

**The Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy  
Track on Human Security**

**ARMED VIOLENCE, WEAPONS AVAILABILITY  
AND HUMAN SECURITY:  
A VIEW OF THE STATE OF PLAY AND OPTIONS FOR ACTION**

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*“...safety and security don’t just happen: they are the result of collective consensus and public investment.” Nelson Mandela*<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction**

The challenges posed by the proliferation and misuse of small arms are complex and do not lend themselves to simple solutions.<sup>2</sup> Over the last decade attention to the global small arms trade has led to intense activity at numerous levels from governments, activists, policy analysts, researchers and advocates. With the failure of traditional security concepts to take into account the shifting nature of armed violence *and* these particular tools of violence, this attention is long overdue.

In the last five years an international NGO network has been established; a premier source book, the *Small Arms Survey*, has been developed for confident reference; a UN process has been launched; a multitude of weapons collection and destruction projects implemented, regional declarations and agreements negotiated, national regulations improved and numerous research projects undertaken. A remarkable dimension, however, has been the reluctance and, at times, inability to prioritize the human cost, and therefore people-centred solutions to gun violence. This has been evident in the types of research undertaken (for example, the numerous reports on border controls, or counting stockpiles,) and the types of policy options conceived (focusing on weapons collection projects, or the marking and tracing of weapons, for example).

There is no doubt that the research and policy options given as examples are important but other critical elements come to light when different questions are asked: What is needed to make people safer? What will reduce the unnecessary death and suffering caused by the misuse of these weapons? When these questions are

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organisation (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*.

<sup>2</sup> Small arms generally refers to grenades, assault rifles, handguns, revolvers, light machine guns. Light weapons generally refers to anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, heavy machine guns, recoilless rifles. For more detail see [www.un.org/Depts/dda/CAB/rep52298.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/dda/CAB/rep52298.pdf) for the 1997 Report on the UN Panel of Experts definition. The terms guns, weapons, small arms are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

posed, much of the current politics, research and policy appears to lack the focus and impact required to adequately address the problems at hand.

This paper provides an overview of the small arms problem; of why alternative conceptions of security such as human security offer a useful tool for tackling this issue; and of the most relevant small-arms-related policy initiatives, processes and networks that have emerged in recent years.

## **The Impacts of Weapons Availability and Misuse**

Armed violence consumes the lives of thousands of people every week. Some 200,000 – 270,000 people die annually from suicide, accidents or homicide involving small arms.<sup>3</sup> There are four times as many homicides than suicides using small arms. Latin America and the Caribbean are the worst affected region(s) with 60% of all murders occurring with a gun.<sup>4</sup> Tragically, North America has the world's highest firearm suicide rate.<sup>5</sup>

Data collection is problematic in many contexts and estimates of war related fatalities vary. The forthcoming *Human Security Report* calculates that some 25,000 people a year die in situations of armed conflict.<sup>6</sup> Weapons availability and misuse also lead to a range of indirect impacts, many with life threatening potential. These include the displacement of civilians;<sup>7</sup> the militarization of refugee camps; the erosion of sustainable development;<sup>8</sup> the restriction of access to health services,<sup>9</sup> education, and food security; land denial; contributing to obstructions in humanitarian assistance,<sup>10</sup> as well as the use of these weapons to threaten the lives and well being of humanitarian, development and health workers.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to these largely preventable deaths, hundreds of thousands of people survive armed violence with injuries, permanent disability and mental health problems.<sup>12</sup> “Current data do not permit exact calculations of the number of people

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<sup>3</sup> *Small Arms Survey: Rights at Risk*, (2004), Oxford University Press, p.175.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Presentation made by Professor Andy Mack, May 2004. The report is to be published in mid 2005. For more background see [www.humansecurityreport.info/](http://www.humansecurityreport.info/)

<sup>7</sup> See Forced Migration Online research report on small arms available at [www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo002/](http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo002/)

<sup>8</sup> See Robert Muggah and Peter Batchelor (2003), *Development held hostage: Assessing the effects of small arms on human development*, UNDP.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, *The impact of small arms on health, human rights and development in Medellín: A case study*, (2003) Oxfam; World Health Organisation, *Small Arms and Global Health* (2001); World Health Organisation, (2002) *World Report on Violence and Health*.

