BEST PRACTICES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORT TO SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALW) PROGRAMMES

With Success Cases from a FECCLAHA Project

September 2019
About FECCLAHA

The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) is a regional ecumenical organisation that provides a platform for its members to share perspectives on issues of common concern, particularly with regard to peace building and conflict transformation in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa. FECCLAHA was launched in March, 1999 and registered in Kenya in February 2001.

FECCLAHA membership consists of eleven (11) National Councils and Churches in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. These are:

- Church of Christ in Congo (ECC)
- Christian Council of Tanzania (CCT)
- Eritrea Orthodox Tewahdo Church
- Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea (ELCE)
- National Council of Churches of Burundi (CNEB)
- National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK)
- Protestant Council of Rwanda (CPR)
- South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC)
- Sudan Council of Churches (SCC)
- Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)

FECCLAHA’s Vision is “Together for justice, sustainable peace and development”, while its Mission is to foster ecumenical fellowship that promotes justice, sustainable peace and development in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa through capacity building, networking and partnership, advocacy and documentation.

Values: In pursuit of its vision, mission and mandate, FECCLAHA upholds the following core values-

- Peace
- Justice
- Human Dignity
- Compassion
- Integrity
FECCCLAHA Strategic Priorities- 2019- 2023 Strategic Plan

- *Peace Building and Conflict Transformation*: Women and Peace building; Church leaders and Peace building; Youth and Peace building; & Small Arms and Light Weapons Advocacy.
- *Governance & Accountability*: Electoral justice; Political engagement; Extractives advocacy; & Engagement with regional intergovernmental bodies.
- *Gender Justice*: Protection against Gender based Violence and Tamar Campaign & Women participation in the life of the Church.
- *Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building*
Acknowledgments

The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) has since 2016 put efforts to contribute to the reduction of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa with a focus on 4 countries namely; DRC (Eastern), Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda. The work focused more on capacity building; awareness creation on the negative effects of illicit SALWs and increasing awareness on national, regional and international legal instruments on SALWs with a focus on the Nairobi Protocol and Arms Trade Treaty; and advocacy for the implementation of these legal instruments on SALWs and ratification of Arms Trade Treaty.

FECCLAHA undertook an exercise to document SALW best practices so as to share experiences with those engaged on issues of SALWs, mainly Faith Based Organization and Civil Society. The Best practices will offer guidance on how to engage while highlighting some success cases achieved through FECCLAHA’s intervention in the region (DRC, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda) between 2016 and 2018.

The best practices cover the critical areas of institutional strengthening and capacity building, legal and policy reforms, physical stockpile management (PSSM), international and regional transfers and transit monitoring, public education and awareness. The best practices booklet is not a comprehensive guide but a general introduction on the critical aspects to bear in mind when intervening or designing intervention plans. We deeply appreciate Bread for the World for their continued financial and technical support which has enhanced church engagements in addressing the issues of illicit small arms and light weapons in the region.

I wish to acknowledge and appreciate Mr. Francis Kinyanjui Wairagu, the Consultant, who led this exercise and the FECCLAHA members in eastern DRC, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda and other stakeholders for availing themselves and providing information that contributed to the success of this exercise. I also express my gratitude to the FECCLAHA Secretariat staff for their invaluable contribution to this exercise.

We hope and pray that the best practices will meaningfully serve religious leaders and civil society in their engagements and efforts towards reduction of illicit small arms and light weapons across the region.

Jeannette Uwizeye (Ms)
Executive Director
### Acronyms

**ATT** - Arms Trade Treaty  
**BCSSAC** - Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control  
**DRC** - Democratic Republic of Congo  
**FECLLAHA** - Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa  
**ITI** - International Tracing Instrument  
**NCCK** - National Council of Churches of Kenya  
**KNFP** - Kenya National Focal Points  
**SALW** - Small Arms and Light Weapons  
**SSCC** - South Sudan Council of Churches  
**UJCC** - Uganda Joint Christian Council  
**UNPoA** - United Nations Programme of Action
Introduction

This brief presents best practices guidelines for Faith Based Organisations, churches and civil society engagements in small arms and light weapons support programmes. It covers the critical areas of institutional strengthening and capacity building, legal and policy reforms, physical stockpile management (PSSM), international and regional transfers and transit monitoring, and public education and awareness. Admittedly, there are more detailed interventions that can be developed under each sub-section and therefore this is not a comprehensive guide but a general introduction on the critical aspects to bear in mind when intervening or designing intervention plans. The purpose of this short document is to offer guidance on how to engage coupled with some success cases achieved under the project.

1. Institutional strengthening

The United Nations Programme of Action (UNPoA), The International Tracing Instrument (ITI), the Firearms Protocol and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and regional instruments such as the Nairobi Protocol on SALW all call for establishment and strengthening of national institutions responsible for the coordination of implementation of these instruments.

The role of civil societies and faith based organizations is to engage with governments to establish such institutions where there is none. In most countries where they are established, they are weak because they are not well funded or legally constituted to deliver on the mandate. In such situations, the civil society and faith based organizations should lobby for adequate budget and staffing of the institutions.

