



# **Reintegration and SSG/R: Evolution and Current Practices from Mali and Somalia**



## Definition

The following definitions are taken from the *Integrated DDR Standards* (IDDRS)<sup>1</sup> and are commonly used to describe DDR:

*Disarmament* consists in the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives as well as light and heavy weapons belonging to combatants. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes, and in some cases, the building of armories if none are in place.

*Demobilization* is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups. It may extend from the processing of individual combatants in temporary centres to the massing of troops in camps designated for this purpose (cantonment sites, assembly areas, barracks or demobilization centres).

*Reinsertion* is a form of transitional assistance to help cover the basic needs of ex-combatants and their families as they leave the demobilization centres. It can include transitional safety allowances (cash), food, clothes, shelter, medical services, short-term education / training / employment, as well as tools. It is a short-term material and/or financial assistance to meet immediate needs that can last up to a year or so.

*Reintegration* is the process through which former combatants become established in their communities and gain sustainable employment and income. It is a social and economic process with an open timeframe, primarily taking place at the community level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility that often requires long-term external assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> The IDDRS were first published by the United Nations in 2006 and revised in 2019.

## Introduction

Since the 1990, traditional DDR had to include the following preconditions in order to take place:

1. a trusted and inclusive peace agreement providing the legal framework for DDR programming;
2. willingness of the parties to engage in DDR;
3. minimum guarantee of security.

Traditional DDR was designed to address the needs of ex-combatants in post-conflict situations and were focused on organized military units and armed forces. There was a fixed sequence to follow: (i) disarmament, (ii) demobilization and (iii) reintegration. There was often a definitive victory of one party, or an internationally mandated peace operation was put in place. Examples of traditional DDR programmes include El Salvador DDR, Guatemala, Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Cambodia, Haiti and the Philippines. While results were mixed, such programmes were relatively straightforward to implement and followed a defined sequence<sup>2</sup>. After receiving modest benefits and possibly a veteran's pension, ex-combatants were expected to return to their home communities as civilians. A smaller selection of those passing through DDR initiatives were eligible to re-apply for entry into newly formed security entities, including the armed forces.

In the 2000s, the link between security and development was codified in the *Brahimi Report*<sup>3</sup>, adding a development dimension to DDR. By 2015, ground experiences pointed towards the need of placing communities at the center of the reintegration process through increased civic engagement. This in turn led to what is now known as “second generation DDR”.

In parallel, DDR interventions have increasingly been called for in complex security and political environments where responses often must be undertaken in situations where security remains fragile, and that many of the historically stated preconditions for DDR are not present. These environments often include armed groups engaged in violent extremism.

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<sup>2</sup> See Muggah and O' Donnell, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> On 13 November 2000, the Security Council welcomed the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations "Brahimi Report") and unanimously adopted a wide-ranging resolution containing recommendations and decisions on peacekeeping operations proposed by its Working Group.

## **I- Second generation DDR**

Second generation DDR programmes emerged in response to changing agendas for peace and security operations, and in recognition of the fact that the preconditions for traditional DDR programming did not

always exist. Following the Brahimi Report's conclusion that DDR was 'key to immediate post-conflict stability and reducing the likelihood of conflict recurrence' (Cockayne and O'Neil, 2015: 26), a UN Inter- Agency Working Group on DDR was set up in 2005. It developed the Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS). Published in 2006, to provide guidance in addressing various dimensions (political, security, etc.) of post-conflict environments. The IDDRS took a more human security-oriented approach to DDR and abandoned the fixed sequential programming (see above in traditional DDR).

Second generation DDR seeks to create wider conditions for peace and development; this is consistent with the more comprehensive approaches to peacekeeping taken by donor governments and multilateral agencies such as the UN. This became necessary due to the increasingly blurred lines between combatants and civilians as well as the undefined security environments. Indeed, peace agreements (where in place) were seldom successful in fully bringing violence to an end; in fact, one could say that peace agreements exhibited regional and transnational dynamics: thus, in a context of a peace agreement, the Government services are often weak and criminal networks become the preferred service providers for the population. Therefore, peace agreements tend to maintain a *status quo* where these criminal networks thrive. The expectations of second-generation DDR programmes became therefore much higher than those of traditional DDR at the same time as the challenges they faced were much greater.

