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DEMOBILIZATION, DISASSOCIATION, REINTEGRATION, AND RECONCILIATION (DDRR) IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

PUBLIC REPORT

Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS) | Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)

COVER PHOTO: USAID/OTI NIGERIA NLCB WOMEN FOR PEACE PLATFORM (FEBRUARY 2020)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper provides an overview of the Demobilization, Disassociation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation (DDRR) effort in northeast (NE) Nigeria derived from an evaluation the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) conducted from July 2020-March 2021. In doing so references are made to both DDRR and 'DDR'. The former refers to the program in NE Nigeria and the latter to the wider body of practice known as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). For over a decade, NE Nigeria has experienced violence at the hands of Boko Haram (BH), which poses the greatest threat to peace and stability. By 2013, Nigerian security forces used the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a civilian militia, to support clearing operations and turn over BH combatants to the army. Following joint military operations in 2015 by Nigerian, Nigerian, Chadian, and Cameroonian forces, BH split with a faction becoming Islamic State West Africa Province – collectively, BH-ISWA. The capture and detention of thousands of suspected BH-ISWA members led to a need for DDRR.

In 2016, a presidential directive established Operation Safe Corridor (OSC), a national rehabilitation and reintegration program for repentant, surrendered ex-combatants affiliated with BH-ISWA. Led by the civilian Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA), the military is the de-facto lead of OSC. By September 2018, the Government of Nigeria (GoN) endorsed a national DDRR Action Plan with 853 persons reintegrated to date. The Action Plan consists of four pillars of DDRR efforts: (i) Legal and Policy Issues, (ii) Technical Support to the Government, (iii) Individual Case Management, and (iv) Community-based Reintegration and Reconciliation. This policy paper is a companion to a program evaluation undertaken simultaneously between July 2020 and March 2021 by USAID/OTI that involved an extensive desk review of background documents and qualitative and quantitative data gathered from 102 surveys, 10 key informant interviews (KIIS), and 2 focus group discussions (FGDs) with OSC graduates, in addition to 439 surveys, 14 KIIS, and 6 FGDs with individuals in four communities hosting returnees in Borno State. The evaluation team also interviewed over 20 individual DDRR stakeholders, including staff of OSC, International partners, Creative, and government representatives of Nigeria, the United States, the United Kingdom, and European Union.

While former fighters returning to their communities usually present some security concerns, these are more acute for NE Nigeria where communities must deal with an active insurgency, remaining vulnerable to VEO attacks. Most stakeholders agree that OSC has largely dealt with former fighters who were coerced into joining BH-ISWA but did not participate in outright violence or destruction. The notion that OSC graduates are victims is widespread, as the majority of OSC graduates are believed to be coerced to join BH-ISWA or were captured in military sweeps. The fact that most DDRR clients to date are not hardcore BH-ISWA fighters likely has made demobilization and disassociation easier, which partially explains community acceptance of reintegration and the military's shift away from counterterrorism (CT) approaches to DDRR. Military leaders from OSC note the importance of 'dignity' during rehabilitation, begging the question of how the GoN will approach DDRR for BH-ISWA hardliners.

If DDR is typically a 3-5 year process in a post conflict setting, in NE Nigeria where the conflict is ongoing, the DDRR process will need to continue for years to have its intended impact. With only one

known case of recidivism,¹ or retribution, some graduates do remain in contact with active VEO members. Additionally, 88% of DDRR beneficiaries and 80% of community members agree that former BH-ISWA members and associates have an important role to play preventing or countering violent extremism (P/CVE). While not known if this will have a positive or negative impact in the long-term, we do know persons self-reintegrated from BH-ISWA are viewed as more aggressive and are less trusted by communities than OSC graduates. Furthermore, community trust increases the longer they are in communities. This is significant, as among the strongest indicators of successful reintegration is a feeling of increased safety, which community members reported with OSC graduate reintegration.

OSC beneficiaries, referred to as ‘clients’, undergo rehabilitation in transition centers prior to reintegration in communities. While OSC staff at the transition centers are supportive and clients report their time is well spent, beneficiaries spend variable amounts of time in transition centers and all believe time spent in the centers is too long. Consistency relies on decisions that should be made with military, state, and local authorities, which requires better coordination and timely communication across civilian and military entities. Family visits to transition centers began in the summer of 2019 to promote community acceptance of DDRR and have included participation of local government officials, community and religious leaders, the CJTF, and previous OSC “clients” or former affiliates. These visits are an effective symbol of the program’s efficacy as stakeholder enthusiasm increased from 48% in August 2018 to 88% a year later. Interestingly, there is no direct correlation between receiving a family visit and how prepared graduates feel for reintegration, as two-thirds of graduates surveyed believe communities see them as dangerous. At the same time, 72% feel accepted, indicating family and community visits may have a positive impact when graduates feel forgiven by community leaders and families who visit them, while also fearing the community, most of whom they do not know. Ironically, family visits appear more important for communities as opportunities to hear stories of graduates’ changed behavior and attitude; seeing graduates in OSC changes the impressions of key stakeholders, who in turn influence the perceptions of their social networks when they return to their communities. This experience helps prepare communities for a more positive reintegration experience. It also increases public confidence in OSC, especially when previous graduates attest to their own reintegration.

Psychosocial support (PSS) is among the most important aspects of DDRR as graduates learn how to be patient, live in peace, and abide by rules. The emphasis on PSS is critical to the effectiveness of other services. A key feature is the premium placed on PSS by communities. Evidence indicates increasing attention to social and psychosocial reintegration in tandem with support to socio-economic reintegration will benefit DDR in the future. Graduates cite vocational training (VT) and business counseling as critical in preparing for productive lives. Community members echo this sentiment, expressing thanks that graduates return to communities with skills which make them productive. When asked what they do for a living, 70% of graduates cited at least one vocation offered through OSC training, and 76% said they felt prepared to pursue their vocation when they reintegrate. While results show continued usefulness of VT, it is important to note that overemphasizing VT aspects of DDR in other contexts has led to cookie cutter approaches that do not balance social, psychosocial, and socio-economic reintegration. Findings can be misconstrued if policymakers think of DDR as a jobs creation program where VT leads directly to employment.

¹ International Crisis Group. 19 March 2021.

This study used innovative methods to gain new insights and knowledge related to treating armed groups and affiliates from VEOs during active insurgencies. In addressing recidivism risks, the team used relative deprivation and competitive victimhood² to measure the degree to which OSC graduates feel unjustly marginalized or aggrieved compared to others. These indicators serve as more effective predictors of VE support than poverty or unemployment, and OSC graduates' expectations and behavioral intent after reintegration point to a relatively low risk of recidivism. Most say they are either actively playing a role in preventing others from joining VEOs, or that they intend to do so once back in their communities; there was unanimity by all stakeholders that OSC graduates have a role to play in P/CVE. Even so, there are some yellow flags. It is unclear to what extent OSC clients are still exposed to the influence of VEOs. There is conflicting information about whether graduates stay in touch with former networks still engaged with BH-ISWA. In contrast to recent OSC graduates, half of the reintegrated graduates said they have been in touch with former peers still affiliated with BH-ISWA. Additionally, only 29% of community members believe OSC graduates have fully disengaged from VEOs, and just over a third believe they have not disengaged at all. Also, the fact that reintegrated graduates who joined voluntarily scored higher in relative deprivation and competitive victimhood than those who were forced to join suggests that they are at a higher risk of recidivism.

This study also collected data to examine descriptive norms, where respondents reported what they believe their 'peers' think, and meta-perceptions, where respondents were asked how they believed out-group members think. Known to elicit more accurate responses in conflict and post conflict settings, these helped the evaluation team identify gaps between how OSC graduates *'think'* they are viewed by community members and how they are *'actually'* viewed. This provided critical insights into the extent to which reintegration and reconciliation is succeeding. Two-thirds of graduates think those living in communities where they are looking to reintegrate would strongly agree that DDRR beneficiaries are dangerous and should not be allowed to return despite graduating from OSC. In fact, only 21% of community members strongly agreed that DDRR beneficiaries are dangerous and should not be accepted, while 37% strongly agreed that DDRR beneficiaries are victims. In addition, 59% of community members believe their fellow community members have mostly or fully accepted DDRR beneficiaries. While graduates think being perceived as a victim is necessary for being accepted, the above indicates this is less important to community members. Cited as the most important factor for reintegration, over 75% of community members completely or somewhat agree that DDRR beneficiaries are sincerely seeking forgiveness. Closing the gap between what OSC graduates *'think'* and what community members *'actually'* feel may decrease recidivism risk and increase reintegration and reconciliation efficacy.

When asked which factors are important to prevent people from rejoining VEOs, most OSC graduates cite a supportive community, the CJTF, family and friend relationships, a supportive religious network, access to counselors, suitable housing, employment, financial stability, and a sense of belonging. To understand why people join, the evaluation team examined trends between those who join voluntarily and those who were forced to join. Indicators, like peer perceptions, show that some reasons for joining voluntarily are more prevalent than others. There is also a strong correlation between prior knowledge of BH-ISWA ideology and joining voluntarily. Conversely, those forced to join generally did not have a good understanding of the ideology. Frustrations with the government did not appear to play

² *Relative deprivation* refers to the sense that one is marginalized compared to others on unjust grounds, a concept shown to be a more accurate predictor of VE support than absolute levels of poverty or unemployment. *Competitive victimhood* refers to a group or individual's motivation and effort to establish that they have suffered more than their adversaries, a tendency associated with a greater likelihood of supporting VE narratives.

a prominent role influencing individuals to join, with zero graduates identifying it as a reason why they joined, and 60% saying it was not a reason at all for their peers. This is striking, considering VEOs' use of grievances against the government as a centerpiece in their narrative to attract and radicalize recruits. We do not know if this finding has broader implications across VEOs, what the conditions may be for this dynamic, or why BH-ISWA is not successfully transferring this narrative to their members. Another interesting finding is a limited distinction in the level and types of education for those who joined voluntarily and those forced to join. The percentage of those with only a religious education was similar for both groups, suggesting having only a religious education is not a pathway to radicalization towards VE (in NE Nigeria). However, receiving no education was highly correlated with joining voluntarily.

Among recent OSC graduates who were still residing at the Shokari Transit Center in Maiduguri, fear was mentioned most frequently as the reason they believe peers stay with VEOs, with 50% citing fear of BH-ISWA retaliation and 50% fearing community rejection. The most frequently cited reasons for disengaging were wanting to return to a normal life, guilt about contributing to violence, poor living conditions, dangers associated with being a member, and friends also wanting to disengage. This is consistent with the accounts citing VEOs' bad behavior, guilt at bringing harm to their communities, disillusionment, disparity between what they thought the VEO group would be like and what it was 'actually like', and wanting to go home to families. There was a strong correlation between individuals who cited social networks as their reason for joining and wanting to return to a normal life as their reason for disengaging. These findings are consistent with Colombia, where former fighters with strong social and familial ties experienced lower recidivism rates and a more positive reintegration experience.

A comparison of recent OSC graduates and those reintegrated earlier showed the desire to return to a normal life increased over time as the main reason for disengaging. It is possible that as awareness of OSC increased as an option for defecting, VEO members and affiliates saw a pathway that could bring them home safely, creating a "pull" factor to leave the VEO. Concurrently, there is reason to believe the potential to influence defections is increasing. When considering data from those with knowledge of the program, 25% of graduates from the first two cohorts and 33% from the third cohort cited it as a main reason for disengaging. This indicates knowledge of DDRR is increasingly influential as a reason for defection. Notably, the lack of reintegration planning cited later is a reason to question a wholesale approach to support defections. There is no correlation between those who joined voluntarily or were coerced regarding knowledge of OSC and leaving because friends in the group wanted to leave. This suggests that choosing to disengage via OSC is not something friends do together.

In NE Nigeria after being captured in military sweeps women are often categorized as 'low risk' and released directly back into communities despite being stigmatized with the taint of 'association'. Their direct release denies them the credibility and sense of government 'anointment' that males derive from the OSC program. A separate study of Boko Haram, the Revolutionary United Front, AS, and Lord's Resistance Army found the methods of recruitment, modes of release, roles in the group, and communities' perception of returnees are not fundamentally different for women and females, irrespective of whether a group is a non-state armed group (NSAG) or a VEO; therefore, the denial of support to them contravenes international norms and the United Nations' Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Females should be more systematically integrated into OSC in NE Nigeria and DDRR globally. This lesson needs to be emphasized as females are disproportionately suffering from the lack of DDRR program benefits.

A criticism of OSC includes activities described as ad hoc and 'transactional', lacking a codified system for implementation with communities bargaining for reintegration outcomes. On one hand, reintegration

and reconciliation is about positive peace; on the other, DDR is time bound with specific operational and program objectives; elements of DDR have always been transactional. Developing policies and programs where former fighter and community member ratios are included in projects is an example. Another is the trade-off between individual benefits and community projects. The goal of our INGO is to support twice as many community members as OSC graduates speaks to the conditionality of a DDR process. Arguably, DDR programs are entered into voluntarily. It follows that a community's decision to accept former VEO members is also voluntary. In the absence of a peace agreement, the ability for communities to negotiate reintegration conditions may be a new feature in DDR programs that deserves attention. Even so, a 2015 USAID fact finding mission on CVE in NE Nigeria highlighted the relevance of demobilization, post release reintegration, and detainee issues, recommending that CVE and defections programs become a national priority addressed through legal, institutional frameworks, and harmonized national policies and strategies. There are questions about the extent to which success of Nigeria's DDDR depends on a fortunate alignment of current circumstances and personalities. OSC would benefit from more rigorously implementing the National DDDR Action Plan, and planning across sectors, including Civil-Military (CivMil) coordination.

Illustratively, USAID/OTI invested considerable resources in NE Nigeria to understand the OSC pipeline and identify operational bottlenecks that would impede DDDR at scale; however, with the military being the *de-facto* lead there is still little visibility into the details of the screening processes, including how the military assigns BH-ISWA members and affiliates into 'high' and 'low' risk categories. High-risk candidates are referred to Giwa military barracks in Maiduguri for prosecution, and eligible low-risk candidates are transferred to OSC for rehabilitation. Vetting takes place on a case-by-case basis with a 'middle risk' category created for (young) men whose status is not as easily determined, resulting in prolonged detainment pending prosecution. There are cases when the GoN has suggested these individuals be sent to OSC upon release based on the fear these persons became 'radicalized' while detained. The limited capacities of the criminal justice system (CJS) to prosecute and the relevant ministries to administer rehabilitative services could result in a default loop back to OSC, creating a bottleneck that would endanger the integrity of the established DDDR pipeline. These dynamics persist and are concerning.

GoN officials consistently expressed an appreciation for international donor support, though noting the government could take on DDDR if donor support were to end. Our partners estimate that its support makes up no more than a quarter of the DDDR budget. Notably, DDDR in NE Nigeria truly is nationally driven and would continue in some form or another without support. Even so, the continued support of OSC through GoN military budget expenditures poses several concerns. Programmatically and operationally, funding may continue for rehabilitation in transition centers without equitable resources for reintegration and reconciliation in communities. This has been a shortcoming for DDDR in NE Nigeria since 2015 and often plagues DDR globally. Continued funding through GoN military expenditures may further stress community absorption capacity to reintegrate OSC graduates. To date, OSC has largely only handled caseloads of former affiliates who were coerced to join BH-ISWA or otherwise loosely associated; as such, the possibility of increased military operations with hardline BH-ISWA combatants presents a greater risk for increased human rights violations by the military that would undermine the reputational progress made by OSC. International support for DDDR activities started in 2016 when it was suggested DDDR stakeholders increase donor coordination around reintegration; yet the first donor meeting did not convene until mid-2017, with another in early 2018. Findings point to a gap in reintegration and reconciliation support that may widen. While a recommendation for increased donor coordination is almost standard in DDR reports, it should not be overlooked that DDDR is succeeding in Nigeria, the GoN is demonstrating requisite political will, and

the international donor community, perhaps inadvertently, has developed a clearer understanding of constraints in support to VEOs. Additional support, however, is needed on the “RR” side of the DDR equation -- as the military has largely left the RR in the hands of donors and our partner whose funding will only last so long.

Among the most innovative aspects of DDR is a shift from an over-dependence on VT, reintegration efficacy measured as a series of training outputs, and the lip service accompanying PSS support. The DDR in NE Nigeria departs from this model by emphasizing PSS and VT from the start through services at the OSC camp in Gombe and continuing in the transition centers. Then, once reintegrated in a community, business development and PSS continue, while VT ends. This is a welcome change that should be considered for other DDR efforts with VEO caseloads and active insurgencies. It is a pragmatic and effective innovation for our partner and OSC that should be continued and replicated. Nevertheless, DDR repeats historic shortcomings in reintegration planning. To date, the GoN and international support to reintegration and reconciliation has been lackluster. This said, the lessons learned in DDR that support increased attention to PSS are considerable.

There are lessons to be drawn on VEO reintegration and reconciliation that should be harvested for other DDR programs around the world. The over emphasis on pre-release activities, with minimal attention to post return reintegration and reconciliation is a dynamic that hampered older DDR programs and may do so in NE Nigeria. There should be equitable resources allocated for post return reintegration. OSC’s indications that it can fund aspects of DDR will reinforce the current dynamic of the military driving reintegration, with continued emphasis on center-based activities like rehabilitation, training, family visits, and tracing activities, all of which are essential though take place prior to actual community returns. DDR stakeholders should consider the implications if BH-ISWA is seriously degraded. Defections along with the DDR caseload may dramatically increase. These will further stretch OSC and other actors, while placing even more stress on communities accepting OSC clients. This has the potential to derail initial gains in the DDR process. Therefore, the recommendations in this report aim to capture and amplify successes achieved through USG investments in OSC, ensure sustainable outcomes, and provide opportunities to replicate these efforts globally.



INNOVATIONS IN EVALUATING DDR

Evaluating DDR and interventions aimed at CVE are notoriously difficult for several reasons. First, the challenges inherent in measuring the negative, and proving that recidivism, violent activity, or radicalization towards VE would have otherwise occurred had there not been an intervention, make causality extremely challenging to demonstrate. Second, the highly sensitive nature of the questions required for this kind of research, which seeks to understand attitudes, perceptions, and behavior towards VEOs and returnees, is known to elicit bias and inaccurate responses. To address these limitations, this evaluation utilized innovative research methodologies empirically proven to produce more accurate and reliable responses around how *professed* attitudes and beliefs may impact *actual* behavior. The first was the use of descriptive norms, which measure how an individual thinks their peers would answer the same question. Multiple conflict studies show descriptive norms are more likely to elicit honest answers that are more likely to influence behavior rather than attitudes.³ Descriptive norms were asked to graduates and community members and provided valuable insights for this evaluation.

In addition, the evaluation team harvested meta-perceptions to gauge how an individual thinks communities view them. Rather than relying on respondents 'attitudes', meta-perceptions have been shown to better predict how an individual will behave towards an 'out-group' - in this case communities of return.^{4,5,6} Measuring meta-perceptions helped the evaluation team identify gaps between how OSC graduates *'think'* they are viewed by community members and how community members *'actually'* view them. This provided critical insights into the extent to which community based reintegration and reconciliation is being achieved. The evaluation team was further able to examine conditions and risks related to reintegration for OSC.

