

# **Swords for Ploughshares**

## **Microdisarmament in Transitions from Conflict**

**Report of the Forum on the policies and practices of  
small arms and light weapons disarmament in  
post-conflict transitions**



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## Preface

Controlling the use and proliferation of small arms and light weapons has become a focus of international efforts to prevent conflict and promote human security. In recent years, multilateral and non-governmental coalitions have coalesced around a concern for the human and social impacts of small arms in conflict situations and the consequent need to better understand and regulate the supply of these weapons world-wide. As efforts to regulate the supply of small arms and light weapons have gathered momentum, international and non-governmental organizations have been working to develop and implement innovative approaches to the removal of weapons, particularly in those situations where they serve as a source of insecurity or help to fuel violent conflict.

On 21 and 22 September 1999, a special Forum was held in Montreal on the policies and practices of small arms and light weapons disarmament as a component of peace-building and as part of peace support operations. The Forum brought together a small group of professionals with operational experience in weapons collection – field practitioners as well as policy and decision makers – including officials from bilateral and multilateral institutions as well as international and national non-governmental organisations. Participants came from Albania, El Salvador, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and from international NGOs active on issues related to small arms and light weapons disarmament, including the Bonn International Centre on Conversion (BICC), the Program on Security and Development (SAND) of the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI). Officials from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, Conventional Arms Branch (DDA) and the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) also participated, as did non-governmental experts from Canada and Norway.

The Forum was organised by the Peace Implementation Network (PIN), a project of the Programme for International Co-operation and Conflict Resolution at the Oslo-based Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science. PIN Forums apply a comparative case-study approach through a dialogue about lessons learned amongst practitioners with hands-on experience of co-ordinating or managing assistance in post-conflict situations. PIN is concerned principally with operations in the field and in the ways in which international assistance can strengthen peace-building. The

intention is that the operational approach of PIN Forums should inform, and ultimately improve, the normative approaches developed in other fora.

To this end, this report has been based on the views and recommendations of the participants in the Forum. The report was circulated in draft form to all participants and the report was revised in light of their comments. While there was broad agreement on many issues during the Forum, the report is not meant to reflect a consensus among participants as much as to present the broad range of experience, analysis and recommendations heard during the day-and-a-half Forum. This report is intended to reflect the views of Forum participants and to suggest constructive recommendations. Of course, the views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the official views or positions of the participants, their organisations or PIN's sponsors.

As Chair of PICCR, I would like to thank the Government of Norway and the Government of Canada for providing funding to cover the costs associated with holding the Forum, and to the Government of Norway and the MacArthur Foundation for core financial support to PIN. The initiative to hold a PIN Forum emerged from a meeting between the Foreign Ministers of Canada and Norway on 19 and 20 May 1999. That date marked the first anniversary of the Lysøen Declaration in which Canada and Norway had initiated bilateral and multilateral cooperation in a number of areas related to human security. Thanks also to the Peacebuilding and Human Security Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada for their interest and support in developing the Forum. The Forum luncheon was graciously provided by Principal Bernard Shapiro of McGill University, which has kindly provided logistical and research assistance to PIN over the past two years.

I would also like to thank the Forum's co-chairs: Ambassador Jill Sinclair, Director-General of the Global Affairs and Human Issues Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada, whose command of the issues and capacity as chair was crucial in keeping discussion of a complex topic on track during the important first day of the Forum. Thanks to Chris Coleman, Chief of DPKO's Policy Unit, who agreed to co-chair the morning session on the second day of the Forum. My sincere thanks to Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, and Norway's State Secretary Wegger Strømmen, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for their timely and engaging discussion with participants, not least as this came a few days before the Ministerial level discussions on small arms and light weapons at the UN Security Council in New York.

Finally, and most importantly, my gratitude goes to the participants for their support, interest and energetic participation in the Forum. Their analyses of the main components of microdisarmament programmes forms the basis of the analysis and recommendations contained in this report.

Terje Rød-Larsen

Chair

Fafo Programme for International Co-operation and Conflict Resolution

April 2000

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# 1 Introduction

In recent years, the field of disarmament has witnessed encouraging steps towards improved policy and practice in small arms and light weapons removal: the Oslo Platform, the Brussels Call for Action, the DPKO Lessons Learned Unit's guidelines for DDR in peace support operations, and the recent Näsby seminar on the removal of small arms and light weapons in the context of peace missions. The Forum itself devoted a session to a discussion of a weapons collection guide then under development by BICC and the SAND program at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.<sup>1</sup>

## **Recent initiatives point to a growing international consensus about the need for an integrated approach to weapons collection.**

### **Microdisarmament defines one possible approach**

These initiatives have contributed to a growing consensus that the removal of small arms and light weapons, whether as part of DDR or peace-building efforts, should be framed within the wider political, social and economic contexts of affected countries. It was in response to this growing consensus that microdisarmament was chosen as the conceptual starting point for the Forum.

Microdisarmament includes activities, such as the disarming of combatants and civilians, which are often implemented as part of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) component of peace operations or post-conflict peace-building. The term microdisarmament also refers to voluntary or incentive-based weapons exchanges. Microdisarmament focuses on individuals and/or communities in countries caught up in the transition from conflict, as well as in countries that have not experienced violent conflict but are affected by small arms and light weapons proliferation and want to prevent escalation to more serious forms of conflict.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See "Tackling Small Arms and Light Weapons: A Practical Field Guide to Collection and Destruction" available at <http://sand.miis.edu/projects/guide.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> This definition of microdisarmament is taken from Claire Pike, *Facing the Challenges of Microdisarmament: A Case Study Review of Practices in Post Conflict Countries*, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada, March 1999 available at [www.fafo.no/piccr/pinpapers](http://www.fafo.no/piccr/pinpapers).

In general, terms such as *practical disarmament* and *weapons collection* describe similar sets of activities. These terms share with microdisarmament the objectives of reducing the proliferation and excessive post-conflict surpluses of small arms and light weapons in societies in which they represent a source of real or potential violence and insecurity. However, in microdisarmament, the prefix “micro” not only refers to the weapons type but also to the level at which disarmament occurs – the individual and community level. Under microdisarmament, disarmament processes are affected by such factors as the state’s ability to protect its citizens, economic opportunities and the degree to which guns are legitimised in society.

