

A Day-long Exchange of Experiences and Lessons Learned Among Implementing Partners in Burundi

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In anticipation of the imminent re-launch of socio-economic reintegration activities for ex-combatants in Burundi, the Executive Secretariat and the National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration (ES/NCDRR) invited implementing partners to a day-long workshop to exchange experiences and lessons learned. The goal was to ensure that those ex-combatants still awaiting support will receive it under the best conditions.

The National Program for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration (PNDRR) is supported by the World Bank and the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP), which has its Secretariat at the World Bank.

The Executive Secretariat has aimed to accelerate reintegration support by increasing the number of implementing partners from three to seven, and two more contracts are likely to be signed shortly.

After having extensively reviewed past experiences, partner representatives and Executive Secretariat staff drew the following major lessons:

- Ex-combatants must be well-informed about the economic opportunities in their communities in order to ensure they make a well-considered in selecting their reintegration projects.
- The environment has a large impact on the success of a given ex-combatant project, as borne out by the fact that those reintegrating in rural areas fare better than their urban counterparts.
- Reintegration support provided by the NPDRR is not as well-adapted to the urban environment, and successful activities are rare, except in cases where an ex-combatant can also draw on additional personal resources. Furthermore, competition in cities is much stiffer, preventing full success in revenue generating activities.



MDRP Representative Dingamadji Solness, (left) and Silas Ntigurirwa, Executive Secretary of the PNDRR Executive Secretariat

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Implementing partners have also noted that success has been most common among those beneficiaries who chose animal husbandry, agriculture, soldering, and soapmilling, among others. Business activities, on the other hand, have been successful for only a handful of ex-combatants.

The success of those choosing animal husbandry was attributed to several factors. An ex-combatant receives two or three cows, which provide manure that increases agricultural productivity. The component also includes technical support by an expert, providing each ex-combatant who chooses this option with direct and sustained contact with an individual from whom they learn practical skills.

During the workshop, it was strongly recommended that implementing partners work continually with other development actors in their respective regions.

Another reason for the success of animal husbandry is that, traditionally, cows are considered common property; they cannot generally be sold without consent of the spouse, and sometimes even the whole family, and the entire community will contribute to the success of the activity. This fact also makes clear the importance of the family in the implementation and success of ex-combatant income generating activities.



Participants during the workshop

Sensitization activities by peers are also not to be underestimated. Personal stories by ex-combatants who have either succeeded or failed in their activities can have a surprisingly profound impact on the actions of other ex-combatants.

The ES/NCDRR strongly encouraged partners to form networks through which to inform each other about successes and failures, in order to improve implementation and achieve sustainable reintegration of ex-combatants. The ES/NCDRR promised to facilitate that

collaboration and provide the necessary support.

“The workshop was not only important, but also useful and rich in substantive exchange,” said Dingamadji Solness, MDRP representative in Burundi. “It allowed participants to thoroughly review the procedures and practical modalities of providing support to beneficiaries, to clarify respective roles, and to build the foundations of an active partnership between the Executive Secretariat and implementing partners on one hand, and among implementing partners themselves on the other.”

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