

# Briefing Paper

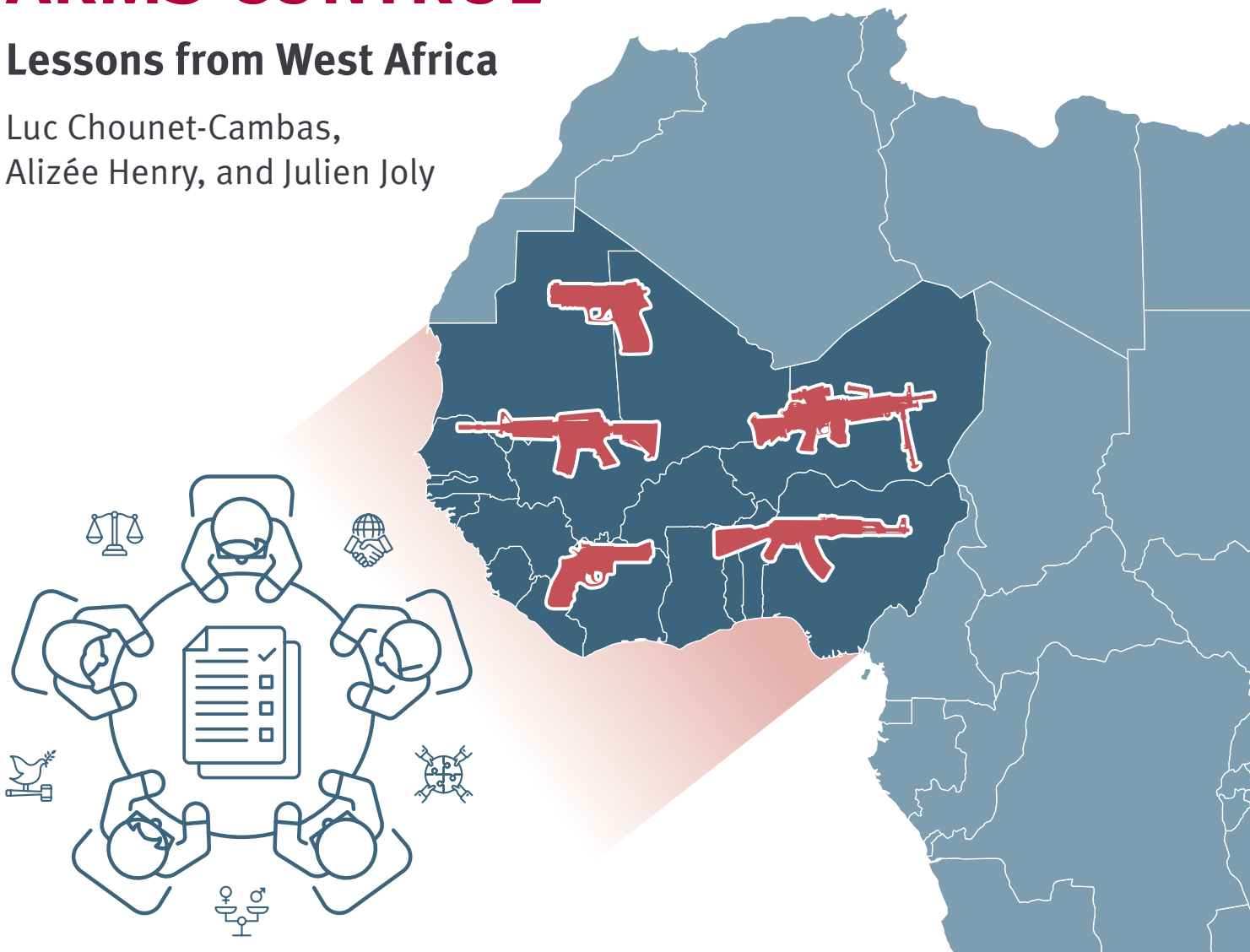
April 2025



## NATIONAL ACTION PLANS AS TOOLS FOR EFFECTIVE SMALL ARMS CONTROL

### Lessons from West Africa

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## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to warmly thank the Small Arms Division of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission; national commissions on small arms and small arms practitioners from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and Togo; and the Réseau d'action sur les armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest—along with donors and implementing partners, including the African Union, the European Union (Delegation Nigeria), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Expertise France, and the Mines Advisory Group (MAG)—for their time and valuable inputs.

The Survey would also like to express its gratitude to MAG for commissioning this study and to the German Federal Foreign Office for its financial support.



## Overview

This Briefing Paper seeks to unpack the current state of practice of national action plans (NAPs) on small arms and light weapons in West Africa, their impact, and existing opportunities to enhance their effectiveness and potential in integrating small arms control into broader public policy frameworks that address development and security concerns. In doing so, the paper aims to provide insights to policymakers and practitioners—including from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission and member states—regarding their approach to NAPs, while stimulating a broader reflection on the best way to adapt NAPs in order to address new challenges and leverage their full potential.

## Key findings

- NAPs have been instrumental in adapting the provisions of the 2006 ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons to context-specific national policies in West Africa. They have served as effective tools for raising the profile of small arms control and recognizing it as a critical policy and operational issue.
- While NAPs provide a solid framework for designing small arms control strategies and plans across West Africa, implementation remains inconsistent.
- NAPs have the potential to foster collaboration and inclusion, thereby normalizing the involvement of non-security actors in the conversation around small arms. While this approach is broadly accepted in principle, significant differences remain in the region, and it is rare for the participation of women and under-represented groups to be maintained effectively from the design through to the implementation phase.
- NAPs have empowered national commissions (NatComs) as legitimate and central actors in small arms control discussions at the country level, and fostered the sharing of information among national stakeholders. They have also been credited with enhancing states' capacities for weapons and ammunition management (WAM), particularly functional areas related to physical security and stockpile management (PSSM).
- Monitoring and evaluation frameworks for NAPs need to be simplified and would benefit from an increased focus on learning and adaptation.

## Introduction

The proliferation of illicit small arms remains an enduring threat to peace, security, and development in West Africa. Their widespread availability exacerbates violent conflict, facilitates organized crime and terrorism, undermines governance, and stifles socio-economic progress across the region (Osimen, Anegbode, and Adi, 2024). In this context, illicit arms come from various sources, including the diversion of state stockpiles, unregulated local production, thriving black markets and smuggling networks, cross-border trafficking through poorly monitored routes, and flows from conflict zones (Mangan and Nowak, 2019). These factors can perpetuate insecurity and instability, posing formidable challenges to regional stability.

