

**Policy and Practice: Operationalizing Mali’s Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Process –
A White Paper**

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Executive Summary:

Introduction:

This paper was commissioned on behalf of USAID and is part of Creative Associates International - Creative Mali Peacebuilding, Stabilization, and Reconciliation (PSR) program. The PSR program is a 5-year project (2018-2023) created to support the Government of Mali (GoM) in the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement and to contribute to building resilience and peacebuilding in the North, Center, and South of Mali. The project works with communities to address conflict mitigation and management, promoting inclusive governance, strengthening civic engagement, and empowering young people. This paper examines certain elements of Mali's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process. Creative's engagement in DDR includes advising the US and national government on national policies and legal frameworks, strategic program development, security sector engagement¹, reinsertion and reintegration, assessments, and evaluations. Aware of the need to develop an updated contemporary approach and understanding of DDR, Creative undertook an inventory of its DDR portfolio from 1986 to the present that includes 44 projects in 18 countries and 6 regions developing a working DDR definition conceptually framing DDR.

“DDR is a political process whereby policies, programs and operations are considered in settings at risk, during, or recovery from armed conflict. Beneficiaries may include armed actors, their affiliates, and associates, and include statutory armed forces and non-statutory armed groups irrespective of their legal designations. (Re)integration can be in the security, civil and public sector, or civilian livelihoods. DDR further supports affected communities, victims, and survivors in the provision of socio-economic, social and psychosocial support”.

The paper broadly discusses the evolution of DDR programs and processes since the 1980s by focusing on a three “generation” model. This is not exhaustive. Major initiatives in Mali like the UN's are including while World Bank (WB) efforts are not. The intent is to provide the reader with a conceptual framework to understand DDR in general global terms, which can then be applied to Mali's history in DDR. This includes the current DDR outlined in the Algiers Accord. In doing so, researcher's decisions on what to include and what to leave out of this paper reflect our attempt to outline different conflict and post-conflict scenarios, political, legal and security elements of DDR and related programming, before focusing on Mali specifically.

The paper assesses DDR in Mali historically, as well as progress, or lack thereof, on DDR benchmarks established as part of the 2015 the Algiers Accords. An area that is threaded throughout the paper is the concept of “political” DDR. We demonstrate how DDR is often conceptualized and implemented by the international community as a technical exercise, e.g., a set of quotas to be filled, training provided, etc. But success or failure rests in large part on its political nature, namely, decisions governments make about who is eligible for DDR, who is not eligible, and why, who is given key military posts, what tasks are assigned to what units, and more. While a major component of DDR in Mali is security sector reform (SSR), in deciding to make reintegration the centerpiece for this paper, SSR is not treated at length. The

¹ The terms 'security sector engagement', 'security sector reform' and 'security sector governance' are used interchangeably for the purposes of this paper.

paper also offers analysis into the possibilities of DDR in Central Mali, where there is no framework peace agreement in place, and addresses the “southern question” of how Malian populations view, understand, and react to the prospect of DDR in the country.

This white paper has three complementary goals:

1. To provide a framework for understanding DDR as part of a peace process and a political process despite often being evaluated through an operational lens (disarmament and demobilization) with a programmatic element (reintegration).
2. Viewing DDR through a political economy and security lens to determine under what conditions the DDR process could move forward credibly, whether these so-called ‘*preconditions*’ exist and what options are available in their absence.
3. To examine and unpack options for engaging with armed groups, and reintegration not limited to security sector integration. What, if anything can be done to create an enabling environment for DDR and reintegration.

Methodology:

This paper is the result of an extensive research process. After an initial planning stage between the three-person research team, Creative and USAID teams in Washington, D.C. and Bamako, the researchers assembled and conducted an extensive review of available secondary and primary literature and documents. This included strategy documents, analysis of DDR processes in other countries, assessments, and theoretical literature about the multiple “generations” of DDR, secondary literature on the history of DDR in Mali and its current implementation, UN, and reports such as those from the Carter Center, and documents including the Malian government’s DDR strategy and the text of the Algiers Accords. The researchers also conducted 10 formal Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and drew findings from 10 informal interviews with a wide spectrum of officials to elicit a wide array of views about DDR in Mali. This includes interviews with UN officials, Malian government officials, members of the international community implicated in DDR, armed group members from the Algiers Process as well as non-signatory armed groups. The research team used discourse analysis techniques to draw conclusions based on qualitative data collection associated with a diverse group of KIIs. During the KII process, the research team benefitted from regular debriefing sessions, interpreting KII narratives to understand and organize data collected in qualitative research. This enabled the team to grasp the political, security and social context in which the interactions took place and draw a narrative around DDR. In the final analysis, the Principal Investigator identified themes and sub-themes presented herein.

Conceptualizing DDR processes and the 3-Generation Model:

Since the mid-1980s, the international community, including the UN, WB, USG and others supported dozens of DDR initiatives. Most followed the conclusion of international or civil wars, making DDR a post conflict endeavor. A guiding feature of these programs was an internationally recognized and signed peace agreement between major warring parties or factions. Oftentimes the disarmament component demonstrated a willingness to lay down a weapon in exchange for peace. Rarely was total disarmament a stated goal. It was widely recognized that soon to be ex-combatants (XCs) will retain some small arms or light weapons. It was common for demobilization to occur at cantonment sites prior to reinsertion back to communities. During demobilization XCs ‘prepared’ for return to civilian lives. Center based or

community based vocational, and skills training followed demobilization ceremonies. Defined as “a social and economic process with an open time frame, primarily taking place in communities at the local level. It is part of the general development of a country and a national responsibility and often necessitates long-term external assistance”² reintegration remains the most complex part of DDR.

The First Generation – The Statebuilding Generation: Corresponding with the end of the Cold War between the US and Soviet Union. This would last for approximately 15 to 20-years, from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s. During this period, the US and Russia underwent a process of withdrawal from Southern Africa and Central America where they were engaged in proxy wars. Realigning as allies, they supported UN led DDR efforts in these regions. These DDRs lacked meaningful attention to reintegration in favor of statebuilding agendas. In Southern Africa the withdrawal of U.S. and Soviet proxies accompanied new states to the international community. Among these, Namibia, Angola, and Mozambique³. Fighters once labeled as terrorists rebel groups like the Mozambican National Resistance - RENAMO and the Southwest Africa’s People’s Organization - SWAPO, were rebranded as ‘*liberation fighters*’ and called upon to unite under a single national identity and fighting force.

The Second Generation – The Era of Development: At about the same time that the UN Brahimi Report created the link between security and development in the early 2000s, DDRs were increasingly criticized by the international community for their lack of reintegration effectiveness. Operationally, DDR was proficient as XCs were disarmed and demobilized in masse, however; program results related to reintegration were subpar. As a response, a broad range of policy options was created to strengthen reintegration, including a shift from an individual focus to communities⁴. DDR caseloads expanded to include women, children and girls associated with armed groups in non-combatant roles. Where the first generation dealt with rebels turned into liberation fighters, the second generation addressed predatory groups⁵ like Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front - RUF. Notably, second-generation DDRs were post conflict efforts following civil wars.

