



Centre for
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Armed violence and conflict assessments

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MAKING KNOWLEDGE WORK

The Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative

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The AVPI is made up of four projects:

- 1) A Briefing Papers series on armed violence and poverty reduction measures in the areas of DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration), SSR (Security Sector Reform), Conflict Assessment, and Rural Livelihoods.
- 2) An assessment of the impact of small arms projects on arms availability and poverty.
- 3) A research project which documents and analyses the circumstances in and processes by which armed violence exacerbates poverty and development.
- 4) A research project which documented the impact of arms transfers on poverty and development.

All of these reports can be downloaded from www.bradford.ac.uk/cics.

This initiative, which expanded beyond DFID to involve a number of donor agencies and NGOs, grew out of a concern to understand the problems created by arms availability and their violent use, and of the ways in which measures to reduce armed violence can be integrated into poverty reduction work at both policy and programme level. This briefing aims to clarify and highlight ways in which the spread, possession and (mis)use of SALW and related armed violence issues can be relevant in conflict assessments, and how they can be integrated better within such assessments. The authors would like to thank Paul Eavis for comments made on an earlier draft.

1. Introduction

The flows, availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) associated with armed violence and insecurity, are clearly potentially important factors in war-torn and conflict-prone countries. It therefore follows that they need to be properly taken into account in conflict assessments conducted by development agencies to inform their country and regional strategies, with the aim of ensuring policies and programmes are ‘conflict sensitive’.

In practice to date, however, SALW have rarely been highlighted as a substantial issue in conflict assessments, nor one on which donors can subsequently develop programming responses as part of holistic conflict reduction strategies. One reason for this oversight is that research into SALW as a specific factor in conflict dynamics and impacts is relatively new, particularly in terms of the connections between SALW flows, availability and misuse in the development context. As such, the significance of SALW and other arms is often underestimated or too narrowly considered in conflict assessment frameworks and practice. Where they are considered, they are often treated as an ‘exogenous’ factor: as a symptom rather than part of the complex connections driving conflict dynamics, developmental impacts, and presenting conflict reduction opportunities. This has been largely true for DFID, which has developed its own guidelines for such conflict assessments, as described in *Conducting Conflict Assessments: Guidance Notes* (DFID, 2002). The implication is that conflict assessments are missing a potentially important element in their analyses, with repercussions for the effectiveness of programming responses of development agencies and their partners.

This briefing aims to clarify and highlight ways in which the spread, possession and (mis)use of SALW and related armed violence issues can be relevant in conflict assessments, and how they can be integrated better within such assessments. It employs the conflict assessment framework set out in DFID’s conflict assessment guidelines, and thus aims particularly to assist people who may be: commissioning and developing terms of reference for a specific assessment; undertaking a desk-based and/or field assessment; and those taking forward the analysis to the development of programming responses. There already exists the potential for SALW issues to be addressed within DFID’s existing conflict assessment guidelines, and thus this paper does not suggest that DFID’s methodology has to change but rather ‘opened-up’ to include SALW more fully within their analyses and the strategies they generate.

Most of the issues raised have generic relevance, and thus the briefing may also be of wider sectoral or international use to those considering sector-specific assessments and the use of other analytical frameworks where armed violence issues arise (such as in poverty and social impact assessment; sustainable livelihoods analysis; drivers of change; and needs assessments in various contexts, including post-conflict environments).

2. SALW and conflict

It is estimated that there are some 640 million SALW in existence. Most of these are in official military, police or other state security agencies, but vast quantities are also legitimately held by civilians. Many millions more are held by criminals and armed militias. SALW are by far the primary instrument of armed violence in war, and particularly in the complex civil wars that have devastated many developing and transitional countries in recent years. Most rebel groups fighting against states, many state forces, and many militias in inter-communal conflict, are almost exclusively armed with SALW. These arms are closely associated with the increased proportion (between 30 – 90%) of civilian deaths in wars since 1990.¹

SALW do not ‘cause’ armed conflicts, which typically arise from a complex and dynamic set of factors, as emphasised in DFID’s conflict assessment guidelines. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are strong links between SALW flows, availability and misuse and the risks and forms of violent conflict. Access to SALW is often a key factor in the escalation, intensity, pattern, spread and duration of conflicts. The wide availability of SALW makes civil wars, inter-communal violence, and armed crime more feasible and more destructive. The armed violence and insecurity associated with SALW proliferation obstructs development and humanitarian efforts, and thus contributes to factors underlying conflicts. It also hinders post-conflict peace building and reconstruction, contributing to the risk of recurrent violence and the costs of rising armed crime commonly experienced in post-conflict societies.

