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Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) Proliferation: A Threat to Peace and Security in Mangu Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria

Geoffrey Nanbal Shipurut[1], Amos Joyce Adi[2], Omolola Abiodun Adenugba[3]
Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria
geoffreynanbee@gmail.com; amosadijoyce@gmail.com

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Abstract

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in Mangu Local Government Area (LGA) has exacerbated violent conflict, undermined social cohesion, and posed significant challenges to peace and security due to weak governance, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms. This study aims to investigate the impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) proliferation on peace and security in Mangu Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive, cross-sectional survey research design. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected from the total population of 442,100 using the Tare Yamane formula. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 randomly selected participants across all the wards in Mangu LGA. Interviews were also conducted with six key informants to complement the data gathered from the questionnaires Responses from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative data were analysed while outlining the key point presented by the key informant. The study revealed that the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) is a major threat to peace in Mangu LGA, fueling violence, insecurity, and social fragmentation.

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Key drivers include socio-economic challenges and ineffective governance, necessitating urgent, comprehensive interventions to restore stability and trust. The study recommends strengthening border security, promoting community dialogue, addressing socio-economic challenges, improving governance, and launching disarmament programs to mitigate the impact of SALW proliferation in Mangu LGA.

Keywords: Arms, Proliferation, Threat, Peace, Security

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) has become a major threat to national security, peace and stability in Africa. Illicit SALWs in the hands of non-state actors are commonplace thereby, challenging the protection of lives and property. Although arms proliferation is a global issue, available data on SALWs show that out of the 640 million circulating globally, it is estimated that 100 million are found in Africa, about 30 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 8 million in West Africa, alone. The majority of these SALWs about 59% are in the hands of civilians, 38% are owned by government armed forces, 2.8 % by police and 0.2% by armed groups (Umaru, 2021). The widespread availability of SALW is a threat to human security because their presence encourages violent rather than peaceful ways of resolving problems, and negates confidence and security-building measures (International Crisis Group [IGC], 2019). The unregulated circulation of SALW to a wide range of unaccountable and untrained actors also contributes to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The impact of the proliferation of SALWs is felt across the world. It is pertinent to note that, of the 500,000 people killed every year across the world, an estimated 300,000 of them are a result of small arms (Umaru, 2021). The author further asserts that in Africa, an estimated 50 per cent of illicit weapons that proliferate are used in internal conflicts, armed robbery and drug trafficking. The availability of small arms outside the formal security structures has contributed greatly to creating a continuous cycle of violence and instability in which particularly women and children are brutalized (Dokubo, 2013). However, the impact of the proliferation is being felt across the length and breadth of Nigeria given the myriads of security challenges.

Although Nigeria's problem with SALWs is not new, its increasing availability in the last decade has helped stoke a wave of insurgencies, ethno-religious conflicts, cross-border banditry, kidnapping, terrorism, human trafficking and drugs, armed robbery and other violent crimes. Arms build-up has fueled violence in various parts of Nigeria especially communal clashes and ethno-religious conflicts. Between 1999 and April 2010, Nigeria recorded at least 187 ethnoreligious conflicts, leading to the death of several thousands of people (Osman, 2010). These weapons helped to prolong conflicts, induced huge internal population displacement, undermined social peace and devastated the economic livelihoods of individuals and communities. As a result of recurrent violent conflicts, Nigeria is faced with the herculean task of responding to a fluctuating but always sizeable number of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Nevertheless, in the North-Central part of Nigeria, the proliferation of SALWs has led to incessant clashes between herders and farmers. The states that are worst hit in this region are Benue, Plateau, part of Taraba, Nasarawa and Southern Kaduna. One has lost count of these clashes as they have become recurring decimals, given the fact that there is hardly any month without an ugly report of wanton destruction of lives, properties and livelihoods (Umaru, 2021).

It is important to note that the North-Central region is the food basket of the nation. Today, this is under a very serious threat as farmers have abandoned their communities to safe havens. Ethnic conflicts also abound in the North-Central region where ethnic militia are formed and armed by different ethnic groups to protect their socio-economic and political interests (IGC, 2019). All these conflicts are recurring due to the availability of illegal SALWs in the hands of the civilian population.