To curb illicit arms proliferation, ECOWAS adopted the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Material in 2006, which calls for harmonizing national controls, building the capacity of states, enhancing border management, and strengthening regional cooperation. In Article 24, the Convention provides for the elaboration of NAPs 'through a national gathering information process involving all relevant national stakeholders, including civil society' (ECOWAS, 2006, art. 24.5). NAPs serve as critical implementation frameworks for advancing small arms control by fostering transparency, strengthening institutional capacity, and harmonizing legislation. With their dual focus on local and transnational challenges, NAPs are crucial tools to mitigate the destabilizing impacts of small arms proliferation across West Africa.

Since the adoption of the ECOWAS Convention in 2006, the landscape of small arms control has evolved significantly, both globally and regionally. International instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the Global Framework of Through-Life Conventional Ammunition Management have introduced new standards for the regulation of arms and ammunition (UNGA, 2013; 2023). Meanwhile, the region has faced new security threats from the Sahel to the Gulf of Guinea (Nsaibia, 2024). The illicit trade and diversion of small arms, with violent extremist groups resorting to conventional and improvised small arms, has fuelled further cycles of violence and resulted in substantial civilian casualties (Bernard, 2021; Small Arms Survey, 2023; UNSC, 2024). By integrating explosives into the category of 'other related materials', the ECOWAS Convention provides an innovative approach that enables NatComs to expand their

“The Survey has witnessed significant changes in the design of NAPs, with their scope expanding to address a broader array of issues—including terrorism, transnational organized crime, petty criminality, and community conflict.”

scope of action and tackle the challenges posed by the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

This evolving security landscape has prompted a recalibration of approaches to small arms control. It raises critical questions regarding the role and effectiveness of NAPs, and their ability to both address security challenges and promote alignment with evolving international normative frameworks.

This review seeks to unpack the current state of practice of NAPs in West Africa, their impact, and existing opportunities to enhance their effectiveness. Brief case studies offer examples of good practice throughout the publication.

## Methodology

This review employed a mixed-methods approach, outlined below, to examine the evolution of NAPs and identify emerging best practices and lessons.

Between August and November 2024, the Small Arms Survey conducted an extensive review of 15 West African NAPs designed between 2010 and 2024, including two NAPs at pre-approval stage (Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone) at the time of writing.<sup>1</sup> To do so, the Survey developed a set of NAP assessment criteria based on the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium's (MOSAIC) module 'Designing and Implementing a National Action Plan' (UNODA, 2016). This framework provided a structured basis for evaluating the scope, design, and overall approach of NAPs in the region. The desk review of the 15 NAPs was complemented by con-

fidential key informant interviews (KIs) with 25 policymakers and practitioners to gain insights into their NAP development processes. Among them, 12 were affiliated with NatComs in West Africa. Others were key small arms control stakeholders operating in the region, including regional organizations, civil society actors, donors, and implementing partners. In addition to these KIs, the review also included written feedback from two civil society actors.

These consultations focused on understanding the challenges and lessons learned to date regarding the design and implementation of NAPs; the extent to which the NAPs align with global, regional, and national priorities; and the systems in place to monitor and learn from West African small arms control efforts.

To illustrate the review's main findings, the Survey presents a selection of practices identified as positive, building on feedback from the KIs as well as the Survey's own expertise and experience in recent NAP development processes. While longitudinal data cannot prove a direct correlation between the said measures and long-term impacts (such as reductions in violent deaths) at the time of writing, these examples aim to highlight and promote promising approaches.

## What have NAPs achieved? Main findings of the review

Over the past decade, the Survey has observed a notable evolution in the approach of West African member states

to NAPs, with many now viewing them as the primary framework for small arms policy at the national level. During the same period, the Survey has supported various NatComs in the region with the development and evaluation of NAPs, including in Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Through these engagements, the Survey has witnessed significant changes in the design of NAPs,<sup>2</sup> with their scope expanding to address a broader array of issues—including terrorism, transnational organized crime, petty criminality, and community conflict. In turn, several NatComs in the region have seen their mandate extended to encompass these emerging challenges, reflecting the growing complexity of small arms control in the context of broader security concerns.

## Strategic and operational dimensions

**Finding 1: Most NAPs were initially aligned with national security contexts and reflected the priorities of a variety of stakeholders, mainly ranging from relevant ministries, NGOs, and capital-based civil society organizations (CSOs)**

Pursuant to Article 24 of the ECOWAS Convention, 'Member States shall elaborate their National Action Plans on Small Arms and Light Weapons' through a 'national information gathering process involving all relevant national stakeholders including civil society, and the convening of a national forum of all stakeholders to deliberate on the elements to be included in the NAPs' (ECOWAS, 2006, art. 24.4–5). All 15 NAPs reviewed as part of this analysis appeared to have been designed based on data and evidence, and adapted to the country's specific context and needs.

Diverse data collection methods were used and featured baseline assessments (including in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Sierra Leone), as well as external reviews and evaluations.<sup>3</sup> These were often conducted with support from donors and implementing partners—notably the ECOWAS Commission, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), and the Survey.<sup>4</sup> In other approaches, technical workshops and consultations were convened with both state and civil society stakeholders (for instance in Ghana, Niger, and Togo) to gather diverse perspectives and prioritize issues, such as the harmonization of the legislative and regulatory framework,

WAM, public information and advocacy, and border security.

National surveys, such as those used in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, were also common tools, offering detailed insights into the relationship between civilian arms ownership and insecurity. These assessments proved instrumental in providing national planners and decision-makers with foundational data on small arms proliferation patterns in their respective country, as well as in identifying strategic gaps (ECOWAS, 2006).

These approaches all combine quantitative data (through surveys and assessments) with qualitative inputs from inclusive consultations, with a view to developing NAPs that are both relevant to specific contexts and actionable. While these participatory approaches have generally allowed for broad stakeholder engagement and the incorporation of their inputs, the resulting NAP documents have sometimes ended up featuring a collection of stakeholder-driven priorities that, despite their inclusivity, lack clear objectives and priorities and do not provide a coherent framework for action.

## Examples of good practice

In Mali, the 2019–23 NAP was subject to a review in 2023, building on extensive consultations carried out with 50 relevant stakeholders<sup>5</sup> throughout the country, a study on craft weapons undertaken with support from the Survey, and a desk review of other sources. Likewise, before developing the 2020–24 NAP, the Beninese NatCom conducted interviews with security actors (including police, customs, armed forces, border control bodies, and intelligence services) to identify their priorities and challenges regarding the proliferation of small arms, and with the Ministry of Education and civil society actors to ascertain their perceptions of risks and threats. Local craft weapon producers were identified as key stakeholders due to the need to regulate their activities. Subsequently, the NatCom organized a one-week workshop with focal points from security actors, civil society, and craft weapon producers to agree on a common set of key priorities.

