

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: [Fragility and development in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), HC 99

Tuesday 25 October 2016

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Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Jeremy Lefroy; Wendy Morton; Virendra Sharma; Fiona Bruce; Dr Lisa Cameron; Pauline Latham.

Questions 1-36

Witnesses

[I](#): Councillor Jean-Roger Kaseki, Associate of the Human Rights and Social Justice Research Institute, London Metropolitan University; Tom O'Bryan, Congo Democracy Project, Harvard University; Dr Suda Perera, Research Fellow, Developmental Leadership Programme, University of Birmingham.

[II](#): Shuna Keen, Regional Programme Manager for DRC and the Great Lakes, International Rescue Committee; Dr Zoe Marriage, Reader in Development Studies, SOAS.

Examination of Witnesses

Councillor Jean-Roger Kaseki, Tom O'Bryan, Dr Suda Perera.

Q1 Chair: Good morning, everyone. This is an evidence session for our inquiry into work in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We have two panels of experts this morning and we plan to take about 45 minutes with each panel. May I welcome our first panel. We generally go straight into questions but, when you first answer a question, please do introduce yourselves. Thank you very much for being here with us. To give you a sense of the time, we have about eight questions that we want to cover with you over the next 45 minutes.

We have obviously seen some pretty horrendous violence in Kinshasa and we have some deep concern about that. Can each of you very briefly just give us your assessment of the current political situation and whether political dialogue is happening at all? Perhaps we could go across, starting with Councillor Kaseki.

Councillor Kaseki: Thank you very much, Chair. The political situation in the DRC is very worrying. As the incumbent who is actually finishing his second term, the President is trying to cling on to power and this has created tensions across the country. As you may be aware, Chair, there was an issue of mistrust between the citizens of the DRC and their Government following the election that was contested in 2011. Now there are actually tensions and people are very angry and have protested and carried out demonstrations against what the President is trying to do. Violence has been escalating there in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He has tried to manoeuvre by clinging on to power with a national political dialogue that did not actually involve the real opposition side of the DRC, which has a lot of support across the country. They were not involved in that national dialogue.

This is a deadlock. There is a need for proper dialogue. As the situation is very complex, the Government could not hold elections as scheduled. There are talks about creating a path for a transitional government for 18 months to pave the way for free and fair democratic elections. This needs the involvement of the real opposition, which has a lot of support in the country, to restore trust. This is where we are politically.

Dr Perera: I would like to echo what Councillor Kaseki said. Indeed, the situation is very dire and there is a real danger that the violence in the country could now escalate into civil conflict.

I would, however, look at some of the positive things that are possibly emerging in this critical moment. We can see a number of strong pro-democracy movements emerging, especially grassroots movements and youth-led movements. The pro-democracy group LUCHA, which is a youth-led movement, is particularly interesting here as they are actively committed to non-violent protest and pro-democracy activities, which



should be seen as encouraging. There are movements that are committed to non-violence.

Having said that, there is of course the danger of violence and we should be concerned with the situation of the armed groups in eastern Congo—in particular, that the lack of trust in the political system as it collapses might encourage re-recruitment into armed groups and the increased mobilisation of armed groups.

Tom O'Bryan: Good morning. My name is Tom O'Bryan and I lead the Congo Democracy Project at Harvard University. I am also the author of "Assisting Democracy", a report that we published yesterday mapping donor assistance for elections and democracy in the DRC.

I was 22 years old when I first moved to Congo, fresh out of university. I was drawn to the rich history and, I think, vibrant future of this country. However, I am very worried about Congo today. I am very worried about my friends, colleagues and their families in the DRC today. Congo is on the brink of crisis, as I said in my written testimony to this Committee back in July, but the calm before the storm is clearly now over. Congo has begun a spiralling descent into crisis that threatens to de-stabilise central Africa—a crisis that will obliterate the fragile political framework that has held the country together since the Second Congo War, a crisis in which there seems to be no human right that President Kabila will not violate to extend his stay in power beyond the constitution's two-term limit, and a crisis in which there will be more fighting and a crisis in which more innocent people will perish.

An average of 20 people are killed each time there is a protest these days. There are still more than 70 armed groups in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces alone wreaking death and destruction with armed violence stoked by these political tensions. I suppose we still do not really know how deep Congo will plunge into this crisis. Things are bad but, without urgent action today, things will worsen tomorrow.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. I have one follow-up question before I bring my colleagues in. What should the international community in this context be doing and who within the international community is best placed to lead on that? In addition, bearing in mind the human rights violations that we just heard about, is there a case for sanctions against some high-ranking Congolese officials? Shall we go in reverse order with Tom first?

Tom O'Bryan: Thinking about the international community and specifically the British Government's role in all of this, it is clear to me that, acting on their own, the British Government have neither the financial resources to circumnavigate the technical obstacles to elections in Congo nor the diplomatic leverage in Kinshasa, the capital, to navigate the political obstacles to elections happening. Anything we do has to be part of a common international strategy for engagement in the DRC.



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I am here today not to be another voice for “co-ordination”, which is a development buzzword that all of us have heard too often, but instead to call for a single strategy on the part of the international community combining strategic democracy assistance—I can get into more details of what I think the priorities should be there—with robust political pressure. I am personally of the opinion that sanctions are urgently needed. The US Government and President Obama have led the way in authorising sanctions to be imposed on anyone in the DRC who has subverted democracy or democratic institutions or who is responsible for serious human rights violations.

Many Congolese people were dismayed when the European Council decided a week or two ago not to impose sanctions on the DRC but instead to wait and see. I do not know how much longer the European Union will wait. How much more violence does the European Union have to see before we impose those sanctions? As a caveat to that, I do not think that sanctions are an overnight solution to this problem, but it can help in preventing impunity for some of those acts of violence by the Congolese leadership.

Dr Perera: I also support sanctions against the top levels of Government. What is interesting now is that, as Kabila loses his democratic legitimacy, an opportunity arises for the international community to leverage the donor support that they give and the support that they give to the Congolese state in order to promote greater accountability from the Congolese Government and to push for the Government to uphold its half of the social contract and provide services and security for the citizens, which it really has not been doing.

At the same time, the international community can engage with other actors within the Congo now that the state is losing its democratic accountability. There is scope there to work with civil society organisations, to work with these grassroots movements that are emerging, and this is an excellent area now where the international community can engage and yet not feel that they are undermining a democratically legitimate sovereign.

Councillor Kaseki: This is a very good point. I am actually struggling to find out the British Government’s position on this. The Americans have come out clearly on this. The French and the Belgians have sanctions. What is the British Government’s position on this? What is the Foreign Office saying about this? I would like to see a strong statement from the British Government and the Foreign Office about sanctions against those individuals involved in human rights violations. The civil society organisations, as mentioned by Dr Perera, are really important as well, especially the Catholic Church, which is doing a very good job in terms of challenging the Government. CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, from England and Wales, needs to reach out to the conference of bishops of the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to try to liaise on applying pressure.



