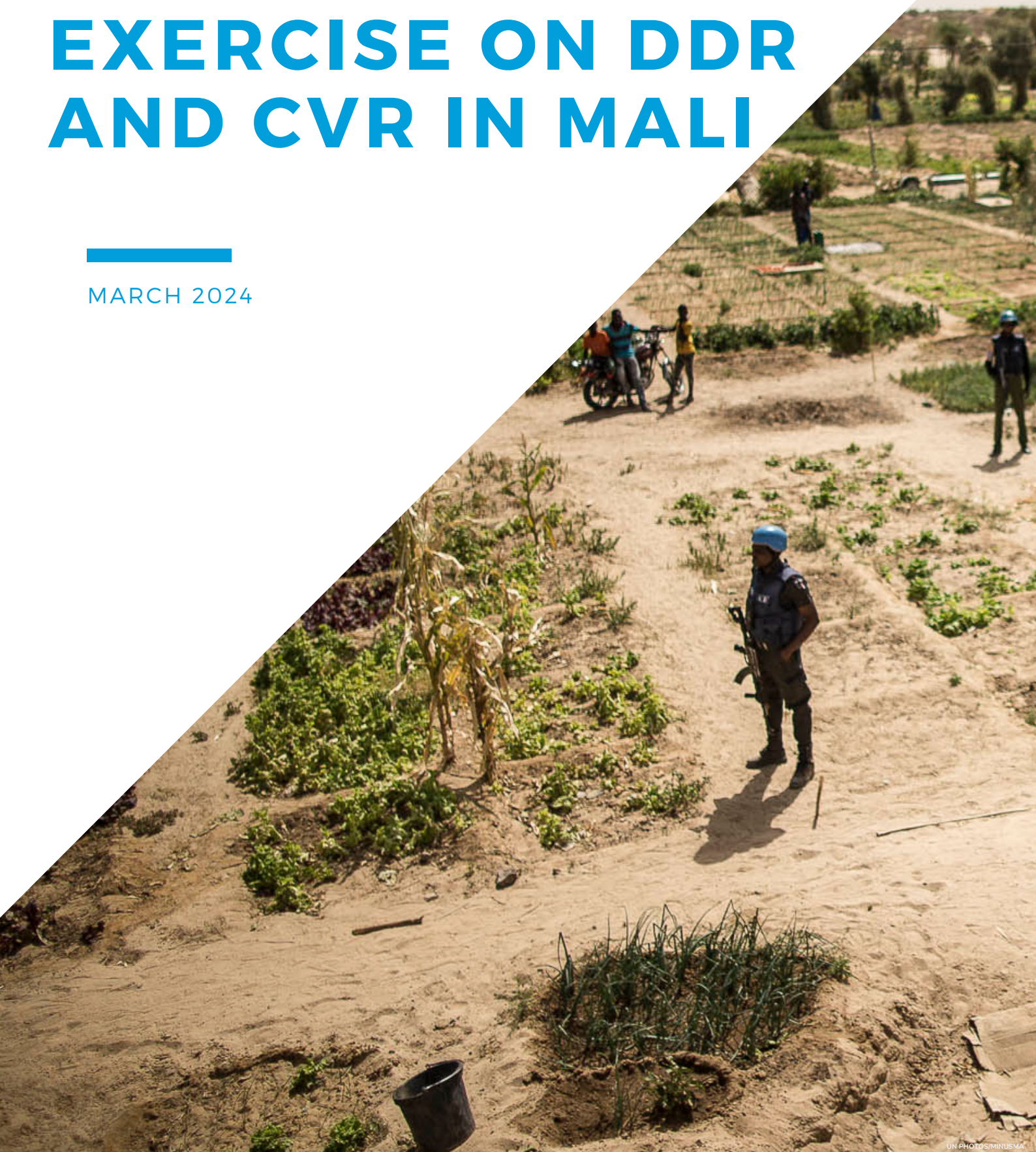




LESSONS LEARNED EXERCISE ON DDR AND CVR IN MALI

MARCH 2024



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ACRONYMS

AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AU	African Union
BATFAR	<i>Bataillon des Forces Armées Reconstituées</i>
CIMIC	Civil-Military Coordination
CMA	Coordination of Azawad Movements (armed group coalition)
CMFPR	Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance
CMI	Coordination des Mouvements de l'Inclusivité
CNDDR	National DDR Commission
CPA	Coalition of the People for Azawad
CRSS	Security Sector Reform Commission
CSA	Follow-Up Committee (to the 2015 inter-Malian peace agreement)
CTMS	Joint Technical Commission for Security (following Ouagadougou interim agreement)
CTS	Technical Security Commission (following the 2015 inter-Malian peace agreement)
CVR	Community Violence Reduction
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Civilian Crisis Management Mission in Mali
GATIA	Self-Defense Group of Imghad Tuaregs and Allies
HCUA	High Council for the Unity of Azawad
IDDRS	Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Standards
MAA	Arab Movement of Azawad
MDSF	Malian Defence and Security Forces
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MOC	Operational Coordination Mechanism (for mixed patrols)
MSA	Movement for the Salvation of Azawad
NIC	National Integration Commission
QIPS	Quick Impact Projects
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	5
1. METHODOLOGY	6
2. CONTEXT	6
3. FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED	7
3.1. The first phase (July 2013 - June 2015): Cantonment & Peace Negotiations	7
3.2. The second phase (July 2015 - June 2018): The Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC) & Mixed Patrols.	11
3.3. The third phase (July 2018-June 2020): "Accelerated DDR" & Integration	18
3.4. The fourth phase (July 2020 – December 2023): The deterioration of the relationship with the host country and the Exit	22
4. RECOMMENDATIONS (BASED ON LESSONS LEARNED)	25
5. CONCLUSION	28
6. ANNEXES	29

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present lessons learned study was carried out in the context of closing the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and resumption of fighting between the Malian armed forces and some armed groups in northern Mali. It provides a contextualized historical and analytical account of key developments and draws lessons from the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Integration processes as well as from Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects in Mali, through four key phases.

The first phase (July 2013 to June 2015) examines the central role the MINUSMA SSR-DDR section played from the very first days of the mission, first through supporting the pre-cantonment of armed groups (following the June 2013 Ouagadougou interim agreement), and as part of the broader peace process, by using DDR and Integration as entry points for advancing and/or restarting political-security dialogue between the parties at various times, and providing SSR-DDR expertise as part of the UN mediation team during the Algiers negotiations.

The second phase (July 2015 to June 2018) was characterized by the mission's support to the implementation of the June 2015 Algiers Agreement, including notably to the setting up of the Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC) and mixed patrols, initially conceived as an interim measure to help prepare for the DDR and Integration but which became an objective of its own as the lack of trust between the parties delayed the implementation of the agreement.

There are also many lessons from the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects, which initially started in 2014 as a confidence building measure around the eight cantonment sites being built but were repurposed as important "peace dividends" - while the DDR was delayed - and extended to other parts of northern Mali where armed groups were present and few other projects could reach, with a focus on enhancing the socio-economic fabric of vulnerable communities, promoting social cohesion, and preventing youth at risk from joining armed groups.

MINUSMA also used other CVR projects to support a 2017 initiative by the president of the National DDR Commission (CNDDR) in central Mali to welcome combatants from armed groups who were not signatories to the 2015 peace agreement. This Community Rehabilitation Programme (CRP) supported the voluntary disarmament of some 352 members of militia and self-defence groups as well as few individuals who left extremist groups. The programme was eventually suspended due to concerns over the confusion with the DDR programme and political dynamics.

The third phase (July 2018-June 2020) was that of the "accelerated DDR and Integration" process to quickly integrate ex-MOC combatants, which once trained joined the Reconstituted Armed Forces Battalions (*Bataillon des Forces Armées Reconstituées* – BATFAR) of the national armed forces. This innovative idea initially put forward by MINUSMA in the context of strong international pressure for progress in the implementation of the peace agreement proved useful to restart a stalled process and to test the goodwill of the parties. It led to the integration of approximately 1,800 combatants from the signatory armed groups into the Malian armed forces, the majority of which remained despite the resumption of hostilities during the second half of 2023. However, the alternative DDR option of a socio-economic reinsertion into civilian life never gained traction.

The fourth phase (July 2020 – December 2023) was marked by the deterioration of the relationship between the host country and the UN following two coups d'État. Despite challenging circumstances, MINUSMA kept encouraging the parties towards implementing the peace agreement and in August 2022 the Malian authorities endorsed a plan to integrate 26,000 armed group combatants into State structures. Relations between the Malian transition government and signatory armed movements however deteriorated to the point of resumption of fighting during the second part of 2023 as MINUSMA had to rush its departure following the end of its mandate. Although Malian transition government ruled out any engagement with the CMA and ultimately denounced the 2015 peace agreement and declared its "immediate termination" on 25 January 2024 (as this report was being finalized), it is still keen on pursuing some kind of DDR for other armed groups.

INTRODUCTION

On the 16th of June 2023, the representative of the transitional government of Mali asked the United Nations Security Council for the “withdrawal, without delay” of the decade spanning United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

Following this decision by the host country, the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution to “terminate MINUSMA's mandate as of June 30th, 2023” but “maintain its personnel until 31st of December 2023, to plan and execute the cessation of operations and transfer of tasks.”

As MINUSMA exited Mali in the Fall of 2023, fighting resumed between Malian armed forces and their Russian allies on the one side, and signatory armed groups of the Cadre Stratégique Permanent which includes armed groups from the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) some elements from the Platform coalition, as well as other non-signatory armed groups on the other side.

The purpose of the Lessons Learned Exercise (LLE) are the following:

- ④ To identify and document lessons learned and good practices in the areas of programme conception/development, implementation/management and outputs and outcomes while documenting achievements vis a vis constraints:
 - The overall DDR process including support to the peace negotiations,
 - The CVR projects managed by MINUSMA, as well as
 - The Accelerated DDR programme/integration process in the Mali context,
- ④ To expand the knowledge and understanding of the benefits of CVR projects (including by helping refine a typology of CVR projects), how they have evolved over time in different geographical areas, their key achievements as well as challenges they faced, and serve as a reference for other peacekeeping missions while taking stock of good practices developed and applied over the course of the DDR process;
- ④ To help understand how CVR projects differed from other types of projects implemented by MINUSMA (funded by the Trust Fund, QIPs projects and CIMIC projects) and the UNCT and what their comparative advantage has been in the constantly evolving context of Mali;
- ④ To provide recommendations/outline options for potential future CVR programmes in Mali based on the evolving nature of the conflict for different geographical locations following the closure of MINUSMA;
- ④ To provide a reflection on the effectiveness of/gains made through the Accelerated DDR and Integration process, including through a political lens.

1. METHODOLOGY





The present report is based on a desk review, examination of relevant documents provided by DPO and MINUSMA staff, and interviews with relevant stakeholders (listed in annex). The confidentiality of the study was emphasized to interviewees to facilitate transparent and frank assessment. However, it is important to preface that the interviews were conducted at a particular time – towards the end of December 2023, where the mission was closing and most MINUSMA staff had already left Mali, which could impact the responses of the interviewees.

Additionally, travel to Bamako was not possible due to the context of MINUSMA's exit. Thus, data and responses were collected remotely from Malian counterparts from the National DDR Commission (including its regional branches) as well as implementing partners and beneficiaries.

2. CONTEXT

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established by Security Council resolution 2100 on July 1st, 2013, following the January 2013 French (Operation Serval) and African military intervention (AFISMA). The UN mission closed after a decade at the end of December 2023 following a withdrawal of consent by the Malian government formally expressed during the June 2023 Security Council session.

For analytical purposes, the lessons from DDR and CVR projects implementation within the broader context, can be broken down into four distinct chronological phases used in the following section on findings:

-  The first phase (July 2013 to June 2015): (Pre-)Cantonment & Peace Negotiations
-  The second phase (July 2015 to June 2018): The Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC) & Mixed Patrols
-  The third phase (July 2018-June 2020): The "Accelerated DDR" & Integration process
-  The fourth phase (July 2020 – December 2023): The Deterioration of the Relationship with the Host Country and the Exit

3.FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

3.1. The **first phase** (July 2013 - June 2015): Cantonment & Peace Negotiations

During this first phase, MINUSMA supported the organization of the 2013 elections that led to the restoration of the Constitutional order (following the March 2012 military coup). **From the very first days of MINUSMA, the then DDR section¹ of the mission played a central role in supporting the pre-cantonment² of armed groups and the peace process** more generally following the 18 June 2013 Ouagadougou Interim Agreement.

From the very first days of MINUSMA, the then DDR section of the mission played a central role in supporting the pre-cantonment of armed groups and in supporting the peace process.

