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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to look into the effects of small arms and light weapons proliferation on women's security in Cameroon's Adamawa region. The study used a mixed-method approach and a descriptive research design. The total population of target population was 290,000 people. The sample size was 400 people. Because Ngaoundere is densely populated, simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used. A questionnaire and key informant interviews were used to collect data, which included both qualitative and quantitative information. The collected data was keyed and analyzed with the most recent version of SPSS. According to the findings, the population of Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon is diverse, with nationals primarily from the country's far north, but also from the country's North West and South West regions. Several expatriates, mostly humanitarian workers and refugees, live in the area of study. Aggression with SALW has increased in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon, over the last decade. The majority of victims of aggression caused by the use of SALW are women, making them more vulnerable to threats using small arms and light weapons. The study recommends that a national commission on small arms and light weapons be established. The study also recommends that more women be encouraged to participate in discussions about security and disarmament.

Keywords: *Small Arms, Light Weapons, Women Security, Adamawa region, Cameroon*

1.0 Introduction

The illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons rank among today's most pressing security threats. Tens of thousands of people are killed or wounded each year in conflicts that are fought primarily with these weapons and in crime-ridden areas outside of conflict zones. They are also the weapons of choice for many terrorists. Small Arms and Light weapons are a challenge affecting different aspects of peace discussions. The current number of firearms in the world is estimated to be over one billion small arms distributed globally, of which 857 million (about 85 per cent) are in civilian hands (Small Arms Survey, 2018). In conflict, SALWs are involved in the majority of deaths as well as human rights violations. While not unique to conflicts, the consequences of SALW proliferation include murder, intimidation, rape, torture, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, threats and humiliation, forced prostitution, and trafficking of women and girls (Jasmine Nario-Galace, 2017). Women are often portrayed as the primary victims of conflict. Although affected by conflict and SALW, they are often neglected during peace processes but women are also agents and active participants in the war. Yet they are frequently largely neglected once peace occurs. Women are a heterogeneous group of social actors who, most times are determined to take on certain roles in conflict situations.

Despite being disproportionately impacted by violence and conflict, women have been and continue to be under-represented in nearly every area of the United Nations small arms process. Though women are sometimes directly involved, such as in peace talks, they are almost always outnumbered by men. Since women are one of the demographics most severely affected by armed conflict, they must be included in all planning, implementation, and evaluation of processes related to small arms and light weapons (Vanessa Farr, 2010). Regardless of the context where it occurs, violence against women is exacerbated and facilitated by the presence of guns and other SALW. Current work on small arms has begun to look beyond simply "counting the weapons" and is, instead, increasingly focusing on the devastating human impact of their misuse. Norms and policies on preventing the proliferation and misuse of small arms, in the meantime, have also continued to evolve at local, national, regional and international levels. The link between SALW and violence against women is visible not only during times of war but also in post-conflict eras and societies experiencing negative peace. Even though Brazil is not at war, homicide rates are comparable to those in war-torn countries, and a woman is assaulted every 15 seconds. "Female victims who filed complaints at the Rio de Janeiro Special Police Station for Crimes Against Women (DEAMs) filled out a questionnaire about various forms of violence."

According to the findings, 86% of the 615 women who responded to the questionnaire knew their perpetrators, and 68% said they were threatened with firearms." Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2005) Even in less violent areas, guns pose a significant risk. If a gun is present in a domestic abuse situation, a woman is five times more likely to be killed by her partner. The significance of viewing women as stakeholders rather than victims or passive beneficiaries has been brought to the forefront over the years by historic events such as the World Conferences on Women (particularly that of Beijing in 1995). Since 2001, African countries have been making a real effort to develop suitable legal instruments to control small arms but this meeting of minds has not yet been followed by any impact on the ground. The issue of small arms is as important as life and death small arms have contributed to the political disintegration of many African countries. The effects of the proliferation of small arms are felt

by many Africans. In many African countries, there are not enough people to till arable lands, and generations waste their lives by engaging in pointless wars. Children are denied their childhood and are forced to become Adults before puberty.

