

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on DDR-CVR operations

Monthly Newsletter: September 2020

Overview

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Community Violence Reduction (CVR) field components have advanced initiatives to ensure the safe implementation of critical mandated initiatives and to further contribute to the United Nations response to the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (hereafter COVID-19). This has included sensitization and risk communication with conflict-affected communities, as well as the production of personal protective equipment (PPE) through CVR projects and has been expanded over the reporting period. Furthermore, adjusted DDR & CVR operations, with reduced caseloads and social distancing measures in place, have allowed for the continued implementation of mandated activities.

The month of September saw the continued resumption of critical tasks and activities that were previously disrupted. In addition, CVR adaptations continue to see strong success in both strengthening government responses to COVID-19 and progressing toward DDR objectives. However, some disruptions due to COVID-19 continue to affect mandate implementation on DDR/CVR in settings in places where the outbreak continues to spread. Continued collaborative efforts at HQ and in the field have helped to overcome many of these disruptions.

Headquarters:

HQ, in collaboration with the WHO, is leveraging lessons learned from the use of CVR during COVID-19 to explore entry points into other settings.

MONUSCO

High-level talks result in resumption of previously stalled DDR processes. The Kananga team continues to implement COVID-19 sensitization sessions.

September Highlights

UNSOM:

DDR and rehabilitation processes are ongoing. UNSOM continues to ensure that mitigation measures and contingencies are put in place should COVID-19 be detected in rehabilitation centers.

MINUSMA:

In the aftermath of the coup, transitional government and key armed groups reaffirm commitment to DDR processes. Distribution of hygiene kits for COVID-19 prevention continues.

UNAMID:

Sudan's government signs peace agreement with Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) and UNAMID GCSS team begins sixth COVID-19 project in North Darfur.

MINUSCA:

MINUSCA supports national authorities in the disarmament and demobilization of 421 combatants in Kaga Bandoro and Bria. CVR projects, including sensitization and mask/soap production, continue.

Updates from Headquarters:

Given the success of the use of CVR to support Government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the DDR section is now looking to leverage the lessons learned from these CVR contexts to determine what programmatic options can be used in other settings, including contexts where no peacekeeping mission is present.

To this end, the Section in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), is exploring settings where this adapted CVR approach can be an entry point for DDR/CVR activities, an opportunity to link health and peace, and an opportunity to strengthen Government responses to COVID-19, especially in conflict-affected environments.

CVR projects being explored and proposed in non-mission settings include, community sensitization campaigns, distribution of hygiene kits, production of masks and soap, and the construction or renovation of isolation centres, WaSH facilities, and medical facilities.

Mandate Implementation: DDR-CVR

components continue to find ways to safely implement their mandates despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. As disruptions begin to subside, delayed programs have begun to resume.

UNAMID:

A gradual return to normal activities continued throughout the country, following the easing of measures and restrictions imposed by the Transitional Government of Sudan (TGoS) to combat COVID-19 pandemic. Official figures show a continued decrease in the number of confirmed cases nation-wide and especially in Khartoum, which accounts for majority of the confirmed cases. Carriers from Turkey, Egypt, Ethiopian and United Arab Emirates continue flights to Sudan following its reopening on 14 June. It is expected that more carriers would resume flights shortly as the pandemic situation continues to improve. Domestic air travel is continuing to major cities in Sudan. The current situation continues to negatively impact on the Government's business continuity capabilities.

Few critical staff members remain stranded outside the Mission due to travel restrictions, particularly the closure of international airports, impacting activities and timely project implementation. As an alternative, the Section has continued to conduct meetings virtually.

The Sudanese transitional government and Darfur armed groups reached an agreement on the integration of the former combatants into the Sudanese army and the formation of a joint force to protect civilians. This agreement on the last sticky point in the negotiations between the government and the armed groups paves the ways for the initialing of a comprehensive peace agreement possibly on Friday 28 August. The agreement provides that the forces would be integrated within 39 months.

The peace agreement, which was initialed on 31 August, was signed in Juba, South Sudan on 3 October 2020.

MONUSCO:

On 20 September, the GoDRC's Multi-Sectoral Committee to fight COVID-19 announced a total of 10,515 cases and 271 deaths.

In Ituri, following up on the forum held on 31 August in Bunia which had gathered MONUSCO, provincial and national stakeholders and community leaders to address the stalled FRPI DDR process, a workshop was organized in Gety on 12 and 14 September to which the FRPI leadership also took part. The meeting, which was chaired by the Governor of Ituri's deputy cabinet director, included the advisor of the vice-Prime Minister in charge of the Interior, members of the national and provincial parliaments, STAREC, FARDC (including the chief of the general staff), PNC and UEPNDDR representatives, community and religious leaders as well as civil society. The participants were informed that the Council of Ministers had adopted the law granting amnesty for insurrectional acts, acts of war and political offences committed between 21 December 2013 and 28 February 2020 (crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, terrorism, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments, rape and other sexual violence, the use or enlistment of children as well as all other serious massive and marked violations of human rights will, however, be excluded from the scope of this law). The meeting was concluded with all parties committing to start the DDR process. It had been confirmed that 70% of the FRPI elements who were gathered in the Azita pre-cantonment camp had previously left due to poor living conditions and lack of support (food and medicine) since June 20. On 15 Sep 20, it was announced that the disarmament and demobilization phases would begin on 30 Sep 20.

