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Small Arms, Human Security and Development

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Small Arms, Human Security and Development

by A. Walter Dorn*

Widespread small arms — the leading threat to human security in today's world — are also a major road-block to human development. These weapons, which can be carried and used by a single person, make conflict more deadly and crime easier, feeding cultures of retribution and downward spirals of violence around the world. And besides taking a heavy toll in human life, small arms undermine development: where they proliferate, projects are obstructed, infrastructure damaged, materials looted, and workers endangered.

This paper outlines how small arms threaten human security and development, offering telling details from the data currently collected. It reports on recent progress in tackling this long-neglected challenge, emphasizing its relevance to development, and makes recommendations for how development agencies can cooperate in seven fields to reduce risk, build human security, and brighten development prospects.

Small arms, big threat...

Nuclear weapons of annihilation may be, in Douglas Roche's phrase, "the ultimate evil", but they are not used daily to end lives in virtually every country. Most killings in our world are performed with small arms, weapons that can be carried and used by one person.

Worldwide, small arms used in conflicts cause an estimated 700,000-plus deaths a year (Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, address to UN Security Council, Sept. 24, 1999). Though not called weapons of mass destruction, they are in reality the prime instruments of mass murder.

...to human security

Small arms are the preferred tools of violence in most internal wars, coups, militia and gang rampages, government oppression and human rights abuses, as well as for domestic and transnational crime. From

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school and workplace shootings in North America and Europe, to Mafia-style operations in Russia and Asia, to militia massacres in East Timor and World War I-type attacks in the Horn of Africa, these weapons have proved to be implements of evil. In Rwanda, where machetes were the main instrument of genocide, it was firearms — such as the assault rifles of the Presidential Guard — that overwhelmed efforts at self-defence. Even in wars between nations, small arms play a major, often predominant, role.

- Before the 20th century, 90 per cent of war victims were combatants.
- In the Second World War, two-thirds of those killed were civilians.
- By the 1980s, the civilian toll had climbed to 90 per cent.

Long after armed conflict ends, these weapons continue to kill vulnerable people. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that, 18 months after the formal end of hostilities, weapons-related casualties remain at 60-80 per cent of the previous rate (Herby, in Boutwell and Klare, 1999, *Light Weapons and Civil Conflict*, Routman and Littlefield, p. 199). Unless peace agreements include strong disarmament and destruction measures, the weapons remain available to promote criminal, communal and family violence.

"If you want to be safe in the modern world, join an army".

— Justice Richard Goldstone of South Africa

Although important steps have already been taken against one category of small arms — anti-personnel mines — tens of millions of these hidden killers remain in the ground, with horrendous results: thousands of deaths or lost limbs every month. Fortunately, through the Ottawa Convention, the vast majority of the world's nations are now pledged to a complete ban on landmines.

Assault rifles, another category of pernicious small arms needing strict global control, often have lives longer than the conflicts for which they were introduced. If peace does not entail disarmament, the small arms remain ready for use. And they frequently move from one arena to another; U.S. M-16s supplied to South Vietnam turned up two decades later in Central American conflicts.

In cultures of violence and gun-ownership — often created initially by armed conflict but staying ingrained long afterwards — these weapons become a symbol of power and pride, even an object of affection. In tense times, this sparks boasting, threats and shows of force, often generating cycles of revenge ending in social disintegration.

The statistics are alarming. Small arms have caused millions of deaths over the past decade; 80 per cent of victims were civilians, mainly women and children (UNICEF press release, July 20, 1999). There are an estimated 500 million small arms in the world, an average of one for each 12 people (Singh, 1995, *Light Weapons and International Security*, Indian Pugwash Society, New Delhi) — but that estimate is very rough, perhaps erring by 100 million or more, a further indicator of the lack of monitoring and control.

When threatened by violence, individuals and communities may sometimes feel obliged to turn to arms themselves for self-defence. Demand increases supply,

widens distribution, and impedes control. Arms producers, brokers and dealers (the 'merchants of death') continually seek new markets to boost profits, thus helping to spread both weapons and conflict — so arms end up where they are least well controlled and can do the most damage.

While the developing world suffers most of the human toll, developed countries — especially those with widespread gun distribution — are also vulnerable and traumatized. In the United States, where guns (over 220 million) outnumber adults, there were 32,436 firearms-related deaths, by murder, accident or suicide, in 1997 (detailed statistics are available at <www.cdc.gov/ncipc/osp/states/0002.htm>).

