



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2017-0004 | 6 January 2016

Security and political situation in the African Great Lakes region

Main chamber

Backbench business

12 January 2017

Debate initiated by John Mann,
Mark Durkan and Pauline Latham

The proceedings of this debate may be viewed on Parliamentlive.tv

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1. Summary

The international community has expressed serious concern over the current political climate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as alarm over the security, political and human rights situation in Burundi.

During 2016, the political and security situation in the DRC deteriorated. President Joseph Kabila and his allies announced a delay until April 2018 of parliamentary and presidential elections which were originally due in late-2016. Although a small part of the political opposition went along with this move, it sparked significant street protests. At least 34 people were reportedly killed by the security forces in December. However, on New Year's Eve the Catholic Church brokered a broader-based deal under which elections will take place by the end of 2017, in which Kabila will not stand for a third-term. A transitional government with an opposition politician as prime minister is also to be established. This has sparked optimism that the political crisis might be peacefully resolved – but critics doubt that Kabila will honour this deal. Meanwhile, North Kivu and Kasai are sites of growing violence and there are reports of growing discontent within the army over pay and conditions.

In Burundi, which has been in turmoil since 2015, when President Pierre Nkurunziza successfully engineered a third term in office for himself, the security and political situation is if anything even more dire. Political repression is intense and violence continues. The UN and African Union have been unable to have much impact on the crisis to date. Burundi accuses neighbouring Rwanda of supporting armed insurgents and has announced its departure from the International Criminal Court.

Notwithstanding periodic criticism that it interferes in the internal politics of some of its neighbours, Rwanda continues to be viewed by the international community as a stable and economically successful developing country. Opponents argue that President Paul Kagame has created an authoritarian political culture that could be storing up trouble for the future. Kagame held a referendum in 2015 to change the constitution to allow him to stand again for the presidency in 2017.

In marked contrast to its neighbours, Tanzania has avoided large-scale political instability and violence in recent decades. But it currently hosts well over 100,000 Burundian refugees and Zanzibar remains a source of political tensions. Elections there in October 2015 were annulled by the electoral authorities. The opposition boycotted the re-run in March 2016. The annulment was criticised by the international community but little punishment has followed. Calls for another government of national unity on the Isles have been resisted by the ruling party. More broadly, new President John Magufuli has focused on anti-corruption efforts since taking office and is still enjoying healthy levels of public support.

2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of recent press and media articles relevant to this debate.

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New York Times

Pact Would Force Out Joseph Kabila From Congo. If, of Course, He Agrees.

Geffrey Gettleman

3 January 2017

BBC New Online

Burundi environment minister Niyonkuru shot dead

1 January 2017

The Guardian

DRC parties reach deal denying third term for President Kabila
Jason Burke

31 December 2016

East African

African govts adopt Internet shutdowns to quell crises in 2016

Njiraini Muchira

29 December 2016

East African

Tanzania, Burundi risk losing European Union aid over EPAs

Allan Olingo

28 December 2016

Financial Times*

Congo opposition says Kabila transition deal agreed

Adrian Blomfield

23 December 2016

The Citizen, All Africa Online

Tanzania: Zanzibar Polls Crisis Unfolds in 2016

23 December 2016

BBC News Online

Kenya's Cord MPs storm out over 'fight'

22 December 2016

Daily Telegraph

'At least 26 killed' in Congo protests

21 December 2016

Associated Press

The Guardian

Congo on a knife-edge as opposition leader calls for Kabila to step down

Jason Burke

19 December 2016

Daily Telegraph

Inside the makeshift goldmines of Uganda: where poverty, child labour and exploitation reign

Guy Kelly

17 December 2016

Financial Times*

EU and US impose sanctions on DRC officials

John Aglionby

12 December 2016

BBC News Online

Kenya Muslims 'targeted in extrajudicial killings'