The Third Generation – DDR During Conflict and ‘Violent Extremism’: Starting around 2012-2015 there was a third shift where DDR mandates were considered during active armed conflict. This remains the case currently. The first major DDR in this category was Somalia. A key characteristic of this 3rd Generation of DDR is candidates for DDR from insurgent groups or violent extremist organizations (VEOs) that are often listed as - ‘*terrorists*’. This creates legal complications for DDR design and implementation as VEOs are excluded from DDR, and incumbent political processes, which can make DDR moribund. There remain significant limitations governing support that can be provided to persons or groups listed as designated terrorist organizations (DTOs). The operating environment increasingly includes counterinsurgency and counterterrorism measures⁶ alongside ‘soft’ approaches to disengaging and reintegration former fighters and associates with community reconciliation efforts. These dynamics continue and occurring in Mali.

² UNSG Report (A/60/705). Page 27.

³ Ibid, page 4.

⁴ Ibid, page 4.

⁵ Ibid, page 4.

⁶ Ibid, page 4.

Examining DDR in Mali is best served by using a framework depicting the changing nature and goals of DDRs from the 1980s to the present. The DDRs of the 1980s and 1990s were largely a manifestation of a peace agreement between two warring parties – typically a non-state armed group (NSAG) in direct opposition to the State. The types of NSAGs and the changing nature of conflict transformed modern DDR. Mali is no exception. In Mali’s north, self-defense forces pepper the landscape. The addition of VEOs further complicates matters. Illustratively the Sahel experienced a 70% increase in violence carried out by militant Islamist groups from 1,180 to 2,005 events in 2021⁷. NSAGs are major players in most armed conflicts. Current estimates place upwards of 66 million people living in territories governed by armed groups and actors. Additionally, NSAGs proliferate in 44% of armed conflicts globally with between three and nine opposing forces, and 22% have over 10⁸. Importantly, of the more than 600 armed groups identified as being of humanitarian concern for the international committee for the Red Cross in 2020, about half are in Africa⁹. This begs the question of who is eligible and ineligible for DDR and speaks to the political elements of contemporary DDR processes. It further suggests an examination of the preconditions for DDR in general, and in Mali specifically. By 2015, DDRs were being considered in countries during active conflict where peace accords did not signal the end of armed conflict.¹⁰

The History and State of Play for Mali’s Current DDR:

To frame DDR in Mali, it helps to look at Mali’s history in DDR through the *3-Generation* approach. To do so we subdivide the last three decades into four periods.

The first period - 1992-1996: Mali experienced the signing of the National Pact in April 1992 between the government of Mali and the Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad (MFUA), and the 1990-1996 Tuareg rebellion. The DDR program was designed as a post-conflict instrument to address the causes of Mali’s internal conflicts. Supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other partners, the Normalization and Rehabilitation Program in the North was a vehicle to support DDR.¹¹ This program allowed for the implementation of a Program of Support for the Reintegration of ex-combatants (PAREM) from July 1996 to December 1997.¹² PAREM reintegrated former fighters in Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu regions through livelihood options and micro-projects.¹³ A second phase supported an additional cohort of XCs and projects along with integration into security and defense forces.¹⁴ This period has elements of the first generation as peace envisaged in the National Pact was an effort at national reconciliation and

⁷ Mooney, pages 1-2.

⁸ Ibid, page 3.

⁹ ICRC Position Paper, page 2.

¹⁰ Piedmont - Centre for Security Governance, page 1.

¹¹ Zafar, 5 June 2010. Page 5.

¹² Ibid, page 5.

¹³ Ibid, page 5. DDR assisted 9,511 former fighters in the Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu regions through 868 micro-projects in agriculture, artisanship, trade, livestock, and services.

¹⁴ Ibid, pages 5-6. In phase II, 876 projects and 9,621 ex-fighters received DDR support with 2,540 combatants e-integrated into Mali’s security and defense forces; mostly the army, the gendarmerie, and the national guard.

“statebuilding”.¹⁵ It constituted a peace deal between the Malian government and an ostensibly unified rebel force that claimed to represent all the armed movements of northern Mali - the MFUA.¹⁶ There are also third generation aspects as conflict continued.

The second period - 1996-1997: The “flame of peace”, inaugurated several programs for DDR as well as economic assistance and development aid for northern Mali, especially Kidal¹⁷ corresponding to a second-generation approach where DDR will accompany (socio-economic) development outcomes. Unfortunately, these programs were poorly administered.¹⁸ However, the civil war that broke out following the National Pact included community militias with some government support.¹⁹ The use of these militias and ethnic fragmentation of armed movements along ethnic lines marked the end of DDR as a state building process. Selective reintegration of armed group members became a means for the government to reward supporters and balance power.

The third period - 2002-2013: The conceptualization of DDR and reintegration became more pronounced as pro-government militia integration into the armed forces became a component of security provision in northern Mali.²⁰ The lack of a unified armed forces contributed to a rebellion from 2006-2009.²¹ There was no formal reintegration or peace process following the 2006 rebellion. Some who left the military were reintegrated into the armed forces while others who led the rebellion were given diplomatic posts.²² The administration at the time relied on armed groups to maintain security, helping to set the stage for the 2012 rebellion when Tuareg fighters came back *en masse* from Libya following the 2011 civil war. An opportunity for peace was missed as little was done to receive or talk with fighters who belonged to some tribal groups, whereas other fighters were received in public ceremonies in the north and in Bamako and in many cases immediately integrated into Mali’s armed forces, fueling tribal and ethnic grievances.²³ These forces largely collapsed when rebellion in northern Mali broke out in January 2012. Some fighters from pro-government groups joined *jihadi* groups, viewing this as the best way to protect their communities.²⁴ The post rebellion landscape was marked by a *jihadi* takeover of northern Mali in 2012, and French intervention in January 2013 to dislodge these groups. In this setting, armed groups sought to maintain or secure their positions against the Malian state and other armed movements. It is within this context that the Algiers Accord was signed.

¹⁵Moulaye, December 2006. Pages 38-50. Shurkin and Pezard, 2015. Pages 34-38.

¹⁶ Shurkin and Pezard, 2015. Page 14; Lecocq, 2010. Page 320.

¹⁷ These programs received significant assistance from USAID, among other donors. See telephone interview with a NGO administrator and political analyst, June 18, 2022.

¹⁸Moulaye, December 2006. Pages 38-50. Shurkin and Pezard, 2015. Pages 34-38.

¹⁹ Lecocq, 2010. Pages 337-338.

