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It’s heartwarming that ECOWAS Region is witnessing the debut a new small arms governance regime with the ratification and the entry into force of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The successive regional efforts at effectively controlling both licit and illicit proliferation have resulted in an increasing interest being generated around the issue, with national actors, including parliamentarians.

The significant effort in this field yielded the right attitude and interests of variety of actors in the region, and particularly building their capacities to face the challenges of fighting against small arms proliferation. The relevant national governments, national commissions, CSOs, Parliamentarians, Research Centres, etc are now recognized and supported as active national partners in this endeavor.

It is on record that ECOSAP, in the last four years, has contributed substantially in supporting the formation of this momentum, nationally and regionally, through its various activities. Within the framework of the pilot small arms survey, for instance, ECOSAP designed the guiding principles for the systematic conduct of the survey that was targeted at encouraging national cohesion in the fight against small arms proliferation. Through the national public dialogues, stockpile management workshops, socioeconomic and legislative reviews as well as the surveys on public perception, knowledge and attitude towards small arms, ECOSAP delivered for individual member states, and of course for the region, a coherent and coordinated course of actions in fighting the scourge.

These concrete achievements recorded by ECOSAP, was clearly acknowledged by Member states. The willingness to further consolidate on these impressive achievements was demonstrated at the last ECOWAS Summit in June 2010 in Cape Verde, where the Authority of Heads of State and Government approved the Council of Ministers report on ECOSAP. This decision implied Five (5) additional years for ECOSAP in order to implement the operational priorities of the Action Plan of ECOWAS Convention.

Consequent upon this development, the ECOSAP Programme Management is determined more than ever, to continue to provide concrete support, technically and financially, to our national partners, with the ultimate beneficiaries being the peoples and residents of West Africa.
The region is witnessing tremendous challenges in terms of the security context characterized by the new trends such as the linkages between intense small arms trafficking, drug trafficking and terrorism. The post – conflict countries are thriving hard on peace consolidation and early recovery, with democratic dividends gradually opening endless opportunities for the citizens. This is an indication that peace and security currently being experienced in the region carries the potentials of allowing for substantial leap in economic growth and the gradual attainment of the objectives of MDGs.

These factors coupled with the new risk factors emerging, such as the linkages to drug trafficking, are conflicts vulnerabilities. The understanding of the critical situation in post conflict countries, informed ECOSAP’s massive intervention efforts in the Mano River Union countries, particularly, within the framework of the Japanese Funding.

The programme continued with the delivery of its general mandate of further strengthening National Commissions of Small Arms and Light Weapons control (NATCOM) with the appropriate capacity building, and financial support to help them implement their key priority activities.

Consequently, NATCOMs are now increasingly having clear policy direction and programming focus, thereby effectively spearheading the execution of their own national activities at combating illicit circulation of weapons.

An important national partner, the West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) continued to receive substantial supports from ECOSAP. This was primarily achieved through the provision of functional office secretariats for effective national coordination and community mobilization by the CSOs. With the entry into force of the ECOWAS Convention on small arms and light weapons in September 2009, the critical role of CSOs cannot be overemphasized. For a regional – wide CSO coordination as well as oversight, ECOSAP continued to support at further strengthening regional WAANSA Secretariat through institutional and policy support.

On the whole, the main intervention areas supported by ECOSAP during reporting period included:

a. Further strengthening National Commissions;

b. Enhancing functionality of National Coalitions of CSOs;

c. Supporting disarmament and armed violence reduction projects.
Small Arms Surveys

During the reporting period, sustained effort continued that further resulted in the completion of surveys in the remaining Member states. The additional countries that have completed their surveys and are now set to conduct national validation workshops included Niger, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Significant feats were achieved in Liberia and Sierra Leone within the period under review, as the NATCOMs in the two countries were fully supported and were able to move rapidly and are now at the threshold of validating their national survey reports. Already ECOSAP had provided them with the funding for this activity envisaged to be soon completed.

Also although initially faced with institutional challenges, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea and Nigeria have been able to launch the survey process and are now at different levels of completion. The pilot small arms surveys in these countries were successfully launched, with national public dialogue of all stakeholders and the administration of perception survey questionnaires in Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea, though country – wide coverage was inhibited due to the political crises.

It is on record, that the survey review processes are already completed in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, the Gambia, Ghana, Senegal, Mali and Togo. This signified that these countries have comprehensively undertaken the various stages/ processes of the survey, from National Public Dialogue to the national validation workshops. See below the status of completion of the surveys conducted in each member states.

The graph above revealed that ECOSAP have recorded significant achievements towards supporting the conduct of small arms perception surveys on the nature and extent of threats prevalent in member states.