MINUSMA's Mandate as per UNSC Resolution 2100 (2013) included "to assist the transitional authorities of Mali in developing and implementing programmes for the DDR of former combatants and the dismantling of militias and self-defence groups, consistent with the objectives of reconciliation" (Paragraph 16).

Key provisions of the 18 June 2013 Ouagadougou Interim Agreement:

- MNLA³ & HCUA⁴ committed to "proceed without delay to the cantonment of their elements under the supervision and with the support of MINUSMA" (**Article 11**).
- Government & MNLA/HCUA agreed to "elaborate, as soon as possible... the modalities of the ceasefire, including security arrangements, cantonment and disarmament of armed groups in northern Mali as well as the effective redeployment of DSF of Mali" (**Article 7**).
- Also agreed that "disarmament will be completed after the signing of a global and final peace accord as part of the DDR process" (**Article 6**).
- MAA⁵ & CMFPR⁶ adhered to the Agreement on 18 June 2013. MNLA, HCUA, & MAA declared coalition on 5 November 2013.
- The Ouagadougou Accord also entrusted MINUSMA with a significant role in supporting and supervising the cantonment of signatory armed groups and requested a Joint Technical Commission for Security (*Commission Technique Mixte de Sécurité* - CTMS) chaired by MINUSMA Force Commander to develop modalities for the cantonment and disarmament of the armed groups in the north of Mali (**Articles 7, 8, and 9**).

¹ The DDR section of MINUSMA was later merged with the SSR Section to form the MINUSMA SSR-DDR Section, which was a unique case in UN peace operations. The present report focuses primarily on the work done by the DDR team in Bamako and in field offices (Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal and Mopti) within the MINUSMA SSR-DDR section.

² Pre-cantonment, at the difference of a formal cantonment, suggests a level of informality whereby armed groups combatants gather in assembly areas which they may have previously been using and with limited supervision and control, rather than cantonment sites built for the sole purpose of cantonment leading into a DDR process.

³ The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (*Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad* - MNLA) is a primarily ethnic Tuareg secular separatist group.

⁴ The High Council for the Unity of Azawad (*Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad* - HCUA) was created in May 2013 out of a splinter group of Ansar Dine, the Islamic Movement of Azawad.

⁵ The Arab Movement of Azawad (*Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad* - MAA) is started out in April 2012 in Timbuktu. In 2013 the MAA split into two branches, the MAA-Ahmed Ould Sidi Mohamed and the MAA-Ould Sidatti, which allied with the MNLA and HCUA.

⁶ The Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance (*Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance* - CMFPR) is a mainly Songhai self-defense militia.

3.1.1. Pre-cantonment & cantonment

Pre-cantonment allowed MINUSMA to start engaging with armed groups and both their military and political leaders on the ground on a regular basis.

The “**pre-cantonment**” was useful in several ways. The limited support (food, non-food items and water)⁷ to combatants in three pilot pre-cantonment sites – authorized by the Joint Technical Commission for Security “CTMS” - in the Kidal region (2 in Kidal City & 1 in Agharous Keyone) limited their movements and supported the facilitation of July 2013 presidential elections in this region, paving the way for the symbolic return of the Malian state to Kidal later that year in November. **Pre-cantonment allowed MINUSMA to start**

engaging with armed groups and both their military and political leaders on the ground on a regular basis, including on issues of a code of conduct for cantonment and the safe management of weapons and ammunition.

Pre-cantonment in the second part of 2013 generally served as a **confidence-building measure** - showing some goodwill on the part of the armed groups - to allow for the continuation of the political process towards a final peace agreement as envisaged in the Ouagadougou Interim Agreement. It notably played a positive role during the workshops MINUSMA organized in Bamako in February 2014 (attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defence, SRSG, international community and representatives of armed groups and civil society) in an attempt to re-launch the stalled political dialogue between the elected government and armed movements. Cantonment and DDR featured prominently in these workshops, which main tangible outcome was the **18 February 2014 Modus Operandi on cantonment** which outlined some of the practical modalities for the cantonment process going forward.

This Modus Operandi on cantonment paved the way for **surveying of potential cantonment sites in April 2013**⁸ by the “*Équipes de Reconnaissance des Sites*” (ERS) and the “*Cellule de Coordination des Opérations*” (CCO) which included representatives of the Malian armed forces and of armed groups supported by

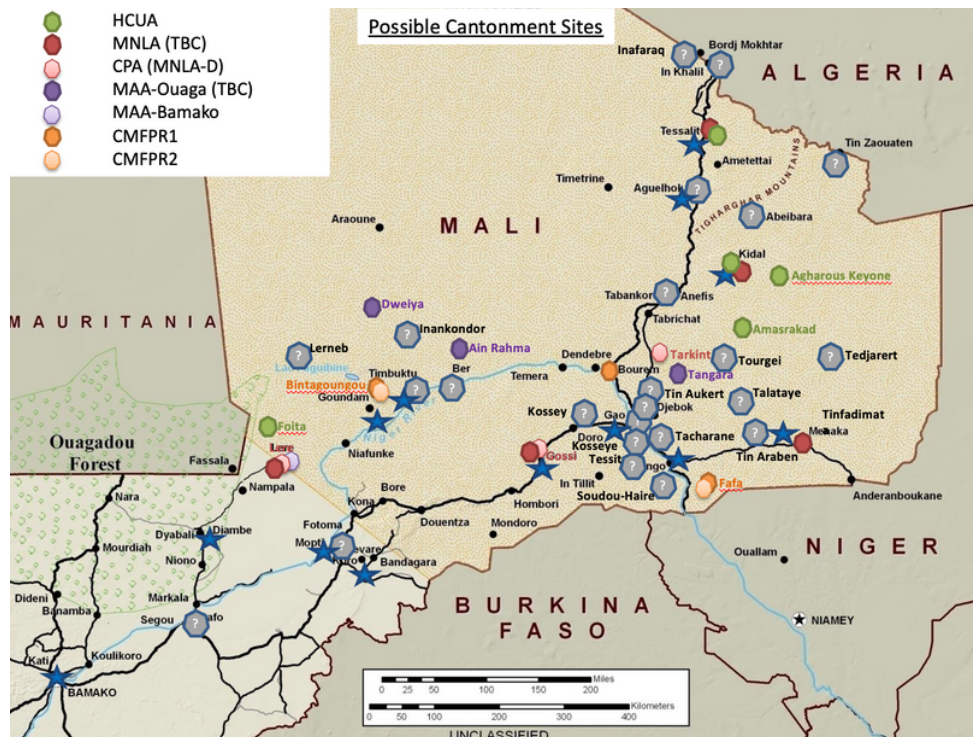


Source: MINUSMA logistics count in the context of pre-cantonment, Kidal, November 2013

⁷ This support for pre-cantonment was initially done under the mission’s trust fund due to the tight timelines (SRSG ordered the mission to start support within a couple weeks of its establishment in July 2013) and thereafter as part of a US \$ 3 million PBF for a listed 1,847 elements, and with UNOPS as an implementing partner. In addition to food & water provision, the pilot project included the construction/rehabilitation activities in the three pilot cantonment sites in the region of Kidal.

⁸ MINUSMA began the construction of five new cantonment sites on 25 April 2015 in Ber (Timbuktu region), Tessalit (Kidal region) and Tin Fatimata (Gao region) and on 15 May in Ilouk and Tabankort (Gao region). On 20 May, MINUSMA completed the construction of the first three sites in Likrakar (Timbuktu region), Fafa (Gao region) and Inékar (Ménaka region), with support from the Peacebuilding Fund. All sites include special arrangements for female combatants.

MINUSMA. This process was made possible by the UN mission assessed budget with UNOPS as implementing partner. Armed groups, however, opposed cantonments in the absence of progress on the political negotiations with the government. The government of Mali, for its part, opposed moving forward on confidence building 'security arrangements' such as mixed patrols and wanted MINUSMA to focus its mandate implementation on supporting the return of the Malian Defense & Security Forces (MDSF) and of State administration to northern Mali and disarming armed groups. The map below shows cantonment sites proposed by armed groups. Out of the 24 proposed sites, only 8 were approved by the Technical Commission for Security (CTS), and thereafter built with support from MINUSMA but never used.



Between 17-21 May 2014 clashes between the Malian armed forces and CMA armed groups led to the suspension of all pre-cantonment activities supported by MINUSMA. **A ceasefire was brokered on 23 May but pre-cantonment did not resume** since the balance of power on the ground was changed with armed groups then in control of a large part of northern Mali from which Malian armed forces and administration had withdrawn.⁹ Meanwhile, the operational environment quickly deteriorated, with peacekeepers becoming the target of terrorist attacks, particularly after the withdrawal of Malian armed forces from a large part of northern Mali. These events however restarted peace process and negotiations but this time in Algiers – with Algeria leading the international mediation - that led to the June 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (APR), also known as the Algiers Agreement.

A “**formal cantonment**” was envisaged by the government and armed groups - who insisted on this as it had been part of the previous DDR process in the 1990s. Each party had their reasons. The government saw cantonment as a useful way to “park” combatants and gain leverage over the armed groups for them to disarm; whereas the armed groups saw cantonment as a way to receive support for their combatants while buying time to prevent disarming immediately. While the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement clearly stipulated that the cantonment of armed groups was a precondition for further dialogue, this was dropped in the subsequent Algiers negotiations and the Algiers agreement envisages cantonment as a first step towards DDR.

⁹ S/2014/403 https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n1441729_eng_0.pdf

The June 2015 inter-Malian peace agreement includes in Chapter 8 and the annex on Defense & Security, a detailed calendar for cantonment/DDR “Within 30 days of the signing of the Agreement, CTS chaired by the MINUSMA Force Commander to finalize the identification and validation of cantonment sites for combatants. The UN mission will launch the construction of these sites, which should be ready within 120 days and be delivered as they are built[...] CTS will update the *modus operandi* for cantonment in accordance with the measures of this Agreement and shall set the effective date of the start of the cantonment[...] armed movements will submit certified and final lists of their combatants and their weapons to the CTS.”

Because of the insistence of the parties and the terms of the Algiers agreement, MINUSMA had no choice but to get these cantonment sites ready as quickly as possible or risk being perceived as responsible for stalling the DDR process. However, formal cantonment never took place, despite important resources having been dedicated to building cantonment sites and prepositioning equipment in containers. No less than eight priority cantonment sites (armed groups were asking for 24 initially) including the first three sites in the Kidal region were built between 2015 and 2017 in remote and unsafe locations. Safety standards for built-up cantonment sites quickly became obsolete due to the new threat of terrorist groups, resulting in additional costs and work. DDR strategy, including the securing of the cantonment sites by the Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC - see thereafter) had to be reconsidered. When MINUSMA closed at the end of 2023 it still had more than 100 containers of DDR and CVR equipment in its possession with supplies meant for the cantonment process, which the UN ultimately handed over to the Malian authorities.¹⁰

3.1.2. DDR in support of political negotiations

DDR and Integration have served as important entry points for advancing and/or restarting political-security dialogue between the parties at various times. However, “technical” entry points cannot be a substitute for a political process.

Time and again in Mali, the DDR and Integration processes stalled because of the lack of parallel progress on the overall political/peace process. Signatory armed groups have been quite explicit about this at different times in the process and were in no hurry to disarm. After having provided lists of combatants and participated in technical

DDR and Integration have served as important entry points for advancing and/or restarting political-security dialogue between the parties at various times.

discussions, the signatory movements refused to move forward arguing the absence of progress in other dimensions of the peace process and notably on the implementation of political-institutional provisions of the Algiers agreement.¹¹

Another key lesson is that **SSR-DDR expertise should be considered in a UN mediation team during peace negotiations.** The participation of a staff from MINUSMA SSR-DDR Section along the UN mediation team in Algiers negotiations served multiple purposes. It the UN with the required expertise to be entrusted as co-rapporteur with the AU of the subcommittee on defence and security during the Algiers negotiations. The SSR-DDR staff also supported the MINUSMA Force Commander in various aspects including when organizing an “enlarged Joint Technical Commission for Security (CTMS)” meetings in Algiers. **The SSR-DDR expert contributed to ensuring that defence and security issues including DDR were adequately taken**

¹⁰ All cantonment sites built were supposed to be used as schools, nurseries, or administrative buildings for local communities. However, the transition government might use some as temporary operational bases until the end of the conflict.

