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## A successful DDR is the key to Mali's long-term peace

Kamissa Camara | 10 July 2015

**In May 2015, the government of Mali signed a peace agreement – also called “Algiers Accords” - with rebel movements from the country’s northern half. The long awaited agreement ceremony was held three years after the start of the 2012 Tuareg rebellion. It also marked the three-year anniversary of the military coup, which toppled democratically elected president Amadou Toumani Touré. Most importantly, the Algiers Accords officially settled the fourth Tuareg rebellion Mali has known since its independence from France in 1960. Symbolically, the Accords reaffirmed the high returns of internationally backed domestic efforts, laying the groundwork for improved development, security and peace in the challenged Sahel region.**

An important aspect of the Algiers Accords is the “*Cantonment, Integration*” as well as “*Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion* (DDR)” of rebel groups as described in chapter 8 of the 30-page document. This process is a crucial component to any post-conflict

their discharge from these groups and many, providing ex-combatants sustainable employment, income and civilian or military status, thus ensuring the viability of this process.

In the context of Mali, the DDR process will be conducted under the principles of “*inclusivity and representation*” of the Malian people within the armed and security forces. This will be especially important because of the strong ethnic and cultural differences which exist between northern Mali, where rebel groups originated and the south of the country. In addition, the DDR process will not undermine the “*unity of Mali’s armed and security forces, which are exclusively accountable to the central state*”.

This will not be Mali’s first DDR attempt. After the Tuareg rebellions of 1964, 1995 and 2009 respectively, Mali has tried and failed each time. Mergers between rebel groups and the Malian army have done little to erase the repeated desertions and insurrections, causing serious discontentment within the ranks of Malian nationalist soldiers. Likewise, the reintegration

of former combatants within the civil service has had limited ripple effects.

Following the 2014-2015 Algiers peace negotiations, Mali will renew its attempt at integrating and in some cases re-integrate about 3,000 rebel fighters, most of which who fought in the 2012 rebellion. The figure also includes about 500 Tuaregs who deserted the Malian army between 2011 and 2012. Deemed a superficial fix that could not resolve the underlying ethnic, tribal and clan rivalries and differences that have often turned comrades into enemies, Mali's DDR process as described in the 2015 Algiers accords, offers hopes for some success in the quest for long-term stability. Rightly so, in contrast to previous similar accords, this DDR process will be conducted in close partnership with all parties signatory to the Algiers Accords. Each will have specific roles and responsibilities necessary to the success of this sensitive endeavor. This indigenous effort will be vastly supported by international actors who will provide technical benchmarks and guarantee

According to the Algiers peace agreement, the UN Mission to Mali (MINUSMA) will be a major player in Mali's DDR process. It will provide technical assistance to Mali's government in order to follow "*norms and established professional best practices*" in the DDR processes. According to the Algiers Accords, all parties have agreed to the creation of a DDR national commission, which will include representatives of Mali's central government as well as representatives from the groups signatory to the agreement. As the agreement was being signed, the commission had not been put in place or its members appointed. One of its main missions however will be to select the ex-combatants who can benefit from the integration program.

The reintegration and DDR processes shall be conducted at the same pace as the cantonment of combatants, ensuring the success of the February 2015 cease-fire and preventing the parties from taking up arms again. Also, the DDR process will only apply to ex-combatants who are cantoned and who have never benefited from Mali's earlier integration programs. It is

however unclear what Mali will do with recidivist army deserters who have repeatedly left the Malian army to join the ranks of rebels with whom they shared cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Although the agreement does not include any timeline for Mali's DDR process, the DDR methodology as described in the Accords follows a thorough logic and high level of inclusivity that should ensure slow but progressive stability over time.

It is certainly true that the multi-layered dimensions of Mali's lingering political and security crises have considerably jeopardized the likelihood of a successful implementation of the recent Algiers Accords. Yet, while a successful DDR process should ensure the state's monopoly of force, guaranteeing the long-term stability of northern Mali, it should also recognize and take into account that organized crime and illicit trafficking are active in Mali and the Sahel and could potentially affect the disarmament and demobilization

As inclusive as Mali's national commission plans to be, its work is not perfectly cut out as of yet. Ultimately and given the porous borders between Mali, Niger, Algeria and Mauritania, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in Mali should be conducted in close coordination with those of its neighbors. And even though a peace agreement has been signed, the outcome of the DDR process will heavily depend on how well the different parties represented within the commission balance their respective interests while maintaining the spirit of the Algiers Accords.

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