### **The Forum discussed innovative ways to address the demand for weapons by enhancing security and promoting development**

Discussion during the Forum revolved around specific experiences of weapons collection in Mozambique, El Salvador, Albania and Sierra Leone (the case of Mali was also indirectly represented through Norwegian non-governmental experts working in support of the small arms collection process in West Africa).

Participants discussed, for example, the disarmament process initiated in late 1999 in Sierra Leone, which presented the Forum with an unique opportunity to explore issues related to microdisarmament in the context of on-going challenges faced by a country emerging from conflict. During the Forum session on Mozambique, participants examined two distinct weapons collection initiatives. The first was the disarmament of combatants implemented through the DDR component of the United Nations peace support operation ONUMOZ (UN Operation in Mozambique).

The second, Tools for Arms, was an initiative of civil society, through the Christian Council of Mozambique, and was established in reaction to the widespread civilian possession of small arms, itself a consequence of the country’s prolonged civil war and an insufficient DDR process. In El Salvador, the Forum heard, the Goods for Guns programme grew out of domestic civil society leadership in addressing the escalating insecurity of a post-conflict environment saturated with weapons. The private sector organisation, Patriotic Movement Against Crime (MPCD), worked with politicians, the media, the judiciary, police and the military to collect weapons, change weapons related laws and generate a public security dialogue throughout the country. The Forum heard also of a pilot project entitled Weapons for Development, initiated by the UN’s Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Gramsh district of Albania. The project deploys community-based incentives and capacity-building support to local policing to help re-create collective responsibility for local security.

As described by the participants in the Forum, microdisarmament programmes offer important lessons about demand-side approaches to small arms and light weapons proliferation and about opportunities for structuring peace-building activities around weapons collection. In all of these countries, Forum participants described the impetus to establish a weapons collection programme as derived from the need to address the destabilising effects of these weapons, either in countries emerging from prolonged conflict or those attempting to prevent the outbreak of conflict. While the nature of each programme varied, in each case discussed the Forum participants emphasised that, to be successful and to have a sustainable impact, weapons collection must involve more than the technical exercise of physically removing small arms and light weapons from communities. They urged that such programmes should consist of a set of activities designed to address the *demand* for weapons as part of a co-ordinated approach to enhancing security and promoting development.

This report is an analytical reflection of the views of the participants in the Forum. The report begins with the Forum's discussion of the integration of development and security activities through microdisarmament programmes, particularly the transactions these programmes deploy to address the demand for weapons. In subsequent sections the report describes some of the key challenges facing microdisarmament programmes implemented by or during peace support operations. Finally, the concluding section identifies emerging conclusions and makes recommendations about possible follow-up activities relevant for multilateral and bilateral co-operation in formulating policies and practices to strengthen the effectiveness of microdisarmament activities.

## 2 Addressing Demand

### **The focus of policy is shifting towards integrating security and development**

The need for an integrated approach has been emphasised in a number of recent initiatives. In its guidelines for development assistance in conflict prone countries, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) acknowledges that the proliferation of small arms holds significance for security in post-conflict countries.<sup>3</sup> The Brussels Call for Action endorsed a proportional and integrated approach to security and development in conflict prone countries. It also underscored the need for donor support for weapons collection and development programmes in affected communities.<sup>4</sup>

### **“Security First” has helped re-focus policy**

A significant development in this approach is “security first” which, as practised in Mali, has become shorthand for an integrated and proportional approach to security and development.<sup>5</sup> The Forum heard that, until recent years, donor country agencies tended to distance themselves from security issues in general, and armaments in particular. “Security first”, as developed in relation to the disarmament efforts in West Africa, has helped to introduce the notion that some donor and domestic resources might best be spent in reforming the security sector. While in the

<sup>3</sup> OECD DAC, *Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation on the Threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Development Co-operation Guidelines Series, 1998; in particular, pp. 86-94. Its analysis, however, is limited to demobilization and reintegration of ex combatants and does not cover the civilian dimension of disarmament in post conflict countries.

<sup>4</sup> *The Brussels Call for Action*, International Conference on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development, October 1998. See *A Call for Concrete Measures on Human Security and Development*.

<sup>5</sup> Tore Rose, UNDP Resident Representative in Mali, defined security first as: “...a proportional and integrated approach encompassing development and security, refers to the obvious fact that without security in civilian life there can be no serious and sustainable development; and conversely, that without serious and sustainable development there will be insecurity or worse.”

case of West Africa, security sector reform was seen as a prerequisite for effective development, in many countries, investments in security and development should be undertaken in parallel.

### **Microdisarmament programmes have implemented innovative approaches which integrate weapons collection and development activities through transactions**

Participants noted that, in general, development and security should be considered together as elements of a comprehensive strategy which aims to improve the lives of affected populations, as a way to address the demand for weapons and as an incentive to disarm. Throughout the Forum, participants called for practitioners, policy makers and donors to move towards actually implementing an integrated approach to development and security as part of weapons collection programmes. They urged those responsible for the implementation of development and co-operation assistance – including donor and recipient governments, the international financial institutions, and the lead UN agencies and programmes – to consider how to incorporate a weapons collection component within existing development frameworks.

Specifically, participants urged practitioners to think of microdisarmament as category of weapons collection involving transactions which remove weapons as part of the promotion of social and economic development. Much of the Forum discussion centred around the transactions or exchanges at the heart of many weapons collection programmes. The following sub-sections explore questions related to incentives or benefits provided in exchange for weapons. It considers how these transactions can begin to address factors that encourage the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons and how those responsible for managing the implementation of programmes can ensure that the appropriate conditions are in place in order to avoid making communities more vulnerable. The section concludes with a discussion of factors to consider when evaluating the impact of these programmes.