In Grand Nord, the DDR team continues working with NGOs on developing CVR projects that will respond to potential individual surrenders in Beni

territory, and on CVR projects to be implemented in the South of Lubero territory.

In South Kivu, the CIAP-DDRC organized a dialogue workshop with the support of international NGOs in Murhesa (20 km north of Bukavu), with the deputy Minister of Defense, the vice-President of the provincial parliament, the provincial Minister of Interior, senior FARDC and PNC officers, and representatives of armed groups operating in South Kivu. The aim was to lay down a path towards peace in South Kivu, with the respective representatives of State actors, armed groups and communities in this process. Armed groups were reminded that there would be no automatic integration into the FARDC or the PNC, and that there would be no impunity for those who have committed human rights and IHL violations and crimes against humanity. Around 70 armed groups signed the final declaration, in which armed groups committed to cease hostilities and the FARDC were called to ensure a safe and secure environment conducive to the rebuilding of trust, and to stop their operations against armed groups. This workshop was a follow up to a first one held in Murhesa in December 2019. However, the recommendations adopted at the time had never been implemented.

In the Kasais, one CVR project aimed at supporting income-generating activities and empowering survivors of GBV was completed, with a handover ceremony during which a last batch of kits was given to beneficiaries, to supplement those already distributed. They will allow the continuation of small businesses started by the beneficiaries. Work for another project aimed at providing community-based care for children exited from the Kamuina Nsapu militia and which is supporting 1,464 children and 40 women, is nearing completion.

As of 20 September, the cumulative total of positive COVID-19 cases among UN personnel stands at 109, out of which five have died and 90 recovered.

MINUSCA:

From 10-25 September, MINUSCA supported national authorities in two major disarmament and demobilization endeavors, which resulted in the disarmament and demobilization of 114 combatants, including 9 women, in Kaga Bandoro and 307 elements, including 23 women, in Bria. Thus, 774 combatants, including 31 women, have been disarmed and demobilized in the Central African Republic since the resumption of DD operations in Ndele on 22 June 2020 despite COVID-19. While doubtlessly a success, challenges remain ahead with armed groups reluctant to fully participate in the DDR process.

MINUSMA:

Following the 18 August military coup and the appointment of a new President to conduct the 18-month transition, Malian authorities reiterated their willingness to implement the peace agreement, in particular its provisions on Defense and Security, including DDR. While decisions are still pending regarding the formation of a new Government, the National DDR Commission is planning to resume its activities once the government is established. Preparatory works for the launching of the second phase of the Accelerated DDR-Integration were paused following the military coup in August. The Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA), one of the main signatory armed movements indicated in its communique of 24 September its support to the transition process and reiterated its willingness to support the peace process.



Meanwhile, Central Mali continues to witness an upswing in violence by various armed groups, including radicalized actors. On 14 September, in Gao, the SSR-DDR Section participated in a joint MINUSMA field mission to Tessit village (156 km south-west of Gao). The delegation met with the deputy mayor and several local residents who complained about insecurity and internal displacements due to the presence of violent extremist armed groups in the area. The community members called for a quick implementation of the DDR process and the launch of several infrastructure projects to address the situation. The SSR-DDR Section used this opportunity to assess area for possible new CVR projects and to inform the population on the progress of the DDR process.



MINUSMA continued to work closely with relevant national stakeholders to explore options to resume the DDR activities during this politically sensitive context.

UNSOM:

The Defector Rehabilitation Program (DRP) with its implementing partners have successfully put in place prevention and control mechanism in response to COVID-19. To date, there are no cases reported in any of the rehabilitation centres. Statements issued by AS allude to the fact and recognition that COVID-19 exists in Somalia including in AS controlled area. This necessitates that the DRP maintains strict adherence to SOPs to mitigate against a potential outbreak of COVID-19 in rehabilitation centres. However, given relatively few COVID-19 cases in Somalia the DRP

in Somalia has reinstated weekend leave and has also allowed for example new defectors into Serendi rehabilitation in batches of more than 12. The quarantine facility in Serendi accommodates 12 persons. The role of UNSOM in the following weeks and months is to address this complacency. It is critical that mitigation measures and contingencies are put in place should COVID-19 be detected in rehabilitation centres.

