWR's successes include hosting a 1998 workshop with the Municipality of Phnom Penh on the destruction of collected weapons; advocating for policy change by the Ministry of Interior (the current plans to destroy all weapons collected, except the newest 20 percent); organising with the Ministry of Interior a workshop on weapons collection programmes; meeting directly with WGWR members to get them to integrate weapons issue in their programmes.

**David Niyonzima, General Secretary
Burundi Yearly Meeting, Religious Society of**

Friends (Quakers), Bujumbura, Burundi

Burundi, a small country in central Africa, has been affected by decades of genocidal violence and poverty. The 6 million people are divided into three groups: Hutus (84%), Tutsis (15%); other (1%). Burundi is the eighth poorest country in the world. Tutsis have always tried to remain in power by utilising an ethnic-dominated military. Hutus have armed themselves in militia groups and the government has been unable to stop their attacks.

Burundi Yearly Meeting is the second largest Protestant religious grouping in Burundi and the oldest. It uses its churches as a platform to give something to the country. They include 72 congregations in 10 of 16 provinces, 11 primary schools and one high school run jointly with the government. The schools emphasise curriculum that goes along with their belief in the centrality of peace making. A number of projects have been organised through the National Friends Advice Committee, including reconstruction of destroyed buildings, cultivation of food for those who are needy, provision of shelter to returning refugees and organising peace committees in different areas to discuss the security situation.

The government feels people have to own weapons to defend themselves. The law says every civilian should go through military service. For Quakers, as pacifists, this was a big blow. They began to cooperate with fellow Quakers in the Congo and Rwanda to come up with a document that could be presented to the government, explaining who they are, what they can and can't do as Quakers. They tried talking about the arms problem, but it is very difficult because they didn't have the necessary data. NGOs in Burundi are more involved in humanitarian aid than doing research. They have found that small arms are mostly in the hands of young people, retired soldiers and some political figures. Ex-Rwandese army forces, the Interahamwe and others all have arms. Their challenge has been to work effectively as a small group. They teach people about conscientious objection to military service. By mobilising young people, they can save them from being used in armed militias and in the military. Young people need to learn to say no to violence.

**John Loughran, Programme Coordinator
North Belfast Peacebuilding Network, Inter
Community Development Association, Belfast,
Northern Ireland**

and

Andrew Salters

Linc Resource Centre, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Drew and John represent very different and opposing political backgrounds. The basis of their joint project recognises the primacy of dialogue between the two communities, Loyalist and Republican. They see their role as conducting community work that will imbue confidence in the main political process. Both communities suffer high levels of long-term unemployment. People living along the interfaces between the communities are more likely to be disadvantaged. Inter-community conflict is part of life. The population of North Belfast has significantly declined. 20,000 people have left of the 90,000 in the early 90s, disproportionately from the Protestant community.

People have to be secure in their own identity. They have to know who they are before they can interact with the other. The work is to educate people to have confidence. Intercomm was initiated by two men who worked for two community organisations, one to reintegrate ex-para-militaries back in the community (Loyalists), the other (Catholic) on economic development issues. In 1994 they founded Intercomm and the cease fires provided political momentum and opportunities for the communities to work together. Their emphasis is on building human relations first, identifying key individuals, giving them skills in conflict management. Their model is based somewhat on the network of (ex-combatant) peace promoters in Managua.

Their approach is now multi-faceted. Intercomm has a momentum of its own. It runs a youth programme on masculinity and violence, works on peace education and peace promotion and initiates construction projects. People assume that because there is a political agreement, there is peace on the ground. That is not true; they see their work as only just beginning. Resources come and go. They are starting building projects in order to make their work sustainable and to build resources into the community. Their vision

is an integrated work force to build up our community together.

