

Forum:	General Assembly First Committee
Issue:	Addressing the production and manufacturing of illegal arms in Ghana
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Introduction

Of the 2.3 million firearms in the hands of civilians in Ghana, approximately 1.1 million are illicit arms. (Anane-Amponsah) The excessive quantities of firearms being produced in Ghana poses a threat to the UN's goals for peace and safety and has already inflicted damage on innocent people. Ambassador Martin Kimani, the Permanent Representative of Kenya said, "the AK-47 rifle has claimed more African lives than many diseases." He also emphasized that reliable identification and tracking of weapons is an important aspect of ensuring safety and security. ("We Must Tackle Illicit Weapons, Ammunition in Parts of Africa, Globally") However, the weapons production in Ghana is a multifaceted challenge which requires more than a simple solution. Careful consideration is required to identify procedures which benefit all members of society.

Definition of Key Terms

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary organizations which help provide a picture of on-the-ground realities in different parts of the world. They are formed by people in the social sphere separate from the State. ("CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOS) : UN Guiding Principles Reporting Framework") It can include community based organizations as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) engages with CSOs for advocacy and service delivery. ("Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) | United Nations Development Programme") They have great potential for alleviating critical issues such as the illegal firearm trade in Ghana.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

An organization whose goal is to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and build resilience so countries can sustain progress. As the UN's development agency, UNDP plays a critical role in helping countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. eradicate poverty reduce inequalities and build democratic governance. They concentrate on sustainable development, democratic governance and peace building, and climate and disaster resilience. (United Nations)

Blacksmith

A metalsmith who creates objects primarily from metal. In the context of the illegal arms dealing in Ghana, blacksmiths not only produce cooking utensils and craft ornaments, but often act as illegal arms manufacturers, with knowledge passed down as a family trade. (ENACTAfrica.org) At least appearance wise, they are able to recreate assault weapons such as the AKM or the AK-47. Most claim that they refuse to sell their products to criminals and smugglers, but there is no way to confirm their words. Those who produce guns are also referred to as gunsmiths.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

Small arms are weapons for use by an individual, including pistols, rifles, submachine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns. Light Weapons are designed for two or more pairs of hands, including heavy machine guns, grenade launchers, mortars, anti-aircraft guns and anti-tank guns. (NATO) They have severe destabilizing effects on social, societal, and economic development.

History

The Origin and Incentives of Gunsmiths:

Arms production has been a part of Ghana's history since its colonial era. Oral tradition claims that a man called Asamoah was Ghana's first gun manufacturer, who learned the skill from working with Europeans. Other recounts say that he knew how to make guns even before any European interactions.

Although blacksmiths have existed in Ghana for thousands of years, they only became a problem for authorities in the early twentieth century, when the guns they produced were used in slave raiding expeditions. Guns became a symbol of opposing colonialism and the expansion of

British influence, and a 'glorious' past which is sometimes colorfully recreated during festivals. ("History of Locally Manufactured Weapons in Ghana History Essay")

The Effects of Ghana's Weaponry on Neighboring Countries:

Instability in Burkina Faso has created ideal circumstances for a thriving illegal firearms trade. Currently, a network of blacksmiths, criminal networks and arms traffickers take advantage of the comparatively looser borders in the West Africa and Sahel region. (Sarpong) Consequently, the illegal manufacturing of arms becomes an issue confined not only to Ghana's internal security, but effects conflicts beyond its borders. Ghana's illegally-crafted weapons have been discovered in Mali, Guinea, Sahel, and West Africa among other countries, fueling conflicts in neighboring countries.

Key Issues

Difficulty in Tracking Blacksmiths and SALW Production

Despite SALW's illicit status in Ghana, there are still large workshops, some in business for more than a century. In fact, this illegalization has played a part in the difficulty of monitoring and tracing weapons manufacture, since gunsmiths go underground, intimidated by prospects of arrest or prosecution. ("History of Locally Manufactured Weapons in Ghana History Essay") It can be seen that this system has a few difficulties and requires an alternate approach.

Abdullah Aziz, a 70-year-old gunsmith, is one of the participants of a long-lasting firearms production system. Although he is aware that SALW manufacturing is illegal, he continues his family trade. "I got the training from my father, and I have passed it on to my son. We recognize that the production of these guns is illegal, but it is all I have known my entire life. We would like the government to regularize it and give us the necessary support." Said Abdullah. (Sarpong)

Home-made SALWs can sell at a price of US\$90 to US\$150 in West Africa, and blacksmiths who sell firearms can usually receive a price which allows them to lead comfortable lives in Ghana. (Sarpong) Therefore, many arms-producers who are continuing family business have no incentive to change their businesses.

