



Deborah Kahambu, a former combatant with an armed militia now runs a sewing workshop in Lubero territory in the DRC.

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New beginnings in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

This is the story of Deborah Kahambu from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At 28 years of age and mother of three, Deborah was once part of an armed militia in Lubero territory (bordering Uganda). She now leads by example, showing to the world that there can be new beginnings. She sews and with this, she makes her livelihood sustainable.

At 19, Deborah was forced to join an armed militia to fight ethnic groups in her native village in North Kivu Province in the DRC. Six years of witnessing devastation and the violent consequences of civil war, she decided to surrender weapons and opt for a peaceful life.

One of the main activities of [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo \(MONUSCO\)](#) is [Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration, and Resettlement \(DDRRR\)](#) and its sensitizing messages on voluntary return of combatants, their reintegration and repatriation.

Of the people who voluntarily disengaged from weapons was Deborah. With the support of Remy Nsengiyumva, international UN Volunteer Associate DDR Officer from Burundi and the MONUSCO DDRRR section, Deborah became part of the Community Violence Reduction (CVR) project that offered disengaged combatants socio-economic opportunities.

CVR projects have a gender-responsive approach that accounts for the specific needs of

women. As part of her reintegration, Deborah got vocational training and entrepreneurial skills coaching. She started sewing, which helped her provide for her children. She could now pay for their education and sustain her family respectfully.

Ex-combatants like her have also had new beginnings. Their new positive roles give strength and resilience to their communities. Some are into building roads and marketplaces, while others are into repairing inter-community bridges.

Remy sees the constructive impact of projects like CVR on a first-hand basis.

“ My proudest experience was working with women who were former ex-combatants and decided to surrender and get involved in the development of their community. I saw the smartness with which they chose income-generating activities and carried out their businesses.” Remy Nsengiyumva, international UN Volunteer Associate DDR Officer with MUNUSCO.

CVR projects aim to reduce high level of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. So far, 28 CVR projects are implemented benefitting over 5,000 people.



Remy Nsengiyumva, international UN Volunteer Associate DDR Officer verifies weapons and ammunition from combatants as part of MONUSCO DDDR activities. @UNV, 2022.

Along with his team, Remy conducted 40 outreach activities that brought together more than 1,600 participants, 53 per cent were women. The outreach focused on peaceful co-existence, social cohesion and community reconciliation.

The team also supported the repatriation of foreign ex-combatants to their countries of origin. And facilitated the separation of numerous children from armed groups through reunification with their own families, foster families, or referring them to reception centers. Remy saw 13 children formerly with armed groups reunite with their families.

UN Volunteers like Remy, make a tangible difference through their UN Volunteer assignments with MONUSCO. Through their service, heroes like Deborah continue following a productive and peaceful role in their communities.

More than 389 UN Volunteers serve with MONUSCO in the DRC.

 **West and Central Africa**

- vocational training • self-sustainability • livelihood • women empowerment • peacekeeping
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Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth](#)