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Q3 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Thank you, Chair. I asked the Prime Minister in the House of Commons yesterday whether the crisis in the DRC had been discussed at the European Council meeting that she attended last week and she said that it had not been, certainly not as a high-level agenda item. Do you think it is remiss of institutions that they are not discussing this potentially disastrous situation? It is in the shadow of Syria, and the Congolese Government, to some extent, is using the fact that everybody is thinking about Syria all the time to operate under the radar?

Dr Perera: It is extremely remiss. From a purely aid point of view, the European Union and the British Government do give aid to the Congo in quite high numbers and they should really be keeping an eye on this. For 20 years, there has been a form of humanitarian crisis in the Congo and not addressing it head on is a real problem. It is incredibly remiss to think that it is a secondary conflict to Syria. This could escalate extremely quickly and not dealing with it at this stage is a real problem.

Q4 **Wendy Morton:** This question would be best asked of you, Tom, first of all, given that you mentioned the spiralling crisis and the deterioration. What do you feel is the impact of the political crisis on the eastern DRC and the many armed groups operating there? What effect could any further deterioration have on the work of DFID, particularly given the length of time that DFID has been working in the country?

Tom O'Bryan: That is a really important question. The political crisis in Congo will lead to more fighting and it will lead to more innocent people dying. Much of the violence linked to elections so far has actually played out in urban centres like Kinshasa, Goma and Bukavu. In September alone almost 60 people died in those protests. The armed rebel groups obviously tend to operate principally in rural areas, but the threat that they pose to civilians will also increase as these political tensions rise. In many cases, there is a clear link between political elites in Kinshasa and armed groups in the east of the country in the Kivus.

Clausewitz said that war is politics by other means and, in the DRC, these rebel groups wage war on behalf of political elites to meet political objectives. We tend to see these rebel groups as conflict mineral-hunting, bloodthirsty fighters but, actually, they are also political actors serving inherently political ends. As the power base of the political elites in Kinshasa is challenged, it is almost inevitable, sadly, that they will be mobilising armed groups and that attacks on civilians will increase.

What does that mean for DFID? The DRC is clearly one of DFID's priority countries; £163 million of British taxpayer money will be invested in Congo this year to help drive development. It is clear that this political crisis threatens all of that. If there is a risk of an uptick of violence, it threatens all of DFID's excellent work in building stronger private sector markets, increasing access to education, and increasing opportunities for women and girls. When you think about it in those contexts, it is really a waste of time and money to invest those resources in tackling those



challenges if we are not going to engage in a serious way with the political challenges in the country.

Wendy Morton: Thank you very much. Would anyone else like to comment? Dr Perera or Councillor Kaseki?

Councillor Kaseki: As Tom has just said, DFID needs to continue helping the DRC in addressing issues of security, for instance, as well. Security reform issues are really important. The issue of the DRC's security and defence capabilities is such that the DRC needs a national army and a proper police force. DFID could help the country in training more soldiers, for instance, and more security forces as well as the police. The more that the DRC gets proper security forces, the more they can protect their borders, the more they can disarm the militias, and the more they can improve the security situation in the country. I would suggest a link with the Ministry of Defence on that to try to look at ways in which DFID can provide support on training the military.

Dr Perera: I agree with that, but it is really important to ensure that accountability measures and justice within the security forces—both the police and the army—are strengthened. One of the real problems has been human rights violations by both the army and the police.

Q5 **Wendy Morton:** You have both touched on what my follow-up question was going to be so perhaps I can ask Tom for a very quick comment because I know that other members of the Committee have questions. How can we prepare and provide resilience given the current situation in the DRC?

Tom O'Bryan: Do you mean resilience in terms of community inventions?

Wendy Morton: Preparedness for a situation that may deteriorate even further.

Tom O'Bryan: Again, that is a critical question and I can tie that answer into Councillor Kaseki's response. Investing in building the capacity of state institutions in the DRC is critical, but it is fraught with risk. Clearly, from my personal perspective, there are institutions in the electoral sector such as the elections commission which DFID can make strategic investments to reinforce. However, building off that point about security and working with the Congolese state security sector actors to provide security, it is my personal belief that, at this point in time, it is not responsible for any bilateral donors to be investing resources into those institutions. You look back at historical DFID support of the police in particular and I think those resources actually enabled a number of really terrible human rights operations. Operation Likofi comes to mind. With evidence mounting that the police and army will stop at nothing to crush opposition to Kabila's continued rule, it is really critical, when we think about that question of resiliency and strengthening the Congolese state to be able to manage resources, that we realise that there are some



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institutions where the risk is just too high for us to be investing financial resources.

Q6 Mr Sharma: You have already touched on the point regarding the commitment from DFID on the elections in the DRC. Has anybody justified their hesitancy in committing resources to the DRC elections?

Tom O'Bryan: Perhaps I can speak to that question first, since I have done this work on elections and mapping donor support for democracy in the DRC. From my perspective, DFID had this budget of £11.4 million chalked up to support the electoral process in 2015 and 2016 in the DRC. Only £2.3 million of that £11 million total budget has been spent or disbursed to date. Some of that money has been used in really smart and really important ways of training local networks of election observers and supporting projects focused on civic education. A specific part of that budget—£6.6 million—had been earmarked to fund the elections process directly by means of a grant to the United Nations Development Programme, which would essentially manage the pooled funds for international donors on elections. DFID has granted none of that money to the United Nations Development Programme so far. From my perspective, that does represent responsible custodianship of British taxpayers' money. If, realistically, we have known that the Government would stop at almost nothing to try to delay these national elections in November 2016, would it really have been responsible to invest £6.6 million in directly funding a process that we thought probably would not happen anyway? There are a number of really smart ways that DFID can be investing its resources to support democracy in the DRC, but I do not think that £6.6 million represents value for money or a smart investment.

Q7 Mr Sharma: Can I just follow up on that? Are there any other donors giving assistance to provide political institutions to help the crisis? In addition, how can the role of women in Congolese politics be improved?

Councillor Kaseki: I will take the first question. The answer is in supporting the political capacity building of opposition parties in the DRC, which is the key issue as these political parties need to be supported. How do we support them? By increasing international observation and, as you mentioned, the political participation of women by making women aware of their right to vote. In addition, we need to help them feel confident about coming forward to stand as candidates in elections at all levels. This is the kind of support that we need to provide.

We also need to support the Independent National Electoral Commission to be independent because, as it is, it seems to be controlled, dictated and manipulated by Kabila. This needs to be really independent.

You mentioned financial support to the election. This needs to be provided as well. There also needs to be support for freedom of expression. The opposition party needs to work in an environment where it is protected by security forces and by the law, with freedom of the



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press, which is currently being suppressed. It is being targeted by the Government of the DRC.

