

## **Small Arms, Children, and Armed Conflict: A Framework for Effective Action**

*"You don't feel safe here unless you have a gun"*

Haitian student, Port au Prince, February 2004

*"Curb the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons and protect children from landmines, unexploded ordnances, and other war material that victimize them..."*  
*A World Fit for Children*, section 44, paragraph 26

### **Introduction**

Reducing the gap between the reality of the Haitian student and the commitment in *A World Fit for Children* is the motivating force behind this research project. Security for children threatened by armed conflict has received considerable attention within the last five years. Reducing the proliferation and misuse of small arms has also become a focus for international action. New commitments in each field have been made by nation states through United Nations assemblies and Security Council resolutions. Growing public support for stronger measures in each area finds expression in reports from local community meetings to international conferences.

While the link between the two issues is commonly understood, the common ground has not been a focus for policy development or implementation strategies. Bringing them together could help to close the gap between reality and international commitments.

Security Council resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict provide a focus for joint initiatives in the field of child protection and small arms control. In particular, this paper addresses implementation of Security Council Resolutions 1460, 1539, and 1612, which call for specific actions to protect children and to control the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. A review of the literature in both fields was undertaken to understand the common ground and develop recommendations for action that could advance the goals of child protection and small arms control. Measures being developed to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict could assist in small arms control, while the technical work being done on the small arms issue could also have benefits for child protection. The challenge in both cases is making the transition from global commitments to effective implementation.

### **Facts about small arms and children in conflict zones**

- There are more than 600 million small arms in the world today. Eight million new weapons are produced each year.
- At least 16 billion units of ammunition were produced in 2001, more than two bullets for every man, woman, and child on the planet.
- More injuries, displacements, rapes, kidnapping, and acts of torture involve the use or threatened use of small arms than any other type of weapon.
- Lightweight, easy-to-use, low cost small arms enable the use of an estimated 300,000 child soldiers in more than 30 armed conflicts in all regions of the world.
- Most child deaths in conflict zones are from preventable diseases, due to lack of access to assistance; high levels of small arms availability and misuse are an important factor in preventing the delivery of assistance to children in need.
- Easy access to small arms increases the severity of conflicts that involve young people and fuels the continuation and escalation of conflicts.

### **Programme of Action on Small Arms**

In 2001 the first global conference on small arms resulted in a Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects ( PoA). The preamble recognizes that one of the reasons for taking action is the “*devastating consequences on children, many of whom are victims of armed conflict or are forced to become child soldiers.*” (Paragraph 1.4)

The Programme of Action includes commitments to work on marking and tracing small arms, preventing the illicit trade in weapons, weapons collection and destruction, and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs. Progress in implementation and strengthening the plan of action will be the focus of the follow-up conference in 2006. That will be an opportunity, on the small arms side, to incorporate relevant elements from the Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

Action plans to reduce the supply of weapons and the demand for them will be more effective if they include youth-specific strategies. Young people under the age of 18 are a significant portion of the population in many countries dealing with the impacts of the illegal use and trade in small arms. To do that, it would be beneficial to make a more conscious link with initiatives designed to protect children.

### **Children and Armed Conflict**

Security Council Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict 1460, 1539, and 1612 contain strong commitments to action on the issue of small arms and children.

On January 30, 2003, the Security Council adopted a series of measures to stop the involvement of children in armed conflict. Paragraph 7 of Security Council Resolution 1460 addresses the small arms factor:

*Urges Member States, in accordance with the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, to take effective action through, inter alia, conflict resolution and the development and implementation of national legislation, in a manner which is consistent with existing responsibilities of States under relevant international law, to control the illicit trade in small arms to parties in armed conflict that do not respect fully the relevant provisions of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict.*

(UNSC Resolution 1460)

Resolution 1539, adopted on April 22, 2004, builds on Resolution 1460 in three ways. One paragraph focuses on effective measures for implementation of controls on the illicit trade in small arms, along with other cross-border factors:

*Expresses its intention to take appropriate measures, in particular while considering sub regional and cross-border activities, to curb linkages between illicit trade in natural and other resources, illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, cross-border abduction and recruitment, and armed conflict, which can prolong armed conflict and intensify its impact on children, and consequently requests the Secretary-General to propose effective measures to control this illicit trade and trafficking;*

(UNSC Resolution 1539)

The second provision relates to ending the use of child soldiers. The resolution calls for specific steps to end the practice. If these steps are not taken, the Security Council:

*(c) Expresses its intention to consider imposing targeted and graduated measures, through country-specific resolutions, such as, inter alia, a ban on the export or supply of small arms and light weapons and of other military equipment and on military assistance, against these parties if they refuse to enter into dialogue, fail to develop an action plan or fail to meet the commitments included in their action plan, bearing in mind the Secretary-General's report;*

(UNSC Resolution 1539)

Thirdly, Resolution 1539 calls for urgent action to establish an effective monitoring and reporting system for children and armed conflict. Following adoption of this resolution, significant attention was focused on developing an effective reporting system. This became the focus of Resolution 1612.