Finally, the evaluation team relied on relative deprivation and competitive victimhood. These are methods that have been shown to be correlated with a greater willingness and motivation to support political violence and endorse VEO narratives.^{4,5,6} *Relative deprivation* refers to the sense that an individual or group is marginalized compared to others in one's society on unjust grounds. *Competitive victimhood* refers to a group or individual's motivation and effort to establish that they have suffered more than their adversaries, a tendency associated with a greater likelihood of supporting VE narratives. Measurements on relative deprivation and competitive victimhood were specifically used to gain insights into the risk of recidivism as these are better predictors of VE support than absolute levels of poverty or unemployment. Taken together, these innovations provide DDR decisionmakers with variables, methods, and indicators to chart DDR, reintegration and reconciliation, and P/CVE at the outcome level.

³ Neville, F.G. Preventing violence through changing social norms. In P. Donnelly & C Ward (Eds.) *Oxford Textbook of Violence Prevention* (p 239-244). Oxford. Oxford University Press. 2015.

⁴ Lees, J. and Cikara, M. Inaccurate group meta-perceptions drive negative out-group attributions in competitive contexts. *Nature Human Behavior*. 4(3). 1-8. 2020

⁵ Berg, S. et al (2020) Exaggerated meta-perceptions predict intergroup hostility between American political partisans. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 117(26). 2020.

⁶ Bruneau, E. and Kteily, N. (2016). They see us as less than human: Meta-dehumanization predicts intergroup conflict via reciprocal dehumanization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 110(3) 343-370. 2016.

INTRODUCTION

Addressing state and non-state armed groups through DDR is often described through three different models, referred to here as *generations*. The first occurred in the waning days of the Cold War in Latin America and Southern Africa when geopolitical goals were based on a statebuilding agenda. In the mid-2000s a 2nd Generation emerged in response to the perception that DDR, and reintegration specifically, was not achieving intended peacebuilding and development aims. By 2012 shifting conflict dynamics created a pressing need for DDR in ‘*non-permissive*’ settings where peace agreements are absent and communities face active risks of recruitment by violent extremist organizations (VEOs). These 3rd Generation contexts include persons who are members or affiliates of designated terrorist organizations (DTOs), including foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), and who are thereby subject to legal prohibitions in the provision of support to DTOs.

This paper provides an overview of the demobilization, disassociation, reintegration, and reconciliation (DDRR) effort underway in northeast (NE) Nigeria. In doing so references are made to ‘DDR’. The former refers to the program in NE Nigeria and the latter to the wider body of practice known as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR). The distinction is intentional and used to draw illustrations from historic cases and to inform a wider, global community of practice.

For more than a decade, NE Nigeria has experienced violence at the hands of Boko Haram (BH). Since 2011, BH has killed over 17,000 people.⁷ Intent on reforming society based on its extremist interpretation of Islam, the BH insurgency has posed the greatest threat to Nigeria’s intractable security problems in the NE for over a decade, targeting civilians, committing crimes against humanity and war crimes, and over time losing any semblance of community support. By 2013, Nigerian security forces used the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a civilian militia, to support clearing operations to capture and turn over BH combatants to the army. At one point BH controlled large areas bordering Niger, Chad, and Cameroon in the States of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, making the group a regional threat across the Lake Chad Basin (LCB). Following joint military operations in 2015 by Nigerian, Nigerian, Chadian, and Cameroonian forces, the group split with a faction taking on the name Islamic State West Africa Province,⁸ collectively, BH-ISWA in this report.

As military operations led to the capture and detention of thousands of suspected BH-ISWA members and associates, a growing need for DDRR emerged. In 2016, a presidential directive established the DDRR program under Operation Safe Corridor (OSC), a national rehabilitation, reintegration and reconciliation program for repentant, surrendered ex-combatants formerly affiliated with BH-ISWA. Led by the civilian Office of the National Security Advisor (ONSA), DDRR targets former fighters or affiliates categorized as low risk and eligible for reintegration. The national initiative includes the OSC rehabilitation program for low-risk men who have defected from VEOs, as well as two rehabilitation centres in Maiduguri, Borno State - one called Bulumkutu, for women and children, and one (opened in September 2020) for men called Shokari. The OSC facility is located in a repurposed National Youth Service Corps camp in Gombe State, with a capacity for 650 people.

Under current procedures, the Nigerian military conducts an initial screening of male detainees. Based on these screening procedures, the details of which remain largely unknown, victims or former affiliates

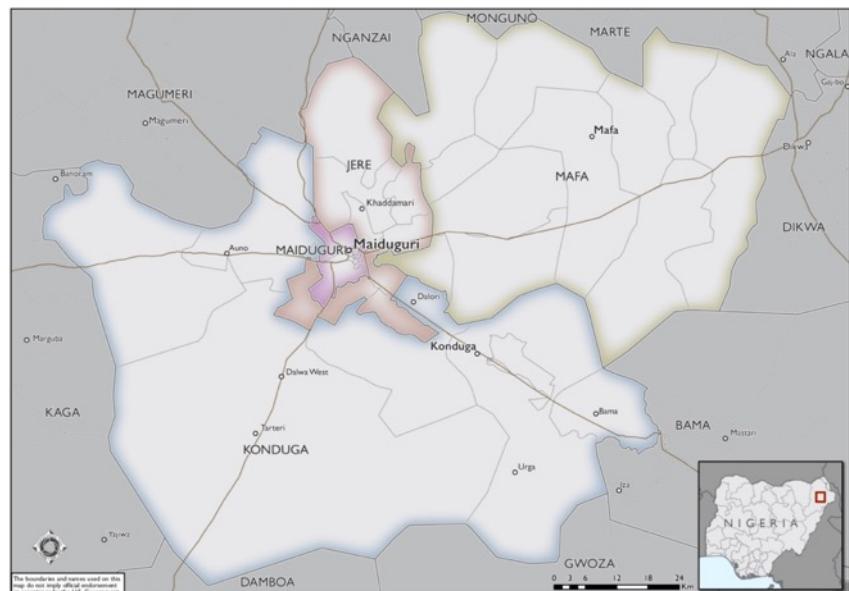
⁷ Council on Foreign Relations Nigeria Security Tracker: <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>

⁸ Amnesty International, page 14.

of VEOs who are categorized with the lowest level of risk are released to a center for rehabilitation services prior to transferring to communities of return or IDP camps. Individuals deemed low-risk and eligible for rehabilitation are sent to the OSC program at Gombe Camp before returning to communities for reintegration. Former combatants categorized as high-risk are referred to Giwa military barracks and high-security prisons to await prosecution. These barracks have a terrible reputation for human rights abuses, and Giwa, in particular, has been notorious for delayed processing of men through the center - whether deemed low or high risk. Women who are considered low risk are often released directly back to communities -- many end up in IDP camps -- without the benefit of DDDR services; however, the recent completion of the Shokari Transit Center as a transition facility for male clients should allow the Bulumkutu center to be exclusively designated for women and girl's rehabilitation services.

The Government of Nigeria (GoN) formally endorsed a national DDDR Action Plan in September 2018, signaling a broader commitment to operationalize national DDR efforts through an internationally recognized legal and policy framework. Since 2016, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) partner has served as Nigeria's primary technical partner for the development and implementation of the national DDDR program under four pillars of support: (i) Legal and Policy Issues, (ii) Technical Support to the Government of Nigeria (GoN), (iii) Individual Case Management, and (iv) Community-based Reintegration and Reconciliation. From 2016-2020, USAID/OTI invested nearly \$7.5 million in Nigeria's DDDR program, through Creative Associates and a \$4.6 million cooperative agreement with our INGO. To date, a pilot group and three cohorts of former affiliates (a total of 843 males) have completed the OSC program and 543 re-entered communities. This is a significant achievement for the Government of Nigeria since 2018 when the OSC pilot program had 6 graduates.

Representing a watershed moment, this public report charts progress in DDDR from 2018-2020, with references dating back to 2015. This report includes an unprecedented level of primary source data -- commissioned for an evaluation of the USAID-funded DDDR program -- including an extensive desk review of background documents and qualitative and quantitative data from 102 surveys, 10 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and 2 Focus



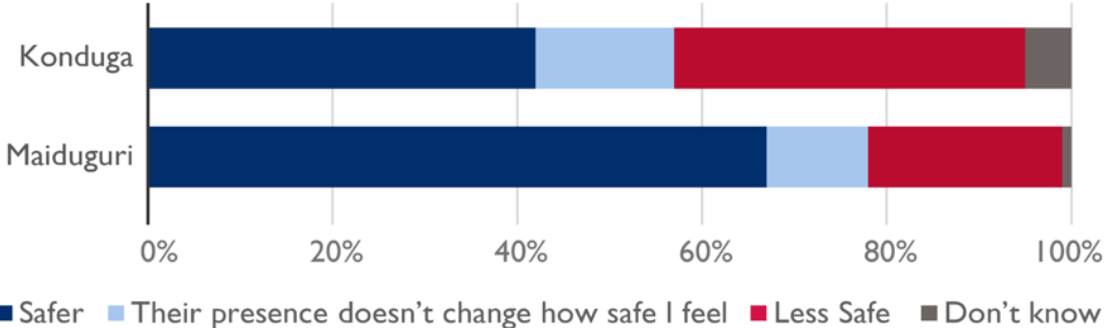
Group Discussions (FGDs) with OSC graduates, in addition to 439 surveys, 14 KIIs, and 6 FGDs in four communities of returned affiliates in Borno State (Maiduguri, Jere, Mafa, Konduga). Additionally, the evaluation team conducted 19 KIIs and 4 FGDs with GoN officials, INGOs, Creative, and international donor representatives. Local community groups and leaders were also interviewed. This report takes lessons from Nigeria DDDR and combines them with lessons learned from global cases, offering insights and innovations in modern DDDR.

THE CONTEXT OF DDR IN NIGERIA

The greatest challenge to DDR in NE Nigeria is the fact there is an ongoing insurgency with multiple VEOs, and that in many cases reintegration is occurring in IDP camps instead of the communities of return as intended. This reinforces the fact that DDR is taking place during active conflict and heightens the risk of secondary displacement, a situation not ideal for reintegration which is usually a post-conflict effort. A large, unknown number of those captured or defected from BH-ISWA remain in government custody. These include individuals who have escaped or surrendered as well as those wrongfully accused of, or coerced into affiliation with insurgents. Following various undetermined periods of detention, individuals are screened and sent either to the OSC program, directly back to communities or IDP camps, or through rehabilitation and transition centers located in Borno State prior to community reintegration.

While former fighters returning to their communities usually present some security concerns, these are more acute for NE Nigeria where communities remain insecure and vulnerable to VEO attacks. Most stakeholders agree that, so far, OSC has largely dealt with former fighters who were coerced into joining BH-ISWA but did not participate in any terrible violence or destruction. The correlation between perceiving OSC graduates as victims and support for reintegration makes it easier for communities to accept graduates than if they were faced with those they consider truly dangerous. Even so, there is a pervasive perception amongst communities where reintegration is taking place that DDR rewards perpetrators of violence. More concerning, there are occasions where community members who universally support reintegration said they knew of graduates who were VEO spies pretending to be rehabilitated. Yet, survey, KII and FGD respondents note there has been no increase in violence since graduates returned with most community respondents feeling either safer or the same level of safety since the return of graduates. Overall, the data indicates that, so far, clients are successfully reintegrating.

Would you say you are feeling more safe or less safe as a result of the DDR beneficiaries living in your community?



The notion that OSC graduates are predominantly victims is widespread. Groups like the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported during interviews that as many as 60-70% of OSC graduates, referred to as clients, were coerced into joining BH-ISWA or captured in military sweeps. This partially explains communities' acceptance of reintegration and why the military component of OSC is "putting a civilian face on a military operation" as one KII respondent noted. Interviews with military personnel from OSC took strides to emphasize the human and civilian components of DDR. The notion of dignity afforded OSC clients is a significant change from typical counterterrorism (CT) and counterinsurgency (COIN) approach.

While this report focuses on the DDRR efforts under the GoN's OSC program, there remain notable gaps in support to the women who are directly released back into communities after being swept up in military operations against BH-ISWA. Determining which DDRR candidates are 'low' or 'high' risk is different for men and women, with women often categorized as 'low' risk. The current practice of the direct release of females creates a dilemma, as women are largely not afforded the same rehabilitation or reconciliation opportunities and services offered under DDRR, including the perception by communities that OSC graduates are properly 'rehabilitated'. Once caught in a military 'sweep,' women face the stigma of BH-ISWA association without the legitimacy afforded those who graduate from the DDRR program. This remains a largely unaddressed need that warrants greater attention from DDRR stakeholders, including donors, NGOs, the UN, and GoN counterparts. In Somalia the same mistake was made for different reasons where it was thought that female Al-Shabaab (AS) members were only responsible for taking care of their husbands and children and therefore did not require DDR services and support. This completely discounts that men and women's coping mechanisms of a similar situation will vary.⁹ In Nigeria, the Shokari Transit Center was completed in 2019 to serve as a separate facility to accommodate men and boys prior to community return. This center is now fully operational, allowing the Bulumkutu facility to be transformed to accommodate women and girls solely. Provided both facilities continue to operate as intended, this is a significant positive development.

The fact that the majority of DDRR clients to date are not hardcore BH-ISWA fighters likely has made demobilization and disassociation portions of the pipeline easier. In NE Nigeria, several people, including ICG, noted "the real DDRR has not started yet". This begs the question, what will happen when it is time to address VEO hardliners? This notion of a 'hard' vs 'soft' DDR is not unprecedented. In South Sudan special needs groups (SNGs) of women, children, persons with disabilities, and elderly persons underwent DDR first with the idea that hardened fighters from the Sudan

DDR is a political process whereby policies, programs, and operations are considered in settings at risk of, during, or recovering from armed conflict. Beneficiaries include armed actors, their affiliates, and associates, and may include statutory armed forces and non-statutory armed groups irrespective of their legal designation. DDR further works in support of affected communities, victims, and survivors in the provision of socio-economic, social, and psychosocial support.

Reintegration is the process of formally disengaging from a VEO via de-radicalization, rehabilitation, and other programs that promotes change in behavior eschews violence to advance ideological or political objectives in favor of civil actions. It is the acquisition of political and personal agency and community acceptance.

Reconciliation occurs during the reintegration process, measured by the perception by communities that former affiliates are also victims of VEOs, AND require protection and security from communities to prevent re-recruitment. For former affiliates it's the perception they are free of stigma based on their association AND that they can be agents in preventing VEO recruitment in their communities.

⁹ International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2018. Pages 13.

People's Liberation Army would undergo DDR in a separate phase¹⁰. Importantly, a DDR program that separates coerced affiliates from hardcore members changes the conflict itself. This can result in a change to the way a military approaches DDR by shifting towards military operations if remaining fighters are viewed as intractable.¹¹

In NE Nigeria, there was one known instance of recidivism of OSC graduates as of March 2021.¹² Qualitative and quantitative data indicates that at least some graduates are in contact with their comrades who are still active VEO members. It is not known if this will have a positive or negative impact in the long-term. DDR is a 3-5 year process in a post-conflict setting, and in NE Nigeria where reintegration through OSC is taking hold, the DDRR process will need to continue for years to have its intended impact. All KII respondents, 88% of surveyed reintegrated OSC beneficiaries, and 80% of surveyed community members agreed that former BH-ISWA members and associates have an important role to play in P/CVE. In 2018, an INGO review of the DDR program in Somalia showed 75% of AS members undergoing the rehabilitation phase befriended all other persons in the program with 22% noting that they were friends with at least some persons in the program. In total 80% of former AS recognized the importance family, government and former associates play in the reintegration process.¹³

¹⁰ Piedmont, Dean. 2012. Pages 101-102.

¹¹ As noted from the UN's Department of Peace Operations during an Expert's Consultation convened in December 2019 by Creative and the Stimson Center in Washington DC.

¹² International Crisis Group. 19 March 2021.

¹³ International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2018. Pages 21-22.

WHAT IS WORKING, WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED IN NIGERIA

Keeping in mind that the program is relatively new, what we know is substantive and should be informed by further studies. In 2016, the GoN conducted a limited OSC pilot program for 6 persons and has since graduated over 800 clients across three cohorts. In the summer of 2020 alone, 601 clients graduated OSC and are being reintegrated back into communities. Ongoing learning from OSC's model can be compared to historic cases, reinforce or debunk lessons learned, and offer insights advancing the field.

People are being reintegrated; communities are accepting them: Community members affirm that graduates have been taught to live in peace. Without a single documented case of retribution, one community leader remarked on the difference between OSC graduates and others returning who did not go through the program: “The character and behavior of those who go through Gombe have a very better relationship with people. It’s quite different from those who have not gone through the Corridor.” Persons self-reintegrated from BH-ISWA are viewed as more aggressive and are less trusted. Additionally, trust in OSC graduates *increases* the longer they are in communities. This is significant, as among the strongest indicators of successful reintegration is a feeling of increased safety, which community members reported with OSC graduate reintegration. A social worker supporting OSC remarked that DDDR graduates are well received and “carry their social quota.”¹⁴ These findings echo those in Somalia, where longer rehabilitation time was suggested.¹⁵

There is only one known case of recidivism: The dearth of recidivism to date is a significant marker of success for OSC. In part, this may be due to the fact that former BH-ISWA members and associates have not been reintegrated for a long period of time yet. Another reason may be that an estimated 60-70% of the caseload were coerced to join BH-ISWA. This comports with Colombia’s DDR where recidivism is strongly correlated with the personal reasons for joining. The family and community visitation element of OSC is also helpful as former members’ likelihood of successful reintegration (less recidivism) increases where there are strong family ties and increased community participation, which was also observed in Colombia.¹⁶ With its success rates to date, OSC provides a good baseline to study recidivism.

Time in a transition center is well spent: Time in transition centers has varied with each cohort, with OSC graduates reporting the time spent in the OSC program at Gombe and other transit centers is too long, even if it is time well spent. The staff at OSC’s facility is supportive, with Amnesty International (AI) acknowledging OSC’s work in Gombe as far better than what was occurring at the Giwa detention center where claims of human rights abuses were rampant. The military, as the de-facto leader of OSC, has softened its approach. In KIIIs with military leaders from OSC, the importance of ‘*dignity*’ during rehabilitation was referenced several times, demonstrating the military’s ability to soften its approaches in this context. The value to graduates of being treated humanely cannot be overstated. Many felt that through OSC, the state was embracing them and forging a new compact with them, which was deeply impactful to clients who never thought they would escape the bush (or Giwa) alive, much

¹⁴ The reference was meant to convey that graduates from OSC are fulfilling their expected obligations as community members in terms of making positive contributions to the communities where they are reintegrating. The implication was that they are functioning, contributing members of society.

¹⁵ International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2018. Pages 21.1. The average time spent in rehabilitation is 3-months with a minimum time of 6-months suggested by all National Programme stakeholders.

¹⁶ Kaplan, Oliver and Nussio, Enzo. 2018. Pages 70-71, 82, 86-88.

less return to their families and communities. Graduates noted the value of receiving registered national identity documents and graduation certificates as a “talisman” protecting their renewed identity in communities.

