

Final Report

Evaluation of the Small Arms Survey

Prepared by



27 October 2013

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ATT	Arms Trade Treaty
AV	Armed Violence
CHF	Swiss Francs
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
FDFA	Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
GBAV	Global Burden of Armed Violence
GBP	Great Britain Pound
GD	Geneva Declaration
GIIDS	Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies
HI	Handicap International
HSBA	Human Security Baseline Assessment
HSD	Human Security Division
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PoA	Program of Action
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SAS	Small Arms Survey
UN	United Nations
UNODA	UN Office for Disarmament Affairs
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

The Small Arms Survey (SAS), which resides within the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (GIIDS), was founded in 1999. SAS is a strategic partner of the Human Security Division (HSD) in the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). HSD supports SAS with core operational funding and commissioned this evaluation.

The purpose of the evaluation is to identify ways to deepen and increase HSD's strategic partnership with the SAS and examine how SAS could be improved in the future. The scope of the evaluation includes all activities, programs, initiatives and outputs by the SAS over the course of the most recent Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the 2010 - 2013 period.

The Evaluation

Two evaluators from International Solutions Group (ISG) conducted the evaluation. The evaluation was based on standard methodology, which involved key informant interviews (KIIs), an online survey of SAS website users, and a review of documentation. The analytical framework for the evaluation was based on the OECD/DAC criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability.

Findings

Relevance

The activities and outputs of SAS have been relevant and produced concrete benefits during the current MoU. The work of the organization has continued to add value and provide a needs-based service for a growing roster of clients. However, looking to the future, SAS will need to refine and design the focus of its activities and outputs to better anticipate and satisfy the needs of an increasingly sophisticated market.

Effectiveness

SAS has remained an effective organization during the current MoU. They have delivered expected outputs without a major failure and have maintained their status and brand reputation as an independent research body. Donors and partners have expressed high satisfaction with the outputs of SAS. Also, stakeholders at the international level use the work of SAS for informing policy and program design.

SAS currently lacks policy and practice in the area of institutionalization and operations, especially related to the mitigation of risk. What was a reasonable level of risk exposure prior to the current MoU has become a necessary management issue as SAS looks to the future. SAS has also shown signs of weakness in product quality and execution of duties as its programming has stretched beyond traditional research activities.

The work of SAS, while well regarded by its traditional international policy-level audience, has the potential for a much greater reach, in terms of depth at the local level, and breath in regards to awareness globally.

Efficiency

While interviewees indicated they were consistently impressed with the output of SAS, the organization also has a well-known reputation for overstressing its staff. While every organization has times when staff need to go above and beyond to begin a new project, or get a deliverable produced, this should not be a normal operating expectation.

SAS continues to run an efficient shop where resources are allocated to programming first, with other considerations (e.g. overhead, benefits, etc.) a distant second. While this is commendable, and expected during a startup phase of an organization, SAS is ready to mature as an organization in order to properly manage its operations and growth, attract and retain the best talent, institutionalize its operations and establish continuity to its programming.

Impact

The work of SAS has taken significant strides in achieving the objectives set out in its MoU with HSD. Future success in achieving these objectives requires refinement of the objectives themselves and, as a best practice, connecting them to expected impacts, a theory of change, and a system to monitor and measure success of the same. To date, SAS has not measured or recorded the impact of its work. Nonetheless, a variety of positive impacts have been realized that directly affect the conversation concerning SALW/AV.

Sustainability

The work of SAS has significantly contributed to a body of evidence related to SALW and armed violence issues. This evidence base will be used as a base for policy and programming for the foreseeable future. In this same context, as the marketplace for this information has matured, the nature of SAS's outputs is shifting more towards short-term responses to donor requests. Such a shift may be seen as a limiting factor to the future sustainability of the organization's work.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions above, the evaluation team makes the following recommendations for the future growth and success of SAS:

Relevance

- Revise outputs to more “immediate” information products such as working papers, research notes and briefings; also, deliver these via multiple channels as a part of a comprehensive communications strategy.
- Recognize the growing sophistication of the SALW/AV market, tailor products and services to the same.
- Rather than continually broadening its set of publications, SAS should consider a more focused smaller portfolio that adds the most value to its target consumers.
- Consider research and organizational strategies that ensure SAS continues to lead the conversation on SALW/AV. Seek to reverse the trend of activities and outputs becoming more and more donor driven via mandated projects.
- Improve relevance through supporting donors and practitioners with activities and outputs that are increasingly relevant to local actors and context.

Effectiveness

- Consider issues of risk (e.g. organizational, structural, brand, etc.) as part of a focus on institutionalizing systems, policies and procedures.
- Reconsider quality control processes when work is outsourced or delegated to junior staff.
- Revisit expectations from donors, especially for non-traditional research-related work like the Help Desk, to ensure SAS is meeting its commitments.
- Seek to provide innovative methods for distribution of findings as a part of a comprehensive communications strategy.

Efficiency

- Consider an organizational restructuring to add a middle management layer and acquire other needed expertise (e.g. fundraising, project management).
- Grow the organization and divide project responsibilities to remove the label of “overworked” from the SAS brand and improve timeliness of response.
- Reconsider the relationship with GIIDS to either leverage it for added value or remove it to gain true autonomy.

Impact

- Revisit the expected objectives of the MoU with HSD and include the development of a vision, mission, theory of change and strategic plan that can be monitored and measured for success.

Sustainability

- Leverage a full-time fundraising position in SAS to broaden, deepen and grow SAS’s available funding.
- Consider alternative forms of funding, including charging a fee for publications.
- Consider how SAS currently contracts its services on both short-and long-term requests to maximize sustainability.

The Evaluation

The Small Arms Survey (SAS), which resides within the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (GIIDS), was founded in 1999. It is a major, and high profile, contributor to international efforts to constrain the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

SAS is a strategic partner of the Human Security Division (HSD) in the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU, signed 2010), HSD supports SAS with core operational funding. This contribution provides SAS with a basis that covers institutional aspects such as rents, salaries and supplies, upon which it can perform its research and other programming. SAS has been evaluated three times, in 2003, 2004, and 2009.

The MoU of 2010 required an independent evaluation of the SAS in 2013. In light of recent strategic discussion and also based on the fact that the HSD has never itself conducted an evaluation of the SAS before, it was decided to take this opportunity to commission an evaluation of the SAS by the HSD.

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is twofold:

1. The HSD seeks opportunities and ways to deepen and increase its strategic partnership with the SAS and thus looks for an independent assessment of what has been achieved hitherto, and could be improved in the future; and
2. As SAS continues to grow, the HSD is interested in finding ways to support this growth.

Scope

The scope of the evaluation includes all activities, programs, initiatives and outputs by the SAS program during the current MoU period of 2010 - 2013. The evaluation takes into account the historical evolution of SAS programming prior to 2010.

Objectives

The evaluation assessed of the current state of the SAS, its impact, how it is perceived by its partners and stakeholders and insights into the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of its resources.