At the same time the civil society should partner with the organizations to fundraise, cater for quick win interventions that would encourage governments to invest more in the interventions.
The best practices in this intervention solidify partnership with governments to achieve the aspirations in the international and regional instruments. Civil society will offer extra capacity for the responsible institutions to achieve the intended interventions. In some cases, the civil society is best placed to help countries set priority areas of intervention because they are close to the population. Coordination among civil society within a country and a region to front a common approach is very essential in cultivating respect and appreciation by the governments and responsible institutions. This calls for respective civil society and faith based organizations to form and strengthen national and regional networks through which they consolidate their response and support to national authorities.

2. Legal regimes interventions

Domestic legal controls are essential in combating the small arms and light weapons problem. Most weapons are legally produced and/or imported, and then at some point diverted to illicit circuits. By studying national arms control laws, the weaknesses that facilitate this movement can be revealed and addressed and thereby limiting the extent to which legal small arms enter illicit markets. The pursuit for effective legislation to guide the use and access to small arms and light weapons is a critical area for civil society to engage in. The starting point is to study and understand the current legal provision and identify gaps in regard to international and regional instruments provisions. Once these are clear, the next step is to engage the national law makers first with the provisions of the international and regional instruments and gaps within the national laws and call for their action to bridge the gaps.

1 Katherine Kramer 2001, Legal Controls on Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeast Asia. Small Arms Survey Occasional Paper No.3
The project sort to influence policies and legislation related to SALW control and management in DRC, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda. A new law “The Fire Arms Act 2016” was enacted in South Sudan. The project supported the participation of South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC) in the process, mobilized the Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms control (BCSSAC) and Civil society and faith based organizations through the South Sudan Action Network on SALW to advocate and lobby for the draft bill until it became a law. In Kenya, the project in partnership with the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCK) supported the review and finetuning of a Draft Firearms Policy and a Draft Firearms Bill to replace CAP114 Firearms Act (1954) which is largely outdated. The draft policy and bill are both currently awaiting Cabinet approval for onward transmission to parliament for enactment. The draft bill is very progressive because it harmonizes the national law to international and regional instruments on SALW control. In Uganda, the project partnered with the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) and other Civil Society Organizations to mobilize the National Focal Point on SALW, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Parliament to lobby for the enactment of a Draft Bill on SALW. Religious leaders and civil society supported by the project, presented a petition on enactment of a comprehensive law on firearms to the Speaker of the 10th Parliament of Uganda and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In DRC, the project supported awareness creation on amnesty law which led to surrender of firearms illicitly held by individuals.

Countries are confronted by many matters that require legal response and the issue of small arms and light weapons may not be a priority. The challenge the civil society has to confront is moving this agenda to become a priority for the government. The civil society has to undertake studies that empirically demonstrate the negative impact of illicit arms in society such as role in armed criminal activities, exacerbating conflicts and retarding development among others to attract the attention of government and development partners.

Crafting of clear and short messages on areas of the national laws that need to be addressed and sharing them with nationwide stakeholders helps in creating the needed pressure for the government to act. Actors should however bear in mind that the process should as far as possible be persuasive and non-confrontational. Civil society should knock doors of all national institutions responsible for legal reforms such as the parliament, the executive and the Attorney General offices.
3. International and internal firearms and ammunition transfer controls

The movement of arms across countries and within states provides fertile space for diversion from the intended recipients to unauthorized users. Apart from brokers, most arms are moved by government entities and mostly under the covert for security reasons, the movements are not open to the public. The role of civil society in this process is to demand accountability and transparency from the government or its sanctioned arms dealers. Civil society is expected to be familiar with the import and export processes so that they can monitor the dispatch, movement, arrival and reception by the authorized parties. Where there are diversions, then the role of civil society is to raise red flags and call for investigation by competent authorities or specialised multilateral organizations. The purpose here is to ensure compliance with agreed international procedures and accountability.

In some countries, access to information regarding arms movement or imports and exports may be difficult but international civil society networks offer opportunity to share information from either source countries or recipients where systems are transparent. The moral responsibility for civil society and faith based organizations under this aspect is to demonstrate respect for states entitlements to secure security operations. So, information on some matters will only be shared on a need to know basis.

Where embargoes are in place issued by international or regional competent organizations, the role of civil society is to monitor compliance and where there is noncompliance, the civil society should act as whistle blowers. The bottom line in this intervention is to have facts right so that campaigns or advocacy is not based on rumours or hearsays but concrete facts.

4. Stockpile management

It is well acknowledged that most illicit arms and ammunition start their life as licit but along the way they are diverted, stolen, lost or through other clandestine methods end in unauthorized hands. The need for appropriate stockpile management to ensure the licit ones do not become illicit is critical.
While the role of physical stockpile security management - PSSM belongs to governments as the custodians of large stocks of firearms, the civil society has a supportive role in the process. There are established international standards or operational procedures that guide stockpile best practices. These standards or guidelines are not known but available to all who need them. The role of civil society is to create awareness on such standards and in some cases also support the capacity building for security agencies at national level.