The value of family and community visits during rehabilitation: Family visits to Gombe camp began in summer 2019 to promote community acceptance of the rehabilitation process. These visits have also included local government officials, community and religious leaders, and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Previous OSC graduates have also sometimes participated in these visits, serving as a highly effective symbol of the program’s efficacy. Stakeholders with our partners, GoN, and the international community exhibited overwhelming enthusiasm for family visits which increased from 48% of the first wave of OSC clients receiving a family visit in August 2018, to 88% for the second cohort a year later. Interestingly, there is no direct correlation between receiving a family visit and how prepared graduates feel for reintegration. Few graduates mentioned family visits in KIIs and FGDs; however, 67% of OSC graduates believe communities feel they are dangerous, while at the same time 72% feel accepted by communities. This indicates that family and community visits may have a positive impact if OSC graduates feel forgiven by community leaders and families who visit them, while at the same time fearing the broader community, most of whom they do not know. Family visits appear more important for communities than for OSC graduates, as these occasions present opportunities for the communities to hear stories of graduates’ changed behavior and attitude. This increases public confidence in OSC’s effectiveness to rehabilitate clients, especially when previous OSC graduates, who can attest to their own reintegration, also participate in visits. In a way, the impact of family visits unintentionally provides more value for communities than for the clients, through building awareness and confidence in OSC by conveying a future where graduates add value to communities.

Psychosocial support is effective: Some of the most important skills graduates learn at OSC are how to be patient, relate with people, live in peace, abide by rules, and practice good manners. Graduates say they were prepared to expect hostility from some community members upon their return, and taught not to retaliate. One graduate said he learned “some community members may not want to associate with us and talk to us but that we should be patient [and] with time they will come to see that we have changed from what we used to be.” The emphasis on PSS at OSC is an innovation critical to the effectiveness of other services. One graduate remarked, “If not for the psychosocial support, I don’t think I will have a rest of mind to learn the tailoring work.” A key feature of PSS is the premium placed on this aspect of reintegration by communities. Positioning social reintegration as a prerequisite for socio-economic reintegration in settings where VEOs exist was initially articulated in 2015.¹⁷ By 2017, a theory of change postulated

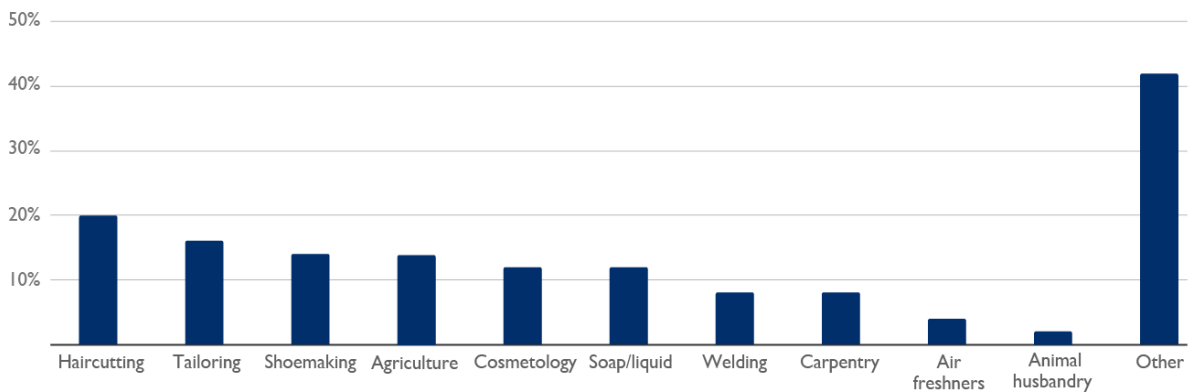


¹⁷ Piedmont. 2015. Pages 1-2, 6, 8.

that social reintegration in Somalia was a precondition for AS reintegration; in this case, recognizing poverty was not the primary driver for VE, but a lack of social reintegration was framed as a barrier to jobs and livelihoods.¹⁸ This indicates that increasing attention to social and psychosocial reintegration in tandem with support to socio-economic reintegration will benefit DDR in the future. The DDR in NE Nigeria is a watershed moment for reintegration in addressing the importance of PSS in reintegration for former VEO members, affiliates, and communities.

Business counseling and vocational training have knock-on effects: Graduates cite vocational training (VT) and business counseling, the more traditional staples of DDR, as critical in preparing for productive lives because they impart practical skills and make graduates useful to their communities. When asked what they do for a living, 70% of survey respondents cited at least one vocation offered through OSC training, and 76% said they felt prepared to pursue their vocation when they return to communities, with 50% rating their preparedness as a seven on a 7-point scale. Zero graduates reported not having a source of income.

What do you do to earn a living?*



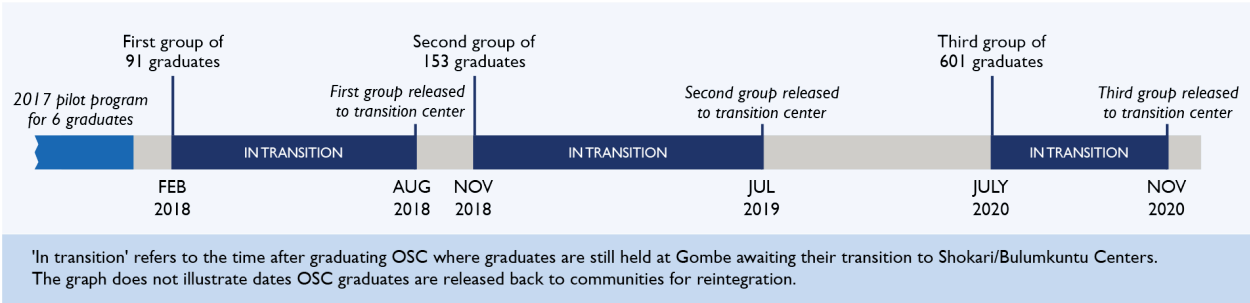
*The majority of graduates selected more than one livelihood



¹⁸ International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2017. Page 7.

While these impressive results show the continued usefulness of VT, the overemphasis of VT as a DDR panacea in other contexts has led to stakeholders designing cookie cutter approaches to reintegration that do not adequately strike a balance between social, psychosocial and socio-economic reintegration. In this light, OSC findings will have been misconstrued if policymakers revert to the habit of thinking that DDR is a jobs creation program where VT training leads directly to employment. A key insight is OSC graduates believing that vocational skills made them helpful to family and friends and facilitated their reintegration to the community. Community members echo this sentiment, expressing thanks that graduates are returning to the community with skills which make them productive to themselves and the community. KII and FGD respondents consistently mention the value of a graduate's ability to fend for themselves and contribute to the community, rather than being a burden. Key takeaways are that vocational training ignites entrepreneurialism in OSC graduates, provides tangible psychosocial benefits to the client, and increases community capital.

The time in transition is prolonged: An overview of OSC timelines, including transition centers and facilities, in NE Nigeria highlights unpredictable lengths of stay and an ad hoc approach to the operational and logistical component of DDRR. The duration of the OSC program has varied with each cohort. Following successful completion of the rehabilitation component of the program, cohorts are subsequently transferred to a transition center. As a result, OSC graduates have spent from 6 months to well over a year in transition before release to communities. The lack of clarity on timelines for each phase of DDRR reveals the need for improved coordination and more transparent, timely communication across military, state, and local authorities. For example, the second cohort of graduates was transferred from the Bulumkutu Rehabilitation Center to communities of return two months earlier than expected, cutting short their family tracing, business planning preparation, and reintegration preparation into communities. The latest group of 601 who graduated in July have also experienced a prolonged stay at Gombe camp prior to transfer to the rehabilitation centers, creating bottlenecks in the pipeline and frustration among clients and community members.



Following the 2017 pilot program for six graduates, the first official OSC cohort of 91 clients graduated the program in February 2018, though remained in transition centers for six months before returning to communities. In November 2018 a second group of 153 graduates spent eight months in transit centers before receiving approval for release to communities. The latest group of 601 OSC clients were admitted into the program in late 2019, graduated in July 2020, and then stayed at the Shokari Transit Center for four to six months before returning to their communities. The time spent in transition centers should be shortened where possible, or this time should be used to prepare communities for

the return of OSC graduates. These inconsistent timelines demonstrate the need for closer coordination between military and state authorities to determine appropriate standards for duration of the OSC program and length of stays at transition centers, as well as improved communication and coordination across involved entities to agree on the timing for graduates to return to local communities.

Individual case management: Individual services are driven by the registration and profiling process, which includes socioeconomic profiling and market assessments combined with the client's skills to guide the selection for VT. Upon arrival, clients go through registration and profiling, including a PSS baseline assessment with services provided by Borno State (Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development (MoWASD) social workers, with support from our partners. This is done through the Information, Counseling and Referral Services (ICRS) mechanism which our partners set up, and helps run, at Gombe Camp. A market assessment analyzes reintegration return rates, timelines, and community absorption capacity. Database registration should include information on where and when clients intend to be reintegrated, providing a window for ONSA, OSC, the military, our partners, and MoWASD to develop community reintegration plans that target specific communities of return. However, given the fact that OSC has advanced knowledge of where clients will be reintegrated, the importance of PSS, the value communities place on OSC, and the fact that family and community visits are taking place, overall planning for reintegration is less than what can be expected. Minimally, the ICRS is underutilized as a planning tool in terms of community preparedness for reintegration.

NEW KNOWLEDGE AND EMERGING QUESTIONS

In consultation with USAID/OTI, the evaluation team chose to highlight areas where new knowledge and emerging issues are relevant. Some findings reinforce knowledge acquired in P/CVE programming over the last few years, while others are specific to NE Nigeria. The evaluation team accessed a wealth of raw data that can serve as baseline data to inform new studies and be used for applied learning for OSC moving forward.

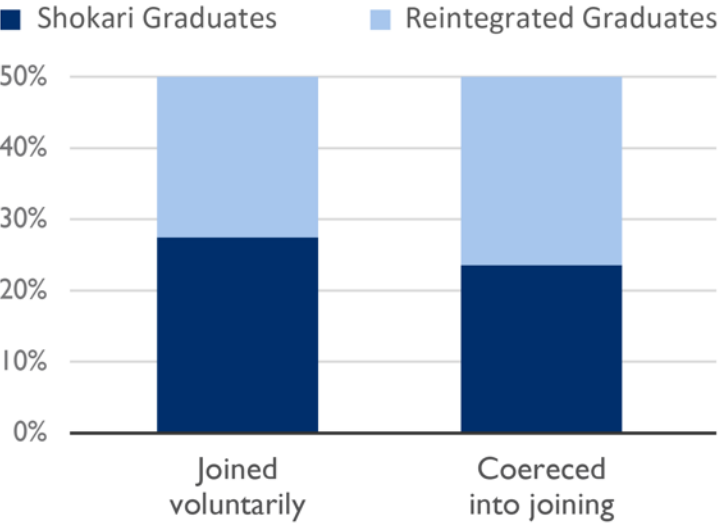
ON THE RISKS OF RECIDIVISM:

For this evaluation, the risk of recidivism was measured by known cases of recidivism, graduates’ behavioral intent, graduates’ unmet expectations post-release, and perceptions of relative deprivation and competitive victimhood. *Relative deprivation* refers to the sense that one is marginalized compared to others on unjust grounds, a concept that has been shown to be a more accurate predictor of VE support than absolute levels of poverty or unemployment. *Competitive victimhood* refers to a group or individual’s motivation and effort to establish that they have suffered more than their adversaries, a tendency associated with a greater likelihood of supporting VE narratives.

Overall, OSC graduates scored higher on competitive victimhood and relative deprivation than community members in their areas of reintegration, and graduates who joined voluntarily scored higher than those who indicated they were coerced into joining. This suggests that generally, graduates who indicated they had joined voluntarily are at higher risk of recidivism than those who indicated they were coerced into joining. However,

emerging research in the field of radicalization has highlighted that attitudes and perceived norms are only indirectly related to behavior via mediation through intention.¹⁹ In other words, while measured perceptions might suggest a higher risk, engaging in a behavior (e.g. recidivism) hinges on the individual’s **intention** to perform that behavior. With the exception of one OSC graduate, all those interviewed said they had no intention of going back to their old lives. In addition, graduates say they are either actively playing a role in preventing others from joining VEOs, or that they intend to once they are transferred to their communities. One of the graduates at the Shokari Transit Center remarked,

Joining VEOs voluntarily vs by coercion*



*The calculation for determining whether an OSC client joined voluntarily or by coercion was based on the response they offered for their reasons for joining. If a respondent offered a reason suggesting coercion (abducted, if didn’t join killed, etc) as well as a voluntary reason (e.g. financial) it was still treated as a case of coercion for this calculation.

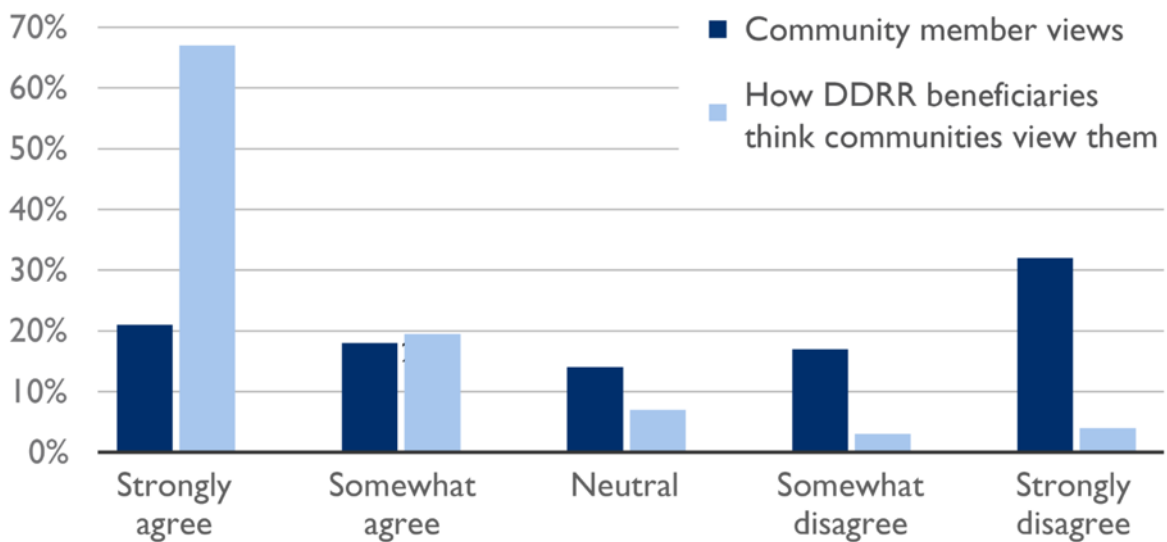
¹⁹ Braddock, K. *Weaponized Words: The strategic role of persuasion in violent radicalization and counter-radicalization*. Cambridge University Press p155. 2020

“The advice I am going to give is ‘I have experience and seen this condition in my own eyes, there is nothing good in this movement because I have been there, and I have many experiences. Had it been good, I would not have left and joined the community again. There is nothing better than peaceful coexistence.’”

Together, these factors measured among OSC graduates appear to signal a relatively low risk of recidivism amongst graduates surveyed, although there are still some yellow flags highlighted for certain graduates who indicated they had joined voluntarily . Overall, it is unclear to what extent OSC clients are still exposed to the influence of VEOs. There is conflicting information about whether graduates stay in touch with current BH-ISWA members and affiliates.

“It's not something to talk about because their effect is dangerous. I have seen how dangerous they are. There was a time they dug my grave and held a knife to my neck to slaughter me there and then, but luckily God saved me and they let me go. So, I don't want to talk about them after I have returned to my community.”

Even if they have gone through DDDR, beneficiaries are still dangerous and should not be allowed to come back.



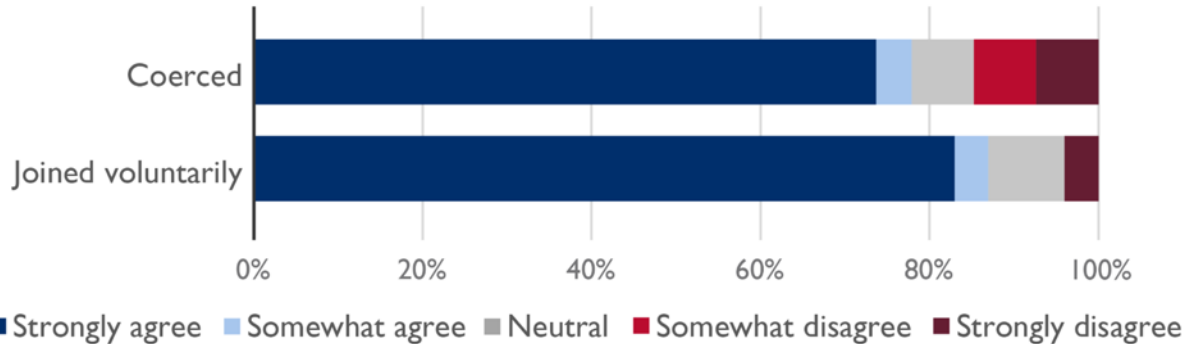
In contrast to recent OSC graduates who were surveyed while residing in the Shokari center before they had returned to their communities, half of the reintegrated graduates from the first two cohorts said they have been in touch with peers who are current BH-ISWA members. Additionally, only 29% of surveyed community members believe OSC graduates have fully disengaged from VEOs, and 34% believe they have not disengaged at all. In the KIIs, there were a handful of occasions when community members - who universally supported reintegration - said they “knew” that a few of the graduates were VEO spies pretending to be rehabilitated. Community members, GoN, and international stakeholders assert that many graduates remain in touch with their former comrades and are in fact encouraging them to leave the group. Altogether data points to a likelihood of at least some connection between graduates and VEOs, with graduates just as likely to be influencing their former comrades to defect as they are to be influenced by them. This topic warrants further observation and research.

What is particularly interesting is how graduates ‘think’ community members view them.²⁰ Two-thirds of graduates surveyed think those living in communities where they are looking to reintegrate would strongly agree that DDRR beneficiaries are dangerous and should not be allowed to return despite graduating from OSC. In reality, only 21% of community members surveyed strongly agreed that DDRR beneficiaries are dangerous and should not be accepted, while only 37% strongly agreed that DDRR beneficiaries are victims. In addition, 59% of surveyed community members believe their fellow community members have mostly or fully accepted DDRR beneficiaries. While the data shows us that graduates think being perceived as a victim by community members is a necessary condition to being accepted, the above indicates that this is much less important to community members.

Cited as the most important factor for reintegration, over 75% of community members completely or somewhat agree that DDRR beneficiaries are sincerely seeking forgiveness. Additionally, 86% say DDRR beneficiaries are putting at least a little effort into building relationships with community members, with 39% saying they are putting in a lot of effort. This is confirmed by KIIs and FGDs with community members who consistently described OSC graduates as peaceful and respectful with good attitudes. They recalled doing business together, praying together, eating together, even marrying each other.

