



BUREAU OF CONFLICT AND STABILIZATION OPERATIONS

Anticipating, Preventing, and Responding to Conflict

Primer: Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in Libya

With the fall of the Qadhafi regime, non-state armed actors organized across Libya. Some began filling gaps in security and justice provision on their own terms. Since the 2011 revolution, several attempts have been made at reforming and rebuilding aspects of the security sector, but these efforts have been fragmented and hampered by the pressures of ongoing civil conflict and political deadlock. These efforts have at times involved international participation, often suffered from poor coordination, mistrust by local communities, and weak administration.

Security Sector Reform (SSR) is a strategic process aimed at creating peace, stability, and reform of security and justice institutions in conflict-affected countries. **Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR)** processes aim to transition individuals and groups from combatant to civilian through the collection and removal of weapons, restructuring or dissolution of non-state armed groups, and economic and social support for combatants reintegrating into society.

An essential ‘reintegration’ activity should also include community sensitization and preparation to receive ex-combatants into civilian communities, to avoid retributive violence and encourage a peaceful transition. Many alternative or “second generation” SSR programs take more traditional conceptions of SSR to new levels, and focus on being more responsive to specific conflict contexts. These newer SSR approaches are open to more creative engagement of non-state actors, and often offer solutions for immediate or temporary stabilization, such as violence reduction and prevention projects.

This product is the result of a collaborative effort between CSO and its partner Development Transformations. CSO would like to recognize Development Transformations’ valuable research and review of SSR/DDR literature that informed this product.

The following pages contain background on SSR and DDR in Libya and considerations for future efforts:

- I. Introduction to SSR/DDR in Libya
- II. Previous SSR/DDR Efforts in Libya
- III. Next Steps for SSR/DDR in Libya

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Introduction to Security Sector Reform (SSR) and Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in Libya

What is SSR?

Security Sector Reform (SSR) is a strategic process aimed at creating peace, stability, and democratic reform of institutions in conflict-affected countries. SSR works to reform or re-establish state security and justice structures, strengthen governance and accountability mechanisms, and enhance the security institutions' ability to enforce the rule of law in an equitable and transparent manner.

What is DDR?

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) is a military and civilian process of shifting the roles of armed groups and individuals in a conflict from combatant to civilian, or incorporating armed groups and individuals into state-owned security institutions. The primary purpose of DDR is to buy 'time and space' for a political agreement or peace negotiation to take root. It facilitates this transition by collecting and removing weapons, dissolving or restructuring armed groups, and supporting ex-combatants economically, socially, and professionally as they transition back into civilian life. While DDR programs often focus on the transition of ex-combatants, it is important to consider the local communities' willingness to accept or re-integrate ex-combatants into their social structures. DDR activities should incorporate community sensitization and should seek to avoid a perception of solely benefitting the groups responsible for violence during the conflict. DDR contributes to the goals of SSR and is also part of a broader reconciliation and reform process in conflict-affected contexts.

Key Lessons on SSR and DDR:

CSO partner Development Transformations (DT) conducted a review of SSR and DDR literature that highlights three key lessons for any SSR and DDR processes.

1. **Need for Legitimacy:** Local ownership can be secured with the help of robust coordination among international actors participating in SSR, as well as between international and local actors. Donors should also take into account existing local conditions and a realistic timeline for reform.
2. **Need for Inclusivity:** SSR processes will be more successful and perceived as legitimate when they include sufficiently representative actors to garner support at a local level. Inclusion is best based on thoughtful criteria specific to the conflict context, and accounts for a range of both armed and non-armed actors involved in, or affected by, the conflict.
3. **Need for Broad Programs:** Successful SSR/DDR efforts are recognized as being part of a broader agenda that includes reform activities and institutional capacity building both within and outside of the security sector. This facilitates the creation of a unified strategic framework for SSR efforts amongst the parties involved.

Takeaways for Future SSR/DDR in Libya?

Local ownership, buy-in, and trust building among Libyans must be emphasized for future SSR efforts. The abandonment and disintegration of past efforts in Libya has fueled further distrust in



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SSR, so future new or revitalized efforts must be carefully designed to avoid repeating failures. Messaging is also key to public perceptions and trust, so must be used thoughtfully. Authorities must clearly define the roles of security forces and their mechanisms for incorporating armed groups, and resolving disputes over integration. DT's primary research in Libya suggests that financial incentives may be a powerful tool for DDR in Libya, but in line with lessons learned, should be distributed fairly, to include amongst the civilian communities receiving ex-combatants, and ensure expectations are realistic. For those not integrated into new security forces, armed group members can be offered vocational training and assistance finding new employment.

Previous SSR/DDR Efforts in Libya

Since the 2011 revolution in Libya, several attempts at SSR/DDR have taken place. Most of these efforts established institutions as temporary or transitional bodies, but were fraught with issues in their planning, execution, and levels of buy-in from Libyans. Efforts were unsuccessful (red marker in table below), stalled (yellow), or in one case moderately successful (green).

