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TRAINING AND EDUCATION ON SMALL ARMS

Basic Principles of Field Research in Small Arms Action

module **BPF 04A01**

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Basic Principles of Field Research in Small Arms Action

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Small Arms Survey

module BPF 04A01

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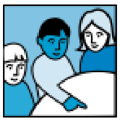
List of Icons for TRESA modules

The following icons will be used in the text. These are intended as pointers for actions the trainer or trainee should take while using the text.



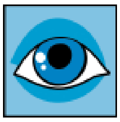
Activity
Indicates some sort of group activity, exercise, discussion, division into separate smaller groups, etc.

R

Case study
Two types of case studies are indicated here:

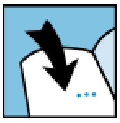
- Case studies which are required (later text refers to the case, and therefore the case study must be used). These are indicated by an ”R“.

- Case studies that are optional (trainers can use a similar case study they might be more familiar with, as the same lessons are drawn).



Essential point
Main points that the trainees *must* remember from the training.

Formal quote
Written or pictographic material that is a quote from some other source (e.g.: UN declaration, national law) and cannot be changed or modified.



Outside reference
An arrow pointing to some outside source, for example, another module.

Tag
This indicates an element of the module that the trainer must be careful to modify to fit the audience.

- L: *Linguistic usage*. Where the text uses a particular expression that might not translate well from one language to another.
- C: *Cultural usage*. Where the text uses examples from one culture that might be misunderstood in another.
- S: *Social usage*. Where a text is aimed at a particular audience (example, parliament members) and must be modified to fit another audience (example, military people).

Take a break
Breath some fresh air, relax, have a cup of coffee, ...

Technical device
Trainer must ensure the availability of some technical device: a computer with presentation software, an OHP, a film projector, puppets, ...

Tool
A film, a form or questionnaire, theatrical performance, etc., that accompany the module but are not part of it. Most are downloadable from www.tresa-online.org

Trainer preparation required
The trainer must make some special preparation (prepare notes or labels, assemble material, collate material for distribution).

Contents

Preface

Preface

This Training Module on SALW Field Research is intended for people interested in conducting research on small arms and light weapons. It is meant to be as exhaustive as possible on the methods and approaches currently used in small arms research.

However, for those who are new to the small arms issue, it is advisable to read up on some of the research that has already been conducted. The current state of the research is summarized in the Small Arms Survey Yearbook, published every spring/summer which is partly available on the Internet (http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/publications.htm) and available to researchers from developing countries on request).

If the prospective researcher has never or rarely conducted systematic social science research before, s/he will find it necessary to complement this training module with general guides on various methodologies (there are a plethora of those, a small sample of which are listed in the Bibliography which is part of this module).

This Module was written by Anna Khakee at the Small Arms Survey. The Small Arms Survey has previously written several research guides (listed in the Bibliography), from which this guide has borrowed whenever appropriate.

We wish you the best of luck in using this manual for your own research!

Process of Research

Section 1

Basic Principles of Field Research

Goals of section:

- Understanding how the researcher's attitude matters in the research process
- Awareness of ethical and security issues surrounding small arms research

Contents of section:

- Introduction
- Flexibility
- Establishing prior contacts
- Respect for interviewees and contacts
- Prior knowledge versus pre-judgements
- The value of repeat visits
- Security in small arms research

Trainer Note

This Module is sufficiently flexible to fit other audiences. This requires subtracting some sections (for people with research experience, Section 1-3 can be skipped), or adding more material (for people with more limited education, the trainer should spend more time on each section, making sure that the concepts, methods, and material is well understood). Some of the following (in Sections 1-3) will prove more useful for expatriate field personnel, and can be skipped if the prospective researchers are from the country where the research will be conducted.

1. Introduction

You are about to undertake research on small arms and light weapons for the first time, or would like to work on how you have done research on the topic in the past. What are the most basic issues to keep in mind, even before starting thinking about the contents of the actual research? What are the “tricks of the trade”? How can you at the same time get the most out of your interviews and retain a respectful attitude to your interviewees and partners? Given the sensitivity of the small arms issue in many areas of the globe, how can you make sure that you and your fellow researchers remain safe throughout the research? How can you make sure that your research does not have adverse consequences on the society that you study? These are the basic issues that are treated in this first section of the training module on SALW field research.

Throughout this training module, the assumed target audience is civilian field personnel with limited research experience, but with general university training, or any other kind of training.

Box 1: Small arms and light weapons: a definition

‘Small arms and light weapons’ covers both military style weapons and commercial firearms (which can be owned by civilians). In this module, the terms ‘small arms’, ‘firearms’, ‘guns’ and ‘weapons’ are used interchangeably to mean ‘small arms and light weapons’ and their associated ammunition.
Small arms: revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, assault rifles, sub-machine guns, and light machine guns.
Light weapons: heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems, recoiless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of less than 100mm calibre.

see TRESA Training Module ‘Small Arms Recognition and Identification’

Notes

2. Flexibility

This module on SALW field research gives a menu of topics related to small arms and light weapons including small arms production, stockpiles, transfers, attitudes/culture, effects, and measures. Although research guides are useful aids in developing the research framework, and later on for comparing and generalizing results, no subject should ever be studied in a “template” or “cookie-cutter” manner. Common approaches are valuable, but good, reliable knowledge is best generated when specific, unique local circumstances are taken into consideration.

The different sections should therefore be used in a dynamic, rather than static, way. The mix of topics should be flexible depending on specific country situations, and what seems of greatest relevance in those situations.

While obtaining data on SALW related topics it is advisable and important to also collect and use sex-disaggregated data (see Section 11 for a definition), as it facilitates an understanding of the different economic contributions, circumstances and realities of women and men. Should you feel that it would be counterproductive to try to obtain data on a particular topic (because it would threaten the security of some of your interviewees or your own, and contacts or other groups in the area, jeopardize interventions on small arms or other issues at a sensitive stage in their implementation, make future access to information more difficult, etc.), then focus should be shifted away to other areas.

3. Establishing prior contacts

If you are not formally affiliated with an organization that has a field presence where you are doing your research, it will be important to establish:

- firm logistical contacts with a NGO/agency on the ground;
- a letter of introduction from the appropriate stakeholder (your organization and/or diplomatic contact); and
- a good open line of communication with relevant security providers and respective government officials.

Trainer Note

The following issues with respect for interviewees and contacts are important and can be difficult, especially for expatriate personnel, so it might be worthwhile spending some time discussing them with the trainees.

Box 2: From the field

‘I don’t know if I have ever sat down to figure out the ratio of preparations versus field research, probably because if I did I would get depressed as funders usually focus only on compensating a researcher for time in the field and time for write-up and edits. I spend a ridiculous amount of time (and money) on pre-visit introductions and logistical preparations. I could not do what I do if I did not have significant support of governments, international agencies, NGOs, etc to get me from point A to B, put me up somewhere, meet me/drop me off at airports, border crossings, etc. And it’s not just a question of persistence, one needs to establish contacts and build a rapport, which takes time, years frankly in some instances. But when things click, it’s a great feeling.’

4. Respect for interviewees and contacts

An important part of your field research will consist of interviews and less formal meetings with government officials, police forces, health workers, local researchers and statisticians, NGOs etc. How can you remain courteous while at the same time retaining a healthy dose of critical distance to what your interviewee is telling you (especially if you are not from the country/culture)? How can you critically probe issues raised without coming across as having a patronizing attitude, and hence make people less co-operative and willing to talk to you? How can you ensure that you understand your interviewees correctly?

Respect for interviewees is paramount. Always treat them with courtesy, and make sure you know the basic rules of social behaviour where you are conducting research. Try to find a proper balance between adopting local rules of politeness and “aping” other people’s behaviour. For instance, if you can, choose a greeting that has no or little religious connotations (if you are not of the same religion). People might get offended if a non-believer “usurps” such greetings.

In all cases, it will prove very useful to talk to people from the area before you go, to learn as much as possible about how people where you are going interact socially, and what you can expect to get out of the interviews.

Cultural differences may make interpreting interviewees’ behaviour and answers difficult. In contexts such as these, it will be important to have contacts with people who can act as “bridges” between your culture and that in which you are conducting research.

Trainer Note

To put more flesh to this whole debate, try to engage a more concrete discussion on how and when gender, nationality, or other personal background details can play a role.

These are problems that cannot be solved once and for all, but have to be re-assessed for each new mission undertaken in the field. One very pragmatic possibility is to do less important interviews at the outset of your field research, and be very attentive to your interviewee's reactions.

In some contexts, a researcher's nationality, religion, or gender can be an issue. In such cases, researchers will have to be selected accordingly. Your goal is to do research, and not to change the values of the people that you are interacting with (even if you do not agree with those values). Few general rules can be set up for when and how the researcher's background plays a role; instead they are context-specific and must always be kept in mind. The more you know about the culture in which you do research, the easier it will be to determine how to deal with issues such as these.

Box 3 : From the field

'As a junior female researcher conducting research on SALW issues in the very male-dominated society I was living in at the time, I was not being taken seriously by the governmental official I was interviewing, but was asked out for a coffee instead. Even though it was probably meant in a nice and harmless way, this invitation did not make me feel very comfortable, but rather vulnerable. From then on I made sure that I was accompanied by someone I knew whenever I went for interviews with male officials. This made me feel a lot safer.'

Always explain clearly where you are from, and the broad goals of your research. Stress that you are not a journalist, and that your goal is not to dig for scandals that can be splashed over a front page of a newspaper. You should also always offer to send a copy of the study once finalized, or if your interviewee so wishes, a copy of the draft section in which s/he appears. These promises are easily made, and easily forgotten, so keep a list of the people that you have promised feedback in various forms. Even though interviewees will sometimes disagree with your analysis, consulting them triggers a dialogue, which can often lead them to share more information with you.

Box 4: From the field

'As for the affiliation, I always am up-front about this as I find that folks already know or are going to find out anyway. I do, however, choose to stress certain things and not others as the situation calls for. For example, I will often talk about peacekeeping matters as "cover" for small arms issues. The information is the same in the end, but the context is often less threatening. One needs to have some peacekeeping credentials to do this, however. No doubt, a development, public health or other similar focus can achieve similar results.'

Any researcher should always ask if the interviewee wants to be formally cited in the report, and, if not, in which form his information can be sourced (by citing for example “interview, personnel working in security sector [date, place]”). People that feel they have been abused in previous interviews will be very reluctant to speak again. As noted by one experienced field researcher: “[a] proven track record of responsibility and an ability to convince the respondent that he or she is just one of many people being interviewed with similar backgrounds is a huge help” and may make respondents willing to give up anonymity (Berman, 2003).

Even though interviewees and partners as consenting adults are responsible for what they report to you, you should still keep their safety in mind, and not use their information in ways that would put their safety at risk.

Payment for information is a sensitive issue. It is advisable not to pay for interviews, other than taking the interviewee out for lunch or dinner, etc.

Exercise 1:

Work in pairs; if possible choose someone with a different cultural background to yours and/or someone in the group you have not previously talked to. You will then be taking turns in a role-play, one being the interviewer, the other the government official interviewed. Possible topics for interview: government stockpiles of small arms; police resale of arms to civilians; bribery that makes a craft gun industry survive and flourish; government officials possible implication in trafficking (see Sections 4-6 for details).

In order to show the different answers a researcher is likely to get it is recommended to have a second round, asking the same questions as above, but this time one person being the interviewer and the other representing an NGO worker.

After the interviews, go through your respective reactions, comments and suggestions.

Trainer Note

In exercise 2, the key is to collect background data on other issues, for example violent death by other means (car accidents, use of bladed weapons etc.), smuggling of drugs and humans, use of other types of weapons in violent conflict, etc, etc.

5. Prior knowledge versus pre-judgements

While prior knowledge is necessary, and should help you assess whatever information you gain through your field research, there is always a certain danger that it pushes your field work in certain directions, and makes you overlook aspects that do not fit with the picture gained through readings. Although this is easier said than done, you should always be ready to move away from your original analysis of the situation, if the information you gather in the field indicates this.

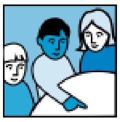
A second equally important “pre-judgement” related pitfall in doing research on anything considered a social problem—be it drugs, human trafficking, small arms etc.—is to expect to find the problem everywhere. Alternatively, researchers can fall into the trap of expecting to find similar manifestations of the problem in all contexts. If your background and field research clearly indicates that the gun problem is relatively minor and that other issues seem more pressing, relevant, and seem to engage people in the society you study much more, then this should be clearly reflected in the report you write. This is not always an easy thing to do, as, most often, you have been assigned the tasks because someone (often someone in a higher hierarchical position) finds small arms an important issue.

Box 5: From the field

‘Often, though it may seem odd, “optimal ignorance” is useful before beginning research, so as to offset biases—conscious or otherwise. Generally, though, its seems vital that the researcher has a good handle on the key issues/debates/politics of a given situation before getting into detailed discussions—it is often the issues that seem least important that can come back to haunt you. These two things are not necessarily contradictory.’

Exercise 2:

How can you collect your background material so as to assure that there is no built-in bias towards considering small arms and light weapons as a great problem?



Trainer Note

The following issues on security in small arms research are particularly important: spend time going over them, and discuss how they apply in different regional contexts and situations.

6. The value of repeat visits

Field research is time-consuming. In particular, establishing a relationship of trust with interviewees and partners, necessary to gain rich and useful information, is a lengthy process. Interviewees who don't know you will often want to verify whom you are working for, have a look at what you have published so far etc. before engaging with you. Even if you have given advanced warning of your visit, people often only check these things once you are actually there. Moreover, the interviewee might not have all the information that you are looking for at hand, and will need time to find it for you.

This means that you should be ready to go back and meet with the same interviewee/partner at least twice. An extended trip might make this possible, but a return trip is in many ways advisable, as it also permits you to digest your first findings, and get a better sense of what additional information is needed. The only way to avoid repeat visits is if you have a trusted (by you and by your interviewees/contacts) partner on the ground who can help you with follow-up. Follow-up on the phone or e-mail, in particular when statistics or other information is needed, often does not lead to the results hoped for.

7. Security in small arms research

Small arms are a sensitive topic to research. As a result, researchers should use extreme caution when undertaking field research and should adapt their research and research methods to the context in which they are working. Basic precautions, apart from precautions always to be taken when travelling (such as taking out insurance, making copies of all key documents, buying maps, carrying a little extra "robbable" money in a second wallet, not fighting back if robbed, etc.) include:

- Preparation: Before undertaking field research, always consult with people working in the field (NGOs, the UN etc.) about security risks and how to avoid them. This preparation should concern aspects ranging from how secure local taxis and hotels are to what the latest political/security incidents have been;
- Make your own safety assessment: If you are not formally affiliated with an organization, that organization normally does not have responsibility for your protection, so any decision to access the field in a UN/other vehicle should be done with caution;

Notes

- Work with allies: Start consulting with people in the field who you have connections with and who will then be able to introduce you to other trustworthy people;
- Transparency: Don’t create suspicion around who you are and what you are doing (see also section “Respect for interviewees and contacts” above);
- Your whereabouts: Make sure that your colleagues know your location in the field, and what appointments you have set up;
- Gender and security: In certain areas, women might be ill advised to do research on small arms without some male company (driver, translator etc.);
- Common sense: use your common sense in all situations, move away from topics when you realize that people become very edgy, make appointments in places which you know and feel comfortable with etc;
- Rule of thumb: The basic rule of thumb is that if it looks, smells and feels dangerous—it probably is. Don’t go where you don’t feel comfortable;
- Food and illness: Contrary to popular belief, more researchers, humanitarian workers and business people die in war-affected countries as a result of car accidents and disease than anything else. Take the necessary precautions: tell your driver to slow down (say you suffer from car sickness), follow the golden rule: if you can’t wash it, peel it, or boil it, don’t eat it! Don’t skip vaccinations; check health risks in the area you are going to, prepare a first-aid kit, etc;
- Be particularly careful after dark...

