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EU-Assistance on curbing Small Arms and light weapons in Cambodia

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EU-ASAC

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**EU ASAC’s Weapons Collection Programme (2001-2003)
and the Development of a Post-Weapons Collection Project
Strategy (2004)
in Cambodia**



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EU ASAC's Weapons Collection Programme (2001-2003) and the Development of a Post-Weapons Collection Project Strategy (2004) in Cambodia

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Introduction:

Since the 1990's weapons collection programmes have been implemented in various countries using different strategies. There have varied from enforced weapons confiscation to buy-back schemes and weapons-for development (WfD) projects.

In Cambodia first attempts at weapons collection were made by the United Nations Transitional Assistance in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1992/1993. However, fighting between the Royal Cambodian Government (RCG) and the Khmer Rouge continued to 1998 with small arms still being distributed to soldiers and villagers in many parts of the country. In 1998 the Khmer Rouge ended its resistance and it was effectively absorbed into government structures, including the military. After thirty years of war Cambodia was finally at peace. But the country was awash with weapons and the RCG had no idea as to how many weapons there were and where exactly they were to be found. In 1998 the RCG began a campaign to confiscate illegal weapons in the capital city of Phnom Penh. In April 1999 the RCG strengthened the legal framework to limit possession of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) when it promulgated Sub-decree 38 declaring private ownership of weapons to be illegal³. Shortly afterwards the twenty-four provincial governors were instructed to collect weapons in their provinces. Most of the governors instituted a buy-back campaign paying approximately 10,000 Riel (US\$2.50) per weapon. Some governors gave rice in exchange for weapons. Over 100,000 weapons were collected during this period. But the government initiative came to a halt when it ran out of funds to continue the programme. In May 1999 the RCG began a series of public weapons destruction ceremonies. In one year some 36,500 weapons were destroyed by crushing in seven ceremonies.

Having run out of funds to continue its campaign against illegal SALW, the RCG appealed to the international community for assistance. The European Union responded and quickly established the EU ASAC programme (European Union Assistance of Curbing Small Arms and light weapons in Cambodia)⁴. In April 2000 it began operations providing technical and financial assistance to the RCG in curbing SALW. In this way the European Union enabled the continuation and development of the weapons reduction activities the RCG had itself started.

The EU ASAC programme:

The strength of the EU ASAC programme has been the development of its multi-faceted, integrated approach in assisting the RCG in weapons management and curbing the illegal possession of SALW in Cambodia⁵, together with the clear and continuing commitment of the Royal Cambodian Government to implementing the programme.

The EU ASAC programme⁶ has had six elements:

³ The text of Sub-decree 38 can be found at www.eu-asac.org/programme/arms_law/

⁴ European Union Council of Ministers Decision 1999/730/CFSP of 15 November 1999

⁵ For a fuller description of the EU ASAC programme see: David de Beer, *An Integrated Approach to Small Arms Management: the EU ASAC Programme on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons in Cambodia*. Presentation given in December 2002 to the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt and GTZ. GTZ, Eschborn, Germany, 2003. It is also available on the EU ASAC website: www.eu-asac.org/ or at www.gtz.de/smallarms/downloads/decosac-cambodia.pdf

⁶ While the core-funding for the EU ASAC programme was provided by the European Commission, important additional funding was provided by The Netherlands (€363,000 for Weapons for

1. Assisting the RCG in developing a new and stricter Arms Law to replace Sub-decree 38 of 1999;
2. Assisting the Ministry of National Defence to develop a comprehensive weapons registration and safe storage system through which all its SALW are stored under internationally acceptable conditions⁷;
3. Implementing voluntary weapons collection projects, largely using the “Weapons for Development” strategy;
4. Searching for weapons hidden in weapons caches in remote forest and mountain areas, in co-operation with the police and military authorities;
5. Assisting the RCG to destroy surplus military weapons and weapons which had been confiscated from or handed in by the civilian population; and
6. Disseminating public information on the dangers and illegality of private weapons possession, the need to hand in illegal weapons and the benefits of a weapons-free Cambodia.

