



UNMAS

Armed violence reduction in Mopti region

March 2014 to July 2015

In Mali, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) leads to many incidents, which are mainly caused by poor gun storage practices at the household level and tensions amongst communities.

In order to reduce these risks, UNMAS supported a pilot project implemented by DanChurchAid (DCA) from March 2014 to July 2015, aiming at improving the security situation, as well as reducing tensions within and between communities in the region of Mopti.

Small arms and light weapons survey

DCA started its project by conducting a survey in a region affected by armed violence, with the objective to:

- 1 - Report on the number of small arms, light weapons and explosive remnants of war that are stored in homes in the districts of Mopti and Douentza in Mopti region.
- 2 - Conduct a needs assessment and inform the subsequent strategy for armed violence reduction (AVR) and SALW awareness through a thorough analysis of the scope and nature of the problems of SALW proliferation and armed violence, as well as the underlying structural causes of those problems.
- 3 - Develop a baseline for evidence-based impact monitoring of the activities for developing community-owned safety strategies and improved awareness of risks.

Members of 546 households were interviewed, with a balance between men and women and of three different pre-defined age groups. In addition, 74 qualitative interviews and 37 focus group interviews were conducted to add a qualitative aspect to the analysis and to get a better overview of the geo-location of areas at risk. Key informants included local security forces, administrative authorities, charities, health personnel and international NGOs with specialised knowledge on armed violence in the surveyed areas.

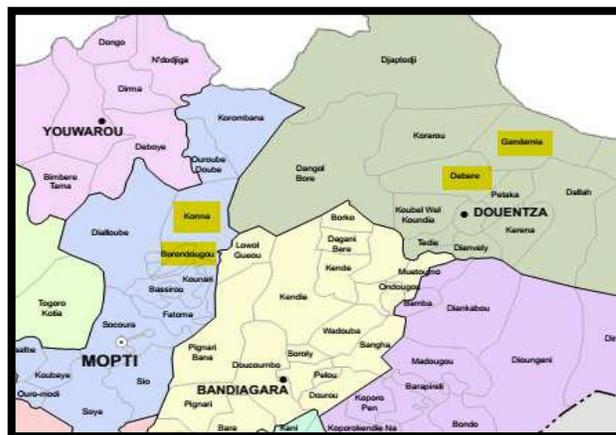
Major findings:

- 17% of the population admitted to owning firearms. These were mostly traditional hand crafted firearms, and in a few cases industrially manufactured firearms;
- “Self-protection” figured highly in both self-reported and perceived reasons for firearms possession;

- 10% of the population has been victim of armed violence within the last year;
- Perpetrators most often identified are young males.
- Road robberies, house burglaries and conflict between farmers and pastoralists were the three most significant concerns related to armed violence;
- Attitudes towards disarmament were generally more positive than negative, although half the respondents did not actively answer the question (said it did not concern them/ non-applicable);
- Women and youth were less in favor of disarmament than men and older generations.

Community safety planning

Following the analysis of the survey, the community safety planning (CSP) methodology was used to define activities and implement safer community action plans. This community-based approach to AVR programming consists of concrete activities aimed at empowering and building the resilience of local populations in order to anticipate, analyze, prevent and manage threats to their security, as well as to respond to incidences of armed violence and conflict. CSP is participatory and puts communities in control of all phases of the project cycle, from the initial assessments to the final evaluations. Following the results of the needs assessment, it was decided to focus on the districts of Mopti (municipalities of Konna and Boroundougou) and Douentza (municipalities of Gandamia and Deberé).



Operational achievements

Prior to starting any of the following activities with the communities, the AVR teams had to be trained in different topics, such as conflict management, community policing and advocacy.

Rap concert in Konna

Under the heading of “Jeunesse et musique face aux armes légères”, DCA implemented a project aimed at empowering youth to advocate for dialogue, and at raising awareness of the dangers and risks associated with SALW to discourage youth from arming themselves. The project culminated with a concert on December 13th that gathered more than 1,000 people. The event was covered by the national TV channel ORTM and two local radio stations in Mopti and Douentza districts.



SALW Risk Education

The delivery of SALW Risk Education (RE) sessions was one of the cornerstones of the project. SALW RE sessions promoted safer behaviour for at-risk groups and owners of firearms. A total of 20 villages were targeted, in which 13,930 people were reached (including 6,166 men, 2,851 women, 2,970 boys and 1,943 girls) and 11,446 awareness leaflets were distributed.

Throughout the sessions 392 questionnaires were submitted to a sample of beneficiaries before and after the sessions to measure whether they had increased their knowledge and awareness towards SALW issues.



Peace and mediation committees

DCA delivered training in conflict management and prevention to the Safer Community Committees, thereby addressing the need identified by the communities for a mechanism to settle community conflicts.

Distribution of gun boxes

DCA distributed 120 wooden gun boxes to 120 beneficiaries who legally possess a firearm with the aim to encourage people to better secure their weapons and thereby reduce accidents and loss of life involving SALW stored at household level.



Each box contained a copy of Law N. 04-050 concerning firearms and ammunition ownership in Mali and an instruction leaflet on how to use the gun box. This pilot initiative aimed to encourage and motivate the population of weapon owners to obtain firearms licenses and to store their weapons safely.

Non-Technical Survey and risk education (RE)

After an accident in June 2015 in which a child lost his life playing with an explosive remnant of war (ERW) and two of his friends were injured in Konna, UNMAS tasked DCA to conduct emergency ERW risk education and non-technical survey in the municipality of Konna. During the course of the project, the population of Sama and Sendugué informed the AVR teams of the presence of two pieces of ERW that were reported to UNMAS and the Malian army (FAMA).



Moussa Fofana,
Village Chief
of Takoutala

“This project has brought about many changes in the villages, one among all is the fact that children are no longer tempted to play with SALW and their ammunition: when they see something suspicious they go and inform their parents and we are grateful to the AVR project for this. We sincerely thank DCA”.

Impact of the project

The AVR teams met with the Safer Community Sub-Committees and village chiefs in 20 target villages to discuss the outcome and impact of the project. A survey was also organized at the village level.

General improvements of security situation in villages

The project has significantly contributed to the decrease of security incidents and conflicts between communities. The target population noticed an improvement of peaceful coexistence between the different social groups as well as better social cohesion due to improved dialogue and cooperation between the different communities. The establishment and/or revitalization of peace and mediation committees and of surveillance committees make the population feel safer and has enhanced understanding of one another's positions and concerns. Conflicts are now managed at the village level, with the common goal being to ensure security. The reduction of tensions and security incidents has facilitated the movement of people and goods.

High ownership of the project by the communities

The methodology of the project has empowered communities to take action and contribute to improve their own security through improved management of conflicts at the village level.

The participatory approach and the involvement of women in the committees has also impacted gender perceptions. The Safer Community Committee members are now practicing their newfound skills in mediation, advocacy and SALW risk education.

Decrease of SALW accidents

Awareness activities have changed peoples' behaviour in handling and storing SALW. The distribution of gun boxes helped increase safe storage of weapons and the affected communities are now aware of the Malian law regulating SALW possession.



**Mr. Kampo,
Village Chief of Konna**

“On behalf of my village, I am very happy to have worked with DCA. I have to say that I have been very much impressed by the project methodology: DCA has facilitated the participation and involvement of all segments, even those who were not used to speak up and now people know each other and have become friends”.

PAR LA
VOIX,
NON PAR LES ARMES



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