More specifically, if you need to meet with warlords and other figures that do not seem fully reliable to you:

- Check with others before meeting anyone with suspicious credentials;
- Try to meet at a location that you know beforehand;
- Don’t go alone if you do not absolutely have to;
- Try to make the appointment early in the morning, if you have reasons to believe that the persons, or their bodyguards or entourage, take drugs or drink heavily. As the day progresses, the individual/group is more likely to become unpredictable and dangerous;

- Come with a driver you trust;
- Bring a mobile phone;
- Remember: if you feel uncomfortable, cancel the appointment!

Main points:

Spend time on establishing contacts.

Respect your interviewees and contacts!

Don’t expect that small arms are a problem—try to find out if this is the case, and what kinds of problems guns pose.

Be prepared to go to the field more than once.

Your research planning *must* include a detailed security plan and a good understanding of the local security situation.

Section 2

Prepare your field research

Goals of section:

- Learning how to efficiently plan field research prior to departure
- Gaining skills in elaborating the research framework

Contents of section:

- Introduction
- Desk research
- Selecting a focus
- Choosing tools for research
- Designing, “customizing” tools to your local context
- Identification of partners and interviewees

Notes

1. Introduction

This section deals with the research itself, and in particular with the first parts of the research process. Starting with the research means dealing with several issues:

First, you will have to gather as extensive data as is possible from your "desk position" (collecting and reading existing reports, statistics, news clippings etc.). During your research it is important to apply different gender perspectives throughout your analysis. In some countries for example, you will not be able to find any official data on domestic violence against women. In that case it is important to contact women's organizations directly.

Second, you will have to select your focus. Good, thorough research must focus on a well-defined and narrow research question, taking into account available resources. Indeed, by trying to accomplish too many things at the same time, the quality and reliability of results may be reduced even if the research project is well-designed.

Third, there is the task of selecting research tools. While interviews (in some cases structured but mostly semi-structured) will almost always be used, they will often be complemented by other research methods: large-scale household surveys, focus group or participatory research, estimation techniques, etc.

Fourth, there is the task of adapting the tools. No tool can be taken "off the shelf" and used without being adapted to the local context. Survey questions will sometimes have to be altered; focus group discussions will have to target different issues, possibly using different heuristic devices (drawing, talking around specific events, general discussion etc.); estimation techniques will have to be selected.

Fifth, a preliminary list of partners and interviewees will complement the basic preparations for your field research.

2. Desk research

Before starting the field research, it is important to have conducted extensive desk research. Without prior desk research you will not only lose precious days in the field, but also risk losing credibility with your interviewees and other contacts, as they will quickly realize that your "basics" are weak. Desk research will not focus exclusively on existing materials on small arms and light weapons, but will also encompass related issues such as:

Trainer Note

To give trainees a first flair of what desk research will entail, you might want to spend some time discussing more informally what statistics and other data to collect (gun registration figures, police estimates of illicit gun holdings, trade data, surveys on the security situation, etc.). Primary material is defined in Section 11.

- History of war and peace in the area;
- Current security situation (aftermath conflict, tensions, crime etc.);
- Functioning of the security sector (police, army, other security forces);
- General political, economic, cultural and social context.

The material will not only be published reports, but also primary materials (i.e. laws, economic, social, demographic statistics, etc.) and press articles. This is all the more true for the materials that deal specifically with small arms. Almost all desk research specifically on small arms will aim to find primary materials, be it from producing companies, customs, in the form of laws and government descriptions of policies, etc.

Press clippings will often also prove useful to get a general sense of how the issue is portrayed and dealt with. In each substantive section of this training module on SALW Field Research (sections 4-9), detailed indications on information that might be obtainable through desk research are provided. Bibliographic details are given in section 10. However, it is worth stressing that what can be obtained through desk research in one country/area might need a personal visit in another.

Box 1: How do you organize your desk research?

By ‘desk research’ we mean all the research that you can do from your desk in the office. This means collecting information from articles (newspapers as well as specialized journals), books, brochures, the Internet, databases available on-line, etc. It also includes information that you can obtain/have mailed to you through phone calls and through ordering material. Some specific sources for desk research on small arms and light weapons are cited in the bibliography (Section 10). As noted above, in small arms research, gathering primary material will often be more crucial than the secondary material (for definitions of these terms, see Section 11).

Desk research needs a clear structure. Even though the history of a particular country interests you, you might only be able to “afford” reading one piece on the topic. Your desk research will of course be more detailed and thorough on the issues on which your study focuses. Desk research will often start with existing secondary studies, from which you can learn of other sources and identify lacunas in information and analysis. After all, there is no use spending time finding information that has been assembled and analyzed elsewhere already.

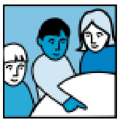
The desk research should also help you identify interviewees and other contacts. Persons involved in gun-related policies, responsible for databases, academics

Trainer Note

In exercise 1, you might want to make participants, especially if they are from different countries, compare what kind of information they believe that they can get through letters, phone calls, internet search, etc. and what not. The divergence even between European countries can be quite impressive! Likewise, large organizations, such as the UN or the regional organizations, can often facilitate access to information.

etc. will hopefully appear in the material you gather. It will often prove useful to contact these people prior to and during your field research.
If you have research assistants/interns, they will often be able to do much of the desk research, but under your guidance. Make sure you read the material collected and make follow-ups as required.

Exercise 1:



Without consulting Sections 4-9, try to list the types of information on small arms and light weapons that you think you should be able to get prior to visiting a country (choose two quite different states), through Internet search, phone calls, formal requests etc. How does this list change if you work for a large organisation?

Box 2: From the field

'We had been commissioned to write a study with two main components. The first would compare all municipalities of a country according to their security and socio-economic situation, and the second dealt with small arms specifically. We came up with really very impressive municipal data (binders full!). But somewhere along the line, the small arms research was, well, not forgotten, but a bit neglected. When we came to the field, we quickly realized this, but it would have been better to realize it earlier...'

3. Selecting a focus

If you have been tasked to do research on small arms in a particular area, your contractor probably already has a clear idea of what the focus of the research should be. In other cases, you might feel particularly drawn to study one aspect of the small arms issue in detail. As mentioned in the introduction, a study will more rarely encompass all aspects of the small arms issue.

However, if you realize through your desk research that issues of potentially great importance have been excluded from the research brief, you should try to change the brief somewhat to include it. For example, if you realize that there are many small arms producing companies in the country and that concerns regarding illicit trade, both domestically and internationally, have been raised, a study that focuses on civilian stockpiles and crime is incomplete without at least a mention of these other issues.
The focus should not be so rigid that it makes it impossible to take into account knowledge gained in the field (see Section 1).

Trainer Note

In Exercise 2, possible tools for study on young men's attitudes: interviews, focus groups, survey of young men (in prison, in university, in rural areas, in urban areas, etc). Interviewees can include police, social workers, teachers, etc., but also people who come into social contact with young men in the evenings: café and bar owners, shop owners, guards outside discos, people living near the main square where young men assemble, etc (this will all depend on where the youth in the particular society gather in the evenings).

Arms to insurgent groups: interviews with customs, police, military attachés, peace keepers, etc; search for primary documentation (customs documentation, insurance notes, flight records, etc.)

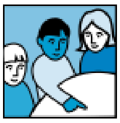
4. Choosing tools for research

As mentioned above, there are several research tools that can be used for researching various small arms issues (see Section 12 for further details). Depending on your focus, you'll choose some and discard others. An obvious example: if you want to study illicit transfers (see Section 6), you might want to try to adopt a "quasi-forensic" approach, examining guns or ammunition remnants discovered in the field to find out where they come from. This could be combined with attempts to obtain official documents from aviation authorities, registers, customs etc. If your focus is attitudes and "gun culture", you will probably end up using focus groups, possibly combined with a survey of young males or some other target group.

The main tools are briefly outlined in the box below. Please note that using these tools will require more knowledge and skills than provided in the box (see 'further reading' note). Estimation techniques are discussed at greater length in the substantive sections, and in particular Section 5.

Exercise 2:

Discuss: What kinds of tools would you use if you were to conduct a study on young men's attitudes towards guns?
What tools would you employ if the focus is on arms transfers to an insurgent group?



Box 3: From the field: The dangers and virtues of prior planning

One seasoned field researcher landing in an African country testifies: "We had prepared an extraordinarily elaborate template/protocol for the research, having spent several days working on it before arriving. Within five minutes of landing in the capital, it became manifestly clear that all of our "methodological" preparation was more or less useless. In fact, we became very concerned that we weren't going to be able to do what we had signed a contract to do. We were almost in tears. The country didn't even have maps, tourist or otherwise (!), as they'd all been destroyed (and the cartographers killed or exiled). The lesson: don't assume your carefully laid plans will always work - allow the context to dictate the means and, to some extent, the outputs. Be flexible and open to new ways of visualising your research approach."

Trainer Note

In Exercise 3, discuss which questions are culturally specific, and which might work in several cultural settings (i.e. ”Do guns give more power/prestige to the owner?“; or ”How do guns influence actors within leadership structures?“; or ”Does the use of guns violate human rights?“).

5. Designing and “customizing” tools to your local context

As already noted, it is crucial not to use tools “off the shelf”, but to make sure that they make sense in the local context. This might seem evident, but in fact requires good local knowledge, which is not always easily obtained.

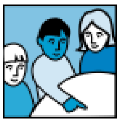
For example, if you want to ask about the security situation in a household survey, you might want the respondents to compare security over time, maybe with a question such as “Do you believe that the security situation is better or worse than one year ago?” Now, if there was a major, but isolated, security incident a year prior, you will have to decide whether you want that incident to affect answers, or if you had better choose a shorter or longer time period for the comparison. So, even a seemingly simple question such as this one requires quite detailed local knowledge. This means that the researcher will have to examine critically and adapt all household survey questions to the local context.

Another example: In some contexts, focus groups are better undertaken as loosely structured discussions around a few questions, while in others, more concrete “exercises” (drawing time-lines, mapping the least secure parts of a town/area, etc.) will engage people more, and make them more willing to talk. In some cultures you might want to consider having separate focus groups for women and men, as sometimes women do not dare to actively participate in discussions if men are around.

For interviews, you might often have to pose questions very indirectly. In some circumstances, however, such obliqueness might make people suspicious and it is hence preferable to be much more direct. Please note that you should chose your approach depending on the local context.

Exercise 3:

Pre-test of focus group questions: In pairs (preferably from different cultural backgrounds), design 4-5 questions aiming to gain a greater understanding of young men’s perceptions of guns (in both participants’ countries separately). Pre-test (i.e. pose the questions) and discuss with another pair.



Box 4: Research tools in brief

Research tool	Pros	Cons
Structured key informant interviews: the interviewer asks the same questions to every respondent, following a pre-determined questionnaire.	Avoids biases of interviewers to a certain extent. Allows the inexperienced interviewer to make sure all questions have been dealt with, and helps him/her direct the interview. Allows reliable data comparison.	Makes it difficult to follow-up on interesting, unexpected points made by the interviewee. Makes an exchange of views and thoughts impossible. Does not allow for a learning process and adaptation from one interview to the next. Could give the interviewee the impression that the researcher is insecure and/or lacks expertise. Can make the interviewee feel as if s/he is being interrogated rather than interviewed.
Semi-structured key informant interviews: the interviewer has determined broad themes and some specific questions in advance, but retain the possibility to create questions during the interview, probe the interviewee's answers, and control the general direction of the interview.	Allows making maximum use of an interviewee's knowledge. Allows for correcting the focus and the questions during an interview (and from one interview to the next), if the interviewer realizes that preparations were inadequate. Can install a more friendly atmosphere in which the interviewee feels more comfortable to speak. Allows to follow-up on interesting, unexpected points made by the interviewee. Makes an exchange of views and thoughts possible. Allow for a learning process and adaptation from one interview to the next.	The friendly relationship sometimes installed can make interviewers less prone to probe and critically assess information provided in the interview. Possibility of biases. Interview is less direct and can derail if the interviewer is not used to interviewing. Can make the interviewee feel that s/he is loosing her/his time if not sufficiently structured.

Notes

Large-scale household surveys Normally >1,000 persons from as many households, randomly sampled, answer a set of identical questions, either by phone, or in face-to-face interviews (the interviewer goes from house to house).	Information obtained, if valid and reliable, is scientifically sound. If identical questions can be posed across countries, cross-country comparisons can easily be made.	Respondents, who will by necessity know very little about the research and its goals, might lie about a sensitive topic such as guns. Enumerators, in contrast to interviewers, have limited possibilities to control for this. Household surveys tend to generate the ”socially accepted“ truth, rather than solicit the preferences and opinions of the respondents (so if guns are considered ”bad“ in a society at large, the individual will claim often that he believes guns are bad, even if this is not his true opinion). Question design is complex, given the sensitivity of the issue. Phone interviews should be avoided, given the sensitivity of the gun issue. House-to-house interviews are more expensive.
Focus groups: A focus group meeting is a flexible, non-formal, interactive discussion on pre-set topics with a group of individuals selected because they are believed to be representative of some category of people. It normally involves between 8-12 people, takes 2-3 hours and involves 1-2 facilitators (leaders of the discussion) and a note-taker.	Gives richer information than household surveys. Can fit well with a sensitive topic such as small arms, if categories of participants are carefully selected.	Requires a skilled facilitator, who can lead the discussion without biasing it. During the selecting process of focus group participants the researcher is often very much dependent on local help. This can lead to a group consisting of ”friends of the local contact person/ collaborator“ rather than a well-chosen mixture of participants. This can lead to very different results.

For further reading see Section 10 and Section 12.

Notes

6. Identification of partners and interviewees

6.1 Partners

Identifying partners for your research (local scholars, research groups, NGOs, polling institutes etc.) is one of the most crucial decisions you will have to take during your research. It is also one of the most difficult. There are no *a priori* rules on how to choose partner organizations, except studying their previous work in related fields very carefully.

Of course, the ideal is to have built up a more long-standing institutional relationship with partners on the ground prior to the research. If you don't have such partners, and you are working for an organization with some field presence, they might be of help. Otherwise, there is no method other than "mouth-to-mouth" advice and recommendations.

6.2 Interviewees

You will often find your first interviewees through your primary research, i.e. people interviewed in the press on an aspect the small arms problem, authors of prior work done locally (criminologists, public health workers etc.), people mentioned as being responsible for a police gun register, for gun policy, activists, etc. Before leaving for the field, you should have drawn up a tentative agenda for meetings.