Despite all these, the resilience of the African people is demonstrated by the number of activists and other leaders who risk their lives for peaceful change. Amoa, quoting from Small Arms Survey (2004), stated that it cannot be an overstatement to say that small arms in Africa have played a major role in every political conflict, from the South, East, and West. Africa. In Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony, a rebellious group which terrorized the country since 1987 (though it has since been removed from the list of designated active terrorist groups) has been responsible for widespread human rights violations including murder, recruitment of child soldiers, abductions and many more. Accordingly, Amoa writes that "conservative estimates indicated that there are about eight million small arms and light weapons in West Africa alone: of the 640 million small arms circulating in the world, it is estimated that 100 million are found in Africa (AU Peace and Security Agenda, 2005). Cameroon has experienced growing political and social instability in recent decades, impacted by multiple crises: the socio-political crisis affecting Cameroon's two English-speaking regions (North West and South West), the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North, the influx of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR), electoral violence and post-election disputes following the 2018 presidential election, the rise of hate speech in political discourse, the fact that the country's security challenges are intrinsically tied to the use of weapons, many of which are not legally owned.

Cameroon is not an arm-producing state (at least in theory), so identifying the sources and actors involved in the circulation of these arms becomes an issue. The main conflicts affecting communities in the Adamawa and East regions are related to the regular influx of refugees and sporadic incursions of armed groups from the Central African Republic, which have resulted in the significant forced displacement of trans-border villages between Cameroon and the CAR. The region is experiencing an increase in insecurity, armed banditry, and intense criminality as a result of the influx of refugees who later migrate to the Adamawa region, as well as being one of the main carriers of small arms and light weapons. The easy availability of small arms and light weapons is at the heart of these insecurities. When the number of refugees increased significantly, water points became hotspots for violence against refugee girls and women by members of host communities. Many cases of physical and sexual violence against women and girls looking for firewood in the forest around the villages have been reported (Nwati, 2021).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The problem at the basis of the present study is that of the effects of SALW on women's security in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon. In Africa, considerable quantities of small arms and light weapons are dumped, the real danger coming from their uncontrolled circulation. The proliferation of SALW has as consequences loss of lives, loss of property, sexual violence and so many more, it is therefore a matter which has to be addressed. As the manufacturing of these arms is prohibited by Cameroon law, it is, therefore, important to identify the different categories of actors with more or less divergent interests who intervene in this illegal movement. The confusion then sets in when some of these parties include importing and exporting states, non-state entities, rebel forces, militias and paramilitary groups. In this case, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between legal and illegal trade.

There have been a lot of discussions and debates on gender-based violence caused by small arms but little or no implementation of the resolutions towards the reduction of this

phenomenon. Women play a very prominent role in conflicts in general and are the most affected. There is a need for a conceptual rethink of how the analysis of these conflicts is approached as interventions so far have failed to bring sustainable solutions. At present, there has been a failure to conduct effective gendered conflict analysis. This means that a broader understanding of what is happening in the country is absent, as actions and recommendations are not addressing the full picture. Because women play an active role in conflict prevention and the different gendered impact of conflict situations, it was time to consult women and women-led civil society organizations as part of the Gender Conflict Analysis.

Given that most of the recommendations of the Major National Dialogue and other peace initiatives such as Cameroon's National Action Plan on the United Nations resolution 1325 are not effectively implemented, this enormously reduces the impact that they could have in feeding the peace processes, accountability mechanisms, transitional justice, and post-conflict transformation. It is therefore important to discuss how SALW threaten the security of women. It is in this light that the research will seek to address; the effects of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on women's security in the Adamawa region of Cameroon.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. This study was guided by the following research questions:
- ii. What are the origins and types of small arms and light weapons in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon?
- iii. What are the effects of small arms and light weapons on women security in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon?
- iv. What role do women play in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Adamawa region?
- v. What proposed recommendations could help mitigate the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Adamawa region?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study anchors itself on two theories namely, the Conflict Theory and the Feminist Peace and Conflict Theory (FCPT).