In countries where arms are less prevalent, deaths are fewer. Canada, with 3.5 times fewer firearms per capita, has a death rate 3.6 times lower: in 1995, total deaths from firearms (per 100,000 population) were 13.7 (U.S.) compared to 3.8 (Canada) — a factor of 3.6, and firearms per capita were 0.84 and 0.24 — a factor of 3.5. Still, more than 1,200 people lose their lives each year in Canada from gunfire (Cukier, 1998, *in* Chronic Diseases in Canada, 19:1, also at <www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpb/lcdc/publicat/cdic/cdic191>).

Other countries, with fewer guns, have fewer deaths — notably Japan, with only 0.003 firearms per capita and 0.07 firearm deaths per 100,000, or about 70 deaths yearly (1998, UN International Study on Firearm Regulation, E.98.IV.2). Researchers find a direct, though not always linear, link; the similarity in U.S./Canada overall death ratios disguises relatively higher ratios for firearm homicides (10.4) and suicides (2.2) between the U.S. and Canada.

Clearly, small arms threaten human security, and their widespread distribution fuels a horrendous, continuing, global tragedy that all authorities have a responsibility to end, or at least mitigate. For the international development community, the case for involvement is especially strong because, beyond the compelling humanitarian rationale, the proliferation of small arms directly undermines the process of human development.

... to human development

Weapons not only intensify and prolong conflict, but undermine development work proceeding in difficult, dangerous settings during conflict and after. Combatants and criminals frequently destroy infrastructure and take whatever they want, often terrorizing society and throwing development into reverse with scorched-earth policy (as pursued by militias in East Timor in September 1999).

The global abundance of small weapons promotes vicious cycles of violence and underdevelopment, each intensifying the other. Referring to a conflict in Mali, UN Under-Secretary Marrack Goulding wrote: “The lack of security was fuelling the demand for weapons. The availability of weapons was fuelling the cycle of banditry and violence which in turn was virtually bringing structural development to a halt and preventing any progress on socio-economic problems”.

Small arms can sabotage development decades after their original purpose has been forgotten: former combatants often apply their skills to crime and gang violence. Development projects have been slowed or

cancelled because of gun-fuelled violence, and in some places (refugee camps in the former Zaire and West Timor) aid distribution was blocked or even controlled by those wielding guns.

International workers are also directly endangered. More than 1,500 people on UN missions have been killed (UN press release, July 22, 1997) and, over the decade 1985-94, more than 60 ICRC workers were killed (18 expatriates and over 40 local employees) while 147 'disappeared' (Berry, 1997, *War and the Red Cross*, St. Martin's, N.Y.). Over half of ICRC delegates with field experience reported that armed threats disrupted work at least once a month (Dr. David Medding, talk at OAS, see <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/seminar5.htm>).

Precautions limit effectiveness: workers in weapons-proliferated areas must stay in safe parts of cities, avoid certain country roads, remain behind locked doors after sundown, and be ready for evacuation or emergency rescues. Some encounter makeshift roadblocks and, at gunpoint, must offer money or part of their cargo. Even one armed person, or just the possibility, can block supply routes.

Besides such direct impacts, arms hinder development by diverting limited national resources to weapons purchases, especially in developing countries. In the past decade, military spending (partly for small arms) by the poorest countries rose by 20 per cent while dropping for the richest. Developing countries spent $172 billion on armed forces — almost five times the official aid they received, and 44 per cent of their expenditures on education and health combined (compared to about 20 per cent for industrialized countries) (UNDP, 1998 and 1999, *Human Development Report*).

In West Africa, diamonds and timber have been used to arm both government and rebel fighters; in Angola, arms for the rebel UNITA army came from diamond exports, a trade that the UN sanctions committee is trying to curtail. Regions can become economically dependent on war and arms; Pakistan's North West Frontier province, the main conduit for rebel weapons during the Afghan-Soviet war, is now a major producer, with skills being passed to the next generation, and a bazaar, sending arms abroad.

Trade in weapons and in drugs are often linked: both are profitable, largely illicit, and likely to follow the same routes, with big arsenals helping drug lords combat authorities and expand cartels.

Development work has even, at times, provided cover for the arms trade — another reason for paying attention. In several African countries weapons have been shipped as development aid — for instance, into refugee camps in Zaire disguised as humanitarian assistance; into Burundi as 'farm implements'; and in Sudan, where aid organizations have been used as a screen by arms merchants (Austin, in Boutwell and Klare, *op.cit.*, pp. 36-39).

Although arms are increasingly manufactured domestically in Asia, the developed world remains by far the primary source. No statistics are available for small arms, but the voluntary register for major conventional armaments (tanks, planes, ships, large guns), kept by the UN and a similar project by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, indicates that the largest exporters are: U.S. 47 per cent, Russia 14, U.K. 8, France 7, Germany 6, China 3. This puts a special moral obligation on developed nations, particularly Security Council

members, to mitigate the effect of these weapons.

