

## Association of Demobilized Women Ex-combatants Improves Community Reintegration

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Born of the efforts of 12 demobilized women ex-combatants, the association, Peace and Development, has 35 members today, including the 12 founders. The woman-only association works in agricultural activities and also carries out sensitization activities to encourage peace and reconciliation.

One of the ex-combatants explained, “When we returned to Mutimbizi, we found ourselves isolated and victims of prejudice. Those around us said that women who had been on the battlefield could not be trusted. So we looked for a way to break through our isolation and began to approach the other women of the village, helping them out in small ways and speaking to them of peace.”



The women of the association work together in the field.

Little by little the ex-combatant became friends with the village women, telling them of their experiences, and that the war had been too difficult, too cruel, and that it was time to work for peace.

“We invited them to join the association, Peace and Development, which they accepted and now they’re full members.”

With support from the Executive Secretariat of the National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration of ex-combatants, financed by the Multi-Country Demobilization and

Reintegration Program (MDRP), the Peace and Development association rents ten hectares of land for cultivation, of which five are for rice, three for beans and two for manioc. Association members meet two to three times a week to work together in the fields.

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Furthermore, one time a week they hold meetings to sensitize those around them about peace, trying to cover all zones of their home commune of Mutizimbuzi.

« The association, Peace and Development, is very good for us; it helps us be seen like other women again, with no particular labels. What we harvest from our fields helps us to support our food needs,» explains Constance Ndayizigiye, ex-combatant and president of the association.

One part of their harvests is consumed, while the other is sold. The money earned covers school fees for members' children, as well as for orphans in the area. With the gradual savings they are earning, they hope that they can some day buy their own farmland for the association.

“These efforts are part of the work in Burundi to consolidate peace and re-launch the economy,» states Marcelo Fabre, MDRP Burundi Task Team Leader. “Associations such as Peace and Development are crucial to facilitating peaceful cohabitation between ex-combatants and the populations of the communities of return.”



Constance Ndayizigiye, ex-combatant and association president.

The Burundian National Program for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration has to date demobilized over 25,000 combatants. It provides them with two types of support – social reinsertion payments in four tranches, equivalent to 18 months salary, and also economic reintegration assistance.

For more information on MDRP, please visit [www.mdrp.org](http://www.mdrp.org) or contact Bruno Donat, Communications Officer, MDRP Secretariat, World Bank at [info@mdrp.org](mailto:info@mdrp.org).