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Chair

Mr. Scott Reid

Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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● (1305)

[*Translation*]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): Welcome to the 42nd meeting of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Today is Tuesday, November 4, 2014, and this meeting is televised.

[*English*]

We are continuing to study the aftermath of the Rwandan crisis, an issue the subcommittee recently determined ought to be examined.

We have two individuals with us today as witnesses, both from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. DFATD is the new acronym. I'm having some trouble adjusting to that one. At any rate, Kenneth Neufeld is the director general of the west and central Africa bureau at DFATD. Leslie Norton is the director general of the international humanitarian assistance directorate.

I know you have already discussed between yourselves who ought to go first, so I will allow you to begin. Once you're done, we'll look at the clock to see how much time is left, divide it by six, and that will determine the length of the question-and-answer rounds for each of the members.

I invite you to begin, please.

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld (Director General, West and Central Africa Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Mr. Chair, I will make the statement, and then Leslie and I will respond to questions and comments from the committee.

Thank you to this committee for inviting the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development to contribute to your study on the long-term effects on survivors of rape and sexual violence during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. As has already been said, I have with me today Ms. Leslie Norton, the director general for international humanitarian assistance in the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, or DFATD, as it's becoming known.

It's never easy to speak on such a deeply affecting topic as the Rwandan genocide, in which more than 800,000 people lost their lives. We'll never know the exact numbers of victims and survivors. However, we know from survivors that sexual violence was used as a weapon of war to destroy the spirits and dignity of women, to humiliate them and their families, and to annihilate support for them from their communities.

The high-level international panel commissioned by the Organization of African Unity estimated that tens of thousands of women and girls were raped, often repeatedly. They were held in sexual slavery or were sexually mutilated. Many women were killed after they had been raped. Others were saved, only to be raped. The long-term consequences of this horror are entirely part of the legacy of the genocide.

Following the genocide in 1994, the whole Great Lakes region was destabilized. Canada contributed extensively to international humanitarian efforts to reduce the suffering of the people in Rwanda as well as that of Rwandan refugees in the Great Lakes region, including in Burundi, Tanzania, and what was then Zaire.

Canada's support included food, medical assistance, shelter, clean water and sanitation, transportation, and logistical support. This was channelled through organizations that are still among our biggest humanitarian partners today: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Food Programme, and the International Red Cross movement.

ln the period from 1994 to 1997, the Great Lakes region accounted for the largest share of then CIDA funding of any single conflict or emergency. Over 65% of the reported budgetary allocations and expenditures for CIDA-sponsored humanitarian activities in this period went to operations in Rwanda and Tanzania alone.

As this subcommittee knows well, the destabilization of the region had long-term consequences. Deplorably, the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war continues to be widespread in the Great Lakes region today, most acutely in what has become known as the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As Canada's latest initiatives and leadership in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence in the DRC have been addressed, most recently by the report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development and the subsequent response from the government, I'll speak here to the latest initiatives that are most relevant to Rwanda.

ln 2010 DFATD provided $13.5 million over a seven-year period to the Canadian non-governmental organization Centre d'étude et de coopération internationale, or CECI, for a regional project to better protect girls and young women of Rwanda, the DRC, and Burundi from the physical and psychosocial effects of sexual violence. This project provides assistance to survivors, raises community awareness, and promotes changes in behaviour and perception towards survivors of sexual violence. As of last year, over 2,000 survivors, including 800 in Rwanda, were able to access key medical, psychosocial and legal services.

● (1310)

The project builds on local expertise in collaborating with an NGO or a collective of associations working for the advancement of women in the Great Lakes region, which brings together 11 experienced women's organizations from Rwanda, the DRC, and Burundi. One of the project's objectives is also to make this local collective a recognized leader in the fight against sexual violence not only nationally but regionally and internationally. Already the Gender Monitoring Office in Rwanda has invited the collective to share its expertise with the national police to improve their services to survivors.

