

Development and implementation of programmes on voluntary surrender and destruction of SALW

This commitment is stated under paragraph 3A(iv) of the Bamako Declaration. The countries under study have joined a group of countries that have taken seriously the recommendation of the 1997 United Nations Panel of Experts on Small Arms to destroy surplus state-owned small arms. In fact some of them, such as South Africa, have gone beyond destroying those considered redundant, obsolete and unserviceable and seized illicit weapons in police custody, and have engaged in a process of rationalising and standardising their own stocks of small arms and ammunition. Existing programmes on weapon surrender and destruction will measure compliance.

Using intelligence information, the Federal police in Ethiopia have undertaken operations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to track proliferated SALWs. As Yemaneh stated, “lots of SALW were confiscated in undertaking such measures (sudden operation).”⁷¹ However, no destruction has taken place.

According to research, Ghana is estimated to have 35,000–40,000 illegally produced guns in five regions. These estimates are based on the output of 500 blacksmiths in the 70 or so towns that were known to be involved in craft production of firearms. Recently, however, it has been

71 *Op cit*, interview with Chief Inspector Yemaneh on 24 February 2004.

demonstrated that there are at least 2,500 blacksmiths with the capacity to engage in craft production in one region alone. This figure does not include the apprentices who have the capacity to manufacture guns under supervision. In the aftermath of the electoral victory of the NPP in 2000, the administration initiated a collaborative police-cum-military collaborative weapons-retrieval strategy called *etuo mu ye sum* – the gun is dangerous.⁷² This was a three-tier approach for tackling the SALW problem in Ghana. First, the new administration granted a general amnesty to all those with unregistered guns who surrendered them through a two-week moratorium.⁷³ Second, a weapons buy-back programme was initiated,⁷⁴ and, third, punitive measures were instituted to forcibly collect unregistered firearms in private possession.

In Kenya, about 8,000 small arms previously held in government stores have been destroyed. Some of these weapons had been confiscated from criminals, while others were handed over to the police voluntarily. In the first phase, 1,000 weapons were destroyed at a public ceremony on 16 March 2003. The British High Commission in Kenya donated two gun-shredding machines while UNDP and Friends of the Nairobi Declaration⁷⁵ provided the technical and financial assistance. In the second phase, about 7,000 arms were destroyed. The military took charge of destroying the landmines as per the MBT.

72 This joint operation was led by Lt Colonel Issa Awuni of the 5th Battalion and Commissioner Yaw Adu Gyimah of the Ghana Police Service. Yaw Adu Gyimah was eventually relieved of his post in late 2001 for allegedly operating armed robbery gangs and supplying these gangs with internal police operational details to evade arrest. Although there was immense public interest in the case, after initial information, the case has been removed from the public purview.

73 The extension of the initial two-week moratorium was related to the fact that few firearms had been handed in. The total success of this campaign is still in doubt as less than 1,000 of the conservatively estimated 40,000 illegal guns in circulation in Ghana were handed in.

74 The efficacy of weapons buy-back programmes is contested. For a discussion of such programmes in other parts of West Africa, see U Hassan Abdallah, *The menace of the AK 47, West Africa*, 2–8 April 2001, pp 8–9.

75 The Friends of the Nairobi Declaration consist of a number of key donors that provide political and practical support to the Secretariat as well as financial assistance. The group was formed in response to an appeal from a Kenyan representative at the UN Small Arms Conference, 2001. The group met for the first time in August 2002 and agreed that priority areas for action included recruitment of staff to the Nairobi Secretariat, the creation of NFPs to co-ordinate government policy and the development of National Action Plans.

Between 1997 and 1999, the Delta state government in Nigeria (mainly governors) attempted to retrieve weapons by initiating some disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes (DDR) without much success.⁷⁶ The Delta state government called on warring ethnic groups in the Niger Delta (Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri) to surrender their arms, without success. Subsequently, a peace plan was announced for the troubled Warri area. Under the plan, the governor (James Ibori) was to offer cash, short-term vocational training and job opportunities to militant youths who surrendered their arms. This plan, which was greeted with scepticism by local leaders, was at best tenuous.⁷⁷

In 2000, the Federal Government of Nigeria took several measures to address the problem of SALW in the country.⁷⁸ It established a 12-member National Committee on the Proliferation and Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCPTAW).⁷⁹

The Committee, among others, has the following terms of reference:

- Collation of the necessary information on the proliferation;
- Investigation of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons within the country and the national borders; and
- Recommending appropriate measures to deal with the problem and overseeing the implementation of decisions towards eradicating the menace.

