



Religions for Peace 
African Council of Religious Leaders
 Religions for Peace

Small Arms and Light Weapons: Africa

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR
RELIGIONS FOR PEACE



The proliferation and misuse of small arms is a worldwide, progressively complex and multifaceted phenomenon that affects people of all religions. By virtue of their easy availability, low cost and manageability, small arms and light weapons (SALW) have become the weapons of choice in most conflicts in the world today and have helped raised levels of armed violence even in areas at peace. These weapons are the leading contributors to the escalation of a culture of violence and to the militarization of civil society. More than 1,000 lives are lost each day to small arms violence. Many of the victims are civilians. Small arms have a disproportionate, far-reaching and long-lasting impact that extends well past their immediate use in conflict.

CONTENTS

LETTER OF WELCOME FROM DR. WILLIAM F. VENDLEY AND DR. MUSTAFA Y. ALI..... 2

INTRODUCTION

The Role of Religion..... 3

How to Use This Resource Guide..... 3

SECTION I: ABOUT SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALW)

Proliferation and Effects..... 4

The African Context..... 4

Connecting to Other Issues..... 7

Laws and Agreements..... 9

SECTION II: RESPONDING TO SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

Reducing Demand: Reversing the Culture of Violence..... 12

Reducing Availability: Weapons Collection and Gun-Free Zones..... 14

Addressing Supply: Supporting Arms Regulation Agreements..... 16

Healing the Wounds of War: Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and Reintegration..... 18

SECTION III: SKILLS AND RESOURCES

Advocacy..... 20

Engaging the Media..... 21

Engaging Parliamentarians 23

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... 24

Letter of Welcome from Dr. William F. Vendley and Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali

Small arms and light weapons are in a real sense weapons of “mass destruction.” Although small and light, they cause massive and widespread death and injury. Easy to use, conceal and maintain, they are the primary tools of violence in almost every conflict where the innocent suffer most.

Small arms afflict countries in conflict and those in peace. They are available long after violent conflicts have ended. From the theaters of wars in Somalia and DR Congo to the cities of Johannesburg, Nairobi and Lagos, they kill and maim people of all religions, social classes, and ethnicities.

In Africa where over 100 million small arms exist, their effects are devastating. In a vicious cycle, they are both a cause and effect of violence. They not only kill the innocent; they also maim, prolong conflicts, choke development and deepen poverty.

We must break this brutal cycle.

Religious leaders are a key. They are the heirs of powerful religious and moral traditions that know it’s profoundly wrong to flood populations with small arms. They know first hand the devastation of death, the shattering of families and the orphaning of children by small arms. They know the scandal of children—who should be in schools—being stocked with guns instead of books, paper and pens.

Multi-religious cooperation can strengthen the role of religious leaders in reducing these weapons. Working together, religious leaders can use their moral authority to call their communities to work together for the reduction of these lethal weapons. Their extended networks of grassroots congregations, women of faith and youth groups can become the frontlines of disarmament efforts.

This resource guide is intended to support religious leaders in their efforts to cooperate to reduce the threats of small arms and light weapons. It includes practical information about the proliferation and effects of these weapons across Africa. It also highlights the links between them and other problems such as poverty, the abuse of children and gender based violence. It places in the hands of religious leaders some of the major agreements that govern the trade and use of small arms.

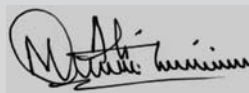
Finally, the guide contains helpful tools for conducting advocacy and other forms of action. It provides concrete examples of multi-religious cooperation that have helped to make a difference.

Diverse African religious traditions know—each in their own way—about the inviolable, “God-given” dignity of each person. Working to end the plague of small arms and light weapons is a religious duty, because these miserable weapons contribute so massively to the abuse of so many innocent people.

This guide is offered by *Religions for Peace* back to the religious leaders in Africa, with appreciation for their leadership in developing it and with confidence—borne out of experience—in their commitment and courage and the power of their multi-religious cooperation.

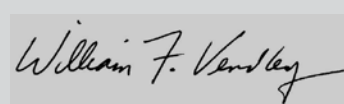
Sincerely yours,

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali



Secretary General
Religions for Peace Africa

Dr. William F. Vendley



Secretary General
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Introduction

THE ROLE OF RELIGION

Faith communities are often in a position to play an important role in combating the proliferation and effects of small arms and light weapons. Sometimes they are on the front lines of local efforts and at other times are conducting high-level advocacy on the subject. By virtue of their close proximity to the population, and because they are regarded as the source of spiritual well-being and sustenance, they play a different and more readily acceptable role in comparison to the administrative role played by law enforcement agencies and governments. Churches, mosques and other places of worship have often been used as arms collection sites. They have put in place development projects that address poverty reduction that, as such, reduce the demand for small arms. Faith communities tend to the victims of gun violence by providing much needed medical care and support and reach out to the perpetrators through rehabilitation and reintegration.

Religions for Peace offers a special multireligious platform for engagement and leadership that reaches across borders and can mobilize faith-based convictions, experiences and religious constituencies to advance the goal of controlling small arms.



HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

This resource guide is designed for religious leaders, communities and organizations at all levels to better understand and respond to the many problems posed by small arms and light weapons, as well as the issues that fuel their use and trade. It is also meant to put this issue in the context of other problems we face, and show that in addressing some of the challenges that small arms pose, we can also have a positive impact on other problems. And while it focuses on Africa, many elements of this manual are applicable to other regions of the world.

The first section provides basic information and definitions, as well as connections to other issues such as development, health and gender. It also outlines some important agreements among states that govern the trade in small arms. The second section outlines four types of responses to small arms. They are organized to help us see that response can be from the perspective of demand, availability, supply and aiding victims of armed violence. Finally, the third section provides helpful advice on how to take action through advocacy, media engagement, mobilizing youth and raising public awareness.

“Conventional weapons are also instruments of death and oppression. Halting the spread of militarization and the commercial exploitation of developing countries by trade in arms leading to military and political dependency is a crucial part of our commitment to disarmament.”

— Religions for Peace World Assembly Declaration, 1984

SECTION I

About Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

In the northern parts of Kenya, women are unable to effectively attend to their daily chores due to fear of gun violence. They hear gunshots all the time. Development projects in the area have stalled. A recent example is a water project, which aimed at connecting a pump to a nearby school. The project stalled because while the people were trying to repair a water pipe, bandits killed 4 of them.

Those giving military and humanitarian assistance are being killed, leaving the vulnerable more vulnerable. Illicit small weapons are plentiful and everywhere. It is not just cattle rustling—people are losing their lives for nothing.

Source: Tool Kit on Small Arms and Light Weapons, produced by The Regional Ecumenical Working Group on Small Arms for East Africa, Nairobi (2004).