Western nations have often provided abundant arms and then failed to remove them or control the consequences. The U.S., for instance, supplied thousands of tons of weapons to 'anti-Communist' rebels in Afghanistan (mujahidin), Angola (UNITA) and earlier in the Horn of Africa. This has prolonged fighting, blocked development, and spread conflict and arms to neighbouring countries — leading later to U.S. and international embargoes with little short-term effect. Likewise, embargoes were imposed on Iraq and Indonesia, well supplied with U.S. weapons before their aggression in Kuwait and East Timor respectively. Even Congressional embargoes on both Iran and the Contras in Central America failed to stop the transfers exposed in the Iran-Contra scandal.

When the Cold War ended, hopes rose: Russia, losing its client states, exported fewer weapons formally — but surplus East Bloc arms leaked massively to areas of conflict and demand. After reunification, Germany gave more than 300,000 Kalashnikov rifles to Turkey (Boutwell and Klare, *op. cit.*, p. 17) and Soviet weapons fuelled conflicts in the former U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia. Failure to destroy these superfluous stocks contributed to the terrible increase in internal strife in the '90s.

A post-Cold War strategy on small arms is long overdue, including review of policies by development agencies. When the superpowers were waging proxy wars in the South, and developing countries were seeking neutrality in the Non-Aligned Movement, it was wise to distance development from ideology and weapons. But then, the nature of conflict changed to internal, or civil, facilitated by cheap arms from left-over production capacity and a lack of coordinated effort to shield the developing world — while the development community only gradually moved away from the Cold War dichotomy, to give security concerns "their legitimate place in most development assistance guidelines, policy and operations" (Saucier, 1998, *Small Arms Proliferation and Peacebuilding: A Policy Paper for Discussion*, DFAIT).

Meanwhile, new opportunities have opened for small arms control beyond Cold War constraints. The U.S.S.R., the largest exporter before the Gorbachev era, had for decades blocked verifiable agreements. More recently, Russia and the U.S. have shown themselves progressive on some issues such as illicit arms trading — but not on others. Fortunately, many middle and small powers have moved ahead without the superpowers, as in the Ottawa process, showing that arms control can be pursued by small and developing nations, bilaterally or multilaterally, within an international framework or without — and can be energized by partnership with civil society.

> *We urgently need to work together as an international community to limit the availability and spread of deadly weaponry. Canadians have already been at the forefront of a crucial international step in that direction, playing an important role in the creation of the Ottawa treaty on landmines... The international community needs to carry out the success of the landmines initiatives through to other, more comprehensive arms control initiatives.*
>
> — Oscar Arias,
> former President of Costa Rica
> and Nobel Peace Laureate

The issue of small arms is rising on the international agenda, new initiatives are being explored, and the time is ripe for development agencies to take part. They can foster disarmament and peacebuilding efforts, promote arms-control standards, provide incentives and employment possibilities, and help build the confidence that makes peace and order possible. The new century needs an agenda that integrates development and security.

Risks remain. Participation may involve donors in sensitive matters, which weapons-dependent recipients may resent; it may complicate aid, require special expertise, and raise the dilemma of linkage. But the risk of inaction is greater, and many developing countries are now asking for help, with some (Colombia, Mali) leading international efforts to control illicit arms nationally, regionally and globally.

Many compelling factors make measures to control small arms not a passing fad but an urgent, global imperative for human security and sustainable development.

Recent progress

Many encouraging initiatives to control small arms have been launched recently. Several, noted below, involve development agencies funding disarmament programs, sponsoring conferences and workshops, and helping societies build the infrastructure needed to deal with small arms.

In areas of former conflict, where urgency is greatest, the development community is supporting some very progressive measures. In particular, UNDP funds a range of innovative, mutually-supportive approaches, from broad legal/judicial institution-building (e.g. gun control and law enforcement agencies) to more targeted programs to collect and destroy weapons. In 1998, UNDP established a trust fund against proliferation (supported by Norway) and another for peace through disarmament. Designed to raise awareness, promote transparency, strengthen capacity, and support collection/destruction, these initiatives grew out of successful precedents in Mali — starting with the Trust Fund to Support the Peace Process in Northern Mali, backed by nine countries including Canada.

Mali

The 'Malian model' — a successful test-case for the integrated, or 'security first' approach — deserves attention. In 1990, rebels in the harsh desert of northern Mali took up arms against the central military government. After a 1991 coup and a phased return to civilian government, a shaky peace was established, but weapons remained widespread. Mali's first elected president, Alpha Omar Konaré, sought UN help in gauging proliferation and finding ways to reduce insecurity and violence. A preliminary study urged a broader, sub-regional approach, and two UN advisory missions then examined arms smuggling, theft, illicit trade, and existing legislation in seven Sahara-Sahel countries, as well as the reasons for socio-economic unrest.

