

Shattered Lives

the case for tough international arms control

Arms are out of control

Arms kill more than half a million men, women, and children on average each year. Many thousands more are maimed, or tortured, or forced to flee their homes. The uncontrolled proliferation of arms fuels human rights violations, escalates conflicts, and intensifies poverty. The time for world leaders to act is now.

To confront this crisis, Oxfam, Amnesty International, and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) have together launched an international campaign calling for effective arms controls to make people genuinely safer from the threat of armed violence.

You can help us to put an end to this horrific abuse. Log on to www.controlarms.org and become part of the largest, most effective visual petition in the world.

Copies of this summary and of the full report are available to download on www.controlarms.org. A print version of the full report is available from Amnesty International UK section (email: info@amnesty.org.uk) and Oxfam GB (email: oxfam@oxfam.org.uk).

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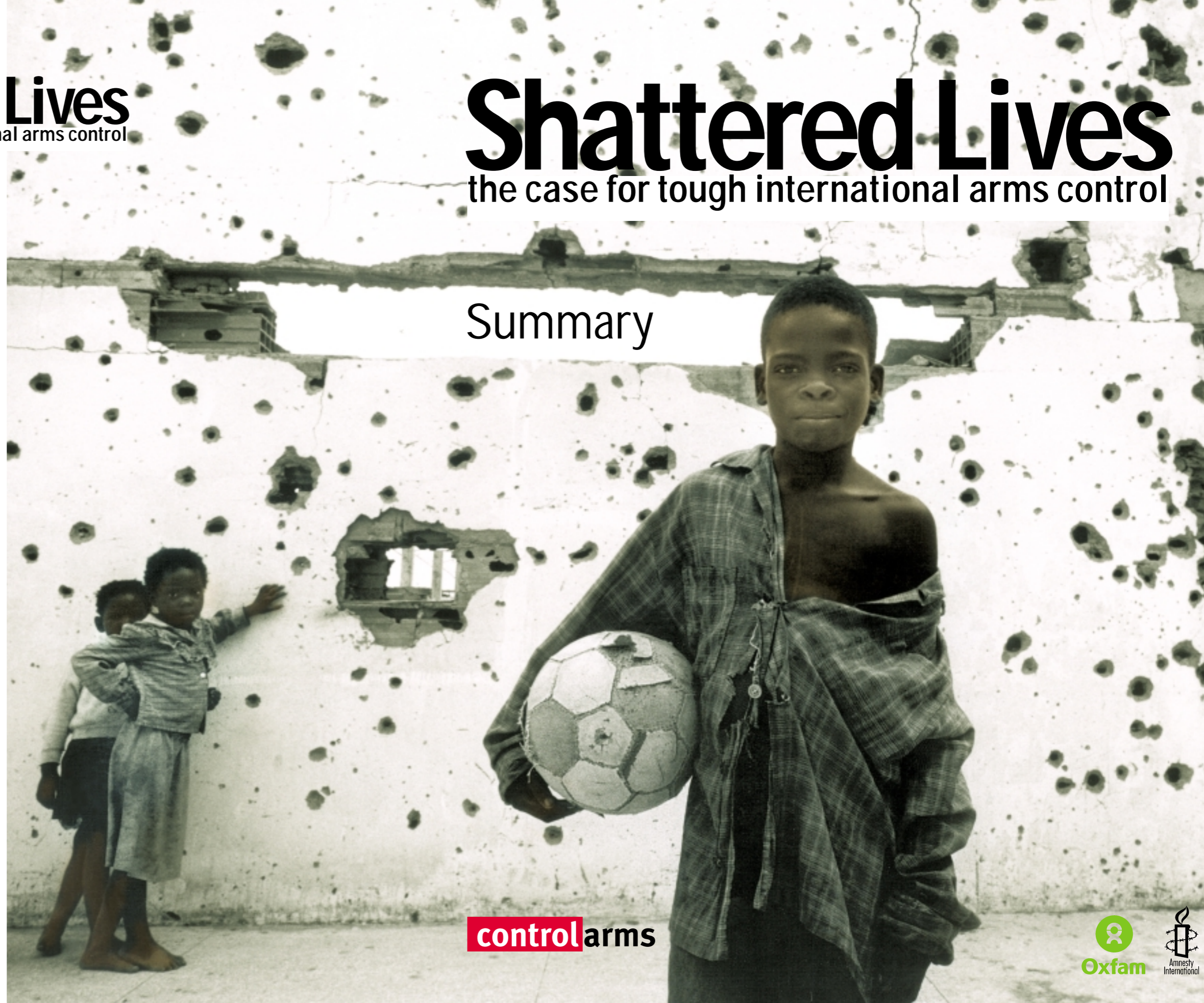
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Summary



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‘They say they are looking for the rebels, but it’s the people that always end up becoming the targets.’