The illicit proliferation of arms has encouraged all manner of crimes ranging from the kidnapping of innocent civilians for ransom, sexual assault of women and girls, cattle rustling, armed robbery, banditry, ethno-religious conflicts and full-fletched insurgency. The reason for this is that SALWs are easily concealed and used by criminals to achieve their objectives. It is important to note that, it is not these SALWs that cause conflicts or criminalities, but the ease with which these arms are available leads to easy escalation or festering. Today, the security agencies are overwhelmed by the spate of criminality that abounds in different communities in Nigeria. In all these crimes, the presence of these arms is not contestable (Kuna & Ibrahim, 2015).

Even after a conflict has officially ended, SALW often remains in the conflict zone in the hands of ex-combatants, civilians and criminals, making it easy for fighting to restart. Even when further combat is avoided, small arms become tools of other forms of violence, such as criminal activity, ethnic and political rivalries, and interference with efforts to deliver food, medicine, and supplies to people in dire need of relief. Refugees are often afraid to return to their homes because of the large number of weapons that remain in the hands of ex-combatants who have not been demobilised or have become affiliated with local gangs, warlords, or militias (Krienert, 2013). While some people may feel that they and/or their families are made more secure by owning a weapon, particularly in situations where governments cannot protect their citizens, this arming of civilians can create a feeling of insecurity among other members of the community. More deaths, injuries and accidental wounding are likely during quarrels and disagreements if a weapon is available in households. Psychological consequences such as trauma may also result. Meanwhile, the proliferation of criminal, domestic and anti-state violence can lead governments to commit resources to security rather than development (Nanaghan, Csaszar, Dieng & Salem, 2021).

After a conflict, SALW may become an instrument for other forms of violence, such as crime and banditry and disruption of economic activities. In countries that receive development assistance or where emergency relief is required for people affected by violence or other disasters, SALW use can make it too unsafe for such help to be provided (Barash & Webel, 2003).

In addition to playing a role in the initiation of internal conflicts, small arms might have also had detrimental effects on ongoing conflicts and post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. The availability of small arms may prolong fighting, increase human and material loss, reduce the willingness of conflicting parties to find negotiated solutions to their disagreements, prevent international and non-governmental organizations from engaging in conflict prevention as well as management and resolution efforts, cause serious problems for the countries surrounding the conflict area, and even trigger interstate violence within regions.

Review of Literature

SALWs refer to the cheap, simple, portable, durable and widely available arms; held and operated by individuals or two to three persons, and in violent conflicts, armed violence and criminality. Small arms are used by one person, while light weapons are used by several

persons working together (Onuaha, 2011). Furthermore, Ngboawaji (2001) defined small arms as smaller infantry weapons, such as firearms that individual soldiers can carry. It is usually limited to revolvers, pistols, sub-machine guns, shotguns, carbines, assault rifles, rifles squad purpose machine guns and hand grenades. It also includes heavy machine guns, as well as smaller mortars, recoilless rifles and some rocket launchers depending on the context.

Recent studies emphasize that communal conflict significantly increases the demand for small arms, driven by a perceived need for self-defence among civilians. For instance, Ibeanu (2019) argues that communal conflicts, particularly in ethnically or religiously divided regions, create an atmosphere of insecurity, leading civilians and local militia groups to procure arms for protection. This "security dilemma" fosters an arms race within communities, as each group fears being left vulnerable should violence escalate. In parallel, Schultze-Kraft (2021) identifies that conflict over resources, especially in agrarian societies, intensifies demand for arms, as access to weaponry becomes associated with both defence and power. These analyses illustrate how communal conflict not only escalates violence but also perpetuates small-arms proliferation due to rising distrust and perceived threats.

Some experts have attributed the proliferation of SALWs to the porosity of Nigeria's borders which make it very easy to move arms into the country. Thus, a major characteristic of illicit SALWs is their movement through trafficking and smuggling across national and regional borders (Asare-Seth, Aklavon, Moussou & Ikelegbe, 2014). Therefore, the end of the Cold War and the deregulation of former state arms industries in Eastern and Central Europe led to an aggressive search for new markets in the developing world. The illicit trafficking of SALWs is a transnational and global activity that has been able to operate outside national and international regulatory institutions (Asare-Seth, et al., 2014).