Results have been promising. A UNDP program of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) involved some 10,000 ex-combatants. At the dramatic *La Flamme de la Paix* ceremony in March 1996 in Timbuktu, 3,000 weapons were burned in a bonfire, with West African leaders and international representatives looking on. Mali's example inspired other countries,

some even more afflicted by violence. Workshops and an international conference spurred action, and on October 31, 1998 heads of state declared a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light weapons in West Africa — an ambitious action including war-torn Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The West African moratorium is being implemented through the UNDP-administered Programme for Coordination and Assistance on Security and Development (PCASED), with a secretariat in Bamako and funding from Canada and others. The current five-year program supports the moratorium and its action plan which contains some provisions for monitoring and evaluation, and has helped develop the code of conduct adopted at the ECOWAS Summit, December 9-10, 1999, which details the obligations.

Albania

In November 1998, UNDP and the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs began a pilot project in Gramsh, Albania to collect weapons, especially those looted from government arsenals in the chaos of 1997. (Small arms from Albania helped escalate fighting in Kosovo in 1998.) Through this 'Weapons in Exchange for Development' program, citizens eagerly turned in weapons — some 2600 in the first few months, along with over three million rounds of ammunition — for community rewards: vehicles for local police, a radio-telephone system, street lights and bridge construction.

A National Steering Committee guides the project, with support from a network of Albanian NGOs. Posters, T-shirts, concerts and TV ads encouraged participation. The program's five key elements are: symbolism, advocacy, community involvement and reward, voluntary surrender, and possible public destruction of weapons (Kushti, 1999, *Weapons in Exchange for Development: Albania*, UNDP, at <www.iansa.org/documents/un/gramsh/update_undp.htm>).

> *Give a community a chance for development and it would be willing to discard weapons. Raise a community's stakes in peace and it would be more determined to shun violence.*
>
> — Jayantha Dhanapala, UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, at Gramsh weapons destruction ceremony, Sept. 17, 1999

El Salvador

Development agencies from several countries supported a voluntary program in El Salvador called *Bienes por Armas de Fuego* (Goods for Guns). Organizers expanded the program to cover an unforeseen array of dangerous military hardware — grenades, rocket launchers, landmines. The government amended laws to allow people to carry such items to collection sites, mostly provided by the Catholic church, where cash ($3 per grenade) or vouchers ($350 per assault rifle) were provided. From 1996 to 1998, about 8,000 weapons and over 100,000 munitions were gathered and destroyed. To ensure integrity and transparency, the procedure provided for checks and balances such as the signing of forms and retention of records by representatives of the program, police, national defence, and the Rotary Club, which provided independent monitors.

Voluntary programs have also been set up in other developing countries with help from development agencies. A 'Tools for Arms' project, sponsored by the Christian Council of Mozambique and aided by CIDA, collected more than 72,000 varied weapons,

accessories and munitions (1995-99) in exchange for sewing machines, bicycles, hoes and materials. Some of the weapons were turned into art. In Panama, where arms distributed before the U.S. invasion of 1989 remain, the mayor's office in San Miguelito started an exchange program aimed at collecting 1,000 weapons locally.

In the developed world, too, weapons collection programs have become popular. U.S. President Clinton launched a $15 million initiative in 1999 to buy up arms mostly in and around public housing projects, saying "Every gun turned in through a buy-back program means potentially one less tragedy." Buy-back efforts collected more than 160,000 handguns in the U.K. and nearly 640,000 weapons in Australia.

United Nations

Other UN bodies besides UNDP are also at work to control small arms. The UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has developed model regulations and a ground-breaking international study (UN, 1998) funded by Australia, Canada and Japan, to promote discussion and negotiation toward a legally-binding curb on illicit trafficking. The General Assembly (resolution 53/111) has created a committee to achieve this. And UNICEF is working with the UN disarmament department (press release July 20, 1999) "because the lives and futures of millions of children are at stake."

To harmonize such UN activities, CASA (Coordinating Action on Small Arms), created in 1998, includes departments and agencies involved in disarmament, development, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, crime, human rights and other issues (website; <www.un.org/Depts/ dda/CAB/index.htm>). The Department of Disarmament Affairs acts as a focal point; helped with the Malian, West African and Albania programs; and supported the panels of experts who issued important reports on small arms in July 1997 and August 1999.

Other initiatives

The World Bank established a Post-Conflict Unit in 1997, and is looking at how to create security in conflict-prone areas. Belgium has proposed exploring linkages between aid and weapons removal, including debt-for-disarmament swaps. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee has created a task force to study military expenditures and other security/development connections, including small arms.

