Small Arms and Light Weapons in the East African Community (EAC)

Impact Assessment of Control of Small Arms between 2006 and 2012
Contributions by the GIZ Programme “Promotion of Peace and Security in the EAC”
Small Arms and Light Weapons in the East African Community

Impact Assessment of Control of Small Arms between 2006 and 2012
Contributions by the GIZ Programme “Promotion of Peace and Security in the EAC”
Small Arms and Light Weapons in the East African Community

Impact Assessment of Control of Small Arms between 2006 and 2012
Contributions by the GIZ Programme “Promotion of Peace and Security in the EAC”

Summary report
Since the end of the 1990s, small arms have been in the spotlight as the “new weapons of mass destruction”. The end of the Cold War released an abundance of portable and easy-to-use firearms at dumping prices on poor and volatile regions of the world. Instability and internal conflicts increased as fewer regimes were propped up by external powers for ideological reasons. In response to increasing demand, organs of the state security sector in affected countries became important suppliers of weapons and ammunition, sometimes openly supporting a particular faction, sometimes providing undercover support, and sometimes through a loss of control as corrupt officials became involved in weapon or ammunition transfers. The widespread misuse of small arms ruined lives and set back development by decades. A problem that continues.

In 2001 the United Nations approved the ‘Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects (UNPoA)’, which set the global agenda to address the problem. In 2004 East African States identified priorities for regional UNPoA implementation in the mutually agreed ‘Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa’. In the same year, the then GTZ programme office in Arusha, Tanzania, designed a regional project to support states of the East African Community (EAC) to imple-
ment these priorities as part of a wider peace and security framework. Many other donors assisted East African States in their endeavours to address the illicit proliferation of firearms through bilateral initiatives or through support via the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA) based in Nairobi. The EAC Secretariat as the principal implementing partner and the decision to pursue a regional strategy for firearms control were unique features of the GIZ project, which ran in two phases between 2006 and 2012. The European Commission provided matching funds for the GIZ activities through the SALW component of the EU Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution project.

What progress has been made in East Africa, more than ten years after the adoption of the UN agenda? Have these initiatives had an impact on the security context of the EAC region? This document presents key findings of a GIZ commissioned evaluation of its support.

Impact is measured in terms of changes in levels of gun crime, strife among pastoralist societies and general conflict volatility. These indicators have been chosen to measure impact because they were originally used to justify the GIZ project in 2004. In addition, the majority of 81 regional stakeholders in small arms issues responding to an online questionnaire in 2012 confirmed that these were their most important areas of concern.

This summary presents observations on the policy choice to implement small arms measures through the EAC Secretariat. What added value can be gained by channelling support to a regional organisation, and was it appropriate to focus assistance on the more stable countries in the region? What are the drawbacks to working through a regional organisation? The third section provides an overview of the current state of implementation as reported by project representatives from national governments (National Focal Points) and interested parties on small arms issues.
arms issues in the region. The closing remarks consider general features of small arms support to Africa, lessons learned from the regional strategy and recommendations for the way forward.

**Changes in gun crime and conflict volatility**

Overall, security has improved in the EAC region over the last decade. Levels of firearm misuse have decreased during the years of project implementation. Available data suggests that a reduction in firearm availability occurred within the EAC, as indicated by falling lethality rates among victims of crime and community conflict. In Uganda, the average number of annually recorded deaths by shooting decreased by over 20 per cent, from 360 in the period 2003-2006 to 279 in the period 2007-2010 (see Figure 1). The firearm homicide rate among all murders in Uganda fell from an average of 15.9 per cent to an average of 12 per cent in the period 2003-2006 compared to 2007-2009 (Figure 2). An overwhelming majority of respondents to the online questionnaire were of the opinion that levels of gun crime had gone down. This confirms the trend indicated by official statistics. Violent crime remains a matter of concern in East Africa, but the data (for Uganda at least) suggests that victims of crime are less likely to die in incidents of gun crime than in the past.

**Figure 1:** Numbers of deaths by shooting, Uganda 2003-2010

**Figure 2:** Rate of firearm homicides among all homicides, Uganda 2003-2009

![Figure 1: Numbers of deaths by shooting, Uganda 2003-2010](chart1)

![Figure 2: Rate of firearm homicides among all homicides, Uganda 2003-2009](chart2)

Source: National Statistics of Uganda Police Force
According to the pastoralist violence monitoring data collected by the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) run out of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), confrontations among warring pastoralists are less lethal today than in the past. The last four years saw on average 0.8 violent deaths per reported conflict event compared to 1.8 during the previous four years (Figure 3). However, the number of actual incidents has increased rather than fallen. This indicates that although small arms control measures reduce the impact of conflict on victims through a reduction in the death toll, they do not resolve the underlying issues leading to conflict and violence.