In July 2001, the Federal Government of Nigeria carried out its first and so far only destruction of arms and ammunition seized by security agencies across the country. These comprised 428 rifles, 494 imported pistols, 287 locally made pistols and 48 Dane guns.⁸⁰ All these weapons were recovered between 1998 and 2001 and were valued at 50 million naira.

⁷⁶ N Obasi, *Small Arms Proliferation and Disarmament in West Africa: Progress and Prospects of the ECOWAS Moratorium*, Apophyl Productions, Abuja, 2000.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Subsequent efforts that were aimed at further destruction of weapons did not succeed. From January 2002 to June 2003, 1,902 assorted firearms and 13,271 rounds of ammunition were recovered but are still awaiting destruction⁸¹ owing to lack of technical know-how and equipment. The 2001 arms destruction exercise involved the burial of arms at sea, a destruction method the government is reluctant to repeat for environmental reasons.⁸²

In Nigeria the destruction of arms as proposed in the Bamako Declaration has, however, been transferred from the NatCom to a committee within the Ministry of Defence, given the technical and specialised nature of expertise needed for the exercise.⁸³

In Senegal, surplus and outdated military arms were destroyed in April 2003.⁸⁴ There are also indications that 8,000 weapons were destroyed after the visit of the USA President George Bush to Senegal in 2003. However, lack of adequate financial resources, as mentioned above, is hindering efforts to exceed this achievement.⁸⁵

As early as 1998, the Department of Defence in South Africa had considered the need to destroy the surplus, redundant, obsolete and confiscated small arms in its possession. The stocks earmarked for destruction were mainly surplus R1 rifles. Others included AK47, AKM and confiscated small calibre weapons up to and including 12.7mm. Operation Mouflon by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) was the largest destruction of surplus state-owned small arms in sub-Saharan Africa. By the end of the operation in May 2001, more than 260,000 weapons had been destroyed and sold as scrap metal. Following the criteria of transparency, safety and security, verification and accountability, as well as cost-effectiveness, the weapons were destroyed using the Fragmentiser Method.⁸⁶ The SAPS now have an ongoing policy

81 Letter by National Commission Chairman (ref CQ: 2400/B' DEPT/FHQ/ABJ/VOL.T/1) to the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the UN, New York, dated 3 July 2003.

82 E Adedeji, *Overview of Small Arms Implementation Structures in Nigeria*, 2003, Mimeo.

83 *Ibid.*

84 E Adedeji, *Small arms control in West Africa*, West African Series No 1, section 6.13, 2003, p 35.

85 MALAO representative resident in Dakar, Senegal, September 2003.

86 S Meek & N Stott, "Destroying surplus weapons: An assessment of experience in South Africa and Lesotho", UNIDIR and SAS, November 2003.

and programme to destroy obsolete and redundant arms as well as illegal or confiscated weapons.

In Uganda the disarmament exercise has mainly targeted the Karamoja region. For over four decades, this region has been experiencing persistent insecurity, community unrest and instability. The intensity of the conflict in the Karamoja region has been attributed to the acquisition of modern weapons. The overall aim of the Karamoja disarmament exercise was to:

- stop armed Karamajong from terrorizing their neighbours within Uganda, Kenya and the Sudan;
- stop inter-clan fighting within Karamoja and infiltration of arms;
- deploy UPDF, LDU and vigilantes in strategic areas within Karamoja and along the borders to ensure protection of life and property;
- enlist support for peaceful disarmament of people at grassroots level through rigorous sensitisation programmes;
- co-operate with Kenya and the Sudan in concurrent disarmament of the Turkana and Didinga;
- stop illegal trafficking of guns from the Sudan/Kenya into Uganda;
- resettle and rehabilitate those who surrender guns and ensure socio-economic transformation of Karamoja;
- improve radio communication for effective dissemination of information and education; and,
- strengthen police and the judiciary to ensure peace and the administration of justice.⁸⁷

