

# SMALL ARMS AND HUMAN INSECURITY

Reviewing Participatory Research in South Asia

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A Synthesis Report documenting findings from  
Banshbari Slum, Dhaka & Simakhali village (Bangladesh),  
Ulukkulama Welfare Camp, Vavuniya (Sri Lanka),  
Nalabari, Assam (India) and Karachi (Pakistan)



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## **PREFACE**

Small arms and light weapons proliferation are a major source of instability in today's world. Their unregulated spread has caused widespread devastation, led to the increasing virulence of international conflicts and have seriously affected law and order, which in turn has destabilized many countries and regions. In many parts of the globe, small arms, and not nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, are today the principal source of threat to governments and their peoples. Much of this is well documented in international literature in recent years.

What is less well known is how small arms affect people's lives. What sense of insecurity they cause in people's minds and how they affect their daily patterns of behaviour. A conceptual framework that allows a more rigorous appraisal of the relationships between small arms availability, misuse and their effects on people is that of human insecurity.

The Small Arms Survey project, Geneva and the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, a regional think tank, which continue to work on these issues extensively, decided to pool their collective resources and explore this area in detail. Both organisations recognise that the next phase in eliminating the threat of illicit and unregulated small arms and light weapons availability, will require mobilising greater international support. This can be accomplished, in part, by raising the conscience of affected populations and their governments and linking the small arms issue to the promotion of human security.

More robust and comprehensive research is required that documents the impact of small arms availability and their misuse on human lives. More innovative and creative research tools are also urgently needed to appraise these effects. A new and innovative, approach is found in Participatory Rural

Appraisal (PRA) and participatory action research, techniques that have been popularised in recent years to democratise and inculcate ownership in the planning and evaluation of development schemes.

This joint project followed a three-stage process. First, it sought to identify appropriate researchers, and organised a training workshop to adapt the tools of PRA to the study of armed violence in South Asia. The second phase involved separate three-month studies in four communities - in order to explore the viability of specific participatory research tools in the study of armed violence as well as to review the impacts of firearm-related violence in context. The final phase involved a “review workshop” where findings were critically reviewed and lessons extracted. In this last phase, four new researchers were invited from Southeast Asia to participate in the discussions and plan for the expansion of the project into their own region.

This path-breaking project has involved many people and there are many to thank. We are particularly grateful to Mallika Samaranayake, for the enormous enthusiasm with which she took up the task. A leading expert in PRA in South Asia, she has devised a number of seminal research techniques to suit this task. Her enthusiasm was infectious - and many have and will continue to profit under her guidance.

Our particular gratitude must be extended to the four South Asian researchers; Anindita Dasgupta (northeast India), Sharif Kafi (Bangladesh) and Naeem Ahmed (Pakistan). They worked under conditions that were at times dangerous and insecure and their efforts deserve high praise. Their diligence and energetic approach to the research have generated exciting results - and we look forward to sharing them with the communities who participated. Our thanks are also due to Mallika Joseph in Delhi. A researcher on small arms proliferation and anti-personnel mines, her efforts in supporting the writing of the synthesis report were an immense help.

Finally, all credit for this project and my personal appreciation is due to Robert Muggah, who developed the idea, convinced us all of its usefulness and through his sheer dynamism and perseverance brought this project together and to fruition. His organisational capability, conceptualising the project and preparation of the final report has enabled the project to be a successful one - that looks to gather momentum in the coming years.

Finally, we dedicate the monograph to all those who have suffered from the spread of small arms and light weapons. Many have not only suffered fatal and non-fatal injuries, but have been traumatised so severely that a life of normality remains but an ephemeral dream. Let this small effort lead us on a path where this suffering will be repeated no more.

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**July 02**

## **Abstract**

A substantial proportion of the world's 500,000 annual firearm-related deaths occur in South Asia, a trend that parallels alarming shifts in the global and local dynamics of small arms proliferation (Small Arms Survey 2001; 2002). In addition to their direct human toll, the indiscriminate use of such weapons in vicious internal conflicts plaguing most nation-states of the region have consequences that extend far beyond fatal and non-fatal injuries. Fear for life and physical well-being, as well as fear to freely exercise religious, cultural, political and economic rights and entitlements fundamentally arise out of this environment - where powerful small arms are relatively easy to procure, controls are extremely lax, the use of guns widespread and casualties disturbingly common.

Most analysis of the issue of small arms and their impact on people's security has been premised on "objective" criteria — of readily available statistics on weapons, as well as descriptive epidemiological surveillance of deaths and injury (Krug *et al* 1998; UN, 1998). What has not been attempted, until now, is a comprehensive representation of the issue of small arms and their effects as interpreted "subjectively". There are few studies that endeavour to comprehensively assess the experience of people living in conflict zones and how the presence of small arms is conceived in relation to their personal security.

To overcome this research gap, the Small Arms Survey (SAS) in Switzerland and the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) in Sri Lanka established a joint project with the primary objective of gauging real and perceived "human insecurity" among civilians affected by social violence in South Asia. The project drew on qualitative methodologies - specifically participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA) - to measure "risk" and "vulnerability" in four communities in South Asia affected by small arms-related violence. The project is, in essence, a pilot to test out methods of measuring insecurity



relating to small arms. This synthesis report collates a number of the key findings from each of the reports — drawing, to the extent possible, on the authors' own words, interpretations and visual aids.

The first objective of the co-ordinators of the project, to determine whether participatory research had any added value to uncover qualitative dimensions of arms related insecurity, was achieved. It is clear from the individual community reports (Ahmed, 2001; Dasgupta, 2001, Kafi, 2001 and Samaranayake, 2001) that while some participatory methods are more applicable than others — there is a strong case for expanding participatory action research in the security and disarmament fields — but also for thinking creatively about its applications in relation to the monitoring and evaluation of violence reduction programmes, weapons collection and destruction initiatives and security sector reform.

A number of general findings emerged from the research highlighting the range of impacts that communities experience as a result of small arms availability and use. Findings from the PRA exercises in the selected four communities reveal that livelihoods had been affected in a number of short and long-term ways as a consequence of prolonged exposure to armed violence. Some of the impacts, across all case studies, included:

- Fear, anxiety, suspicion and insecurity;
- Forcible and voluntary displacement;
- Changes in occupation;
- Changes in expenditure patterns;
- Contribution to the polarisation along ethnic and political lines;
- Impacts on the quality, delivery and sustainability of developmental activities; and,
- Systematic erosion of the credibility of national and municipal governance

Many of the conflicts underway in South Asia have shifted from persistent political dissatisfaction in the 1980s to low, medium

and high-intensity armed protests in the 1990s. It is perhaps not coincidental that two major sources of small arms in the region – the ‘Afghan pipeline’ and post Cold War small arms stockpiles in South East Asia -opened up at this time. From the findings of the PRA studies, it appears that violence is especially pronounced among ethnic conflicts aimed at secession or autonomy.

Some of the community solutions suggested include:

- Dialogue and the enforcement of political solutions and the introduction of strategies aimed at promoting cultures of non-violent conflict resolution;
- A renewed effort to restore the credibility of national and municipal governance in affected areas;
- A renewed commitment to ensuring that sustainable development takes place in affected areas, particularly through the creation of meaningful economic opportunities for young men; and
- More emphasis on ensuring that people participate in the design, planning and implementation of violence-reduction strategies as well as development more generally

It is important to stress that most communities felt threatened by the excesses committed by security forces and were particularly worried about being caught in the crossfire between armed forces. Virtually without exception, they believed that a political solution to armed violence is the only workable option for redressing insecurity and that preventive and reactive military responses would yield few positive results. Despite a strong awareness of the political and economic machinations of conflicts, many community members invested considerable faith in the ability of the political system to resolve the issue of small arms availability, provided that the political will existed to do something about the problem.

## Introduction

*“According to available statistics, nearly 30,000 illegal arms were recovered by security forces during the tenure of the present government. There are 80 organised crime syndicates in Bangladesh, of which 28 are in capital Dhaka. An estimated 200,000 small and light arms exist in the country and at least 50,000 of those are in the hands of criminals and their godfathers. The possession of small arms by organised criminals leads to death of four people and injury to 10 others every day.”<sup>1</sup>*

*“The problem that illicit small arms and light weapons constitute is well known. During the past decade, these weapons have been the weapons of choice in 46 out of 49 major conflicts, most of which have been armed insurgencies and intra-state conflicts, claiming on an average, 300,000 deaths... In India we are particularly aware of their lethality: in the past twenty years about 35,000 innocent persons have been killed by terrorists — all using illicit small arms and explosives. The seizures of illicit arms and explosives by our security agencies — and surely these represent but a fraction of the quantities to which the terrorists have had access — would be enough to equip a few divisions of a regular army: it demonstrates the volume of haemorrhage of illicit arms law-abiding societies are faced with.”<sup>2</sup>*

As the issue of small arms gained increasing attention at the international level — reaching a new peak at the UN 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms in All Their Aspects — a rash of studies have been generated to assess their impacts in a range of contexts and from multiple perspectives.<sup>3</sup> Arms control research has traditionally focused on supply-side

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<sup>1</sup> Manzur (2000).

<sup>2</sup> Statement by India (Mr. Arun Shourie) during the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, New York, 9-20 July 2001

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the *Small Arms Survey* (2002; 2001), WHO (2001), *Human Rights Watch* (2001), Lock (2000).

issues associated with the production and export of small arms, as well as the efficacy of interventions such as marking and tracing weapons, reigning in brokers and developing normative controls to reduce their proliferation. But increasingly, empirical studies have emerged concentrating on the direct and indirect effects of small arms — primarily in Western Europe and North America — but also in parts of Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Drawn primarily from the fields of public health, epidemiology and criminology, these efforts have identified quantifiable indicators of the impacts — specifically fatal and non-fatal injury and crime rates (measured per 100,000). Public health specialists have also developed indexes and composite variables to measure lost productivity associated with death and disability (measured as disability-adjusted life years, DALYs or years of productive life lost YPLL) or contingency valuation. A small number of focused retrospective and prospective studies have also emerged that systematically document the impacts of small arms in areas affected by conflict and widespread social violence (ICRC, 1999, Meddings 1999, Coupland, 2001, Muggah and Berman, 2001; Muggah and Batchelor, 2002).

**Box 1. What are Small Arms and Light Weapons?**

**Small arms** include Revolvers and self-loading pistols; Rifles and carbines; Sub-machine guns; Assault rifles; and Light machine guns. By contrast, **light weapons** include Heavy machine guns; Hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers; Portable anti-aircraft guns; Portable anti-tank guns; Portable anti-tank missile and rocket systems; Portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems; and Mortars of calibre of less than 100 mm.

UN (1997)

Though still a nascent field of inquiry, almost without exception, research on the effects of small arms and light weapons has focused on objective and readily quantifiable statistics. Because some basic indicators, such as homicides, armed robbery or injury

rates are occasionally reported to the UN from national governments, these have formed the basis of longitudinal comparisons. But what happens when the data is flawed, such as instances where reported rates do not capture the full extent of latent crime or where hospitals don't record long-term trends? Related, what happens when governments fail to collect or release accurate figures for fear of losing investment or damaging their reputation — as is the case throughout much of South Asia? Furthermore, how does one go about measuring the effects of small arms violence where there is no data — such as in situations of widespread violence or conflict? Perhaps most important — even where some statistics are available, what if the research community is not using the appropriate indicators to capture the full extent of the impacts of small arms on individual and community well-being?

This synthesis report introduces the findings of a project designed to generate data on the effects of small arms in four South Asian communities where injury and crime statistics are not regularly recorded. The project sought to move beyond recording traditional indicators of armed violence — fatal and non-fatal injuries, forced displacement and the like - in order to better understand the subjective experiences of people living in conflict zones where small arms are widely available. It aims to turn the conventional interpretation of measuring the effects on its head — asking people themselves what makes them feel insecure in situations of armed violence. The project sought to identify, through participatory research, what factors arms-affected communities fear most, and why. Perhaps most important, the project asked how individuals and communities coped with insecurity and sought to understand how they managed their daily lives. Conventional statistics tell a story — but by definition, cannot reveal the subtleties or full extent of any particular incident.

The project ***Human Insecurity and the Threat of Firearms: Perspectives from South Asia***, was co-ordinated by the Geneva-based Small Arms Survey and the Regional Centre for Strategic

Studies (RCSS), a South Asian think tank, in Sri Lanka.<sup>4</sup> The goal of the project was to introduce a new range of methodological tools to understand and measure the relationship between small arms availability and human security in regions where conventional surveillance data is limited. The project drew on qualitative methodologies - specifically participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA) - to map risk and vulnerability in four communities affected by small arms-related violence. The participatory evaluations yielded insight into the perceptions of insecurity among clusters of men, women and children, and aimed to yield community-based solutions to armed violence. For comparative purposes, the project involved research in Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

### **The Background**

The study of the effects of armed violence and the intellectual discussion of small arms is dominated by a combination of Northern experts, researchers and policy makers focusing on affected communities in the South. Their findings draw on an inductive and positivist approach to research, focusing on objective secondary data and key informants – always on the presumption of appraising key risks of vulnerable groups. In spite of a rapidly growing body of research on the impacts and effects of small arms, the literature consistently emphasises objective criteria and indicators of small arms-related insecurity (e.g. mortality, injury) rather than the subjective experience of fear and insecurity on peoples lives. It is this subjective experience of fear and insecurity that urgently requires substantial investigation and better understanding.

Participatory research, particularly participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and participatory urban appraisal (PUA), suggests an innovative way of evaluating people-centred security. These methods, originally drawn from development practice, have not usually been applied to the study of human security. Where PRA

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<sup>4</sup> The outline of the five-day training workshop — held in June 2001 — is included as Annexure D to this report.

has been used to assess, for example, watershed management, irrigation programmes and livelihood issues particular to the public domain, they have rarely been used to investigate private issues such as anxiety, fear and insecurity relating to firearms (see Moser and Holland, 1998; Moser and Maclewane, 1998).

The strength of such methods lie in their implicit recognition that people understand their own risks and have rich insights into their own lives. Participatory approaches to appraising arms-related violence, then, can be envisioned as one step toward the democratisation of the security agenda. In providing a voice to arms-affected communities and vulnerable groups facing acute vulnerability to armed violence, participatory research yields locally appropriate intervention strategies.

### **The Methods**

Participatory approaches to research and action are evolving and dynamic. Many of its methods emerged from social anthropology and progressive social movement theory, developing in Latin America and South East Asia in the seventies and throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia from the eighties. Importantly, the methods and practice evolved in the “South” and have later been transferred to and adopted in the “North” (e.g. multilateral institutions, development agencies, academic institutes, etc.) rather than the other way around. They have been described as “a growing family of approaches, methods and behaviours to enable people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act and monitor and evaluate”.