¹¹ Related to regionalization/advanced decentralization with greater power and revenues towards elected regional assemblies, a new Constitution capturing these elements including through the creation of a senate and better representation of northern population in state institutions in general, etc.

into consideration in the negotiations and agreement, notably in the form of a dedicated Defence and Security Annex (which includes more detailed provisions on cantonment, DDR and SSR) as part of the agreement.¹²

This also helped secure the subsequent participation of the MINUSMA SSR-DDR section in the follow-up mechanisms to the peace agreement, including the Follow-Up Committee (CSA) to the 2015 inter-Malian peace agreement and its Defence and Security subcommittee, as well as the Technical Security Commission (CTS) where key decisions related to cantonment and DDR were taken. The presence of the MINUSMA SSR-DDR section in all these fora allowed them to make technical proposals for overcoming hurdles every time discussions stalled. However, the international community and the international mediation represented in the CSA, failed to hold the parties accountable for not implementing the agreement thereafter. While MINUSMA has been able to leverage its field presence (with DDR staff in all regional offices) and its role as CSA Secretariat and the SRSG's good offices (notably under SRSG Mahamat Saleh Annadif who engaged with armed groups between 2015 and 2021), its leverage over the parties was ultimately limited.

3.2. The **second phase** (July 2015 - June 2018): The Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC) & Mixed Patrols

The second phase (July 2015 to June 2018) was characterized by the mission's support of the implementation of the June 2015 Algiers Agreement in addition to supporting the extension of state authority. This agreement provided the mission with a clearer political framework, captured in Resolution 2295 (2016), which also gave MINUSMA a 'more proactive and robust' mandate and increased its troop ceiling to approximately 13,000 military personnel. During this second phase, the Security Council also established a sanction regime on Mali in 2017, and through resolution 2391 (2017), opened the way for MINUSMA to provide 'operational and logistical support' to the G5 Sahel Joint Force contingents, to enhance their ability to conduct cross-border counterterrorist operations across the region.

However, progress of the implementation was very slow in ensuing months, in particular its defense and security provisions. This in turn made it difficult to differentiate between "compliant," "terrorist," and "criminal" armed groups. The signatory armed groups retained their weapons and maintained mobility, with the distinction between them and non-signatory armed groups remaining unclear. This ambiguity persisted due to the fluid nature of their leadership structures and the opportunistic decisions made by fighters who had aligned themselves with these groups. Officially, signatory armed groups expressed their readiness to take part in the cantonment and DDR process. While the new Security Council sanctions regime may have initially served as a deterrent, signatory armed groups started viewing sanctions as biased. This perception arose after the first few listings targeted individuals from armed groups but not from the government, which was accused of obstructing the peace agreement.

The ongoing clashes between the two coalitions of armed groups - CMA¹³ and Platform¹⁴ -, coupled with CMA's suspicions of the government's intentions posed challenges to the DDR process. Consequently, combatants saw no immediate benefits in the peace process - such as the short-term sustenance and revenues associated with formal cantonment and long-term integration into the Malian security forces.

¹² Although the parties only agreed on broad principles but never on more detailed figures/quotas for integration notably, which had to be further negotiated by the parties during the implementation phase and led to many blockages.

¹³ The Coordination of Azawad Movements or CMA is an alliance between the MNLA, HCUA, and MAA-Coordination that has existed since November 2013.

¹⁴ The Platform brings together the MAA-Platform, CMFPR, and the Coalition of the People for Azawad (Coalition du peuple pour l'Azawad or CPA, which split from the MNLA on March 18th, 2014) came into being on June 14th, 2014.

During that time, MINUSMA as part of its mandate also supported - with technical, financial, and logistical support - the establishment of key institutional structures created by the 2015 peace agreement, including the National DDR Commission (CNDDR), the National Integration Commission (NIC), and the Security Sector Reform Commission (CRSS). MINUSMA also fostered coordination among international partners by establishing on 10 August 2015 a **technical working group on security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration** in order to coordinate support to Malian security institutions.¹⁵ On 18 May 2016, the Malian Council of Ministers approved a decree establishing the National Council for Security Sector Reform, placing it under the authority of the Prime Minister – another institution critical importance for the implementation of provisions of the agreement on cantonment, DDR, Integration and SSR.

3.2.1. MOC and mixed patrols

The Operational Coordination Mechanism (MOC) responsible for both the mixed patrols and protecting cantonment sites, was a key component of the confidence building measures of the 2015 inter-Malian peace agreement. Although **initially conceived as short-term interim measures to help prepare for the DDR and integration (due to take place no later than six months following the signing of the peace agreement), the MOC became an objective of its own.** At the end of April 2016,

initially conceived as short-term interim measures to help prepare for the DDR and Integration (due to take place no later than six months following the signing of the peace agreement), the MOC became an objective of its own.

CMA and the Platform handed over lists of their personnel to join the mixed patrols in Gao.¹⁶ Not only was the establishment of the MOC headquarters in Gao delayed for different reasons until 2016 but it was targeted on 18 January 2017 by suicide attack that killed more than 64 and injured about 115 members of the first mixed patrol.

With support from MINUSMA (including four projects to equip the MOC headquarters through the mission Trust Fund), the MOC was set, and mixed patrols became more or less operational in Gao that same year and in Timbuktu in 2018. However, **the MOC mixed patrols were neither able to effectively patrol nor were they trusted enough by the population to secure the cantonment and DDR process should it have taken place.**



Source: Gao MOC mixed patrol, MINUSMA, 23 February 2017

The lack of political will from the parties was evident. The armed groups failed to provide the vehicles and heavy weaponry for the MOC. The government (which did provide 42 vehicles to the MOC on 8 April 2016) failed to regularly pay MOC members' salaries and to provide helmets and uniforms, among other items. Armed groups elements within the mixed patrols were frustrated with the Malian armed forces members who did not give them responsibilities, vehicles, or operational funds. This led to absenteeism, disciplinary misconduct, and desertions in some cases.

¹⁵ S/2015/732

¹⁶ and the CMA provided to the CTS a preliminary list of 18,000 combatants for cantonment).

The combatants assigned to the MOC were eventually taken up by the CNDDR and integrated by the national Integration Commission (NIC) into the national armed forces through the “accelerated DDR and Integration” process discussed in the next section, but MOC commanders remained in the MOC headquarter in Gao and regional branches, calling into question the continuation of the MOC structures.¹⁷ A major challenge would remain the fact that integration into defence and security forces wasn’t that attractive to CMA leadership due to salaries that were not appealing enough, probably compared to revenue from taxation/extortion – including in the context of a gold rush that started in 2016 with artisanal gold mining sites in Intahakat (near Gao), Almaghmor (North of Timbuktu) and Kidal region – all areas under the control of armed groups - and traffics.

At the turn of 2017, both coalitions of armed groups – CMA and Platform - decided to boycott the Follow-Up Committee to the agreement (CSA) – in protest of the “lack of inclusiveness in the decision making of the implementation process and delays in implementing interim measures.” In an attempt to unlock the situation, on 13 April 2017 MINUSMA SRSG Mahamat Saleh Annadif, with support from MINUSMA SSR-DDR and Mediation units, convened a meeting of the strategic committee for security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration with the diplomatic community in Bamako.¹⁸ In early 2018, mixed units of the MOC were established in Timbuktu.

3.2.2. Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects

MINUSMA’s Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects officially started in 2014 informed by Security Council Resolutions 2100 (2013) and 2164 (2014) and by a baseline assessment study conducted by MINUSMA in October 2014¹⁹ initially to help prepare for the future socio-economic reinsertion of ex-combatants as part of DDR. The rationale for CVR projects evolved over time. They were initially conceived as a confidence building measure around the eight cantonment sites being built - to help with the acceptance of the cantonment of armed groups’ members in neighboring communities - through the provision of short-term job opportunities and infrastructure rehabilitation.²⁰ UNOPS implemented the first 11 CVR projects while also building the cantonment sites as part of a USD 3 million PBF project; IOM thereafter took over (USD 1 million worth of CVR projects).

Later, as cantonment was not taking place, CVR projects were repurposed as “peace dividends” - while waiting for DDR - and extended to other parts of northern Mali beyond just the vicinity of cantonment sites with a focus on enhancing the socio-economic fabric of vulnerable communities where future ex-combatants were expected to return one day, preventing youth at risk from joining armed groups, and promoting reconciliation between local communities and “inactive combatants”.²¹

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were prepared by MINUSMA to guide the design and implementation of CVR projects in Mali. **These SOPs were amended multiple times in 2019, then in 2020, and again in 2023 to reflect the changing focus of CVR projects.** The latest SOPs dated 1 May 2023 state that “the projects aim at improving security, strengthening and promoting dialogue, and facilitate reconciliation between ex-combatants, community members, self-defence groups, as well as inter-intracommunity reconciliation and creating an environment that is favourable to the rule of law and peacebuilding during the cantonment and DDR process.” It also states that “these projects can be extended to other communities depending on mission priorities.”

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were amended multiple times in 2019, then in 2020, and again in 2023 to reflect the changing focus of CVR projects.

¹⁷ https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/peace/conflict_resolution/mali-independent-observer-report-april-2020.pdf

¹⁸ S/2017/478, https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_mali_june_2017.pdf

¹⁹ “Rapport Général de l’Etude sur les Opportunités de Réinsertion Socio-économique du Nord au Mali”

²⁰ Robert Muggah, “Revisiting Community Violence Reduction”, UN, June 2017

²¹ MINUSMA also started using the term “inactive combatant” in 2021 to describe combatants that did not demobilize but may be back in communities and were not engaged in fighting.

The SOPs for CVR stipulate that 60% of participants in the projects should be ex-combatants and the other 40% should be community members. However, because no DDR had taken place, **no ex-combatants were employed in these CVR projects** (and combatants declared “medically unfit” for integration did not want to participate in CVR projects and insisted on being integrated into defence and security forces). To avoid the risks of employing “active combatants”, MINUSMA designed CVR projects to prevent youth from joining armed groups. Also, the proportion of women beneficiaries grew to almost fifty percent overall.²² Different types of CVR projects were also implemented in central Mali in support of the Community Rehabilitation Program – CRP – established by the National DDR Commission and discussed in section 3.2.3.

MINUSMA started working directly with local NGOs, instead of working as previously with the larger UN agencies such as UNOPS and IOM as implementing partners. This was a positive development that contributed to reinforcing the capacity of local NGOs. It also meant more of the project management responsibilities and risks associated had to be shouldered by MINUSMA SSR-DDR staff in the regions – Gao, Kidal, Timbuktu and Mopti – which supported these NGOs while building their capacity.

Some of the CVR projects implemented by local partners included vocational training, basic infrastructural rehabilitation, income-generating activities, lighting and security, agriculture, solar-powered water system, animal husbandry, etc.

Years	Number of CVR projects	Total Amounts	Number of beneficiaries
2013 - 2015	11 CVR projects	USD 466,000	38,000 including 11,438 women
2015 - 2021	30 CVR projects per year on average*	USD 3 million per year	52,416 including 25,415 women**
2021 - 2022	38 CVR projects	USD 3 million	33,522 including 16,666 women
2022 - 2023	34 CVR projects	USD 3 million	26,804 including 12,952 women***

*except during the COVID-19 year when some of the CVR funds that could not be spent due to limited access were redirected to support the government response to the pandemic.

**average number per year

***this number reflects the initial target set at the programming stage, nevertheless, due to the closure of the mission the numbers attained were: 21,126 including 10,222 women

There are many lessons from these CVR projects at different levels, from strategic down to program management.

CVR strategic intent

A consistent added value across most CVR projects reviewed is that they took place in areas where armed groups were present, at the difference of other projects MINUSMA implemented (Stabilization Trust Fund, Civil Affairs QIPs and Contingents projects such as the German one in Gao). CVR projects allowed MINUSMA SSR-DDR to access areas controlled by armed groups which other sections of the mission had no access to. This also aided the Mission to be perceived as impartial. The CVR projects also **helped diffuse tensions and promote social cohesion** between armed groups, national authorities and communities. The robust approval process (both

A consistent added value across most CVR projects reviewed is that they took place in areas where armed groups were present.

²² See Bulletin produit par la section RSS-DDR de la MINUSMA Bamako focused on women and youth in the SSR-DDR process in Mali, Nov-Dec 2021. <https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Bulletin-interne-No-11-65.pdf>

at regional level and in Bamako) and the level of MINUSMA SSR-DDR involvement in the projects - higher than for other types of projects (QIPs notably) - allowed more holistic projects that went beyond only a rehabilitation or construction (but involve sensitization and trainings) and made the **projects more sustainable**.

In areas where there are no jobs and the government is absent, CVR projects contributed to preventing youth from joining armed groups. The more successful CVR projects were bottom-up community-managed projects related to water-irrigation systems and agriculture/gardening. These were for the most part sustainable and some of the vegetable gardens even grew into small businesses selling vegetables on local markets and investing in small transport vehicles. Some water projects helped with the protection of civilians and notably women who no longer had to travel long distances.

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Concerns over possible duplication with other MINUSMA projects were mitigated after 2016 when MINUSMA Stabilization and Recovery section and OCHA representatives became part of the Local Committees and the Project Appraisal Committee (PAC). Although **a formal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanism meant that all CVR projects had to be visited one year after completion**, due to insecurity some of the projects could not be visited and MINUSMA SSR-DDR had

to rely on information provided by local NGOs - as well as local beneficiaries and communities (to assess NGO's reports) - who were asked to come to MINUSMA camps to report.