**Finding 2: NAPs are mostly viewed as multi-year planning tools and have more impact if streamlined and underpinned by a clear strategy**

The scope and ambition of many NAPs on small arms and light weapons demonstrates a commendable commitment to

“The overly ambitious and exhaustive list of activities and outputs included in some of these NAPs raises practical challenges for national authorities responsible for their implementation.”

addressing pressing security challenges. In most cases, NAPs have sought to both outline a strategic vision and provide detailed operational plans to guide implementation through a lengthy description of outputs and activities contained in multi-year planning tools, structured around up to ten objectives<sup>6</sup> that can overlap with functional areas for WAM (Giezendanner and Shiotani, 2021, p. 15).<sup>7</sup> As a result, while it is agreed that NAPs represent relevant, useful, and authoritative policy milestones,<sup>8</sup> the documents themselves risk losing focus and becoming too complex and lengthy, thereby undermining the prospects of effective implementation.

Indeed, the overly ambitious and exhaustive list of activities and outputs included in some of these NAPs raises practical challenges for national authorities responsible for their implementation. These include prioritization in the face of limited resources, clear communications with all stakeholders—including but not limited to civil society actors and populations in areas most affected by armed violence—and assessment of progress.

Feedback from practitioners suggests the need to address this commonly shared challenge by ensuring a clearer distinction between strategy and operational plans, as outlined below:

- A stand-alone strategy should outline a vision to promote alignment between key stakeholders on the overarching long-term objectives and priorities ('why' and 'what').
- A detailed operational plan should focus on how to implement said vision, with a focus on the tasks, timelines, and resource allocation ('how', 'who', and 'when').

This distinction reflects established results-based management (RBM) best practice to help countries focus on 1) ensuring a coherent stance to controlling both the demand and supply of illicit small arms; 2) narrowing down and agreeing upon a set of priorities for a given implementation timeline; and 3) aligning small arms control efforts more systematically with wider national objectives and development agendas.

## Example of good practice

In Burkina Faso, the adoption of an RBM approach for national planning purposes led to the term NAP being replaced by 'Strategic Plan' (Burkina Faso, n.d.b). In practice, the 2025–29 Burkina Faso Strategic Plan on Small Arms comprises a National Strategy for Small Arms Control for the 2025–29 period (Burkina Faso, n.d.a), supported by a three-year operational plan that defines the initial implementation framework (Burkina Faso, n.d.b). The operational plan is designed to be updated annually, ensuring continuous alignment with, and coverage of, the overall strategy period. Those responsible for national planning recognized the need to address security concerns previously left untouched, specifically IEDs and craft weapons, in discussions on the design of the revised NAP. In addition, the 2024–28 plan acknowledges the increase in the number of community security actors and the need to address self-defence groups and community militias in operational plans intended to reduce the threat of illicit small arms proliferation. This occurred in parallel to more systematic efforts to link the NAP to the transitional government's national development plan.



“More systematic linkages to other national strategies would enable West African NAPs to maximize both their coherence and their potential impact to achieve the transformative goals set at the design stage.”

### Alignment with relevant public policies

#### **Finding 3: NAPs would benefit from further alignment with broader national strategies or policies**

Traditionally, NAPs have emphasized operational and technical measures, largely focused on supply-focused arms control and PSSM. West African countries surveyed as part of the present review have mostly sought to align the operational plans featured in their most recent NAPs with wider public policies, including existing national economic and development plans. Additionally, small arms control and counter-proliferation are presented as factors contributing to broader strategic objectives of economic growth and human development with the aim of guaranteeing the peace and safety of all citizens. This broadening of scope has, according to the Survey, marked in some ways a transition from ‘first generation’ to ‘second generation’ NAPs on small arms, whereby their development process is no longer conducted by external consultants liaising only with state security agencies, but instead involves a wider range of stakeholders with a stake in security-related issues.

The alignment of NAPs with existing national strategies and policies is, however, mostly considered in a cursory manner. Several practitioners and observers feel there is insufficient concerted reflection at the top national level<sup>9</sup> to link small arms control with other national and global agendas, including but not limited to security sector reform (SSR); disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR); women, peace, and security (WPS); and the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs). More systematic linkages to other national strategies would enable West African NAPs to maximize both their coherence and their potential impact to achieve the transformative goals set at the design stage. For example, Senegal’s NAP does not explicitly refer to the country’s national counter-criminality strategy, although both national agendas share the broader objective of violence reduction and feature capacity building for law enforcement agencies as well as support for strengthened regulatory frameworks. The NAP’s focus on reducing the illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms directly supports counter-criminality efforts by limiting access to arms commonly used in organized crimes. Conversely, any counter-criminality strategy that seeks to clamp down on networks involved in weapons trafficking will bolster the objectives of a NAP with these aims.<sup>10</sup>

More systematic integration and linkages may also help streamline funding and accountability. According to an interviewee in Guinea, the country’s NAP design process was inclusive and consultative, but the NAP policy document includes only superficial references to the country’s National Plan on Economic and Social Development (PNDES).<sup>11</sup> As a result, selected activities of the NAP are funded and implemented within the broader framework of the PNDES rather than through the NAP itself. Although this creates challenges for reporting and for funding accountability, it is more likely to facilitate coordinated and sustainable approaches to small arms control.

#### Examples of good practice

Sierra Leone’s latest 2025–29 NAP seeks to align with a wide range of national

frameworks, including the country’s medium-term national development plan, which frames an ‘efficient and effective security sector’ (Sierra Leone, 2024b, p. 18) as key to sustainable development and the advancement of democracy and the rule of law. The NAP also builds on national gender and inclusion policies, including the country’s WPS NAP (2019–23) and the Gender Empowerment Act of 2022 (Sierra Leone, 2021).

Niger’s NAP is rooted in a vision of sustainable development, human security, and inclusive growth set out in the country’s 2017–21 Economic and Social Development Plan, which seeks to deliver quality public services to the population in a secure environment. Additionally, it is inspired by the country’s internal security strategy, as well as its gender policy and 2020–24 WPS NAP.

The Malian case is also of particular interest as the NatComs on small arms and light weapons, DDR, and SSR presented an integrated operational action plan for the period 2021–23 to the authorities to implement joint activities and were reportedly successful in leveraging more resources. The three NatComs intend to renew this joint approach in the future.

#### **Finding 4: Resource prioritization is a common challenge that undermines the implementation of NAPs across the region**

A lack of prioritization of funding for NAPs remains a significant barrier to effective implementation in West Africa.<sup>12</sup> Although many NatComs report receiving state funding to cover basic operating costs (such as office space, office expenditures, and capital-based staffing requirements), these allocations are not typically sufficient to support the comprehensive implementation of NAPs. In practice, the rollout of systems and processes for the control of government stockpiles and the updating of national legislation has largely depended on international donors and implementing partners,<sup>13</sup> and the financing of civilian disarmament remains particularly under-resourced.

