Removing Small Arms from Society

A Review of Weapons Collection and Destruction Programmes

July 2001

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The Small Arms Survey

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Acronyms

AUD	Australian dollars
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BED	Special Disarmament Brigade (Nicaragua)
BICC	Bonn International Center for Conversion (Germany)
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh)
CNN	Cable News Network
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DPKO	Department for Peacekeeping Operations (UN)
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FMLN	Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (El Salvador)
GBP	British pounds
ISS	Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)
IUCN	World Conservation Union
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MINUGUA	United Nations Observer Mission in Guatemala
MISAB	*Mission interafricaine de surveillance des accords de Bangui*
MPCD	Patriotic Movement against Crime
NBCA	National Biodiversity Conservation Area (Laos)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NOK	Norwegian kroner
ONUSAL	United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
PRM	Police of the Republic of Mozambique
SAND	Program on Security and Development (Monterey Institute of International Studies, US)
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SAPS	South African Police Service
SFOR	Stabilisation Force
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNTAES	United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium
URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit
US	United States
USD	United States dollars
WGWR	Working Group for Weapons Reduction in Cambodia
ZAR	South African rand

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Surrendering arms to peacekeepers, Kosovo (Associated Press/Adam Butler)

Summary

A key component of efforts to curb small arms proliferation is the removal of these weapons from society. A broad range of programmes has been carried out in recent years—in every region of the world—for the purpose of collecting and/or disposing of small arms and light weapons. Weapons collection conducted in a peacetime setting for the purpose of reducing and preventing crime is often, though not always, voluntary in nature, with a wide variety of incentives (and sanctions) deployed for the purpose of recovering firearms from legal (and illegal) owners.

A second major type of weapons collection programme is that carried out as part of efforts to ensure peace and stability in post-conflict societies. The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants is, in fact, a crucial component of broader peace-building efforts. Moreover, the experience of Central America in the first half of the 1990s shows that if weapons are not mopped up soon after the end of armed conflict, they wind up contributing to escalating rates of violent crime in the relevant society.

Whatever the aims of a particular collection programme, the effective disposal of retrieved weapons is essential. In certain cases, weapons that are incorporated into existing government stockpiles may be lost through theft or corruption. Even where stockpiles are secure, some governments are deciding to destroy weapons surplus to their security needs in the broader interests of non-proliferation. Weapons collection and destruction is never cheap and several global mechanisms have been established in order to fund these efforts in countries which would otherwise lack the necessary financial and material resources.

This paper seeks to provide a broad, but by no means comprehensive, overview of practice in the field, drawing attention to some of the main lessons learned in this context. In contrast to many of the other, newer types of measures being developed and implemented to curb small arms proliferation, the existing body of experience with respect to weapons collection allows us to begin to map out some of the key elements of best practice in this area.

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Introduction

This paper reviews formal programmes designed to take small arms and light weapons out of circulation. It covers surplus destruction programmes, as well as collection efforts conducted in peace-building and crime prevention settings. The paper begins with an overview of the main themes and concepts arising in the field of practical disarmament, with illustrations from relevant cases. Some tentative inferences are offered as to best practice in this area. This section also serves to frame the subsequent description of selected weapons collection programmes in four regions: the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. Tables provide additional information for many of the programmes described in the regional sections. The question of funding and the Operation Rachel, Gramsh, and Cambodia programmes are accorded somewhat more detailed treatment. The paper concludes with a review of the key steps involved in a weapons collection programme.

While this paper does not aim at a comprehensive treatment of the subject of weapons collection, it does seek to provide a broadly representative account of practice in this area and to point to some of the main lessons learned. In contrast to many of the other, newer types of measures being developed and implemented to curb small arms proliferation, the existing body of experience with respect to weapons collection allows us to begin to map out some of the key elements of best practice.

The definition of small arms and light weapons used in this paper encompasses both military-style weapons and commercial firearms (handguns and long guns). It follows, in other words, the definition set out in the *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms* (UN document A/52/298, 27 August 1997):

- *Small arms:* revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, sub-machine guns, and light machine guns.

- *Light weapons:* heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of less than 100mm calibre.

The terms 'small arms', 'firearms', and 'weapons' are used more or less interchangeably in the paper. Unless the context dictates otherwise, these terms cover both commercial firearms (e.g. handguns), and small arms and light weapons designed for military use (e.g. assault rifles).

Practical disarmament

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Curbing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in a given society is a complex undertaking involving three distinct tasks: reducing demand, controlling supply, and recovering stocks.

Governments can reduce the demand of their citizens for weapons by ensuring public safety, enforcing the law, promoting full employment, facilitating political participation and the non-violent resolution of conflicts, and otherwise gaining the confidence of their citizens. The success of these endeavours will often depend on the active co-operation of business and civil society.

By contrast, in modern states it is the exclusive responsibility of the government to control the supply of small arms. If they fail in this task, their authority and effectiveness will be undermined. Apart from regulating arms deliveries, governments also need to control small arms in the broader sense of imposing, and effectively enforcing, clear restrictions on their possession and use.

Finally, using a mix of incentives and sanctions and working together with business and civil society, governments must recover stocks of firearms held by the population and dispose of them definitively, preferably through destruction. Surplus government stocks must also be disposed of safely and securely. The proliferation of such weaponry is an obvious threat to public safety and political stability. Removing the tools of violence from society is a necessary corollary of weapons control and the most distinctive part of what the United Nations calls 'practical disarmament measures'.[1]

While opinions vary as to the conditions under which citizens should be allowed to possess firearms, there is fairly broad agreement that military-style weapons should only be held by properly trained, fully accountable, and specifically authorized government officials.

The contribution of practical disarmament to security and peace in a given society is illustrated in Figure 1. Both weapons reduction and control are necessary for the maintenance of public order. Public order and the rule of law together form the basis of public security. The latter, in turn, is one of the conditions for peace.

Figure 1. Elements of security and peace

PEACE

SECURITY

LAW AND ORDER

WEAPONS CONTROL

PRACTICAL DISARMAMENT
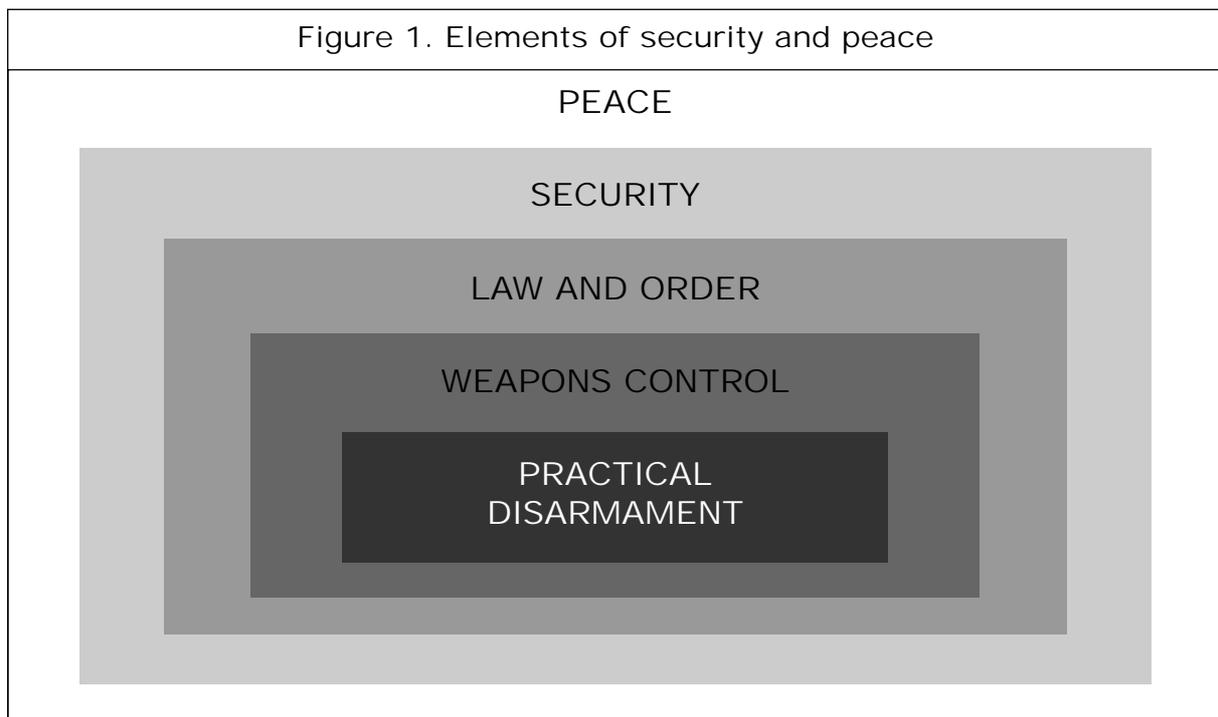
When successful, practical disarmament creates or reinforces a governmental monopoly of the tools of violence. This applies to both of the settings in which it is usually conducted, namely crime prevention and post-conflict peace-building. Yet for practical reasons, such a monopoly must be balanced by the rule of law and respect for human rights and civil liberties. As Figure 1 indicates, practical disarmament is only one component of public security. When attempted in isolation, it will typically fail. People will be reluctant to give up their arms unless the motives that drive them to want firearms are convincingly addressed. Attempts to forcibly disarm them will typically heighten their desire for private firepower. So practical disarmament can only work in the context of a dual effort to improve the capacity of the state to enforce the law, on the one hand, and to create effective safeguards against the abuse of state power, on the other.