At the core of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is responsibility and self-awareness, commitment to equity and empowerment, as well as recognition of diversity. Inventiveness and improvisation is another vital component (linked to “optimal un-preparedness” or optimal ignorance). Good PRA, which evolved out of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), is intended to be an empowering activity, rooted in a process of appraisal and analysis (and action) by local people themselves (see Chambers

2000; 1998 and IDS Participation Group). The methods are visual and graphic, drawn from social anthropology (e.g. observation, semi-structured interviews (SSI) and transect walks, etc) as well as from participatory action research (e.g. participatory mapping, diagramming, comparisons and focus groups).

Participatory research is about reversal. Researchers, instead of being teachers or guardians of technology, take on the role of convenors, catalysts and facilitators. The intention is to unlearn and ensure that one's own claims to knowledge, ideas and categories are sidelined. The participatory researcher's role is to enable local people to own the outcome by doing their own investigations, analysis, presentations, planning and action, and then to teach us, by sharing their knowledge. The researcher "hands over the stick" and facilitates the appraisal. As noted by Chambers (2000): "They do things that we thought only we could do: mapping, diagramming, counting, listing, sorting, ranking, scoring, sequencing, linking, analysing, planning, monitoring and evaluating".

### **Linking PRA with Security and Small Arms**

A question often sidelined by most researchers and policy makers thinking about security and small arms issues is what exactly makes people afraid in situations of political unrest and armed violence. Where guns and light weapons are a daily reality, analysts rarely consider how people cope with insecurity or develop solutions to their problems. Another serious challenge to policy makers, political analysts, and the advocacy community is how to document the range of qualitative impacts of gun-related violence on civilians and how to respond to the widespread availability of weapons at the local level.

These are vital questions — particularly in light of the evolving interpretations of security. The security landscape is shifting, from one that prioritises state-based or territorially defined notions of security to a more human-centred and rights-based approach emphasizing security among individuals. The intellectual bedrock of this new form of *human security* was asserted in its



broadest form in the 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report*. Other actors, most notably the Human Security Network, have sought to accommodate a more narrow perspective – one that captures only “violent” threats to the well being of human beings: in this vein, human security is essentially about “freedom from fear”.

A second issue advanced by proponents of the humanitarian and development sectors is that security is a pre-condition for development and that human security and human development are mutually reinforcing. In this way, security sector reform, human rights training, physical protection for vulnerable groups, weapons collection programmes and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) have all been posited as a vital basis for human safety. Small arms represent a direct threat to human security — and understanding how, where and what these risks are, is fundamental to ensuring appropriate intervention.

But the obvious question remains: *how does one measure human insecurity?* Not surprising to those who work with vulnerable groups and violence-prone societies, people experience insecurity in widely divergent ways: depending on whether they are young or old; men, women or children; minority or majority groups; wealthy or poor, etc. Widespread fear frequently accompanies armed violence and war – permeating the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of community life – undermining social and human capital (Uphoff, 1997). Ultimately, appropriate policy responses for those experiencing severe insecurity can only be effectively determined by asking precisely what makes them “feel” insecure (Moser and McIlwaine, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Moser and Holland, 1997).

Participatory assessments of “human security” would represent a first-attempt to empirically measure the differentiated perceptions of insecurity among a range of violence-affected societies. Participatory tools such as PRA introduce a human-centred approach to analysis, providing a forum for affected people to themselves explore their own situation, develop their

own criteria of risks and elaborate their own ideas about what appropriate interventions might look like. In this way, the project represents a theoretically and practically relevant contribution to contemporary thinking on security more generally, adding another dimension to the human security debate.

### **Case Studies**

The extent to which human security is threatened by the diffusion of small arms in South Asia is still under-appreciated. A substantial number of casualties of armed violence occur in South Asia, a result of increasing proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their indiscriminate use in the devastating internal conflicts plaguing many nation-states and communities in the region. An overwhelming number of those casualties are unarmed civilians, caught in the crossfire or deliberately targeted. Fear for life and physical well-being, as well as inability to freely exercise religious, cultural, political and economic rights fundamentally arise out of this environment - where sophisticated and highly lethal small arms are easy to procure, controls are lax, use of guns widespread and casualties frequent. Other consequences include forced displacement of populations, devastation of local economies and disruption of human development, particularly in areas that have borne the brunt of armed violence over a prolonged period of time (Muggah and Berman, 2001; Muggah and Batchelor, 2002). Long standing unresolved conflicts and crises in governance within South Asian states have resulted in the deterioration of law and order and a consequent rise in transnational organized crime, including narcotics trafficking and gun-running, contributing to an increase in armed violence in the region.

In addition to diffusion from South Asian state arsenals, South East Asia is a significant source of illegal small arms and light weapons to South Asia's simmering conflicts. The cold war era conflicts in South East Asia resulted in massive covert arms transfers by the United States, the former USSR and China to the different factions they supported (Small Arms Survey 2001; 2002;

Smith, 1988). Stockpiles of leftover weapons in Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar have become regular sources of illegal arms for various rebel groups operating in India's North East, Bangladesh and even Sri Lanka. From Bangladesh and India's North East, such weapons have also proliferated into the neighbouring countries of Bhutan and Nepal.

New weapons legally acquired by South East Asian states for their respective militaries are also commonly finding their way into the black market or are illegally sold to narco-traffickers and rebel groups. In 1996, for example, the LTTE is believed to have procured Russian manufactured SAM-7 man-portable surface-to-air missiles from Cambodia. Again, in 1997, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) acquired North Korean manufactured IGLA man-portable surface-to-air missile from Vietnam. Corrupt politicians, governments and military officials in South Asia, as well as in Thailand, Singapore or Myanmar, routinely purchase substantial quantities of small arms and light weapons from producers in the West and sell them for profit in the black market or to non-state actors in South Asia.

Another major source of illegal small arms proliferation in South Asia is the legacy of the US sponsored 'Afghan Pipeline' supplying the *Mujahideen*—the collective term for the various guerrilla groups resisting the Soviet invasion. The vast array of military small arms available in Pakistan includes M-16s, Uzis, and Kalashnikovs, in addition to shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles, including the US-manufactured Stinger missiles (Small Arms Survey 2001). Supplementing this existing pool of weapons is the illicit production sophisticated small arms by the gunsmiths of Darra in the North West Frontier Province in Pakistan. There is clear evidence that small arms were transferred from Pakistan to rebel groups in the Indian states of Punjab and Kashmir and continue to be transferred to Kashmir.

There have been other sources of proliferation as well. For instance, between 1983 and 1987, the Indian intelligence agency RAW supplied LTTE with weapons and ammunition. Rebels in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh, acquired weapons

while they were in India, some claim from its intelligence agencies. In 1989 the Sri Lankan government provided LTTE with weapons ostensibly to be used against the Indian Peace Keeping Force, then present in Sri Lanka. Rebel groups have also acquired arms by ambushing security and military forces, snatching away their weapons and ammunition - as in Nepal, North East India and Sri Lanka.

In order to understand the way that regional and sub-regional arms flows affected local livelihoods, several representative communities were selected in four South Asian states. The four researchers, fluent in regional dialects and familiar with the history of their respective communities, spent a minimum of three months carrying out participatory research in situ. Though the themes and sample sizes differed between them, the tools and approaches invoked were analogous. The following four case studies highlight the background of the regions in which participatory research was carried out. They are followed, in section II, with a cursory review of the key trends and findings from each case and some general conclusions.

**The Case of Sri Lanka:  
Ulukkulama Welfare Camp, Vavuniya**

Sri Lanka's nineteen-year old internal conflict has claimed the lives of more than 62,000 lives. The UNHCR and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) state that the protracted war has resulted in more than 93,000 refugees and an estimated 800,000 internally displaced people — scattered primarily in the Northern parts of the country. Though a recent ceasefire has led to peace talks for the first time in seven years — armed violence is prolific.

For the purposes of the study, a Sri Lankan research team chose to focus on the perceived insecurities of several groups of IDPs in Vavuniya, in the North West of Sri Lanka. The findings are not representative of the IDP, much less the Sri Lankan, population as a whole — but do shed light on the situation of an acutely vulnerable segment of the population. The Ulukkulama Welfare Camp is located in the Vavuniya South Divisional

Secretariat (DS) Division. The 30 families who live in this recently established Ullukulama Welfare Camp (IDP camp) were displaced from a neighbouring Pawakkulama village, located in the same DS Division.

The Pawakkulama village came into existence as a result of the Pawakkulama settlement scheme of the Sri Lankan Government in 1956. At the time of settlement, each family was allotted three acres of paddy land and 1.5 acres of highland with irrigated water supplied from the nearby Pawakkulama tank. Most of the families were engaged in paddy and *chena* cultivation, which provided them with a continuous supply of food throughout the year. The nearby Pawakkulama tank provided not only irrigated water but also a source of inland fish. It was reported that all the basic amenities required for living were available in the village and its vicinity, and the need to obtain commodities was limited to materials such as soap, salt etc.

The relatively peaceful and prosperous life in the Pawakkulama village was disturbed by the eruption of insurgent activities in the northern areas by the emergence of a “separatist” group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who demanded an autonomous state. Geographically, the Pawakkulama village is located at the border separating the Sinhalese and Tamil groups. The effect of the insurgency on this village has been acute. The first warning from the insurgent groups came in 1985 with demands for the villagers to evacuate the settlement. As a result, about 20 of the 55 families left the village to live with their relatives in other districts such as Kegalle and Anuradhapura.

The remaining 30-35 families were forced to move to a Buddhist temple nearby to seek some protection from possible attacks, and they remained there until 1987. In 1987, these families were transferred to a school in Kanakulammaduwa where they resided for approximately one year, sharing accommodation with families from other areas who had been displaced in a similar manner.

Since 1987, attempts were made to resettle them in the village of Pawakkulama, under security provided by the armed forces.

However, continuous attacks on the village security post and the massacre of villagers and security forces by the LTTE created a situation whereby the villagers were left with no choice but to vacate the village permanently. After an incident that occurred on 14 April 2000 in which one home guard was killed, all the 30 families fled to Ulukkulama Agrarian Service Centre where they stayed for almost three months. With physical and financial support provided by the Seva Lanka Organization (an NGO), they were able to build temporary houses (wattle and daub) in what is known as the Ulukkulama Welfare Camp, located ¼ mile away from the Ulukkulama Agrarian Service Centre.

### **The Case of India: Nalbari, Assam**

The North East of India has been facing protracted armed violence for decades. Spread over an area of 2257 sq. kms on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra, the Nalbari district of Assam has experienced armed violence, primarily related to insurgency, for more than a decade now. The main sources of political violence in Assam are the separatist militancy of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the demand for a Bodo homeland as a distinct state within the Indian Union. Assam's three most significant insurgent groups – the ULFA, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the Bodoland Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF), have consistently made their presence felt in the Nalbari district.

Nalbari's 'open' land border with the neighbouring South Asian kingdom of Bhutan has, in recent years, turned into a sizeable cross-border illegal arms markets for banned insurgent groups. Sustained counter-insurgency operations by state security forces and killings by 'unidentified gunmen' have also taken their toll on civilian lives and contributed to a heightened sense of insecurity.

Earlier a part of the undivided Kamrup district of Assam, Nalbari was given the status of a full-fledged district on 14 August 1985. The National Highway 31 passes across the centre of the district, neatly separating it in two. The district is under-developed,

lacking even basic infrastructure like proper roads, medical and healthcare facilities and electricity in most villages. Moreover, the Brahmaputra River inundates large areas of the district every year.

Approximately 97 percent of the total population of 1,138,184 live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for subsistence. The ethnic Assamese constitute 71 percent of the population concentrated in the areas south of the National Highway 31, while the second largest ethnic group, the Bodos, constitute 13 percent of the population and predominantly inhabit the northern areas. Other smaller ethnic groups like the Bengalis and Hindi-speaking groups (mostly Marwari petty traders and Bihari labourers) are concentrated in the Nalbari town, which is also the district headquarters.

Nalbari witnessed considerable mass disturbances during the six-year nativist Assam Movement (1979-85). There were wanton acts of arson and sabotage, assaults on minorities and dissenting ethnic Assamese and even deliberate political murders. With the emergence of the ULFA, a section of this militant polity immediately found an affinity with ULFA's ideology. It was no coincidence that a number of the top leaders of the ULFA emerged from Nalbari district. In the initial years, the ULFA enjoyed considerable goodwill among the communities as a result of both its ideological stance and the strong sense of alienation that most people felt due to the prolonged apathy of the state. However, with the degeneration of its ideological moorings, indiscriminate killings and endless extortions, such goodwill dissipated. If a large number of its cadres are still drawn from among the largely ethnic Assamese communities of the district, it is because of compelling socio-economic circumstances rather than ideological affinity; if the insurgents still continue to find sanctuary among these communities, it is more out of fear than deference.

A split in the ULFA in the early nineties started a series of surrenders, still on-going, that led to the emergence of SULFA (Surrendered ULFA) - a group of former 'revolutionaries' who

gave up their struggle but not their guns. Their fratricidal war with the ULFA and increasing involvement in organized criminal activities in collusion with corrupt officials has further aggravated the situation. Although these developments are not confined to Nalbari alone, the situation in this district has been exacerbated due to easy availability of small arms coupled with people willing to use them without compunction.

With the emergence of a separate Bodo homeland movement, the Bodo-inhabited northern areas also witnessed mass disturbance and equally brutal repression by the state. Emergence of two rival groups (the NDFB, which demands sovereignty and has so far refused all offers for a negotiated settlement, and the BLTF, which demands a separate state and is currently in negotiation with the Indian state following a cease-fire declaration) has ensured that not only non-Bodos but also Bodos themselves are now targets of armed violence.

The ULFA considers the southern areas its spheres of influence while the NDFB and the BLTF dominate the northern areas, closer to the Kingdom of Bhutan. Prolonged and sustained counter-insurgency operations by the Indian Army, the Central Reserve Police Force and the Assam Police have claimed lives of militants and civilians. The security forces have achieved significant successes in containing the intensity of the conflict. However, any semblance of normalcy is maintained only by a large presence of security forces.

There is widespread insecurity among the communities living in Nalbari district. The two distinct cases of armed insurgency – the Assamese separatists and the Bodo homeland movement – have had different impacts on the communities. Therefore six villages from the southern areas – Budrukuchi, Niz Banhjani, Morowa, Borhidottora, Bugurihati, Niz Juluki, and four others from the northern areas – Boroma, Mushalpur, Dorronga, Tamulpur, were chosen for PRA.



