

Firearm database to be installed with the support from Brazil and UNDP



Maputo, 17 December 2009 -

Mozambique is planning to develop a national electronic firearms register. It will be established by the Ministry of Interior with the support from UNDP, Brazilian NGO Viva Rio and the Civilian Police of Rio de Janeiro. In the beginning of December, Viva Rio's Armed Violence Control team and the Director of the Civilian Police of Rio de Janeiro's Police Laboratory visited Mozambique to identify the technical, human resource and logistical requirements to install the national database.

The intensive programme of meetings for the integrated Brazil, Ministry of Interior and UNDP delegation was designed to provide a "cradle to grave" picture of firearms ownership in Mozambique - starting from a gun's entry into the country until it either exits or is destroyed.

At Maputo, Nampula and Beira levels, the delegation met with senior management from Police Protection, Public Order, Police logistics, the Police Criminal and Forensic Laboratories, Domestic violence and children protection cabinet and Customs authorities as well as members of civil society, private security companies and firearms dealers.

With this initial needs assessment completed, Viva Rio and the Civilian Police of Rio de Janeiro will continue to support the Government by designing the firearm database based on the Civilian Police of Rio de Janeiro's experience, but tailored to Mozambique's specific needs.

The team will also return to Mozambique in 2010 to support the installation and training of staff responsible for management and maintenance of the database.

10 years ago, the Civilian Police of Rio de Janeiro was in a similar situation to Mozambique regarding its paper based firearms database. Viva Rio supported the Civilian Police of Rio de Janeiro during the four year long process of the digitalization of tens of thousands of files - entering all data held in paper copy into one, centralized online database. Moreover, the shared language and experience of the two countries makes this South - South cooperation extremely productive.

The development of the Mozambican database and initial training is to be funded by UNDP in 2010. UNDP and the Government will look to the international donor community to provide financial support for the national roll of the database across all 11 provinces of Mozambique.

Under its "Weapons Risk Mitigation and Mainstreaming Mine Action, Small Arms & Light Weapons Controls 2008-2011" project, UNDP and the Government have agreed to avail themselves of the expertise of the Rio de Janeiro Police Force and Viva Rio, to support the

development and roll out of a national firearms register.

Although the post conflict weapons surrender campaigns in Mozambique secured more than 260,500 guns, a considerable number are still in circulation illegally. The controls of these weapons as well as guns entering the country across its borders pose a considerable challenge to internal security. At present firearms registered with the Police

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currently number only around 4,000.

However, with the 2007 Arms and Ammunition Act providing a more stringent legislative framework, the Government is committed to developing an integrated national computerized register to create a chain of accountability which provides a more effective incentive to comply with the new law.

Currently information in the national firearms registry is stored in paper files, but these do not consistently contain basic data such as make, caliber, producer and serial number. Access and analysis of information is very limited and therefore it is impossible to observe diversion from legal to illegal users, or to conduct international tracing in cooperation with law enforcement agencies on a regional basis.

The picture:

Viva Rio Economist Júlio Cesar Purcena with a representative of the Nampula Provincial Police Command Firearms Registry.