Obvious interviewees are: international civil servants, humanitarian aid/development workers, NGO workers, diplomats, journalists, ex-combatants, religious leaders, women's groups or other peace groups, business people (especially in the transport business if you are interested in small arms transfers), refugees etc. As noted by one seasoned field researcher "in recent years there appears to be an increasing number of people with military backgrounds who have joined the ranks of humanitarian workers—many as security advisers. These people are an especially useful resource because they tend to know specifics and do not call every firearm "an AK-47" or describe every explosion as "a mortar" (Berman 2003). The same researcher notes that "[w]hile it is necessary to schedule appointments with high-ranking officials of recipient and supplier countries to discuss small arms transfers, this is not likely to yield significant usable information, especially concerning current events. Perhaps not surprisingly, former government officials such as military chiefs of staff, ambassadors, and

Trainer Note

Exercise 4. Hurdles that the researchers might encounter include (but are by no means restricted to): (a) data that the researcher thought was available from a certain source is not (e.g. police statistics, hospital data etc.)—s/he will then have to think of other ways of obtaining the data, or finding data that could replace the unavailable data (b) many things are likely to take longer than the researcher (and his/her funder!) thinks. Thus, the researcher will have to think about how the work can be planned and divided to meet deadlines (c) travel on the ground might be restricted for security or other reasons, and not seldom, travel will be restricted precisely in those areas that the researcher would most like to visit. The researcher might find people who can travel even when restrictions are in place (people from the locality), but most of the time, s/he will try to find ways to get data from the region in some other way (d) if you have no partners on the ground, finding a good partner, with access to the people you would like to meet (armed groups etc.), but not so partial that you will not be able to get any reliable data out of the collaboration.

A checklist will basically detail all the pieces of information and statistics to be collected, people to meet, a draft agenda for the days in the field, a preliminary list of interview/focus group/survey questions etc.

ministers can be excellent sources – although one must always pay special attention to the reasons they are no longer in government and their motivations for speaking. Most people are willing – even eager – to talk.”

The hardest interviewees to find are always the first; subsequently you can use a “snowballing technique”, i.e. ask your interviewees for further people to talk to (the first informant recommends others, who in turn recommend yet others). Try not to leave the interview without at least one or two other names. It might be the most useful thing you actually get out of an interview!

Exercise 4:

In groups of 4-5 people, prepare an imaginary field trip to a country of your choice. Write up plans and checklists, including details on desk research, research tools, and how to adapt them. Discuss what hurdles and difficulties you are likely to encounter.

Main points:

Spend time on thorough, focused desk research: that always pays!

Make sure that your research focus makes sense, and that it does not exclude gun related issues that are important locally.

Chose your research tools carefully, and make sure you know how to use them.

Adapt your research tools to the local context, and be prepared to make further adaptations (and even discard some tools!) once you are in the field.

Section 3

Verifying and using data

Goals of section:

- Understanding the concept of triangulation
- Awareness of ethical issues surrounding the use of information

Contents of section:

- Introduction
- Triangulation
- Research ethics

Notes

1. Introduction

This very brief section makes a leap from the beginnings of the research process (treated in Sections 1 and 2) to the later stages of it. It deals with how researchers should and should not use the data and information gathered while doing field research.

However, although this section will be particularly relevant when writing up the research report, it is important to keep the issues of triangulation (see definition below) and ethical use of sources in mind when gathering the data: as triangulation requires using multiple sources of information, these have to be consulted during the research phase. Having to go back and find additional data during the writing-up phase often proves cumbersome and can entail serious delays in the finalization of the report. The conscious and unconscious misinterpretation of data is also something to keep in mind while collecting data.

2. Triangulation

Triangulation means using several different sources of information and/or different methodological approaches to verify the accuracy of a piece of information. A main research principle is to always use more than one source of information to validate a finding. The rule of thumb is: the less reliable the source, the more sources are needed.

Hence, on one extreme, even five mutually independent news reports from one party to a conflict regarding the other party's dealings (say, Pakistani media reports on Indian arms imports and vice versa, or Serbian information on Kosovo Albanians and vice versa) will have to be treated with extreme caution. On the other, one possible exception to this "minimum two sources" rule in the context of small arms research could be official government information on such topics as state (police, military) inventories, government-to-government transfers and transfers through customs, registered civilian firearms ownership, etc.

Triangulation must involve *mutually independent* sources of information. This is often problematic in the context of news reporting, which often is based on one common source: the news wires (or the news source which appeared first). Hence, news reports have to be examined with special care and attention, and an effort has to be made to understand the sources used (which is often not easy!).

Notes

Trainer Note

Exercise 1 requires some preparation on your part (reading and examining the report section in some detail), but we find that it is worth the trouble, given the importance of the topic.

Triangulation should ideally involve using a variety of methods to come up with one single piece of information. For example, determining the share of households possessing guns can be based on: (a) the share of households where guns were seized during random searches (of course, this method can only be used where guns are illegal and random searches are made); (b) the share of respondents to a household survey who answer positively to the question “does your household possess a gun”?; (c) expert estimates (by the police, private security firms etc.). These sources can then be compared.

In small arms research, triangulation is oftentimes easier said than done. Sources on small arms are often few and far between. In such cases, the only way to move forward might be to present the data available, with VERY clear caveats, explanations of additional (unsuccessful) attempts to obtain (better) data, etc.

Exercise 1:

Study a selected section of a research report on small arms (use section “Guns in Macedonia” in A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-conflict Macedonia, pp. 11-27, available at http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/publications/). Discuss in small groups: how has information been verified/triangulated?

3. Ethical use of data

Several issues related to research ethics (possible bias in selecting research focus, treatment of interviewees, etc.) have been treated in section 1. In this section, the focus is narrowly on how to make sure data is *interpreted* and *used* ethically.

One basic, and fairly obvious, point is not to use data without quoting the source: give credit when credit is due! If you don’t always cite your sources, this amounts to plagiarism, the academic equivalent of theft. Unfortunately, it is not an uncommon phenomenon. Citation is due even if you do not directly quote a text, but only paraphrase it. Citations should be complete; i.e. *the reader should be able to find the material with the help of the indications you give*. Thus, if you cite a PDF file you found on the World Bank website, it is not enough to just write “www.worldbank.org” as the source: you have to give the exact site where the document can be found.

Notes

If you take notes while reading, and use these notes to write up your report, make sure that you separate your own thoughts from analysis and information contained in the readings. Quote the source after each annotation, as you will quickly forget where the notes came from, and might mistakenly take them to be your own thoughts and findings.

Box 1: From the field

‘One of the most frustrating things that can happen to a researcher is to get data from a reliable source, but on the condition that you don’t cite it or use it in writing up the report. You know all these really interesting things, but can’t write it! And your report would be so much better with it, and your boss/the funding agency would be so much happier... But unless you can convince the person(s) who gave you the data to give you the permission to use all or parts of it (which sometimes happens), you have no choice: the data is not going in there! A consolation: You learn things from that data that will help you avoid making stupid statements in the report that you might otherwise have made.’

A second, equally basic issue concerns the objective interpretation of the material. *“Bad faith” interpretations of interviewees’ statements, written reports, statistics etc. are of course strictly prohibited as a research method.* The pitfall in small arms research is that you will often have a strong “gut feeling” based on interviewees reactions, movements on the ground etc, that something has take place (an illicit transaction, a new production facility, etc.). The temptation is of course strong to report this, and you might want to “read in” too much from interviews, written reports etc. However, without some form of evidence, you will have to keep this information to yourself.

A third fallacy is related to the “finding the problem everywhere” issue discussed in Section 1. Unconsciously, the researcher might try to find a gun problem, and interpret data accordingly. Hence, data might, even without any malicious intent whatsoever, be systematically misinterpreted. For example, anything focus group participants or interviewees mention on guns is magnified, while other information that they provide, and that put the gun issue into perspective, is forgotten. The best way to avoid this fallacy is to go back to the original research notes, taken during the field research, as often as possible.

Notes

Main points:

Always use more than one source of information to validate a finding!

Scrutinize sources to make sure that you are aware of any potential political or other bias!

Always, always, always identify the source of your information! Give credit when credit is due!

Go back to your original sources often, to make sure that you are not misinterpreting the data.

Research Foci

Section 4

Production Research

Goals of section:

- Gaining basic knowledge of SALW production
- Acquiring skills in researching production

Contents of section:

- Introduction
- Producing states
- Producing companies
- Licensed production
- Ownership structures
- Methods for production research

Notes

1. Introduction

Production is the original source of small arms and their associated ammunition. Small arms produced are transferred and/or stockpiled (see Sections 5 and 6) by a variety of actors, thereby contributing to their widespread availability. The issue of small arms production can be researched from various angles, ranging from the development of one particular product to global production trends. This section provides an overview of the basic issues, methods and sources relevant to production research.

2. Producing States

A first building block for production research is to determine in which countries weapons are produced. Basic data to look for in this regard includes: number of producing countries; value and volume of production per country; types of small arms and ammunition produced. Today, such data are already available for a number of states, so it will be important to check existing sources of information (Small Arms Survey, Forecast International, Jane's Ammunition, Jane's Infantry Weapons, Jane's World Defence Industry, Omega Foundation, SIPRI, etc.) before doing any research with the aim of mapping producing states.

3. Producing Companies

Researching production further entails examining the different actors involved in small arms production. Typically, there are two broad categories of small arms producers: regular arms producing companies and illicit craft producers. Illicit craft production occurs in (often small) private workshops or homes without any legal (i.e. governmental or company) authorization. It is often, though not always, crude and small scale (i.e. single weapons or small batches). Weapons are usually hand-made, rather than industrially produced. Most craft production involves the manufacture of simple single-shot weapons, and/or illicit copies of existing types of small arms.

Regular arms producing companies are far more important than illicit craft production in terms of scale of production (numbers of weapons produced, value of production, number of people employed etc.). However, in some contexts, craft production can take on a local, or even national significance and thus merit close scrutiny.

Trainer Note

You might want to discuss briefly in what circumstances craft production can be economically viable: large share of population impoverished, restricted access to legally produced firearms, tradition, etc.

On *regular arms producing companies* (state-owned, privately owned, or mixed state-private ownership), research-relevant information includes:

- The value and volume of production of SALW within the company (N.B. this is often different from total company output, which often includes non-SALW products as well);
- The types of small arms manufactured (past and current), and their relative share of production;
- The reliance on exports of small arms produced (as % of total SALW sales), and on particular export destinations;
- Information on the financial situation of the company (turnover, profit, employment, owners, etc.);
- Links with other companies (mergers, subsidiaries, mother company etc.) and ownership structures;
- Marketing strategies (presence at arms fairs, lobbying foreign governments etc.).

A study on *illicit craft production* can include the following elements:

- An overview of the history/culture of craft production (factors which create the demand for such production);
- A detailed description of the craft production sector (products, volume of production, prices, materials used, quality, geographical distribution [rural/urban], socio-economic profile of craft producers, consumers/ recipients);
- An assessment of the economic value of craft production at the national level, linkages with legal production;
- Government attitude towards craft production (control, legalize or criminalize).

Trainer Note

Licensed production is an interesting and controversial phenomenon, and you might want trainees to discuss briefly its implications (legal, political, on employment etc.), even though this is not, strictly speaking, a research method issue.

4. Licensed production

Licensed production occurs when ‘A company in country A contracts with a company in country B to undertake the legal production of its products. In terms of a licensed production agreement, the licensing company in country A usually provides technical data or copies of the products to be produced in country B, and sometimes provides machines or tools or assists in the setting up of production facilities’ (Small Arms Survey, 2001, p.9).

Many companies that produce arms under license also make their own designs. Interesting information on licensed production, over and above general company information (see producing companies above) is:

- Details of the licensing agreement;
- Possible reasons for licensing (access to new markets, reduce production cost, circumvent strict export/import controls, etc.);
- Volume and value of licensed production;
- Information on the licensing company (country where it is based, countries in which it operates, etc.).

Box 1: Heckler and Koch

“The Anglo-German company Heckler and Koch has engaged in a number of LPO arrangements (licensed production overseas) with the state-owned Turkish arms manufacturer MKEK. In 1998, for example, Heckler and Koch won a ten-year contract worth US$ 18 million for the licensed production of 200,000 HK 5.56mm assault rifles in Turkey. While several states had previously refused direct arms supplies to Turkey in response to serious concerns about the abuse of human rights, this local production of H&K small arms allows the provisioning of the Turkish military and security forces.

In a UK TV documentary program broadcast on 9 December 1999, MKEK revealed that it had shipped a consignment of 500 MP5 submachine guns to the Indonesian police in August/September 1999. This was at a time widespread violations of human rights were being committed in East Timor by anti-independence paramilitaries. On 16 September 1999, as the human-rights situation was deteriorating, the EU instituted a comprehensive arms embargo. This embargo meant that neither H&K in Germany nor the UK would have been allowed to export MP5s to Indonesia. However, since Turkey was not a member of the EU and was not covered by the embargo, little could be done to stop MKEK from producing H&K small arms under license and from continuing to supply these weapons to the Indonesian security forces.” (Coe and Smith, 2003, pp. 38-39)

Trainer Note

Exercise 1. What type of information you can obtain very much depends on the type of production you want to research (regular/irregular), as well as on the company itself and the internal situation of the country the company is based in. Craft production is usually clandestine and can therefore be more difficult to research.

Potential dangers with trying to obtain information: i.e. being accused of being a spy, running afoul of the country's security forces, or the end users.

Exercise 1:

Discuss: What information on production (regular and craft) do you think you could get hold of fairly easily where you will do your research? Are there any potential dangers with trying to obtain some of the information listed above? How could such dangers be overcome, if possible?

5. Ownership structures

In researching small arms producing companies, NGOs often find it worthwhile to focus particularly on the ownership structures, going beyond examining links with other companies (see above). In such cases, NGOs focus in particular on who owns shares in the companies, and whether political parties, churches, pension funds, etc. are important shareholders.

6. Methods for production research

Many of the issues mentioned above can be researched through desk review and interviews. Company websites and other promotional material can be quite helpful in this regard, as can data collected by state authorities on SALW production. The sources already mentioned above (Small Arms Survey, Forecast International, Jane's Ammunition, Jane's Infantry Weapons, Jane's World Defence Industry, Omega Foundation, SIPRI, etc) will also provide useful data in many cases.

In many cases, field research will still be required. Defense exhibitions are one quite particular type of field research (in that they will take the researcher to a defense fair in London, Paris, or elsewhere, and not to the producers' home countries). In many countries, interviews with company personnel and officials at state oversight agencies will prove necessary to get the level of detail that interesting research on production demands.

Craft production research cannot easily be conducted without thorough field research. Such research is potentially dangerous (see Section 1, 7. Security in Small Arms Research). It is therefore a requirement that a person with extensive local knowledge and connections conducts such research.

Trainer Note

It seems that, given the nature of the research and of the Pakistani tribal system (see exercise 3), you would have to rely extensively on local researchers. However, it might be worthwhile for foreigners to do interviews with law enforcement officials.

