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Charity Registration Number: 208223

## Transcript Q&A

# Global Solutions to Sexual Violence in Conflict

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18 February 2013

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### **Question 1:**

Thank you very much for your sobering and very interesting talk.

I've just got a very quick question. In 2011–12, through the UN Action [against Sexual Violence in Conflict] strategy plan, certain countries were identified as a priority, one of which was the DRC, unsurprisingly. I just wanted to ask you, how successful has the comprehensive strategy on combating sexual violence in the DRC been? Purely in terms of protection and mainly in the eastern provinces.

### **Question 2:**

You mentioned in your talk early warning indicators. And this sort of ties in with another conversation I'd had on conflict that I was discussing with colleagues last week – early warning indicators. I wonder whether I might invite you to say a little bit more about the indicators themselves.

### **Haja Zainab Hawa Bangura:**

I'll start with the first question. The mandate actually is about countries that are on the Security Council agenda, and the Security Council has interests. So of course through the UN Action it identifies its countries and the DRC is one of those countries. To be honest, it's one of the countries where we have had the biggest challenge. I think the challenge is because of various reasons.

One has to do with the political will. You cannot fight this if the political will is not there. The country has to provide the political leadership, and I think that's the missing link in the case of the DRC. Because when they have the political will, then they can actually develop the legal framework nationally and they can be able to take action on issues that have to be done, because we cannot work from outside. That's the second challenge we have.

Also, when you have the political will, you can also address the culture of silence and denial. This is one of our biggest problems, and countries have to own up that we have this problem – and we should be able to address it at the national level – and that it is actually affecting people and be able to make sure that we get the correct data.

These are the missing links with regards to the DRC and this is why we're now trying to work – my predecessor went there three times. The secretary-general himself has been there two times and we'll have a series of

discussions. We're going back on the drawing board to see. In addition to that, since I took over the office we've been trying to actually develop a relationship with the African Union (AU), regional and sub-regional organizations. I just attended the African Union summit to talk to Mr [Jacob] Zuma, so that they also can include it within their peace and security architecture.

The UN Security Council meets on an annual basis, once or twice, with the Peace and Security Council in the African Union. And we've actually spoken to the members of the Security Council to be able to make sure this issue is covered. So we're trying to close the loop on everything that we need to do to be able to address the problem of DRC, because I don't think we've been very successful the way I would have wanted it. At the end of the day, even the people that were indicted within the government armed forces, we've not been able to prosecute.

And I think what also makes it a big problem is that you have too many non-state actors in the DRC. You don't only have one rebel group. In the CAR, when I visited, we have six groups that actually signed the first agreement. So we have to have political commitment from them. And they agreed on various specific things that they need to do. This is what we've not been able to have in the DRC, because every other year a new group emerges.

All of that are some of the challenges we are now looking at. I think with the UK initiative, ourselves – and the Canadians have also come on board – we're trying to work together as a team and look at how we can address the problem in the DRC. It's a big challenge for all of us, but we have to address it because women on and off regularly on a daily basis are being raped. And you also know that the doctor who is trying to reconstruct these women, basically they had an assassination attempt on him. He had to leave. But now he's back, he's still in the hospital.

It's our biggest challenge, the DRC. And you can rest assured we're not going to give up. We're going to do everything possible to be able to address it. I think that's the problem we have.

With the problem of the early warning: the reason why we created Resolution 1960, because the UN obviously recognizes – the Security Council – that rape does not happen by accident. It's pre-planned, it's pre-meditated. So what the training does is actually looking at local scenarios. Each country is difficult. So when you develop the early warning sign, you look at a particular country and you say, 'What are the things that you have to be able to know, to see, to understand?'

This is the reason why, in doing my visits, in organizing my visits from now to going to visit several countries, I don't go in and come out. I went to the CAR for eight days, because you need to understand the country to look at content. You need to know who are the players. You need to be able to engage more players than one – not only the head of state, not only the state actors, but the non-state actors. And you also have to deal with the victims.

I travel in two different regions in the CAR, and I engage the women, the local authorities, the NGOs, the religious leaders, the armed groups. Even within the army, because there are a lot of cases, evidence we have in the DRC, even in the CAR, that sexual violence is being committed by the state actors.