As a result, DDR was now expected to promote reconciliation between erstwhile soldiers and communities, rebuild and reinforce social institutions, and promote economic livelihoods for combatants, their dependents and neighborhoods (Muggah 2009).

The most commonly referenced example of second-generation DDR was in Haiti. A new community-oriented model was swiftly developed to address gangs, who in form, behavior and motivation were distinct from the military-style units that were typically the focus of DDR programs around the world. Building on crime and violence prevention models tested in Latin America and other parts of the world, MINUSTAH developed a Community Violence Reduction (CVR) program. Although the outcomes of CVR were clearly mixed, the explicit shift in approach triggered a rethink of DDR across the United Nations system.

Despite some success in Haiti, concerns that DDR was not working began to accumulate. Reintegration was (and continues to be) routinely castigated for being the weakest link in

the DDR chain. Indeed, in most contexts, the reintegration phase of the process never really succeeded due to the lack of trust between the population and the Government as well as to the potential violations committed by ex-combatants. Many development practitioners vehemently argued against funding initiatives designed exclusively for soldiers and their families on moral and more pragmatic grounds. Critics raised concerns about the ways in which DDR was often disconnected from recovery and development activities intended to benefit traumatized communities. As a result, more and more development agencies began stepping back from the DDR enterprise altogether.

## **II- DDR in violent extremist environments**

Since the Brahimi Report in 2000, violent extremism (VE) has progressively grown through the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, North Africa and the Sahel, including Nigeria and Libya. DDR activities are now being pursued during fully-fledged armed conflicts that lack the basic preconditions for DDR as laid out in the IDDRS. Many extremist groups active in current conflicts are listed as terrorist organizations by the UN and fall under the framework of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, with far-reaching political and legal repercussions for DDR.

Consequently, DDR is being increasingly called upon in contexts of extremism conducive to terrorism, presenting practitioners with complex legal and operational challenges, and bringing to the forefront critical questions about when, how and with whom to engage. For example, in Somalia, DDR was called upon to facilitate the reintegration of persons formerly associated with al-Shabaab into communities, while in Nigeria, reintegration programs were used to incentivize defection from Boko Haram.

A new policy approach for DDR requires a paradigm shift if it is to address the DDR-CVE intersection. A primary shift in policy development is to see DDR as a conflict-prevention measure (notably through CVR by reducing violence within communities through social cohesion and by occupying youth which in turn strengthened trust and reduced the pull of violence and violent extremism), rather than a post-conflict peacebuilding tool. Such an approach addresses the phenomenon of recidivism into armed groups. A second shift is from socio-economic reintegration as the prime factor for successful DDR towards social reintegration as a precondition to sustainably reintegrate persons in fragile economies where radicalized groups operate.

This can be done by placing communities and reintegration of foreign fighters from DDR at the centre of the reintegration process through a process civic engagement, as is the case in Somalia. However, such an expansion is causing a growing debate about the merits of expanding the parameters of DDR. On one hand, some experts have argued that fundamental changes in the dynamics of organized violence, partly because of the spread of violent extremism conducive to terrorism in Africa and the Middle East, combined with the rising expectations of DDR in contexts of peacebuilding, state-building and CVE, make such an expansion important. On the other hand, others have cautioned against stretching the parameters of DDR, arguing that while programs, such as disengagement and deradicalization, share traits with DDR, they should be treated separately. A third group has called for the development of a new practice framework on the “Demobilization and Disengagement of Violent Extremists” (DDVE). With the adoption of UN Security Council Resolutions, such as Resolution 2396 (2017) under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, member states were called upon to develop screening, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for domestic and foreign terrorist fighters.

### **III- Next (or third) generation DDR**

Despite the shift from strictly defined traditional DDR, to more flexible second-generation DDR programmes, these were still seen as too formulaic and ineffective. Presently, DDR is undergoing a *third* shift.