Development agencies have organized major meetings, such as the 'sustainable disarmament for sustainable development' conference at which 98 states supported an "integrated approach to security and development" and endorsed the Brussels Call for Action. It emphasizes peacebuilding as a "cornerstone of development cooperation strategy" (October 12-13, 1998, <www.disarmconf.org/database/en27.htm>).

In recent years, many developing countries have taken action on their own. In public ceremonies, Cambodia destroyed 15,000 weapons in 1998. China took steps in 1998 to confiscate illicit arms, and destroyed 300,000 weapons. South Africa has pledged to scrap all surplus small arms, including 260,000 automatic rifles and hundreds of tons of ammunition.

In Central America, UN peacekeepers destroyed thousands of weapons surrendered by the Contras, then in 1991 the Nicaraguan

government further confiscated or bought back 132,000 weapons and 250,000 bullets. However, despite government efforts in Colombia and other countries, uncontrolled weapons continue to feed violence — and, although several countries with gun problems have recently strengthened their laws (Algeria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Brazil, China, Haiti), many still lack national regulations on who can acquire which weapons, an area where the development community could help.

Some developed countries have also taken major steps. Germany, with a huge surplus of small arms after reunification, destroyed more than one million weapons, and Sweden some 170,000 over the past decade. The U.K. instituted a total ban on handguns in 1997. Even in the U.S., with its strong pro-gun lobby, atrocities have spurred recent progress — such as a new law requiring citizens (resident or not) who are arms brokers to be registered and approved ... but a modest limit of one gun purchase a month has failed to receive congressional approval. Some U.S. gun manufacturers, facing lawsuits from victims of gun violence, have agreed to incorporate new safety features (including fingerprint gun locks) into their weapons.

Actions by governments worldwide in recent years give hope that the political will exists to create new norms and conventions on the control of small arms. Meetings — such as a July 1998 gathering in Oslo, prompted by Canada and Norway — have built support among 'like-minded' nations. The impressive Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, signed by 29 OAS members, calls for marking of guns, licensing of transit, and information-sharing (1997, *Disarmament: A Periodic Review*, UN, XX: 2, 3, p. 141).

The (voluntary) 1998 European Code of Conduct for Arms Exports gives eight criteria, from human rights to possible diversion. A much stronger code, proposed by a group of Nobel peace laureates, even requires that recipients' military spending must not exceed their combined health and education budgets (Arias, 1999, "The Moral Challenge of Globalization", in Peace Magazine, Toronto, summer issue, p. 11).

Many NGOs are also working to control small arms. A grass-roots movement, IANSA (International Action Network on Small Arms), created in 1998 to educate and lobby governments, maintains an excellent website (<www.iansa.org>) and is pushing for stronger norms and an international convention. E.J. Laurence of the Monterey Institute of International Studies has outlined a proposed convention (<www.iansa.org/documents/research/res_archives/ngo20.htm>).

Such widespread initiatives may mean that an international regime is emerging and can be codified through progressively stronger global conventions. There is broad agreement, particularly on the need to stop illicit arms flows, with the OAS convention showing that even powerful countries with weak gun laws, who could obstruct progress, can find common ground on some aspects of international gun control.

Thus, the General Assembly agreed unanimously (resolution 53/77E) to convene an international conference on the illicit arms trade no later than 2001, and created a committee to draft a protocol on firearms as

part of a comprehensive initiative against transnational organized crime.

It now seems reasonable to hope for progress, at least on illicit arms flows (which are assumed to be more than half of the global arms trade). Such a step toward achieving both human security and development requires, in Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy's words, a "global division of labour ... to fight on all fronts — from the Security Council to individual governments to the level of community organizations — to address the meance of small arms" (address to Security Council, Sept. 24, 1999).

From guns to bread: Recommendations

Controlling small arms requires innovation at many levels, involving many actors, to make sustainable disarmament a catalyst for sustainable development, and vice versa. The following seven recommendations echo others' proposals but are uniquely customized for the development community, which can make vital contributions by helping to:

... assess the problem

Diagnosis precedes cure. The development community can support country and regional studies to document the sources and impact of weapons — following the precedent of the UN's Sahara-Sahel mission: requested by Mali's President Konaré, then expanded regionally, and assisted by UNDP resident representatives, in order to explore all aspects of the problem and identify needs and ways to help. Country impact studies can raise awareness, share lessons learned elsewhere, and support initiatives by concerned domestic leaders.

Study missions can assess the harm to areas, countries and their development, and can try to tally weapons and locate supply routes — through covert, black-market activity is hard to document. Lacking resources and in-house expertise, the UN needs to work with national police and legal authorities as well as Interpol.