Resolution 1612, adopted in July 2005, gives direction for the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the use of child soldiers and other abuses of children in armed conflicts. The focus is on country-level collection of information by UN country teams, working in co-operation with national governments and civil society

actors. Timely information is to be provided to a working group of the Security Council, who will review progress made and recommend appropriate action by either the Security Council or relevant bodies within the UN system. Specific direction is given to apply this mechanism first to a number of parties and situations already on the security council agenda, as identified in the Secretary General's report, and then to other parties named in the report but not presently on the security council agenda. This resolution, called a "trigger to action," provides a structure for implementing the directions laid out in the earlier resolutions, such as action plans and targeted measures for those who show no progress in compliance.

Throughout resolution 1612 there are references to the role of small arms in the violations of the rights of children. The preamble notes grave concern about the "*documented links*" between the use of child soldiers and the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and stresses the need for "*all States to take measures to prevent and to put an end to such trafficking.*" Paragraph 9 reaffirms the provisions of Resolution 1539 for using targeted measures such as a ban on the export and supply of small arms and other military assistance to parties who violate international laws for the protection of children. Paragraph 16 urges member states, UN agencies, and regional organizations, "*to take appropriate measures to control illicit subregional and cross-border activities harmful to children, including illicit exploitation of natural resource, illicit trade in small arms,*" and other factors that contribute to the abuse of children.

Taken together, the provisions of Resolution 1612, if implemented as intended, could add significant tools to other mechanisms for monitoring the flow of small arms, with a focus on those situations that involve serious violations of the security and rights of children.

### **Implementation Reports in 2006**

The Small Arms Programme of Action and the Children and Armed Conflict Resolutions both have built in reporting requirements that will help to measure progress and maintain momentum. Resolution 1612 calls for an independent review on the implementation of the monitoring mechanism, to be tabled at the Security Council by July 31, 2006. On the small arms side, an international conference in 2006 will measure progress on the Programme of Action.

Focused attention on the common ground of these two initiatives in preparation for the 2006 reports could achieve progress toward the goals of each one, and make a substantial contribution to the advancement of human security around the globe.

### **Measures to Address Small Arms and Children**

There are five specific elements in the Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict that have particular value for addressing the illicit trade in small arms:

#### ***1. Specific Measures in Specific Situations***

Resolution 1460 as a whole builds on earlier resolutions on children and armed conflict, resolutions 1379, 1314, and 1261. These provide a well-established basis for action on the grounds that the involvement of children in armed conflict is a matter of international peace and security, and therefore a matter for Security Council action. The significance of Resolution 1460 is the transition from hortatory injunctions, typical of thematic resolutions, to an expressed willingness by the Security Council to take specific actions in specific situations where children are involved in armed conflicts. Limiting action to countries already on the Security Council agenda, it included reference to a list of 23 parties in five armed conflicts who recruit child soldiers and it established progressive measures to bring an end to this practice. These include measures to stop the flow of small arms to listed groups.

One year later, the list was expanded to include 54 parties in 15 armed conflicts, some of which are not on the Security Council agenda, but involve serious violations of the rights of children.

Resolution 1612 makes specific reference to 11 specific situations and lists 54 specific parties in those situations for application of regular reporting and follow-up action, starting with those situations already on the Security Council agenda.

**Situations subject to specific provisions in Security Council Resolution 1612**

List I: On Security Council Agenda	List II: Other Situations
Burundi	Colombia
Cote d'Ivoire	Myanmar
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Nepal
Somalia	Philippines
Sudan	Sri Lanka
	Uganda

The intention to move from a generic expression of concern to action in specific situations was clearly stated by Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations:

*“By exposing those who violate standards for the protection of children to the light of public scrutiny, we are serving notice that the international community is finally willing to back expressions of concern with action.”*

During the debate on resolution 1539, members of the Security Council and numerous other states who intervened expressed disappointment at the lack of progress in ending the use of child soldiers and other serious violations of the rights of children, such as the systemic rape of girls as a tool of war. The decision to use much stronger language was a deliberate one, reflecting a growing will of the council to do what is necessary to exercise its responsibility to protect children from involvement in armed conflicts.