The implementation of each of these six elements has been a separate project, but each element has supported the other five and made their implementation easier and more effective. This is the essence of the multi-faceted, integrated approach to weapons collection and weapons management and it is within this context that the voluntary weapons collection programme of EU ASAC was implemented.

Voluntary Weapons Collection⁸:

Large-scale Weapons for Development projects:

At the beginning of its operations in Cambodia in April 2000, EU ASAC began planning a Weapons for Development (WfD) programme. Consultations were held with the government, not so much on where development was needed, but where the areas were where illegal ownership of small arms caused the greatest number of problems. Two districts were chosen for WfD pilot projects. The first was Snuol in Kratie province where the security situation was so bad that no development organisation dared to work there and the first EU ASAC missions had to be accompanied by armed guards to ensure their safety. The second was Bakan in Pursat province, which had also been the scene of heavy fighting in the past, but where several development agencies were already operating. A third area, in Kampong Thom province, was also under consideration. However, due to a lack of co-operation from the local authorities and their record at that time of punishing civilians who voluntarily handed in weapons, it was decided not to proceed with a project in Kampong Thom.

Similar, what were termed large-scale, comprehensive projects were designed for both Snuol and Bakan:

Development and €500,000 for Weapons Registration & Safe Storage), GTZ (US\$ 200,000 for police training and support as part of WfD), United Kingdom (US\$ 116,000 for Weapons for Development and police support), Japan (US\$ 137,000 for Weapons for Development) and Canada (CAN\$ 40,800 for police training).

⁷ In a pilot project in 2003 EU ASAC also assisted the Ministry of the Interior in registering and providing safe storage for the SALW used by the police in three provinces.

⁸ This section is based on *Lessons learned from development-oriented SALW programmes: Reflections on experience in Cambodia*, a presentation given by David de Beer on 14 April 2003 at the Conference at Wilton Park, England, on “Integrating Small Arms and Light Weapons into Development Programmes” sponsored by DFID.

- a local field manager was employed for each project to make contact with each Village Development Council and explain that they would get appropriate development objects, such as water wells or schools if they handed in a sufficient number of weapons. No promise was made to reward individuals illegally holding weapons. The appeal was to a sense of communal loyalty emphasising that a community without weapons was more likely to receive development assistance than a community where weapons were still present;
- national, Phnom Penh-based NGO's were hired to undertake public awareness activities on the dangers of SALW in the communities and to encourage villagers to hand in their weapons to the local authorities;
- in Snuol a contract was signed with an institutional development agency working in a neighbouring district to drill and construct the water wells and other development objects. In Bakan the government-run Provincial Rural Development Committee implemented the development objects which were larger in nature than in Snuol, but which formed part of the provincial development programme;
- the police in the districts were trained in human rights and community relations so that the villagers would have more trust in the police to provide security;
- the inadequately equipped police were given motorbikes, mountain bikes, two-way radio's and office equipment to improve both their visibility and response times; and
- in an attempt to cut down on police corruption (with a salary as low as US\$ 18 per month, the police are often forced to be corrupt in order to survive) a detailed programme improving the income of the police family was begun. This generally involved working with the wives of the policemen, training them in skills such as sewing or providing them with goods such as oxen or small animals.

Over a period of 20 months 3,251 weapons were collected in Snuol and 2,442 weapons in Bakan. Most importantly the security situation in both districts improved dramatically and the villagers felt that the police were doing a better job than before. After the completion of the project in Snuol other development agencies were prepared to work in the district considered too dangerous in 2000 and 2001. However this all had a heavy financial price tag for two small isolated districts in Cambodia: Snuol cost US\$ 442,658 and Bakan US\$ 291,291⁹ excluding the core salary and administration costs born by EU ASAC.