PROLIFERATION AND EFFECTS

The rapid movement of small arms across the world is increasingly difficult to trace and has long-lasting effects on human security. Often small arms become available in a region for valid and legal reasons related to national security, peacekeeping or law enforcement. In fact, much of the trade in arms is legitimate and accounted for; it is a well-established and prosperous industry. Like other industries, it has become increasingly globalized. Most weapons are now assembled from components sourced from many countries. The result of this rapid global expansion is that weapons, their parts and ammunition are more easily diverted from their intended destination. They may end up in countries that have few controls over how they will be used. Surplus or poorly guarded military weapons find markets in war-torn or post-conflict nations, or are stolen and end up in the hands of non-state armed groups or terrorists. Illicit brokers are able to manipulate the inconsistencies and loopholes between national arms trade laws. Small arms can cross from state to private owners many times over.

Once weapons enter an area, they can remain there for many years. Guns in particular have a functional lifetime of many decades. Small arms change the dynamics of a conflict instantly. They are lethal; they are meant to kill. They can transform a simple argument into a tragedy, and be used against civilians seeking to protect themselves. In some countries considered to be at peace, the level of small arms violence can be as high as in war zones,

and their presence is an acknowledged means through which domestic violence occurs.

Small arms and light weapons are responsible for the majority of battle-related conflict deaths—an estimated 60-90 percent of all direct conflict victims are killed with firearms. Large numbers of men, women, older people and children die indirectly from the effects of armed conflict on the economy, ruined health and security infrastructures, disease and famine. In addition, many more people are made refugees or are internally displaced, injured or abused. Arms fuel conflict. Conflict fuels instability and poverty.

Violence does not necessarily begin with a weapon, but it increases dramatically when weapons are present, particularly in already volatile environments rife with poverty, mistrust or injustice.

THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Small arms proliferation has been particularly devastating in Africa, where machine guns, rifles, grenades, pistols and other small arms have killed and displaced many civilians across the continent. These weapons have been used in deadly conflicts in Sudan, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and other African countries. They are frequently recycled from country to country, and their ownership is transferred among fighters, security forces and war profiteers.



Small arms are personal weapons that can be operated by only one person. They usually include revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles, submachine guns and light machine guns. A **light weapon** refers to heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable launchers of antitank and anti-aircraft missile system, and mortars of less than 100 mm caliber.



In **central and eastern Africa**, many lives have been lost through conflict and its related effects. The irregular warfare that has been common there in recent decades is well served by these kinds of weapons, which are easily available and sometimes cost less than food items. In 1994, an intraethnic conflict in Rwanda left more than 800,000 people murdered, mostly with small arms, including machetes. An estimated 300,000 civilians have also lost their lives the same way in Burundi. However, the foreign supply of arms to both governments and rebel groups continues to grow in illicit, ungoverned or poorly controlled transactions. The small arms that are already in the subregion move easily across borders—the borders between Cameroon, Chad and the Central African Republic have been identified specifically as areas of high proliferation.

Small arms and light weapons are widely available in **southern Africa**. Civil and interstate conflicts drive demand for small arms and create a pool of weapons that can be used to commit violent crime as well as fuel conflict. Most were transferred there during the Cold War, but some others originate from within the region. South Africa maintains a sizable arms production industry. There is also another aspect to the issue here—the cultural significance of the AK-47 to the formerly colonized peoples of southern Africa. After decades of use by anticolonial and anti-apartheid movements, the powerful weapon has come to be associated with liberation. For example, the silhouette of a gun is featured on the Mozambican flag. Freedom songs from the struggles against minority rule in Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Angola often extolled the virtues of the AK-47, and those of the fighters carrying it. Recognizing the problems posed by its proliferation, many countries are involved in coordinated action, mainly within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The estimated 8 million small arms that are circulating throughout **western Africa** play a central role in fostering instability. Demand for small arms in West Africa is motivated by weak governance, insecurity and poverty. The supply comes mostly from external sources. They have been used in armed robberies, intra- and intercommunal feuds, local wars, armed insurrections, armed rebel activities and terrorism. They are used to facilitate drug trafficking, smuggling and other such crimes. Overall, small arms maintain a general state of fear. As a result of the armed conflict in the region, many people have been killed, many others displaced or made refugees and property

QUICK FACTS

- There are approximately 640 million small arms in the world—one for every 10 people on earth
- Nearly 60 percent of the world's firearms are in the hands of private citizens.
- 8 million new guns are being manufactured every year by at least 1,249 companies in 92 countries
- Every year at least 1 million firearms are stolen or lost worldwide
- According to the Small Arms Survey, military expenditure in sub-Saharan Africa rose by 47 percent during the late 1990s, while life expectancy fell from 50 years to 46 years
- More than 500,000 people are killed by small arms each year



Characteristics of Small Arms

Low cost and wide availability: Small arms are relatively low-tech tools of war, and due to state-driven demand, there are well over 600 suppliers around the world. With more than 550 million in circulation—whether newly produced, liquidated by downsizing militaries or circulated from conflict to conflict—small arms are inexpensive and easily diffused.

Increasing lethality: The increasing availability of rapid-fire military assault rifles, automatic pistols and submachine guns and their distribution to non-state actors have given such actors a firepower that often exceeds that of police or military forces. The adoption of newly available technology into shoulder-fired rockets, mortars and light antitank weapons has magnified the presence of warring factions in civil conflicts.

Simplicity and durability: Small arms are easy to maintain, require little support and may last several decades. They require almost no training to use effectively, greatly increasing their use in conflicts involving informal militias and children.

Portability: The flow of small arms is extremely difficult to track or monitor. Small arms and light weapons can be carried by a single soldier or light vehicle, are easily shipped or smuggled to areas of conflict and can be effectively cached in legitimate cargo, warehouses or the outdoors, often in the harshest of climates.

Military, police and civilian uses: Unlike major conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons cross the dividing line separating military and police forces from the civilian population. In many countries, there has been a dramatic increase in the number and size of private militias and security firms that, in many cases, are equipped with military-type weapons.



destroyed. Every country in West Africa has experienced widespread violence in which small arms were a factor.

CONNECTING TO OTHER ISSUES

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has wide-ranging effects and touch upon many other problems that nations and societies face. Sometimes these connections are so integrated that it can be hard to isolate if the weapons are the source of the problem or merely a symptom of other issues. Understanding some of these connections is an important first step in facilitating change.