If the NAP is developed without involving the key ministries that allocate the national budget and fails to align with national priorities and objectives, funding shortfalls may be inevitable. Stakeholders in several West African countries highlighted this challenge. It was also evidenced in one country where government authorities requested that the NatCom revise its NAP to align with national planning and reporting frameworks, offered technical advisers, and committed to providing budgetary resources for the implementation of the

NAP upon completion of the revision. The NatCom did not undertake the requested revisions, however, which ultimately resulted in the loss of state funding.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, unforeseen national emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic can force governments to reallocate funds initially designated for the NAP's implementation to address more immediate crises.

Compounding these issues is the limited capacity within NatComs to independently mobilize resources. This can sometimes be attributed to the fact that they are attached to the office of the presidency or prime minister. Although this gives them political leverage, as they are not located within a particular ministry, it means their activities may not be automatically included within the regular national budget. This is one reason they remain heavily reliant on international donors and implementing partners to access the resources needed for implementation. Moreover, the bold vision outlined in many West African NAPs can make them long, overly ambitious, and complex, which may, paradoxically, limit their ability to attract funds from international donors.

## Examples of good practice

In Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Economy and Finance validates the NAP, ensuring government buy-in, adherence to the methodology, and alignment with the national development plan. This process elevates the NAP's profile within the ministry and enables optimal funding, as most of the NAP is allocated funding in the national budget.

In Ghana, the NatCom receives a yearly allocation from the Ministry of Interior that notably finances awareness campaigns, as well as additional funding for other NAP priorities (such as public education and capacity building). The NatCom also benefits from partnerships with organizations such as MAG, the HALO Trust, and the joint United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)–United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) SALIENT initiative (for their baseline report and legal reviews).

In Mali, the NatCom's active advocacy led to increased funding from the Malian National Transition Council in 2022 (including an increased operating budget and vehicles). As already highlighted, the NatCom successfully collaborated with the country's DDR and SSR NatComs to submit a joint integrated operational plan for the implementation of similar activities between 2021 and 2023. The plan was well funded and is about to be renewed.

“In practice, most NAPs appear to prioritize national capacity development for the NatCom and the country's defence and law enforcement agencies.”

## Scope

**Finding 5: The international discourse has evolved towards a more holistic approach to small arms control, but the operational focus remains centred on PSSM**

In recent years, international discussions on small arms control have emphasized a need to integrate small arms control into conflict prevention and management strategies, moving beyond the then traditional focus on PSSM (UNODA, 2018). This trend was reflected in the 2024 Fourth United Nations Review Conference (RevCon4) of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA), which underscored the profound connections between small arms control and the 'triple nexus' of development, peace, and security (UNTFHS, 2021). The RevCon4 outcome document highlights the severe negative humanitarian and developmental impacts of illicit small arms proliferation (UNGA, 2024, p. 6), and advocates for comprehensive measures to curb small arms proliferation, in alignment with the SDGs—particularly SDG 16.4, which seeks to reduce illicit arms flows (UNDESA, 2015; UNGA, 2024, p. 9). RevCon4 stressed the need to embed arms control within broader development strategies to ensure greater coherence and complementarities between humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development efforts.

This global trend was reflected in West Africa. Very early on, the 2006 ECOWAS Convention explicitly recognized the critical role of small arms control in advancing the objectives of the triple nexus of development, peace, and security. It further stipulated that arms transfers must not be authorized if they risk violating international humanitarian law, endangering peace, or hindering sustainable development (ECOWAS, 2006, p. 8).

The challenge to translate these principles into effective, practical measures has led to changes in the formulation and structure of recent West African NAPs. For example, Burkina Faso's latest Strategic Plan articulates a strategic objective to manage weapons and ammunition through a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach, contributing to socio-economic development and to a peaceful and united nation by 2027 (Burkina Faso, n.d.a).

While the commitment to aligning small arms control with the triple nexus agenda may be formally captured in some of the NAPs reviewed for this publication, in practice, most NAPs appear to prioritize national capacity development for the NatCom and the country's defence and law enforcement agencies. This prioritization is also evident from a review of the budget provisions made in available planning documents. This focus has led to a strong operational emphasis on the training of security and law enforcement personnel in WAM, especially on matters of marking and record-keeping.

As a result, most interviewees see PSSM—a subset of WAM—as the area with the most tangible progress for NAPs in West Africa. Variations exist between countries, including the areas in which they made greater headway: the marking of defence and law enforcement weapons (mostly undertaken in Benin, Senegal, and Togo); the destruction of surplus and obsolete weapons and ammunition (Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Togo); and the construction and refurbishment of armouries (an area of noticeable progress in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Mali).

Notable recent achievements include the marking of all security forces' weapons and the destruction of 250 tonnes of obsolete ammunition and 18,000 weapons by Benin,<sup>15</sup> the construction or refurbishment of ten weapons warehouses and the destruction of 68 tonnes of obsolete ammunition by Guinea,<sup>16</sup> and the strengthening of national capacities to investigate arms trafficking and the

# “When facing competing priorities, most NAPs aim to concentrate resources to reduce small arms trafficking at major entry points.”

marking of 20,000 arms by Senegal.<sup>17</sup> In addition, ECOWAS benefited from financial support from the German Federal Foreign Office, as well as technical support from the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies and the Multinational Small Arms and Ammunition Group, to establish a regional pool of 24 PSSM instructors and senior instructors in the period 2018–23.<sup>18</sup> Some of these instructors then implemented national PSSM training programmes in Benin, Sierra Leone, and Togo in 2024.

## Example of good practice

Burkina Faso offers a good example of how small arms control has been connected to the WPS agenda through the development process of its latest NAP that began in 2021. In 2022, the Survey supported a consultation process with representatives from CSOs working on gender equality and women's rights, as well as state institutions, to develop concrete and realistic proposals to strengthen the gender dimension of the NAP on small arms.<sup>19</sup> In this regard, participants were asked to formulate recommendations to the NatCom on small arms on how to operationalize the NAP's gender-related components. Moreover, they were invited to propose activities and indicators that would enable them to support the NAP's implementation and monitor its progress.<sup>20</sup>

### **Finding 6: NAPs have been less effective in contributing to border control, civilian weapons control, and the control of craft weapons**

Enhancing border control is recognized as a priority in eight of the 15 NAPs surveyed for this review (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo). When facing competing priorities, most NAPs aim to concentrate resources to reduce small arms trafficking at major entry points (such as Cotonou port and airport facilities in Benin's

2020–24 NAP), urban areas, and established border checkpoints (Côte d'Ivoire's 2016–20 NAP). Interviewees suggested a need for increased cross-border collaboration in practice, as well as more human and financial resources for rural areas and remote porous land borders that are highly susceptible to small arms trafficking.