There were several lessons to be learned from the comprehensive, large-scale WfD projects. In Snuol water wells brought the development resulting from WfD very close to the people. In Bakan no water wells were built and the larger development projects such as schools, road repair, and repairs to police stations were literally more distant from many of the people who handed in weapons and therefore felt they had not benefited from surrendering their weapons. On the other hand, a small survey done in Snuol when most of the weapons had been collected indicated that for many people "improved peace and security" was sufficient for them to feel they had done

⁹ Of these amounts development incentives and police support cost US\$ 274,250 in Snuol and US\$ 118,495 in Bakan.

the correct thing in surrendering their weapons. While water wells were appreciated, the improved security was appreciated more.¹⁰

In Cambodia the large-scale WfD projects did not really fit into a 12-month, January-to-December, project cycle that EU ASAC required because of funding regulations of the European Commission in Brussels. This was because a large-scale project required more than twelve months to be fully implemented. An aggravating factor was that the dry season in Cambodia (November to April) in which most activities could be implemented falls at both the beginning and the end of the European financial year.

90% of the weapons were collected in the first eight months. Implementing the development projects over the following twelve months virtually turned EU ASAC into a development organisation for nearly a year, thereby extensively limiting its real core business: collection, destruction and management of weapons. Senior officials in the Cambodian government also began to regard EU ASAC as not much more than another development organisation, submitting development requests for certain areas with the comment that “weapons could be collected at the same time”.

However, despite these drawbacks, the comprehensive approach of public awareness trainings; networking in the villages; training the police in community relations; improving their equipment and increasing police family income to reduce corruption certainly proved its value and the result was a significant increase in security in both Snuol and Bakan districts.

2002 - Small-scale WfD projects using local NGO's:

Early in 2002 EU ASAC branched out into seven small-scale WfD projects involving local NGO's from the relevant provinces. Part of the rationale was to limit the intensity of management required by the large-scale projects and develop a project cycle that was limited to one year, as EU ASAC can only make financial commitments on a year-by-year basis. EU ASAC also wanted to spread its weapons collection activities into more areas. Contracts were signed with each NGO to conduct public awareness and training sessions that were held largely in local pagodas. EU ASAC produced its own training materials to ensure the consistency of the curriculum the local NGO's were teaching. The materials included two specially commissioned video productions on the effects of illegal weapons possession in the local communities. In co-operation with the local police, the NGO's kept track of the number of weapons handed in after the training sessions and the NGO's were allocated a budget to build water wells for the villagers where sufficient weapons had been handed in.

In theory this approach should have required less management time by EU ASAC staff. However this was an underestimation. Some of the NGO's were good at training and weapons collection, but did not handle the well-building process in a satisfactory manner. Other NGO's were not very effective public awareness trainers, but could build better wells. All NGO's carried out the same survey among participants in the villages where the public awareness training took place. 83% of the participants reported significant improvement in the security in their villages¹¹. The seven projects cost US\$ 167,824¹². Over 3,000 weapons and almost 3,000 rounds

¹⁰ To interpret this reaction, it must be realised that the security situation in Snuol before the WfD project began was much worse than in Bakan.

¹¹ For full survey results see: www.eu-asac.org/programme/vwc/report2002.pdf and www.eu-asac.org/programme/vwc/report2003.pdf

¹² Of this amount US\$ 29,480 was spent on 90 (ring) water wells.

of ammunition and UXO's were collected. Importantly for EU ASAC, the concept of a one year project-cycle held.

2003 - NGO Lite Projects and "mainstreaming":

Learning from past experience, in 2003 EU ASAC switched to a new concept, spontaneously dubbed by Dr. Owen Greene of Bradford University as the "NGO Lite" project. This differed from the approach used by EU ASAC in 2002 in that the development component of WfD was removed from the responsibility of the NGO's. In 2003 EU ASAC supported NGO's in nine provinces. Because of an extra grant made to EU ASAC¹³ it was also possible to add ten-day training courses in community relations for the local police in the districts where the NGO's were working. These courses differed from those given as part of the large-scale projects in Snuol and Bakan, in that the curriculum was drawn up for EU ASAC by a joint team from the Department of Training of the National Police and human rights NGO's. (For both parties this was the first time they had actively co-operated together.) The courses were also given by a joint team of trainers from the Department of Training of the National Police and a human rights NGO. There were two scenarios for the NGO Lite projects. In both scenarios EU ASAC signed contracts with local NGO's, but only to conduct public awareness trainings on the need to hand in weapons held by the local population.