Organization of the Evaluation

Evaluation Team

The evaluation was conducted by International Solutions Group and included the following individuals:

- Mr. Stephen Ladek, Principal of International Solutions Group
- Dr. Rebecca Roberts, Small Arms and Armed Violence Specialist

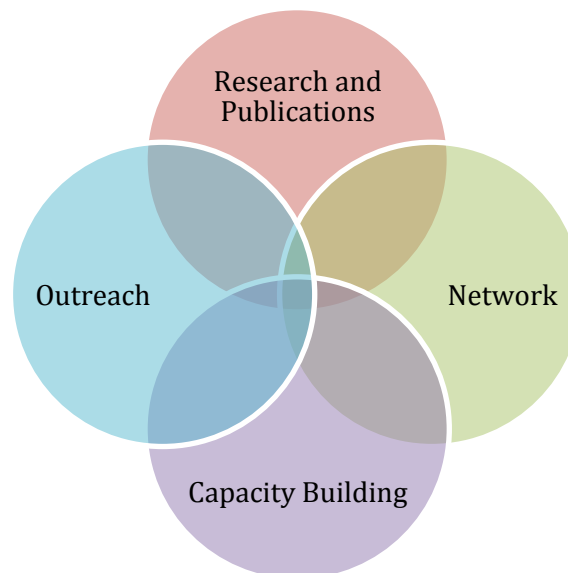
Methodology

As the basis for data collection, analysis of findings and reporting of conclusions/recommendations, ISG built its methodology around the strategy of SAS, the analytical frame of the OECD/DAC criteria and the expected objectives of the MoU.

The SAS Strategy

According to the MoU with HSD, the SAS has maintained an essentially constant strategy to fulfill its stated goals. This strategy includes the following four elements:

Figure 1 - The SAS Strategy



Research and Publications

- Further advance the state of information and research, and to publicize the best available data and analysis of problems associated with the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons by publishing the Small Arms Survey;
- Undertake and participate in a variety of practical and policy-relevant research and data-collection projects;

Network

- Serve as the Secretariat for the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development;
- Build and consolidate an international network of collaborating institutions and researchers;

Capacity Building

- Train and build the capacity of researchers, especially in the developing world;

Outreach

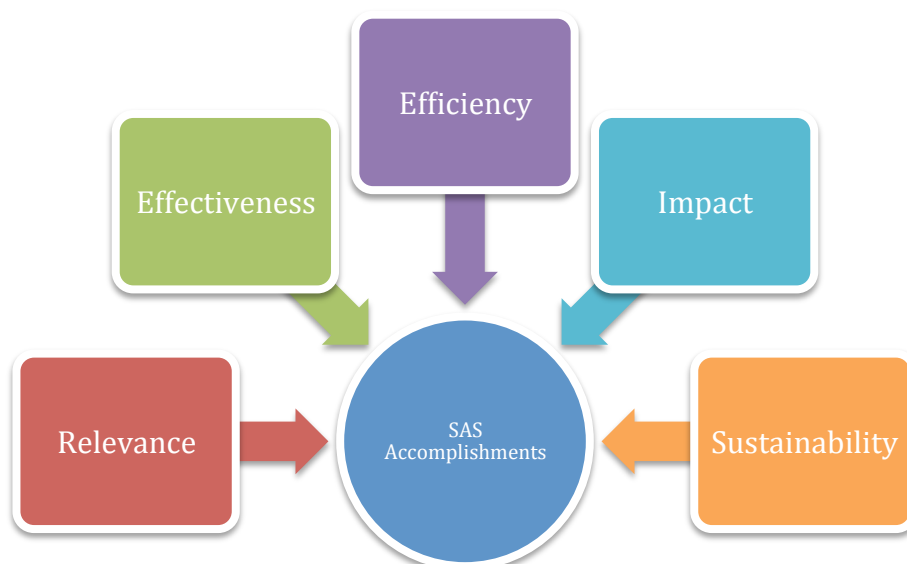
- Work with governments on issues of concern, including their overall policy goals;
- Support for government as an important actor in the area of small arms and light weapons policy; and
- Support armed violence prevention and reduction.

In this context, this evaluation has analyzed the SAS's performance for the MoU period in the light of this strategic frame.

Analytical Frameworks

As its main analytical frameworks, the evaluation will use standard OECD/DAC criteria.¹

Figure 2 - Summative Evaluation Framework



- **Relevance:** The extent to which SAS is suited to the priorities and policies of its target audience, stakeholders and donors.
- **Effectiveness:** A measure of the extent to which SAS's activities attain their objectives.
- **Efficiency:** A measurement of the outputs of the SAS—qualitative and quantitative—in relation to the inputs.
- **Impact:** The positive and negative changes produced by the SAS, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
- **Sustainability:** A measurement of whether the benefits of the SAS are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.

¹ See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

SAS's Expected Outcomes

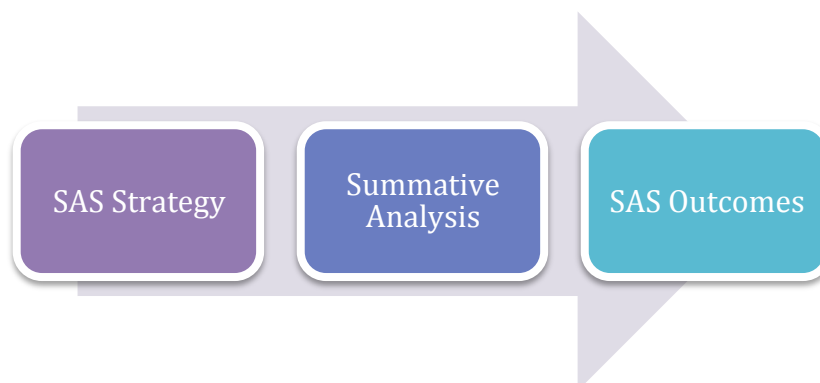
The 2010-2013 MoU re-articulated the long-standing expected outcomes of the SAS's work. These are:

1. Be a major and high-profile contributor to international efforts to constrain the proliferation of small arms and light weapons;
2. Be the leading international source of independent information and analysis on small arms and light weapons issues;
3. Be a crucial monitor of international and national, governmental and non-governmental, policy initiatives; and
4. Be an independent transparency mechanism, promoting greater national and international openness, and contributing to multilateral efforts to deal effectively with the causes and consequences of small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse.

The evaluation examined these outcomes through the lenses of the analytical framework above.

In brief, the evaluation used the following logic in its specific areas of enquiry and draw conclusions. The SAS has implemented essentially the same strategy for success since its inception; the analytical framework will be used to gauge the extent to which the four expected outcomes have been achieved by the SAS.

Figure 3 - Flow of the evaluation's analysis



Key Questions

The following key questions were included in the TOR for this evaluation. The evaluation team has disaggregated them across the proposed analytical framework.

Relevance:

1. What is the relevance of SAS's projects?
2. What is the concrete benefit of its work?
3. Is the SAS an added value that fills a void and does it provide needs-based services?

Effectiveness:

1. How were foreseen risks addressed?
2. What were the fundamental factors for the successes and failures of SAS's projects?

