

Conflict Minerals Bill
Senate Hearing, March 30, 2016
State and Local Government Committee
Dr. Edwige Mubonzi

Thank you Madam Chair and members of the committee.

I am very thankful for this opportunity to share my story with you.

My name is Edwige Mubonzi. I am a medical doctor from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In my country I worked in the Panzi Hospital mobile clinic that went to rural areas to find and treat women victims of rape and mutilation. Rape is used as a weapon of war in Congo. The war is about controlling our mineral resources – especially coltan, which is used for cell phones and computers all over the world. 80% of the world's supply of Coltan comes from the eastern part of the Congo where I am from. Since 1998 more than 400,000 women and girls have been raped in this war. Today my country is called "*the rape capital of the world*".

Rape is an effective war strategy, and it is destroying my community. Usually women are raped in front of their husbands and children. This destroys the whole family and enables militias to control populations and therefore the mineral resources.

After raping a woman, soldiers and militia members often insert an object such as wood, knives, guns, or fire into the vagina. This practice destroys a woman's body--often causing leakage of bodily fluids from the vagina and the inability to have children--and it completely destroys her spirit.

I would like to share a story of one of my patients:

One day during my night shift at Panzi Hospital, I received a woman that I knew because I had treated her before. She was a victim of rape and became pregnant from that rape. She came with her 6 month old baby, and I was afraid that she had been raped again. But she told me that she had not come for herself, she had come for her baby. Her baby, *born of rape*, was raped at 6 months old. This has become an intergenerational problem. The baby had her vagina destroyed and the liquid was coming from her stomach through her vagina. All the physical findings were heartbreaking. This was the reason why I decided that besides treating my patients, I also had to advocate for them. This is the reason why I am here today.

We all know the close connection between the exploitation and illegal trade of natural resources and how this finances armed groups and massive human rights violations.

We cannot continue to only repair the consequences of violence. We must treat the root causes of this violence to put an end to these horrific crimes. Minerals from Congo

need to be mined in a lawful manner that respects the lives of all people. That is why I am here engaged in a plea for peace, justice and respect for human rights.

It is urgent to act. The solutions exist and require real political will.

Madam Chair and members of the committee –

The vote in support of this bill would be a victory for human rights and stability in my country, DRC.

With humility and hope, I now urge this committee to support this legislation to help transform blood minerals into minerals for development and peace.

This is an opportunity to solve the real problem of Congo and we need your support.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

Dr. Edwige Mubonzi