²⁰ Molenaar et. al., September 2019. Page 84.

²¹ Chebli, Spring 2022. Pages 99-100. Also see for instance Desgrais et. al., 2018. Page 659

²² Chauzal and Van Damme, March 2015. Page 10.

²³ Chebli, Spring 2022. Pages 101-102.

²⁴ Desgrais et al., 2018. Page 667. On the impact and failings of past agreements, also see Boutellis and Zahar, June 2017. Pages 3-9.

The fourth period - 2015-present: It is from the signing of the Algiers Accord (2015) to the present where aspects of all three generations are at play. State and national building efforts are taking place with calls for development programs to address some root causes of conflict including poor governance. At the same time VEOs continue to operate within Mali's borders. In this context, the government and UN moved toward an "accelerated DDR and Integration Program" or ADDR-I.²⁵ The integration of nearly 1,800 fighters out of a planned 3,000 in the initial round of ADDR-I was intended to build confidence by rapidly deploying integrated former combatants to generate momentum among the armed groups to continue the DDR process.²⁶ After an initial training period, candidates deployed as part of the Bataillon des Forces Armées Reconstitués (BAT-FAR) in 2020. The beginning of the transitional government heralded cautious optimism about advancement in the peace process in general, and DDR specifically, with the first meetings of the monitoring committee of the accords (CSA in French) occurring outside of Bamako, with meetings in Kidal in February 2021 and Kayes in March 2021.²⁷ By summer 2021, BAT-FAR deployed to Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal, with a smaller contingent to Ménaka.²⁸ While conducting some patrols, they appear to have limited engagement in security operations. Some in Mali, including signatory group representatives, have expressed concern that instead of serving only in the north and as the core of a reconstituted army, they sometimes spread out among different units with an unclear chain of command.²⁹ Arguably, a dynamic like what was occurring prior to the 2006 rebellion.

Some signatory movements began to doubt the will of the transitional government to implement the accords.³⁰ An example was repeated delays in 2021 to hold a high-level meeting on defense and security and a CSA, leading the Carter Center to conclude in June 2022 that "implementation [of the Accord] is at an unprecedented impasse."³¹ This impasse included DDR, until high ranking government stakeholders raised the possibility of integrating 26,000³² combatants from all groups in two tranches.³³ One KII, noted this proposal caused some confusion as parties were reluctant to discuss sensitive issues of ranks, quotas, or the chain of command for reintegrated forces.³⁴ The high-level meeting which did take place in August 2022 on defense and security addressed a single original agenda item on the integration of 26,000 fighters into Mali's security forces over the next two years. The government and signatory movements also agreed to create a commission to manage senior civilian and military figures in the

²⁵ Savey and Boisvert, 28 December, 2018. Page 5. This process was intended to overcome delays in the earlier process, as well as uncertainty after the January 2017 suicide bombing on the base housing members of the Mécanisme Opérationnelle de Coordination (MOC) in Gao.

²⁶ Carter Center, August 2021. Pages 5-7.

²⁷ Telephone interview with specialist in Algiers Accords, June 22, 2022.

²⁸ Carter Center, August 2021. Page 13.

²⁹ Interview with signatory group member representative, Bamako, Mali, August 2022.

³⁰ Telephone interview with specialist on the Algiers Accords, 22 June, 2022.

³¹ Carter Center, June 2022. Page 7. The high-level meeting on defense and security was originally scheduled for February 2021 but not held until August 2022.

³² The figure of 26,000 reflects a proposed plan for 'integration' into the military and security forces, though also other "uniformed" forces like the police and customs, as well as civil service positions.

³³ The proposal was tabled at an October 2021 CSA. Each tranche would consist of 13,000 combatants each.

³⁴ Telephone interview with specialist on the Algiers Accords, 22 June, 2022.

signatory movements integration into Mali's chain of command on a "case-by-case basis".³⁵ These call into question whether preconditions for DDR exist in Mali.

Political DDR and Mali:

The 1992 National Pact and continued need for SSR as integral to a credible DDR process in Mali align with DDR in 1st-Generation models. This supports the notion that DDR is a political process, rather than a technical undertaking, even though the government has not always treated them in this way. Political reintegration can include transforming armed groups into political parties, though also includes the legitimate and active participation in political processes at national and local levels.³⁶ In short, "success of DDR depends on political will",³⁷ not political expediency. This is an all-too-common feature for DDR efforts as we've seen in places as far flung as the Democratic Republic of Congo to Afghanistan.³⁸ In Iraq the transformation of 'local' Iraqi groups into political entities was more about elites inserting militias into security and power structures than placing them under civilian control. As we will see below, in Mali this plays out in the SSR process.³⁹ And came out in several interviews, including with a signatory group member representative, who stated "for us, DDR is first of all a political question and of political fundamentals that are made on the basis of consensus."⁴⁰ UN DDR personnel in Mali acknowledge the political aspect of their work and overarching focus on technical issues.⁴¹ A trade off may be technical accomplishments and operational proficiency to the detriment of sustainable resolutions to political questions preceding DDR. Addressing the political dimensions of Mali's DDR requires recognizing the political status quo is not working. Fortunately, the UN provides guidance on treating political aspects of DDR taken up in '*Options for DDR and armed group engagement*' section.

Security Sector Reform, Politics and Governance:

It is difficult to address DDR in Mali without talking about SSR. A broad understanding of the SSR-DDR nexus can show us how DDR activities are supposed to connect SSR goals.⁴² In relations to each other, DDR can be viewed as adopting and carrying out a series of short-term activities. The beneficiary groups are individuals and their dependents⁴³ and increasingly, communities. Conversely, goals of SSR involve longer term objectives of transforming the entire security sector⁴⁴ implying a systems approach. This often includes integration of XCs from a DDR process into the national army and security forces of a country, governed by the rule of law, under civilian control with clear command and control. This is the case in Mali. The UN global policy standards for DDR are explicit - "Ignoring how DDR and SSR affect each other may result in missed opportunities or unintended consequences that undermine broader security

³⁵ Agence France-Presse, 6 August, 2022.

³⁶ Berdal, Mats and Ucko, David H. Page 6.

³⁷ Ibid, Page 2.

³⁸ Ibid, Pages 6-7.

³⁹ Ibid, Page 7.

⁴⁰ Interview with a signatory group member representative, Bamako, Mali, August 2022.

⁴¹ Conversations and communications with UN HQ and MINUSMA officials, 2019-2022.

⁴² Integrated DDR Standards - 6:10: DDR and Security Sector Reform. 2019. Page 1.

⁴³ Ibid, page 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid, page 2.

and development goals”.⁴⁵ Illustratively, the Algiers Accord lays out a series of steps linking DDR and SSR that includes creating institutions designed to move DDR forward to help create a more inclusive and effective armed forces for Mali.⁴⁶ However, DDR and SSR are treated separately, sometimes by the government (with separate commissions and steps for implementation), which is also reflected in the peace agreement. The Algiers Accord does not explicitly link these processes, despite some signatory groups expressing a need for political and institutional reform before a comprehensive DDR can occur.