New Technologies Increase the Difficulty of Tracing

Usage of materials such as polymers, 3-D printing, and other modular designs increase the difficulty of tracing illegal SALWs. At checkpoints in Ghana, some are made of

materials that are able to avoid detection by security checkpoint scanners. The speed of technological advancement has made it difficult for Less Developed Countries to keep up with security measures. Martin Kimani, Permanent Representative of Kenya says, “only a handful of countries are meeting the technology challenge...it’s really a race between those who manufacture these weapons and those who regulate them” and hopes for more discussion on this issue and more “capacity building for countries that are having a hard time.” (“We Must Tackle Illicit Weapons, Ammunition in Parts of Africa, Globally”)

Major Parties Involved

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS

An agency which established to prevent, combat, and eradicate SALW trade. It was established by an Act of Parliament, Act 736 of 2007. The National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons to ensure commitment to any International Instruments on SALWs such as the UN Firearms Protocol and ECOWAS Convention in Ghana and discourage the acquisition and production of SALWs by spreading awareness and sensitize the public on their dangers. They advise the Minister for the Interior on the creations of policies and strategies to regulate any of Ghana’s interactions with SALWs. (“National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons”)

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS is constructed of 15 member states, who’s goals are to maintain regional peace, stability, and security. They usually attempt peaceful solutions to disputes among Member States and promote a safe environment which can increase equitable distribution of economic costs and benefits among all citizens. ECOWAS protects human rights in accordance to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, working towards equality, self-reliance, and economic co-operation. (Limited)

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Date	Description of Event
1960	Criminal Code of Ghana of 1960 (Act 29)
1962	Arms and Ammunitions Act of 1962 (Act 118)
1962	Armed Forces Act of 1962 (Act 105)

1965	Africa Defense (Ghana) Act of 1965 (Act 313)
1994	Public Order Act of 1994 (Act 491)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Before year 2019, Ghana had absolutely no system identifying civilian owned weapons. However, this has changed in recent years. This coding effort is in accordance with Article 18 of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which requires member countries to mark their weapons to facilitate identification and traceability. The Small Arms Commission created coding system after the composition of Article 18 of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light weapons, which states that “member countries to mark their weapons to facilitate identification and traceability.” (ENACTAfrica.org) The Small Arms Commission ensures that all legally owned firearms, such as those owned by security services or registered civilians, possess distinctive codes and features to differentiate them from illegally crafted weapons.

NATO has also created multiple operations in an attempt to create effective solutions. Two of these have been especially influential: the Ad Hoc Working Group on SALW and Mine Action (AHWG SALW/MA), and the NATO/Partnership Trust Fund mechanism. Others which NATO supports also includes the United Nations (UN) Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects (PoA), and the UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). (NATO)

Possible Solutions

CSOs have great potential in solving the issue of production and manufacturing of illegal arms in Ghana. Their knowledge of local dynamics and influential figures, among other specific situations of certain regions, are instrumental for combating illicit firearms. They are well placed to perform the needed operations and can effectively spread advocacy. In her remark concerning CSOs, the Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP in Ghana noted that “CSOs willingness to adapt, to be innovative, versatile and more prepared to take risks in order to address their communities’ security concerns, places them in a strategic position to provide the needed support to communities in preventing the proliferation of small arms”. (“Small Arms and Light Weapons Control: Role of CSOs Critical | United Nations Development Programme”) Their localized knowledge and influence will prove to be one of the most persuasive methods of

educating communities. Assisting CSOs is critical for advocacy and may even have the potential to monitor and identify possible conflicts beforehand.

Another approach would be to begin from the root of the issue: blacksmiths. The main issue with blacksmiths is the difficulty tracing them, and lack of alternative livelihoods once weapons manufacture is illegal. Therefore, the first step is developing a reliable database of blacksmiths in Ghana. If every gunsmith was registered with the government, they could track the production of SALWs as well as their route after being produced. IN A ECOWAS workshop in 2023, a blacksmith representative said that the design of a “sustainable alternative livelihood programme that provides at least equivalent benefits to arms manufacturing” is a crucial step in regulating illegal arms manufacture. (ENACTAfrica.org) It would prevent issues such as weapons manufactured in Ghana fueling conflicts in other countries, and more effectively prevent arms production by cutting off the source of the weaponry.

Once all blacksmiths are successfully registered and are allowed to continue their work, the government could alternatively legalize weapons manufacture for a period of time, in order to control and monitor the trade. A temporary legalization of weapons manufacture could be incentive for blacksmiths to voluntarily register on the database and provide a transitional period for them to find other jobs which can continue to support their families.

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