The 1998 UN International Study on Firearm Regulations — the most extensive survey of this kind — includes data and narrative from 69 representative member states on harm, legislation and initiatives, but reveals large gaps in available information: only 12 countries had such a basic figure as total firearm deaths.

A 1999 IDRC-funded study of gun control policy in SADC countries drew many useful insights showing the positive relationship between strict gun control and less crime. Botswana, for instance, with a handgun ban and only 29,000 licensed firearms, experienced only 11 armed robberies in 1998 and has a murder rate of less than 15 per 100,000 people; South Africa, with 4.18 million licensed firearms, reported 69,501 armed robberies and a murder rate of 65.

Future studies, if they detect an increase in arms, can offer an early warning signal of on-coming conflict. Pre-genocide Rwanda had become sub-Saharan Africa's third largest weapons importer in 1992-94 ($100 million total, Boutwell and Klare, *op. cit.*, p. 29), while conflict-prone Angola topped the list.

... devise solutions

Once problems are identified, development agencies can help a country or region tailor solutions. Together, they can study causes, build partnerships, educate

people, create incentives, and look at worldwide experience — examining, for example, the Malian model to judge its success and transferability.

Disarmament, reintegration and conversion projects demand detailed planning — of rewards, penalties, logistics and safe storage. Conversion of arms facilities takes expertise and resources to ensure continued employment as well as successful production of new goods, and may require large incentives, such as costly U.S. programs for former Soviet defence laboratories.

Some considerations are particularly relevant in the developing world. The population of 'low-human-development' countries is more rural (72.5 per cent) than in middle-human -development (58.8 per cent) or high-human development (22.1 per cent) countries (UNDP, 1999, *Human Development Report*, indicator table 16), and hunting societies or rural regions may need special provisions. Overly severe legislation anywhere, such as a total gun ban without exceptions, risks helping criminals escape overburdened enforcement systems.

Arms control is more difficult in regions of armed conflict and, in the past decade, all but two of the 35 countries in the 'low-human-development' category have experienced civil or international war (18) or have neighbours that did. In such settings, especially during conflict, demand for guns, leakage from military stocks, gun-running and bribery flourish even despite UN embargoes, so effective control often must wait until peacebuilding begins in earnest.

Domestic measures can range from banning certain types of small arms to requiring safety locks including smart technology, e.g. finger print validation. Research can unearth bold ideas from the past that may be relevant now or in the future — such as Woodrow Wilson's proposal (inserted in an early draft of the League of Nations Covenant) that private manufacture of armaments be banned. Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy suggested in 1998 prohibiting transfer of military small arms to non-state actors. All such proposals merit detailed examination.

... promote controls

Worldwide, domestic controls on arms range widely, as does enforcement. Developing countries often lack detailed legislation as well as capacity to carry out measures. Typically, states with modestly strict laws may ban certain arms (military-style, handguns) and may require licensing, training, justification, conditions of use, locked storage, and registration.

An acceptable control regime must balance rights and benefits of the individual (self-defence, hunting, recreation) against those of society (order, safety). In most situations, fewer arms mean greater human security and fewer deaths from crime and domestic violence (note that suicides and domestic quarrels account for 89 per cent of firearms deaths in Canada and 60 per cent in the U.S.).

Countries need information to decide what is in their best interest. Education efforts, often sparked by NGOs, can reach people ranging from government officials to the general public. Posters seen in recent campaigns proclaim 'Stop the Killings' (Great Lakes Region of Africa) and 'From disarmament ... to reunion ... peace advances' (Guatemala) (<www.iansa.org/ documents/ campaign/posters/ index.htm>).

Development agencies can support campaigns on the dangers of guns and the benefits of disarmament, as they have done on landmines, and as CIDA has done in funding Pearson Peacekeeping Centre projects in post-conflict countries in Latin America and the former Yugoslavia, to promote the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process. This can help instil new values of resolving disputes peacefully.

... encourage disarmament

Voluntary weapons removal can be done through amnesties, buy-backs or exchange programs. The use of carrots and sticks, threats and rewards, to promote disarmament is not new: North Korea was offered a $5 billion 'carrot' (oil and nuclear power) not to develop nuclear weapons; and aid was denied until Mali chose 'security first' and destroyed weapons, then was accelerated.

Incentives have included local development (Albania), supermarket vouchers (El Salvador), and micro-enterprise seed money (provided by Italy in Nicaragua). Oscar Arias has insisted that any money gained through Belgium's debt-for-disarmament proposal for low-income countries must not be spent for new weapons.