One other thing I would suggest about supporting opposition MPs in the DRC's Parliament is that DFID should support parliamentary reform and support opposition MPs in training—for instance, to know how our Parliament in this country is being run and how to actually be effective in an effective legislature. These are the sorts of things that DFID should consider.

We also need to support civil society organisations, especially the Catholic Church, because they are playing a vital role in challenging the Government and holding the Government to account.

Chair: Thank you very much. I am really sorry, but we will run out of time for questions, so I am going to go to the next question now. Do feel free to say something on a previous question when you answer the next one. I will encourage my colleagues to direct the questions to particular panel members because otherwise we will run out of time.

Q8 Fiona Bruce: My question will follow on very neatly from what Councillor Kaseki said. It is directed specifically to Mr O'Bryan. You state in your written evidence that DFID should help build the organisational capacity of opposition parties. There is a very fine distinction between that and supporting the democratic structures which Councillor Kaseki has talked about. What do you think the effects of your suggestion would be and does it risk putting DFID in an awkward position politically in the DRC?

Tom O'Bryan: Again, that is a critical question. Clearly there is some risk when DFID supports a project that is providing capacity-building support for opposition candidates and opposition political parties. The risk is that, in the eyes of the Congolese Government and the Kabila administration, Britain will be seen as supporting an opposition movement seeking to overthrow his Government. It is my personal opinion, having worked on a number of those projects, that they function best when you are integrating candidates both from the majority coalition and from opposition parties. That also happens to be a good way of defusing some tension in projects like that.

There is some risk, but which option here is risk-free? There is risk if we support a project like that but, if we do nothing and just completely withdraw and disengage, there is a risk that in the eyes of the Congolese and their perception of the UK we are seen to be on the wrong side of history here. There is a risk to the lives of the Congolese protestors who are out on the streets if we do nothing. Every option has some degree of risk.

Q9 Fiona Bruce: Just to clarify, what you are saying, therefore, is not dissimilar to what Councillor Kaseki is saying—that we should engage in helping to strengthen the democratic structures and engage with



politicians of whatever party.

Tom O'Bryan: That is true, but there is also, critically, a role in investing in those state institutions where appropriate. One specific example that I will quickly point out is that I think it is time for DFID to make a very small contribution to the UNDP pool fund to support the secondment of international experts to the elections commission to help with this critical process of updating the electoral roll. That is such an important process, and I think there can be huge value added in a public sector institution like that.

Q10 **Fiona Bruce:** My next question is to Dr Perera. You note in your evidence that, despite more than a decade of considerable peace-building work in the DRC, international intervention has not significantly reduced fragility, instability or poverty. Is there a form of long-term peace-building intervention that you think could work?

Dr Perera: Yes, absolutely. The evidence has shown that peace-building initiatives that have taken place so far in the Congo have tended to focus on the short-term humanitarian crises that are taking place and have tended to be about conflict containment and crisis containment rather than long-term development. In part, that is because of short programme cycles and a quick turnover of staff who are not taking the long-term view. However, if you look at the fact that there has not been a significant improvement in either development or security over that time and look at why people are joining armed groups and why there is constant conflict over, for example, land, you see that there has not really been an investment in the long-term development issues such as investment in secure and stable livelihoods. There has not been an improvement in infrastructure that allows economic development to thrive, for example. While the crisis containment is extremely important in the immediate context, taking a long-term view of building up resilience through the development infrastructure is really important as well and has been largely overlooked to date.

Q11 **Fiona Bruce:** Paint me a picture of how you think that would work in practice.

Dr Perera: When people are thinking about how they are apportioning aid, there is a tendency to say, "There are people starving in refugee camps so let us feed these people", but they are not looking at the fact that a lot of these people live on very fertile land that they have been driven away from because of conflict or that the roads are so bad that they cannot trade. Investing in those kinds of things and allowing people to have livelihood opportunities that mean that they do not turn to armed groups, which are a cause of this insecurity, is as important as feeding people in camps.

Fiona Bruce: So it is about looking at the fundamental causes rather than treating symptoms.

Dr Perera: Yes, exactly.



Q12 Dr Cameron: This is a question to Dr Perera. You argue in your evidence that international actors should engage with armed groups. Is there a risk, though, that such groups could simply use donors for their own advantage without there being a real development or security benefit to the community?

Dr Perera: Absolutely, and I think everything comes with risk. What should not be forgotten is that President Kabila himself came up through armed group struggle and that a lot of the political parties we work with in the Congo were armed groups turned political parties, essentially. Hence the idea of engagement with armed groups is actually almost one of classification. What I am suggesting though, again, is looking at the reasons why people turn to armed groups and how armed groups are created. As has been mentioned by both my colleagues, there is a link here; political elites often leverage and use armed groups and create armed groups for their own means. That link is not as separate and oppositional between political elites and armed groups as we might think. We work with armed groups a little bit off the record anyway. What I am suggesting with the engagement is really looking at what drives them in trying to deal with these livelihood issues and security issues.

Q13 Dr Cameron: Is disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration work in the DRC effective in taking people out of armed groups and re-integrating them into communities?

Dr Perera: I would personally say "no" because the re-integration element is never fully realised. Within the context of the pervasive insecurity within the Congo, people are very reluctant to give up their arms without any guarantees of their safety and security and without any incentives. We see people go through the DDR process, feel that it does not work for them and then go back into the same armed groups or create new armed groups. Therefore, there really needs to be something that will act as a disincentive to people to re-recruit and, to date, this element has not been appropriately dealt with in the DDR programmes.

Q14 Jeremy Lefroy: Polling shows that most Congolese people do not believe that MONUSCO contributes to improving security in DRC. Certainly, when we were there in 2011, there was a feeling that MONUSCO was really just about protecting itself rather than protecting the communities. Obviously, the Security Council basis for MONUSCO has changed since then. Do you see MONUSCO as being more effective than it used to be and how effective is it now? Perhaps Tom could contribute to that.

Tom O'Bryan: When one thinks about MONUSCO, there is this strategy, the I4S, which is one of the underpinning documents that dictates the operational decisions and overall strategic decisions too. I would say, to kick things off, that the concept behind that is an excellent one: that there is a strategy driving the interventions of donors and what donors are funding and what NGOs and non-profits on the ground are implementing. The degree to which that is really happening is something that I would potentially take issue with. Sometimes this concept of



stabilisation that drives the MONUSCO missions feels a bit like a catch-all term for anything that works: “If we can create economic opportunities, that is stabilisation. If we can increase access to education, that is stabilisation.” It is really not. That strategy needs to be driven by a really rigorous analysis of specific drivers of conflict, with MONUSCO proposing very specific interventions that respond to those very specific drivers of conflict, donors’ funding and implementation; and, from my perspective, that is not happening at all for the moment.

Q15 Jeremy Lefroy: What would you identify as the drivers of conflict that are not being addressed?