In Scenario One the only change with the small NGO approach used in 2002 was that the NGO was no longer responsible for providing the water wells. After a six-month public awareness and weapons collection cycle, EU ASAC itself decided where water wells were to be built. EU ASAC contacted the relevant Provincial Rural Development Committee (PRDC) and informed them of the intention to build wells in particular villages. The PRDC's agreed to regard the wells as part of the official schedule of development projects and were prepared to conduct water and sanitation training for the local communities and ensure future maintenance of the wells. The building of the wells was put out to public tender among companies recognised by the PRDC's¹⁴. In this way the development component of the WfD programme was "mainstreamed" into the government planning and EU ASAC developed a close relationship with the PRDC's.

In Scenario Two, there was an alternative development option. The local NGO's conducted public awareness activities in target areas of institutional development organisations and aimed at providing an added sustainable security value to the development implemented by each agency. The theme of the public awareness was not: "Hand in your weapons and we will give you a water well", but rather "By handing in your weapons, you are improving the security of your community, encouraging future development and the development that is taking place will be of greater benefit and become more long lasting". Development was no longer presented a reward for handing in weapons: increased security that will maximise present development and possibly attract new development was to be seen as the reward for handing in weapons. The development agencies CWS (Church World Service), GTZ, CARE Australia and LWF (Lutheran World Federation) co-operated to a greater or lesser degree in such NGO Lite projects. In this way the "traditional" development agencies were exposed to the concept of weapons collection and weapons security,

¹³ This was a grant of US\$ 100,000 from GTZ.

¹⁴ As part of the 2003 small-scale WfD projects 88 water wells equipped with Afridev water pumps were built at a cost of US\$ 98,781.

and began to see the need to increase communal security in their target areas as a prerequisite for stable development¹⁵.

The changed security situation and EU ASAC's weapons collection and weapons security strategies:

By the end of 2003 the security situation in Cambodia was significantly different from that which was encountered in 2000 when the first large-scale WfD projects were designed. In virtually all provinces where EU ASAC implemented weapons collection campaigns, the villagers reported that safety in their area had significantly improved over the last two years¹⁶. In addition other surveys indicated that villagers gave the problems of SALW in their local communities a much lower rating than four or five years ago when SALW problems were still regarded as “major” in the communities¹⁷.

EU ASAC's experience in the local communities showed that, by the end of 2003, a large majority of Cambodians knew that it was illegal to possess a firearm.

Indications were that many of those who had decided not to voluntarily hand in their weapons to the local authorities had decided to remove the weapons from their houses and to hide them. The preferred method of hiding a weapon was simply to dig a hole in the ground and place the weapon in the hole. Usually the weapons was not wrapped in oilcloth or other protective material, with the result that with the result that its condition deteriorated rapidly in a few months. By burying their weapons, the villagers were essentially taking them “out of circulation”. Weapons in houses are often used for “impulse violence” in domestic quarrels, especially if alcohol abuse is involved. A weapon buried in the ground twenty or thirty metres away from a house is far less likely to be used in “impulse violence” as the effort involved in digging it up undermined the impulse to use it. The result is that weapons such as AK-47's, which are leftovers from the war, are being noticeably less used in the daily violence that is still common in Cambodian society¹⁸. Crimes involving knives and axes now seem to be more common than crimes involving AK-47's.

In view of the above factors it was not surprising that local and international NGO's involved in voluntary weapons collection had registered the numbers of weapons collected dropping (or being below expectations) in 2003. The expansion of the joint UNDP/RCG SEILA development programme into all twenty-four provinces by 2003 was also a good indicator to improved security and accessibility, underlining that poverty issues were now most significant.