Importantly, SSR is also a political process, given that security sector organization, governance and security strategies can determine who controls access to licit and illicit resources. Allegations of ‘unclear chain’ of command’ and operating outside the national armed forces related to BAT-FAR deployment are excellent examples. These are reinforced with the 2022 high-level CSA meeting where an agreement was reached for SSR integration on a ‘case-by-case basis’. The post 1990s rebellion was an opportunity to build a unified national armed forces, implement wide-ranging political reforms and development programs in northern Mali.⁴⁷ However, lagging programs, and efforts at decentralization (a key political reform requested by armed groups and many citizens) resulted in the creation of decentralized territorial institutions, and continued centralization of funding and political power in Bamako.⁴⁸ In this regard, the 2006 rebellion is also the story of a failure of SSR to account for political issues and an equitable balance of power, e.g., political, security, and economic resources. Decisions by the post 2006 rebellion administration to reinforce the reliance on ethnic militias deepened this divide, helping fuel the 2012 rebellion when more effective DDR and SSR may have reduced the push toward rebellion. In an environment where trafficking incomes and chronic insecurity reduces the incentive to ‘disarm’ - the absence of concrete security guarantees and individual protection and a real DDR dividend to local communities, makes it difficult to imagine armed groups seriously disarming and demobilizing.

The Algiers Accord reiterates many of these institutional reforms,⁴⁹ however; a perceived failure to proceed with them, even through interim authorities, is a reason for signatory armed groups do not engage fully with the DDR program. This may allow armed groups to draw out the peace process without making real concessions AND reflect a lack of faith that the government will commit to political reforms. One political analyst interviewed observed the government “wants to do DDR immediately, disarm the movements, and then discuss the institutional aspects” of the Algiers Accord.⁵⁰ They continued, noting signatory armed movements did not want to disarm as long as they saw the government not fulfilling its promises, a feeling not likely to be resolved without progress on political

⁴⁵ Ibid, page 1.

⁴⁶ “Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process,” June 2015. Pages 7-9.

⁴⁷ See for instance Robin-Edward Poulton and Ibrahim Ag Youssouf, *A Peace of Timbuktu: Democratic Governance, Development and African Peacemaking* (New York: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, 1998). Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/258157>

⁴⁸ Jennifer Seely, “A Political Analysis of Decentralisation: Coopting the Tuareg Threat in Mali,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 39: 3 (September 2001), pp. 499-524. Also see Susanna Wing, “Mali’s Precarious Democracy and the Causes of Conflict,” *USIP Special Report*, May 2013. Available at: https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR331_Malis_Precarious_Democracy_and_the_Causes_of_Conflict.pdf

⁴⁹ Boutellis and Zahar, June 2017. Pages 32-35. In part, these reforms were meant to create more effective local governance and provide localities with more representation and the ability to directly elect members of these local and regional councils.

⁵⁰ Telephone interview with Political Analyst, 18 June, 2022.

and institutional reforms.⁵¹ The results of the recent high-level meeting are likely to have a limited effect on advancing DDR or SSR, in part because the issues highlighted above are political, not technical.

This said, the CSA meeting ended with an agreement to form a committee addressing SSR issues that are, at least for armed groups, necessary preliminary steps for proceeding with DDR.⁵² Given the slow pace of even the accelerated ADDR-I target of integrating 3,000 fighters, it seems difficult to imagine an effective integration within only a few years of 26,000 fighters⁵³ as envisaged by the national institutional bodies mandated to carryout DDR with MINUSMA support⁵⁴. Even so, such a huge infusion of former armed group members into the national army and other arms of Mali's security services, may not be met with open arms in other parts of Mali, particularly from the country's south.

The 'southern' Question:

Rebellions mark Mali's political and conflict landscape. The Tuareg uprisings of 1964, 1990, and 2006 are clear demonstrations. Likewise, DDRs in Mali have been attempted before. The point, perceptions of DDR by Malians matters. Many people in Mali, including the south, feel that DDR and larger concessions made to armed groups have undermined the state.⁵⁵ In part this reflects a dynamic where traditional, post conflict DDR efforts following a peace accord are national by nature and in scope. This is not the case in Mali. There is no DDR in the south. As we have seen, in Mali [as elsewhere] DDR is a political issue. As such there may be ramifications for a DDR taking place in one part of the country while there is active conflict in another. It is common in discussions in Mali - with southern populations as well as Central and Northern Malian communities who did not rebel against the state - to hear that the only way for communities to achieve concessions from the state is to take up arms.⁵⁶ Moreover, in the past there was no clear management of funds, as well as allegations of favoritism and nepotism in selecting and screening of candidates, and no true monitoring of the DDR process.⁵⁷ These perceptions can be dangerous, pointing to the instrumentalization of DDR as a tool to achieve political ends including access to the state and its resources. People in southern Mali may not believe in the DDR process. There are significant ethnic and cultural differences between northern Mali, where most of the armed groups are native, and the south, where political power is concentrated.

Some in southern Mali perceive DDR as a source of profit for armed groups in the north. While our research indicates there a need for a better understanding of perceptions around DDR in Mali's 'southern' regions, how to manage expectations for what DDR is, what it can deliver, we were able to derive trends on DDR perceptions across the north, central and southern regions that are telling.⁵⁸ In any DDR program, a public information and communication strategy is needed, and appears lacking in Mali. Community perception surveys conducted by Creative, and our partners show knowledge and

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Interviews with armed group representatives and Malian conflict observers, June 2022.

⁵³ UNDPO DDR Officer, Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, HQ New York. The integration of a tranche of 13,000 was planned for the end of last year with the remaining 13,000 integrated over the next two years.

⁵⁴ MINUSMA, Section RSS-DDR, Page 2.

⁵⁵ See Keita, 2018. Page 28.

⁵⁶ Numerous discussions between project consultants and Malian contacts, from 2013 until the present.

⁵⁷ See for instance Moulaye, June 2006. Pages 39-44.

⁵⁸ Mali PSR Midline Findings Report, 2022. The analyzed data are from the midline citizen perception survey conducted in December 2021. The sample of 2,373 citizens across all 43 communes where PSR has programming was used for this analysis.

understanding of DDR decreases moving from north to the south. This can lead to misunderstandings about what DDR represents and reduce support for broader peace agreements that impact national unity. Relatedly the highest support for DDR is in the north.⁵⁹ The PSR Midline Survey Report generated by Creative to for this study indicates DDR is generally supported as fighters may not be primarily religiously motivated, but are rather driven by political objectives such as greater autonomy.⁶⁰ Arguably, because southern Mali is more populated than other parts of the country and closer to the capital with key agricultural, gold, and cotton production areas, negative perceptions of DDR could impact calculations of leaders responsible for developing security policies like SSR, and impact citizens' perception of Mali as a unified country while encouraging increased autonomy⁶¹.