## **2.1 Transactions in Microdisarmament**

In affected countries, the possession and misuse of small arms and light weapons is widespread, making disarmament a complex undertaking. Unlike the disarmament of nuclear, chemical or heavy weapons, the decision to disarm will be made by each

and every person who owns a gun. This requires policy makers and practitioners to determine the contexts in which they are seeking to encourage people and their communities to disarm.

### **In affected countries, demand for small arms and light weapons is driven by economic and personal insecurity**

The Forum highlighted the degree to which the perceptions and actions of individuals influence the effectiveness of weapons collection programmes. What drives individuals to want to retain their weapons? What are the social, economic or political disincentives to surrendering a weapon? Do they feel safe? If not, what is the nature of the threat? Does the weapon generate income? Is there a lack of productive alternatives or opportunities? What might cause them to dispose of their gun?

The Forum discussion ascribed the demand for weapons to economic and personal insecurity. A lack of economic opportunities may increase the reliance on weapons as income generators – especially when there is a regional demand for weapons or, as was sometimes the case of Mozambique, a local market for the rental of weapons on an informal and *ad hoc* basis. Also, factors such as pervasive violent crime and confidence in the state to protect citizens weigh heavily on decisions to disarm. In the north of Mali, people believe that the government is not capable of providing sufficient security and many have indicated that they will keep their weapons until this capacity exists. There has been relatively little violence to date as community leaders have worked to ensure that weapons are not used. The Forum heard that in such a situation, if key development and security concerns were not addressed, enforced arms collection could result in violence.

### **Weapons collection programmes may offer goods to individuals or development oriented incentives to communities**

In many weapons collection programmes, individuals often receive some form of personal and/or communal benefit in exchange for surrendering weapons. In El Salvador, successful personal incentives included in-kind vouchers for consumer goods, while in Mozambique farm implements or other tools to assist with productive opportunities worked well. In Albania, an exchange of cash-for-weapons was ruled out. Cash-for-weapons can raise fears of inflation and, rather than reduce their appeal, create a demand for weapons as sources of income. In Mozambique, the church run Tools for Arms programme did not want to offer cash for the weapons they received primarily because unemployment was a significant problem and the church wanted to provide people with sustainable productive opportunities rather than short-term income support.

Some programmes offer incentives at the level of the community. Participants emphasised that community-based programmes must be carefully tailored to local needs and context. In Gramsh, for example, community benefits included improvements to infrastructure or local policing. However, incentives will differ depending on an analysis of the programme's context: a rural setting will most likely require a different set of incentives from a programme focusing on individuals in an urban environment, and incentives deployed in one country might not translate well to another. For example; a South African organisation visited the Mozambican Tools for Arms programme to assess its applicability to their own country, but found that, in South Africa, people were not receptive to the sewing machines, bicycles, farm implements and other tools that had worked well in Mozambique.

### **Incentives should be sensitive to context**

Participants also noted that the messages conveyed through the microdisarmament exchanges should be considered during the planning phase. In UNDP's Weapons for Development programme in Albania, for example, a cash-for-weapons exchange was ruled out in part because, as many of the weapons had been looted from government depots, giving money to those that surrendered guns would be seen as a reward for theft. In addition, changes in black market prices made it difficult to plan budgets around the need to provide comparable rewards. Instead, exchanges were structured around community oriented projects, such as rebuilding sections of roads or installing telephone lines, as well as providing vehicles or communications systems to the local police to respond more effectively to the needs of the community.

### **Understanding context is a precondition to doing no harm**

Participants urged planners and implementers to understand the broader contexts within which communities are being disarmed in order to avoid making them overly vulnerable. As with the support to police capacities in Albania, or the deployment of a UN peace support operation in Sierra Leone, security initiatives which run parallel to weapons collection play a key role in success. Indeed, seeking to disarm communities whose safety cannot be guaranteed is irresponsible and dangerous. Ultimately, those implementing microdisarmament, as well as the government of the affected country, have a considerable responsibility to do no harm to those they are seeking to disarm.

### **Incentives should address a mix of security and development needs with the aim of promoting an exchange of weapons for improved security**

In its decision to use small scale development incentives to promote a collective benefit, the UNDP project was also emphasising a collective responsibility to turn over weapons and sustain development progress. Participation in the microdisarmament transaction is not restricted to those who surrendered weapons. Entire communities or households received some form of assistance that improved their lives. In exchange, they often opt for an alternative form of security, based on a decrease in the availability of weapons and improved police services.

The Forum discussion illustrated that exchanges in microdisarmament programmes are not simply a material or economic transaction. In fact, the transaction is one which involves an individual and/or a community choosing an alternate source or basis of security. Participants felt that the most successful approach is a mix of personal and community benefits, a mix which addresses why individuals keep or seek to obtain weapons and how communities can address that demand for weapons. They suggested that transactions should be chosen which emphasise peaceful and productive integration into society for individuals or communities surrendering weapons and that programmes should be context specific and tailored to the experiences and needs of communities.

## **2.2 Building Trust**

Choosing to abandon one security strategy for another is a difficult step to take. Often people have legitimate reasons for possessing weapons. In many instances, the surrendering of weapons in fluid economic or security situations demonstrates a degree of social responsibility which, given the circumstances, might otherwise be unexpected.

Participants noted that effectiveness of microdisarmament programmes demands the generation of a significant level of popular confidence in the security situation in general. The discussion made clear that this is not as impossibly broad or intangible as it might sound. For example; it may be as concrete as first understanding that enforced disarmament of one community could tip the balance of power, make a community vulnerable or fuel further conflict. The next step might be to find ways to build confidence in weapons collection as a means to increased security.

### **Implementing organisations must be trusted**

Forum participants emphasised that much depends upon the degree to which the implementing organisations are trusted by those in possession of weapons. In weapons collection programmes, individuals and communities surrender their weapon to some type of authority structure. In practice, these structures have included government institutions of law enforcement or security, international organisations, local NGOs, churches or other groups from civil society or the private sector. Participants emphasised that trust or confidence in those overseeing weapons collection was a key determinant of success. Following the conflict in El Salvador, for example, the Ministry of Defence organised a weapons collection programme. However, despite the offer of cash in exchange for weapons, the response was less than enthusiastic, in part because people did not feel secure identifying themselves to the military as former or potential combatants.