On the ground, armed groups and communities generally knew that CVR projects were managed by MINUSMA SSR-DDR and often came directly to the section to ask for projects. The fact that **CVR projects were not targeted by terrorist attacks** speaks to their acceptance but may also suggest that some armed groups active in the areas may also have found value in some CVR and other UN and non-UN projects either because they benefit directly (from a water project for instance), or are close to the benefiting communities.



Source: Agriculture CVR project in Tarabangou village near Timbuktu, March 2017, Harandane Dicko/MINUSMA

CVR program management

At the program management level, one of the main challenges for MINUSMA was the **absence of line ministries' representation in Kidal region**. This created multiple challenges related to national ownership. First, although these projects were meant to increase community acceptance of cantonment and DDR, the government of Mali took issues with some projects (particularly those that started before the signing of the 2015 agreement and before the establishment of the National DDR Commission) it thought would support pro-CMA communities. **Many of the early projects (2015-2017) that required government engagement (rehabilitation of schools and dispensaries, or installation of solar lights for instance) were not sustained** beyond 6 months to a year after the completion of the project (because the government was not able to provide teachers, doctors and supplies, or maintain the solar lights). This led MINUSMA SSR-DDR to adjust the focus of subsequent CVR projects towards more bottom-up community-managed types of projects.

For any water project as for construction projects, **the first necessary step is a technical assessment by the competent government technical agency**. Employees from relevant government agencies asked MINUSMA for financial support to carry out such assessments but such support is not part of SOPs nor budgeted for. The **MINUSMA SSR-DDR Section did not have its own engineers** (while the Stabilization and

Recovery section had its own engineer for instance²³) which made it reliant on the MINUSMA Engineering Section which rarely had time.

Another major challenge was the **limited capacity of local NGOs in northern Mali to design and implement CVR projects**. Since 2015, the MINUSMA SSR-DDR Section fostered partnerships with nearly 60 local NGOs. Despite capacity building workshop organized by MINUSMA, many of these were incapable of drafting project proposals and reporting correctly, which meant they were wholly reliant on MINUSMA staff to rewrite these. Because of that, starting in 2020, MINUSMA innovated with the concept of "Consortium"²⁴ which brought together 2-3 local NGOs implementing partners operating under a lead NGO with more capacity which would help the others. This model allowed to raise the ceiling for a CVR project (initially at USD 50,000 but raised to USD 100,000) to USD 300,000 for a consortium.

The **Human Rights section was also involved in the Local Review Committee to conduct a vetting of participants** in CVR projects as part of Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP). While important this process also created delays, albeit none of the participants ever showed up on the "wanted list" (of armed groups leaders and commanders having committed grave crimes) since participants in projects were either community members or very low level "inactive combatants" and none had been mid-level commanders in armed groups.

²³ The MINUSMA DDR-SSR section was ultimately able to add a Malian engineer position to its staffing table but did not have time to recruit one before the closing of the mission.

²⁴ The idea was apparently proposed by DSRSG/RC/HC and in 2023, the Mission's CVR SOPs were amended to reflect this new "consortium" paradigm.

Source: CVR project in Hamakouladji, region of Gao, February 2018, MINUSMA



Communication around CVR projects

An aspect that could have been improved is the communication on CVR projects, both within the UN mission (there was a monthly MINUSMA SSR-DDR newsletter) and towards outside constituencies and notably national authorities (the communities generally perceived CVR projects very positively). The first mention of CVR projects in SG reports was in late 2015 as “MINUSMA with support from UNOPS initiated eight community violence reduction (CVR) projects in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu in order to mitigate the potential risks of recruitment by criminal and armed groups of civilians”.²⁵

On the 2nd of May 2023, MINUSMA SSR-DDR together with Mediation Section produced a Code Cable to UNHQ entitled “Peace dividends: the positive impact of CVR projects in Mali” which argued that CVR projects had a major impact notably in terms of maintaining the ceasefire through immediate interventions. It noted that the demand for CVR projects had increased, with armed groups, local communities and local authorities regularly approaching MINUSMA to carry out more CVR projects.

Importantly, the relation between MINUSMA SSR-DDR and the CNDDR from 2015 to 2022 had been excellent. MINUSMA SSR-DDR staff had the opportunity to present CVR projects and their contribution to peace and security to the new CNDDR president during the August 2022 high-level decision-making meeting. This, however, led to the Malian **transitional authorities trying to control** the local NGOs selected as implementing partners and to get the governors to approve all CVR projects. The minister of national reconciliation decided that the government would control all projects. This is a testimony to the strategic importance CVR projects gained over time particularly in regions where government services are not provided. MINUSMA SSR-DDR explained that Malian authorities were always included in CVR projects at the local level, and that it is essential for CVR projects, especially in contested areas, to be implemented in an impartial manner.

3.2.3. Parallel Community Rehabilitation Programme (CRP) in Central Mali

In early 2017, the **president of the National DDR Commission (CNDDR) announced that three cantonment sites would be built in central Mali** (Ténenkou, Douentza, and Bankass) to welcome combatants from armed groups from central Mali who were not signatories to the peace agreement.²⁶ **Although this initiative was not in the framework of the 2015 inter-Malian peace agreement, MINUSMA decided to support the government’s Community Rehabilitation Programme (CRP) in Central Mali, which was intended to foster the voluntary disarmament of members of militia and self-defence groups (the majority) as well as few individuals who left extremist groups. But the absence of a clear legal framework and Malian political strategy to support this DDR-like program for Central Mali** (notably the absence of military pressure and of transitional justice provisions), the absence of mention in MINUSMA mandate of non-signatory armed groups and self-defence militias however made this support challenging and risky for the mission.

MINUSMA SSR-DDR notably implemented three dedicated CVR projects of a different nature than those implemented in northern Mali (focused more on sensitization, labour intensive and potable water) in support of the CRP around the Soufouroulaye camp. **A total of 352**

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²⁵ S/2015/732

²⁶ “Ténenkou: Démarrage de la construction du centre du cantonnement,” MaliActu, May 5, 2017, available at <http://maliactu.net/mali-tenenkou-demarrage-de-la-construction-du-centre-de-cantonement/>.

participants (“defectors”) including 17 “women affiliated” voluntarily disarmed and participated in the CRP in 2018. Among these 85 including 4 women were “recruited” (to avoid using the same “integration” terminology used for signatory armed groups) into the Malian armed forces. The others undertook a DDR process (the only one that actually took place in Mali) accompanied by NGOs which even helped them secure loans once reintegrated into their communities.

This “parallel DDR” initially created tensions with the signatory armed groups (some international partners also expressed concerns over possible confusion). Some 5,000 individuals had pre-registered for the Community Rehabilitation Programme (CRP) but many dropped out when they found out that they wouldn’t benefit from integration like signatory armed groups. Some of them were later recruited under a 2022 special recruitment program for the Malian armed forces.

A total of 65 CVR projects were implemented in Central Mali (36 in Mopti, 13 in Bandiagara, 10 in Douentza, 2 in San and 4 in Ségou) by 23 local NGOs between 2015 and 2023, targeting 54,131 direct beneficiaries including 28,148 women. Interestingly, **CVR projects carried out in the context of the CRP were the only ones that included a Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM)** aspect led by the CNDDR with support from MINUSMA and in coordination with Malian Defence and Security Forces which collected a few weapons from militias notably as part of the process.

The CRP was suspended due to concerns over the confusion with DDR programme for the signatory armed groups but also continued intercommunal violence, political dynamics and lack of agreement on militias dismantlement and disarmament procedures. The camp where the 352 “defectors” were hosted was attacked by an extremist group and was thereafter closed. Despite this, MINUSMA SSR-DDR continued implementing other CVR projects in Central Mali focused on social cohesion, vocational training for youth at risk and income generating activities.

3.3. The **third phase** (July 2018 - June 2020): “Accelerated DDR” & Integration

The third phase (July 2018-June 2020) was marked by a **shift of MINUSMA’s attention towards Central Mali**²⁷ in response to the deteriorating security situation there. Resolution 2480 (2019) formally added a second strategic priority to MINUSMA’s mandate to “facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive politically-led Malian strategy to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence, and re-establish State authority, State presence and basic social services in Central Mali.” Later in this phase Resolution 2531 (2020) updated the “priority measures” for the Malian parties to fulfil, including inter alia DDR and integration into reconstituted inclusive Malian Defence and Security units (at least another 2,000 members of the signatory armed groups).

3.3.1. The “Accelerated DDR and Integration” process

The “accelerated DDR and Integration” process has been an innovative and useful initiative to restart a stalled process almost three years after the signing of the 2015 peace agreement.

The “accelerated DDR and Integration” process has been an innovative and useful initiative to restart a stalled process almost three years after the signing of the 2015 peace agreement. It was a way to shift from interim measures (mixed patrols) that were only supposed to last six months to starting to implement core provisions of the peace agreement that were meant to be durable, by quickly integrating combatants assigned to the Operational Coordination

²⁷ However, the Council maintained the same troop ceiling and the mission’s primary strategic priority to support the implementation of the Algiers Agreement.

Mechanism (MOC) into the national armed forces. The idea had first been put forward by MINUSMA in 2016 as a way to overcome some of the challenges the MOC was facing and in early 2017 the government requested technical and logistical assistance from MINUSMA to initiate such a special programme for 529 members of the Gao MOC - from CMA, Platform and some splinter groups.

This integration of combatants scheduled to begin on 25 April 2018 was postponed, owing to alleged logistical and security constraints.²⁸ The **official “launching” ceremony for the “accelerated DDR and Integration” took place on 6 November 2018 following international pressure for progress in the implementation of the peace agreement.**²⁹ The process resulted in the **registration of 1,423 MOC combatants** initially (later up to approximately 1,800) who stood to officially join the ranks of the Malian armed forces and, upon the completion of a three-month training exercise (supported by the European Union military training mission EUTM), to redeploy to northern Mali. The “accelerated DDR and Integration” process stalled due to disagreements over medical clearances³⁰ and the fragmentation of the Platform armed groups, despite a “catch-up” phase of the “accelerated DDR and Integration” process to reach the objective of 3,000 troops in total, by integrating the remaining elements of the MOC.

On 8 April 2019, under pressure from MINUSMA (SRSG Annadif, chief mediation and SSR-DDR section together), **the Government and signatory armed movements held a high-level meeting to discuss the draft decree defining the modalities of rank allocation, reclassification and command and control** for the former combatants of the signatory movements to be integrated into the Malian armed forces and other security institutions. The CMA refused to sign the draft over disagreement with regard to benefits for the families of deserters who had died before reintegration.

The ex-MOC combatants, once trained, joined the Reconstituted Armed Forces Battalions (*Bataillon des Forces Armées Reconstituées* – BATFAR), which deployed back to Gao and Timbuktu first, as well as Menaka, then Kidal in February 2020 - marking the first form of symbolic State security presence there since 2014. While the Kidal BATFAR never patrolled the town and did not survive the Fall 2023 resumption of fighting,³¹ the other **BATFARs contrasted with the previous MOC mixed patrols in that they took part in military operations.**



Source: Launch ceremony of the accelerated DDR Integration process in Gao, November 2018 (MINUSMA/Marco Dormino)

²⁸ S/2018/541, https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/180606_sg_report_on_mali_english_.pdf

²⁹ Baba Hamed, “Au Lancement officiel du programme DDR, les ex-rebelles posent leurs conditions”, 7 Novembre 2018, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/659488/politique/mali-au-lancement-officiel-du-programme-ddr-les-ex-rebelles-posent-leurs-conditions/>.

³⁰ Elements considered medically unfit undertook several re-examinations. Disagreements over medical clearances (leading to the declaration of some 430 armed groups’ members as “unfit” for Integration) and delays on the side of the Government in formally publishing through decree or other official text the agreed-upon modalities and integration criteria stalled the process.

³¹ In the context of the resumption of fighting in fall 2023, the Malian army and Platform components of the Kidal BATFAR took refuge in the MINUSMA camp before leaving Kidal altogether in October 2023. See <https://afrikinfos-mali.com/2023/10/11/kidal-la-composante-fama-du-batfar-rejoint-le-camp-de-la-minusma/>

The lack of trust between the parties and the lack of attractiveness of integration into defence and security forces among Tuaregs and Arabs however led signatory armed groups (especially the CMA) to keep their best combatants and weapons with them as a security guarantee. The **issue of “chain of command” also became a major sticking point**. Armed groups asked to hold “deputy/second in command” positions within the army and national guards as part of reconstituted armed forces (rather than just a few BATFAR all commanded by Malian officers), but the Malian ministry of defence rejected this.

by mid-2020, the “accelerated DDR and Integration” process had involved 1,840 combatants from all signatory armed groups.