Resolution 1539 explicitly states that the Security Council is “*stressing its determination to ensure respect for its resolutions and other international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.*”

Resolution 1612 repeats that determination and specifically addresses the gap between norms and reality by registering that the council “*remains deeply concerned over the lack of overall progress on the ground, where parties to conflict continue to violate with impunity the relevant provisions of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict.*”

Given these expressions, there is space to press for more specific action in specific situations to address both child protection and control of small arms.

## **2. *Small Arms Misuse and Child Protection***

Member states are asked to control the flow of arms to parties who do not “*respect fully the relevant provisions of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict.*”

Compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law is established as a standard for consideration in small arms trading. This covers all violations of the security and rights of children, not just the use of children as soldiers. It would include, for example: the role of small arms in the sexual exploitation of girls as a means of warfare; the role of small arms in forced displacements; the role of small arms in denial of access to humanitarian assistance; and the role of small arms in the denial of the right to education.

Resolution 1460 established new ground in its recognition of other violations as being equally egregious as the use of child soldiers. Subsequent to its passage, significant work was done by both UN agencies and non-governmental groups to identify a more specific list of violations that could be used as a consistent basis for implementation of this policy direction.

As a result, Resolution 1539 expands the list of violations:

[The Security Council] *strongly condemns:*

- *the recruitment and use of child soldiers by parties to armed conflict in violation of international obligations applicable to them,*
- *killing and maiming of children,*
- *rape and other sexual violence mostly committed against girls,*
- *abduction and forced displacement,*
- *denial of humanitarian access to children,*
- *attacks against schools and hospitals,*
- *forced labour and all forms of slavery, and*
- *all other violations and abuses committed against children affected by armed conflict.*

(UNSC Resolution 1539)

### ***3. Conflict Resolution and Early Intervention***

Both the Small Arms Programme of Action and the Security Council Resolutions on Children and Armed Conflict specifically call for greater use of conflict resolution. This reflects recognition of the need to address the causes for resorting to small arms as well as issues of availability and access to weapons.

It also recognizes the reality that addressing the problem of small arms may require more systemic approaches than landmines or child soldiers. Initiatives to stop the use of child soldiers and landmines focus on the elimination of these specific options from the range of choices to be considered by parties in conflict. In each case it can be argued that forces can use other options, such as adult soldiers and weapons that are less destructive for civilians.

The same logic cannot be applied to the issue of small arms, because of their centrality to most armed conflicts today. It is less likely, for example, that a group of insurgents, who have taken up arms for a cause they strongly defend, would agree to co-operate in efforts to reduce or eliminate small arms without some resolution of their issues. Governments faced by insurgents are no more likely to reduce their stockpiles of small arms.

Once the supply of small arms has reached the point where they are easily available to both parties in a conflict, which happens quickly in the current global marketplace, other options in the toolkit of peace builders are more likely to be entry points for impacting a particular situation. Small arms proliferation and misuse point toward the importance of expanding the acceptance and use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms at early stages of emerging conflicts.

From a youth perspective, easy access to small arms is an important escalating factor that turns less violent, controllable conflicts into dangerously violent situations that easily escalate into on going, entrenched armed conflict. The easy availability of small arms increases the urgency of deploying more resources for early intervention through negotiation, mediation, and other non-violent conflict resolution methods. More attention is needed to prevent low-level conflicts from evolving into conflicts where small arms become the instrument of choice to resolve the original dispute.

### ***4. Ban on Small Arm Sales as a Disciplinary Measure***

Resolutions 1539 and 1612 explicitly state the willingness of the Security Council to ban the sale of small arms and light weapons to listed forces who refuse to take action to stop the use of child soldiers.

In its determination to end the use of child soldiers, the Security Council searched for effective measures to influence behaviour without turning to comprehensive sanctions, with their potential for unintended negative impacts on children and civilians. One of the choices they adopted is cutting off the supply of arms. While difficult to enforce, arms

embargoes can have an effective influence, and some progress is being made to strengthen enforcement mechanisms for them.

## ***5. Monitoring, Reporting, and Follow-up Action***

Central to both small arms control and child protection is the need for accurate information, investigation of allegations, follow-up action, and monitoring to ensure compliance with commitments made under agreements or international law.