In the last months of 2003 EU ASAC reviewed the options open to it for its voluntary weapons collection programme for 2004. The improvement in the security situation and the diminishing returns on weapons collection campaigns indicated that it would not be worthwhile to continue the NGO Lite approach for another year, in spite of the close association that had been developed with the National Police and the Provincial

¹⁵ In 2004 CWS adopted its own Peace Education programme in Kampong Thom Province co-operating with EU ASAC on weapons security education.

¹⁶ See Footnote 11.

¹⁷ FIT Media survey, May 2003. Only 19% of those surveyed still found weapons to be a problem in their communities.

¹⁸ In Phnom Penh criminal violence involving the use of firearms is now generally carried out with K-54 and K-59 handguns. These are new weapons, smuggled into Cambodia in recent years, and are not directly part of the post-conflict SALW problem. However their existence has been allowed to become a problem due to the weaknesses inherent in a post conflict SALW situation without strong measures being taken to control them.

Rural Development Committees. On assessing its own involvement in weapons collection since 2000, it became clear that what had started off in April 2001 as a self-contained comprehensive large-scale WfD programme evolved—partly because of managerial, financial and developmental constraints—into a weapons collection and public awareness programme that provided a security and stability element as “added-value” to the work of institutional development agencies as well as to the RCG’s own provincial development structures.

The question EU ASAC then faced was “What comes after a weapons collection programme?” Just abruptly stopping weapons collection activities without putting a sustainable exit-strategy in place was out of the question. It was also clear that while financially supporting active weapons collection activities might no longer be viable; there was still a need to improve weapons security on the local level. Recognising that a voluntary weapons collection programme operates as a process rather than an activity is crucial. Weapons collection had been ongoing since 1998 and its slowing down pointed to considerable success.

The weapons collection programme had reached a zenith point; weapons undoubtedly remained in rural areas and continued to be used, often in brutal fashion. However, these weapons were held by criminals or protected individuals who had not and in all likelihood would not respond to appeals made as part of a voluntary weapons collection campaign. To recover these weapons obviously required alternative strategies more heavily based on effective police work and which fell outside of the immediate mandate of EU ASAC.

Defining the point at which a society can be considered to have solved its post-conflict weapon proliferation problem is a challenge for SALW programmes and assessing Cambodia in this light was a source of much debate within EU ASAC.

As a part of weapons collection campaigning, EU ASAC had assisted in the strengthening the practical and administrative procedures of the police and equal emphasis was laid on ensuring that these procedures were maintained. Through this experience EU ASAC was concerned about a lack of local understanding of weapons security issues: collected weapons, UXO’s (unexploded ordnance) and landmines were often piled together in insecure conditions in a corner of a small police post with both police and general public using the office; there were delays in removing surplus (collected) weapons from the commune police and there was no structural contact between police and de-mining agencies on a commune level. Recording weapons collection statistics by the local police needed to be standardised as well as statistics of incidents involving firearms. There were considerable variations across provinces in the extent to which the police engaged in effective weapons management due to the interlinked combination of capacity and resources. A programme involving training the local officials in weapons security was seen as the logical follow-up to voluntary weapons collections campaigning.

EU ASAC’s network:

In many provinces EU ASAC had also been active in activities other than weapons collection.

- Weapons belonging to the military authorities had been registered and improved storage facilities provided to the military. This helped cut down the “leakage” of

weapons from the military into civil society and therefore was a factor in improving weapons security.

- Training courses in improving police/community relations had been given.
- Flames of Peace weapons destruction ceremonies had been held by the provincial governors and these had been technically and financially supported by EU ASAC. Some ceremonies destroyed surplus military weapons from the safe storage programme while others destroyed illegal civilian weapons collected by the police.
- EU ASAC had sponsored public awareness campaigns involving signboards, books, stickers, posters, theatre and media aimed at improving awareness of weapons security and promoting a weapon free society in the provinces, districts, communes and villages.