Craft production research involves interviews with law enforcement agencies, producers in the formal arms production sector, people previously involved in craft production, informal interviews with current producers, and possibly posing as a client. To get an idea of the history/culture of craft production, you will have to rely on local sociologists/criminologists that have studied the matter, or else integrate questions on craft production in the past into your interview matrix. Research on craft production is difficult; you will only rarely and only if you devote quite some resources produce a study on craft-production that covers all the elements mentioned in the section on “Producing Companies” above.

Box 2: Estimating the value of small arms production in the United States in 2000

If you are lucky, you will get information on number of small arms produced. From such numbers it is possible to estimate the value of production. It is also possible to make estimates of production volume from values.

For example, in 2000, according to a publicly available US military contract, US$ 6,58 million was paid for 14,835 M-16 rifles (FN Manufacturing) = US$443 per unit

Based on data published by the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), the US produced a total of 3,873,210 small arms in 2000.

So the estimated value of US small arms production in 2000 was 3.9 million units x US$443 (average price) = US$1,7 billion

NB: This is an extremely rough estimate, given that it is based on only one type of weapons (M-16 rifles). It should be refined according to weapons type.

Exercise 2:

How would you go from production values to volumes? What are the difficulties/ pitfalls to look out for?

Exercise 3:

How would you go about doing research on craft production in Pakistan? To what extent would you rely on local partners?

Main points:

A good study on small arms production will contain a host of data (not only volume and value of production).

Methods will differ quite radically depending on whether you research regular arms producing firms or craft production.

Section 5

Stockpiles research

Goals of section:

- Understanding the basic concept of ‘stockpiles’
- Mastering the main techniques for estimating stockpiles

Contents of section:

- Introduction
- Limited sources of information
- Estimating small arms stockpiles: Acquisition approach
- Estimating small arms stockpiles: Possession approach
- Estimating small arms stockpiles market price analysis

Notes

1. Introduction

Stockpiles is a rather technical term for weapons held throughout society and by different state authorities (military, police, border guards etc.). Basically, doing research on stockpiles means finding out who owns weapons, how many, and of what types. This can be done in anything from a single neighborhood (i.e. a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro or a Los Angeles suburb) to wider areas such a country, a region, or an entire continent.

Stockpiles research aims to determine the number of weapons and the types of weapons (handguns versus hunting rifles versus assault rifles etc.) in the area of study. It examines whether civilians hold weapons legally or illegally, as well as the demographic (gender, age etc. of gun holders) and geographic distribution of arms. It also includes assessing the size of police, military, and insurgent stockpile.

Issues of stockpile security, such as how small arms are stored or cached, also fall under stockpile research. Over time, it is also often of interest to examine to what extent the number of weapons in an area of study is increasing, decreasing, or stable. Are some types of weapons becoming more available while others are getting scarcer?

2. Limited sources of information

Small arms stockpiles in a country can be quantified using the following official data, provided governments and companies have this information and agree to make it available to the researcher:

- State reports on military holdings and police arsenals (including customs and paramilitary holdings);
- State records of civilian holdings (private owners) by licenses (i.e. registered gun owners) and/or sales;
- Private security companies holdings;
- Official estimates of illicit gun holdings.

Such data would give us information on the numbers, types, and distribution of weapons (demographic and geographic), although official estimates of illicit gun holdings have to be used with care, as they can be biased (against certain social or ethnic groups for example).

Notes

Trainer Note

Spend some time discussing ‘estimating small arms stockpiles’ on this and the subsequent approaches, making sure they are well understood. Maybe illustrate with a case that you know well; alternatively use Berman 2004, Part II for acquisitions, Small Arms Survey 2001 chapter 2 for possession, and Demetriou 2002, p.33 for market price analysis.

In reality, however, this data is most often either not comprehensive or not available. Thus, it often has to be supplemented by estimates. Estimating small arms stockpiles is an approximate exercise and, therefore, it is necessary to use several methods—what is called 'triangulation' (see Section 3) in technical terms—in order to compare and verify results.

The Small Arms Survey has developed three methodologies to estimate stockpiles: the acquisition approach, the possession approach, and market price analysis. These have been used and refined in a number of studies (Small Arms Survey 2001 [pp. 59-93], Demetriou et al 2001, Demetriou, 2002, Khakee and Florquin 2003, MacFarlane and Torjesen 2004, Grillot et al. 2004, Small Arms Survey/SEESAC 2004).

3. Estimating small arms stockpiles

3.1 Acquisition approach

This approach involves projecting an estimate of the number, types and—to a certain extent—distribution of small arms in an area by focusing on the different sources of weapons and their inflows.

Depending on the context, sources include domestic production and/or transfers. Transfers can be domestic (sales, theft/looting of police stations and military stockpiles) or international (imported legally or illegally to the country) (see Section 6 for additional information). This data must be adjusted, taking into account weapons transferred out of the area of study, weapons lost, attrition rates (weapons becoming useless due to damage, age, lack of spare parts, etc.), and weapons destroyed. Of course it is important to study which groups within the area have acquired weapons (military, law enforcement, private security agencies, civilians, insurgents, etc.).

The most difficult aspect of the 'acquisition approach' is often to determine the time period to study. The ideal for the researcher is to find a baseline year when either (a) there were very few weapons in the area, or (b) the number of weapons were known with some precision. This is sometimes the case. In other cases, the baseline year could be the year in which acquisitions are known to have "taken off", i.e. started to increase. In all circumstances, the baseline year should be determined according to local circumstances, and not using some standard formula of 10, 20, 30 etc. years.

To exemplify how the acquisition approach works in practice, a study that seeks to determine a population’s weapons stockpiles (including ex-combatants and any other weapons holders) after a conflict period can use the following equation:

Initial stockpile before conflict

Weapons acquired during conflict		Production within area of study since the outbreak of conflict
	+	Transfers into area of study (authorized and illicit)
	-	Loss, damage, attrition
	-	Transfers out of area of study (authorized and illicit)
	-	Weapons destroyed
	=	Stockpile estimate after conflict

The data can be drawn from primary—e.g. government documents, airway bills, invoices, end-user certificates—and secondary sources, e.g. international and local media, NGO reports, online databases on small arms transfers (see section 6 for further details on transfers research). Depending upon the context, supporting information can be gathered via interviews (of groups or individuals) with police, military and governmental officials, customs officers, former criminals/ gang members, ex-combatants, former militia commanders and extensive field visits (see sample questions in Section 12).

3.2 Possession approach

Using the possession approach to assess the size of an area’s stockpiles implies projecting an estimate of the number of small arms in the area on the basis of data on the *size* and *weapons possession patterns* of the main groups of weapon holders.

Put simply, if we know that there are 10,000 organized criminals in an LA suburb, and that they are likely to hold 2 weapons each (this kind of information can come from police seizures of guns when apprehending the criminals), the size of their stockpile is an estimated 2x10,000 = 20,000 guns. If, moreover, we know that most of these guns are pistols, but that, on average, every other gang member holds one pistol and one automatic rifle, we can estimate that organize crime holds 15,000 pistols and 5,000 automatic rifles.

Notes

Military weapons: [number of armed forces] x [guns per soldier]
\+ Law enforcement/other government security force weapons: idem
\+ Civilian weapons: idem
\+ Insurgency group weapons: idem

= Stockpiles estimate

In more formal terms: the number of weapons possessed by each group is obtained by multiplying the number of armed members of that group to a weapons possession multiplier representative for that group (obviously, never use the same multiplier across the board, i.e. don't use the ratio of guns per soldier to calculate civilian holdings!). Possession multipliers (the ratio indicating the number of weapons per individual) can be generated from a number of sources.

One such source is interviews and surveys administered to these groups and sampled throughout the area of study. Depending upon the context, surveys can be administered either by professionals such as market research agencies, or people especially trained for that purpose: ex-combatants, NGOs, students etc (see Section 12). Surveys are designed to obtain information on past and current holdings for each group broken down by quantity and weapon type.

Another source is extrapolation. An example: if we know the ratio of weapons per police officer in one country, this ratio can be applied to estimate the gun holdings of police forces in other countries with a similar police structure and policing culture.

A third is police seizures of illicit weapons, be it of petty criminals or organized crime. The types and amounts of weapons found in such caches can, with appropriate caution, be used for establishing a multiplier.

3.3 Market price analysis

Market price analysis makes use of basic economic supply and demand dynamics. The changes in weapons prices (on second-hand or illicit markets) over time can be useful in assessing weapons availability (types and amounts of weapons available). As anyone studying economics will know, price changes are not always easy to interpret without additional information on market dynamics. Here is a very basic analysis, to be combined with additional information and common sense:

Decreasing weapons prices can either reflect the increasing supply of the weapons concerned, or the decreasing demand for them due to, for example, the end of conflict or more stringent state regulations on gun possession. The decrease in

Trainer Note

Exercise 1. The research protocol should outline what information the researcher needs to collect to make the estimates, and how s/he thinks the data can be obtained. The research protocol will also list the exact data on stockpiles that can be obtained (for some categories of owners), as no estimates will be needed for those (which can be civilian ownership through gun registries, military statistics of SALW arsenals made public etc.).

the price of a particular type of weapon can also result from a combination of the two (increase of supply and decrease of demand).

In all cases, declining prices mean weapons are easier to get hold of. It also means that there is a risk that weapons will move out of the area to neighbouring areas, if a seller can get more for his gun(s) there.

Rising weapons prices can either reflect their reduced supply, or the rising demand for weapons due to, for example, fear of conflict or crime, or the intensification of existing conflict. Again, a combination of the two might be a plausible scenario. In all three cases, rising prices imply that weapons are getting harder to get hold of.

Weapons price fluctuations and trends over time can be used to validate estimates made according to the acquisition approach and/or the possession approach, if such estimates have been made for several moments in time (i.e. during and after conflict).

Potential data sources of black market prices include interviews with ex-combatants, unit commanders, local law enforcement authorities, journalists, military attachés, arms dealers etc.

Comparing *black market prices at a given time* between countries for same weapon types can also provide insights about the volume of weapons available, provided such comparison takes into account purchasing power differences. Indeed, should an M-16 cost USD 250 both in Yemen and the United States, this would probably mean M-16s are more widely available in the US than in Yemen, given that the GDP per capita is higher in the United States (and M-16s are therefore relatively cheaper in the US). Comparing *legal market prices at a given time* between countries is not as revealing since prices for commercial firearms are more or less homogenous worldwide.

Exercise 1:

In smaller groups, choose a country/region/conflict that you know rather well, and draw up a research protocol for stockpiles estimates for (a) military forces (b) paramilitary forces (c) insurgents, and (d) civilians (as appropriate in local context). Try to use all three estimation techniques, discuss in particular (a) sources of information; (b) baseline year (for acquisition approach); (c) ways to generate multipliers and force strength (for possession approach); (d) how to conduct the market price analysis.

Notes

Main points:

Try to get hold of official stockpiles data if possible.

If you have to rely on estimation techniques, always use several (triangulation).

If you use estimation techniques, make sure that you understand them fully!

Section 6

Transfers research

Goals of section:

- Distinguishing the authorized and illicit trade in small arms
- Know-how on researching all types of small arms transfers

Contents of section:

- Introduction
- The authorized trade
- The illicit trade (trafficking)
- The legal/illicit link
- Determining the authorized trade
- Determining the illicit trade

Trainer Note

In this section, make sure you don’t get stuck on this definitional issue. It is rare that these distinctions pose a problem in practical research.

1. Introduction

Coe and Smith (2003) define a transfer as a “the reallocation of small arms from the possession of one actor to another. There are always at least two principle actors involved in any transfer, namely the originator and the recipient. These actors can be individuals, groups such as companies or armed opposition groups, criminal organizations or states. However, other actors, such as arms brokering and transportation agents, are also often involved.”

Transfers research usually involves looking at the volume, value, routes, and the types of weapons traded. It also often involves examining intermediaries (brokers, financial intermediaries, etc.) and transport agents. Research can concern anything from a particular export (e.g. the modalities of the export of a batch of military small arms from the Nicaraguan police to Colombian rebels via Panama) to the global flows of small arms (total value of world trade in small arms, trade between Europe and Africa etc.).

Transfers are often divided into authorized deals on the one hand, and illicit (grey/black) market transactions on the other. The authorized deals are those that have been authorized by governments of both exporting and the importing countries.

Grey market transfers are often covert, conducted by governments, or brokers or other entities sponsored by (or acting on behalf of) governments, and clearly break, exploit loopholes or circumvent national and/or international law (for a discussion of transfers and international law, see Frey [2002]. Grey market transfers include, for example, sales to a recipient country that has no identifiable legal authority or government, or transfers by governments to non-state actors, i.e. rebel and insurgent groups.

Black market transfers, lastly, are those deals that occur in clear violation of national and/or international laws and that take place without any official government consent or control. The difference here between the grey market and the black market is that government involvement in the grey market usually entails a hidden policy agenda or operation driving the transfer, while the black market includes those transfers where corrupt individual government officials are acting on their own, usually for personal gain, or deals between non state actors that do not involve government officials.

Trainer Note

These distinctions (authorized trade, illicit trade, and the legal/illicit link) might look simple, but that's a bit deceptive. Thus, make sure that you feel fully comfortable with them before starting the training.

Transfers can either be *international*, or purely *domestic* (i.e. the trade does not cross state borders). In what follows, the emphasis is specifically on the international trade, but much (although not all) of the discussion is also applicable to the domestic market.

2. The authorized trade

There are basically three different types of authorized transfers:

- State-to-state sales (or, alternatively, state-to-state donations, such as US and Scandinavian donations of small arms to the Baltic states after their independence from the Soviet Union). These often, although not always, involve weapons that have already been used;
- Commercial sales, involving private companies in two different states (an example would be the sales of sporting/hunting weapons made by a private producer (say Colt's Manufacturing) to a private retailer (for example an arms shop in Rio de Janeiro);
- The third type of authorized transfer is when a company sells small arms to a foreign state (as for example when FN Herstahl of Belgium sold assault rifles to Nepal).

The legislation of most states requires that a specific state authority in charge of overseeing the arms trade license (authorize) deals of all three types before the transaction takes place. (However, some states make exceptions of various kinds for state-to-state sales.) These authorizations is a good source of information, if publicly available in some form.

3. The illicit trade (trafficking)

The illicit trade (grey and black market) is not licensed by governments (although it might be unofficially condoned by a government in the case of grey market transactions). As a consequence, the export and import process will be more intricate. Often, brokers are used to arrange the transfer (find customer/seller, organize shipping and payment, provide necessary [fake] documentation, act as intermediary between the parties to the deal etc.). Hence, even more than for legal sales, the actors involved in the transfer become objects of study. Such actors can include:

Notes

- Suppliers: arms trading companies, or producers involved in the illicit manufacture of SALW but also legal manufacturers, where part of the production is made “off the books” and sold outside official channels;
- Intermediaries: criminal groups (sometimes involved in the illicit trafficking of several different commodities, not only arms) and arms brokers (which usually focus on arms) facilitate and organize arms transactions, provide counterfeited documentation, and sometimes have their own transport facilities;
- Financial agents and banks: arrange finance and payment;
- Transport and shipping agents, including air charter companies: organize the transportation of goods;
- Corrupt government officials: provide the necessary documentation (i.e. in the exporting country: forged export licenses, in the importing country: forged end user certificates), sometimes act as intermediaries;
- End-users: insurgents, illegitimate non-state actors, countries under embargo, criminals (individuals or organized) etc.