### **Trusted organisations are found at the grassroots**

Often communities, frustrated with the negative impact of small arms, look to groups in civil society to implement weapons collection programmes. Many of these groups have had no previous experience of weapons collection, but are known and trusted on the basis of other work they are doing in the community. A common characteristic shared by many practitioners participating in the Forum, was that they were not professional “microdisarmers”. Most were seen as active in the community and, because of the transparency and trust generated by this activism, in a position to take on weapons collection as a means of addressing a problem confronting the community as a whole. For example, the Christian Council of Mozambique’s (CCM) Tools for Arms (TAE) project was initiated by the Council in response to approaches from people in communities who requested that the Council assume responsibility for removing weapons from civilian circulation. When Council staff asked people “why us?” the answer was invariably that only the Council could be trusted with this issue.

### **Supporting grassroots efforts for weapons collection can help repair damaged social relations, which in turn can help generate a wider sense of security, thus reducing demand for weapons**

When these groups begin to address some of the factors driving the possession and misuse of weapons, they can contribute to the (re)establishment of social norms within affected communities or societies. The Forum heard how the experiences of national or locally-based weapons collection programmes, such as Goods for Guns and Tools for Arms, has created awareness among citizens, giving them a sense of

control and responsibility over their community, as well as their role in reducing violent crime. In Mozambique, experience has shown that individuals surrendering weapons express feelings of peace of mind or an increased sense of security once the weapons are no longer in their homes. Their participation may also give them a sense of control as they feel they are doing something about what they regard as a key source of insecurity.

The relationship of trust enjoyed by grassroots organisations can provide important opportunities for normalising relations within communities and facilitating their subscription to broader peace-building and reconciliation efforts. Micro-disarmament programmes educate people about the consequences of a militarised society and they communicate to individuals and communities, in words and action, that there is no need to continue possessing weapons. This is particularly important in situations where the use of weapons to promote fear and violence was in some ways routine. The Forum heard that it was not enough to remove weapons from society and that, in El Salvador for example, it was just as important to initiate a public security dialogue in order to influence weapons related laws. This included an extensive civic awareness campaign and co-operation from the private sector, as well as the police, military and judiciary, to promote legal reform.

### **Communities should be involved in programme development**

In addition, weapons collection can provide opportunities for rebuilding relationships between communities and state structures which may have been difficult or hostile in the past. However, participants emphasised that these opportunities will go unrealised unless based on an inclusive approach to programme development. Where appropriate, this might involve integrating representatives of parties to the conflict in the early stages of programme development.

### **Domestic authorities need to provide a proper legal framework**

Regulatory transparency and legal accountability are important factors in the individual's perceptions of overall security. In addition, adequate accountability and transparency is required in the regulation of weapons possession and collection, not least in the legal framework governing the possession or misuse of weapons. Recent experience with the MPCD in El Salvador indicates that a weakening of the legal framework has occasioned an increase in weapons possession since the end of the war. Under the new criminal code, threatening to use or even firing a weapon has been reduced to a misdemeanour. It also permits the civilian possession of high powered and semiautomatic weaponry. The increased firearms purchases in recent

years have been attributed in part to people seeking to protect themselves from violent crime in a context in which the common perception is that the country's weak weapons laws encourage criminal impunity. The result is that El Salvador is now more armed than ever before, via legal imports of weapons. This legal re-armament has significantly overshadowed some of the gains made by the Goods for Guns programme in removing underground weapons.

Governments must also to be flexible with application of the law to facilitate weapons collection, particularly as the granting of amnesties or grace periods to assist in weapons collection may require legislative or administrative changes to weapons related laws. In Albania, for example, UNDP's Weapons for Development programme was built around a general amnesty for the duration of the collection period. Amnesties or grace periods are necessary for most weapons collection programmes and delivering such basic administrative measures requires close co-operation with government. Participants noted that, to be effective, amnesties or grace periods need to be limited in time and, when finished, the law needs to be applied properly. Participants stressed that the need to enforce the law upon the expiry of the amnesty or grace period must be made clear to the public from the beginning of the programme.

## **2.3 Integrating the Security Sector**

The Forum emphasised the importance of the police and/or military in, for example, establishing security at collection sites and the handling of weapons, ammunition and explosive (which are often turned in along with small arms and other weapons). Goods for Guns in El Salvador, for example, received good co-operation from the police and military as institutions, as well as with police and military personnel who have volunteered to assist in the collection and destruction of weapons. This has had a positive impact on the public's perceptions of these institutions.

### **Co-operation with the police or military, where appropriate, can be important technically and in generating processes of confidence building.**

Participants stressed the importance of the technical aspects of microdisarmament that must be considered by those responsible for these programmes; especially practical issues such as the safe storage and transport of the weapons, ammunition and explosives collected. Given the range of groups that find themselves implementing

microdisarmament, it is understandable that many are unaware of the technical challenges they may face. During the start up phase, for example, many participants acknowledged they expected that only guns would be turned over and were unprepared for the ammunition and various explosives collected. The result was that many programmes found themselves under pressure to ensure the safe and proper storage and dismantling, as well as transport, for the full range of small arms and light weapons being surrendered, for which they had little experience or expertise.

Many programmes have built partnerships which incorporate the practical skills of the police and military. In Albania, the Tirana cell of the NATO Partnership for Peace approached UNDP and offered practical advice concerning collection and storage. Mozambique's Tools for Arms programme received assistance from demobilised soldiers with technical aspects of weapons collection. This was also the case in El Salvador, where police and military volunteers dismantled weapons, grenades and other explosives collected through Goods for Guns.