7 December 2016

The Guardian

War crimes trial of former Ugandan child soldier Dominic Ongwen to begin

Jason Burke

6 December 2016

BBC New Online

Willy Nyamitwe's shooting: Burundi blames Rwanda

29 November 2016

The Guardian

Burundi politicians back international criminal court withdrawal

Associated Press in Kigali

12 October 2016

The Guardian

UN report accuses Burundi government of human rights abuses

Jason Burke

21 September 2016

The Guardian

Ugandans driven to despair by spending on MPs' cars as basic services suffer

Alon Mwesigwa

20 September 2016

Daily Telegraph

Schoolchildren arrested in Burundi for defacing pictures of President Pierre Nkurunziza

Agence France-Presse

3 June 2016

3. Parliamentary material

3.1 PQs

Democratic Republic of Congo: Overseas Aid

17 Oct 2016 | 47839

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what assistance her Department is offering the Democratic Republic of Congo to achieve peace and economic growth.

Answering member: James Wharton | Department for International Development

We remain concerned both by ongoing violent conflict in eastern DRC, and nationwide political tensions relating to democracy and human rights. Stability and economic growth are at the very heart of our strategy for the Great Lakes region, which is implemented by DFID, MoD and the Foreign Office. Politically, we are engaging at the highest levels, including via the UN and EU system, to seek a resolution to the current political impasse and conflict in eastern DRC.

British Military officers and stabilisation experts are embedded in the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC, shaping a more agile force, better able to protect civilians. We fund an £80 million programme to build peace in eastern DRC by establishing a durable political settlement at regional and national levels and addressing root causes of conflict, such as land reform.

The UK also supports economic growth and prosperity in DRC through a £100 million private sector development programme. The programme works with micro, small and medium enterprises to facilitate access to markets and raise incomes, and helps reform the broader business environment, making it more attractive to international investors.

Democratic Republic of Congo: Elections

17 Oct 2016 | 47260

Asked by: John Mann

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the next presidential election in that country.

Answering member: Mr Tobias Ellwood | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

One of my first visits since my appointment as Africa Minister in July was to the DRC on 8-10 August. During my visit, I met a number of senior members of the government. I stressed the importance of holding Presidential elections within the constitutional time frame. Our Embassy in Kinshasa and our Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region take every

opportunity to make this point to members of the DRC Government. I also hosted an event on the DRC during the UN General Assembly in September, where I discussed a collective approach to addressing the issue of electoral delay with a number of foreign ministers and Special Envoys to the Great Lakes.

Following the violence in Kinshasa on 19 September, I made a statement condemning the violence and urged the DRC Government to set a date for Presidential elections as soon as possible in 2017; this can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-for-africa-concerned-at-violence-in-drc>. On 20 September, I made a further such statement urging for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as reiterating the need for a date for Presidential elections; this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tobias-ellwood-minister-for-middle-east-and-africa-calls-on-drc-government-to-set-election-date>

Democratic Republic of Congo: Elections

27 Jun 2016 | 40472

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Democratic Republic of Congo counterpart on ensuring that elections in that country are open and transparent.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I have repeatedly urged the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Raymond Tshibanda, to ensure that elections in his country are open, transparent and are conducted in line with his country's Constitution. Most recently I wrote to Mr Tshibanda in April this year to follow-up on my meeting with him in the margins of a UN debate on the Great Lakes region held in March 2016. I also met Mr Tshibanda at the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa in January 2016. In all my interactions with representatives of the Congolese Government I have stressed the importance of a peaceful, democratic transition of power in the DRC. My Hon Friend, the Member for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (Nick Hurd MP), Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Department for International Development), visited the DRC in March 2016.