What do you do to have a code of conduct, which the AU has developed now, to be able to make sure they have a zero tolerance within themselves? You cannot address the problem in the DRC with the non-state actors if you cannot address it with the state actors, with the police, with the soldiers, with the state. Getting the parliamentarians to pass the national legislation that actually makes it a crime.

So each of the early warnings is actually looking at content. So we work with the local people and find out that these and these are what we have to know, and this is how you need to react. And these are the actions that have been taken. So that's what we do, apply it using the local context and scenario base. It's a scenario-based early warning that we develop. So each country is actually different and unique.

### **Question 3:**

I actually have a question about the preventive element with regard to sexual violence, especially conflict-related sexual violence. Yes, combating impunity can have a preventive role. However, what we see is that much of the sexual violence is actually rooted, to a certain extent, in society. It's about how a man relates to women and women relate to man. So how is UN Action actually addressing that part about mindsets, about changing that?

And then next to that, as you already said, men can also be victims of sexual violence. How is UN Action focusing on that?

### **Question 4:**

Thank you. I would like to ask you how you, the UN, or any state actor or non-state actor can deal with the risk that by putting a specific focus on sexual

violence in conflict, instead of taking it as one of the symptoms of conflict, do you not encourage somehow perpetrators to go on with that kind of crime, when they find it an easy way to attract attention?

#### **Question 5:**

Thank you so much for your presentation. My question relates to – you're talking a lot about involving women, both in the peace processes and in the process of actually having their own voice. But I'm wondering where you see the role of children, particularly as so many victims are children.

#### **Haja Zainab Hawa Bangura:**

You know we have my colleague who deals with children in armed conflicts. We are on the same floor, we are neighbours, and the resolution actually asks us to work together. So she is dealing with children affected by conflicts. We know that women and children are affected by sexual violence, but we share lots of information and work together as a team. She is part of the UN Action against Sexual Violence which I chair and I have the secretariat in my office.

So we work very closely. We don't leave children, but when we have huge information on children, we try to engage her. Even in Mali, when we were visiting Mali, we went to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), our office – and children affected by war, we actually deal with it. So when we make our reports, we also refer to it. We work together as a team so we don't leave the children alone. Of course when she also travels, she makes sure she looks at the issues affecting women. And the Security Council has actually asked us to work together. So that's what we do.

On the issue of the focus of sexual violence, as part of the UN Action against Sexual Violence, we have part of the team members of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. She looks at the general human rights violations.

If you take for example in Colombia, we don't operate in the field. We don't have people in the field; we are only based in New York because we depend on all of this network: UNDP (UN Development Programme), UNICEF, UNFPA (UN Population Fund), WHO, UNHCR – OHCHR – they are part of the network which I chair. So we look at the broader issues. They work on those issues. They implement action. We act as a political voice and advocacy.

So if you take for example in Colombia when we went there, the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights has 100 human rights staff. So they look at all the human rights issues related, whether it's execution, torture, and other things. Our own mandate is very specific and as I said, the reason why the Security Council actually came with this mandate is from Resolution 1325. They did a study and they realized the impacts of armed conflict on women – that armed conflict affects women disproportionately [more] than men.

Therefore, to be able to address that issue, it became an issue of international peace and security, which demands a peace and security response. That's the reason why they came to that conclusion. So they are looking at that, and to be able to do that, you have to be able to know the problem.

Even today as I speak to you, we do not know the extent. I'll give you an example. In Mogadishu once we have the problem we have with Somalia... In my report that is going to come out very soon, between January to November, we documented 1,700 women who had been sexually abused in and around the camps in Mogadishu.

In Mogadishu, we don't know the number of women who have been abused out of Mogadishu. We don't know the number of women who have been sexually abused in the al Shabaab area because we don't have access to it. And we don't even have a guarantee that the 1,700 is the real figure. Maybe it's the tip of the iceberg. If you take the way the government has responded to the one woman who spoke to the media, not only has she been arrested, this is the first time in the history of this job we're doing that a victim is being criminalized for speaking out.

Do you know how many women would be so afraid? Apart from the fact that the state is criminalizing them, but the stigma that is with it, to say that you are raped. So if we sit down and at all those scenarios, there's a possibility the figure is five, six times over.

