

MDRP Countries Visit Angola to Learn about Reintegration Support and Exchange National Experiences

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June 14-24, 2006, the MDRP Technical Coordination Group (TCG), with participants from Burundi, CAR, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and the Secretariat of the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) gathered in Angola for a study tour.

The group met with government officials at national and provincial levels, program partners, ex-combatants, civil society groups and MDRP partners, to exchange their experiences in assisting reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life, and to learn about the Angola Demobilization and Reintegration Program (ADRP).

The tour specifically aimed to increase TCG members' knowledge and skills concerning, among other issues: design and implementation of arrangements for reintegration support; the management systems and practices of the Angolan Institute for the Socio-professional Reintegration of Ex-combatants (IRSEM) and its relationship with implementing partners; the specifics of support to vulnerable groups of ex-combatants, such as the disabled, women, children and adolescents; and, linking reintegration support to broader rehabilitation initiatives.



Participants discuss reintegration during a field visit



A World Bank staff member with ex-combatants

The MDRP Secretariat, the World Bank Country Office and IRSEM organized the tour. IRSEM staff members were pleased to have the opportunity to share their experiences with their counterparts from other programs. The ADRP is one of the most advanced of the programs supported by MDRP, and thus a good example of possible approaches and solutions to the implementation of reintegration assistance to ex-combatants.

Presentations and discussions were first held in Luanda, to identify relevant issues and give an overview of Angola's reintegration support experience. Participants also described for each other the contexts and approaches of their own programs in the region.

Two groups then visited the provinces of Benguela and Huambo, respectively, where they observed reintegration support activities and met with local authorities, implementation partners, project approval committee members, and beneficiaries.

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“Although many participants had to make quite a long trip to get to Angola,” Kees Kingma of the MDRP Secretariat said, “the tour proved to be a great opportunity for the representatives from MDRP national programs to see and discuss current operations here in Angola.”

The technical group drew several lessons and conclusions from observing the ADRP’s approach to reintegration. First and foremost, they observed that Angola’s strong national ownership has played a crucial role in its successful program.

Participants also took note that reintegration support in Angola has clearly emphasized agriculture, reflecting the prevailing country context and the majority of ex-combatant skills profiles.



The participants in Luanda

Also highly important, reintegration support in Angola consists mainly of civic education and HIV/AIDS-related support, and other community-oriented activities that may further reintegration of ex-combatants.

Strong partnerships at the strategic, institutional and implementation levels have further added to ADRP’s effectiveness. Angolan government institutions have been important sources of technical knowledge and strategic-level support. The ADRP has also actively sought the participation of national and international NGOs, UN agencies and other partners already working in the areas to which ex-combatants have returned. These actors can leverage management capacity, facilitate more comprehensive reintegration initiatives, and also often serve to link ex-combatants support efforts to wider community rehabilitation initiatives.

Such linking can help ensure that ex-combatants continue to receive assistance after targeted reintegration initiatives end – particularly important in the case of chronically sick or disabled ex-combatants in need of long-term follow-up.

Participants described the study tour as a highly valuable experience.

“The tour was educative and eye-opening,” said Justice P. K. K. Onega, Chairman of the Ugandan Amnesty Commission. “Every country involved found something to learn and to copy from another country. We also learned that circumstances vary across countries and so that no uniform system can be applied to all countries – systems applied should be flexible enough to suit particular circumstances, and the sharing of such experiences should be done regularly.”

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