3. To what extent are the intended beneficiaries (governments, relevant international and regional organizations and agencies, Civil Society Organizations) satisfied with the results provided by the SAS?
4. How and to what extent have materials produced by SAS projects (research, guidelines, manuals, web pages and other outputs) been disseminated and used by relevant actors?

Efficiency:

1. What is the balance between input and output?
2. How efficiently have resources been allocated?
3. Where was a lack of efficiency?
4. How did this lack of efficiency hinder SAS in succeeding with projects?

Impact:

1. To what extent have the goals and the objectives set in the different agreements and MoUs been reached and accomplished?
2. What are the positive and possibly negative impacts of SAS's work?

Sustainability:

1. Are projects designed in a manner that allows for long-term, sustainable impact, or do they aim at short-term changes?

Data Collection

As requested in the TOR for this assignment the evaluation collected data using the following tools:

Evaluation Tools

1. *Document review:* A review of key documents relevant to the MoU period, both internal and external.
2. *Key Informant Interviews:* Semi structured interviews, based on the Key Questions, with 38 individuals across a broad cross section of stakeholders.
3. *Survey:* An online survey of users of SAS material, delivered via the SAS website that received 125 responses during the evaluation period.
4. *Online Asset Review:* A review of the usage of SAS online assets.

Findings

Relevance

Relevance refers to *the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor.*

The evaluation considered the following questions:

1

What is the relevance of SAS's projects?

2

What is the concrete benefit of its work?

3

Is the SAS an added value that fills a void and does it provide a needs-based services?

Overall Relevance

The overall relevance of the work of SAS can be analyzed across three groups:

1. **Donors** – those who pay for the activities performed by SAS;
2. **Practitioners** – those who use outputs of SAS for policy, research, media, advocacy, and other secondary activities; and
3. **Peripheral Stakeholders** – those who are affected by issues related to SALW/AV.

Donors. A key indicator of relevance is the extent to which donors are willing to pay for work performed by SAS. In this regard, SAS's portfolio of outputs is seen as highly relevant. Donor contributions have grown from approximately 1.5 million CHF to 5.6 million CHF from 2000–2012. Donor contributions also indicate that SAS is seen as an organization that can deliver on specific output requests; the percentage of “mandated” or project-specific funding has increased from 8% in 2000 to 37% in 2010. This growth in mandated project funding also indicates that donors are shifting their interests from more general information related to SALW, to specific geographic or topical foci.

Interviews with representatives from donors who contribute to the work of SAS were positive. In all cases, the work of SAS was seen as relevant and well regarded. In line with the shift in funding allocations noted above, interviewees from donor agencies spoke about SAS's contribution to their specific interests or programs and not about the more general topic of SALW and armed violence. This indicates increased donor sophistication and underlines the shift towards mandated funds.

The largest donor, by far, remains the Swiss Government, accounting for 44% of total funding for SAS in 2012. While the overall percentage of Swiss support has decreased since 2000 (from 61%), the actual amount of funding has increased from 910K CHF to 2.5 million CHF. Our interviews with staff from HSD indicated that the Swiss government continues to see the work of SAS as highly relevant and a positive contribution to the goals of HSD and FDFA more generally. For HSD, the future is not whether or not SAS should continue to grow but rather what is the best way for this to be realized.

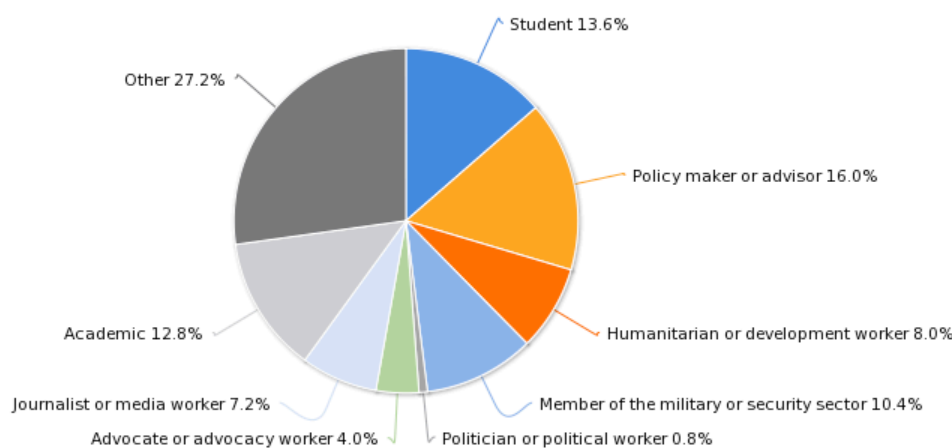
Practitioners. As with donors, our interviews with practitioners in the SALW/AV space were positive. The work of SAS is seen as relevant, of high quality and accessible. In the case of international organizations, the work of SAS regularly informs policymaking—indeed it sometimes is the foundation of the same. In several cases, interviewees noted that the work of SAS was their first point of reference when researching, reporting or discussing issues related to SALW/AV. This extended to project design and implementation related to the same. Parallel to the shift seen in donor focus, practitioners also related a shift in information needs—from general SALW/AV information, to more specific geographic or topical foci.

The information produced by SAS is sought out and regularly used by a variety of stakeholders. During the window used for the online survey (August 8–22, 2013), 3,186 unique visitors visited the SAS website. This is a substantial number of visitors over a two week period. SAS outputs are also regularly used by the media, SAS recorded 209, 296 and 254 mentions from primary sources in 2010, 11, and 12, respectively².

The online survey confirmed the use of SAS’s published use by a wide variety of actors. Surprisingly, the largest percentage of respondents indicated “other” for their professional focus. The second largest group of respondents was “Policy maker or advisor” (16%) with “Student” coming in a close third (13.6%).

Figure 4 – Professional foci of survey respondents

1. Which of the following best describes you: I am a...



Practitioners also underscored the need for the activities and outputs of SAS to be refined going forward to ensure that SAS remains relevant. With regard to research and reports, it was noted that political interest in general SALW/AV information is waning and that there is a growing interest in the broader topic of armed violence. There were also requests for providing deployable expertise (i.e. experts that can work in the field) and a move toward practical implementation (i.e. SAS implementing programs related to SALW/AV reduction).

² The ultimate reach of each media mention is exponential through aggregators, newswire services, etc. SAS only records the “primary” mention of an output.

Peripheral Stakeholders. The evaluation did not interview individuals who are directly affected by issues related to SALW/AV³. However, several interviewees specifically mentioned local actors as a potential target for SAS work in the future. Today, the outputs of SAS are highly relevant to the international community of policymakers, academics, and activists. But the relevance ‘on the ground’ is limited. At best, the work of SAS is acknowledged by local government actors, as indicated by pushback on reports published by SAS. In most cases, however, knowledge and understanding at the individual level has not been achieved. As one example, in Sudan and South Sudan—the location of SAS’s largest and longest running project—interviewees related that SAS’s work is generally inaccessible to local actors because of its nature (i.e. academic language, long written format), poor internet connection, and difficulties accessing local government actors. Thus, while SAS’s work has been relevant to donors and practitioners, the local population has not adopted the work.

Concrete Benefits

The work of SAS has remained relevant throughout the current MoU, and the organization’s outputs have produced a number of concrete benefits. Responses from interviewees focused on two areas: international policy and the use of the material in implementing organizations.