The data showed that reintegrated graduates who joined voluntarily scored higher in relative deprivation and competitive victimhood than those who were forced to join. When measured through the agreement statement, “People do not understand what I have been through and how much I have suffered,” 70% of reintegrated graduates who say they were forced to join strongly agreed, with the number rising to 83% among those who say they joined voluntarily. Fifty-two (52%) of those forced to

People do not understand what I have been through and how much I have suffered.



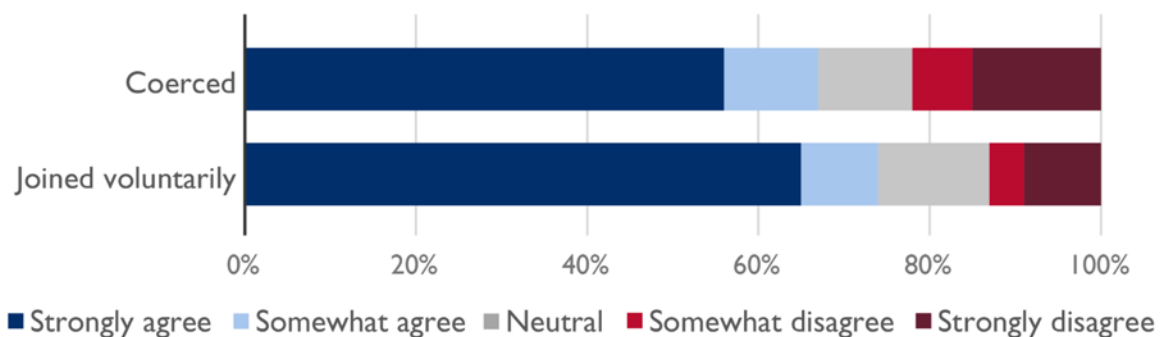
join strongly agreed that “In Nigeria, no matter how hard we work, it is harder for Muslim youth to get ahead compared to other youth,” compared to 65% who joined voluntarily and strongly agreed with this statement. Similarly, 56% who were forced to join strongly agreed that “No matter how hard we work, it will be harder for OSC graduates to get ahead compared to other youth in my community,” compared to 65% who joined voluntarily.

While across the board, graduates’ higher scores on both relative deprivation and competitive victimhood suggests they are at a higher risk of recidivism, as studies show that relative deprivation is a predictor of VE support and driver of radicalization, and competitive victimhood is associated with a greater likelihood of support for VE narratives. However, **what current studies do not tell us is whether these factors are as accurate as predictors of recidivism as they are of initial radicalization and VE support.** It might be assumed that graduates’ first-hand experiences with the VEO and long journeys out and back to their communities are strong mitigating factors that could prevent recidivism even against a backdrop of feelings of relative deprivation and competitive victimhood.

ON THE ROLE OF PEERS IN ENGAGING, DISENGAGING, AND PREVENTING RECIDIVISM:

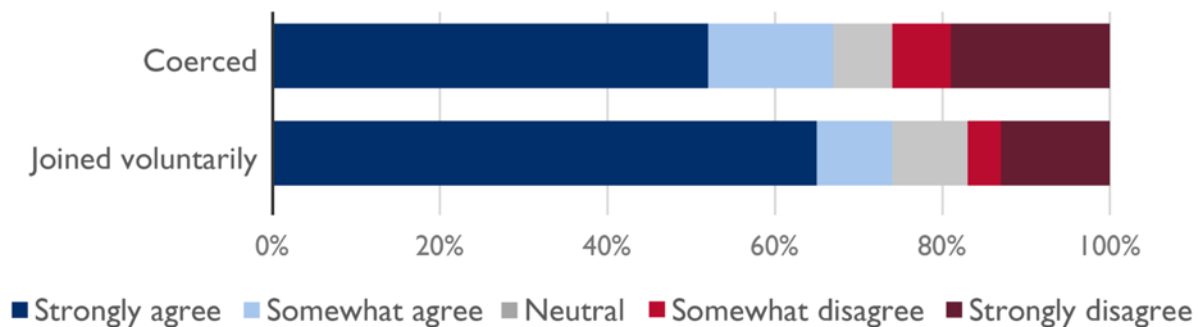
Overall, nearly 80% of reintegrated graduates strongly agree that they have an important role to play in P/CVE of vulnerable youth, a sentiment reiterated by all KII respondents. **Of those who joined voluntarily, 83% strongly agreed that they can have an important role in P/CVE, compared to 74% of those who were coerced.** This is reinforced by all KII and FGD respondents acknowledging that former BH-ISWA members and affiliates have a role to play in reintegration and P/CVE. A sentiment echoed in Somalia for AS, this highlights an opportunity to engage DDRR graduates in P/CVE efforts in NE Nigeria and elsewhere. OSC graduates’ intent to play a role in P/CVE is significant. As previously mentioned, studies show behavior in the future is partially dependent on a person’s intent to engage in a specific behavior,²¹ in this case P/CVE. Community members confirm that graduates are playing this role, though nearly 50% of community members think it is somewhat or very likely graduates will continue to support the VEOs they left.

No matter how hard we work, it will be harder for OSC graduates to get ahead compared to other youth in my community.



²¹ Braddock, K. *Weaponized Words: The strategic role of persuasion in violent radicalization and counter-radicalization.* Cambridge University Press. 152-157. 2020

In Nigeria, no matter how hard we work, it is harder for Muslim youth to get ahead compared to other youth.



When asked which factors are important to prevent people from rejoining VEOs, an overwhelming majority of OSC graduates cited the presence of supportive community, CJTF, family and friend relationships, a supportive religious network, access to counselors or PSS, access to suitable housing, employment, financial stability, and a sense of belonging. In this regard, there were few differences between those who joined voluntarily and those coerced. In terms of continued VEO engagement, **those who joined voluntarily were slightly less likely to say they were still in touch with former affiliates (48%) compared to those coerced (56%).** At least a portion of OSC graduates remain in contact with affiliates, while they also believe they have an active role to play in P/CVE by encouraging disengagement from BH-ISWA and mitigating youth recruitment into VEOs. During KIs, it was noted by government counterparts that OSC uses graduates for defection. The evaluation did not determine whether OSC graduates were used as intelligence ‘assets’ by OSC or whether they are utilized as advocates for the DDDR rehabilitation and reintegration component. **Using graduates for intelligence and promoting defections without a plan for their reintegration that includes protection for them and their communities can place graduates in harm's way.** It is not considered a responsible practice for DDR.

WHY PEOPLE JOIN BH-ISWA:

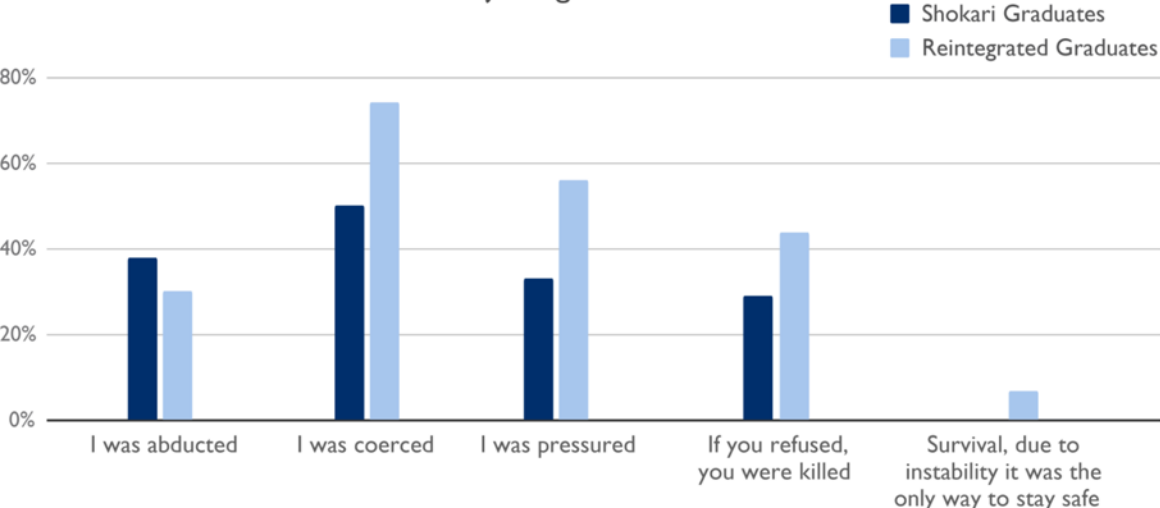
To understand why people join, the evaluation team examined trends between those who join voluntarily and those who were forced. **Slightly more than 50% of those interviewed said they were forced to join BH-ISWA.** There is a strong correlation between prior understanding of the ideology of BH-ISWA and joining voluntarily. Conversely, those forced to join generally did not have a good understanding of the ideology. Using this as a baseline, the evaluation team used a method for data collection called peer perceptions,²² asking respondents how they AND their peers would answer a question. In conflict settings people are more likely to answer honestly when describing the behavior or attitude of their peers, as social desirability bias is much lower than when reporting on personal perceptions or attitudes.²³

²² Also referred to as descriptive norms

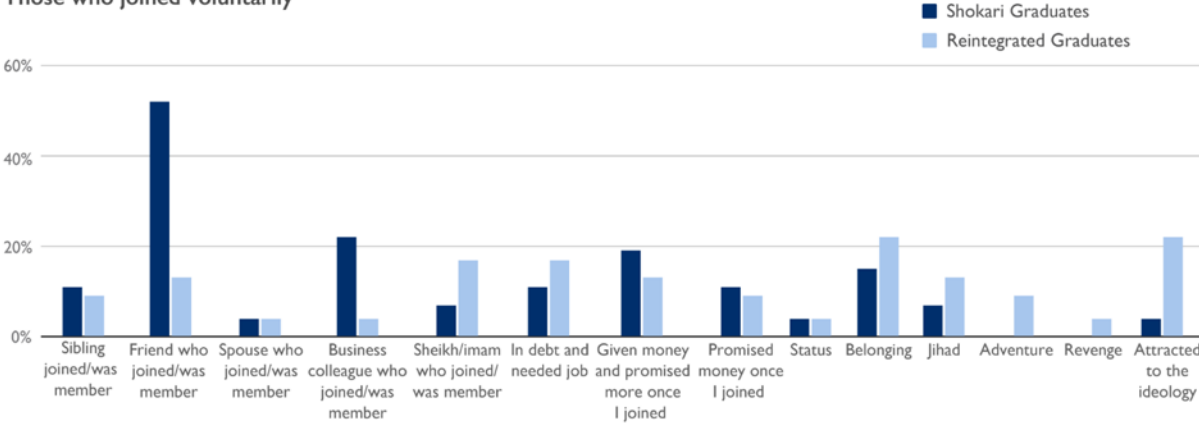
²³ Neville, F.G. Preventing violence through changing social norms. In P. Donnelly & C Ward (Eds.) *Oxford Textbook of Violence Prevention* (p 239-244). Oxford. Oxford University Press. 2015.

This data on peer perspectives was collected while recent OSC graduates were still living with their peers in the Shokari transit center, making them excellent candidates for using descriptive norms to measure attitudes and beliefs about VEOs. While 38% of Shokari graduates said that they were coerced to join, 85% believe coercion is the main reason their peers joined. An additional 10% think ‘coercion’ was a minor reason for peers joining, and 5% said it was not a reason at all.

Those who were coerced/forced into joining



Those who joined voluntarily

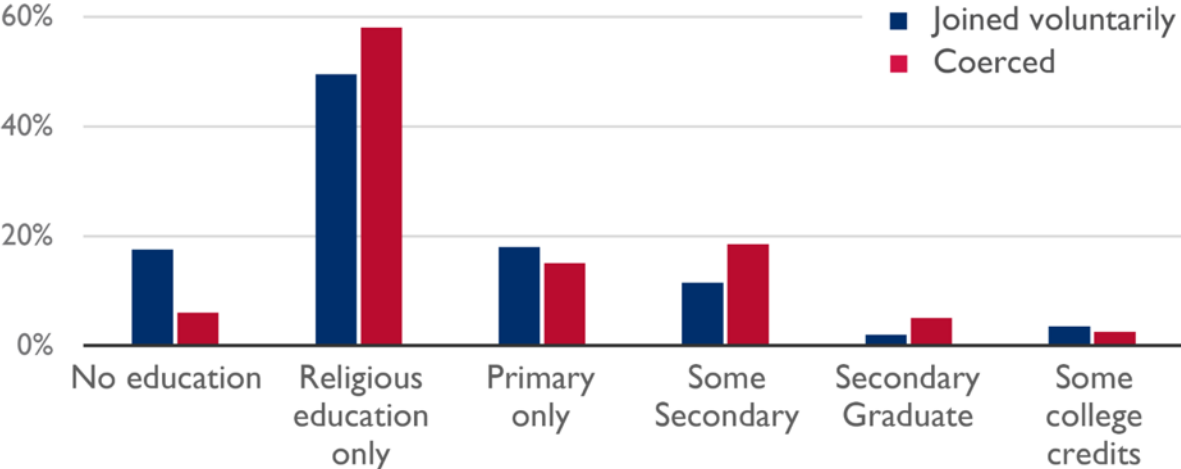


Several indicators show some reasons for joining voluntarily are more prevalent than others. While only 14% of Shokari respondents cited a financial reason for joining, 52% said it was a major reason they thought their peers joined. Just 7% said they joined for jihad, but 50% said it was a major reason for their peers. Similarly, 8% cited ‘belonging’ as a reason for joining, with over 50% citing it as a major reason for their peers. Peer influence is a significant reason for joining, with 37% of graduates saying this was a major reason for their joining, and 46% saying it was a major reason for their peers. Interestingly, only 10% mention someone in their immediate social network²⁴ as a reason for joining.

²⁴ Friend, sibling, spouse, business colleague.

Frustrations with the government did not appear to play a prominent role influencing individuals to join, with **zero graduates identifying it as a reason why they joined, and 60% saying it was not a reason at all for their peers**. This is striking, considering VEOs often use grievances against the government as a centerpiece in their narrative to attract recruits and radicalize members. We do not know if this finding has broader implications across VEOs, what the conditions may be for this dynamic, or why BH-ISWA is not successfully transferring this narrative to their members. Another interesting finding is the limited distinction in education levels and types for those who joined voluntarily and those who were forced. The percentage of those with only a religious education was similar for both groups. This underscores that receiving only a religious education is not a pathway to radicalization towards violent extremism (in NE Nigeria). However, receiving no education was highly correlated with joining voluntarily.

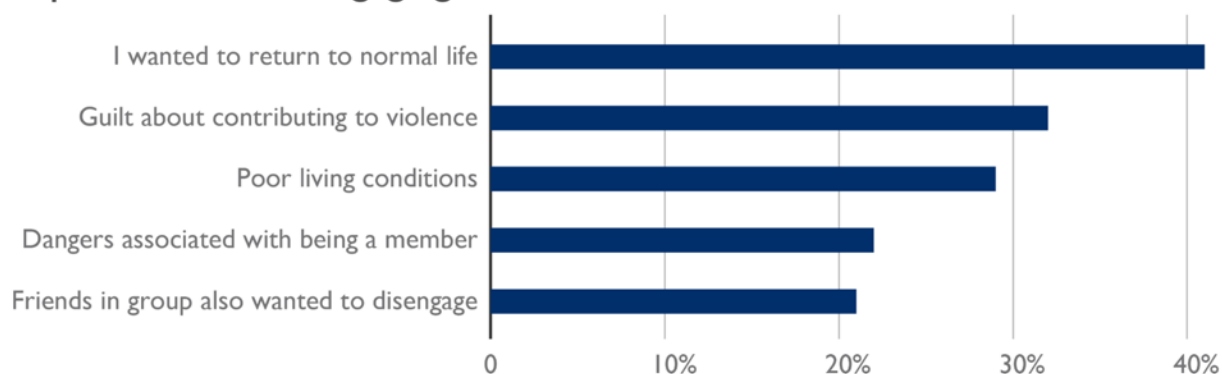
Education levels for those joining VEOs



WHY PEOPLE STAY AND WHY THEY LEAVE:

Overall, ‘fear’ was mentioned most frequently by Shokari respondents as the reason they believe peers stay with VEOs, with **50% citing fear of BH-ISWA retaliation and 50% fearing they would not be accepted by communities**. Shokari graduates surveyed believe peers played an important role in joining, yet only 10% of those who joined because of a friend actually stayed because of a friend. Additionally, only 15% indicated that members stayed for financial reasons, yet 67% of these individuals cite it as a major reason why peers join. This suggests that though there may be financial incentives to joining, this support may not necessarily continue. It also suggests that the financial benefits of remaining do not outweigh the costs of doing so, which may make defections easier for those not ideologically aligned with a VEO. In some cases, members are being rewarded financially, perhaps with upfront payments. This speaks to the importance of degrading a VEO’s financial capabilities to encourage defections. More studies in this area are needed.

Top reasons for disengaging from VEOs



The most frequently cited **reasons for disengaging from VEOs** were **wanting to return to a normal life (41%), guilt about contributing to violence (32%), poor living conditions (29%), dangers associated with being a member (22%), and friends in the group also wanting to disengage (21%)**. This is consistent with the accounts of graduates in KIIs and FGDs that cited VEO’s bad behavior, guilt at bringing harm to their communities, disillusionment, what they thought the VEO would be like and what it was ‘actually like’, and wanting to go home to their families. There was a strong correlation between individuals who cited social networks as their reason for joining and wanting to return to a normal life as their reason for disengaging. These findings are promising as they are consistent with findings in Colombia, where former fighters with strong social and familial ties are less likely to rejoin a VEO and thus more likely to have a positive reintegration experience.²⁵

A comparison of recent Shokari graduates and those who reintegrated earlier **showed the desire to return to a normal life increased over time as the main reason for disengaging**. A reason may be that as awareness of OSC increased as an option for defecting, VEO members and affiliates saw a pathway that could bring them home safely, creating a “pull” factor to leave the VEO. There was also a moderate correlation for disengagement between dangers associated with VEO membership and knowledge of OSC, suggesting that those who placed a premium on safety were more likely to take part in DDRR and OSC, which promises safety. While further research is required, **two implications are that social (peer) networks might be a significant “pull” factor into the group, though not what keeps individuals as members**, and that DDRR reintegrees have a role to play in P/CVE. It suggests OSC is missing opportunities to more systematically include former VEO members in family visits and emphasize a ‘safe exit’ as a key component of DDRR messaging targeting defections.