**Salomao Tirco Mungoi, Programme Officer
Propaz, Maputo, Mozambique**

Propaz's work stems from the 1992 peace agreement between the Mozambican government and Renamo. A UN mission monitored this peace accord, including demobilisation and disarmament. Propaz is a peace promotion programme carried out by ex-combatants from both warring groups. One of the biggest problems was the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian roles. There was a stigma against them in the eyes of civilians and the former fighters wanted to better their image. They chose a programme of peace promotion, conflict management and community building. This was also leadership training, looking at how other members of the community were living, rather than just promoting their goals. They looked for outside planning expertise and made links with the Centre for International Studies' (CEI) ex-combatant project in Nicaragua. They also received scholarships for training. Propaz works in four provinces with a team of 20 trainees. They train people in their communities, eliciting the ideas of the community about what they think peace is. This leads to the issue of small arms. Ex-combatants have special expertise in dealing with arms issues. They know where the weapons are buried, both small arms and landmines and also are familiar with how to handle such weapons. Propaz conducts training programmes on the following topics: conflict resolution; community development; addressing the gender issue; reconciliation; re-integration; inclusion of handicapped ex-combatants.

**Clare Hansmann and Andy McLean
Institute for Security Studies: Arms Management
Programme, Pretoria, South Africa**

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) maintains three broad programmes: 1.) military/defence, 2.) civil-military relations; 3.) arms control. In this last category there are three interrelated elements that have to be dealt with simultaneously: management of arms; reduction of arms; prevention of new supply.

The South African action programme on light

arms and illicit trafficking has been agreed by Southern African Development Community (SADC). The programme outlines steps in a comprehensive approach. It stakes out ground on which community programmes can exist. With the end of the Cold War massive amounts of weapons became available within South African societies and the crime problem became acute. This coincided at the international level with small arms becoming a bigger issue.

ISS and the UK NGO Saferworld organised a seminar in May 1998 which brought together governments in both regions (EU and SADC). The document approved provides for action in four main areas:

1. operational capacity to combat illicit trafficking—police, customs, etc., joint training;
2. laws on licit possession; controls over export in the region—all countries involved in weapons transit get governments to conduct inventories—how many weapons in state security hands?;
3. weapons collection and removal;
4. enhancing transparency and information exchange—build competency and confidence in the region.

Political endorsement at a higher level led to new developments, including the passage of a European Code of Conduct on arms exports, and the use of development aid to fund projects that control small arms. The programme also works with police in Southern Africa. Cooperation includes: regional training for police; destruction of seized weapons; drafting of legal protocol on firearms control and licit trafficking; reversing culture of violence; Operation Rachel between South African and Mozambican police.

On prevention: ISS is designing a strategy to reduce firearm proliferation by changing people's minds about guns and security. ISS approached communities and surveyed attitudes. The lessons learned were: 1.) On issues of firearms you may not need political will on firearms, you need to work with the micro-communities affected; 2.) Some community members want pay for their work. Some had bad experiences with NGOs before; 3.) In Kwa Mashu, outside Durban, ISS

works with an existing structure.

Work with existing structures has included: building public awareness about issues of firearms; making sure people know what they are committing themselves to; publicity via public debate; written media; drama; visual material such as banners, charts, walls. Long-term work has included non-violence education in public structures.

Carlos Pacheco Alizaga
Center for International Studies, Managua,
Nicaragua

After the end of the war in Nicaragua a lot of soldiers were demobilised and a process of reintegration into civil life started. After a few months ex-combatants felt frustration with unfulfilled promises by the government. This contributed to continued social unrest. Many ex-combatants didn't give in all their weapons, they kept some as insurance and many are still suspicious of their former enemies. It is easy to buy a weapon; \$25 or \$50 for an AK-47. The absence of an armed conflict in society doesn't mean peace. The more arms you have in a context of injustice, the greater the impact of these arms.

Contra and Sandinista ex-combatants felt drawn toward each other, due to common interests. They acknowledged their common problems, put away political affiliation and started to work together. Little by little a process of reconciliation continued without major support from any government. This is important because the social causes that provoked the uprisings in Central America remain and in some cases are worse. If we don't transform the mentality of trained soldiers, it is really dangerous. A lot of weapons and a lot of people who know how to use them, combined with a social context of exclusion, creates an explosive situation.

Gail Wannenburg, Coordinator
Network of Independent Monitors, Durban,
Republic of South Africa

The situation in Kwa Zulu Natal is not yet post-conflict. Many forms of violence continue, often social violence interlinked with political violence. Guns are easily available, both legally and ille-

gally, and over 50 percent of murders are committed with firearms. Violence is not limited to criminals; the police and army were involved in abductions, murders, arming groups inside and outside the country. Consequently, people mistrust the police and army. Many of the arms caches left from the war are still in the province.

