

**Testimony by U.S. Agency for International Development
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**U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights**

“The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Securing Peace in the Midst of Tragedy”

March 8, 2011

Good afternoon Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Payne, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you about current issues and foreign assistance activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). I have been the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa at USAID since October 2010. Prior to joining USAID, I was a senior advisor and head of the Peace and Security Division in the Department of State Office of the U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, and I have been working to help countries transition from war to peace for the past 17 years.

My testimony adds to the remarks of Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Donald Yamamoto who spoke on U.S. diplomatic issues in the country. I am pleased that we can discuss these issues together, as the DRC is a yet another example of a place where diplomacy and development work together to build a safer and more hopeful future, not only for those within the country, but throughout the world. As Secretary of State Hilary Clinton said during her 2009 visit to the DRC, “We know that the DRC, its government, and people face many serious challenges, from the lack of investment and development, to the problem of corruption and difficulties with governance, to the horrible sexual and gender-based violence visited upon the women and children in the country. We know these are big challenges, and we are ready to help the government address them.”

U.S. foreign assistance supports the Government of the DRC (GDRC) in its efforts to establish peace and stability, make progress toward good governance and effective rule of law, increase agricultural productivity and economic development, and safeguard the health and well-being of its people. The U.S. Government (USG) continues to be one of the largest donors in the DRC, providing \$306 million in bilateral assistance in FY 2010. The United States also provides support to the UN peacekeeping operation MONUSCO and multilateral institutions. U.S. foreign assistance is coordinated among USG agencies under a Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) to address stability, governance, economic growth, health, and education. The CAS (FY 2009 to FY 2013) outlines plans for the U.S. to work with Congolese government and local actors to transition from conflict and humanitarian relief programming to development assistance and poverty reduction.

Despite many and complex challenges to development, U.S. foreign aid is making a difference. Congolese children are being reunited with their families after being abducted, trafficked, and abused. Some low-income women and other vulnerable individuals are accessing the judicial system for the first time. Surgical teams are gaining

the resources and skills necessary to treat health issues like fistula. Small farmers are learning better ways to grow, process, and distribute their crops. Across the many areas where foreign assistance is needed, USAID is promoting an approach in the DRC that addresses both short-term, immediate needs and long-term, sustainable development.

Peace and Security

Resurgence of widespread conflict remains the biggest threat to stability in the DRC, with the potential to incite regional flare-ups. The eastern region lacks sufficient governmental oversight, creating an environment where illegal armed groups easily find refuge. The area continues to experience instability and violent conflict, which often results in population displacement. Conflict hinders stabilization and reconstruction efforts, while fueling human rights abuses that include brutal and repressive violence against women and girls in particular—though men, too, are suffering sexual assaults.

USG efforts to promote stabilization and post-conflict recovery are aligned with the GDRC's Stabilization Program for Eastern DRC, as well as with the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy. Components under these programs aim to establish and maintain peace and security along strategic roads, or "axes," re-establish infrastructure needed to create or maintain state authority, and support the disengagement of armed groups that remain a threat to Congolese state authority. In FY 2010, U.S. assistance supported these components through community-based reconciliation and conflict mitigation programs that seek to promote peace in eastern DRC by mediating conflict within communities, addressing land tenure issues, improving livelihoods through small income generating activities and employment in infrastructure rehabilitation projects, and bringing public administration services closer to citizens. These targeted interventions are creating tangible, rapid peace dividends that lay the foundation for longer-term stability.

USAID's programs seek to increase stability in the DRC by addressing the root causes and mitigating the consequences of conflict. In recent years, agreements between the GDRC and armed groups, along with DRC military offensives, have weakened armed groups in eastern DRC. USAID responds to humanitarian need and promotes stability there through activities in community reconciliation; community-driven infrastructure and livelihoods recovery; reintegration; local governance and justice; and social protection. Further, we are working along with the State Department and Department of Defense to support the GDRC's development of a national action plan on women, peace and security—ensuring women's role as agents of peace, reconciliation, economic growth, and stability.

