

President Wolfowitz meets with Ex-combatants in Burundi and DRC

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World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz visited Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in early March, consulting with a wide range of stakeholders and beneficiaries, including ex-combatants.



Promoting peace for sustainable development

His visit to Burundi on March 7-8 — the first ever by a World Bank president — highlighted the institution's focus on peace and stability as the foundation of sustainable development and successful economic growth in the region.

“I am here in part to learn how the World Bank can support the government and the people of Burundi in their efforts to build on that peace and to make it more secure and more stable,” noted President Wolfowitz during his arrival statement.

After a series of meetings with members of government and civil society, President Wolfowitz headed out to meet the beneficiaries of the World Bank's largest stability exercise in the region, the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP).

The MDRP aims to help an estimated 400,000 ex-combatants throughout the Great Lakes Region to leave the military or armed groups and start a new civilian life. In Burundi, over 22,000 have been demobilized to date, approx. 19 000 provided with reinsertion support, and over 6,000 have started durable economic reintegration activities.

During his meeting, President Wolfowitz asked the ex-combatants about their lives, their reasons for joining their armed groups or forces, the support they receive through the Government's – MDRP-supported – program as well as about their hopes for the future. He also assured them of the Bank's continued commitment to their country.

Security and peace were also at the top of President Wolfowitz's agenda during his visit in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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“Congo now faces the challenges of consolidating the peace and reconstructing the country after conflict. It is very important for development partners such as the World Bank Group to continue to support this country’s recovery efforts and to create conditions for growth and to enable people to escape poverty,” declared Wolfowitz. “A successful DR Congo would have major positive effects for the entire region and its many neighbors.”

President Wolfowitz discussed the efforts of the MDRP in that regard, and also flew to Kisangani to meet with several ex-combatant beneficiaries of the program, as well as with Daniel Kawata, General Coordinator of the country’s National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (CONADER).



Meeting with Burundian ex-combatants



Wolfowitz and MDRP beneficiaries in DRC

After almost an hour of discussion, the President congratulated the ex-combatants, and encouraged them to continue their reintegration efforts.

The DRC is the largest beneficiary of MDRP financing, with over \$200 million. In the face of significant challenges, the program has already demobilized over 100,000 adult ex-combatants and offered assistance to thousands of children released by the armed forces. It has also contracted for 69,000 reintegration opportunities

“Wolfowitz’ visit comes at a critical time for both MDRP and the Congo,” concludes Alex McPhail, World Bank Task Team Leader for the MDRP project in the Democratic

Republic of Congo. “With elections successfully completed, the new government now has a unique opportunity to create long term policies and strategies for security and development that will allow for sustainable peace in the country and the region.”

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