It is noteworthy that most of the countries that share a common border with Nigeria, most especially in the northern part, are grappling with one security challenge or the other, and the availability of SALWs in these countries has made it very easy for criminals in Nigeria to acquire them which are used to cause mayhem in Nigerian communities. There is no gain in saying the fact that Chad, Niger and Cameroon are countries in arms with different rebel groups, fighting to advance their interests, as the Lake Chad region has become the fertile ground for Boko Haram (IGC, 2017).

Furthermore, other experts attributed the proliferation of SALWs to the unwholesome behaviour of some Nigerian security officials who sell or lease arms to individuals and groups for selfish purposes (Abiodun, Ifeoluwa, Oluwasolape & Chukwuyere, 2018). These arms are given out to youth groups who are being recruited to unleash terror in the event of group conflicts, or the arms are leased out to criminals to perpetrate all manner of criminal activities in society. This has been the bane of national security in Nigeria. Also, politicians are responsible for the proliferation of SALWs. In Nigeria, politics is considered a big industry by the political class Therefore, the political class stops at nothing in arming the youths to intimidate the opposition to secure electoral victory at all costs. What happens to these arms after elections is not their business as their security is guaranteed by the state. Civil society is left to pay dearly for the carnage that is unleashed by the youths who bear arms in the community. This truism is a national security problem in every part of Nigeria (Abiodun, et al., 2018).

However, the small arms problem is not connected only with the wider problem of violent political disputes within the state. Small arms are also the main tools of violence for criminals operating either on a national or transnational basis. The linkage between small arms and drug trafficking is a good example: drug traffickers use small arms to protect their business interests and often supply weapons to other criminal elements and non-state actors. In many cases, parties involved in internal conflicts take part in narcotics trafficking because it may be the only way for them to finance the purchases of small arms and other types of military hardware. Similarly, trafficking in other commodities and mineral resources, such as diamonds, is also used to sustain warfighting capabilities (Nnamdi, 2002).

However, the impact of the proliferation is being felt across the length and breadth of Nigeria given the myriads of security challenges. In the Northern part of Nigeria, the ungovernable spaces have been taken over by insurgents and bandits who daily inflict pain on the hapless civilians (Umaru, 2021). In the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, the Boko-Haram terrorist group has been fighting since 2009 to establish an Islamic state, has killed more than 37,000 people, displaced more than 2.5 million in the Lake Chad region, and rendered nearly 244,000 refugees since May 2011, in their campaign of terror (Global Terrorism Index [GTI], 2015). Hence, they are described as the deadliest terrorist group. Their operations have caused acute food shortages, thereby creating food insecurity in Nigeria as farmers are either being killed, displaced, or their livelihoods destroyed.

Infrastructural facilities on the other hand, as well as businesses have not been spared of the devastating impact of the Boko Haram insurgency (Susan, Chijioke & Uwakwe, 2020).

In the North-Western part of Nigeria, armed bandits have taken over the vast forests killing people in different communities of Kebbi, Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna and Niger state without any cause. In Sokoto state, for instance, bandits took over communities and even appointed Judges (Gobir, 2020). Millions of people in these states have been exposed to insecurity from the activities of bandits. Thus; the people have become hopeless as they are daily being killed in their numbers (Susan et al., 2020). Providing a historical background to banditry in the area, it was posited that Banditry began in 2011 and intensified between 2017 to 2018 to include cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, sexual violence and killings. The discovery of gold mines and the activities of illegal miners competing for control of gold reserves have served to further intensify the existence and activities of armed groups in the North-West, most especially in Zamfara state By March 2020, more than 21,000 people have been internally displaced. More than 35,000 refugees have crossed communal borders to Maradi in Niger Republic by the beginning of March 2020. These refugees are hosted in Madaou in the Tahaoua region, Dan Dadji, Makaou, Garin Kaka and Guidan Roumdji (Umaru, 2021).