2.1.1 The Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, first developed by Karl Marx (1818-1883), is a theory which explains that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. According to conflict theory, those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. A basic premise of conflict theory is that individuals and groups within society will work to try to maximize their wealth and power (Nickerson, 2021). Conflict theory has sought to explain a wide range of social phenomena, including wars, revolutions, poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence. It ascribes most of the fundamental developments in human history, such as democracy and civil rights, to capitalistic attempts to control the masses (as opposed to a desire for social order). Central tenets of conflict theory are the concepts of social inequality, the division of resources, and the conflicts that exist among different socio-economic classes (Nickerson, 2021).

The theory was considered relevant to the current study because it explained the conflict part of the study which brings out the part of SALW. Most of the time, weapons are brought out as a result of conflictual situations. Karl Marx in the above theory tried to explain why it is in

human nature to be conflictual. It explains the variations of conflict in society, how it can affect peaceful coexistence and how two main parties are involved. Conflict theory believes that competition is a constant and, at times, an overwhelming factor in nearly every human relationship and interaction. Small Arms and Light Weapons are often used in a bid to control the available resources or impose ideologies on minorities and commit hideous crimes mostly with the intent of dominating. The relevance of SALW is an addition to the conflict theory as these are often used in a bid to control mostly resources be they material or natural.

2.1.2 Feminist Peace and Conflict Theory

The genealogy of feminist peace and conflict theory naturally comes as a hybrid phenomenon. Feminist peace and conflict theory (FPCT) is nurtured by a variety of disciplines and methodologies. The early twenty-first-century historic reference to pacifist movements and gender aspects claimed by feminists relate mainly to the two world wars. Yet feminists questioned earlier the gender dynamics of the French Revolution (Mary Wollstonecraft, 1792) and the exclusion of women from the acclaimed new status of citizenship. Pacifists such as Bertha von Suttner or Revolutionaries, like Rosa Luxemburg or Emma Goldman made explicit reference to the plight of women in war and the continuity of private and public tyranny; men's domination in the family and the public domain. The continuum of violence running from domestic violence to war is therefore an essential paradigm for FPCT. For the first time, the realities encountered by women in wars were brought to the surface, written about and taken into consideration. For the pacifist struggle, the visibility of those who suffered innocently was a moral mobilising factor against war. For patriotic suffragists, images of women in war enabled them to mobilize more capacities for just war or revolution. However, both movements argued the plight of the innocent, those suffering under the hands of the enemy or the war in general. Through the paradigmatic shift from the architects to the victims of war FPCT had a tremendous impact. Due to the thinking by scholars in the field of Feminist Peace and Conflict theory, progress was made in the field of women's rights as human rights. Mass rape in the war was formally acknowledged as a crime against humanity and war crimes (Yugoslavia, Rwanda).

The theory was considered relevant to the study because it explained the role played by women in conflict situations and peace processes. This is a question that has become of major importance to the international floor because the main victims in conflicts and post-conflict situations are women. But the part of the implication of women in these conflicts or the role they play has often been neglected. The Feminist Peace and Conflict Theory are therefore of relevance to the question of women's security as a whole and the role of women in particular. The present work will also be relevant to the theory as it will help affirm the role that women play in conflict situations and peace processes and the relationship they have with SALW.

2.2 Empirical Literatures

2.2.1 Origins and Types of Small Arms and Light Weapons

There are many ways in which SALW can end up being misused in environments where the state is unable to fully control the accessibility to and illegal possession of arms. In general, political, economic and social transformations within countries tend to increase the availability of arms. SALW, unlike heavy arms, circulate in both the military and civilian markets. While military markets involve legal transfers from the producers and certified states to the purchasing state, civilian markets are flooded with excess arms that might result from either military budget cuts or producers' surplus production. While it is not always possible to accurately pinpoint how SALW find their way into one country from another, and eventually into the hands of civilians, seven possible ways can be identified: Arms captured from enemies

during the fighting, soldiers defecting from armed groups, stolen or captured peacekeeping stocks (from UN troops), arms supplied by the armed forces, purchase through the open market, supply from government stockpiles of neighboring states and through inheritance from family and relatives or friends (Araba, 2007). The case of small arms collection programs in Kosovo demonstrates that even with a thorough review of local culture and historical factors, there can still present a challenge to disarmament. In Kosovo, gun ownership brings a sense of cultural pride. And so, the seizure of hunting rifles was met with strong resistance (UNDP, 2021).