Progress on civilian weapons control and the harmonization of national legal frameworks also appears limited, despite both areas being consistently flagged as salient issues in most NAPs. A combination of the following factors may contribute to the lack of progress in certain countries:<sup>21</sup>

- a lack of political will (other issues are prioritized over small arms regulatory frameworks);
- a lack of state capacity to provide adequate security in certain communities, as well as along transport routes, resulting in a civilian culture of acquiring arms for self-defence, which in turn may lead to the state being reluctant to take unregistered arms from civilians it cannot protect;
- blurred lines of responsibility between security and law enforcement agencies claiming jurisdiction over small arms control, resulting in overlap;
- a strong culture of craft weapons production compounded by weak government expertise on their relevant regulations; and
- a fragmented compliance effort, whereby several countries ratified regional and international treaties, such as the ATT and the ECOWAS Convention, but have yet to incorporate these fully into domestic law.

As a result, there is limited evidence of progress regarding the licensing and registration of weapons in the hands of civilians, including craft weapons.<sup>22</sup> In several countries, the lack of a digitized national register of civilian weapons limits

the accessibility of data and undermines the ability of national authorities to undertake evidence-based policy design, enforcement, and monitoring. Likewise, the process of obtaining a civilian small arms licence is reportedly regarded as cumbersome in many contexts, thereby deterring civilians from taking the steps that would allow them to comply with the law. In Benin, no civil licences were granted in the period 2010–23, in part due to the lack of promulgation of the decrees implementing the revision of Law No. 2019–07 (Benin, 2020).<sup>23</sup> The revised law sought to update the country's regulatory framework regarding artisanal craft weapons production—a country-wide challenge. Other countries in the region note a similar need to harmonize and update national legal frameworks.

The proliferation of craft weapons is another pressing issue that may require greater consideration in the implementation of NAPs. At least five countries—Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, and Togo—face significant challenges related to the manufacture and use of homemade firearms. The ECOWAS Commission has recognized this trend and recently produced both a study and regional guidelines on the manufacture, possession, and transfer of craft weapons in the ECOWAS region,<sup>24</sup> presented during the 2024 annual meeting of ECOWAS NatComs on small arms in Abuja, Nigeria.<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, but significantly, several NatComs have shown interest in incorporating initiatives to address the proliferation of IED components within their NAPs on small arms control. This interest appears to stem from their evolving mandates, which increasingly encompass the control of explosives and, in some cases, efforts to counter the threats posed by IEDs. Additionally, this focus is justified by the fact that IEDs are sometimes constructed using small arms components and conventional explosive ordnance (Small Arms Survey, 2023). The ECOWAS forthcoming regional counter-IED (C-IED) strategy may provide NatComs with more systematic guidance to integrate this threat into their planning processes.

## Examples of good practice

Ghana has strengthened border control by permanently deploying NatCom staff at key border posts to enhance cooperation with security agencies such as immigration and customs, ensuring immediate notification of weapons seizures.

Craft weapons are a key area of concern in Benin's 2020–24 NAP, which calls for strengthening the regulation of local production. This includes registering local



arms manufacturers, creating a database of local producers, and centralizing the registration of locally made weapons at the national level. Some progress has been made, with a national census identifying 145 manufacturers throughout the country, mostly blacksmiths.

Benin also offers an interesting example of adaptation, having recently conducted a self-assessment workshop on national C-IED capabilities. As a result, the country now plans to integrate a C-IED component into its next NAP iteration, demonstrating a proactive approach to this critical challenge.<sup>26</sup>

## Inclusiveness

### **Finding 7: NAPs are credited with forging a common understanding of small arms control matters and promoting collaboration among a broad range of national stakeholders**

The participation of stakeholders representing government, security, and law enforcement agencies, civil society, local communities, and even arms manufacturers (in Benin and Senegal) has sought to combine different perspectives in a mutually reinforcing manner. There is strong evidence that NAPs have not only made a significant difference in terms of putting matters of small arms control on the region's agenda, but also served as a very effective means of awareness raising in the countries that formed part of this review.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, donors and implementing partners interviewed as part of this review unanimously emphasized the importance of NAPs as advocacy and coordination tools across the region. They consistently indicated that NAPs have equipped all relevant stakeholders with joint frameworks to share their unique perspectives, address differences, and align priorities, including with other international partners and donors. This is evidenced by the proliferation of regional civil society platforms that address small arms, such as the Réseau d'action sur les armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest (RASALAO) and the regional work of the Gender Equality Network for Small Arms Control.

This includes more effective collaboration between government security and law enforcement agencies—multiple interviewees spoke of NatCom proceedings in which security personnel transparently disclosed information on topics usually deemed sensitive (such as weapons stockpiles per agency). The most successful NatComs are credited with

“There is no evidence to suggest that NatComs prioritize investing time and/or financial resources in civil society engagement.”

supporting government and civil society constituents to engage with each other more frequently and coherently, to the benefit of all national stakeholders. For most interviewees, the design processes of NAPs have made a significant difference in enabling inclusive and constructive discussions with civil society representatives, who have often gained legitimacy as a result of the process. CSOs are increasingly seen as credible stakeholders on small arms control, something that was not necessarily the case in earlier NAP processes. This strong focus on process, which the Survey actively promotes, is necessary to ensure the NAP's national ownership, legitimacy, and feasibility, as well as to develop and reinforce local governance capacities.

While participants of this review agree that inclusion benefits NAPs as a matter of principle, realities may differ within the region. Exceptions apply when CSOs have demonstrated knowledge on armed violence (as in the case of the Mouvement contre les Armes Légères en Afrique de l'Ouest in Senegal, which supplies data on criminality and armed violence relevant to the NatCom). In many other contexts, small arms control remains in practice seen as the remit of security actors, and the involvement of CSOs in the drafting process has sometimes been limited to one organization only. At the implementation stage, there is no evidence to suggest that NatComs prioritize investing time and/or financial resources in civil society engagement.

## Example of good practice

The Survey conducted a mid-term evaluation of Benin's 2020–24 NAP in 2023, which highlights the extent to which CSOs were consulted and involved during the development of the NAP. Two NGOs had a seat on the NatCom—RASALAO, the main CSO working on the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the Association de Lutte Contre le Racisme,

l'Ethnocentrisme et le Régionalisme, which works on good governance. In practice, however, their collaboration mostly focused on public information and awareness-raising activities.

### **Finding 8: Diverse participation marked the design phase of most West African NAPs but proved hard to sustain during the implementation stage**

While NAPs actively fostered exchanges and consultations within and beyond government stakeholders at the design phase, this was not sustained during the implementation stage due to a combination of the following factors:<sup>28</sup> the Covid-19 pandemic; shrinking civic space in several countries in the Sahel and West Africa region; insufficient funding to support the implementation of NAPs; and, for most countries, the absence of periodic reassessments of implementation progress.<sup>29</sup>

Coordination efforts, especially with non-governmental actors, were impeded by the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020. Inclusive meetings were either limited or absent; this disruption was compounded by significant political and security developments in certain countries. According to several KIIs, restrictions due to the pandemic affected participatory mechanisms, creating gaps in both horizontal (across stakeholder groups) and vertical (national to sub-national level) coordination.

