Inputs from the Small Arms Survey on international assistance and coordination

Gender and small arms control
Ongoing research by the Small Arms Survey points towards the fact that at the national level, actors from both the small arms field, and the women, peace, and security (WPS) field have a wealth of knowledge and expertise, but this is largely siloed within their respective communities. Small arms actors could draw on WPS actors to address the gender-related aspects of the root causes of the demand for illicit weapons as well as those of armed violence. WPS actors could draw on the expertise of small arms actors to better understand how to engage in monitoring and oversight activities related to the illicit trafficking and misuse of weapons, which can be used to perpetuate gender inequality. Both parties also have much to gain by connecting their respective networks towards common goals and by finding ways to work collaboratively.

Peace operations arms monitoring
The Small Arms Survey perceives a need to more systematically include and strengthen small arms-related mandates within peace support operations. We continue to observe important roadblocks to the effective monitoring by peace support operations of illicit arms in conflict zones, which prevent the adoption of good practices. These obstacles are institutional in nature and result from the structure of multilateral peace operations, in which troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and police-contributing countries (PCCs) are responsible for documenting and managing (or destroying) illicit weapons in the areas of operations they control, but may not have the resources, expertise, or capacity to execute those responsibilities. Solutions could entail enhancing institutional capacities inside and outside peace operation missions to collect, report, and share information about illicit arms flows that will enhance civilian protection and reduce attacks on peacekeepers. Better information on these flows would provide a reliable mechanism for the design of national and international law enforcement and customs operations to disrupt these flows. Basing operations on empirical and geo-referenced analysis of trafficking dynamics will lead to more efficient and targeted use of resources.

Regional arms control focus
Illicit arms flows have national, regional, and international dimensions. For this reason, regional organizations play a pivotal role in fostering the development and the implementation of coherent regional approaches and policy frameworks. However, the Small Arms Survey’s experience shows that regional organizations struggle with capacity- and resource-related challenges that undermine their ability to support member states in tackling the problems posed by the proliferation of illicit arms and ammunition flows. Establishing or strengthening responsive, equitable, and longer-term funding- and capacity building mechanisms, would enhance policy and operational responses especially in low-priority donor regions.

Armed violence
The Small Arms Survey also notes the importance of ensuring that international assistance reaches those regions most affected by armed violence—which as evidence shows, are not limited to conflict areas. Indeed, regions affected by high levels of armed violence related to the activities of gangs, or other types of violence outside the scope of conflict, should also be supported in their efforts to curtail the spread of illicit weapons. Especially as the international community shifts its focus back to confrontations between great powers, it is imperative not to leave considerations of human security behind.