Small Arms and Development

Sustainable development is a combination of economic growth and social progress that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is also undeniably linked to the problems of small arms and armed violence. Small arms affect development in the most basic way because they are the tools of conflict. During conflict, physical and human resources are destroyed; transit routes or fertile areas are blocked and diverted; and sometimes national industries are corrupted or taken over by armed groups. Foreign investors and aid agencies are discouraged from proceeding with essential projects and support. All of this undermines, halts or prevents development. In Darfur, for example, security deteriorated rapidly in 2005 as armed forces terrorized civilians. Many development organizations withdrew thousands of personnel who had been delivering critical basic services to displaced citizens. The cost of conflict on African development was approximately \$300 billion between 1990 and 2005, according to new research by Oxfam International, IANSA and Saferworld. The report shows that on average, a war, civil war or insurgency shrinks an African economy by 15 percent. The continent loses an average of around \$18 billion a year due to armed conflict.

Half of the countries emerging from war resume conflict partially due to inadequate post-conflict development and reintegration programs, and the availability of arms supports this regression. In post-conflict societies, large numbers of former combatants flood the job market only to discover a lack of economic opportunities. Ex-soldiers, typically still armed, often turn to crime as the only means of survival.

The United Nations, governments and aid agencies are linking development and disarmament through their programming more frequently. Many focus on changing the attitudes and behaviors of would-be small-arms users in order to reduce the demand for weapons. Other projects take a more pragmatic approach tied to the collection and destruction of weapons, often in exchange for development incentives, to prevent their recirculation. In Sierra Leone, for example, community and church groups have helped the government and the UN carry out an “Arms for Development” program in which weapons are exchanged for community-based development incentives.

Small Arms and Public Health

Public health can be greatly affected by the proliferation and misuse of small arms. Violence leads to injury; injury requires care and when there is widespread injury, it is all too easy for health care systems in developing countries to become overwhelmed. Tending to victims of armed violence can also divert medical resources away from those who are ill or need other attention. The cost of medical care for these individuals can be overwhelming and, for some, may last a lifetime.

Moreover, it is not uncommon for armed groups to target health workers, hospitals, ambulances and clinics. In many conflict zones, transportation routes used for the distribution of food and medicine are insecure due to the proliferation or threat of small arms, and sanitation and water purification systems break down, leading to outbreaks of diseases such as cholera.

Small Arms and Gender

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly guns, contributes to gender inequality and violence against women around the world. Men are the primary users and victims of guns, but women are continually victimized by them to a disproportionate degree.

In conflict and post-conflict zones, women and girls suffer from a variety of harmful effects related to the threat and misuse of small arms. For example, sexual violence such as rape, sexual slavery and forced impregnation—the common tactics of war—usually occur at the barrel of a gun. In the course of the armed conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), tens of thousands of women and girls were raped and sexually assaulted by well-armed combatant forces. In the Dadaab refugee camp in northern Kenya, 75 percent of reported rapes and sexual



assaults occurred at the hands of armed assailants. Significantly, armed violence has socioeconomic effects that are experienced by women in ways different than men. They become the main breadwinners in a family when their male relatives are killed or maimed in combat, but also retain their role as caregivers. Women are disproportionately affected by the damage to health, education and other social services. Even in times of peace women remain subject to violence and intimidation, often in their homes. Women are much more likely to be shot with a legally held weapon by someone they know well than by an anonymous assailant. A gun increases the chance of death by 12 times compared to other means of violence. Every six hours in South Africa, a woman is shot dead by her current or former partner.

Women in many countries have taken on strong leadership roles in combating gun violence through awareness-raising and gun collection programs, by lobbying governments for gun law reform, and contributing to a number of creative and courageous initiatives. Despite these efforts, women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes. An important step forward has been the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, which was passed in October 2000. It marks the first time the Security Council addressed the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women; recognized the undervalued and underutilized contributions that women make toward conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building; and stressed the importance of their equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.

Small Arms and Youth

Children are particularly and uniquely vulnerable to the proliferation and misuse of small arms. For obvious reasons, they have fewer defenses to armed attacks and are more susceptible to kidnapping or injury. Psychologically, early exposure to violence numbs people's sensitivity to it. This can be a key influence on a child's decision to become a combatant, or use a weapon later in life. The effect of this on an entire generation of young people can have great influence on the development of a nation.

The trauma that armed violence causes destroys family structures and disrupts the provision of basic services upon which children depend. This includes food assistance, the harvesting of food or health care and it also extends to education. Schools cannot



function as they should and sometimes become targets for armed groups seeking child recruits. In general, the population displacement that at times accompanies conflict makes children more susceptible to disease, violence, military recruitment and sexual assault.

In at least 20 countries around the world, children are direct participants in war. Denied a childhood and often subjected to horrific violence, hundreds of thousands of children are serving as soldiers, often for non-state armed groups. These young combatants participate in all aspects of contemporary warfare. They wield AK-47s and M16s on the front lines of combat, serve as human mine detectors, participate in suicide missions, carry supplies, and act as spies, messengers or lookouts. Some of these children are abducted while at school and coerced into service, an activity made easier by weakened family and social structures, and, of course, fear of their abductors who are wielding their own weapons. Moreover, when there are few employment opportunities available, the option of serving a militia or army and belonging to something is more appealing than it otherwise would be. In the trend of using child soldiers, one sees the tragic intersection of small arms proliferation and the challenges of development.

On a positive note, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and many others have launched programs to help adolescents learn about the danger of small arms and alternatives to gun violence in many countries across Africa. The projects combine basic gun safety education with leadership development, vocational training and conflict-resolution techniques to give boys and girls real alternatives to lives of violence and fear.

Small Arms and Crime

Do weapons cause crime? Or does crime perpetuate the use of weapons? The answer is not easy and perhaps varies in different locations, but they are strongly connected. Obviously they are used in many criminal activities by both individuals and syndicates. Moreover, where there is poverty and desperation for food or other resources, cheap weapons make it far easier to secure those items through force and intimidation. It has been noted in different studies that in some parts of Africa, it is cheaper to buy a gun than to buy a piece of bread. Armed crime is more common in urban environments and is still a plague in some countries that might otherwise be considered at peace.

The previous section already noted the vulnerability of youth and

arms in relation to conflicts, but all too often young people are the ones most vulnerable to using arms and taking up crime, which can include anything from stealing food or money, or joining a gang. There is another dimension as well. Young men are the primary users of weapons in criminal acts, and are therefore also often the victims. The death and injury of so many young people hinder development by reducing the number of educated people entering the workforce, diverting resources away from law enforcement or assisting those disabled by gun violence. Creating employment opportunities and teaching that crime and the use of weapons is not the right path in life are the two most important actions one can take to correct this situation.

LAWS AND AGREEMENTS GOVERNING SMALL ARMS

By recognizing that weapons acquired for national security can be diverted and misused to increase poverty or suffering, governments can work in close coordination to move toward a human security approach to nonproliferation and disarmament. It will never be feasible to ban most small arms, but it is very possible to put in place stricter agreements for their use, regulation and trade that will keep small arms away from their abusers and prevent illicit transfer and diversion. Below is an outline of these agreements.