In most countries, the lack of sufficient funding to undertake the often ambitious scope of work outlined in the NAPs led to a prioritization of PSSM, as noted above. This may also reflect a stronger inclination to prioritize security and militarized responses over human security. Fewer resources were allocated to engagement with the populations most affected by armed violence, often in border areas, during the implementation phase of the NAPs.

# “More progress can be made towards gender mainstreaming in the development and implementation of NAPs.”

Lack of financial and capacity support to CSOs are both factors that may prevent them from playing an effective role in monitoring NAPs, holding the authorities accountable for NAP implementation, and fostering more engaged and coordinated government action on small arms control. Other factors include CSOs not considering the topic of small arms a priority for their work, lacking confidence, and being fearful of engaging with security ministries or oversight mechanisms (Watson, 2024).

Despite initial successes in ensuring stakeholder inclusivity, most NAPs lacked a mechanism and resources for periodic reviews. Multiple interviewees noted that the non-prioritization of monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) frameworks (discussed in more detail in the section on MEL below) was a significant limitation and did not lend itself to change, including adjusting the modalities of civil society participation when needed.

## Example of good practice

Multi-country studies have not yet been able to gather sufficient evidence to establish whether CSOs (including, but not limited to, youth and gender equality stakeholders) have been able to remain involved at the implementation stage across the region. The evaluation of Mali's 2019–23 NAP, however, indicated that progress had been made in making funds available for women's and youth CSOs to educate the public about the risks and consequences surrounding the possession and use of small arms.<sup>30</sup> Also notable is the number of local CSOs and faith-based organizations engaged in activities that contribute to (armed) violence reduction and supporting community dialogue, without identifying these as small arms control efforts.

## Gender responsiveness

The outcome document of RevCon4 encourages all UN member states to

‘mainstream a gender perspective in the design and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programming on small arms and light weapons control’ (UNGA, 2024, p. 19). It also recognizes the ‘need to promote the full, equal, meaningful and effective participation of women in decision-making and implementation processes including in leadership roles’, which is a goal in itself but also fundamental to achieving gender-responsive small arms control (UNGA, 2024, p. 10). It goes on to provide details on what this entails in a dedicated section on ‘differential impacts of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons on women, men, girls and boys’ (UNGA, 2024, p. 9). The MOSAIC chapter focusing on the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons, released in 2017, provides insights on how this commitment can be further refined and operationalized (UNODA, 2017).

**Finding 9: Gender and diversity do not form a substantive part of most NAPs; while women and other under-represented groups may have been in attendance at NAP proceedings, their participation was not meaningful across the board**

With the exception of three NAPs (Mali's 2019–23, Burkina Faso's 2025–29,<sup>31</sup> and Sierra Leone's 2025–29), most NAPs make reference to gender mainstreaming only in passing, if at all. In stark contrast, all participants interviewed for this review acknowledged the following needs:

1) to recognize the different impacts that small arms and light weapons have on men, women, youth, and children; 2) for women's organizations and gender experts to be included in the planning, design, and implementation of small arms control initiatives; and 3) to ensure that small arms control policies and programmes include a gender perspective.

In selected cases, women's CSOs, women, and other under-represented groups have been consulted on the design of West African NAPs, often in their capacity as civil society participants

or as gender focal points for selected line ministries or public institutions. In addition, a number of interviewees framed gender participation, specifically that of women's organizations and women leaders, as a matter of public engagement and awareness raising (such as in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal).

Nevertheless, ‘[t]he presence of women and under-represented groups in the room does not in itself mean that they will be able to participate meaningfully by deploying their agency, exerting influence, and having self-efficacy’ (Djouhri and Watson, 2025, p. 12). Members of a given NatCom often do not have the necessary process facilitation skills, knowledge, and gender expertise to take into account issues of equality and social inclusion in their work. This reality is compounded by the inherent biases that come with working on small arms—a sector that tends to be traditionally male-dominated and less open to gender mainstreaming. Benin is a case in point: while the country has strong gender-related capabilities, institutions, and public commitments—evidenced by the 2021–24 WPS NAP and the existence of the National Women's Institute attached to the presidency—the actors behind these initiatives were not involved in the development or the implementation of the country's NAP on small arms.

Against this backdrop, and in light of the resource constraints mentioned earlier, more progress can be made towards gender mainstreaming in the development and implementation of NAPs.

## Examples of good practice

Mali's 2019–23 NAP clearly identifies the country's NatCom Permanent Secretariat as being responsible for ‘making an inventory of all the players involved in the fight against small arms and light weapons, including women's organizations’ and ‘granting women's associations, as emphasized in Resolution 1325, and youth associations, the possibility of joining the fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons’ (Mali, 2019, p. 32). Women's organizations are members of the NatCom, and the NAP planned for the organization of workshops on WPS in all regions of the country. The evaluation report of the NAP 2019–23 also attests to the collection of gender-disaggregated data on accidents linked to the possession of small arms.<sup>32</sup>

Sierra Leone's NatCom has prioritized gender as one of three strategic areas in its 2025–29 NAP, focusing on inclusivity by addressing the population's

needs based on gender, age, and disability status. Additionally, it aims to create decision-making and consultative spaces to guarantee the meaningful participation of under-represented groups in arms control policies and programmes.

## Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

### **Finding 10: NAPs do not sufficiently use MEL to promote adaptation**

Most of the reviewed NAPs feature logical frameworks spanning 12 to 40 pages. These frameworks outline specific activities and outputs but often lack robust baseline data and clearly defined performance indicators, particularly at the outcome level. As a result, while log frames are seen as valuable planning tools, there is little evidence of their use in monitoring or adapting implementation strategies.<sup>33</sup> There is very limited evidence to suggest that dedicated MEL expertise is available in most NatComs, or that those with MEL expertise in the different ministries are engaged in activities related to NAPs. There is also no evidence of dedicated resources being available for field-level data collection, limiting the potential to gather actionable insights.

Interviews conducted by the Survey in West Africa have shown that the effectiveness of NAPs is often undermined by a significant lack of institutional memory, especially due to high levels of staff turnover.<sup>34</sup> A lack of systematic reporting and documentation of achievements and lessons learned applies across the board. While selected interviewees could speak of progress made in one or several countries, reporting was inconsistent, and results remain difficult to assess at the regional level.<sup>35</sup>

External evaluations have proven to be an effective means of reviewing NAP progress, as evidenced by recent assessments in Benin (2023 mid-term evaluation), Burkina Faso (2021 final evaluation), Mali (2023 final evaluation), and Senegal (2023 feasibility study). Interviews with in-country and regional stakeholders suggest these external evaluations were highly valued due to their ability to critically assess achievements and inform future strategies. Building on this positive feedback, NatComs have an opportunity to reconceptualize MEL as a tool not only for accountability but also to foster learning and adaptation.