The Lord's Resistance Army

A key area of concern remains the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel movement that has roamed effectively ungoverned portions of the DRC, southern Sudan, and the Central African Republic (CAR) since being ejected from northern Uganda in 2005. The 2010 LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act called for the development of an interagency LRA strategy, and USAID has been a key partner with the State Department in developing this strategy. USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance

and Office of Food for Peace have ongoing commitments to provide emergency humanitarian and food relief where the LRA is active.

Human Rights Watch and other actors consistently identify a lack of reliable communications in LRA-affected areas as a key factor enabling a shockingly high level of violence against citizens. In response, USAID assembled a team to design a program to increase communications by supporting community-based protection planning and providing information communications technology in LRA-affected areas.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Human Rights

Addressing the consequences and causes of human rights abuses and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) continues to be a priority for USAID. Insecurity and conflict in eastern DRC have fueled rape and sexual terror as weapons of war. Impunity for SGBV crimes is still pervasive although there has been limited progress, as Deputy Yamamoto noted in his testimony. Additionally, women and girls throughout the DRC are affected by destructive gender norms and discriminatory laws—for example, women cannot open a bank account or file a case in court without their husband’s approval.

For nearly a decade, USAID has been the leading bilateral donor in the DRC for SGBV response and prevention activities, as part of a broader effort for stabilization and protection. We are an active member of the interagency working group on SGBV and an important contributor to donor discussions about SGBV. USAID and State led the development of the U.S. Strategy to Address SGBV in the DRC, with four key objectives: to reduce impunity for perpetrators, to increase prevention of and protection against SGBV for vulnerable populations, to improve the capacity of the security sector to address SGBV, and to increase access to quality services for SGBV survivors.

USAID programs to provide access to support services for SGBV survivors and their families include medical and psychosocial care, counseling and family mediation, social and economic reintegration support, and legal aid. In FY 2010, over 57,000 vulnerable individuals and nearly 20,000 SGBV survivors received specialized support services as a result of USAID programs. Additionally, more than 7,000 service providers and 300 Congolese service delivery organizations improved their ability to deliver high-quality services to SGBV survivors, abandoned children, and their families. Finally, 1,450 separated or abandoned children—many of whom are survivors of sexual abuse—were reunited with their families.

In addition, USAID has provided technical assistance in the drafting of critical legislation and subsequent prosecutions in SGBV cases in the DRC. USAID efforts to promote awareness of the 2006 Law against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence led to an increase in surveyed population awareness from 21 to over 66 percent in South Kivu province. USAID also works with civil society organizations to improve gender perceptions and empower vulnerable populations, including through behavior change communication and engaging men and boys. We have provided technical assistance to almost 100 national human rights organizations on how to successfully plan and manage projects, raise

community awareness of human rights and SGBV, and monitor courts and judicial processes.

Trafficking in Persons and Child Soldiers

Indicating the dire human trafficking conditions, the 2010 Department of State Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report ranked the DRC as Tier III after being ranked a Tier II watch list country for the two previous years. Since 2003, USAID has been implementing anti-trafficking projects focused on providing care and reintegration services to former child soldiers, including those abducted by the LRA, and identification and reintegration services for women and child survivors of sex trafficking and abduction.

Current TIP programming seeks to raise awareness and build the capacity of the GDRC to address trafficking through a new grant to the International Office of Migration (IOM). USAID has directed other resources to a UNICEF program in Ituri District to reintegrate former child soldiers back into their families and communities. As a result, in FY 2010, more than 1,000 vulnerable children—many of whom were formerly associated with armed groups and affected by sexual violence—received protection and medical and psychosocial assistance. Additionally, over 700 children and youth participated in income-generating activities and vocational training. Similar programs are ongoing and planned in the Haut Uele District and North and South Kivu provinces.

