

**GREAT LAKES POLICY FORUM
MEETING REPORT
April 3, 2003**

The April forum consisted of a presentation from the World Bank on the Bank's Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP). Speakers included Ingo Wiederhofer, Operations Officer working on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in the Great Lakes Region; Natacha Meden, Communications Officer for the MDRP; and Ellen van der Laan, Senior Advisor in the Great Lakes Department.

The economic performance in the greater Great Lakes Region is lower now than it was in 1990, as GDP in the region has gone down from US\$ 470 to US\$ 250 since 1990 (the region referred to includes Angola, Burundi, CAR, Congo-Brazzaville, DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe). War and national defense expenditures are two inter-related and key sources of the downward trend. The World Bank's MDRP seeks to demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatants into society, offering an alternative to those participants willing to put down their weapons. The MDRP is currently attempting this in partnership with governments in the region, bilateral donors, UN agencies, financial organizations, and other non-governmental organizations (41 partners in all).

Demobilization and reintegration is no small task, as there are potentially 350,000 combatants in the region, including government forces, child soldiers, female participants, and combatants from rebel groups. Demobilization also depends upon a first/prior step of disarmament, which MDRP does not address; MDRP subsequently depends upon its partners to deal with disarmament issues, which are key to any post-conflict resolution. MDRP does not deal with humanitarian relief, either, nor is it a community reconstruction program. MDRP does, however, through demobilization and reintegration, seek to consolidate the peace processes by increasing dialogue, stability and security, which help promote social and economic recovery in the region's countries. To achieve these long-term goals, MDRP offers a trust fund for donor coordination and resource mobilization as well as serving as a platform for dialogue with regards to national consultative processes. MDRP makes up one vital piece of the reconstruction effort.

The expected timeframe and cost of MDRP are five years at a total of US\$ 500 million, with US\$ 150 million coming from the World Bank's International Development Assistance (IDA) program, and US\$ 350 million from the international donor community. To date, US\$ 180 million has been pledged from the international community. On a programmatic level, national programs form the foundation of the MDRP. Ideally, there would be national programs in all nine countries in the region. Currently there is in operation a national program in Rwanda, which has been responsible for the demobilization of 9,000 ex-combatants. A national program is set to begin in Angola in the coming months, and there are preparations for programs in Burundi, CAR, DRC, and Uganda. National programs finance demobilization activities by providing

HIV/AIDS education, health screening, identification cards, and information on benefits given to ex-combatants. The programs also grant reinsertion benefits as well as reintegration assistance. To be eligible for an MDRP national program, countries must meet certain criteria, such as preparing a national DRP plan that establishes appropriate safeguards and security mechanisms to see that money will get where it should go, as well as setting up a national committee to oversee the structure of the DRP plan. Countries also must be or have been directly involved in or affected by civil conflict within the region and actively participating in the regional peace process.

MDRP also consists of special projects in local areas that do not cover the whole of the country. Special projects can begin without a national government or national program in place. Currently there are plans for special projects in eastern DRC, Angola, and Burundi. In addition, MDRP has regional activities between countries that consist mainly of technical knowledge sharing on cross border issues. MDRP is managed by a small Secretariat from the World Bank. Institutionally, MDRP desires a broad participation between national, regional, and international actors, and therefore has set up one advisory committee that acts as a policy body, as well as a multi-donor trust fund subcommittee, composed of contributing donor partners. There is also a Regional Technical Coordination Group that has been put in place to discuss DDR and other regional issues. The World Bank role in MDRP is to manage the program Secretariat, administration of the multi-donor trust fund, and co-funding of the national programs.

There are a variety of reasons why MDRP has a multi-country focus. First, the conflicts within the greater Great Lakes region have tended to extend across borders. Second, regional cooperation is a prerequisite for successful peace building. Third, a multi-country program lowers administrative burden on recipient governments. Finally, it allows for a more unified donor strategy from the outside, even generating contributions from donors who may not be present in the region and would thus not participate otherwise.

MDRP could not be successful without its partner groups and organizations. MDRP has aforementioned limits because it is focused on demobilization and reintegration. However, partners provide other necessary financial and technical means toward the wider goal of community reconstruction—in the economic, political, humanitarian, and security realms—that allow for efforts at disarmament and social, economic, and political rebuilding. MDRP recognizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to stabilization. Together, MDRP and bilateral partners can exert pressure on local players in the region through working with a joint vision, approach, and decision-making process. Partners give overview and knowledge of reconstruction activities, as well as work with MDRP to foster and promote dialogue on reconstruction and other issues. Local partners and civil society play an integral role as well, in terms of helping with the social reintegration of ex-combatants, managing expectations of international players, providing a local context for appropriate programs and ideas, and helping with reconciliation in tense areas.

As with anything, there are certain interior and exterior challenges that MDRP face in order for it to be as successful as possible. Within the MDRP, an enormous challenge

will be implementing its programs and projects on the ground, especially because this process involves different groups working together. Getting these different groups to work together is difficult for numerous reasons. Each group brings with it its own focus and perspective. For example, a national government and a humanitarian relief group will have differing opinions and ideas on what's best and what's needed most. Further, donor coordination at a local level is a continual learning process. Donors are not used to working together within a regional approach. There is also the challenge of getting the technical planning and political negotiations aligned in order for programs to be implemented. Again, this points back to implementation on the ground of what's decided on a policy level. Additionally, there is a general low trust environment in the region of other parties and players. Thus a substantial challenge will be building confidence and creating dialogue between regional players. Outside of MDRP, disarmament remains a huge obstacle to MDRP's objectives. Also, the lack of political will among the region's main governmental actors poses a real threat to MDRP success.

MDRP has various concrete steps to take as it continues to work for more widespread implementation of its strategies and goals in the region. First, it needs to get the financing in place as soon as possible so governments and the international community can support demobilization and reintegration. Another ongoing objective is to continue to build confidence with regards to MDRP and to support information facilitation and dialogue activities with regards to regional reconstruction. The objectives all lead up to the main goal of putting in place the operational agreements. To do so, governments need to take more of a lead in the process and exert greater political will to implement DDR and manage expectations of ex-combatants. MDRP cannot create political will; it can, however, continue, along with its international and local partners, to exert pressure on governments.

MDRP's goals of demobilization and reintegration would provide a framework for building confidence and creating space for other reconstruction efforts in the greater Great Lakes region. At present, it is difficult to implement its programs because of the security situation throughout the region. However, since MDRP covers such a wide region, it can be effective in some places irrespective of conflict in other places. Programs can be very localized in willing areas. It remains to be seen what role MDRP will play in the greater picture of the peace process in the region. Securing financing for the program and continuing to work with its partners on a greater reconstruction agenda are immediate next steps MDRP will be taking so that it can put into practice its goals and plans.