NOTE ON THE INFLUENCE OF OSC ON DEFECTIONS:

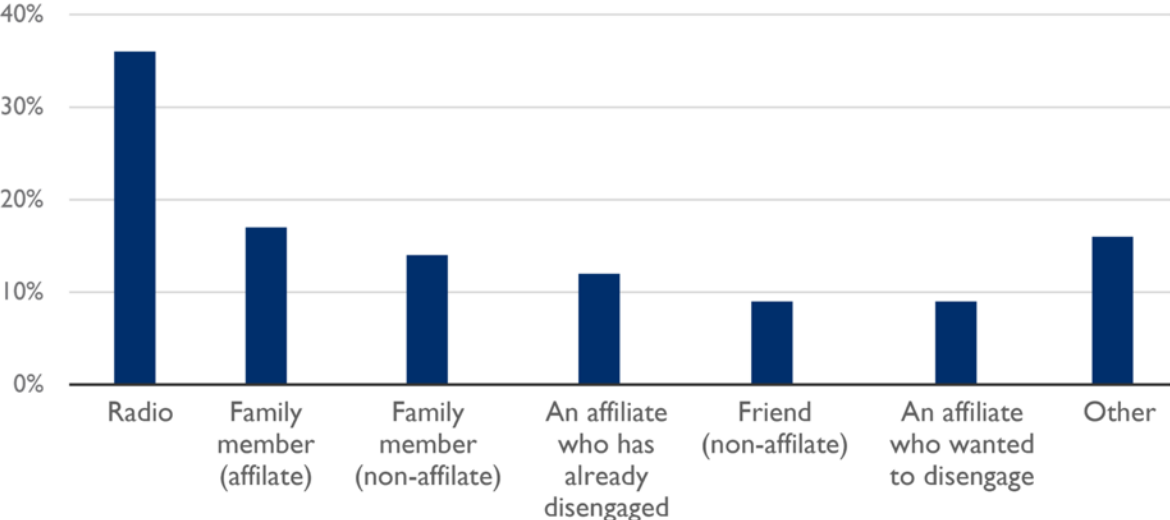
There is reason to believe the potential to influence defections is increasing over time. When considering data from those with knowledge of the program, 25% of graduates from the first two

²⁵ Kaplan, Oliver and Nussio, Enzo. 2018. Pages 70-71, 82, 86-88.

cohorts and 33% from the third cited it as a main reason for disengaging. This indicates that knowledge of the DDDR program is becoming increasingly influential as a reason for defection.

When asked how they heard about OSC, **one-third with knowledge before disengaging say they heard about it from a fellow affiliate, 36% from the radio, and about 20% from non-affiliate friends or family members.** This indicates that radio shows like Dandal Kura that feature the experiences of OSC clients are indeed reaching current VEO affiliates with information that may further spread by word of mouth. The OSC Coordinator, Major General Shafa, confirmed he hears stories of individuals defecting because they heard about OSC on the radio. There are also reports of affiliates receiving flyers advertising GoN acceptance of defectors, which are effective in some cases. Data shows increased outreach to fighters through these and other means may increase defections, especially as more OSC graduates are safely and successfully reintegrated into communities.

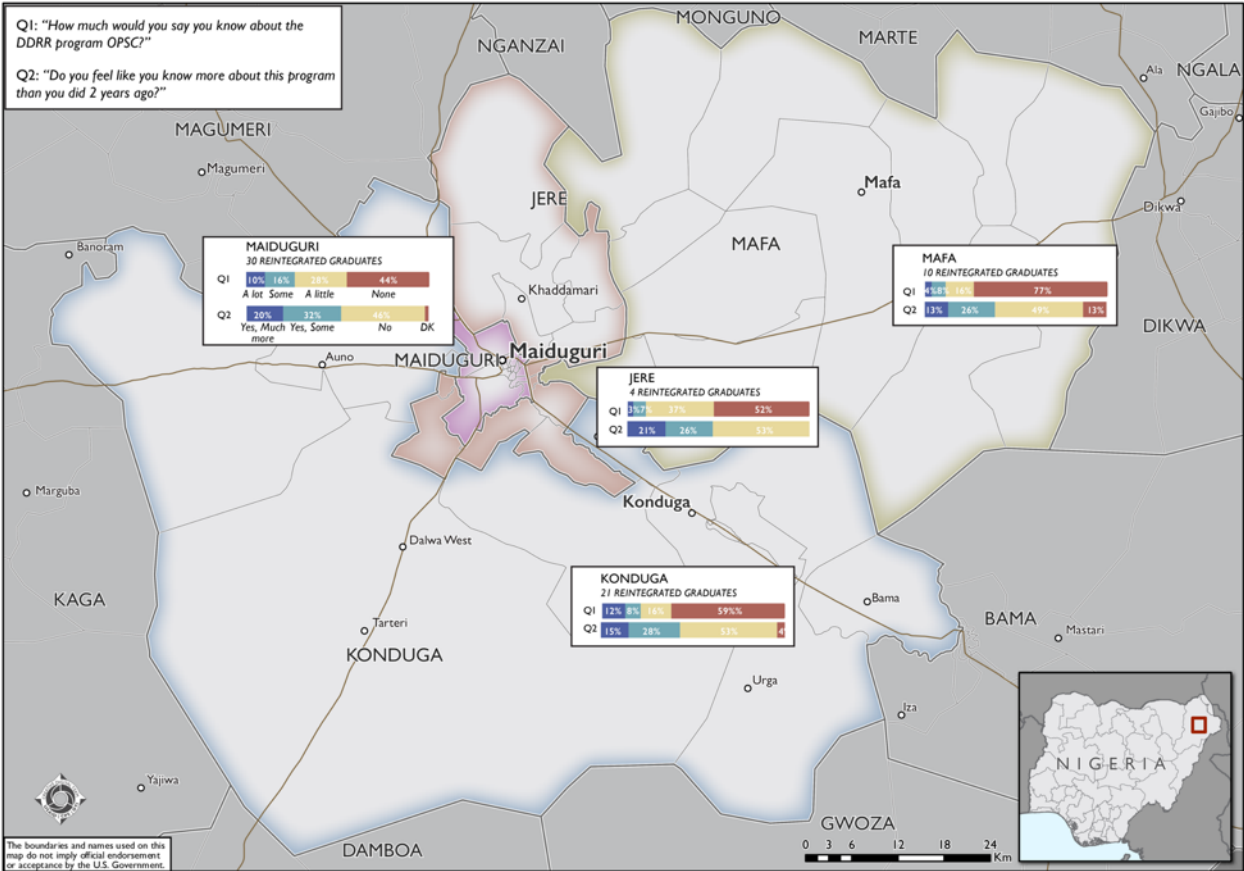
Where/How did you hear about OPSC?



There is no correlation between those who joined voluntarily or were coerced regarding knowledge of OSC and leaving because friends in the group wanted to leave. This suggests that choosing to disengage via OSC is not something friends do together. This correlation was only observed among the first wave of graduates (reintegrated graduates), suggesting that in early days before OSC was widely known, friends would defect together. It is possible that this is because they understood less about the program, and as knowledge of DDDR and OSC spreads, along with its credibility, disengaging alone is increasingly viewed as a viable option.

ON THE RE-EMERGENCE OF DDR

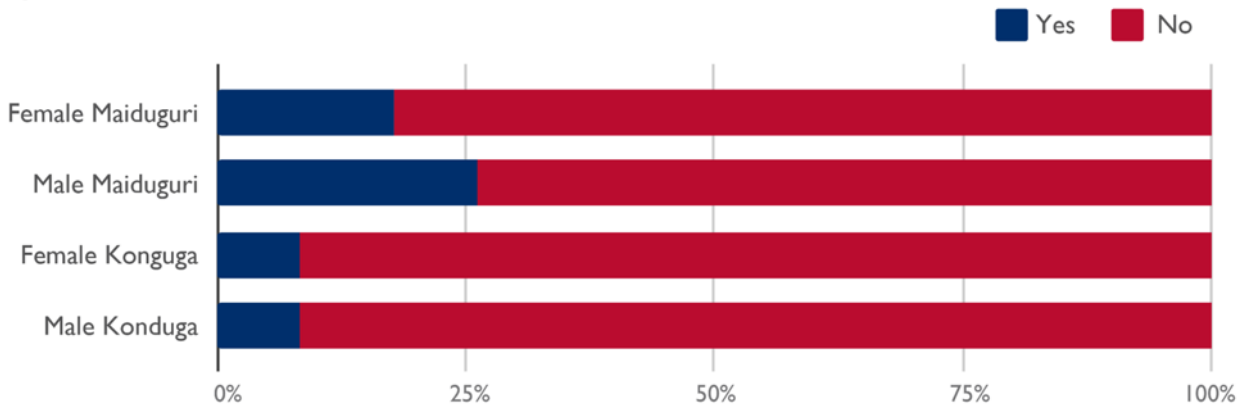
DDR programs are gaining traction as the preferred avenue for addressing the rehabilitation and reintegration of armed groups, actors and their affiliates from VEOs. Over the past couple of years there has been a reinvigorated of policies, publications, and practices on DDR. In 2019 the UN through the Inter-Agency Working Group in DDR, published updated policy guidance called the Integrated DDR Standards, and the African Union promulgated its DDR Capacity program Operational Guidelines. Concurrently, Creative Associates International with The Stimson Center convened a high-level Experts Consultation on Armed Group and Actor Reintegration. The 2020 USAID-funded evaluation identified three areas validating DDR as an optimal framework for former VEO member and affiliate reintegration.



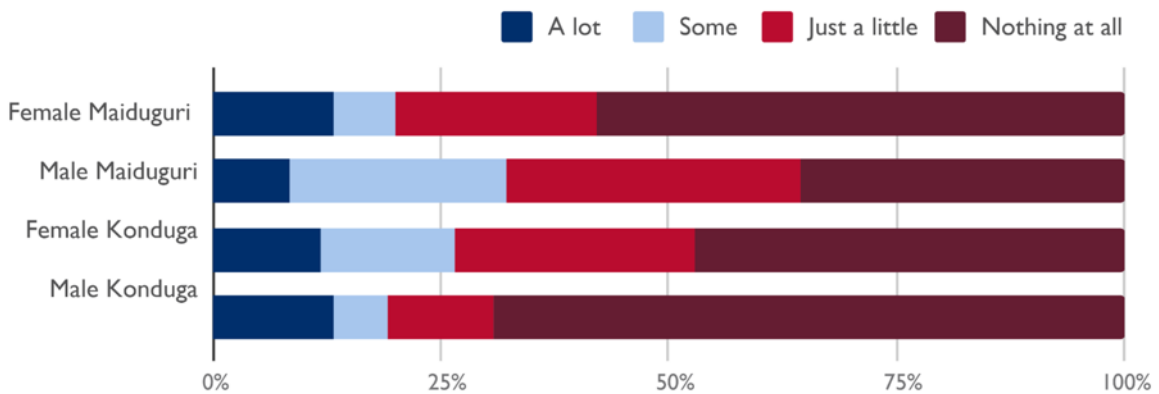
I. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

Historically, public information and sensitization has been a challenge for DDR globally, with issues ranging from communities not knowing what they gain from DDR to ex-combatants thinking DDR provides them a job. Both sides often lacked an understanding of the principal peace agreement governing DDR. Managing expectations was difficult. Communities often perceived DDR as rewarding perpetrators of violence, and the international donor community would question why ex-combatants were not employed, with ex-combatants were reluctant to give up their arms. The answer? More public information and sensitization to everyone, everywhere. A look at the data in NE Nigeria collected in four communities of return – Jere, Mafa, Maiduguri and Konduga – provides refreshing insights for DDR stakeholders.

Do you think that you have sufficient information about the DDDR program and process?

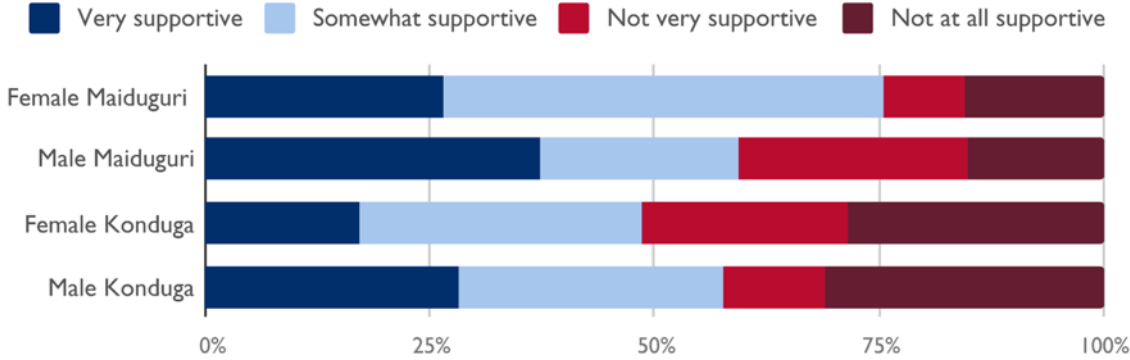


How much would you say you know about the DDDR program Operation Safe Corridor?



The data shows DDDR has limited outreach, particularly outside Maiduguri and the area immediately surrounding it. Of community members surveyed across four communities, **59% reported knowing nothing about OSC**. The further from the center of Maiduguri city, the less people know. Illustratively, **44% of Maiduguri respondents and 77% of Mafa respondents said they knew nothing about OSC**. In Maiduguri, where 30 graduates returned, only 19% of community respondents reported awareness that OSC graduates lived in their area. In Konduga, with 21 graduates, the number was 10%. Of this very small number across all four communities who knew graduates had returned, less than 1 in 5 said they were informed through a community meeting, which would include most of the sensitization activities conducted by our partners and the Social Cohesion Platforms (SCPs) made up of community leaders, youth leaders, religious leaders, and women who are the “champions” for DDDR in their communities. This is significant considering the SCPs are among the most significant advances in reintegration and reconciliation over the last 2-years.

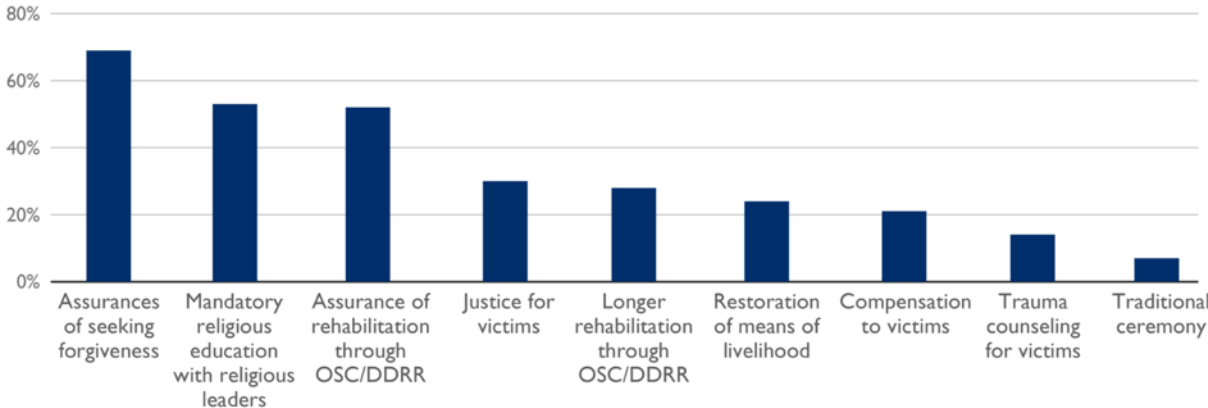
Overall, how supportive are you of the reintegration of former Boko Haram-ISWAP affiliates in your community?



However, there is an interesting relationship between knowledge of the DDDR program and support for reintegration. While 59% reported knowing nothing at all about the program and 86% felt their knowledge is insufficient, **64% of respondents still said they are either somewhat or very supportive of reintegrating VEO affiliates in their communities, with 69% saying they are ready to accept them.** This indicates that feeling informed is not a necessary condition for community acceptance. While knowledge of DDDR may not be necessary for support, it does increase the likelihood of support. For example, KIIs and FGD respondents who were selected in communities because of their familiarity with DDDR demonstrated universal support for the program. This supports findings that DDR is dispositive for reintegration paving the way for future programming.

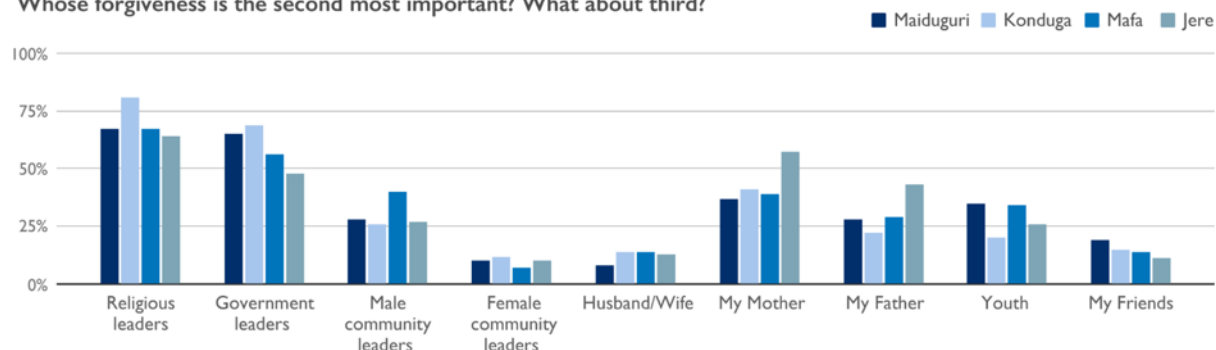
If DDR is dispositive and information preferred though not necessary, what should be done for outreach and public information? Analysis shows getting the right information about DDDR to key people in communities may be more important for community preparedness than simply getting more information to more people. The top three most important conditions for reintegration identified

When you think of what it means for former affiliates to reintegrate into your community after going through the process of DDDR, which of the following would you say are the most important?

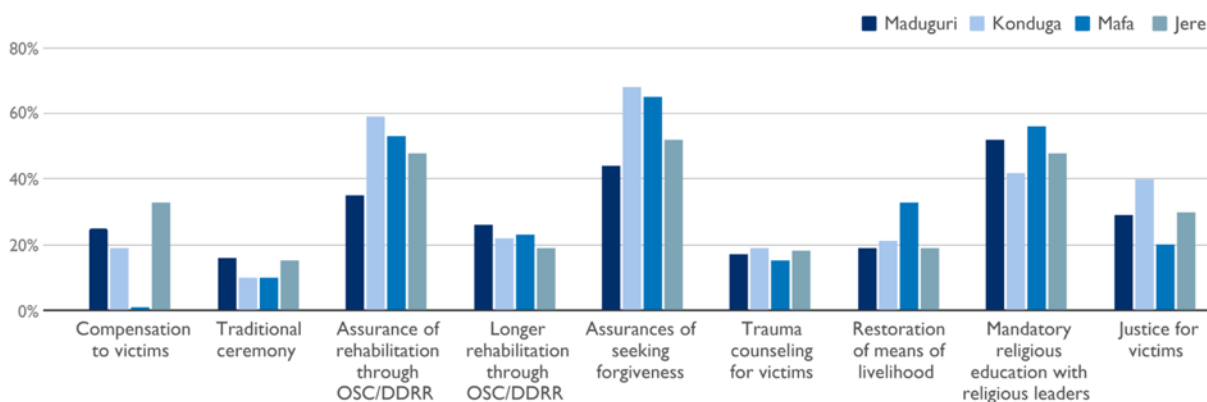


by survey respondents are: reassurance that reintegrates are seeking forgiveness (69%), mandatory religious education with religious leaders (53%), and assurances that reintegrates are rehabilitated (52%). There is a further correlation between believing DDRR beneficiaries are victims and supporting reintegration. When community members were asked who's forgiveness of reintegrates would be most important for influencing whether or not they would forgive reintegrates, religious leaders (70%), government leaders (60%), and "my mother" (44%) topped the list.

