# Course 3: War, weapons and conflict strategies
## Chapter 1: Weapons of Mass Destruction

**Exercise 1: Information pooling**

Choose a topic:

1.) Nuclear weapons
2.) Chemical weapons
3.) Biological weapons
4.) Radiological weapons

Visualise following information using a PowerPoint presentation, poster or mind-map:

A. The characteristics of the weapon type
B. Their dangers to health and the environment
C. What can be done to protect us?

You can find the information you need here on the Medical Peace Work website:

http://medicalpeacework.de/mod/book/view.php?id=133

**Chapter 1: Weapons of mass destruction**

- Lesson 1.1: Nuclear weapons
  http://medicalpeacework.de/mod/book/view.php?id=133&chapterid=65
- Lesson 1.2: Biological weapons
  http://medicalpeacework.de/mod/book/view.php?id=133&chapterid=66
- Lesson 1.3: Chemical weapons
  http://medicalpeacework.de/mod/book/view.php?id=133&chapterid=67
- Lesson 1.4: Radiological weapons
  http://medicalpeacework.de/mod/book/view.php?id=133&chapterid=68

## Course 3: War, weapons and conflict strategies

### Exercise 2: Calculating effects

Calculate the effects of a crude Hiroshima type nuclear bomb (12.5 kilotons) on your city by using this table:

| *Zone* | *Distance from Ground Zero* | *Area* | *Average population per km²* | *Fatality rate* | *Total deaths* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | 0-0.5 km | 0.8 sq km | | 98% | |
| B | 0.5-1.0 km | 2.3 sq km | | 90% | |
| C | 1.0-1.5 km | 4.0 sq km | | 46% | |
| D | 1.5-2.0 km | 5.65 sq km | | 23% | |
| E | 2.0-5.0 km | 65.9 sq km | | 2% | |

Choose a target for the bomb. Using this as “Ground Zero”, draw the zones as concentric circles on the map of your city, radiating out from this point.

What is to be found in these zones? Who lives or works there? What important buildings can be found there, e.g. hospitals, government buildings?

Think about how you would personally be affected by a nuclear attack of this kind. Where would you, your family or friends be (depending on time of day).

# Course 3: War, weapons and conflict strategies
## Chapter 2: Effects of certain types of weapons or conflict strategies

**Exercise 3: Brainstorm on war crimes**

1. Brainstorm what might constitute a war crime.

## Course 3: War, weapons and conflict strategies

2. Write the following weapons/conflict strategies on cards and pin them next to the war crimes you have identified in your brainstorm.

List of weapons/conflict strategies

| | |
|---|---|
| Landmines | Rape, sexualised violence |
| Cluster munitions | Slavery |
| Nuclear weapons | Genocide |
| Agent orange | Blanket bombing |
| Mustard gas | Massacre of civilians |
| Biological Weapons | Blowing up a nuclear reactor |
| Uranium weapons | Torture |
| Radiological dispersion devices | Using child soldiers |
| Dum-dum bullets | Pretending to be medical personnel |
| Blinding laser weapons | |
| Genetic weapons | |

3. Compare your list to the following information on international humanitarian law and banned weapons/conflict strategies and add anything that is missing.

International Humanitarian Law states:

The use of weapons is banned that:

- cause unnecessary suffering and superfluous injury (e.g. dum-dum bullets or blinding laser weapons)
- are indiscriminate in their effects, i.e. they affect combatants and non-combatants alike (e.g. landmines, cluster munitions)
- destroy things needed for the survival of civilians (e.g. poisoning water)
- cause lasting damage to the environment (e.g. radiological dispersion devices)
- contain poison gas, chemical or biological agents (all chemical and biological weapons, e.g. agent orange or mustard gas)

Conflict strategies that are banned:

- Use of child soldiers
- Deceiving the enemy by pretending to be a protected person
- Rape, sexualised violence, sexual slavery
- Inhumane treatment of prisoners (such as slavery, torture)
- Mass murder or genocide
- Attacking dams, dykes or nuclear generating installations
- Disproportionate use of excessive damage to civilians (e.g. blanket bombing)

Nuclear weapons are not banned per se, but any use would most likely contravene international humanitarian law. Uranium weapons are also not internationally banned as yet, but some countries (Belgium, Costa Rica) have banned them.

4. (Optional) Discuss this proposal from the ICRC

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has proposed that the legality of a weapon can be measured by establishing whether it would cause any of the following effects:

- disease other than that resulting from physical trauma from explosions or projectiles
- abnormal physiological or psychological states (other than expected response to trauma from explosions or projectiles)
- permanent disability specific to the kind of weapon
- disfigurement specific to the kind of weapon
- inevitable or virtually inevitable death in the field or a high hospital mortality rate
- grade three wounds among those who survive to hospital
- effects for which there is no well recognized and proven medical treatment which can be applied in a well-equipped field hospital

## Exercise 4: Debate on Non-Lethal Weapons (NLW)

Definition of Non-Lethal-Weapons (NLW)

- NLWs are specifically designed and primarily employed to incapacitate people or disable equipment, with minimal collateral damage to property and the environment
- they should be discriminate and not cause unnecessary suffering
- their effects on people should be temporary and reversible
- they should provide alternatives to or raise the threshold for use of lethal force

Arguments for and against

Proponents of NLWs claim that the term correctly reflects the intention neither to kill nor to permanently harm. It is not meant to imply that 'non-lethal' weapons will never produce fatalities but that, compared to lethal weapons, NLWs could significantly reduce the number of deaths during violent conflict. NLWs have already been used for years, but those now being developed are far more advanced.