Today, some highways in the North-West are abandoned by motorists for fear of kidnappers. Most people travelling from Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory to Kaduna prefer to use the train as the road has become a den of merciless kidnappers who use SALWs in their operations. Also, the bandits in this part of the country are so daring that they send advanced notice to communities about their impending attacks. More often than not, these criminals make good on their promise, as the security personnel can do little or nothing to secure the people, as they are not spared either. Therefore, the people are grappling with how to secure themselves from incessant attacks by these criminals who carry these heinous acts with impunity. The people are left to rise to the occasion to defend themselves as the Nigerian state has failed to protect lives and properties (Gobir, 2020).

Nevertheless, in the North-Central part of Nigeria, the proliferation of SALWs has led to incessant clashes between herders and farmers. The states that are worst hit in this region are Benue, Plateau, part of Taraba, Nasarawa and Southern Kaduna. One has lost count of these clashes as they have become recurring decimals, given the fact that there is hardly any month without an ugly report of wanton destruction of lives, properties and livelihoods

(Umaru, 2021). Ameh and Geoffrey (2024) were of the view that ethno-religious violence affects socio-economic activities in Jos Plateau State. Socio-economic activities such as trading and marketing activities in Jos often suffer as a result of ethno-religious violence. Violence based on religion or race made it harder to trade and market goods because prices went up quickly, shops and their valuables were destroyed, and there was less demand and supply of goods between and within states. Similarly, ethno-religious violence exacerbates poverty and hunger among traders and marketers, leads to the loss of lives and livelihoods, reduces their access to loans from commercial and microfinance banks due to forceful shutdowns, and forces them to flee their homes and shops. Thus, ethno-religious violence has left an untold adverse effect on the socio-economic activities of the people of Jos Plateau State (Ameh & Geoffrey, 2024).

Scholars have examined the ways small arms proliferation exacerbates and prolongs conflict, highlighting a cyclical relationship where conflict drives arms acquisition, which in turn fuels further violence. Olawale and Fawole (2018) argue that arms proliferation reinforces cycles of retaliation, as groups armed with weapons are more likely to escalate conflicts. This "escalatory spiral" transforms initial disputes into sustained conflicts, contributing to long-term insecurity within affected communities. In a related study, Rogers and Stevenson (2021) note that the presence of small arms shifts the nature of communal conflicts from intermittent clashes to organized, militarized engagements, complicating peace-building efforts. This insight suggests that small arms not only increase violence but also redefine communal conflicts, making them harder to resolve.

Thus, at the slightest provocation, people who have co-existed for a very long time would rise against one another leaving behind deaths and destructions. This is the case between Tiv and Jukun ethnic groups in Taraba state, as well as Fulani and Berom alongside Anaguta ethnic groups in Plateau state. Also, Nasarawa state has its fair share as the state has witnessed bloody ethnic conflicts between Ibira-koto and Bassa in recent times. All these conflicts are recurring due to the availability of illegal SALWs in the hands of the civilian population (Umaru, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Frustration-Aggression Theory

The Frustration-Aggression Theory, developed by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer & Sears (1939), posits that frustration a blockage of an individual's or group's goal-directed efforts,

inevitably leads to aggression. The aggression may be directed at the perceived source of frustration or displaced onto other targets if confrontation is not possible or feasible. In the context of Mangu LGA, frustration arising from socio-economic hardships, ethnic and communal tensions, and ineffective governance creates a fertile ground for aggression. The inability to resolve grievances or access justice can prompt individuals or groups to acquire small arms and light weapons as a means of expressing aggression, protecting themselves, or pursuing power. This proliferation exacerbates conflict and undermines peace and security by intensifying violence and perpetuating cycles of retribution.

A key strength of the Frustration-Aggression Theory is its ability to provide a psychological explanation for violence, linking structural inequalities and unmet needs to aggressive behaviours. However, its deterministic nature assuming that frustration always leads to aggression overlooks alternative responses such as resilience or nonviolent coping mechanisms. Furthermore, it does not fully account for the role of structural and systemic factors in escalating or suppressing aggression. The theory is highly relevant to understanding SALW proliferation in Mangu LGA as it highlights the psychological and situational triggers for aggression. By linking the frustrations caused by systemic failures and communal conflicts to the demand for SALWs, the theory offers insights into addressing the root causes of violence, such as improving governance, fostering dialogue, and reducing socio-economic disparities.

