

From Weapons to Art
Armes Transformées en art



A Component Summary of a Project to Transform 'Arms into Ploughshares'

There are five (5) distinguishable components of the Tools for Arms Project:

- A/ Weapons collection
- B/ Destruction of weapons
- C/ Exchange of incentives
- D/ Civic education
- E/ Transformation into artwork.

A) Weapons Collection

Once initial contact is made and verification has been done, the project team visits the target area and begins to establish an infrastructure concerning information, logistics and security together with local partners and concerned parties. An assessment is made as to the number of arms to be collected and then to determine if the arms are destroyed on site or brought back to Maputo for destruction. It is then agreed upon when the team will return to the area to make the collection.

B) Destruction of Weapons

Weapons destruction is done by members of the project team with appropriate equipment and qualified weapons and ballistics personnel from the Ministry of Defense. The method of destruction is to saw the weapons into pieces using a mitre saw. Safety is observed at all times by reassuring the community of their expertise and ensuring that only qualified personnel are permitted near the danger zones. Unexploded ordnances (UXO's) such as rockets, munitions, grenades, missiles and landmines are disposed of through a controlled environment with the assistance of the military or professional de-mining groups so as not to pose danger of any kind to anyone.

C) Exchange of Incentives

Once weapons and UXO's are securely removed and/or disposed of, goods and incentives are exchanged. The project offers a wide range of incentives in return for weapons and will take into consideration the various needs and interests of urban and rural settlements. The arms holder can express his or her wishes and expectations, but the value of the incentive will be related to the number, type and functionality of the weapons. The exchanges are carried out based on mutual agreement between the weapon holder and the project team.

D) Civic education

Civic education activities are organized to increase awareness of the project and to increase the number of participants and supporters. Throughout every aspect of the project the value of the beneficiaries' efforts in contributing to peace and stability is discussed. Other aspects include civic awareness in the schools whereby team members orchestrate a mock destruction of plastic weapons while educating the children and their parents. Members of the 'Tools for Arms' Project team, work with local theatre groups who perform skits and plays. This very effective method is designed to inform people about the existence of a project that offers income generating tools and building materials in exchange for weapons and also to encourage participation in peacebuilding activities. The message portrayed is that by participating in peacebuilding activities greater and more positive opportunities in life can be realized and that their efforts would be contributing to a culture of peace and non-violence.

E) Transformation of destroyed weapons into artwork

The process of transforming weapons into artwork is considered a method of promoting a culture of peace. Mozambican artists are invited to participate in building peace monuments and sculptures. These works of art are constructed from pieces of weapons and are then exhibited or placed in public areas. This form of expression has had a profound impact on many of those who have had direct or indirect involvement with the project because it brings closure and finality to a violent past.