### **The Case of Bangladesh: Banshbari Slum, Dhaka & Simakhali Village, Narail**

In Bangladesh, PRA exercises were conducted at two locations – the Banshbari slum in Dhaka and Simakhali village in Narail district.

The Banshbari slum, located in the mid-west part of Dhaka, used to be a small village on the outskirts of Dhaka before 1971. It began to grow into a large slum with the rapid rural urban migration that followed the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. However, its size was gradually reduced during the nineties when buildings were constructed by newly established housing societies.

People living in Banshbari can be divided into three broad groups based on their backgrounds: people made homeless by riverbank erosion in their rural villages; those rendered landless due to pauperisation in the rural societies; and low-income migrant families attracted by employment opportunities in Dhaka. Currently, there are approximately 400 families in Banshbari with a total population of about 2,000.

People in Banshbari were familiar with violence even before the introduction of small arms into the community. However, the situation began to deteriorate when the use of homemade cracker-bombs began in the mid-eighties. The first firearm-related death occurred in 1988 and since then, the availability and use of small arms has risen - as reflected by an increase in the number of firearms users and incidents of gun violence. The 1991 general elections triggered a further increase in the use of small arms and consequently heightened people's sense of fear and insecurity.

The second location, Simakhali village, is located in the Narail district in the southwest part of Bangladesh. The village is separated from the Narail district town by a small river. The village was established nearly 300 years ago during the Mughal Empire. Once, the village community comprised farmers, fishermen, boatmen, craftsmen and artisans. Now, farmers,

boatmen and transport workers dominate. Currently there are 335 families, with an approximate population of 1,840 in the village.

The people of Simakhali lived in relative peace until March 1971 when the liberation war began. The Simakhali community became a frequent victim of assaults perpetrated by the Pakistan Army and the paramilitary Rajakars as the village was just across the river from Narail town. On every occasion that the Pakistan Army crossed the river for a military operation, they attacked Simakhali village. The violence carried out by the Pakistani Army – the killings, abductions, burning down of houses – imposed a reign of terror among the community.

Unfortunately, fear and insecurity prevailed even after the end of the liberation war as the inhabitants were now caught between the police and leftwing armed activists. The outlawed leftwing Sarbahara Party organized a militant group in the village by recruiting a section of the villagers and arming them with small arms. The rival Naxalite party then organized and armed another group, recruiting from the remaining section of the villagers. The situation soon developed into a triangular armed conflict involving the Sarbahara, the Naxalite and the Police.

### **The Case of Pakistan: Karachi**

Karachi was founded in 1729 A.D. on the site of a fishing village named 'Kolachi'. It became the capital of Pakistan in 1947 with a population of about 450,000, the majority being non-Muslim. A chief port and industrial center of Pakistan, it grew rapidly. By 1951, the population was already 1,122,406, of which the *Mohajirs*<sup>5</sup> constituted about 550,000. Migration from within the country, from the rural and urban areas, as well as from the outside – Bangladesh, Iran and Afghanistan – has contributed to a steady increase in Karachi's population. 'Illegal' migration from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and the Philippines increased

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<sup>5</sup> The term '*Mohajir*' was used for those who migrated from India to Pakistan; they were mainly the Urdu-speaking Muslims and a majority of them settled in the urban parts of Sindh like Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas and Sukkur.

between 1977 and 1986, and by 1987 the total population of Karachi stood at 7.4 million.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of education and the consolidation of cultural roots, the *Mohajir* community was much ahead of the rest of the communities of Karachi, and as a result, enjoyed higher posts within the administration and the political leadership of the city.<sup>7</sup> However, their supremacy suffered after President Ayub Khan moved the capital from Karachi to Islamabad. Soon after, two initiatives during Bhutto's period – Sindhi being declared the official language and introduction of a new quota system wholly alienated the *Mohajirs* and resulted in Sindhi-*Mohajir* riots.

The *Mohajir Qaumi Movement* (MQM) was established in 1984 as a reaction to the discriminatory attitude of the State towards *Mohajirs*. Its popularity was established after achieving an overwhelming victory in the local elections of 1987 and gained the mayorship of Karachi. In the 1988 and 1990 general elections, MQM attained sweeping victories and became part of the government, but only temporarily. In 1992, others interpreted the Army's 'Operation Clean-Up', which was supposedly targeted at the 'Dacoits' as a pretext for action against the MQM. Furthermore, a split in the MQM resulted in the anti-MQM forces and the exploitation of divisions within the party by state agencies.

Since the early nineties, the situation in Karachi has been characterized by a breakdown of the rule of law. Violence now prevails not only between the various ethnic communities but also different sectarian religious parties. The ready availability of small arms has increased the intensity and virulence of violence perpetuated against and between all communities and groups. The ethnic and sectarian violence in Karachi has frequently paralysed the city politically, economically and socially.

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<sup>6</sup> Arif Hassan, *Understanding Karachi: Planning and Reform for the Future*, (Karachi: City Press, Karachi), 1999, p. 40.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

### **Box 2. Deweaponisation in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, the government initiated a large arms control campaign to address its considerable small arms problem. The country has a significant illegal domestic industry, a strong tradition of carrying and using weapons, several heavily armed religious militant groups and suffers from a regular influx of weapons from nearby Afghanistan. Starting in 2000, the government set out to crack down on this problem through a multi-phase programme that combined a variety of policy measures.

These efforts include undertaking search and confiscation operations, requesting that people voluntarily surrender their weapons under amnesty schemes, regularising unauthorised arms manufacturing as well as banning the issuance of new arms licenses, arms displays and the ceremonial firing of weapons during festive occasions. In order to bolster public support for the programme, public awareness campaigns have been initiated – particularly in rural areas.

The weapons collection programme had two phases. First, the government announced a general amnesty between 5 and 20 June 2001 for the voluntary surrender of illicit weapons. This initial phase also included a countrywide sweep of law enforcement agencies to recover additional arms. According to official figures, over the course of two weeks, the authorities acquired more than 86,500 weapons of various types and calibre. The second phase included the cancellation of automatic weapons licenses that had been issued by the previous government and the re-implementation of stricter ownership criteria. The pace of the voluntary arms surrender has fallen short of expectations, and the campaign has been criticized for lacking transparency or political will to speed up the exercise.

Small Arms Survey 2002

**PRA exercises were conducted to gauge the impact of armed violence on Karachi in general and the Urdu-speaking *Mohajir* community in particular. Other ethnic communities like Punjabis, Pathans, and Sindhis were also interviewed considering that the persistent armed violence experienced since the 1980s has affected every group in the city.**

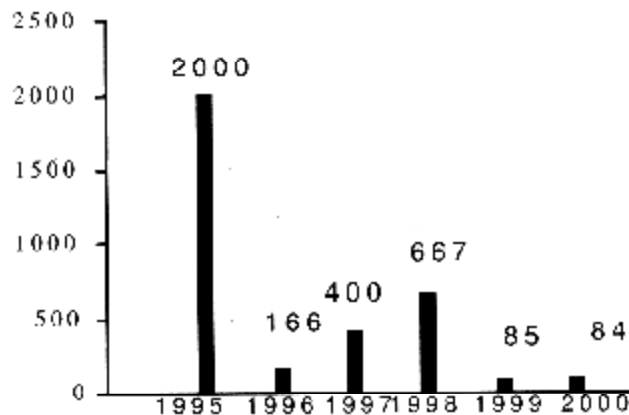
## SECTION II

### **Findings of PRA evaluations: Effects of small arms as perceived by the communities**

#### **Timeline of violence**

Throughout South Asia, virtually every on-going armed conflict began its life as more pacific variant of political disgruntlement and opposition. Political grievances had been expressed peacefully at various points of time; however, without exception, armed violence began with the rapid introduction of small arms in the 1980s. It is not coincidental that two major sources of small arms – the ‘Afghan pipeline’ and post cold-war small arms stockpiles in South East Asia – opened up at the same time.

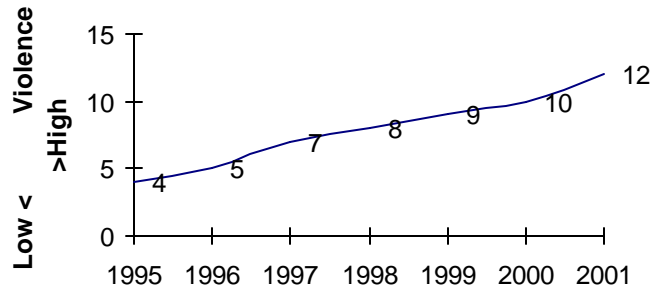
Figure 1. Timeline of violence in Karachi (Number of Killings)



There does not appear to be a clear pattern that can be discerned in terms of variations in levels of violence experienced between the communities. While some, like Banshbari, have registered a steady increase, others, like Karachi and Ulukkulama, alternate with peaks and lows. In Karachi, for example, there was a peak in 1995 when more than 2000 people were killed (see Figure 1 above). Many of the victims were labourers who had come to

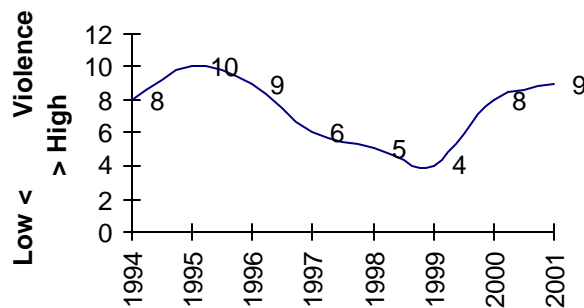
Karachi from other provinces. On the other hand, in Banshbari, violence has increased gradually each year (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Participatory Timeline of Firearm Deaths in Banshbari slum



In contrast, violence in Simakhali peaked in 1995 (see figure 3). In 1996, the gunning down of 18 members of a leftwing group forced members of the two rival political factions to go underground. Crime then dropped after a new Superintendent of Police was appointed in the village, reaching an all time low in 1999 when the same police official was transferred to another location. Since then there has been a steady increase in violence. The experience of Simakhali illustrates that new and non-traditional approaches to controlling violence can have positive outputs.

Figure 3: Participatory Timeline of Firearm Deaths Simakhali

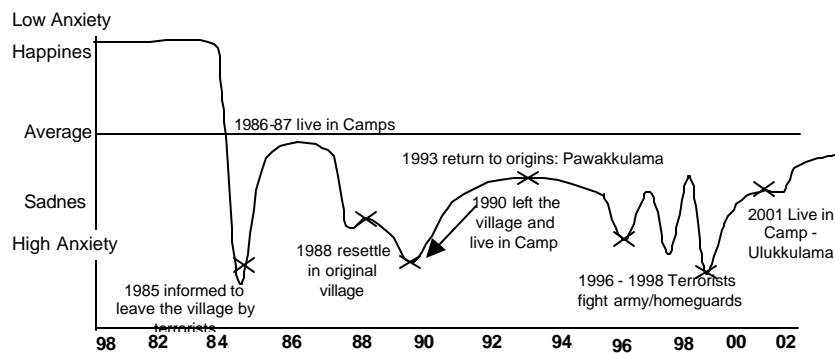


Though no graphic timeline was available for Nalbari – there were strong indications that the violence there has been persistent. For example, according to one respondent, Nripen Kalita in

Nalbari: “Every succeeding government has its own interests in keeping insurgency alive at a certain level. Otherwise, how is it believable that (armed) elements who do not constitute even half a percent of the population can keep this entire state in turmoil for so long? It is beneficial for the political class because so long as the common people are caught up with violence and live in fear of their lives, they are not likely to raise the difficult questions as to why have the political elite failed to deliver for all these past years? Why are we still so under-developed? Where are the roads? Where are the schools and hospitals? Where are the jobs?”

In Ulukkulama, the timeline of violence is usefully expressed in the anxiety map prepared by Kusumawathie, one of the PRA participants. It describes periods where she felt high and low moments, times of happiness and sadness. It also provides a useful anecdotal account of the experiences of a single household, their repeated displacement and the dynamics of the conflict in the region.

Figure 4. Timeline of violence in Ulukkulama



### Changing patterns in communities’ livelihood due to violence

Despite the different driving forces of armed conflict throughout South Asia, every community that witnessed violence has had a pronounced change in livelihood patterns: the Pawakkulama community was displaced to Ulukkulama Welfare Camp and

was forced to adapt to a totally new way of life; people in Nalabari have become politically and ethnically polarized due to prolonged insurgency and ensuing violence; significant occupational changes mark the Banshbari slum dwellers; and, ethnic polarity in Karachi has increased the levels of intolerance within the community, thereby unleashing a cycle of violence perpetuated by hatred.

The changing dynamics of the armed conflicts in the region have had a significant effect on the intensity and severity of violence. Accordingly, changes in livelihood patterns are more pronounced in communities that have witnessed ethnic and secessionist violence: the most significant changes were documented in Ulukkulama, Simakhali and northern Nalabari. By way of contrast, in neighbourhoods experiencing political violence (where despite an ethnic underplay, the basic struggle is for power), the communities appear to have adjusted to the insecure lifestyle to the extent that they are able to live relatively unencumbered by fear (particularly fear relating to small arms). This is also particularly true of Karachi and southern Nalabari; in southern Nalabari, issues like unemployment, corruption, floods and underdevelopment ranked higher than insurgency related violence as an area of concern; and in Simakhali, villagers appeared economically better established than those at Bashbari.

Specific changes in the livelihood patterns of the community in Ulukullama Welfare Camp provide an indication of adjustments that might have been made in other communities experiencing violence over a protracted period of time. What follows is a review of some of the findings of the participatory exercises conducted in said region.

### ***Forced Displacement***

As discussed previously, 20 families of the Pawakkulama village left it at the outset of violence. According to participatory livelihood mapping activities, it was determined that they were from the 'above average' and 'average' economic category and could afford to move to another place of their choice. The remaining



30-35 families from 'average' and 'poor' categories had no choice but to move from place to place, in between attempts to resettle in their original village; between 1985 and 2000, they were displaced five times and attempted settling in their original village twice. Every instance of displacement was triggered by armed violence and ensuing heightened insecurity (see Appendix A).