Democracy and Governance

As responsibility and leadership of the DRC's future progress lie ultimately with the DRC's government and people, establishing a functioning and responsive political system is paramount. USAID programs focus on civic participation and education; building capacity among legislators, civil society organizations, women's groups, and the media; and judicial strengthening and access to justice—all essential elements of a legitimate and functional democratic government. Additionally, to support an effective decentralization process, we have provided technical assistance to draft and assess several laws related to improving local governance structures.

To build capacity for good governance, USAID programs have trained nearly 2,000 national and local legislators and staff, improving management ability and accountability. We have improved the ability of radio and television stations to broadcast information on a broad array of political and social issues. Critically, we have collaborated with the GDRC and international organizations to support credible election processes.

Support to Elections

In the fall of 2011, the DRC plans to hold its second presidential and national legislative elections. In addition to logistical and practical challenges—such as the DRC's enormous geographic size, ongoing conflict in the east, general lack of infrastructure, and low voter education rates—the elections face many political challenges. The voter registration process has been slow, with the new electoral commission being sworn in only in late February. A controversial constitutional amendment to reduce the number of rounds of elections as well as delays in the final adoption of the electoral law that

provides the legal foundation for the elections further contribute to uncertainty around elections.

Donor and MONUSCO resources for elections are not as robust as they were during the 2006 presidential elections, and the GDRC projects a funding gap of over \$350 million for the 2011 elections. The UNDP-managed election assistance basket fund provides \$163 million for electoral operations and administration, and MONUSCO is focusing on logistical support.

Our strength in promoting civic education has been recognized in the DRC. USAID is managing a \$5.2 million two-year civic education program through International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to inform and enable citizens to register and vote in the elections. We have produced a massive amount of materials and empowered civil society organizations to promote and distribute them. The program is expected to reach more than 8.2 million men and women voters across all of DRC's 11 provinces. USAID is also playing an important role in leveraging additional donor resources for civic education, and has attracted over \$3 million in commitments from Great Britain, Germany, and Canada.

The GDRC has agreed upon an elections calendar that includes local elections, which are now scheduled for 2012 to 2013. USAID's experience in promoting civic education and community dialogue will provide an important foundation for preparing for these local elections, which are key to the decentralization process.

Rule of Law

The DRC's judiciary continues to suffer from a lack of independence, resources, and public trust, leaving the most vulnerable members of society with no meaningful access to justice. The justice system is absent from most of the country, with the nearest court often hundreds of miles away from people's homes. Overall there is a severe shortage of magistrates and court personnel, and recent constitutional amendments have eroded previous progress in judicial independence. Existing courts supplement their insufficient operating budgets with arbitrary and undocumented fees from citizens—a practice rife with corruption and partiality. Judges lack formal and systematic training and access to new laws and decisions, which is essential to administration of fair and equitable justice.

Promoting the rule of law and establishing an independent, effective, and accountable judiciary is a key long-term U.S. foreign assistance priority in the DRC. USAID activities in rule of law support judicial institutions, civil society organizations, and individual citizens. In cooperation with international donors, U.S. assistance led to the training of 1,000 new magistrates. We provided assistance in establishing new laws that increase judicial independence, clearly define the roles and responsibilities of magistrates, improve judicial salaries, and increase oversight of the executive branch. Additionally, we provided technical assistance to the High Judicial Council in drafting an organizational structure, strategic plan, and magistrates' code of ethics. Thousands of lawyers received new handbooks on pre-trial detention and penal code compendia that incorporate DRC criminal legislation. USAID has also helped bring legal services and

courts to remote populations through mobile courts, providing access to justice for over 5,000 vulnerable individuals—including more than 1,100 women—and combating impunity for grave abuses.

Health

The DRC is ranked among the bottom ten countries worldwide on a range of basic social and quality of life indicators. Health indicators in particular are among the worst in the world and reflect the hardships resulting from many years of conflict and significant deterioration of health services throughout the country. According to the 2007 Demographic and Health Survey, about one child out of seven dies before reaching age five. Negative health outcomes reduce productivity while increasing expenditures of scarce resources on health care.