By the end of 2003, EU ASAC had a virtually unrivalled network of contacts across over ten provinces and was well known by the military region authorities, provincial, district and commune civil and security authorities, the decentralised government development structures (e.g. Provincial Rural Development Committees), de-mining organisations and local and international NGOs. Again it is important to emphasise the symbiotic nature of these relationships and their effect on the reputation of EU ASAC; co-operation in one sphere could often be directly attributed to their awareness of work in another. The EU ASAC Field Manager, who had for years worked within this broad series of contacts, was certainly also a central figure in the developing and maintaining this network.

The network essentially was formed by the (then potential) stakeholders in a Commune Council Capacity Building programme on weapons security (CCCB). The established network already had the confidence of all local stakeholders. This explains the ease with which the transition to the CCCB project was achieved. The awareness for the need for continued weapons security already existed; and the need was felt to place responsibility for maintaining awareness on weapons security within a broad spectrum of institutional structures once EU ASAC stopped this part of its work.

The most important factor of all was human resources; the most effective way of promoting sustainable community programmes is to embed them in institutions having a guaranteed existence and a natural authority. The activities of NGO's, whose authority is only based on the provision of donor funds, cease immediately when donor funding ends. Uniting different state institutions such as the police and various civil departments and institutions in common activities toward a common goal, improving local security and promoting a weapons-free society was the next step and represented another effort by EU ASAC to mainstream SALW work into government structures in Cambodia¹⁹. The strong commitment of the RCG to improving weapons management meant that a top-down momentum also influenced the co-operation of these institutions. By clearly directing security to be a common responsibility, co-operation was an issue of duty rather than choice. Ultimately, SALW related work should be fully integrated in government planning and activities at all levels of society. It was inevitable that degrees of co-operation altered between

¹⁹ The Weapons Registration and Safe Storage Programme with the Ministry of National Defence is another example of mainstreaming SALW responsibility into RCG structures.

target areas, principally due to unseen political factors which often characterise Cambodian society.

In February 2002, as part of the RCG's decentralisation programme, elections for Commune Councils had been held for the first time. By the second half of 2003 the administrative structures of the Commune Councils were taking shape. One of the five responsibilities of the Commune Councils was "Administration and Security". In discussions held by EU ASAC's Field Manager at the local level in mid-2003 and later with the Department of Local Administration (DoLA) at the Ministry of the Interior in Phnom Penh, it became clear that there had been no real input into the "Security" aspect of "Administration and Security" and that the police administrative procedures also required strengthening. DoLA agreed to the proposal that EU ASAC develop and implement a series of pilot training sessions with the Commune Councils of certain provinces aimed at improving security and weapons security in particular. The follow-up programme to voluntary weapons collection could now be confirmed: a training programme for relevant Commune Council members on improving security and weapons security at a local level.

The programme for training Commune Councils in weapons security:

EU ASAC decided to implement a pilot project in key districts of three provinces; Battambang, Pailin and Pursat. In these three provinces EU ASAC retained its most effective networks and the EU ASAC Field Manager, since January 2003 based in Battambang which adjoins Pailin, had previously worked as Regional Field Manager based in Pursat. Being able to capitalise on proven co-operation and networks of contacts played an important role in the choice of target areas.

In 2004 EU ASAC began working with decentralised local government structures to facilitate co-ordination and co-operation between provincial, district and commune level civil and security authorities and also civil groups to build sustainable local capacity to deal with weapons security issues. The main objective of this programme was to build the capacity of Commune Councils on issues relating to local security, including weapons security.

Not overstressing the resources of EU ASAC and the target stakeholders was an important consideration in designing the programme. Many international donors including the United Nations were funding extensive training programmes for commune councils on a range of issues from rural development to natural resource management. Mainstreaming the programme meant that it had to fit in with these other priorities and focus on activities that were sustainable. The closer an activity is to grassroots level, the more responsibilities the involved individuals have outside their occupational roles. These outside activities are principally engaging in subsistence agriculture. That this extends to the commune police, who spend much of their time engaging in agriculture, is a good indicator of the resources available at this level of Cambodian society.