Various domestic and regional dynamics contribute to the widespread proliferation of SALW in the Horn of Africa. These dynamics are shaped by the trade and trafficking of SALW in the region, which are conditioned by many structural factors.

- Political tension and environmental scarcity at the regional level give rise to the diffusion of arms, while longstanding migratory patterns facilitate their transfer across borders.
- Combinations of political manipulation, extreme poverty, deteriorating livelihoods, and environmental degradation contribute to people's willingness to take up arms.
- The presence of poorly paid and poorly-trained security forces further ensures a steady supply of weapons to civilians.
- The political tradition in the Horn of outsourcing armed conflict to non-state armed groups is another factor driving proliferation (HSBA, 2007).

Burundi has emerged from a 13-year conflict. One of the most serious consequences of the war was the spread of small arms and light weapons in rural and urban areas. The civilian population's possession of arms increased during the civil wars (1972 and 1993-4), with some significant differences between provinces; the capital and provinces bordering the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were particularly hard hit. 2 Most demobilized combatants keep their weapons; as of February 2006, only about 6,000 arms had been collected from the 35,000 people who had been demobilized (United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, 2007). Weapons moving in Cameroon include both locally sourced equipment and illegally sourced arms from other parts of the world. They could include repurposed weapons from previous conflicts. In the case of Cameroon, it is frequently claimed that many weapons circulating in the country, including those brought in by rebels from the Central African Republic, are a result of the Libyan conflict. Some of the weapons were also taken from existing national stockpiles. These are some examples;

Firstly, Shotguns were smuggled from Cameroon to the Central African Republic in 2014, some of which had been imported from Europe only two weeks earlier. Authorized transfers can be quickly diverted and reach conflict actors through the "Ant trade" (Small Arms Survey-AU report, quoting UNREC, 2016). Secondly, craft arms or artisan weapons are produced locally or in neighboring countries, particularly Nigeria. Further, converted firearms, for example, given, a policeman in Bertoua, east region, whose weapon was initially an anti-riot weapon for use with lead bullets, gave his weapon to his security guard, who in return gave it to the police commissioner's twelve-year-old son. The latter took the weapon to school but the police were called and the incident was addressed without any casualty. The weapon used in the incident can become lethal when used with real bullets. (Interview with Police Commissioner in Bertoua, east region, Cameroon, 2019). Also, the trafficking of firearms parts and components is easily concealed in vehicles or among other commodities. (Small arms survey-AU report, 2018).

2.2.2 Actors Moving Small Arms and Light Weapons

There are several categories of actors moving weapons across territories. Some of them include;

Firstly, Armed Groups. These include particularly armed groups in the North-West and South-West conflicts (secessionist fighters) and former rebels from the Central African Republic. In the East region, former Seleka and Anti-Balaka fighters who often cross Cameroon allegedly sell weapons. Sometimes, these people stay in Cameroon, and other times they return to the Central African Republic. (ENACT, 2019). Also, Small Scale Traffickers such as refugees (Adamawa and East Regions). The crisis in the Central African Republic that started in 2013 has particularly affected the East and Adamawa regions of Cameroon, as these regions have seen an unprecedented flux of refugees from CAR over the years. Cameroon currently hosts 291 000 registered refugees from CAR at the United Nations Agency for refugees. But there are more that are not identified as some residents from CAR who have sought refuge in Cameroon are not registered. These refugees both official and impromptu are often accused of carrying weapons into Cameroon. (ENACT, 2019).

