July 2009

SA/LW and the OSCE Response

Jernej Cimperšek
Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the OSCE

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approach to development planning and ownership would seem to provide a very strong foundation for future development in a complementary and mutually supportive approaches.

Mine Action, SA/LW and DDR

Demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration refers to procedures designed to smooth the process of transitioning combatants back into productive civilian life. Analysis has shown that much of the informal demobilising taking place is conducted by ex-militia and ex-military. These former combatants represent both a problem and an asset for post-war countries. The combatants are trained and armed, and could be employed in projects including engineering, transportation and demining. They could also become restless and have a negative impact on the community. Unfortunately, the mine-action and SA/LW communities have yet to integrate this issue systematically to any real extent. This area is one in which the mine-action and SA/LW communities might be more successful if they jointly undertook analysis and strategic planning.

Conclusion

Though previous research has shown the management of SA/LW and mine-action programs require quite different skills, supporting analysis from other contexts and wide-spread expert opinion gathered from within the mine-action and SA/LW sectors show a number of areas at the project level that could offer opportunities for synergy. Accordingly, the integration of mine-action and the management of SA/LW has been significant in some countries (Bosnia, Cambodia and Tajikistan, to name a few), and is accelerating on a global level.

See Endnotes, Page 113

This article was extracted from the GICHD study: Identifying Synergies between Mine Action and Small Arms and Light Weapons released in October 2008.

Eric M. Filippino has headed the Socio-Economic Unit at the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining since February 1998. He is responsible for thematic training, assessment, research and direct field support in the areas of socioeconomics, MINEx and capacity development. Filippino has worked in mine action since the past 15 years and advantages were for five years prior to that. He has worked both for MSF and the United Nations in numerous field positions in Africa, Central Asia, Europe and Southeast Asia.

Eric Filippino
Head, Socio-Economic Unit
Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
7th floor, avenue de la Paix
Box 1201 CH-1211 Geneva 1 / Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 306 1660
Fax: +41 22 326 1690
E-mail: e.filippino@gichd.org
Web site: www.gichd.org

SA/LW and the OSCE Response

The illegal dissemination of small arms/light weapons has recently come to the forefront of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s agenda. Through security forums and the provision of literature and physical assistance to affected countries, the OSCE is working to rid Europe of SA/LW that may potentially spread to more militant nations. Working with other international organizations such as the United Nations, the OSCE aims to encourage implementation of its Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, drafted to address the spread of SA/LW and related issues, and to completely rid the area of dangerous arms.

by Jemri Cimperšek | Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the OSCE |

W hy are small arms/light weapons an issue for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and in the OSCE area? The problem began when huge amounts of military hardware, such as tanks, combat planes, armed personnel vehicles, etc., were disarmed and dismantled in Europe during the 1990s. SA/LW and ammunition, however, were not significantly reduced or disabled. They were instead placed in huge depots in much of the former Soviet Union borderlands. Many of these depots are reportedly vulnerable to the elements and inadequately secured or guarded by security agencies with histories of corruption, including instances of suspicious arms sales. Some depots are not secured or watched at all. NATO and the Ukrainian Military estimate that Soviet soldiers left more than seven million rifles, pistols, mortars and machine guns in Ukraine, along with 2.5 million metric tons (2.76 US tons) of conventional ammunition. Wars in the former Yugoslavia also saw the collection of huge numbers of SA/LW and ammunition. Typically, a lot of this now-unnecessary military equipment finds its way to the illegal market.

Illicit trade of SA/LW from areas of the former Soviet Union and the Western Balkans poses a security threat for all states of the OSCE. SA/LW from these areas can be found in Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq and the South Caucasus. SA/LW are the weapons of choice in contemporary regional conflicts. There is a higher probability that a peacekeeper in Africa or in Afghanistan will be killed by illicitly traded SA/LW from the Western Balkans or the former Soviet Union than by any other weapon. This situation is unacceptable to all countries participating in peace operations all over the world, and to the states of the OSCE in particular.

OSCE Reply

To address the threat posed to the international community by the excessive and destabilising accumulation of uncontrolled SA/LW, the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation adopted the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2000. This document is a cornerstone of the OSCE response to the extreme growth and spread of SA/LW to the global community. It is also an important tool in combating threats caused by terrorism and organised crime, while underlining the importance of further strengthening its implementation. With this document, the OSCE sets norms, principles and measures, while simultaneously mandating participating states to keep the implementation of these norms, principles and measures under regular review. The need for the document was acknowledged by the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. In addition, while adopting the Document on SA/LW, the OSCE also saw an opportunity to provide a substantial contribution to the process underway in the United Nations.
In particular, it could implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SA/LW, which was adopted in 2006, the Data (E)}

**Information Exchange**

Under the OSCE Document on SA/LW, participating states agreed in 2003 to establish and submit updated national information on marking systems, procedures for the control of manufacturing, legislation and current practice in export policy. The document also includes national procedures for stockpiles management, control over brokering, small-arms destruction techniques, stockpile security and management programs. In addition, the states pledged to exchanging annual data on national exports and imports of SA/LW from other OSCE-participating states. Last but not least, these states made a commitment to identifying surpluses and seizing and destroying excess small arms within their territories.

According to the data exchanged between 2001 and 2006, participating states destroyed 6,388,206 pieces of SA/LW, of which 5,213,134 were deemed surplus and 1,175,082 were seized from illegal possession and trafficking.

**OSCE Handbook of Best Practices**

Standards set in the Document on SA/LW are high, and for some OSCE-participating states, implementation of the commitments represents a heavy burden. To assist them, the OSCE launched the Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2003. In 2006, the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation approved an annex to the handbook concerning national procedures for stockpile management and control of small arms and light weapons (MANPADS). The handbook provides a set of recommendations for the implementation of the Document on SA/LW. It is a tool that can use states to assist in applying the norms and standards indicated in the Document.