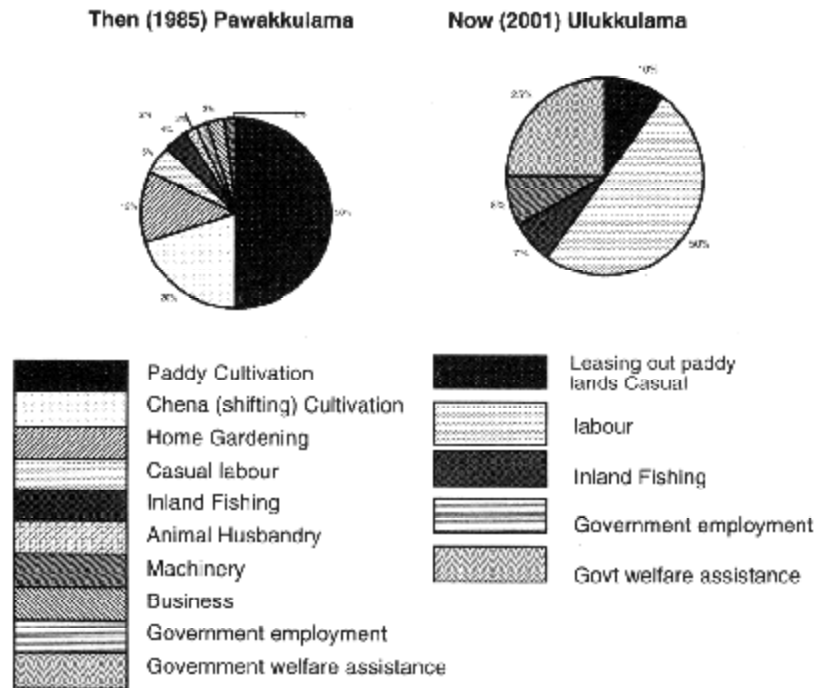
### ***Occupation***

All families, prior to their forcible displacement, had in their possession three acres of paddy land and 1.5 acres of highland that had been provided by the government through the Pawakkulama Settlement Scheme in 1956. Though the income generated from the land varied, participatory land-mapping exercises revealed that it was their main source of income with paddy cultivation contributing to 50 percent and *chena* cultivation 20 percent of the total income generated from land. Casual labour, inland fishing, animal husbandry, trade and government employment were the other sources of income.

Deprived of their land – due to forced displacement, the community presents a totally different picture now. Casual labour (50 percent) and government welfare assistance (25 percent) are the two main sources of income while leasing outlands (10 percent), government employment (8 percent) and inland fishing (7 percent) constitute the balance. The availability of casual labour is seasonal and at times difficult to find. Under the government food assistance programme, each family with more than five members get monthly commodities worth Rs. 1200 (US\$ 16); families with fewer members get proportionately less. Around 16 families have leased their paddy lands; other families have not being able to do so as it is suspected that landmines have been buried in their paddy fields.

This transformation of the income pattern from a rural subsistence agricultural economy to a dependent economic model heavily supported by government welfare assistance has robbed the community of their earlier self-sufficiency and food security.

Figure 5. Comparison of Livelihood Patterns (income profile) in the original village and the Ulukkulama Welfare Camp



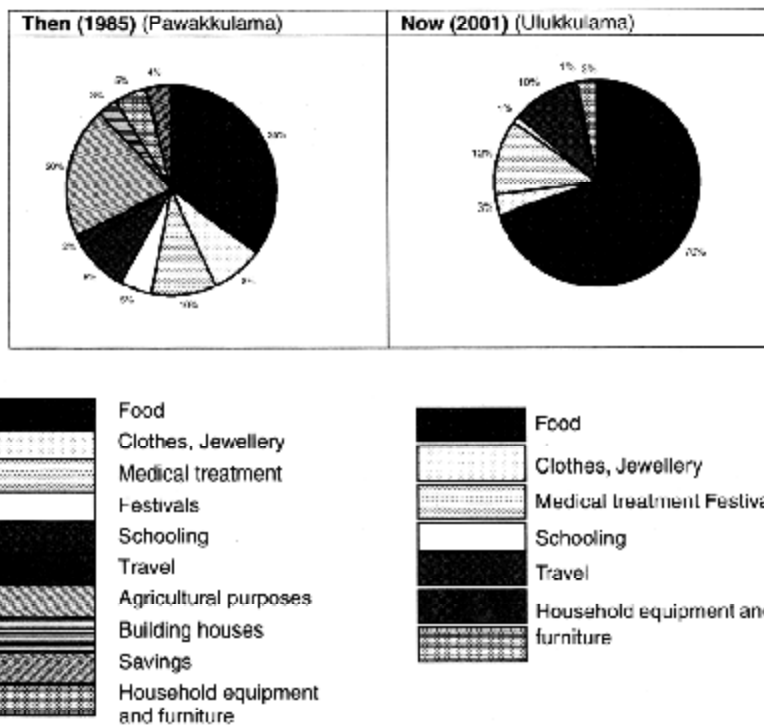
Prolonged conflict has, however, opened up new opportunities for employment for the youth in the armed services including the Homeguards. Despite the monetary benefits of the job, however, this has only increased the sense of insecurity among their family members.

### ***Expenditure patterns***

Displacement and insecurity has generated a transformation in the expenditure patterns of the community. Expenditure on food has doubled after displacement, squeezing out money that was earlier available for building houses, furniture and utensils, jewellery, clothes, travel and festivals. There are fewer resources left to save, while earlier at least 4 percent of their income went into savings.

It is worth noting that the decrease in expenditure on travel, social events, clothes and jewellery, is due not only to the financial constraints but also because of heightened insecurity, perpetuated by armed violence, inhibiting free travel and participation in social events.

Figure 6. Expenditure pattern – As perceived by the community of Ullukkulama



**Education**

Expenditure on education has registered a 2 percent increase despite an overall scaling down of all expenses. PRA exercises reveal that the community gave high priority to education and were acutely affected by the inability of their children to access higher education facilities. This problem has been compounded by financial hurdles as well as firearms-related insecurity associated with traveling long distances to attend schools. Those

who have managed to overcome these difficulties and attend school still received only second-class treatment from their schoolmates and teachers, as they are stigmatized as “camp dwellers”.

### ***Health Care***

The high cost of food items has reduced the quality and quantity of food that the people consume and as a result, the community has become vulnerable to malnutrition and associated health hazards. The proportionate expenditure incurred on medical treatments has increased from approximately 10 to 12 percent as “they are not bothered about the minor diseases and they remain without getting any medicine until the conditions become worse”.

### ***Social status***

Often under-appreciated by outside observers, the conflict has robbed the community of the pride and respect they formerly enjoyed among their peers. They have been stigmatized as “camp-dwellers”, have lost their land – which was not only their main source of income but also their cultural attachment to heritage, lost the status associated with land ownership and become laborers on others’ land, and have shifted from being self-sufficiency to dependency on government welfare assistance. They are no longer able to sustain their old social customary patterns, including festivals and religious celebrations that were meeting grounds for relatives. With symbols of social status and wealth, such as jewellery and higher-quality clothes no longer affordable, festivities have also become less attractive.

### ***Common trends in changing livelihood patterns***

As demonstrated, a decade and half of armed violence in Sri Lanka has undermined the social and economic fabric of the community in Ulukkulama. However, as mentioned earlier, these changes are not reservedly associated with this community; conflict prone areas in other countries where PRA was conducted also displayed some similarities.

For example, there were instances of out-migration by the Simakhali community in Bangladesh at the onset of conflict. Their livelihood patterns changed significantly as a result of the displacement. The ethnic armed conflict between *Mohajirs* and *Sindhis* in Karachi has had serious repercussions for the Urdu-speaking community in interior Sindh who subsequently migrated to Karachi.

Despite the high levels of small arms related violence, no clear changes in livelihood patterns were registered among the Banshbari slum dwellers. This is likely related to the fact that the slum dwellers were all originally migrants who had already given up their original occupation and adapted to a lifestyle best suited to the circumstances in which they lived. As in Ulukkulama, conflict has opened up new employment opportunities and sources of informal income, but they remain unprofitable; instead, there has been a marked increase in organized crime syndicates, extortion rackets and crime in both Banshbari slum and southern Nalabari.

Nevertheless, the access of civilians to education in northern Nalabari has been affected as schools and colleges have shut down due to insurgency. Health care has also been affected in northern Nalabari. Though there are primary health centres and dispensaries in some villages, most are non-functional and inadequately provisioned. Ironically, a spacious 30-bedded government hospital remained closed after the last Medical Superintendent was shot dead by the militants two years ago.

In addition to changes in these livelihood sectors, another pattern of change is discernable in the overall structure of the communities, namely increased ethnic polarization and political consciousness. This is not limited to a specific conflict zone nor has it been particularly highlighted in the PRA activities. However, comparative analyses of the four PRAs conducted bring out this latent transformation as significant in all the communities.

In southern Nalabari, the community is politically conscious and articulate, and notes that armed violence and insurgency activities

are outward manifestations of unresolved socio-economic and ostensibly “political” issues. In northern Nalabari, the Bodo movement has caused a noticeable Bodo and non-Bodo divide within local communities, and even within Bodos, there is ideological polarization. Ethnic minority groups apprehensive of the proposed “Bodo Homeland” through the 1993 Peace Accord, have become targets of ethnic cleansing and their vulnerability has increased.

In Karachi, ethnic polarization was so intense that what would otherwise have been treated as an “accident” in 1985 - assumed ethnic undertones and resulted in riots and widespread violence between the Muhajirs and Pathans. Political support provided to certain communities and the playing off of factions and communities against one another, has served to heighten insecurity. By way of comparison, Banshubari slum in Bangladesh regularly witnesses increased violence during elections and the first casualty of the politically charged atmosphere is people’s feeling of security.

In the case of Sri Lanka, ethnic consciousness and the narcissus of difference was not particularly pronounced prior to the conflict in Pawakkulama as inter-community marriages brought the different communities together. However, ethnic polarization in Ulukkulama is clearly manifested by the displacement diagram drawn by the community members. A neighbouring Sinhala village had already been abandoned. Despite the presence of a Tamil and a Muslim village nearby, the Pawakkulama community resettled at Ulukkulama near a Sinhala fishing village. This is purported to have increased their sense of security: “this camp did not provide us 100 percent security. But, there were several Singhalese villages around us and we had some consolation”.

### **Violence, insecurity and fear - Community Testimonials**

The communities of Ulukkulama, Nalbari, Banshubari slum, Simakhali and Karachi have all witnessed a high degree of armed violence that has left them insecure and incapable of undertaking

even the most mundane daily tasks like shopping, bathing and collecting firewood.

Gruesome killings, massacres, abduction and intimidation have been the most common violent acts committed against the communities. As the early section shows, in Karachi, more than 2000 killings took place in 1995 alone, averaging some six murders per day. Extortion is particularly significant in Nalbari, Simakhali and Karachi. Violations of human rights, including extra-judicial killings and torture, are prevalent in Karachi and southern Nalbari where the people dread the armed agencies of the state as much as the militants. Damage to property is another mode of intimidation resorted to by armed groups in all the conflict zones; for instance, in one instance of election violence in Banshbari, 12 houses and a number of shops were set on fire.

In addition to this range of violent acts, peculiar to Banshbari was the pronounced physical abuse meted out to the women in the community. Rape, abduction for trafficking and prostitution and disfigurement by attacking with acid are some of the crudest forms of violence perpetrated to intimidate and terrorize. In Banshbari, during election violence in 1991, a girl was gang-raped because her brother was involved in political campaigning. A participant from Banshbari expressed,

*“I wish I could run and escape from them because anything can happen to me. I can be raped by a number of them... they can traffic me out of the country or sell me to a brothel; they can keep me in captivity and use me as a prostitute for life. Even if I come back from them somehow, the society will not accept me; they will think I am spoilt and nobody will marry me. My family will lose face in the society”.*

The insecurity perpetrated by prolonged periods of violence has left a deep scar in the psyche of the people. The immediate effect of violence has been fear – fear for their physical well being and property. Attacks in the neighbourhood, like in the case of Ulukkulama, heightened the community’s vulnerability and triggered a mass exodus. Displacement then caused further anxiety and stress.

Fear of repercussions alters political choice and expression. This was explicit in the PRA at Bansbari where more than one person noted the following:

*“There were gunfire and bomb charge at the vote centre on the day of general election in 1991. Many people were injured in crowd stampede. Rival political activists abducted one person at gunpoint. He was later recovered from the embankment in senseless condition as the abductors cut the tendons of his legs and hands. All the voters fled the vote centre out of fear following the armed attack and no one dared to come back to the vote centre. The terrorists snatched ballot boxes; ballot papers were destroyed, burnt and thrown in the river. We found many ballot papers near the embankment and in the river the following day. Since then I do not go to the vote centre for fear of gunfire and bombing”.*

*“I go to vote because of fear. If I do not go and vote for them then they might evict us from the slum or burn our houses or kidnap and harass family members”.*

*“When the election comes I go to my rural village ten-fifteen days before the election and come back after ten-fifteen days of the election. This way I keep away from trouble that grows during the elections”.*

The inability of the security forces to provide adequate security has exposed the communities to intimidation by militant groups. Their vulnerability is explicit in remote inaccessible areas. Naren Sarma of Nalbari explains,

*“today, most of those who still provide shelter to militants do so under duress. There was a time when the ULFA enjoyed a lot of goodwill and they could even move about openly with arms. Their indiscriminate threats of extortion and killings of unarmed civilians have tremendously eroded that goodwill which has now been replaced with fear. They cannot move about openly with arms anymore due to the overwhelming presence of the security forces and naturally carry the weapons concealed. But if one were to turn up at my doorstep with the intention of staying the night, I surely would not ask him whether he is carrying a gun! It is just accepted that they carry arms and that their demands are best complied with. It is unlikely that one would inform or even turn to the*



*security forces because it is unlikely that they will be able to protect one from the retribution such an act will inevitable invite”.*

Expressing the same helplessness, Tarini Das confides, *“if anyone claiming to belong to the ULFA turns up at my door and expresses the desire to spend the night, I would not have the courage to refuse him”.*

According to yet another person, *“everyone in Nalbari knows who is an ULFA militant, where he is hiding, but they do not say anything for fear of being killed by them”.*

Helping the militants under duress has only increased people’s vulnerability against the security forces, which have unleashed a parallel reign of terror.

Most of the communities expressed fear of being caught in the crossfire between two armed entities – either the “militants” and state armed forces in counter-insurgency operations or two rival armed factions. In southern Nalbari, unarmed civilians have been the “targeted victims or incidental casualties” of the conflict between the ULFA, the security forces and the SULFA. In southern Nalbari, fratricidal war between the BLFT and NDFB has claimed several civilian lives. The situation has not been any different in Simakhali, where civilians are caught between two rival armed leftwing groups and the police.

Similarly, armed clashes between the two factions of MQM have turned the East and Central districts of Karachi into battlegrounds. They were also ‘no-go-areas’ where people from other areas were not permitted to enter without the prior permission of the unit in charge. Even the law enforcement agencies were restricted. Trenches were dug out on main roads to stop Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) from entering the area. Shops were shut down before 7 p.m.