26-year-old student, Aceh, Indonesia, 2003

‘Please remember my son Matthew and all the children and young people who have died or been injured and traumatised around this world. Remember that they were denied the basic right to live their lives.’

Mary Leigh Blek, President of the Million Mom March, USA, 2001

‘They [the paramilitaries] began to bother us, pressuring us to inform on the guerrillas.’

When we go to town to buy supplies, the paramilitaries accuse us of supplying the guerrillas. The guerrillas have been passing through the area for years. We don’t carry guns.’

All we want to do is to plant our crops, take care of our animals, and manage the river and forest.’

Marcos from a rural community in Urabá, Colombia, 1997

Arms fuel poverty and suffering

Every day, millions of men, women, and children are living in fear of armed violence. Every minute, one of them is killed. From the gangs of Rio de Janeiro and Los Angeles, to the civil wars of Liberia and Indonesia, arms are out of control.

The uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of arms by government forces and armed groups takes a massive human toll in lost lives, lost livelihoods, and lost opportunities to escape poverty. An average of US\$22bn a year is spent on arms by countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America – a sum that would otherwise enable those same countries to be on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals of achieving universal primary education (estimated at \$10bn a year) as well as targets for reducing infant and maternal mortality (estimated at \$12bn a year).

Every day in our work around the world, Oxfam and Amnesty International witness the abuse of arms which fuels conflict, poverty, and violations of human rights.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

More than three million civilians have been killed or have died from hunger and disease as a consequence of the conflict in the DRC (formerly Zaire) since August 1998.

This conflict has been characterised by illegal killings, torture, and rape of civilians by forces on all sides. Despite this catalogue of human misery, many countries have continued to supply arms to the DRC. The former Zairian government received arms from many countries, including Belgium, China, France, Germany, Israel, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK), and the USA. Deliveries of light weapons and associated military equipment from Albania, China, Egypt, Israel, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa and other countries, to the governments of Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, have also been used in the conflict.

In November 2001, around Kisangani, the scene of intense fighting involving many civilian deaths, Amnesty International found evidence of foreign military supplies in the form of ammunition cartridges for the following weapons: North Korean, Chinese, and Russian heavy machine guns, Russian revolvers, South African assault rifles, Chinese anti-aircraft weapons, and Russian, Bulgarian, or Slovak automatic grenade launchers.

Supply routes and methods vary. British pilots and air cargo companies are not banned by the UK government from supplying weapons from overseas to armed forces in the DRC responsible for mass abuses of human rights. In addition, between 1993 and 1998, a time of rapidly escalating violent conflict and grave violations of human rights, Italy exported arms, munitions, and explosives worth nearly US\$ 10m to the DRC.

Arms are out of control

Sixteen-year-old Camila Magalhães Lima from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil lost the use of her legs in 1998 when she was hit by a stray bullet in a shoot-out between thieves and private security forces while walking home from school.

‘I had plans for the future; I wanted to travel the world, take a modelling course, and continue my gymnastics training. From one day to the next, my dreams were shattered – all because of the irresponsibility of supposedly civilised men who only feel brave with a gun in their hands.’

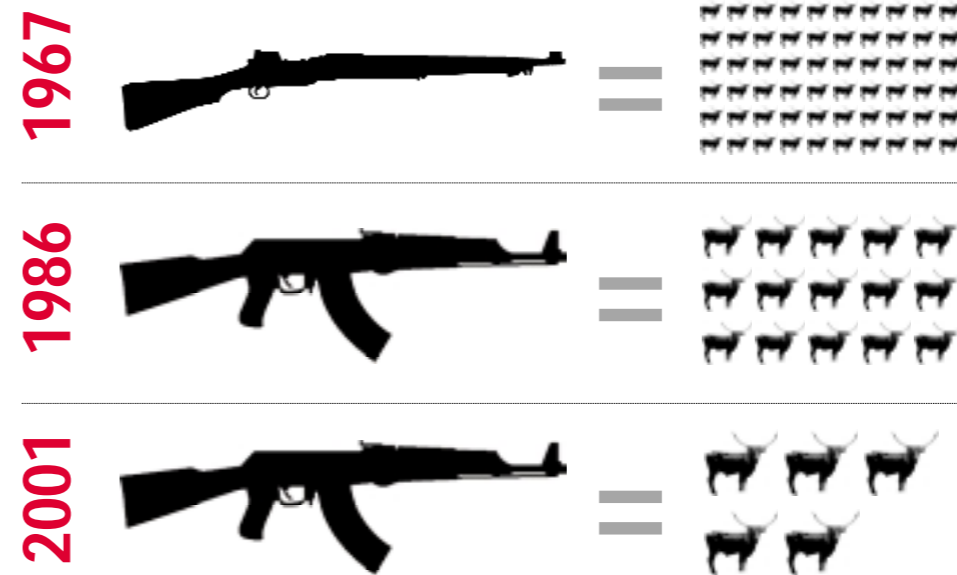


Photo: Tiago Quirroga/Viva Rio

The impact of the widespread proliferation and misuse of arms is now critical. The ‘war on terror’ should have focused political will to prevent arms falling into the wrong hands. Instead, since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, some suppliers have relaxed their controls in order to arm new-found allies against ‘terrorism’, irrespective of their disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law. Despite the damage that they cause, there is still no binding, comprehensive, international law to control the export of conventional arms.