Moreover, efforts to address SALW problems are part of the wide range of measures available to contribute to conflict prevention and reduction. Not only can efforts to address SALW be important in their own right, but they can also have powerful symbolic or confidence-building value. For example, weapons hand-in and destruction programmes have contributed substantially to conflict prevention and peace-building in numerous conflict-prone or post-conflict countries, from El Salvador and Mali to Cambodia. SALW can have complex connections with many aspects of development agencies’ agendas. As such, it can not only be addressed through SALW-specific projects or programmes, or as an integrated component of ‘direct’ conflict prevention or peace-building programmes, but also through mainstreaming an understanding of SALW issues in the design of conflict-sensitive development programmes.

Conflict assessments typically include three key elements: conflict analysis; analysis of responses, and the development of strategies and options (for example, these are the main sections of DFID guidance notes on conflict assessments). This briefing discusses the relevance of SALW issues for each of these elements in turn. The aim is not to suggest that SALW issues are always a critical factor in conflict-prone societies: this is a matter for specific investigation and analysis in each case. Rather it is to clarify the ways in which SALW issues may be relevant and important, particularly in the complex, multi-

¹ ICRC, Arms Availability and the situation of civilians in armed conflict, (Geneva, ICRC, 1999).

levelled and interlocking patterns of tension and conflicts in countries in which development agencies often operate.

3. SALW and conflict analysis

DFID's guidance notes on conflict assessments (Section 1) suggest that conflict analyses may be approached through three dimensions: historical/structural factors contributing to conflict (conflict structures); conflict actors; and conflict dynamics. SALW issues are relevant to each of these dimensions in a multiplicity of ways, depending (for example) upon the 'phase' of the conflict in the country/region concerned.

3.1 Structures (historical/structural factors underlying conflicts)

The DFID Guidance Notes already identify 'the proliferation of light weapons' as a security factor amongst its illustrative list of sources of tension and conflict (Table 2, p12). As noted above, excessive or uncontrolled availability, flow and misuse of SALW can escalate, intensify, spread and extend the duration of armed conflicts. Their easy availability can turn endemic low-level social violence and crime into a major challenge to the state's monopoly over violence that is seen to require an armed response, as well as significantly raising the numbers and degree to which vulnerable people are affected by armed violence and insecurity.

Arms flows and accumulations can have an overall structural impact by making it more feasible for numerous interest groups to try to use violence to resolve conflicts in their favour. Arms flows constitute and facilitate relationships amongst armed groups and suppliers that can entangle a country in neighbouring conflicts from which it might otherwise be able to distance itself. In insecure countries, simply the visibility of arms or the sound of gunshots (even from hunters) can sap public confidence and generate fear and instability.

However, SALW can have much wider significance than as a single factor to be taken into account within the 'security' dimension of a given context. The spread, availability and misuse of such weapons can further contribute to many of the other long-term factors underlying conflict, as well as the compounding of their impacts on poverty. Further analysis can identify the ways in which SALW are intimately connected with other aspects of the security context, and with the underlying political, economic and social characteristics of the conflict:

3.1.1 Security

The availability, spread and misuse of SALW contributes to key security factors underlying conflict. For example, it can be a cause as well as a symptom of: limited reach and poor control of military, police and other security forces; human rights abuses from security forces and other armed groups; poorly controlled borders; and the potency of non-state militias, vigilantes and other armed groups.

For instance, the wide availability of AK-47 and other automatic assault rifles across much of sub-Saharan Africa has made it harder for relatively poorly resourced police or border guards or traditional authorities to assert their authority over borders, criminals, bandits or militias, and has greatly exacerbated the scale of abuses that can readily be perpetrated on vulnerable people. SALW may be legally or illicitly supplied by states and others to governments or armed groups in support of strategic security interests, and arms flows across borders can produce regional conflict ‘systems’.