Arms, Militia Groups and Central Mali:

It is a misnomer to classify Mali's violence as one occurring in the "north" or "central" regions. Although Central Mali (often designated as the regions of Mopti and Segou) is distinct in many ways from the more arid northern regions (Kidal, Timbuktu, Gao, Ménaka, and Taoudenni). Even so, the violence in 2012 and *jihadist* occupation nonetheless touched part of Mopti.⁶² As there is significant movement of populations between the north and center, the violence that broke out in Mopti in 2015 also involved some fighters recruited from areas in Central and Southern Mali who joined *jihadist* groups or other armed self-defense groups during the 2012 rebellion and occupation.⁶³ Several groups took up arms again, or for the first time, in response to the spread of *jihadist* violence in Central Mali. These included traditional hunters, and ethnic armed groups, some of which were supposedly supported by military officers and are allegedly responsible for attacks and human rights violations against civilians, including groups like the Fulani. The support received from government indicates an ongoing strategy of using ethnic militias against *jihadist* groups and the populations believed to support them. Some of these groups are at times aligned with the state, but are in many ways para-statal groups, and have threatened the state with violence when faced with forced disarmament⁶⁴ or limiting their activities by Malian security forces.⁶⁵

Mali administrations, as well as the Transitional Government have put forward multiple suggestions for DDR in central Mali,⁶⁶ There have also been attempts to organize ethnic militias to benefit from the DDR process that included efforts to help youth disengage from violent extremist organization. As well, the government has conducted a 'special recruitment' of some militia fighters into the security forces

⁵⁹ Ibid, Page 1. The regions in which citizens are more than 80% favorable to the reintegration of the ex-combatants and the regions are in the north and include Taoudenit (95.5%), Gao (87.1%), Menaka (85.5%) and Kidal (82.2%).

⁶⁰ Ibid. The analysis of data taken from PSR's midline survey is anecdotal. A more robust dataset and analysis is needed to determine the veracity of this dynamic more generally. Page 3.

⁶¹ This is an area the research team deems to be under researched. Understanding how DDR could impact parts of a country where it is not implemented could be an interesting avenue on advancing the field for DDR. The 'southern' question in Mali would be a good case study.

⁶² This included the city of Douentza and areas beyond it.

⁶³ See for instance Thiam, March 2017. Pages 20-22; also see Sangaré, *GRIP*, 20 May, 2016. Page 5.

⁶⁴ Integrated DDR Standards – 4.10: Disarmament. 2019, Page 6. UN global policy notes that disarmament processes should be voluntary, and that forced 'disarmament' can have a "negative impact on contexts in transition, including in terms of restoring trust in authorities and efforts towards national reconciliation."

⁶⁵ For instance, Quidelleur, Spring 2022. Pages 119-124; also see Tanguy Quidelleur, 2022. Pages 53-57.

⁶⁶ De Leon Cobo, 1 March, 2021; International Crisis Group, 9 November, 2020. Page 28.

separate from any formal DDR initiatives⁶⁷ In other areas, ethnic fighters and militias have worked directly with Malian security forces, acting as guides and benefitting from military support.⁶⁸ This is similar to the northeast Nigeria Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) who served the same function ‘para-statal’ function in relation to the government and army. Importantly, as of 2020, the CJTF, are supporting DDR under Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) facilitating family visits for former VEO members from Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa.⁶⁹ Notably, MINUSMA also operates several programmes in Mopti and Segou under its SSR-DDR division⁷⁰ The political nature of DDR, conflict dynamics in Mali and use of armed groups requires an examination of the ‘preconditions’ for DDR.

Mali and the ‘preconditions’ for DDR:

Mali’s performance in current and past DDR indicate that a peace agreement is not a sufficient condition for success, however parties continue public support for implementation and ongoing dialogue⁷¹ and “demonstrated pragmatism in day-to-day implementation”⁷² may be facilitative. So, what are preconditions for DDR, and do they exist in Mali presently? The UN policy underpinned several preconditions for DDR in its 2006 policy guidance. These include the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement (CPA), trust in the peace process and minimum guarantees of security, partially signaled by a willingness of signatory parties to participate in DDR.⁷³ The failure to devolve financial management and allocate resources from central authorities in Bamako after the 2012 rebellion as part of the decentralization process, lack of meaningful institutional reform including establishing a national armed force under civilian control led signatories to resist DDR and government questioning of the signatories’ seriousness based on a reluctance to disarm all speak to a dearth of preconditions. Also, the use of armed groups and tribal militias by previous administrations and the rise of *jihadism* in 2015 is not translating into the guarantee of minimum security for DDR beneficiaries.

At the time, the 2006 UN policy depicted DDR as a post conflict intervention that usually takes place for the entire country. As 3rd Generation DDR emerged, preconditions became ‘*preferred conditions*’ while the UN Security Council continued to issue DDR mandates. The first, in Somalia where there is active conflict, and the group slated for DDR was Al-Shabaab – a listed violent extremist and terrorist organization. The UN also positioned DDR as a precondition for political transitions, including security sector reform (SSR).⁷⁴ All issues relevant for Mali. In response to the changing conflict environment where DDR mandates were designed and implemented, in 2019 the UN revised its global policy guidance on DDR, and with it, notions on preconditions. These are important for Mali’s DDR process. While not currently the case, should revisions to the agreement occur consistent with its provisions⁷⁵

⁶⁷ Ahmed, 17 March, 2019.

⁶⁸ Interviews and personal communications with members of Malian armed forces and Malian activists and researchers, Bamako, Mali, July 2022.

⁶⁹ USAID-OTI. Pages 11 and 17.

⁷⁰ UN DPO-DDR Section, “The DDR Bulletin.”

⁷¹ The Carter Center, June 2022. Page 7.

⁷² Ibid, Page 13.

⁷³ Integrated DDR Standards, 2006. Page 1.

⁷⁴ Integrated DDR Standards - 2:10: The UN Approach to DDR. 2019, 2006. Page 7.

⁷⁵ The Carter Center, June 2022, Page 6, 9-10.

there are options for DDR and reintegration for Malians. Examples of constructive adaptation to the agreement driven by consensus includes the ADDR-I, absent from the original agreement.⁷⁶

Policy guidance offered in 2019 notes that peace agreements may not result in complete cessations of hostilities and that peace operations with DDR mandate occur in settings where peace agreements are not yet reached⁷⁷ or fully realized, which is the case for Mali. Importantly, “requests from the Government for the UN to support DDR are made either when ceasefires are reached or when a peace agreement or a comprehensive peace agreement is signed...practitioners should decide whether DDR programmes, DDR-related tools and/or reintegration support constitute the most appropriate response to a particular situation”.⁷⁸ In Mali, the political and security environment is not conducive for DDR as a standalone program - the preconditions are not present. Knowing this, we can focus on options for engaging armed groups. In other words, what DDR related tools are available and relevant for Mali that foster conditions for DDR and will enhance stability with armed groups not slated for DDR.