Practical disarmament and crime prevention

Facing situations of uncontrolled firearm proliferation and use, civil society groups in such countries as Brazil, El Salvador, and the United States are campaigning for more effective firearm controls. Often, they are also attempting to remove the tools of violence from society.

Gun buy-backs[2] are quite common in the **United States.** They are typically organized and funded privately, often with the support of local civic groups and media and with the assistance of local police and federal agencies such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996, p. 142). They help focus public attention on the problem of the proliferation and misuse of firearms and involve local communities in initiatives designed to tackle these issues. When implemented in conjunction with measures that address the various social problems that underlie firearm proliferation and misuse, they have considerable potential. However, by themselves, buy-backs have little impact on the huge numbers of weapons circulating in the US.

On their own, weapons collection programmes rarely address the reasons that lead people to buy guns. Nor can they stem the flow of new weapons in to society. John Eck notes that if water is being pumped out of a flooded basement surrounded by a hidden pool, the pumping will have to continue until both the cellar and the pool are empty. If, however, there is a spring under the cellar, no amount of pumping will help. Eck concludes that as long there is a continuous 'spring' for guns in the United States, gun collection efforts, no matter how intensive, will do little to curb gun crimes, suicides, and accidents (Eck, 1996). Others affirm his conclusion (Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996).

Gun collection can even have perverse effects. To the extent that it leads potential victims to disarm while potential aggressors do not, it can tip the balance of power in favour of violent crime (Kleck, 1996). While voluntary weapons collection programmes help mobilize communities and raise awareness of the need to control weapons, it seems reasonable to conclude on the basis of US experience that these programmes in isolation have little impact on the entrenched problems of firearm proliferation and misuse.

A series of emotive and highly publicized incidents of gun violence in the US, including the 1999 school shootings in Littleton, Colorado, have not yet resulted in significant new restrictions in US gun control law—in contrast to the experiences of the **United Kingdom** and **Australia** in the mid-1990s.

On 13 March 1996, Thomas Hamilton shot 16 primary school students and their teacher dead in the Scottish town of Dunblane. Six weeks later, on 28 April, Martin Bryant killed 35 people and wounded 19 more at Port Arthur, Tasmania. As a direct result, the governments of both countries moved quickly to remove firearms from society and introduce tough new restrictions on their possession.

Two factors seem to have been instrumental to the success of practical disarmament in these cases. First, the proponents of strict gun control capitalized on public revulsion at these crimes. In Scotland and other parts of Britain, the Snowdrop Campaign mobilized support for a ban on privately held firearms (Craig, 1998). Public response in Australia was similar. In fact, polls showed that 95 per cent of Australians favoured the new government restrictions, though some gun owners loudly protested (Sullivan, 1997).

The second major factor underlying the success of weapons collection in the UK and Australia was its combination with tighter weapons control. The governments of both countries made it clear that rules governing the possession of firearms would be made much stricter and would be fully enforced. In fact, Britain imposed an almost total ban on handguns.

Some 185,000 arms were surrendered in Britain, while Australians turned in nearly 644,000 weapons. If, as researchers believe, 8 to 10 per cent of the firearms handed in were subsequently replaced, then the total stock of firearms in Australian society was reduced by over half a million weapons. In contrast to the UK, Australia destroyed all the weapons it collected, except for a few rare models that were donated to museums. Despite the fact that the Australian weapons collection programme was the largest in history, millions of firearms remain in private possession in the country.

The financial cost of these programmes—whether measured at the national, regional, or individual level—was modest. Just under AUD 320 million (USD 210 million) was paid to those handing in weapons, some AUD 165 million (USD 108 million) less than the government had raised for this purpose by increasing the Medicare levy by 0.2 per cent for one year. As of November 2000, the UK government had paid out just under GBP 90.2 million (USD 146 million) in compensation for returned firearms.

Some of the lessons learned in the context of weapons collection efforts undertaken in the US, UK, Australia, and elsewhere are clearly relevant to other countries, industrialized or developing, facing a problem of firearm proliferation and misuse. The Goods for Guns programme established by Fernando Mateo in New York served as a model for the programme of the same name established in the city of San Salvador, *El Salvador.* Run by the Patriotic Movement against Crime (MPCD), a coalition of citizens, businesses, NGOs, and churches, the programme has successfully drawn the attention of politicians and communities alike to the need to reverse the proliferation and misuse of firearms in the country. Unfortunately, like most of the US buy-back programmes, it is not making much of an impact on the stock and flow of legal and illegal weaponry (Laurance and Godnick, 2001).

Brazil suffers from an exceptionally high rate of firearm homicide—mostly crime-related and concentrated in the major cities. In 1999, the community development organization Viva Rio collected 1.3 million signatures in support of an initiative to ban the sale of guns in Brazil. It has had considerable success mobilizing the population of Rio de Janeiro and Rio state, and developing a good working relationship with the authorities. This has led to the collection and public destruction of some weapons. In collaboration with local authorities and others, Viva Rio has also set up a comprehensive database that tracks registered guns that are legally sold as well as those seized by the police. Viva Rio's signature campaign and other lobbying efforts have placed gun control squarely on the national legislative agenda. Its initial emphasis on establishing a strong support base for gun control among citizens and local authorities may, in fact, prove more effective in achieving significant disarmament at a later stage than if such a campaign had been attempted at the outset.

Practical disarmament and peace-building[3]

Practical disarmament in the context of crime prevention, the focus of the preceding section, can be contrasted with practical disarmament in situations of political and communal conflict. Efforts to combat such violence are commonly referred to as peace-building.

Criminal violence and political violence are not the same thing, but in some cases the distinction is blurred. In such places as Afghanistan, Colombia, Northern Ireland, and Sierra Leone, political and communal violence has been sustained through various forms of criminal enterprise. The converse may also apply. Violent conflict of an ostensibly political nature supports illicit economic activity in some of the places just mentioned, as well as in Albania, Angola, and Pakistan.

By the same token, many of the mechanisms underpinning practical disarmament are similar, whether the aim is to fight crime or build peace. Nevertheless, we will now see that there are some major differences between the two settings.

Most writers and practitioners agree that successful peace-building involves uprooting the causes of lethal conflict from the society. Both the UN Security Council and the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) have emphasized the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to peace-building, which includes the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants in the context of broad efforts to promote peace, stability, and development in the given society (UN, DPKO, 1999; UN Security Council, 1999).

When to disarm—the case of Northern Ireland: The first step in the Northern Ireland peace process involved ending the misuse of firearms—specifically, their use in sectarian violence. This was achieved when the Republican and Loyalist militias announced and maintained their cease-fires. While this did not put an end to all armed violence in the province, its level was then low enough to allow movement to the next, more difficult stage of the peace process.

With the guns more or less silent, the perceived need or demand for weapons had to be reduced. Fundamentally, this could only be achieved by addressing the root causes of the conflict. The Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 represented an attempt to do this. If the peace process is to continue to move forward, the problems of the illegal possession of arms and the build-up of government forces will have to be tackled. However, since April 1998, progress on the 'decommissioning' of weapons, as it is called in Northern Ireland, has been extremely difficult.

If and when Northern Ireland disarms, another challenge remains. The governing authorities will have to exert strict control over the supply of firearms and other weaponry to the province. This will entail legal restrictions on imports and sales. In addition, the authorities will have to tackle the problem of the protection rackets and other criminal activities that paid for, and were sustained by, militia weaponry.

It seems clear that successful peace-building in cases of domestic political conflict, as in Northern Ireland, must tackle all aspects of the weapons problem: use, demand, possession, and supply. The peace processes in such African countries as the Central African Republic, Liberia, and Mali have done this in the same sequence. Some of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia[4] and Central America have diverged from this pattern only in the sense that use, demand, and possession were tackled almost simultaneously, within the framework of a UN peacekeeping mission.

When to disarm—other cases: The sequence followed in Northern Ireland may not be appropriate in places like Cambodia and El Salvador. Weapons collection in these countries is not really conducted

within the framework of post-conflict peace-building, strictly defined, since the armed conflicts that once raged there have long ended. Here, the problems that must be dealt with first are the possession and supply of weaponry, not their use. In the atypical case of Albania, the number of weapons in circulation seems to far outstrip demand for them. Under conditions of relative peace, as prevail there, it may be better to block the supply of new weaponry and reduce the stock of weapons in circulation before addressing issues of demand and misuse.

