

Republic of Congo Disabled ex-combatants receive artificial limbs thanks to PNDDR

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In the Republic of Congo, 37 disabled ex-combatants have recently received orthopedic prostheses as part of the implementation of the National Program for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (PNDDR, from the French).

At the National Center of orthopedic equipment of Brazzaville, even before walking on his artificial leg for the very first time, Crépin Mayoumou Mousoua expresses his happiness: *“I feel good, I feel great now, despite the warmth I feel where the prosthesis is attached to my leg... I never would have thought that I would be able to get this artificial leg in my lifetime.”* All prostheses – tibial, femoral and brachial – and ambulatory aids such as shoes, canes and crutches, were made in Brazzaville, after taking measurements of the beneficiaries. Once the ex-combatants receive their artificial limbs or other devices, the center also handles their physical rehabilitation.



Crépin Mayoumou Mousoua being fitted with his new prosthesis

Crépin Mayoumou Mousoua is one of the ex-combatants who received a reinsertion grant from the PNDDR as part of its social and economic reintegration component. With the 200,000 CFA (about \$400) he received, he invested in agriculture, but had difficulties moving about.

Like Crépin, Richie Elodie Mboundou traveled about 200 km. from her hometown of Sibiti to the capital city of Brazzaville which has the best equipped orthopedic center in the country. *“I had to wait a very long while, and it was difficult to find a place to stay here and to move about in the city. But the assistance I received was well worth all the efforts,”* says Mboundou.

She received support from the PNDDR to launch an income generating activity. She explains: *“With the 100,000 CFA I received in the first tranche of my micro project grant, I started a small retail business in Sibiti. I bought my inventory in Pointe-Noire. Thanks to the profits, I was able to purchase a ticket to come to Brazzaville.”*

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It is not an uncommon story. Most ex-combatants who have benefitted from prostheses do not live in the capital. Sometimes neglected by their families, some have had to use their micro project revenues to pay for the trip to Brazzaville.

Pascal Malouono, Director of the National Prosthesis Center, is certain that beneficiaries will be able to walk again. *“It’s such an opportunity for them,”* he says, *“Since these prostheses can cost as high as one million CFA (\$2000) per unit. This is very often too expensive for disabled ex-combatants.”*

The 37 beneficiaries are among 19,000 ex-combatants identified by the implementation unit of the PNDDR from February to May 2007 as part of the socioeconomic reinsertion process. Prosthetic equipment was part of the specialized support provided to specific vulnerable groups.

The operation, with an overall cost of 34 million CFA, was made possible through a partnership between the PNDDR implementation unit and the National Prosthesis Center in Brazzaville.

Céline Lémbé, who received a brachial prosthesis, has only one wish: *“I ask the Congolese people to promote peace, to banish violence that only creates desolation. Our bodies are evidence of the horrors of war”* she concludes.



Richie Elodie Mboundou, one of the beneficiaries of the program

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*Contributed by **Bienvenu BOUDIMBOU**, Communications Assistant, in charge of social mobilization of PNDDR*

For more information on MDRP, please visit www.mdrp.org or contact Chantal Rigaud, Communications Officer, MDRP Secretariat, World Bank at info@mdrp.org.