Burundi: Politics and Government

14 Jun 2016 | 40003

Asked by: Joanna Cherry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the government of Burundi on (a) ending political violence and unrest and (b) alleged extra-judicial killings,

torture, lack of freedom of expression and other human rights abuses in that country.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I am extremely concerned about the situation in Burundi. During my visit to Bujumbura in December 2015 I emphasised to the Burundian Government that killings, torture and other abuses must stop and that they must take action to end impunity. I underlined the need for media, opposition and civil society to be allowed to operate freely and that all sides must renounce violence and participate fully in the dialogue. I repeated these messages in my letter to the Burundian Foreign Minister in May. Our Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region reiterated these points in meetings with Burundian ministers in Bujumbura last week and during her visit to Arusha in May for the second round of the dialogue facilitated by former Tanzanian President Mkapa.

Great Lakes Region: Military Aid

12 May 2016 | 36967

Asked by: Rebecca Long Bailey

To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what the purpose is of the training provided by the UK armed forces to the security and armed forces personnel of Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Answering member: Penny Mordaunt | Ministry of Defence

The UK Armed Forces do not currently provide any training to security and Armed Forces personnel of Burundi or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We provide some limited training to the Rwandan Armed Forces, largely at the Rwandan Peace Academy and Staff College and through occasional places at UK staff colleges. This training is in support of security sector reform and effective and compliant Rwandan contributions to peace support and disaster relief operations. We also deliver training to the African Union's Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF), as part of our effort to build the EASF's capacity to conduct peace support operations. This training includes elements such as protection of civilians and civil and military cooperation. Some Burundian and Rwandan Armed Forces personnel attached to the EASF may attend this training.

Great Lakes Region: International Assistance

12 May 2016 | 36966

Asked by: Rebecca Long Bailey

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to encourage other nations to contribute bilateral donations to the Great Lakes regional appeal.

Answering member: Mr Nick Hurd | Department for International Development

The UN regional refugee response covering Burundian refugees is for \$314 million (£216 million) and is currently funded at 27%. DFID has contributed £21.15 million to that appeal since April 2015, to support refugees in Tanzania and Rwanda. We are considering further allocations to address the continuing crisis. DFID is also supporting refugees in the DRC and Uganda through existing programmes and the provision of technical advice. DFID is working closely with other donors to the appeal such as the EU and US, as well as UNHCR and NGOs, to highlight priorities and encourage other countries to donate.

Topical Questions

20 Jan 2015 | 591 c82

Asked by: Graham Jones

With some 50 murderous, marauding militia operating in eastern DRC and some 5 million dead during the conflict, what assessment have the Government made of the role of MONUSCO in bringing that violence to an end?

Answering member: David Lidington | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We strongly support the role that MONUSCO is playing, but we continue to work with European and international colleagues to see whether improvements need to be made. Ultimately, that will depend in large part on getting the co-operation of the neighbouring countries to work towards peace in the great lakes region.

3.2 Debates

Democratic Republic of the Congo (Human Rights)

25 Mar 2015 | 594 cc502-9WH

4. Gov.uk

Minister for Africa statement on the political situation in DRC Foreign and Commonwealth Office 19 December 2016

Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Africa, calls for swift elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Commenting on the last day of President Kabila's constitutional mandate, the Minister for Africa, Tobias Ellwood, said:
I am deeply disappointed that elections did not take place in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2016. The UK and our international partners have been clear that President Kabila and his government bear primary responsibility for this.

Without an inclusive political agreement which states that President Kabila may continue in power beyond the end of his mandate today, his legitimacy to govern the Congo is reduced. As long as there is no such agreement, the UK's relationship with the Congolese government will regrettably have to change.

I support the ongoing political dialogue and encourage all parties to urgently reach an agreement which paves the way for Presidential and legislative elections in 2017. I also encourage President Kabila to be clear that he will neither seek a further term in office nor change the constitution.

At a time when the attention of the world is focused on DRC, I urge all parties to refrain from violence and repression against the Congolese people. Individuals involved will be held personally responsible for their actions. I also look to the UN peacekeeping operation in DRC to do everything they can to protect civilians.

