



AR/092

30 January 2007

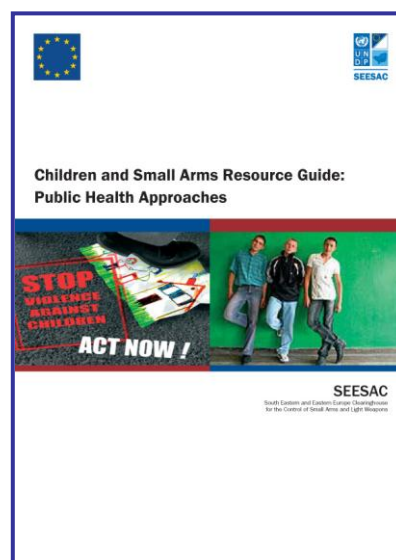
SEESAC ACTIVITY REPORT – AR/092 CONSULTANCY REPORT: SMALL ARMS, CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

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| SEESAC FUNCTIONAL AREA | FA 4 - SALW Awareness and Communications Strategy |
| SEESAC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY | OA 3 - Information Management and Exchange Activities OA 7 - Training and Research |

In March 2006 SEESAC commissioned an Education Consultant to determine the need for a school curriculum on small arms throughout the Western Balkan countries through consultation with relevant stakeholders, a review of available literature on the subject of small arms, children and youth, and examination of evaluation reports from previous risk education projects conducted in South Eastern Europe (SEE). This is the final consultancy report from that process.

The consultancy concluded that there is no evidence to support the need for a school curriculum, arguing that 'small arms risk education' programmes in schools lack educational validity and are not particularly effective. The focus of the consultancy then changed to reviewing the available knowledge about:

- Child development;
- Research on risk-taking;
- Research on safety and risk education;
- The public health approach to small arms and violence; and
- The role of media violence in influencing children's attitudes to weapons.



The consultancy gathered much useful data on the linkages and psychology of children, youth and weapons. After an extensive review of available literature and wide-ranging consultations the report recommends the need for impact data, in particular in the areas of public health and the impact of violence in the media on children and young people, and the need for an integrated approach to the issue of small arms and children. Any programme involving children and small arms should be based on a children's rights approach and knowledge of child development and education. The public health approach is recommended, which would provide 'actionable' data on the impact of small arms and children as well as highlighting the role of small arms in domestic violence, suicide and employment and mental health needs of veterans and their families.

The report recommends that the issue of firearms be viewed as an aspect of the larger problem of domestic violence (often intensified due to the presence of firearms in the home) and that any programmes should address the root causes of this violence, rather than firearms specifically. Programmes developed to tackle the issues of small arms and security should be based on participatory consultations, and ensure that the voices of young people are heard so that programmes can address their concerns.

With regard to educational programmes, the report advises against the use of 'small arms risk education' and 'gun safety' programmes, claiming that most programmes of this nature have been stand-alone, short-term and without demonstrated effectiveness. The report highlights the danger of removing responsibility from the appropriate people by targeting children with small arms programmes. Instead Governments and gun owners should be held to account for any violence involving children and small arms. The report advises against creating a new issue of 'small arms and children' but advocates for funding and support for existing programmes on child protection, education for peace, conflict resolution, human rights education and schools without violence. These approaches should become integral to curricula and the functioning of the school system.

This report is now available on the Education and Small Arms section of the SEESAC website <http://www.seesac.org>. For more information please contact SEESAC SALW Awareness Officer, Ciara Loughney: ciara.loughney@undp.org.



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