

# IMPROVING SECURITY IN THE DRC THROUGH WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION MANAGEMENT

Background image courtesy of Katrin Stauffer.

By Beamie-Moses Seiwoh, Aurelie Fabry, Grégoire de Nantes, and Edison Pineda [ UNMAS DRC ]



Weapons secured by the Congolese National Police in safes provided by UNMAS at a sub-commissariat in Karisimbi, Goma.

All images courtesy of Katrin Stauffer, external M&E Specialist provided to UNMAS DRC by the Swiss Armed Forces, 2019.

Since its independence in 1960, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has undergone significant political turmoil. The resurgence of armed conflict since 1996 has displaced thousands across the country and resulted in proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SA/LW), which remains a serious concern. The diversion of SA/LW and ammunition from state-owned stockpiles is linked to poor or insufficient weapons and ammunition management (WAM) capacity, practices, and procedures, and has been identified as a major cause of illicit arms and ammunition

proliferation in the DRC.<sup>1</sup> The trafficking, accumulation, and misuse of SA/LW and related ammunition pose a systemic and pervasive threat to peacebuilding and hampers long-term socioeconomic development.<sup>2</sup> Installation of weapon storage solutions as well as the provision of WAM training, as implemented by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), is helping to improve the security situation in the DRC. Moreover, these activities support the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) mandate to establish a protective environment for civilians in conflict-affected areas. Additionally, it is in alignment with the National Action Plan for Control of SA/LW in the DRC 2018-2022 (NAP 18-22), implemented by the National Commission for the Control of SA/LW and Reduction of Armed Violence (CNC-ALPC).

In 2018, the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region aimed to establish the nexus between fragility<sup>3</sup> situations and the illicit proliferation of SA/LW in the DRC, and examine how this correlation has impacted on livelihoods and human development. This assessment attributed the proliferation of SA/LW to the protracted armed conflict and violence that led to the formation of militia groups, weak border controls, and the porosity of national and territorial borders. A study carried out in Eastern DRC in 2010 (where approximately 300,000 illicit firearms were in circulation at the time) by the Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix et la sécurité (GRIP),<sup>4</sup> concluded that SA/LW are key drivers and enablers of conflict. In a 2018 study, Small Arms Survey (SAS) estimated that 945,784 unregistered firearms were in circulation throughout DRC in 2017.<sup>5</sup> These wide-reaching problems contribute to an insecure environment (including food insecurity in the most rural areas) with an elevated rate of armed violence; displacement of populations as a result of internal conflicts, namely territorial conflicts (among pastoralist communities); and armed conflict in neighboring countries, creating significant challenges for the host<sup>6</sup> communities' populations and authorities.

In an effort to combat the threat of SA/LW proliferation, the DRC has committed to regional and international instruments such as the Kinshasa Convention,<sup>7</sup> the Nairobi Protocol,<sup>8</sup> the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA),<sup>9</sup> and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).<sup>10</sup> The DRC works with partners, including the MONUSCO and UNMAS, to strengthen its national SA/LW framework through WAM.



Marking and numbering of Congolese National Police weapons at sub-commissariat in Karisimbi, Goma.

In line with international standards, UNMAS in DRC supports the reinforcement and enhancement of national security actors' capacity for effective WAM in support of the government's effort to limit and control the circulation of SA/LW and associated ammunition in close cooperation with the CNC-ALPC.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, UNMAS assists in

- improving the security protocols relating to state-held weapons through the assessment of Congolese National Police (PNC) commissariats and sub-commissariats;
- installation of weapons storage solutions;
- marking of weapons;
- training designed to safeguard and manage the SA/LW and ammunition of the national security and defense forces, namely the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and the PNC; and
- destroying surrendered weapons, in support of national disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs.

## RECENT INITIATIVES

Between July 2018 and May 2020, UNMAS worked to reduce the proliferation, trafficking, accumulation, and misuse of SA/LW and ammunition in Tanganyika, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces. Going forward, UNMAS is committed to further developing an SA/LW incident database to gather information on how the construction and installation of armories, weapon safes, containerized commissariats (i.e., containers that have been converted into police stations for the PNC with secure weapons storage capability), and the relevant WAM trainings contribute to an overall improvement of the security situation in the DRC.