NatComs and external partners have expressed a strong desire for sharing

“The inherently transnational nature of West Africa’s security challenges reinforces the need for structured regional learning that would also build on the engagement of border communities.”

experiences and lessons learned across West Africa in a more systematic manner. The inherently transnational nature of West Africa’s security challenges reinforces the need for structured regional learning that would also build on the engagement of border communities.<sup>36</sup> ECOWAS is well-positioned to play a supportive and coordinating role in this area. Reconceptualizing MEL as a tool for iterative learning and adaptation, rather than just a reporting mechanism, would enable NatComs and their partners to enhance knowledge exchange, support the alignment of strategies with complex and changing security dynamics, and promote regional learning on cross-border small arms issues.<sup>37</sup>

## Example of good practice

Mali’s NatCom carried out a thorough and inclusive evaluation of its 2019–23 NAP with the support of the European Union-funded Organized Crime: West African Response to Trafficking (OCWAR-T) initiative in July 2023. This evaluation provided an opportunity for around 50 participants from Bamako, and different regions of Mali, to carefully review all the objectives and related activities within the NAP, thereby quantifying them and identifying the reasons for success or failure. Moreover, it proved useful for the NatCom to reassess needs and pinpoint priorities for the next NAP.

## Conclusion and policy observations

Perhaps the main impact of NAPs has been to empower NatComs as legitimate and central actors in small arms control discussions. Although their mandate and affiliation varies across the region, NatComs have gained the legitimacy

and visibility necessary to engage with security and law enforcement agencies, positioning themselves as critical interlocutors in policy development. This allows NatComs to play a pivotal role in shaping the national dialogue around small arms control, facilitating coordination between various stakeholders and ensuring a more structured and systematic approach to the issue.

In many regards, NAPs have given shape to the 2006 ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, as they have proven essential in providing a clear and unified framework for small arms and light weapons control across West Africa. They facilitate a common understanding of the issues at hand, even when national legislation and definitions may be outdated or inconsistent. While not always detailed, NAPs have promoted coherent and aligned approaches and enabled West African countries, donors, and implementing partners to harmonize their efforts. Increasingly, NAPs also provide opportunities to align small arms control efforts with broader national policies and development frameworks, and to some extent with the triple nexus.

NAPs have also served as effective tools to begin breaking down silos and to foster inclusion, especially in bringing non-security actors into the conversation on small arms control at the design stage. NAPs can formally encourage the participation of diverse stakeholders, including CSOs, regional organizations, donors, and implementing partners. Of course, realities may vary; small arms control may still be perceived as a sensitive topic that falls within the exclusive purview of security actors. Moreover, resource constraints and trade-offs in resource allocation mean that the inclusion of CSOs is often not prioritized at the implementation stage.



NAPs have been instrumental in consistently prioritizing WAM as a key functional area, especially on aspects related to PSSM.

The following recommendations may help to address some of the challenges identified as part of this review, and strengthen the effectiveness of NAPs as tools for promoting effective small arms control:

1. **Strategic and operational dimensions:** NatComs should develop a strategic vision in a stand-alone strategy in order to guide the operationalization and ensure the relevance of a more detailed yet concise operational action plan.
2. **Alignment with relevant public policies:** Closer alignment with national development policies and processes would enable NAPs to maximize their coherence and visibility, as well as possible funding allocations—from both national budgets and international partners.
3. **Scope:** Regular reviews of contextual developments will enable NAPs to adjust their activities in the face of fast-paced change and to remain aligned with the strategic vision.
4. **Inclusiveness:** Regular reviews can also assess levels of inclusivity to help national authorities address any barriers to inclusive engagement with all relevant stakeholders at the implementation stage and thus foster collaboration and broaden ownership.
5. **Gender responsiveness:** NatComs should draw more extensively on gender specialists as well as populations affected by armed violence to capture the specific needs of men, women, boys, girls, and under-represented groups, given the differentiated impact of weapons depending on gender and other factors. NAPs present a valuable opportunity to foster diverse, meaningful participation in national and local small arms control processes, and hence to deepen understanding of the root causes of violence and address small arms control from a development perspective.
6. **MEL:** NatComs, donors, and implementing partners should be purposeful in their approaches to MEL for NAPs. At the very least, MEL frameworks should be simplified and used as tools for adaptation and learning, including in relation to promoting more systematic sharing of lessons learned at country and regional levels. ●

## Abbreviations

<b>ATT</b> Arms Trade Treaty
<b>C-IED</b> Counter-improvised explosive device
<b>CSO</b> Civil society organization
<b>DDR</b> Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
<b>ECOWAS</b> Economic Community of West African States
<b>IED</b> Improvised explosive device
<b>KII</b> Key informant interview
<b>MAG</b> Mines Advisory Group
<b>MEL</b> Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
<b>MOSAIC</b> Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium
<b>NAP</b> National action plan
<b>NatCom</b> National commission
<b>NGO</b> Non-governmental organization
<b>OCWAR-T</b> Organized Crime: West African Response to Trafficking
<b>PNDES</b> National Plan on Economic and Social Development
<b>PoA</b> Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects
<b>PSSM</b> Physical security and stockpile management
<b>RASALAO</b> Réseau d'action sur les armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest
<b>RBM</b> Results-based management
<b>RevCon4</b> Fourth Review Conference of the PoA
<b>SDG</b> Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SSR</b> Security sector reform
<b>UNDP</b> United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNIDIR</b> United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
<b>WAM</b> Weapons and ammunition management
<b>WPS</b> Women, peace, and security

## Notes

- 1 The full list is composed of Benin (2020–24), Burkina Faso (2017–21 and 2025–27), Côte d'Ivoire (2016–20), Ghana (2010–15), Guinea (2018–22), Mali (2014–18 and 2019–23), Niger (2019–22), Senegal (2018–22), Sierra Leone (2011–15, 2019–23, and 2025–29), and Togo (2012–16 and 2022–25). See Benin (2019); Burkina Faso (2017; n.d.b); Côte d'Ivoire (2015); Ghana (2010); Guinea (n.d.); Mali (2014; 2019); Niger (2019); Senegal (n.d.); Sierra Leone (n.d.; 2019; 2024a); Togo (n.d.; 2012).