Year		Initiative	Lead/Authority	Summary
2011	○	Warriors Affairs Commission; renamed the Libyan Program for Reintegration and Development	Linked in name to the Ministries of Defense (MOD) and Interior (MOI), but independent.	Attempted to gather information on fighters and prepare for reintegration; large public awareness campaigns. People were widely suspicious of the effects of registration with the Commission, and it lacked participation from the MoD and MoI. Stalled, but still maintains a website: https://lprd.gov.ly/en/
2012	●	Law 59 on Local Administration – Ch. 3 Article 11, and Ch. 4 Article 26 – Quotas for revolutionaries	National Transitional Council (NTC)	Required the reservation of elected seats for wounded/special needs revolutionaries. Faced bureaucratic issues, but only institutional quota requirement of its kind in Libya, and nearly all municipalities had multiple candidates run for these seats.
2012	✗	Supreme Security Committee (SSC)	Created by the NTC, under authority of MOI	Meant to bring thuwar/brigades under the MOI; meant to dissolve as members integrated into the police. Integration varied by locale, and it was ultimately dismantled.
2012	✗	Libyan Shield Forces (LSF) (or, Libya Shield)	Under the MoD, but not fully incorporated	Umbrella coalition of brigades that ultimately fragmented; Initially popular among armed actors and general public, gradually viewed as partisan and unprofessional, in part because forces were not vetted or trained. A core group within the LSF formed the Libya Revolutionaries Operations Room (LROR), which pushed for passage of the Political Isolation Law.
2013	✗	General Purpose Force (GPF)	Conceived by Ali Zeidan	International partners aimed train and build a broad Libyan military force to be deployed across the country. US/AFRICOM also considered committing to training soldiers. The mission was unclear, and the program failed to move forward.



On top of the context of violent conflict and political deadlock, SSR initiatives were hindered by:

- **Poor Sequencing:** Concentrating on military rather than governance restructuring made identifying lines of authority in governing structures difficult, causing stalling around decisions and training.
- **Distrust and Lack of Clarity:** With lack of clarity around the purpose and plan for next steps, distrust brewed between military structures and the interim governing bodies. Politicians have been generally distrusted in Libya, even ones with more consistent alliances, further disadvantaging their initiatives.
- **Lack of Experience:** Qadhafi's regime suppressed independent institutions and thus in the formation of new institutions following the revolution, many officials lacked political experience and training. Administration and organization of efforts and authorities was weak.
- **National Focus:** Many Libyans define their interests at city or even neighborhood-levels, and there is great misunderstanding between cities. Many efforts focused too broadly on national-level integration rather than working with the existing, and perhaps more cohesive, security structures.

Public confidence in new initiatives will hinge on high quality management; transparency and lack of corruption; and capacity to provide local security. Past SSR efforts in Libya highlight that processes conducted before a moment of ripeness and without significant local buy-in are destined for failure.

Next Steps for SSR/DDR in Libya

Previous SSR/DDR efforts in Libya have been disjointed and largely unsuccessful, due to over-ambitious design, weak implementation, and failure to gain the trust of the Libyan people. Based on a review of SSR and DDR literature, relevant case studies, and primary research in key Libyan cities, there are many key lessons to consider for any future SSR/DDR work in Libya. Given current levels of violence and mistrust, **Libya is not ripe for full-scale SSR/DDR initiatives**. However, **immediate strategic planning and coordination efforts are needed** to lay the groundwork for full-scale SSR/DDR, which will become urgent as soon as the political process advances. In parallel, **immediate, short-term local efforts** are necessary to create conditions that will predicate success of national-level SSR/DDR. Efforts should:

- Avoid being top-down, externally imposed, or deadline-focused.
- Be based on continued and augmented research on the plethora of active armed groups, their motivations, and what is needed to encourage opposing parties to come to the table.
- Address the fragmentation of identity in Libya at a community level. Such efforts would be augmented if combined with security force trust building processes at a national level.
- Be participatory and inclusive. Armed groups and individual *thumar* (revolutionaries) with legitimacy, who have served their communities, must be incorporated in a strategic way.



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Immediate and Short-Term Recommendations:

Research and Mapping.

One of the first necessary steps for international actors involved in SSR/DDR in Libya is to assess and map the armed groups and their motivations. Interviewing armed groups and key leaders about SSR/DDR approaches would not only ensure a more grounded and participatory design of initiatives, but could also foster relationship building and buy-in for any those are implemented. Organizations such as State/CSO should conduct this research as a pre-requisite prior to a larger scale SSR/DDR intervention in Libya.

Focus on community violence reduction.

Since the Qadhafi era, Libyan cities have been largely isolated and operating independently. This standard of minimal interaction has fueled dangerous levels of mistrust and zero-sum political approaches in which a city can succeed only at the expense of others. Local community violence reduction programs are more feasible and can set the stage for national-level reform. Peacebuilding and development programs in Libya can particularly focus on encouraging inter-city cooperation and security reform efforts to increase coordination. Efforts must fairly distribute resources across the population, and avoid creating the perception of favoring some communities over others.

Focus on confidence in security forces

Prior to any formal national SSR/DDR process, money can be given to local groups to conduct messaging and begin building national level trust in the security forces. Public perceptions will be a key challenge in Libya, and could dramatically influence SSR outcomes. This will also begin to create a situation of ripeness for future SSR/DDR initiatives, although such trust building programs may only be possible once there is a reduction in violence levels.

Mid- to Long-Term Recommendations:

Test a small, official, security force

Prior to a formal national SSR/DDR process, a “test” security force could be established to check the ripeness of the situation for SSR efforts, to test the success of a narrow or more localized effort, and to ascertain contextual challenges for future wider scale efforts. This force could be based on an existing or previously tried structure, such as a Presidential Guard or local police unit, and work with local armed group members with legitimacy and experience in the community.