Options for DDR and Armed Group Engagement:

In the mid-2000s, Desmond Molloy was working as the Chief the DDR section in the UN Mission in Haiti when in the summer of 2005 he was visited by the assistant secretary-general for the UN Department of Peacekeeping (DPKO) Jean-Marie Guéhenno. A purpose of the visit to get a status update on the DDR process.⁷⁹ Desmond was unable provide evidence the DDR program was advancing at pace, citing the lack of *preconditions*⁸⁰ - a situation like Mali. Exhausted and overcome with fatigue, he exclaimed the known but unspoken truth, that “nobody was going to do DDR in Haiti.”⁸¹ This proved to be a watershed moment in DDR – community violence reduction (CVR) was born. As a result, the UN Secretary General facilitated an unprecedented change in a UNSCR mandate from a DDR to CVR.⁸² This demonstrates that options for engaging armed actors slated for DDR exist despite the absence of preconditions. Relevant for Mali, is to identify options that can enable conditions for DDR and be implemented if they do not. Such a program would off a Peace Dividend to Mali.

The current Mali UNSCR mandate is telling. Extending the UN Mission – MINUSMA, through June 2023, a strategic objective remains implementation of the Algiers Accord.⁸³ This includes a political efforts addressing root causes and conflict drivers “and to disarm without delay all militias through DDR programmes...advance community violence reduction efforts.”⁸⁴ The mandate calls for supporting DDR of armed groups, integration of elements of the signatory armed groups in the security forces as an interim measure, and implementation of a CVR program.⁸⁵ Having established that without credible guarantees for security, disarming and demobilizing is unlikely, we turn our attention to CVR efforts as

⁷⁶ Ibid. Pages 14-15.

⁷⁷ Integrated DDR Standards – 2:10: The UN Approach to DDR. 2019, Page 15.

⁷⁸ Ibid, Page 15.

⁷⁹ UNSCR - S/RES/1542 (2004). Pages 2-3.

⁸⁰ Molloy. Page 63.

⁸¹ Ibid, Page 67.

⁸² UNDPO-OROLSI, UNSCR 1702 (2006). Pages 5 and 13.

⁸³ UNSCR - S/RES/2640 (2022). Page 6.

⁸⁴ Ibid, Pages 5 and 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid, Page 8.

options for engaging armed groups. In doing so, we first look at high level meetings, national and strategic frameworks for DDR in Mali, and global policy to see if these options are available.

Getting to Reintegration:

Initiated by the Citizen Coalition of Civil Society for Peace, Unity, and National Reconciliation, a group of experts met from June 20-25, 2021, to reflect on an "intelligent revision" (*relucture intelligente*) of the Algiers Accord. Notwithstanding difficulties around the intelligent revision, which is currently having a detrimental effect on Algiers implementation, eroding both signatory parties trust and public support for the peace process⁸⁶, from the reading of the meeting report, there is a principled agreement that DDR and SSR were needed to advance peace in Mali, AND an acknowledgement that disagreements on these issues created bottlenecks not easily removed. There is a general tenor in the report reflecting an insistence that DDR commence without delay, without complementary language reflecting CVR efforts.⁸⁷ However, when we look at the national planning frameworks and similar reports, there emerges more consistency in approaches with global policy, and the current UN mandate that include CVR.

The national strategy leans towards CVR, recognizing the need to support community-based reintegration and '*parallel*' programs for women due to the stigma they may face. References to '*parallel*' programs are outside DDR and implemented by partners not associated with DDR. Interestingly, the call for '*parallel*' programs is explicit that it should be funded by the same mechanism as the Mali DDR effort⁸⁸. Another is the call for greater emphasis on psychosocial support (PSS) for XCs, and other conflict trauma survivors. A National DDR Commission (CNDDR) report notes that MINUSMA support in the North and Center includes CVR to benefit communities that may be impacted by DDR reintegratees.⁸⁹ The report goes on to state that in November 2018 a CVR effort in Mopti and Ségou was designed on a voluntary basis for the demobilization of all armed groups operating in this area - militias and community self-defense groups and 'all' *jihdist* groups.⁹⁰ From the reading of documents, field reports and KIIs, several issues become evident - one is that Mali DDR stakeholders are appropriately considering CVR efforts; the second - these are framed as a 'DDR add on', perhaps too closely associated with the DDR program.

Facilitating an Enabling Environment:

An aspect of preconditions for DDR is trust and confidence in the peace process. A peace agreement is more of a *preferred* condition for DDR, not a *precondition*. This implies they can be de-linked from a CPA, an important feature for DDR in Mali. Activities designed to facilitate and enable DDR was a response to DDR the Central African Republic where preconditions did not exist. Opening the political and security space to advance peace, reports on successes of 'enabling activities' in 2015 provided a pathway to implement DDR. Likewise, DDR does not have to occur sequentially, e.g., D-D-R. A feature of

⁸⁶ Carter Center, June 2022. Page 7-8.

⁸⁷ CCSN-PURN. Pages 3-4, 10-11, 16-18 28 and 30.

⁸⁸ Zafar. Pages 6-7, 62.

⁸⁹ REPORT ON THE CNDDR. Page 11.

⁹⁰ Ibid, Page 28.

the 2nd Generation approaches includes reverse sequencing with reintegration being delivered before demobilization or disarmament.⁹¹

Creative identified two board sets of DDR related tools applicable for Mali's context that may provide government stakeholders options to 're-engage' in DDR and related armed actors and group reintegration efforts – one development and reintegration oriented, and the other - security and defense related. These confidence building measures (CBMs) are designed to reduce or eliminate drivers of mistrust during negotiations that include DDR. The CVR toolkit is development and reintegration oriented for use during negotiations at national and local levels.⁹² Interim stabilization measures (ISMs) maintain armed group cohesiveness prior to a DDR⁹³ and are more security focused. In Mali there have been efforts at CVR with ISMs. These tools should also be considered for non-DDR caseloads of armed actors and not be restricted to the DDR program in Mali.