Local civil society can play a key part in exchange and control initiatives. With modest incentives, NGOs, businesses and volunteers can build local enthusiasm, as in El Salvador, where the private sector contributed half the resources because of their concern about crime and safety.

> *In very poor countries, the control of small arms can only be achieved through their religious and social organizations, and with a strong involvement of women. Neither police forces nor committed external agencies are in a position to play, by themselves, a meaningful role.*
>
> — Jakob Kellenberger
> Swiss Minister
> for Foreign Affairs

Buy-back programs must be carefully considered to avoid creating new demand and inadvertently promoting the gun trade. Prices can be set below market value and numbers restricted, or incentives can be for the community as in Albania, where this encouraged local competitions. UN peacekeepers in Cambodia decided against a buy-back program in 1993 because the black-market supply was too great; U.S. forces in Haiti in 1994, combining buy-back with naval patrols and raids on arms caches, bought 3684 weapons in just four months.

Aid/disarmament linkage makes sense when weapons threaten development project success; and if disarmament will have positive impact on development, it can become an essential part of the aid program. In post-conflict peacebuilding, DDR programs for former combatants are becoming standard procedure. Civilian disarmament, using incentives and amnesties, should also become a new norm in peace-building.

... build security

If citizens disarm, the state must provide for their safety. Development agencies can support improved police and judicial systems — including ensuring that police are properly equipped, are attentive to community needs, and are not themselves agents of illegal violence; that judicial processes are strong, independent, and fair; and that police and military officers understand human rights, appropriate force, and gun safety.

Citizen involvement in monitoring and reporting can be encouraged.

Within their mandate of protecting citizens, police should be trained in the many aspects of gun control, including cooperation with customs and border officials. Norway is helping Malawi (with NGO support) research armed crimes and control measures, involve community groups, and develop pilot projects (<www.nisat.org> under Security Sector Reform).

Society also has a responsibility to help firearms victims — through health care, legal assistance, and counselling. The development community could put more emphasis on assisting victims of gun violence, but this may seem a luxury in conflict-prone areas where the top priority is emergency and basic care.

... control the arms trade

Governments agree that illicit trade in small arms must be curbed. A first step is to reduce and monitor the legal trade, whose high volume helps to mask illegal transfers. To increase transparency, all nations should report imports and exports, public and private. These transfers of small arms should be disclosed in a form parallel to the UN's existing register of major conventional arms (this is being discussed regionally in Africa and globally at the UN).

A bolder step would be direct monitoring of flows by Interpol, the UN, and/or a new agency. Methods could include assistance to border services, short-notice inspections, on-request inspection teams, or even challenge-inspection, as used with unwilling states under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Development agencies have begun supporting customs/border officials. In West Africa, UNDP/PCASED is helping to develop procedures such as checking of cargo manifests, flight plans, and inspection.

With the lack of UN systems to enforce UN embargoes, monitoring has sometimes been done by military alliances (European Union in the Adriatic re Yugoslavia), *ad hoc* coalitions (Persian Gulf re Iraq) or even commercial firms (for UN in Jordanian ports re Iraq). The UN must rely largely on national self-reporting, because there is no international body able to investigate sanctions-busters, and currently too little political will to create one.

A realistic goal would be to globalize the Inter-American Convention, creating new worldwide standards — such as the marking of weapons with unique, tamper-resistant serial numbers for tracing arms transferred illicitly or used in crimes (the U.S. received 30,000 such information requests in 1996).

Control of arms brokers is rising on the international agenda, with Secretary-General Annan calling, in his *Report on Africa*, for "more effective measures to punish the continent's arms traffickers" who exploit gaps in national systems and lack of global controls. A recent NGO report (Wood and Peleman, 1999, *The Arms Fixers*, PRIO rept. 3/99) throws light on their murky, lucrative world.

Codes of Conduct, though only voluntary, are valuable, and the European Union's 1999 code sets out important principles — but, as mentioned, something far stronger is needed, and the international code proposed by eight Nobel laureates offers more stringent, progressive criteria.

... promote new global norms

Tackling illicit arms trade and restricting international transfers are important but limited steps toward global goals. A much bigger challenge is the problem of domestic manufacture, possession and movement.

States and communities should enforce strict regulations on firearms, then push for new higher standards and norms, at least in their region, so that their security is not undermined by weak laws in neighbouring jurisdictions. Canada is well placed for leadership on small arms control, by its own laws, its foreign policy, and public opinion. The General Assembly should be urged to adopt, at minimum, a firm code of conduct — preferably followed by an international treaty making commitments binding.

Moving ahead

In an ideal world, no small arms would be in criminal hands, police and the military would have an essential minimum, and civilians would have only licensed guns for legitimate needs — properly registered, marked and safely stored — with international trade under strict control. Steps can be taken now toward these still-distant goals.