<sup>10</sup> See *Putting guns in their place: A resource pack for two years of action by humanitarian agencies* (2004), Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org); Robert Muggah and Eric Berman (2001), *Humanitarianism under threat: The humanitarian impacts of small arms and light weapons*, Small Arms Survey; Martin Griffiths and Robert Muggah, (2002), *Reconsidering the tools of war: Small arms and humanitarian action*, Humanitarian Practice Network Paper 39.

<sup>11</sup> See Ryan Beasley, Cate Buchanan, Robert Muggah (2003), *In the Line of Fire: Surveying the perceptions of humanitarian and development personnel of the impacts of small arms and light weapons*, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and Small Arms Survey; Sheik M et al (2000), *Deaths among humanitarian workers*, British Medical Journal, Volume 321

<sup>12</sup> See World Health Organisation, *Injury: A Leading Cause of the Global Burden of Disease*

who suffer non-fatal injuries due to violence, but there is every likelihood that it runs into the millions.”<sup>13</sup>

Men and young men in particular are hardest hit by gun violence. It is believed that:

- Over 85% of homicide victims with weapons are under 44.<sup>14</sup>
- Over 90% of gun related homicides occur amongst men.<sup>15</sup>
- 88% of all male and 12% of female suicides use a gun.<sup>16</sup>

### **A Snapshot of the Arms Trade**

- Of the estimated 639 million weapons in the world, almost 60% are in civilian hands. The vast majority of the balance is in the arsenals of national armed forces and police, while about one million are in the hands of insurgents.<sup>17</sup>
- The global stockpile grows by about 1% annually through new production, but it is the re-transfer of second-hand firearms that shapes global distribution most.<sup>18</sup>
- Over 250 million small arms are in the USA; 84 million guns are in the 15 states of the EU; between 45 million and 80 million exist in 11 Latin American countries.<sup>19</sup>
- There are 1249 companies producing small arms with 98 countries having the capacity to produce weapons and ammunition, including all the major donors addressing the problems caused by the misuse of these weapons.<sup>20</sup>
- The USA has the largest number of companies with Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States home to 42% of these companies.<sup>21</sup>
- The global value of the trade is estimated to be worth around \$7.4 billion;<sup>22</sup>
- The cost of gun violence in the USA has been estimated at \$80 billion a year.<sup>23</sup>
- In 2001 three million commercial firearms were produced in the USA – the lowest number since 1992. The total value of the small arms trade in that year was \$2.5 billion.<sup>24</sup>
- Contrary to popular perception, Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to have 30 millions small arms and light weapons – just 5% of the global stockpile.<sup>25</sup>

### **Human Security – a Useful Tool for Tackling the Small Arms Crisis?**

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<sup>13</sup> World Health Organisation, *Small Arms and Global Health* (2001), p. 2

<sup>14</sup> *Small Arms Survey: Rights at Risk*, (2004), Oxford University Press, p.180

<sup>15</sup> World Health Organisation (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*, pp.274-5

<sup>16</sup> *Small Arms Survey: Rights at Risk*, (2004), Oxford University Press, p. 178.

<sup>17</sup> *Small Arms Survey 2003: Development denied*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 57 and *Small Arms Survey: Profiling the Problem*, (2001), Oxford University Press, p. 89.

<sup>18</sup> *Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the human cost*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 103.

<sup>19</sup> *Small Arms Survey: Profiling the Problem*, (2001), Oxford University Press, p. 89, *Small Arms Survey* (2002), *Small Arms Survey 2002: Counting the human cost*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 103, and *Small Arms Survey 2003: Development denied*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 57.

<sup>20</sup> *Small Arms Survey: Rights at Risk*, (2004), Oxford University Press, pp. 8-9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 191.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> *Small Arms Survey: Development Denied*, (2003), Oxford University Press, pp. 80-81.