Even though the objective of reintegrating 3,000 fighters by 2020 set in the UN Security Council in Resolution 2480 (2019) was never entirely reached, by mid-2020, the “accelerated DDR and Integration” process had involved 1,840 combatants from all signatory armed groups. The process also had the merit of being nationally owned by the National DDR Commission (the lists were endorsed by the CTS and the CNDDR) with support from MINUSMA. The fact that

the process began without an agreement on a final quota for the number of fighters to be integrated however made it challenging – and figures kept changing over time. The “accelerated DDR and Integration” while useful turned out to be costly and required heavy MINUSMA support, including with flights, camp improvements for the Malian armed forces, and movements of the Malian teams.

Lastly but importantly, **the ultimate objective of DDR which is the return to civilian life was never really promoted due to political reasons** despite the fact that some 16,000 individuals pre-registered in 2018 (out of a total of 26,000 individuals pre-registered) were earmarked for a potential socio-economic reinsertion into civilian life³² (with another 10,000 individuals listed for Integration)³³ and some 15 million USD in World Bank funding had been made available to the National DDR Commission, including 4 million to support socio-economic reinsertion. **MINUSMA SSR-DDR section**



Source: Accelerated DDR in Gao, 2020

Most of the integrated armed group elements remained within the Malian Defense and Security Forces BATFARs despite the resumption of fighting.

worked closely with the World Bank and CNDDR. Because of the absence of the DDR programme (meaning socio-economic reinsertion), the **World Bank repurposed the 4 million toward CVR-type projects and partly funded a project dedicated to supporting 900 women associated with armed groups (FAGA), whom MINUSMA hosted in its camps.** The World Bank closed its program at the end of December 2023 due to the absence of DDR.

Tensions kept growing between the parties after the signatory armed movements suspended their participation in the CSA and CTS in late 2020. The Malian armed forces eventually launched a full-fledged military offensive in the Fall of 2023 to take over camps vacated by the mission in the context of MINUSMA's departure –before they fall into the hands of armed groups. As the Malian army supported by allied forces started advancing towards Kidal, CMA combatants who were in the BATFAR in Kidal would have rejoined the armed groups as well as reportedly a good number from Gao (estimated at 163). The majority of members of the CMA in Timbuktu BATFAR and other armed groups in all BATFARs reportedly remained within the Malian armed forces, which means that overall, most of the integrated armed group elements remained within the Malian Defense and Security Forces BATFARs despite the resumption of fighting.

³² S/2018/541, https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/180606_sg_report_on_mali_english_.pdf

³³ S/2020/476, https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2020_476_e.pdf

The pre-registration of combatants from signatory armed groups carried out in 2018 by the CNDDR and the National Integration Commission supported by MINUSMA SSR-DDR, gave the following results: 74,000 pre-registered combatants and affiliated women, including 26,000 combatants with weapons, therefore eligible for the DDR process and possibly for integration into the Malian defense and security forces and the civilian administration. After long negotiations facilitated by MINUSMA and the International Mediation, in 2019, the government agreed to integrate 10,000 of these eligible fighters into the Reconstituted Defense and Security Forces and to put the other 16,000 into the national DDR program, while the other 48,000 unarmed men and women would be reinserted into civilian life through socio-economic projects within the framework of Community Rehabilitation Programs. As part of the “accelerated DDR and Integration” process, 2,300 armed group members were registered biometrically, of which 1,765 were declared medically fit and therefore integrated into the BATFARs (while the other “medically unfit” were directed toward socio-economic reinsertion as part of the national DDR program).

3.3.2. Children

The annexes to the report on children and armed conflict (A/74/845-S/2020/525) list the MNLA as part of the CMA for the recruitment and use of children and for perpetrating rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.³⁴ They also list the Platform, including affiliated groups, for the recruitment and use of children. In 2014, cases involving 103 children were verified and attributed to CMA (MNLA, HCUA and MAA-CMA) and the Platform (MAA-Platform and GATIA); an increase in cases was documented in 2015 (167) and 2016 (454), of which only 84 and 79 cases, respectively, of recruitment and use were verified. In the first half of 2017, 24 allegations were received and 18 boys were verified as recruited by the Platform, CMA and unidentified groups. Children were used as combatants and reportedly engaged in hostilities, but were also used as cooks and to serve at checkpoints. Only a few cases involving girls, 16 in total, were verified during the period under review. Two girls were recruited by MSA in 2015 and 14 by the Platform in 2016. The peak in 2016 of reports of child recruitment and use is considered the result of armed groups’ interest in inflating the numbers of their combatants because of the prospect of DDR dividends, as well as due to misinformation about the DDR process which may have led to an increase in children joining armed groups in the hopes of benefitting from the adult DDR package.³⁵

Because of that personnel of the National DDR Commission established in December 2015 were trained by the country task force co-chaired by MINUSMA and UNICEF on monitoring and reporting on the procedures established for the separation and reintegration of children associated with armed groups. Within the eight cantonment sites that were set up, separate facilities were built for children associated with armed groups and sensitization sessions on the specific needs of children undergoing the process were conducted in communities surrounding three of the cantonment sites in the Gao and Timbuktu regions. In December 2016 the Malian authorities appointed a senior defense official to serve as an expert on issues related to women and children within the National DDR Commission, to ensure the integration of specific provisions relating to gender and children into the national DDR programme. During the same month, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family adopted a national child separation and reintegration strategy as a preamble to a national DDR strategy. In order to address the absence of child protection provisions in the 2015 peace agreement, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and the Family validated, in January 2017, a Government-led study analyzing ways to mainstream child protection in the implementation of the Agreement, including by prioritizing the protection of children in the national DDR strategy.

³⁴ MNLA was listed for recruitment and use of children and for rape and sexual violence against children in 2013 (S/2013/245). In 2017, MNLA was still listed but as a party that had put in place measure aimed at improving the protection of children (A/72/361-S/2017/821). Engagement with MNLA led to an Action Plan to end and prevent recruitment and use and sexual violence against children signed in 2017; however, its implementation has presented challenges (as a result, MNLA is still listed for both grave violations).

³⁵ Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Mali, S/2018/136, 21 February 2018

In practice however, the cantonment process never took place and no child was registered during the accelerated DDR and integration process.³⁶ This despite various screenings of combatants (in Gao, Kidal, Timbuktu and Mopti Regions) in order to identify any associated children and ensure their immediate separation, between November 2018 and October 2019 and again between June and July 2020, to which the country task force participated in cooperation with national authorities. A few individuals presumed to be children by child protection actors presented birth certificates or identity cards, established a few days prior to the registration of combatants, showing their presumed adult age. The validity of the documents was questioned, and the issue was brought to the attention of senior government officials and armed group leaders. Some of the adult combatants may also have been recruited into the armed groups when they were still children.³⁷ During the process, 1,878 combatants, including 17 women, were sensitized regarding the six grave violations against children.³⁸

3.4. The **fourth phase** (July 2020 – December 2023): The deterioration of the relationship with the host country and the Exit

The fourth phase (July 2020 – December 2023) was characterized by a **deterioration of the relationship between MINUSMA and the host country**, amidst two military coups (18 August 2020 and 2021). Tensions between the transitional government and France grew, precipitating the end of Operation Barkhane. At the same time, the transition government was keen on pursuing a military stabilization approach rather than the more political one advocated by MINUSMA and the international community as part of the implementation of the peace agreement. The Malian transitional authorities also started restricting MINUSMA's movements, blocking UN flights and supply convoys; and kept calling for "better coordination for MINUSMA's actions with the Malian State."

At the end of November 2022, the signatory armed movements announced the suspension of their participation in the bodies implementing and monitoring the 2015 peace agreement "until a meeting is held with international mediation and on neutral ground." The transition government's focus shifted back to Bamako politics and the two coalitions of signatory armed movements - CMA and Platform. Despite various splits and shifts in alliances, these coalitions found a modus vivendi, notably through the *Cadre Stratégique Permanent* (CSP) signed in Rome early May 2021, had not disarmed and de facto controlled northern Mali.

Despite these challenging circumstances, MINUSMA kept encouraging the parties towards implementation of key defense and security provisions of the 2015 peace agreement. On 18 and 19 March 2021, a workshop was held (in the six central and northern regions, targeting 300 ex-combatants per location) on the modalities and eligibility criteria for the planned DDR of an additional 1,800 combatants who had opted to be reintegrated into civilian life as a result of the road map of 28 December 2020. In April 2021, **MINUSMA completed the construction of a transit camp in Kati** (with the capacity to accommodate up to 250 former combatants for training prior to redeployment as part of the BATFAR), Koulikoro Region, handed it over to the transition Government of Mali, and continued organizing workshops in support of the government.³⁹

³⁶ The fact that no child was registered during the Accelerated DDR process does not imply that no child was ever released by Armed Group as children are expected to be released unconditionally regardless of the implementation of the DDR process.

³⁷ The IDDRS addresses the issue of demobilizing and reintegrating former combatants who were recruited as children and demobilized as adults. IDDRS 5.30 on Youth and DDR (IDDRS-5.30-Youth-and-DDR_7-Dec-2021.pdf (unddr.org)) provides guidance on children who are closer to 18 years of age in recognition of the fact that these children, who are likely to enter into employment and who have socio-political reintegration demands, (especially young adults with their own children) require special assistance.

³⁸ Reports of the Secretary-General, Children and armed conflict in Mali, S/2020/1105 of 11 November 2020 and S/2022/856 of 15 November 2022

³⁹ In May 2023, MINUSMA with support from DPO organized a workshop in Bamako focused on (i) DDR and Armed Groups Designated as Terrorist Organizations considering the situation in the Centre of Mali and (ii) good governance of the security sector while taking into account the centrality of local ownership. (https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2021_519_e.pdf)



Source: Joint awareness raising mission in Timbuktu by CNDDR, CTS and MINUSMA SSR-DDR for the resumption of the DDR process and the reinsertion of “medically unfit” ex-combatants, 27 September 2021, MINUSMA

August 2022 high-level decision-making meeting on DDR and Integration issues, during which the transition Government of Mali made the unexpected offer to integrate 26,000 armed group combatants into State structures.

The key development during that period was the August 2022 high-level decision-making meeting on DDR and Integration issues, during which the transition Government of Mali made the unexpected offer to integrate 26,000 armed group combatants into State structures – 13,000 the first year and another 13,000 the following years (it was also decided that an ad hoc commission would be established to address issues of rank and chain of

command).⁴⁰ The January 2023 strategic review of MINUSMA acknowledged the work done by the mission in support of the DDR process in Mali, notably that “with MINUSMA support, 2,300 combatants have undergone the accelerated DDR process, 1,765 of whom have been integrated into four reconstituted units in the north.”

3.4.1. Transitioning and exiting

The MINUSMA transition and exit took place in a particular context of withdrawal of host country consent announced on 16 June 2023 by the representative of the transition government of Mali to the UN Security Council, asking for the **“withdrawal, without delay” of MINUSMA**.⁴¹ Following this request made by the host country, the Council passed a resolution to “terminate MINUSMA’s mandate as of June 30, 2023” but “maintain its personnel until 31 December 2023, to plan and execute the cessation of operations and transfer of tasks.”⁴²

This means the planning of the potential handover tasks - including DDR-related ones - was rushed (even though the Security Council had asked MINUSMA multiple times before to start planning its exit strategy). The mandate ended on 30 June 2023 and the mission had less than six months to complete its ongoing activities and/or hand them over to either the government and/or the UN country team by 31 December 2023. The fact that most MINUSMA SSR-DDR staff left Mali at the same time as other MINUSMA civilian staff by the end of September 2023, and only two SSR-DDR staff (a P5 and a P2/UNV) stayed in the UN Resident Coordinator’s office as advisers until 30 December 2023, added to the difficulty. With that said, there are a few lessons learned.

⁴⁰ S/2023/36, <https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/n2301648.pdf>

⁴¹ Security Council 9350th Meeting (am), Sc/15325, 16 June 2023.

⁴² David Lewis and Edward Mcallister, “U.N. peacekeeping mission in Mali set to end on June 30”, Reuters, 27 June 2023.

The first lesson is the **limited ability and readiness of the UN Country Team - and of UNDP in particular - to take over outstanding DDR tasks, notably related to ongoing CVR projects.** MINUSMA SSR-DDR spent a considerable amount of time preparing a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlining how UNDP would take over tasks. However, it turned out UNDP⁴³ could not take over these tasks without an explicit request from the government of Mali (since at the difference of MINUSMA it does not have a mandate from the Security Council) and because of the risks it foresaw.

This put MINUSMA staff in an awkward position vis-à-vis the communities and local authorities but all eight CVR projects that were ongoing were somewhat completed or at least the remaining funds were transferred to the local implementing partners. **Mobilizing programmatic funding from assessed budget to support continued SSR-DDR expertise in the RC office** beyond December 2023 (during the liquidation phase) also turned out to be difficult as priorities in a complex security context were probably elsewhere. This is source of concern in terms of institutional memory.

