

Staff Film Series Focuses on Peace Building

May 22, 2007—When the film, [Buying Time for Peace](#) (view trailer), a 35-minute documentary about the [Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program \(MDRP\)](#) was screened at the Bank late last year, the effect was palpable, says Bruno Donat, the film producer and the program's communications officer.

The film captured the horrors and after-effects of descent into violence, and, significantly, how the region was putting all that behind with the assistance of donors, the Bank among them. It has attracted large audiences wherever it has been screened, mostly recently in Africa, where several television stations have already screened it during prime time.

The demobilization program was designed and launched in 2002, to transition seven conflict-ravaged African countries in the Great Lakes Region to peace. A panel of MDRP Secretariat Staff, including Roisin de Burca, was at hand after the screening to provide answers to the consequent questions.

The screening was a part of the Social Development Film series—"Voices from the Field"—which screens films produced by staff. ([Click here](#) to view the 35-minute film in its entirety.)

From Conflict to Peace in the DRC

Transition to peace is difficult says de Burca, a veteran of conflict and post-conflict situations. She joined the Bank in 2003 and became part of a frontline team based in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. Other members of the team were based in Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, and Uganda.

De Burca brought to her job a veritable trove of experience. Between 1998 and 2002, she worked with child soldiers, first in Sierra Leone, and later in Côte d'Ivoire. "It was while I was working in a regional position with UNICEF in Côte d'Ivoire that I became aware of MDRP," de Burca explained.

She joined the Bank in Kinshasa in 2002. "The country office was reestablishing itself and we worked for a about a year and a half in a construction site that was the Bank office in Kinshasa," de Burca recalled.

Pushing petty and serious discomforts aside, de Burca and other Bank staff quickly got to work designing and implementing the project, a process that involved working closely with the transitional government and coordinating with several main partners as well as the international community that was providing support to the project. "I provided the technical expertise necessary to design the project," she said.

No Time for Fear

De Burca was not new to DRC, having stayed in the conflict-wracked eastern part of the country from 1996 to 1998. The experience, she says, steeled her against fears of insecurity. "I simply



Roisin Ellen Mary De Burca, Senior Social Development Specialist

became unafraid of staying in conflict areas," she observes, mentioning that she experienced quite a few close brushes with danger while in Eastern Congo before she joined the Bank.

Living and working in Kinshasa during relatively less turbulent but nonetheless dangerous times, de Burca became accustomed to heavy gunfire or sudden armed unofficial checkpoints. She took it all in her stride and went about her work.

"We have 29,000 children who have been demobilized in the DRC, 8 percent of whom are girls," she said, measuring the progress of the project she described as successful in the context of a transitional government, because it facilitated an internationally recognized election. "A fragile peace holds and the project has another two years to go," she said.

De Burca is back at headquarters, and her place in Kinshasa has been taken over by Abderrahim Fraiji. Madjior Solness Dingamadji, another Bank staffer and former Colonel from Chad, is based in Burundi.

Post-Conflict in Rwanda

Working from Kigali, Rwanda, Gregory Alex ("Gromo," as he is known to his colleagues), is another frontline staff hard at work reintegrating ex-combatants in civilian life. Alex sees the challenge as convincing the rest of society that ex-combatants can become viable members of society. Once a plan is in place, ex-combatants follow through, he said.

The key to success, Alex observes, is "convincing yourself and others that it will work, and convincing the rest of society that ex-combatants are worthwhile members of society," says Alex, who has worked on the project 9 years, 4 of them with the Bank. In total, Alex has spent 30 years in Africa. He was with the United Nations during the Rwanda genocide. He recalled how he and his colleagues endured daily threats and attacks by militias. "I survived," he says.

Hundreds of Thousands Demobilized

The Bank and 13 donors finance the MDRP. The program collaborates with over 30 partner organizations, including United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. The program's estimated cost is about \$560 million. Donors have already contributed \$242 million to a trust fund, and an additional \$190 million is available through IDA.

Through the program, 286,276 combatants have been demobilized and 160,839 have been or are being assisted through the reintegration support.

"Voices from the Field"

The Social Development Film series, now in its fourth month, screens films produced by staff that showcase the work of the network. The series will culminate in June with a week-long series retrospective, including an award for the best film of the season.

The next screening, a documentary profiling the Indigenous Community Development Project (ICD) in Argentina, entitled "The Power of Self-Management" will be screened on Wednesday, May 23 at 12:30 pm in MC8-100.

*Contributed by John Mulaa
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