*“Highlighting the human security dilemmas of ordinary people might provide a point of entry in the crowded global agenda on small arms. The task may appear daunting without some helpful pointers emerging from the experience of field based exposure in sub-regions and countries that are actually facing the dilemma. Although not yet systematically recorded, such experience has been gained by humanitarian agencies, health care workers, refugee rehabilitation staff and international development institutions. But above all, this experience is woven into the lives of people undergoing it.”<sup>26</sup>*

Through the work of activist NGOs, particular governments, elements of academia, visionary individuals in UN agencies and the incremental work of the Human Security Network, thinking about human security has progressed into two overriding, though increasingly laden objectives – freedom from fear and freedom from want. From a policy perspective, the human security wish-list to decision makers is becoming broader, making it easy for the least demanding options to be chosen – and the concept to be all too easily dismissed. Critiqued for offering little added-value, particularly by the human rights community, “human security” does however provide the state and weapons centric disciplines of arms control and disarmament a multidisciplinary framework with which to better understand the challenge of weapons availability and misuse.<sup>27</sup> Human security also offers a much needed bridge between development and security frameworks, overcoming a Cold War legacy.

The Helsinki Process has an opportunity to consolidate thinking on the prevention of armed violence – freedom from fear – to promote health and well-being, the enjoyment of human rights, gender equality, the rights of children and comprehensive disarmament. A coherent and compelling package related to the use of force and its control emerges: reducing the volume of conventional weapons on the planet – landmines, unexploded ordinances, cluster bombs, small arms and lights weapons; ending the use of child soldiers; eliminating gender-based violence; ending impunity. This is emboldened by the development of an effective International Criminal Court and complemented by justice and security sector restoration and reform.

Whilst the debate rages about the utility of human security approaches and definitions, work is underway to reconfigure the ‘small arms issue’. A diverse community is gaining ground in shifting the terms of this debate, and this provides a critical entry point for the ‘human security community’ to engage with the arms trade. The tide is turning as evidence mounts that legalistic approaches – whilst compelling for their neatness – are only one part of a much larger puzzle and are a means to an end, rather than the dominant policy response. Sustainable security objectives that balance the interests of states and people can be demonstrated in the area of small arms control, reduction and use. “A people first” approach to this issue has much to offer:

- It puts a human face on the often technical discussions of arms control.

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<sup>26</sup> Background note for the Human Security Network Ministerial Meeting, Lucerne, May 2000.

<sup>27</sup> For an overview of thinking on human security and small arms issues see the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (2003), *Putting People First: Human security perspectives on small arms availability and misuse*. Available at [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org).

- Those people most immediately affected by and working with violence-ridden communities are drawn into political processes, essential for building momentum, effective interventions and credibility.
- It provides multidisciplinary ‘lenses’ and fresh insights for an issue that has been crafted mainly by disarmament and law enforcement experts.

## Key Issues

Arms availability has three components: supply, demand *and* misuse – a critical departure from the dominant supply vs. demand arms control dichotomy. There are essentially three types of *weapons transfers*: authorised, diverted sales, and the illicit market. The dominant focus on the ‘illicit trade’ is misleading and cannot be usefully isolated from other types of transfers.<sup>28</sup> *Supply-side* measures have often been equated with traditional arms control approaches. These approaches have, to date, focussed more on weapons and less on people, yet we know that fewer weapons does not always result in more safety. Exploring how UN or other arms embargoes might promote human security is one example of how the arms control and disarmament approach can be made more people-focussed. It is believed that at least fifty four nations have been involved in embargo busting activities; clearly this requires urgent attention.<sup>29</sup>

Acknowledging that there are legitimate uses of guns, *national arms control* or standards surrounding civilian weapons possession are an accepted – if unevenly developed – norm, and can also be a powerful component of violence prevention strategies. Experiences from Australia to South Africa to Cambodia demonstrate the ‘freedom from fear’ dividend that strong national gun laws and regulations can bear. Clear political will to create national arms control mechanisms exists in the majority of states, as evidenced during the 2001 United Nations small arms conference; however, some powerful states are resistant to this notion, most particularly the USA.