As a result of that, that's what the Security Council is saying: if you want women – who constitute over 50 per cent of the population – that human resource capacity is so huge. If you take their lives away from them, as the victim in Bosnia said, you dehumanize them, you degrade them, you humiliate them to a level where they cannot stand up and do anything with their lives. The economic effect in the country, nobody has done a study on that. We need to anticipate that. So those are some of the challenges that we face. That's the problem we're dealing with.

With regards now to the issue of the men and the prevention: the issue of sexual violence against men, like a lot of other issues, is one of the things we want to know more about. We do not have very specific information and detail. I think a lot of the men are very reluctant. I was saying to somebody, I was talking this morning to people here and I said, in the case of Syria, they are using it to extract information from men when they're imprisoned in detention centres because they want them to talk.

In the case of Mali, we sent a team who went to Mali and we found out that when the coup took place in Mali, the red [beret] brigade was supporting the ousted government. The green [beret] brigade were supporting the non-military government. And the red brigade attempted to make a coup, and of course they failed. The green berets, when they ran after the red berets, actually forced the red berets to rape each other. And then in turn, the green berets started raping their wives and children, daughters, of the red berets.

These are things which you find very difficult for men to talk about. One or two of the people we sent somebody to talk with, they just broke down. They can't deal with it. The UN response has been sexual violence against women. How can you send a man to a gynaecologist? Most of the agencies who are providing the services to deal with victims are people who have been trained, psychologically, physically, to deal with women. Most of them are women. How do you deal with it?

So it's coming out, we're looking at that discussion, including the issue of how do you deal with children coming out of rape? If a woman has been raped by five, 10 men, then she discovered a month later she's pregnant, what is she going to tell that child – who is the father? And nobody has been able to document the number of children that are coming out of rape, and what's happened to those children, what their life is.

Just as again with Syria, we're recognizing that rape triggers refugees. We do not have any information on that, but we see that when we talk to the women refugees who are the only ones we have access to now in Syria, a lot of them said once they started raping, the men decided to run away with their children and their wives.

The issue of extractive industry, how it affects sexual violence – when there is war, a lot of people concentrate on the areas where you have the resources. In eastern Congo, so all the armed groups are assembled in eastern Congo. What's the effect on that? We're seeing a massive number of rape cases in eastern Congo than in a lot of other countries. So these are all the things.

The issue of rape is coming on the mainstream. But we still need a lot more information to be able to understand the context. These are some of the challenges.

With prevention, of course, we're trying to make sure, like I said in the discussion, we're trying to work with the military, we're trying to work with governments, we're trying to work with the armed forces and everybody. If we break the silence of culture, if countries are able to accept that you have rape, then we start – that's the beginning.

Because you cannot prevent something which people refuse to say is happening. So they will not be committed, whatever scenario you want to create or support, they will not accept because they have it in their minds that this is not happening, my country does not rape. Yes, women are suffering on a daily basis. So to be able to deal with the preventive mechanism is you have to have the countries to own up, to accept and be ready to work with you.

Then you can sit together with all the UN Action members mostly on the ground, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFP, WHO and the others to say, okay, now this is a problem, you have a problem. Like Colombia has done with us: 'I have a problem, what can you do to help me?' I think that's a starting point. That's why we're talking about the experience in Colombia and we hope that you can use it to share with other countries. Thank you.

#### **Question 6:**

Thank you very much for your excellent talk. Of course, it was decades ago that Susan Brownmiller wrote a very good book, I think it was called *Against Our Will*, if my memory is serving me correctly, which documented exactly this. Whether it was the Americans in Vietnam or the Soviet forces sweeping through Europe after the end of World War II, this has been going on forever, it seems. So your global silence hasn't been silent for everybody, it's just that nothing was happening very much.

Legislation – you mentioned the importance of states recognising rape as a crime. If we take Russia, it's recognized in law, but over 14,000 women every year are killed by their partners and rape is often much wider than that.

But my question is this, finally. Human trafficking: this very often comes out of conflict situations. Women are then taken away; rape continues there. Does your work overlap with that? Or is that just one step too far for your brief?