This is the range of actors involved in a major illicit deal. Small deals will involve only a supplier (an unscrupulous arms seller), a small time trader or broker, and a recipient.

4. The legal / illicit link

Small arms are a legal commodity, and most are produced legally (only a fraction, perhaps as little as one per cent, of the global small arms production is illegal). However, approximately 20 per cent of the trade in small arms is illicit (Small Arms Survey, various years). This means that small arms are regularly transferred from legal to illicit circuits. Mechanisms or pathways by which weapons move from the legal to the illicit market include the following:

- Domestic leakage (e.g. theft from state stockpiles or production sites, theft from individuals);
- False Documentation: False end-user certificates or violations of end-use undertakings;
- Ant Trade: The small-scale transfer of weapons legally acquired in one state and then trafficked illegally into a neighboring state (see also glossary, section 11);

Notes

- Supplies to unauthorized recipients: Non-state actors or countries under embargoes or other restrictions;
- Interceptions by illicit recipients of authorized sale.

Examining cases in which arms move from the licit to the illicit circuit will often help point towards weaknesses in national and international legal frameworks and law enforcement.

Exercise 1:

Discuss: Which of the above small arms trade related issues do you find most relevant in your home country? Which would merit further study? Why?

5. Determining the authorized trade

The research methods for determining the authorized and the illicit trade are often not the same. The scope and value of the legal trade is obviously easier to determine than those of the grey and black markets. However, great obstacles exist even with respect to the legal trade.

Commercial transfers (private-to-private), as well as private-to-state transfers usually go though customs. Some state-to-state transfers also do so. They should hence appear in customs statistics of both importing and exporting countries. However, national export and import statistics from customs are not always publicly available.

When researching transfers of a larger number of states, it is often convenient to use international customs databases, of which there are several. Unfortunately, access to these can often be very costly. The most comprehensive trade database is probably the UN Comtrade database of the United Nations Statistics Division (available on the Internet at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/comtrade/)

It takes some training to decipher customs data, and the interpretation of customs figures is not always simple. Moreover, some customs categories include both SALW and non-SALW items, which makes additional probing necessary.

Notes

Box 1: Comtrade small arms customs codes (excluding parts)

Code	Weapons
930100	Military weapons other than revolvers and pistols (includes some non-SALW)
930200	Revolvers and pistols
930320	Sporting shotguns
930330	Sporting rifles
930621	Shotgun cartridges
930630	Small arms ammunition (cartridges and parts thereof)

Another source of information on small arms transfers is national arms export reports. A growing number of mostly Western governments publish yearly reports on their arms export, in an effort to increase transparency. The more complete export reports include information not only on commercial sales but also on state-to-state sales.

National reports which are available on the Internet can be found on the Small Arms Survey's website (http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resurces/arms_export.htm) and on the NISAT website (http://www.nisat.org). Different countries have different systems for categorizing various types of small arms, a fact which obviously has to be taken into account if several countries' exports and imports are compared using national arms export reports.

If the country on which you are conducting research does not publish any information about its imports and exports, you can use mirror data (see glossary, Section 11) to get at least a partial view of the trade. This involves examining what other countries, in their customs data and export reports, report on their sales to/purchases from the country you are interested in. For example, Israel does not provide any data on its arms trade. By examining US exports to Israel as reported in US export reports, and for example Czech customs data on exports to Israel, you will get a partial indication of Israeli imports. Likewise, if the Republic of Congo reports that it has imported Israeli Galil guns, you have a first indication of Israeli exports. Of course, this is much more time consuming, as it means going through all countries' import data, as compared to just examining Israeli export data. Databases, such as that of NISAT, helps make this research less cumbersome.

Notes

Trainer Note

For exercise 2, make sure you are well-accustomed to using the database prior to launching this exercise. Also examine some recent national arms export reports and the Comtrade database.

A source covering all the above (customs data, national arms export reports) and other data is the NISAT database of authorized transfers of small arms and light weapons (see NISAT website http://www.nisat.org/). This might be the best resource for a non-seasoned researcher wanting to examine weapons exports and imports.

Additional sources of information include interviews with personnel working in the security sector, news reports (both the local and the international media), specialized list serves (Gun Policy News at http://lyris.dundee.net/read/?forum=gpn, David Isenberg's mailing list at http://topica.com/u/?a2i30m.bnQk9I.c21hbGxh).

Always remember that transfers data is among the most sensitive of all small arms data, and that governments will often protest if they feel the information is incorrect. Take particular care in assuring that the trade figures you cite are well sourced.

Exercise 2:

Familiarize yourselves with the NISAT database of authorized transfers of small arms and light weapons and with some national reports. Compare reporting in both sources. What are your conclusions?

6. Determining the illicit trade

Researching the illicit trade obviously involves additional obstacles. Here, very little official information is available to the researcher. If s/he wants to find novel information on this topic, s/he must be prepared to do interviews with law enforcement officials, private security personnel (which often have a good sense of the illicit trade dynamics), military attachés, brokers etc., and/or attempt to get hold of end-user certificates, shipping documentation, contracts, insurance etc. Press clippings, including the list serves mentioned in the previous section, can be an additional useful source. There is also the NISAT database on black market transfers (at http://www.nisat.org/) which contains mainly press information.

Like in the case of craft production, illicit transfers research requires the involvement of a person with extensive local knowledge and connections. It must also be kept in mind that such research is potentially dangerous (see Section 1, 7. Security in Small Arms Research). Also, research into illicit transfers only sometimes yields results.

Trainer Note

This is a difficult piece of research. The first thing to do is to try to get to the sources used by the newspaper. However, these are often well protected. Therefore, the researcher then will have to outline several alternative ways in which data on the shipment could be obtained. Here are a few:

1) through obtaining documents proving the shipment;
2) through interviews with military attachés, customs, people working in transport sector;
3) through interviews with people seeing the cargo arrive and how it was unloaded and transported further; and
4) through examination of some sample weapons which are alleged to stem from that shipment, examining if they are of recent manufacture, noting markings, making inquiries in the exporting country on these markings etc.

Surveys of civilians or ex-combatants can be used to triangulate results (see sample questions in section 12), although survey result must be interpreted with extreme caution.

Exercise 3:

A recent article in a leading newspaper includes unsubstantiated evidence that a large shipment of weapons was delivered from country X to the national army of country Y, but does not cite figures, value, or the time of export. The government claims that this has not occurred. It is well known that the weapons of country X are being used by the army and paramilitaries in country Y to commit rights violations. How would you design a research project to examine the claims made?

Main points:

Make sure that you understand the complex nature of transfers before undertaking research in this area!

Make sure that allegations of transfers (in particular illicit ones) are properly sourced.

Take the necessary safety precautions when doing research on illicit transfers.

Section 7

Attitudes

Goals of section:

- Distinguishing traditional and modern-day gun culture
- Studying attitudes on guns

Contents of section:

- Introduction
- Researching modern-day attitudes and gun culture
- Extrapolations from traditional gun culture

Notes

1. Introduction

It is at times assumed that gun culture—national or local traditions surrounding guns and gun use—explains how and why people in certain communities (mis)use guns. For example, differences in "gun culture" supposedly explain why two countries with the similarly high levels of civilian gun ownership (such as for example the US and Switzerland) encounter such different patterns of gun misuse. It is clear that guns have had different uses and meanings in different societies, and that, due to environmental, political, and social factors, they have been more central in certain cultures than in others.

"Guns" mean different things to different people. A "gun" in Siberia is a hunting rifle, used for subsistence hunting. A "gun" in a *favela* of Rio de Janeiro is a handgun, used by (very) young men in gang-fights, self-defense and criminal activities. In both communities, guns are important. In urban Japan, however, a gun does not mean much in relation to people's real life, and is more associated with fiction (movies, popular culture). Meanings attached to guns and their use change over time within one society. By gun culture, we mean these social meanings surrounding guns and gun use.

However, beyond such quite simplistic statements, how can one research gun culture, both as a historical phenomenon and in its current manifestations? This section sketches out some considerations.

Why is it interesting to study attitudes towards guns and gun culture? There are several reasons: First, attitudes tell us something about demand for guns. Demand (by different groups, for different guns) is not simply a consequence of the direct use to which a gun can be put, but also of how it is perceived. Second, changes in attitudes towards guns can be a precursor to change in actual gun-related behaviour. For example, if youth starts talking differently about guns, this might mean that we can expect changes in how they are used in youth circles. Third, gun culture tells us something on what policy prescriptions and legal provisions can and cannot work in specific local circumstances.

Trainer Note

In order to deepen the issue on ‘researching modern day attitudes and gun culture’, you might want the participants to discuss informally how they perceive guns, and how that might differ from how others in their society view them.

2. Researching modern-day attitudes and gun culture

How then, can one go about doing research on the social meaning of guns, and attitudes towards guns? The social meaning of guns can be gauged by examining how they are portrayed in local films and TV-programs, news reporting, books, music, and other manifestations of local culture. Studying the social meaning of guns will involve examining in what contexts and situations guns appear, with which actors, together with what other objects, etc. Studying political debate around changes in gun laws will often also prove fruitful for understanding what meanings are attached to guns. A good study on gun culture will have to cover a range of different sources, from films and books, to political debate. This requires good knowledge of the local language.

Research on attitudes towards guns can either target the general population, or distinguish between different sub-groups of the population. It is clear that young gang-members and elderly urban dwellers will not have the same attitudes towards guns. When researching attitudes it is therefore important to start out by identifying which specific groups (if any) should be studied further. For example, the distinction between male and female attitudes towards guns, and the way in which certain models of masculinity's and femininities shape these groups can be of particular interest. This, however, requires some previous knowledge of patterns of gun possession, general levels of gun use and gun crime, etc (see Section 1).

Although we have included some household survey questions pertaining to attitudes in Section 12, it is important to note that gun culture and attitudes toward guns is often better studied through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews with for example social workers, police, hunters and target shooters, officials issuing gun permits, etc. The reason for this is that household survey respondents, if believing that the "socially acceptable" answer is to have a negative attitude towards guns, will manifest such an attitude even though it might not correspond to his or her true beliefs. In in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the level of trust between the interviewee/participants and the researcher is generally greater, and more honest responses can be generated.

Focus groups and interviews should try to gauge the social meaning attributed to guns, the way they are perceived, why they are valued, how they change the bearer and attitudes to the bearer, who in society can/should hold weapons, if/how weapons should be controlled, etc.

Trainer Note

Obviously, there is the issue of sources to be used, which will be partially different in the different regions. Up to the participants to be creative about which sources to study (they will of necessity in part be culturally and thus not noted in the text above)

Exercise 1:

How would you go about studying present day gun culture in a Middle Eastern country? How would such a study differ from an examination of gun culture in an African state?

3. Extrapolations from traditional gun culture

Researchers are sometimes tempted to refer to traditional gun cultures when discussing the present-day situation in the area they study. Historical gun cultures are often fierce, exotic and make for good stories. While it is important to understand old-day gun culture, through studying how guns are depicted in important texts (normative and cultural) and what role guns have played in the history of a country, one should be extremely careful in making statements about the present on the basis of the past. Societies change, and so do attitudes. Moreover, as noted above, it is at times more relevant to talk about a series of different gun cultures within one and the same country (urban, rural, generational, gender-based, etc.), than one monolithic culture relating to guns and gun use. Hence, extrapolations can be more misleading than revealing and should only be made with utmost care.

Main points:

Be sure to distinguish between historical gun cultures, and present-day varieties!

If you study gun culture, make sure that you cover as many different sources as possible! Drawing conclusions from a few films won't do.

When trying to gauge attitudes, use several methods (triangulate).

Section 8

Effects

Goals of section:

- Understanding of the various types of effects small arms can have
- Understanding to what extent it is possible to draw direct causal links between guns and undesirable effects

Contents of section:

- Introduction
- Direct effects
- Crime
- Suicides
- Humanitarian/development/socio-political impacts
- Methods

Notes

1. Introduction

Measuring the effects of small arms availability and misuse is both a controversial and difficult process, especially when trying to make them distinct from the effects of war and conflict generally, or when seeking to establish a causal relationship with crime.

Current research on the issue often distinguishes between the *direct* and the *indirect* effects of small arms (although there are disagreements on what constitutes direct and indirect effects). Direct effects include death, injury, disabilities, and trauma, as well as the costs related to treatment of injuries and disabilities and the cost of lost working days. Indirect effects are the impacts on a society's social, economic and political organization and structure. They can include instability and insecurity, which in turn can have a number of socio-economic effects.

Due to the methodological concerns mentioned above, it is critical to look for data that can be disaggregated by sex and has a clear small arms component when undertaking research on the effects of small arms. For example, when looking at the effects of small arms on crime, one needs to study carefully the proportion of crimes committed with small arms, and to take into account if/how firearms affects overall crime rates (and not only firearm crime rates).

2. Direct effects

The physical and psychological impacts of small arms use include:

- Mortality, injury and disability resulting from small arms related homicide, suicide, domestic (intimate partner) and other violence, and armed conflict;
- Psychological and psycho-social trauma resulting from small arms related threats and injury;
- Public health costs include costs of treatment of small arms related injury and trauma, lost productivity, Years of Potential Life Lost (YPLL), Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALY).

The direct effects can be measured using public health data and public health analysis of costs (see Small Arms Survey 2002, pp.162-167 for further details). Weapons related death and injury data can be drawn from hospital statistics and statistics on causes of death. It is normally necessary to get an authorization to access hospital data.

Trainer Note

In exercise 2, there are a number of issues that can be brought up here: time frame (3 months) is very short for such a relatively uncommon occurrence. However, if time frame is lengthened, respondents' memories start fading. Do people make distinction between crime and violent crime? Are questions detailed enough (compare to UNICRI crime victimization survey)? Etc.

Exercise 1:

How would you go about collecting mortality, injury, and public health costs of gun misuse in a developing country? What kind of problems can you foresee? How would you try to overcome them?

3. Crime

How guns affect crime is a hotly debated topic, in particular in certain countries such as the United States. There is a large literature on the topic. Currently, the consensus (if one can indeed talk of consensus in this debate) is that the availability of guns does not necessarily affect *overall* violent crime rates. However, gun availability is linked to levels of gun crime: the more guns around, the higher the rate of gun robberies and gun homicides. Gun crimes also tend to be more lethal than other types of violent crime. More narrowly focused research is producing findings that are more refined: It seems, for example, that the more guns there are, the more women become victims of homicides by any means, at least in the US and Western Europe (Small Arms Survey *2004,* chapter 6).

Currently, the data in countries outside the Anglo-Saxon world on gun crimes is not detailed enough to take research forward. Hence, if you are doing field research outside the Anglo-Saxon part of the world, the first thing to do will be to encourage systematic data collection, and collect whatever information is available on guns in crime. Weapons related crime data will come from police statistics, which is sometimes official, and sometimes available upon request. The media can at times be a good source for reporting on gun crime.

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute produces the main international crime victimization survey. The full survey can be found at http://www.unicri.it/icvs/data/questionnaires/Face_to_Face_2000.pdf

Exercise 2:

Gun crime is often studied through crime victimization surveys. How, if at all, would you adapt the survey questions at the end of Section 12 to your home country? What are the problems with doing so?