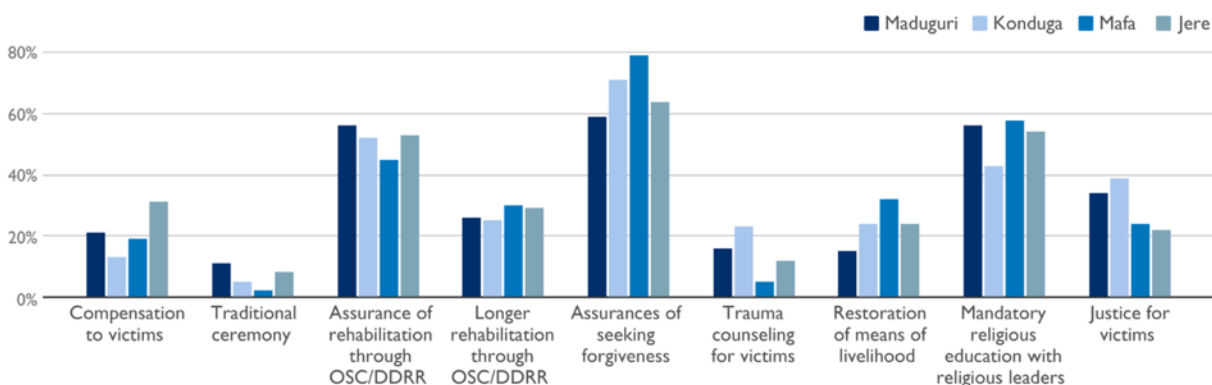
Forgiveness is an important part of reintegration. Thinking about the influence of other community members, whose forgiveness of returnees/defectors/DDRR beneficiaries is most important for you to be able to forgive them yourself? Whose forgiveness is the second most important? What about third?



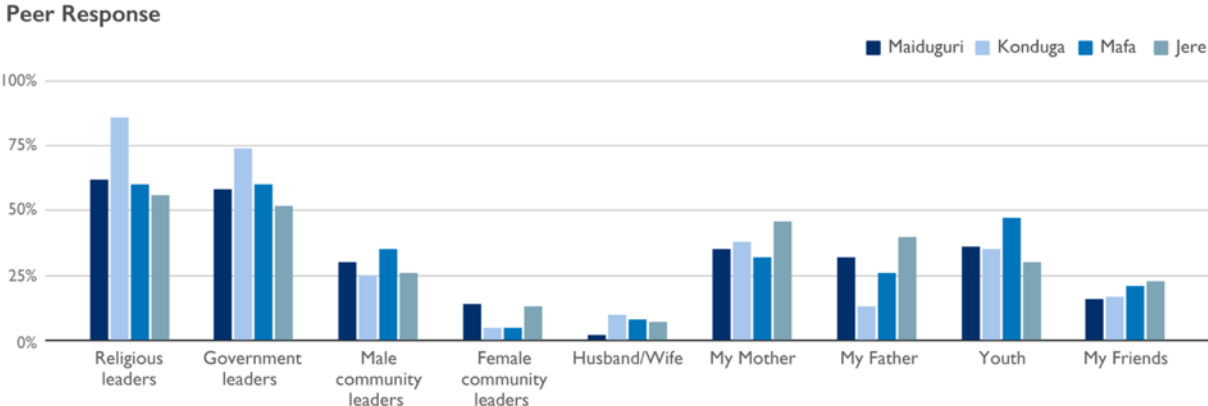
Now please tell me which three of the following your peers think are the most important? (Choose top 3)



When you think of what it means for former affiliates to reintegrate into your community after going through the process of DDRR, which of the following would you say are the most important? (Choose top 3)



It follows that outreach emphasizing that many graduates are victims is likely to increase support for reintegration. **It also speaks to the critical roles of family members, religious leaders, and the government as gatekeepers and “anointers” of the DDR process.** If these groups accept graduates, the community at large will. While knowledge of DDR is not widespread within communities, targeted approaches focused on families and community leaders in areas of return appear to sufficiently prepare communities to receive DDR graduates.



2. LEGAL ISSUES RELATED TO ARMED GROUP REINTEGRATION:

This evaluation did not focus on the range of legal prohibitions which may impact international donors’ ability or willingness to provide support to GoN DDR efforts, including support or resources for former Designated Terrorist Organization (DTO) members. This is not to say legal issues have been resolved among leading donor states, as various counter-terrorism laws and national restrictions on material support to DTOs will not be going away, but in the case of NE Nigeria, general adherence to a well socialized DDR process, including a formal DDR framework, host government screening, and rehabilitation program for qualifying ex-combatants, has facilitated United States Government (USG) and other international donor support. This suggests that the substantial time and energy the international community has invested into working with the GoN to develop clearer sets of DDR procedures since the establishment of OSC is paying off; however, without further research on how progress was made and where it can be replicated outside Nigeria, these advances could well be threatened if the Nigeria DDR framework were to change. Importantly, while DDR program stakeholders have seemingly addressed the issue of provision of support to former DTO members and affiliates in certain factual contexts, a related issue is Foreign Terrorists Fighters (FTFs). A FTF can be viewed as a member of a DTO who has crossed an international border.

Illustratively, if a country implementing DDR finds a foreign national in their caseload and the receiving country no longer recognizes this person as a citizen, the person runs the risk of becoming stateless. The phenomenon of ‘citizen stripping’ and the Stateless Fighter stems from a growing concern in the Global North of its citizens traveling to conflict zones to fight with VEOs, mostly to Iraq and Syria in support of ISIS, though also those joining BH-ISWA. The fear is that upon return they will carry out ‘terrorist’ attacks at home. By 2014, this resulted in many governments developing policies to strip

individuals of their citizenship.²⁶ Without jurisdictional clarity, countries from the Global North that often serve as donors to DDR efforts that engage in ‘citizen stripping’ may be signaling to regional partners and countries a form of tacit consent to do the same.

A dynamic that originated between countries with noncontiguous borders now affects regional neighbors that share borders, namely Mali, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad where DDR programs are planned or ongoing. This is an issue in NE Nigeria, as nationals from Niger, Chad, and Cameroon are included in the OSC caseload. To date, foreign nationals have been vetted on a case-by-case basis. Where a foreign national has relatives in Nigeria, a family visit may be arranged to support reintegration. Prior to repatriation, the Nigeria Ministry of Justice convenes a quasi-judicial panel with each client appearing to denounce past actions and vow never to return to Nigeria. The Nigeria Immigration Service receives client information before handing over the case to the country's embassy who works with Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to facilitate transfer back home.

In NE Nigeria, the case-by-case basis for handling FTFs is working so far, with no rejections of the caseload received by countries in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region. Nigeria's demonstration of political will in the region through diplomatic channels to return and reintegrate former BH-ISWA members to countries of origin through DDRR is important. Even so, this may result in bottlenecks as DDRR goes to scale. A low threshold of foreign nationals in the DDRR caseload should not discount the likelihood that other regions may face much larger caseloads. The best example may be the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region where hundreds of thousands of fighters may require reintegration support. However far from perfect, there is an increasing harmonization of domestic law, compliance with international standards, and donor requirements, including USG policies. For Nigeria, OSC has only handled a small caseload of FTF individuals to date, and as DDR programs expand to other countries and regions, the requirement for returning and reintegrating FTFs at scale suggests a need for harmonization of legal systems and international humanitarian and human rights law to meaningfully address legal issues directly related to FTF reintegration so former VEO members from a country with a DDR program can return to their country of residence.

3. FEMALES, WOMEN, REHABILITATION, AND REINTEGRATION:

Programs from the mid-1980s into the 1990s largely ignored gendered approaches to DDR, which meant women and girls were largely excluded from DDR and reintegration processes. The logic was flawed, though simple. Males were fighting as combatants and were therefore eligible for DDR benefits. Verification methods included the ability to answer questions about commanders and specific battles and the ability to disassemble and assemble a gun. This excluded associated members of armed groups, usually women and girls, who served as porters, wives, sex slaves, spies, and other roles. In 2000 the UN released the Brahimi Report linking security and development and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda calling for the inclusion of women in rehabilitation, reintegration, and DDR processes. The first robust efforts to include women and girls in DDR planning and programs took place in Africa's Mano River junction and Great Lakes regions. Efforts to include women and girls in DDR processes have appeared in UN policy guidance ever since.

DDRR in NE Nigeria offers new and fresh insights into the role females play in the reintegration process of former BH-ISWA members and affiliates. Underscoring the importance of continued adherence to

²⁶ Laine, 2017. Pages 22-24, 28-29.

the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, gender analysis of the data shows how male and female community members are affected differently by knowledge of the DDDR process. Being informed about the DDDR process and supporting reintegration is positive for both males and females; however, this correlation was stronger for females than their male counterparts. Conversely, while still positive, a lack of knowledge of DDDR was strongly correlated with less support of reintegration for males, though this correlation was much weaker for females. This indicates that women are a potentially catalytic voice for DDDR.

There is anecdotal evidence of this being true in other cases like Somalia, where wives followed husbands who joined AS, and husbands followed wives who left the group.²⁷ It is important that the influence of women be clearly understood as their roles and agencies vary from case to case. For example, in NE Nigeria, 96% of the OSC caseload is married. The Somalia example would indicate that strengthening the role of wives would lead to reintegration efficacy in Nigeria; however, surveys show that 44% of respondents indicated they are primarily influenced by their mothers, with only 15% citing their wives. In this regard, the situation in Nigeria is more like Sudan where the UN partnered with the National Commission for Counter Terrorism and other line ministries to train mothers in early warning and P/CVE intervention techniques for disengagement, rehabilitation, and reintegration.²⁸

Globally, there is a continuing need to engage women in DDR both at the community level and as clients. In NE Nigeria women face a dichotomy: after being captured in military sweeps they are often screened and categorized as ‘*low risk*’ and therefore released directly back into communities. This poses significant challenges, as being caught in a military BH-ISWA clearing operation automatically stigmatizes women with the taint of ‘*association*’. While some women have received medical and PSS services by transiting through the Borno State Bulumkutu rehabilitation center, their time at the center is short-lived and current DDDR procedures - as well as limited resources - do not include a system for women to receive the same suite of services offered to OSC graduates. Many women ultimately end up in IDP camps. The direct release of the majority of women denies them the credibility and sense of government ‘*anointment*’ that KII respondents reported is derived from the DDDR program. A study comparing Boko Haram, the Revolutionary United Front, AS, and Lord’s Resistance Army found the methods of recruitment, modes of release, roles in the group and communities’ perception of DDR returnees are not fundamentally different for women and males between these groups; therefore, the denial of reintegration support to them contravenes international norms and the UN Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.²⁹

²⁷ This sentiment was expressed by women during FGDs in Baidoa and Kismayo in Somalia during an evaluation of the ‘National Programme for the Treatment and Handling of Disengaged Combatants in Somalia’ in 2017.

²⁸ United Nations Development Programme, 2017. Pages 5, 8-10.

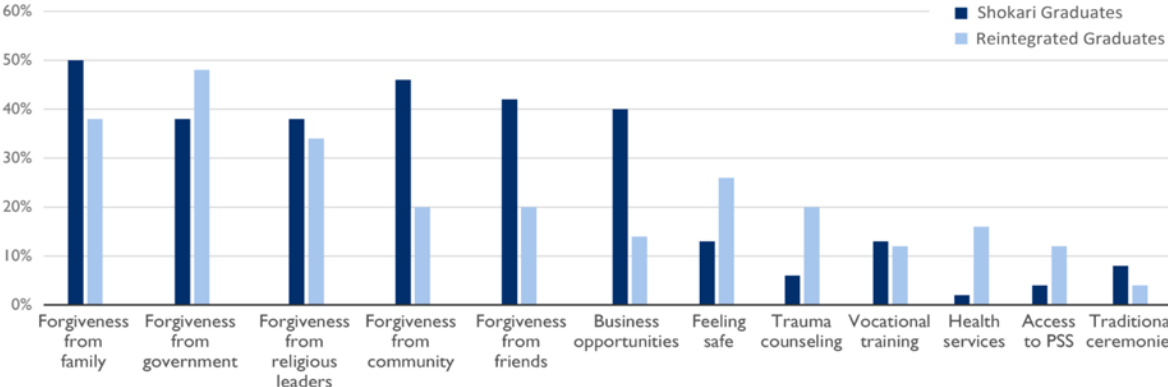
²⁹ Piedmont, Dean and Belli, Gabrielle, 2018. Pages 229-230, 235.

THE TRANSACTIONAL NATURE AND NECESSITY OF DDR

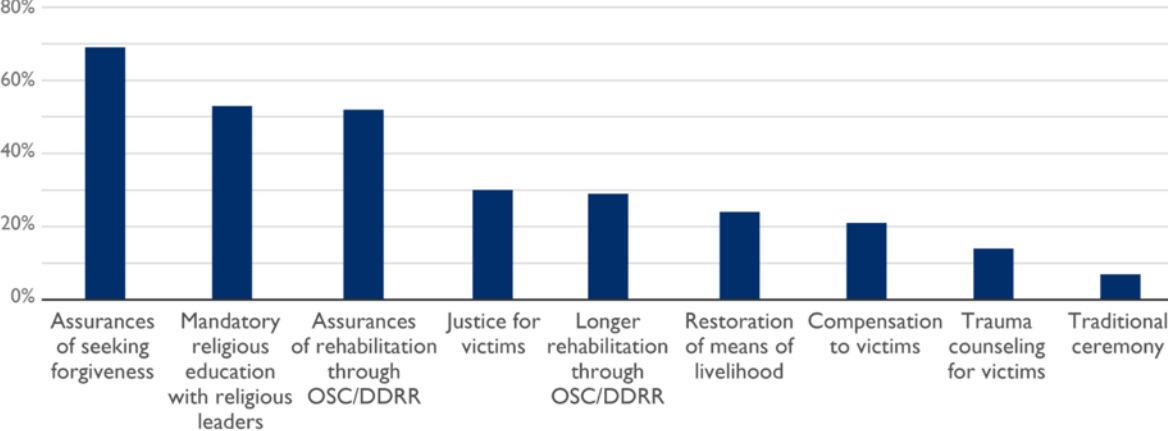
One KII interviewee noted there is no “codified program, method or template in place for reintegration and reconciliation.” Activities were described as ad hoc and ‘*transactional*’, with parties ‘bargaining’ for (community) reintegration outcomes. The concern is that short-term gains would not lead to durable stabilization outcomes as “reintegration and reconciliation is about getting out of conflict, not tolerating DDR”. The evaluation team decided this issue is worth taking up as it speaks to the political nature of DDR. On the one hand, reintegration and reconciliation is about positive peace; on the other, DDR is a time bound strategy with specific operational and program objectives. It is not a peacebuilding ‘panacea’.

The data shows an interesting dichotomy between the role forgiveness plays in reintegration and the perception that DDRR ‘rewards’ perpetrators. The Gwoza District Head, a member of the Gwoza SCP and strong advocate of DDRR remarked that, “The community looks at this as if the ex-combatants have been given the upper hand,” and repeatedly asked for additional livelihood and PSS support for other members of his community. A frequent request from communities was that they be given the same support as OSC graduates. This prompted our partners to try to balance the scales by providing tangible benefits to communities receiving OSC graduates.

When you think of what it means to be reintegrated into your community after going through the process of DDR, which of the following elements would you say are the most important?



When you think of what it means for former affiliates to reintegrate into your community after going through the process of DDRR, which of the following would you say are the most important?



At the same time, community members consider forgiveness to be the most important condition for successful reintegration. **Cited by 69% of community members, assurances of seeking forgiveness was listed as the most important condition for reintegration, despite the fact that just over 50% somewhat or strongly agree that DDRR benefits perpetrators rather than victims.** Similarly for OSC graduates, being forgiven was the most important element for successfully reintegrating. While a majority of OSC graduates expect communities to strongly agree that DDR benefits perpetrators not victims, with 87% strongly or somewhat agreeing that communities will not welcome them after DDR; however, the data revealed that most community members support reintegration. This perception, that DDR rewards the perpetrator, is not unique to Nigeria. In the early 2000s, DDRs shifted from the 'Liberation Struggles' in Southern Africa to predatory civil conflicts across west and central Africa, ushering in a new need for community-based reintegration approaches.

These dynamics demonstrate that elements of DDR have always been transactional. Developing policies and programs where former fighter and community member ratios are included in projects is a simple example. Another is the trade-off between individual DDR benefits and community projects, common to most DDR programs. Our partner's stated goal is to support twice as many community members as OSC graduates. This speaks to the conditionality of a DDR process. Arguably, DDRs are entered into voluntarily. It follows that a community's decision to accept back former VEO members and affiliates is also voluntary. Although frequently overlooked in policy discussions, program activities that include community based reintegration approaches recognize the transactional component of DDR, as the client and community enter the relationship voluntarily based on a set of agreed negotiated conditions.

Equally important are considerations of local customs and cultural norms. This is also not new, and often expressed through activities like use of 'traditional cleansing ceremonies'. The evaluation concluded that traditional ceremonies play a very limited role in NE Nigeria. This should not preclude the use of traditional ceremonies as an activity in a DDR program, though it should inform how they are prioritized and what they can achieve. Moving forward, it will be more effective to understand how a local culture mediates and negotiates solutions that may 'appear' transactional and account for those in policy frameworks and program activities. In societies where bargaining and mediation is the norm, local customs may dictate negotiating DDR and reintegration solutions and conditions.

Finally, the historic function that a peace agreement serves in negotiating terms for DDR is largely inapplicable for VEOs, and certainly not relevant in NE Nigeria where conflict is ongoing. The terms laid out in a peace agreement for traditional DDR were largely transactional insofar as they are part of a negotiated settlement. These occurred without the consultation of local communities. A model for DDRs during an active insurgency can include terms settled with communities on the types, levels, and conditions for reintegration of former fighters and affiliates. This deserves further study and may prove to be an innovative way to ensure reintegration becomes a bridge to reconciliation.

GOING TO SCALE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

A 2015 USAID fact finding mission on CVE in NE Nigeria highlighted the relevance of demobilization, post release reintegration, and detainee issues. Findings and recommendations suggested CVE and defections programs should become a national priority comprehensively addressed through “legal, institutional frameworks, and harmonized national policies and strategies.”³⁰ At the time, GoN policies and institutions did not accurately reflect the degree of risk represented by VEOs, as ONSA and the Vice President’s Office competed over this space. A system for DDRR began a year later in 2016 when OSC was established. Officially ONSA is responsible for overseeing Nigeria’s DDRR efforts; however, in practice, the military is in the driver’s seat. There are questions about the extent to which success of DDRR depends on a fortunate alignment of current circumstances and certain personalities - notably, Major General Shafa serving as the head of OSC and a powerful advocate for the program since its inception. The program’s **continued success may be overdependent on the will of personalities with long-term success and ‘going to scale’ requiring a continuation of political will by national and state level administrations, that translates into institutionalization of processes and procedures for DDRR.**

Two fault lines are exposed in this dynamic. One is the lack of uniform implementation of the National DDRR Action Plan, and the other is limited coordination across sectors. Since the National DDRR Action Plan adoption in 2018, three cohorts of former BH-ISWA affiliates have successfully graduated from the OSC program. This indicates that pipelines are flowing from screening to rehabilitation; however, there are gaps between OSC graduation and reintegration back to communities (see “The time in transition centers is prolonged” sub-section). With approximately 850 total graduates since 2016, an average of 200 clients per year reintegrate through OSC, the largest cohort to date, 601 clients, entered the program in late 2019 and started reintegrating into communities a year later. This shows that 70% of the caseload was serviced in the last year. **With potentially thousands of VEO affiliates in need of OSC support, taking DDRR to scale in NE Nigeria will be a major challenge.** With a maximum capacity of 700 persons, the camp in Gombe has limited capacity to accommodate more clients. Staffing levels at Gombe, Bulumkutu, and Shokari are inadequate to support caseload surges. Individual case management is incredibly labor intensive. Our partner will struggle to keep up with increasing numbers, especially with the growing need to track and support graduates once released - an increasing challenge - and especially since our partner relies on donor funds that may not last. The GoN does not currently demonstrate the capacity to manage the existing caseload, much less a scaled-up one.