*Working to lessen the demand* for weapons suits the desire of many governments to work actively at the intersection between ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’. There is broad acceptance that certain socio-economic conditions increase the likelihood of armed violence and, therefore, increase demand for weapons. Responding to these root causes, however, can be a challenge, as core elements of this agenda – poverty alleviation, youth employment and social alienation amongst other issues – are elusive development objectives.

At the moment, the demand side of the equation has tended to comprise a wide range of worthy yet diffuse objectives. The lack of specificity has allowed the demand agenda to be endorsed at the broadest levels by governments without resulting in much concrete activity. The demand for guns is highly dependent on individual and community preferences; resources – perceived and otherwise – and market price. The challenge on the demand side is to tighten the agenda into a series of clear policy objectives, while recognising the interdependence among them. This challenge is

<sup>28</sup> For more detail on this issue see Emanuela-Chiara Gillard (2000), *What is Legal? What is illegal?* In Lora Lumpe (ed), *Running Guns: The Global Black Market in Small Arms*, Zed Books.

<sup>29</sup> *Small Arms Survey: Counting the human cost*, (2002), Oxford University Press p. 134.

perhaps best met by emphasising the nexus between security and development. Particular support must be given to the provision of community security – creating the conditions of law and order, and access to justice that reduce feelings of insecurity and the demand for weapons. Exciting multi-disciplinary work is underway led by the Small Arms Survey and the Quakers to identify methodologies and policy suggestions that could be used to respond to factors that can erode the demand for weapons acquisition and misuse.<sup>30</sup>

Somewhere between supply and demand lies the all important issue of *taking weapons out of circulation*. In the often slow and unrewarding world of small arms control, it is easy to see the attraction of weapons collection projects. However, the focus on weapons collection and destruction has led to mixed results with evidence available that many interventions merely skim the surface; reward entrepreneurial men over communities; drive up the illegal market; and do not diminish deeply held reasons for wanting a weapon in the first place. Considerable policy and programmatic interventions can and are being devised with holistic processes *and* outcomes in mind, for example, community-led ‘weapons for development’ initiatives or gun-free zones.

The last decade has revealed significant shifts in approaches to *disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration* (DDR) with operations from Sierra Leone to the Philippines and the Balkans generating a series of lessons learnt.<sup>31</sup> The UN for the first time has undertaken an agency-wide process to streamline its approach.<sup>32</sup> Increasingly, the ‘R’ is being recognised as the most significant element of a post-war violence-prevention strategy and yet the most poorly understood. The Helsinki Process can call for strategic thinking on this issue and urge for approaches that move away from many of the militaristic weapons-centric processes of the past.<sup>33</sup>

While the majority of the world’s small arms are held by private individuals rather than government security forces, it is the latter that need to be the principal focus of efforts to *address misuse*. Security sector reform efforts to date have tended to focus on militaries, including gaining civilian oversight of armies and human rights training for them. However, a focus on strengthening the rule of law and providing access to justice is likely to be more relevant for limiting the misuse of firearms. Particular attention should be given to carefully targeted support for reform of police, judiciary and prisons, the incompetence of which is in itself a major reason why civilians often feel the need to arm themselves, perpetuating a vicious cycle.

*Justice sector restoration and security sector reform* are critical as part of a package of activities to challenge weapons misuse, by state forces in particular. An end to impunity and the full enjoyment of human rights by all are key policy objectives to be

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<sup>30</sup> For more information visit [www.quno.org](http://www.quno.org); Also see Tibebe Eshete and Siobhan O’Reilly-Calthrop (2000), *Silent Revolution: The role of community development in Reducing the Demand for Small Arms*, Working Paper No. 3, World Vision available at [www.worldvision.ca/publications.cfm?ID=176](http://www.worldvision.ca/publications.cfm?ID=176).

<sup>31</sup> Sometimes also referred to as DDRR, the additional R referring to repatriation.