**Figure 3:** Average number of deaths per reported incidents, Karamoja Cluster, 2004-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average for four year intervals</th>
<th>2004 to 2007</th>
<th>2008 to 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CEWARN Monitoring Data

The number of International Crisis Group (ICG) reports issued for EAC countries and their neighbours is another indicator of conflict. This also suggests a steady stabilisation within the Partner States of the EAC in contrast to volatility in some of the neighbouring countries. However, the flare-up of lethal election violence in Kenya in 2008 highlighted the fact that progress is fragile and access to weapons can still be orchestrated at times of heightened crisis.

Overall, these are encouraging findings. The indicators signal that the multitude of measures undertaken to restrict access and to criminalise illicit use have had an impact. Small arms measures can and have reduced the death toll in the region. Every life spared during a robbery or conflict over cattle makes an important difference for the victims' families and communities. The general sense of improving security is important for economic growth that will lift people out of poverty. However, the observed improvements are uneven across the EAC region, and progress could be reversed if efforts and measures are not sustained.

**A regional approach to tackling illicit proliferation and civil society inclusion – contributions from the GIZ project**

GIZ’s regional strategy had the added value of strengthening the commitment of EAC States to work together on the issue within the region and within UN processes, thereby empowering the most dynamic and stable states in East Africa to assume greater responsibilities for peace and security within the wider region. The GIZ project started at an opportune moment, when the EAC Secretariat was searching for practical areas to engage with the peace and security agenda and had identified a regional SALW policy as a strategic EAC aim. The lead role of EAC helped the Partner States to find a common voice on small arms matters within multilateral processes. Three such common positions have been agreed upon related to the African Union SALW Policy, the African Union Common Position on Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the Regional Common Position on the ATT. These common positions on SALW are a
new feature of the EAC integration process. The EAC leadership role within the region on small arms issues also manifested itself in financial contributions to the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA), to which EAC partner states provided nearly 80% of all African contributions, and which supports implementation of small arms measures within the wider East African region.

The GIZ project also ensured greater **coherence between national measures** in different EAC countries to control small arms proliferation. In addition to its regional focus, the project supported national governments, who retain the main responsibility to control small arms. The project made funds available to national governments on the basis of project proposals for self-identified priorities. The regional strategy enhanced the impact of national measures
through EAC facilitation that encouraged Partner States to adopt accompanying regional policies. The regional approach also ensured that the two most stable states, Rwanda and Tanzania, which due to their current stability find it hard to attract much other support, could also proceed with implementation. However, disbursement of funds for use at national level via a regional organisation weakened the donor’s ability to influence priorities and ensure quality control at project management level. Arguably, some of the activities at national level could have had a stronger focus on results and would have benefitted from a formal monitoring and evaluation process throughout the project cycle.

The GIZ project also made an important contribution by bringing individuals with small arms responsibilities within national government and civil society closer to each other. The project supported representatives from the East African Action Network on Small Arms (EAANSA) and the Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI) to participate at EAC meetings. Regular and direct contacts ensured that civil society is informed about progress in implementation and influences the debate. Notably, the involvement of EASSI has helped to bring a gender perspective and the UN agenda on women, peace and security into the East African SALW process.

Implementation of the Nairobi Protocol Commitments in EAC countries
Concrete measures to reduce the illicit proliferation of small arms are set out in the UNPoA and the Nairobi Protocol. The GIZ project and other donors supported these activities which focussed on preventing illicit transfers and misuse and require measures at national government level. Key initiatives are the engraving of unique ID numbers on all government weapons held by the armed forces, the police and other services (e.g. national park rangers), and, where possible, legally owned civilian firearms. Such marking of firearms has to be accompanied by an institutionalised information management mechanism to permit tracing the whereabouts and use of legitimate guns, as well as a clear legal and regulatory framework that criminalises illicit behaviour and sets out deterring penalties.

According to a self-assessment questionnaire sent to National Focal Points (NFPs) of the five Partner States of the EAC, implementation of the commitments made in the Nairobi Protocol are well advanced within the Community. Between 70 % and 96 % of Nairobi Protocol Commitments are described as operational in the EAC Partner States. Implementation is most advanced in terms of strengthening prohibitions and criminalisation of illegal activities, in particular controls on illicit civilian firearm ownership and trafficking. However, a fully developed legal framework to address SALW issues is only in force in Rwanda so far. The process of marking firearms is currently under way, with several mobile marking machines in operation to engrave ID numbers on all government stocks. There has been less progress in bringing about changes in management practices within government or state bodies. In particular security force stockpile management and tracing mechanisms require further work and reform. Manufacturing and transfer controls are considered, rightly or wrongly, less of a priority in the East African region – despite the fact that Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania are ammunition producers – and reporting of a relatively advanced state of implementation reflects this assumption despite the fact that no specific measures in the areas of manufacturing controls were taken in any of the EAC Partner States over the last years.