Tom O'Bryan: The critical challenge is that we tend to paint a single narrative of conflict in Congo such that there is one singular war. The reality is that, in the east where I lived in Goma, North Kivu, there are many very localised drivers of conflict. International policy, including MONUSCO’s approach, needs to get better at rigorously analysing those very localised drivers of conflict—which can be as small as land disputes or who has the right over particular cattle—and designing appropriate interventions. That also helps with a preventative and predictive model in terms of where troops and resources should be stationed in order to best respond to where conflict could arise. I do not think that that granular localised analysis is happening right now and it is not informing the strategy, from my perspective.

Jeremy Lefroy: In a way, it is a little like Nigeria, where the northern conflict is Boko Haram, the central conflict is Fulani herdsman and land, and the southern conflict is over oil—all within the same country.

Tom O'Bryan: Exactly. Within the space of 10km or 20km, the specific driver of conflict could be very different and it makes no sense that a single common intervention applied everywhere would have the same effect or adequately respond to those drivers of conflict.

Q16 Jeremy Lefroy: Do you see people recognising that and are we seeing some approaches that are beginning to take that into account now, particularly in the east but elsewhere as well?

Tom O'Bryan: The UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations, at the New York level and in the field, not just in Congo but in other conflict zones, is taking measures to try to build some in-house capacity to get better data on this stuff and to get better analysis. It is a challenge and I do not think it is there yet. You see singular narratives about conflicts. You can look at the situation in Beni and the narrative that the ADF-NALU rebel group is responsible for the atrocities that we have seen in Beni. Really localised analysis and the intelligence that has later surfaced has shown that that is not the case. The UN is making progress, but it still has a long way to go in building that in-house analytical function to look at localised drivers of conflict.

Q17 Jeremy Lefroy: My colleague is about to ask about Beni, but I have a final question on this. Do you think that MONUSCO is incapable of



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handling this kind of situation, or could it adapt and become much more flexible to deal with the different drivers of conflict that you are talking about? We are talking about the largest peacekeeping operation in the world with an extremely expensive 20,000 troops.

Tom O'Bryan: Very briefly, it is clearly a lot of money; \$1 billion is a lot of money. It is very hard to quantify the impact. When you look at the surveys that have been done, the level of confidence in MONUSCO is low in eastern Congo. The level of confidence and trust, sadly, in the Congolese security sector is even lower. They are responsible for human rights violations on a mass scale. In that context, it is not perfect. MONUSCO is not the perfect silver-bullet answer, but it is the best alternative that we have right now.

Councillor Kaseki: There is a degree of disappointment that MONUSCO within Congo has failed to protect civilians. I would like to see peacekeepers with a robust mandate to disarm the militias. This is something that I would like to see, as with what happened when the M23 were disarmed following a UN resolution granting a special mandate to a brigade from Tanzania and South Africa. I want to see those peacekeepers in DRC with a robust and strong mandate to disarm the militias because people are really disappointed that the UN peacekeepers have been in the country for many years and yet we are still talking about issues of security. Some people have even made some comparisons with the presence of the UN in the country after independence when Patrice Lumumba was killed. The UN was in the DRC so people are asking those questions: "What are they doing? People are dying. We are being killed. What is the UN doing? What are the peacekeepers doing in the DRC?" These kinds of questions need to help us to try to see things differently and put forward some new ideas for MONUSCO's strategy to disarm the militias.

Dr Perera: The mandate to go unilaterally after armed groups has been expanded and, following the success of the M23, they were encouraged to go after the ADF and the FDLR. We have not actually seen the replication of the success that they had with the M23, in part because the M23 is a much more conventional fighting force, it is much less embedded among local populations and had less local knowledge, but also in part there is a lack of regional political will. The FIB was massively supported by Tanzania and South Africa and regional partners there.

One of the issues with the lack of trust in MONUSCO is that it is huge and people expect so much from it and, realistically, there is a limit to what it can do, given its lack of local engrained knowledge and its ability to fight in this kind of terrain. What MONUSCO really needs to do in order to improve trust is to communicate more effectively what it realistically can do. It might mean reducing troops, for example, or it might mean reducing the mission. They will have to consider the logistics of that, but they need to be much more honest with the Congolese population about what they realistically can do.



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Q18 Pauline Latham: My question is particularly related to Beni. Jason Stearns has come up with some research suggesting that the massacres that have been occurring in Beni over the past two years have been linked with the Congolese army. Is this true? How can donors such as the UK effectively hold the state actors to account? I do not know who wants to go for that one.

Dr Perera: I would just like to caveat this by saying that I have not personally done research in Beni, but I am going to draw on my research with armed groups in the eastern Congo in North and South Kivu to suggest that it is highly likely that there is a link to the Congolese army, as there have been links between armed groups and the Congolese army in both North and South Kivu. I see no reason necessarily to doubt Jason Stearns' report and research. He is a very vigorous researcher and Congo Research Group do very thorough research.

There might be a need to think about whether there is necessarily an institutional link between the Congolese army and the ADF or whether this is about individual fighters. One of the big problems that the Congolese army suffers from is discipline. Through the process of integrating various former armed groups into the Congolese army by mixage in the past, discipline within the Congolese army itself is a real problem. We need to be careful when drawing these distinctions in terms of whether it is institutional support for the ADF in Beni or just local army members supporting the ADF there.

Pauline Latham: Would you like to add to that, Councillor Kaseki?

Councillor Kaseki: The massacre in Beni, as my colleague just described, means that we need to be careful about this. If this report is right and the Congolese Government is involved, I would suggest that this could be one of the Government's strategies in terms of creating a situation rife with lawlessness and chaos such that Kabila can cling to power by saying to the people that the country is at war and he needs to stay in power.

Q19 Pauline Latham: Do you think MONUSCO should be doing more to stop these massacres and, if so, how?

Tom O'Bryan: Let me start with a quick word about Beni. Clearly, the DRC has faced armed conflict for over two decades now, but the nature of the violence in Beni is truly abhorrent. I remember getting an email back in 2014 one morning in the office in Goma with a report that featured some photos of the attacks in Beni the night before. I will never forget the photos of severed limbs and intestines spilling out of stomachs that had clearly been hacked open with a machete—truly awful things. 500 people died in the space of a year. This is truly extraordinary violence that necessitates extraordinary attention and extraordinary resources committed to this.



Both the Congolese Government and the UN blamed the ADF-NALU principally for this and, as you say, research by Jason Stearns and other researchers at the Congo Research Group have shown that that was actually an intelligence failure of epic proportions. We know that Congolese troops were involved. We know that different RCD-K/ML rebels were also involved as well as smaller local militias. That report did a good job of finding out who the potential killers have been in Beni. We still have no idea about what is driving this violence. We have no idea what caused this sudden uptick in violence in Beni. It is shocking. The Congolese Government launched an investigation into this. Its findings are not public. That is a gigantic challenge. The UN has started to deploy more troops up to the Beni region, but this violence is continuing. We clearly need to direct an awful lot more attention to this or else it is going to continue.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Can I thank all three of you for your responses? We have obviously covered a lot of issues and we could have spent five times as long getting into more detail, but it has been really valuable for us hearing from you in person, and please feel free to stay in the public area, if you wish to, for the second panel.