In resolution 1539 the Security Council gives strong direction to the UN Secretariat to establish an effective monitoring system for the protection of children as a matter of urgency. This has been an identified need in every report on children and armed conflict since the groundbreaking UN report on *The Impact of War on Children* in 1996.

Resolution 1612 establishes a structure for reporting and follow-up action that links local, national, and international bodies who play a role in child protection. If implemented as intended, this new structure could be an important mechanism for translating commitments on both child protection and small arms control into effective action.

The Programme of Action on Small Arms also includes provisions to strengthen monitoring and reporting. The work of the Small Arms Survey and other reporting initiatives provide useful information on the supply and flow of small arms. In many of the specific situations listed under Resolutions 1539 and 1621, however, it is still difficult to get enough information on the flow of small arms to design effective measures to control it.

By working together, monitoring initiatives in each field could contribute to a more integrated and effective strategy for dealing with specific situations.

## **Lessons from experience**

A review of the literature on both issues, small arms control and the impact of war on children, reveals some important considerations for development of effective strategies based on the common ground between them.

### ***Protecting children motivates action***

Harm to children can be an important motivating factor for political action to control the proliferation and misuse of small arms, particularly at a national and international level. The experience of the landmines campaign is frequently cited to illustrate that awareness of the humanitarian impact helps to build political support for action on arms control issues. For this reason the human costs of small arms misuse has been an on-going focus of the Human Security Network and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.



Preventing the involvement of children in armed conflict was a high priority issue during the 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children. Representatives of most states who made presentations proposed stronger measures in this area, and the young people who participated named it as a high priority.

***We see an end to war:***

- *World leaders resolving conflict through peaceful dialogue instead of by using force,*
- *Child refugees and child victims of war protected in every way and having the same opportunities as all other children;*
- *Disarmament, elimination of the arms trade and an end to the use of child soldiers.”*  
(Children’s Statement to the UN Special Session on Children, May 8, 2002)

One of the top priorities in “*A World Fit for Children*,” the new international action plan adopted by member states to the UN, is to “*Protect Children from War*.” The section on this subject includes a specific reference to controlling the flow of small arms and light weapons to forces that abuse children. The significance of this is evident by comparison with the former plan, which did not include a section on child protection.

National Plans of Action for Children are being developed by each member state of the UN to implement *A World Fit for Children*. These provide an avenue to make a link between child protection and national strategies on small arms control.

Earlier the First International Conference on War-Affected Children, hosted by Canada in Winnipeg in September 2000, gave prominence to this issue in a declaration adopted by delegates from 143 national governments in attendance. One of fourteen agenda items commits governments to:

*Suffocate the supply of arms: States commit to addressing the impact of small arms and light weapons on war-affected children. We recognize that the illicit trade in natural resources and illegal drugs, and the illicit production and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, have devastating effects on children. States and the private sector must also ensure that funds and facilities are not used by armed groups which target children for participation in armed conflict.*  
(*Agenda for War-affected Children*, paragraph 8, adopted September 17, 2000)

These recent commitments build on the historical base of the Geneva Conventions and its optional protocols. Norms for protecting children are among the most universal and the most local, providing a strong ethical and legal base for action. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), for example, has been ratified by 191 countries. It combines human rights and humanitarian law, and it does not contain a derogation clause, so its provisions apply even in times of conflict. Together the current body of international law provides a strong basis for linking arms control policies to the mandate to protect the security and rights of children.

The easy availability of small arms is a critical factor that contributes to escalation from non-violent disputes to violent confrontations with increased danger for young people. Measures to address the small arms factor are important interventions from the perspective of protecting children from armed violence that threatens their lives, their communities, and stability within countries.

An emphasis on child protection is also likely to garner broad-based public support for initiatives in small arms control.

### ***Multi-dimensional strategies are more effective***

Research studies and reports from stakeholder workshops suggest that a mix of strategies targeting different aspects of the issue is more likely to be successful than relying on any one policy or program to effect change in a specific situation. An effective framework will include short and longer-term approaches, with diverse actors at different levels.

The literature on small arms is replete with on-going discussion about the relative merits of supply-side controls compared to demand-reduction strategies. The results of consultations and workshops in conflict settings, however, usually point out the necessity of engaging in both kinds of activities to have a lasting impact at the community level.

