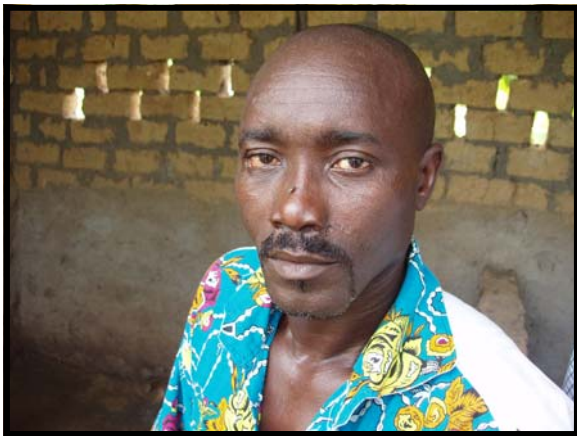


Making a New Civilian Life: *Interview with a Demobilized Combatant in the Central African Republic*

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Interview by Yves Sanghamy, Head of Communications

Ex-Combatant Reintegration and Community Support Project, Central African Republic



Name : *Adrien Koyangatoua*

Age : *40 ans*

Faction of Origin : *Mutins*

Marital status : *Married*

Number of children : *10*

Profession : *Pig husbandry*

Sergeant Adrien Koyangatoua went into the army in 1989, and after training, joined the Autonomous Armored Squadron, an elite corps of the army of the Central African Republic (CAR), now dissolved. This military son (his father was in the national navy) took part in several mutinies and in the May 2001 coup d'état, because, he says, he wanted to change things. Wounded, one leg

amputated, he was exiled in the Democratic Republic of Congo until the coup d'état of March 2003, when he returned to the CAR. He is now a beneficiary of the Ex-Combatants Reintegration and Community Support Project (PRAC, from the French), and has adopted its philosophy wholeheartedly. The PRAC is supported through the World Bank's Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP).

Yves Sanghamy (YS): *Why did you take up arms?*

Adrien Koyangatoua (A.K):

...When you're in the army, your goal is to rise up in the ranks. To do this, one must perform acts of bravery. But you go through all that, and instead, at the moment you should be promoted, you're treated unjustly, and it's disgusting.

"... The path of arms did more harm than good. To rebuild the country and bequeath our children a land of peace, we have to do something else."

What's more, government leaders at the time wanted to disarm CAR's national army in favor of the Presidential Guard – that was the basis for the discontent of the Army of the CAR...We felt that, whatever the situation, it was the army that should be responsible for maintaining order in the country...



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Y.S: *Did weapons allow you to solve your problems ?*

A.K: No, weapons didn't allow me to solve my problems. On the contrary, in trying to do so, I became handicapped. It was May 28th of 2001, during a skirmish between rebels and loyalist forces that lasted more than six hours, on a small island of sand named "Ndomboutou." I was wounded during this combat, shot in the arms and legs. Lack of medical care meant that my leg eventually had to be amputated.

My family has been my main support. If I'd been rejected by my own family, I wouldn't be here speaking with you today. Me, I was lucky to be amputated – others lost their lives.

I don't hold anything against anyone...If you know that your destiny is in God's hands, that's what matters. It's a question of morale – I have colleagues who aren't alive anymore, but me, I am.

My background is in infantry, and in an armored squadron where the slogan was "Even dead, we will prevail." That maxim has become my guide; it's what has allowed me to keep my spirits until today.

Being handicapped isn't a synonym for dunce—despite my handicap, I can perform manual activities that non-handicapped don't. Many able-bodied people have nothing to do, and spend all day playing checkers or Ludo. But me, I'm active. I work to support my family, and that's what's important.

Y.S: *How did you find out about PRAC?*

A.K: As a former military leader, I was contacted by other former military members, and I agreed to join them.

YS: *What were your motives for joining the project?*

A.K: The events I participated in were supposed to change the face of the country and solve the problems of the people, but nothing came of it. The path of arms did more harm than good. To rebuild the country and bequeath our children a land of peace, we have to do something else.