The UK's commitment to the Congolese people will remain undimmed and we will continue to provide support to those in most need.

Wharton: UK reiterates its commitment to the DRC
Department for International Development
21 November 2016

International Development Minister James Wharton returns from the DRC where he urged timely elections for the first ever peaceful transition of power.

During his first visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Minister emphasised the UK's commitment to its people and stressed our continued work in partnership to build a developed, stable and prosperous DRC.

In the capital city Kinshasa, Minister Wharton met Prime Minister Matata and Vice Prime Minister of Interior and Security Boshab. He urged them, as part of the DRC Government, to ensure peaceful, timely and free and fair elections, following a history of violent political transitions and recent civil unrest. He also called on the Government to tackle the current economic challenges facing the country.

The Minister saw the positive impact of the UK's investment in a power plant at Virunga Park, in Matebe, which is providing 96 megawatts of clean energy, creating around 100,000 jobs and boosting economic development.

This investment is routed through CDC, the UK and the world's oldest development finance institution. CDC is making pioneering investments in the hardest to reach markets across Africa to support local businesses, stimulate economic growth and help countries lift themselves out of poverty.

Minister James Wharton said:

"This is an historic moment for DRC and an opportunity for this great country to make its first ever peaceful transition of power, building stability and security – which is firmly in DRC and the UK's interests. All parties need to find a genuinely inclusive agreement, which is vital before elections take place.

"I have seen first-hand how the UK is providing lifesaving assistance and supporting the country to tackle poverty, stimulate economic growth and create jobs and livelihoods for the poorest people, helping them to stand on their own two feet."

In Goma in Eastern DRC, the Minister saw how the UK is working with local partners such as the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) to deliver life-changing support to the most vulnerable people. He met beneficiaries of a UK aid-funded urban water and sanitation programme, which is providing 150,000 people with clean water.

He also visited an ICRC hospital – supported by UK aid – and met war surgeons who are saving lives of those harmed by conflict, treating emergency wounds and supporting the physical rehabilitation and psychological recovery of patients, including amputees.

Over the last 5 years, UK support in DRC has helped:

- Provide 1.6 million people with sustainable access to clean water and 1.36 million people with improved sanitation
- Provide 150,000 people with emergency food assistance
- Improve access to security and justice services for 950,000 girls and women
- Enable 600,000 mothers to give birth safely and 200,000 women to access family planning support.

Burundi: Human Rights Priority Country update report: January to June 2016

Foreign and Commonwealth office

Updated 21 July 2016

The overall human rights situation in Burundi showed no improvement in the first half of 2016, following the political crisis that began in 2015. There was a drop in the number of assassinations but impunity for crimes remained. Many political prisoners remain in jail and we saw an increase in arbitrary arrests and detention, often involving ordinary citizens, including children.

Peace talks started in Arusha in May, led by former Tanzanian President Mkapa. This was a positive first step towards finding a political solution to the crisis. However, the first round of talks was not inclusive. The umbrella CNARED opposition group was not invited to take part. Government representatives stuck firmly to the regime's entrenched position, including advocating changing the constitution and altering the Arusha Accords of 2000 which have played a critical role in underpinning Burundi's stability for the past decade.

During the 32nd UN Human Rights Council session on 29 June in Geneva, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (HCHR) drew attention to a range of human rights violations in Burundi, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments, extrajudicial executions, and enforced disappearances and sexual violence. According to information received by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the majority of these violations and abuses were committed by members of the defence and security forces, the youth wing of the ruling party (Imbonerakure), or unidentified armed opposition groups. The HCHR also raised his concern over the escalation of ethnic-based violence due to prevailing ethnic hate speech and teachings in the country.