Analysis of recent progress on the ground in Mali shows several achievements that can be built upon. These are especially important as the Algiers Accord is in a fragile state. Notably, from 2019 - 2021, the DDR, Integration, and SSR Commissions facilitated training, integration, and redeployment of 1,735 XCs into the reconstituting Malian army with UN support. Progress on CVR activities is equally noteworthy as partnerships with upwards of 30 NGOs are implementing 52 projects in the northern and central regions. Project initiatives include infrastructure rehabilitation, vocational training, income generating activities like animal husbandry, agriculture, and solar powered water systems. Projects also include lighting and security.⁹⁴ The number of beneficiaries is 58,528 including 27,487 women⁹⁵ indicating there are lessons to drawn from on security, political, and development aspects of DDR. The use of ISMs is more of a mixed bag. When parties from the army and signatory groups engaged in joint patrols, through the Mécanisme Opérationnel de Coordination (MOC), they struggled to gain the confidence and trust of local communities they are charged with protecting.⁹⁶ The ISMs suggested here allow signatory groups to remain intact as a cohesive group for reintegration before disarmament or demobilization.

Among the goals of enabling activities is confidence and trust building in negotiation, increases social cohesion and security for high-risk communities. Activities can include skills development and training for DDR candidates, provisions for weapons and arms management (WAM), and community-driven, labor-intensive projects.⁹⁷ Importantly, WAM projects may not require formal '*disarmament*' and labor-intensive projects may allow armed group cohesiveness to main intact, like an ISM proposed above. These may be attractive options for jump starting DDR in Mali, and negotiating with other armed groups not slated for DDR. In Afghanistan an ISM kept several armed groups integrated into a single force under a common command structure for defense and demining.⁹⁸ In pre-referendum, 'southern' Sudan, ISMs,

⁹¹ UNDPKO. Page 28.

⁹² IDDRS - *2:10: The UN Approach to DDR*, 2019. Pages 16-18.

⁹³ Piedmont – Journal of Peacebuilding and Development. Page 101.

⁹⁴ UN DPO-DDR Section, "The DDR Bulletin."

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Interpeace. The mixed patrols - MOC, is a pillar of the Algiers Agreement where XCs from signatory parties and member from the Malian army engage in joint patrols. August 10, 2020.

⁹⁷ UNDPKO-ODA. Pages 35-36.

⁹⁸ Piedmont – Journal for Peacebuilding and Development. Page 101.

allowed the Sudan People's Liberation Army to release its special needs groups (SNGs) of women, elderly, persons with disabilities and children.⁹⁹ In Mali non-DDR armed groups can use this option to normalize relations with government, local, and the international community.

Political Reintegration:

Global practices and scholarly research teach us that when armed groups have political aspirations, the likelihood of a sustainable peace governed through a CPA increase if these groups are afforded the option to transform into political entities.¹⁰⁰ The salient point here is that CPA's are political agreements where parties address and acknowledge historic and present grievances. For signatory groups that will be part of a DDR process, requirements often include a degree of credibility, or a constituency, not be listed as a DTO or in breach of international law and willing to be under civilian control. Constructively engaging opposing parties in dialogue, mediation, capacity development and training on DDR and political reintegration may lessen a risk whereby transforming irregular forces into political entities creates a scenario where military leaders insert their soldiers into security structures to consolidate power.¹⁰¹ This has taken place in Mali's DDR-SSR processes.

Importantly then, political reintegration gives policy makers, governments, and armed group leaders' options to open political space using non-military, diplomatic measures. Combined efforts like dialogues, training, and joint media statements¹⁰² are viewed as CBMs. These can also include south-south tours as done in Colombia, and phased disarmament as a ceremonial gesture. This can be effective in Mali knowing armed groups will not fully disarm. An excellent example of training opportunities is from the Accra based Kofi Annan International Training and Peacekeeping Center (KAITPC). Convening several training courses each year, these courses include foundational and advanced DDR courses attended by former enemies planning to engage each other in DDR. During the early days of the Northeast Nigeria Demobilization, Disengagement, Reintegration and Reconciliation (DDRR) program - Operation Safe Corridor (OSC), Creative facilitated training with the KAITPC in Accra and Abuja to support government entities, the Nigerian military and community defense force - the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)¹⁰³ in support of DDRR. These trainings helped the CJTF normalize their relations with communities, where they later supported family visits for Boko Harma-ISIS West Africa (BH-ISWA) reintegratees.¹⁰⁴

Innovative thinking on political reintegration in Mali can consider the complexity of local politics, conflict dynamics and fluid nature armed groups, and how this may increase the importance of sub-national, regional, and local actor inclusion in peace processes. As seen in Mali, conflicts are continuing despite a signed peace accord.¹⁰⁵ Thinking and working politically, MINUSMA, CNDDR and national stakeholders should consider decentralized peace agreements. For its part, the USG could draw upon its Stabilization Assistance Review – *SAR policy*, to determine its level of engagement in development and diplomacy.

⁹⁹ Ibid. Pages 101, 103.

¹⁰⁰ IDDRS - 2:10: *The UN Approach to DDR*, 2019. Page 1-2.

¹⁰¹ Berdal, Mats and Ucko, David H. Page 7.

¹⁰² Mooney. Page 7.

¹⁰³ It was widely accepted that the CJTF was armed and that they wanted to be considered for a DDR program, though little mention about them as being armed was used in public discourse.

¹⁰⁴ USAID-OTI. Pages 5-6, 17, 25, and 40.

¹⁰⁵ IDDRS - 2:10: *The UN Approach to DDR*, 2019. Page 1-2.

Examining SAR policy, a case is made that Defense and Development are in support of Diplomacy can advance DDR in modern complex conflict settings.¹⁰⁶

Community Based Reintegration and Community Violence Reduction:

The following policy options can be specifically tailored to the context in Mali. They are meant to inform senior managers working on peace negotiations and can be used for diplomacy for DDR mandates. Their design should follow an assessment of the viability of DDR in Mali – do the preconditions exist, can they be facilitated – if so, how? They can be developed if a traditional approach to DDR is not appropriate.¹⁰⁷ They are not exhaustive and are relevant to Mali. Some fit into ‘pre-DDR’ and can be integrated into ISMs. A key feature of these initiatives is the inclusion of local decision makers – communities, local government - often overseen by community representatives. This increases credibility and transparency¹⁰⁸ and aligns with USAID’s locally led development – LLD, policies.

- *Emergency employment options* usually involve a cash for work component and can be for skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled labor. When well designed, they target priority infrastructure identified by communities where reintegration will occur, and include livelihoods and skills training, and correspond to a demand driven market.¹⁰⁹
- *Alternative weapons management programs* can offset and tendency towards¹¹⁰ and resistance to disarm.¹¹¹ The proliferation of weapons in the north, frustration with the pace of implementation of the Algiers Accord¹¹² and resistance of armed groups to indicates WAM, and weapons for development programs are better options to disarmament in Mali.
- *‘At-risk’ youth and gender programs* can link social reintegration, livelihoods and employment opportunities while addressing governance issues related to feelings of disenfranchisement and related grievances.¹¹³ These programs should be integrated with preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) efforts, and strategic communications.
- *Community-based reintegration* should include projects and specialized programs in communities accepting back former armed group reintegrates. These efforts should include a PSS element and emphasize reconciliation as part of the reintegration process. This will help de-stigmatize and reduce resentment of benefits accruing to perpetrators of violence.