The changing deployment strategies of the national security forces—based on ongoing conflicts—is a challenge that is likely to

persist in the future. With the installation of weapon safes and commissariats, UNMAS actively seeks to address these circumstances and responds with “protection through projection,” a flexible and comprehensive MONUSCO approach combined with increased mobility and a proactive posture facilitating both police and military interventions. An external evaluation<sup>12</sup> conducted in 2019 on UNMAS DRC SA/LW activities highlighted that containerized commissariats have a direct impact on the security situation, as they increase physical presence on site and improve the mobility and agility of the PNC. By expanding MONUSCO early warning systems that can detect emerging violent hotspots, UNMAS provides police with the ability to leverage their increased physical presence and mobility to intervene quickly and quell rising tensions before they escalate, providing physical protection to civilians.

**Assessing needs for storage solutions.** UNMAS conducted weapon storage needs assessments for the PNC and FARDC in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Haut-Katanga. As a result, 230 locations were furnished with 975 rifle safes, 202 pistol safes, thirteen containers for sub-commissariats, and seven armory containers enabling the safe storage of over 17,000 weapons.

**Ensuring national sustainability of WAM storage facilities.** UNMAS developed and delivered a training package on safe and effective WAM to 1,164 armorers and ammunition storekeepers, including forty-three women, from national security and defense institutions.

**Marking and registration.** Following UNMAS training, and under the leadership of the CNC-ALPC, FARDC and PNC teams have marked and registered over 18,000<sup>13</sup> state-held weapons in Ituri and Tanganyika provinces as of November 2020. MONUSCO is coordinating efforts with the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/





Non-functional weapons collected and prepared for destruction by Police Nationale Congolaise at the sub-commissariat in Karisimbi, Goma.

WRA) to support the CNC-ALPC. These efforts directly contributed toward the NAP 18-22 objective's deadline of 2022.

## LESSONS LEARNED

**Knowledge Management.** After adopting the Nairobi Declaration Protocol in 2004, DRC conducted surveys in order to design the NAP 18-22 for SA/LW. These surveys were neither renewed nor consistently reviewed. As a result, it was difficult to quantify the impact of the policies and programs implemented over the past decade. Moreover, these surveys were outdated and unable to fully reflect the nature, extent, and challenges created by SA/LW proliferation. Therefore, to support the DRC in further strengthening its WAM framework, the CNC-APLC, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), and UNMAS organized a national consultative process to conduct a baseline assessment<sup>14</sup> of national WAM institutions and methods in the DRC, which was instituted and completed in 2016.

**Strengthened national institutions.** The CNC-ALPC's dependency on external donors reduces its operational capacities, and the low political backing of other governmental institutions limits its capacity to leverage the international assistance necessary to achieve their goals. Thus, any attempt to support the DRC in clearly defining baselines and targets for a roadmap on the implementation of the NAP 18-22 should be closely coordinated with CNC-ALPC to better assess their needs and strengthen their ability to design programs and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms.

**DRC's commitment and ownership.** The CNC-ALPC plays a proactive and constructive role in coordinating the M&E working group to implement NAP 18-22 for SA/LW control activities, which aim to

prevent, combat, and eradicate illicit proliferation, trafficking, accumulation, and misuse of SA/LW and ammunition.

**Increased coordination.** While the effects of uncontrolled SA/LW proliferation vary between provinces, there are regionally interconnected dimensions. The initiatives advanced by the NAP 18-22 M&E working group or by the local/international counterparts, while helping to respond to isolated incidents often fall short of addressing the common regional needs. Increased coordination among NAP 18-22 key stakeholders and M&E working groups would ensure that efforts are consistent with the needs and priorities set out by the national authority.

## FORWARD LOOKING FOR UNMAS

**Collaborating with relevant partners and the broader peacebuilding process.** UNMAS emphasizes cooperation, particularly with regard to joint data collection, which facilitates better cross-sectoral monitoring. UNMAS also identifies strategic areas for collaboration, focusing on volatile environments such as Beni Territory. This increases human security where needed most but also facilitates comprehensive data collection and lessons learned with regard

to the impact of joint activities by conducting small-scale, high-impact case studies.

**Maximizing the cost-benefit ratio to safeguard solutions.** In addition to weapon safes and container commissariats, which are flexible and cost-effective solutions, still simpler solutions like weapon racks are to be promoted as they are even more adaptable to the changing deployment plans of the national security forces. UNMAS seeks cost-effective methods to deliver weapon storage containers to allow an increase in the physical presence of security staff, which leads to reduced criminality and violence.