4. Suicides

Research has shown that in many Western societies, the easy availability of firearms increases the percentage of suicides committed with guns. Suicides with firearms are more likely than suicides by other means to lead to death. Research in other areas of the world is still incomplete (Small Arms Survey 2004, chapter 6). In certain cultural contexts, due to issues of morality and honour, it will prove very difficult to obtain any valid statistics on suicides. Any research on this should be made in close consultation with persons who know the local culture well.

5. Humanitarian / development / socio-political impacts

Humanitarian and human rights impacts: These include violations of international humanitarian law (small arm related fatalities and injuries of relief personnel), human rights abuses, forced displacement (refugees and internally displaced persons), militarized refugee camps, child soldiers, basic needs not satisfied etc (Small Arms Survey 2004, Small Arms Survey 2002, chapter 4).

Lack of development: Declining access to and quality of basic services (education, health etc.), declining agricultural production, food insecurity, etc (Small Arms Survey 2003, chapter 4).

Impacts on economic productivity: Declining investment and tourism, foreign direct investment (FDI), decline in social capital etc.

Militarization of politics: The widespread availability of guns might in certain circumstances lead to the militarization of politics and societies. Political actors rely on armed groups (militias, national guards, etc.) and conflict to achieve their goals, leading to government instability, the exclusion of women and minorities etc.

Notes

6. Methods

Apart from data gathering from hospitals, morgues, the police, surveys (mentioned above; sample questions in Section 12) etc., focus groups are a useful tool for studying impacts of small arms misuse. They involve asking communities affected by small arms availability and use what they perceive as being the impacts of small arms.

Focus group research may reveal more “unorthodox” small arms impacts such as the predominance of female or elderly householders, increased numbers of abandoned/orphaned children, the reduction of commercial and trading activity, the incidence of robbery, increased sexualized violence, the forceful occupation of abandoned homes, or the incidence of temporary displacement, abduction etc. It is essential in conducting such exercises to protect the anonymity/security of participants (see Section 12).

Household surveys can also be designed in conjunction with such focus groups: they can be used to test formally hypotheses drawn out from the focus groups, which ensures that they are relevant more generally.

Exercise 3:

It is well known that men are the primary users and victims of the direct effects of small arms. That said, women are severely indirectly affected. You are interested in developing a profile of the types of risks facing women in relation to small arms. Draw together a research strategy that uses either focus groups or a survey instrument to measure these effects. Consider (1) your research question, (2) the scale of your study (target group, reliability of the sample size, etc) and (3) the types of research instruments you might use.

Main points:

Make sure that your data on effects really has a small arms component!

If you do research on gun suicides, beware of the cultural sensitivities involved.

Section 9

Measures

Goals of section:

- Understanding what normative and practical measures are, and the relationship between them
- Basic understanding of conducting research on measures

Content of section:

- Introduction
- Normative measures
- Practical measures

Notes

1. Introduction

Research on small arms measures involves identifying, describing and analyzing the various interventions taken to address the diverse aspects of the small arms problem. These interventions can include international agreements, national laws and regulations, as well as specific programs, such as for example those designed to collect weapons and raise awareness around weapons issues.

Small arms measures can be directed at tackling any one (or several) of the small arms issues described in the previous sections, for example: regulate production and transfers, register civilian gun owners, influence youth attitudes to guns etc. This means that research on measures can become quite complex, especially if the goal is to assess their implementation.

Measures research can be roughly divided into two broad categories: normative and practical measures. Normative measures are what is agreed on paper and include formal laws and regulations, legally binding treaties and non-binding declarations (**see TRESA Training Modules 'Regional and Subregional SALW Agreements in Africa and their Implementation'; 'Global and Regional Agreements on SALW Control'; 'SALW Import and Export Controls')** Practical measures include, amongst other things, projects and programs to reduce armed violence, collect weapons or raise public awareness. While this distinction is a practical heuristic device, it should be underlined that, in reality, the distinction is not so easy to make. Practical measures and programs may serve to implement normative measures. In this way, practical measures and programs may often be a subset of the normative measures category (concrete implementation).

2. Normative measures

Research on normative measures can involve (a) a description and an analysis of *measures on paper* and/or (b) issues arising with respect to *measures as implemented*. The former will be especially relevant when the measure is first proposed or adopted—before actual implementation has begun. Studying the issue (b) will require some discussion of issue (a).

Trainer Note

You might want to illustrate the ‘measures on paper’ discussed in 2.1 with a particular document with which you are familiar. If no document comes to mind, the UN Firearms Protocol (http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resources/un_gen.htm, A/RES/55/255 [8 June 2001]) is a good example, which can also be used for the two following sub-sections)

2.1 Describing measures on paper involves assessing:

- Geographic scope: Does the measure apply in a local (urban, rural), national, subregional, regional, or global setting? Note that some multilateral (i.e., involving more than two states, as opposed to a ‘bilateral’ measure which applies to only two states) measures may bring together various states from different parts of the world, but not so many states so as to be global in scope (e.g. the Wassenaar Arrangement);
- Type of measure: Possible types of measures include those which are formal/legally binding in nature, such as (at the national level) a law or regulation or (at the multilateral level) a legally-binding treaty or non-binding (‘politically binding’) declaration;
- Actors: whether government (national level, sub-state level), international organizations, civil society (including transnational and local NGOs);
- Subject matter: At what point(s) of the small arms life cycle does the measure intervene: manufacture, use/possession, transfer, storage, disposal etc.?
- Mechanisms: Examples of mechanisms designed to achieve particular regulatory effects at different points in the small arms life cycle include marking, record-keeping, tracing, licensing/registration (of weapons, persons, transactions, etc.), documentation, penalties and criminalization.

2.2 Analyzing measures on paper

Criteria for comparison and analysis of measures on paper include geographic scope, regulatory scope (the number of issues covered), the degree to which the instrument constrains relevant actors, especially states (legally binding or not?), capacity for implementation, the degree to which the measure is potentially effective, its gaps and weaknesses. The last issues, in particular, raise the question of the standards to be used as a basis for comparison and analysis. For example, in the field of concern, is there an accepted “best practice” against which the relevant measure, as written/conceived, can be evaluated?

Especially when dealing with legal instruments or other formal instruments, careful reading is of utmost importance. A particular provision of a treaty or other document will need to be read alone, and in conjunction with other provisions of the same document, before its meaning will be clear.

2.3 Describing measures as implemented involves an assessment of:

- Status of instrument: If we are dealing with a legally-binding treaty: has it entered into force? If not, how many ratifications are required before this happens? In the case of a non-binding instrument, what is the extent of consent or adherence to it? Documentation and status information (signatures and ratifications) should be checked, wherever possible, with the organizations or actors responsible for maintaining the instrument;
- Efforts taken for implementation: At the national level, what legislative or administrative changes have occurred for purposes of fulfilling the commitments undertaken by a state internationally? Note that while most implementation of multilateral measures occurs at the national level, such implementation may also occur at the multilateral level. For example, a particular instrument may provide for the creation of a new multilateral body (for purposes of monitoring compliance with the instrument for example). Inter-state cooperation, including information-sharing and the provision of assistance, are in fact common features of many multilateral measures.

2.4 Analyzing measures as implemented

The question of a standard or benchmark for comparison is especially important when the focus of the research is on the implementation of a particular measure or measures. In order to evaluate the relative success of a particular intervention, we need a reasonably accurate measure of the situation that the intervention was designed to change. The generation of such information may, in fact, constitute the basis of its own research project.

Particular analytical issues which arise in the course of evaluating the implementation of normative measures include the following:

- Extent of compliance: Has the instrument been complied with? How does concrete action compare with formal commitment?
- Reasons for non-compliance: Such reasons can include, in addition to the infamous lack of “political will”, a lack of resources and a change of material circumstances making compliance more difficult (renewed warfare, for example);

Notes

- Effects of implementation: These may be negative, as well as positive. The task of measuring the effects of measures is invariably difficult. The contribution the particular measure may have made to a particular social change (e.g. lower gun violence) must be isolated from other potential causes of that change before causality can be attributed with confidence;
- Whether the measure has achieved its desired goals (overall evaluation): This issue is obviously related to the preceding ones. In addition to intended consequences, the issue of unintended consequences should also be examined;
- Lessons learned: including recommendations for improvements to existing efforts or enhanced or additional measures. (Where the issuance of policy recommendations is part of the project or organization mandate.)

3. Practical measures / programs

By definition, a program is an organized, planned, and sometimes short-term effort designed to address an existing problem affecting a particular group of people (the ‘target population’).

Whatever the objectives of a small arms program, it should ideally have three main components that need to be researched:

- It addresses a well-defined need that can be changed (e.g. gun violence, unmanageable availability of weapons in a post conflict situation etc.);
- It consists of a series of interventions aimed at addressing this need (e.g. awareness raising and public education campaigns on the effects of gun-related criminality, disarmament, weapons collection);
- It has a monitoring and evaluation system (M&E).

One particularly important area of research on small arms programs is evaluation. Program evaluation involves the assessment of the five steps in the program cycle, and should therefore seek to answer the following questions **(see also TRESA Training Module on Evaluation)**:

- Needs assessment: Did the problem which the program was intended to address really exist? Was it really crucial to address this problem compared to other problems? Were the needs and target population properly defined?
- Program design: Was the intervention chosen to deal with the problem the best available option (in theory)? Was it built upon previous experiences and did it take into account lessons learned from other programs? If the program was not successful, was it because its underlying theory was wrong (theory failure)?
- Program implementation and service delivery: Was the program carried out as it was designed? Were sufficient resources provided, and was the implementing team qualified to do the job? Did the team face unexpected obstacles which affected implementation? If the program did not meet its objectives, was it because it was not implemented as designed (process failure)?
- Program impact or outcomes: Were the program objectives defined in program design achieved (i.e. was gun violence reduced after the program)? How was this measured? Was there baseline data available to compare the situation before and after the program?
- Program efficiency (cost-effectiveness): What is the program’s cost relative to other similar programs? Did the costs match the outcomes?

Evaluation can be participatory and non-participatory. Participatory evaluation provides for active involvement in the evaluation process of those with a stake in the programme: providers, partners, and beneficiaries (e.g. communities affected by gun violence). Participation takes place throughout all phases of the evaluation: planning and design; gathering and analyzing the data; identifying the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations; disseminating results; and preparing an action plan to improve programme performance (USAID 1996). There is a large literature on participatory evaluation **(see TRESA Training Module on Evaluation).**

Notes

Exercise 1:

In smaller groups, design an evaluation of a weapons collection program of your choice **(see TRESA Training Module 'Management of Weapons Collection and Disposal Programs'; and 'Management of Community Weapons Collection Program')**. Make sure you integrate methods from previous sections (on stockpiles, attitudes, effects etc.). What difference does it make if the evaluation can be designed before the actual weapons collection program starts? What changes if you choose to make the evaluation participatory?

Box 1: Comparative elements of traditional and participatory evaluation

Evaluation with a participatory component:	**Traditional external evaluation:**
Participant focus and ownership of evaluation	Program sponsor focus and ownership of evaluation
Broad range of stakeholders participate	Stakeholders often don't participate
Focus is on learning	Focus is on accountability
Flexible design	Predetermined design
Rapid appraisal methods	Formal methods
Outsiders are facilitators	Outsiders are evaluators

Main points:

Evaluation of measures is complex, often involving research on various small arms issues

Section 10

Bibliography

1. Doing desk research on small arms

1.1 Production

Internet sources:

http://www.nasog.net/datasheets/index.htm (contains descriptions on various types of weapons)

http://www.earmi.it/armi/database/brand_r.htm (similar to the previous site)

http://premium.hoovers.com/global/uk/ (contains company information. Nevertheless, access to most of the information requires subscription)

Hardcopies/books/journals:

Small Arms Survey. Various Years. *Small Arms Survey Yearbook.* Oxford: Oxford University Press (contains detailed information on small arms production countries and companies)

Forecast International, *Ordnance and Munitions Forecast.* Newtown, Connecticut: Forecast International

Jane's Ammunition. Various years. Couldson: Jane's Information Group

Jane's Infantry Weapons. Various years. Couldson: Jane's Information Group

Jane's World Defence Industry. Various years. Couldson: Jane's Information Group

SIPRI. Various years. *SIPRI Yearbook.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Notes

1.2 Stockpiles

Berman, Eric. (forthcoming). *Small Arms in the Central African Republic* Geneva: Small Arms Survey.

Demetriou, Spyros. Politics from the barrel of a gun: small arms proliferation and conflict in the Republic of Georgia (1989-2001), Occasional Paper 6 (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2002).

Demetriou, Spyros , Robert Muggah, and Ian Biddle, Small Arms Availability, Trade and Impacts in the Republic of Congo, Special Report, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2001)

Grillot, Suzette, Wolf-Christian Paes, Hans Risser, and Shelly O. Stoneman. 2004. *A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-conflict Macedonia* Geneva/ Skopje: Small Arms Survey/UNDP

Khakee, Anna and Nicolas Florquin. 2003. *Kosovo and the Gun: A Baseline Assessment of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kosovo* Geneva/Pristina: Small Arms Survey/UNDP

MacFarlane, Neil and Stina Torjesen. 2004. *Kyrgyzstan: A Small Arms Anomaly in Central Asia?* Geneva: Small Arms Survey

Small Arms Survey. Various Years. *Small Arms Survey Yearbook.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Small Arms Survey/SEESAC. 2004. *A House isn't a Home Without a Gun: SALW Survey Republic of Montenegro"* Belgrade: SEESAC

1.3 Transfers

Internet sources:

http://www.nisat.org/ (NISAT maintains databases on authorized and illicit trade)

http://disarmament2.un.org/cab/register.html (The UN Register of Conventional Weapons contains some information on transactions and holdings of light weapons (including MANPADS)

http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resources.htm (Resources include links to states' arms export reports, small arms trade transparency barometer, and UN documents)

http://www.amnesty.org.uk/ (Amnesty International regularly produces reports on the arms trade)

Notes

http://www.hrw.org/ (Publishes reports and shorter documents on the arms trade)

http://www.ipisresearch.be/ (Conducts research on the arms trade)

Hardcopies/books/journals:

Frey, Barbara. 2002. *The Question of the Trade, Carrying, and Use of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Context of Human Rights and Humanitarian Norms.* Working Paper. Geneva: Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/39

Lumpe, Lora and Jeff Donarski. 1998. *The Arms Trade Revealed: A Guide for Investigators and Activists.* Washington DC: Federation of American Scientists

Small Arms Survey. Various Years. *Small Arms Survey Yearbook.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

1.4 Measures

Internet sources:

http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/databases.htm (Comprehensive collection of national statements on a wide range of small arms and light weapons (SALW) issues, voting records, and documents on the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on illicit SALW)

Hardcopies/books/journals:

Small Arms Survey. Various Years. *Small Arms Survey Yearbook.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

1.5 Effects

Internet sources:

http://www.research.ryerson.ca/SAFER-Net/Text.html (Provides research on effects)

http://sand.miis.edu/ (Security and development programme with publications on small arms)

http://www.unicri.it/icvs/data/questionnaires/Face_to_Face_2000.pdf (Data and questionnaires from research on guns in crime)

Hardcopies/books/journals:

Small Arms Survey. Various Years. *Small Arms Survey Yearbook.* Oxford: Oxford University Press (Contains extensive references to literature on various types of effects)

1.6 General

Internet sources:

http://www.bicc.de/ (Prepares studies on various SALW topics)

http://www.saferworld.org.uk/ (Studies, workshops, training on small arms issues)

http://www.unidir.org/ (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, undertakes studies on SALW)

http://www.international-alert.org/ (Prepares studies on various SALW topics)

http://www.iansa.org/ (Information and advocacy on a variety of small arms related issues)

http://www.grip.org/ (Produces reports on small arms related issues (mostly in French)

http://www.iiss.org/ (Information on current conflicts, including the types of weapons involved (subscription required)

http://www.janes.com/ (Information on a rage of security related topics, including some on small arms)

2. Regional sources for small arms desk research

Internet sources:

http://www.smallarmsnet.org/ (Clearing house for research on small arms in Africa)

http://www.iss.co.za/ (Parent organization of the above)

http://www.seesac.org/ (Commissions studies on small arms in the Balkans)

http://www.vivario.org.br/ (Conducts extensive research on small arms in Latin America)

3. SALW research manuals / methods

Internet sources:

http://www.seesac.org/resources/surveyprotocols.htm (SALW Survey Protocol 1, 2, and 3)

Hardcopies / books / journals:

Banerjee, Dipankar and Robert Muggah. 2002. *Small Arms and Human Insecurity*. Colombo/Geneva: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies/Small Arms Survey Available online at (http://www.rcss.org/small.pdf).