International Policy. The work of SAS has directly influenced policymaking at the international level. This was evidenced the responses from interviewees regarding SAS’s contribution to, among others, the United Nations Program of Action (POA) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). In both of these cases, the research of SAS has undergirded the formation of policy and the expertise of SAS staff has been regularly been called upon for advice and consultation. The following examples are illustrative:

- In the 1990s, the United Nations (UN) used terminology stating that 95% of victims of small arms were civilians. Work by SAS has proven this figure is not true and the UN now uses figures developed by SAS in their reports and policies.
- SAS’s research has been critical in understanding how munitions get into conflict areas.

Another example of concrete benefit is the housing of the Geneva Declaration (GD) within SAS. This arrangement has not only contributed to policy choices at the international level, it has also provided the GD with a critical support structure for its evidence base regarding the global burden of armed violence.

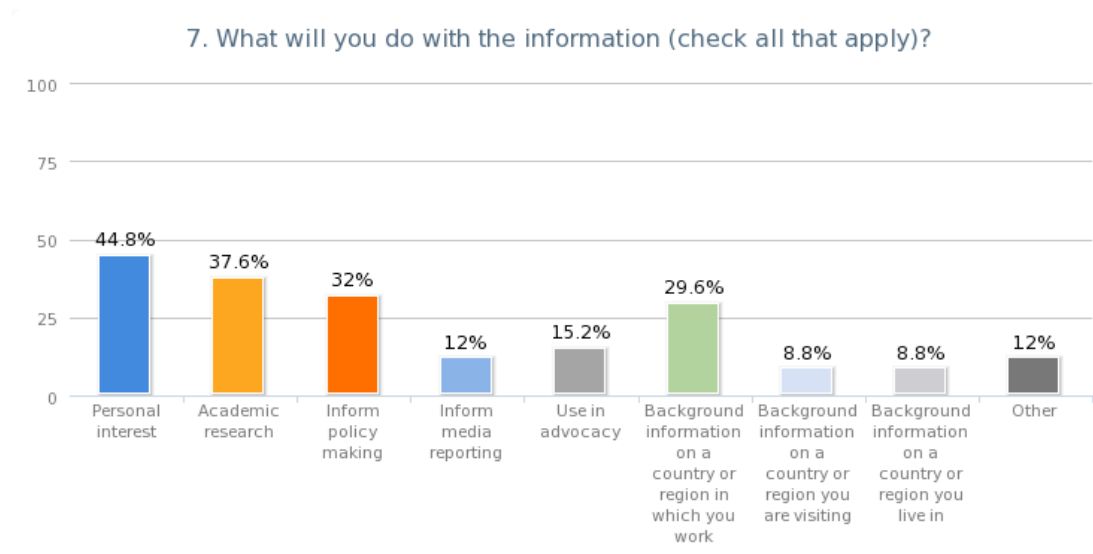
Implementing Organizations. Our interviews with representatives from organizations who implement programs related to SALW/AV reduction indicated that the activities and outputs of SAS are directly used in the design and justification of past, current and future programming. Less specifically, interviewees indicated that the work of SAS continues to be the benchmark for policy, programming and outreach work related to SALW/AV.

³ Because of the nature of SALW/AV, the evaluators acknowledge that essentially everyone on the planet are affected. However, the work of SAS is highly concentrated in the developing world and the evaluators have focused there analysis on these locations.

Needs and Added Value

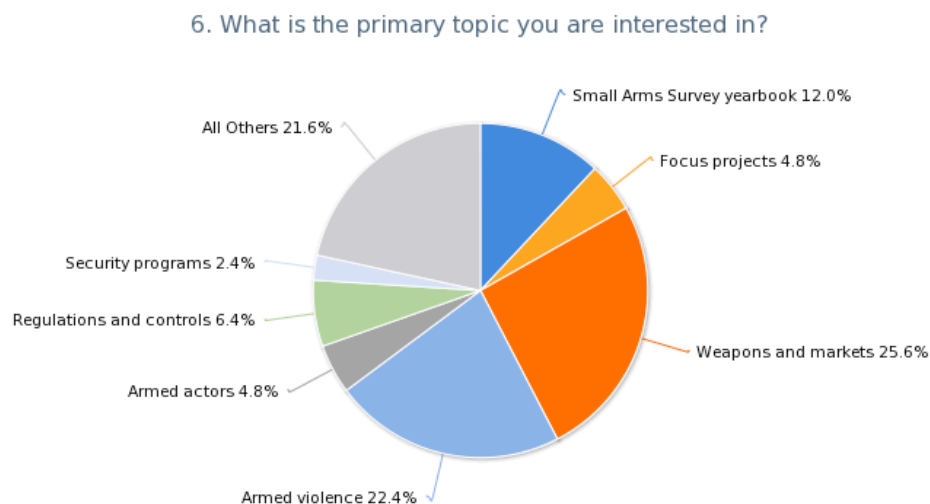
As discussed above, the continually increasing contribution of donor governments—especially with regards to projects with specific mandates—indicates that SAS provides a needs-based service. The marketplace for information and advice regarding SALW/AV has clearly sought out SAS for its expertise. As shown through the online survey, almost half of respondents (44.8%) expect to use SAS information, among other things, for their own personal interest. Academic research was the second most popular use (37.6%) and informing policy the third (32%).