METHODS

The study used a descriptive, cross-sectional survey research design. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected from the total population of 442,100 using the Tare Yamane formula. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 randomly selected participants across all the wards in Mangu LGA. Interviews were also conducted with six key informants to complement the data gathered from the questionnaires Responses from the questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed while outlining the key point presented by the key informant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondents rating of the impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) proliferation on threat to peace and security in Mangu LGA

	Responses	
Rating	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Low	11	2.8
Average	98	25.7
High	275	71.5
Total	**384**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The data in the table above reveals that the majority of respondents, 71.5%, rated the impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) proliferation on the threat to peace and security in Mangu LGA as high. Meanwhile, 25.7% of respondents perceived the impact as average, and only 2.8% of the respondents rated it as low. These results indicate that the proliferation of SALWs is widely regarded as a significant threat to peace and security in the area, highlighting the need for urgent measures to address this pressing issue.

Table 2: Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) proliferation and a threat to peace and security in Mangu LGA

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	STD
The availability of SALWs increases the likelihood of communal violence in Mangu LGA.	171	172	19	22	3.28	.804
The proliferation of SALWs poses a significant threat to peace and security in Mangu LGA.	143	202	19	20	3.22	.764
Socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment contribute to the proliferation of SALWs in Mangu LGA.	167	175	22	20	3.27	.792
Government policies and enforcement strategies are insufficient to curb SALW proliferation in Mangu LGA.	165	168	20	31	3.22	.872
The availability of SALWs exacerbates tensions between ethnic and religious groups in Mangu LGA.	161	167	31	25	3.21	.848
Inadequate policing and weak security infrastructure encourage the spread of SALWs	163	165	22	34	3.19	.895

in Mangu LGA.

SALWs proliferation undermines community trust and cohesion in Mangu LGA.	183	137	36	28	3.24	.899
The presence of SALWs increases the fear of violence among residents in Mangu LGA.	164	157	24	39	3.16	.934
The proliferation of SALWs is linked to ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms in Mangu LGA.	135	186	28	35	3.10	.884
Community engagement and dialogue are essential for addressing SALW proliferation in Mangu LGA.	177	158	18	31	3.25	.877

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The table above shows how respondents rated the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) and their threat to peace and security in Mangu LGA. The ratings, based on a 5-point Likert scale, suggest that SALW proliferation significantly impacts communal harmony. All mean scores exceed the average threshold (2.5), highlighting the seriousness of the issue. The highest-rated concern was the availability of SALWs increasing the likelihood of communal violence (Mean = 3.28, STD = 0.804). This suggests a strong agreement among respondents regarding the role of SALWs in fueling violence. Socio-economic factors like poverty and unemployment were also highlighted as key drivers (Mean = 3.27, STD = 0.792). Similarly, community engagement and dialogue were identified as critical for addressing SALW proliferation (Mean = 3.25, STD = 0.877).

Other notable concerns include the undermining of community trust and cohesion (Mean = 3.24, STD = 0.899), insufficient government policies and enforcement strategies (Mean = 3.22, STD = 0.872), and the exacerbation of ethnic and religious tensions (Mean = 3.21, STD = 0.848). The presence of SALWs increasing fear of violence among residents (Mean = 3.16, STD = 0.934) and its link to ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms (Mean = 3.10, STD = 0.884) further highlight the multifaceted nature of the threat. The standard deviations for most statements indicate moderate variability in respondents' opinions, suggesting a mix of experiences and perceptions regarding the impact of SALWs on peace and security in Mangu LGA.

Findings from the key informant interview added flare to the impact of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) proliferation on the threat to peace and security in Mangu LGA. One of the interviewees expressed that:

> *The recent conflict between the Mangu people and Fulani herders has significantly contributed to the proliferation of SALWs in the area. Insecurity and mistrust between communities have prompted individuals to acquire weapons for self-defence. However, this has escalated the conflict, as more weapons in circulation mean higher chances of violence. Our efforts to control the spread are hindered by porous borders and a lack of resources. Without strict enforcement and intelligence-sharing, the problem will persist and continue to undermine peace* (KII/3/6/2024/*Police representative, Mangu).*

Another interviewee expressed that:

> *The proliferation of SALWs in Mangu LGA is a direct consequence of the unresolved grievances between our people and the Fulani herders. The government's inability to address these conflicts fairly has left communities feeling vulnerable, forcing them to arm themselves for protection. Unfortunately, this has deepened mistrust and made peaceful coexistence even harder. The solution lies in dialogue and disarming both sides through a transparent process that restores confidence in the security apparatus (KII/3/6/2024/Community Leader, Mangu).*

Another interviewee stated that:

> *We feel our community has been unfairly targeted in the narrative surrounding SALW proliferation. While some members of our community may carry weapons for protection due to the fear of attacks, the same can be said for the Mangu people. The issue is not just about weapons but also about land disputes, lack of justice, and biased responses from authorities. If these root causes are not addressed, the weapons will continue to flow (KII/3/6/2024/ Youth Leader, Mangu).*

Another interviewee expressed that:

> *SALWs proliferation in Mangu LGA is a symptom of deeper governance and social issues. The conflict between the Mangu people and Fulani herders exposed the weaknesses in conflict resolution mechanisms and the lack of trust in security agencies. Many young people see arms as a way to assert power because they feel excluded from economic opportunities. Our organization is working to create awareness about the dangers of SALWs and advocating for disarmament programs, but we need stronger government support (KII/3/6/2024/Religious Leader, Mangu).*

Another interviewee holds the position that:

> *The violence and proliferation of SALWs in Mangu LGA are deeply troubling from a moral perspective. Weapons only bring more destruction and pain. Both communities must come together*

under a framework of forgiveness and reconciliation. However, this cannot happen unless the government steps up to remove these weapons from circulation and provides assurances of security. As religious leaders, we are ready to mediate and preach peace, but we need the government to act decisively (KII/3/6/2024/Religious Leader, Mangu).

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) is a significant threat to peace and security in the Mangu Local Government Area (LGA). An overwhelming majority of respondents rated the impact of SALWs on peace and security as high, with a smaller proportion considering it moderate or low. Respondents highlighted various consequences of SALW proliferation, including increased communal violence, weakened social cohesion, and heightened fear of violence among residents. Key informants emphasized that unresolved grievances, mistrust, and ineffective government interventions have fueled the demand for weapons, thereby intensifying the conflict between the Mangu people and Fulani herders. This aligns with recent research that identifies the proliferation of SALWs as a major driver of instability in conflict-prone regions, where weak governance and socio-economic challenges exacerbate insecurity (Aning & Pokoo, 2021).

Qualitative findings from interviews further reveal the systemic nature of the issue. Community leaders, religious leaders, and youth representatives highlighted the role of poverty, unemployment, and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms in driving arms acquisition. Many community members acquire weapons for self-defence due to perceived neglect and mistrust in government security measures, creating a vicious cycle of violence and retaliation. Similar findings have been documented in studies linking arms proliferation to governance failures and inadequate security infrastructure in fragile states (Ero, 2020). Moreover, the moral and social implications of SALW proliferation were underscored by religious leaders, who called for reconciliation and dialogue to rebuild trust and promote peaceful coexistence.

Recommendations

i. The government should strengthen border security to curb the illicit flow of SALWs into the region. This can be achieved through increased surveillance,

intelligence-sharing among security agencies, and partnerships with neighbouring regions to tackle cross-border arms trafficking.

ii. Facilitate inclusive community dialogue and reconciliation initiatives involving all stakeholders, including ethnic groups, religious leaders, and local authorities. These efforts should aim to rebuild trust, resolve grievances, and foster peaceful coexistence between conflicting communities.

iii. Implement programs that target poverty alleviation, job creation, and youth empowerment. Providing alternative livelihoods can reduce the incentive for arms acquisition and participation in violence, particularly among vulnerable groups.

iv. Improve the capacity of local security agencies through better funding, training, and equipment. Transparent and impartial conflict resolution mechanisms should also be established to address disputes effectively and build public trust in government institutions.

v. Launch community-driven disarmament campaigns that prioritize voluntary surrender of weapons, coupled with reintegration programs for individuals who disarm. These programs should be supported by public awareness initiatives emphasizing the dangers of SALWs and the benefits of disarmament.

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