The United Nations Programme of Action (2001)

After much preliminary investigation in the impact of small arms on civilians and societies around the world, the United Nations convened a conference in 2001. The purpose of the conference was to decide on steps that nations should take to prevent the illicit trade in small arms. Nongovernmental organizations participated by presenting evidence on the difficulty in separating legal and illegal transfers, and calling for tough controls on both state and non-state weapons sellers. The result of the 2001 conference was a Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (POA).

The POA reflects that the problem of small arms transcends political borders, and that solutions must be multilateral and multilevel. Some of the major commitments of the UN Programme of Action include the following:



Why International Regulations Are Important

Over 150 refugees were killed in an attack on the Gatumba transit camp in Burundi on August 13, 2004. Ammunition cartridges recovered at the scene of the massacre had been stamped with codes identifying their manufacturer or country of manufacture, as well as their year of production. If enforced international standards of marking, record-keeping and tracing of small arms had been in place, it would have been possible to identify the point at which these weapons were diverted into the hands of the armed groups that perpetrated the massacre. Drawing up and implementing such standards will prevent future diversions.

- Make illicit gun production/possession a criminal offense
- Establish a national coordination agency on small arms
- Identify and destroy stocks of surplus weapons
- Keep track of officially held guns
- Issue end-user certificates for exports/transit
- Disarm, demobilize and reintegrate (DDR) ex-combatants, including collecting and destroying their weapons
- Mark guns at their point of manufacture for identification and tracing
- Maintain records of gun manufacture
- Include civil society organizations in efforts to prevent small arms proliferation

The POA does have a few weaknesses. Specifically, it is not binding and does not indicate how to regulate small arms among civilian populations. Nor does it consider non-state actors, state officials' misuse of arms, the role of public health and gender considerations or human rights.

ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) took the lead in devising strategies to control the spread and misuse of small arms in Africa. In 2006 member states signed a Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials. It is a legally binding document that was predated by the ECOWAS Moratorium. It

entered into force in September 2009.

Highlights of the Convention include the following:

- A ban on international small arms transfers (except those for legitimate self-defense and security needs, or for peace support operations)
- A ban on transfers of small arms to non-state actors that are not authorized by the importing member state
- Procedures for shared information
- A stringent regulatory scheme for anyone wishing to possess small arms
- Strong management standards to ensure the security of weapons stockpiles

The Convention draws attention to gender perspectives and local manufacture of small arms and light weapons. The Convention led to the creation of the ECOWAS Small Arms Unit, responsible for policy issues related to the Convention. The ECOWAS Small Arms Programme (ECOSAP) was also created in 2006 as five-year capacity-building program based in Mali.

The Nairobi Protocol

In 2004, 11 states signed the Nairobi Protocol, a legally binding document that strengthens the Nairobi Declaration of 2000 and commits signatory states to concrete actions, including mandatory gun registration and a ban on the civilian ownership of military assault rifles (like the AK-47), to deal with the problems caused by small arms in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions. It requires these countries to incorporate



provisions into their national laws, including the following:

- A ban on civilian ownership of automatic and semiautomatic rifles
- Registration of all guns
- Regulation of gun storage and competency testing for prospective owners
- Restrictions on the number of guns a person can own
- A ban on pawning guns
- Uniform minimum standards regulating the manufacture, control, possession, import, export, transit, transport and transfer of small arms
- Standardized marking and identification of small arms
- Regulation of security companies
- Uniform tough sentencing for unlicensed gun possession

The Protocol is monitored and implemented by a Secretariat known as the Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA), which works actively with civil society.

The SADC Protocol on Firearms, Ammunition and Related Materials

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted a protocol to control the flow of small arms and light weapons in the subregion called the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and other Related Materials. It entered into force in 2004. The main goal of this Protocol is to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit manufacturing of firearms, ammunition and other related materials, and regulate

the import and export of legal small arms. Among the Protocol's provisions is the standardization of legislation on private ownership, and harmonized record-keeping of state-owned guns, along with the destruction of surplus state weapons. It also includes regulation of brokers and provisions for marking and record-keeping.

National Laws

The above-mentioned agreements require national legislation for them to have an effect, and it is even more helpful if those laws are harmonized between states. Even if they are not part of a subregional agreement, governments should take action to ensure responsible use and trade, and institute programs to reduce the amount of weapons in circulation. These goals can be achieved in a variety of ways. Limiting civilians' access to inappropriate weapons and instituting licensing processes—similar to a driver's license—is one fundamental step forward, as is ensuring the safe storage of small arms, marking and registering newly made guns, registering all guns to their owners and playing a larger role in all aspects of international trade.

SECTION II

Responding To Small Arms and Light Weapons

Imagine the life span of a gun. It is manufactured in a developed country considered to be at peace, and purchased legally by another country for national defense. This country is considered “developing,” and just five years ago was embroiled in a domestic conflict. The gun falls into the possession of state forces. However, corrupt officials permit the looting of a stockpile containing the gun for personal profit. It, along with many other weapons, is sold to a small armed group that is operating outside the law and is building on popular discontent to overthrow the government. This group has found it easy to play on the fears of those in small villages and towns to recruit members. Suddenly, this gun is now being used in rapes and assaults.

How can people ensure that this never happens again? One quick answer would be to tighten trade regulations and procedures. Another would be to address governmental corruption. Someone else might suggest that educating people and providing employment prevents them from falling under the influence of armed groups.

Clearly, there is no easy response to problems caused by SALW. The following sections illustrate this by outlining and suggesting four possible actions and perspectives that include demand, availability and the supply of weapons, as well as the need to help the wounded and reconcile communities and nations that are divided.



REDUCING DEMAND: REVERSING THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

Of all the above-mentioned activities, it has often been said that reducing the demand or reasons for using weapons is the one that is most about people, and about communities. Many feel that working to reduce the demand is an easier and more accessible way to contribute. Religious institutions have much to offer this work. They have a unique potential to change public attitudes, shape community values and become a public voice against armed violence.

Understanding the source of the demand for weapons is the starting point for any action. Sometimes, demand for weapons can be traced to fear of violence in which weapons are perceived as a means to increase personal security. Some people choose guns or other weapons to reassert their personal worth and ensure their safety, but others then also take up arms for their own protection. It also facilitates a culture of violence in which the use of guns or other small arms is legitimized and seen as socially acceptable. There is a dangerous link to issues of masculinity and strength. Poor socioeconomic conditions are a second reason for demand. It is often the case that less developed communities are unfortunately more violent, more likely to use

FOCUS

Small Arms and Light Weapons Awareness through Burundian Churches

In August 2007, DanChurchAid (DCA) and the National Council of Burundian Churches (NCBC) developed materials to educate local communities about the risks of SALW possession and trained religious leaders to deliver the messages. The activity aimed to “disarm the mind” in order to garner public support for the national disarmament campaign. After six months, 40,000 people had participated in SALW awareness sessions, and the activity has now been incorporated into the daily activities of the churches.