At the moment, pertinent information/data continue to be indicated by results of the various surveys such as weak law enforcement capacities, poor management of national stockpiles; porosity of national borders – air, land and maritime.

The national survey reports also pointed at associated factors such as linkages with drug for instance, as aiding illicit circulation of weapons across borders. The stakeholders and the aggregate public perceptions in the region acknowledged that these are conflict traps and called for increased efforts, nationally and regionally, through functional strategic response action plans and financial supports, that provide sustainable safety to Arms Management and Administration.
Elaboration of National Action Plan on Arms Management & Security

In order to support the elaboration of comprehensive national action plans, ECOSAP provided relevant guiding principles and terms of reference for its systematic development in Member States. Guidelines for basic requirement for selection of national experts and consultancy were equally done, which eased National Commissions’ understanding and now fully embraced the procedures. In order to attain this very important objective, ECOSAP made adequate budgetary provision for the elaboration and development of NAPs in all the Member states.

In this respect, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo that have completed survey processes were funded and have already commenced the elaboration of their NAPs.

It is to be reported that Mali, Ghana and Cape Verde have completed and validated their NAPs to date, while Burkina Faso, Senegal and Togo have commenced already the processes with the initial workshop towards the elaboration of the country’s national action plan.

At the moment, both Mali and Ghana are at final stage of mainstreaming their NAPs into their national development plans and medium term expenditure frameworks of government.

National Synergy through Inter-Agency Collaboration

The quest to increase functionality of National Commissions was sustained during the reporting period as more national forums were supported that created institutional collaborations and cooperation amongst and between national actors. This prompted Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, Guinea and Sierra Leone to undertake this activity with the support of ECOSAP, technically and financially. It will be recalled that, as reported in the previous progress update, Benin, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo had already been supported and they conducted this very important activity in their countries.

The outcome of these forums further consolidated the objectives set out by ECOSAP for these forums. The need to sustain management and organizational goals/standards of NATCOMs were imperatives for sustainable programme implementation as well as effective collaboration amongst national actors.

This objective has largely been achieved during the reporting time with improved programme delivery effort and enhanced enforcement capability of security forces due to closer collaboration and synergy, particularly at the border points.

Armed Violence Reduction Initiatives

In support of national efforts at promoting human security and social cohesion, ECOSAP provided crucial support to Member states particularly facing very difficult national integration challenges. The countries emerging from violent conflicts and those facing rebellion and youth restiveness attracted significant support from the programme.

The test elections in Montserrado County, Liberia witnessed intense community mobilization and massive sensitization campaign by the national commission on small arms control (LiNCSA), an intervention described as very useful and timely, the lack of which could have resulted in serious electoral violence.

Within the framework of ECOSAP support for quick impact projects, NATCOM Liberia was funded to implement these activities before, during and after the county elections that took place November 10 – 24, 2009.

The peaceful way the election was conducted was generally applauded as it gave clear indication of the successful governmental intervention and the campaigns on election without guns mounted by LiNCSA.

In the same vein, the effort of the Malian government in the reintegration process of ex combatants in northern region of the country, continue to record significant successes.
The NATCOM Mali has been recognized for undertaking successful arms for development projects

Weapons handing over ceremony in Mali

The imperative of supporting these disarmament measures informed the strategic support provided by ECOSAP to the NATCOM, by organizing and communities in the Kayes region into cooperatives.

Malian Customs hands over assorted weapons to NATCOM

This ECOSAP – supported project was well received by the community and has greatly improved the social cohesion. Similar support was provided to Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Senegal, all with the potential of impacting positively on the livelihoods of the targeted communities.

Support Quick Impact projects

In anticipation of some of the challenges of small arms control, ECOSAP continued to support member states with critical needs. For instance, NATCOM Senegal has received support from ECOSAP for its quick impact project. This activity was part of the NATCOM’s semester work plan. This project was presented as an element of effective response to the pressing need to pursue the initiatives previously undertaken by the Government of Senegal. The project had three major components, namely (1) the mobilization and sensitization of communities on the illicit circulation and availability; (2) the collect stockpiling, destruction of the SALW in exchange for support micro development projects as alternatives; (3) the effective capitalization and communication on the SALW;

This project executed over 4 months helped in creating results in the reduction of the circulation of illicit arms. These results are being capitalized and the visibility momentum created by the NATCOM of Senegal, ECOSAP and the NGO Afrique Enjeux, and other stakeholders in the project is being shared with the policy makers and general public through the mass media.