Civil society has high capacity with experience of retired or former security officers and therefore well placed to offer the needed training and capacity building. Some of the civil society membership has had opportunity to serve at high levels with international organizations and governments and therefore have the required skills to offer training and capacity building where it lacks.

The other best practice in this area is forming partnerships with national institutions responsible for SALW management and control to mobilize resources for priority interventions. In some countries, accountability levels for national institutions are in question and development partners prefer to work with civil society because they can hold them accountable which may be difficult for national institutions due to bureaucracy.

A critical area of interest in PSSM intervention is the determination of surplus stocks held by government and call for the disposal mostly through destruction. The risk associated with surplus stocks is that they are vulnerable to diversions, stealing and misuse because they are not regularly accounted for. There is need for awareness on these aspects to state agencies responsible for stockpile management so that they cooperate in processing such weapons for destruction. It gets even more sensitive when dealing with explosives and other munitions that could be unstable due to vagaries of weather or poor storage facilities.
Addressing this concern is important to eliminate unintended munition storage sites explosions. There are several aspects to cover under this component but the bottom line is adequate knowledge for civil society and faith based organizations to enable them to engage with national authorities with professionalism and value addition.

5. Civilian firearms control

Access to arms and ammunition regulations differ across the globe. Some countries have total prohibitions for civilians to legally acquire arms. In such cases, all arms and ammunition outside government agencies are illegal. At the middle ground are countries that allow legal position of arms and ammunition but with very stringent regulations on qualification for certification to hold arms and ammunitions. In such territories, those who hold arms without such certifications hold them illegally. There is always a need for clear analysis why individuals well aware of the national legal provisions still break the law and possess illicit arms. These are referred to as demand factors. The role of civil society in such situations is to partner with governments and undertake studies that could bring out the demand factors. The third category of states are where guns and ammunition ownership is liberalised and they are openly available legally for citizens to acquire. There may be categories that are prohibited and allowed for personal ownership/use but the allowed categories are openly available in the market.

There is a unique category of countries in conflict or emerging from conflicts where arms have proliferated within affected areas. In such cases, the national legal provisions do not matter because the arms are already among the population. There are several interventions designed for such circumstances that range from Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR), Security Sector Reforms (SSR) that reduces the number of armed combatants by giving them alternative livelihoods after disarmament. These are complex processes and there are great opportunities for civil society participant ranging from technical support to awareness creation and monitoring of such processes to ensure they are transparent and adhere to human rights standards.
Some countries where individuals hold arms illegally offer amnesty periods as advocated by most international and regional instruments to allow such individuals surrender their weapons without prosecution as along as they are not being sort for criminal activities. The role of civil society in such interventions include awareness creations on legal provisions for such amnesties and assurance to the public that there will be no prosecution for those who voluntary surrender their weapons. A critical element in the awareness creation is why it is important to reduce illegal arms in communities. The expected benefits of such surrender ranges from peaceful neighbourhoods to reduced armed crimes and domestic violence among others.
6. Public Education and Awareness Creation

To galvanise governments and public response to the negative effects of illicit SALW, awareness creation is central. Efforts to enhance knowledge and awareness relating to the dangers of SALW proliferation involves gathering data on incidences of SALW-related violence and accidents. This data would document incidences like deaths, injuries, robberies, sexual and gender-based violence involving the use of SALW. The data would then be used in campaigns.
through media such as radio, television, print media and social media platforms, as well as the distribution of information, education and communications materials such as posters, flyers, banners, t-shirts among others.

Awareness creation and public campaigns are in some cases framed as community safety programmes because they interrogate more matters beyond small arms and light weapons. Facilitators of community safety programming should plan to engage with a community for long enough to help meet the aspirations espoused by the community during project planning. Adequate time is necessary to build confidence between a community and the project implementors. In some situations, confidence and trust should be established between the police or security agencies and community for surrender of arms or sharing of information. The bottom line in this is that short term interventions may not be sufficient for a community transformation in addressing illicit arms possession.

The church as a trusted community interlocutor is well placed to take local ownership of such interventions because it is always among the people addressing many other social matters and therefore grants local ownership.

The thematic approach to SALW should entail cross cutting matters such as the impact of SALW on domestic violence, gender based violence, youth vulnerability, cultural norms on arms possession (gun culture), community safety and development.
On awareness creation, the project through regional, national and community level mobilization by religious leaders in the 4 countries; DRC, Kenya Uganda and South Sudan where FECCLAHA worked with National Council of Churches; an estimate 21214 community members were mobilised, reached and enhanced their awareness on the dangers of SALWs and legal instruments (national, regional and global). Over one (1) million people were reached through media mainly in Kenya, Uganda and DRC. Additionally, religious leaders efforts led to increased collaboration between religious leaders, civil society, security agencies and community members.
The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA)

P. O. Box 10033, 00100
Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254 (0) 20 2728289/ 2730270
Mobile: + 254 786 670488
Fax: +254 (0) 20 2721626
Email: info@fecclaha.org
Website: www.fecclaha.org

FECCLAHA is a member of

actalliance

ISBN NO: 9966-7380-9-6