There is a peace process between the warring groups in the province. This justifies a cycle of impunity because people fear to upset the peace process. They are trying to avoid civil war, but this means a lot of people are not charged with offences. Even the chief of police was charged with illegal gun possession. In some cases police units are completely partial. Groups have not disarmed. A buy-back scheme didn't work. This is due to the level of insecurity people feel because of ongoing political violence and crime. There is no political leadership or community control of weapons or armed groups. Young people are being absorbed into gangs. Discipline is lacking in the community. In the criminal justice system the conviction rate is only 1 to 9 per-

cent, with only 10 percent of cases completed. This causes people to take justice into their own hands and leads to an increased use of private security and closed housing estates for wealthy whites.

The Network of Independent Monitors (NIM) works across a continuum of action that includes: human security; rule of law; peace process/conflict resolution; rehabilitation/integration; community building; development incentives for peace. NIM arranges for security force deployments, protection for those under threat, medical support, documentation of assaults (by police or others). Their major goal is to promote the rule of law. They investigate specific incidents of violence and conduct mediation on some occasions, depending on the style of the field worker. They are not a counselling NGO, but link up with others who do this work. NIM conducts training sessions in community safety planning; collecting evidence; how to engage police and army; election monitoring and development projects.

AGENDA

“SHRINKING SMALL ARMS”

A SEMINAR ON LESSENING THE DEMAND FOR WEAPONS

19 - 24 November 1999
Holiday Inn Garden Court, North Beach,
83/91 Snell Parade, Durban

Programme

Thursday, 18 November

Arrival of some participants

Day 1 (Friday, 19 November)

Arrival of remaining participants

16.00 Opening
Welcomes
Brief vision for the seminar
Introductions
Logistical information

18.30 Evening meal

20.00
Sharing of expectations and hopes
Seminar agenda review
Overview/planning for Day 2

Day 2 (Saturday, 20 November)

Breakfast (available from 06.30)

09.00 Overview of the day/announcements/further introductions

09.15 Presentations 1, 2, 3 (30 minutes total for each presentation, including 5 minutes for questions of clarification)

10.45 Break

11.15 Presentations 4, 5, 6

12.45 Taking note of early threads

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Presentations 7, 8, 9

- 16.00 Break
- 16.30 Presentations 10, 11, 12
- 18.00 Identifying further threads; taking note of particular issues
- 18.30 Evening meal
- 20.00 Opportunity for discussion of particular programmes/further elaboration of issues emerging

Day 3 (Sunday, 21 November)

Breakfast

- 09.00 Identifying lessons learned I*
- 10.30 Break
- 11.00 - 12.30 Identifying lessons learned II*
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.30 Identifying lessons learned III*
- 16.00 Break
- 16.30 - 18.00 Community-based work in the context of national, regional and international policy development
- 18.30 Evening meal

Evening open

* These sessions will seek to pull out lessons from each stage of programme development and implementation. Successes, issues, possibilities in: problem identification; programme design; encouraging participation; government relations and partnerships; obtaining funding; building community trust; evaluation processes; identifying growth/managing change.

Day 4 (Monday, 22 November)

Breakfast

Kwa Mashu community: case study of a practical projects towards peace-building and reversing the culture of violence.

09.00 Session I: Background to Kwa Mashu community (Jenny Irish)

10.30 Departure from hotel for Kwa Mashu community

11.00 Session II: Presentation of survey results and discussions with community respondents return late afternoon (led by Clare Hansmann and Jenny Irish)

12.30 Session III: Cold drinks and cookies in the community; walk in community
early afternoon: return to hotel

18.30 Evening meal

20.00 Reflections on the visit

Day 5 (Tuesday, 23 November)

Breakfast

9:00 Session I*

10.30 Break

11:00 - 12.30 Session II*

13:00 Lunch

14.30 Session III*

16.00 Break

16.30 - 18.00 Session IV*

18.30 Evening meal

Evening: Closing party/entertainment

* The topics of the working sessions will emerge from the course of our work together. In addition, time will be needed for the drafting and commenting on a final report for the seminar.

Day 6 (Wednesday, 24 November)

Breakfast

09.30

Identifying follow-up directions
Networking
Evaluation of the seminar
Closing

12.30 Lunch

Departures

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