Can I ask our second set of witnesses to join us? We will be focusing in the second half of today's evidence session on the humanitarian aspects of the DRC situation.

Examination of Witnesses

Shuna Keen and Dr Zoe Marriage.

Chair: We have two witnesses and, as with the previous panel, we will go straight into questions, but please do introduce yourselves when you have the first opportunity to answer a question. I am going to invite Wendy Morton to ask the first question.

Q20 **Wendy Morton:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning. I want to ask a question about conflict and security and for your views on how you feel the conflict in eastern DRC affects the ability to gain access to provide humanitarian assistance in the region. Following on from that, with security issues being so prevalent, how can development programmes be made more resilient against shocks or flare-ups in the conflict? Could we start with Shuna?

Shuna Keen: I am Shuna Keen. I am the Regional Programme Manager for the International Rescue Committee. We have been working in the Democratic Republic of Congo for the last 20 years and are really seeking to respond to acute need as well as to address some of the underlying factors of instability and to contribute to longer-term development.

One of the things that we have learnt in the course of our programming in the DRC is that, as a humanitarian organisation, there is a lot that we



can do to improve our own security at lots of different levels. It is integral to the quality of our programming and the acceptance that we have at community level that helps to support our own security and our ability to gain access. However, the situation is becoming riskier for us in many countries where we have to be a lot smarter about how we assess risk and how we integrate that into our planning at all levels.

In the longer-term perspective that we have through our programmes, we are really trying to build up resilience at local level through, for example, community reconstruction programmes. We have just completed a programme that was funded by DFID called Tuungane, which means “let’s unite” in Swahili. It is one of the biggest community reconstruction programmes of its kind, working in almost 2,000 communities and reaching more than 2 million people from 2007 until this year when the programme was closed. We have been able to really contribute to that at local level, with reconstruction and tangible results like bridges being re-built. Needs have been met through responding to local development planning and working with stakeholders at the community and local government levels.

One of the important results and outcomes of that programming is not just the tangible results—the bridges and the things that have been fixed—but also the interaction, the dialogue and the relationships that are created at local level between the state and the community, which is absolutely fundamental. It takes a long-term programme like that to address that and a longer-term investment, for example with the outcomes for women and their ability to contribute to decision-making and the impact that that has on their own ability to get involved in absolutely vital decision-making at household and community level. That, at an aggregate level in the Congo, is transformative against the backdrop of conflict, instability and a lot of these protracted problems that have been discussed previously. With the DFID investment, it is possible to really drive change at local level, but it takes time. That was a programme from 2007 until this year. When we started out, it was not necessarily going to be such a long programme, but it was extended. It gives you an idea of what is possible in the timeframes that we have to operate in.

Q21 Wendy Morton: I have a follow-up question for Dr Marriage, but if there is anything that you want to add on my previous point, by all means do so. My follow-up question relates to the evidence that suggests that DDR—disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration—is not particularly effective. I wonder what your thoughts are on how it can be made more effective.

Dr Marriage: My name is Zoe Marriage. I am a reader at SOAS in the Department of Development Studies, and I have studied Congo for the last 15 years. I have been following it from my PhD onwards basically.

When it comes to the security issue, I would like to open it up a little bit more because of the conversation that we have already had this morning.



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It seems that it is impossible to answer that question about the security for a provision only on the basis of aid. NGOs are obviously working in a situation that is incredibly difficult. Those NGOs that are working there are probably the best people equipped to deal with the risk that they are trying to face and the dangers both to their international staff and their national staff.

I would like to throw this open a little bit further: what is it that we understand by “security” in Congo? What are the interests involved? What are the power bases? How are people going to be pursuing those power bases? There is a huge difference between the rhetoric of what is going on, the rhetoric that is in fact adopted by DFID and the reality on the ground. If you look at the submission to this panel, there is a narrative of a slow and steady improvement in Congo over the last 15 years since the signing of the peace agreement. That is not something that we have heard from the witnesses this morning. That is not something that we have heard from the Congolese people. That in itself suggest a single narrative of a war that has now been brought to a close and that these episodes of violence that we are observing are vestiges of that war. However, what we are hearing about in Beni and what we saw in Ituri and northern Katanga and with the CNDP is that theatres of war have opened up since the end of the conflict. We therefore have to get away completely, when we are talking about security, from this idea that there was a war and that it has been gently petering out over the last 15 years.

Now, I do not think that that is a naïve rhetoric; it is a politically loaded rhetoric. It is about how DFID and other northern donors have intervened in Congo in order to ameliorate what was a horrendous war situation. However, when we look at the interests of those donors in terms of when they intervened and how they intervened, we see that a lot of those interventions have been responsible for extreme forms of insecurity being exacerbated since the end of the conflict.

I will give two very clear examples of how I see the security of the Congolese population being very seriously compromised by the form of aid that has been directed at the country since the end of the war. The first, originating before the end of the war, was a rapid and totally unregulated process of liberalisation that allowed the Congolese political elites to sell off the resources of Congo in a way that involved no valuation of resources and no transparency. Hence, while appearing to be a kind of neoliberal market intervention that would suggest that the market would drive development in Congo, a fire sale—a selling off of the family silver—left the Congolese state and the population in a much more destitute position than it was previously.

The second example is the form of democratisation that we have seen in Congo, as well as across the region, with a consolidation of power and a subversion of what we understand to be democratisation. The leaders of Uganda, Rwanda, Central African Republic, Burundi and Congo have all



extended their mandates through various means to subvert what we have optimistically been referring to as the democratisation of the region of central Africa for the last 15 years.

Those two things, of course, are operating together. They are incorporating the political elites of central African countries in the processes of selling off resources of whatever sort—and, obviously, the vast majority of them are on Congolese soil—to an unregulated international market. In its report, Global Witness has referenced its “Out of Africa” piece of work, which estimates that \$1.36 billion has been lost from the Congolese coffers, all of which has been routed through British tax havens and through companies that are listed on the London Stock Exchange.

The destitution of the Congolese population at the moment is in complete conflict with the interests of Britain, broadly speaking—I am not going to name the British Government specifically—given that this is where the London Stock Exchange is based and this is where returns are felt from those tax havens.

Chair: Can you wind up because this is quite a long answer. This ranges rather more widely than the question.

Dr Marriage: This is where I see that the security of the population has been compromised because, through these processes of unregulated liberalisation and through the consolidation of apparently democratic power, we have deprived the Congolese population of economic and political resources. All of the decisions have been taken out of Congo to a level to which the Congolese population has no access.

