

MDRP Partners and Stakeholders discuss the future of DDR in Central Africa

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Participants at the Advisory Committee Meeting

The Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) annual partners meeting took place at the World Bank office in Paris, December 11-13. Representatives of the MDRP country counterpart governments, donors, partner and guest organizations participated over the three day gathering, which had as its key themes: consolidating progress and accelerating operations; planning for transition and exit; and learning from MDRP experiences.

The meeting included sessions with the whole MDRP partnership, as well as smaller meetings with MDRP donors and MDRP country representatives, and concluded with the first MDRP learning seminar focused on sharing best practices and strengthening program impact. Among the achievements of the meeting was the initiation of the MDRP exit strategy.

This annual gathering of MDRP countries, donors, and partners is a unique opportunity to bring all stakeholders around the table and discuss the partnership's accomplishments and challenges. Ian Bannon, Sector Manager of the World Bank's Fragile States, Conflict and Social Development unit in the Africa Region, and Chairman of the meetings pointed out the many achievements of this ambitious partnership while reminding the participants of *"the challenging operating environment in the region and the complex nature of DDR and post-conflict activities ."*



Breakout session at the seminar

Throughout most presentations, was the underlining fact that the MDRP is now entering its last phase. Discussions included the need for tailored and country-specific exit and transition strategies,

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and there was also consensus among participants that, given the achievements of the program and partnership to date, and the ongoing needs in the sub region, the MDRP partnership should continue in some form after the June 2009 closing date



Keynote address from
Amb. Roeland van de Geer

The meetings also received a keynote address by the European Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes, Ambassador Roeland van de Geer. His remarks highlighted the need for an optimistic as well as realistic view of the region. Specifically, he noted the need for diplomatic efforts alongside development. He also noted the notion of the conflict in Eastern DRC as one based on unacceptable violation of human rights, including sexual-based violence, and emphasized the need for an integrated solution to peace that incorporates diplomatic, political and developmental tools.

One particularly interesting session for the Technical Coordination Group was dedicated to creative leadership. Participants in this session discussed their views on leadership, the challenges they faced in their roles as leaders, and strategies they used in their everyday leadership tasks. Common themes emerging from the discussion included: flexibility, learning from failures, importance of feedback, and reinforcing the youth and gender elements of leadership.

It was very clear at the Paris meeting that the MDRP partnership had made significant progress, but with only one year remaining until the closing date of national programs, much remains to be done.

The gathering also showed the true value of a partnership and regional program such as the MDRP. *“In addition to the inherent challenges of a program of this kind, we recognize that working regionally and in partnership is much more difficult and more risky than conventional bilateral initiatives, however, the payoff is also much greater and thus worth the additional efforts,”* concludes Maria Correia, MDRP’s Program Manager.



Maria Correia and Marcelo Fabre
from the MDRP secretariat

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