<sup>32</sup> In October 2004, the Department of Peacekeeping convened the first UN wide meeting on DDR.

<sup>33</sup> For thoughtful overviews see Kees Kingma (1997), *Post-war demobilization and the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life. After the war is over, what comes next?* Washington, DC: USAID, available at [www.dec.org/pdf\\_docs/PNACB979.pdf](http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACB979.pdf); International Peace Academy (2002), a *Framework for Lasting Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Crisis Situations*, available at [www.ipacademy.org/PDF\\_Reports/Framework\\_for\\_DDR.pdf](http://www.ipacademy.org/PDF_Reports/Framework_for_DDR.pdf).

realised. The misuse of weapons is a critical though neglected facet of the small arms crisis. Increasingly donors are recognising the linkages between justice and security sector reform activities. Again, the Helsinki Process can put forward several recommendations including the implementation of existing norms, such as the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms and the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the promise that community policing offers to transform violent power relations.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to these issues and policy options, there are a number of *cross-cutting issues* to take into active consideration.

An estimated two million *children* have been killed with guns over the last decade in situations of conflict alone.<sup>35</sup> In certain societies and for some populations, small arms use and abuse is among the leading causes of death for young people. For example, more than 4000 under-eighteen year olds were killed in Rio between 1988 and 2002 – ‘more than eight times the combined number of Israeli and Palestinian children killed in the same period.’<sup>36</sup> From Brazil to Burma children have been recruited into governmental armed forces, insurgencies, armed groups and gangs.<sup>37</sup> Violence affected children experience *and* perpetrate considerable trauma and suffering representing a profound challenge for families, communities, policy and programming.<sup>38</sup> When teenagers become killers due to rampant weapons availability, much can be done to tackle this.<sup>39</sup>

The human cost of small arms is increasingly laid out in terms of fatalities – this is a significant step forward. However little attention has been devoted to those surviving gun violence with *injuries and disabilities*. Decades of injury prevention and public health work need to be brought more actively into small arms processes – a direct linkage between health and security for the Helsinki Process to offer thinking on. Key questions to answer include: How was the landmines process able to include a victim assistance component to the treaty? And what can we do to develop similar models to *care for gun violence survivors*?

There is an increasing awareness of the utility of *gender* analysis to further understanding of the small arms crisis.<sup>40</sup> However, significant work is still required to

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<sup>34</sup> Adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, 1990, available at [www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/h\\_comp43.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/h_comp43.htm). See the work of Viva Rio on alternative policing for inspiration go to [www.vivario.org](http://www.vivario.org).

<sup>35</sup> *The Machel Review 1996-2000: A Critical Analysis of Progress Made and Obstacles Encountered in Increasing Protection for War-Affected Children*, (2000), UNICEF and UNDP, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Alex Bellos, “Where children rule with guns,” *The Observer*, 19 January 2003.

<sup>37</sup> For example, see Luke Dowdney, (2003), *Children of the Drug Trade: A case study of children in organised armed violence in Rio de Janeiro*, Rio de Janeiro, 7 Letras; see also [www.child-soldiers.org](http://www.child-soldiers.org)

<sup>38</sup> For a policy relevant document see Rachel Stohl et al, *Putting Children First: Building a Framework for International Action to Address the Impacts of Small Arms on Children*, Briefing 11, Biting the Bullet.

<sup>39</sup> For more detail on the issue of children, refer to the work of Kathy Vandergrift for the Helsinki Process.

<sup>40</sup> For more detail on the issue of violence against women, refer to the work of Claudia Garcia-Moreno for the Helsinki Process.

assess the impacts of weapons proliferation and misuse on men and women.<sup>41</sup> Thinking about gender challenges the neat dichotomies that are drawn between the domestic and the international; the global north and south; public and private domains; and crime and conflict situations.