FOCUS

Uganda's Ecumenical Peace and Development Committee

Religious leaders in Uganda spearheaded and established the Ecumenical Peace and Development Committee (EPDC) with representation across three sub-counties. Having undergone training in conflict resolution, small arms issues and monitoring as well as advocacy, the EPDC is recognized by local police and councilors for its local awareness-building work. Five female leaders were also selected from each parish and trained in peace-building and leadership to establish a Women's Peace Link. Through these activities and exemplary partnership with police, the EPDC has successfully established a collaborative structure in which all arms issues have been integrated into communities that are now empowered to participate in ensuring their own security. Not only has crime been reduced, but there is a greater sense of security in communities that were notorious for gun-related murders.



weapons and to have a greater demand for them. When there is unemployment, few opportunities and little education, it is easier to become involved in criminal activities out of necessity. This is true for societies in many nations, whether they are developed or developing, at war or at peace.

Programs or initiatives that target demand reduction are sometimes linked to conflict resolution, community development, employment opportunities, peace-building and programs for youth. Sometimes these other elements are welcome side effects and sometimes the reverse. Establishing peace education programs can lead to broader public awareness of peaceful alternatives and eventually an attitude change that will lead to voluntary disarmament and dissolution of a culture of violence.

Demand reduction is not an easy task, but because religious leaders and communities are often among the more influential and trusted of local groups, they can take an active and important role in reconciliation and building confidence and trust among communities.

Questions for reflection:

- How are small arms used in your community? Why are they used and who uses them?
- What are the sources of insecurity for individuals in your religious network?
- What are the attitudes of your community and/or religious network toward violence, armed conflict and use of weapons? Will reducing these problems meet with resistance or support?
- Through what methods or activities can you promote peace education and conflict resolution?
- What value can religion add to existing programs that focus on reducing the demand for small arms?
- Are there others in your religious network or community with whom you can work? Is it beneficial to engage with outside communities to overcome mutual misunderstandings and sources of conflict?
- Do governments in your region have an adequate understanding of arms proliferation, conflict management and demand for weapons? What policies exist and what is needed?

Actions to take:

- Identify the sources of demand for small arms in your community or region. Consult with the users of small arms to better understand their motivation and what challenges you will face
- Condemn the use of small arms on moral and theological grounds
- Teach people about the value and dignity of human life
- Sensitize the community about the dangers of the proliferation of small arms and, for those in conflict-prone areas, on the need for negotiation
- Strengthen the self-worth, identity and positive social roles for individuals, especially children and youth, particularly boys
- Assist communities in seeking alternative means of livelihood by initiating and supporting relevant development programs and income-generating projects
- Conduct regular workshops and sessions, including conflict management training and direct intergroup peace-building, that improve the capacity of those in your community to resolve conflict peacefully
- Collaborate with schools and teachers

Turning Swords into Ploughshares in Mozambique

Mozambique was in the midst of civil war for 16 years, during which military-style weapons were widely available in the country to arm the two main warring factions. In an effort to reduce the number of weapons in circulation, in 1992 the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM) initiated Swords into Ploughshares, a voluntary weapons collection program in which weapons were exchanged for tools and machinery ranging from carpentry tools to pickaxes, bicycles, sewing machines, ploughs and tractors. It is run wholly by the CCM and there is no police or political presence at the urban collection sites. In rural areas, however, police officers are often present to handle the destruction of explosives or ammunitions. Participants in the program are guaranteed anonymity, and no identification is required to participate in the exchange. The CCM receives funding for the program from ecumenical partners in Europe, but had to suspend operations at times due to a lack of funding. The program is endorsed by the government of Mozambique.

REDUCING AVAILABILITY: WEAPONS COLLECTION AND GUN-FREE ZONES

Addressing demand is more challenging if weapons remain easily accessible for use or sale. A society with fewer weapons overall will naturally reduce the risk of them being diverted and used, and will help to build confidence in the rule of law. Therefore, reducing availability goes hand in hand with efforts to curb demand.

One step is **voluntary SALW collection/destruction programs** in which responsible governments, civil society and/or international organizations motivate individuals or groups to voluntarily surrender legal and/or illegal weapons that are not required for the purposes of national or internal security, and may be unsafe or unwanted. They offer the opportunity to improve the security of a region.

For this reason they are an important tool in conflict prevention, but have also been applied successfully in many post-conflict situations or in societies that are experiencing high levels of armed crime and social violence. Destroying the collected weapons should be undertaken only by experts.



FOCUS

The Gun-Free South Africa Campaign

In 1994 the Gun-Free South Africa Campaign's (GFSA) goal was to focus attention on firearms. After discussing several ideas, the GFSA decided to undertake a **Voluntary Weapons Collection Program (VWCP)**, combined with a toy gun exchange and a widespread education campaign.

The GFSA was supported by local business, media, religious organizations and government. Newly elected President Nelson Mandela gave his full support to the weapons collection program, stating that "this campaign is both necessary and timely. Dealing with the violence in South Africa will take time and requires a multifaceted strategy, but people need something visible in dealing with crime and violence." The South African Police Service was also supportive of the program,

assisting with publicity and being present at the hand-in locations during the exchange program.

Places of worship were chosen as collection sites because it was felt that people were more likely to go to sites other than a police station. However, where churches or mosques were not available, people were asked to turn in their weapons at local police stations. In the final tally, 80 percent of the weapons turned in were received at religious depots.

Religious institutions have been strong partners in establishing gun-free zones in South Africa. When the GFSA began in 1994, many of the mainstream religious organizations endorsed gun-free zones through resolutions and statements. The Southern Africa Catholic Bishops Conference and the Office of the Chief Rabbi encouraged their members to participate in and support GFSA activities.



In many countries and regions, places of worship such as churches, temples and mosques have been the site of successful voluntary small arms collection. Often civilians are more willing to turn in their weapons to religious leaders than to state officials because they are more trusted. It is very important to clarify with local police or other authorities the process for collecting weapons, and to guarantee anonymity for those turning in weapons. Often the guarantee of anonymity and immunity are the deciding factors for some individuals to turn in their weapons. Moreover, it also protects those who are collecting the weapons from being punished for holding onto what are essentially illegal weapons. Some provide in-kind incentives—including food, clothing, tools or even bicycles—as a form of payment for the weapons. The return or exchange is made with a “no questions asked” understanding.

Gun-free zones are areas where firearms and ammunition are not allowed. This concept can be an important step toward disarming communities and reducing weapons availability. It can support national policy making as well as a source of unity at the grassroots level. Establishing gun-free zones was an integral part of the building of Gun-Free South Africa, an organization formed in 1994 to help build a safe and secure South Africa by reducing the number of firearms in society. Banning firearms and ammunition is also a step toward challenging the culture of violence and reshaping public attitudes to weapons.