Many NGOs, independent media, and human rights organisations remained suspended, with their leaders and members exiled. Those that continued to function operated in a climate of fear and intimidation. Two radio stations did re-open with more nuanced content, having struck deals with the government. The disappearance of the treasurer of

Burundi's oldest human rights defence organisation, Ligue Iteka, was further evidence of the volatile human rights situation. Human rights observers continued to work in difficult conditions, including being subject to regular vehicle searches, making it difficult to carry out their mandates and obtain clear evidence of the latest human rights situation.

Since the beginning of the year, Burundian human rights monitoring organisation, SOS Torture, recorded more than 500 new cases of torture and ill treatment. Some victims were unable to walk without assistance after allegedly being beaten with belts, iron rods or sharp objects, and even burned. Many were denied medical treatment.

Mass graves were identified in areas around Kanyosha commune and in Ruvubu National Park, sometimes guarded by youth militia. Numerous bodies were reportedly found in the streets or in ditches, and dozens of civilians simply disappeared in tit-for-tat violence pitting pro-government forces against armed opposition groups. Prisons remained overcrowded and poorly maintained, leading to the spread of contagious diseases.

Some Burundian women in neighbourhoods labelled as anti-regime were sexually abused by police and members of the youth militia. More than 300 children were arbitrarily detained between January and June 2016. Most of them were detained in prisons for adults, in deplorable conditions. UNICEF (the UN Children's Emergency Fund) and its partners have been continuously appealing for their release, and more than 134 have now been released to their families. Others have been moved to centres specifically dedicated to children.

Dozens of school pupils in a number of communes (including Ruziba, Gisuru, Gihanga, Muramvya, Kinama) were victims of arbitrary detention, arrest and imprisonment for doodling on a picture of the President contained in a textbook. Despite the Minister for Education intervening with pardons, up to 20 students remain imprisoned, with more than 500 expelled and 3,000 paying a fine.

Reports suggest a growing trend of human trafficking of girls, especially to Saudi Arabia and Oman in the guise of housemaids, with the Burundian police eventually acknowledging the problem and making arrests. Statistics vary with police citing 267 trafficked since April and credible reports from local human rights groups claiming up to 2,500.

The British Embassy Office continued to monitor and report on human rights violations during the period. The UK's Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) supported activities to monitor and report on incidents of human rights abuses, violence, intimidation, hate speech and other triggers of conflict in all 18 provinces across Burundi. The UK government conducted a Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) review of Burundi, including 2 visits by internal and external experts during the period.

The UK Special Envoy for the Great Lakes attended the Arusha peace talks in May and visited Burundi in June to encourage a political solution and accept the UN Security Council recommendation of a police mission to Burundi. The police mission would help put an end to human rights violations, regardless of who perpetrated them. The UK Department for

International Development has contributed £21m since 2015 towards the UN Refugee Agency regional response plan to support Burundian refugees who have fled the insecurity to neighbouring countries.

Burundi - Human Rights Priority Country
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Update 21 July 2016

The human rights situation deteriorated in Burundi in 2015. In July, President Nkurunziza ran for a third term, which was widely considered, including in the region, to be unconstitutional and against the Arusha Accords. This sparked a coup attempt and a subsequent government crackdown. It also marked the beginning of a downward trend in Burundi's human rights situation, which currently poses a threat to the stability of the country and wider region.

Throughout 2015, there were reports of targeted killings, arbitrary arrests, indiscriminate attacks, torture, enforced disappearances, and violence against peaceful protestors, carried out by the police, Service Nationale de Renseignements (SNR – Burundi's intelligence agency), and Imbonerakure, the ruling party's youth militia. The trend was extremely negative on political space and media freedom. The government closed down all private radio stations and only one private newspaper was still operating at the end of 2015. The government introduced strict controls on NGOs, including those promoting human rights. Many opposition leaders fled the country and are currently subject to arrest warrants.

