

# SCIAF factsheets

## arms...

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in a final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed."

**General Dwight D. Eisenhower.**

The money needed to give everyone in the world adequate food, water, housing, education, and health care is estimated to be about £50 billion a year. That may seem like a huge sum, but the world's armed forces spend about the same amount on weapons each month.

### **WHY DO WE SPEND SO MUCH ON ARMS WHEN ...**

- About 1.3 billion people live at a level of poverty that prevents them from meeting their most basic needs.
- More than 1 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water.
- At least 15 million children die each year from hunger and related diseases.

### **PERHAPS IT IS BECAUSE ...**

- About 100,000 jobs in Britain are sustained by arms exports.
- Britain is one of the world's top five arms suppliers. In 1993, £1.9 billion worth of arms were exported, with more than 75 per cent going to Third World countries. (The total 1993 aid budget to developing countries was about £1.6 billion.)
- There is a direct link between countries receiving British aid and those importing British arms. In 1989, for example, the British government earmarked £234 million from the aid budget for the Pergau dam project in Malaysia. The deal was linked to the purchase of £1 billion of British arms by Malaysia. The Pergau dam was subsequently judged to be a misuse of aid funds by a judicial review in 1995.

### **BRITISH ARMS DEALS**

- In 1993, British Aerospace (Britain's largest military manufacturer) won a £500 million contract to supply 24 Hawk aircraft to Indonesia.
- Between 1988 and 1995, Saudi Arabia bought £1,948 million worth of arms from Britain.

### **EFFECTS OF MILITARISATION AND WAR**

- Militarisation diverts money and skills away from basic health services, agriculture, and education, towards the purchase of arms.

In mid-1992, the UN estimated that between 2,000 and 5,000 Somalis were dying each day from hunger-related diseases. Because of war, Somali farmers had only been able to plant 5 per cent of their normal crops.

- The majority of the world's 20 million refugees and 30 million displaced people are victims of war.

In Mozambique, some 5 million people were displaced by civil war, while conflict in Rwanda forced more than 2 million to flee to neighbouring countries in 1994.

- War ruins land and destroys crops, depriving people of their security and livelihoods.

Long after wars end, there remains the problem of uncleared landmines, which prevent crops from being cultivated.

### **THE FINANCIAL COST**

The total annual world military spending is estimated to be about US\$750 billion (£470 billion - just under £1 million per minute)

At least £384 million a year (20 per cent of the total value of British arms exports) is paid by the taxpayer to British arms manufacturers. This takes the form of subsidies to enable British firms to tender more competitively for arms contracts overseas.

### **THE HUMAN COST**

Since World War II ended in 1945, more than 23 million people have been killed in the developing world as a result of armed conflicts; 90 per cent of these casualties were civilians.

One-third of the population of East Timor (around 200,000 people) have died as a result of Indonesia's continued occupation of the island since 1975.

Cambodia has 4 million landmines and 30,000 amputees. This means that one person in every 236 Cambodians has lost a limb in a landmine explosion.

### **MILITARISATION AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT**

The combined annual military spending of the Third World amounts to about US\$125 billion (£78 billion).

- Just 12 per cent (£9.4 billion) of this could provide safe drinking water for everyone in the Third World.
- A mere 4 per cent (£3 billion) could achieve universal primary education, reduce adult illiteracy by 50 per cent and educate women to the level of men.

"Countless millions are starving, countless families are destitute, countless people are steeped in ignorance; countless people need schools, hospitals, and homes worthy of the name. In such circumstances we cannot approve a debilitating arms race."

**Pope Paul VI, Populorum Progressio.**

#### **ARE THERE ALTERNATIVES?**

The enormous cost of funding wars could be better spent:

- One ballistic submarine costs just over £9 hundred million, whereas one child in a developing country may be fully immunised for about £9.
- Nigeria could have immunised two million children with the money its government spent on 80 British battle tanks in 1992.
- With the money it spent on 20 Russian MiG-29 fighter aircraft in 1992, India could have provided basic education for all the 15 million girls without a place in school.

Just 1.5 per cent (£7 billion) of the total world military expenditure could provide primary health care for all areas in the world currently without it.

#### **THINGS TO DO**

1. Find out how much the British government currently spends on defence. Compare this with what it spends on health, education, and housing.
2. Carry out a survey in your school or neighbourhood on "Arms and Development". Ask people about their attitudes to selling arms; protecting British interests overseas; using violence to control people; supplying arms to developing countries; and converting defence industries into new civil industries.
3. Write to your MP or MEP and include the following questions:
  - What types of arms does Britain export?
  - To which countries are they exported?
  - Does Britain sell arms to countries where there are human rights abuses?
  - How much of tax-payers money is used to subsidise arms sales?

Most of the information for this Fact Sheet is taken from WDM, UNDP Development Report 1994, Pax Christi, New Internationalist magazine (November 1994 issue), and World Game Institute, USA

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