Support for health services is a major component of U.S. foreign assistance and continues to represent an important area of cooperation between the United States and the DRC. In addition to ongoing programs to combat HIV and malaria, USAID health programs seek to increase the availability and utilization of cost-efficient primary health care. USAID provides technical and financial assistance to strengthen the fragile health system while improving access to integrated, quality care to more than 11 million Congolese in 80 of the country's 515 health zones. USAID-supported health zones continue to operate at a high level; the overall clinical and preventative service utilization rate is 40 percent in USAID-supported health zones, compared to 25 percent nationwide.

Through USAID's flagship primary health care program and a range of other health activities in FY 2010, U.S. assistance:

- Provided antenatal care to more than 400,000 pregnant women, enabled 351,073 deliveries with a skilled birth attendant, and provided care to 323,516 newborns within three days of birth.
- Trained nearly 15,000 people in child health and nutrition by working with mother-leaders to provide health and nutrition education as part of a package of community development activities through the Food for Peace program.
- Helped combat micronutrient malnutrition by providing nearly 2.3 million children under the age of 5 with Vitamin A supplements.
- Provided treatment to 292,675 children with diarrheal illnesses and 430,171 children with pneumonia, as well as DPT3 immunization to 324,772 children.
- Prevented malaria cases by purchasing and distributing 824,100 long-lasting insecticide treated nets, purchasing 4.5 million artemisinin-based combination treatments, and collaborating with the UN to support the distribution of 5.5 million bed nets in Maniema and Orientale provinces.
- Improved access to safe drinking water for more than 230,000 individuals and improved sanitation facilities for than 120,000 additional individuals.
- Improved outreach activities related to tuberculosis through private and public media outlets.

Fistula

Women lack access to even the most basic health services, including maternal and reproductive health services, such as prenatal care and skilled birthing care. Compounding this lack of access to services is early forced marriage, early pregnancy, and a lack of voluntary family planning services resulting in pregnancies occurring at too early an age or spaced too closely together, which often gravely endanger the health of the mother and child.

These precarious social conditions and the lack of available health care services are predisposing causes of gynecological fistula, a severe problem in the DRC. In addition, the prevalence of brutal rape with objects, such as weapons or sticks, has also led to cases of traumatic fistula, particularly in North and South Kivu provinces of eastern DRC.

USAID support to prevent and treat fistula has been ongoing since July 2005 with a program designed to reduce incidence of obstetric and traumatic fistula and rehabilitate women with injuries as a result of childbirth and gynecologic trauma in North and South Kivu provinces. In FY 2010, USAID continued to support two key fistula hospitals—Heal Africa and Panzi. Technical and financial assistance was provided to perform fistula repairs, train surgical teams for fistula repair and management, and strengthen the capabilities of surgical and nursing staff to prevent obstetric fistula through safe pregnancy and delivery practices. Thirteen health care providers received fistula surgery training and 197 others received fistula-related training. As a result, nearly 1000 fistula repairs were performed. USAID has also been able to stimulate dialogue among fistula activists in the country and help coordinate the development of the National Fistula Strategy. However, much more work is needed to best advance girls' and women's overall health in the DRC.

Economic Growth

Food insecurity and the global economic crisis have had adverse impacts on the DRC's ability to increase food production and generate revenue. In FY 2010, USAID's economic growth program, aligned with the principles of the Feed the Future Initiative—which include recognizing the contribution of women to agricultural productivity as critical to achieving food security—focused on investing in agricultural productivity, distribution, and processing; livelihoods support in three conservation areas; and food aid assistance in eastern DRC targeting the most vulnerable individuals. With the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), USAID provided support for the launching of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) as well as six other research and policy activities. Additionally, USAID:

- Supported the release of five new varieties of cassava and provided new equipment to Congolese producers and processors to increase cassava productivity.
- Supported the release of 15 new technologies made available to farmers in the agricultural sector that addressed soil, land, and water management practices in biodiversity landscapes.