Moreover, transnational organized crime involving poachers is becoming more prevalent in the East, particularly in Adamawa. Criminals have been identified as coming from Sudan, transiting through CAR, and operating in Cameroon's East, Adamawa, North, and Far North Regions. Furthermore, Fulani and Mbororo pastoralists in the East and Adamawa have been primarily victims of increased criminality involving arms in recent years. (ENACT interview with Aliou Bouba, a member of the Mbororo Social Development association in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, in 2019). Terrorists (Boko Haram in Lake Chad), border communities seeking to escape poverty (boat riders, travellers, and motor taxis from the Adamawa region), transporters such as truck drivers who cross borders regularly, and corrupt security and law enforcement officials (ENACT, 2019).

When dealing with gender issues, it is also important to remember that the relationship between women and weapons is far more complex. For example, in some cases women are also perpetrators of gun violence (in the case of female combatants); therefore, they should not be viewed as just passive victims of armed violence. Moreover, even when women have been excluded from military combat during the conflict, they may have been associated with other aspects such as smuggling weapons. Girls and women have been also associated with and play multiple roles in criminal gangs or fighting forces. Female combatants and gang members increasingly receive the same initiation and training in the use of weapons as their male counterparts. For all these reasons, when drawing women as both victims and perpetrators of deadly aggression, it is important to properly know what constitutes an actor and who is a victim of armed violence.

2.2.3 The Influence of Small Arms and Light Weapons on Women Security

Women and girls are clear victims of SALW violence. There is in particular gender-specific violence (domestic violence, rape and other sexual abuses) committed against women using SALW. The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons is recognized as an obstacle to development. In addition to facilitating criminal and armed violence, SALW is used to facilitate sexual and gender-based violence and to reinforce violent, gendered social norms. The UN Platform for Action (1995) described how girls and women are especially affected by armed conflict because of their unequal status in society and their sex. Existing research demonstrates that notions of masculinity are often linked to the possession of weapons (SIPRI, 2022). Among the specific effects experienced by women of all ages are displacement, loss of home and property, loss or involuntary disappearance of close relatives, poverty and family separation

and disintegration, victimization through acts of murder, terrorism, torture, involuntary disappearance, sexual slavery, rape, and sexual abuse. If one intends to destroy a culture, women are tactical targets of special significance because of their important roles within the family structure (Seifert, 1993). Compounding these gender-specific effects are the lifelong social, economic and psychologically traumatic consequences of armed conflict and foreign occupation and domination (UN, 1995).

In modern wars, civilians are killed at far higher rates than combatants; women and children are the majority of civilians killed in the process. As war disrupts social, economic and gender hierarchies, women also take on economic and political responsibilities as heads of households and communities and as leaders in peace and reconciliation projects. Global justice frames concern about women in multinational conflicts as refugees and as targets of violence that is punishable under international humanitarian laws and the laws of war. Although women in conflict and post-conflict situations often lack institutional resources to address their concerns, international treaties have brought some measure of global justice to them in elevating women's status (OECD, 2009). As a result of armed conflicts, systematic rape and other forms of sexual abuse of women and girls have been reported in many war zones around the world.

In Bosnia Herzegovina and Yemen, systematic rape forced marriages and other forms of sexual abuse are often used as a tool of war. Past studies have indicated that female adolescents are up to six times more likely than male adolescents to develop PTSD symptomatology (BICC, 2007). In some countries which have had an experience conflicts, such as Rwanda and DRC, there may be so few men that, women were called upon to assume the responsibilities of both mother and father, in addition to dealing with their deep wounds. Because armed conflict often requires women to take on expanded and sometimes new roles and responsibilities, they may experience greater equality with men. After fighting stops the resumption of normal life and traditional roles often curtails progress made (Human Rights Watch Africa, 1996). Cameroon is facing several security challenges which are a major threat to peace and affect in particular women's lives. The Boko Haram crisis and the violence in the South West and North West regions have had profound impacts on the people in the affected areas, especially women and girls. The conflicts worsened the living conditions of women, exposing them to food and water insecurity and causing the destruction of socio-economic infrastructure such as hospitals, health centers and schools (WILPF, 2018). Armed conflicts have also led to the increased circulation of weapons and the immediate impact of these armed conflicts is the massive displacement of women and children. Women are also victims of threats, rape, and assault committed under the threat of weapons.

