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**EVIDENCE**

## Wednesday, May 14, 2014

## Chair

**Mr. Dean Allison**

# Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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● (1530)

[*English*]

**The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)):** Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our study on the protection of children and youth in developing countries, we'll get started.

I welcome both of our witness organizations. We have Lorna Read, the chief operating officer for War Child Canada, and Samantha Nutt, the founder and executive director. Thank you for taking us up on our offer to be here today. From Right To Play, we have Evelyne Guindon, the vice-president of international programs. It's great to have you back with us as well.

Let's start with War Child Canada. We'll have 10 minutes for your opening testimony and then we'll move to Right To Play.

Samantha.

**Dr. Samantha Nutt (Founder and Executive Director, War Child Canada):** Thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to be with you this afternoon.

● (1535)

[*English*]

It's a real privilege for me to be here. I have spent the last 20 years as a medical doctor working for the UN, and then in my capacity as executive director and founder of War Child, working on the issue of children and women who are very much in need of our protection in war zones around the world.

My colleague Dr. Lorna Read also comes with about two decades of experience working on this issue. We're both about 68 years old. We're absolutely delighted that the standing committee has chosen to address it this afternoon.

I'll begin with a brief overview of the context in which War Child works because obviously the protection challenges in the environments in which we operate are among the most serious and challenging that exist in the world. We are in conflict and post-conflict states, and the ongoing risk of violence and abuse and threats to children, and in particular girls, in those contexts are extremely grave. Sexual violence and poverty and a lack of access to education, a lack of any kind of meaningful judicial infrastructure, a climate of impunity, the rabid proliferation of small arms—all of these represent very real threats to the safety and well-being of children, but especially of girls.

Still, what we have found over the course of our work internationally is that even in the midst of such complex circumstances, there are measures that are very well known, well established, especially when it comes to girls, to protect them and to reduce the risks they face over the medium and long term. I'll give you examples, and this is by no means an exhaustive list. First, there are the safe and protected spaces in communities as well as in internally displaced persons camps and refugee camps. There are the literacy initiatives and educational programs for children as well as their families and caregivers. That last part is very, very important. We often think of education for children without recognizing the importance of literacy and education for their caregivers as well in that process and the impact that has on child well-being. There is the access to justice in the form of fostering a culture, particularly at the community level, that respects and upholds the rights of children and youth. They can be both formal and informal mechanisms. By formal, we often think of the rule of law, training of members of the judicial system, police training, and upholding and strengthening those indigenous infrastructures. But the mechanisms can also be informal, and by this we refer to alternate dispute mechanisms that take place at the community level to resolve conflict and to strengthen and promote the rights of children. The access to income, particularly for mothers, is also another known factor that will make a tremendous difference in protecting children from harm and abuse.

Of these, the evidence really shows, if you look at the data that has come out over the past 30 years, that supporting education and increasing or improving income levels, in particular for women, correlates most strongly with all the protection concerns that are being discussed here today. By this I mean that education and income levels are known to reduce rates or prevalence of early and forced marriages. It reduces the likelihood of children and youth participating in the sex trade. It has a tremendous influence on shaping the views that communities hold when it comes to female genital mutilation. We know that girls and women who have attained at least a secondary education are much more likely to disapprove of the practice of female genital mutilation and to not further it.

We know that increasing education and income levels also have an important impact on reducing fertility rates around the world and improving the health and well-being of children, especially those under five. The single most important determinant of whether a child in the developing world will live to see his or her fifth birthday is without question a measure of that family's—the mother's in particular—access to education and to income.

To summarize the evidence, then, that has been collected over the past three decades when it comes to protection concerns, it is clear and it is uncontested that education and economic development are strongly, positively correlated with the protection of children and youth across the developing world without exception. I want to be clear on that: it is without exception.

However, to fully capitalize on these beneficial effects, Canada's strategy when it comes to emergency humanitarian assistance ought to evolve to reflect these realities by continuing to prioritize protection programming as part of our early intervention strategy.

Often we prioritize basic human needs, and these are extremely important. We prioritize food, water, shelter, blankets, and health care, and these are vital to ensuring the survival of children in acute situations, but we can do more here as well. Humanitarian assistance that includes direct support for education measures, such as accelerated learning and adult literacy for women, and economic development, which includes skills training for youth tied very directly to market needs and income-generating opportunities for families, is also critical, even when you're looking at the most emergent phase of a crisis.

For example, consider Syria. Lorna and I have just recently returned from Syria. There has been an extraordinary response that has been mounted to deal with the unfolding tragedy taking place in that part of the world. At the same time, that response has overwhelmingly focused on those short-term basic human needs.

As for what we are seeing in the camps, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, and in the communities, you will see that even in those early stages, because families are unable to find work—and in some cases in Jordan they're not even allowed to work—that creates real protection gaps when it comes to children and puts them at increased risk. Families then send those children out to earn income. Sometimes that is an illicit means of earning income, such as prostitution, or other things such as begging in the streets or hard labour. We also see that families are more inclined to marry off their girls at younger ages, and we have seen some cases of the trafficking of children.

Again, education and economic development opportunities for families in those acute stages do have a very positive effect when it comes to protecting children and decreasing those risks, so it is also important for our approaches to be holistic in that regard. For education in and of itself, education that isn't backed up by employment opportunities and income-generating opportunities at the back end tends to have a much more muted effect than when you have young people who are provided with that kind of pillar-to-post programming. Then you have young people who are allowed to pursue an education and then marry that education with livelihoods and skills training. That allows them to earn an income, provides a much more comprehensive package, and protects them from further harm, even in conflict states.

Simply put, or at least to sum up, it is our position that Canada's humanitarian assistance strategy, to be successful, ought to always target children and youth who are at the highest risk. By “highest risk”, I mean those who are living in extreme poverty and those who are living with war. Also, we ought to give some very serious consideration to expanding our definitions of emergency relief to include these other important areas that go beyond basic human needs, to also include education, employment, and safe spaces and protection, recognizing that to truly have an impact in these areas, if we want to see our aid working to maximal effect, it needs to be more than just six-month and one-year funding increments. It takes a generation to see the effects of well-managed aid.

When you're talking about protection of children, funding cycles that are at a minimum of three to five years, even in those emergency phases, provide the kind of structure and the kind of continuity that allow families to actually have a more positive outlook, to not be fearful for their future, and to not engage in high-risk activities for themselves and for their children.

With that, I will hand it over to my colleague from Right To Play, who also has an opening statement.

I think we're doing questions after that?

● (1540)

**The Chair:** Exactly. Thank you very much, Ms. Nutt.

Evelyne.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Evelyne Guindon (Vice President, International Programs, Right To Play):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Evelyne Guindon. This time, I am going to give my presentation in English.

[*English*]

I'm the vice-president of international programs at Right To Play, and I'm very honoured to be with you today to speak to an issue that's core to my personal mission, as a committed development and humanitarian worker and as a child rights advocate for over 25 years now.

Right To Play, for those of you who might not be familiar with it, is a global organization, and what we do is we use the transformative power of play to educate and empower children facing adversity. By playing sports and games, Right To Play helps over one million children create better futures while driving lasting social change in more than 20 countries each week. We were founded in 2000 by four-time Olympic gold medallist Johann Olav Koss, and we're headquartered in Canada, in Toronto. Our programs are facilitated by more than 600 international staff and 16,400 local volunteer coaches in the communities where we work.

So we're committed to the holistic development of children and their communities. Child protection is at the very foundation of all of Right To Play's works. Our programs, which reach children in development and refugee settings and in conflict-afflicted areas, ensure that the children are safeguarded and also protected. Of note is that our child protection policy confirms our legal and moral commitment to child safety in all of our programs. We hold our staff, our partners, and our volunteers to the highest standards in child safeguarding and protection, but we also help governments, we work with civil society, and we work with the private sector to help them be accountable as well.

I want to start by commending the standing committee for prioritizing this issue. It's important that we actually begin talking about this issue, and I'm very pleased. It's also important that you all know that Canada does have a strong history, from the early 2000s, of having a good strong global voice on this issue. Most recently, in 2012, there was the national action plan to combat human trafficking. There was the introduction of the first-ever resolution to end child, early, and forced marriage at the UN General Assembly. That was just last year, in 2013. There was a $3-million commitment to implement the minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action, and there's the newly formed DFATD child protection unit. So there's a lot for us to be proud of and a lot to inspire us.