Several aspects also made engagement with the Malian transitional government more challenging. During the 2-4 August 2023 high-level Roundtable that was organized by the UN to discuss the mission departure with the Malian transitional authorities, **MINUSMA made clear that no DDR or CVR funds would be transferred to the government, which led the latter to be less interested in engaging with the UN.**⁴⁴ The Malian military offensive in northern Mali tried to prevent camps that MINUSMA was vacating from falling into the hands of armed groups. This further complicated the relations between the Malian transition government and the UN.

The presence of a **Malian transitional government that came out of two military coups has complicated the ability of UNDP and others to mobilize donor funding to continue supporting SSR-DDR in Mali** (UN agencies, funds and programs did not inherit funds from the MINUSMA Trust Fund either since contributing donors decided to repatriate their funds instead); so did the exclusion of CMA members from the previously inclusive National DDR Commission (CNDDR), National Integration Commission (NIC), and Security Sector Reform Commission (CRSS).

With that said, although the Malian transition government ruled out any engagement with the CMA - which it considers having defeated in its stronghold of Kidal on 14 November 2023 and denounced the 2015 peace agreement (declaring its "immediate termination") on 25 January 2024, it continues engaging with non-CMA armed groups from Platform and the *mouvements de l'inclusivité* (CMI) notably. The sudden prestige gained by the Malian armed forces will likely make Integration a more attractive proposition for many combatants. But the Malian transition government is also keen on disarming and demobilizing (and possibly supporting the socio-economic reinsertion into civilian life if it has the means to) as many of the armed groups' combatants out there as possible.

⁴³ In October 2023, UNDP carried out an assessment visit in Bamako in the perspective of possible continued UN support on DDR and CVR to the government of Mali beyond the end of MINUSMA mandate on 31 December 2023.

⁴⁴ The UN Secretary-General also issued a letter to the UN Security Council on the articulated plan of MINUSMA's withdrawal, particularly pertaining to the transfer of tasks, whereby, based on the request of the Malian government, the DDR Section in New York could continue to provide support to the Malian people through the continuity of the DDR process via Agencies, funds and programs in conjunction with whichever monitoring mechanism the Parties may settle on.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS (BASED ON LESSONS LEARNED)

Below are recommendations derived from the lessons identified in the previous sections but for the most part applicable beyond Mali:

Cantonment:

- I. **An informal pre-cantonment phase can serve as a stopgap confidence-building and protection of civilians measure (particularly if WAM measures are introduced) and help early engagement with armed groups but should not be formalized;**
- II. **Formal cantonment should be discouraged** as part of DDR process and/or kept to the bare minimum, as few processing/transit/demobilisation centres (due to the costs of building infrastructures and the many risks - including security risks - associated with an open-ended process) ideally located not too far from UN camps for logistical and security reasons.

Peace negotiations:

- III. During peace negotiations, always **include SSR-DDR expertise in a UN mediation team** and try to secure enough time for building trust between the parties such that the final agreement includes as much detail as possible in terms of Integration, DDR quotas (lists and agreed numbers) and eligibility criteria for both Integration and DDR (in order that these do not become sticking points during the implementation phase); and secure the **subsequent participation of SSR-DDR expertise in follow-up mechanisms** to a peace agreement;

During peace negotiations, always include SSR-DDR expertise in a UN mediation team.
- IV. **Better sensitize UN senior leadership (including SRSGs, DSRSGs, and RCs) on DDR/Integration/SSR** such that they can **use DDR and Integration as entry points** but also understand that **SSR-DDR cannot be a substitute for a political process** that is needed to enable the DDR/Integration process;

SSR-DDR cannot be a substitute for a political process that is needed to enable the DDR/Integration process.
- V. Short-term confidence-building measures such as pre-cantonment and mixed patrols should be conceived as and remain short-term interim measures (and should have an expiry date) in order to **avoid delaying the start of the core defence and security provisions of an agreement with longer term (and hopefully less reversible) impact, notably DDR and Integration**; the longer the delay in the start of the DDR/Integration process, the more likely it will never take place.
- VI. **The number of follow-up committees/bodies to a peace agreement should be limited** in order to facilitate discussions and decisions and avoid confusion and delays. **Allowances for members of armed groups serving in follow-up committees** related to the implementation of a peace agreement should be proportionate to those of government civil servants (not more!). Too high allowances may unwittingly encourage delaying tactics.

The number of follow-up committees/bodies to a peace agreement should be limited.

DDR/Integration planning:

VII.

Strive to **synchronise Integration and DDR – supported by a political strategy** - into two simultaneous processes, providing security guarantees to armed groups (and promoting integration into a local type of police force and not only the national army which soldiers may be redeployed away from their communities of origin) as well as **tangible peace dividends to communities** as ex-combatants also prepare to return to civilian life;

VIII.

Make the socio-economic reinsertion and reintegration package attractive enough (through careful socio-economic but also anthropological studies) and promote it as a credible alternative to integrating into the national state institutions and security forces; include self-defence militias in DDR planning from the beginning rather than as a parallel process that risks derailing the process;

Make socio-economic reinsertion and reintegration package attractive enough and promote it as a credible alternative to integrating into the national security forces.

IX.

National ownership should be encouraged and tested and not just recognized, including through clear cost-sharing partnerships whereby the government commits some of its own human and financial resources in support of the process, and prepares to shoulder it without support from the UN mission.

Community Violence Reduction (CVR) projects:

X.

In planning for CVR projects, more time and money should be invested in a **political economy analysis of the specific area where the project is meant to be implemented** (not just relying on an initial overall assessment and requests from communities and/or local authorities) keeping in mind that population are waiting for the dividends of the peace agreement;

XI.

In areas where active armed groups are operating (particularly if these include extremist groups), a thorough **political, fiduciary, legal and reputational risk analysis** should be carried out and a robust risk-management framework should be built into the CVR project;

XII.

The financial cap for CVR projects should ideally always be USD 100,000 and CVR projects should remain funded under assessed budget, implemented by local NGOs, and supervised by national and international DDR experts; an approach involving a Consortium of local NGOs can help with allocating more funds for CVR projects (USD 300,000 instead of 50 to 100,000 for a single NGO).

XIII.

Better sensitize UN mission leadership and mission support (particularly Finance) to the purpose and strategic importance of swift implementation of CVR projects to encourage flexible administrative and financial processes;

Better sensitize UN mission leadership and mission support to the purpose and strategic importance of swift implementation of CVR projects.

XIV.

DDR sections implementing large amounts of CVR projects should have their own **engineering capacity** (like UN Police, Corrections or Stabilization sections);

XV.

National DDR Commissions should be better sensitized to the purpose and strategic importance of CVR projects and associated to their conception (to respect national ownership and avoid misunderstandings), while preserving the projects' bottom-up and community-managed identity and the ability for these to be implemented in an impartial manner;

XVI.

CVR **projects that will be sustainable in a given context should be prioritized** (water/irrigation and agriculture/gardening in the northern Mali context for instance) and certain stopgap income-generating projects may also be considered;

XVII.

CVR projects can usefully complement the DDR process and should attempt to retain their unique identity and added value with regards to armed groups (particularly when mission leadership and/or partners are tempted to use them to win "hearts and minds" and for stabilization purposes);

XVIII.

A better and clearer narrative should be developed highlighting how CVR projects are different from other projects such as QIPS (civil affairs or by a peacekeeping contingent) and Trust Fund projects; fewer more targeted CVR successful projects based on a clear theory of change/strategy (that can be validated by facts!) and added value is better than too many projects with unclear objectives and impact;

CVR projects can be strategically used to **support local peace agreements with quick and tangible peace dividends** and, where relevant and feasible, **try to integrate weapons and ammunition management (WAM) provisions**. To this end, close collaboration between SSR-DDR section and Civil Affairs Division (CAD) and Mediation section (if it exists as in MINUSMA) should be encouraged.

CVR projects can be strategically used to support local peace agreements with quick and tangible peace dividends and, where relevant and feasible, try to integrate weapons and ammunition management (WAM) provisions.

XIX.

A robust communication strategy should highlight the roles and impacts of CVR projects to counter mis/disinformation, build trust between the UN and local communities and host government as well as to attract partnerships and donors.

Transition/Exit:

XX.

The UN Secretariat and UNDP should organise a **joint lessons learning session on the failed attempt from MINUSMA SSR-DDR to have the RCO/UNDP take over** some of the ongoing CVR projects and support to Malian SSR-DDR/Integration institutions more broadly; the respective DPO and UNDP legal experts as well as the budget experts/Controllers officer (to discuss the complex issues of transfer of assessed budget to non-Secretariat entities and overheads, etc.) and the Mali RCO should be invited too; the purpose of the exercise would be for both DPO and UN Agencies, Funds or Programs to better anticipate and plan for future similar situations;

XXI.

Peacekeeping operations should better anticipate the handing over of sea containers (containing DDR equipment and supplies) and sensitive databases in times of transition. The option of including such equipment in the liquidation phase should be explored - in order not to rush the handover process -, supported by a dedicated DDR staff budgeted for during the liquidation phase;

XXII.

Endeavor to retain **institutional memory and human capital** including through "placing" NPOs (and not just international staff) in UN Agencies, Funds or Programs and/or national DDR/Integration/SSR institutions as relevant.

5. CONCLUSION

The present lessons learned study was carried out in the particular context of the closure of the ten-year old MINUSMA, the resumption of fighting between the Malian armed forces and some armed groups in northern Mali during the second part of 2023, and on 25 January 2024 the Malian transition government denouncing the 2015 peace agreement and declaring its "immediate termination." The report provides a contextualized historical and analytical account of key developments and draws lessons from DDR, Integration and CVR projects in Mali.

Ultimately, while relentless efforts were made by MINUSMA SSR-DDR to build DDR and Integration processes, the lack of trust between parties – the government and the signatory armed groups - kept stalling the DDR and Integration processes. Even though national structures – CNDDR, NIC, and the CRSS – were established and collaborated well with MINUSMA SSR-DDR, these structures couldn't by themselves build the trust that was lacking at the political level for a genuine implementation of defence and security provisions of the 2015 peace agreement.

“while relentless efforts were made by MINUSMA SSR-DDR to build DDR and Integration processes, the lack of trust between parties – the government and the signatory armed groups - kept stalling the DDR and Integration processes.”

Because of that, implementation was slow, and progress often engineered under international incentives (including generous monthly allowances) and pressure (including the 2017 sanctions regime) rather than driven by the parties themselves. Armed groups regularly blocked or boycotted the peace process because

“The creative use of SSR-DDR by MINUSMA helped promote dialogue between the parties and helped restart and/or engineer progress at different times.”

of the lack of progress on core political-institutional provisions of the 2015 agreement. The government of Mali did not drive the implementation of the agreement out of concern for suspected autonomist ambitions of CMA armed groups.