All of what I am going to say for the next hour will be about shifting power downwards instead of upwards. The security question is absolutely about that as well. We cannot deal with chasing after certain militia groups or the Congolese army. We are talking about a country that has been deprived of its decision-making capacity, and the population are the key victims of that.

Q22 **Fiona Bruce:** Good morning. Can I turn to the very specific question of the safety and security of humanitarian staff? The number of kidnappings in eastern DRC has risen considerably over the last few years. Has that created issues for the safety of humanitarian staff?

Shuna Keen: It is a growing problem, especially in the east of the country. Already this year there have been 11 cases of NGO staff being kidnapped, and it is usually local staff. NGOs are targeted, but we are not the only ones to be targeted by kidnapping, and the ransoming and kidnapping phenomenon has been in the east of the DRC for some time now. It is often farmers, families and whole villages that are held to ransom and, until the ransom is paid, they are not returned. It is unfortunately an extension of the war economy and a feature of the war economy. The motivation is economic, unfortunately, and, looking at it



from the aggregate level, it could be seen as a negative coping mechanism because the legitimate means of survival are not there. Again, lots of the longer-term programming that organisations such as IRC and DFID can do is geared towards creating opportunities for people, especially young people, so that they do not have to resort to such negative coping strategies. As I mentioned before, there are ways that we try to manage risk at all levels, and it has to increasingly be part of our decision-making and planning.

Q23 Fiona Bruce: The numbers you have quoted are quite high in terms of humanitarian staff and the people who are there to help suffering in this way. Is there anything more that can be done in the short-term to improve their security? More broadly, what support is provided for those families that fall victim to kidnapping and fall into financial difficulty as a result of ransoms having to be paid? I am thinking specifically at the moment of humanitarian workers.

Shuna Keen: There were 11 cases of kidnapping of humanitarian workers this year. I cannot speak for other NGOs, but for International Rescue Committee our policy is that we will not pay ransoms and we will not compromise our humanitarian principles in that way. We do not think that that is the way to respond to this problem. As to how families are then supported, we would have to get back to you on that because, as far as I know, the 11 NGO staff are not our IRC staff so I do not know. I assume there are plans in place for how we would respond to that if it were to arise.

Fiona Bruce: Clearly this specific issue is inhibiting your ability, and the ability of other NGOs, to be effective in that region.

Shuna Keen: One of the main problems for access is security, but infrastructure is also a problem. The road system in the Congo—if you can call it a road system—is inadequate and presents some of the biggest challenges that we face alongside insecurity.

Q24 Chair: Can I ask you both about the Common Humanitarian Fund? As a general opener, how effective do you think it is?

Shuna Keen: We have mixed experiences of the UN pool fund, both positive and negative. We find that overall, not just in the Congo but in general, that kind of funding mechanism is more effective for smaller-scale crises where time is not of the essence. When responding to an acute emergency, those processes tend to be too slow and do not really enable effectiveness at scale to respond to a large-scale rapid-onset type situation. It depends on the situation really. There can also be a lack of transparency in how those mechanisms function.

Chair: Could you say a bit more about that?

Shuna Keen: It is not always clear how decisions are made and which things get funded and which do not. Sometimes that is just a matter of communication, but the fact that decisions are not clear can lead to a



question mark over the transparency of what the criteria are for making funding decisions.

Q25 **Chair:** Is there then an issue in terms of aligning the humanitarian assistance, which is the focus of the programme, with the longer-term development needs that I think you both referred to in answer to the first question?

Shuna Keen: That is the challenge in general for our programme in the Congo and in other situations. We are really pleased that DFID supports now, through the Grand Bargain, the commitments that were made there to longer-term planning for humanitarian funding. That is absolutely part of the solution. It has to be because, in a situation like Congo with a protracted crisis, people are displaced often for long periods and are displaced repeatedly. Grants of 11 months—which is the average length of a grant and is the length that we have in the DRC—or shorter do not allow us to plan for that when we know that it is a longer-term problem. Generally, if longer-term funding mechanisms are available, it would enable much more cost-effective planning as well because our overheads would come down by being able to plan longer term, as well as being more effective generally in terms of the results and in terms of the assistance that is provided.

Q26 **Chair:** One of the things that has been clear in evidence to us is that a lot of humanitarian organisations are providing pretty basic public services that ordinarily one would expect the state to provide. Dr Marriage, would you like to comment on that? In particular, what does that mean for relations between the citizens of DRC and the state?

Dr Marriage: It goes back to the last two questions as well, because one of the issues with providing development or humanitarian assistance is accountability, and this is something that NGOs, governments and official donors struggle with all the time in terms of, “How can we be more accountable to our beneficiaries while gathering funds and considering our constituencies at home?” This is something that we have been debating for 20 to 30 years within the development discourse. One of the things that a pooled fund does is to invent another line of legitimacy and accountability whereby official donors can put their money there and then the United Nations can deal with it. The United Nations is seen, to some extent, as a legitimate actor that should be operating in eastern Congo, whereas DFID might be saying, “Should we be operating here? Should we be operating there?”

That question of accountability goes to the centre of the pooled funds, and then the problems of the bureaucracy of something that is going to involve so many people is clearly going to slow down that mechanism, even if it is made into a mechanism that is supposed to be more transparent and quicker. There is an internal contradiction with the way that is framed.



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Certainly, with regard to humanitarian aid and development, the issue in Congo is that these things are going on at the same time. We are not going from a humanitarian phase to a development phase. There were always some people in their houses attempting to take their children to school and to the markets and so forth, and at the same time we have waves of displacement internally and waves of displacement from Burundi, Central African Republic and South Sudan. These are overlaid in people's experiences and they interlock in terms of people's life opportunities. If you are already suffering from acute food insecurity and then people come from South Sudan and start to take food—whatever the combination of events is—that is going to make the situation even more difficult.

As far as the agencies are concerned, what I have seen in terms of how NGOs operate is that the titles "humanitarian" and "development" refer mainly to how long the money is for. If it is a six-month thing, it is called "humanitarian". It can be the same kind of intervention that is made and which is repeatedly tagged on, turning it into a three-year project and relabelled as "development". It depends pretty much on where the money is coming from and on the conditions of spending. NGOs tend to do the same sort of things. Oxfam, MSF and other NGOs tend to do medical aid. They tend to do the same sorts of things, whether they are accessing longer or shorter-term projects. For them, it is an operational question in terms of how each individual NGO is going to manage to make that development work matter in a way that prepares people for any other shocks and humanitarian crises that may be overlaid. It is not the case that the development will stop and the humanitarian will start.