As described in Table 1, Edward Laurance and William Godnick have distinguished what they call Phase I practical disarmament programmes—implemented soon after the end of armed conflict and tied in with a broader peace process—from Phase II programmes, which try to mop up arms still circulating in society at a later stage (Laurance and Godnick, 2001).

Table 1. Practical disarmament in the context of peace-building		
	Phase I **Disarmament by command**	**Phase II** **Voluntary weapons collection**
Timing	Soon after a peace settlement	Later
Objective	Establish political stability	Maintain political stability, enhance public safety
Inducements	Command, penalties, rewards	Penalties, rewards
Scale	Collective	Individual
Visibility	Public	Public or private
Policy framework	Demobilization	Demobilization, crime prevention
Responsible actors	Governmental and political organizations	Governmental, political, or private organizations

Disarmament by command (Phase I): When armed conflict ends through surrender or settlement, it is essential to disband irregular militias, disarm their fighters, and redirect the latter towards peaceful and constructive activities. Such DDR measures might also be needed for regular security forces. DDR considerably reduces the risk of renewed civil war as well as the possibility that former soldiers and guerrilla fighters will turn to armed banditry. In demobilization centres set up for this purpose, ex-combatants surrender the weapons they bring with them and are given clothing, food, money, official papers, training, and/or other assistance in order to prepare them for a new life in the regular security forces or in civil society. Collected weapons are often destroyed publicly, some-times immediately and on-site.

Disarmament by command, then, is an attempt to recover the tools of war immediately after the end of an armed conflict. It tends to be organized, supervised, public, and collective. In addition, it is usually more coercive than Phase II disarmament as wartime structures and leaders are used to consolidate peace.

Voluntary weapons collection (Phase II): After the peace process has been formally wound up—the peacekeeping force has left and ex-combatants are demobilized—it is much more difficult to retrieve the tools of war. Holders of weapons will be reluctant to disarm if they are disappointed with the benefits

of peace or sceptical as to how long it will last. Disarmament can no longer be effected by 'command'. Its success will depend on a wide variety of factors. The critical variable is probably the extent to which weapon holders believe they need to retain their weapons. Unless and until such demand is effectively reduced, voluntary weapons collection will almost certainly fail to achieve significant reductions in illicit weapons stocks.

The differences between Phases I and II are clear and fundamental. Peacekeeping experience clearly points to the need to arrange an orderly 'farewell to arms' very soon after a peace settlement. Their later removal from circulation is much more difficult.

While Phase I disarmament is distinct, there are many similarities between Phase II disarmament and weapons collection programmes conducted in a peacetime, crime prevention context. Both rely on the co-operation of individual firearm holders. Both offer positive incentives and sometimes the prospect of punishment for non-compliance after an amnesty period. And both have the same fundamental aim—to remove from society weapons that can threaten political stability and/or public safety.

Lessons learned

Practical disarmament is not a science. The existing body of knowledge on the subject consists of trial and error experience, from which only the most tentative inferences can be made. Here are a few.[5]

Prior assessment: Successful weapons collection requires a thorough prior assessment of the problem to be remedied. Otherwise, the standards for success cannot be pinned down. Thus, it is not known what effect the Gramsh Pilot Programme (Albania) has had on the stock of weapons held by civilians since the size of the stock was not determined beforehand (van der Graaf and Faltas, 2001).[6]

Coherence: Determining the nature of a problem is the first step towards solving it, yet many weapons collection programmes are undermined by disagreement and uncertainty concerning the problem and/or the specific objectives to be pursued for its resolution—both on the part of those conducting the programme and prospective participants. In the Central African Republic, a post-conflict weapons collection programme disarmed one faction but not the other, giving rise to resentment that jeopardized the very process of peace-building it was meant to promote. Though beneficial in some respects, the overall success of the project was compromised by a lack of consistency and transparency (Faltas, 2001).

Choice of incentives and sanctions: One of the most frequently discussed issues in weapons collection is the choice of rewards and penalties. Three criteria are important in this regard: their effectiveness in accomplishing the immediate objective of disarmament, their contribution to long-term programme goals (such as public safety and/or political stability), and their cost. Trade-offs between these criteria are unavoidable. For instance, offering attractive rewards to firearm holders will usually boost the number of weapons collected but is costly. Undesired side-effects may also result. Gun imports and thefts may increase as people without weapons try to get their share of the rewards being offered. People receiving cash for their weapons might use the money to buy other arms, perhaps more lethal ones. Nevertheless, it is clear that incentives, essential to voluntary disarmament, must be attractive.

What works best by way of inducements will depend on local conditions. The 'weapons in exchange for development' approach, first applied in Gramsh by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), appears to have worked quite well and may be worth copying. In the case of Gramsh, the community selected the development projects that were to be offered as an incentive for disarmament. Whether their cost was justified by the number of weapons and ammunition ultimately collected is debatable. Yet the great strength of this approach is that such expenditure yields more than returned

weapons. It seems clear that the development projects have made a contribution of their own, independent of weapons collection, to public safety, economic progress, and community development in Gramsh (van der Graaf and Faltas, 2001).

Penalties for non-compliance are a separate issue. If practical disarmament is part of a wider government effort to reinforce state control over small arms, then citizens who fail to surrender such weapons during the relevant amnesty period must be told, in advance, they will face legal prosecution.

Combination with other efforts: On its own, practical disarmament can achieve little, as is argued below.

Conclusion

It seems clear that, whether in the framework of crime prevention or peace-building, practical disarmament by itself can do little to remedy the problems of weapons proliferation and misuse in a society. Practical disarmament projects can, as mentioned earlier, serve to inform and mobilize communities around these issues. In this way, they may help pave the way for future disarmament. Yet in order to fulfil its principal objective of reducing weapons stocks, practical disarmament must be supported by measures designed to strictly control weapons supplies and reduce the demand for them. Furthermore, when successful, practical disarmament will tend to reinforce the state's monopoly of force. It must therefore be accompanied by safeguards against the abuse of this monopoly. In the specific context of post-conflict peace-building, practice points to the need to link disarmament measures to broader peace-building efforts, including development. In sum, practical disarmament can only be effective where it is part of a broader integrated strategy that addresses all major components of peace and security in a given society.

Funding

Weapons collection is not cheap. Even surplus destruction programmes involve a significant outlay of funds, even though no money needs to be spent to recover weapons. To cite one example, described in more detail in the section devoted to Africa, the Government of South Africa has budgeted just over USD 320,000 for the destruction of surplus small arms held by its armed forces. While the relative benefits of weapons collection programmes easily justify their cost, some countries lack the financial and material resources needed to carry them out. For this reason, several mechanisms have been established at the global level in order to fund collection programmes and such associated efforts as the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

The Group of Interested States was established in 1998 pursuant to UN General Assembly resolution 52/38 G (9 December 1997). Open-ended in its composition, the Group meets periodically to review and extend support to practical disarmament projects at the local and national levels. A second funding instrument, the United Nations Trust Fund for the Consolidation of Peace through Practical Disarmament Measures, was created in August 1998 on the recommendation of the Group of Interested States and is administered by the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs. UNDP's Trust Fund for Support to Prevention and Reduction of the Proliferation of Small Arms is another important source of financial support for weapons collection and destruction projects.

The World Bank's Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit is moving to address the problem of small arms proliferation in the context of its work. In March 2001, at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the *United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects,* the UK government announced that it was seeking support for a new multilateral funding initiative for weapons collection, management, and destruction.

Bilateral assistance is another important source of funding for practical disarmament. Support at the national and community levels is also crucial to weapons collection. Business, religious, and community organizations, as well as ordinary citizens, play an important role in many of these projects, providing them with essential financial, material, and human resources. Fund-raising at the local level obviously serves to help meet programme costs. Yet it is also an important means of involving the community as a whole in the resolution of the small arms problem.

Sources: Godnick, 1999; Laurance, assisted by Meek, 1996, p. 82; UN, Department for Disarmament Affairs, 2000, pp. 85–86; UN Secretary-General, 2000a

Regional practice

This section reviews selected weapons collection programmes in four regions: the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. Accompanying tables provide additional information for many of these programmes, while initiatives in southern Africa, Albania, and Cambodia are examined in somewhat greater detail. Though many of the key concepts and broad lessons learned in the field of practical disarmament were presented earlier, the following survey demonstrates the diversity of weapons collection practice, both across and within various regions.