COVID-19 notwithstanding, both Male and Female rehabilitation facilities are well operational, and all the activities are ongoing well. Currently the beneficiaries are enrolled in various vocation trainings at BMTC such as Computer class, Tailoring, Electricity and Tuk-tuk auto mechanics. Total number of beneficiaries at Baidoa Female Transition Center (BFTC) is 111 as of this reporting period. Literacy and numeracy classes, as well as civic and religious education classes, business development, life skills training, and social work are also ongoing in both centers.

Planning to graduate and reintegrate 15 beneficiaries from male centers and their process is underway. IOM is also organizing a graduation ceremony of 30 female beneficiaries from BFTC and hopefully they will graduate next week.

DDR/CVR support to COVID-19

Response: DDR-CVR components continue to find innovative ways to support Host Governments' efforts to combat the pandemic. As the pandemic subsides in certain areas, DDR-CVR components have found ways to transform projects to be sustainable for a post-pandemic era.

UNAMID:

GCSS core programmatic activities were reviewed to align with current COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines prioritizing support to government's response and preparedness to COVID-19 remain in place. Programmatic funding is committed to

providing immediate support to the Government's efforts to combat COVID-19 in Darfur.

On 15 September, GCSS in collaboration with Action Hand for Development (AHD) finalized and submitted a project proposal with a total budget of SDG 2,657,500 (\$ 48,318) on Awareness Raising and Prevention of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Outbreak, and Peaceful Co-existence in Kabkabiya Locality, North Darfur to the Budget and Finance Section for the disbursement of funds for implementation. The project will target 45,000 residents of Kabkabiya town host community and IDPs.

The project activities would include both house-house and mobile awareness-raising campaigns on the dissemination of the Ministry of Health COVID-19 guidance and protocols, and the distribution of detergents, soap and masks, including PPE to health workers in the locality. Furthermore, the project will provide training for selected community members to continue with sensitization activities after the end of the project for sustainability.

This is the sixth COVID-19 project to be implemented by GCSS, planned to sensitize communities on COVID-19 and to address existing gaps in response related activities at the request of the Government and local partners. GCSS already implemented five other COVID-19 prevention projects in Central and North Darfur states benefitting over 100,000 members of host communities, nomadic settlements and IDP camps. GCSS programmatic activities involving gatherings of more than 10 people, especially the dialogue forums and peace campaigns which help address inter-communal tensions, remain suspended until further notice. However, GCSS has maintained low-level engagement with various stakeholders in the communities and several key activities are in the planning phases to be implemented once the restrictions are lifted.

GCSS also continues to participate in integrated field and confidence-building missions but with minimum direct contact with local communities.

The implementation of community stabilization projects (CSPs) which were put on hold at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in March have resumed and engagement with NGO implementing partners have been stepped up because of the easing of travel restrictions for monitoring and evaluation, deployment of staff and transportation of project materials to project sites.

MONUSCO:

The DDR Kananga team conducted a number of sensitization sessions with local authorities, women and youth representatives in several locations in Kananga town. While promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and engaging with individuals active in their communities, the team took these opportunities to explain and promote the implementation of COVID-19 preventive measures.

MINUSCA:

CVR projects contributing to the COVID-19 response and strengthening social cohesion continue in seven locations in the Central African Republic, including community sensitization initiatives and the production of soap and face masks. In Bossangoa and Kaga Bandoro, the renovation of isolation stations of local hospitals was completed; construction works at medical facilities in Bria are ongoing. Meanwhile, MINUSCA DDR started inclusive consultations with communities in Bangui and Bangassou in preparation for the implementation of the 2020/2021 CVR projects in these locations.

MINUSMA:

On 24 September, the SSR-DDR Section in Gao carried out a mission to monitor the ongoing construction work of a hangar in the Gao Military Camp-1. This project is aimed at providing the relevant equipment and materials for the maintenance of workshops in the camp and the supplying of tires and inner tubes. At Camp-1, the Deputy Commander from the area, Lt Col. Kader Konaté, thanked MINUSMA (SSR-DDR Section) for carrying out this project. The refurbishing of

Camp-1 in Gao is to support the reconstituted army in improving their facility to effectively perform their national duties.



As part of the preventive measures against the COVID-19, the SSR-DDR Section in Kidal handed over 11 boxes of hygiene kits each containing 12 soaps, two hydroalcoholic gels and two buckets for washing hands for the NGO CAMR; NGO AZHAR; and NGO ALMUD. The delivery of the kits to the implementing partners took place in front of the MINUSMA Super Camp in Kidal on 24 September. It is expected that a total of 22 handwashing kits, 22 hydroalcoholic gels and 132 liquid soaps will be distributed to the beneficiaries of CVR projects.

UPCOMING IN NOVEMBER:

- HQ: Third knowledge exchange video-teleconference to be held bringing together chiefs of components to share experiences on CVR implementation and response to COVID-19.
- UNITAMS: COVID-19 related lessons learned workshop for organizations that are directly involved in DDR implementation in Darfur.