

Option 1: The Status Quo

Currently, Canadian support for multilateral SALW programming is essentially handled on a pragmatic case-by-case basis. The result is a somewhat “diffuse” or “across-the-board” pattern of funding, characterized by considerable spending across a wide range of global, regional and sub-regional SALW programmes, organizations and initiatives. Consider the following snapshot of Canadian donor support:

- Canada has been a major source of funding for a significant number of conferences, workshops, seminars, and other “consciousness raising” and “information sharing” meetings dealing with topics as diverse as “marking and tracing”, “collection and destruction” and “regional transparency”;
- Canada has provided financial and other support to SALW actions in every region and sub-region (including Europe, the Americas, Africa, ASEAN/Pacific Islands);
- Canada has been an important and reliable contributor to a number of key SALW-relevant NGOs;
- Canada has assisted with capacity building in a variety of different regional and institutional settings; and
- Canada provided substantial support to the 2001 UN Conference on SALWs.

While this is an admirable record – and while there can be no doubt that to date Canada has exercised an effective leadership in the area of SALWs – the current approach may not be sustainable in the long run. The reason for this is simple: while Canada currently stands out as one of several countries playing a leadership role in addressing the SALW problem,²⁹ as the field of donor countries and multilateral institutions becomes increasingly crowded it may be difficult for Canada to maintain its current leadership profile. To the extent that maintaining such a profile is important to the government of Canada, this suggests the need for a somewhat more focused (or niche-based) approach that would allow more resources to be devoted to high value-added programming that would have a visibly and demonstrably *Canadian* identity or dimension.

Continuing with the *status quo* also appears to a somewhat less than optimal approach when judged against the other criteria of “effectiveness” defined above. While current Canadian support for SALW programming obviously meets pressing operational needs, there is a danger that in the future (as certain regional or global multilateral programmes become increasingly well resourced) Canadian funding will end up wastefully duplicating support from other donor countries or institutions. At the moment, despite the clear support within the donor community for SALW action, there has been very little co-ordination of effort. Moreover, few governments are fully aware of the programmes and activities being undertaken or supported by others. Diffuse or across-the-board patterns of funding by donor countries like Canada can only exacerbate this problem. Indeed, the result of continuing with the *status quo* approach seems entirely predictable: reduced visibility; increasingly poor coordination; and growing duplication and overlap. Increasing both focus and profile, on the other hand, would have the benefit of improving the visibility and co-ordination on SALW assistance within the donor community. It would also facilitate the targeting of assistance at priority (i.e., currently under-resourced) regions and programmes.

²⁹Other leaders include Switzerland, Norway, UK, Japan and Germany.