- 2 Further details can be found under Findings 3 and 5.
- 3 Based on baseline assessments for the NAPs from Burkina Faso (2021), Ghana (2024), and Sierra Leone (2024), along with unpublished reviews of the Beninese and Senegalese NAPs carried out by the Survey in 2023 and 2024, respectively.
- 4 This point was made in many of the interviews with NatComs.
- 5 These stakeholders came from Bamako and from various regions of Mali and included the permanent secretariat staff, including the permanent secretary himself, the Organized Crime: West African Response to Trafficking (OCWAR-T) project coordinator, and representatives of government departments (the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection, the Gendarmerie, the Military Engineers, and Customs), as well as representatives of CSOs (the Réseau d'action sur les armes légères en Afrique de l'Ouest (RASALAO), the Association des femmes pour les initiatives de paix, the firearms manufacturers' association, hunters' associations, women's and youth organizations, community leaders, and associations of security firms).
- 6 Two NAPs are structured around five objectives—Niger (2019–22) and Togo (2022–25)—whereas most others outline eight to ten priorities.
- 7 UNIDIR identifies the following ten functional areas: a national coordination mechanism on WAM; a legal and regulatory framework at the national level; transfer controls; stockpile management; marking; a record-keeping system; the profiling and tracing of arms and ammunition; the processing of illicit arms and the treatment of illicit ammunition; and weapons collection and disposal, including destruction.
- 8 Based on feedback from all interviews with representatives from NatComs, small arms practitioners, regional organizations, donors, and implementing partners.
- 9 Qualitative data based on KIIs.
- 10 Based on the Senegalese NAP, two KIIs with Senegalese stakeholders, and the Small Arms Survey's confidential review of the Senegalese 2018–22 NAP.
- 11 Interview with a Guinean small arms practitioner, 18 October 2024.
- 12 Interviews with representatives from NatComs, small arms practitioners, regional organizations, donors, and implementing partners.
- 13 The partners mentioned most frequently include Expertise France, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), MAG, and the UNDP. Donors listed by respondents include ECOWAS, the European Union, France, and Germany.
- 14 Online interview with a small arms practitioner, 21 October 2024, and internal review of the country's NAP.
- 15 Feedback from online interview with the Beninese NatCom, 22 October 2024.
- 16 Feedback from online interview with a Guinean small arms practitioner, 18 October 2024.
- 17 Feedback from online interview with the Senegalese NatCom, 18 October 2024.



- 18 Multiphase six-year regional PSSM training-of-trainer process (2018–23) aimed at facilitating the support of member states and implementing partners for the ongoing implementation of the ECOWAS roadmap on PSSM in member states.
- 19 The NAP's third strategic priority focuses entirely on integrating gender and inclusion into WAM (Burkina Faso, n.d.a).
- 20 Internal report by the Survey on a workshop on the operationalization of the gender dimension in the NAP on small arms, Ouagadougou, 28–29 November 2022.
- 21 The factors listed below were mentioned in some of the KIIs, depending on the context. While some of these factors may apply to several countries across the region, the resulting list should not be mistaken for an authoritative analytical list applying to all West African states.
- 22 One potential contributing factor may be that many people in West Africa do not have national identity cards or birth registration certificates, which is a prerequisite for registration (UNICEF, 2019).
- 23 Confidential 2023 mid-term evaluation of Benin's 2020–24 NAP carried out by the Survey.
- 24 See ECOWAS (2022); ECOWAS and GIZ (2023).
- 25 Internal trip report by the Survey, dated 31 October 2024, on the ECOWAS small arms NatComs' annual meeting that took place in Abuja, Nigeria, from 29 September to 3 October 2024.
- 26 Burkina Faso and Sierra Leone also broadened the scope of their latest NAPs to include IED-related matters. Sierra Leone even annexed a roadmap to its 2025–29 NAP that includes recommendations for developing a dedicated C-IED strategy.
- 27 Based predominantly on interviews with representatives from NatComs, small arms practitioners, regional organizations, donors, and implementing partners. Some interviewees gave more detailed feedback on the kind of public engagement that followed the adoption of NAPs, including, but not limited to, youth sensitization, engagement with religious groups and leaders, and the inclusion of small arms control and proliferation as topics in selected university curriculum.
- 28 Reasons listed were mostly mentioned in some of the interviews with NatComs and small arms practitioners.
- 29 In the absence of regular reviews, several interviewees noted the lack of an accountability mechanism to evidence the state of practice and formally address the issue of dwindling inclusion at the implementation stage.
- 30 Confidential report of the 2019–23 NAP's Malian evaluation workshop carried out as part of the OCVAR-T project on small arms and light weapons, July 2023.
- 31 This NAP has yet to be validated at the time of writing.
- 32 Confidential report of the Malian 2019–23 NAP evaluation workshop carried out as part of the OCVAR-T project on small arms and light weapons, July 2023.
- 33 Existing documents and feedback from most respondents indicate work on log frames at the planning stage, but lack

specific feedback on how they are used to monitor and support implementation. Two international partners interviewed as part of this review specifically said they are not being used to support implementation.

- 34 This echoes findings from the unpublished reviews carried out by the Survey in Benin (2023) and Senegal (2024).
- 35 For instance, two interviewees confirmed that civilian disarmament schemes took place in Togo in 2022, backed by a one-month amnesty, and resulted in the collection and destruction of an estimated 1,500 small arms and ammunition ordnance. The review team could not, however, find written evidence to corroborate this finding.
- 36 One stakeholder noted, for example, the value of disseminating regular 'information packages' to all NatComs in a transparent manner, suggesting that such practices could be institutionalized.
- 37 The above-mentioned annual meeting of ECOWAS NatComs on small arms demonstrates the organization's readiness to foster the sharing of experiences and lessons learned among member states. The last two meetings therefore featured specific sessions on IEDs in order to learn from countries with more experience in dealing with this threat. Additionally, ECOWAS organizes a couple of thematic and technical meetings every year with all interested NatComs. The topics are determined based on specific cases or identified needs (feedback from online interview, 22 November 2024).

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# About the Small Arms Survey

The Small Arms Survey is a centre for applied knowledge dedicated to preventing and reducing illicit small arms proliferation and armed violence. The Survey informs policy and practice through a combination of data, evidence-based knowledge, authoritative resources and tools, and tailored expert advice and training, and by bringing together practitioners and policymakers.

The Survey is an associated programme of the Geneva Graduate Institute, located in Switzerland, and has an international staff with expertise in security studies, political science, law, economics, development studies, sociology, criminology, and database and programme management. It collaborates with a network of researchers, practitioners, partner institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governments in more than 50 countries.

The Survey's activities and outputs are made possible through core support as well as project funding. A full list of current donors and projects can be accessed via the Small Arms Survey website. For more information, please visit:

[www.smallarmssurvey.org](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org).

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A publication of the Small Arms Survey, commissioned by MAG with support from the German Federal Foreign Office.