The Americas

Some post-conflict disarmament was undertaken in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua following the end of civil war in those countries. These efforts were largely unsuccessful in reducing weapons stocks and there has been a need to follow up with additional collection programmes. The latter initiatives have been conducted within a crime prevention framework. Thus the aim, at one level, has been to curb the widespread availability of firearms and thereby rein in high levels of social violence and crime. While such efforts have had, in fact, only minimal impact on the total numbers of weapons circulating in the relevant societies, they have been more successful in raising public awareness of the small arms issue and promoting public discussion of and participation in the design and implementation of solutions.

Nicaragua was the first Central American country to embark upon a post-conflict disarmament process. Though guerrilla forces were disarmed in 1990, following the end of the civil war, by early 1991 many ex-combatants from both sides had rearmed with weapons held in caches throughout the country. The Nicaraguan government created the Special Disarmament Brigade (BED) to collect as many of these arms as possible. With the support of the Organization of American States and the Italian government, BED initiated a gun buy-back programme in late 1991. Cash, food, and micro-enterprise programmes were offered in exchange for weapons. Before the programme ended in late 1993, approximately 142,000 weapons were either bought back or forcibly confiscated. These were publicly destroyed in an intense, open pit fire (BICC, 1997, p. 161; O'Connor, 1996).

The disarmament and demobilization of guerrilla and regular forces in *El Salvador* began in June 1992. The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) monitored the process and, with the co-operation of the armed forces of neighbouring Nicaragua and Honduras, carried out several search and destroy missions in these countries for weapons caches belonging to the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). More than 11,000 FMLN fighters surrendered some 10,200 small arms and light weapons and 9,200 grenades. These were destroyed, while weapons belonging to government forces were collected and stored. The post-conflict disarmament process ended with the demobilization of ex-combatants, though widely shared estimates put the number of military-style weapons left in individual hands at some 360,000 (Laurance and Godnick, 2001).

From 3 March to 14 May 1997, the United Nations Observer Mission in *Guatemala* (MINUGUA) monitored the disarmament of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit (URNG) as part of a broader programme of demobilization and reintegration. Incentives offered to the ex-combatants included literacy programmes, medical and dental services, and vocational guidance. Of the 3,570 reported URNG combatants, 2,928 arrived at the demobilization centres, handing over 1,665 small arms, 159 light weapons, and nearly 535,000 rounds of ammunition. This, however, was a small fraction of the estimated 2 million weapons that continued to circulate illegally within the country (Laurance and Godnick, 2001).

One of the first attempts to disarm civilians in Latin America was carried out by the US Army in **Haiti,** operating from 1994 to 1995 within the framework of the US-led Multinational Force that restored democracy to the country in September 1994. Participants in the buy-back programme were given cash for functional weapons according to a set price scale and benefited from a 'no questions asked' policy. Between September 1994 and January 1995, a total of 3,684 weapons and 6,512 munitions were bought-back. An additional 15,236 weapons were seized during the same period. Before the programme was scaled back in March 1995, over 33,000 weapons and munitions had been bought-back or seized. After the replacement, in March 1995, of the Multinational Force by a UN peace-keeping force, US troops continued to run the buy-back programme, but in a far more modest form. Only one collection site was kept open and relatively few weapons were turned in. Modern weapons in good condition were given to the US Justice Department's International Criminal Investigations Training Assistance Program for use by the Haitian police, while those of historical value were set aside as museum pieces. The remaining weapons were shipped to a destruction facility in the US state of Pennsylvania to be melted down (Laurance, assisted by Meek, 1996, p. 84; O'Connor, 1996).

Fernando Mateo, an American citizen of Dominican descent, was the driving force behind the Guns for Toys (*Armas por Jugetes*) collection programme carried out in the **Dominican Republic** from 2 to 6 January 1996. The programme offered participants a gift certificate, mostly for toys, and a chance to win an apartment in a raffle in exchange for each weapon turned in. With the assistance of the Catholic Church and backed by a general amnesty offered by the government, the programme netted approximately 200 weapons, with the police turning over 2,000 others that they had confiscated in the course of their work. Though the total number of weapons collected was small, the programme did appear to meet its objective of influencing, to some degree, public attitudes towards weapons owner-ship and use (O'Connor, 1996).

As discussed earlier, the Patriotic Movement against Crime (MPCD) of **El Salvador**—a coalition of concerned Salvadoran citizens and businesses working in collaboration with civil society organizations and the Catholic Church—launched a weapons collection programme called Goods for Guns in September 1996. Participants received vouchers for consumer goods. Between the start of the pro-gramme and its June 1999 conclusion, 9,527 weapons and 129,696 rounds of ammunition were col-lected with government assistance, mostly in the San Salvador area. All the collected arms were destroyed, thus putting them definitively out of circulation. Approximately half of the funds raised for the programme came from international donors, with the remainder provided by the Salvadoran gov-ernment and the private sector. Although the programme did not have much impact on the total stock of military weapons in El Salvador, it did raise awareness of the consequences of their proliferation and fostered a public discussion of security issues (Godnick, 1998; Laurance and Godnick, 2001).

San Miguelito, an autonomous municipality on the periphery of Panama City, **Panama,** initiated an arms exchange programme (*Intercambio de Armas por Mejores Condiciones de Vida*) in 1997 in an effort to improve public safety. Three rounds of collection in 1998 resulted in the handing in of 108 firearms, with another 97 recovered through police raids and stepped-up enforcement efforts. In a 'carrot and stick' approach, holders of illegal weapons were given an opportunity to hand these in prior to increased police raids in the area. The programme offered such incentives as employment in commu-nity projects and vouchers for foodstuffs, construction materials, and domestic appliances. Most of the weapons turned in were destroyed, while others were incorporated into national police inventories (Godnick, 1999).

A number of gun buy-back programmes have been conducted in various cities of the **United States** in an effort to reduce violent crime. The states where these programmes have been carried out include Alabama, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas,

Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia, as well as the District of Colombia. The incentives offered have included cash, vouchers for goods, and tickets to concerts and sporting events. Since 1990, the following cities and districts have recovered the largest numbers of guns: St. Louis, October 1991 (7,469); Hennepin County, Minneapolis, February 1992 (6,000); and Syracuse, New York, May 1992 (2,736). The US collection programmes have typically netted from several dozen to several hundred guns (Kleck, 1996; Laurance, 1996; Rosenfeld, 1996).

Table 2. Weapons collection programmes, the Americas				
Country	El Salvador	El Salvador	Guatemala	Panama
Period	1992–93	1996–99	1997	1998
Framework	Peace-building	Crime prevention	Peace-building	Crime prevention
Organizers	ONUSAL	MPCD	MINUGUA	Office of the Mayor of San Miguelito
Small arms	8,918	4,397	1,665	108
Light weapons	1,312	55	159	
Other		1,126 detonators, detonator cords	380m of explosive cord, 3,480 other explosive devices	
Small arm ammunition	4,032,606 rounds	3,157 magazines, 129,696 rounds	534,955 rounds	718 bullets, 22 magazine cartridges
Light weapon ammunition	214	290	934	
Grenades	9,228	3,180	147	
Landmines		55	1,390	
Explosives	5,107.1kg	277 blocks TNT, 147 C-4 explosives	1,720kg	1 flask of gun powder
Sources	Laurance and Godnick, 2001	Laurance and Godnick, 2001	Laurance and Godnick, 2001	Godnick, 1999

Africa

Weapons collection and destruction in Africa has mostly been conducted within the framework of post-conflict peace-building. Of particular significance, in this context, is the emphasis placed on publicly destroying arms in order to symbolize the cessation of conflict. Yet much attention has also been paid in the region to the links between small arms proliferation, armed violence, and crime. Several weapons collection programmes have been designed and implemented in South Africa and Mozambique with this problem in mind. Examples include the bilateral Operation Rachel programme, the Gun-Free South Africa campaign, and the destruction programme carried out by the South African Police Service (SAPS). The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is also carrying out a major programme for the destruction of its surplus stocks.

Selected programmes

Between October 1995 and January 1996, ex-combatants in **Mali** turned in some 3,000 weapons as part of a post-conflict demobilization process. These were subsequently burned in a public ceremony called the Flame of Peace. The collection took place in four demobilization camps in the north of the country and was supervised by a commission comprising military authorities and representatives of the various rebel groups. UNDP co-ordinated the programme and established a trust fund to finance it, to which several governments, including Mali, contributed. In return for their weapons, demobilized ex-combatants received food, medical treatment, and paid vocational training. While the collection and destruction of 3,000 weapons obviously had little impact on illicit firearms stocks in Mali, the Flame of Peace did serve as a powerful symbol of national reconciliation. It also inspired several community-based practical disarmament projects and broader, subregional disarmament initiatives, including the West African Moratorium (Poulton and ag Youssouf, 1998; van der Graaf and Poulton, 2001).[7]

As part of a long-term peace-building initiative, the Christian Council of **Mozambique** launched a weapons collection programme in October 1995 that continued through 2000. Dubbed the Tools for Arms Project and supported by both the Mozambican government and the opposition, it offered a wide range of tools and machinery in exchange for weapons. The collected weapons were destroyed and fragments of many of the weapons were used to produce works of art, ornaments, or practical objects (Christian Council of Mozambique, 1999; 2000).