2.2.4 Recommendations Regarding the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Over the years, the United Nations has significantly enhanced global efforts to combat the proliferation of SALW. In 2001, the adoption of the United Nations Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects (PoA), the subsequent adoption of the International Tracing Instrument, and the Firearms Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, has established an overall framework within which Member States and regional organizations have, both individually and collectively, enacted numerous legislative and administrative measures to combat the proliferation of these weapons. Of these, only the Firearms Protocol, which entered into force in 2005, is legally binding. In early 2011, CARICOM Heads of State and Government adopted the CARICOM Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons, a

politically binding agreement reinforcing our joint commitment to fully implement the PoA, and took all necessary measures to combat the proliferation of SALW.

The efforts of CARICOM Member States to tackle this problem in a coordinated manner are mirrored in other parts of the globe, particularly in Africa. Regional efforts, such as those being undertaken within CARICOM and in other parts of the globe from one tier of global action to combat the proliferation of SALW, and we count the United Nations as one of our main partners. The United Nations, and in particular the Program of Action Implementation Support System, has been instrumental in assisting Member States in identifying their priority implementation needs and in recognizing those in a position to help meet these needs (UN Chronicle, 2011). The devastating impact of the proliferation of these weapons on the lives and livelihoods of people all over the world, including in non-conflict countries, has been raised. The UN worked with many states to strengthen their legal and administrative frameworks to combat and prevent the illicit flow of these types of weapons across their borders. Member States have begun to incorporate efforts to combat the illicit flow of SALW into larger national development planning documents, recognizing the importance of such efforts.

Member States have begun to put in place the most stringent international standards for the storage and disposal of SALW (UN Chronicle, 2011). To effectively combat the illicit trade in and proliferation of SALW, these issues must be addressed holistically. Member States will need to build on this framework with the help of the UN to realize more tangible, quantifiable benefits. Member States must begin to demonstrate the political will to address seemingly taboo topics such as ammunition and cross-border trade. The UN and the international community of non-governmental organizations should continue to play an important role in this regard by ensuring that adequate research is conducted to assist Member States in holding factual, evidence-based discussions on these issues (UN Chronicle, 2011). There must also be a greater exchange of information and sharing of best practices at the state-to-state and region-to-region levels to enable individual Member States and regions to ensure that programs and policies that are developed are ahead of the curve, and to forestall the repetition of the failures and setbacks already experienced by others. The vital role played by the International Tracing Instrument in combating illicit trade and the proliferation of SALW cannot be overstated. While many Member States frequently reinforce their political commitment to implementing the provisions of the Instrument, the limited number of states reporting on its implementation is a problematic issue that should be addressed (UN Chronicle, 2011).

3.0 Research Design

The study used a mixed-method approach that included both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics were used in the study to identify characteristics, frequencies, and patterns to answer the what, when, where, and how of the study variables. The research was carried out in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon. Ngaoundere's population is estimated to be around 290,000 people (Cameroon open data portal, 2020). The study's sample size was 400 people. Furthermore, the study used a simple random sampling method and purposive sampling to obtain 410 sample sizes, and the study purposefully selected 10 experts in the field of defense and security. Therefore, the sample size for the study was 410 people. Because the inclusion and exclusion criteria were so important during the current study, the researcher specifies that the participants in the current study were all current residents of Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon. To collect data from study participants, a questionnaire with open and closed-ended questions was used. Because of its ease of collecting qualitative and quantitative data, the questionnaire was an appropriate research instrument for this study. In addition, because of the sensitive nature of the research topic, respondents were

given the option of filling out the information anonymously. To collect primary data, a semi-structured questionnaire was used in the study. A semi-structured questionnaire was appropriate for this study because it allowed for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Origins and Types of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The first objective of the study was to examine the origins and types of small arms and light weapons in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region.

The study revealed that 243(89%) of the population in the area of study had a broad understanding of the subject of small arms and light weapons. The study found out that most of the respondents 231(85%) have never been or were not currently owners of small arms and the participants who indicated to be owners of SALW were mostly law enforcement officers. Furthermore, the study informed the researcher that 154(57%) of the participants do not personally know gun owners or do not know the status of gun ownership around them. The study also found that most of the respondents have seen a gun or any other form of weapon before at least once. This is noticeable in the country because most law enforcement officers have belted handguns during their duty times so most of the population of Ngaoundere have encountered these at least once.