I believe, based on this, we as Canadians have that credibility. We have the trust of our partners in the private sector, in governments, in UN agencies, and in civil society, and we're very well positioned at this time, I believe, to help lead global efforts in the protection of children and youth. So today I am going to highlight a bit of Right To Play's unique perspective on the complex issue and provide some very specific recommendations on what we feel the Government of Canada should focus on. We've built these recommendations based on our key learnings over 15 years in 20 countries, and that involved a lot of work in Africa and the Middle East and in Asia, and also recently here in Canada.

Before I move to those specific recommendations, I want to underscore that protecting children from trafficking, from female genital mutilation, from exploitation of all kinds, is incredibly complex. And I want to start off by giving you a little bit of an example that is top of mind, something that happened to us recently in Mali.

We had been working with the government on the development of laws, and this has been through Canadian government-funded programs, but we also recently began working with a series of clubs. We're building these child protection clubs. One of the goals of these clubs has been to try to identify and report cases of child abuse. As a result of the training and the sensitization activities on child rights and child abuse in a particular community called Bougouni, all of a sudden we started seeing the number of child abuse cases reported increase. These laws, again, these systems, had been in place, but the difference was the child protection clubs, and one of the things we saw was that this led recently to the first arrest and conviction of the first child trafficker in Mali. So these are things that we know are important to weave together. It's about the systems, but it's also about those community-based mechanisms.

I'm going to get to some recommendations based on these types of examples, and we have many of them.

● (1545)

The first thing I want to say is that we feel it's critical that on issues of child protection and issues that affect children broadly, but especially on this issue, we must put children's voices first. Children must be provided with meaningful and inclusive opportunities to express their views and to engage in mutually respectful dialogue with adults, and they must take action in order for child protection to work.

We must equip children to become active agents in their own safety and ensure that they have a seat at the table. By investing in those participatory approaches such as sport and play and these child protection clubs, we can reinforce positive behaviour and build children's life skills and knowledge to protect themselves and their peers and to create lasting change as they grow and build their own communities.

Children's summits and children's parliaments can be very effective mechanisms among others. Right To Play has helped the most forgotten and silenced children find their voice and make changes within their communities and their nations. However, we do feel that we need to learn more about these mechanisms. There is a critical need right now for research to identify which best practices are working and which ones can be developed. We need to develop assessment tools to ensure authenticity and the right level of representation and engagement of children. This is a very important need for us and one of the reasons we put it first and foremost.

Second, to produce real results, we must integrate child protection into all interventions. To address the full range of factors that contribute to the violation of children's rights, child protection must be integrated into other interventions. For example, work in maternal newborn child health dovetails with work in birth registration. That's very critical. Education is an area we can speak to with our extensive experience. We must invest in building the skills and engaging educators and youth leaders, and we must leverage the types of investment that Canada is making in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, and integrate child-centred methodology. This is something that we as Canadians take for granted. It's seen in the way a Canadian classroom looks, but it wasn't that long ago that we were sitting in rows ourselves and also getting a bit of a beating from our teachers.

These child-centred methodologies are critically important, and this is what we can use to help not only reduce corporal punishment but provide that safe and child-friendly learning environment. It's still appalling to me that we walk into so many classrooms in developing countries where we see classrooms of 80 or 100 students, and corporal punishment is still seen as accepted. In over 78 countries, corporal punishment in classrooms is still legal. This is one of the things we have to look at.

The other thing that is core to this is making child protection a cross-cutting developing issue. I'm old enough to remember when gender was new. Now gender is a cross-cutting normative part of how we do development work. I hope for the day when child protection is also integrated into all of the different initiatives that we fund, invest in, and engage in within Canada.

The third recommendation would be to build community capacity and mechanisms. This must be at the core of any meaningful intervention. As I mentioned before, systems and laws can't in and of themselves protect children. Building community capacity is critical to preventing and responding to child protection risks. We've seen first-hand how strong and equipped communities can be a driving force to raise awareness of, prevent, monitor, and respond to child protection issues.

One recent example was what happened in Benin, where Right To Play works with something called “child saviour committees”, as the kids in the communities call them. They're comprised of children, community members, and a village chief. They prevent and help respond to child rights and protection issues. We're working in communities that have very serious violations.

Recently, in one particular community, a 16-year-old girl was sexually abused by her brother. Culturally, she would have been forced to marry him as a sacrifice to the rain gods. The committee reported the case to the social promotion centre, which worked with the king to make an alternative sacrifice. The committee in this case, in collaboration with civil society and with the government-supported programs, supported the young girl in accessing the child protection services. She was able to access legal, health, physical, and psychosocial support. This example shows how these systems need to work together with community-based systems.

● (1550)

Canada needs to invest in these community-based mechanisms that build on existing community strengths and to strengthen the relationship between community-based networks and local and national efforts.

The fourth recommendation would be around collaboration and coordination, something that we as Canadians do very well. We know that the global community is increasingly recognizing that the exploitation of and violence towards children remains a major barrier to broader development goals, and it's undermining the very important gains we're having in health, education, and economic growth. Concerted efforts to firmly situate child protection in global dialogues and coordinate and focus efforts globally are required.

Forming alliances that engage bilateral and multilateral partners, political leaders, civil society, private sector, and children and youth themselves at all levels—at the local level, national level, and international level—is critical. We've seen the effectiveness of this approach first-hand.

I want to give a couple of examples where this notion of collaboration has been very effective. One of them, we know, is maternal, newborn, and child health, the Muskoka initiative. It's very much about collaboration and bringing initiatives together. Canada has played a leadership role in acting as a convenor. Another area was Scaling Up Nutrition, a little known but high-impact initiative where Canada championed and brought together the nutrition community to see investments now in multiple countries by other governments, by other private sector donors. Collaboration is very critical.

Fifth and last, I want to echo what was said by my colleagues at War Child, and that is to prioritize child protection as not only essential in the development sector but also in the humanitarian sector. At Right To Play, we've also seen first-hand how developing protective environments contribute to the safety and the well-being of children before, during, and after emergency.

In closing, as Canada looks to the role it can play in the protection of children and youth, with a focus on the prevention of human trafficking, early forced marriages, sex trade, FGM, and online abuse of children, focused efforts to support meaningful child participation, robust coordination and collaboration across sectors and stake-holders, multi-sectoral approaches to remove barriers and risks to children's protection are what will ensure that children not only survive but thrive.

As we mark the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child—in Canada, the 10th anniversary of A Canada Fit For Children—it's a pivotal moment to take strong leadership in child protection globally.

With strong Canadian networks such as the International Child Protection Network of Canada, leading international NGOs such as Right To Play and War Child, both globally recognized, built in Canada by Canadians, headquartered in Canada, in collaboration with the Government of Canada, we have the solutions collectively in hand. Together we can create real impact and help ensure that every child is safe and equipped to reach her or his full potential.

Thank you very much.

● (1555)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll start our first round of questions.

Mr. Dewar, seven minutes, please.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to our guests. Both of the presentations were very concise and very helpful for our work. You're our first witnesses as we do this study, so thank you.

I'll start with War Child. The recent events in Nigeria and in CAR, Central African Republic, give us a couple of good examples of how to deal with the issue of child protection and maybe how to innovate and improve the approach. I think in the case of Nigeria, there's a state there; it has problems in the north, as we know. It's the fastest-growing economy, yet there are ten million children who are not in school, six million who are girls. Of course, the recent events have grabbed the attention of the world. In that case, it seems we have a government that seems unwilling at times to actually fulfill their responsibilities under some of these international conventions.

In the case of CAR, it seems that we have a state...well, there isn't a state, in essence, as we would normally design a state or reference a state. It seems unable to fulfill the requirements of protecting children. So in the one case they're unwilling and in the other case unable.

I was struck with your points, Dr. Nutt, around building the right kind of capacity—in other words, the right kind of response—and that it has to be tailored to the different situations. I've given two recent conditions that we've been seized with. You mentioned Syria, which our committee just finished a study on.

The question is, how do we build that into the response? I agree with you in terms of going beyond just the shelter, water, and basic needs that we normally associate with child protection. But in the case of Nigeria, for example, there's seemingly an unwillingness to act from the state—or, in the case of CAR, an inability to.

When you're enumerating these issues around child protection you note that we need to expand and provide the safer spaces, and education, and employment—I couldn't agree with you more—cash for work programs, for instance, as well as setting up schools that function as soon as possible. But how do you do that in those two scenarios?

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** Thank you. That's a very thoughtful question.

Lorna, do you want to handle that question, or do you want me to go ahead?

