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ARMS MANAGEMENT AND DESTRUCTION PROGRAMMING: TAKING STOCK

by Chris Loughran and Djadranka Gillesen [MAG, Mines Advisory Group]



In Ségou, MAG built four armories, rehabilitated three armories and installed two containerized armories. To enable safe and secure management of weapons and ammunition, specialized equipment was installed at each site. This included bullet traps, adapted weapon racks, metal cabinets for long SA/LW and oversized weapons, and fire powder extinguishers outside the stores. Once the physical security was obtained, MAG provided training for staff. All photos courtesy of Sean Sutton, MAG.

The Arms Management and Destruction (AMD) sector—an element of conventional weapons destruction (CWD) that includes several elements of physical security and stockpile management (PSSM)—has experienced dynamic growth over the last 18 months. An increasing number of programs address illicit and poorly stored weapons, enhance the safety and security of arms storage, and support the development of national capacity, including MAG’s regional initiative in the Sahel and West Africa. As a distinct AMD sector emerges, now is the time to analyze what makes programming strategies effective as well as ineffective. The industry must resist the temptation to talk about best practice which distracts from the importance of tailoring AMD assistance to specific national contexts. Rather than seek to replicate projects, focus should be on identifying, sharing and

embedding good practice, and the approaches that underpin successful programming in a specific national context.

Ensuring Needs-based Programming

Three years ago, MAG explained one of its key messages to donors: include and fund assessments, and develop assistance projects based on their findings. This followed a number of instances in which small arms projects were designed solely on the basis of national reporting under the U.N. Programme of Action and without technical assessment missions. When MAG engaged to deliver a project, successful delivery required significant reworking.

States took this on board and now support MAG to implement assessment-based AMD projects for weapons and munitions. Two years of assessments led to further refinements in



A MAG team conducts a technical armory assessment with the Gendarmerie in Koulikoro, Mali. MAG conducted technical assessments in Koulikoro in September 2014. After presenting its recommendations to the authorities and defining priority interventions, MAG began implementing AMD activities in Mali in early 2015.

MAG's approach. Assessments initially focused on the need and scope for weapons and munitions destruction, armory and explosive storehouse construction or rehabilitation, and the training required for storekeepers and managers.

These activities still form the core of assessments and subsequent assistance activities; they also ensure that programming is needs-based. However, MAG now undertakes assessments jointly with national authorities, ensuring that subsequent recommendations are fully owned nationally. MAG's approach assists authorities in determining their AMD needs, aiding the development of longer-term planning and prioritization of needs. This approach also enables development of accurate project costing. MAG expects this strategy will eventually support development of improved illicit small arms and light weapons (SA/LW) national action plans, by which the stockpile-management section is frequently underdeveloped.

Within the assessment, MAG also included stakeholder mapping and analysis in order to identify the activities and assistance already occurring, and the individuals, departments or organizations whose involvement is critical to successful programming. By including stakeholder mapping, MAG ensures complementary support and avoids overlap or duplicated efforts.

Replication of Good Practice

Needs-based assessments led by national authorities that incorporate stakeholder mapping are an example of good practice that can be replicated, precisely because they ensure tailored assistance to specific contexts. Comparing programs in various African countries illustrates this. In Mali, numerous national authorities and state-security providers identified an enormous need to address insecure weapons and

munitions stores, as well as destroy unserviceable and obsolete weapons and munitions while assisting in the development of national capacity.

A large number of assistance providers are also available, including the United Nations, European Union, bilateral military aid and international nongovernmental organizations (NGO). A stakeholder-mapping approach and close coordination with donors and other assistance providers reduces overlap and increases interorganizational cooperation. In Burkina Faso, there has been a high level of engagement by the national authorities. However, a similar range of actors providing assistance does not currently exist. As the only international assistance provider, MAG's programming focuses on specific technical support and the development of a nationwide assistance plan to deliver and prioritize activities.

As the only AMD assistance provider in Chad, MAG is at an earlier stage of development and conducted a nationwide assessment of armories with the Gendarmerie and Garde



A weapon is issued after being logged out of an armory in Ségou.



As part of a request from the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), MAG worked with the Malian Defence Security Forces (MDSF) from October 2014 to destroy more than 10,000 weapons. MAG completed the destruction in January 2015. Before commencing the cutting of weapons, MAG provided training in weapons cutting in October 2014 for 12 personnel identified by MDSF.

Nationale et Nomade du Tchad. This aims to act as the basis for future operational activity while also developing trust and demonstrating to other state-security providers the benefits of AMD programming.

MAG has conducted AMD programming in Democratic Republic of the Congo for nearly a decade. MAG's longer-term presence led to a high degree of trust and partnership with the armed forces and police. A weapons-destruction facility in Kinshasa, established with funding from the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA), runs under national management with minimal technical oversight. MAG's assistance also included support to the development of national technical guidelines led by the European Communications Security Evaluation Agency working group.

These programs are just a few examples of how AMD programming is tailored specifically to the local context, need and capacity while also complementing other avenues of assistance. These examples demonstrate how good practice and replication of AMD programs should focus on the approach taken rather than assuming that a successful project in one country can be replicated with guaranteed success.

When AMD involves the safe and secure storage of ammunition, the IATGs reflect this approach to good practice. The IATGs aim to provide a global, guiding framework that informs development of standards and implementation practices at the national level. Context-specific approaches are built into their structure, as is the principle of incremental good practice across three levels.¹

Within the IATGs, MAG's assistance focuses on supporting states to achieve Level 1, which will make progress toward preventing unplanned explosions and diverting munitions to illicit markets in even the most challenging contexts. Projects based on assessments that involve relevant national authorities and consider wider stakeholders, programming and assistance have the best chance of success.

Where Next?

By the time this article is published, a number of important meetings involving stakeholders in the AMD sector will have convened, particularly a meeting on ammunition life cycle management (hosted in Switzerland) as well as efforts to improve coordination in the Greater Sahel, led by Germany and the African Union. These discussions are unlikely to change



Major Arme Amoya, storekeeper, Ségou Police. “I am very happy with the container and the way it is organized. All gun racks have padlocks. The training went very well and I learned a lot. I am from the old school and I didn’t receive any training. I became a storekeeper because of trust rather than training. Now I am trained, I was recently promoted to work in a bigger armory. I will make sure to pass on my knowledge to my replacement—but I will keep the manual MAG gave me.”

the scope of AMD assistance activities significantly, as activities will continue to focus on destruction of conventional weapons; construction and rehabilitation of armories and explosive stores; and training and capacity building of national authorities, security agencies and armed forces. However, these will be vital steps in defining the future direction of the AMD sector by concentrating on coordination in AMD programming, defining end states for international assistance, programming effectiveness, and measuring success and sustainability.

The period ahead is important for further developing an AMD sector separate from mine action and where programming approaches can continue to evolve and improve. The AMD sector must deepen its understanding of how assistance efforts support conflict prevention and broader security-sector reform efforts. To be successful, we must continue to develop a culture that embraces critical self-reflection while deepening and broadening dialogue and partnership. ©

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