Figure 5 – Use of SAS Information



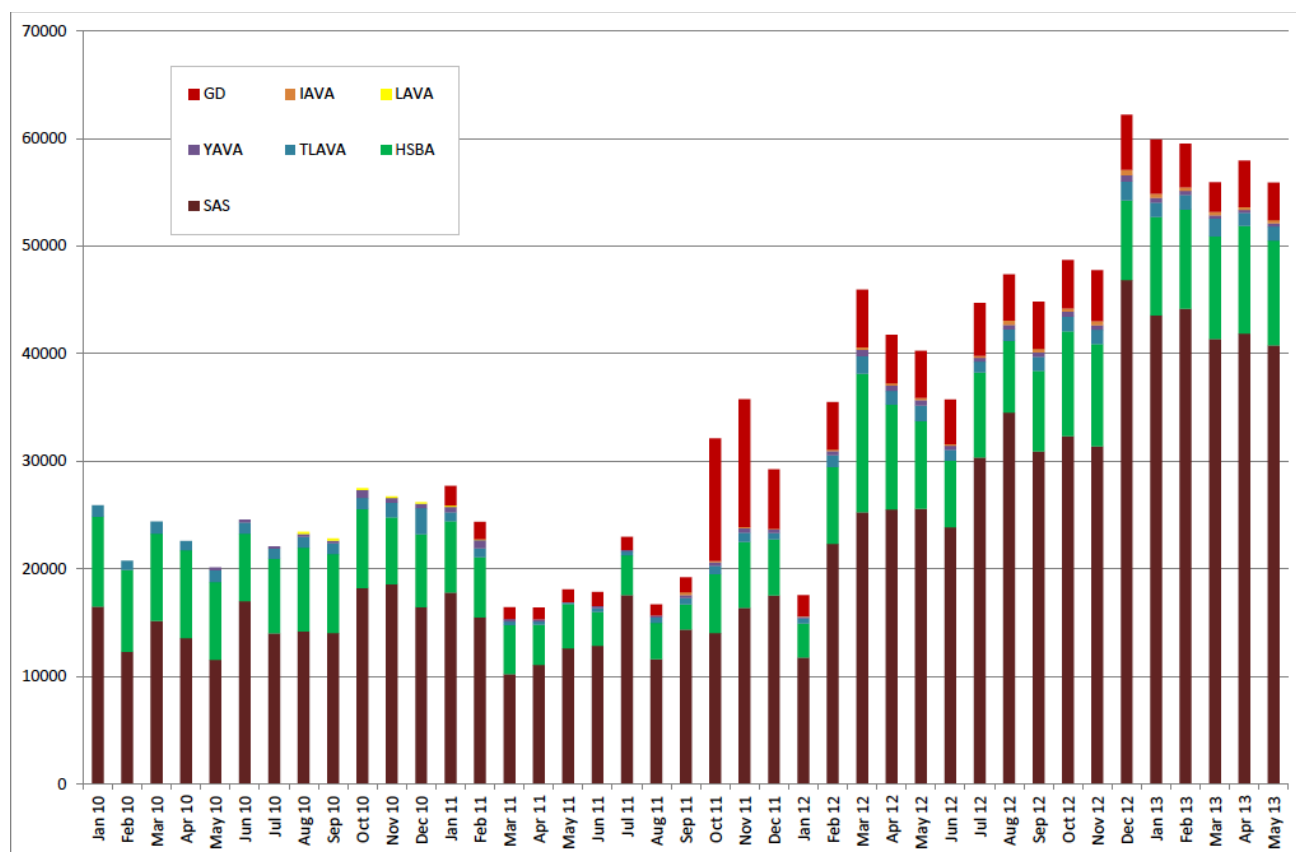
The steady increase in mandated projects indicates that the marketplace is becoming more sophisticated and requiring information related to specific geographies, topics and other foci. As indicated by interviewees, SAS enjoys a unique place within the conversations regarding SALW/AV, but that the context is changing and other organizations may be seeking to enter this market. This is supported by the online survey where roughly half of respondents indicated primary interest in either Weapons and Markets or Armed Violence (48%) but 52% were interested in topics of a more granular nature.

Figure 6 – Primary topics of interest



While SAS donors have increasingly called for more targeted and focused activities and outputs, information downloaded from the SAS website indicates that a large majority of users focus their attention on SAS's flagship product: the Yearbook. Even more importantly, while total downloads have increased since 2010, the Yearbooks proportion of these downloads has also increased.

Figure 7 - Downloads from SAS website by publication



The activities and outputs of SAS have also added value in a number of ways beyond the contribution of publications. Through its research, SAS has connected the dots between SALW/AV and broader issues such as gender. SAS staff is also regularly requested at meetings, site visits, trainings and other activities as advisers and contributors because of their specific expertise. Further, through its work as a help desk for the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), both as contributor and coordinator, the reach and influence of SAS is multiplied across a broad selection of programs and initiatives.

Conclusions

The activities and outputs of SAS have been relevant and produced concrete benefits during the current MoU. The work of the organization has continued to add value and provide a needs-based service for a growing roster of clients. However, looking to the future SAS will need to refine and design the focus of its activities and outputs to better anticipate and satisfy the needs of an increasingly sophisticated market.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to *a measure of the extent to which an activity attains its objectives*.

The evaluation considered the following questions:

- 1 How were foreseen risks addressed?
- 2 What were the fundamental factors for the successes and failures of SAS's projects?
- 3 To what extent are the intended beneficiaries (governments, relevant international and regional organizations and agencies, civil society organizations) satisfied with the results provided by the SAS?
- 4 How and to what extent have materials produced by SAS projects (research, guidelines, manuals, web pages and other outputs) been disseminated and used by relevant actors?

Risk Management

SAS does not currently implement programs related to SALW/AV of a nature akin to traditional development or humanitarian aid that would specifically attempt to reduce the proliferation and negative effects of SALW/AV. However, SAS does perform research across the globe and, in many cases, in contexts that present significant potential risks. SAS is also exposed to risks common to any organization of its size and nature.

Responses from interviewees indicate that SAS has focused its risk management on reputational issues associated with the transparency and independence of research. For example, the organization has taken care to avoid “shaming” countries as a part of its outputs and some research topics are specifically avoided, such as the relationship of homicides to the number of small arms, because they are too controversial.

Responses from interviewees indicate that SAS has not emphasized risk management on an operational level—as a part of its normal program or organizational design and implementation. Generally, SAS relies on its ability to problem solve and react to situations as they happen. To date, this policy has proven effective and SAS has not experienced a case where they have not been able to deliver on promised outputs. For example, when faced with non-delivery by a manager in Nepal, arguably the organization’s most significant programming challenge thus far, SAS was able to respond and complete the deliverables required albeit with significant delay. However, the area of risk management holds potentially serious issues for SAS. For example:

1. The sudden departure of any staff at the director-level, especially the director of administration, would significantly compromise the organization's day-to-day functions and, more generally, its ability to deliver its outputs;
2. The organization is particularly "personality" driven, potentially causing gaps in knowledge and brand erosion with the departure of individual staff;
3. The organization relies on independent consultants for management of a variety of programs and specific deliverables, potentially compromising the organization's ability to oversee work and protect its brand;
4. The organization has a reputation for being "overworked" or "over-committed," leading to possible individual burnout that could contribute to delays in deliverables and potential quality control erosion; and
5. SAS is based in a location that is exceedingly expensive and visa-restricted, limiting its ability to attract and retain talent, efficiently use donor funds and make the best use of its headquarters.

These and other risks are exacerbated by the size and breadth of the organization's current (and future) commitments.

Fundamental Factors

As mentioned earlier, to date, SAS has not experienced an outright failure in delivery to a particular client or stakeholder group. There are a variety of factors that contribute to SAS's ability to consistently deliver. These include, but are not limited to:

- SAS as an organization, and in particular its senior staff, are leaders in their field and true groundbreakers. This has put them in a position of unique expertise, knowledge, skill and experience not easily replicated by other orgs;
- The research of SAS has, generally, been regarded as high quality at an academic-level;
- SAS has a cadre, albeit small, of senior researchers known as the paragon in their field;
- SAS attracts young, energetic researchers eager to make a name and do work of real substance;
- SAS is an important and active member of a growing network of experts and organizations focused on SALW/AV. Individuals who leave SAS tend to remain in contact and continue to contribute to SAS outputs; many who leave return;
- The organization has a "family" feeling in many respects internally;
- Staff has an unspoken acceptance of "more than 40 hour week" job expectations;
- SAS has strategically seconded SAS staff to other organizations for policy advice and contribution to programs, which provides SAS access and influence in the same;
- SAS has remained adaptable to donor requests;

- A substantial proportion of core, non-mandated, funding has helped SAS to grow organically, bridge gaps in project funding and establish the organization internationally;
- Some of SAS's fieldwork leverages partner organizations and staff;
- SAS has stayed focused exclusively on the topic of SALW/AV.