Participants also discussed questions related to security at collection sites and, where appropriate, the disposal of materials collected. It was generally agreed that the police and military are normally the best equipped and trained for such tasks. The experiences of co-operation with the security sector represented at the Forum were largely positive and participants seemed to agree that, where possible, local groups should seek to take advantage of the expertise of the police and military. Furthermore, participants noted that the co-operation of these institutions signals to the government respect for core issues of state sovereignty, including monopoly on the use of force. However, it was acknowledged that the participation of these institutions – or their personnel as individuals – would not be feasible in situations where there exists no reliable law enforcement, or where they are viewed with suspicion or fear by particular communities or the population at large.

Whether the security sector is engaged to assist with technical aspects of weapons collection or as part of a wider effort to ensure safety, their involvement in microdisarmament programmes has the potential to improve their relations with communities. This is a significant contribution in countries or regions that have experienced conflict. The active involvement of the Salvadoran police and military as volunteers, sometimes out of uniform, was a powerful message for citizens of their support for the project in that country. Engaging the technical expertise of demobilised Mozambican combatants in the destruction of weapons collected through Tools for Arms sent important messages to the community about the stability of the peace. In this regard, microdisarmament can become a confidence building measure for both sides.

### **The ability of the security sector to protect civilians will decide much about the willingness of people to disarm**

Throughout the Forum, co-operation with security structures such as the military and police was identified as a significant, and often critical component, of micro-disarmament. The police in particular, are an essential component in addressing issues related to personal security. In the case of Albania, some of the factors that contributed to the reluctance of people to surrender their weapons included the confrontational political atmosphere in the country and regional instabilities stemming from events in Kosovo.

The residents of Gramsh also indicated that surrendering their weapons might make them vulnerable to neighbouring districts which had not been disarmed. A marked lack of resources, together with the difficult terrain, meant that the police were unable to maintain an effective presence or respond quickly to calls for assistance. Therefore, an essential component of the weapons for development project was supporting local police capacity in order to allow them to maintain a more effective presence in the district, thereby reassuring residents that they were not more vulnerable as a result of disarmament.

## **2.4 Operationalizing an Integrated Approach: The Example of Gramsh**

Weapons for Development was a weapons collection project with a development component, rather than a development project with a weapons collection clause inserted into its programming documents. The primary objective of DDA and UNDP in launching the project was to remove weapons from the Gramsh district.

### **Weapons for Development was a weapons collection project with a development component.**

In planning the pilot project of the Weapons for Development programme, UNDP sought out partners in geographic areas that were relatively stable. Weapons collection in areas where there is still fighting or severe unrest risks making people feel more vulnerable and insecure. This is a particularly valid concern in areas where other groups remain armed and potentially hostile. Even though residents of the Gramsh area had definite concerns, the degree of stability in the area meant they were more likely to be willing to consider exchanging their weapons for development benefits and improvements in security.

It was evident to UNDP that Weapons for Development involved processes that could be not imposed. For example, it was not enough to inform people that weapons would be collected on a particular day, show up in the town square with a truck, and provide rewards to those willing to hand over weapons, without regard to the overall community. Rather, the programme was developed through processes that involved the community in identifying appropriate exchanges for disarmament. The result was a set of community-centred transactions that emphasised a collective responsibility to surrender weapons and, in exchange, benefits of use to the entire community.

**The nature of the exchange was developed through consultation, a process which helped refine the project, build community support and identify possible hurdles**

This required a certain amount of preparatory work in order to raise awareness of the value of participating in microdisarmament, as well as the communes' (municipalities) responsibility in making the project work. Although this took some time, this degree of preparation was necessary given the project's community-based approach. The emphasis on community benefits also required UNDP to interact with the various communes, their leaders and local NGOs in order to determine the most useful types of development incentives. All of these activities created widespread support for the process, and allowed those affected to provide input to the project's definition.

While such a participatory framework was necessary for the project's success, it presented many challenges. It was inevitable that the level of co-operation from communes would be complicated by the number of groups consulted. Competition between commune leaders made it more difficult to settle on development priorities that could be deployed as incentives. Some local officials expected to receive direct personal benefits from the programme, or control over the awarding of contracts. In these cases, tension occurred when it was made clear that UNDP was implementing standard procedures that prevented officials from controlling funds allotted to each commune.

Another challenge, was the degree to which local politicians identified themselves with the national governing or opposition political parties. Meetings organised by the weapons for development project were sometimes boycotted by one party, requiring UNDP to meet with the offended party and convince them of the project's political neutrality.<sup>6</sup> Under these circumstances, the inclusion of a public awareness

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that an unintended, but welcome, outcome was improved relations among local politicians as they were eventually able to co-operate to make the project work.

component within the programme was critical in helping the programme remain transparent to all participants and in allowing UNDP to communicate the project objectives, or reasons for project delays, directly to the population of the commune.

### **Public awareness can lead to high expectations**

A continuing challenge for UNDP was keeping people's expectations within realistic bounds. The pilot programme received widespread publicity in Albania, in part because of televised discussions broadcast throughout the country in order to increase receptivity to similar weapons for development projects beyond Gramsh. There was a significant level of awareness generated at both the local and national level on the dangers of weapons, as well as the consequences of living in a militarised society. While beneficial, the high profile nature of the project raised expectations in Gramsh concerning the types of development initiatives they would receive.

### **The incentives selected need to be realistic given the resources available**

The resources available to the programme would not cover a comprehensive development project. Therefore, the development incentives offered could not be grandiose, nor could they have a dramatic impact to the physical face of the district. Instead, they were comprised of basic improvements such as repairs to small sections (usually 2–5km) of critical road networks or electricity grids, installing telephone lines, building a public address system in the town of Gramsh, and donating three vehicles to the Gramsh police.

### **Donors or partners who delay, risk undermining the security situation**

The time it took to deliver these improvement presented some difficulty for the project. In most microdisarmament programmes, the transactions made with individuals are more immediate i.e., they receive the benefit when they hand over their weapon. In Gramsh, however, road repairs were complicated by factors such as procurement (all contracts for work were tendered locally and publicly). This process, together with the time that it took to make repairs, meant that the completion of actual development incentives took as long as 2–3 months. The use of small-scale development incentives may mean, therefore, that many of the activities promised to communities as incentives come some months after those communities surrender weapons.