3.1.2 Politics

SALW and the risks of armed violence contribute to key political factors underlying conflict. High levels of armed crime and violence in a society can undermine respect for law and government, limit the reach of government, discourage participation amongst relatively vulnerable sectors of society (including women and the poor) and provide the context for vigilantism. The political exploitation of ethnic, religious and other differences has sometimes included the distribution of SALW to allied groups, with wide and enduring consequences. Ready availability of arms tends to increase the risks of violence and intimidation in elections. Wide access to highly lethal SALW can help to overwhelm the capacity of existing conflict management and dispute resolution systems.

3.1.3 Economy

The economy can be severely affected by the availability and use of SALW. Fears of armed violence tend to disrupt or constrain much economic or developmental activity – including mobility and trade, as well as access to education and health care – undermining both rural and urban livelihoods (see for example, the Armed Violence and Rural Livelihoods Briefing Paper in this series). It distorts patterns of economic development, and often contributes to economic marginalisation and under-investment in already deprived areas – exacerbating social division and economic disparities. It deters foreign investment, tourism and other key areas for economic development. These impacts can help aggravate underlying economic sources of tension and conflict.

The growth of black and parallel economies and the development and maintenance of ‘war economies’ are intimately linked with the relative empowerment of armed groups associated with SALW proliferation. For example, the links between the drug trade and the spread of weapons and violence was highlighted in DFID’s conflict assessment in the Ferghana Valley of Kyrgyzstan. In insecure or conflict environments, SALW may be a crucial part of the war economy, facilitating and enforcing extortion and corruption, as well as feeding into widening insecurity through ‘defensive’ weapons ownership to protect livelihoods.

3.1.4 Social

In relation to social sources of tension, SALW proliferation can reinforce processes of social exclusion and the general degeneration of social capital. The legacy of unresolved ethnic or political conflicts may be heightened by an abundance of SALW that increases violence and casualties associated with social friction. Migrants and displaced peoples can not only be driven by SALW-related violence, but used in SALW flows, particularly in cross-border trafficking. The emergence of cultures of violence may become entwined

with gun cultures, increasing the human costs and making the violence harder to manage overall. The spread of SALW to disenfranchised youth and “warrior” groups may further reinforce cultures of violence at the expense of customary governance and conflict management systems.

In summary, in conflict-prone countries it is often a mistake to readily assume, as many still do in the development community, that SALW issues are simply a symptom rather than a source of tension and conflict. In the complex and dynamic processes that are characteristic of conflict-prone countries, supposed ‘symptoms’ and ‘underlying tensions’ become intimately entwined over time. SALW often feature, either explicitly or implicitly, in perceptions of power and insecurity, and conflict analyses need to be alert to this possibility.

3.2 Conflict actors

Alongside examinations of historical or structural factors, DFID and other conflict assessments require an analysis of the interests, relations, capacities, agendas, and incentives of the actors who influence or are affected by conflict. SALW availability can affect all of these factors.

Access to SALW, including ammunition and explosives, is a critical attribute for actors in countries at risk or suffering from armed conflict. It is an important determinant of their capacity to influence conflict. Moreover, SALW availability and flow can substantially change the capacities of some actors to influence events – enhancing the capacities of certain armed groups, while disempowering others. Even a relatively small and unpopular group can impact significantly in a conflict if it is well armed and willing to use violence.

SALW are particularly associated with security forces, arms brokers, warlords, black market dealers, trafficking networks and other criminal organisations, militias and civil defence forces, and rebel groups. Flows of arms to conflict areas are often facilitated by one or more neighbouring state, either as an instrument of policy by at least some section of the government or through neglect or corruption. SALW availability may also be connected with the strategic and political objectives of wider international actors who, through arms transfers or sanctions (and their enforcement) can influence the interests or capacities of state and non-state parties. Possession and use of substantial amounts of arms is often likely to be sufficient for an actor to warrant inclusion as a key conflict actor in the analysis.

Furthermore, as conflicts develop, SALW flows can change incentive structures, and thus the peace agendas of some actors. The availability of SALW may encourage some to believe that they can achieve their goals through violence, thereby reducing interest in peaceful strategies. Peace agendas may also be informed by other interests related to SALW. For instance, access to SALW is often vital to some protagonists for the maintenance and protection of their exploitation of natural resources and the protection of illicit trafficking routes. Similarly SALW may be a key element of the internal power structures of elites within conflict factions – allowing leaders to mobilise and equip

forces, and to maintain the coherence of the group. For instance, in some conflicts rebel groups have tended to fragment when leaders were unable to secure access to supplies of arms and ammunition.