Peace operations are receiving DDR mandates in areas with weak state structures and limited statehood where conflict is ongoing, state governance and rule of law are absent and insurgent groups slated for DDR are associated with “terrorist” organizations. DDR efforts are mandated for states, although they have regional dimensions, with conflict dynamics and emergent caseloads of foreign fighters being shaped by radical agendas. The operating environment includes counterinsurgency and counterterrorism, with addressing reintegration and CVE an increasing concern. This current generation of DDR can be characterized as the political reintegration generation for DDR. Indeed, the current reintegration process is currently often linked to political sensitivities based on the emergence of violent extremism. There is a dearth of research for DDR and CVE with no policy to guide practice on the ground.

In response to the proliferation of non-state armed groups across multiple settings, Muggah and O’Donnell (2015) note the emergence of more diverse and forceful ‘next generation’ DDR interventions. They highlight several differences between next generation DDR and traditional/second generation DDR:

- Next generation DDR often takes place *before* peace agreements have even been reached in non-permissive security environments: Next generation DDR appears to be more all-encompassing than its predecessors. In some cases, DDR is preceded by interim stabilization measures while the terms of peace deals are being negotiated;
- It targets groups that may not be explicit parties to an eventual peace agreement;
- It takes a ‘stick rather than carrot’ approach, thereby revisiting the voluntary nature of DDR that was a core tenet of preceding DRR interventions;
- Revisiting reinsertion and reintegration: Reinsertion and reintegration are supposed to follow disarmament and demobilisation, however carrying them out first can be a more feasible and effective approach – providing combatants with assistance can create incentives for them to give up their weapons. This is particularly the case in countries with a strong gun culture, e.g. Afghanistan;
- This new generation of DDR puts politics – including political engagement and outreach – at the center of the picture. It is wider in scope, moving from narrowly defined standalone interventions to activities purposefully connected to national development objectives; DDR is seen as intimately connected to security sector reform, transitional justice and state building efforts. Accordingly, third generation DDR is characterized in part by a shift in focus from predominately socioeconomic integration to also include social and political engagement. This is increasingly connected to broader conflict management and peacebuilding operations. By rebuilding social bonds between communities and former combatants, fostering acceptance within communities for disengaged combatants and addressing the drivers that can be exploited by armed groups to recruit individuals, third generation DDR aims to offer a more sustainable economic, social and political alternative to conflict.

## **IV- Examples and highlights of next-generation DDR:**

### **Somalia and Mali**

#### **Somalia**

DDR programmes in Somalia are being implemented in a situation of on-going conflict, counter-terrorism operations, and in the absence of a peace accord. The government is fighting Al-Shabaab with military support from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and non-military support from the UN. There are several small-scale DDR programmes underway, mostly funded by the UN, as well as bilateral country counterterrorism initiatives. DDR programmes are focused exclusively on Al-Shabaab defectors and combatants: other armed groups such as militias, clan forces, etc. are not included, even though long-term peace cannot happen without disarming and reintegrating them. Lack of international funding (as well as capacity on the part of

Somali actors) means the special needs of vulnerable groups such as women and minors are not being addressed in DDR programmes. The difficult security situation means donor agencies (notably the UN) have limited physical access to facilities.

Somalia offers yet another example of the 'stick then carrot' approach. There, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) force confronted Al-Shabaab in what resembled conventional military confrontations for territory. This culminated in AMISOM re-gaining control of the capital Mogadishu in 2011. Shortly thereafter, the Somali government was contacted by Al-Shabaab rank and file members requesting assistance to leave the group. In turn, the government launched a national program for 'disengaging combatants' with support from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). At least four 'transition centers' were established in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Beletwyane and Kismayo. Concerns were registered about the legal and operational risks associated with setting up disengagement efforts, not least owing to the heavy involvement of Somali intelligence (NISA). What is more, these interventions were pursued at a time that Al-Shabaab remained very active, switching its strategy and tactics from conventional military engagements to almost exclusively asymmetric warfare.