Q27 **Jeremy Lefroy:** In other current crises, such as the Syrian crisis and the impact on Lebanon, Jordan and elsewhere, a lot of attention has been paid, rightly so, to the impact of the refugees on the local population. Clearly, Congo has been experiencing this for a much longer period, with well over 200,000 refugees and increasing all the time, particularly from Burundi and South Sudan, and with more than 400,000 Congolese living in other countries. Are you seeing the same level of attention given to the needs of local people alongside refugees in Congo as we are seeing in the Middle East at the moment, or is it a forgotten area?

Dr Marriage: I do not think Congo is ever forgotten. It has an exalted title as a "forgotten crisis", but people discuss Congo. It is extremely important for the global economy. It is a major area of central Africa.

Jeremy Lefroy: I am not thinking about Congo being forgotten but about the needs of local people as against refugees.

Dr Marriage: Going back to the last question, these are things that are overlaid. If you talk about 200,000 refugees, the World Food Programme in July estimated that there were 5.9 million Congolese people in acute food insecurity crisis. The number of refugees in comparison to the horror that is already being experienced in Congo absolutely pales into insignificance. That is not to say that they are insignificant but that the



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issues of Congo are so profound to start with that anything that is done to support refugees must also support the host environments in which they are going to be finding themselves because those areas are already troubled with food insecurity and land issues, particularly in the eastern part of Congo where land has been one of the major issues for years in local conflicts. Any work that is carried out with refugees also has to support the Congolese population, who will in any event be the major means of support for those populations of refugees.

Shuna Keen: The numbers of IDPs—internally displaced people—vastly overshadow the numbers of refugees. There are around 1.7 million internally displaced people in the east compared to, for example, 400,000 refugees coming over from CAR, South Sudan and Burundi. It is also important to say that the planning that has been done to respond to the refugee influx and the needs of those people coming in is actually at the moment 0% funded, and this is the same for lots of the humanitarian response plans around the region, which includes refugees and internally displaced people. There is a real problem in that the refugee response plans are not being funded yet.

Q28 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Is that from within Congo? We have heard from DFID that, for instance, there is a lot of support going to the Burundi refugees in Tanzania.

Shuna Keen: Yes, and the response is better for the Burundian refugees in Tanzania than for IDPs in Burundi, where the humanitarian response plan for this year is funded at about 50%. That is the same for Congo and for sub-Saharan Africa.

Q29 **Jeremy Lefroy:** So you are drawing the distinction between the support for IDPs and for refugees and saying, obviously, the IDP problem in Congo is vastly bigger.

Shuna Keen: Equally, the refugee crisis is not being funded at the moment.

Dr Marriage: The same problems occur for NGOs trying to assist those refugees as for NGOs trying to assist anybody else in Congo: the infrastructure is not there and there are problems with militia forces.

Shuna Keen: In terms of our work, we are focused in the east much more with internally displaced people so we are not responding to the influx of refugees. We have had to focus our programming in particular places. However, in terms of the host communities, including for internally displaced people, that is part of our programming, but where we are also seeing a gap is funding for returnees, i.e. people who have been displaced internally and gone back home. That is not really being thought through and planned for in humanitarian funding to the extent that is required. Again, looking at bridging the humanitarian and development divide, supporting host families as well as returnee families and those communities that are going back is clearly vital.



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Q30 Dr Cameron: We heard a bit earlier about the importance of infrastructure for jobs and livelihoods and long-term development. How significant is the poor infrastructure to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, what can donors realistically do to improve infrastructure and how can those difficulties be overcome?

Dr Marriage: I would say that the infrastructure, as well as the militarisation of the east, is the key constraint for NGOs operating particularly in eastern Congo. However, it is not only in eastern Congo, because we have Kinshasa in the west and a lot of forest and it is extremely difficult for any NGOs to access populations that are in that forest just because of the problem with the infrastructure. There are very few roads. Aircraft are unreliable and expensive. It is difficult to underestimate how constraining the infrastructure is. That is actually a key determinant of who gets aid and who does not. Those who are nearer the main road are almost certainly in a better position to receive assistance than those who are not, so infrastructure ends up guiding where assistance is given.

I would also say that there is no distinction between political infrastructure and physical infrastructure. The ability of Congolese people to interact with road-making, the maintenance of dams, electricity grids and anything else depends on their skills and education. One of the quite peculiar experiences of going to infrastructure projects in Congo is that you take a step back 60 years and find yourself in a Belgian building where all of the machinery is Belgian and some of it is broken but the rest of it is ticking over. It is an absolutely extraordinary experience. The building of physical infrastructure, which has to be part of the development of the country, needs to go hand in hand with the building of education, skills and the employment of Congolese people in order to interact with and operate that infrastructure. That needs to be the basis of the development programme rather than a top-down state building operation which, for the first 15 years, has been very disappointing.

Q31 Dr Cameron: As a quick follow-up, you were suggesting that, when people are nearer to the roads, they receive more help. Does that mean that very vulnerable people such as elderly and disabled people may be least able to access humanitarian aid? How could we be reaching those people?

Dr Marriage: The life expectancy in Congo does not really allow for elderly people. There are some but very, very few. My experience of Congo is basically of young people. There are also very few disabled people. Life is pretty brutal so all strength to any organisation that wants to work specifically with elderly people or disabled people, but that is a tiny minority amongst millions of healthy people who are in food crisis.

Dr Cameron: It is very shocking to hear you say that, particularly in terms of our sustainable development goals and trying to leave no one behind.



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Dr Marriage: I do not mean that in a brutal way at all. I just mean that the life chances are so abysmal for people there that not being able-bodied and being elderly are two pretty much fatal conditions.

Shuna Keen: Life expectancy is what—49?

Dr Marriage: It is certainly less than 50.

Q32 **Pauline Latham:** In this country, sexual and gender-based violence is often not reported, and this is in a much more difficult situation. How can humanitarian aid be best targeted to those victims who need it and what can be done to encourage them to come forward? As a follow-up to that, how much of a role does a lack of enforcement play in the continuation of sexual and gender-based violence, and how can humanitarian organisations working in the DRC promote and strengthen the rule of law? It is a problem here as well, but that is a really tricky situation.

Shuna Keen: In terms of response, it is a good question. Key to programming in gender-based violence in eastern DRC is the timeliness of that response because the first 72 hours is the window in which a woman can receive post-exposure prophylaxis to treat HIV. The first 120 hours is the window for emergency contraception. The window in some cases for potentially fatal injuries to be treated is just a few hours. That would be a challenge in any situation, but is very difficult with the infrastructure challenges that we have heard about. That is the kind of programming that IRC is doing in terms of an initial response and encouraging women to come forward. Often it is a case of women knowing that those services are provided in health centres or having a safe space that they can go to where they know that, by coming forward, they are not going to be stigmatised or ostracised, because that is often the unfortunate reality.

With regards to our long-term development work, the intention is to increase women's status in DRC and adolescent girls' self-esteem through education, for example, and through social and emotional learning in schools. Those are services that we are funding from DFID, and equally with boys' education as well to develop more positive attitudes towards women. Unfortunately, those are the kinds of social norms against which sexual and gender-based violence and sexual harassment takes place. Thus, we have both the immediate response as well as the longer-term response.