As conflicts come to an end, it is now widely recognised that special measures are needed to support the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants. Otherwise there is a risk that their familiarity with and access to arms will encourage them to turn to banditry or crime to sustain themselves. In this context, analyses of the incentives required for particular groups (individual members and their leaders) to turn to peace are particularly critical. Experience shows that such measures and incentives can be critical at all phases of a conflict, and also amongst all sections of society with access to arms as well as formal 'ex-combatants'.

Box 1: SALW and conflict scenarios in Uganda

In the UK's strategic conflict assessment for Uganda, SALW and related arms violence issues were key to the examination of conflict scenarios in the north of the country. For instance one of the key possible indicators for intensified and prolonged conflict was evidence that the Government of Sudan was backing the Lords Resistance Army, including through the provision of SALW. Regional support for rebel groups, or one of rival groups, through the supply of SALW, or the facilitation of supplies by others, is often a critical element in the prolongation and intensification of civil wars. However, although some form of weapons decommissioning was regarded as being a potential feature of a peace process, other aspects of SALW issues were not systematically included either as indicators of potential conflict scenarios or as programming options.

Furthermore, processes of arming and disarming the Karamoja and other tribal groups have become a major feature in northern Uganda. Unfortunately, processes aimed at controlling arms availability have often been sporadic and uncoordinated, nationally and between Kenya and other neighbours, thus changing power relations between tribal groups and sometimes exacerbating rather than reducing armed violence.

This box draws on table three of DFID, "Conducting Conflict Assessment: Guidance Notes", London DFID.

3.3 Dynamics and stages

Based on the analysis of structures and conflict actors, a conflict analysis should examine long-term trends and short-term triggers for conflict, in order to understand the dynamics of the conflict and the risks of outbreak or escalation of armed violence (see, for example, DFID Guidance Notes, section 1.3). The dynamics of SALW availability, flow and misuse can be critical in the overall dynamics of conflict because, as outlined above, it can profoundly affect all three of the key factors for escalating conflict identified in DFID's guidance notes:

- The structural vulnerability to violent conflict;
- Opportunities for key conflict actors to benefit from instability and violence;
- A society's capacity to manage or contain conflict.

Even quite modest flows of assault rifles can dramatically change power relations between key groups, and change perceived interests and incentives for peace or war. Moreover, the spread of weapons can be particularly hard to reverse, contributing to a ratcheting-up or exacerbation of the conflict dynamic. For example, as tensions rise, authorities in countries such as Peru, Guatemala, Nepal, Mozambique and Sierra Leone have been tempted to distribute arms to civil defence forces or to their ethnic or political allies, often with irreversible and damaging consequences, including loss of control.

Because of the importance of SALW availability and flows in the dynamics of many conflicts, and also the significance of such flows as an indicator of the expectations and intentions of key conflict actors, there have been proposals to monitor them for the purposes of early warning of conflict. Flows of arms to key conflict actors in the former Yugoslavia, DRC or the Mano River countries of West Africa, for example, appear to have been important indicators.

SALW can also be particularly relevant to processes that trigger conflict. Competitive arming can lead to mini arms races and security dilemmas amongst conflict parties, with consequent incentives for excessive arms accumulation or pre-emption. Moreover, the high lethality of many widely available SALW, such as automatic weapons, increases the risk that a local incident escalates into wider conflict. Where casualties may previously have been limited to a few injuries, use of assault rifles can result in dozens of deaths and injuries in a few minutes.

Access to SALW can enable even small and unpopular groups to be effective 'spoilers' to disrupt efforts to prevent or end violent conflict. On the other hand, SALW reduction and control measures can provide particularly potent symbols of a desire by key conflict actors to opt for peace and confidence building. Weapons hand-in or transparency can be much more persuasive than mere declarations of good intentions.

4. SALW and international responses

The second stage of a strategic conflict assessment is to examine the role of external development and other international engagement, and their inter-actions with conflict and conflict prevention processes. According to the specific context, outside countries (including development agencies such as DFID) may to some degree be seen as interested parties in a conflict. As such, elements of this section may also feed into conflict analysis under the mapping of the interests and policies of international actors.