The lengthy delay in receiving the benefits after weapons had already been collected was problematic for communes. During public meetings, many people indicated that they had received empty promises from NGOs in the past and were concerned that UNDP might not deliver on its development commitments after communities had already surrendered weapons. While this has not been the case, the experience of Weapons for Development in Albania indicates that, to preserve credibility and minimise popular frustrations, implementing agencies must narrow the time lag between weapons collection and the delivery of development incentives.

## **2.5 Measures of Success**

The very term “weapons collection” implies that a logical approach to measuring success would be to determine the number of guns (and explosives and ammunition) collected by these programmes, relative to the levels of small arms proliferation. This apparently simple exercise is in fact made difficult by problems with data collection.

### **Quantitative measures are difficult to implement ...**

Due to illegal arms flows into and out of many post-conflict countries, and the relatively weak regulatory or reporting mechanisms in most post-conflict countries, it is difficult to track these illicit trans-boundary flows of arms or maintain comprehensive data on legal domestic weapons possession over time. In the absence of this data, it is difficult to place the number of weapons collected by any one programme in the context of the number of weapons possessed in a particular country.

### **... and don't capture tangible improvements in security.**

While it is important to know the quantity and types of small arms and light weapons collected, the participants agreed that evaluating microdisarmament by quantitative means alone leads to inaccuracies in assessments of quantitative or qualitative impacts. For example; Over the course of its pilot programme in Gramsh, UNDP collected approximately 6,000 weapons. As a quantitative measure, this figure represents an impressive result *and* signifies that much remains to be done.

**There are other ways to measure a programme's impact ...**

There is little doubt that the project has helped improve the security situation in Gramsh. International NGOs have been attracted to the area and the positive working relationship between the community and the police continues. Moreover, the improvements to the district's infrastructure will be of benefit to the population for a number of years and the manner in which development incentives were decided at the commune level allowed people to actively participate and shape the programme's implementation, reinforcing non violent ways of bringing about change.

**... particularly its contribution to peace-building in general.**

If an evaluation of the impact of microdisarmament is limited to determining the number of small arms and light weapons collected, its role in countering violence and building partnerships among diverse groups within society is neglected. Microdisarmament programmes generate dialogue between communities and various state structures i.e., police, military, judiciary, political representatives from different levels of government. The programmes educate and increase public awareness about the impacts of small arms and options for removing them from circulation. They provide productive opportunities to people and contribute to reconstruction for communities. Defining the success of these programmes through quantitative measures alone, ignores the nature of the transactions pursued through these programmes and their contribution to rebuilding the security – physical and psychological – of communities affected by violence.

## 3 Microdisarmament in Peace Support Operations

### **Weapons collection by a PSO can reduce post-conflict arms surpluses**

Disarmament in peace support operations is limited to combatants and usually occurs in the immediate post-conflict period. In peace support operations, disarmament is the first activity undertaken in the DDR process – Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration. It often represents a country's initial attempt to remove weapons from circulation and as such, effective weapons collection by a peace support operation has the potential to minimise post-conflict arms surpluses. This is an important foundation upon which to base the transition from conflict.

### 3.1 Disarmament Mandates

A common criticism discussed during the Forum was the lack of specificity and enforcement powers of disarmament mandates. The need was identified for clearly stated enforcement powers that allow a more active approach to disarmament. Participants discussed the complicated issue of balancing robust enforcement powers with the political demands of the peace-building process.

#### **Mission mandates can undermine effectiveness ...**

In discussing the disarmament mandates of peace support operations, the Forum focused primarily on ONUMOZ in Mozambique. The operation was described as a success in facilitating the short term implementation of the peace accords and establishing the institutional foundations for the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Some participants noted that one of the mission's shortcomings was its inability to ensure effective disarmament or destruction of weapons collected. In part, they attributed this to the absence of a specific disarmament mandate. This occurred because disarmament was subsumed within demobilisation which, it was argued, obviated an operational distinction between the two activities. In operational terms,

this restricted disarmament to assembly areas and prevented access to weapons caches.

**... but greater enforcement powers may complicate peace-building.**

Beyond its obvious intuitive appeal, the question of actively seeking and destroying weapons was seen as difficult in practice: once peace accords have been signed, the conflict is not over, it is in transition. In Mozambique, as in many other cases, the parties to the conflict came to the table only once the military option had been exhausted. They engaged in the peace process at what was described as a moment of severe weakness and both harboured acute levels of mistrust. Consequently, both were reluctant to disarm and both retained significant weapons caches in the event that the peace accords collapsed and there was a return to conflict.

**Microdisarmament activities may offer alternatives to enforced disarmament ...**

Mistrust is a common element of peace processes that compels the parties to retain weapons. It is common for both sides to withhold weapons until they gain a clear indication that peace is in some sense sustainable, beyond the often short-lived cease-fires. In most circumstances, actively enforcing disarmament during this delicate stage would prove unsuccessful and could result in significant setbacks. In the case of Mozambique, the leadership of ONUMOZ, keen to secure concessions from both sides on other issues, did not push as hard as it might have on the question of weapons. The Forum discussion indicated that full disarmament may only become feasible as the parties gain confidence in the peace process, but that microdisarmament programmes could contribute to confidence building during the early post-conflict period.

**... and help bridge the gap in disarmament activities between the peace-keeping phase and reconstruction**

Participants noted that the approach of peace support operations towards disarmament based only on its role vis a vis demobilisation, tended to preclude any consideration of the civilian dimension of disarmament. The same is often true of peace accords. Since the issue receives little or no recognition during the negotiation phase there tends to be no formal foundation for subsequent microdisarmament programmes. This acts as an obstacle to civilian disarmament being made a political or reconstruction priority early in the transition from conflict.

This is a significant omission. Often, the disarmament of civilians is neglected until a few years later, when civil society assumes responsibility for addressing the widespread circulation of weapons. In El Salvador, the diffusion of surplus weapons, including explosives, had been a major contributor to continuing violence and instability, and was closely linked to post-conflict black markets, drug cartels, juvenile gangs and organised crime. The escalation of violence and crime, influenced by the easy availability of small arms and light weapons, is a phenomenon witnessed by other countries in transition.

