



AR/087



23 November 2006

SEESAC ACTIVITY REPORT – AR/087 ARMED VIOLENCE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS MECHANISMS IN SOUTH EASTEN EUROPE - OVERVIEW

SEESAC FUNCTIONAL AREA	FA 3 - Management Information FA 8 - SALW Survey
SEESAC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	OA 3 - Information Management and Exchange OA 8 - Research Activities

Armed violence data gathering systems in countries in South Eastern Europe (SEE) vary in quality and coverage of the population. No single country embodies best practices by itself. The lack of continuous monitoring means that data has sometimes been generated by research that attempts to recover information on armed violence retrospectively. Different methods for doing this offer differing degrees of reliability; analysis of media reports and SALW Perceptions Surveys offer an important substitute for continuously gathered data, but are unreliable for a number of reasons. Other studies have been obliged to recover data from past records, which were not designed for storing data specifically on armed violence. In other cases, individual institutions have conducted their own data gathering, and have supplied useful fragments of a comprehensive picture of the problem.

Where information specifically covering armed violence has been gathered systematically on a national level a number of problems remain:

- A lack of standard equipment and systems;
- Variations in the qualification, motivation or availability of staff;
- Poor facilities;
- A lack of data handling mechanisms;
- Where data analysis is undertaken, it has no impact on public policy.

Nowhere in SEE is continuously gathered, reliable information on injuries inflicted by SALW clearly connected to policy-making circles and then made a routine part of national strategies, action plans and other laws or initiatives. This could be altered through concerted investment in more comprehensive national or regional systems to gather information routinely on SALW-related injuries, offences and prosecutions; but at what financial cost? Yet it is clear that better monitoring of injury levels can be adopted with relatively small amendments to standard forms in use among healthcare institutions, and databases to capture the information. Following the approach of the World Health Organization to injury prevention, it would be possible to develop a system in each country in SEE that would adequately monitor the level of armed violence and identify the social determinants of the problem.

In terms of crime statistics, the police and criminal justice systems already keep records of some kind in all countries in the region but the following problems were identified:

- Law enforcement agencies and judicial systems tend not to distinguish firearms crimes from overall crime, typically classifying offences under the penal code;



- ❑ Law and justice institutions in SEE are often not open with information on crime, prosecutions and convictions; and
- ❑ Law and justice institutions lack the strategic vision to assert the significance of data gathered for policy making.

The transition period of the last ten years appears to have left its mark on many regional institutions and it is apparent in many cases that data gathering is conducted to fulfil a bureaucratic imperative, generating information that is barely analysed, and not widely shared or used. No sweeping reforms would be needed to change this situation in relation to armed violence or injury surveillance, just a change in data collection priorities and analysis mechanisms. However, even in countries with the most advanced data gathering systems, the circle between social problems, data describing them, analysis of that data, and evidence-based policies and initiatives that can mitigate social problems, has not yet been closed.

This report is available to download from our website: <http://www.seesac.org>. Please contact Ana Martinovic, the SEESAC Communications Officer at ana.martinovic@undp.org for further information.



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