As recorded by researchers, “[t]he acquisition and possession of these arms has escalated cattle raids, armed conflict and thuggery within Karamoja and neighbouring areas. The unchecked gun trafficking from the Sudan and Kenya has compounded and complicated the security situation and development efforts, impoverishing the region even more.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Feasible, participatory, peaceful and sustainable disarmament of the Karamojong, Action for Development of Local Communities (ADOL), Research and Workshop Report, October–November 2000.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

In July 2002 the government started two wholly voluntary exercises. The Karamoja disarmament exercise has so far harvested close to 10,000⁸⁹ weapons, including SALW, while the Yumbe disarmament⁹⁰ exercise has so far netted about 400 weapons and was scheduled as follows: July to December 2000: sensitisation, consensus building and registration of guns; January to December 2001: the Local Defence Unit's programme of consensus building plus ongoing registration and voluntary surrender of guns; January 2002 to December 2002: voluntary surrender of guns and strengthening of police, judiciary and local intelligence; and January 2003 to July 2003: evaluation of the disarmament programme with military action to contain resistance to disarmament.⁹¹

According to Nabudere, the incentives for weapon surrender include government provision of economic resources, such as ox ploughs and water wells to the people of Karamoja.⁹² Many of the arms that have been collected in the exercise have been in good working condition.

However, the Karamoja disarmament exercise has not progressed smoothly. In many respects it has achieved only limited success. According to Nabudere, this has partly been due to interruption by other security threats, particularly the frequent incursion of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) into the Teso region, which neighbours Karamoja. Furthermore, the exercise was done unilaterally by Uganda. The problem of SALW in the Karamoja region is regional. Whereas Uganda embarked on the disarmament project in Karamoja, the anticipated disarming of the Turkana and Didinga by Kenya and the Sudan did not take place. As it has been aptly noted, "the Karamoja region is awash with guns that originate from the war in the Sudan, northern Uganda and even far field in Somalia

89 *Op cit*, interview with Nabudere, 18 November 2003.

90 The Yumbe district is in the West Nile region of Uganda. This district for a long time suffered from an insurgency perpetrated by the rebels of the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF II) of Ali Bamuze against the Museveni government. Many illegal guns found their way into the wrong hands. With the government of Museveni reaching a peace agreement with the UNRF II, a voluntary disarmament was started by the civil society groups, operating in the district to recover the illegally held guns.

91 *Op cit*, ADOL, 2000.

92 *Op cit*, interview with Richard Nabudere, 17 December 2003.

and Ethiopia.”⁹³ Thus, for the disarmament to succeed, there need to be parallel/simultaneous disarmament exercises in all these countries. The net result of all this has been the re-arming of the Karimajong, who had initially been disarmed.

Civil society groups have also been instrumental in co-ordinating the voluntary surrender of arms in the ongoing disarmament exercises in Uganda. According to Nabudere, CSOs working together with the police and civic leaders helped in co-ordinating the recovery of 400 firearms in the district of Yumbe, in North West Uganda, through the programme of voluntary surrender.⁹⁴

In addition, last year the government of Uganda launched Operation Wembley (now re-named the Violent Crime Crack Unit: VCCU), to capture/confiscate all arms in illegal hands. It is estimated that up to now over 10,000 weapons have been netted.⁹⁵

It is evident that some of the seven countries, South Africa for example, had thought of destruction long before the Bamako Declaration. In others, such as Kenya, the information collected was not sufficient to suggest destruction interventions before the Bamako Declaration. What is clear, however, is that security organs had been recovering weapons. For countries such as Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda, which had attempted serious disarmament programmes, success has been hampered by a number of factors, including poor planning and lack of a regional approach. There is therefore evidence of sustained public discourse about the efficacy and effectiveness of disarmament.

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⁹³ *Op cit*, ADOL, Research and Workshop Report.

⁹⁴ *Op cit*, interview with Richard Nabudere.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*.