**Dr. Lorna Read (Chief Operating Officer, War Child Canada):** I'll start with a couple of points, and then I'll turn it back over to you, Sam.

I think one thing we've certainly learned from our experience is that we need the ability to act in a timely fashion. We need the ability to be on the ground and to have a response mechanism that is not necessarily only, as Samantha said, primarily just looking at the basic needs but is a response mechanism that from the get-go engages local community, local partners, and those on the ground—who are on the ground, who are going to be on the ground, regardless of the situation and the scenarios—and to engage them in a kind of dialogue around what we look at as response and prevention.

So we need response mechanisms vis-à-vis the issues that might be of immediate concern for children and for the communities, but we also need to build in right away a dialogue around prevention in the long-term strategy. I think in both situations, this is where you see the urgency of a situation that's unfolding. There are not necessarily those mechanisms in place that allow an organization—I mean, we feel it for War Child—to be able to get in in such a timely way and to start the kind of dialogue that we know will be productive over a longer term.

● (1600)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** What are the barriers on that? Sorry to interrupt, but I'm very interested in this.

**Dr. Lorna Read:** Security is a primary barrier, and the resources that are required to be able to be as secure as possible in that environment. Also, I think, what we're all immersed in now is the debate around what is a humanitarian situation and at what point is there a response mechanism and what does that look like. Our experience is that these—in both situations that you mention also—will be protracted, will be long term, and there's a long-term investment that's needed as soon as possible. And that's the most efficient intervention.

Local communities see the spurts of money in other situations and they're not sure of longevity of it; they're not sure, if they get it now, there will be a commitment for it six months or a year out. So the ability to have those kind of dialogues up front builds the trust and the infrastructure that you need locally to be effective and to be effective over a long term.

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** I would echo that: it's the capacity to be able to deploy quickly and to know that those resources are there for a longer period of time. But I'm going to be honest with you, because I think....

This is a challenge that we face all around the world. We are in Darfur in Sudan, dealing with the regime of Omar al-Bashir; we are in South Sudan in Malakal, which just imploded, doing protection initiatives with children; and we are in eastern Congo. Dealing with governments that are either unwilling or unable to respond to the protection needs of their own population is, unfortunately, par for the course in our line of work. The real answer to your question is that NGOs in and of themselves are not the solution, but they are part of a solution if it's handled correctly and if it's handled swiftly and efficiently.

Within that, I would say that if you look at the example of CAR, or at the example of Nigeria, even in those contexts where governments are unable or unwilling, with the right kinds of linkages that Lorna has already discussed, with the right kind of programming model that actually meaningfully engages those local actors, that immediately identifies those protection gaps and needs, that identifies those local actors—not international actors, but local actors—that are immediately able to respond and have legitimacy and the support of that local community, if you can actually work with Canadian organizations to build the capacity to respond much more effectively and efficiently and if they know that there is a longer more meaningful relationship and investment that's taking place, then you certainly can offset some of that tide.

It doesn't mean that you'll be able to prevent it in every instance, but it does mean that you have a strong enough presence and a greater degree of resiliency within the population to be able to at least address these issues meaningfully as they come up.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Brown, please, for seven minutes.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC):** I hope I have lots of time, Chair, as I have lots of questions.

Dr. Nutt, at what point do you insert yourself into a situation? What are the signs that you're looking for? Are there things that you can do proactively if you see conflict starting to emerge? Do you go in at that point, or are you not allowed in until such time as it's a full-blown conflict?

As well, we were talking about collaboration. Are there other partners with whom you are able to work? In Syria, for instance, we know that the Red Cross/Red Crescent are on the ground. Do you collaborate with those organizations?

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** Thank you.

Yes, we do. Our entire programming model is based on collaborating with local community-based organizations, or CBOs, as we often call them, local non-governmental organizations, and local communities. We also collaborate quite extensively with a number of other international organizations on the ground. For example, we have strong relationships with UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, and other organizations, partly because we're such a specialized agency.

In terms of how we decide where we're going to be, and the mechanisms that exist for us to identify what those needs are, that's an iterative process that our office is engaged in all the time, in the countries in which we're working, and the countries in which we believe we ought to be working. Most often what constrains that decision-making process is resources, it's nothing more than that. However, security is something we take very, very seriously, and we look at that too.

A number of different early warning mechanisms exist. Certainly, it was no surprise to us and to our team that South Sudan imploded the way it did. The timing of the implosion was a surprise to all of us, but the fact that it was heading in a certain direction...there was a lot of evidence to suggest that this was what was going to happen.

What I would say to you is that it is imperfect, but what we have found is that, over time, if you are able to withstand those ups and downs and that inevitable ebb and flow that is a conflict or post-conflict civil war environment, it is rarely intense forever, and nor is it peaceful forever, if you are in those in-between phases. But if you're an organization that is prepared to stick it out, if you have the resiliency and the determination, when those local partners and local communities recognize that you're invested for a longer period of time, that also contributes to the success of that program.

We have seen that in Afghanistan, where we've been on the ground for more than 12 year now, with funding from CIDA and other partners, now DFATD. We've seen that in eastern Congo and elsewhere. It's this sense that international organizations land, they set up, they put their banners everywhere, they're running around doing high-profile, high-visibility things, and as soon as the cameras begin to go home and public interest begins to wane and donors develop fatigue, all of those gains that were made begin to evaporate. That's when you also see higher levels of local corruption and various other things, because people are actually only trying to get what they can get for as long as they can get it. Until we break that kind of model, until we break the attitudes around that and begin to make longer-term investments, that's always going to be a risk.

For us, it's a constant process to identify where we can have an impact, what the security risk will be to our staff, and who is on the ground that we can invest in. We don't go in with a prescribed version of what we think we should be doing. We go in and we ask questions, we conduct comprehensive needs assessments, we talk to local experts, international experts, we identify the gaps and we focus on the protection strategies—access to justice, education, including accelerated learning, safe and protected spaces for kids, and livelihoods and economic development—for children and youth.

Did you want to add to that?

● (1605)

**Dr. Lorna Read:** No, that's fine.

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Hopefully what you're doing, Ms. Guindon, is part of the set-up to ensure that some of those building blocks are in place. You and I were talking a little bit earlier about some of the work you're doing in China. Could you tell the committee about those initiatives?

**Mrs. Evelyne Guindon:** China is a country that was developed with Right To Play China as a legacy of the Chinese games. The area of focus in China has been primarily research. It is the academic community that is really interested in looking at these issues, particularly as it relates to child labour issues. What it has elicited there is an academic community that is interested in researching this.

Various development settings are unique in their own ways. Again, as I mentioned, the community-based approach is incredibly important. It's incredibly important with regard to preparedness. We work in many countries where conflict can erupt, violence is prone to erupting, and I think the preparedness is critical.

What is also very, very important is aligning with UN partners—UNHCR and UNICEF are some of the key partners we work with, as well as War Child, I'm sure—and working with the cluster system; that's one of the areas that make an awful lot of sense. But working at the community level, and building that trust at the community, is really critical.

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Do I have any time left, Chair?

**The Chair:** Yes, you have a minute and a half.

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Oh, my word.

You spoke about the discipline used in schools. My daughter is currently teaching in west Africa. She's teaching grade 4 and 5 English in a basic school in Tarkwa, Ghana. When she was first signing her papers with the headmaster, he handed her a cane and said, “This is what we use for discipline.” My daughter said, “Well, I won't manage my classroom that way.” He told her, “The kids expect it. This is what we do.” My daughter said, “I won't manage my class that way.” It's created some other challenges, because the kids know that she won't use the cane in the classroom, and she has had to develop other mechanisms to class-manage. But it was just the way it is.

Do you ever interface with ministers of education in developing countries in order to help them understand that children live what they learn?

● (1610)

**The Chair:** If you could answer that question in five seconds, we'd really appreciate it.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mrs. Evelyne Guindon:** I can answer that by saying there's an awful lot of evidence that shows that children benefit academically and want to come to school when they can be in a safe environment. There are plenty of governments that we can showcase and highlight that are taking that step.

The key is that we've been investing in getting children in school—a big push to get children in school—and we need to be making more investments in what actually happens inside those classrooms and looking at quality education and safety.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Dr. Lorna Read:** Can I say something in, like, six seconds?

**The Chair:** Okay: six seconds.

**Dr. Lorna Read:** Very interestingly, in Afghanistan, we have some direct results that show—just to speak a bit to the comprehensive nature of this—a significant decrease in corporal punishment in the communities where we focused on the education of the mothers. This is about the linkages. As mothers were educated and corporal punishment went down in the household, then, over time, it also brought it down in the broader environment for children. It's very interesting, actually.

