



The UN system working together against the illicit trade in small arms through the CASA mechanism

The United Nations system is making a difference by assisting States in their efforts to implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The UN has provided assistance in:

- weapons collection and disposal;
- development and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in the context of UN peacekeeping operations;
- reintegration of former child soldiers;
- support to national coordinating bodies and development of national action plans against the proliferation of illicit small arms;
- action-oriented research on prevention of armed violence and other pertinent subjects;
- improvement of legislation and import and export controls, and;
- awareness-raising campaigns and advocacy.

In addition, the UN has assisted States in the implementation of the legally-binding UN Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which went into force in July 2005 and supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Sixteen UN Departments, Agencies, Funds and Programmes¹ are members of the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) mechanism, which provides a forum for coordination and consultation as well as a vehicle for the delivery of assistance to States through joint activities and projects.

The CASA mechanism was established in 1998 in order to formulate and implement, throughout the UN system, a multidisciplinary approach to the problem of the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW). Since its inception, CASA has provided a forum for harmonizing policy proposals and building synergies among all the participating UN bodies.

¹ The Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Public Information (DPI), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG/CAAC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Collaborative initiatives carried out under the framework of CASA include fact-finding missions, field projects, seminars and workshops to assist States in the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

CASA Projects

The main objective of CASA is to promote interagency projects and activities to address the specific needs of Member States in a coordinated manner. Below are some of the projects undertaken by CASA members.

One area in which CASA provides assistance to Member States is capacity-building for the Governments, including the establishment and functioning of national coordinating bodies to provide guidance and leadership in the implementation of the Programme of Action. In this regard, support is being provided to the Sri Lanka National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons under a joint project by DDA, DESA, in partnership with UNDP and Saferworld. Following the intervention of the project, the National Commission against Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms (NCAPIISA) was established in November 2004 by a Presidential decree, consisting of 15 members, including three representatives of civil society. Moreover, the capacity of the NCAPIISA has been enhanced so as to conduct a public destruction of 30,000 confiscated weapons planned for July 2006. A similar project is envisaged in Guinea-Bissau to be jointly implemented by DDA, DESA, UNDP and UNODC in 2006.

Weapons destruction and stockpile management is another area where CASA can provide assistance to the Governments. For example, DDA's Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC), in cooperation with the Small Arms and Demobilization Unit of UNDP, has been implementing a series of weapons destruction activities under the "Lima Challenge 2006" project since 2001. Sixteen destruction activities, which took place in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, resulted in the destruction and disposal of over 570,000 small arms and 70 tons of explosives.

CASA members such as UNIDIR, UNDP and DDA, together with the independent research project Small Arms Survey, have continued to assist Member States in preparing national reports in the framework of the joint project "capacity-building for reporting to the UN programme of Action on Small Arms". The project has assisted over 50 countries in formulating and submitting their national reports. Technical assistance included provision of reporting assistance tools, dedicated desk-bound assistance and field support missions.

In addition, a wide variety of initiatives has been jointly undertaken by CASA members, including:

- i) Armed Violence Prevention Programme by UNDP and WHO;
- ii) The United Nations Study on Violence against Children by OHCHR, UNICEF and WHO;
- iii) Protection of refugees and camp security by UNHCR, in collaboration with UN peacekeeping missions; and
- iv) Protection of civilians in armed conflict by OCHA and DPKO, including UN peacekeeping missions.

For further information, please contact Mr. Antonio Evora, Secretary of CASA, Conventional Arms Branch, Department for Disarmament Affairs, Room S-3170G, United Nations, Tel: (212) 963-5876, Fax: (212) 963-1121, e-mail: evora@un.org.