UN LiREC Training Manual Module 8: Undertaking Research on Small Arms Issues available on demand from UNLiREC or the Small Arms Survey

Berman Eric G. 2003. *Surveying Small Arms: A View from the Field* for the International Conference *Peacekeeping Intelligence: New Players, Extended Boundaries* sponsored by Carleton University and the Royal Military College of Canada, 4-5 December, Ottawa

TRESA Training Module 'Small Arms Recognition and Identification' – in the making

TRESA Training Module on Evaluation – in planning process

TRESA Training Module 'Management of Weapons Collection and Disposal Programs' – in planning process

TRESA Training Module 'Management of Community Weapons Collection Program' – in planning process

4. General research manuals / methods

Hardcopies / books / journals:

Bloor, Michael, Jane Frankland, Michelle Thomas and Kate Robson. 2001. *Focus Groups in Social Research.* London: Sage Publications

Jim Coe and Henry Smith. 2003*. Action Against Small Arms. A Resources and Training Handbook*, joint publication by International Alert, Oxfam and Saferworld, London, p.7

Greenbaum, Thomas L. 2000. *Moderating Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Group Facilitation.* London: Sage Publications

Morgan, David L. and Richard A. Krueger. 1998. *The Focus Group Kit.* London. Sage Publications

Spradley, James P. 1997. *The Ethnographic Interview.* International Thomson Publishing

USAID. Center for Development Information and Evaluation .1996. ”Conducting a Participatory Evaluation“ Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Tips, Number 1)

Section 11

Glossary

Ant trade	Guns are bought legally in one country, and then smuggled in small increments, sometimes one at a time, into another country.
Desk Research	Research that can be done from the office, away from the field (see section 1).
Enumerators	Signation of those interviewers conducting the interviews for household surveys.
Estimation Technique	Techniques used when the actual data is missing or cannot be extracted. The techniques use indirect data to find out a missing number etc.
Field Observation	Observations that the researcher manages to make while on mission: it can be how the police actually stores firearms (observed while touring police facilities); what types of guns were dominant in military storage facilities to which the researcher gained access, etc.
Focus Group	Informal, interactive, but nevertheless directed discussion on pre-set topics with a group of people assumed to be representative of some sub-category of the population.
Gender Analysis	Applying gender perspectives at all stages of your research and assessing the different impacts of i.e. SALW on women and men.
Household Survey	Reasonably >1,000 persons from as many households, randomly sampled, answer a set of identical questions, either by phone, or in face-to-face interviews (the interviewer goes from house to house).
Hypothesis	Testable supposition about reality.

Notes

Key Informant Interview	Interview with person with particular knowledge on the issue.
Mirror Data	Small arms export data of states X, Y and Z, used to estimate imports of state A. Alternatively, small arms *import* data of states X, Y and Z, used to estimate *exports* of state A.
Participatory Research	Research in which those who are directly affected by a problem are involved in defining the exact nature of the problem, causes, effects, and possible remedies.
Pre-testing (of survey questionnaire)	Verifying the validity and reliability of a social science research tool prior to using it.
Primary Material	Material that comes straight from the source which produced it: laws, resolutions, statements, statistics, interviews, witness accounts, court material, etc.
Respondent	Interviewee
Secondary Material	Studies and analysis of various kinds, including press sources
Semi-structured Interview	See section 12
Sex-disaggregated Data	Any data cross-classified by sex, or presented separately for women and men, girls and boys
Small Arms and Light Weapons	See Section 1, Box 1
Structured Interview	Respondent is asked fixed, pre-determined set of questions.
Triangulation	Using several different sources of information and/or different methodological approaches to verify the accuracy of a piece of information.

Section 12

Annexes: Research techniques and sample questions

1. Interviews

Interviews are used to collect in-depth information. It allows for interviewers to use probing techniques to interpret and analyze quantitative data and findings. Interviews are seemingly very simple. You arrange to meet with one or several "key informants", i.e. persons with particular knowledge on the issue, and you try to solicit information from them. You can choose between structured interviews, and semi-structured interviews (see below), and between interviewing one or several persons at the same time.

However, this apparent simplicity notwithstanding, interviewing is a difficult art to master, and one that is not easy to teach. In many ways, interviewing skills are "learning-by-doing" skills. If you have never done interviews before, you should prepare carefully, with role-play being an important component of that preparation. Ideally, the best way to learn interviewing skills is to accompany a seasoned interviewer in his/her work. If that is not possible, a solution might be to interview in pairs.

Structured interviews ask the same questions to every respondent, following a pre-determined questionnaire. Advantages and disadvantages of structured interviews are discussed in Section 2.

Semi-structured interviews, in contrast, are more flexible, where the interviewer has determined broad themes and some specific questions in advance, but retain the possibility to create questions during the interview, probe the interviewee's answers, and control the general direction of the interview. Examples of semi-structured interviews include:

Community interviews: Involves interviewing members of the studied community. In the case of small arms research, this will usually mean communities affected by small arms availability and misuse.

Notes

Key informant interviews: Key informant interviews involve interviewing people with a certain degree of expertise in the subject matter. Key informants on small arms transfers will include customs officials, persons sitting on export authorization boards, intelligence personnel, journalists etc. Key informants on community gun violence will comprise community leaders, NGOs, etc. Key informants can provide useful contacts for further research.

Stakeholder interviews: Stakeholders, such as funders, partners, can be interviewed discuss the research's strengths, weaknesses, and current conditions. Stakeholders can provide useful guidance as to what the priorities of the research should be in the view of their institutions.

2. Large-scale household surveys

Undertaking survey research is a complex exercise, which requires careful preparation. There are a number of precautions to take while designing and administering surveys that researchers should be aware of. For this reason, it recommended that researchers planning to do surveys possess a very solid social science background and review the relevant literature. Even so, if they have limited experience in polling techniques and statistics, hiring a professional company is almost certainly the best solution.

However, even if a professional company is hired, the small arms researchers are still responsible for designing the questionnaire. Below, sample questions on various small arms related issues have been reproduced. A number of these, and additional questions, can be found in the SEESAC Survey Protocol 3 (http://seesac.org/resources/SurveyProtocol3.pdf). These questions, however, need to be reviewed, adapted to the local context and pre-tested before they can be administered. Pre-testing is crucial in ensuring that survey questions are well understood and considered relevant. Pre-testing takes place in several stages. First, informally with people who are familiar with the local context and the people to be surveyed. Second, the survey should be pre-tested on the ground and conducted as if it were part of the actual polling.

Critics of survey methodology hold it to be a method that artificially forces respondents to formulate opinions, masking the complexity of conflicting views and unconscious biases within each respondent. In many sensitive areas, survey questions poorly predict actual behaviour: respondents give the “socially acceptable answer”, rather than their personal conviction. In small arms research especially, it is difficult to estimate the accuracy of respondents' answers when asked about a sensitive topic such as gun possession. For this reason, special attention should be paid to the formulation of survey questions, and who will be administering the survey, as a certain degree of trust between the interviewer and respondent is needed.

Notes

Nevertheless, survey findings can be extremely useful when comparing them to findings obtained by other methods (so-called triangulation). For instance, a survey on weapons possession patterns can be used to validate or refute findings on small arms availability obtained from other methods (i.e. from the number of licensed guns etc.). They can also generate important information on people's perceptions and attitudes, especially in terms of small arms demand and effects.

3. Focus groups

3.1 Background

Focus group research is based on facilitating an organized discussion with a group of individuals selected because they were believed to be representative of some class (i.e. women heads of household in a small arms affected community). Discussion is used to bring out insights and understandings in ways which simple questionnaire items may not be able to tap. If successful, the interaction among focus group participants brings out differing perspectives, multiple meanings of concepts and topics, and new avenues of exploration. People get caught up in the discussion and may reveal more than they would in the more formal interview setting. Interaction is the key to successful focus groups. In an interactive setting, discussants draw each other out, sparking new ideas. One may even find a form of collaborative mental work, as discussants build on each other to come to a consensus that no one individual would have articulated on their own.

The number of topics explored per meeting is usually at most three (often just one), with subtopics under each. Meetings are usually held in neutral, safe locations such as hotel meeting rooms (not, for instance, in the workplace in a study involving employees). Participants are selected at random. Participants should be informed of the purposes of the focus group study. Often they are encouraged to participate on a first-name basis, which encourages informality and openness while suggesting greater anonymity.

Focus groups can be designed to generate representative insights on insecurity, weapons ownership and small arms misuse, and are therefore relevant tools for research on small arms demand, stockpiles, and effects. Because such information is sensitive in nature, it is vital that the focus groups are carried out discretely and with the trust of the participants. Views from different target groups (i.e. men, women and children, or different ethnic groups) should be solicited separately, so as to generate alternative views of the issue of small arms-related violence, and facilitate better information gathering, and guarantee the safety of participants.

Notes

The findings from the sub-groups should be presented publicly by the participants to the group at large at the end of each focus group session. This latter point will depend on the kind of information that was solicited – in certain instances it may be unwise to share smaller discussions, especially if sensitive topics such as gender-based violence or inter-ethnic prejudice were discussed. Attention also needs to be given to whether group participants will require psycho-social support after interviews have taken place.

3.2 Focus Group Design and Methodology

A focus group meeting should be participatory (flexible, non-formal, interactive), involve between 8-12 people (i.e. men, women, children; mixed groups where this does not detract from data collection or cause discomfort or jeopardize the safety of participants), take between 2-3 hours and involve at most 2 facilitators and a note-taker.

The Role of the Facilitator: The facilitator is absolutely central to the success of participatory focus groups. The facilitator should be trained in basic participatory methodologies and should be fluent in the language of the participants. If interviewing single-sex groups, it is often advisable to choose a facilitator of the same sex as participants. It is important that the facilitator approach the focus group with few biases (assume optimal ignorance) in relation to the exercises. It is up to the judgement of the facilitator to determine which questions should be asked, in which sequence they should be posed and what types of methodologies should be used to capture information. The facilitator should demonstrate strong listening skills, an informal style and a skilful (and practiced) use of specialized research tools to elicit information from participants. While the Research Guide provides a list of suggested instruments, it is ultimately up to the facilitator to use the appropriate combination of methods and to sensitively guide the research process.

The Role of the Note-Taker: The note-taker acts as a participant observer throughout the focus roup meetings. His/her role is devoted to recording the proceedings of the focus group, taking notes on the reaction (both words and gestures) of participants to the exercises, documenting key issues/questions raised by participants, and, where appropriate, asking questions for the purposes of clarification. The note-taker is also responsible for producing short 2-3 page reports of the proceedings. These notes should briefly be shared with participants at the end of the session to ensure that they accurately reflect what they said.

Notes

3.3 Outline of Focus Group Process

Recruiting focus group participants: Contacts should be established in the area of study well in advance of the arrival of the facilitators. Ideally, a local NGO will be able to identify a representative sample of participants (i.e. approximately 8 to 10 men, women and children respectively) and arrange an appropriate meeting place (e.g. school, public office) and time (e.g. preferably late afternoon or evening depending on the schedule of the participants). Prospective participants should be asked whether they could spend 2 to 3 hours of their time to contribute to the study. Refreshments should be organised prior to or immediately on arrival of the facilitator team.

Upon arrival of the facilitators: It is absolutely vital that each facilitator and note-taker introduces him or herself and explains the overall aims and objectives of the study (be general – and avoid unnecessary details). The introduction should also take note of the role of the note-taker, guarantee the confidentiality of respondents, and describe the likely outputs of the exercise. The facilitator will then divide the group into separate clusters (i.e. subgroups of men, women and children) if appropriate to the topic under discussion.

Focus group process: The focus group process can be either highly organized, using exercises, such as time lines, mapping, diagrams, etc. (for further details, see Banerjee and Muggah 2002, UNLiREC Training Manual). They can also take the form of a simple (although directed) discussion on a few selected topics. What format to choose will depend on a number of factors such as the age, education, social background, and culture etc. of the participants.

For further reading, see bibliography, Section 10.

4. Sample household survey questions

The following are questions derived from various questionnaires designed by the Small Arms Survey. Unless otherwise stated, the questions are generally NOT closed, i.e. the enumerator does NOT provide the list of responses (enumeration of alternatives). Instead, the respondent answers the question, and the interviewer translates the answer into the tick list (or selects ”other, specify“ if the answer does not fit with any of the listed responses).

4.1 Sample household survey questions on stockpiles

These questions can be used in areas where the issue of small arms is sensitive and questions on small arms cannot be asked directly (i.e. ”Do you own a firearm? How many arms do you own? Etc), for example in situations where small arms ownership is illegal.