Beyond the supply management/demand reduction approaches prevalent in small arms research, research with young people suggests the use of strategies that put young people in the centre and consider different dimensions of the issue from the perspective of the young person. These strategies, reflecting a child rights approach, include consideration of measures to address the political, economic, social, cultural, health, and developmental aspects of the issue. Following are examples of considerations included in a more holistic, child-centred approach to the issue.

***Economics:*** Are young people resorting to the use of weapons as a way to survive? What alternatives for livelihood are available for young people? Is there a choice and what factors contribute to the choice young people are making? What is the socio-economic status of youth at risk? Is there disparity in opportunities for youth within communities that might evolve into conflict?

***Social well-being:*** Is the use of weapons motivated by self-esteem or group dynamics? Is security provided in a family setting or is a peer group substituting for security within a family?

***Political space:*** Do young people have an avenue for political expression? Is there space for young people to voice their concerns and have them addressed? Is there active recruitment of young people into military forces? Is there room for active participation in community life? Are there local avenues for conflict resolution or youth justice systems?

**Culture:** What is the role of weapon use in the local culture? What is the concept of adolescence within the local culture? How do these impact the choice of strategies that will be accepted within the cultural context?

**Developmental aspects:** What is the current status of public health and education? Could these contribute to solutions that provide practical alternatives for young people?

## **Tools for Implementation**

Implementation of commitments to stop the use of child soldiers remains a challenge, as does implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms. Some of the strategies proposed for stopping the use of child soldiers may have potential for addressing the small arms issue as well. The advocacy community for children and armed conflict proposed a set of progressive, practical measures designed to encourage compliance with international norms. If no progress is made as a result of incentives, then targeted disciplinary measures might be applied, in the context of public accountability. These measures have been included in the most recent Security Council resolutions as steps to move from general exhortations to specific actions in specific situations.

Unfortunately, implementation of these measures has been slow. Early steps indicate some positive results, enough to encourage greater implementation of graduated measures in action plans designed for each situation. In resolution 1539 and 1621 the Security Council provided strong direction for application of graduated measures in the specific situations listed in the Secretary General's Reports, and it asked for regular progress reports.

If implemented, the following measures could have benefits for both goals: eliminating the use of child soldiers and controlling the misuse and proliferation of small arms.

### ***1. Enhanced monitoring and reporting***

The focus at the national level in the new reporting system for children and armed conflict complements the use of national focal points for implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms. Child advocates strongly recommend the inclusion of civil society organizations at the both the national and international levels, to help ensure public accountability and deter manipulation of reporting for military or political purposes. The child protection reporting system will depend on civil society co-operation at the local level and co-operation is mandated at the national level. On the small arms side, civil society co-operation is encouraged at all levels from local to international.

More transparency will allow less space for both abuses of children and illicit arms sales. Co-ordination between the reporting systems for child protection and the flow of small arms could assist in targeting measures for more effective implementation.

### ***2. Listing as a tool for public accountability***

Resolution 1460 set an important precedent for implementation of thematic resolutions by listing parties to armed conflict that use child soldiers. Listing is a public accountability measure, based on the concept that shame will induce a desired change in behaviour. The degree to which government parties included on the list exert their influence within the UN system to be removed from the list is a good indication of the value of public accountability as one tool to encourage compliance.

The use of this tool was expanded in resolutions 1539 and 1612 to include more than fifty individual parties found to be in direct violation of international laws for child protection. At the moment it does not include other actors who may be complicit in the abuses through the supply of weapons or resources to parties who violate the norms.

Listing suppliers of small arms to groups who violate the security and rights of children might be one tool to encourage compliance with the small arms aspects of Resolution 1539 and 1612. Such initiatives would be supported by the results of recent experience with specific embargoes on weapons suppliers, as discussed in the detailed research paper.

The challenge of tracing and documenting supply chains is formidable, but good evidence has been gathered in specific situations, such as Liberia. While effort is being put into the development of a comprehensive, international system for marking and tracing the flow of small arms, specific initiatives in selected, specific situations under Resolution 1621 could provide valuable, practical experience.

### ***3. Use of action plans with specific targets for progress***

In the early years of advocacy for children in conflict zones, visits by the UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict were used to encourage armed groups to stop using child soldiers. Agreements were signed to end the use of child soldiers, with resulting international praise, but follow-up was limited and, in many cases, implementation was weak or short-term.

In response, advocates propose the use of action plans that include gradual steps, starting with short-term achievable goals, time-bound targets, and built-in monitoring mechanisms. The action plan would be developed through dialogue, with support from both donor agencies and civil society organizations to encourage progress and guard against retrogression.