Beneficiary Satisfaction

Within the timeframe of the assignment, the evaluation team was able to speak with a limited number of donor agencies and partner organizations. The evaluation did not speak with regional bodies or civil society organizations at the regional or local levels.

Overwhelmingly, interviewees from both donors and partner organizations expressed satisfaction with the outputs of SAS. Without prompting, several interviewees offered high praise for the work produced by SAS, especially in terms of quality and within the context of the high level of output by a relatively small organization.

At the same time, there were comments from interviewees about areas where SAS could improve. These include:

1. **Timeliness:** A common theme amongst interviewees was that SAS staff was difficult to get a hold of and often were delayed in delivering. This was always attributed to the overwhelming workload at SAS.
2. **Quality:** Several interviewees commented on quality issues related to SAS research. Specifically, in the case when SAS delivers work that has been outsourced or performed by another organization and when work is performed by more junior research staff or staff whose native language is not English⁴.
3. **Responsibility:** As a part of its help desk function, SAS is required to oversee the work of other similar organizations. Interviewees indicated that they expected more from SAS in terms of leadership and proactive management in this program.

Dissemination and Use of Outputs

The work of SAS has been used in a variety of context: from the foundations of policies at the international level to the establishment of systems that trace weapons to the reformation of local police activities. Specific examples include:

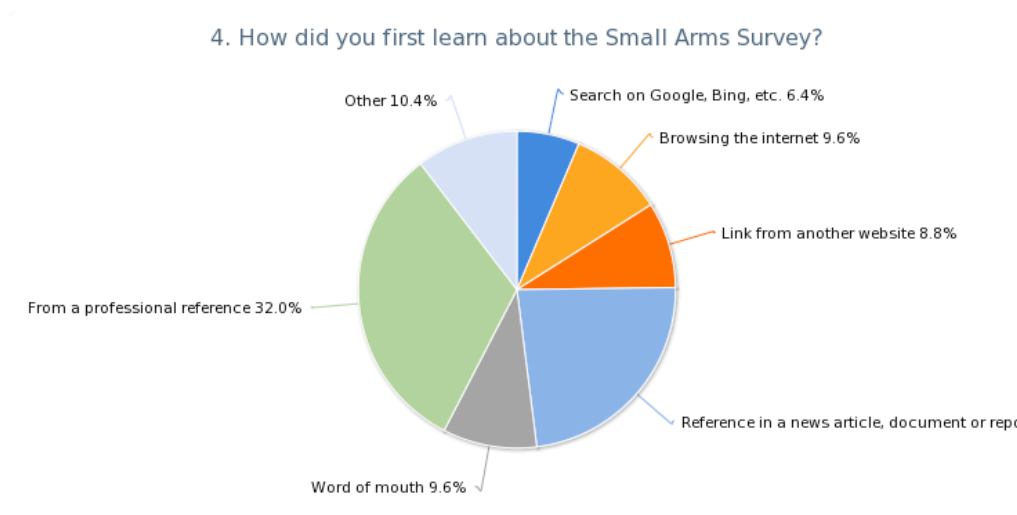
- The World Health Organization (WHO) uses SAS data, Global Burden of Armed Violence (GBAV) studies and mid/low income country case studies in their work;
- The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) uses SAS research within reports published by their Secretariat;
- Handicap International (HI) uses SAS research to design and inform their work in the field;

⁴ The evaluators note that, because of the global nature of SAS's work, working with non-native English speakers is an absolute necessity and strength of the organization.

- Swiss missions distribute hard copies of SAS work (e.g. Yearbook) to relevant actors throughout the world;
- OSCE uses SAS research in their work;
- SAS's Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) publications are unique in Sudan and South Sudan; and
- The research and data of SAS have had significant influence in program design for several donors and implementing organizations.

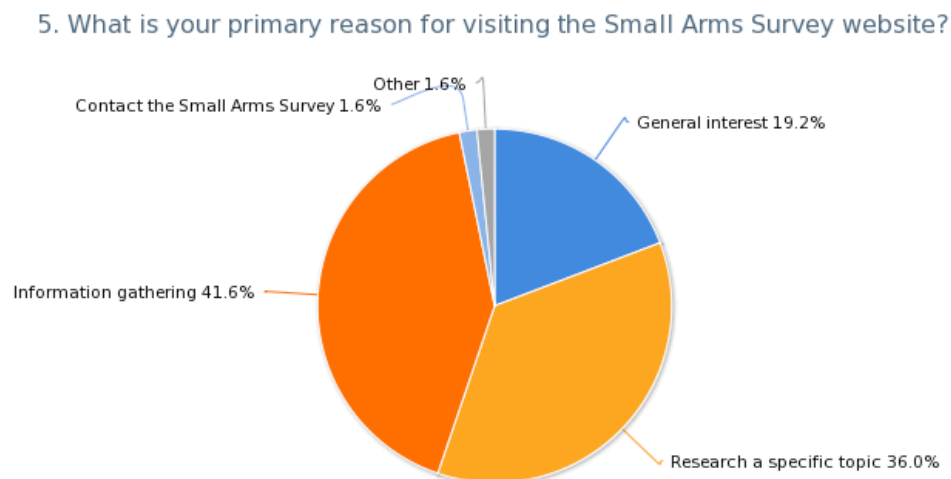
As noted above, the work of SAS is also regularly used in media publications and requests for interviews from all types of media outlets are a regular occurrence. The online survey confirms that SAS's work has enjoyed significant dissemination as the largest portion of respondents first learned about SAS through a professional reference (32%) with media references a close second (23.2%):

Figure 8 – Introduction to the SAS



Further, online survey respondents indicated they visited the SAS website mostly for Information Gathering (41.65) and Researching a Specific Topic (36%):

Figure 9 – Reasons for visiting the SAS website



While the work of SAS enjoys considerable uptake at the international policy and organization level, their work has yet to trickle down, and more importantly to be accessible, at the local level. In some cases, such as Sudan and South Sudan, the complexity of the local context may not yet offer real opportunity for uptake with local governments and civil society organizations (CSO). However, as related by interviewees, in other cases, such as Libya and Tunisia, re-packaging SAS's work for accessibility (i.e. shorter papers, verbal briefings) may have the opportunity to impact the local context.

Also, more generally, SAS has operated on a “build it and they will come” strategy for the dissemination of their work. SAS does not design outreach and marketing of its outputs into its activities and there is very limited post-report activity that occurs to create visibility about SAS outputs to potential users. These include posting of research on the SAS website, an email blast to the SAS mailing list and a mention on social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook). SAS has been doing more to raise awareness about its work, for example through the use of podcasts, but there has not been significant energy, time or resources devoted to these activities.

Conclusions

SAS has remained an effective organization during the current MoU. They have delivered expected outputs without a major failure and have maintained their status and brand reputation as an independent research body. Donors and partners have expressed high satisfaction with the outputs of SAS. Also, stakeholders at the international level use the work of SAS for informing policy and program design.