The role of international actors relevant to SALW availability, such as arms exporter countries, arms brokers and illicit traffickers, should already be included in the conflict analysis. Military, trade and diplomatic interests can sometimes lead to the supply or denial of SALW as an instrument. The legitimate transfer of SALW can contribute to state military and policing capacity during conflict; while illicit transfers from and through regional states can affect rebel military capacities. Legitimate arms transfers can be diverted en-route; or be lost due to poor stockpile security and theft. However, many conflicts feature human rights abuses by state actors. The fact that SALW have a

relatively long ‘shelf-life’ means that they may well have been obtained through a legitimate arms transfer to legitimate state forces, but end up being used by a repressive regime against its own population.

The DFID Guidance Notes highlight the different approaches of donors to conflict – the analysis of international responses may point to the fact that specific donors are working on SALW directly or indirectly, or intentionally or inadvertently avoiding them in their strategies and programmes. This can highlight potential partners for follow-up responses to the conflict assessment, as well as identifying which other donors it may be useful to influence to take SALW more actively into account.

Box 2: Sri Lanka conflict assessment: responses and options

A conflict assessment of Sri Lanka criticised the provision of different types of aid to different regions, thereby exacerbating divisions. Arms issues were also raised in this assessment, but largely as a footnote: for instance reference was made to the significance of arms procurement as “the most significant vested interest related to the conflict in financial terms” and it was noted that “The extent of involvement of foreign arms dealers, their proximity to the army, and the inclination of some sections of the defence establishment to benefit from dollar-based transactions are a cause for concern.”* In addition to these economic structures of conflict, other arms-related issues, such as the transnational criminal networks of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – including gunrunning, the leakage of arms from the military to disaffected youth, and the military significance of LTTE captures of arms, contributed to instability. However, specific options for tackling arms problems, and many other issues related to the availability, flow and misuse of arms in the Sri Lankan conflict, are absent from the evaluation of international responses and possible donor strategies and options. It is also noteworthy that arms and armed conflict issues are not prominent in the poverty reduction strategy paper for Sri Lanka. While this may reflect some real policy restraints, it also may highlight missed opportunities.

**Reference: Jonathan Goodhand, “Conflict Assessments: Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka”, London, Centre for Defence Studies, 2001.*

Development agencies may directly or indirectly affect SALW availability, flow and misuse, and thus conflict dynamics. This is relevant not only for assessing responses by development actors but also their capacities to respond. Possible direct effects include support for capacity building, reform, accountability and control of police, border guards, military, judiciary, and so on, through Governance, Safety, Security and Access to Justice (SSAJ) or Security Sector Reform (SSR) programmes (see the Armed Violence and Governance Briefing Paper in this series). The UK and many other donors provide direct support for programmes to control and reduce SALW – such as weapons collection and destruction; laws and regulations on trade and civilian possession, or arms stockpile security - thereby affecting some of the structures of conflict. After conflicts, programmes for demobilisation, disarmament and re-integration of ex-combatants should

have a direct affect on arms availability as well as conflict risks (see the Armed Violence and DDR Briefing Paper in this series).

More widely (intended or unintended) linkages between humanitarian and development interventions and SALW accumulations or misuse can be significant. For example, experience has shown that, unless specific controls are in place, programmes for refugees and displaced people can be misused by armed groups to facilitate arms flows and abuse. All development aid interventions (for example, as emphasised in section 2.3 of the DFID Guidance Notes) need to be conflict sensitive if they are to contribute to conflict prevention and avoid negative impacts. Economic liberalisation, administrative reform, decentralisation, and downsizing police and security expenditures can have unintended impacts on controls of SALW and opportunities for armed groups.

5. Developing strategies and options

The final stage of a conflict assessment is to identify strategies and options for conflict reduction. Where SALW issues have been identified as important in the analyses of the conflict and of international and developmental responses, it would be expected that they are prominent in the development of strategies and options.