### **Question 7:**

Thank you very much for the talk. It's been most interesting. Two questions, if I may. First is: when you look at conflicts across the world, where have the atrocities against women been the worst and what factors have underpinned that? Number two is the programme itself: where have you been the most effective and also the least effective? And what factors have underpinned success and failure?

### **Question 8:**

My question is really I suppose to ask: what are your policy options for cleaning up the conduct of groups that are non-state actors? So in the case of the DRC mentioned earlier, consulting with the government, groups like the AU can exert considerable pressure on state forces, but when you're dealing with al Shabaab or a lot of the rebel groups who are almost definitionally out of the scope of many of those influences, how do you work to clean up the conduct of those groups?

### **Haja Zainab Hawa Bangura:**

Thank you very much. I'll start with the issue of cleaning up non-state actors. Obviously, you cannot work with the issue... Actually, let me go back. The issue of sexual violence in conflicts takes place mostly when the states literally collapse and when there is conflict and a problem. But at the end of the day, it's the insecurity that creates the opportunity for it to happen.

Therefore, that's why we're saying that it becomes part of the peace negotiation, part of the peace process. Someday they will sit at the table. In the case of the CAR, I'll give you a typical example. When I visited CAR, I made sure I engaged – I have a mandate to engage with non-state actors and groups. So in the case of the CAR, I actually engage with those ones that have signed the peace agreement and I got a political commitment from them first to release all the women and children they have under their control; secondly, to be able to give the command instruction that this is unacceptable – if it happens, they will investigate and prosecute it; thirdly, to make sure when there is a DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) security sector reform, you cannot allow people who are involved in mass raping and human rights violations to be part of that.

That's the process. Obviously that's what we're starting to do. So if I go to the DRC, of course I will look forward to be able to engage with the M23 and the others, their commanders, to have a political commitment from them.

And once we have that political commitment from the government, from many of the groups, we make sure they become part of the peace agreement. In CAR, we included that into the peace agreements. And now in the verification exercise, if you commit rape, it becomes a violation of the ceasefire agreement.

So we are working now with the government to build a structure within and supporting the mission in Bangui. So we're going to have a UN women summit, because in the UN Action, they're going to deploy staff there. We're working with the British government to provide the support we can.

So obviously in the process of engaging, we make sure we have political commitment. The other issue in the CAR, once they've indicted some of the non-state actors, so they're on the list, not only do we name and shame them, but actually we indict them and we look forward to the time when they will be prosecuted. Once there is a peace agreement, the indictment is lying there waiting for them. Whenever we get all of them, we will prosecute them. We tied the noose around them.

On the question you asked on the most effective... for me one rape against a woman, one woman, is as good as anything. What we're working towards is making sure that they stop. There's not much difference between one and 100. The important thing, we don't want women to be sexually abused. That's point number one. So wherever it happens in conflicts, we will take it as a challenge.

The second issue, the size, in the case of the DRC, because the country is huge, there are a lot of armed groups around. It's not one, it's not two, it's not three, and they keep emerging every day, so each one of them – the state actors are committing the crime. In terms of volume, the DRC is that. And that's the reason why, because the government is not in control. There are too many groups. And let's face it, the DRC has never existed as a country. So that affects us, our operation within the DRC. So we're dealing with that, because it's a big problem.

But I think you also have to look at the scenario. In the case of Somalia, it's the first country that we have a victim being criminalized. So for us, that's very serious... Here is a situation where a woman who's been bold enough to stand up to say, 'I'm raped,' has been arrested, her husband is arrested, the journalist who interviewed her is arrested, the human rights officer who

worked with her is arrested, the social worker who recommended her to the journalist is arrested. They're all charged in court. Her medical record was made public. That is unacceptable.

What do you do? You tell the victim, 'Shut up. If you talk, I'm going to go after you.' What is the crime? Insulting the state. The state is in such a position of denial that rape is not happening, that they're prepared to go after the victims. That's one point.

Second point – you are giving the perpetrators a cut blank cheque to say you can rape as many people as you can. It's the victim we're going to charge because nobody should be bold enough to talk in Somalia that rape is happening in Somalia. So that scenario is very bad, obviously.