Opponents of NLWs fear that calling them 'non-lethal' hides the fact that they can have devastating effects on their targets and that they have great potential to injure and kill. The current trend towards NLWs that combine one or more technologies and have variable settings has led the ICRC to argue that there should be no 'non-lethal' or 'less-lethal' labels whatsoever, as all are simply weapons.

## Course 3: War, weapons and conflict strategies

Sources of information

Additional information can be taken from the lesson on New Types of Weapons and from the internet (e.g. consult the list of references at the bottom of the lesson).

Debate

First proponent speaks for six minutes giving the basic arguments.
First opponent speaks for six minutes giving the basic arguments.

Recess of 10 minutes to prepare answers.

Second proponent answers for four minutes.
Second opponent answers for four minutes.

## Course 3: War, weapons and conflict strategies
### Chapter 3: Response to war

**Exercise 5: Develop a public awareness action**

Develop an action to raise awareness on one of the following issues:

1. use of small arms and guns
2. effects of uranium weapons
3. cluster munitions

Answer the following questions while developing your action:

- What do you know about the effects of these weapons? (Facts and figures)
- How do you feel about the use of these weapons? (use personal stories)
- Why does it affect you? (motivation to act)
- What can you do about it? (message, option to act)

The action can be a street or an online action. It should have a strong visual or dramatic element. Facts and figures or personal stories can be made up but should be kept as realistic as possible. Some facts and figures can be found in the lessons in course 3 on the effects of weapons but research should be kept to a minimum.

You will be asked to make a short (10 minute) presentation of your ideas for the action to the whole group.

Some helpful information:

**Small arms and light weapons**, or 'conventional weapons', are those that can be operated by one or two people. They include handguns, assault rifles, machine guns, grenades and landmines. These weapons are known to cause the majority of deaths in violent conflict globally, increase the number of deaths occurring during robbery or assault, and enhance the lethality of suicide. There are estimated 639 million small arms globally, or approximately one for every ten people on earth. More than half the world's countries are involved in producing the 7.5-8 million new weapons and 10-14 billion rounds of ammunition manufactured annually (Small Arms Survey 2003). The global trade in small arms and light weapons may be worth US $21 billion (€15 billion) annually (Hillier and Wood 2003). Around 98 countries have the capacity to produce small arms, but the vast majority are produced in Europe (47%) and North and Central America (34%).

**Uranium weapons** contain radioactive depleted uranium (U-238). Uranium weapons are specifically designed to penetrate armoured vehicles such as tanks. On impact, the uranium penetrator tip melts and partially vaporizes. The generated metal particles start burning spontaneously to form particles of uranium oxide. When the round has entered its target, fuel tanks are often set on fire and ammunition stored in vehicles detonates, usually leading to large explosions. As a result the remains of the penetrator may also partly burn into dust (uranium oxide particles). The resulting very fine, radioactive, toxic dust can cause harm

when inhaled or ingested. Apart from on testing ranges, uranium weapons are known to have been used in the 1991 Gulf War, Bosnia in 1994-5, Kosovo in 1999, Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan. DU is an alpha emitter, which has led to claims that it is more or less harmless because the radioactivity it emits cannot travel through the skin. It is, however, harmful when particles are inhaled, ingested or enter the body through a wound. Moreover, as a heavy metal DU is highly toxic. Although slightly less radioactive than natural uranium, it behaves identically in terms of its chemistry. It is widely accepted that uranium, inhaled as insoluble particles, is carcinogenic to the lung through its radioactive emissions; and that if soluble it will cross the blood-air barrier of the lung to become systemic and be physiologically toxic to the kidney. Uranium may also be genotoxic, meaning that it is capable of damaging the genetic material of humans and thus potentially lead to cancer. Uranium weapons are not specifically banned, but are considered by many to be illegal under present international law.

**Cluster munitions** are intended for attacking large-scale enemy troop formations. They come apart in the air before making contact, dispersing 200-400 bomblets that can saturate a radius of 250 m. The changing nature of warfare, though, means they are used against enemies in or near highly populated areas, so all too often they critically injure or kill civilians instead of their intended military targets. There is a further danger: up to 40% of the bomblets fail to detonate immediately, and leave a trail of unexploded munitions in war-torn areas. Cluster bombs fall under the general rules of international humanitarian law, but were not specifically covered by any currently binding international legal instrument until the signature of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in December 2008. This international treaty stemmed from an initiative by the Government of Norway known as the Oslo Process which was launched in February 2007 to prohibit cluster munitions. This treaty was signed by 94 states in Oslo on 3–4 December 2008.