The control of small arms is a key piece of the interlocking puzzles of sustainable human development and sustainable human security. Without it, neither can be solved. Development agencies, in partnership with governments, civil society and local communities, can be agents of change by working in the ways described above and others yet to be discovered.

The real solution to the small arms problem is, ultimately, rising global levels of human security and development. When people are free, have the means to achieve their human potential, and realize that conflict can be resolved justly without violence, then resentment and revenge will become as rare as guns.

With an integrated agenda of human security and human development, we can gradually build respect for life, overcome poverty, and raise the physical, intellectual and spiritual standards of our communities and our world.

Note from the Editor:

This article has clearly brought out the fact that there are far fewer firearms-related homicides in Canada compared to U.S. One principal reasons is the stricter gun control laws. Recently, in the Reference re: Firearms Act (Can.) case, the Supreme Court of Canada, in a unanimous decision upheld the Federal Firearms Act. In this case the Court ruled that:

"The Firearms Act constitutes a valid exercise of Parliament's jurisdiction over criminal law. The Act in pith and substance is directed to enhancing public safety by controlling access to firearms. Its purpose is to deter the misuse of firearms, control those given access to guns, and control specific types of weapons. It is aimed at a number of mischiefs, including the illegal trade in guns, both within Canada and across the border with the United States, and the link between guns and violent crime, suicide, and accidental deaths. The purpose of the Firearms Act conforms with the historical public safety focus of all gun control laws. The changes introduced by the Act represent a limited expansion of the pre-existing gun control legislation. The effects of the Act also suggest that its essence is the promotion of public safety. The criteria for acquiring a licence are concerned with safety. Criminal record checks and background investigations are designed to keep guns out of the hands of those incapable of using them safely. Safety courses ensure that gun owners are qualified.

The Firearms Act possesses all three criteria required for a criminal law. Gun control has traditionally been considered valid criminal law because guns are dangerous and pose a risk to public safety. The regulation of guns as dangerous products is a valid purpose within the criminal law power. That purpose is connected to prohibitions backed by penalties.

The Firearms Act is not essentially regulatory legislation. The Act's complexity does not necessarily detract from its criminal nature. Nor does the law give either the chief firearms officer or the Registrar undue discretion. The offences are clearly defined in the Act. The chief firearms officer and the Registrar are explicitly subject to the supervision of the courts. Further, the law's prohibitions and penalties are not regulatory in nature. They are not confined to ensuring compliance with a scheme, but independently serve the purpose of public safety. Parliament's intention was not to regulate property, but to ensure that only those who prove themselves qualified to hold a licence are permitted to possess firearms of any sort. Finally, Parliament may use indirect means to further the end of public safety".

Canadian gun control laws show how control of small arms could have a a very positive effect on reducing crime and promoting development.

For more information

Should you require further information on small arms, human security and development, or any other subject related to international development, please contact IDIC Client Services at (819) 953-1035, or come to the 8th floor, 200 Promenade du Portage, Hull, Québec, K1A 0G4. The centre can put you in touch with a broad range of information sources on virtually any development issue. More information on CIDA and Canada's development cooperation is also available on the CIDA Home Page in Internet: http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca.

This EXPRESS was written by A. Walter Dorn.

DEVELOPMENT EXPRESS is produced to contribute to CIDA's realization of knowledge-based and continuous learning objectives. Our intent is to facilitate learning by providing reader access to consolidated information from significant works on critical topics and issues.

Ideas, views or comments

If you have any ideas or views to share or comments to make concerning the subject matter of this article, please send an e-mail to the editor (express@acdi-cida.gc.ca)

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Si vous souhaitez obtenir de plus amples renseignements sur les armes légères, la sécurité humaine et le développement, ou sur tout autre sujet touchant au développement international, vous pouvez téléphoner au Service à la clientèle du CIDI, au (819) 953-1035, ou encore vous rendre au 8e étage, 200, promenade du Portage, Hull (Québec), K1A 0G4. Le Centre peut vous faciliter l'accès à toute une gamme de sources d'information sur presque toutes les questions de développement. Vous pouvez également vous renseigner sur l'ACDI et les programmes canadiens de coopération au développement en visitant le site de l'ACDI sur Internet : http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca.

Ce numéro a été écrit par A. Walter Dorn.

L'EXPRESS SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT entend favoriser l'acquisition d'une culture du savoir et d'apprentissage permanent au sein de l'ACDI. Le but visé est de faciliter l'apprentissage en offrant aux lecteurs une synthèse des renseignements contenus dans des travaux d'envergure portant sur des sujets et problèmes important.

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