ISACS Self-Assessment Software

In collaboration with partners worldwide, the United Nations has developed the International Small Arms Control Standards (ISACS) to provide clear, practical, and comprehensive guidance to practitioners and policymakers on fundamental aspects of small arms and light weapons control.

In support of the rollout and use of the ISACS, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) and the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS) have developed a knowledge management tool to allow users to easily apply the standards in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of their small arms control programmes.

Added value to the ISACS

The ISACS software tool is designed to:

- improve the design, monitoring, and evaluation of projects and programmes by all stakeholders, in particular the United Nations and Member States;
- enable the United Nations to streamline its policy, programming, and practice on small arms control;
- help to collect, maintain, and share knowledge and effective practices on small arms control;
- assist in the identification of capacity-building needs and provide a tool for evaluating the effectiveness of assistance programming;
- create a set of benchmarks against which to measure the implementation of small arms commitments;
- facilitate the process for development of national small arms control standards through the use of the ISACS.

Who are the potential users?

Potential users include the United Nations, Member States, implementing agencies, regional organizations, and civil society. Users have complete ownership and control over the data generated by the tool, and its use is voluntary.

Examples of how the tool can be used

- The United Nations and Member States can use it to identify priority areas for small arms control efforts and better develop and target their programming and activities to the highest level of obligations codified in the standards.

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- The United Nations and Member States can use it to conduct internal self-assessments, monitor progress of their implementation efforts, and generate data for strategic and policy planning.
- Recipients can use it to develop assistance requests by identifying priority areas and ensuring alignment between needs and assistance requests. The tool can also help to generate specific data for national reporting exercises, thereby raising the quality of information reported.
- Donors can use it to generate baseline data at the beginning of an assistance project and as an evaluation tool at the end.

Validation through field-testing

During Phase II of the project (January–December 2013), the software was validated through field-testing of its utility and applicability in several countries representing a range of capacity and geographic locations.

A total of 10 countries were visited in validating the ISACS software tool. Experts, practitioners, and policymakers from states, the United Nations, regional organizations, implementing agencies, and civil society actively engaged in testing activities and consultations. The software's applicability was tested at the programme assistance, national authority, and operational levels.

Key feedback was received during the validation phase:
- Users welcomed the tool's ability to assist in assessments and evaluations of existing programmes, as well as gap identification.
- Application of the ISACS software in states emerging from conflict presented an opportunity to contribute towards the development of national small arms strategic frameworks.
- Users welcomed the user-friendliness of the tool and how it facilitated the practical application of the ISACS, including the ability to select thematic issues and topics of the ISACS most relevant to their national/local context.
- The design of the software to protect user data was welcomed by states for security of information.
- Users requested follow-up training in the use and integration of the tool.

ISACS tool technology and requirements

The software tool is stand-alone and functional offline. The offline framework enhances protection of information, as well as facilitates operational support where internet is not available. Users have complete ownership and control over the data generated. The tool is compatible with both Windows and Mac systems.

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