The collective has also successfully established a partnership with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the ICGLR, to increase the impact of its advocacy work to fight sexual violence and end impunity. The ICGLR is the primary international forum set up to identify lasting solutions to the region's peace, security, stability, and development problems. lt assembles 12 leaders of the wider Great Lakes region, including Rwanda.

ln addition, Canada contributed $4.3 million in 2011 and 2012 to a World Bank project that offers gender-sensitive activities and technical assistance to national programs for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants in Rwanda, the DRC, Burundi, and Uganda. The project was developed after it became known that women-specific needs were not necessarily properly considered in these projects. Among the results achieved, all the targeted national programs have increased their gender-sensitive programming to better address the gender-specific needs of male and female ex-combatants.

Such Canadian programming and results show how far we have come. If we can point to one seed of hope in the Rwandan experience, it is this: that the Rwandan genocide marked the departing point for significant changes in how the international community of states understands sexual violence in war and how it addresses these crimes as part of international responses to conflict situations.

The testimonies of the brave Rwandan survivors of sexual violence provided the essential evidence base that made possible the first ever prosecution of sexual assault as a war crime. These Rwandans helped set a new precedent in international law, that those who use rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war can and will be held legally responsible for those war crimes.

lt was a Canadian, Louise Arbour, who, as chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, led this first ever prosecution. For its part, the Government of Canada was a strong supporting partner for this groundbreaking initiative.

From the outset, Canada has been a partner for survivors of sexual violence in the Rwandan genocide. We have sought to carry forward the agenda they began: to end rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war. We remain a strong advocate for these important changes in the international order.

For example, in June 1999, the Parliament of Canada adopted amendments to Canada's Extradition Act and other legislation in order to allow the surrender of accused individuals to the ICTR. ln 2000, Canada enacted the Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act, which authorizes the initiation of proceedings in Canada for war crimes committed abroad. Two Rwandans have been charged under this act, and one of them has been convicted.

ln addition to its share of contributions made through general assessments, Canada has provided $1 million in voluntary contributions and facilitated the appearance of several witnesses before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Canada is also a member of the “Friends of the ICTR” group in Dar es Salaam, with its allies the U.S., the U.K., the Netherlands, and Norway.

Beyond the pioneering victories won by Rwandan survivors at the ICTR, the Rwandan genocide was also a catalyst for the development of new global norms of how the needs and experiences of women are treated and considered in conflict situations. These norms inform and guide Canadian foreign policy today.

Canada was on the UN Security Council when it unanimously adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security on October 31, 2000. This landmark resolution calls on all parties to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in situations of armed conflict, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Resolution 1325 was the first Security Council resolution to deal exclusively with women in situations of armed conflict, and it stresses the importance of equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

● (1315)

Since then, six more resolutions on women, peace, and security have been passed at the Security Council. These include: Resolution 1820, which explicitly links sexual violence as a tactic of war with women, peace, and security issues; Resolution 1888, which requires peacekeeping missions to protect women and children from sexual violence during armed conflicts; and Resolution 2106, passed just last year and co-sponsored by Canada, which stresses that the Security Council, parties to armed conflict, all member states, and United Nations entities must exert more effort to implement women, peace, and security mandates and help ensure that perpetrators are held to account.

ln October 2010, the government announced Canada's national action plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace, and security. The action plan is a whole-of-government initiative that sets out concrete objectives, actions, and performance indicators and emphasizes participation by women and girls in peace processes, the protection of their human rights, and ensuring their equal access to humanitarian and development assistance. The government has tabled in Parliament annual progress reports on the implementation of the national action plan for fiscal years 2011-12 and 2012-13 and anticipates tabling the next annual report soon.

Mr. Chair, the legacy of Rwanda has informed Canadian foreign policy in other significant ways. The genocide and conflicts in other parts of the world throughout the 1990s taught us the hard lesson that many intra-state conflicts defy isolated military, humanitarian, or development responses. That is why in 2006 Canada created the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, or START. This new tool has provided the government with an agile, rapid programming, deployment and policy capacity, designed to specifically improve Canada's capacity to both prevent and respond to conflicts and crises.

The terrible reality of the Rwandan genocide and the brave efforts of Rwandan survivors of sexual violence compelled the international community to take seriously the issue of sexual violence in war. Canada has been a proud partner of these survivors. Today, Canada is building on their efforts by strengthening the international community's ability and resolve to prevent the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, and by empowering survivors to hold perpetrators of these war crimes to account.