Places of worship are gun-free zones, but schools, government buildings and businesses should also be as well. Consider providing a secure storage place, such as a safe, near the entrance of a building in which people can leave their weapons. Create posters that announce the location as gun-free through signs and posters.

Questions for reflection:

- Who are the people in your community or region who possess weapons and why?
- What opportunities are there within your religious structure to start a successful weapons collection or other project that reduces firearms availability?
- What previous efforts have been implemented to reduce the weapons in circulation? Did they succeed or fail? Why?
- Which organizations could assist in reducing or preventing the availability or misuse of these weapons?
- Does your religious institution have a formal policy on gun-free zones?

Actions to take:

- Establish a gun-free zone in your place of worship. Create

signs and posters that make it clear that weapons are not welcome.

- Support the establishment of gun-free zones in other places within your community
- Approach local authorities and nongovernmental organizations about organizing a weapons collection program. Identify which groups would be supportive of doing this and work with them
- Organize an event where children could turn in toy guns or other violent toys. Connect this to peace education practices

ADDRESSING SUPPLY: SUPPORTING ARMS REGULATION AGREEMENTS

Weapons suppliers are often located in countries far away from those who are impacted by their products. In fact, 75 percent of commercial hand guns and long guns are produced in the U.S. or the European Union. And the manufacture and sale of small arms is a very lucrative business, so while addressing issues of demand and availability is an important way to make change, one cannot and should not overlook the role of weapons suppliers and the need for stronger controls in international trade of weapons.

Strict controls on export, transit and import of weapons are essential to prevent the further proliferation of small arms and their abuse by those violating human rights and international humanitarian law. This resource guide has already outlined existing small arms agreements, including their major provisions. It will take time before the international community can speak with one voice on this subject. Success will depend to a large extent on how the subregional organizations, particularly those in Africa, effectively manage the implementation of the various instruments they have established. Therefore, supporting those agreements and ensuring their implementation on the ground is an important aspect of responding to the problem of small arms.

There is another treaty process underway that is connected to the issue of small arms and light weapons. This is the process to negotiate a legal binding agreement—an arms trade treaty (ATT)—on all conventional weapons and ammunition. More easily understood as a trade agreement than a traditional disarmament agreement, the ATT will move into proper negotiations under the umbrella of the United Nations in 2010 and will be concluded by 2012. However, it is significant in the context of this resource guide because certainly it would encompass the category of arms that are referred to here, as well as many others.

FOCUS

African Regional Conference of Catholic Bishops

The African Regional Conference of Catholic Bishops has been at the forefront in advocating for an arms trade treaty, and has mobilized religious constituencies to advance the goal of controlling small arms proliferation in a number of countries in eastern, southern and central Africa. These efforts have led to increased awareness of the small arms problem and the need for religious groups' participation in advocacy.



FOCUS

The Gothenburg Process

The Gothenburg Process is an ecumenical initiative uniting churches and church-related organizations on the issue of the arms trade. The process takes its point of departure in the ethical dimension of the production, trade and proliferation of military equipment.

The Gothenburg III meeting, held in Nairobi, was very successful and has laid a good foundation for the work of the Gothenburg process after 2007. Especially important was the strong participation from African faith leaders, providing the participants with important insights on how the faith communities can promote disarmament on all levels, from the community level as well as on how to develop an advocacy agenda directed to those who make decisions on procurements and military doctrines.

In summary, the outcome of the meeting in Nairobi was to expand the work of the Gothenburg Process into something more than just the conferences—a long-term, sustainable involvement. From the discussions about ecumenical action on arms control, and from the presentations in the first part of the conference, it was agreed that the work should be further developed in three ways:

- (1) theological and ethical reflection;**
- (2) an arms trade treaty; and**
- (3) ecumenical action on small arms.**

The participants committed themselves to working toward the enhanced participation of their own church or faith community to achieve these goals.

Because they represent so many people, religious leaders, organizations and communities have important political influence and power that can facilitate national or international change. They bring the voice of moral authority to the diplomatic process and can monitor the shaping and implementation of policies. Similarly, this role enables religious leaders to mobilize their constituents around the issue to take action. Their constituents can continue to spread news and information about the problem, advocate with governments and fund raise or develop projects related to collection and survivor care.

There are many ways to be a supporter or advocate of arms regulation at the national and community level. For example, the Nairobi Protocol has established “focal points” in member states that are responsible for coordinating and monitoring implementation of the Protocol. Implementation requires collaboration between local authorities, governing structures, police and civil society. As such, actions that support arms regulation agreements include providing information, promoting legislation or supporting programs that relate to rehabilitation or demobilization of former combatants. Also, Central Africa does not yet have a subregional agreement, so advocating for the creation of one is another positive way to strengthen efforts at regulation and control.

One of the important roles that religious leaders, communities and faith-based organizations have played is constructive engagement with communities, governments and the African Union and the United Nations in peace initiatives, negotiations and conflict resolution. Consequently, the UN, the EU, the AU and other regional and international bodies have partnered with religious organizations in recognition of their experience and expertise in the area of small arms.

Questions for reflection:

- Is your government a member of an arms trade agreement? If so, what are the challenges for its full implementation?
- If they have not signed such an agreement, why not? What is the major obstacle? How can you contribute?
- Does the agreement have any effect on the weapons problem in your community? Why or why not?
- Does your national or local government have a department or division that focuses on small arms problems? Do they approach disarmament in isolation or in relation to development or other issues?
- Has your religious institution shown support for any arms agreements through statements or resolutions?
- What opportunities do you have to lobby? Which political figures do you have access to?
- Which advocacy methods are most effective in your national or local context?

Actions to take:

- Build awareness in your community and constituents about existing arms agreements and their obligations
- Ensure that a negotiated ATT includes the most stringent conditions for trade in weapons
- Lobby your national government for implementation of an existing obligation or for the advancement of an ATT
- Reach out to the manufacturers of weapons and show them how their products hurt your communities
- Create the conditions in which arms agreements can be successfully implemented. This may include the peace education, conflict resolution or combatant rehabilitation

programs described elsewhere in this resource guide.