Through USAID/OTI, the USG has invested considerable resources in NE Nigeria to understand the DDRR pipeline and identify operational bottlenecks that would impede DDRR at scale. Although in 2019 our partner started working with the Joint Investigation Center (JIC) in Giwa Barracks to improve screening, collection, and storing of investigative data, there is still little visibility into the details of the Nigerian military’s screening processes including how OSC assigns BH-ISWA members and affiliates into ‘high’ and ‘low’ risk categories. High-risk candidates are referred to Giwa for prosecution, and low-risk transferred to OSC for rehabilitation. However, vetting is conducted on a case-by-case basis with a ‘middle risk’ category created for (young) men whose status is not as easily determined and therefore subject to prolonged detainment pending prosecution through the criminal justice system (CJS). There are cases when the GoN has suggested these individuals be sent to OSC upon release based on the fear

³⁰ United States Agency for International Development, 2015. Page 7.

these persons became ‘radicalized’ while detained. The lack of the CJS capacity to prosecute and the limited capacities of ministries to administer rehabilitative services could result in a default loop back to OSC, creating a bottleneck for DDDR. This dynamic persists, as a 2020 KII interviewee noted there have been no BH-ISWA prosecutions since 2018. The first instance shows the need for an institutional framework and adherence to a plan of action, and the second, the need to coordinate across sectors. Minimal requirements for DDDR should include the security sector through the Ministry of Interior and Defense, Department of State Services, CJS and CJTF, and on the civilian side, the Ministry of Education and Youth Development, and the North East Development Commission (NEDC) with others mandated to address agricultural and livelihoods needs.

ON CIVILIAN-MILITARY COORDINATION

Civilian-military coordination (CivMil) is necessary in DDR. As a matter of global policy, DDR is led by the civil sector, though requires support from the security sector. The emergence of detention centers put a strain on CivMil coordination for DDR. The role of detention centers in DDR started with the now infamous Serendi Camp in Somalia. The NE Nigeria equivalent is the Giwa Barracks. Detention centers emerged as DDR caseloads were increasingly drawn from VEO defectors. This happened because DDR was being planned and implemented during insurgencies rather than through a post-conflict peace agreement. This widened the caseload from a non-state armed group that signed into a peace agreement to persons ‘captured’ during a military operation, those surrendering, turning themselves into government forces, etc. In NE Nigeria the military conducted operations and ‘commissioned’ the CJTF to capture and turn over suspected BH-ISWA to the military. The framing of defector issues was straightforward; security sector actors like the military and intelligence services perceived suspected VEO members as ‘terrorists’ who had taken up arms against the State. They represented an exigent national security threat; thus, their detention was a matter of national security. The international community and civil society countered with the weight of international law; detainees had rights that were violated when subject to prolonged detention. This widened a divide in CivMil coordination.

The USAID 2015 fact finding mission reported there were three security actors affecting the environment in NE Nigeria, namely, BH, the GoN military, and CJTF. All three were accused of human rights violations and all three may have influenced rates of defections.³¹ Community members faced a personal security dilemma - side with the VEO and the CJTF, and the military would come after you. Refuse to side with the VEO, and risk retribution and death. Aligning with any of these actors did not guarantee immunity from human rights violations. The significant roles of the military and the CJTF, a quasi community defense force, demonstrates the complexity of CivMil issues in DDDR. This is especially true as the CJTF now supports OSC during family visits during rehabilitation.

An important element in CivMil relations in DDR initiatives generally, and OSC specifically, is accountability, as civil society has a role to play in ensuring adherence to human rights standards. In NE Nigeria, the lack of an overall DDDR strategy was reflected in the lack of CivMil coordination through a coherent institutional framework.³² Arguably, an example that affected USG interests was the Nigerian military 7th Division being named in several reports as perpetrating human rights abuses at Giwa Barracks. This placed limits on USG support as the Leahy Law requires prior vetting to ensure prospective assistance recipients have not engaged in human rights violations. The shift in OSC’s approach from a CT to a human based approach to DDDR may be best exemplified by increased coordination with the MoWSD, inclusion of the CJTF in community and family visits to OSC clients, and increasing acknowledgment that a majority of the OSC caseload was coerced to join BH-ISWA. The shift towards a human security driven approach and inclusion of the CJTF in rehabilitation appears to be increasing the credibility of the DDDR program. In KIs and surveys, ICG and OSC graduates equated a DDDR certificate with a GoN ‘anointment’. In short, Giwa Barracks is a liability, as are other detention centers used in DDR programs.

³¹ United States Agency for International Development, 2015. Pages 1-2.

³² Ibid. Pages 4, 6.

INTERNATIONAL DONOR COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Surprisingly, GoN officials (including ONSA, Defense, and Borno state officials) consistently expressed that while international donor support is appreciated and they prefer it continues, the government can take on DDDR efforts even if donor support were to end. This is confirmed by international donors, who note financial resources exist to support OSC as the military and other ministries already contribute significant sums, with strong GoN political will to see the program continue. Staff from our partner estimate that its support makes up no more than a quarter of the total DDDR budget. As international support for OSC was only initiated after the military established the rehabilitation center in Gombe and requested support, it is notable that DDDR in NE Nigeria truly is nationally driven and would continue in some form or another without support. Even so, the continued support of OSC through GoN military budget expenditures poses several concerns.

Programmatically and operationally, funding may continue to sustain rehabilitation in transition centers without equitable resources and attention made for reintegration and reconciliation in communities (this is largely managed by our partner). This has been a shortcoming for DDDR in NE Nigeria since 2015 and often plagues DDR globally. Another concern is that OSC remains a militarily-driven program even though ONSA is the lead agency. These issues will significantly impede OSC's capacity to effectively go to scale. Continued funding of OSC through the GoN military expenditures will likely further stress community absorption capacity to reintegrate DDDR beneficiaries. Should the insurgency continue, this will constrain reconciliation processes and degrade overall DDDR efficacy. Even worse, the possibility of increased military operations with BH-ISWA entrenching themselves in communities presents a greater risk for increased human rights violations by the military and the unintentional release of hardline (former) fighters back to communities.

International support for DDDR activities started in 2016, yet the first donor meeting did not take place until mid-2017, with another in early 2018. In the same year it was suggested that DDDR stakeholders increase donor coordination around reintegration. Donor coordination has always been a challenge as DDR is often planned sequentially despite lessons learned and best practices that are over a decade old.³³ As USAID/OTI concluded its support to our partners at the end of 2020, the European Commission only recently approved the Support for Reconciliation and Reintegration of Former Armed Non-State Combatants and Boko Haram Associates (S2R) as a three-year intervention, underscoring how long it can take for international funding to substantially come online, a historic trend. Intended to be implemented by INGOs, UNDP, and UNICEF, one could argue S2R is timely; however, evaluation findings point to a persisting gap in reintegration and reconciliation support that may widen. While a recommendation for increased donor coordination is almost standard in DDR reports, it should not be overlooked that DDDR is succeeding in Nigeria, the GoN is demonstrating requisite political will, and the international donor community has developed a clearer understanding of constraints in support to VEOs.

³³ United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2010. Pages 28, 39.

ON REINTEGRATION AND RECONCILIATION

Reintegration is the most important and most difficult aspect of a DDR program. In the case of NE Nigeria, we add reconciliation. One of the key lessons learned from the High-Level Expert Consultation convened by Creative and the Stimson Center is that ‘*All Roads Lead to Reintegration*.’³⁴ Most older DDRs masked reinsertion as reintegration. Reinsertion included VT, business development, and related skills training that typically took place in communities after demobilizing. Without a clear definition for reintegration beyond its role within a county’s long-term development process, previous DDRs simply measured the success of reintegration by focusing on reinsertion outputs like the number of VT and business development graduates, kits distributed, and former fighters back in communities. This also highlights a prior tendency to look towards socio-economic aspects of DDR at the expense of social and psychosocial elements. Lastly, the tendency to plan for DDRs sequentially – Disarmament, followed by Demobilization, then Reintegration, staggers reintegration support vis-à-vis resource mobilization, preparing communities, and so on. The DDDR in NE Nigeria departs from this model by emphasizing PSS and VT from the start through services at the OSC camp in Gombe and continuing in the transition centers. Once reintegrated in a community, graduates continue to receive business development and PSS support, while VT ends. This is a welcome change that should be considered for other DDR efforts with VEO caseloads and active insurgencies. This is a pragmatic and effective innovation for our partner and OSC that should be continued and replicated.

Nevertheless, as noted in the above sections on CivMil and donor coordination, DDDR repeats historic shortcomings in reintegration planning. Reinforcing this trend, GoN and international community support to reintegration and reconciliation has been lackluster. This said, the lessons learned in DDDR that support increased attention to PSS are considerable. This does not discount the value of VT but rather provides an opportunity for equity in PSS with VT and offers metrics for reintegration effectiveness. Reintegrated graduates report their businesses are patronized, and they are involved in community activities.

Findings in this USAID-funded study represent the most widely gathered and analyzed datasets for Nigeria DDDR to date. Amnesty International’s (AI’s) 2020 report ‘We Dried Our Tears’ was among the most critical reports on the OSC program reviewed in the desk research for this paper. While the report acknowledges significantly better conditions at Gombe Camp compared with the Giwa detention facility, and rightfully notes prolonged periods in transition facilities after OSC graduation, the report’s framing of VT, religious instruction, and other rehabilitation activities as an undesirable requirement does not align with the larger data set surveyed for this study. Notwithstanding the allegation of inadequate food, healthcare, and dangerous VT, most issues taken up in the report concern OSC operating unlawful detention centers without the benefit of judicial proceedings.³⁵ This study does not take issue with these assertions, as these were not studied in detail; however, statements like: “For most people there, Safe Corridor is another stage in their prolonged, unlawful detention, even if the facility has better conditions”³⁶ do not accurately reflect experiences of OSC graduates surveyed in this study who reported considerable benefits from OSC as illustrated in the graph below. Additionally, the report’s assertion that family visits are rare³⁷ discounts their benefit to communities and the importance that stakeholders place on these visits in preparing the ground for reintegration as discussed extensively

³⁴ Creative Associates, 2020. Page 5.

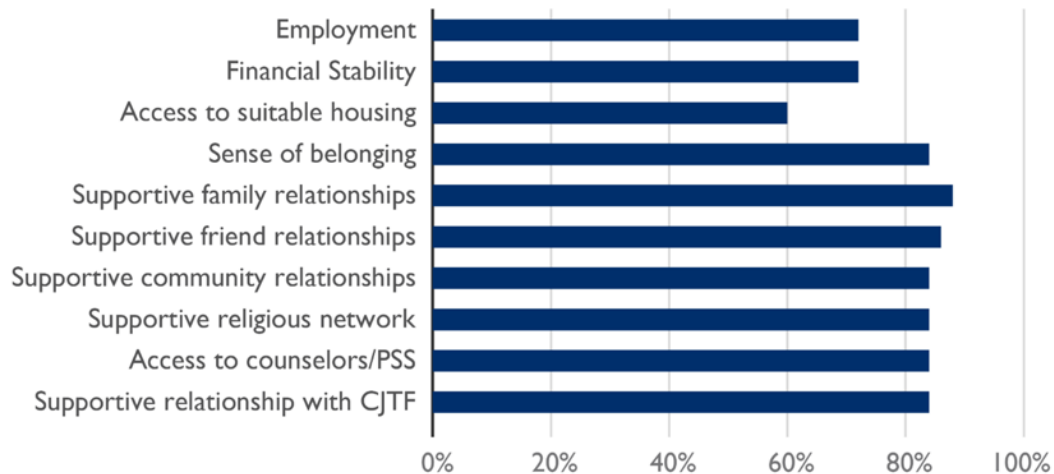
³⁵ Amnesty International, pages 55-57.

³⁶ Ibid. Page 56.

³⁷ Ibid. Page 59.

in this report; of additional note, family visits were a new addition to the reintegration phase and have not occurred in all iterations of the OSC program from the start.

Which of these elements do you think have been achieved in your case?



As previously noted, 67% of graduates surveyed said they thought community members would strongly agree that DDDR beneficiaries are dangerous despite graduating from OSC, a stark contrast to the 72% who feel at least somewhat accepted by their communities. This may indicate that feeling forgiven by friends, family, religious leaders, and community leaders does not necessarily translate to feeling forgiven by the community at large. With 21% of community members strongly agreeing that DDDR beneficiaries are dangerous and should not be accepted, **there are clear indications that graduates are perceived more positively than they think.** This data provides a critical inflection point as studies show that how they think they are viewed by others influences their behavior more than their own attitudes.^{38,39,40} Therefore, it is likely that the reintegration experience of graduates is unduly influenced by this inaccurate perception, which could easily be corrected. In other words, **our ability to close the gap between DDDR clients’ perception of what community members think of them and what the community actually thinks is a bridge from reintegration-to-reconciliation.** Failure to do so may put at risk reintegration gains and increase chances of recidivism.

Reinforcing the ‘*perception vs. actual gap*’, the data shows similar experiences of graduates and community members who feel initial distrust about the return of OSC graduates, followed by feelings of comfort and acceptance. As one male community member put it, “these ones coming in, it is another round of fear for us, til we also live with them, know their character, and see if we can feel safe and trust them.” Another female community member confirms this sentiment, noting,

³⁸ Lees, J. and Cikara, M. Inaccurate group meta-perceptions drive negative out-group attributions in competitive contexts. *Nature Human Behavior*. 4(3). 1-8. 2020

³⁹ Berg, S. et al. Exaggerated meta-perceptions predict intergroup hostility between American political partisans. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 117(26). 2020

⁴⁰ Bruneau, E. and Kteily, N. They see us as less than human: Meta-dehumanization predicts intergroup conflict via reciprocal dehumanization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 110(3) 343-370. 2016

“For the ones that just reintegrated into the community, we cannot trust them yet because we do not really know them. For those that have been with us now for many months, we have interacted with them, we know them, and we are friends with them because they are no longer violent.”

This pattern is likely to be followed with each new batch of reintegrees. Critically, KII and FGD respondents note that there has been no increase in violence since graduates returned, with 78% of community survey respondents in Maiduguri and 57% in Konduga feeling either safer or the same level of safety since the return of graduates. Overall, the data about the post-release experiences of OSC graduates and the communities in which they have been reintegrated indicate that, so far, clients are successfully reintegrating.

Challenges with the initial rejection of several OSC graduates in Gwoza in 2018 led to improvements in community preparation and sensitization activities. OSC and Borno state representatives have taken to television to raise awareness about OSC and advocate for community acceptance with radio shows like Dandal Kura. OSC has hosted dialogues with community leaders in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa to discuss reintegration and reconciliation, and the Borno MoWASD Commissioner regularly travels to communities and hosts meetings with Local Government Area chairmen to provide updates on OSC’s reintegration process. Community stakeholders now visit the OSC camp in Gombe to assist with screening and develop familiarity and comfort with the program. These efforts are all significant advances; however, reintegration and reconciliation efforts by the GoN and OSC are still minimal and *ad hoc* relative to center-based rehabilitation activities. OSC staff insist they are only responsible for preparing for reintegration and not for reconciliation itself. The focus has been on getting OSC up and running without extensive planning for reintegration and reconciliation activities.

There are lessons to be drawn on VEO reintegration and reconciliation that should be harvested for other DDR efforts. The over emphasis on pre-release activities, with minimal attention to post return reintegration and reconciliation is a dynamic that hampered older DDR programs and may do so in NE Nigeria. There should be equitable resources allocated for post return reintegration, including necessary skills transference to local actors, institutions, and communities for reintegration and reconciliation. The EU-funded S2R consortium project is belated, albeit welcome. The immediate impact on DDDR is a dearth of skills transference to local actors, institutions, and communities necessary for reintegration and reconciliation. OSC’s indications that it can fund aspects of DDDR will reinforce the military driving reintegration with continued emphasis on center-based activities like rehabilitation, training, family visits, and tracing activities, all of which are essential, though take place before a graduate actually returns to a community. DDDR stakeholders should consider the implications if BH-ISWA is seriously degraded. Defections along with the DDDR caseload may dramatically increase. These will further stretch OSC and other actors, while placing even more stress on communities accepting OSC clients. This has the potential to derail initial gains in the DDDR process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. USAID/OTI should consider a dedicated research and learning agenda for DDR: The reports generated under this evaluation only scratch the surface. The amount of raw data available to USAID/OTI positions the USG to develop policies, programs, and approaches previously unavailable that can impact the Sahel, LCB, West Africa, MENA and beyond. To do so, human, financial, and institutional resources need to be committed to this effort. The evaluation team could be extended to extract and develop a 5-page paper on research topics for 2021.

2. Work with partners and regional actors towards a legal framework on FTF issues. The USG should lead a process that can result in harmonizing legal systems where DDR and cross-border reintegration will occur. The successes in DDR under OSC with USG support are considerable. Advances addressing DTOs in the Lake Chad Basin region can be catalytic for global DDR. Through OSC, the GoN has already transferred several BH-ISWA suspects to their country of citizenship through diplomatic channels. This process will be streamlined if countries harmonize legal regimes so that DDRs taking place across national borders can process the large number of cases. Minimally, this will be relevant in MENA, the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.

3. Work with the GoN, international partners and OSC to figure out what “going to scale” means. The evaluation underpins several problems that may arise because of an increasing OSC caseload. With forecasted numbers, decisions can be made about expansion of DDRR in terms of time, human and financial resource requirements. The international community should consider an unprecedented step to keep DDRR ongoing until such time as the insurgency ends. It would be unfortunate to close DDRR while it is succeeding.

4. Develop a model for post community-driven reintegration and reconciliation follow-up: As DDRR ‘goes to scale’, pre-release resources will be stretched, outstripping the needs for individual case management in post reinsertion phases of reintegration and reconciliation. To address this, communities should be trained to track, monitor, and treat OSC reintegrees. Consideration should be given for a larger role for NEDC that integrates single systems strengthening and multi-systems collaboration under an institutional framework for DDRR and/or the DDRR Action Plan.