**The Chair:** That was slightly more than six seconds, but still pretty close.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Dr. Hsu, it's good to have you here. The floors is yours for seven minutes, sir.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to find out a little bit more about a comment that Dr. Nutt made about the need to expand the definition of emergency relief to include things like, I presume, creation and maintenance of safe spaces, literacy, and education, and this other aspect of building community capacity.

I want to try to understand this from the point of view of what the federal government would do differently, what policies would change, who in the federal government would do what differently. I'm thinking ahead to what the committee report might be and how the government might react to the report.

What ideas do you have on what the federal government should be doing differently—what part of the federal government, and what should they be doing differently?

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** Thank you for that.

There have been some changes taking place with what used to be CIDA, and what's now DFATD, in terms of how we view what's normally called IHA, international humanitarian assistance. Normally if there is a crisis, for example in Syria, there will be either a request for proposals and there would be a certain amount of funding that is announced that will go to support the humanitarian effort in that part of the world.

In recent years we have seen a greater willingness to look at what would normally be considered non-emergency activities—education, literacy, protected environments for children, safe spaces, that kind of thing—as activities that will be included as part of those funded. Historically, however, the priority and the preference is still to do announcements that have a higher per capita, lower per cost yield, focused on basic needs—food, water, shelter, blankets, vaccinations. And there is a reason for that. I mean, it's understood that obviously you need to make sure that people are well before they can engage in these other pursuits. We fully understand that. But by not including, in that emergency strategy, education, both formal and informal; literacy, both formal and informal; activities for youth, both formal and informal, we are missing an opportunity at that very early stage of a crisis to actually create a more protected environment for girls.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** So are you saying that the federal government, when it specifies how it's going to spend emergency aid money, should specify that? And is there a minister responsible for that?

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** No, I think what should happen is that it should be more receptive to including financial support for those kinds of activities. At the moment, often when those announcements are made, the decisions have already taken place that it will be Red Cross for this and MSF for that. Those are wholly legitimate, but it is a missed opportunity, absolutely.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Whose responsibility is it in the federal government, do you think, to make a change?

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** Where are those funding decisions made? It's the Prime Minister's Office, it's Foreign Affairs, it's CIDA, it's....

This is not just now; this has been going on for the last 15 years. We've been on the front lines of having conversations, internal and external, with CIDA to get them to expand the definition of what they would consider to be emergency humanitarian assistance. So it would be that.

I would add to this, too, that in terms of what other things the government can do, one very obvious one would be to sign and ratify the arms trade treaty, which is something that I frankly think is long overdue. There's no good reason not to do it. We do know that the reduction in the proliferation of small arms has a very beneficial effect when it comes to reducing the ongoing threats of violence to women and children globally, but particularly in unstable environments.

● (1615)

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Okay: so get that treaty taken care of.

From the body language here, I'm guessing that maybe our other witnesses might want to add something.

**Dr. Lorna Read:** No, I would just totally concur. I think part of it has been that there has been some ongoing dialogue of late between what has been the traditional humanitarian arm and the more long-term development arm. I think it's really a struggle in terms of what is the bridge between the two, what does that bridge look like, and how could the government seek to understand the type of funding mechanisms that would somehow bridge the two? Because very traditionally, they've been quite separate.

What we know, when we look at the millennium development goals, is that the failure to meet a lot of those goals has largely been because a majority of the extreme...those who are categorized as in extreme poverty, and also the conflict-ridden states, where the majority of the populations are living. Those are the exact contexts in the exact states that will receive bursts of short-term humanitarian funds, including UN pooled funds, etc. But there can be huge lapses between those bursts and when a more stabilized source of funding comes in. Then you can see very easily the return to conflict and how these situations become very cyclical and very protracted.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Can you name one place in the world in particular?

**Dr. Lorna Read:** Darfur, Sudan.

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]...and still pooled emergency funds. It's all six months to one year. We're engaged in livelihoods, we work with youth. We know that engaging those young people in those employment opportunities dramatically decreases the likelihood that they will participate with militia groups or be recruited by militia groups. Yet when you have these short bursts of six months to one year, you cannot sustain or lock in the kinds of changes you're talking about.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** So the federal government should be looking at Darfur and looking three to five years out, and looking at how it could perhaps make good use of resources from Canada in the longer term. Is that a fair statement?

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Ms. Guindon, would you...?

**Mrs. Evelyne Guindon:** I'd also say, in line with that, is the example of Dadaab. You have a generation of children who have grown up in that camp, and when the crisis hits, the attention is there, but they are forgotten. The opportunity that exists in that camp for the future of Somalia is right there. But again, our organizations are very stretched.

I'd have to echo, in terms of what we would do differently, that in this case it is about making sure that child protection is central to humanitarian funding, and that Canada, which is a generous donor to World Food Programme and UNHCR and UNICEF, demand that child protection also be made central to their intervention.

Further, a new opportunity that exists right now is the fact that trade and development are within the same ministry. Opportunities for collaboration on long-term development issues and on child labour issues are there as well. The government helping us come together as an NGO community and through the private sector—there's an interesting opportunity for us.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

That's all the time we have, sir.

We'll move to Mr. Anderson, five minutes, please.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

I want to ask the opposite question that Ms. Brown asked you. She asked you when you get engaged, and I'm wondering: do you, or when do you, get disengaged after you have gone in? Do you stay where you are and expand, or do you actually disengage and then move on to somewhere else?

I'm interested in what both your organizations do.

**Dr. Lorna Read:** In the case of War Child, for good or for bad it demonstrates a reality on something we've been emphasizing over the course of this afternoon. That is, most of the situations where War Child has been are over 10 years now because most of those situations are protracted conflicts. We've gone through quite a few ebbs and flows in terms of active conflict and lesser so.

For the organization, ideally the decision on the disengagement is when there's local capacity—the local partners who have been part of the capacity-building strategy with the organization and the work on the ground—and when the light is there that they are going to continue with the work themselves, and that they are sort of ready to move forward. In most of the countries where we are now, that capacity hasn't been possible yet because of the continuation of the conflict. But there have been other situations, certainly, where that decision has presented itself, and it really comes down to believing that the local community's capacity has been set to continue the work themselves.

● (1620)

**Mrs. Evelyne Guindon:** I think for us it depends on the setting. Our goal every day is to work our way out of a job. We can do that in many communities where we're building the local capacity, and we have these local coaches, these local volunteers.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Have you found that's the case, then, that you've been able to move on to other places?

**Mrs. Evelyne Guindon:** There have been countries where we've been successful, where our interventions have been short. I have to say that many of the countries we work with, whether it's the Palestinian territories...and right now we're working in Jordan. It's a country where we had a very light touch, and today we have a much heavier touch, unfortunately. There are countries like Benin, where I can see the end within the next five to ten years, because we have that concerted effort now from a few donors that we will be able to actually leave a very different education system.

In other communities it's a little bit different. The situation's more precarious.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Ms. Reid mentioned something about working with mothers and reducing levels of corporal punishment, and I want to come back to that.

Can you talk a little bit about the role of parents, and how you address that? I realize you have all kinds of different situations and realities there, but how do you approach—particularly when you're talking about child protection—parents and parenting with your organizations as well?

**Dr. Lorna Read:** For us, it's actually a central part of the programming. Primarily we have what we call our child-centred program, with protection mechanisms and so on at the forefront of that model. But built into that model are ensuring the protective environments and the points of interaction for the child. The parents are obviously foremost in that model, and are very often the entry point for War Child's programming in terms of when you start your needs assessment and understanding where some of the highest risks are.

In our particular situation, very often it's related to the home situation based on the circumstances of the conflict. So it's ensuring that the mothers and the female heads of households have access themselves to education, to livelihoods, and to the type of life-changing circumstances that we know will then have a positive impact on their children.

With fathers, it's different. Very often, for us, fathers are more a part of the advocacy work of our engagement. That's often about awareness for the men in communities, to understand the importance of the work with women and children. Afghanistan just sticks out as an example for us of such a successful program there. We really focused on the women and we focused on mothers, understanding that they are ultimately the primary protective mechanism for the children and how we then would be able to work more directly with children. But that also required significant understanding and almost approval of the men in the communities, whether it be fathers, as parents, or religious leaders.