The key to ensuring sustainability was to design the programme at the lowest possible cost in order that the scant resources of the target stakeholders could maintain the activities after the initial support from EU ASAC ended. High cost donor programmes which unbalance national development efforts have been a consistent problem in Cambodia and stressing the need for a financially sustainable programme

gained it strong support and co-operation from the Partnership for Local Governance (PLG)²⁰ Because of this planning focused on basic communication, information dissemination and administration.

EU ASAC's planning of the Commune Council Capacity Building programme (CCCB) had begun in mid-2003. Stakeholders, target districts, aims and needs had been identified and towards the end of 2003 a working document produced.

The major aims of the CCCB programme were laid out as follows:

- To strengthen sustainable capacity of target local government structures and security authorities on issues relating to local weapons security through mainstreaming the message of community responsibility for security into these target structures;
- To improve communication and co-operation between the above groups on local security issues;
- To reduce numbers of illegally held and collected weapons in the target areas;
- To raise grassroots community awareness on weapons security issues and the need for community responsibility for security by implementing a comprehensive public awareness campaign and encouraging provincial, district and commune level civil and security authorities and local stakeholders to disseminate information.

Implementing the Commune Council Capacity Building (CCCB) programme:

Implementation began in early 2004. EU ASAC's Field Manager was tasked with the production of relevant training and administrative materials for use by target stakeholders. These included radio communication and crime record forms for the commune-level police to use until 2006, books outlining the structures, roles and responsibilities of the police and civil authorities and legal information on SALW issues such as Sub-decree 38 of 1999 and the new draft Arms Law. Public awareness materials such as stickers, posters, pens and T-shirts were also part of the package of materials to be received by each of the hundreds of trainees.

Starting in March 2004, a co-ordinated series of orientation meetings with provincial level stakeholders including the police and civil authorities was held in each province. Both the objectives of the programme and the processes to be followed were explained. These were followed by provincial and district level workshops at which local trainers from the provincial and district level facilitation teams were trained. The trainers were already employed by the provincial authorities to do general capacity building at commune council level, so weapons security was just one more subject they had to build in to their overall training package. Finally these trainers organised commune level workshops where all stakeholders were trained together to encourage cross-agency understanding and co-operation. The security authorities were made aware of the role and structures of the civil authorities and vice versa. (Cross-agency training of this nature is very rare in Cambodia where each department tries to maintain a "safe distance" from other departments.) A total of 200 communes were targeted to receive training in the three provinces by November 2004.

²⁰ PLG oversees the financial and administrative management of the joint UNDP/RCG SEILA development programme

The original planning was that the programme in the three provinces would last for nine months (March – November 2004) and pending its approved success by the relevant authorities, adopted as part of the national investment plan over the next few years. As early as May 2004 EU ASAC was approached by the provincial authorities in Kampong Thom province (where EU ASAC active was co-operating with Church World Service in a public awareness programme on weapons security) and asked whether it would still be possible to implement a Commune Council Capacity Building programme on weapons security in Kampong Thom province by the end of 2004. Due to the experience already gained in the early stages of the CCCB programme in the first three provinces and the existence of a reliable security network in Kampong Thom province, it proved possible to implement a CCCB programme in 81 communes in Kampong Thom province in addition to the 200 in the other three provinces. This is an indication that the model originally developed for the first three provinces can be quickly and easily taken over and implemented by other provinces as well.

Factors contributing to the success of the Commune Council training programme:

Co-operation at all levels was immediate, though there was obvious disappointment on the part of the authorities that the EU ASAC Weapons for Development programme had come to an end. The issue of responsibility was not a problem since national government directives instructed full commitment to improving local security and working to reduce numbers of illegal weapons. Because it is an assistance programme to strengthen the efforts of the national government EU ASAC has never implemented programmes in its own right. The Commune Council Capacity Building (CCCB) programme is a good example of how this assistance translates to concrete SALW related activities by government officials on a local level.