At the same time, we are seeing a long-term change, as guns are becoming an integral part of life – and therefore an increasingly common instrument of death – in more communities and cities around the world. From the pastoralists of northern Uganda to the gangs of Rio de Janeiro, the carrying and use of increasingly lethal weaponry is becoming the norm.

Increasing availability reduces arms prices in Kenya



According to Joshua Katta, a Pokot chief in Kolowa, Kenya.

Source: Karl Vick, ‘Small arms global reach uproots tribal traditions’, *Washington Post*, 8 July 2001.

Children come out of school talking about guns. The mentality is so much more vicious now. They don’t talk about beating each other up. They talk about killing each other. The simple fact is that with a gun, you are someone, you can hold your own. Without one, you are a dead man.’

Former youth worker in north London, 2002



Rodrina Faustina, aged 42, in a camp for displaced people near Kuito, Angola.
 'In October 1990, UNITA [*União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola*] came to the village, stealing things. I tried to escape, but they shot me in the leg. I got first aid, then I was brought to the hospital here in Kuito, and they had to amputate my leg below the knee... To go to the river with a bucket of washing on crutches is very difficult. Also to go and cut wood for cooking to help my husband. Washing clothes, washing dishes, fetching water: all these things are hard.'

The time to act is now

Every government in the world has a responsibility to control arms – both their possession within its borders, to protect its own citizens, and their export across its borders, to ensure respect for international human rights and humanitarian law in the wider world. The world's most powerful governments, who are also the world's biggest arms suppliers, have the greatest responsibility to control the global trade. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council – France, Russia, China, the UK, and the USA – together account for 88 per cent of the world's conventional arms exports; and these exports contribute regularly to gross abuses of human rights.

The challenge to all governments is urgent. They must co-operate to control and limit the flow of arms and the spread of arms production. At the very least, arms-exporting countries must not supply arms where there is a clear danger that they will

Arming the Philippines

In late 2001, the USA offered the government of the Philippines military equipment worth more than US\$ 100 million – including helicopters and transport planes and 30,000 M16 rifles – to fight various armed groups. The transfers were agreed as part of the US government's 'war on terror'. The US military has also provided counter-insurgency training. This training does not incorporate rigorous human-rights safeguards, and systems of military accountability in the Philippines have proved weak. As a result, US military aid risks exacerbating patterns of human-rights violations, aggravating local tensions, and prolonging the armed conflict in central Mindanao.

There is already a thriving illegal market in small arms in the Philippines, and there are fears that the injection of military equipment from the USA – which includes small arms – may contribute to a further proliferation of these weapons. Through loss, theft, or illegal sale, munitions originating with the Philippine government forces sometimes end up in the hands of criminal and armed political groups. In Mindanao, for example, more than 70 per cent of the population own one or more guns. Machine-guns can be bought for as little as US\$ 375, and revolvers for a mere US\$ 15. As many as 82 per cent of homicides involve small arms.

'My point of view is that these manufacturers should be stopped. The world powers, Britain, France, the USA, and so on could help. Guns are not made for animals in the bush. Rocket launchers are not made for animals in the bush... You are making them to kill who? To kill me and you!'

Peter Rashid, Boajibu, Sierra Leone, 2001

be used for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. But to use the words of Olive Kobusingye, a surgeon treating the victims of gun violence in Uganda, it is not enough *either* to mop the floor *or* to turn off the tap – both the trade in arms and safety at community level must be addressed. Thus it is vital for communities directly affected by such violence to co-operate in removing lethal weapons. To achieve this, women, men, and children must be given protection by legitimate security forces which respect human rights.

To those who say that nothing can be done to control the flow of arms, Oxfam and Amnesty International argue that it can. The 1997 Landmines Treaty was brought into being by the combination of active governments and worldwide popular support. Although the scourge of landmines has not yet been eradicated, no country has openly traded in these weapons since 1997. The same combination of public pressure and action by sympathetic governments is needed to secure an Arms Trade Treaty.

Governments are acting too slowly to control arms. Amnesty International and Oxfam therefore propose urgent and interlinked action, from community level to international level, to control their proliferation and misuse more effectively.