An early barrier to the use of such strategies was the reluctance to engage with non-state armed groups, out of fear of granting them legitimacy. In recent experience, however, the Security Council, on field missions, has engaged directly with non-state armed groups. Non-governmental organizations, such as Geneva Call and the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, are developing strategies to engage directly and effectively with non-state armed groups in the interests of improving protection for civilians during long civil wars that are prevalent in today's context.

This approach has not yet been tested enough to know what its chances of success are. As mentioned earlier, the centrality of small arms for most parties in conflict suggests that such action plans would need to focus on components of alternative dispute resolution in order to create an environment for cooperation on the small arms issue. Other areas for early attention might be stockpile control, safe storage, and other aspects of the small arms issue that might be in the interests of the parties to conflict themselves.

#### ***4. Targeted disciplinary measures***

The relative success of targeted sanctions for conflict diamonds and the enhanced enforcement of arms embargoes suggests that there is potential to use carefully targeted sanction measures to cut off the supply of arms to forces that violate the security and rights of children. Disciplines on military support for forces that abuse children would also reduce their potential to purchase weapons. Effective targeting of penalties would need to be based on careful analysis of each specific situation and the actors involved.

Resolutions 1539 and 1612 express the resolve of the Security Council to consider such measures in cases where forces refuse to take action to stop the use of child soldiers. At the moment, consideration is limited to those forces involved in conflicts already on the Security Council agenda. This constrains the application of such measures and may reduce their effectiveness in breaking supply chains.

Provisions are included in the resolutions for future expansion to include both parties not on the Security Council agenda and parties engaged in violations other than child soldiers. Starting with a narrow target has the benefit of building success in specific situations and then using success as a precedent for broader application.

The small arms community and the children and armed conflict community have a strong interest in the success of such measures. By working together resources may be found to ensure success in limited applications now and lessons will be learned for the future.

### **Good Practices in Youth-focused Programs**

Enough research has been done to identify key ingredients for effective programming at the community level, supported by policies at the national, regional, and international levels. Some good practice models are available for use by policy makers and program designers. Key ingredients include:

#### **1. Active youth participation**

Active youth participation is essential to understand the context, to recognize local factors that contribute to small arm use, to identify local influences that can be marshalled for social change, and to develop, implement, and monitor targeted strategies.

A comprehensive approach to youth participation is needed, rather than simply using youth to identify sources of small arms. Experience, such as that of Viva Rio, shows that

youth may fear revenge and not be secure enough to reveal sources of small arms supply in isolation; a more comprehensive approach to their involvement with the issue is needed in order to be effective.

## **2. Community-based approaches**

Reports from both local and regional workshops emphasize the importance of involving all sectors of the community in any strategies to address the small arms issue. Examples of good practice are described in the research paper.

## **3. Good practices in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)**

Effective practices for youth in DDR are a major focus for implementation of resolutions on children and armed conflict. DDR is also a major component of efforts to control the misuse of small arms.

The Secretary General's report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict on November 10, 2003 outlines good practices in youth-focused DDR. While collection of small arms is an essential component of DDR, the report recommends, for example, that youth not be required to turn in a gun in order to qualify for DDR. This would end the use of practices that sometimes encouraged young people to obtain weapons and discriminated against those youth, mostly girls, who did not leave the war zone with weapons. Research into DDR also raises questions about the unintended consequences of policies to pay for the return of small arms and it suggests alternatives that benefit all youth. The next report by the Secretary General, tabled on February 9, 2005, emphasizes again that turning in weapons should not be a criteria for eligibility for programs and cash allowances for weapons should not be used as a method to encourage arms collection. Specific cases of abuse of these provisions are cited as reasons for using alternative approaches.

Greater focus on good practices will assist in both rehabilitation of child soldiers and control of small arms.

## **Policies to support local programs**

Good local programming is essential. Research in both fields, small arms control and children and armed conflict, includes documentation of successful program methods and tools. In many cases, however, local programs are isolated initiatives; they can only be effective in the context of national, regional, and international policies that support community-based efforts.

### ***National legislation and action plans***

National Action Plans for Children and National Focal Points for the Small Arms Programme of Action provide avenues for setting direction and priorities at the national level. Some countries, such as Tanzania, have shown leadership in developing national

action plans on the small arms issue. In a best case scenario, a national plan for children will include specific goals related to small arms, such as education initiatives and no-weapon zones; and the work plan for the Focal Point on Small Arms will include youth participation. Civil society organizations can also use these processes to raise awareness and mobilize public constituencies in support of action at the national level.