The fallout of this violence is deep-rooted suspicion among the community members. PRA in Nalbari highlights this as members were very hesitant to participate in a process with “strangers” (PRA facilitators) in their midst. While expressing his fear of ‘unidentified gunmen’ (read as SULFA or disguised security personnel), Sanjib Mehdi of Nalbari said,

*“It could even be you! If I have said something which displeases you, perhaps you will come back at night, your face covered and a gun in your pocket”.*

Participants, at times, politely refused to answer pointed questions for fear of being targeted for the opinion they expressed. Also in Banshbari, participants were hesitant to express themselves in open group discussions. Armed forces, in addition to militants and other armed groups, were a source of insecurity in all communities, with the exception of Ulukkulama.

In Karachi, people were scared of the “agencies” that carried out extra-judicial killings and perpetrated violence by playing one faction against another. Furthermore, people were reluctant to discuss issues relating to small arms due to the government’s recent de-weaponization campaign. Due to the fear of extra-judicial killings by the Police, PRA exercises revealed that people were afraid to leave their homes. This was especially the case during the *bandhs* because everyone was perceived to be a suspect by the Police. Where civilians were arrested, a bribe was often demanded, under the threat that the suspect might be “accidentally” killed. Indeed, the study revealed that most people are more afraid of the Police as compared to armed conflicts among various ethnic and sectarian groups.

In Nalabari, brutal killings and frequent encounters have made the community averse to the security forces. There have also been incidents of over-reaction by panicky or trigger-happy security personnel opening fire indiscriminately or due to mistaken identity. Security forces, people feel, are quite prone to such excesses.

*“They shoot first and ask questions later. Even if someone who is not a militant is killed, he is passed off as one. After all, who will dispute their version?”*

In the case of Ulukkulama, PRA reveal that the community felt safe due to the presence of security forces and their insecurity heightened when the force strength was reduced.

*“An Army camp with 200 soldiers was established for security of*

*Ulukkulama village. Owing to these reasons we were able go back to live in the village.... In 1989, the army camp was removed from the village. As a result, we fell into mental agony."*

It must be remembered, however, that the PRA was conducted in a Sinhalese village and had a Tamil community been chosen, the possibility of security forces being viewed, as a source of insecurity cannot be ruled out.

### **Communities' knowledge of small arms**

Perhaps surprising to Western readers, all community members involved in the participatory research had varying degrees of knowledge of small arms. While people in Ulukkulama demonstrated extensive knowledge of weapons, others like Nalbari and Karachi had only basic knowledge.

In Ulukkulama, the participants were able to identify an astounding 18 different types of small arms and light weapons that they had been exposed to. The weapons identified included the T56, Hand Grenades, Pistols, Swords and Daggers, RPGs, Mortars, LMGs, Artillery, GPMGs, 50 mm guns, Shotguns, Repeaters, 303 Rifles, SLRs, T 81s, Jonny mines and Tomba. The community's knowledge and insight into the varying impacts of each of these weapons was extensive and, as some participants were Home guards themselves, they were quite acquainted with technical aspects of the arms. Unsurprisingly, sharp-edged weapons such as swords and daggers were also considered as small arms. In one massacre, insurgents using such sharp instruments and blunt weapons, in addition to the guns they were carrying, killed 44 people in the village.

It should be mentioned that the Ulukkulama community's knowledge of small arms does not appear to be the norm for all communities in conflict prone areas in Sri Lanka; comparatively Aluthwatta and Tharanikulam, two other locations that were visited, had less knowledge in this regard. An explanation may be that the Ulukkulama community, having been victims of displacement several times within a short duration, have been more exposed to the use of arms.

Regarding the use of small arms, the community at Ulukkulama made several specific observations:

- ? T 81 is used sparingly as it cannot be used for long distances
- ? RPG is frequently used to attack bunkers
- ? Swords/Daggers are used for mass killings
- ? LTTE frequently uses repeater guns
- ? 303 Rifles are not much in demand; this is an outdated rifle
- ? T 56 is very much in demand as it is light to carry, easy to aim, both long range and short range.

In contrast, community knowledge of small arms in Nalabari is more limited. While almost everyone had seen rifles and guns like SLRs and Kalashnikovs being carried around by the security personnel and earlier by the militants, their knowledge was rather more rudimentary and they were unable to differentiate all of the brands and types. Some Bodos in northern Nalabari, who were ex-army personnel, were experienced in the use of SLRs and other such weapons but were not acquainted with the types of arms carried by the “militants”. Everyone, however, was acutely aware of the lethality of these weapons.

In the Banshbari slum, small arms best known to the community were the pipe gun, revolver, pistol, cut rifle, shotgun, rifle, and light machine gun (LMG) and sub machine gun (SMG). Almost everybody had seen homemade cracker bombs. According to the community, the “terrorists” mostly used pipe guns, revolvers, pistols and cut rifles, and the police were generally equipped with rifles and shotguns.

By comparison, the Simakhali community had more comprehensive knowledge of small arms. They could differentiate between local and foreign pistols and revolvers. The small arms commonly used by terrorists in Simakhali included rifles, pipe guns, shutter guns (has a number of bullet chambers that can be used alternatively for different types of ammunitions), both locally and foreign made pistols and revolvers, BBL guns, sub machine guns and cut rifles. The most commonly available and used small arm was the pipe gun (locally made); next was the local pistol followed by the shutter gun which ranked third,

foreign revolvers ranked fourth and foreign pistols fifth. According to the community, these arms were cheap, small to carry, hide and use.

Though participants in Banshbari were unclear regarding the sources of weapons, they had heard that these weapons came from abroad, mainly India, and Chittagong - though not South East Asia. Some weapons were also being made in workshops and many participants were aware of two areas (Agargaon and Kamrangir Char) in Dhaka where weapons could be procured. They mentioned names of two sites in Dhaka City where one could purchase arms. Participants from Simakhali said that terrorists acquired arms from the black market and sometimes stole them from the police. They also noted that they had heard of certain Islamic fundamentalist groups that obtained arms from foreign countries.

### **Impacts of small arms as perceived by the communities**

As indicated in earlier sections, the research sought to analyse both the short and long term impacts of particular types of weapons on local communities. An interesting feature of the findings is that a significant number of homemade or domestically produced weapons are being used in acutely affected regions. These, in addition to internationally imported weapons, have a differentiated range of effects on communities. As an example, the impacts of different categories of small arms on the Ulukkulama community are shown in Table 1.

As the figure above shows, the most devastating impact were perceived to be associated with landmines and mortars, with “high impact” ratings for damage to vehicles and houses, loss of life, injury, physical disability and tension and shock. The weapons with the most severe impacts in terms of their damage to vehicles and houses, is the 50mm gun, mortar, RPGs and landmines. Weapons associated with loss of life comes from the use of T56, hand grenades, landmines, swords and daggers, RPGs, Mortars, LMGs, 303 rifles, SLR and T81s. Physical disabilities are connected mostly with the use of swords and daggers, 303 rifles, SLRs, landmines, mortars, artillery and jonny

Table 1. Impacts of Small Arms as Perceived by the Community in Ulukkulama Village

Armament	Damage to Vehicles/Houses	Loss of Life	Injury	Physical Disability	Mental Disability	Tension / Shock
T.56	??	??	??	?	?	?
Hand Grenade	??	??	??	?	??	??
<b>Landmines</b>	??	??	??	??	??	??
Pistols	?	?	??	?	??	?
Sword / Dagger	?	??	??	??	??	?
R P G	??	??	?	??	??	??
<b>Mortar</b>	??	??	??	??	??	?
L M G	??	??	??	??	??	?
<b>Artillery</b>	??	?	??	??	?	??
G P M G	?	?	?	?	?	?
50 mm Gun	??	?	?	?	?	?
Sot gun	?	??	??	?	?	?
Repeater	?	??	??	?	?	?
303 Rifle	??	??	??	??	?	?
S L R	??	??	??	??	?	?
T 81	??	??	??	?	?	?
Jonny Traps *	?	?	??	??	?	?
Tomba	??	??	??	??	?	??

\* Small pressure mines

?? High Impact

? Medium Impact

?? Low Impact

? No Impact

traps (small pressure mines) and the tension and shock associated with landmines, RPG and artillery.

Persistent use of small arms exposes the communities to additional complexities that can be termed as long-term impacts. They include:

### **Anxiety**

The communities appeared to be in constant anticipation of trouble, be it threats from the militants or harassment by security forces. Fear of being targeted or becoming incidental victims of armed violence was high. Most communities appeared alert to such possibilities and were easily alarmed. Even the appearance of a vehicle with a few unknown persons is capable of triggering panic within villages. As explained by Parameswar Sarma of Nalbari,

*“we immediately fear the worst when someone is a little late in returning home. Any unknown person coming into the village and inquiring about*

*one of the residents, even for perfectly legitimate reason, can elicit panicked reactions”.*

Communities are also perpetually apprehensive about “militants” asking for shelter, which they do not have the courage to turn down, while knowing that they will suffer the bitter consequences if security forces come to know about it. Hamid Ali from Nalbari complains,

*“They accuse us of harbouring militants and not cooperating by refusing to provide information and whereabouts of militants. But if we do so, can they ensure us protection from the inevitable retaliation?”*

Residents of these are unable to draw on their traditional coping-strategies, since they are victims both of the state and those who are waging their wars against it. This is in large part at the root of their fears and resultant anxiety.

### ***Restricted Mobility***

Most communities sought to reduce their mobility after dark. They believe that “militants” and security forces prefer to move about or strike during the hours of darkness to avoid detection or quickly withdraw in the event of an ambush. In response, the security forces also intensify checks and patrolling at night. The likelihood of encounters with security forces, which civilians are eager to avoid, predictably increases. Also, individuals moving about after darkness are liable to arouse the suspicion of security patrols if intercepted and likely to be dealt with much more harshly than during daytime.

The consequences of restricted mobility suggest that people generally go about their businesses only during the daytime and hurry home by dusk. Commercial and retail establishments close down and the streets become deserted. Restriction on mobility has had an effect on the access of children and adults to primary, secondary and vocational education as well as social events, particularly in Ulukkulama. Even in case of extreme emergencies, such as an illness or an accident, people are reluctant to venture out after dark.

### ***Polarisation of Communities***

A result of violence over prolonged periods is polarisation of communities along ethnic and sectarian lines as has been explained earlier. The division is very real and is at the root of rampant suspicion and apprehension within communities. According to Kamaleswar Bodo from Nalbari, this is *“because of the killings, these divisions have become more rigid and is contributing to greater sense of insecurity”*.

### ***Constrained Developmental Activities***

Developmental activities have been severely curtailed, as the state has been preoccupied with counter-insurgency initiatives. As a result, even basic infrastructure such as roads and bridges, medical and health care services, electrification and educational facilities have remained underdeveloped or have degenerated from lack of care and maintenance. Even where development funds and resources have been made available, much of it has been siphoned away as a result of lax accountability. Underdevelopment also persists because many officials and personnel continue to avoid going to work in areas considered “dangerous” and draw their salaries without having to work.

*“No official came to the field for inspection. Militancy has become an excuse for so many of them not to work. It has also become such a good excuse for every government to hide their non-performance”*, remarked Nripen Kalita in Nalbari.

*“If you have to shell out greater part of what you earn through sheer hard work to anyone who comes with a gun, what is the point of working at all?”* said Bibhuti Sarma, also from Nalbari.

The suspension of meaningful economic opportunities has created more unemployment and has added to the already deteriorating situation. In Karachi, for example, armed ethnic and sectarian conflict has resulted in the flight of capital and factories to different cities of Punjab. Predictably, the result has been a higher rate of unemployment and daily spikes in the price of goods and services. The inability of Karachiites to meet their



basic needs has lead to both acute distress (proxied by suicides) and a concomitant increase in armed violence.

### ***Criminalization of Youth***

In sharp contrast to the desperate economic plight of most of the communities, a relatively prosperous class has appeared within them. This class is made up of “militants”, former combatants and people who are believed to have nexus with them. Their power and prestige is tied to the possession of weapons and of their association (both overtly and covertly), with armed elements. It is widely believed that their prosperity is intimately tied to their involvement in extortion, organized crime syndicates and other, illegal activities such as the trade in women and rare animals.

Participatory research indicated that high rates of unemployment and economic desperation have lured a considerable number of youths to join “militant” groups and to adopt criminalised lifestyles. Many of the communities with whom participatory exercises were held, felt that in the absence of concrete alternatives, it has become extremely difficult to dissuade the youth from turning to the gun in order to gain prosperity and identity.

*“This will ruin an entire generation of our youth and eclipse our society’s future forever”*, said a participant from Nalbari.

It is important to stress that young males are particularly susceptible to a life of armed violence. In Banshbari, the community unanimously agreed that fifteen out of the thirty-two “terrorists” in their slum belonged to the 15-19 years age group, and nine of them belonged to the 20-24 years age group. They identified that lack of education, irregular schooling, unemployment, intimidation, coercion, and deterioration of overall law and order situation as being responsible for such a high degree of participation by young people in “terrorist” activities. The Simakhali community made similar observations. They further observed that, when compared to adults, the youth were more attracted to guns.

In Karachi, arms are displayed and used in academic institutions by student organizations like the *Islami Jamiat Talaba*, People's Student Federation (PSF), Punjabi Student Association (PSA), All Pakistan *Mohajir* Student Organization (APMSO), *Jeay Sindh*, *Pukhtun* Student Federation (PSF), *Baloch* Student Organization (BSO). This trend began during the Afghan war when procuring weapons was not difficult. Arms and money is supplied to them by their mother organizations.

The community in Simakhali was able to analyse that young people sometimes joined "terrorist" groups in order to avenge violence against their families, or as a strategy to ensure their safety, security and survival. However, it came out in their analysis that joining "terrorist" groups did not ensure safety or security for them in the end; instead, some got into more trouble and provided them with fewer opportunities than initially believed.

### ***Erosion of Credibility of Governance***

Marginalisation of the democratic polity by armed political movements on the one hand, and restrictive interventions by the state or armed elements in the communities' ability to freely exercise their democratic rights on the other, have seriously undermined democratic governance in surveyed communities. Failure to uphold or at times, even denial of the right to effective judicial/constitutional remedies for violations have alienated entire communities and have undermined their confidence in the governance and justice the state is capable of dispensing.

## SECTION III

### **Community Responses**

#### **Political Solution/Conflict Resolution**

The participatory research focused not only on “problems”, but also community-based “solutions” to the issue of armed violence in South Asia. Though micro-level approaches were appropriate in all of the four communities surveyed, there was a unanimous expression of hope that viable political responses to the conflicts were the best means of curbing violence.