International action

Key objective: Governments are urged to agree an Arms Trade Treaty by 2006, to prevent arms being exported to destinations where they are likely to be used to commit grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

At the international level governments should:

1. **Adopt the Arms Trade Treaty** by the time of the 2006 UN review conference on small arms. Progressive governments must champion the Arms Trade Treaty in international and regional forums and lobby other governments, pressing for action outside the UN process if necessary. Once in force, this new legally binding treaty will ensure that all states are working to the same standard, to prevent the irresponsible transfer of arms where they would contribute to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.
2. **Create new international instruments to prevent irresponsible arms brokering, transporting, and financing, and foreign licensed production**, using the Arms Trade Treaty criteria to define and prevent irresponsible transfers.
3. **Provide more funding for practical assistance** for arms-affected communities – particularly from donor agencies in arms-producing countries.

Regional action

Key objective: Governments are urged to develop and strengthen regional arms-control agreements, to uphold international human rights and humanitarian law.

'It is like we are mopping the floor with the taps on. It takes five minutes to shower bullets, but it takes three hours and immense resources to repair each person.'

Dr Olive Kobusingye, trauma surgeon in Uganda, 2001

'The availability and misuse of [small arms and light] weapons has an indisputable impact on the number, type and gravity of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by state and non-state actors.'

Barbara Frey, UN Special Rapporteur on Small Arms, 2002

We must turn off the irresponsible supply of arms...



At the regional level, neighbouring governments must work together to:

1. **Create or strengthen regional arms controls**, based upon international human rights and humanitarian law, building on – as well as inspiring – work at the national level. Such controls should both address the flow of arms, instituting effective measures to limit supply and reduce demand for weapons, and also reduce the widespread availability of arms, striving to improve community safety. Regional collaboration provides opportunities for sharing information and best practice, as well as building consensus on regional policies and programmes.

National action

Key objective: For governments to improve state capacity and their own accountability to control arms transfers and protect citizens from armed violence, in line with international laws and standards.

At the national level, every government must act responsibly to prevent the misuse of arms

1. Ensure the **responsible use of arms by its security forces**, based firmly on existing international human-rights standards and principles of humanitarian law, requiring a minimum level of training, discipline, and control. All states should abide by the UN Basic Principles for the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, the Geneva Conventions and other relevant international standards, incorporating their provisions into domestic law in every country.
2. **Take swift action, when conflict has ended**, to work with international bodies to implement high-quality disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programmes.
3. **Establish independent mechanisms to bring to justice**, without delay, those who perpetrate serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, ensuring that such violations are adequately punished and other steps are taken to end impunity.
4. **Enforce existing legislation or create new legislation** to control the import, export, transit, production, sale, management, and use of all arms. The standards outlined in the Arms Trade Treaty should be used when taking decisions on national arms exports, ensuring that human rights, international humanitarian law, and sustainable development do not suffer under commercial pressure.
5. **Ensure transparency and oversight** by providing regular and meaningful information to the public about the production, possession, and transfer of arms. These reports should be subject to regular review by legislatures and parliaments.

6. **With civil society, develop and implement an action plan for the strict control of all arms.** A first step is to undertake a broad review to assess problems of protection, arms availability, and misuse of weapons; then to develop solutions and implement an effective action plan. Each stage must involve close collaboration with civil society.

Local action

Key objective: Civil society and local government agencies are urged to take effective action to improve safety at community level, by reducing the local availability and demand for arms.

Community safety must be improved by the following means:

1. Rebuild confidence in the possibility of non-armed security, by
 - ▶ reducing the quantity of surplus and illegal arms in circulation – through the establishment of gun-free zones, removal of illegal arms which could contribute to violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law, and destruction of surplus weapons;
 - ▶ building relationships and trust between opposing communities and between communities and police; such work should be based on international human rights and humanitarian standards;
 - ▶ delivering civic education about community safety to counter cultures of violence, including the destructive link between arms and conventional notions of masculinity;
 - ▶ introducing and using tools for peaceful conflict resolution.
2. **Providing assistance** to victims of armed violence.
3. **Developing sustainable livelihoods as an alternative** for those who might be dependent upon armed violence for their living.

To date, there has been a tragic lack of urgency on the part of most governments around the world to address the problem of the proliferation of arms. Words are plentiful, real progress is slight. The time to act is now.

Civil society and governments need to work proactively and effectively together to address the problem of arms at each level – stemming the source of the supply, and addressing the root causes of why people possess arms in insecure environments.

Oxfam, Amnesty International, and IANSA (the International Action Network on Small Arms, which represents more than 500 non-government organisations around the world) are campaigning for a safer future for us all, through strong action to turn the tide of weapons abuse. Certain key governments have already expressed their support for this work, and we appeal to others to join our efforts.



...and drain the pool of existing uncontrolled weapons