In practice, SALW and armed violence issues still often receive inadequate attention at this stage of conflict assessments even where they are prominent in the earlier stages. The main reasons for this include:

- ❑ Lack of familiarity in development organisations with the range of opportunities for supporting SALW reduction and control in different contexts ('pre-conflict', during conflict, and 'post-conflict').
- ❑ Lack of awareness of ways in which measures to address SALW and armed violence issues can usefully be linked or integrated with other areas of development programming, to the overall benefit of the programme and its wider contribution to conflict reduction.
- ❑ Lack of institutional capacity to design and implement programmes engaging with armed violence and SALW issues, and low awareness of sources of assistance.
- ❑ Lingering perceptions that SALW and armed violence issues are unduly 'technical', risky, or particularly politically sensitive, or that they are merely symptoms of conflict that are not worthy of attention in their own right (often linked to lack of familiarity with opportunities for engaging).

These are significant obstacles. But there is now sufficient experience with addressing SALW and armed violence issues in donor programmes to enable their inclusion, where appropriate, in both individual donor strategies and in the development of common donor approaches to conflict-prone countries.

5.1 Individual donor strategies

The conflict assessment guidelines include a number of sector-specific interventions that can be developed as new initiatives within individual donor strategies. These include

specific SALW programmes – such as proliferation controls, laws and regulations, weapons collection and destruction, stockpile security, and post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes. Measures to address SALW have proved to be surprisingly good entry points for engagement with local communities, armed groups, and security sector reform. Far from being highly sensitive, a focus on the control of arms can often help to generate mobilisation and cooperation amongst otherwise divided communities, and for starting an engagement between communities, the police, military and armed groups. SALW can be addressed through civil society/NGO capacity-building programmes aimed at supporting the role of the public in conflict resolution and dialogue, such as human rights-focused organisations and those which seek to bring traditional conflict resolution and justice to bear on conflict protagonists and in reconciliation.

In many cases, established development programmes can usefully be developed to contribute to SALW reduction and control to mutual benefit. For instance, local community development projects can include community incentive-based weapons collections, and benefit from the community mobilisation and cooperation these can generate. Reforms of public administration and law can include issues related to SALW regulations (civilian possession, trading), security sector reform should include issues of stockpile security to reduce proliferation, and police reform can contribute to reduced demand for SALW. (See other briefings in this series).

Conflict assessments can be used to generate useful early warning indicators of conflict trends, as well as potential triggers of future conflict escalation (such as sudden large-sale acquisitions of SALW), or specific opportunities which make the time ripe for active engagement in conflict approaches (such as a critical mass of civil society calling for weapons control or disarmament). Indicators can also be used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of SALW programmes.

5.2 Common donor approaches

The DFID conflict assessment guidelines emphasise the need for common donor approaches and for “joined-up” analysis as a prerequisite for the development of coherent responses. It also emphasises the need to develop comprehensive approaches which link development assistance to other policy instruments. Although there are major challenges to developing common donor approaches to conflict, and to associated SALW issues, there are some frameworks in place that may contribute towards this.

Several global and regional frameworks exist with the potential for developing common donor approaches to SALW, including the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms, and regional agreements in Southern Africa, East Africa and the Horn of Africa; West Africa; OAS member states and elsewhere. They provide a common normative basis for cooperation amongst recipient countries and between them and providers of development aid. In several issue areas, including those outlined above, best practice guidelines and shared commitments are now quite well-developed internationally, with stated commitments to coordinated and coherent programmes.

In practice, the same problems of donor cooperation, coordination and coherence exist in programmes to address SALW and armed violence as they do in other areas of development assistance. It is important to ensure systems for regular information exchange and consultation at least, and to build the capacity of the recipient countries to coordinate international assistance according to their priorities and needs. In relation to SALW, DFID, UNDP and other donors are actively supporting the development of comprehensive SALW national action programmes and national coordination capacity in several countries, including Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. Since conflict dynamics depend on complex interactions across a range of security, economic, political and social areas, co-ordination and coherence is particularly important.