Recommendations:

The following topline recommendations address political and security conditions for designing and implementing programs in complex conflict settings. Each must be approached through a ‘do no harm’ approach. They center around policy issues relevant for Mali, can facilitate DDR, though are not

¹⁰⁶ Piedmont – The 3-D Approach. Page 2.

¹⁰⁷ UNDPKO. Page 21.

¹⁰⁸ UNDP. Page 8.

¹⁰⁹ UNDPKO. Page 22.

¹¹⁰ Based on interviews with UNDPO-OROLSI staff and high-level meeting on Armed Group Typologies. UNHQ, New York. May 2022.

¹¹¹ Based in interview with Mali senior DDR stakeholders by research team. 2022.

¹¹² USAID. Page 14.

¹¹³ UNDPKO. Page 26.

dependent upon DDR. The recommendations are intended for four audiences including the USG, GoM and CNDDR, civil society and the international donor community.

For the USG:

1. Engage diplomatic resources in DDR as a political process: Diplomacy in support of international mediation should align SAR doctrine coordinating defense, diplomacy, and development. The USG should lead démarches with the government of Mali, all Algiers signatories and ensure civil society is at the table. Defense assets should harmonize SSR, human rights, civilian control of armed forces with development funds focused on community reintegration. The *SAR-3D Approach* is fit for purpose.

2. Invest in CBR for non-DDR groups: The USG can use the SAR 3D-Approach, to increase development assistance for non-signatory party reintegration. There is a wide range of armed groups in need of reintegration that cannot be accommodated by DDR. Options exist for engaging them. USAID should use PSR platform and follow-up paper on Armed Group Reintegration to generate support for this area.

For the GoM and CNDDR:

3. Engage armed groups in ISMs: There is no shortage of ‘other armed groups’ in Mali – tribal militias, VEOs, self-defense forces, etc. DDR cannot accommodate them all. The GoM and its allies, should use ISMs as a CBM for reintegrating armed groups within communes. This should not be limited to DDR salted groups. Armed groups willing to peaceably engage with the government and communities should be encouraged to release SNGs to increase their legitimacy. These should accompany CVR efforts.

4. Undertake an assessment of the Algiers Accord and DDR: Key national stakeholders and institutional bodies mandated to undertake DDR and SSR that include the Integration and SSR Commissions, should lobby the UN for a comprehensive review of DDR conditions that include the UNSC mandate with an eye in increasing resources towards creating enabling ‘pre-conditions’ for DDR

For civil society:

5. Capacitate NGOs, CSOs, youth and women’s groups to engage (formerly) armed reintegratees: Evidence from USAID’s Peace through Evaluation and Learning – PELA initiative indicates communities are increasingly engaging with VEOs (and armed groups). In communities where armed actor reintegration may take place, civil society should be supported to negotiate terms for reintegration. This should take place at national and local levels.

6. Undertake social network analysis (SNA) where reintegration will take place: The centerpiece of successful armed group reintegration hinges on CBR. Undertaking SNAs in communes where reintegration will occur informs DDR stakeholders on how and where to target interventions needed to accommodate community needs and capacities to absorb and reintegrate former fighters and affiliates.

For the international donor community:

7. Continue to assess DDR preconditions: An insistence DDR (and SSR) advance while acknowledging a stalled process frustrates stakeholder’s ability to shape policy and implementation scenarios for DDR that are achievable. Assessments should be done with options forwarded for ‘pre-DDR’, CVR and DDR. If DDR is not viable, then work to create the conditions armed groups to reintegrate.

8. Devote more resources to CVR as part of stabilization and peacebuilding: While CVR supports individuals selected for DDR, their advantages include directing resources and assets to communities

receiving former fighters, they are not over-reliant on DDR, and are CBMs for communities. They can be used for programs and policies aimed at armed actor reconciliation outside a DDR process as well.

Conclusion:

Our research team looked at the current DDR process in implementation terms and was able to assess the political and security environment in which the DDR program and the Algiers Accord are taking place. Mali has the benefit and detriment of history when planning DDR. A comparison of historic DDR trends through a “3-generations” approach is juxtaposed against the history of DDR processes in Mali from the 1960 to the present. As such the paper treats DDR as a state building endeavor, a necessary element in post conflict recovery, as well as a program that takes shape during conflict. Importantly, we examine DDR as a political process, neither divorced from peacebuilding and stabilization processes, nor able to create the conditions to sustain peace. We posit that DDR can contribute to, and in Mali, is necessary for peacebuilding and stabilization. To this end, there is a real possibility that a credible and successful DDR can help facilitate a real peace dividend without being viewed as a panacea for peace.

The story of DDRs in Mali – past and present, are marked by politicization of the process, and a lack of confidence and trust by signatory parties to the peace agreement. This may partially account for a trend where security elements of the program include powerful and influential commanders seeking to secure key postings in Mali’s security apparatus for their constituents. The DDR landscape is further complicated by an emergence of *ihadists* and continuing armed conflict. The DDR for Mali is neither national in scope, nor part of a post conflict landscape. Turning our attention to the ‘southern’ question reinforces DDR as a political process, accompanied by a tension between state control of resources, marginalization of aggrieved armed groups, and the possibility that people in the south look to see if DDR affords groups greater autonomy, or more allegiance to the state, and in turn whether the state is accountable to its aggrieved populous. These issues can be aggravated by a DDR process, or relieved. Importantly, referendum scheduled for March 2023, right after local elections by June 2023, presents challenges and opportunities to advance the DDR process.

Necessarily, we are driven to examine underlying conditions required or preferred when designing and implementing a DDR process. Historically they include a CPA, minimum guarantee of security and confidence in the peace process. Determining that these are not sufficiently present in Mali currently, we look at options for engaging armed groups, both inside and outside of a formal DDR process, and the importance of reintegration. In doing so, we unpacked options for engaging with armed groups, not limited to security sector integration and consider communities – the place where reintegration will take place. A key question we attempt to address, what - if anything can be done to create an enabling environment for DDR and reintegration? And if the conditions cannot be created, what can be done to address and treat armed groups and communities in need of reintegration irrespective of DDR. We are fortunate to find several options laid out in ‘pre-DDR’, CVR and ISMs. The policy-oriented recommendations are driven by actionable, achievable steps that can be taken, and include multi-stakeholders to enable a permissive environment for DDR and armed group reintegration.

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Annexes:

Annex A – Literature Review

Annex B – Key Informant Interview Tool
Annex C – Key Informant Interview List
Annex D – DDR ‘white paper Inception Report
Annex E – KII Master Transcript
Annex F - Mali PSR midline Findings Report – DDR issues