**Mr. David Anderson:** I'm out of time, but Evelyne, I'd like a response from you as well.

**Mrs. Evelyne Guindon:** Again, I think it's critical that parents are involved. Once again, for us as an organization focused on children, working with parents as community leaders but also as influencers, what we see in a lot of our programs is we actually have children who are empowered and who are able to go back to their parents, to their communities, and make changes, changes that impact their health and impact their education. It goes both ways, but for us the parents are at the core of all of our programs and must remain.

**The Chair:** Thank you so much.

Mr. Dewar, five minutes, please.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thanks again, Chair.

I'm glad you brought up the arms trade treaty. I was going to ask you that question, but you've already answered it. I would just plead with the government to acknowledge the need to do that, because particularly in a place like Africa the effects on children are clear. We see it in real time, right now, and hopefully we'll see fit to sign that treaty real soon.

On some of the UN resolutions, the resolution on children in armed conflict or the UN Security Council resolution on women, peace, and security, we've seen some member states engage in this and put in programs. Our government actually has an action plan on women, peace, and security. We've talked about child protection. From what you've seen of other member states, how are we doing? What's your assessment of where Canada is at in implementing those resolutions regarding both child protection, in particular the one on children in armed conflict—obviously there's a direct connection there—and the one on women, peace, and security, Security Council Resolution 1325, and subsequent resolutions following that?

It really is clear that women are the agents of change here, as you mentioned in your overview. But in light of the fact that we've had these for a couple of years, and in light of the fact that governments have had the time to respond and put things into action, how are you seeing it on the ground in terms of the work you're doing? And what improvements can we make to strengthen and improve those resolutions we've signed on to?

I'll start with War Child.

● (1625)

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** I'm of the belief that there is always room for improvement in everything we do. Certainly I would say that Canada's visibility, at least in the areas where we are working, is not that high when it comes to protection. The exception I would put on that would be Syria, because certainly in the refugee camps in Jordan we've had a very high visibility. You could also argue that with Haiti we had a much higher visibility.

But when it comes to...keeping in mind that most of our programming is in Africa—in eastern Congo, South Sudan, Darfur, northern Uganda, and elsewhere. Canada's involvement in those contexts—South Sudan would be the exception, because we have had a much more prominent role there when it comes to these issues—has been, in some of these other places, not as much.

I think there has been a shift: the high-visibility activities we are engaged in tend to focus, as I've said, on these bigger announcements of the shorter-term interventions in response to a crisis or a natural disaster. Alternatively, those big announcements also tend to go to, say, UN pooled funds, which has been mentioned already. The opportunity for Canada to be visible within that is understandably diminished, because it's not seen that there is a very prominent role for Canadians, either diplomatically or at least within the humanitarian movement. There's not a prominent role we are taking on that is visible, being reported on, and shaping or influencing policy at that level. That's just the context in which we are working. Within that there are exceptions: Afghanistan, South Sudan, and a few others.

When you look at what's happened in Europe, for example, with the greater alignment of the AIDS strategy within DFID, and the Scandinavian countries that have committed to achieving or are already achieving or exceeding the 0.7%, we have a lot of catching up to do. I think there is great room for us to define ourselves on an international level as being a country deeply invested in human rights, child protection, and the protection of women and the advancement of girls globally. But it is incumbent upon all of us to seize that platform; to think about our aid in a more concerted, progressive, longer-term way to target those high-risk countries; and to stop chasing our tails with crisis announcement, crisis announcement—to actually be meaningfully invested over the long term.

So we're doing some good stuff, but we can do more.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Can I confirm or just underline some of these? You said the U.K. is doing good work, and you mentioned Scandinavian countries. Is there any particular country within that—

**Dr. Samantha Nutt:** Norway. Absolutely Norway.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have.

To our witnesses, thank you very much. I'm sure we could have gone on for another hour. It's always a challenge with that limited amount of time we have.

We'll suspend the meeting so we can get our next group of witnesses up.

Thanks again.

● _____ (Pause) _____

●

● (1630)

**The Chair:** Welcome back, everyone.

I want to welcome our two witnesses to finish up our last hour here.

From World Vision Canada, we have Elly Vandenberg, who is the senior director of policy and advocacy.

Welcome back. You're no stranger to our committee, so we're glad to have you back.

From UNICEF, we have Susan Bissell, who is the associate director of program division for child protection.

Susan, welcome, and we're glad to have you here as well.

We'll have both of you give your opening remarks, and then we'll go around the room. I believe we have bells at quarter after five, so we'll try to finish off what we're doing just shortly after that. We'll try to keep our rounds a little bit tighter.

Ms. Vandenberg, you have ten minutes.

**Ms. Elly Vandenberg (Senior Director, Policy and Advocacy, World Vision Canada):** Great.

Good afternoon.

● (1635)

[*Translation*]

Thank you for inviting me to be part of this important study on the protection of children and youth in developing countries.

[*English*]

World Vision Canada, for those of you who don't know about us, is a Christian relief, development, and advocacy organization operating as a federation in about 100 countries. We use a long-term community-based development model. We are a child-centred organization committed to protecting children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other forms of violence. We're really thrilled to be here for this committee meeting.

Today I want to share some recommendations on the role that Canada can play to ensure that children and youth are safe from harm. To understand the approach that's required, I'll begin with a story from Bangladesh, where I was recently.

Shabira, currently 15 years old, is from a very poor family. As a child she worked in a shrimp factory to help earn extra income for her family. After years of struggle, Shabira's aunt sold her to a brothel in India. She was exploited sexually there for a year until police found her and took her to a nearby shelter.

With no education, Shabira didn't understand what was happening to her. Desperate to get home to her parents in Bangladesh, she left the shelter. She reached out to a group of men to help her, and they ended up raping her.

When some community members found her and heard her story, they brought her to World Vision volunteers, who put her in touch with World Vision India, who made the connection with World Vision Bangladesh so that she could be repatriated back to her family in Bangladesh. Once home, she received medical attention but was too young to understand what had happened to her.

At 15, Shabira is now a young adolescent with physical and emotional scars.

I love working for World Vision, but it's stories like this that break my heart. I'm sharing this story as a way to help us understand the interconnectedness in the issue of child protection. I wish there was just one thing we could do that could protect children like Shabira, but what we've learned from our experience is that it takes a holistic approach to address issues of child protection. This approach starts with the child first.

You know, when I try to explain the systems-based approach to my mother, it's hard. The other day, when I was trying to explain it in a family setting, I said, you know, what we mean by a systems-based approach is that there can't be just one thing done for a girl like Shabira. The systems-based approach is with a child at the centre: we strengthen that child and we strengthen the protective environment around that child.

That includes different elements. It includes her parents—you had questions before about the role of the parents—it strengthens the community, it strengthens the government and different bodies within the government, and it strengthens international bodies. So it takes strengthening the child and strengthening that protective system, that protective shield, around the child.

Shabira's story shows just some examples of how complex and interrelated child protection issues are. We know that it's impossible to treat any of these issues in isolation.

Let me give you just a few examples of the interventions World Vision uses with children like Shabira. Like many girls in her community,

[*Translation*]

The fact that Shabira has never set foot in a classroom limits her potential and makes her vulnerable to exploitation once again. Our work involves providing her with good quality education and professional training so that she can acquire the skills she needs to fulfill her dream of working in a small business.

[*English*]

We're also engaging local and national governments to not only enact but to enforce legislation that would increase the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18.

Through Citizen Voice and Action, World Vision's approach to local-level advocacy and local government accountability, we're mobilizing girls, boys, parents, and leaders to change discriminatory gender norms and create alternative social, economic, and civil opportunities for girls. These provide a small sample of the many interventions needed to help somebody like Shabira reach her full potential, and create that safe environment for her and so many like her.

With regard to World Vision's recommendations, there is no silver bullet for addressing child protection, but the Government of Canada can continue to make a contribution to efforts that build that protective environment for children by taking action in diplomacy, trade, and in development.

We would like to highlight three areas where Canada can make real and lasting change for protecting children. The first is to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by investing in vocational training and increasing safe and decent employment opportunities for youth. Second is to prevent harmful practices, such as child marriage, by investing in birth registration and in education, both formal and informal. Last is to protect children in emergencies by prioritizing child-friendly spaces.

On eliminating the worst forms of child labour by investing in skills training and increasing safe and decent employment opportunities for youth, ending child exploitation and child slavery are top priorities for World Vision. It is also a priority for Canadians. Through our No Child For Sale campaign, we have learned that Canadians are deeply engaged on this issue. They have asked us to work with key players to protect children from hazardous conditions. In fact, a recent Ipsos Reid poll showed that 86% of Canadians want the Canadian government to play a role in making sure that Canadian companies don't directly or indirectly support poor labour practices in other countries, including using child labour.

