

Bank Is Partner in Plan to Resettle Africa Great Lakes Soldiers

May 17, 2006—The World Bank is a key partner in a plan to reintroduce an estimated 400,000 former combatants to civilian life in the African Great Lakes countries—an area that has endured decades of conflicts but has recently become more stable.

Launched in 2002, the [Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program \(MDRP\)](#) aims to demobilize and reintegrate former combatants in Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, DRC, Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, and ease the way for increased security in the region.

The Bank and 11 donors—Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Commission—are committed to providing \$500 million in funding for, among other things, national programs to discharge combatants from their armed groups, and reintroduce them into society.

Bruno Donat, MDRP Communications Officer, emphasizes that the Bank has no part in disarming soldiers. “The disarmament stage is carried out by MDRP partners such as the United Nations peace-keeping forces. The Bank, through MDRP, supports efforts to ease the ex-combatants’ transition to civilian life,” adds Donat.

Nevertheless, the program poses some risk for the Bank, says Bernard Harborne, Lead Conflict Specialist for the Bank’s Africa department, particularly in volatile regions like eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

“We’re not used to working in a dangerous environment, but we have done these kinds of programs elsewhere,” says Harborne.

The Bank’s involvement in MDRP stems from a desire to help countries recover from conflict, he says. The Bank has the technical expertise and financing to help countries rebuild.

MDRP is starting to enjoy success, with projects being implemented and overall progress, Harborne says.

Development assistance is now occurring in areas that are secure, including parts of the DRC, where the first free elections in 40 years will take place in July.

Donat adds that to date, about 63 percent of targeted ex-combatants have been discharged from armed groups, and some 39 percent are receiving reintegration support region-wide.

Of the \$500 million that will be spent, donor countries have committed \$215 million, and the World Bank \$194 million.

“While the experience of the Bank and its partners is very rich and encouraging in the region, many challenges remain in managing and contributing to the resolution of conflicts in the Great Lakes region,” says Maria Correia, the Bank’s MDRP Program Manager.

“We, at the MDRP are pleased to be part of this peace-building partnership.”

This article was published on the World Bank website www.worldbank.org in May 2006.

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