In Nalbari, the community believed that armed violence could end only if insurgency-related conflicts are resolved. This cannot be achieved through military means alone. It was noted that the state has a legal obligation to address the root causes of insurgency and armed violence and offer a political solution. “Insurgency is only the symptom”, agreed the groups, as they listed and ranked the proposed solutions. “The factors which give rise to insurgency and armed struggle have to be resolved first if one is really interested to bring back peace and security.”

In Bansbari and Simakhali, the communities stated that political parties would have to find out a practical way to develop a culture of mutual respect and peaceful co-existence. They have to be committed to settle disputes and conflicts through peaceful dialogue. These discussions would have to emphasise the role of small arms - and stress their destructive effects.

In Karachi, political, economic and social isolation of the *Mohajirs* compelled them to resort to armed violence to show their resentment. Responding with the use of force through *Operation Clean-Up* in 1992, the Army further complicated the problem. It created a feeling of alienation among the *Mohajirs* in relation to the centre, which is dominated by the Punjabis, and vilified the image of the Army. The communities recommended that the political, economic and social alienation of *Mohajirs* should be considerably reduced and they should be given a role in the political process.

### **Restoring Credibility of Governance**

All communities pointed out that neither military nor political initiatives to curb insurgency and resolve conflicts are likely to succeed without popular support and co-operation. The state must first build confidence among its citizens, introduce a firm commitment to accountability and transparency into their initiatives and try to bridge the tremendous gap that currently exists between the “state” and the “people”. “The state has to stop treating us like enemies. As long as the administration is unable to command the respect and trust of the people, it will never be able to end militancy”, remarked a participant from Nalbari.

In Banshbari and Simakhali, people felt that it was very important to stop corrupt practices in politics if small arms-related violence was to be reduced. The amount of money political leaders spend to attain power is an incentive for them to remain corrupt and involved in armed violence. They also felt that ‘Godfathers’ perpetrating armed violence should be identified and brought to justice. The community felt that if these ‘Godfathers’ - otherwise known as leaders of criminal syndicates - were caught and punished, than armed violence would decrease automatically.

In Karachi, people felt that the lack of democracy and weak political and economic institutions had paved the way for the suppression of the minority ethnic groups and an increase in hatred among and between them. Therefore, it was felt that genuinely participatory democracy should be promoted at the grass-roots level so that any person could feel confident enough to speak out and to claim his or her rights.

### **Sustained Development and Creation of Meaningful Economic Opportunities**

Many communities believed that under-development was also responsible for political unrest, the proliferation of insurgencies and armed violence and that inequality and impoverishment had to be addressed. But while communities demanded basic

infrastructure like roads, health care facilities, schools, and electricity in rural areas - they also proposed sophisticated local solutions.

In Simakhali, the community strongly recommended that a bridge be constructed over the Chitra River at the Simakhali point linking the village with the Narail town. They believed that this would remove the current ferry terminal that functions as the hub of all criminal activities in the village and adjacent areas.

In Nalbari, one participant expressed, *“if the roads were constructed, it would immediately make these remote areas accessible. It will be a deterrent for the insurgents from finding shelter in these areas and the security forces will also be able to search them out more easily”*.

In Banshbari and Simakhali, people felt that the government should take the initiative to create employment for the people engaged in armed activities. It was felt that if young people were provided with relatively stable employment and reasonable salaries they might not resort to armed violence. They argued that the next step should be to create employment more generally so that unemployment does lay the ground for more “terrorists”. They were not calling for handouts. It was suggested that the offering of loans on favourable conditions from banks or other financial institutions would promote self-employment.

In Karachi as well, the participants in the research study felt that the government should introduce employment schemes, the promotion of cottage industries, and provide the unemployed with interest-free micro-loans to improve the present situation where unemployment begets violence and crime.

### **Peoples’ Initiatives**

Most communities felt that the state and the élite were to a large extent reluctant to end political unrest. Therefore, a peoples’ initiative or social movement from the “grass-roots” was needed to create overwhelming mass pressure, in order to compel the state to move towards initiating dialogue for peace, security and development.

In Banshbari and Simakhali, many participants believed that a long-term nationwide campaign programme should be undertaken against violence and use of small arms. They felt that communities and citizens could play a strong role by joining and strengthening pro-peace anti-violence social movements.

### **Bridging the ethnic divide**

In northern Nalbari, the victimization of non-Bodo communities and the resultant insecurity has led to renewed violence. It is imperative that differences between communities be resolved, their fears taken care of and the polarized communities reconciled. Several participants noted that: “suspicion and mistrust between communities must be resolved and we must move forward together, otherwise peace will not be very lasting”.

In Karachi, participants were convinced that the Punjab province should learn from the dismemberment of East Pakistan in 1971 and should be fair in dealing with the other small provinces, especially Sindh. Instead of promoting the culture of provinces, there needs to be promotion of a Pakistani culture, acceptable to all the communities living in Pakistan, so that the element of hatred, and its expression in the form of armed violence, is reduced *vis-à-vis* other ethnic communities.

### **Arms control measures**

When asked about how to reduce armed violence in the case of Ulukkulama, people gave priority to ending the supply of arms to the “militants”. They felt that an internationalised dialogue must be promoted to limit the production of harmful armaments, and that there needs to be consensus among the international community regarding the “use” and “export” of small arms. In their view, the supply of arms to Sri Lanka by outside countries and brokers has to be stopped.

Community recommendations from participatory exercise of Karachiite males called for the issuance of licenses for weapons to “everyone without any discrimination so that they can defend themselves in case of an emergency”. They also recommended

that the government target the arms manufacturing factories, especially in Darra Adam Khel and stop the supply to other areas. The number of police check posts on the Peshawar-Karachi and Quetta-Karachi routes should also be increased and they should be given enough power and sophisticated weapons.

In Banshbari and Simakhali, respondents indicated that trade in illegal drug and illegal arms must be stopped and that this should be a high priority for the government.

### **Police and Legal Reforms**

Participants in Banshbari and Simakhali believe that the police department has to be restructured and thoroughly reoriented to regain its credibility and effectiveness. They felt that attention should be given to the recruitment process and police training program and the curriculum needs to be thoroughly revised. The police department should work to find ways to ensure effective cooperation between the police and the people at all levels with a view to restore peace and order in the society. The community also expressed the need for a legal system capable of prosecuting and punishing the terrorists who continue to engage in armed violence.

In Karachi, participants felt that the government should have effective control over the law enforcement agencies and that their role should be restricted and not used for political ends. Proper investigations should be conducted of police officers suspected of supporting or being involved in criminal activities. If found guilty, they should be dismissed from service and severe punishment should be administered. Participants also believe that police transferred into Karachi from other provinces further undermine the security of local residents and that reforms of the police system should include area-based appointments were necessary. In other words, it was felt that Karachiites should be given preference for law enforcement duties in Karachi.

### **Rehabilitation**

In Banshbari and Simakhali, people urged the government to have a strong social program to support the victims of gun vio-

lence. In Karachi, they also demanded special attention to be given to those families who have been directly or indirectly affected by armed violence and have lost their source of income. Participants from all communities wanted employment opportunities to be provided to members of affected families. In Ulukkulama, the community also noted the need for awareness (on the part of the government) regarding alternative post-conflict employment for those who are in armed services or serving as Home guards.

### **Conclusion**

The application of participatory research to the study of armed violence and small arms, presents many opportunities and challenges. The studies described in this monograph indicate that while some tools might be appropriate for measuring the effects of small arms misuse in one area - they may not necessarily be effective in another. Nevertheless, they take us a step forward in articulating locally appropriate indicators of the availability and use of small arms, and sustainable and appropriate solutions to reduce armed violence. A number of broad trends emerged from the four community studies highlighting the range of impacts that people experience as a result of small arms availability and misuse. Across all case studies, the following impacts were present:

- ? Fear, anxiety and growing levels of suspicion
- ? Forced displacement
- ? Shifts from formal to informal employment
- ? Constraints on the mobility of individuals
- ? Dramatic transformations in expenditure patterns
- ? Restrictions on the access of civilians to education
- ? Restrictions on the access of civilians to health care or health related services
- ? Long-term implications for the social status of affected groups
- ? Constraints on the exercise of social, religious, recreational and entertainment activities
- ? The intensification of ethnic and political divisions



- ? Obstacles to the quality, delivery and sustainability of developmental interventions
- ? Increases in the criminalisation and militarisation of youth - particularly young men
- ? Gradual erosion of the credibility of national and municipal government bodies

It is important to stress that most communities felt threatened by the excesses committed by security forces and police. In some cases, it was the organs of the state that were perceived to be more dangerous than armed “militants”. Virtually without exception, participants believed that a political solution to armed violence offers the only durable option for redressing insecurity and that preventive and reactive military responses would yield few positive results. Despite a strong awareness of the political and economic machinations of conflicts, many participants of the communities invested considerable faith in the ability of the political system to resolve the issue of small arms availability, provided that the political will existed to do something about the problem. Some of the community solutions suggested include:

- ? The consolidation of a political solution and the introduction of strategies aimed at promoting cultures of non-violent conflict resolution
- ? A renewed effort to restore the credibility of national and municipal governance in affected areas
- ? A renewed commitment to ensuring that sustainable development takes place in affected areas, particularly through the creation of meaningful economic opportunities
- ? More emphasis to ensure peoples participation in the design, planning and implementation of violence-reduction strategies
- ? Concerted efforts to bridge tensions and “polarisation” of ethnic and minority groups
- ? Implementation of practical arms control measures on exports and imports of small arms
- ? Legal reforms to ensure that impunity - particularly of police - is stopped
- ? Police reform to ensure that the quality and responsiveness of services increase
- ? Rehabilitation for affected and “at-risk” groups.

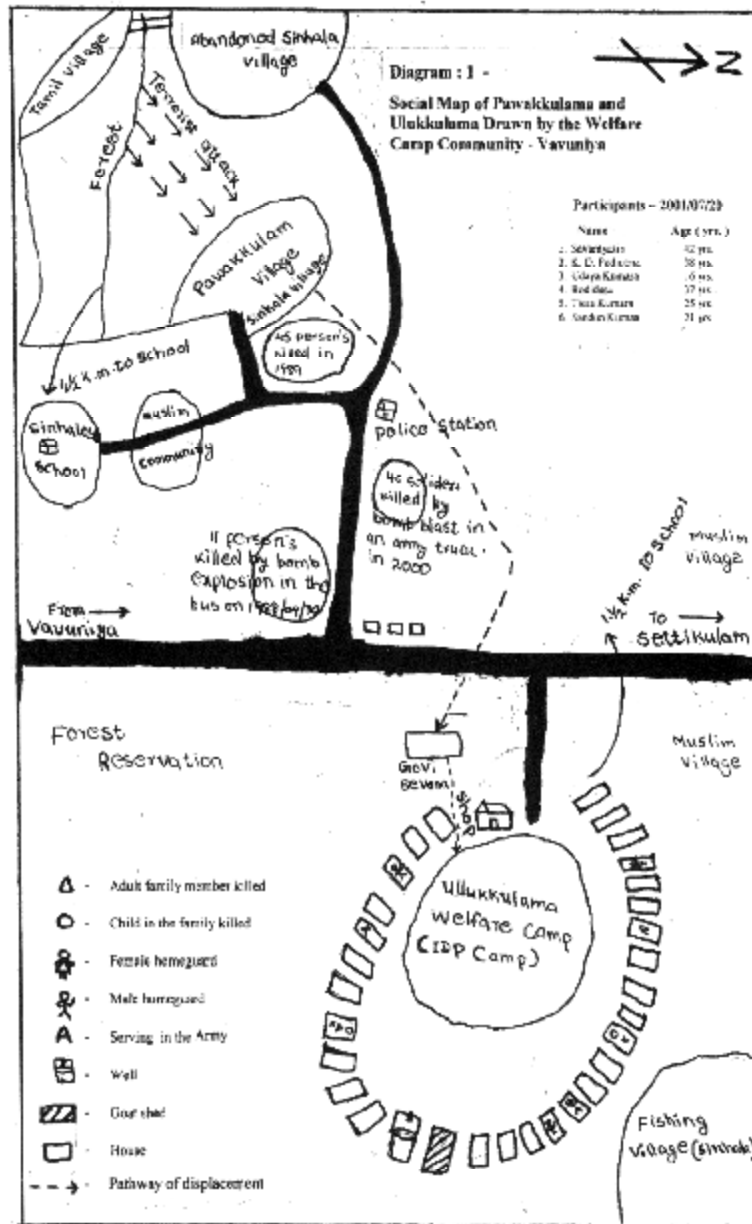
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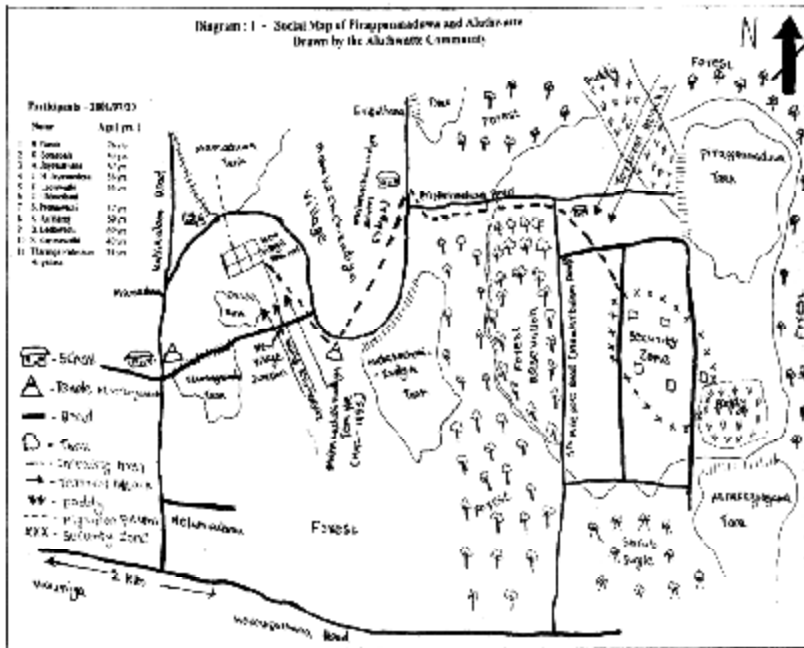
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Social Maps of Displacement in Ulukkulama and Alluthwatte







Testimonial Experience of the Victims of Firearm-related  
Insecurity in South Asia

Mudalihamy, Ulukkulama

“I am the oldest person here from Pawakkulama village. My age is 65 years. Our lands are highly valuable. Since 1985, we have been leading a complicated life, falling from the frying pan to the fire and vice versa as if it were.