The Government of the **Central African Republic,** with the assistance of an African peacekeeping force (*Mission interafricaine de surveillance des accords de Bangui,* MISAB), conducted a weapons collection and confiscation programme in 1997 for the purpose of recovering arms and ammunition looted from government stores in April–May 1996. Of the more than 2,000 small arms, 100 artillery pieces, and several hundred thousand rounds of ammunition taken, 95 per cent of the heavy weaponry and 62 per cent of the small arms and light weapons were retrieved (Faltas, 2001).

A three-month programme for the destruction of weapons retrieved following the end of the civil war in **Liberia** was completed in October 1999. The programme, carried out by the Liberian government with the assistance of the UN, the US, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), resulted in the destruction of more than 19,000 small arms and light weapons and over 3 million rounds of ammunition. These arms were retrieved during a 1996–97 demobilization and disarmament programme and a separate search and confiscation operation conducted by the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) during the first half of 1997 (Berman, 2000a; Deen, 2000; Fraser, 2001; Kahler, 1999).

From November 1999 to May 2000, an attempt at disarming rebel factions was made by the Government of **Sierra Leone** with the assistance of ECOMOG and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). According to the UN, 12,695 weapons and 253,535 rounds of ammunition

were retrieved before the collection programme collapsed, with the peace process itself, in early May 2000. Collected weapons were not immediately destroyed, but simply disabled, facilitating their subsequent recapture by rebels after the peace process had broken down. As reported by Berman, the programme was largely ineffective. Many of the weapons that were handed in were in very poor condition. More broadly, the programme was undermined by the intensive rearmament efforts undertaken by the rebels over the 1999–2000 period (Berman, 2000b).

Niger held a public bonfire in September 2000, destroying more than 1,000 weapons that had been surrendered by former combatants. The destruction ceremony also served to celebrate the end of fighting in the north of the country (BBC, 2000; UN, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2000).

In 1994, a nationwide 24-hour voluntary weapon collection programme was launched by Gun-Free *South Africa* with the support of local business, media, religious organizations, and the South African government. Incentives included gift vouchers and a raffle for prizes of up to USD 25,000. Approximately 900 firearms and explosive devices were collected along with more than 7,000 rounds of ammunition at 167 operational collection sites located throughout the country, mostly in urban areas (Meek, 1998).

Since 1997, SAPS has destroyed firearms and ammunition as part of long-term efforts to fight violent crime in South Africa. A total of 42,659 firearms—2,654 of which were confiscated, with the remainder surplus to SAPS needs—were destroyed on 29 August 2000. The destroyed weapons included pistols, revolvers, rifles, shotguns, and home-made firearms (South Africa, SAPS, 2000).

In 1998, the South African government took the exceptional decision to destroy all redundant, obsolete, unserviceable, and confiscated semi-automatic and automatic weapons and purpose-built sniper rifles of less than 12.7mm calibre held by SANDF. This decision is in line with government policy on non-proliferation and arms control. A total of 262,667 small arms and light weapons and parts have been slated for destruction. These are mostly outdated models, single items, or arms confiscated during military operations. The destruction operation, code-named 'Mouflon', seeks to balance transparency, cost-effectiveness, security, and safety. As of September 2000, 554,000kg of surplus weapons have been destroyed by fragmentation, which prevents individual parts from being re-used. The remaining 831,000kg were scheduled to be destroyed by April 2001. The estimated total cost of Operation Mouflon is ZAR 1,982,665 (USD 322,778). The government of Norway has donated NOK 520,000 (USD 64,792) of this sum, with the rest coming from SANDF's operational budget (Sendall, 2000; UN Secretary-General, 2000b, pp. 30–31).

Table 3. Weapons collection programmes, Africa					
Country	Mali	Mozambique	Niger	Sierra Leone	South Africa
Period	1995–96	1995–2000	2000	1999–2000	2000
Framework	Peace-building	Peace-building	Peace-building	Peace-building	Surplus destruction
Organizers	UNDP, Government of Mali, and ex-combatants	Christian Council of Mozambique	Government of Niger	Government of Sierra Leone, ECOMOG, and UNAMSIL	South African Department of Defence
Small arms	3,000	2,278	1,000	7,686	259,999
Light weapons		225		402	2,668
Other		616 machine gun pieces, grenade pins, mine removal equipment, triggers for mortars and explosives		2,752 additional small arms, anti-personnel mines, anti-aircraft weapons	
Small arm ammunition		69,069 rounds		253,535 rounds	
Light weapon ammunition		487			
Grenades		174		1,855	
Landmines		848			
Explosives		119			
Sources	Poulton and ag Youssouf, 1998	Christian Council of Mozambique, 2000	UN, OCHA, 2000	Berman, 2000b	UN Secretary-General, 2000b, p. 31

Operation Rachel: South Africa–Mozambique

Section authors: Martinho Chachiua and Ettienne Hennop, Institute for Security Studies (ISS) [8]

Since 1995, the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM) have undertaken a series of joint weapons destruction operations, code-named 'Rachel'. Arising out of a March 1995 bilateral agreement on co-operation and mutual assistance in combating crime, the Operation Rachel programme was launched for the purpose of destroying arms caches left in Mozambique following that country's civil war and transition to democratic rule. These weapons were generally believed to be finding new markets among criminals in South Africa and contributing to that country's surge in rates of violent crime during its post-apartheid transition period.[9]

The weapons caches are located on the basis of information supplied by local informers and then destroyed on-site by South African and Mozambican police specialists. Informers are given rewards, often cash. The value of the reward, determined by the team negotiating with the informers, is based on such criteria as the worth of the revealed cache. This non-punitive approach is designed to encourage people to reveal weapons caches and to generate support for the programme among local communities and the Mozambican people generally. The caches mostly belong to the former rebel movement so their disposal must be effected with a relatively light hand in the interest of Mozambican national reconciliation.

Other incentives such as clothes, biscuits, and sweets have been introduced as Mozambican women and children have become more important sources of information on hidden weapons. While the use of incentives has proven quite successful in promoting the disclosure of weapons caches, it has also had the perverse effect of driving up the price of information, in terms of cash or goods, over time.

As more of the caches located in southern Mozambique have been discovered and destroyed, the focus of the Rachel programme has shifted northwards, away from the border area with South Africa. Operations Rachel 5 and 6 (1999–2000) have been significantly smaller than their predecessors and more *ad hoc,* in the sense that they have been launched when and as information on specific weapons caches becomes available.

The Rachel programme has had to overcome a series of obstacles arising out of important differences between the two countries and their police forces. These included tensions between the two nations rooted in the apartheid era and the two forces' unequal operational capabilities. While the first two operations were hampered to some extent by such problems, a sound working relationship had been forged between the two forces as of Operation Rachel 3 (1997). Thus, confidence building did not pre-cede the programme, but instead accompanied it. This increasing mutual confidence between the two police forces was reinforced by both governments' strong political commitment to the programme and by the popular support it enjoyed in Mozambique.

Table 4. Operation Rachel: consolidated statistics (August 1995–July 2000)	
Category/type	**Quantity**
Handguns	671
Sub-machine guns	2,366
Rifles	11,627
Light/heavy machine guns	910
Mortars	179
Launchers	258
Cannons/guns	27
Small arms ammunition (7–14.5mm)	276,122
25mm signal flares and other	3,226,747
Cannon/gun ammunition (20–140mm)	2,551
Mortar bombs	6,740
Projectiles/rockets/missiles	6,545
Boosters/rocket motors	1,184
Initiators/fuses	4,068
Grenades	6,875
Anti-personnel mines	1,572
Anti-vehicle mines	94
Demolition mine/charges	2
Explosives (in kilograms)	209
Safety fuses/detonating igniter cords (in metres)	2,536
Detonators	926
Magazines	8,404

Source: UN Secretary-General, 2000b, p. 32

Fundamentally, Operation Rachel serves the interests of both South Africa and Mozambique. The destruction of arms caches in Mozambique by SAPS and PRM links directly to the problem of violent crime in South Africa.[10] At the same time, the programme helps further the Mozambican post-civil war, peace-building process. South Africa has supplied most of the technical expertise and financial and material resources needed for the programme, while the Mozambicans have facilitated contacts with local communities, gathered intelligence, and of course extended the permission the South Africans need to operate on Mozambican territory. This successful collaboration between the two police forces and the two governments has been widely noted and is considered a useful precedent for similar efforts elsewhere.