2 Information provided by NFPs was not independently verified.
Arms marking for easy traceability and identification of arms
To ensure effective SALW controls, weapons must be adequately marked and registered, and verified by physical inspections.

The marking of arms contributes to effective management and control of stockpiles and prevents diversion from state stockpiles or from civilian hands.
Figure 4: Policy areas in which Nairobi Protocol commitments have been implemented based on NFP self-assessment

External observers which were asked for their opinion on implementation of small arms measures via an online questionnaire agreed with the NFPs that the greatest advances have been made in SALW policies imposing restrictions on individuals who misuse of firearms. However, external observers perceived a greater need for further action than government representatives across all other SALW policy areas. They emphasised the need for the further strengthening of frameworks and the enforcement of policies and laws. The differences in view highlight the fact that, notwithstanding the clear progress that has been made, further efforts are needed to consolidate these advances and strengthen the enforcement of new and existing regulations.

Figure 5: Online questionnaire respondents views on the system of SALW control in their countries

Responses to all policy areas combined (Questions 10-15 of online questionnaire)

Concluding remarks and the way forward

Important resources and commendable efforts have gone into addressing the small arms issue in the region. Progress has been made in a number of technical areas that are not always clearly visible to the outside observer. New computer software, a machine operating behind guarded barrack gates and burning ID numbers onto thousands of government held weapons, and draft bills that meander their way through long-winding law making processes, do not often make it into the headline news. It requires some imagination to perceive the benefits that these technical measures bring to the development efforts in the region through reduced lethality and declining fear of crime and violence. The perception of induced changes is also hampered by the fact that it takes several years for results to be visible. Re-enforced stockpile control only bears fruit after several years, when reduced leakage of government stockpiles starts to affect the availability of weapons for criminals and insurgents. Public crime statistics always lag two years behind reality (the latest figures available for review in 2012 are from 2010).
Therefore, expectations of what can be shown in monitoring data six to eight years after efforts started should not be too high. And yet, the data shows a reduction in violence and deaths. This is extremely encouraging.

The review of the GIZ project also showed that a regional policy can add value by strengthening regional and national ownership of the peace and security objectives. Participation in EAC processes can enhance the motivation and determination to change policy at national level. The common agenda provides a road map that helps in particular the more volatile countries to pursue a clear path towards stabilisation. Regular contacts between colleagues from different countries strengthen policy commitment and implementation. It has also been helpful to base the approach on a predefined policy agenda (the UNPoA) rather than requiring EAC negotiations on a new framework. The small arms strategy has been the first area where the EAC Secretariat has engaged in peace and security work, and the lessons learned from this process could be applied to other aspects of the regional peace and security agenda. The involvement of civil society has helped to widen the discussion from very technical measures to a broader societal approach.

Institutionalised impact monitoring remained a weakness of the GIZ project and others working on small arms measures. The reasons for this drawback are manifold. The extra layer of implementation via a regional organisation did not facilitate the application of GIZ best practice in monitoring. More generally, trend data on violence and conflict is sparse. Security agencies provide little data on the progress of firearms marking and have not been transparent on assessing leakage. They are not used to, and often resist, public scrutiny of their work. Institutionalised monitoring of security or violence trends requires expertise that is not always available in general project staff. However, better monitoring might have helped some Partner States to move faster in the implementation of tangible areas and to result in faster progress in internal management. In addition, these weaknesses in monitoring make it harder to demonstrate progress, and to make the case for further action.

This assessment recommends continuing support to the EAC’s work on regional peace and security under a broad umbrella, which should include further cooperation on small arms policies among broader objectives. This will help to sustain the regional working structures established by the project that clearly brought benefits to the region. It is recommended that future projects which work with security sector organs will consider the specific challenges related to monitoring and evaluation. Finally, it is hoped that other donors will step forward and fill the gap left by the exit of the GIZ project from direct support to national governments. Further donor support can help sustain the trend towards reduced violence in East Africa. A drastic shift in donor priorities would risk jeopardizing the achievements made over the last decade with potentially detrimental consequences for prospects of economic development should levels of violence and crime start to rise again.
Speak out and join the effort to eradicate gender based violence!