Thus arms transfer controls by supplier or transit countries are very relevant here. Where there is a multilateral arms embargo or other related sanctions, patterns of international implementation or circumvention need to be taken into account. Even in the absence of an embargo, the UK and other arms suppliers have adopted criteria for licensing arms transfers aimed at limiting risks of negative impacts on conflict, security, human rights and development. As a member of the EU, OSCE and Wassenaar export control arrangements, the UK has a capacity to influence arms transfer controls in other supplier countries as well as a responsibility to ensure appropriate restraint. DFID is part of the UK's arms export control process, and thus issues raised in its conflict assessments can be directly fed in to decision-making. A conflict assessment may provide the basis for denying an application for an official license for an arms transfer since it would undermine the Government's conflict prevention and development objectives. The assessment may also highlight more appropriate material assistance to the state security sector, accompanied by other capacity-building such as human rights training and tackling impunity. Controls on SALW can thus provide a hook for broadening engagement into these associated areas. A conflict assessment may also provide the basis for the commissioning Government to influence other arms-supplying states to change their practices.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Issues relating to the availability, flow and misuse of SALW are potentially important in every key aspect of conflict assessments – conflict analysis; assessments of international responses; and development of strategies and options. This is recognised, for example, in DFID's conflict assessments guidance. But, in practice, the role that SALW play in conflict, their developmental impacts and the potential for strategies and options to address SALW issues are commonly neglected.

This briefing has highlighted ways in which SALW and related armed violence issues may be relevant in each aspect of a conflict assessment, in order to help those conducting such assessments to take them appropriately into account. It has shown that SALW potentially play a part in all dimensions of a conflict, rather than being simply a stand-alone issue, and as such, that they may be addressed throughout response strategies and programme design, as well as through SALW-specific programmes.

In some cases, investigation may demonstrate that SALW issues are relatively marginal. There is no implication that they are always important in conflict-prone countries. However, it seems clear from experience that they are often important, and moreover that addressing SALW issues can provide useful entry points for wider engagements with communities, governments and security sector agencies at the same time as reducing the human cost of SALW violence.

It is specifically recommended that guidance on SALW and conflict assessments, such as this briefing paper, be circulated and made available to those staff in DFID and the UK government, as well as in other governments, development agencies or multilateral organisations, that are involved in: advising on conflict issues; commissioning or conducting a conflict assessment; or developing or coordinating response strategies and programmes. Experience shows that they are unlikely to be fully aware of all the issues raised here. A number of further sources of information, including other briefing papers in this series, are listed at the end of this document. Concerned staff can seek further support and more detailed best practice guidance from these sources.

Further sources of information and support

If you wish to consult further about the ways in which SALW and armed violence issues can be taken into account in conflict assessments with which you are concerned, contact the SALW team at CHAD:

Richard Haviland, SALW Programme Manager

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Further reading

Armed violence and Poverty Initiative papers (Bradford University/DFID, at www.brad.ac.uk/cics/)

Other papers in this Briefing Paper Series:

- *Armed Violence, Governance, Security Sector Reform, and Safety Security and Access to Justice*
- *Armed Violence and Rural Livelihoods*
- *Armed Violence in the Post-Conflict Transition: DDR and Small Arms and Light Weapons Reduction Initiatives*
- See also: *The impact of armed violence on poverty and development: synthesis report*

Other reading

DFID, *Conducting Conflict Assessments: Guidance Notes*, (London, DFID, 2002)

Available at: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/conflictassessmentguidance.pdf>

DFID, *Tackling Poverty by Reducing Armed Violence: Recommendations from a Wilton Park Workshop: 14 – 16 April 2003*, (London, DFID, 2003).

Available at: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/tacklingpovredviolence.pdf>

Goodhand, Jonathan, *Conflict Assessments: Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka*, (London, Centre for Defence Studies, 2001).

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Available at: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/conflictassessmentsynthesis.pdf>

Vaux, Tony, & Goodhand, Jonathan, *Conflict Assessments: Disturbing connections: aid and conflict in Kyrgyzstan*, (London, Centre for Defence Studies, 2001).

Available at: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/conflictassessmentkyrgyzstan.pdf>

Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey 2003: Development Denied*, (Oxford, OUP, 2003).

Available at: http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/publications/yb_2003.htm

Useful websites

UK Global Conflict Prevention Pool SALW Strategy:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1041606161328>

Small Arms Survey: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org>

Saferworld: <http://www.saferworld.org.uk>

International Alert: <http://www.international-alert.org>

Human Rights Watch Arms Project: <http://www.hrw.org/doc/?t=arms>

IANSA: <http://www.iansa.org>

Centre for International Co-operation and Security, University of Bradford:

<http://www.brad.ac.uk/peace/cics>

UN Department for Disarmament Affairs Conventional Arms Branch:

<http://disarmament.un.org:8080/cab/salw.html>