Apart from the small arms of public authorities, how often do you hear and see firearms in your neighborhood?		
	Hear	See
Never		
Infrequently		
Once a month		
Once a week		
Several times a week		
Daily		
Refused		
Don’t Know		

Which groups of society are well armed, in your view?	
Criminal groups	
Businessmen	
Politicians	
Households	
Youth	
Ex-fighters/ex-military	
Whole society	
Other, specify	

How do you think that the number of firearms in your neighbourhood has changed in the last three years? Has it decreased, increased or remained the same?	
Has decreased	
Has increased	
The same	
Refused	
Don't Know	

In your opinion, how many households in your town/city/village/surroundings have firearms?	
All households	
Almost all households	
Most households (three-quarters)	
Every other household (one out of two)	
Few households (a fourth)	
Almost no households	
Not a single household	
Refused	
Don't Know	

Notes

Among those households that possess a gun, on average, how many firearms do you think that they have?	
Record actual number	
Refused	
Don’t Know	

On average, what types / makes do you think are the most common in [area of study]? (Multiple response)	
Pistols/revolvers	
Automatic rifle (such as AK-47)	
Hunting rifle (single-shot, bolt)	
Shotgun (non-automatic or pump)	
Medium or heavy machinegun	
Landmine	
Grenade	
Mortar	
RPGs (rocket-propelled grenade launcher)	
Other (specify)	
Refused	
Don’t Know	

Notes

If a person from your neighbourhood, for whatever reason, would need a weapon, where do you think he or she could get one? (Multiple response)	
Would not be able to get one	
Would have to ask	
Buy one from the black market	
Buy one from someone else	
Know of a hidden cache	
Buy from a friend in the armed forces	
Borrow one	
Get from family member	
Get in specific town/region (specify)	
Get a license and buy a gun	
Other (specify)	
Refused	
Don't Know	

4.1.1 Simple survey questionnaire for ex- combatants

While the following questionnaire has been designed for ex-combatants (presumably mostly males), relevant information can also be gathered from the so-called 'camp followers' (people – including women – who assist combatants by carrying weapons, food etc.).

Please note that the last two questions in this section might not be appropriate in all countries; especially in countries where the civilian possession of weapons is rendered illegal by law.

Notes

In the fighting, how important were small arms compared to other types of weapons?	
Very important	
Rather important	
Not so important	
Not at all important	

How many weapons did you hold before the conflict began? In what condition were they?		
Types	Quantities	Condition (new/average/ non-serviceable)

How many weapons did you hold [*in the midst of fighting*] In what condition were they?		
Types	Quantities	Condition (new/average/ non-serviceable)

Notes

How many weapons did you hold [*at the end of the fighting]* In what condition were they?		
Types	Quantities	Condition (new/average/ non-serviceable)

How many weapons do you currently possess? In what condition are they?		
Types	Quantities	Condition (new/average/ non-serviceable)

If you possess fewer weapons today, what explains the difference?	
They were sold	
They were collected	
They were given to other members of militia	
Other, specify	

Do you think that a small arm or light weapons is necessary for your personal protection? If yes, why? If no, describe how you ensure your own protection.

What kinds of small arms do you rely on for your own protection?

If a person from your neighbourhood, for whatever reason, would need a weapon, where do you think s/he could get one? (Multiple response)	
Would not be able to get one	
Would have to ask	
Buy one from the black market	
Buy one from someone else	
Know of a hidden cache	
Buy from a friend in the armed forces	
Borrow one	
Get from family member	
Get in specific town/region (specify)	
Get a license and buy a gun	
Other (specify)	
Refused	
Don't Know	

Notes

If a person from your neighbourhood, for whatever reason, would need ammunition, where do you think s/he could get one? (Multiple response)	
Would not be able to get one	
Would have to ask	
Buy one from the black market	
Buy one from someone else	
Know of a hidden cache	
Buy from a friend in the armed forces	
Borrow one	
Get from family member	
Get in specific town/region (specify)	
Get a license and buy a gun	
Other (specify)	
Refused	
Don't Know	

Notes

4.2 Sample interview questions on transfers for ex-combatants

What were the most important sources of small arms and light weapons of [your armed group], and you personally, before the conflict?

Describe the most important sources of small arms during conflict? Have the routes changed?

C

Describe the financial arrangements established and used to acquire weapons before and during the conflict? Were weapons paid for in cash? Were weapons bought on credit? Were weapons acquisitions organized by known members of [your armed group] or other actors? (Do not ask “who” these people might be – it is unimportant but very sensitive)

C

Describe the most important sources of small arms acquisition following the conflict and today? Have the sources and routes changed?

Describe the current financial arrangements established and used to purchase small arms and light weapons today.

C

Did [your armed group] confiscate small arms and light weapons from [official security forces] during the conflict? If yes, roughly how many of the overall stocks were acquired in this way? If no, what happened to weapons left behind by [official security forces]?

Did [your armed group] purchase small arms or light weapons from [official security forces] (e.g. military, para-military, police, business, etc)? If yes, roughly how many of the overall stocks were acquired in this way?

How much would an assault rifle (e.g. Kalashnikov) cost in the [area of study]? In the capital and other major cities? Along the main borders? (SENSITIVE, if illegal)

C

How much would a pistol (e.g. a Makarov) cost in the [area of study]? In the capital and other major cities? Along the main borders? (SENSITIVE, if illegal)

C

Notes

Repeat for other relevant types of weapons (revolvers, grenades, hunting rifles [shotguns or other], Rocket Propelled Grenade [RPG] launchers, etc.)

Have you heard of other kinds of weapons circulating in the (area of study) besides the ones just mentioned? Can you please list them?

4.3 Sample household questions on attitudes

What do you think is an appropriate age for starting to handle a weapon?	
Record actual age	
Don’t know	
Refused	

Do you find that owning a weapon makes you safer or less safe?	
Safer	
Less safe	
Makes no difference	
Don’t know	
Refused	

Notes

Do you find that owning a weapon makes your family safer or less safe?	
Safer	
Less safe	
Makes no difference	
Don’t know	
Refused	

Are you for or against stricter control on weapons of citizens?	
For	
Against	
Don’t know	
Refused	

What types of guns do you think citizens should be allowed to own (for example pistols, hunting rifles, sporting guns, assault rifles, grenades etc.)?	
All types	
No types	
Some types, circle which:	Pistols, hunting rifles, sporting guns, assault rifles, grenades, machine guns, mortars, other
Don’t know	
Refused	

Notes

Why do you think that people keep firearms?	
Personal protection	
Protect property	
Political security	
Work	
Hunting/sport shooting	
Left-over from war	
Part of the tradition	
Valued family possession	
Other, specify	
Don’t know	
Refused	

If your household could own a gun legally, would you choose to do so?	
Yes	
No	
Don’t know	
Refused	

Why would your household choose to own a firearm? *(if yes to question above)*	
To protect myself/my family	
To protect my property/business	
For political reasons	
For my work	
Sport shooting/hunting	
Because all other people have guns	
Tradition	
Other, specify	
Don’t know	
Refused	

Why would your household choose *not* to own a firearm? *(if no to question above)*	
Don’t like guns	
Dangerous for family in the house (i.e. children)	
Don’t need one	
Don’t know how to use one	
Only women in the house	
License/storage too costly/difficult to obtain	
Other, specify	
Don’t know	
Refused	

Notes

Do you personally think that there are too many or too few guns in [area]?	
Too many	
Too few	
Just right amount	
Don’t know	
Refused	

4.4 Sample household survey questions on effects

Has anyone in your household been injured in an accident (in the last three months)?	
Yes (Fill in victim form for each case. See 4.4.1 below)	
No	
Refused	
Don’t Know	

Has anyone in this household been a victim of a crime or a violent encounter (in the last 3 months)? Has anyone else?	
Yes (Fill victim form for each case)	
No	
Refused	
Don’t Know	

Has anyone in this household been threatened or made to feel fearful (in the last 3 months)? Has anyone else?	
Yes (Fill in victim form for each case. See 4.4.1 below)	
No	
Refused	
Don’t Know	

What type of violent crime and violent problems occurs most often in this area nowadays? (Multiple response)	
Robbery	
Kidnapping	
Threats	
Murder	
Assault/beatings	
Rape or other sexual assault (on men or women)	
Gangs	
Fighting	
Violence related to smuggling	
Revenge	

table continues on next page

Domestic violence	
Drunken disorder	
Other (specify)	
There are no violent crimes and violent problems whatsoever	
Refused	
Don’t Know	

Is violent crime conducted with weapons?

If yes, what kind of arms?	
Bladed weapon	
Firearms	
Other, specify	
Refused	
Don’t know	

Do you think your town / neighborhood is safer, the same or more dangerous than other areas in the country?	
Safer	
Same	
More dangerous	
Refused	
Don’t know	

Compared to one year ago, is the security in this area better or worse?	
Improved	
Worse	
The same	
Volatile: goes up and down	
Refused	
Don’t Know	

4.4.1 Victim form

Victim's sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

Victim's age: __ __ years

Location of incident

Victim's home	
Other home	
Public place	
Other (specify)	
Don't Know/Refused	

Type of violent encounter

Threat	
Mugging	
Robbery	
Theft	
Rape	
Assault	
Fight	
Throwing stones	
Other (specify)	
Don't Know/Refused	

Number of assailants: __ __ person/people

Assailant armed? No ☐ Yes ☐

(Filtered) Specify type ________________ and quantity ________________

Assailant known to victim? No ☐ Yes ☐

If yes, what was the perpetrator’s relationship to the victim? (Check all that apply)

Friend/neighbor/acquaintance	
Intimate partner	M ☐ F ☐
Other family/relative	
Person of authority (teacher, doctor, community leader etc.)	
Stranger/criminal	
Security force member	
Other, (specify)	
Not applicable	
Don’t Know/refused	

Victim injured?

No injury ☐ Light injury/recovered ☐ Heavy injury ☐ Lethal ☐

Consequences: Was the assailant arrested, tried? What kind of punishment was meted out? Was it an adequate deterrent?

Was the assailant punished by other means (‘street justice’). By whom? What were/are the results?

Section 13

Writing up the report

Contents of section:

Notes

Introduction to section

The structure, length, and complexity of your report will depend on the intended audience. You might find yourself writing several versions of the report: one extended version for those particularly interested in the topic, and a shorter one for a broader public. In any case, reports will often have a rather similar structure. This section describes this structure in more detail.

Often, it is good to use a report (even on a somewhat different topic) that you find particularly clear and useful as a model in your own report writing. The style, structure, graphics, etc. of that report can help you think about how to format your own work. If you write for a particular organization, you will of course want to check what their requirements for reporting are.

1. Executive summary

A report often starts with an executive summary. It provides a summary of each main section, or simply outlines the purpose, the approach/methods, and major findings of the report. The style should be simple and accessible. The summary is obviously written only once the report has been finalized. A good trick in making sure that the executive summary is indeed clear to non-specialists or people not familiar with the intricacies of the topic is to have someone from outside of the small arms field read it and comment on it. Ideally, in fact, such a person should read the entire report.

2. Introduction

The introduction should capture the reader’s attention. It is therefore important that it is clear and explains convincingly why the issue you are covering is of interest and importance.

The introduction states the questions/problem, the rationale for writing a report on this issue, and how it complements already existing work. It also summarizes methods used and the main findings of the study. While you might find it useful to write a first draft of the introduction at the early stages of your research (to make clear to yourself what you are about to do!), you should always go back and rewrite the introduction once the report as a whole has been finalised.

Notes

3. Review of existing information

Most reports will include a review of already existing studies, information, and of generally held opinions (for example, “a common assumption is that small arms proliferation is organized by organized criminals from neighbouring countries”) or on-going debates on the topic you’re studying. This will permit the reader to see what’s been done and thought so far, and to compare this to your findings and conclusions. The review surveys already available information and identifies what data is missing.

By giving an overview of existing information, the review section is a good backdrop to your study. This is why the “literature review” is often the first part of the report you write. In fact, it should be written (even if only in preliminary form) even before you settle on your final research question(s) and methodology.

4. Research Methods

This section outlines which methods you use to collect and analyse data (see Sections 2 and 12 for further discussions on research methods). It should explain why you chose those methods, and assess in an objective way the strengths and weaknesses of the methods chosen. The section will also include a short description of what kinds of results one can (and cannot) obtain with the use of the methods used in the report.

It is important that you are detailed enough in your description of the methodology. The rule of thumb is that you should give a good enough description so that any interested reader can reproduce the study if s/he would want to do so. Therefore, it is not enough to state that “we used a possession approach to estimate paramilitary holdings of small arms”. Instead, you must describe how you arrived at an estimated force strength, a weapons multiplier and a sense of the types of weapons held, etc. (see Section 5 for further details of the approach).

A first draft of the methodologies section should be prepared as part of the research design at the outset of the research process. A final version should be finalized before you start writing the section on the findings (as noted in Section 2, Box 3 “dangers and virtues of prior planning”, there might be important differences between initial and final methodologies). To lighten up this sometimes quite heavy section, you might want to cut it up, and present the various methods in boxes in the results section.

5. Findings

This section provides the answer to the question(s) that you outlined in the introduction. It is the core of the study, in which you present the results of your work. There are many ways to present findings, and the presentation will ultimately depend on the goals of the study. If your study covers all the areas discussed in this module, you might want to use the same structure as the module itself (starting with production, moving on to stockpiles and transfers, and then to attitudes, effects and measures). Within one specific topic area, you might find it handy to start out with the broad findings, and then move on the more specific and detailed findings.

Providing data in tables, graphs, charts, and maps will often prove useful, as you can fit large amounts of information using little space. Doing this is not sufficient, however. Data does not speak for itself. It is up to you to interpret and analyze the information, pointing out particularly noteworthy figures. Make sure that you actually discuss the data in the table/graph/chart/map, and do not start diverging from the topic. Maybe surprisingly, this happens quite often!

Sometimes, you will find that you cannot answer all your research questions on the basis of the data you managed to collect, or that the data is very patchy and/or unreliable. Then you will have to explain why it was impossible to gain better data (secrecy of governments or other actors, time and resource constraints, etc).

Box 1: Example of table

Total quantity of firearms produced and exported by US manufacturers, 1998–2001

Year	Quantity produced	Quantity exported	% exported
1998	3,724,546	215,873	5.8
1999	4,070,237	242,573	6.0
2000	3,840,941	184,346	4.8
2001	2,989,022	182,632	6.1
Total 1998–2001	**14,624,746**	**825,424**	**5.6**

Source: US, BATF (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001)
(table taken out of Small Arms Survey 2004, p.119)

Notes

6. Conclusion

The conclusion should summarize the main findings, and point out their implications for future research, policymaking, etc. You might want to compare your findings to those of studies in other geographical areas, and related, but separate issues (such as de-mining, or security sector reform).

It is particularly important, when studying narrow and quite technical issues such as small arms, to replace the issue in its larger context. Make sure that you carefully stress the relationship between small arms and other issues. For example, clarify how small arms holdings and attitudes are a related to history, to the distrust in the government and the police, to living conditions (in remote areas with no government presence), etc. Not doing so will skew your results and might lead to serious consequences for policy decisions, etc.

7. Bibliography

It is critical to list absolutely ALL your sources (including interviews, surveys, focus groups etc.) used in compiling the report in the bibliography. The bibliographical references must be complete. This means that the reader should be given sufficient information to be able trace the source without any difficulties. The reference should thus include (a) full name of all authors; (b) title of the source; (c) name of publisher; (d) place of publication; and (e) year and month of publication. If the source comes from an edited volume, the name of the volume and the editors should be included in the reference. If it comes from a journal or a newspaper, the name of the journal/paper, issue and volume will be included. We recommend you to use the format in Section 10.

You will save a lot of time through compiling the bibliography as you write. It is much easier to write down the full reference when you have the report in front of you, than when you have to dig it out from enormous piles of paper! Similarly, always note the full bibliographical references on any expert you photocopy. Nothing is more time-consuming than to have to trace the source of a random page from a book.

8. Appendices

Appendices are attached at the end of the report. They can include detailed descriptions of the focus group sessions, the survey questionnaire used, the raw numbers if these were transformed into graphs in the text, pictures of sighted weapons, etc.

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