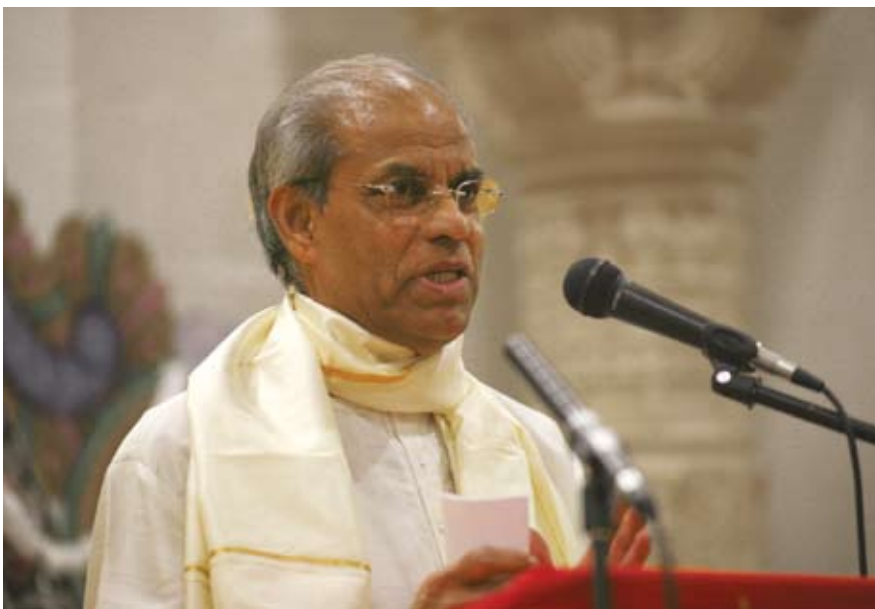
- Collaborate with other religious leaders and communities to identify areas of shared concern and potential for common action or advocacy

HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR: REHABILITATION, RECONCILIATION AND REINTEGRATION

A fourth dimension of response to small arms involves reaching out not only to the victims of armed violence but to the perpetrators and abusers of small arms whose rehabilitation and reintegration into the society is necessary for healing and lasting peace. Religious leaders are well placed to teach the forgiveness and understanding necessary for countries and regions to reconcile in peace. The transformative processes that end conflict may also prevent future ones and can be best carried out by those who hold the trust of communities and governments alike.

Supporting those who have suffered from armed violence is multifaceted. Situated at the heart of communities, religious institutions are often called on to care for the wounded and provide basic medical care or physical rehabilitation where and when it is needed. Sometimes these wounds are not only physical, but also emotional and psychological—for example, a child who struggles to understand why his mother is no longer there, a woman who has been raped at gunpoint or a parent who has seen his or her child taken off to become a soldier.

At times religious leaders have also participated in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes. These pro-



grams replace weapons and a soldier's skills with civilian skills. It is akin to conflict transformation, linked to peace education and works in tandem with the creation of gun collection programs and gun-free zones to create the conditions in which arms treaties can succeed. It is challenging and long-term work.

Questions for reflection:

- What types of treatment are available for survivors of armed violence in your community?
- How do others in the community treat those who are disabled due to injury? Are they stigmatized?
- Are there faith-based hospitals or treatment centers nearby?
- Is there a role you can play in reconciling the differences that keep communities divided and in conflict?

Actions to take:

- Encourage affected states to provide assistance in accordance with human rights and guided by the principles of inclusion, accessibility and equality. Ensure that they develop concrete national action plans to deliver this assistance
- Encourage states to incorporate survivor assistance activities into existing mechanisms for development, human rights and services for those who are disabled
- Offer counseling and refuge. Faith communities offer hope, comfort and spiritual guidance and strength to help survivors heal. Extend this to the families of survivors
- Assist survivors and communities in finding new means of employment, livelihood and/or relevant training

- Work with local hospitals and medical practitioners to ensure that emergency medical care is available and that facilities are maintained with personnel and supplies. Training in first aid for traumatic injuries and severe bleeding increases the chance that survivors will live long enough to receive emergency medical care.

The Churches Health Association of Zambia

The Churches Health Association of Zambia is the second largest provider of health services in Zambia. It has health units throughout Zambia, and serves over 8 million Zambians. A number of church-run health centers are located near the Namibian, Mozambican, Angolan, Congolese and Zimbabwean borders, which served as bases for political liberation movements and, as such, have left a legacy of anti-personnel mines, assault rifles, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. Therefore, many of the patients treated suffer directly from armed violence injuries and require different treatment and rehabilitation.



SECTION III

Skills and Resources

The following section gives focus to three specific skills that can be useful in changing policy or raising public awareness – advocacy, media outreach and engaging with parliamentarians.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea or policy. One can engage in advocacy by meeting with a legislator on an important issue, writing an editorial for a newspaper, raising awareness for a cause at a community event or even promoting an issue while having dinner with friends. When lobbying, one tries to influence the actions and votes of a legislator. Political officials' jobs usually depend on the votes of their constituents, and how they vote on particular issues can be very easily shaped by the opinions and beliefs of those they represent.

Planning an advocacy campaign requires just that—clear planning! The most important things to establish are your goals, objectives and tactics. Goals provide a general direction and commitment to action. **Objectives** are relevant, attainable, measurable and time-limited outcomes to be achieved. **Tactics** are the small actions and activities you will use to achieve your objectives.

Your message should be coherent, concise and agreed upon by all members of the group. It is impossible to advocate and lobby for disarmament when you don't have a message to share with your government officials. These are important questions to ask while creating a message.

Formulating an effective advocacy and lobbying strategy requires the group to consider who they should try to influence. Governments are usually made up of legislators at many levels, and at each level certain people hold more influence and power than others. In order to achieve their goals, religious youth must decide on who they should engage. A head of state might have more “star power,” but he or she is rarely accessible and not easily influenced.

If you are planning a tactic like writing a letter, some questions to ask yourself include the following:

- Who has the power to make the change you are seeking?
- What is his or her current position on the issue?
- Is this person open to pressure from within government? Is

Best Practices When Writing an Advocacy E-mail or Letter

First paragraph: State what you want the person to do for you.

Second paragraph: State the most important facts that support your cause. You want this paragraph to explain the most compelling reasons for action.

Third paragraph: Talk about how the reader can make a personal difference. This paragraph should not list just facts, and should engage the reader in a personal way.

Fourth paragraph: Thank the reader for considering your request, and provide information on how you may be reached.





- he or she open to external pressure and, if so, from whom?
- What are the best ways to influence this person?

Different Ways to Advocate

Send a letter or e-mail to a local, regional or national leader expressing interest and concern regarding your country's progress on any of the campaign issues. Your letters should be brief and clear. Explain the reasons for your request, providing information and facts. Are there others advocating the same message? If so, write at the same time to achieve a greater impact. Distributing postcards throughout your community and asking people to sign and send them in is an excellent way to increase advocacy.

Speak with the traditional leaders in your society. As these individuals often hold a special role with their communities, they also have a special influence on politicians.

Request a meeting with local, regional or national leaders to discuss their position on one of the campaign issues. Your targets should be the decision-making institutions and bodies, as well as individuals who have power and influence. Remember that while you are collecting information from the government on their position, this is also an opportunity to give information that could inform or shape their decisions.

