

A Rwandan Woman Ex-Combatant Succeeds in Her Business

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Serafina Mukagacinya is forty years old and the proud mother of four children. She is also an ex-combatant who has become a successful entrepreneur in the clothing business.

In 2002, Serafina demobilized through the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Program (RDRP), which provides demobilization and reintegration assistance to Rwandese ex-combatants. She had been a member of Rwandan Armed Forces, also known as the *Forces Armées Rwandaise*, or FAR – forces of the Rwandan government at the time that were disbanded after being defeated by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1994.

Serafina settled with her children in the Gicumbi District of Rwanda's Northern Province. As a widow, her first priority was to quickly find a way to provide for her children.

Before joining the FAR, she had practiced tailoring, and had always loved commerce. "When I was a student," she says, "I used to sell things here and there."

With that same entrepreneurial spirit, Serafina used her RDRP reintegration benefits to start a business in selling second-hand clothing. Later on, she applied for and received an RDRP Vulnerable Support Window (VSW) grant, which helped her overcome her fragile economic situation.

Today, Serafina sells over ten bales of seasonal second-hand clothes a month, and employs three sales agents in neighboring districts. This has enabled her to pay for the education of her two daughters in secondary school and two sons in primary school, and build a small house for her family.

Serafina has also been able to use part of the 2.5 million Rwandan Francs (approximately \$4,500) she has saved to invest in various business projects. One of these ventures is a silkworm factory, which she intends to use to support her clothing business. "I hope to expand my business and supply more markets in the neighboring districts," she explains.

As the result of entrepreneurial activities, Serafina has gained the trust and confidence of local community members, and has been appointed secretary of the "URWEGO" community bank in Gicumbi.

According to Mr. Stephen Mangwa, District Reintegration Officer of Gicumbi, there are thirty-one reintegrated women ex-combatants in the district and all are doing well. "We have not had a single case of failure" he stated.



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News & Noteworthy

To date, the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission has demobilized and reintegrated a total of 368 women ex-combatants, all of whom have received training in entrepreneurship, in addition to receiving reinsertion and reintegration grants. Serafina Mukagacinya is one of the beneficiaries who has made a difference in her life and is now a happy and prosperous member of her community.

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