In terms of legislation, a good recommendation has come from the 28<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Red Cross (ICRC). They have proposed that all national governments include criteria from international humanitarian and human rights law in their national legislation on arms control. This might be one effective way to begin incorporating issues of protection of civilians in technical discussions about regulations to control the sale and trade in small arms.

### ***Regional Agreements***

Given the cross-border factors involved in arms trading, regional cooperation is essential for effective implementation of any strategy to control small arms trading. The OSCE agreement, described in the research paper, provides a model for an effective policy initiative at the regional level. Current agreements by the European Union on both small arms and children also set an important precedent for regional cooperation.

### ***International Norms, Codes of Conduct***

The impact of small arms on children is a strong motivating factor for the adoption of the proposed International Arms Trade Treaty and the interim adoption of other Codes of Conduct, described in the detailed paper.

### **Areas for additional research**

The link between security of children and small arms use is an emerging field of research, policy development, and program implementation. A preliminary review identified a number of areas for further exploration. These include:

- The unintended consequences of specific, well-meaning policy choices, such as youth becoming preferred agents for arms trading as a consequence of less severe sentences under juvenile justice systems than under adult justice systems.
- The unintended consequences, on a broader level, of success in reducing the supply of small arms without eliminating demand factors. It is likely that belligerents will turn to other means of violence, such as improvised explosives, if small arms and ammunition are effectively controlled, but the root causes of conflict are not addressed. This possibility is reduced if comprehensive strategies are developed and implemented.
- Careful design of small arms components of programs for demilitarization, demobilization, and reintegration for former child combatants, to prevent

incentives for acquiring weapons in order to access benefits, such as “cash for guns” strategies.

- Scope and use of the term “protection” in policy analysis and development. There is good reason for taking a broad view of the term protection, especially protection for children, because of the inter-relationships between many different factors in security for children. The danger is that the broad application of the term may dilute the focus on the very specific physical protection needs in threatening environments.

Effective methods for early, non-military intervention are needed to address the need for immediate physical security in threatening contexts, while progress is made on broader, societal initiatives to improve protection for the security and rights of children. The tension between broad concepts of protection and immediate needs for physical protection is discussed in the detailed paper.

## **Recommendations for Immediate Implementation**

Existing research suggests a number of steps that could be taken immediately to achieve progress toward the mutual goals of reducing the flow of small arms and preventing the involvement of children in armed conflict, based on Security Council resolutions 1460, 1539, and 1612.

### **Monitoring, Reporting and Investigation**

The Security Council should seriously consider taking the initiative to monitor, actively investigate, and document the supply of small arms and ammunition to armed groups involved in serious violations of the security of children, in keeping with the focus on small arms in the resolutions on child protection. Initiatives could start with the groups already on the Security Council agenda and then consider situations of equal concern but not officially on the Security Council agenda.

Member states could be asked to co-operate in any investigations launched by the Security Council.

### **Listing individuals and groups**

The Security Council should consider listing individuals or groups engaged in the illegal manufacture, trade, stockpiling, transportation, and/or financing of the acquisition of illicit weapons in selected specific situations, with a view to proposing possible future actions against such violators.



### **Action plans with graduated measures**

In specific situations, the graduated strategies proposed for child protection should be implemented and consider including SALW measures. Measures would start with dialogue and formation of action plans with support and incentives, followed by monitoring and consideration of targeted disciplinary measures if there is no progress.

### **Interdiction to stop the flow of arms**

The Security Council should give serious consideration to those situations where the flow of SALW to groups involved in serious violations of the rights of children are either in violation of UN embargoes or are contributing to breaches of international peace and security. In such cases, consideration should be given to the use of UN monitoring missions, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to interdict these movements and control the illicit brokering of small arms, including in bordering countries suspected of serving as transshipment points via air, land or sea routes.

### **Protection for vulnerable populations, including youth**

The Security Council and appropriate UN agencies could support enhanced protection activities for populations vulnerable to SALW violence, especially in refugee and IDP camps. In situations where SALW are reported to be contributing to illegal child recruitment or violations of child rights, international monitors could be deployed with expertise in human rights, humanitarian law, child rights and SALW to conduct a detailed assessment and recommend specific strategies for protection.