When tigers attack we move into the welfare camp and after some time we move back into the village. Again, when Tigers repeat, we move into the welfare camp and after some time into the village. We have gone through this fate four to five times. Loss of the highly valuable village is sad and painful to us. Those who could afford moved out to places like Anuradhapura and Nochchiyagama. About 30 helpless families were compelled to remain in welfare camps.

We are scared to move into the village as we fear that we will be again attacked by Tigers. Son of Chandrasekera who was a homeguard was shot (last year) at 7 a.m. on April 14<sup>th</sup> 2000. On that morning a group of home guards were moving towards the police post to handover the guns. At the junction there were about 50 people who appeared to be army personnel. Villagers thought that they are from the army. The homeguards dropped the guns and raised their hands. Chandrasekera’s son approached them inquiring who they were and as he approached he was shot. The other homeguards ran away. Thereafter, the insurgents went away carrying the four guns (T56) with them.

It is difficult to identify some of these insurgents. They speak Sinhalese very well. On the following day we left the village. In our village there are about 1500 families. Out of them about 800 -1000 are Sinhalese and the balance are Muslims. The Muslim families yet live in the village though they too have problems from the insurgents. Some of the Sinhala families moved into the village. It will be great if all these families living in this camp could also move there.



As we are destitute people, we are unable to obtain loans from anybody or any goods on credit from a boutique. We thrive on the dry ration. A part of dry ration is sold for purchasing of other necessities. There were about 35 mango trees on the highland of my allotment in the village. These trees brought me an income of about Rs. 40,000 — Rs. 50,000 per year. As we had paddy, we had no fear about our food. Now we have a fear about our food, because, in case the dry ration is stopped, our food will be a big problem.

I live in fear about my son who is in the army. One daughter is living with us and the other two are married and living at Padaviya. They are also destitutes owing to insurgency.

It would be a great consolation if each of the 30 families living here can get about ¼ acre of land at least for each”.

#### M. Kusumawathie, Ulukkulama

“Prior to 1984 we lived very happily in Pawakkulama village. We possessed 1½ acres of highland and 3 acres of paddy lands. Throughout the year we were engaged in lucrative agricultural activities. We never faced a shortage of food. We were well-off financially and only salt and dry fish we had to purchase from outside the village. Although we had minor disagreements we were united in community work. Our village was really a beautiful place.

Life in the Refugee Camp brought about some consolation being away from the danger of tiger terrorists, although it did not provide an opportunity to lead a free and happy life as prior to 1984. The reason for consolation was the protection from the army. Considerable pain and suffering was caused owing to:

- ? inability to provide education for children,
- ? being weak economically,
- ? the Sinhalese villagers being a target of the terrorists.

As a result of an army operation carried out by the army in our village and the surrounding jungles in 1988, our village (Pawakkulama) became clear for the re- settlement. An Army

camp with 200 soldiers was established for security of Ulukkulama village. Owing to these reasons we were able to go back to live in the village. Although some mental satisfaction was brought about, we lived in the village in a state of uncertainty.

When we were re-settled in the village in 1988, we started our usual agricultural activities. But, we were unable to continue these activities without interruption. In 1989, the army camp was removed from the village. As a result, we fell into mental agony. However, since police protection was provided, the suffering was reduced to some extent. But, the threats from terrorists continued. We felt that we would become a target of the terrorists moving around the village. Protection provided by the police was not sufficient for the village. The road connecting the village and the town was in an insecure condition. As a result we were compelled to leave the village and live in a camp. This camp did not provide us 100% security. But, there were several Sinhalese villages around us and we had some consolation.

After living in this manner for two years, with protection from the police and the homeguards, we went to live in Pawakkulama village. The police and the home guards were unable to provide us adequate protection. But, owing to a reduction of terrorist activities during this period, the fear and shock was reduced to some extent. But, the effects of terrorist acts were felt from time to time. We lived in this manner for a period of two years and again we started to feel the effects of fear, shock and tension increasingly. The reasons were,

- ? In 1996 starting of fights between the police/ home guards and the terrorists'
- ? attacks were launched on the army who came to support the police.
- ? loss of several lives.

Taking the above factors into consideration, we left the village in the year 2000 and came to Ulukkulama camp. Living in the camp is painful and sad although the fear is reduced to some extent. But, now we are conditioned to this life.

Parameswar Sarma, Headmaster, Nityananda Girls High School, Nalbari

“We immediately fear the worst when someone is a little late in returning home. On any unknown person coming into the village and inquiring about one of the residents, even for perfectly legitimate reason, can elicit panicked reactions. Perceptions exist regardless of whether the basis for such fears are real or not”.

Hamid Ali, teacher of Political Science in the Bishnuram Medhi Higher Secondary School, Nalbari

“They (the security forces) accuse us of harbouring militants and not cooperating by refusing to provide information and whereabouts of militants. But if we do so, can they ensure us protection from the inevitable retaliation?”

Piyush Sarma, former ULFA leader, Nalbari

“We have become so divided that it is difficult to figure out where one’s interests lay or who one is connected to. One just has to be careful of what one utters because one never knows where it will be heard, who it might displease and what may be its consequences. I would not have even spoken to you if you were not Kushal’s friend. I trust that no harm would come to me or my family for speaking so cordially as I did. But do not expect the same way in public.”

Amalendu Sarma, Nalbari

“I worked at the High Court in Guwahati and still have relatives there. My son has studied staying in Guwahati. Because of all these troubles I rarely let him come home to the village.”

Nripen Kalita, Nalbari

“No official came to the field for inspection. Militancy has become an excuse for so many of them not to work. It has also become such a good excuse for every government to hide their non-performance.”

Bibhuti Sarma, Nalbari

“If you have to shell out greater part of what you earn through sheer hard work to anyone who comes with a gun, what is the point of working at all?”

Bodo youth, Nalbari

“The state had brutally repressed the Bodo movement. The battalions had, at one time, burnt down entire villages, tortured many villagers and molested and raped women. Even if we are afraid of the militants, we are equally fearful of approaching the security forces for any help. Also, who will ensure our safety from retributions?”

Sufia, Banshbari

“I found three foreign revolvers rapped in gunny bags inside a community centre while cleaning it. I was frightened and did not know what to do with them. Then I showed the revolvers to the Caretaker of the community centre took the revolvers from me and immediately concealed them again. Then he told me not to tell anything to anybody about the arms. He said to me that my family or me would face dire consequences if I disclosed the matter to any one. Afterwards I could easily sense that the members of the armed group that owned those revolvers were closely watching my family. I kept silent, I did not tell anything about the matter even to my family. Still the terrorists who probably owned the revolvers did not trust my family or me. We were intimidated and threatened in many ways for the next six months. They often used to come to our house and sit or stand there for a while, but telling nothing. Sometimes they would come in the dead of night knock at our door, call my mother or me and say, ‘we just wanted to check whether you are home’. It was a matter of serious insecurity and fear for us. This put us in high tension and we were worried. Members of the armed group occasionally asked many questions about me to our neighbours. It was an indirect form of intimidation. Our neighbours thought something very bad was going to happen to me as the dirty guys have become interested in me. They became really frightened

and did not hide their concerns from us. Some of them advised my mother to send me somewhere to a safer place. The situation took away my smile and happiness, I could not move freely and I was always in fear of something bad to happen. I really had a bad time during those six months.”

Rahima, Simakhali

“My son was very gentle and docile from his childhood. All liked him. But some members of our extended family had friendship with an armed group. On one occasion in 1995, a person died in a gun battle in the village. There were arrests following the murder and while arresting suspected persons, the police arrested my son as well. Since then we have been through a big financial trouble, as we have to bear the expenses for the case and do our best to satisfy the police not to inflict further trouble on us. The case is still under trial. My son is in jail now. He cannot cultivate our land. Whatever I try to grow on our land is stolen or destroyed by the rival terrorist group. I have sold two valuable fruit trees and a piece of land to bear the costs of the case. Previously I had to spend on food, shelter, clothe, cultivation, medicine and festivals. Now I have to spend on the case and the police and these two heads have become the major heads of expenditure for me”.

Hasina Begum, Simakhali

“My family became a target of the leftwing Sarbahara Party as we were economically solvent – ‘rich’ in their language. First they attempted to kill my father, and then they demanded a big amount of money from us. My family sought help from the police, the administration and from the political leaders of the main political parties. But nobody was able to ensure our security and peace. As we went to the police and the authorities, the terrorists became angrier with us. Now they put my brother on the hit list along with my father and kept on threatening me of rape. The Naxalite group also demanded a big sum of money and warned us of dire consequences if we did not meet their demand. My brother was shot at two times. Once he escaped unhurt but he narrowly survived the second attempt sustaining a bullet injury

in his hand. The injured hand is disabled now. My father and two brothers are still in hiding. Two months ago members of the terrorist group threw acid on my younger sister who was seriously injured. She is under treatment in a hospital in Dhaka. We cannot move freely, we cannot go to school and college regularly due to fear and insecurity. In the mean time the terrorists have compelled some people of our village to file false cases with the local police station against my father and the brothers. Knowing that the cases are false yet the police are harassing us in connection to these cases. Most of our croplands remain uncultivated year after year, as sharecroppers do not cultivate our land. They fear of harm by the terrorist groups if they cultivated our land. We have already run out of cash and we do not get adequate income from agriculture. Our income as well as standard of living has gone down. We have already sold our cattle, nine trees and two hectares of land to support our livelihood. We don't think of good foods and good clothes any more. My sister's treatment needs a lot of money, which we find difficult to afford. The income that we have is from the sales of beetle nut, coconut, mango, jackfruit and a few other seasonal fruits. There are five or six other families who are facing the similar situation."

Habubullah, Simakhali

"I had a well established tea stall at the ferry ghat. I used to sell tea, snacks and cigarettes. I had a very good income and a happy life. But I had to pay toll to the terrorists on weekly basis. Before 1996, the amount of toll was a small amount, tolerable to me. But things started turning beyond tolerance after the general election in 1996 as the terrorists demanded bigger amount in tolls. In addition, they were demanding big tolls at times of festivals. Two other shopkeepers were beaten for non-payment of the money they demanded. Just around this time there was a meeting arranged in Simakhali by the government administration on restoring law and order situation. Almost all the senior civil and police officials of the district along with political leaders attended the meeting. The government officials made an appeal to the local people to co-operate with the police and to provide information

on the terrorists. I had appreciated the initiative taken by the administration. Some terrorists were arrested within the next few weeks and some of them went in to hiding. But the secret information provided to the police by various persons leaked out to the terrorists. They suspected me as one of the persons who provided information to the police. One day they attacked me with small arms and fired four rounds of bullet to kill me but somehow I escaped unhurt. They looted all the materials from the shop and broke the shop. My family and me were worried about my life. I went in to hiding. As I went in to hiding they imposed restriction on the movement of my wife. On several occasions they 'misbehaved' with her. We had a few trees, one cow with a calf and some ornaments belonging to my wife. All those were sold while I was in hiding. Then I sought help from an 'influential' person who had 'good' relationship with the terrorists. Through him I apologized to them and begged pardon. Then I received a signal to return home and at last I came back home with a very high sense of fear and insecurity, rather risking my life. I had no other alternative as I had to take care of my wife and children. One night after a month, the terrorists came to my house and took me out at gunpoint. I begged them, my wife and children begged them first and then cried and shouted for help but nobody among the villagers had the courage to come forward to our help. They took me to a field and beat so mercilessly that one of my leg was broken. They did not kill me but it took months for me to recover. In the mean time, they took possession of my shop and told me to forget about the shop. I accepted it and begged them to allow me to start a small tea stall afresh at one corner near the river so that I could make some earning for survival. They allowed me to do that. Since then I am running this tea stall for livelihood. The income I earn now is less than twenty percent of what I used to earn from the previous tea stall. Socially, economically and psychologically, in all respect I am a reduced man now. The irony is that I did not receive any support from the police or the civil administration during the plight. Another person in our village got fingers and a wrist cut off for similar reason."

## The June 2001 Training Workshop

**Days 1-2. Considering PRA and Human Insecurity:**

An excellent PRA facilitator was contracted from Sri Lanka to co-ordinate the workshop. The workshop began with a familiarisation exercise for the participants (e.g. name, research focus, interest in small arms, etc) followed by a listing and prioritisation exercise to elicit the objectives of the workshop participants. The table highlights the key objectives articulated by the participants at the beginning of the workshop. An additional column – workshop outputs – was also included to contrast expectations with perceived results (*see Figure A*).

Figure A. Workshop Objectives and Outputs

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES	WORKSHOP OUTPUTS
Familiarisation of PRA methodology	Participants familiar and comfortable using PRA approaches
To identify tools that are appropriate for proposed research	Tools appropriate for use in the proposed research projects are identified
To promote linkages among participants as a base for carrying out further research on small arms issues	Informal linkages among participants established as a preliminary basis for networking in the region
Sharing experiences	Opportunity to share and reflect on experiences

From the introductory exercise, participants were rapidly exposed to the key tenets of PRA: from the establishment of collective criteria, to prioritising and ranking as well as demonstrating the visual and graphic elements of participatory research.

Over the course of the following two days, participants were familiarised with the key tenets of participatory methodologies, the history and evolution of PRA methods and the range of tools or methods available (*see Figure B*). Given that the research objectives and key research questions for the project were deliberately abstract, time was allocated to thinking critically about the objectives, design and shape of the research project in both the pilot site and each of the four proposed regions of South



Asia. It was important for the project organisers that the researchers themselves came up with the central research objectives in order to promote a sense of ownership and shared understanding.