Small Arms and Light Weapons reduction project in Senegal

In Burkina Faso, funds were allocated to take in account the issues related to the local arms manufacturing. This project includes four main activities which include (1) the census in 5 regions of local arms manufacturers, (2) workshops held with the local arms manufacturers, (3) update of the legislative texts on local arms manufacturing and (4) diffusion of these updated texts. Another activity in this Member state concerned the translation and vulgarization of the ECOWAS Convention in the three main languages spoken in the country.
Permanent Secretariats of NATCOMs

As part of the lessons learnt, the programme policy of providing office equipment only to NATCOMs with distinct office accommodation allocated by government has yielded positive results.

It is to be reported that all the National Commissions in West Africa now have fully operational and functional offices. The latest countries that allocated permanent offices for their NATCOMs included Cote d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. At the moment, it can be reported that all 15 Member states have demonstrated strong political will and acceptability of the ECOWAS initiatives consistent with Article 24 of the ECOWAS Convention.

In support of the political ownership of the fight against SALW by Member States, ECOSAP has now accomplished the mandate of providing functional secretariats for the NATCOMs with the provision of modern office equipment thereby putting the NATCOM Secretariats on the right path for effective national coordination and control.

NATCOM Senegal who became fully functional early 2010 has now received the equipment needed to make their office completely operational and have already started the process of adding to the staff of the Permanent Secretariat.
In 2006, ECOSAP was faced with the huge challenge of getting the national implementation framework for small arms control fully installed in the Union. The countries emerging from violent civil wars, characterized with massive destruction of infrastructure and social services.

Due the effective utilization of the dedicated funding provision by Japan for these three countries, ECOSAP’s interventions in the last three years, yielded significant results, with national authorities becoming increasingly engaged and manifesting political will through allocation of permanent offices for the NATCOMs in Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The NATCOMs have now moved into their newly reconstructed and fully refurbished offices with funding made available by ECOSAP.

Also important is the legalization of the activities of the NATCOM by establishing them through the appropriate legal provisions of each country. Thus, Cote d’Ivoire and Sierra Leone are fully established by national laws and Cote d’Ivoire has been allocated a budget line.

In the case of Cote d’Ivoire, due to the persistent intervention of ECOSAP and its engagements with the national authorities, the National Commission recently established by government, have since started various activities towards the completion of the Small Arms survey.

In addition, due to the political situation in Cote d’Ivoire, ECOSAP supported the conduct of elections without violence by supporting national sensitization campaigns.

In order to boast operational activities of the NATCOMs, ECOSAP procured and provided Toyota 4X4 to NATCOMs to Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This facility meant to further compliment the efforts of national governments, have since proved to be very useful in the community mobilization effort and outreach services in the various countries.

The functionality review of the NATCOMs conducted by ECOSAP in 2006, showed the total lack of modern office equipment, tools and facilities in most of the National Commissions.

In an effort towards improving the situation, ECOSAP provided funding, within the Japanese framework, and these equipment were procured for the permanent secretariat of the NATCOMs in Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, provision of equipment have greatly boasted their operations and functionality.
Monthly Stipend to Personnel

As provided for within the Japanese funding, payment of stipend for the personnel working at the secretariats of the National Commissions were met regularly by ECOSAP. This was an intervention that greatly assisted the full installation of the NATCOMs in these countries, given their development situations, and the governments grappling with post conflict reconstruction efforts/challenges.

Functional NATCOM Offices

Also consistent with the Japanese support, ECOSAP recognized the serious development challenges of these countries and the impact of the long period of civil wars, interventions were made in terms of providing funds for the renovation/rehabilitation of offices of NATCOMs provided by their governments.

In this regard, permanent secretariats of NATCOMs in Liberia and Sierra Leone were renovated, using the UNDP Procedures, and now wearing facelift as functional national commissions. While in Cote d’Ivoire, resources were made available for the Leasing of the NATCOM Secretariat by ECOSAP.

Operational Expenses for NATCOMs

The operational expenses for the day to day running of the NATCOMs in these countries, was also of great importance and this informed the consistent support provided by ECOSAP. In this respect, expenses related to the functionality of the secretariats such as running cost, payment of utilities and other sundry services were fully met in the last two years, for Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In addition, NATCOMs with dilapidated structures were supported and renovations of such facilities were carried out, particularly countries within the Mano River Union, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire.

Updating National Laws and Legislative Frameworks

In an effort to create National Commissions consistent with the provision of Article 24 of the ECOWAS Convention, ECOSAP continued its support to national processes towards attaining this objective. This included relevant parliamentary advocacies, interactive sessions and lobbying of Defense and Security committees in Member States.