We're seeing good results from combined efforts. Recent statistics indicate that the number of children working in dangerous, dirty, and degrading jobs has actually dropped, from 115 million children to 85 million children, since 2008. However, progress is not fast enough. There are 85 million children still suffering in the worst forms of child labour. We're not talking about paper routes here or jobs on the farm. These are dirty, dangerous, and degrading jobs. We encourage Canada to join with World Vision to address child labour as an urgent global priority.

As a starting point, Canada can help to fully implement the 2016 International Labour Organization's road map for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, by doing two things: continuing to develop and invest in education and skills-based training opportunities for children and youth and supporting employment creation and livelihood diversification for youth to access safe and decent employment.

World Vision's goal is to continue to promote a dialogue on child protection, with both the private sector and with Canadians, to ensure that the worst forms of child labour—dirty, dangerous, and degrading labour—can be traced in global supply chains. This isn't easy. We're not exactly sure how to make that happen, but we want to start the dialogue.

Second, I want to highlight the importance of preventing harmful practices, such as child marriage, by investing in birth registration and in education. Canada has shown real leadership on ending child early and forced marriage.

● (1640)

[*Translation*]

Child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage constitute a violation of children's rights. They are also a major obstacle to the reduction of poverty and, more generally, to the achievement of development objectives.

[*English*]

Beyond its engagement with the United Nations, we encourage the government of Canada to invest in formal and informal education, especially for girls, in both long-term development and humanitarian responses. Supporting girls and boys to enrol in school enables them to broaden their choices in life, and develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to help break the cycle of poverty.

We appreciate Canada's generous support to the No Lost Generation initiative as a concrete example of how investing in education can be done in fragile states.

It's important to emphasize that in situations where children do not have the option to attend formal school, we need to invest in flexible, informal education—such as peer-to-peer learning—that offers children life-skills-based education.

We also encourage Canada to support universal birth registration as a key tool in making sure that all children have legal protection against exploitation. As we have found with our investments in maternal, newborn, and child health, a critical aspect in mothers and children getting the help they need requires knowing who they are.

Finally, there is protecting children in emergencies by prioritizing child-friendly spaces. A child like Shabira would be faced with unique child protection issues if Bangladesh were hit by a flood or engulfed in a conflict.

● (1645)

[*Translation*]

World Vision has long been recognized, for more than 50 years, in fact, for its ability to respond to humanitarian emergencies. Our experience has shown us that, because of the complexity of emergency situations and of their consequences for children, the process of prevention must focus on making children and their families aware of the dangers of violence and sexual exploitation, of human trafficking, of child labour. It must also focus on ways in which they can protect themselves.

[*English*]

Sadly, conflict continues to destroy the social fabric of communities, and many children are separated and without the protection of caring adults. This exposes them to high levels of violence, including gender-based violence, exploitation, abuse, and deprivation.

In times of humanitarian need, one practical thing Canada can do is ensure that creating safe spaces for boys and girls is prioritized as a key life-saving intervention. World Vision's child-friendly spaces serve as an important means of providing care, support, and protection for children in emergencies.

In conclusion, I want you to imagine the hundreds of children I have met as though they were sitting beside me and behind me, children who wish that they could speak to you themselves—that they had the opportunity I have right now—about what it takes to build their protection. We need to keep looking for new and innovative ways to work together to reach our goal of ending the worst forms of child labour by prioritizing skills-based training and increasing opportunities for youth to access safe and decent employment. Each of us has a responsibility to protect children, especially those who are most vulnerable.

World Vision, along with other partners, is collaborating with national governments and communities to strengthen the environment that will protect children and prevent them from being harmed. We've been encouraged because children and families are using their voices to advocate for change in their communities.

World Vision's No Child For Sale campaign points to the fact that Canadians are ready to take action to protect children and expect their leaders to protect children as well. There is a consensus that no child should be for sale. Let's say that my hand shows the child and each finger shows the parts we have to play: strengthening the child, strengthening that protective system, strengthening the family, and strengthening the communities, the government, and the international bodies. My pinky finger represents strengthening the participation of you and me as individuals and shows that we all have a part to play in protecting children.

Thank you for inviting World Vision Canada to be here today and for including our perspective in this important study. I look forward to your questions.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll move over to Ms. Bissell, please.

**Dr. Susan Bissell (Associate Director, Programmes Division, Child Protection, UNICEF):** Thirty years ago, over two summers, my job was updating the index to the rules of procedure in committees of the House of Commons. What a pleasure to be back here. I know from that exercise that I'm not supposed to use any profanity. That was under “P”.

Thank you very much for inviting UNICEF to be with you today. I can't think of a more important reason to come home to Canada than to be with you for this critical conversation at a distinct moment in human history.

Think back to December 2012. Malala of Pakistan had been shot. We were all witness, mostly via the media, to the gang rapes in India. The Russian government sentenced children to life in institutions, preventing their adoption to the United States. The war raged in Syria. And children in a small school in Newtown, Connecticut, not far from where I currently live, were gunned down.

I could go on and on. The picture is violent and graphic, and plays out even today in northern Nigeria, where a mass kidnapping is now potentially a scene of rape, child marriage, trafficking, and even sale.

The time has come to say enough is enough and to centre the protection of children on the global stage. It is true that more children than ever before are being saved from preventable diseases. They are in schools, have access to potable water, and sanitary facilities have improved dramatically. As countries develop economically, the basics are being addressed, at least in part. What remains is a long list of child protection issues, from child labour to trafficking, female genital mutilation and cutting, child marriage, the sale of children, online bullying, and more. Sadly, no country is immune to violence, and to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children.

Getting the world to wake up to the protection of children from all of this has been my life's work. From my current vantage point in UNICEF's headquarters, I want to share with you in the next few minutes some data on protecting children, and from there a vision that we have for the future of child protection and that I hope is also potentially a vision for the Government of Canada.

Equity is integral to this vision. Programmatic work in child protection is all about reaching and achieving results for marginalized and excluded children. Many children who suffer violence suffer in poverty, but not all. Poverty does not explain harmful practices, violence against children, and the systematic discrimination of certain segments of society. There will indeed be equity in human society when all children are protected all the time.

A little later this month—I'm not supposed to have this, but they snuck me a copy—we're actually going to be putting out a report on violence with some updated data. I'm going to draw from that a little.

We also put out a data-driven report on female genital mutilation and cutting last June, which we launched in Washington, and another report on birth registration in December of last year. This upcoming report on violence will be our next major publication; this year there will also be another one on child marriage. I'll be very happy to share with the committee links to all of this data—this one—at the end of the month.

I want to begin with what Elly very wisely brought up, the subject of birth registration. We refer to it in UNICEF as a child's passport to protection for life. Without proper registration, the risks of being bought and sold, trafficked without legal documentation, and other potential harms are great. In many instances, a missing birth certificate can mean that a child is refused a leaving certificate from school, or worse, she or he may not even be allowed to enrol.

Pause on this statistic for a moment: 230 million children under the age of five in the south are without a birth certificate today.

Every year, 1.2 million children are trafficked. This is an old statistic, and we expect it's a gross underestimation of the situation. For every 800 victims of trafficking, there is one conviction of a trafficker.

Add to this the millions of children Elly already mentioned who are in exploitative, numbing, and soul-destroying work and we begin to get a picture that lingers, not because it's interesting but because it simply should not be.

I've seen and worked with children for whom so-called work is picking through heaps of garbage for usable debris, and others who are sent down diamond mines daily, for whom daylight is an unknown. This is 2014, not 1768, and this is wrong.

The report on violence that we will bring out shortly tells us that spousal violence is common among married adolescent girls. Uganda had reported rates of 67%. These are girls between the ages of 15 and 19. In the Democratic Republic of Congo the figure is 70%.

● (1650)

What the data tells us about bullying is that, in many countries, students between the ages of 13 and 15 fear for their lives daily. In the Solomon Islands, for instance, 64% of boys and 68% of girls say they have been bullied in the last month, and likewise for children in Ghana, Uganda, and Sri Lanka, to name but a few.

Let me leap from what is most definitely a bleary picture to some visionary ideas and thoughts that we're trying to put into action.

The vision shares the following characteristics: a world focused on the protection of the millions of children it has helped save from preventable deaths; a professional workforce; a social service workforce that is funded and supported; a world where leaders, public sector and private, are passionate advocates for, and supporters of, child protection; a world engaged in a global movement to prevent violence against children; a world in which young people—they're called the millennials, apparently, I have one at home—care about, and are engaged in, the protection of children; and a world in which the rights of all children are realized.