Figure B. PRA Methods and Assessing the Impacts of Small Arms

TOOLS	QUESTIONS
Semi-Structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Open-ended questions regarding insecurity</li> <li>▪ Six helpers (who, what, where, why, how, when) and groups to determine distinctions between fact, opinion and rumour.</li> </ul>
Community and Social Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighbourhoods where armed violence occurs (proportion of area affected, conditions where it occurs such as time and context, conditions where it does not occur, etc)</li> <li>▪ Impacts on associations and local institutions and involvement in social activity (attendance at schools, access to clinics and churches)</li> </ul>
Historical Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changes in frequency of armed violence</li> <li>▪ Trends in patterns and types of armed violence</li> </ul>
Mobility Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluating source of firearms</li> <li>▪ Distance people have to go to access markets, health and education facilities, and associated risks of armed violence</li> <li>▪ Also trace anxiety (mapping) – responses to insecurity, and “fear scales”, psychological response</li> </ul>
Transect Walks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review of areas of insecurity in a particular region</li> <li>▪ Consideration of problems, contrasts, constraints and opportunities for improvement of security</li> </ul>
Seasonality Timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider changing rates of armed violence over the year, month, week and day (e.g. what time of day is a particular type of weapon being used?)</li> <li>▪ Seasons associated with high levels of violence</li> </ul>
Matrix Ranking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Determine the types of arms</li> <li>▪ Severity and magnitude of costs of different arms (physical and psychological)</li> <li>▪ Ranking and prioritisation of central risks associated with violence</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Psychological and physical distance of institutions and associations</li> <li>▪ Ranking of wealth and well-being in areas affected by armed violence (e.g. list all criteria from community perspectives: family income – permanent and foreign remittance, food security, housing type – roof, walls, floor, permanent, temporary, size, health care, education facilities, social status, contentment, assets, etc.)</li> </ul>

### **Piloting PRA and Research on Small Arms: Day 3**

On the third day of the workshop, researchers and local facilitators visited a number of resettled communities in Puttalam and Kalpitiya, in order to test and apply research methodologies learnt in the previous sessions. The intent was not to carry out a proper PRA exercise, but rather to pilot a range of tools. Space was allocated during the following morning to generate 15 minute feedback presentations in order to elaborate (a) findings, (b) methods (e.g. what worked? what didn't work? new innovations) and (c) critical self-reflection on the process (e.g. community interaction and reflection on attitude and behaviour). There were four (sequenced) questions that the researchers were to consider in generating profiles of human insecurity and small arms use in Puttalam – each requiring a range of PRA/PUA tools of analysis (see *Figure C*).

Violence, in any circumstance, is a subject confined to the private domain. There is frequently a great deal of reluctance to engage on such issues with members of a shared community, much less outsiders. Exploring such topics frequently demands a relationship with participants, respect and empathy, and may not be possible in every circumstance. With this in mind, the researchers were to (1) determine the context of insecurity among community participants (i.e. before and after their forced displacement) through SSI, listing and prioritisation. There was also consensus that the researchers should (2) seek to document the types of violence present, through prioritisation and ranking exercises. Where possible, the researchers were to (3) explore the range of impacts of small arms related violence prior to and following from displacement, through listing, matrix ranking and impact diagrams. Finally, the researchers, where appropriate, would (4) explore community “solutions” for small arms availability and use and ways to contain armed violence.

Figure C. Pilot Research Framework

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS
Place in context the community perceptions of insecurity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSI</li> <li>• Historical Timelines (before and after displacement)</li> <li>• Listing of what makes people "insecure"</li> <li>• Prioritising and ranking conditions of insecurity</li> </ul>
Understanding the "types" of violence from a community perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSI</li> <li>• Listing of types of violence (before and after displacement)</li> <li>• Prioritising/ranking</li> <li>• Mapping (social, household, resource-use, venn diagrams)</li> </ul>
Impacts of armed violence on community life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSI</li> <li>• Transect walks and focus group discussions to triangulate and establish vulnerable groups and focus on particular issues</li> <li>• Listing of types</li> <li>• Brainstorming on criteria for assessment</li> <li>• Trend change, seasonality calendars, cause-impact analysis, etc</li> <li>• Resource inventory and or livelihood analysis</li> <li>• Matrix scoring and ranking of types</li> <li>• Impact diagrams</li> </ul>
Community perceptions on possible solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSI</li> <li>• Listing options</li> <li>• Pairwise ranking</li> <li>• Problems, opportunity and analysis ranking</li> <li>• Planning and negotiation</li> </ul>

It is worth revisiting some of the experiences of the individual research teams in order to better illustrate the range of methodologies available to researchers. Upon arriving to the resettled community (e.g. investigation site), the first team of researchers explained the broad theme of the study and the respective backgrounds of the researchers to a group of participants. The participants consisted of 12 female Muslim participants from Jaffna and, aged 22-70 years).

In order to build rapport and begin the research process, the participants were asked to draw a picture (social map) of their "home community" (pre-1998, the "displacement event") and to graphically represent their flight to the new resettlement site (historical timeline). The discussion revolved around the sudden

increase in political armed violence between 1983 and 1985, its intensification and criminalisation in the late eighties and early nineties, and decline following resettlement in the late 1990s (see *Figure D*).

Figure D. Historical Timeline of Insecurity

State of Insecurity and Small Arms: 1975-2001									
1977	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1993	1997	2001
1	1	1	1	4	4	5	5	3	1

By contrast, a second team noted from another group of female participants from the North East (Mankulam) that the pre-1990 period had been peaceful. In 1997, they had been issued an ultimatum from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to depart within two hours, with allowances for only R300-2000 and whatever they could carry. A listing exercise of the risks before and after, as well as community solutions to mitigating the new security risks is reproduced below (see *Figure E*). When asked by the researchers to list and prioritise the kinds of threats they faced during their displacement, they listed threats to life, followed by a fear of dropping shells, kidnapping (citing a story of a man who was released by the LTTE only after his wife sold-off her Rs 2,500 dowry), fear of lost assets (fixed and liquid), loss of livelihood (sources of income) and hunger.

Figure E. Listing of Insecurities Before and After Displacement

Risks in MRC (NE)	Risks in Resettlement Camp	Community Solutions
Loss of home (title and deed)	Unemployment	Assistance for self-employment (machines,
Loss of sources of livelihood Pauperisation	Lack of infrastructure Land-related insecurities (property rules)	Electricity (for schooling, work) Change in title deeds
Physical and psychological damage	Limited sources of income	Better housing facilities (kitchen, toilets)
	Social segregation	Proper transportation to schools, drinking water
	Humiliation	Tamil schools

A third team, following social mapping exercises with another small group of five women and two men from Jaffna also employed a combination of historical timelines and pair-wise ranking exercises to measure risks associated with displacement and the range of impacts of small arms on community life. An interesting finding is that the participants ranked the destruction of homes as the most severe risk of small arms and light weapon rather than the loss of life (which is ranked fourth).

Additional discussions on the sources of weapons and community solutions for armed violence were particularly illustrative. According to the participants, weapons were diffusing into civilian hands from a variety of sources. They identified leakage and theft from army sources, sea-transported weapons from other countries – often picked up and trafficked by fishermen, weapons in exchange for petrol, and the trade of weapons by ex-combatants. Community solutions related to:

- Publicizing the impacts of small arms in TV and radio;
- Restricting the LTTE from indoctrinating young children and showing them video footage;
- Reducing the distance that children were forced to walk between home and school;
- The diminishing of the illegal small arms trade to LTTE insurgents;
- Vigilance among communities (e.g. houses were often used by LTTE to produce weapons and suicide bombers often resided in homes before committing acts of terror);
- Adopting stringent penalties for military officers involved in corruption;
- Supporting NGOs such as the Red Cross, UNICEF, and UNHCR; and
- Enacting penalties for those carrying weapons, including swords and knives

A fourth research team, in addition to elaborating a number of listing and ranking profiles, reflected on the caveats associated with pilot research. First, the team expressed concern that the community participants had many pre-set or pre-established ideas about the motives of the researchers. In spite of the research team's efforts to be "transparent", it was perceived that the

invited IDP participants were misinformed about the possible “benefits” and “objectives” of the research team’s visit. Further, the researchers discovered, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the community participants had alternative security priorities than those that the researchers wanted to explore: in the pre-displacement, gun violence was a critical issue. By contrast, in the post-displacement, current insecurities relate to the quality of homes, land ownership and the reliability of potable water supplies.

At a process level, the research team reported that rapport-building, a critical element of the process, required more time and was not easily accomplished in the setting and within the time provided. Also, without exception, each of the researchers noted that translators required better briefing about the goals and objectives of the exercise and that their expectations needed to be adjusted accordingly. Related, the research teams noted that there were a range of vested interests among stakeholders (e.g. Organisation for Human Rights and Development – OHRD and a political party) that influenced the research and PRA process. Taking stock of these actors was seen as particularly important if genuine participation was to occur.

### **The Emergence of a Research Agenda: Day 4-5**

**Determining Criteria and Indicators:** One of the principal objectives of the participatory research project is to evolve locally-appropriate and common definitions and criteria<sup>1</sup> for armed insecurity from the affected community. The research questions start from the general and move to the specific with and ultimately seek to articulate (1) **peoples’ perceptions of armed violence and the use of small arms** and (2) **the impacts of armed violence on human security**

Participatory research would allow people themselves to define the criteria that they associate with human insecurity (within a the parameters that relate to fear) – and the manifestations of these criteria become indicators. Indicators must express five

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<sup>1</sup> Criteria spells out what your looking at, becomes an indicator when it is refined, becomes a “variable” when it is related to another factor.

qualities: quantity, quality, location, timing and target. A useful introductory research question might be: “what makes you feel afraid?”

The workshop sought to develop a common set of priorities in the four South Asian regions under study. Through a card sorting and rank-ordering session, it was decided that the four countries and proposed areas of investigation had a range of commonalities and critical overlapping security concerns. In Bangladesh, for example, it was noted that both urban and rural communities are affected by politically motivated firearm related violence. In India, particularly in IDP camps in Nalbari and Kokrajhar, political related and ethnic related violence, coupled with urban criminality, posed critical challenges. In Karachi, the researcher believed that ethnic, criminal and sectarian violence was being meted out by political parties. Finally, among border regions in North and North Eastern Sri Lanka, ethnic, political and criminal violence were all believed to represent critical threats to human security. It was agreed then, that the study might focus broadly on regions and communities suffering from political violence in both urban and rural sites.

The workshop yielded a rich array of insights into participatory approaches to measuring human insecurity and the threat and impacts of small arms. Though still provisional, a research agenda was developed on the final day of the workshop that would be tailored appropriately by the researchers and the community members who will take part in the study. The research objectives, information needs and a selection of methodologies are included in the table below (*see Figure F*).

Figure F. Research Framework for the Project

Research Objectives	Information Needs	Methodologies of PRA
Country status and background overview of violence attributed to small arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on overall status of the context of violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Conventional wisdom: Secondary data, police records, government reports and health indicators</i></li> </ul>
Peoples perceptions of armed violence (and the use of small arms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of small arms and who is using small arms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>SSI</i></li> <li><i>Listing and brainstorming</i></li> <li><i>Prioritising use of pair-wise ranking</i></li> <li><i>Matrix scoring</i></li> </ul>
Impacts of Armed violence on Human Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Degree of damage and ranking of impacts of small arms identified by the community</li> <li>Status of armed violence trends – increasing or decreasing</li> <li>Changes over time of livelihood patterns and coping strategies with respect to small arms availability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Trendlines</i></li> <li><i>Bar Charts</i></li> <li><i>Pie Charts</i></li> <li><i>Brainstorming/list livelihood sources</i></li> <li><i>Peoples diagram on income from various sources</i></li> <li><i>Expenditure patterns</i></li> <li><i>Expenditure Profile (pie-chart)</i></li> </ul>

### Closing Thoughts

The central tenets of PRA focus on changing behaviours of researchers and informed or conventional research techniques. It asks researchers to consider “who asks the questions and establishes the criteria” in an effort to reconsider biases and assumptions. It demands of researchers to always “use their best judgement”, encourages optimal ignorance and appropriate levels of imprecision. As a process-oriented approach, it requires researchers to “unlearn” previous approaches, while ensuring a



high degree of triangulation, cross-checking and critical self-awareness. Researchers become facilitators and listeners, and should seek to faithfully re-present the information generated by participants themselves. As community members know more about their own lives than researchers, PRA acts as a set of tools to allow people to illustrate their own realities and present and interpret their own data.

The application of PRA techniques to the study of security and small arms presents many challenges. Nevertheless, where usefully applied, it promises to highlight much of the subjective domain of fear and insecurity – allowing affected communities and households to translate their concerns and articulate locally-appropriate intervention. In engaging South Asian researchers, the project promises to build and disseminate skills and capacity in the region, as well as evolve profiles in an under-researched part of the world. The synthesis report collates the research undertaken in Karachi (Pakistan), Assam (NE India), Banshbari Slum, Dhaka & Simakhali Village, Narail, (Bangladesh) and northern Sri Lanka.



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## **RCSS PUBLICATIONS**

- ? *South Asian Security: Futures*  
*A Dialogue of Director's Regional Strategic Studies Institutes (March 2002)*
- ? *Security and Governance in South Asia* (September 2001)
- ? *Globalization and Non-Traditional Security in South Asia* (September 2001)
- ? *Security in the New Millennium* (India Research Press 2001);
- ? *The Simla Agreement 1972-Its Wasted Promise* (Manohar 2001);
- ? *Security Studies in South Asia: Change and Challenges* (Manohar 2000);
- *People to People Contact in South Asia* (Manohar 2000);
- ? *South Asia at Gun Point: Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation* (RCSS 2000);
- ? *CBMs in South Asia: Potential and Possibilities* (RCSS 2000);
- ? *Confidence Building Measures in South Asia* (RCSS 1999);
- ? *Ethnicity and Constitutional Reform in South Asia* (Manohar 1998);
- ? *Regional Economic Trends and South Asian Security* (Manohar 1997);
- ? *Diplomacy and Domestic Politics in South Asia* (Konark 1996);
- ? *Nuclear Non-proliferation in India and Pakistan: South Asian Perspectives*  
(Manohar 1996);
- ? *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia* (Konark 1996);

### **RCSS Newsletter**

A quarterly bulletin, it publishes a brief report of RCSS activities, presentations at its workshops on topics of contemporary interest and news and programmes of the RCSS and its alumnae.

### **RCSS Policy Studies**

23. Christianity and Political Conflict in India: The Case of Gujarat (June 2002)
22. Nature and Dynamics of Conflicts Over Privatization of Potable Water (June 2002)
21. Governance and Defence Spending: View from South Asia (August 2001)
20. Globalisation and the Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in South Asia: Towards Building a Partnership for Sustainable Development (July 2001)
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12. Defence Expenditure in South Asia: India and Pakistan (June 2000)
11. Defence Expenditure in South Asia: Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (April 2000)
10. Defence Expenditure in South Asia: An Overview (March 2000)

### **Fellowship in South Asian Alternatives (FISAA) Monograph**

- ? *Water, Power And People: A South Asian Manifesto on the Politics and Knowledge of Water*, (1997) a collaborative venture of the Fellowship in South Asian Alternatives.
- ? *The Nuclear Debate: Ironies and Immoralities*, (1998) A monograph of the Fellowship in South Asian Alternatives.

### **Others**

*Directory of Individuals and Institutions Engaged in South Asian Strategic Studies*