The outcome of this strategic intervention, for instance, resulted in the approval of the Bill titled “The Sierra Leone National Commission on Small Arms Act 2010” on Tuesday 22nd June 2010, thereby legally establishing the National Commission of Sierra Leone.

On the other hand, in accordance with Art 21 of the Convention on Small Arms, the National Commission took the initiatives to convene with ECOSAP support, a Review workshop on the firearms legislation in Togo in order to create country – wide agenda for action. This activity took place in July 2010 where
the government officials, the legal luminaries and the issues were brought together with the common goal of reviewing the draft Law that will signal the new Firearms and ammunition regime in Togo.

**Workshop to review firearms legislation in Togo**

**Domesticating the ECOWAS Convention**

The entry into force of the ECOWAS Convention in September 2009 meant that the various provisions apply to the Member states that have ratified the Convention. With this strong legal environment in place and the pilot intervention of ECOSAP, by providing support for effective regional coordination and functional national secretariats, national laws, often outdated, must be seen to be updated. Thus, ECOSAP support to NATCOMs in this direction has stated yielding positive results. In Senegal, Sierra Leone and Liberia, national gun laws are currently being reviewed so that they can be consistent with the relevant sections of the Convention.

**Strengthening CSO Activities Regionally & Nationally**

The CSOs play an important role in community mobilization and down - stream project delivery and support in Member states. In support of their position and the role they play, ECOSAP continued to underscore their importance by providing each national coalition with the means and equipment for functional office secretariats.

The national coalitions received support from ECOSAP through the West African Network but were also encouraged to work closely with their respective NATCOMs.

In the last six months, ECOSAP through WAANSA had supported with funding the establishment of the 5 remaining National Coalition secretariats in Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia, Mali and Niger. The period also witnessed the sustained support at strengthening the Regional West African Action Network on Small Arms (WAANSA) Secretariat in Accra, Ghana.

**Delegates at Regional CSO Forum in Accra**

**ECOSAP Addresses 3rd Forum of Regional CSOs**

The operational expenses and the advocacy visits to states were supported by ECOSAP, which resulted in the strong leadership, institutional coordination as well as oversight of national civil society coalitions in Member states by WAANSA secretariat.

The preparedness is to allow the CSOs to effectively play pertinent roles with the entry into force of the ECOWAS Convention and the implementation of the NATCOMs Action Plans in each Member state. (See attached contact details of national coalitions in the 15 Member states).
Strengthening Peer Reviews & Information Exchange

It will be recalled that ECOSAP supported the development of the Guide for the formalization of Regional Network of NATCOMs which was presented and adopted at the 3rd Networking meeting of NATCOMs held in Dakar, October 14 – 15 2009, the programme continued the measures in strengthening the network. Due to the importance of the network in the harmonization of regional policies on small arms control, ECOSAP involved President of the Regional Network in major regional strategic meetings. The regional network was also fully represented at the Ministers of Defence Meeting held in Abuja March 6 – 7 2010, where the action plan for the implementation of the ECOWAS Convention and the Exemption Form were considered and adopted.

Supporting Parliamentary forums

The ECOWAS Small Arms Control Programme (ECOSAP), the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (UNREC) and the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons held a Regional Inter-parliamentary conference titled “Parliamentary Action on SALW in West Africa”, at the Blondin Beye Peacekeeping Centre in Bamako, Mali 25th - 26th February 2010. Eight (8) parliamentarians from West African states as well as representatives of Government of Mali and regional/international experts representing ECOWAS, the Network of National Commissions on SALW control in West Africa, GRIP [1], the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung and UNREC participated in the two day conference. This meeting was the first to be held in West Africa and it acknowledged as important, the work of ECOSAP in the region, through its various activities. The next meeting is in Liberia, where successes recorded at the Bamako Conference shall be further consolidated.
Programmatic Cluster Collaboration

The main objective of the cluster meeting continued to be attained with the consistency of the semester review and planning meeting that allows for ECOSAP partners (National Commissions and CSOs) to exchange information and experiences as well. Within the period under review, all the 15 Member states were brought together in their different clusters with a view to reviewing benchmarks, successes and challenges recorded.

In the last six months, the following Member states hosted the various cluster meetings: Dakar (Cluster A) with Senegal as observing country; Monrovia (cluster B) with Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire as observers; Ouagadougou (cluster C) with Cote d’Ivoire as observer and Abidjan (cluster D) with Ghana as observer. The notion of observer was introduced in these meetings to take in account geographical and socio-economic realities between Member states.