## **3.2 Responsiveness**

Participants noted that it was important for peace support operations to respond in a convincing manner. In many cases, this has been compromised by funding interruptions and delays in the deployment of essential resources, such as peacekeepers, required to implement disarmament mandates. For example, during the negotiations of Sierra Leone's July 1999 peace accord, a significant UN presence had been a key issue and an important confidence building measure for the rebels who did not trust ECOMOG. However, the first major deployment of UN peacekeepers did not occur until late November and many of these lacked essential equipment. In addition, there have been instances where peacekeepers have been confronted by rebel elements and unable to respond effectively. The Security Council has increased its authorisation of 6,000 peacekeepers to 11,100, however the impact on the disarmament process will depend on the number and quality of troops, as well as other resources, made available by UN member states. Participants stressed the importance of early deployment of troops and other requisite resources in order to convey a wilful approach, avoid a drawn out disarmament process, and establish a momentum towards alternative foundations for a country's security.

### **Early deployment and timely implementation creates momentum and confidence.**

The relative responsiveness to the issues related to small arms proliferation is also important for the credibility of other actors, not least the governments of affected countries. Over the course of Sierra Leone's conflict, the government cancelled two separate disarmament initiatives. In 1998, for example, it was forced to recycle troops that had been slated for disarmament. The programme had been implemented prematurely, as fighting had not actually ceased, and combatants were removed from the programme in order to support ECOMOG efforts against the rebels. This

resulted in disappointment and a significant loss of confidence within the country and among external actors in the government's ability to implement disarmament.

### **3.3 Reintegration and Reconstruction**

Although the disarmament component in DDR precedes demobilisation and reintegration, the degree to which its impact endures in the post-conflict environment is very much a function of the effectiveness of the later DDR activities. Participants noted that this was particularly true in relation to the reintegration of ex-combatants.

#### **The R in DDR is central to the sustainability of disarmament**

In Sierra Leone, providing alternative occupations to soldiering for its troops was identified as a primary concern of the government. The prospects were described as daunting as the country had been devastated by the war and faces acute reconstruction needs. A significant portion of the population has been displaced or become refugees. The challenges of reintegrating ex-combatants under these circumstances are both dire and typical of countries emerging from conflict. However, in Sierra Leone, there are barely enough resources to move beyond the first stage of disarmament let alone finance other essential post-conflict needs.

#### **The speed and effectiveness of reconstruction will determine opportunities for ex-combatants and civilians alike**

It was agreed by participants that the medium-term success or failure of microdisarmament hinges heavily on the support a country receives for reconstruction. Participants observed that countries are often under intense pressure from the international financial institutions to reduce social expenditure when the need is greatest. They also stressed the importance of economic development assistance, commenting that it was unrealistic to expect countries to reintegrate former combatants into economies destroyed by conflict without external support. In El Salvador, the reintegration of significant numbers of ex-combatants was complicated by their economic prospects. Some decided to retain or acquire weapons and form criminal groups that have contributed to the country's escalating rate of violent crime. Participants also stated that DDR programmes often failed to factor in the differentiated experiences and needs of women and/or child combatants.

The degree to which the prospects for reintegration influence decisions to disarm are not limited to combatants. It is important to recognise that civilians face similar challenges when attempting to integrate themselves productively into the post conflict economy. In Sierra Leone, for example, the design of the DDR programme did not take into account the families of mature combatants. In addition, reintegration assistance that former combatants receive must contend with civilian reactions to programmes which may appear to be rewarding unpopular ex-combatants. Participants urged that non combatants be treated fairly and that, where relevant, DDR be matched by parallel microdisarmament programmes for civilians.

### **3.4 Weapons destruction**

Most participants agreed that the disarmament component of peace support operations, and microdisarmament programmes in general, should include the destruction of small arms and light weapons collected. The destruction of weapons sends the important signal that weapons are no longer necessary. It also guarantees that the weapons surrendered will not be recycled, domestically or internationally, and contribute to further insecurity. This is important for the affected country, as well as surrounding region. It minimises the export of arms surpluses to neighbouring countries which themselves may be experiencing tensions.

#### **Destruction of weapons collected sends a message and reduces proliferation.**

Decisions to destroy weapons are not always straightforward, nor can they be imposed. The Weapons for Development programme in Albania has not included a destruction component because the vast majority of the weapons in circulation were looted from government stores. Albania is a sovereign country, with a standing army and in possession of weapons for its police and army. Destroying weapons which are the property of the military and are intended for military purposes would simply create an added budgetary burden. However, in situations where there is a weak or illegitimate security sector, every effort should be made to destroy collected weapons to prevent their reintroduction into society or their transfer to neighbouring conflicts.

## 4 Emerging Conclusions and Recommendations

Microdisarmament entails an approach to the removal of small arms and light weapons which seeks to integrate security and development activities. Whether implemented by multilateral organisations or domestic NGOs, whether focused on individuals or communities, the integration of these activities should aim to create an opportunity for people to make a choice based on the incentives and disincentives for possessing or surrendering a weapon.

The Forum discussion raised a number of points relevant to the design and implementation of microdisarmament programmes:

### Addressing Demand

1. Grassroots initiatives to establish microdisarmament programmes are often based on a community's desire to address the destabilising effects of the proliferation or use of weapons. These same initiatives often find that to be effective, or to have a sustained impact, they must address the sources of the demand for weapons, not the problem of proliferation alone.
2. The demand for small arms and light weapons is driven in large part by individual, household and communal perceptions of economic and physical insecurity. This tends to be true both for countries or communities emerging from prolonged conflict and for those places where conflict threatens.
3. There is a close link between the supply of and demand for small arms and light weapons. Unchecked, the demand for small arms will make attempts to regulate arms flows extremely difficult; while the unregulated trans-boundary flows of small arms and light weapons undermine efforts of affected countries to remove these weapons from circulation.
4. Microdisarmament programmes should consist of a set of activities designed to address the demand for weapons as part of a co-ordinated approach to enhancing security and promoting social and economic development.