The ‘small arms community’ is only just beginning to comprehend the enormity of what it may mean to address gender and armed violence. Existing discussions on small arms and disarmament processes tend to consider the impact of gun violence on women in terms of the “women as victims” and “men as perpetrators” dichotomy, rather than analysing the complex ways in which the widespread use of guns support cultures of masculinity and femininity, be they violent, passive or resistant.

Additionally, feminist and gender critiques argue that the ‘people’ premised in human security are still predominantly male agents of change. Women tend to feature in the bulk of literature and analysis largely as victims, often clumped together with children and the elderly. A departure from this would be welcomed, given that it is men – young men in particular – who are the primary casualties of armed violence. This is not to diminish or underestimate the acute vulnerabilities women experience due to the threat and use of armed violence but rather a call to address violent masculinity as a key factor in armed violence the world over.

A final challenge is to advance thinking on the various *typologies of impacts* relating to small arms use and misuse that have been developed in recent years, whether narrow (usually with a direct/indirect impacts dichotomy), broad or flexible. There is a need – for programming guidelines, benchmarks for donors, accountability mechanisms for local communities, amongst other imperatives – to extract a set of *operational indicators* from these typologies that would enable greater precision about the problem and contribute to sculpting more effective interventions.

## **Processes and Networks**

After a series of governmental expert reports through the late 1990s, the UN convened the world’s first conference on the small arms issue in 2001.<sup>42</sup> It resulted in the *United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*. Hard fought, the *UN Programme of Action* is explicitly non-binding but it nevertheless represents the only global ‘tool’ for addressing the small arms crisis ‘in all its aspects’. Indicative of governmental temperature on the issue, the key ‘red lines’ during this process included any and all

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<sup>41</sup> See for example, the IANSA Women’s Network portal at [www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org); Brief 24, Bonn Institute for International Conversion, *Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Regional and International Concerns*, available at [www.bicc.de](http://www.bicc.de).

<sup>42</sup> The *United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects* was convened in July 2001. For more information go to [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org) (Small arms section) and the UN Department of Disarmament Affairs website at [www.disarmament.un.org](http://www.disarmament.un.org)

references to restrict weapons transfers to non-state armed groups;<sup>43</sup> regulating the possession of weapons by civilians;<sup>44</sup> and human rights references.

The UN process was successful in bringing together the governments of the world for the first time to discuss the trade in small arms, and in developing a consensus document, albeit open to diverse interpretations in many areas. It provides a global framework for addressing many elements of the problem of small arms availability by encouraging states to address aspects of national legislation or procedures which allow weapons to fall through gaps and into the flourishing illegal market; to improve stockpile management; to urge co-operation between government agencies and regional bodies; to endorse weapons collection and destruction activities; and to promote transparency and information exchange. It is also suggestive of the need to regulate export controls by those nations that choose to trade in weapons.

As a spin off from this conference, work is underway to examine the veracity of legally binding action on brokering (the private business of arranging weapons transfers)<sup>45</sup> and the marking and tracing of weapons (to develop a globally accepted code for marking a weapon in order to be able to trace it, if it were to be used illegally).

*“Small arms do not proliferate by themselves. They are designed, produced, and procured in response to demand by governments and/or civilians. They are sold, re-sold, perhaps stolen, diverted, and maybe legally or illegally transferred several more times. Ultimately, they are used and re-used, during and after conflict. At each juncture in this complex chain of legal and illicit transfers, people – brokers, insurgents, criminals, government officials, and/or organised groups – are active participants in the process. Regulation and control of these weapons must proceed from this simple fact.”<sup>46</sup>*

Despite the ambiguous and ambitious title of the UN Programme of Action, a key issue remains the continuing debate about the dichotomy between the licit and illicit trade. Put simply, a legal weapon can be as misused as an illegal weapon. Efforts to clean up the illicit trade are critical particularly when placed in the larger part of the puzzle: the legal trade.