Europe

Most of the programmes initiated in Europe since the mid-1990s for the collection and disposal of weapons have been conducted in the Balkans as part of different multilateral peace operations. An important collection programme was also carried out in the UK following the Dunblane massacre and subsequent adoption of strict firearms controls in that country. Although not described here, other programmes have been conducted in Europe for the destruction of surplus arms (the Netherlands) and the destruction of arms confiscated by or handed in to the police (Croatia).

Selected programmes

The United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) conducted a weapons buy-back programme from October 1996 to August 1997 as part of its mandate to oversee the peaceful reintegration of the region into *Croatia* following the end of the Croat-Serb conflict. After completing the demilitarization of Serb paramilitaries, UNTAES estimated that there was still a large quantity of weapons left in civilian hands. The objective of the buy-back programme was to recover as much unauthorized weaponry, ammunition, and explosives as possible. The Croatian government financed the programme, which used on-the-spot cash payments as an incentive. Although UNTAES indicated that the programme was voluntary, they also made it clear they would confiscate any unauthorized or unregistered firearms they discovered. A total of 8,356 small arms, 6,083 light weapons, 13,573 grenades, and 1.7 million rounds of ammunition were collected during the programme and in the three weeks following its formal conclusion at the end of August 1997. Weapons that were old or in bad condition were destroyed. The remainder were stored and monitored by UNTAES until the end of its mandate, after which they were transferred to the Croatian authorities. The number of weapons turned in was much higher than had been expected, though significant quantities probably remain to be dealt with (Boothby, 1998; UN, Department of Public Information, 1997).

The NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) initiated Operation Harvest as part of its peace enforcement mission in *Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Launched in 1998, Operation Harvest continued through 2000. Collection efforts were tied to a formal amnesty, allowing weapons to be handed in without penalty to mobile and fixed sites staffed by local police and supervised by SFOR. Weapons were also retrieved/destroyed on-site by SFOR personnel. In 1999, primary responsibility for programme implementation was shifted from SFOR to local authorities and the Entity Armed Forces. SFOR and the International Police Task Force now play supporting roles. Specific phases of Operation Harvest have been accompanied by public information campaigns explaining programme aims. Harvest 1999 and Harvest 2000 (to 31 August) netted 11,059 small arms, 2,878,479 rounds of ammunition, 38,051 hand grenades, 10,136 mines, 7,125kg of explosives, and some 35,000 other weapons (mortar rounds, light anti-tank ammunition, rifle grenades, and handmade ordnance) (King, 2000; Ruzicka, 2000; SFOR, 2000a; 2000b).

The NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) has actively sought out and confiscated weapons in **Kosovo,** by searching people, vehicles, and houses. KFOR launched a programme to destroy confiscated arms in April 2000. By the beginning of October 2000, 3,343 rifles, 976 pistols, 78 support weapons, 31 mortars, 147 anti-tank weapons, and 6 anti-aircraft weapons had been destroyed under the programme (KFOR, 2000a; 2000b; 2000c).

The March 1996 shooting deaths in Dunblane, **Scotland,** of 16 primary school students and their teacher prompted sweeping reforms to UK firearms laws and nationwide gun collection efforts. A 1997 ban on handguns of more than .22 calibre was followed in 1998 by the prohibition of handguns up to and including .22 calibre. Only a few types of handguns and handgun uses were exempted from the new laws. Some 162,000 handguns were surrendered to police in England, Scotland, and Wales in two hand-in periods—from July to September 1997 and in February 1998. In addition, 23,000 illegally held firearms were handed in under an amnesty programme in June 1996. Compensation was offered in the 1997 and 1998 programmes for eligible handguns, ancillary equipment, and ammunition. Gun-holders were also given the option of exporting their firearms before the new laws came into effect (United Kingdom, Home Office, 1999; 2000; United Kingdom, House of Commons, 1999).[11]

Albania: exchanging weapons for development

The anarchy that swept Albania after the collapse of the pyramid schemes in 1997 led to the looting of approximately 650,000 small arms and 1.5 billion rounds of small arms ammunition from army depots. The Albanian government and UNDP devised the Gramsh Pilot Programme as a means of recovering some of the looted ordnance. Since cash rewards can have undesirable side-effects, they offered development aid, designed to benefit the whole community, in return for weapons. This was an innovative way of promoting security and development and, concurrently, strengthening local capacity.

The Gramsh community identified the most urgently needed development projects as access roads, bridges, a radio-telephone system, and urban lighting. Weapons collection took place throughout 1999 along with the execution of the development projects. UNDP provided overall co-ordination for the various international organizations, foreign and national NGOs, and authorities involved. Domestic and overseas donors could contribute to the project through one of UNDP's trust funds and through donor country–UNDP cost-sharing arrangements.

UNDP reports that 5,981 small arms and light weapons and nearly 138 metric tonnes of ammunition were recovered as a result of the programme. But the programme's impact on weapons stocks is unclear. According to some estimates, the recovered items make up 40 per cent of the weaponry looted in the district, yet the data on weapons stocks before and after the collection programme are sketchy. The organizers nevertheless consider the Gramsh Pilot Programme a success as it addressed the community's most urgent needs with respect to security and development. While only a small quantity of unusable weaponry has been destroyed so far, many of the other weapons recovered in Gramsh are expected to be destroyed pursuant to the commitment, made by the Albanian government in September 2000, to destroy 100,000 small arms nationwide with the assistance of Germany, Norway, and the US.

(Sources: UN, 1998; UNDP, 1999; 2000; CNN, 2000)

Table 5. Weapons collection programmes, the Balkans				
Country/area	Albania	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Croatia	Kosovo
Period	1999	1999–2000	1996–97	2000
Framework	Crime prevention	Peace-building and crime prevention	Peace-building	Peace-building
Organizers	Government of Albania and UNDP	SFOR, local authorities, and Entity Armed Forces	UNTAES	KFOR
Small arms	5,919	11,059	8,356	4,319
Light weapons	62		6,083	262
Other	863 hand grenade detonators	approx. 35,000 mortar rounds, light anti-tank ammunition, rifle grenades, handmade ordnance		
Small arm ammunition	7,795,193 rounds	2,878,479 rounds	1.7 million rounds	
Light weapon ammunition	59			
Grenades	7,628	38,051	13,573	
Landmines		10,136		
Explosives	55 TNT demolition charges (200g)	7,125kg		
Sources	UNDP, 1999; 2000	King, 2000; Ruzicka, 2000; SFOR, 2000a; 2000b	UN, Department of Public Information, 1997	KFOR, 2000a

Asia-Pacific

The weapons collection programmes conducted in the Asia-Pacific region have been diverse in their aims. A huge programme mounted in Australia, over 1996–97, falls squarely within the category of crime prevention. Cambodian government efforts to mop up some of the many firearms circulating in that country following three decades of conflict straddle the peace-building/crime prevention divide. Weapons collection programmes attempted elsewhere in Asia, while aimed at peace-building, have atypically been carried out in the midst of conflict, as opposed to its aftermath, as part of a policy of encouraging the surrender of militants. At the same time, a very different type of weapons collection programme has been conducted in Laos for the purpose of preserving endangered wildlife.

Selected programmes

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the **Laos** Department of Forestry have implemented the Gun Hand-Over Programme designed to reduce hunting and wildlife trade in the country's National Biodiversity Conservation Areas (NBCAs). The programme was carried out by local authorities, with the assistance of the Laotian military and IUCN staff, in Nakai-Nam Theun NBCA (Nakai District, Khammouane Province) in 1996–98. The collection programme targeted districts surrounding the NBCA where hunting was common among local villages. In 1996–97, the three districts targeted were Khamkeut, Nakai, and Ngommalath. In 1998, the programme was extended to include Viengthong district. Even though some 9,000 firearms were collected during the programme, it appears that significant numbers of weapons remain in these areas (World Conservation Union, 2000).

The armed forces of the **Philippines** have provided relief assistance, especially food, to ex-combatants and their families in the context of their *Balik-Baril* (Bring a Rifle and Improve Livelihood) Project. Supported by extensive public information and sensitization campaigns, the project resulted in the surrender of 1,447 insurgents, carrying 907 firearms, during the first ten months of 2000 (Philippines, 2000).

Gun buy-back schemes have been tried in South Asia in the context of the various low-level conflicts affecting the subregion. A peace accord signed by the Government of **Bangladesh** and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) rebels (Shanti Bahini) in December 1997 provided for the surrender of weapons in exchange for a one-off payment and assistance in reintegration. A total of 863 weapons were handed over, mostly in poor condition. Given the uncertain status of the peace accord and the continued use of firearms in the CHT region, it is believed that significant numbers of weapons have been cached away. A surrender policy for Kashmiri militants, first announced by the Government of **India** in August 1995 and revised in June 1997, provides for cash payments for arms, ammunition, and equipment, plus a monthly stipend for resettlement. Programme results have been disappointing, however, with only some 5,000 weapons of low quality handed in. Pure rehabilitation programmes, carried out in Kashmir and other parts of India, have been rather more successful in encouraging combatants to stop fighting—yet they lack a weapons collection component, and therefore have not removed weapons from circulation (Kartha, forthcoming).