4.2 Effects of Small Arms and Light Weapons on Women Security

The second objective of the study was to determine the effects of small arms and light weapons on women security in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon.

The study found that most of the respondents 166(61.1%) indicated to know a woman who had been the victim of armed aggression. This revealed that most of the participants know at least one woman who has been the victim of armed aggression. The study also established that the majority 221(81.3%) of the participants believed that women are more vulnerable to armed aggression. In the same light, the majority 110(40.6%) of the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that the level of violence towards women has increased over the past year. Additionally, the study found that most 140(51.4%) of the respondents in the area of the study have little or no knowledge about campaigns of education against gendered-based violence in their area of residence. Also, the study revealed that most 234(86.1%) of the residents in the area of study have not been victims or have never experienced domestic armed violence however, there is still cause for alarm because still some people have either been victims or have experienced domestic armed violence.

4.3 Role Played by Women in the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The third objective of the study was to identify the role played by women in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Ngaoundere, Adamawa region, Cameroon.

The study revealed that the majority 140(51.4%) of the participants indicated that they were not sure (or did not know) of women's implication in the movement and trafficking of SALW. The results, therefore, implied that most of the residents of Ngaoundere have little or no knowledge of the role of women in the movement and trafficking of SALW. The study also showed that the majority 110(40.6%) of the participants indicated that they strongly agreed with the statement that Women contribute to the escalation of violence in the area of the study.

5.0 Conclusion

Firstly, the study concludes that most of the population of Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon are men. The population of Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon is diverse mostly residing by nationals from the far north region of Cameroon but also from other places like the North West and South West Regions of the country. The area of study is also resided by several expatriates who are mainly humanitarian workers and refugees (mainly from the Central African Republic but also from Nigeria and other neighbouring countries). The diversity of the population may be attributed to the fact that the area of study is geographically located at the centre of Cameroon and therefore is easily accessible to people seeking asylum from instability. Secondly, the study concludes that most people in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon have a broad knowledge of the subject of SALW but are not SALW owners. Most of the population either knows of people who are or has seen them at least once. It was concluded that most SALW owners in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon are generally part of one of the several law enforcement agencies in the country. Most law enforcement officers in the area are seen with belted guns which may explain why most of the population has seen the weapons in question.

In addition, the study concludes that the level of aggression with SALW in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon, has increased over the past decade. This could be explained by the fact that there has been a large influx of refugees from the instabilities of the Boko Haram threat in the Far North Region, the internal conflict in the North West and South West Regions of the country and the instability in the Central African Republic which have led to an increase in the population of the area of the study therefore increasing the level of armed insecurities. Also, the study concludes that most of the victims who suffer from aggression with the use of SALW are women and are therefore more vulnerable to threats using small arms and light weapons. The study also concludes that the level of aggression with the use of SALW towards women has increased greatly during the past decade and precisely in the past year. However, women being victims of armed aggressions do not exclude them from being perpetrators, in this light, the study concludes that women contribute to violence escalation in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon as well as the movement and trafficking of SALW. Finally, the study concludes that there are campaigns in Ngaoundere, Adamawa Region, Cameroon in the light of SALW and of women security but which are unfortunately not well known to the population in the area of study.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that United Nations Women-related Organs such as UNWOMEN broaden their perspective on women's security about SALW. Furthermore, the study suggests that Cameroon's government investigate the establishment of a national commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons. This study also recommends that the government encourage more women to participate in discussions about security and disarmament. Further, the effective implementation of international, regional, and national legislation concerning women's security and the fight against the illicit trafficking of SALW should be ensured. In addition, Cameroonian authorities should improve research and monitoring of SALW incidents to increase the availability of SALW information. Finally, the Cameroon government should address internal conflicts more effectively to reduce the demand for SALW by traffickers and smugglers.

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