### **Early engagement in conflict resolution initiatives**

The Security Council or its designated representatives could actively engage at the earliest opportunity in dialogue with belligerent parties involved in serious violations of the security of children where SALW exacerbates the situation. Dialogue could seek support for alternative methods of conflict resolution, guarantees of the right of humanitarian access, and participation in peace processes and reconciliation.

### **Demilitarization, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR)**

UN programs for DDR should implement the good practices for youth-oriented DDR, as called for in Resolution 1539 and 1612, and outlined in the reports of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict.

Donor governments could make a commitment to adequately fund good DDR programs as an investment in security rather than diverting limited development funds from other important aspects of development for conflict-affected countries.

## **Setting national examples**

National governments are encouraged to incorporate criteria based on international humanitarian law for the protection of civilians into their national legislation on the export of arms, and then encourage other nations to do the same.

## **Recommendations for long-term policy options**

For long-term sustainability, many of the proposed measures to control the proliferation and misuse of small arms will also have benefits for preventing the involvement of children in armed conflict. Co-operation between the two communities of interest could assist in achieving implementation of the following measures:

### **National measures to control misuse of small arms**

- National legislation and programs for effective control on the export, import, transit, civilian possession, and storage of small arms should be encouraged; these might be facilitated through the development of agreed minimum standards for such legislation.
- National legislation on export controls should include provisions that prevent exports to actors who do not comply with existing international human rights and humanitarian laws, such as the laws against child abuse and the use of children as soldiers.
- National policies to regulate the activities of arms brokers should be encouraged, including registration of brokers, licensing of brokering activities, and appropriate penalties for all illicit brokering activities.

### **Marking and tracing**

- The creation of a comprehensive international marking and tracing regime should be a priority. It would include training and the standardization of electronic data collection to enable sharing of information, under appropriate international governance.
- The consistent use of end-user certificates would strengthen national efforts to control the flow of arms to situations of armed conflict.
- International norms should be developed for stockpile management, the destruction of surplus weapons stocks, and the harmonization of small arms legislation at regional and global levels

## **Transparency and Confidence-building**

- Expand the UN Conventional Arms Register (UNCAR) to include all classes of small arms and light weapons.
- Initiate and support the development of binding regional transparency and information-sharing arrangements similar to the UNCAR, if the UNCAR cannot be made binding or broader in scope.
- Co-ordinate the work of national small arms focal points with national child protection agencies or networks, child protection advisors where they exist, and relevant non-governmental initiatives to protect the security and rights of children.

## **Community-based Initiatives by Civil Society Organizations**

- International and local civil society organizations can advocate for and facilitate the active participation of children and youth. Youth should be involved in the analysis of local contexts and in the design and implementation of both national strategies and local programs for demand reduction, weapons collection, public education, and DDR.
- Data collection should be disaggregated by sex and age, in order to develop and target effective interventions through community-based organizations.
- Research and programming must include provisions to protect children from reprisals because of their involvement in small arms initiatives.
- Civil society organizations can participate in the implementation of demand reduction programming, community-based small arms collection programs, and preventive strategies and programming, based on emerging good practices.
- Community-based peace building activities designed to respond to local circumstance, with full participation of local actors, could be supported by both non-governmental and governing agencies, as a way to address causes leading to greater use of small arms.
- Donor states and civil society should be wary of supporting weapons collection programs that may be politicized or involve indiscriminate human rights violations or collective punishment.

## **International Criminal Prosecution**

In appropriate circumstances, international criminal prosecution for child recruitment should be pursued. In situations where criminal prosecution is the most appropriate response, individuals could be prosecuted, according to ‘command responsibility’ and ‘secondary responsibility,’ for aiding and abetting crimes against humanity through knowingly supplying weapons and ammunition to groups known to commit these crimes. In the case of on-going conflicts, careful consideration must be given to the protection concerns of civilians, including children, before starting the prosecution process.

## **Conclusion**

In 2001 a publication entitled *Putting Children First: Building a Framework for International Action to Address the Impact of Small Arms on Children* proposed a broad conceptual framework for the linkage of small arms and security for children. This report takes the framework a step further by identifying more specific strategies that will benefit the objectives in both fields. The specific focus for this paper is effective implementation of the small arms components in Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

Implementation of the short-term strategies proposed in this paper could provide valuable experience in specific situations. Based on progress made, further co-operative strategies could be incorporated into the 2006 work plan for implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms. Greater co-operation within these two fields of work will benefit both children and adults in affected communities, through enhanced security and respect for human rights.