SAS is currently lacking policy and practice in the area of institutionalization and operations, especially as it relates to the mitigation of risk. What was a reasonable level of risk exposure prior to the current MoU has become a necessary management issue as SAS looks to the future.

The work of SAS, while well regarded by its traditional international policy-level audience, has the potential for a much greater reach, in terms of depth at the local level, and breath in regards to awareness globally.

Efficiency

Efficiency refers to *measuring the outputs—qualitative and quantitative—in relation to the inputs*.

The evaluation considered the following questions:

- 1 What is the balance between input and output?
- 2 How efficiently have resources been allocated?
- 3 Where was a lack of efficiency?
- 4 How did this lack of efficiency hinder SAS in succeeding with projects?

Inputs vs. Outputs

By all accounts, interviewees expressed that the volume of output by SAS is extraordinary given the size of the organization and its staff. SAS published 22, 30, and 41 original works in 2010, 2011, and 2012, respectively. In 2013, as of this evaluation, SAS was on track to exceed 2012 numbers. These numbers do not include translations of past works, of which SAS does 10 or more a year.

The production of its flagship product, the Yearbook, is by all accounts a massive undertaking and usurps a significant portion of staff resources. The Yearbook is rivaled by the relatively new GBVA publication, which is used as the delivery mechanism for bolstering the “evidence pillar” of the Geneva Declaration⁵. In addition, SAS delivers occasional papers, special reports, books and edited volumes, working papers, handbooks, issue briefs, research notes and other specific publications related to the Geneva declaration.

Research related publications from SAS are the most visible and tangible measure of the output of SAS. Taken alone, the evaluation team is of the belief that donors would be satisfied that they were provided adequate value for money. However, SAS staff also contributes time and effort on a number of other fronts. These include consultancies related to policy formation and program design, participation in topically relevant conferences and meetings, responding to media requests and more.

Resource Allocation

SAS has a well-deserved reputation for stretching its budgets as far as possible, and has remained committed to ensuring donor funds are spent by and large on research and publication. This is no more evident in the physical space SAS uses for its headquarters. Rather than the space of a prestigious research institution, one is left with the impression they're visiting a committed non-governmental organization (NGO). Said another way, overhead has been minimized to a bare-bones status⁶.

SAS also maintains an extremely flat organizational structure with essentially two layers: a management layer and a staff layer. This structure has contributed to the efficient allocation of resources in that everyone wears multiple hats and works on multiple projects. Indeed, there is a culture of “if you propose it you own it.” While this provides staff with significant autonomy and responsibility, it also may place critical functions and management responsibilities in the hands of unprepared or unwilling individuals. Multiple roles may also contribute to inefficiencies in decision-making (especially at the director level) and duplication of effort.

SAS's flat structure is also mirrored in its administration. Contracting, financing, benefits and information technology are overseen by one director with the support of only a few part-time staff. SAS also has a formal relationship with the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (GIIDS) that provides some benefits related to accounting, information technology and contracting.

⁵ See <http://www.genevadeclaration.org/> for information about the Pillars of the GD.

⁶ During this evaluation SAS was in the process of moving its facilities to the Maison de la Paix – a significant upgrade in facilities that will also connect SAS to the three existing Geneva Centres of Excellence.

Efficiency Challenges

As experienced by all organizations, SAS has a number of areas where they experience challenges in optimal efficiency. Interviewees indicated the following areas as challenges that contribute to delays in decision-making and delivery of outputs:

- An unclear management structure and division of responsibilities at the Director level;
- Staff turnover and difficulty in staff retention;
- Inconsistency of staff skill sets requiring some staff to need substantial support, especially in the case of junior staff;
- Piecemeal funding sources requiring significant and consistent efforts to maintain sufficient funds;
- Quality controls related to fact checking and copy editing;
- Inadequate or inconsistent delegation of duties;
- Contracting and financial relationships with GIIDS;
- A consistently overwhelming workload across all staff;
- Specific administrative structures required by some donors (i.e. the United States State Department);
- Inconsistent support between management and staff; and
- Lack of institutionalization, policies and procedures.

While all of the above contributed inefficiencies at SAS, none of them, by themselves, result in any significant waste of donor funding. As related by interviewees, these challenges do however, cause roadblocks and bottlenecks within SAS in the following ways:

- Delays in publication;
- Erosion of quality control;
- Contribution to a reputation of a “personality driven” organization; and
- Lack of programming continuity.

Conclusions

While interviewees indicated they were consistently impressed with the output of SAS, the organization also has a well-known reputation for overstressing its staff and consistently running on overwhelm. While every organization has times when staff need to go above and beyond to begin a new project, or get a deliverable produced, this should not be a normal operating expectation.

SAS continues to run an efficient shop where resources are allocated to programming first, with other considerations (e.g. overhead, benefits, etc.) a distant second. While this is commendable, and expected during a startup phase of a project, program or new organization, SAS is ready to mature as an organization in order to properly manage its operations and growth, attract and retain the best talent, institutionalize its operations and establish continuity to its programming.

Impact

Impact refers to *the positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.*

The evaluation considered the following questions:

1

To what extent have the goals and the objectives set in the different agreements and MoUs been reached and accomplished?

2

What are the positive and possibly negative impacts of SAS's work?

Achievement of MoU Objectives

The MoU between SAS and HSD sets out four objectives to be achieved through the support of SAS's activities. These have remained consistent over SAS's history:

Objective #1. *Be a major and high-profile contributor to international efforts to constrain the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.*

Through its publications, interaction with policymakers, receptiveness by the media and ongoing evolution of programming, SAS is a major contributor of information related to SALW/AV issues. Partners, advocacy organizations, implementing organizations and governments regularly seek out and use this information in initiatives designed to constrain the proliferation SALW/AV.

However, SAS has fought hard to maintain an impartial, independent, and non-advocacy related profile. As such, as long as this policy is maintained internally, the evaluation team suggests this objective can never truly be fully achieved as SAS does not commit itself, through its published work, to specific positions related to SALW/AV.

Objective #2. *Be the leading international source of independent information and analysis on small arms and light weapons issues.*

Responses from interviewees leave little doubt that SAS has successfully achieved this objective. SAS has an outstanding reputation as the “go to source” of independent information and analysis on issues related to SALW/AV.

Objective #3. *Be a crucial monitor of international and national, governmental and non-governmental, policy initiatives.*

SAS has partially achieved this objective. Staff of SAS are regularly consulted as advisors on issues related to international policy initiatives and the work of SAS has influenced policy and programming across a number of international actors. However, the contribution of SAS's work to the formation of policy at the national level and within nongovernmental organizations has been minimal.

The objective itself suffers from a lack of clarity, as there is no real definition about what an indicator of success might be when one is a “crucial monitor” of policy initiatives. In one sense, monitoring policy activities is the work of advocacy groups, which is a position SAS has worked hard to distance itself from. In another sense, monitoring could simply mean awareness and understanding policy initiatives in order to use that knowledge is a part of current and future research. SAS currently participates in the latter to a high degree.