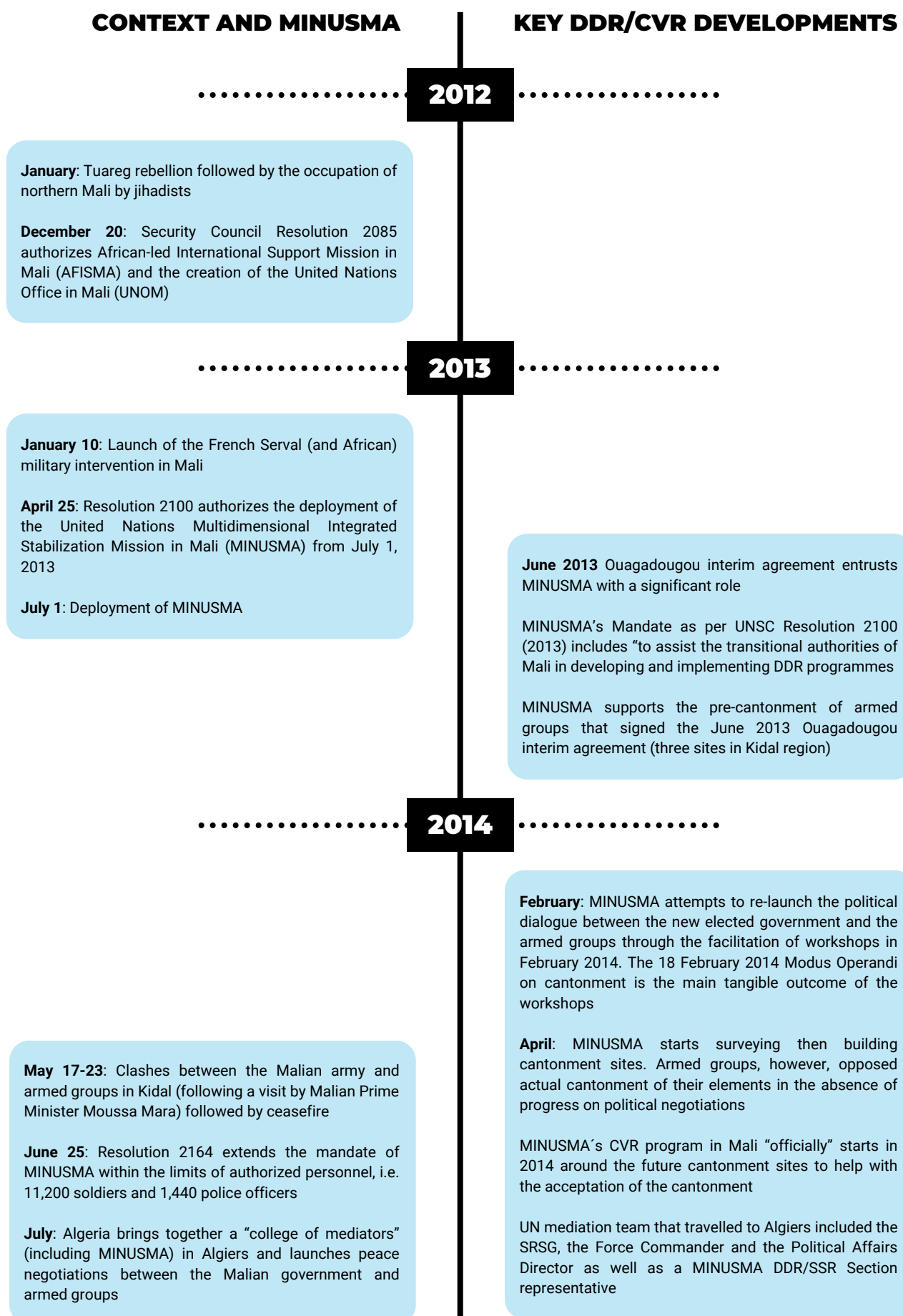
The creative use of SSR-DDR by MINUSMA helped promote dialogue between the parties and helped restart and/or engineer progress at different times. However, it quickly became evident that DDR could

not be successful in a vacuum and would only go so far if the political process did not achieve some progress in parallel. MINUSMA tested this time and again, first during the pre-cantonment, and later during the MOC/mixed patrols and “Accelerated DDR and Integration”, which made headway but eventually stalled. A clearer overall MINUSMA political strategy for advancing the political process could have helped the SSR-DDR section.

The MINUSMA experience also demonstrates that CVR projects can be a useful complement to a DDR programme (and may in some cases help prevent youth recruitments) and help provide much-needed peace dividends in areas under armed group control while awaiting DDR. Last but not least, this study highlights the strategic importance of DDR and CVR activities being supported by assessed budget programmatic funding (rather than depending on voluntary funding from risk-averse donors and/or the goodwill of a transition government), which allowed MINUSMA SSR-DDR to be creative and continue working in a relatively impartial fashion despite the difficult political circumstances.

6. ANNEXES

6.1. Timeline



August: French Operation Serval becomes Operation Barkhane, and is extended to four other Sahel countries - Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad

October: MINUSMA DDR section conducts a baseline assessment on socio-economic reinsertion opportunities in northern Mali in October 2014 to prepare for future DDR and CVR

2015

May-June: The inter-Malian peace agreement is signed in two stages, first on May 15th by Platform groups, then on June 5th, following further consultations, by CMA

June 29: Resolution 2227 extends the mandate of MINUSMA (and adds to the workforce 40 military observers responsible for monitoring and supervising the ceasefire)

A dedicated Defense and Security Annex was included as part of the agreement with specific provisions on cantonment, DDR, Integration & SSR

MINUSMA supports the establishment of the National DDR Commission (CNDDR), the National Integration Commission (NIC), and the Security Sector Reform Commission (CRSS) - Government organs after the signing of the 2015 Peace Agreement

August 10: MINUSMA and partners, including the African Union, ECOWAS and the European Union, establish a technical working group on SSR and DDR in order to coordinate support to Malian security institutions

2016

April 7: Ministry of Defense organizes workshop to discuss the integration of former combatants into the Malian defense and security forces with support from MINUSMA

Concept of Operations for the Operational Coordination Mechanism headquartered in Gao is finalized. The MOC is responsible for coordinating mixed patrols and protecting cantonment sites

April: CMA and Platform hand over lists of their personnel to join the mixed patrols. CMA provides preliminary list of 18,000 combatants for cantonment

May 18: Council of Ministers approves decree on the National Council for Security Sector Reform, placing it under the authority of the Prime Minister

UN puts forward idea that in order to "accelerate the resumption of security responsibilities by the State throughout its territory, MINUSMA should support the early integration of the mixed patrols into the Malian defense and security forces" (this will later become the "Accelerated DDR and Integration")

2017

January 18: a suicide vehicle attack on MOC in Gao kills more than 64 and injured about 115 members of the first mixed patrol

February: Creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force during a summit of heads of state in Nouakchott

March: Main Malian jihadist groups — AQMI, Ansar Eddine, Al-Mourabitoune and the Macina Liberation Front — announce their merger under the name JNIM

June 21: Resolution 2359 welcomes the deployment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, with personnel of up to 5,000 people

June 29: Resolution 2364 extends the mandate at constant numbers

September 5: Resolution 2374 creates a sanctions regime concerning Mali

December 8: Resolution 2391 authorizes “operational and logistical support from MINUSMA” to the G5 Sahel anti-terrorism joint force

President of National DDR Commission announces three new cantonment sites in central Mali to welcome combatants from armed groups not signatories to peace agreement as part of a separate Community Rehabilitation Program (352 participants voluntarily participated in the CRP in 2018 before it was suspended)

April 3: The government requests technical and logistical assistance from MINUSMA to initiate a special “Accelerated DDR and Integration” programme (initially for 529 members of the MOC in Gao)

April 13: MINUSMA SRSR Mahamat Saleh Annadif, convenes a meeting of MINUSMA strategic committee for SSR and DDR with diplomatic community in Bamako to unlock the situation

2018

January-June: Independent strategic review of MINUSMA led by Ellen Margarethe Loj

June 28: Resolution 2423 extends the mandate but initiates a pivot towards Central Mali

June 29: Suicide attack on the headquarters of the G5 Sahel Joint Force in Sévaré

March 22: Adoption of the Roadmap for implementation of priority actions from the Mali peace and reconciliation agreement based on the decision of the CSA follow-up committee

The “accelerated DDR and integration” process begins in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu in late 2018 with the registration of 1,423 combatants ready to join reconstituted battalions of the Malian armed forces (BATFAR). The process however quickly stalled due to disagreements over medical clearances and the fragmentation of Platform armed groups

2019

February: The reconstituted battalion (BATFAR) arrives in Kidal in February 2019 but remained in its camp under the protection of MINUSMA

April 8: Government and signatory armed groups hold high-level meeting to discuss a draft decree defining the modalities of rank allocation, reclassification and command and control for combatants to be integrated

May 5: CSA urges parties to accelerate the “catch-up” phase of the “accelerated DDR and Integration” process of former combatants to reach the target of 3,000 elements

July 12: Revised roadmap of priority actions in the implementation of the Mali peace and reconciliation agreement

June 28: Resolution 2480 extends the mandate at constant numbers but adds a “second strategic priority” in central Mali

2020

March-April: Legislative elections

June 29: Resolution 2531 extends the MINUSMA mandate at constant staffing levels

August 18: Coup d'état by Malian officers deposes President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (IBK) after two months of demonstrations demanding his resignation

By **mid 2020**, approximately 1,800 combatants participated in "accelerated DDR and Integration" but the objective of integrating 3,000 fighters by 2020 set in UN Security Council in Resolution 2480 (2019) is not reached

December 18: Updated roadmap of priority actions in the implementation of the Mali peace and reconciliation agreement, during the transition

2021

April 2: Large attack on MINUSMA camp in Aguelhok is repelled by Chadian soldiers but leaves 40 attackers dead

May 24: New coup by the junta; interim President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane are arrested by the army and forced to resign

June 7: Colonel Assimi Goïta takes oath as new president of the transition and appoints Choguel Maïga Prime Minister

June 11: President Macron announces the departure of the French Barkhane force

June 29: Resolution 2584 extends the mandate but adds support for political transition to mandate

September: Reuters reveals that the Malian transitional authorities are about to conclude an agreement with Russian Wagner Group

October: Security Council visit to Mali (the 5th since the start of MINUSMA)

March 18 and 19: Workshop held on the modalities and eligibility criteria for the planned DDR of an additional 1,800 combatants who opted to be reintegrated into civilian life

April: MINUSMA completes and hands over a transit camp in Kati, Koulikoro Region, with the capacity to accommodate 250 former combatants for training prior to redeployment as part of BATFAR

Further delays in integrating the remaining 1,265 ex-combatants (of envisaged 3,000 target) due to continued disagreement between transitional Government and armed groups

2022

January 10: ECOWAS imposes sanctions against Mali due to the delay in the transition timetable

March 23 to 31: Massacre of Moura; government does not authorize MINUSMA to investigate

May 15: Mali withdraws from the G5 Sahel, including the Joint Force

June 29: Resolution 2640 extends the mandate

August 2022: High-level decision-making meeting: Government proposes integration of 26,000 combatants into State structures

December 2022: Signatory armed groups announce the suspension of their participation in follow up structures to the peace agreement

2023

May 12: Publication of the UN report on Moura which concludes that at least 500 people were unlawfully executed by the Malian armed forces and their foreign allies during the siege of the village

June 16: Representative of transition government of Mali requests the "withdrawal, without delay" of MINUSMA. Security Council passes a resolution to "terminate MINUSMA's mandate as of June 30, 2023" but "maintain its personnel until 31 December 2023, to plan and execute the cessation of operations and transfer of tasks"

August 2-4: High-level Roundtable with Malian transitional authorities, MINUSMA and UNCT in Bamako (including ECOWAS, UNOWAS and EUCAP) to assess whether and where UN support would be required in a post-MINUSMA context

Secretary-General issues letter to UN Security Council on plan for MINUSMA's withdrawal, including transfer of tasks

Late August: Resumption of hostilities between the Malian armed forces (supported by Wagner Group and air assets) and CMA armed groups, precipitating rushed disengagement of MINUSMA from some of its camps in northern Mali (Kidal by 31 October, Mopti-Sévaré 8 November, and Timbuktu by the end of December)

November 14: Malian armed forces announce having 'seized' rebel stronghold of Kidal

December 31: Transition president Assimi Goita announces "direct inter-Malian dialogue for peace and reconciliation" that should enable "national ownership of the peace process"

Most MINUSMA DDR/SSR staff leave Mali at the same time as other MINUSMA civilian staff by the end of September; two staff are seconded to the UN Resident Coordinator's office as DDR/SSR advisers until the end of December

October: UNDP carries out assessment visit in Bamako in the perspective of possible continued UN support on DDR and CVR to the government of Mali beyond the end of MINUSMA

All CMA combatants that were part of Kidal BATFAR re-join the armed groups as well as, reportedly, a good number from Gao BATFAR. The majority of members of the CMA in Timbuktu BATFAR as well as other armed groups reportedly remain within the Malian armed forces ranks

2024

25 January: Malian transition government denounces the 2015 peace agreement and declares its "immediate termination"

28 January: Malian transitional authorities – alongside that of Burkina Faso and Niger – announce their withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

6.2. Roadmaps of 22 March 2018 and 18 December 2020 for implementation of priority actions from the Mali peace and reconciliation agreement

FEUILLE DE ROUTE POUR LA MISE EN ŒUVRE DU CHRONOGRAMME D'ACTIONS PRIORITAIRES, ENDOSSE PAR LA 23^{ÈME} SESSION DU COMITE DE SUIVI DE L'ACCORD (CSA) :

Le Gouvernement de la République du Mali, la Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) et la Plateforme des Mouvements du 14 juin 2014 d'Alger (Plateforme), soucieux de préserver la cohésion et la paix sociales et de promouvoir la paix et la sécurité au Mali, décident de conjuguer leurs efforts pour accélérer la mise en œuvre de l'Accord pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Mali, issu du processus d'Alger, en vue de créer un climat propice à l'organisation d'élections inclusives, libres, transparentes et démocratiques sur toute l'étendue du territoire national.

A cet effet, les parties maliennes conviennent de la présente feuille de route qui complète le chronogramme d'actions prioritaires endossé par la 23^{ème} session du CSA et réaffirment leur ferme engagement à assurer sa mise en œuvre diligente.