Against all that negative data, I want to quickly say, in true UNICEF fashion, that we're making a lot of progress. I have the good fortune to have accompanied UNICEF through these last 25 years in this process of evolving work in child protection. I want to humbly suggest that our organization is uniquely placed to leverage our own presence and our leadership, but that needs to be done in partnership with governments, including that of Canada. Leadership and partnership is how I like to characterize things.

Two decades of hard work and solid advocacy from many agencies—World Vision being but one of them—are a big part of the reason we've arrived at this point. The “we” I refer to is UNICEF and the many other UN and civil society organizations. Starting from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF and others evolved from more issue-based, response-driven programming to one that focuses on systemic, holistic approaches that address the multiple underlying vulnerabilities of children and their families.

We heard in the earlier Q and A session that the sector is guided by Security Council resolutions, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed alternative care guidelines, and other standards that previously we didn't have. Child protection is visible and a necessity, but with this advocacy victory comes great expectations.

Importantly, we as a child protection sector have a strategy. That strategy comprises...and it's really encouraging to hear everyone who's been here this afternoon talking about strengthening systems that prevent harm, helping those who are violated and, at the same time, addressing social norms to strengthen those things that are helpful, and changing those that aren't good for children.

Together, we're part of a child protection community that's growing both in number and in its effectiveness. The community speaks a similar, if not always the same, language. That wasn't the case two decades ago.

Nevertheless, there remains a dearth of examples across the sector where there are scalable programs to achieve results for children. I want to highlight a couple of them, and one of them you should all be very proud of. Your recent support to UNICEF in Ghana holds great promise. It is a substantive grant that will allow the team and its partners to take child protection efforts to scale. Such investments are rare. They need to be encouraged. We're often taking a small-project approach, hampering the delivery of results that are truly systemic and sustainable. So all eyes are on Ghana.

The second example is Ethiopia, where the government and its partners are strengthening the child protection and social welfare system with significant financial support, in this case from the U.S. government. A degree of political will and the collaboration of child protection actors are expected to deliver evidence-based results in five years. These comprise an increase in the numbers of children in stable families, a decrease in the number of children living in institutions, a stronger judiciary, and a social welfare workforce.

Regionally, work in eastern Europe is preventing the institutionalization of children. Mildly disabled children were being institutionalized for a range of reasons. By tackling those reasons, and strengthening and supporting families, we're seeing a sustainable change for the good. These efforts already show evidence of scalable programming, with great results.

As one more example, by the end of next year, 17 countries will have completed high-quality household surveys of violence against children. A growing number of government-led comprehensive action plans to prevent and respond to violence are being developed. Importantly, the leadership of these governments brings to the table actors in education, justice, social welfare, and others. They take a systemic approach.

● (1655)

There are enormous advocacy challenges internal to the sector, and child protection advocates call for the kinds of investments that child health, nutrition, and education sectors have benefited from. Scholars Shiffman and Smith examined why some global health initiatives were prioritized by political leaders, whereas others received little attention. They told us there were four major factors that appear to influence an issue, and why it would become a priority. Those four factors are actor power, ideas, political context, and issue characteristics. All four of these exist for child protection today. What the sector needs is voice, political will, and financial resources.

So if I may be so bold, I have two big asks of Canada, a nation recognized as a leader in caring for women, children, and human rights. Please continue to bring your clout and commitment to this crucial work stream. What you have already done for child protection in Ghana, for protecting children affected by armed conflict and children in armed conflict, is enormous.

Second, please add your voice to the post-2015 discussions. Preventing violence against children must be a clearly articulated goal in whatever the goals are that the world sets for itself. We have a saying in my team that if you're not at the table, you're on the menu, and we've been on the menu throughout the MDGs.

Thank you again for this invitation, and I look forward to your questions and our discussion today.

● (1700)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'm just going to propose to the group that we have one round of seven minutes each. We're going to go over bells a bit, but I think that way everyone will get a chance to get in.

Paul, for seven minutes.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I'll be disciplined, Chair.

**The Chair:** Promises, promises.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** First, to Ms. Vandenberg, you mentioned Bangladesh. We just had some hearings on Bangladesh, so it's timely.

How would you like to see the Government of Canada show leadership in supporting Canadian companies—because, obviously, they have a role to play here—to do things such as sign the accord? I'm sure you're aware of the accord that was negotiated on fire and building safety in Bangladesh.

How do you see the role of the Canadian government in signing that very important accord, which, as you probably know, one Canadian company has signed on to?

**Ms. Elly Vandenberg:** Thanks so much for the question.

During my recent visit to Bangladesh, it seemed that everywhere I looked there were workplace tragedies just waiting to happen. Our partners in Bangladesh suggest that the accord is the best way to tackle the issue of workplace safety, so we've encouraged our supporters. We have something called the No Child For Sale campaign going on right now. It's really an awareness-raising campaign.

Canadians want to do something. Many of them were shocked and appalled when they knew that Canadian clothing, some of the clothes that they were wearing, that they had purchased, was part of the collapse of that factory in Bangladesh, so they want to do something. The polling suggests that Canadians would pay more if they knew that the clothing was made in such a way that didn't involve child labour.

It's a complex issue. We know that. We don't know how exactly to ensure that supply chains are completely transparent, but we know that something can be done. There have been these efforts made to have this accord for workplace safety in Bangladesh. Our partners are suggesting that it's the best way to go at this point.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Another facet to this, and you were touching on it, is how government can actually engage with Canadians, citizens and communities, to support the advocacy and the partnership on child protection efforts, because clearly—it was mentioned in the way you laid it out and in the key visual you had with your hand—everyone has a role to play.

What suggestions might you have in terms of having the Government of Canada do that facilitation to engage Canadians on their role? One of the obvious things is on purchasing; that makes sense. Are there some other things that you can see the Canadian government playing a role in to engage Canadian citizens and community groups and others to get involved and support this advocacy on child protection?

**Ms. Elly Vandenberg:** Well, I can draw on our experience of something we call Citizen Voice and Action, which I think I referred to earlier. It's our social accountability tool that we use for local-level advocacy in the countries where we work.

It's not an expensive thing, it's a tool. It takes some time to be trained on the tool, but it's about helping people at the local level—including children and youth who are very excited about this tool because they can see immediate results from being engaged in it. It's a tool that helps them ask the questions about the responsibility of their local government around meeting their particular needs.

So when you go into a community and you ask children and youth what it is they need, they're very clear about their needs and what needs to be done. The role of the local government is not as clear to them. When they're exposed to learning how to read budgets, read the local development plan, the local community plan, then they're in a position where they can ask questions.

What we have found is that it's not an antagonistic relationship with local government, because the local government wants to be engaged with the community and wants to be able to respond to their needs. What we found with using that tool around health is that we've seen a huge increase in, for example, the number of skilled birth attendants, because families will say it's a need that they have.

Around child protection, I can imagine they would make clear demands around the needs that they have related to safe working environments, for youth in particular.

That would be my response.

● (1705)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** I have just two minutes, so I want to turn now to UNICEF.

Ms. Bissell, you referenced where we're at in our MGDs. In the post-2015 discussions that are happening—I look forward to hearing from government on this, because clearly Canada has a role to play—the agenda that we're looking at is to try to.... People are talking about the globalizing or universal approach to these issues, which I think is great.

How do you see child protection in that agenda? Where are we at? Do we need to give a lot more volume to the issue to make sure it will be part of the post-2015 focus and goals? And how do we get there, if that's the case?

**Dr. Susan Bissell:** Where we are depends on whether it's Monday or Thursday in those discussions, because it's just a constant turnover.

We call ourselves the "C-six", the child-focused agencies who have come together in their advocacy, together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children. So we're in a reasonably good space right now, but we don't believe we can let up for a moment.

As an example, Canada in New York is very good friend of child protection in all contexts—in armed conflict as well as non-armed conflict—so we are planning a couple of things leading up to a higher-level meeting in September. But even as early as June, we're just continuing to lobby governments. Actually, we've prepared together a list of possible indicators. We've worked with measurement people to come up with some suggestions for this.

We have a lot of interaction with Jeff Sachs and his group to whatever extent they have influence, but if Canada would throw even more of its weight into those conversations, I think that would be very important.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Are you able to share that information with our committee?

**Dr. Susan Bissell:** Yes.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** That would be great. Thanks.

Thanks, Chair.