5. To be effective, microdisarmament activities should be part of a larger spectrum of activities that can address the demand for weapons in particular, and contribute to normalising relations in communities affected by violence in general.
6. A microdisarmament programme cannot address *all* of the political, social or economic factors that drive the demand for the possession or use of weapons in affected countries, nor should such programmes seek to do so.
7. Microdisarmament programmes should integrate development and security-related activities to the core weapons collection project. Similarly, weapons collection or related activities should be integrated to the relevant development programmes.

### **Transactions**

8. Exchanges in microdisarmament programmes involve encouraging an individual and/or a community to choose an alternate survival or security strategy. Improvements in peaceful security strategies should be a fundamental objective of microdisarmament activities.
9. In structuring incentives, the most successful approach has been a mix of personal and community benefits. This mix of incentives should address why individuals keep or seek to obtain weapons and how communities can address that demand for weapons.
10. Incentives should be context specific and tailored to the experiences and needs of communities. Economic and social incentives should emphasise peaceful and productive integration into society for individuals, and economic and social development for households and communities.

### **Implementation**

11. A microdisarmament programme should be initiated where or when open conflict has ceased and/or where there exists a minimum of security.
12. Planning the programme should be based on sound data. In situations in which reliable data is hard to come by, rapid survey methodologies may be required. Integrated survey methodologies used in de-mining activities and in rapid household living conditions research offer examples upon which to draw.

13. A programme should prepare for implementation with significant community relations efforts. Independent information and public awareness activities are critical to establishing and maintaining trust as well as reasonable expectations.
14. Amnesties and other regulatory measures relevant to microdisarmament should be transparent, well communicated and enforced with fairness.
15. Trust in the implementing agency is a key determinant of success. It can also provide important opportunities to support the broader peace-building agenda.
16. Implementing organisations should do no harm to those they seek to disarm. They must ensure that their activities do not inadvertently make communities or individuals more insecure or vulnerable.
17. Implementing organisations should seek co-operation with security sector institutions where appropriate, particularly concerning technical assistance in the handling of weapons and ammunition.
18. Security sector institutions should not be integrated to microdisarmament activities in the absence of accountable law enforcement or in situations where the communities which are the focus of the activities are threatened by the participation of individuals or institutions from the security sector.
19. Microdisarmament programmes will have a greater and more sustained impact if they are matched by effective demobilisation and reintegration of combatants and if they are integrated to or co-ordinated with strategies for reconstruction.
20. Evaluating microdisarmament programmes requires both the quantitative investigation of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as well as the qualitative assessment of the conflict prevention and/or peace-building impacts of the programmes.

## **4.1 Future Action**

Forum participants urged practitioners, policy makers and donors to move towards implementing an integrated approach to development and security through microdisarmament programmes. To this end, the analysis of the Forum discussion suggests a number of initiatives related to policy and practice:

## **Financing**

Microdisarmament programmes are often grassroots efforts. As a result, they often fall off the political radar of the more prestige oriented donors. The work accomplished through national or locally-based microdisarmament programmes is often punctuated by serious funding shortages, limiting the reach and planning capacities of these initiatives.

21. Donor countries should consider innovative ways of supporting grassroots microdisarmament initiatives. For example; the appropriate government departments (aid agencies, foreign and defence ministries) should explore bilateral mechanisms to identify and mobilise assistance to develop or support microdisarmament programmes as conflict prevention initiatives and/or in the context of peace support operations.
22. The United Nations has established two separate trust funds to support weapons collection, administered by UNDP and the Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA). More work needs to be done to make these mechanisms effective. Member states and the relevant UN agencies should build on administrative reforms already underway to ensure that these become more responsive to the financial needs of national or locally-based programmes.

## **Implementation Issues**

23. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) should consider ways to expand its efforts to date related to microdisarmament activities and bilateral overseas development assistance.
24. The authority to support or undertake microdisarmament activities, both as components of DDR programmes and in support of civilian microdisarmament initiatives, should be included in the mandates of peace support operations. The United Nations Security Council should interpret its mandate to include microdisarmament activities as an integral part of peace-keeping.
25. The key relevant multilateral organisations should initiate processes to establish their own programmatic responses and a common division of labour with regards to microdisarmament in post-conflict transitions. This effort should include the UN's DDA, DPKO, UNDP and Department of Political Affairs (DPA), World Bank and IMF, NATO, OSCE, as well as the relevant foreign and development ministries.

## **Demand and Supply Linkages**

26. Multilateral efforts should be made to simultaneously address both supply and demand for small arms. On a case by case basis, interested governments and NGOs might consider ways that microdisarmament programmes could integrate to their activities support for the monitoring or regulation of arms flows.
27. Preparatory consultations for the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (scheduled for 2001) should consider surplus weapons in affected countries in light of their significance for illicit trade. The Conference should explore options for the collection of surplus weapons, particularly in those post-conflict countries through which weapons are transported or from which weapons surpluses are drawn for illicit trade.
28. The Conference should consider such linkages between supply and demand in the global trade in small arms and light weapons. Ammunition arose in the Forum as a key linkage between demand and supply issues. Simply put, better regulation and/or control of the production and transfer of ammunition, can make weapons more difficult to use and thereby reduce the demand for weapons in affected countries.
29. In all of these policy formulation processes, affected countries must be involved, both on an inter-governmental level and through non-governmental organisations.

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# Swords for Ploughshares

Controlling the use and proliferation of small arms and light weapons has become a focus of international efforts to prevent conflict and promote human security. In September 1999, Fafo's Peace Implementation Network convened a special Forum in Montreal on the policies and practices of small arms and light weapons disarmament as a component of peace-building and as part of peace support operations. The Forum brought together a small group of professionals with operational experience in weapons collection, including officials from bilateral and multilateral institutions, international and national non-governmental organisations. Drawing on the observations and analysis presented by these participants "Swords for Ploughshares" examines the dynamics of weapons collection programmes and offers practicable measures to improve the implementation of these programmes.

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