N°Ordre	Intitulé des actions	Echéances
1	Parachever la création des collectivités territoriales des régions de Taoudénit et de Ménaka (d'ici la prochaine session de l'Assemblée Nationale)	avril 2018
2	Diligenter la création des collectivités des cercles d'Almoustarat et d'Achibogho (après les élections présidentielles et avant les régionales)	août 2018-août 2019
3	Assurer le fonctionnement effectif des Autorités intérimaires et des Collèges transitoires en les dotant de moyens financiers et matériels, notamment en vue de la fourniture de services sociaux de base et de leur participation dans l'organisation des élections à venir	mars-avril 2018
4	Renforcer les capacités du bataillon du Mécanisme Opérationnel de Coordination (MOC) de Gao en le dotant d'armes lourdes	mars-avril 2018
5	Mettre en place et rendre fonctionnels les bataillons du MOC de Kidal et Tombouctou en les dotant de moyens logistiques et d'armement (y compris les armes lourdes)	mars-avril 2018
6	Selon des modalités à convenir entre les parties, identifier et redéploier les combattants anciennement membres des forces armées et de sécurité conformément à l'Accord	mars-avril 2018
7	Procéder au recensement des combattants éligibles à l'intégration ou au programme Désarmement-Démobilisation-Réinsertion (DDR)	mars-avril 2018
8	Procéder au report de l'élection des conseillers des Collectivités territoriales, l'organiser après les législatives et recommander d'en informer l'ensemble de la classe politique	avril 2018
9	Adopter en Conseil des ministres le projet de décret déterminant les modalités de transfert des services déconcentrés de l'Etat aux Collectivités territoriales relevant de leurs domaines de compétences (transfert des ressources humaines, financières et matérielles)	avril-mai 2018
10	Organiser un atelier de haut niveau sur la Réforme du Secteur de la Sécurité (RSS) y compris les concepts de "l'armée reconstituée" et de la "police territoriale"	27-28-29 mars 2018


11	Procéder au regroupement assisté (appui alimentaire) des combattants recensés sur les sites de cantonnement retenus par la Commission Technique de Sécurité (CTS) en vue des opérations DDR (durée du cantonnement : 45 jours au maximum par combattant)	25 avril-25 août 2018
12	Procéder à l'intégration dans les forces armées et de sécurité, les services paramilitaires et les fonctions publiques des éléments de mouvements signataires suivant les critères retenus et après harmonisation des visions sur le "concept d'armée reconstituée"	25 avril-15 septembre 2018
13	Organiser les élections dans un climat apaisé avec l'implication des mouvements signataires de l'Accord et faire participer les éléments en cours d'intégration à la sécurisation des opérations électorales selon les modalités à définir entre les parties	mai-août 2018
14	Procéder à la réinsertion socio-économique des éléments des mouvements signataires non intégrés	août 2018-juillet 2019
15	Parachever, sur une base consensuelle, la mise en place des Autorités intérimaires au niveau des cercles et au cas par cas pour les communes, dans les régions du Nord du Mali (Tombouctou, Gao, Kidal, Taoudénit et Ménaka)	avril-décembre 2018
16	Accélérer le retour des réfugiés, avec l'implication des parties signataires, sur les sites viabilisés et procéder à leur enrôlement au RAVEC, s'il y a lieu	septembre-décembre 2018
17	Adopter les projets de textes portant création de la Zone de Développement des régions du Nord du Mali, suite à un atelier de haut niveau qui abordera aussi toutes les questions y afférentes conformément à l'Accord	octobre-novembre 2018
18	Organiser des consultations sur le découpage administratif en vue de la création de nouvelles circonscriptions	octobre-décembre 2018
19	Réactiver et diligenter le processus de révision de la Constitution du 25 février 1992 avec la prise en compte des réformes institutionnelles prévues dans l'Accord, notamment la mise en place de la deuxième chambre du Parlement sous la dénomination de Sénat	Année 2019
20	Procéder à la relecture, après les élections présidentielles et avant les élections régionales et locales, de la Loi sur la libre administration et du Code des collectivités territoriales conformément à l'Accord, notamment en vue de prendre en charge les questions relatives à la dénomination de l'organe délibérant et celle afférente au statut du chef de l'exécutif régional	Année 2019
21	Parachever le processus de la Conférence d'Entente Nationale, conformément aux dispositions de l'Accord	Année 2019

Fait à Bamako, le 22 mars 2018

Pour le Gouvernement,
Le Ministre des Collectivités Territoriales,


Alhassane AG HAMED MOUSSA

Le Chef de la Délégation de la CMA au CSA,


Sidi Brahim OULD SIDATT

Le Porte-parole de la Plateforme au CSA,


Me Harouna TOUREH

Le Haut Représentant,


Mahamadou DIAGOURAGA

Pour le Chef de file de la Médiation,
l'Ambassadeur d'Algérie,


SEM Boualem CHEBIHI

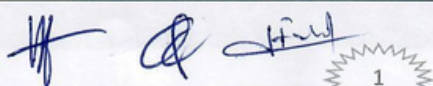
Pour la MINUSMA,
le Représentant spécial adjoint,

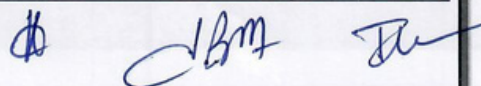

Koen DAVIDSE

**FEUILLE DE ROUTE ACTUALISÉE DES ACTIONS PRIORITAIRES DANS LA
MISE EN ŒUVRE DE L'ACCORD DE PAIX ET DE RÉCONCILIATION AU
MALI, ISSU DU PROCESSUS D'ALGER, PENDANT LA TRANSITION**

En référence à la feuille de route révisée du 12 juillet 2019, les parties maliennes, en présence de représentants de la Médiation internationale, conviennent de la mise en œuvre de la présente feuille de route actualisée en adéquation avec la période de Transition suivant un chronogramme d'actions prioritaires.

N°	Actions prioritaires	Echéance
Questions politiques et institutionnelles		
1	Poursuivre le processus de révision de la Constitution en conformité avec les dispositions de l'Accord en impliquant les Mouvements signataires (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	Juin. 2021
2	Procéder à l'ouverture du Haut Conseil des Collectivités notamment aux représentants des notabilités traditionnelles, aux femmes et aux jeunes (<i>Gouvernement</i>).	Mars 2021
3	Procéder à la relecture des textes notamment le code des collectivités territoriales et de la loi sur la libre administration en conformité avec la nouvelle Constitution et les dispositions de l'Accord (<i>Gouvernement, Muts</i>).	Août. 2022
4	Parachever la mise en place des Autorités intérimaires et Collèges transitoires des Cercles et Communes (<i>Gouvernement, Mouvements</i>). Assurer le fonctionnement des Autorités intérimaires et Collèges transitoires des Régions, Cercles et Communes en les dotant de moyens ; poursuivre les actions de formation à leur profit (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	D'ici Mars 2021
5	Prendre les textes (décrets) sectoriels de transfert aux collectivités territoriales des services déconcentrés relevant de leur compétence (<i>gouvernement</i>), dans un ordre de priorité et selon un calendrier à définir de manière consensuelle entre les parties (<i>Gouvernement, Mouvements</i>)	D'ici Juin 2021
6	Atteindre le taux de 30% des ressources budgétaires de l'Etat transférées aux collectivités territoriales sur le budget 2022 (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	Déc. 2021
7	Favoriser le recrutement des ressortissants locaux dans les fonctions publiques des collectivités territoriales (<i>Gouvernement</i>) ; Intégrer les cadres civils des Mouvements signataires dans les administrations et services publics y compris dans les programmes de réinsertion (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	A partir de Janv. 2021
8	Adopter les projets de textes relatifs à la police territoriale par l'organe législatif de la Transition. (<i>Gouvernement, CNT</i>)	Fév. 2021
9	Poursuite et finalisation des travaux de la réorganisation territoriale (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	Mars 2021



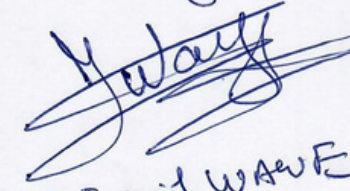


Questions de défense et de sécurité		
10	Organiser une rencontre de niveau décisionnel des parties à l'Accord pour avoir une compréhension commune du concept des « forces de défense et de sécurité reconstituées », ainsi que des modalités de sa mise en œuvre. Cette rencontre règlera définitivement la question des quotas (civils et militaires), de la chaîne de commandement, des inaptes et des combattants anciennement membres des FDS (<i>Gouvernement, Mouvements</i>)	Janv. 2021
11	Finaliser le processus DDR-Intégration accélérée et faire le screening des BAT-FAR de Kidal, Gao, Tombouctou et de la compagnie de Ménaka, en faisant respecter la règle du tiers (1/3) au niveau du commandement et des effectifs. (<i>Mouvements, Gouvernement, CTS</i>)	Déc. 2020
12	Fournir les listes des volontaires pour la 1 ^{ère} opération de réinsertion socio-économique à raison de 300/région. (<i>Mouvements</i>)	Janv. 2021
13	Démarrer le processus global de DDR et d'Intégration de tous les combattants des mouvements ainsi que l'intégration des cadres civils des mouvements dans la fonction publique de l'Etat. (<i>Gouvernement, Mouvements</i>)	1 ^{er} trim. 2021
14	Diligenter la mise en œuvre du décret n°0874/P-RM du 30 octobre 2019 fixant les modalités d'attribution de grades, de fonction de commandement et de reclassement des ex-combattants des mouvements signataires dans les corps constitués de l'Etat y compris dans les forces armées et de sécurité. (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	Janv. 2021
15	Parachever le rappel des éléments des mouvements anciennement membres des FDS n'ayant pas rejoint leurs corps d'origine. (<i>Gouvernement, Mouvements</i>)	Janv. 2021
16	Opérationnaliser la police territoriale par son déploiement. (<i>Mouvements, Gouvernement, CTS</i>)	Mars 2021
17	Assister les combattants dans leurs bases respectives en attendant le démarrage des opérations. (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	A partir de Janv. 2021
Développement socio-économique et culturel		
18	Mise en place d'une Zone de Développement des régions du Nord du Mali (ZODERN-Mali) à travers la mise en place des organes, la désignation du Président et du Vice-président du Conseil Consultatif Interrégional de la ZODERN, les conditions de nomination du Secrétaire Permanent. (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	Janv. 2020
19	Organiser une table-ronde avec les partenaires sur le financement de la Stratégie spécifique de développement des régions du Nord. (<i>Gouvernement, Mouvements</i>)	Fév. 2021
20	Assurer une gestion transparente et inclusive du Fonds de développement durable (prise en compte de toutes les parties dans les instances de gestion) (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	Déc. 2020
21	Lancer au moins un (01) projet structurant par région dans la ZODERN tiré de la SSD/RN sur les fonds disponibles du FDD. (<i>Gouvernement</i>)	Fév. 2021

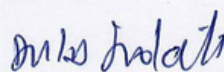
Réconciliation, Justice, Questions humanitaires		
22	Accélérer l'adoption de la loi sur le rôle des cadis et des autorités traditionnelles dans la distribution de la justice. (Gouvernement)	Avril 2021
23	Accélérer l'adoption de la politique nationale de réparation proposée par la CVJR. (Gouvernement)	1 ^{er} trim. 2021
24	Adopter le décret d'application de la Loi d'Entente nationale. (Gouvernement)	Mars 2021
25	Accélérer le processus d'adoption de la loi portant sur l'assistance judiciaire et juridique et l'information sur les droits des citoyens. (Gouvernement)	Avril 2021
26	Adopter des mesures visant la prise en charge des autorités traditionnelles (chefs de villages, de fractions et de quartiers) et leur prise en compte au plan protocolaire. (Gouvernement)	Juin 2021
27	Poursuivre l'accompagnement du retour des déplacés et réfugiés (visites dans les camps de réfugiés, l'identification et l'aménagement de trois sites de retour, soutien au transport des retours volontaires) (Gouvernement / Mouvements)	A partir de Janv. 2021
28	Parachever le processus de la Conférence d'Entente Nationale en vue de l'adoption consensuelle de la Charte nationale pour la paix, l'unité et la réconciliation nationale. (Gouvernement / Mouvements).	Sept. 2021

Bamako, le 18 décembre 2020

Pour le gouvernement



CLN Ismaïl WAEF

Pour la RMP


Moussa Diallo


Pour la P. 
Fatah

Pour la CPA.


Mohamed Ousmane
Mohamed Ousmane

me Harana Touré H Po



ABou m Haïdara

B. L. CH FPR 2


B. Y. Youssef TOURE

Pour Ahmed Abdel Salam Mohamed, P.O.
Plateforme

Moulana Abdallah Haider



Contact:

Thomas Kontogeorgos (Chief, DDR Section): kontogeorgos@un.org

Akossiwa Lea Koudjou (Policy and Planning Officer): koudjou@un.org

DPO/OROLSI/DDR Section: unhqddr@un.org

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