Objective #4. *Be an independent transparency mechanism, promoting greater national and international openness, and contributing to multilateral efforts to deal effectively with the causes and consequences of small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse.*

The only policy position SAS has formally taken is that of transparency of data and information related to SALW/AV. However, SAS does not participate in advocacy activities and relies on publically available data—both separate to, and in conjunction with, data they collect or generate via projects. Thus any transparency achieved through the work of SAS is simply through the use of these data sets in the analysis and reporting on issues related to SALW/AV. As such, similar to the achievement of Object #1 above, this objective can only be partially achieved.

Positive and Negative Impacts

While the work of SAS has four stated objectives in its MoU with HSD, the evaluators did not uncover specific, stated long-term impacts that were expected as a result of achieving these objectives. Also a theory of change has not been established regarding the work of SAS. Rather, the genesis of SAS, and for a large part of its ongoing work, has been justified around an assumed gap in information related to SALW/AV.

That said, responses from interviewees indicate the ongoing work of SAS has had a number of impacts. For example, the work of SAS has:

1. Built a substantial evidence base related to SALW/AV;
2. Fueled ongoing debates related to SALW/AV;
3. Directly influenced policies at the international level;
4. Increased the focus of national governments on interpersonal violence; and
5. Impacted and informed multi-million GBP worth of funding for direct programming and initiatives related to SALW/AV;

Interviewees indicated that negative impacts could result from the work of SAS. These impacts would most likely result from improper analysis of data, incorrect reporting of facts or inflammatory tonality of reports. This has been a justification for a lengthy and tedious fact checking process for all publications and a policy on non-advocacy, which results in publications that do not contain recommendations for action. According to interviewees, the only negative impacts experienced to date by SAS have been push back from specific governments (e.g. Sudan) related to analysis and findings of an SAS reports. Also, in a few instances, national actors have lodged complaints related to incorrect information. SAS has not experienced more serious potential negative impacts, such as placing individuals or groups in harm's way.

Conclusions

The work of SAS has taken significant strides in achieving the objectives set out in its MoU with HSD. Future success in achieving these objectives requires refinement of the objectives themselves and connecting them to expected impacts, a theory of change and a system to monitor and measure success of the same. To date, SAS has not measured or recorded the impact of its work. Nonetheless, a variety of positive impacts have been realized that directly affect the conversation concerning SALW/AV.

Sustainability

Sustainability refers to *measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.*

The evaluation considered if SAS's projects are designed in a manner that allows for long-term, sustainable impact, or if they aim at short-term changes.

Project Design

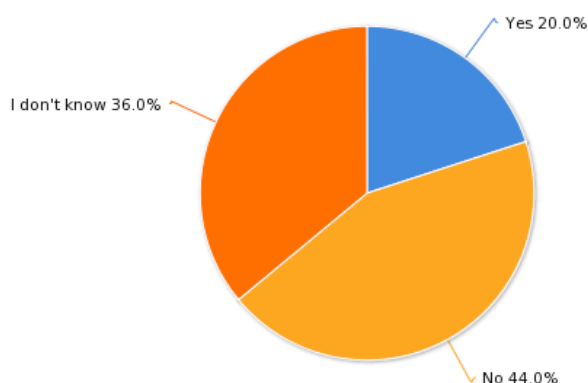
The sustainable impact of SAS's work can be likened to that of similar quality academic research recognized as groundbreaking or seminal. Were donor support removed suddenly, the work of SAS would live on as high quality reference material used by academics, researchers, advocates and others who would, assumedly, carry the work forward. In this regard, the work of SAS, by its nature is designed for long-term sustainable impact. SAS's publications have contributed to a growing body of knowledge that can be used for policy and programs for the foreseeable future.

When speaking about sustainability with interviewees, the immediate initial response always focused on the fickle nature of the funding that supports the work of SAS. Mandated funds have grown at a rapid pace over the past 10 years and highlight donor recognition of the importance of the general topic surrounding SALW/AV and their need to move to more focused geographic and topical specific information. To that end, a significant portion of SAS's current work is focused on short-term deliverables. However, these deliverables regularly contribute to policy formation or program design that may have long-term lasting impacts.

Beyond donor funding, the online survey indicates there may be alternative funding sources available not previously considered by SAS. These include, for example, a nominal fee for publications, nominal “membership” to SAS for access to full publications, the use of an annual conference as a profit center and many others.

Figure 10 – Willingness to pay for SAS publications

8. Would you be willing to pay a nominal fee for Small Arms Survey publications?



The increasing sophistication of the market for information related to SALW/AV has begun to shift the nature of the outputs of SAS. In its early days, the research focus of SAS was new and, as such, normal academic turnaround times for analysis and reporting were acceptable. However, today there is increasing demand for fresh, up to the minute information that can be used in day-to-day decision making by implementing actors. In this regard, the work of SAS is focused on short-term outputs. For example, some of SAS's more recently acquired work is more akin to consulting than academic research.

Finally, interviewees indicated that the work of SAS lacks an explicit overarching strategy. To date, it's been enough to produce the Yearbook (and now the GBVA) and its related research or to respond to specific donor requests. There has been minimal follow up on past research to understand trends, record changes and update analysis.

Conclusion

The work of SAS has significantly contributed to a body of evidence related to SALW and arm violence issues that can be used as a base for policy and programing for the foreseeable future. However, as the market place for this information has matured, the nature of SAS's outputs is shifting more towards short-term responses to donor requests.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions above, the evaluation team makes the following recommendations for the future growth and success of SAS:

Relevance

- Revise outputs to more “immediate” information products such as working papers, research notes and briefings; also, deliver these via multiple channels as a part of a comprehensive communications strategy.
- Recognize the growing sophistication of the SALW/AV market, tailor products and services to the same.
- Rather than continually broadening its set of publications, SAS should consider a more focused smaller portfolio that adds the most value to its target consumers.
- Consider research and organizational strategies that ensure SAS continues to lead the conversation on SALW/AV. Seek to reverse the trend of activities and outputs becoming more and more donor driven via mandated projects.
- Improve relevance through supporting donors and practitioners with activities and outputs that are increasingly relevant to local actors and context.

Effectiveness

- Consider issues of risk (e.g. organizational, structural, brand, etc.) as part of a focus on institutionalizing systems, policies and procedures.
- Reconsider quality control processes when work is outsourced or delegated to junior staff.
- Revisit expectations from donors, especially for non-traditional research-related work like the DFID Help Desk, to ensure SAS is meeting its commitments.
- Seek to provide innovative methods for distribution of findings as a part of a comprehensive communications strategy.

Efficiency

- Consider an organizational restructuring to add a middle management layer and acquire other needed expertise (e.g. fundraising, project management).
- Grow the organization and divide project responsibilities to remove the label of “overworked” from the SAS brand and improve timeliness of response.
- Reconsider the relationship with GIIDS to either leverage it for added value or remove it to gain true autonomy.

Impact

- Revisit the expected objectives of the MoU with HSD and include the development of a vision, mission, theory of change and strategic plan that can be monitored and measured for success.

Sustainability

- Leverage a full-time fundraising position in SAS to broaden, deepen and grow SAS's available funding.
- Consider alternative forms of funding, including charging a fee for publications.
- Consider how SAS currently contracts its services on both short and long term requests to maximize sustainability.