Cambodian positions of power are almost always concentrated within small circles and this is no different within the target stakeholders for the CCCB programme. The provincial governor who is responsible for civil affairs and directing the police on issues of security is also the head of the local decentralised development programme. Therefore, gaining approval at the level of the provincial governor guarantees immediate co-operation at all lower levels, bolstered of course by the previously mentioned national level directives.

PLG and SEILA²¹ are key partners in the implementation of the CCCB programme as they are the focal point for sustainability. Provincial and district level facilitation teams of PLG are responsible for overseeing the implementation of specific activities (such as commune level monthly security meetings) and integrating them into on-going planning. This is crucial to both mainstreaming responsibility into local government structures and ensuring continuity.

Without the extensive network of EU ASAC contacts described earlier and the trust that EU ASAC enjoyed from a wide-ranging selection of contacts, the CCCB programme would never have been able to be implemented so smoothly in such a short period of time. The fact that all stakeholders were aware of the work that had been done in previous years to improve weapons security made it easy for them to

²¹ See Footnote 20.

decide to carry on this task but now placing responsibility for it on the Commune Councils. In any event this fitted in perfectly with the RCG's decentralisation plans.

While it was is not directly part of the CCCB programme, EU ASAC arranged for a public awareness media campaign to be implemented during the period that the training of the commune councils took place. This included radio and TV broadcasts on weapons security and the dangers of small arms in society. In addition local traditional theatre performances were developed in co-operation with two local national NGO's, Working Group for Weapons Reduction (WGWR) and Cambodia Institute for Development and Human Rights (CIDH). The travelling theatre groups perform nightly in different villages often reaching audiences of over one thousand people per evening in the communes where the CCCB programme was being implemented. This is another example of how one component of EU ASAC's work has supported the impact of another component.

Conclusion:

It has already been pointed out that a voluntary weapons collection programme operates as a process rather than an activity²². A new period on weapons collection in Cambodia began with the RCG's Phnom Penh campaign in 1998. EU ASAC's work on voluntary weapons collections has been an on-going process since it began with large-scale Weapons for Development projects in 2001 and 2002. And this process involved learning from the experiences gained in the field at each stage of the process. The large-scale WfD projects were a way of once again "kick-starting weapons collection in Cambodia".²³ In 2002 management restraints and the need to spread activities into a wider selection of areas led to the involvement of NGO's in small-scale WfD projects in more provinces, while in 2003 desire to integrate development rewards into institutional government development planning was a driving factor in choosing the NGO-Lite approach. Each transition was based on learning from on-going success and designed to ensure further the success of EU ASAC's involvement.

One final transition was required: with weapons remaining from the years of war posing an ever smaller threat to stability, a transition had to be found to allow EU ASAC end its involvement in weapons collection and weapons security in the civilian sector of Cambodian society by the end of 2004.²⁴ Based on past successes of the whole EU ASAC project, this became the Commune Council Capacity Building programme, mainstreaming responsibility for weapons security into local government structures. The CCCB was also designed to ensure sustainable maintenance of that success in a period when the EU ASAC project in Cambodia will have closed.

While there will be significant differences in every post-conflict situation in which SALW pose a threat to the stability and development society, the comprehensive programme of EU ASAC and the processes through which it evolved are offered as a model for other post-conflict areas. Particularly the pioneering development of an

²² See section "*The changed security situation and EU ASAC's weapons collection and weapons security strategies*"

²³ Brigadier-General (ret.) H.J. van der Graaf, EU ASAC Project Manager 2000/1 at the UNIDIR Conference "Increasing the cost-effectiveness of weapons collection by involving local communities in decision-making", Geneva, 14 and 15 September 2004.

²⁴ It is planned that EU ASAC will continue its Weapons Registration and Safe Storage programme in co-operation with the Ministry of National Defence in 2005.

exit-strategy for weapons collection activities, institutionalising responsibility for weapons security with local authorities offers a new solution to the long-term stabilisation of post-conflict areas.

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