

Rwandan Milk Association: Ex-combatants, Civilians Working Together for Success

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Anastase Manirafasha, ex-combatant and coordinator of the Mizingo Milk Association

Anastase Manirafasha was once an active member of the armed groups fighting the Government of Rwanda from bases in the Democratic Republic of Congo. One day a few years ago, Anastase had enough of the war and decided to drop his weapon, renounce his combatant status and return home to a better life, making a decision he says he will never regret. Today, Anastase is the proud coordinator of Mizingo Milk Association in Gaturu, a village in the Western Province of Rwanda. Out of the 150 members of the association, 65 are ex-combatants demobilized and reintegrated under the Rwandan Demobilization and Reintegration Program (RDRP) within the MDRP framework.

Every day, fresh cow milk is collected from all the Mizingo Milk Association members and villagers who are cattle breeders. The milk is then processed in a modern cooling plant and sold to the public in the local market. *“Our production has increased from 4,000 liters to 5,000 liters a day this week and we are flooding the village market”* said Anastase. Although he is happy that Mizingo is prospering and employing 16 full-time workers, he is worried that the increased production might cause the milk price to drop by 50% in Gaturu. As a good entrepreneur, Anastase is already thinking on how to keep the association successful for all its members and expand the Mizingo milk distribution country wide and perhaps export to neighboring countries.



Milk being processed in a cooling plant

News & Noteworthy



Member of the Mizingo Milk Association

Mizingo is one of the successful associations in Rwanda where ex-combatants together with other civilian members of the community join their efforts to create an activity that generates a regular income for its members. These joint associations also provide an opportunity for ex-combatants to be socially integrated in the community and to have a chance, like Anastase, of being chosen by the association's members to coordinate their activities.

The Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (RDRC), which, after demobilizing the ex-combatants, provides assistance for their reintegration process, visited the milk

association recently and was satisfied with its success. *"It has always been the policy of the Commission to encourage ex-combatants to join or create associations with civilians for them to fully reintegrate socially and economically in their communities of return. The Mizingo Milk Association is an exemplary case of successful reintegration"* said Faustin Rwigema, the coordinator of the RDRC.

Since 2002, the MDRP has supported the Government of Rwanda's efforts to support the socio-economic reintegration of over 37,000 ex-combatants of Rwandese armed groups, the former Rwanda Armed Forces (ex-FAR), who remained in Rwanda after 1994, and the Rwanda Defense Forces (ex-RDF) through the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Program.



Ex-combatant member of the Mizingo Milk Association

Anastase is one of those beneficiaries who received training in entrepreneurship, in addition to reinsertion and reintegration grants, which helped him build a brighter future for himself and his family.

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