5. Focus on building the capacity of the GoN to take on reintegration and reconciliation activities. OSC staff run the rehabilitation program in Gombe Camp relatively smoothly with all stakeholders agreeing it would continue even without donor support. However, reintegration and reconciliation planning -- which has been largely left to our partner to implement -- are staggered and *ad hoc*. More focus on increasing the capacity of state agencies like Borno’s MoWASD so they can deliver services on their own is needed.

6. Increase defection campaigns for BH-ISWA affiliates that highlight OSC as a way out. The latest data shows 33% of affiliates who know about OSC cite this knowledge as a main reason for disengaging. As knowledge about the program is spreading through radio and by word of mouth, that percentage is increasing.

7. The GoN should reduce its reliance on Giwa. The USG should advocate for the decreased use of detention centers, while CivMil coordination should continue with training provided to OSC personnel in Human Rights, the Rule of Law, and International Humanitarian Law (IHL). These trainings should be expanded to the CJTF given their roles as critical stakeholders in family visits in the DDRR program and within communities where reintegration is taking place.

8. Continue to advance innovations in PSS. OSC and our partner re-positioned VT and PSS in DDR that is fit for purpose. DDRR presents a long sought-after opportunity to develop an evidence-based approach to PSS that includes metrics linked to reintegration. These practices should be replicated elsewhere.

9. Expand access to OSC benefits for women and girls. The credibility accompanying DDRR shows that when women are caught in military sweeps they should not be directly released to communities (or IDP camps) without benefits conferred by OSC due to the stigma they endure and the potential to exacerbate risks of VE support as a result of continued marginalization. Women and females should be offered equitable access to OSC services as their male counterparts.

CONCLUSION

The violence, insecurity, and ongoing insurgency in NE Nigeria by BH-ISWA has resulted in the GoN's decades-long engagement in military operations to defeat the group. This has included military sweeps resulting in the capture and detention of thousands of suspected BH-ISWA members that created a need for DDRR. Under OSC 853, former members and affiliates of the VEO have undergone rehabilitation and reintegration. While the GoN's enactment of the national DDRR Action Plan served to provide a framework that birthed Nigeria's DDRR system, the lack of its systematic implementation accompanies the many challenges that remain with coordination of responsibilities and clarity of roles for each of the ministries, departments, and agencies involved. . At the same time, most DDRR program participants to date were coerced into joining BH-ISWA, which likely eases the DDRR process, but this may change when 'hardliners' enter the process. A positive result has been the military, now the de-facto leader of OSC, adopting a '*reintegration with dignity*' approach. With our partner as the technical lead, OSC has made considerable strides operationally, programmatically, and reputationally. Largely driven by key personalities in leadership roles, increased institutional coherence, including CivMil, will increase the ability of DDRR to go to scale.

In NE Nigeria where conflict is ongoing, the DDRR process will need to continue for years to have its intended impact. To date there is one known case of recidivism and no cases of retribution against former VEO members and affiliates. There is consensus among all stakeholders that graduates from OSC have a role to play in P/CVE and reintegration, with communities largely accepting of individuals returning after graduation from OSC. Even so, the process is fragile, with the possibility that hard earned gains can be lost. Former members and affiliates remain in contact with their former comrades still associated with VEOs, and while there are variations between persons who joined voluntarily and those coerced, OSC graduates who score higher in relative deprivation and competitive victimhood point to a potential risk of recidivism. Additionally, women and females are largely sidelined from DDRR; their release following short periods of stay with the military after being captured results in stigmatization. This could be allayed with access to OSC rehabilitation and reintegration, however; appropriate resources have not been allocated to make this possible. Further, family visits, which are well received, underutilize mothers as agents and advocates for DDRR and post release (community) reintegration.

Among the most effective aspects of the OSC DDRR program is the PSS component, which teaches graduates patience, how to live peaceably, and abide by common rules of society. The emphasis on PSS is an innovation critical to the effectiveness of other services. Communities and OSC clients place a premium on PSS. Importantly, the DDRR program in NE Nigeria and our partner's approach de-emphasizing VT as a panacea creates a long-needed equity in services and pathways to measure psychosocial outcomes. This is a long-awaited innovation for DDR programs globally that should be replicated. Relatedly, when asked which factors are important to prevent people from rejoining VEOs, a supportive community, family and friend relationships, a supportive religious network, access to counselors, suitable housing, employment, financial stability, and a sense of belonging are all referenced. While these are not surprising, the ranking and data disaggregation this report outlines offers fresh insights for program managers and policymakers. Considerable data is also collected on voluntary versus forced recruitment, public information, and defections. The wealth of data gathered for this report should be used to inform a robust, well-funded research agenda toward additional findings.

As DDR programs gain traction as the preferred avenue for rehabilitation and reintegration from VEOs, there is both a necessity and opportunity to address adherence to, and implementation of, institutional

policies governing DDR along with further understanding and harmonizing legal frameworks. Speaking to the latter – the USG, international community, and GoN have made impressive strides working in environments that support the rehabilitation and reintegration where DTOs and FTFs dot the conflict landscape. Efforts to return OSC graduates to countries where they are third-party nationals is conducted through diplomatic channels, which may not be as effective at scale. In tandem, advances in program activities, international donor coordination, and reintegration of former VEO members where certain factual issues are present could be better captured for lessons and replication elsewhere. It is suggested the USG lead research and policy agenda that widen legal apertures supporting DDRs, advocate for increased human rights and IHL training, alongside decreasing reliance on detention centers.

Regarding institutional coordination, the fact the civilian-led ONSA has the DDDR mandate with the military holding the *de-facto* lead has limitations. Implementation of the National DDDR Action Plan by OSC would increase coherence planning across sectors, including CivMil coordination. An area where the DDDR program remains overly militarized includes the opaqueness around vetting and suspected BH-ISWA categorization; this threatens to undermine the reputational credibility achieved by OSC nationally and invites continued international criticism around prolonged detention which could endanger future donor funding. Other risks include bottlenecks that prevent DDDR from going to scale as the criminal justice system still lacks the capacity to screen and prosecute existing caseloads, the military and CJTF face increased risks of human rights abuses when BH-ISWA hardliners are addressed, DDDR funding remains overly reliant on the GoN military budget, and post release community reintegration continually falls to the wayside.

Findings that point to a gap in reintegration and reconciliation funding are not inconsequential. International donor funding remains subject to competing and shifting priorities, lapses in funding, and uncertain timing. Though DDDR would continue in NE Nigeria in some form if donor support ceased, it would likely be from military budgets amplifying support to Gombe (since the military operates the camp) but lacking in support to reintegration (as this falls on civilians agencies/the state governments to manage). This may be the largest deficit for both OSC and the international community. The DDDR effort in NE Nigeria is truly a nationally-owned process that benefits from international community support. While there are several different definitions of reintegration, they all share some similar attributes, namely that reintegration is a national-owned, long-term development process that often requires external assistance. Increased donor coordination and sustained support is warranted.

There are lessons to be drawn on VEO reintegration and reconciliation that can be harvested for DDR globally. **The over emphasis on pre-release activities and minimal attention to community reintegration and reconciliation is an historic weakness repeating itself in NE Nigeria.** The GoN funded effort, focused on center-based activities like rehabilitation, training, family visits, and tracing activities, offers many of the essential elements, but these take place prior to community returns. There should be equitable resources for reintegration once graduates are reinserted in communities. DDDR stakeholders should also consider the implications if BH-ISWA is seriously degraded. The caseload may dramatically increase, further stretching OSC and other actors; hardliners may need to enter the program, placing more stress on communities. This can undermine initial gains achieved through USG and other donor investments in OSC with a lasting impact on Nigeria and the region. As already stated in this report, the gains made in achieving a successful DDDR program are to be commended; however, the future of OSC hangs in the balance if the challenges and shortcomings are not meaningfully addressed.

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ANNEX I: METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY & SAMPLING

The evaluation was conducted in three phases. The first phase consisted of an extensive desk of OTI's Activity Database, monthly & quarterly reports, progress reports, cables, work plans, workshop notes, external reports, memos, and previous surveys and evaluations. To determine which documents to include in the desk review, an evaluation matrix was created outlining the initial evaluation questions and which available documents corresponded to those questions. In total 154 documents were included in the desk review, in addition to an analysis of data from over 30 OTI activities from the database. Through the desk review, the evaluation framework was refined, which sought to map information in these documents against the evaluation questions.

The second phase consisted of 19 remote KIIs and 5 remote FGDs with key government stakeholders (both Nigeria and donor government), as well as OSC implementing staff (including partner agencies). These KIIs were conducted by the core evaluation team in August 2020.

The third phase consisted of field-based research in Nigeria carried out by ORB International on both OSC graduates and community members in the communities of return. For the OSC graduates, the research included a combination of reintegrated graduates ($n=50$) and graduates who had completed their time at OSC and were being held in the Shokari transit center awaiting their reintegration ($n=52$). In addition, 10 KIIs and 2 FGDs were conducted with OSC graduates. For the Shokari graduates, a simple random sampling approach was used to select 50 graduates from a batch of 300. Sampling was based off of the unique ID codes allotted to each graduate. For the reintegrated graduates, purposive sampling was utilized.

For the communities of return, research was conducted in four key reintegration locations; Maiduguri, Konduga, Mafa and Jere, as well as in Gombe Camp. In total, 439 surveys, 14 KIIs and 6 FGDs were conducted. ORB employed probability sampling in which every eligible individual in the selected communities has a calculable and non-zero chance of being selected for interview. PSUs, classified as primary and secondary enumeration areas (EA) according to the most recent Nigerian census, were drawn randomly at the municipal level. No weights were applied to the final dataset.

For both the qualitative and quantitative tools, an outcomes focused approach was used for designing the questions, which sought to identify what changes the participant had observed in their community, and then working backwards to identify what they thought contributed to that change. The languages of the interviews and surveys were Hausa and Kanuri, which were later transcribed and translated into English for the analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The FGDs, KIIs and surveys used perceptions- based approach to research to measure both attitudes and perceptions. The surveys were close- ended and measured attitudes and perceptions via quantitative measurements, while the FGDs and KIIs measured attitudes and perceptions via semi-structured questions and these results were qualitative in nature.

All KII and FGD notes were coded manually by the researchers for qualitative data analysis to identify common themes expressed in the responses of the participants. The researcher also quantified the

instances of respondents' mentions of issues for certain sections of the questionnaires and surveys, and created infographics for use in this report. For these metrics, the unit of analysis was the number of mentions of a specified topic across all the interviews, questionnaires, and surveys.

Evaluating DDR and interventions aimed at CVE are notoriously difficult for several reasons. First, the challenges inherent in measuring the negative, and proving that recidivism, violent activity, or radicalization towards VE would have otherwise occurred had there not been an intervention, make causality extremely challenging to demonstrate. Second, the highly sensitive nature of the questions required for this kind of research, which seeks to understand attitudes, perceptions, and behavior towards VEOs and returnees, is known to elicit bias and inaccurate responses. To address these limitations, this evaluation utilized innovative research methodologies empirically proven to produce more accurate and reliable responses around how *professed* attitudes and beliefs may impact *actual* behavior. The first was the use of descriptive norms, which measure how an individual thinks their peers would answer the same question. Multiple conflict studies show descriptive norms are more likely to elicit honest answers that are more likely to influence behavior rather than attitudes. Descriptive norms were asked to graduates and community members and provided valuable insights for this evaluation.

In addition, the evaluation team harvested meta-perceptions to gauge how an individual thinks communities views them. Rather than relying on respondents 'attitudes', meta-perceptions have been shown to better predict how an individual will behave towards an 'out-group' - in this case communities of return.^{41,42,43} Measuring meta-perceptions helped the evaluation team identify gaps between how OSC graduates 'think' they are viewed by community members and how community members 'actually' view them. This provided critical insights into the extent to which community based reintegration and reconciliation is being achieved. The evaluation team was further able to examine conditions and risks related to reintegration for OSC.

Finally, the evaluation team relied on relative deprivation and competitive victimhood. These are methods that have been shown to be correlated with a greater willingness and motivation to support political violence and endorse VEO narratives.^{44,45,46} Relative deprivation refers to the sense that an individual or group is marginalized compared to others in one's society on unjust grounds. Measurements on relative deprivation and competitive victimhood were specifically used to gain insights into the risk of recidivism as these are better predictors of VE support than absolute levels of poverty or unemployment. Taken together, these innovations provide DDR decisionmakers with variables, methods, and indicators to chart DDR, reintegration and reconciliation, and P/CVE at the outcome level.

NIGERIA DDRR EVALUATION LIMITATIONS

A number of limitations from this research are important to note when considering the findings presented.

⁴¹ Lees, J. and Cikara, M. Inaccurate group meta-perceptions drive negative out-group attributions in competitive contexts. *Nature Human Behavior*. 4(3). 1-8. 2020

⁴² Berg, S. et al (2020) Exaggerated meta-perceptions predict intergroup hostility between American political partisans. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 117(26). 2020.

⁴³ Bruneau, E. and Kteily, N. (2016). They see us as less than human: Meta-dehumanization predicts intergroup conflict via reciprocal dehumanization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 110(3) 343-370. 2016.

First, the deteriorating security conditions in NE Nigeria limited the areas where field research could be conducted for OSC graduates. For the community research, the research plan originally sought to select two host communities that had received a significant number of OSC graduates, and one community that was scheduled to receive graduates but currently hosted none (designed for comparative purposes). However, due to road security concerns, the research team was unable to identify an accessible comparison community where no OSC graduates had returned. Instead, the comparison community (Mafa) was in fact a community that was already hosting DDDR beneficiaries, albeit a small number (only 7 in the past two years).

Though the research team hoped to access at least one comparative community, these research challenges were anticipated, and steps were taken to help mitigate their impact. The survey questions for community members included several primers to gauge the level of awareness of DDDR, and specifically reintegration, in their communities. As was expected, a majority of community members were totally unaware of reintegrated beneficiaries in their communities, and had no knowledge of DDDR. These primers allowed us to disaggregate findings into those who *thought* they lived in communities with beneficiaries, and those who didn't.

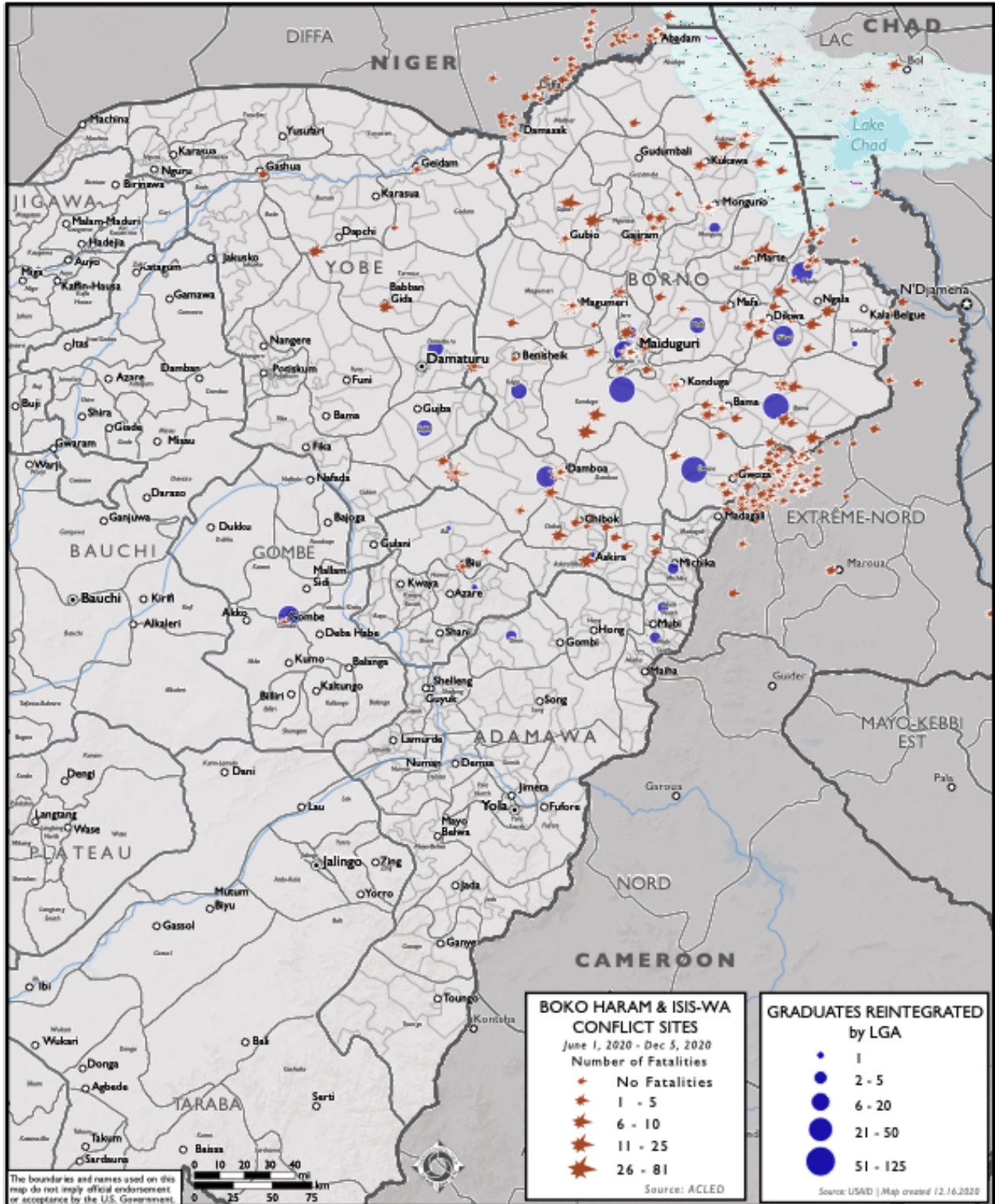
In addition, the fact that the community research was only able to be conducted in areas that were safe enough to access likely resulted in sampling bias, as it is likely that community members in more stable areas feel less threatened by reintegration than community members in areas under the direct line of VEO attacks. While this limitation is important to keep in mind when analyzing the results, it is equally important to note that overall the entire NE region is experiencing a deteriorating security condition, and that even those areas that were accessible were still deemed to be at the frontlines of the insurgency.

Second, the highly sensitive nature of the research questions, which sought to understand attitudes, perceptions, and behavior towards VEOs and returnees, likely resulted in biases in some responses. These limitations are common in conflict research, and the evaluation approach utilized innovative methodologies which have been shown in empirical research to produce more accurate and reliable responses, especially when it is important to understand how *professed* attitudes and beliefs may impact *actual* behavior. The first was the use of descriptive norms, which measure how an individual thinks their peers would answer the same question. Descriptive norms have been shown in multiple conflict studies to be more likely to elicit honest answers, and more likely to influence behavior than attitudes. In addition, meta-perceptions, which gauge how an individual thinks an out-group views them were measured as they have been shown to better predict how an individual will behave towards an out-group than attitudes. Finally, relative deprivation and competitive victimhood, both measurements that have been shown to be correlated with a greater willingness to support political violence and endorse VEO narratives, were measured to provide insights into the risk of recidivism.

ANNEX 3: NORTHEAST NIGERIA CONFLICT MAP



OPERATION SAFE CORRIDOR GRADUATES





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