On 10 May 1996, only 12 days after a lone gunman shot 35 people to death in Port Arthur, Tasmania, federal, state, and territorial governments in **Australia** agreed sweeping new restrictions on firearms. These laws, subject to narrow exceptions, banned all semi-automatic firearms and pump-action shotguns and brought unprecedented uniformity to previously disparate state and territorial firearms policies. A uniform registration and licensing system and minimum standards for the security and storage of firearms accompanied the new restrictions. A series of buy-back programmes were conducted at the state and territorial level in advance of the entry into force of the new laws at the end of September 1997. Compensation was paid by the federal government for both registered and unregistered firearms

on the basis of a national price scale. With rare exceptions, collected weapons were destroyed. Cumulative figures, issued at the end of August 1998, show that 643,726 firearms were collected with a total of AUD 319,833,727 (USD 210,130,759) paid to the former owners. Other expenditures incurred by the federal government in the context of the programme included AUD 4 million (USD 2.63 million) for a national public education campaign and a contribution of AUD 1.5 million (USD 985,000) towards firearm training courses (Australia, 2000; Meek, 1998).[12]

Weapons collection in Cambodia
Three decades of conflict have left Cambodia with a huge number of small arms and light weapons—anywhere from 500,000 to 1 million according to most estimates, with a very large proportion in civilian hands. Although the civil war ended in early 1999, the proliferation of small arms throughout the country has contributed to widespread public perceptions—and indeed the reality—of insecurity across Cambodian society.

In October 1998, the city of Phnom Penh initiated a weapons collection and confiscation programme that was subsequently extended by the Ministry of the Interior to the rest of the country and backed by a sub-decree limiting legal gun ownership to a thin stratum of upper-level government and military officials. As shown in Table 6, a variety of different strategies have been employed for the purpose of retrieving weapons. As of October 2000, 66,309 small arms had been recovered, of which 45,200 were confiscated by the authorities and 21,109 were handed in voluntarily by Cambodian civilians. A total of 36,505 small arms had been destroyed in a series of seven public ceremonies in Phnom Penh and across the country.

The Working Group for Weapons Reduction in Cambodia (WGWR), a coalition of Cambodian and international organizations and individuals, has monitored implementation of the government programmes. WGWR has reported strong public support for weapons reduction efforts, coupled with a widely held belief that those conducted to date have, in fact, helped improve short-term security in the country. While the national crime rate declined 24 per cent in 1999 according to the Cambodian government, it appears doubtful that the weapons programmes have been the cause, given the relatively small number of small arms, especially illicit small arms, collected and destroyed so far.

There have been several problems with the programmes. First, only a fraction of the collected weapons has been destroyed, leading to the diversion and recirculation of many of the others. At the same time, supplies of new weapons have not been closed off. Military-style weapons can still be purchased in the Phnom Penh black market and through informal networks. A more fundamental limitation of the government collection programmes is the present inability of the Cambodian security forces (police, gendarmerie, and army) to ensure internal security and uphold the rule of law. Undisciplined weapons use against civilians and poor management of existing stockpiles are among the manifestations of this broader problem.

WGWR has reported that a significant number of people complained of improper conduct by government agents in their implementation of the collection programmes. More crucially, most people, while broadly supportive of the process, have been and remain reluctant to participate in it themselves so long as the state does not ensure security for all people and communities regardless of political affiliation, status, and wealth. It seems clear that weapons collection can play only a marginal role in improving human security in Cambodia until such concerns are addressed.[13]

(Sources: WGWR, 1999; 2000a; 2000b; Johnson, 1999; Agence France Presse, 2000)

Table 6. Weapons collection programmes, Cambodia

Location	Name of programme	Organizer	Type of programme	Legal framework	Target	Time period	Publicity	Incentives offered
Phnom Penh	Weapons Collection and Confiscation Programme	Municipality of Phnom Penh	Weapons buy-back, road check-point confiscation	none	Civilian population, civil servants, police, gendarmerie, armed forces, militia, criminals	October 1998-30 April 1999	Television spots, radio spots	AK-47: 30,000 Riels (≈ USD 7.50) CKC/M-16: 20,000 Riels (≈ USD 5) Grenades or landmines: 5,000 Riels (≈ USD 1.25)
Phnom Penh	Weapons Collection and Confiscation Programme	Municipality of Phnom Penh	Voluntary turn-in, road check-point confiscation	Based on Sub-Decree No. 38 of the Royal Government of Cambodia (30 April 1999)	Civilian population, civil servants, police, gendarmerie, armed forces, militia, criminals	30 April 1999 to present	Television spots, radio spots, street banners	none
Nationwide	Weapons Collection and Confiscation Programme	Ministry of Interior: Department of Police Administration, Provincial Weapons Confiscation and Control Committees	Voluntary turn-in, road check-point confiscation, house-to-house checks (in some provinces)	Based on Sub-Decree No. 38 of the Royal Government of Cambodia (30 April 1999)	Civilian population, civil servants, police, gendarmerie, armed forces, militia, criminals	30 April 1999 to present	Television spots, radio spots, street banners, provincial meetings, Ministry of Interior newsletters, mobile loudspeakers	none

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Key steps in the planning and implementation of a weapons collection programme

This section outlines the key steps generally involved in a weapons collection programme. It is intended only as a framework for planning, since every programme is unique and must be adapted to local circumstances. The following guidelines are a distillation of best practice, derived from several years of field research involving the careful observation and evaluation of these programmes.[14]

Stage I: Preliminary assessment

Conducting a feasibility study: The feasibility of implementing a weapons collection programme in a target area needs to be assessed beforehand. For example, weapons collection efforts attempted during an ongoing armed conflict are not likely to succeed. One needs to take into account both general factors—including demographics, economic variables, levels of crime and violence, and the structure and quality of the security sector—along with such weapons-specific factors as the effects of arms on society, who possesses weapons, the types of weapons that constitute a problem, and relevant laws and their enforcement.

Stage II: Planning

Establishing objectives and goals: In order to avoid confusion, false expectations, misspending of resources, and unintended or unwanted effects, it is important to clearly define programme objectives and goals. While the short-term objective will usually be to collect a certain type or number of weapons, long-term goals might include reducing armed violence or raising awareness of the risks associated with the private possession of firearms.

Integrating the programme with other initiatives: A weapons collection programme should form part of a broader strategy that, through the promotion of human security and development, addresses not only the presence of weapons, but also the root causes of violence. For example, after the end of an armed conflict, weapons collection needs to be accompanied by the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants as well as reconstruction and reconciliation programmes. Public education to change perceptions about the desirability of possessing weapons should also be integrated with weapons collection efforts.

Acquiring funding and support: Weapons collection programmes are most likely to succeed when they enjoy strong support from a broad array of political and societal sectors. The necessary resources are usually obtained through a mix of cash and in-kind contributions from a variety of sponsors, including local or national government, external donors such as governments or intergovernmental organizations, local businesses, NGOs, community groups, churches, and private citizens.

Establishing an organizational structure: A weapons collection programme can be organized in a number of ways involving a range of different actors. The latter must have the needed administrative skills and technical expertise, while at the same time enjoying the trust of the target group. For this reason, it is important to carefully consider whether and how police and military officials should participate. Clear lines of authority and a well-defined division of labour must be established. It is also essential that experts trained in the identification, evaluation, safe handling, and storage of weapons participate in the programme.

Legal and political considerations: Prevailing laws and regulations, as well as the political environment, need to be taken into account. For example, an offer of amnesty might require amending or suspending

existing laws and necessitate the intervention of the national executive or legislative branch of government. Contemporaneous political events, such as elections, might affect the programme outcome. Endorsement of the initiative by the majority of political players, including, in particular, elected and public officials, can encourage and reassure potential participants.

Psychological and cultural considerations: The decision to give up a weapon will depend on each individual's assessment of the desirability of being armed, both in the shorter and longer term. Such an assessment is often driven by psychological or cultural considerations, including the perceived need for self-protection, the presence of an arms-bearing tradition in the society, and the existence of cultures of violence that have eroded peaceful methods of conflict resolution.

Attracting publicity: Wide media coverage is essential in making people aware of the programme's existence, maximizing the number of participants, and enhancing its awareness-raising effect. Enlisting the support of media personalities, such as athletes or entertainers, can raise the profile of the programme.

Establishing the types of weapons to be collected: Based on the preliminary assessment and programme objectives, planners must decide which types of weapons can and should be turned in. Factors to be considered include the types of weapons that are most widely distributed, most lethal, or most commonly misused in the relevant area. It is also necessary to take into account the group targeted by the programme—whether ex-combatants, young offenders, or the civilian population at large—and the kinds of weapons they hold.