- Assisted 38,654 households and 572 producers' organizations and associations through improved agricultural technologies and management practices.
- Implemented agricultural livelihood-improvement activities in three important target areas reaching tens of thousands of target households in Ituri, Maringa-Lopori Wamba, and Salonga landscapes, in partnership with the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment.

Conflict Minerals

Recognizing the role of the illegal mineral trade in promoting violence and human rights abuses, the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act included a provision requiring certain U.S. companies to report on the origin of “conflict minerals” used in their products. The illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources originating in the DRC fuels armed groups and contributes to the region’s security and governance problems. Profits from this trade not only support arms purchases, but also undermine the ability of the GDRC to collect much-needed revenue. Men and women civilian miners and traders are routinely victimized along mining routes as armed groups or individuals solicit “taxes” for passage, which hampers regional economic growth. A comprehensive response to these problems calls for diplomatic and security solutions that are complemented by conflict mitigation strategies, infrastructure development, and the strengthening of Congolese national institutions.

USAID planned programming in conflict minerals is designed to improve strategic roads to decrease the barriers to legal trade, lay a foundation for long-term cooperative efforts among the Great Lakes countries, and strengthen the GDRC’s capacity to manage and regulate the mineral sector. Activities will include the rehabilitation of key roads; improving legal and regulatory frameworks by harmonizing new legislation to enforce the DRC’s 2002 mining code; building the capacity of the DRC’s mining sector institutions; and reinforcement of monitoring and transparency in the mining sector, including certification. Recognizing the role of cooperation in responding to the problem of conflict minerals, USAID has been very involved in the development of due diligence guidance together with interagency and international counterparts through the OECD that complement these domestic efforts.

Humanitarian Assistance

USAID continues humanitarian support for the DRC to respond to the effects of conflict and mass population displacement. In FY 2010, our Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance provided approximately \$24 million in aid concentrated in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Orientale provinces. Activities included agriculture and food security, economic recovery and market systems, health, humanitarian coordination and information management, logistics and relief commodities, nutrition, protection, shelter and settlements, and water, sanitation, and hygiene. P.L. 480 emergency food aid was also provided to meet urgent hunger needs.

Donor coordination and conclusions

In the DRC, USAID has been successful in attracting and leveraging resources from other donors in order to amplify our programs’ impacts. Additionally, USAID is actively

engaged in donor coordination: exchanging ideas, sharing data, streamlining and improving division of labor so that our activities are harmonized. USAID is one of the 19 bilateral and multilateral donor institutions that organized its programs under a Common Assistance Framework (CAF) in 2007. USAID participates in CAF monthly meetings with donors and senior GDRC officials as well as the CAF network of 20 thematic groups, which establish structured dialogue at the sectoral level.

In line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, we have worked with other donors to improve the division of labor, beginning with a mapping exercise, a forum on aid effectiveness in June 2010 and a forthcoming retreat of CAF donors. USAID participates in additional coordination groups around specific development topics. A USAID representative serves as Second Vice President for the Country Coordinating Mechanism of the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and we also serve on the steering committee for the GAVI Alliance, which focuses on childhood vaccination. In the security sector, USAID coordinates assistance with the UN and other donors under the framework of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, which in turn supports the GDRC's STAREC. Finally, in cooperation with donors from the United Nations, European Union, and other groups, USAID actively participates in the cluster system, which increase donor coordination around specific sectors and services provided during humanitarian crises.

With the signing of bilateral assistance agreements with the GDRC in February, 2011, USAID has formalized its cooperation with the GDRC and plans to continue to deepen its dialogue on development issues with key government actors in FY 2011.

Thank you for your attention to development issues in the DRC and for providing me with the opportunity to speak with you today. I am happy to respond to any additional inquiries you may have.