An important moment in this process occurred at the first Biennial Meeting in July 2003, convened to ‘exchange information’ on progress in implementing the UN Programme of Action. 103 states submitted voluntary reports on progress or otherwise in implementing the Programme, in sharp contrast to the nineteen states in 2002, highlighting the value of such meetings for promoting government transparency.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> On May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004 the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue held a meeting on this issue in Bamako, Mali in advance of the HSN Ministerial Meeting. A succinct briefing paper was prepared by Dr. David Capie from the University of British Columbia’s Armed Groups Project. This and other documentation is available at [www.hdcentre.org](http://www.hdcentre.org) (small arms section).

<sup>44</sup> As part of the same project as the meeting above, the Centre will be convening a similar meeting on this issue in March 2005 in Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>45</sup> A draft treaty has been proposed by the Fund for Peace and endorsed by many NGOs. It available at [www.fundforpeace.org](http://www.fundforpeace.org).

<sup>46</sup> *Small Arms Survey: Profiling the Problem*, (2001), Oxford University Press, p.2

<sup>47</sup> Most reports are available electronically at <http://disarmament.un.org:8080/cab/salw-nationalreports.html>.

The Second Biennial Meeting in July 2005 presents another important reality check with many policy and advocacy projects gearing up for this event. Gentle consideration of the shape *and* potential outcomes of the 2006 Review Conference is underway. The September 2005 reporting of the Helsinki process provides an opportune moment to inject coherent policy recommendations into this UN process.

*The International Action Network on Small Arms* has some 500 participant NGOs from every region of the world. It acts as the principal coordinating mechanism for NGOs working on the issue and attempts to provide space for the many viewpoints on how to tackle the problem. Initially conceived of as having a largely networking function, it has recently shifted into campaign and policy development mode. Additionally, an initial emphasis on regional networking is being balanced with the establishment of thematic networks. As an example, there is now a Women's Network.<sup>48</sup>

IANSAs was created in 1998 and is based in London with a small staff. With the support of governments, private foundations and its own participants it is set to become a powerful unifying voice for civil society on this issue.<sup>49</sup>

A number of initiatives are up for support including a call for an arms trade treaty,<sup>50</sup> the UK government's '*Control Initiative*' to encourage agreement on export controls, a Swiss and French led process to develop agreement on the *marking and tracing* of weapons and a Norwegian Dutch led initiative to crack down on *arms brokers*.<sup>51</sup> Seeking to limit transfers where arms might be used in the commission of grave violations of humanitarian or human rights law places people centrally into arms control discourse. Governmental support is growing for a normative framework on arms transfers; for example the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs has stated, "Now is the time to proceed in creating international rules for the arms trade... Finland... is ready to support the process towards an *Arms Trade Treaty*."<sup>52</sup> Governmental commitment will need to be broadened and consolidated in the years to come and the Helsinki Process is ideally placed to do so.

The work of the *Special Rapporteur on Small Arms* is also pertinent. In 2002 the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights expressed a concern that 'human rights (and small arms issues) are not being given adequate consideration in other contexts' – a reference to the exclusion of human rights terminology and principles from the outcome of the 2001 UN conference on small arms.<sup>53</sup> Since then several reports have been compiled by the Special Rapporteur seeking to inject a much needed focus on human rights approaches and priorities into international

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<sup>48</sup> See [www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org) (women's portal).

<sup>49</sup> The IANSAs website is an invaluable resource on the issue, go to [www.iansa.org](http://www.iansa.org).

<sup>50</sup> Launched on the 9th October, 2003. For more information see [www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org).

<sup>51</sup> For more information on both of these processes go to [www.disarmament.un.org](http://www.disarmament.un.org).

<sup>52</sup> 10 December, 2003 [www.controlarms.org/latest\\_news/ihrd\\_pr2003.htm](http://www.controlarms.org/latest_news/ihrd_pr2003.htm).

<sup>53</sup> *The prevention of human rights violations caused by the availability and misuse of small arms and light weapons*, Sub-Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/25, August 14, 2002. Available at: [www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/10a32527edc27cd4c1256c1d0038ee46](http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/10a32527edc27cd4c1256c1d0038ee46) In April 2003, the UN Commission on Human Rights appointed Barbara Frey as Special Rapporteur to prepare a study on the prevention of human rights violations caused by the availability and misuse of small arms.

debates.<sup>54</sup> Given the resistance to recognising the human rights implications of weapons availability and misuse, the work of the Special Rapporteur would benefit from high level support.