Dr Marriage: I would agree with everything that Shuna said and I would add that sexual violence is one of the things that really does not fit into the "It is gently getting better" narrative. Most people in eastern Congo report that sexual violence of the epidemic proportions that we see in fact started after the end of the war—just at the end of the war—and have grown through the first decade of the 21st century. This is something that is associated very strongly with militia forces, with the Congolese army and a little bit less so with the Rwandan sponsored militias. It is also associated with teachers, policemen and husbands, so this is



something that goes through from a large number of perpetrators called “non-identified men in uniform” to ordinary social relations; sexual and gender-based violence is part of what is accepted socially. Therefore, looking at legislation and how the law can respond to sexual violence only deals with a very small proportion of it because all of those political and social assumptions are also embedded in the legal systems in Congo. It is very difficult for women, as we have heard, to bring their cases.

There are also at least two other sides of the story: lots of women now claim to be sexually violated when they have not been because they know that this will give them access to medical resources and humanitarian assistance. Women are even deliberately sexually assaulted by members of their own family in order to give them access to assistance. “Sexual violence” has become such an excited term within the narrative of NGOs that it has actually been itself prostituted in Congo: something that people do in order to get assistance. That is something that any response to sexual violence has to take into account.

There is also, of course, the rape of men, which is something that has been on and off the agenda throughout the last 10 years or so. Hundreds of thousands of men have been raped in eastern Congo and, because the whole story of women’s sexual violence has gained such currency, it was very difficult for NGOs and for those men to gain any kind of acceptance, assistance or medical support for the sexual violence that they had experienced.

The last part of this is that sexual violence is so widespread in eastern Congo that the idea that it is somehow different or stigmatised has to be challenged. I have a PhD student who is working in eastern Congo on the experiences of sexual violence. She would talk to entire villages all of whom had been raped. There is no way that we can talk about a stigma if everybody in the village has the same experience. All responses to sexual violence, therefore, have to take into account not only the first story about how this has been increasing or decreasing since the end of the war but also how this has been integrated into the narrative of how observers think about Congo and how Congolese people think about themselves and their relationships between men and women, between threat and protector, even within the domestic experience, and how political, social and legal mechanisms can be taken forward in concert with each other to protect women not just at the point of crime.

Q33 Pauline Latham: For the genuine cases, are there enough trained women police officers for women to go to in order to report it or do they have to go to male police officers who actually really do not care and may be perpetrators themselves?

Dr Marriage: I really do not know what the women police office numbers are in eastern Congo.

Shuna Keen: I do not have information on that.



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Dr Marriage: I do not think they usually go to police officers. That is not the way of doing it. In general, women will go to a medical facility and an NGO working at a medical facility will keep the records and then will take it forward if that is what the woman wants.

Q34 **Pauline Latham:** Are there sufficient women in the medical centres or are most of the doctors male?

Dr Marriage: Most of the doctors are male.

Q35 **Pauline Latham:** Do women feel comfortable reporting it to them?

Dr Marriage: I do not think women feel comfortable reporting sexual violence to anybody. That is part of the global gender difference. From my experience, I have not heard that women have a particular problem with male doctors in Congo because most doctors are male. There are some fantastic doctors. There is a guy who won the Nobel Prize a couple of weeks ago. There is some really outstanding work done by male doctors so there is quite a lot of confidence in the medical profession in comparison to the police, the army or other public services, of which there are not very many. There are a few teachers and I would say, anecdotally, that doctors are probably the ones who are held in the highest esteem.

Q36 **Wendy Morton:** I will try to put two questions into one so that we can hopefully get some answers to both. Work to prevent and mitigate sexual and gender-based violence and to provide humanitarian aid to victims has been either community-based or top-down, such as lobbying the Government of the DRC to implement the FCO's international protocol on preventing sexual violence. How can these two types of approach be best aligned for maximum impact? What are the best methods of mainstreaming gender and protection in humanitarian work so that women and girls are properly taken into account and their needs are addressed?

Shuna Keen: In terms of response and prevention, you mentioned top-down advocacy. We see a need for local-level advocacy because it is not necessarily a given that humanitarian actors or even local authorities are really able to programme in a way that responds to women's needs and the types of barriers and opportunities that they face across the board, but especially around sexual and gender-based violence. There is a need for advocacy at that level, including by DFID. We would wholeheartedly recommend that.

Gender mainstreaming and gender analysis has absolutely got to be part of programme design, and it is. DFID's practice on that is really good amongst donors. They have rigorous requirements around gender analysis that is based on best practice and that we are held to when we apply for funding. That definitely seems to be part of the actual practice as well as at policy level.



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Dr Marriage: This idea of what goes on at the high Government level and what goes on at community level has come up iteratively in the discussions that we have had, but talking about “top-down” and “bottom-up” slightly misses the directions because lobbying the Government is not really the same as top-down. Lobbying the Government is attempting to stop a predatory elite from being exploitative of its population. How to discipline the Government of Congo in all of these different ways that we have been talking about, including in terms of their relationships with militia forces and whatever the militia forces are doing in the eastern part of Congo relating to sexual violence, is certainly one area, but I would think it would be quite difficult to get anything more than official statements from them, and official statements are reasonably easy to agree to. Most people will say, “Yes, it’s important for gender violence to stop in eastern Congo; it is a horror”.

Please keep going with it—it needs to be said—but that in itself will not be a major political or social stride. The community approaches are very positive and very promising. In fact, Congo is the only African country that I have been to where people will openly talk about sexual violence and rape as a problem because they know that it is a problem. There is absolutely no running away from it. In a lot of other African countries, gender is a “giggle-giggle” issue, something for women and something over there. In Congo, my experience is that, at the community level, people absolutely embrace it as something that is tearing the eastern part of their country apart and is the most severe threat to their family ways of life and cultures. It is absolutely where it needs to be.

In terms of how to do that—the same as I would think with everything else—it is about training, skills and employment opportunities, and for women to be put into positions where they have the opportunity to be strong and earning members of their society and part of a society that is working economically. I know there is a tension around this in terms of whether women should be earning more than men and whether it will cause friction at a domestic level, but it is already happening. There are no regular jobs in eastern Congo. For the last generation and a half, if not two generations, women have been the ones who are selling the bread on the street, brewing the banana beer and doing whatever little things they can in order to get their kids fed and to school. Already it is the women who are absolutely responsible for the household income and economy, and to support them in that, to give them training and to give them employment opportunities, would be a major development challenge and achievement.

Chair: Thank you both very much indeed for your evidence here today. On behalf of all of us, I am grateful to both of you for appearing before us. As ever, there is not enough time to cover all the things that we would like to, but I know that you have also provided written evidence, which is very helpful indeed. Thank you.