**The Chair:** You're right on time: perfect.

Mr. Schellenberger, sir, you have seven minutes.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** That you very much.

Ms. Vandenberg, my wife and I at Christmastime were very fortunate to adopt a child, Elizabeth, from Malawi. She's eight years old from a family of peasant farmers. She is not labourer, and she loves going to school, so she's getting some education.

It's probably easy to set up some of the things that you've been talking about in areas that are relatively stable. Malawi right now is relatively stable. But in war-torn areas, and in some of these countries where the rule of law just isn't there, it has to be very, very difficult. There's corruption, there's everything to go against even education.

Now, it's my understanding that the investment in education in Afghanistan, and the education of girls, was one of the foremost parts of the Canadian government initiative there. Yes we had forces there, but along with that we did support the education of girls, and to give more education.

Could you just speak a little wee bit about what happens in some of the more stable countries like Malawi, and what might happen in Afghanistan, and the change we've made there?

**Ms. Elly Vandenberg:** When it comes to child protection, or education in particular?

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Education and child protection, because I think they're very much combined.

**Ms. Elly Vandenberg:** I'll start with the question around war-torn areas.

That's why I was raising the issue of child-friendly spaces. There are emergency contacts where safe spaces can be protected and informal education in particular can take place. A lot of work can be done around societal norms, and changing some of those norms around early forced marriage, child labour, and gender roles, in those child-safe spaces.

In terms of other environments, there's both formal and informal education. It's important that children are in school and that the quality of the education is good, but there's also the issue of the kind of education that children need for life skills training, peer-to-peer education.

I took a group of MPs to Cambodia and Thailand, and we saw the incredible work that children were doing around helping to educate each other and about how to protect each other. There was a particular initiative that was done with boys, called My Son. Late at night, they'd come out with their lanterns, and kids would come out from the street and gather around these young boys. Giving them a voice to describe what it takes to protect a child had great meaning for their peers.

Those are some examples that come to mind.

● (1710)

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Ms. Bissell, how do UNICEF and other partners coordinate a global response to child protection?

**Dr. Susan Bissell:** Oh, wow.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** I know it's a big question.

**Dr. Susan Bissell:** We have an eight-point plan for this. I'll skip some of the points in it, but let me start with a couple of them.

One, which has been two years in the making but we'll launch in September in India, is called Know Violence—and the "no" is in red. It's a global learning initiative on violence prevention in children. It's not just passive learning; it's scholars, academicians, and others from around the world, ordering their research on the magnitude of the problem, and a second group working on what works to prevent it, so bringing in the research that they have.

Lincoln Chen, if any of you know him, is a leading public health professional, and he has agreed to chair the steering group on this. Amartya Sen has agreed to grandfather the process. We'll be publishing. We'll be getting the BBC to do things. We'll be really upping our game, in terms of what the science tells us about preventing and responding to violence against children. That's one initiative, and that's galvanizing us globally.

A second part of the eight-point plan is getting the academy around the world—academicians and universities—to take more seriously child protection as a discipline, an inter-disciplinary discipline. It's not charity. It's actually very important scientific work. We have an international advisory committee, made up of scholars from India, Mexico, South Africa, Scotland, Ethiopia, and a couple of others, and we need to get into French-speaking Africa so that we address some of the linguistic issues. This is a start, and Harvard is the home for the establishment of the first-ever Master's concentration in child protection. Those advisors from around the world are growing their own field, in their own countries, in their own academic institutions.

The third thing that's been incredibly galvanizing is a communication initiative that my boss, executive director Tony Lake, launched last July. A bigger impact than anything in UNICEF'S history was the launching of an end violence initiative. Some of you may have seen this quite famous and powerful PSA with Liam Neeson. It's not about Liam Neeson. The sort of chapeau for this is to make visible the invisible. What's happened is that the global chapeau has created a platform at the local level, in country after country around the world, for the excellent work of many civil society organizations that were in the shadow, small projects. It's also made it much more legitimate globally for us to have this conversation.

I'll tell you, I spent five years of my life in Bangladesh. When I got there, in 1992, the government didn't want to talk to me about child labour. Look where we are now. There are a number of global things that are galvanizing.

Getting back to the Government of Canada, we've been working with this newly established child protection unit. I couldn't be happier. I spent the morning with them today, strategizing and planning and plotting. I think the more that Canada can grow and bring its voice and its leadership to this, the more other countries will come on board.

● (1715)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Schellenberger.

We'll finish up with Dr. Hsu.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Vandenberg, you spoke about the importance of investing in education, both formal and informal, to help prevent harm to children, and you gave some examples of informal education of peer-to-peer learning and life skills training. I wonder if you could elaborate on that.

Specifically, what can or should the Government of Canada do to encourage that? What kinds of actions should the Government of Canada take, and what would they look like, on the ground, for the children?

**Ms. Elly Vandenberg:** Thank you for the question.

I was so focused in response to Mr. Dewar's question about local-level advocacy in country that I didn't actually respond to your question about what the Canadian government should do.

Broadly, there is a trade, diplomacy, and development role for the Canadian government. Around trade, it really is looking at the supply chain and the kinds of agreements we have; looking to ensure that child labour isn't part of that; looking at the link to informal education that's happening at the peer-to-peer level in the streets of Cambodia. And in terms of how it's directly linked, we have to ensure that there are safe alternatives for children to have. It is not enough to be aware that you need to be protected, and aware that you shouldn't be involved in child labour, but to also have those decent employment options out there.

Around diplomacy, the Canadian government has done a great job at highlighting the particular issue of early forced marriage. Informal education deals with the underlying root causes of early forced marriage. It deals with issues of discrimination, of societal norms, of mothers' and grandmothers' ideas about when children should marry and the pressure they're under to have their children married early, so that, again, is the link to informal education.

As to the way in which we can get at this through our development programs, I'm thrilled to see the interest of the development minister around child protection. I look forward to seeing that the same kind of leadership role Canada has played on maternal and newborn child health sees a similar role around child protection, and that we invest in proven interventions that we know work, don't cost a lot of money, and really make a difference in children's lives.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Okay. So there's a potential for an investment there from the development side.

I want to ask about birth registration and how it actually works, again starting with what the Government of Canada could do. Presumably birth registration would involve local government or other local institutions. How does a Government of Canada action affect what happens on a local level? What happens when you try to encourage birth registration?

**Ms. Elly Vandenberg:** We can tag-team this, because we both mentioned it. I think it's a good way to show again the system-based approach, because I can speak to it from the community level and Susan then can speak to it from the international-body kind of level.

At the community level, church leaders, for example, play a key role in the conversations they have, when partners come to them and want to marry, to say that it's probably not a good idea and that the couple is kind of young. There is a role there at the community level, or knowing what's happening in relationships. There is a also key role with faith leaders around actually registering marriages. That's sort of a very practical example at the community level.

What we have found in maternal and newborn child health, in child protection programming, is that without a birth certificate, you don't exist. You don't have access to the services that are required, so the role of the Canadian government is about encouraging birth registration as part of programming. It's one of those things that don’t cost a lot and that can be included on the checklist of ensuring that is an element of the programs we support.

You might want to add to that.

● (1720)

**Dr. Susan Bissell:** Sure. I'll try to be brief.

There's an encouraging global movement afoot on this, with various regional bodies. Let me just speak to a meeting that was held in Addis Ababa last week with the African Union. There's an all-Africa push for civil registration and vital statistics.

We're speaking about birth registration, because that's the most relevant part of that systemic approach to child protection. That involves advocating—it could potentially be a role for Canada—with other governments to prioritize birth registration. Financial support is definitely an option. Of late we have had masses of funding coming in through the EU on this. At a country level, child protection actors are leading this together with the health sector and the faith-based community and so on, but the advocacy position is that there needs to be a central civil registration and vital statistics body that is of a high standard. There are about six or seven criteria, including the protection of data, etc.

I would like to share with the committee a guide book we prepared in December for everybody, for the field, to really understand the ABCs of getting birth registration in place. We've seen globally that when countries are boosting their civil registration and vital statistics, they tend to focus first on birth registration. So the role for Canada would be as an advocate in whatever fora.... We know that in Toronto, in a couple of weeks, there will actually be a panel on civil registration and vital statistics as part of the MNCH summit.

Let me stop at that.

**The Chair:** That's all the time we have.

To our witnesses, thank you very much. Once again, I realize we could spend many more hours talking about this. We really appreciate the comments you had today and the input to the committee, so thank you.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.