Y.S: *What did you expect from the project ?*

A.K: For me, the PRAC has been very beneficial, because, despite my military status, I didn't get any help after my accident...

The PRAC came along right when I'd saved some money to start up a productive activity that would allow me to support the needs of my family. I expected financial aid from the project, but in the end I got more than that; love, understanding, availability, training, a job for a new life, and, above all, I've developed social ties with many people thanks to the project. Today I'm a new man: a complete citizen, respected by all, and respectful of the laws and rules of my country.

Y.S: *When did you turn in your weapons and military supplies?*

A.K: I left the regular army in 2001, and left for exile in the DRC at the time of the coup d'état in 2001. We were political refugees there and were disarmed. So I came back to the CAR without weapons.

Y.S: *How did your demobilization proceed ?*

A.K: I have to say that the PRAC really gave me a hand, and first and foremost saw to getting me a prosthetic [leg] that allowed me to move around easily during my activities.

"The project was a good thing. At the very least, it was able reach many brothers in arms and made them realize that it was time to turn the page. The time for reconstruction had come, and for us to unite our efforts to bring the country out of crisis."

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Y.S: *What was your choice for reintegration activity?*

A.K: I chose to go into pig husbandry.

Y.S: *What moved you to make that choice?*

A.K: I had read in a paper by the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) that in 2005, the CAR was importing more than 2.5 million CFA Francs (XAF) in pork products . I concluded that there was a market. What's more, pig husbandry is very demanding – I was convinced that few would succeed in that niche. That's why I made that choice, since I felt that it would give me, in time, a regular income and a profession.

Y.S: *How did you feel about the training you received?*

A.K: The training was a good thing. You always think, mistakenly, that you know enough. They taught me to reduce the risks. And it was an absolutely necessary part of the project. I learned a great deal during those sessions. I've applied all that I learned, and passed it on to my children and wife, who are all involved in raising the pigs. And I look on the internet regularly for information about the profession, papers on diseases, pig husbandry organizations – in short, I keep learning, and that's really great.

Y.S: *How did you feel when you got your diploma at the end of the training ?*

A.K: I had the same feeling that I had when I received my military diploma after seven months of training, or when they attached the bar that made me a corporal, and then a sergeant. A feeling of pride, and I thought of

my parents. I would have wanted them by my side...

Y.S: *Tell us about your activity.*

A.K: You know that I've already received money and materials from PRAC, and the results are apparent, if modest. I don't take my future lightly. So I undertook an activity that could serve as an example to others in the same field. If I get a little further support, I'll do other good things. Today, I have a farm with over 25 pigs, including six sows, one boar and 18 piglets that are being fattened up.

Y.S: *Does the project follow up with you ?*

A.K: I get visits from PRAC teams regularly, on reintegration or just following up. And that's not counting visits from the instructors, who come by now and then to make sure we're following the instructions for husbandry.

Y.S: *What are you planning on doing to improve the return on your activity ?*

A.K: Right now I have a group of six sows, but I intend to work to have 3 new groups of six, so I can increase my production capacity.

I also have to save up and apply for a bank loan so that I can modernize my facilities.

Y.S: *What is your view of PRAC today ?*

A.K: The project was a good thing. At the very least, it was able reach many brothers in arms and made them realize that it was time to turn the page. The time for reconstruction had



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come, and for us to unite our efforts to bring the country out of crisis. Before, people looked at us strangely, a little afraid. With this project, they don't anymore. We live together on good terms.

Y.S: *What are your ambitions ?*

A.K I have three goals in life : that my children are well-fed and cared for, that they go to school and succeed in their studies, and that they be capable of manual work in addition to their intellectual skills.



Y.S: *What message would you want to give to newly demobilized ex-combatants, or those now in the middle of reintegration ?*

A.K: I'd like to take this opportunity that you're giving me to offer some advice to those young people who are now in the military. The military's role is to protect and defend the population, and its members must even sacrifice themselves for their country. The military shouldn't extort the people, but rather support them during difficult times.

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