The UK's human rights objectives in Burundi in 2015 were to promote freedom of speech and assembly, and urge the Burundian government to end the increasing violence by the police, SNR, and Imbonerakure. We pressed the authorities to allow civil society, including an independent media, to operate without impediment. We have increased our support to the thousands of refugees fleeing the situation, especially those in Tanzania and Rwanda, where the Department for International Development provided additional resources to humanitarian organisations. We also urged the government to engage in unconditional and inclusive dialogue, including with those who opposed the President's third term. We supported engagement by the UN, EU, African Union, and East African Community. The Burundian government consistently blocked the efforts of the international community, including the UK, to improve the human rights situation. It used a series of bureaucratic procedures to delay or block the deployment of international human rights monitors, and refused to take the necessary steps to establish a political dialogue that would end the cycle of violence.

Looking to 2016, we are extremely concerned about the possibility of further deterioration in the political, economic and security situation in Burundi, additional displacement of people, and increased human rights violations and abuses. Recently there has been a small but significant increase in reports of sexual violence. We are concerned that in attempts to secure stability, the government will further constrain human rights. The Burundian government's engagement in unconditional and inclusive dialogue is essential. We remain committed

to assisting regional efforts to influence the Burundian government in order to avert an even deeper crisis. We continue to work with international partners, especially the UN, to develop contingency plans to protect civilians, should there be a dramatic deterioration in the security situation.

Statement on announcement of Election re-run in Zanzibar
British High Commission Dar es Salaam
22 March 2016

The High Commissioners and Ambassadors to Tanzania of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, today issued the following statement regarding the election re-run which took place in Zanzibar on March 20th, 2016:

“We regret the Zanzibar Electoral Commission’s decision to hold a re-run of the 25 October 2015 election, without a mutually acceptable and negotiated solution to the current political impasse.

“In order to be credible, electoral processes must be inclusive and truly representative of the will of the people.

“We reiterate our call on the Government of Tanzania to exercise leadership in Zanzibar, and to pursue a negotiated solution between parties, with a view to maintaining peace and unity in the United Republic of Tanzania.

“We commend once again the population of Zanzibar for having exercised calm and restraint throughout this process, and call on all parties and their supporters to re-start the national reconciliation process to find an inclusive, sustainable and peaceful resolution.”

UK statement on Zanzibar elections
British High Commission Dar es Salaam
29 October 2015

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is deeply concerned by the announcement of the Chairman of the Zanzibar Electoral Commission to nullify the elections.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is deeply concerned by the announcement of the Chairman of the Zanzibar Electoral Commission to nullify the elections. We note that all the international observers were impressed by the quality of the electoral process they witnessed. We call on ZEC to resume the results tabulation process without delay.

We congratulate the people of United Republic of Tanzania on the peaceful and enthusiastic way in which they participated in their elections. We call on all political actors to seek a solution which respects the will of the Zanzibari people as expressed in the polls on 25 October.

The United Republic of Tanzania has a well deserved reputation for peace and stability and respecting democratic principles. We urge all Zanzibaris to maintain peace and we commend the restraint they have shown so far.

5. Further reading

[Conflict in the Great Lakes Region](#), Patrick Kanyangara, Accord.org, 5 May 2016

[International Conference on the Great Lakes Region](#)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group on the African Great Lakes Region](#)

[APPG Great Lakes Twitter](#)

Democratic Republic of Congo

[MONUSCO](#) - United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo

[Security Council Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), January 2017 Monthly Forecast, Key Recent Developments and UN documents on DRC

[The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), Statement by the President of the Security Council, 5 December 2016

[Report of the Secretary-General](#) on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, UN Security Council, 4 October 2016

Amnesty International, Annual Reports 2015/2016: [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#)

Burundi

[Burundi profile – Timeline](#), BBC News Online

Amnesty International, Annual Reports 2015/2016: [Burundi](#)

[Burundi](#), European Commission Development Fund

Other countries

Amnesty International, Annual Reports 2015/2016: [Kenya](#), [Rwanda](#), [Tanzania](#), [Uganda](#)

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