The creation of the transitional centers differs in some respects from cantonment sites established in first or even second-generation DDR. In Somalia, the centers were not merely a convenient way to deliver assistance, training or education. Rather, they were an institution designed to protect Al-Shabaab defectors from imminent threat.

## **Mali**

In June 2019, the National Assembly adopted new laws on national reconciliation and created the Northern Region Development Zone. In August, about 1,000 former combatants of the Coordination of Azawad Movements and the Platform were integrated into the national defense and security forces, though they have yet to be deployed.

But the report also highlights the parties' delaying tactics in the accelerated demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) process, as well as the standstill in constitutional reform. The planned constitutional referendum in June did not occur, and the Inclusive Political Dialogue, the process designed to increase support for constitutional reform, will have to be completed before the reform process restarts. In July, the burning of the Malian flag in Kidal further contributed to declining trust among the signatories of the agreement and further set back the return of government-provided social services to the town.

## V- On-going challenges

**Unrealistic expectations:** DDR has become increasingly linked to wider agendas for stability, recovery and reconstruction, and State building.

**Funding:** Short-term budgetary mechanisms constrains the effectiveness of DDR programming.

**Conduct of DDR in 'hot' conflict situations:** Since 2010 DDR initiatives are increasingly being carried out in situations where conflict is on-going, e.g. the Sahel, North and Central Africa and the Middle East. There are questions about the extent to which positive DDR outcomes can be achieved if there is no buy-in from conflict parties to the DDR process and on-going violence prevents the level of economic development necessary to support civilian development.

**Transnational elements:** Another characteristic of 'modern' conflicts, particularly in the regions listed above, is the presence of foreign fighters and movement of combatants across borders.

**Economic insecurity and haphazard reintegration:** DDR is premised on the assumption that economic recovery and job creation – leading to absorption of ex-combatants – will take place post-conflict, but in reality, economic insecurity means this rarely happens (UN, 2010). Reinsertion and reintegration are seen as the weakest link in the DDR process. As well as economic insecurity, this stems from a failure to assess local economic opportunities and market dynamics and identify what would be suited to DDR participants, and from lack of diversification in vocational training leading to gluts in certain sectors (Cockayne & O'Neil, 2015).

**Respect for human rights:** Donors face 'moral hazards' in the increasingly messy settings in which they have to implement DDR, how to ensure support for national DDR does not appear to reward combatants for their prior violence? (Cockayne & O'Neil, 2015: 30)

**Monitoring and effectiveness assessment:** Cockayne and O'Neil note that the focus in DDR programming appears to be on outputs rather than outcomes. There is minimal or no post-release monitoring of ex-combatants 'so there is no way of knowing that impact DDR programming is having on participants' behavior or choices, or whether they are returning to conflict or violent extremism' (2015: 155).

**Lack of political will among donors for DDR:** Lack of political will to champion DDR partly because of the limited empirical evidence on effectiveness of DDR programming.

**Integration and coordination:** As DDR interventions have become wider in scope (given the necessary links between security and development work), ensuring effective integration and coordination of different activities between diverse donors has become more challenging (UN, 2010 and Kolln, 2011).

**Need for more research:** DDR-related research has expanded significantly over the past thirty years (Muggah, 2010), but there remains considerable scope for improvement, in particular for a closer nexus between researchers and practitioners, so that research can effectively inform programme design and implementation.

## **Concluding Remarks**

DDR is increasingly merging with CVR initiatives and programmes, especially across peacekeeping and peacebuilding environments. Operating under the assumption that radical ideologies are relational and can be reversed over time, third-generation political reintegration addresses legitimate grievance through transformative processes of NSAGs. In this framework, the linkages in DDR and CVE will necessarily address the structural causes of conflict, rather than offer remedial short-term solutions handed down through a legally binding Security Council mandate. Taken together, these elements can inform a new generation in emergent DDR and CVE policy.

DDR is adapting to address complex armed groups and situations marked by stop-start peace and simmering violence.

To do this, DDR will need to be supported by a highly trained pool of experts, and fully exploit the research-practice nexus.

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