The third, you take Colombia. There's been war for over 50 years almost. And they are running after, killing the victims, killing the witnesses, killing the human rights activists. Basically what I'm saying, each country is different and unique. It depends what actions they take. This is the reason why we're engaging research institutions and universities, to help us understand it.

This is one of the priorities, is how we understand rape, recognize and understand rape as a tactic of war. Each operation is different, each country is different. So the response you prepare in the country is different. But the totality is that we're against rape. One woman being raped in CAR, in Somalia, in South Sudan, in Darfur, is as good as any other number of women.

We don't want a single woman to be raped in conflict. We want a scenario where people can recognize women are valuable material in their country and they're part and parcel of the rebuilding of their country. So when there is war, they should be recognized as stakeholders instead of victims and should not be punished because they are women. Or should not be punished or their bodies become battlefields when the men start fighting for resources or power.

So the best way you can humiliate your opponents, you can degrade him, you can go after his women and children, to destroy the next generation or the people who produce the next generation. That way, you can be able to take over the life of those, your opponents.

That's what is happening because of the structure of the battles now within countries. So you go after the assets, the best assets of your opponents. How do I destroy his asset base to be able to make sure he does not recover? And I punish him in a way he will always remember that I'm the boss.

That's the challenge we face. That's what we are fighting for, to be able to make sure that we deal with this. As I said, the worst scenario – Somalia is small, it's not as big as the DRC. But what they are doing is as bad if not even worse than what is happening in the DRC.

On the issue of human trafficking: it's not really my mandate, but when it comes in, we pick it up and flash it and we discuss it with the people that are handling it. I'll tell you an example. When war broke out in Syria, a commission of inquiry was set up and when they started interviews, the news flashed out that there are young men coming from the countries where you had these women refugees, coming to marry them.

Straight away we raised the flag that this – especially when the men are not citizens, you travel all the way from your country, you want to come and marry young Syrian girls to take them away. Straight away, we raised the alarm that this is a problem; we have to be cautious of it. It could be a potential thing for trafficking. They want to look at these vulnerable girls and they take them away from their families. How are they going to account for them? Who is going to monitor what is happening? How do you know the number of these girls?

Obviously we raised it and the human rights office picked it up. So I don't deal with it specifically, because I'm dealing with sexual violence in conflict. But in the course of investigating, monitoring, when it comes up in the reports, we make sure we shift it and we share information with our other colleagues and they become aware of it. And then of course it triggers action from their own side.

### **Question 9:**

Following on from one of your last comments, Raphael Lemkin, who created the UN Genocide Convention – he included in his definition of genocide the systematic attempt to destroy a group in whole or in part. I think he included in that definition the idea of decimating a population through things like sexual violence.

To what extent does the Genocide Convention help the labelling of perpetrators by calling them – they're committing acts of crimes against humanity – to what extent does that help in trying to get the message out around the world? That this isn't just a simple act of rape, it is about a crime against humanity.

**Haja Zainab Hawa Bangura:**

Thank you very much. One of the tools that actually is actually at my disposal is referral to the ICC (International Criminal Court). In addition to the listing and shaming, the imposing of sanctions, we also do work very closely with the ICC. Recently the ICC actually addressed the Security Council and we have a commitment from them that in almost all the indictments, they are specifically going to look at the issue of sexual violence and mass raping.

So we work together with the ICC as well as my colleague, Adama Dieng, on the issue of genocide. We compare notes, we read their [Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide] reports – for example in the case of Syria, we actually took some of their reports and materials. So we share information and we work together. Obviously once we see something that we think actually is related to what he's doing, mass eradication, we raise the alarm, which can trigger him to visit and have his people deployed there.

Obviously when he visits, he has discussions, he does investigation, monitoring. He picks it up but he doesn't believe that it's genocide, but at least this is happening. He gives us the information which triggers us to follow up and if we're able to send somebody, we send somebody. So we work together as a team, because they're all interrelated, the issues. Of course we know what's happening in these cases.

So we work together as a team and share information and collaborate. I think that's the only way we can get it done. Once he sees this, and once we have the information that this is happening in a situation or scenario which is beyond our capacity, and we think that it can help if he comes in, we definitely invite him to share the information with him.