**Long-term management strategies for installations.** UNMAS relinquishes ownership of storage facilities once they are operational. Nevertheless, case studies<sup>15</sup> and recent SA/LW impact evaluations show that the long-term management of installations—including maintenance, repair, and resupply of spare parts—could be drastically improved by the national security forces responsible for these facilities. The M&E consultant provided by the Swiss Armed Forces to evaluate SA/LW storage facilities recommended that UNMAS provide increased support to ensure facilities remain in good working order. Aside from discussions with national security forces on how to best manage and maintain the installations, UNMAS can make a difference by conducting systematic follow-up inspections after installations are in place. By detecting misuse or inadequate upkeep of physical security measures early, UNMAS can better identify additional required training and is currently reinforcing its partnership with United Nations Police to implement such inspections.

**Reconsidering WAM training strategies and providing WAM materials.** The frequent turnover of WAM-trained personnel—due



Weapon registration book maintained by Police Nationale Congolaise personnel at the territorial Police Nationale Congolaise commissariat in Irumu.

to the changing deployment plans of national security forces—is an ongoing challenge. UNMAS intends to implement a more integrated approach including developing self-study materials and WAM templates such as registration and inventory books, and weapon security or identification booklets. Through detailed needs assessments, this will require the PNC and FARDC to better coordinate the training needs and deployment plans of trained personnel to ensure at least two WAM trained personnel are deployed in a commissariat or FARDC facility. To address relevant requests for additional booklets, UNMAS aims to provide laminated and resistant posters for all duty stations. In December 2020, UNMAS will also develop self-learning material to national security forces to fill the gap until those National Security Forces receive proper WAM training or in case of rotation, in areas where weapon storage solutions are in place.

## CONCLUSION

With the inclusion of SDGs 1 and 16<sup>16</sup> in the 2030 Agenda, the availability and misuse of SA/LW have a recognized negative impact on sustainable development and reduction of poverty. Activities to fight the illicit trade of SA/LW in the DRC should be strengthened, particularly the establishment of a roadmap based on CNC-ALPC/UNMAS joint assessments<sup>17</sup> of FARC and PNC needs and regarding joint data collection to facilitate better cross-sectoral monitoring. SA/LW activities are key to improve the security environment and contribute to the protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas. This increase in the perception of safety has strengthened the local community's confidence to move about without fear and to conduct their daily activities including fetching water and accessing local markets and other key infrastructure. Although this improved perception of safety is based on the mere noticeable presence of national security and defense forces, the local population also registered an apparent improvement in the professionalism of FARDC and PNC when dealing with weapons and ammunition. ©

*See endnotes page 65*

### Beamie-Moses Seiwoh

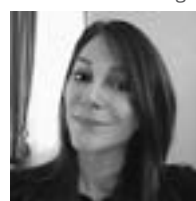
#### UNMAS DRC, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist



Beamie-Moses Seiwoh is the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist with UNMAS DRC. Before joining UNMAS DRC, he worked with the United Nations World Food Programme and United Nations Development Programme conducting monitoring and evaluation in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan. Seiwoh holds a master's degree in Development Studies from Njala University, Sierra Leone, and a master's in Sociology of Law from the International Institute for the Sociology of Law, Spain.

### Aurelie Fabry

#### UNMAS DRC Programme Officer



Aurelie Fabry is the Programme Officer at UNMAS DRC. Fabry has worked in mine action for over seven years and has implemented programs in DRC and Central African Republic. Previously, she worked for the Belgium Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Directorate-General Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid where she focused on allocations of Belgian Official Development Assistance to national and international stakeholders as well as on monitoring and evaluation of development policies. She holds a post-master's degree in International Humanitarian Action and a master's degree in Communication from the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

### Grégoire de Nantes

#### UNMAS DRC, SA/LW Project Manager



Grégoire de Nantes is the Project Manager of Small Arms and Light Weapons at UNMAS DRC. He joined UNMAS in 2016 in Mali as Programme Planning Officer. Previously, de Nantes was deployed by the French Military Land Forces to UN missions in Ivory Coast as the Deputy Chief Joint Operations Centre, and the Deputy Chief of the Joint Mission Analysis Centre. His area of expertise focuses on strategic, operational, and tactical planning as well as on weapons and ammunition management. He also acquired teaching experience in military operation planning and implementation at the French Staff College and worked on developing the extension of the tactical simulation training center in Saumur, France.

### Edison Pineda

#### UNMAS DRC, Swiss SA/LW Specialist



Edison Pineda is a Swiss Armed Forces Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Specialist, supporting UNMAS DRC in the role of Weapon and Ammunition Management Operations Officer. Pineda began his career in the private sector in roles including corporate auditing and project management. He is certified in EOD Level 3 and Physical Security and Stockpile Management from the Swiss EOD Center and has over five years of experience in mine action working in the areas of project management and evaluation, technical support, quality assurance, and operations.