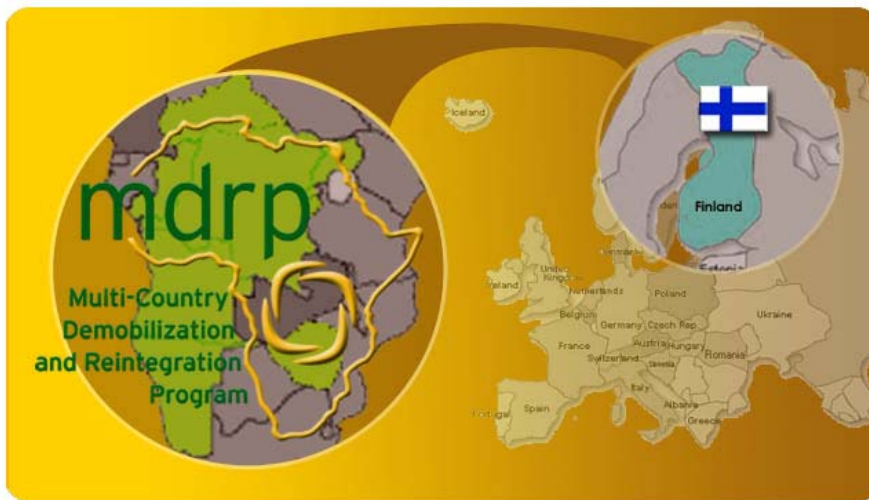


Finland Joins the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program

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The Government of Finland has joined the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) as its most recent donor, and has contributed US\$1,300,000 to the Program. The MDRP focal point is based in the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Department for Africa and the Middle East, assisted by the Department for Development Policy.

Finnish officials say that the MDRP framework has several advantages.

First, it allows Finland to effectively channel its resources in a coordinated manner, while limiting administrative requirements that might constitute an unnecessary burden on some fragile countries. The MDRP structure also allows Finland, which has no embassy or bilateral co-operation in the region, to channel support and be assured of a high quality of financial and project monitoring.

The MDRP's regional and collective approach is also key.

“Coherence among all partners plays a crucial role in successful peacebuilding,” says Sirpa Mäenpää, Director in the Unit for East and West Africa in the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. “MDRP offers the best platform for engagement in demobilization and reintegration (D&R) activities in the greater Great Lakes region. Coordination among donors, as well as between donors and beneficiaries, is best guaranteed by a pool-structured arrangement.”

Sean Bradley, MDRP Trust Fund Coordinator, welcomed the addition of Finland as a new MDRP Partner and noted that, “Their participation goes beyond the value of the contribution. Having an additional donor in the partnership helps further our efforts to maintain a coherent DDR strategy for the region, keeps the administrative costs as low as possible for our clients, and adds additional numbers and weight to our collective dialogue and discussions on critical security sector issues with the countries of the Great Lakes region. We look forward to their full participation in the partnership.”

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News & Noteworthy

Finland's overall development policy goal is the eradication of extreme global poverty through the promotion of stabilization, security and peace, among other efforts. Through the European Union, Finland has been involved in peacekeeping and civilian crisis management efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and contributed to humanitarian de-mining in Angola.

Now, as a new donor and partner, the government of Finland is becoming engaged in a new aspect of post-conflict peacebuilding – demobilization and reintegration. Finland sees D&R in the Great Lakes region as a key element of government strategy.

Explains Mäenpää, “The nexus between security and development has become increasingly important in both security and development policy. We identified a need for Finland to, on the one hand, support and learn from efforts in the fields of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR), and, on the other hand, to support programs in the Great Lakes region, which was not previously part of Finland's traditional development co-operation.”

The Finnish government deems vocational training, income-generation and job-creation activities for former combatants as critical means to ensure their successful reintegration into civilian life. Human rights and justice, and particularly the rights of women and children, are also vital principles by which to implement D&R activities.

“Many countries are still either conflict-ridden or gradually recovering from conflict. Great numbers of armed ex-combatants, crippled with physical injuries, mental frustration and unemployment constitute a significant potential threat to stability to human society and security,” states Dr. Mika Vehnäkäki, Adviser on Development and Conflict. “We want to move people out of the battlefield and help them reintegrate economically and socially into the civilian life”

Asked what he sees as Finland's overall goal, Vehnäkäki answers, “Even though there are formal peace accords signed, elements of fragility and instability remain. We wish to see the region lift itself up – when people's rights are protected and the governance is accountable and transparent, people can start utilizing their potential and make a real difference.”

And the Finnish people, although unaware of the specifics of the situation in the greater Great Lakes region, are generally very supportive of development efforts, he says. They hold eradication of poverty and maintenance of peace as among the most important objectives in Finnish foreign policy.

Says Mäenpää, “Finland is very pleased to be able to contribute to MDRP. We are glad that this opportunity has now become a reality for us and we look forward to learning from the region and from others' experiences. We hope that through the program we will make a real contribution to the improvement of people's lives in the greater Great Lakes Region.”

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