Two processes for the Helsinki Process to consider related to women and armed violence include the UNIFEM-commissioned *Independent Experts' Report, Women, War and Peace* (2002) and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. *Women, War and Peace* observed that women have taken concrete steps to move 'from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention' through establishing systems of early warning and response. These include: recording women's concerns on armed violence and its tools; increasing knowledge and awareness of how women can take an active role in weapons collection and DDR processes;<sup>55</sup> and an active participation in national, community and family processes related to security. This report contains many focussed recommendations worthy of support.

For several years a groundswell has developed acknowledging the need to include, not accommodate, gender perspectives in disarmament and peace processes. The Security Council understood this when it passed the Resolution 1325 on 'Women, Peace and Security', acknowledging and signalling the international community's intent to act on the different experiences of men and women in war zones and violent conflicts. It is a "watershed political framework that makes women – and a gendered perspective – relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peacekeeping operations and reconstructing war torn societies"<sup>56</sup> The annual anniversary in October marks an opportunity for the Helsinki Process to affirm the value of this groundbreaking resolution.<sup>57</sup>

The only semi-regular interface between governments and civil society at an international level is facilitated by the Geneva Process. It entails a series of meetings in Geneva with a rotating chair of government, UN and NGO representatives. The Geneva Process seeks to complement the UN process by creating a space for discussion and engagement. It has the potential to be a valuable forum for governments to air non-binding views on various issues.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Potential of the Helsinki Process**

The small arms issue has proven hard to neatly define. Harder still is finding the compelling three-four 'things' that must be done. This wish-list is unlikely to emerge given the ubiquitous nature of armed violence, the volume of weapons on the planet and the power of human agency. Outlined in this paper are the essential areas for

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<sup>54</sup>For example, *The question of the trade, carrying and use of small arms and light weapons in the context of human rights and humanitarian norms*, (2002) working paper submitted by in accordance with Sub-Commission decisions 2001/120 ECOSOC, United Nations, available at [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org).

<sup>55</sup> See for example, the Women Waging Peace critique of the DDR process in Sierra Leone, Dyan Mazurana and Khristopher Carlson (2004), *From Combat to Community: Women and Girls of Sierra Leone*, Hunt Alternatives Fund, available at [www.womenwagingpeace.net](http://www.womenwagingpeace.net).

<sup>56</sup> Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2002), *Progress of the World's Women Volume 1: Women, War and Peace. The Independent Expert's Assessment*, UNIFEM, p.3.

<sup>57</sup> See [www.peacewomen.org](http://www.peacewomen.org) for regularly updated information, particularly the October 2003 statement with recommendations from the NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security at [www.peacewomen.org/un/ngo/ngostatements/Oct03.html](http://www.peacewomen.org/un/ngo/ngostatements/Oct03.html).

<sup>58</sup> For more information go to [www.geneva-forum.org](http://www.geneva-forum.org).

action from a people-centred perspective that requires both bold global public policy and leadership from committed states.

The landmines campaign provides an illuminating example. A small group of states proved instrumental in spearheading the movement that eventually led to the adoption of the landmines convention. The small arms issue needs such a group of committed states to play a similar role in advancing multilateral action on these weapons in the lead up to the 2006 Review Conference. The governments of Tanzania and Finland can be active in this regard along with other like-minded states.

The small arms issue also requires considerable engagement from diverse communities. Breaking out of the limited arms control vision is essential. Much work has been done on this. More can be done. The Helsinki Process can be instrumental in reaching out to various communities, encouraging advocacy, policy and action-oriented research on small arms availability and misuse.

For ordinary people to feel relief from the arms trade and its insidious impacts the key ingredient is political will from states particularly, though not entirely limited to arms producing nations. If the Helsinki Process can make a contribution to demonstrating this will through action, a significant contribution will have already been made.