The ECOSAP partners, NATCOMs and CSOs, have shown significant improvement in capacities and functionality, this was observed in the quality and content of the semester progress reports presented during the cluster meetings. The focus of the cluster meetings, as earlier noted, was to further provide appropriate capacity building to the partners in Project Management and Monitoring, one of the technical gabs of the NATCOMs project formulation and delivery effort.

Joint Capacity Building Exercise

The entry into force of the ECOWAS Convention meant that national platforms that primarily implement key elements of the Convention must be strengthened. The collaboration and synergy with centers of excellence, particularly, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) cannot be overemphasized.

This informed the consistent active participation of ECOSAP in elaborating the training. ECOSAP also encouraged/advised NATCOMs in the selection of course participants attending the training.

Also, ECOSAP participated as facilitators to the training workshops, particularly the specialized training course held in April 2010 on Border Security, Stockpile Management and Tracing/Marking Techniques. In the Steering Group meeting, ECOSAP also contributed in the policy discussion, review of progress and sharing of information during such meetings at the centre, this was the case at the just concluded 5th steering Group meeting held July 7 2010.

Security Situation of MRU Appraised

The cluster review meeting also provided timely forum where current security situation of the Mano River Union was analyzed by representatives from Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other regional experts.

The outcome clearly indicated that peace in the MRU was still fragile due to the political situations in Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea; general rising trends in the incidences of armed robbery, domestic violence and rape; abused of air and maritime boundaries, etc; these elements and the emerging complex dynamics of the SALW problems in the region, will continue to require sustainable support.
Public Education and Information Dissemination

The renewed management vision considered information management and dissemination as vital tool for mass mobilization in support of actions and programmes. This informed the reconstruction of ECOSAP Website to be consistent with the new management mission and mandate. The website is now fully reengineered, with content and qualities, as the corner stone that fulfill this vision.

As an appropriate portal, the website will continue to provide useful visibility to the programme worldwide, and will serve to provide, the decision makers/researchers with reliable reference materials. In terms of visibility, the management also intensified production of hard reference materials, through quarterly newsletters, fliers, brochures and billboards.
Biennial Meeting of States on UNPoA Implementation

The United Nations convenes meeting of States every two years in order to review national implementations within the framework of the United Nations Programme of Action of Small Arms (UNPoA). The 4th meeting took place in New York, June 14 – 18 2010 with Member states, Intergovernmental organizations and Civil Society activists in attendance. The ECOWAS Commission, through ECOSAP had a strong showing during the meeting, with delegates drawn from the ECOWAS Member states and civil society networks participating. Amongst other thing, ECOSAP supported the attendance of delegates of NATCOMs, ECOSAP Advisory Board members and Civil Society Representatives; it equally established a public exhibition stand throughout the duration of the meeting.

The ECOSAP stand at the BMS attracted significant attention where a number of participants visited the stand and were provided with relevant publications of the programme, which they appreciated and commended.

The highpoint at showcasing ECOSAP and its activities was the hosting of a Side Event which took place on June 18 2010. The participants were shown the activities, progress and challenges of ECOSAP. The occasion attracted major international players in Small Arms control as well as development partners and donors. The Programme Manager presented his progress update and was backed by the projection of a documentary film capturing key achievements in the field, lessons learnt and the aspirations of the beneficiaries of ECOSAP.

At the end, the forum was used to also inform on the expanded mandate of ECOSAP of implementing the operational activities of the ECOWAS Convention on SALW. This effort was roundly commended by partners as ECOWAS was then seen, for the very first time, strategically seizing the opportunities that abound during the BMS.
Key Lessons, Challenges and Prospects

Lessons/challenges

1. Lack of programme funds to satisfy ECOSAP Partners, the NATCOMs and CSOs, due to limited budgetary allocations;

2. The political instability in some Member States continue to deter implementation of programme in Member States, with serious disruptions in Guinea and Guinea Bissau, due to the political crisis;

3. Increasing sophistication of local manufacturers continue to be recovered in crime scenes thereby posing great danger to the region;

4. Unemployment in Member states generate youths restiveness and involvement in crimes and criminal activities;

Prospects

5. National Synergy retreats in Member States should be sustained with the entry into force of the convention;

6. Massive public awareness programmes should be conducted to continue the momentum towards regional ownership of the convention and its domestication;

7. Political will should be complimented by ECOSAP through continuous provision of technical and financial supports to NATCOMs/CSOs, to implement key activities of ECOWAS Convention;

8. The CSOs national and regional secretariats should be consolidated to make them fully functional and operational for effective coordination as well as implementation of downstream programming, nationally and regionally;

9. Increased Political and Financial support from ECOWAS Commission;
National Commissions / Focal Points on Small Arms Control in West Africa

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