Attend conferences. Diplomats who attend international, regional or national conferences are trained to be approachable and expect to be lobbied. These conferences are the perfect opportunities to meet decision makers, find out their positions, develop a good relationship and provide them with information. They can be approached at any time during the conferences. Do not hesitate to engage in conversation with them.



ENGAGING THE MEDIA

Engaging media is a logical and effective way to disseminate information and raise awareness, but it can also become an effective advocacy tool. However, it is not always easy to attract media attention and can be a competitive process. As with any action, begin by establishing a clear idea of how media can advance your cause. Become familiar with different types of media and the major news agencies and publications that you might connect with.

What are different forms of media?

- Television (national networks, local stations and cable networks)





- Radio (national networks, local stations, university and college stations)
- Newspapers (national dailies, local dailies, community and special interest publications)
- Internet sites for organizations, clubs, news or local event information
- Blogs
- Newsletters (electronic or hard copy)
- Magazines

Common Media Tools

A press release is used to let the media know of something new taking place. This could be a new development on an issue, a new action that has been taken or a statement or reaction to a current event.

The media get dozens of press releases every day, so it is important that your press release be clear, concise and to the point—it should not exceed one page. At most, your release will have about 20 seconds to capture someone’s attention, so the most important information should be in the first paragraph of the release and highlighted in your headline. The remainder of the release should include background and factual information to support your message, including a quote from a relevant spokesperson and links to further information.

Press releases should be sent out on the day of your news or dated for release on the day of your news.

Media advisories are used to alert the media to an event. A good media advisory will let the media know:

- Why the event is important and why it should be covered by the media
- Where it is
- What the event is and any interesting photo opportunities
- When it will take place

It is best to send a media advisory one week before your event. Follow-up phone calls can be made soon afterward to ensure it was received, and then again shortly before the event as a reminder.

Letters to the editor are a great tool for spreading your message. They are read by a large audience; can provide a perspective not given in a news article; and are often read by elected officials. They are written for a few reasons, including if you disagree with an article, editorial or comment covered in the newspaper; to thank a paper for its coverage of a subject; or if there are relevant links to international news or events that concern the campaign.

Remember to send letters to the editor as soon as you can, before the article you are commenting on becomes out of date. Keep letters short as most newspapers have word restrictions of between 150 and 200 words.

Opinion editorials (op-eds) are a good tool to use if you want to express a more in-depth opinion on a particular current event topic or issue such as a development in the negotiations for a new disarmament treaty. Your op-ed should have a headline that summarizes its main message and its link to current events;



clearly indicate the author; is approximately 400-800 words and provides the relevant background information and statistics to support your opinion.

If you want your opinion editorial to be run during a specific time period, it is best to contact the editor a few weeks in advance to find out if there is space available during that time and if there is any interest in your article.

ENGAGING PARLIAMENTARIANS

Targeted engagement with Members of Parliament (MPs) can significantly increase the priority rating of your issue on a government's agenda. Building solid relationships with parliamentarians establishes access to decision makers and provides a channel for obtaining information on policy and a means to monitor and analyze it. This in turn ensures transparency of government policy and helps to inform the direction of domestic public campaigning and high-level advocacy work, which can help to shift domestic policy in the direction of your campaign.

First, identify if there are currently any discussions about your issue in Parliament. This is a crucial first step. Discover in which department's portfolio your issue falls. Typically, on these issues, it might involve foreign affairs, development and defense. Then monitor reports on internal parliamentary procedures, specifically looking at proceedings related to the departments identified above, to see if they refer to your issue.

If there is open discussion on your issue, then get in touch with those who have raised it. Thank them for their interest in the subject and provide them with more information. Remember that they are very busy people, so having concise tools like briefing papers really helps.

Use parliamentary mechanisms that will allow the MP to raise the topic further. These mechanisms include questions, debates and motions.

Increase parliamentary support by engaging other MPs who might be supportive. Look at the issues on which they have been active. Provide them with information and reports, and connect them with others who are advancing this issue.

If there are no open discussions on your issue, then make it happen! Work through contacts that you or others may have with different MPs, and introduce them to the subject. This is not always easy, so it's best to work through someone with a clear and credible link to a parliamentarian. Even if this parliamentarian is not able to take up work on your issue, he or she will be in a better position to advise you as to which parliamentarians will.

Acknowledgements

Writing: Ms. Allison Pytlak, Disarmament Program Coordinator, *Religions for Peace*

Project Supervision: Mr. Stein Villumstad, Deputy Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*

Communications: Ms. Andrea Louie, Communications Manager, *Religions for Peace*

Copy Editing: Ms. Valerie Ahwee and Ms. Alicia Allison

Design: Design by Julia Reich Design | www.juliareichdesign.com

Photo Credits: Except as noted below, all photographs are property of *Religions for Peace*. Cover photos: bottom left—UNICEF/NYHQ2003-0554/LeMoyné, top—Tim A. Hetherington; Page 5 top—UN Photo/Martine Perret; Page 6: top—Tim A. Hetherington, bottom left—Sean Svadilfari*, bottom right—Gregory Wild-Smith*; Page 10 and 11: UN Photo/Martine Perret

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The information in this resource guide was compiled from a wide variety of sources that include faith leaders, experts on the issue, advocates, community activists and global organizations. *Religions for Peace* wishes to acknowledge and thank those listed below:

Control Arms Campaign (www.controlarms.org) for information related to the Arms Trade Treaty, the Quick Facts section, development and addressing supply

Ecumenical Action Network on Small Arms (ENSA) for information related to actions that religious leaders and communities can take

IANSAs Women's Network (<http://www.iansa.org/women/index.php>) for information related to gender

International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSAs) (www.iansa.org) for information related to proliferation, the African context, major instruments and treaties, the Mozambique gun-collection program and the Gun-Free South Africa Campaign

Regional Ecumenical Working Group on Small Arms for East Africa, Nairobi, for their *Tool Kit on Small Arms and Light Weapons* (2004) related to the role of religious leaders and their communities in addressing SALW

Small Arms Survey (<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/>) for information on the connection to crime and development

Small Arms Working Group (SAWG) (<http://www.fas.org/asmp/campaigns/smallarms/sawg.htm>) for information related to youth, development, public health and weapons collection programs

United Nations Development Program (<http://www.sl.undp.org/afd.htm>) for information about the Arms for Development program in Sierra Leone

United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for *The Human Dimension of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms: The Key Role of Africa* by Valerie Yankey-Wayne (2006)

Individuals:

Ambassador Ochieng Adala

Joseph Dube, IANSA

Adam Forbes and Thomas Skov-Hansen, DanChurchAid Burundi

Helena Koumi, SweFOR

Dr. Robert Mtonga, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War Zambia

Canon Joyce Nima, Uganda Joint Christian Council

This publication was made possible by the generous support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Religions for Peace is the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition advancing common action amongst the world's religious communities for peace.

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