Selecting an appropriate location: The collection site should be well-known, easy to reach, and perceived as neutral. Churches, other places of worship, and community centres are commonly used. Police or military facilities should be avoided in communities where these institutions lack credibility or trust, though this will depend on the circumstances; such locations might, for instance, be appropriate when the collection is part of a demobilization process.

Determining timing and duration: The duration of a collection programme will depend on many factors, including the amount of funds raised, the expectations of the organizers, and logistical considerations. Programmes can range from one day to one year or more; in some cases, they have been annual events. Longer initiatives can be more successful as they give potential, though hesitant, participants time to gain confidence in the programme, allow for more exposure of its existence, and demonstrate the organizer's determination and commitment to reducing the numbers of weapons in circulation. Timing can be crucial to the outcome—for instance, when collection efforts are carried out immediately after a peace agreement or after a shocking incident involving the use of weapons.

Choosing appropriate incentives: Offering some form of compensation or reward is helpful in inducing people to disarm, but some incentives may undermine programme goals or create additional problems. Incentives can be offered on an individual basis or to the community as a whole. Examples include cash, vouchers (for food, clothing, and other consumer goods), construction materials, agricultural tools, micro-credit, educational programmes, and development projects aimed at strengthening public security capacities and/or improving local infrastructure, public health services, or schooling.

Stage III: Implementation

Establishing procedures for turning in weapons: The numbers and types of weapons collected should be recorded, even if the programme is based on anonymity and amnesty. Qualified technical personnel must be present to ensure the safe handling, transport, and storage of weapons. This includes evaluating the condition of the weapons, verifying that they are safe and unloaded, as well as dealing with such hazards as people handing over unexpected types of weaponry or weapons in dangerous condition.

Disposing of collected weapons: Collected weaponry is usually disposed of in one of three ways: transfer to the government, transfer or sale to a foreign user, or destruction. Destroying or rendering weapons unusable is the only way of ensuring they are permanently taken out of circulation. A public destruction ceremony reassures participants that surrendered weapons will not be reused and sends a powerful message to the public at large about the importance of removing the tools of violence from society. In any case, competent experts must oversee the destruction process.

Stage IV: Evaluation

Conducting a programme evaluation: An evaluation of programme process and outcome must be undertaken in order to document the results to all actors involved, as well as the authorities and general public. The evaluation should, at a minimum, provide a description of the process, account for funds received and expended, verify the final disposition of the weapons, assess the degree to which stated goals have been achieved, and determine what lessons have been learned for the future. While the evaluation criteria should be determined during the planning stage, the final evaluation should also take unexpected programme impacts into account.

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Endnotes

1   Boutros Boutros-Ghali discussed 'micro-disarmament' in his *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* (UN Secretary-General, 1995, paras. 60–65). Soon afterwards, the UN opted instead for the term 'practical disarmament'. It defines this as 'the collection, control and disposal of arms, especially small arms and light weapons, coupled with restraint over the production, procurement and transfer of such arms, the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, demining and conversion, for the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in areas that have suffered from conflict' (UN Secretary-General, 1997, para. 1). In this paper, the term 'practical disarmament' is used more narrowly, meaning the recovery and definitive disposal of weapons in a given society.

2   In the US, the term 'gun' typically refers to small arms in general and 'buy-back' to any kind of voluntary collection programme (Plotkin, 1996).

3   Much of the analysis in this section is based on a review of post-conflict weapons collection programmes conducted between 1997 and 1999 by the Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) and funded by the Ford Foundation and the United States Institute of Peace. The results of the project have been published in Faltas and Di Chiaro III, 2001. See also Boothby, 1998 and DeClerq, 1999.

4   For example, in Eastern Slavonia (discussed in the section on Europe).

5   For a more extensive discussion of lessons learned in practical disarmament, see BICC and SAND, 2000, summarized in the final section.

6   For more information on the Gramsh Pilot Programme, see the section on Albania.

7   For more information on the West African Moratorium, see Small Arms Survey, 2001, pp. 258-61.

8   Note that this section is based, in part, on Chachiua, 2000.

9   See Hennop, 2000, pp. 64 and 68.

10 While it is impossible to estimate Operation Rachel's impact on the total stock of illicit weapons in South Africa, given the lack of an accurate baseline figure, SAPS believes the Rachel programme is at least partly responsible for the decline in the number of AK-47 assault rifles seized since the programme's inception and for the current reported shortage of ammunition for these weapons in South Africa.

11 Additional information and analysis of the UK programme is found in the section 'Practical disarmament'.

12 Additional information and analysis of the Australian programme is found in the section 'Practical disarmament'.

13 In late 1999, the European Union and Cambodia agreed a joint programme for tackling the country's small arms problem, comprising assistance in the development of legislation, in the management of small arms stockpiles, and for initiatives to raise awareness within civil society of small arms issues.

14 These steps are described in greater detail in BICC and SAND, 2000. Available from BICC, Help Desk for Practical Disarmament, <http://www.bicc.de/weapons/helpdesk/>

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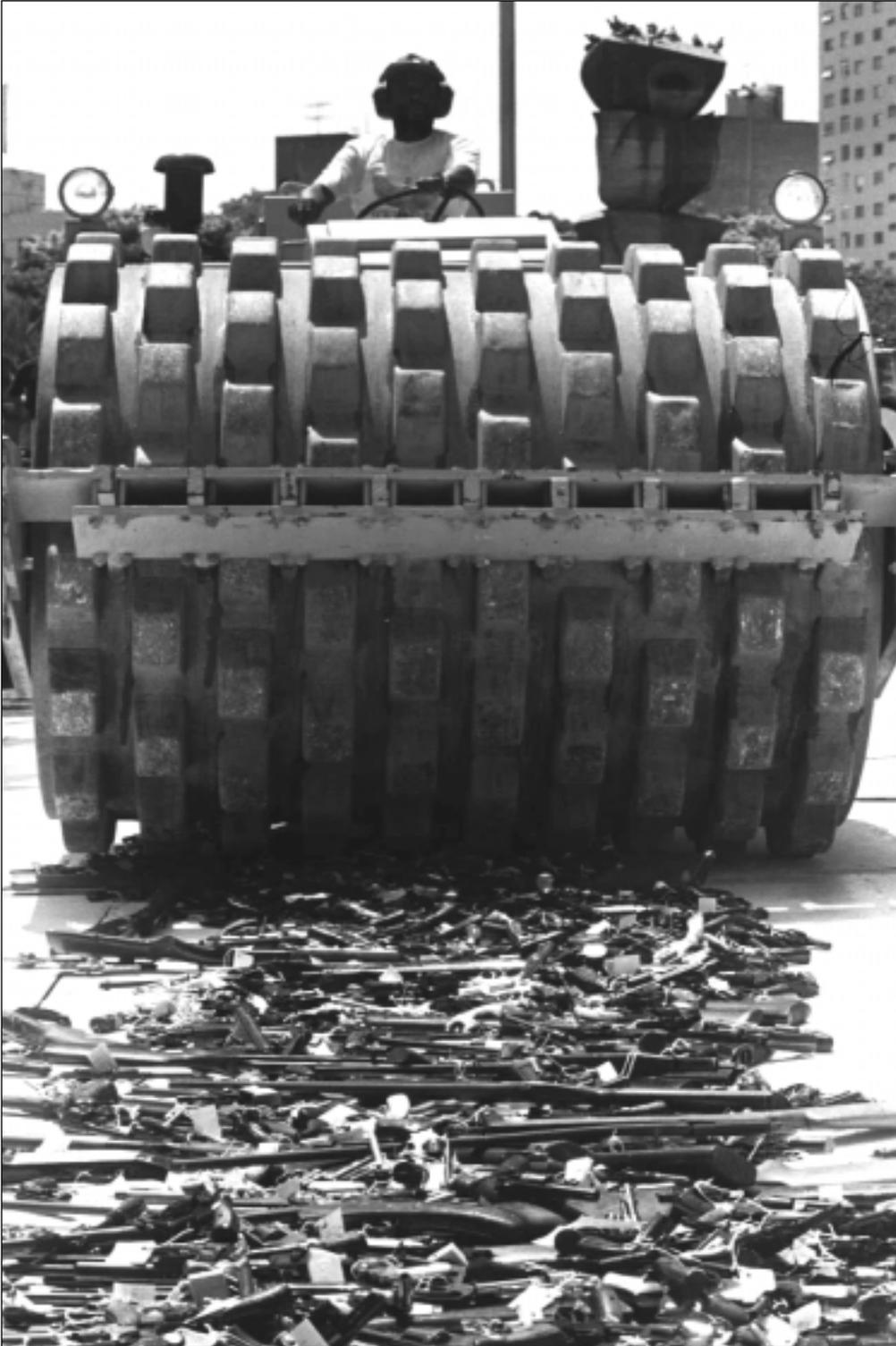
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