Mr. Chair, thank you for your attention. We'd be very pleased to answer your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll start with Mr. Sweet. We'll have six-minute rounds of questions and answers.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Thank you very much to the witnesses for coming today and illuminating us on a very tragic story, and of course, the very tragic outcomes and legacy that are happening in Rwanda.

Your comments actually took me off my original course of questions that I'd like to ask. I'm very interested in the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force. I recently read the book *The Locust Effect*. The author of the book's premise is that aid without security means that much of it is diminished by those who would seek to harm people afterwards.

In DFATD's moving forward, particularly since you mentioned START, are we looking at more innovative ways to try to make sure that security is in place first, as we help nations with aid? Are we looking, for example, for more of a commitment and an obligation by the governments of the individual states that they'll provide security as we give aid?

● (1320)

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Mr. Chair, as I stated at the beginning of my presentation, the situation in Rwanda following the genocide obliged the international community to focus almost entirely on the humanitarian disaster that was a result of these terrible events.

Obviously, the pure economic and social development of a country in that context was difficult or impossible. I didn't come here today to talk about plans going forward for general programming, and so I'd have to come back to you on that particular issue.

Certainly it's without question a necessary condition that basic law and order, peace and security, and stability be in place for successful development programming to take place.

Mr. David Sweet: Yes, and I certainly didn't want to catch you off guard, Mr. Neufeld. I was just wondering, because of the long line of experience that we've had, what kind of mindset there was. But we'll leave that for another day.

With regard to the Rwandan diaspora here in Canada, I'm wondering if there has been any official or unofficial partnership with those who have come to Canada and who are prospering, for them to participate with the Government of Canada to help particularly the ones we're speaking of right now, the victims of rape and the children of those victims of rape. Has there been any kind of initiative on their part? Have we encouraged that, or is there any kind of collaboration?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: I do know that within a number of non-governmental organizations there are Rwandan Canadians active. I would have to come back to you on whether any specific initiatives would have been initiated or supported directly by the diaspora as such.

Mr. David Sweet: That would be great. Thank you.

The other aspect is that a large part of the problem is a cultural one, in the sense that the children of these women who were raped are really outcasts from their society. Of course they're reminders for the women of the people who raped them, etc.

Are there some initiatives on the ground to try to change that mindset, to educate people that obviously the situation that these young men and young women are in is not a situation they asked for or had any part in bringing to fruition?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Absolutely. I may ask my colleague Ms. Norton whether she has details on some of the initiatives that would have been supported through the multilateral mechanism.

In terms of the bilateral program, I made a brief reference to a project with CECI that directly addresses that issue not only in Rwanda, but also in the Great Lakes region as a whole, because the same problem is present particularly in the DRC but also in the border areas of Tanzania and in Burundi. This project does specifically work with communities, with survivors, and with the organizations and authorities that support those survivors.

Likewise, the ongoing project we have with the World Bank attempts to build that kind of mechanism into programs that belong to the government of the region that would be working on reincorporating people back into their old communities. Through that project they're addressing the issue of traumatized communities and individuals who were victims of sexual violence, and for that matter, also perpetrators. You often see that perpetrators, when they come back from justice, or when through amnesties are incorporated into communities, are also in need of support and counselling.

Those kinds of issues are addressed specifically through those projects. There's nothing specific from the multilateral side.

● (1325)

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Marston, please.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): I appreciate your being here today.

What occurred in Rwanda was a near complete social breakdown from the perspective of somebody in North America, where our lives are so sedate compared with what people lived through there. Last year—I believe you were there, Mr. Sweet—they marked the anniversary in Hamilton of the genocide. Some of the people who spoke talked about the horrific things that happened. For example, they'd go to the police to report a rape and they would then be raped by police. There were so many horrific things.

Looking at the support programs that you referred to, the ones that I'm concerned about, and that we were talking about in this committee, were specific to the children born from women who were raped, in terms of the ramifications for their complete lives. The whole purpose, in many instances, was the shame factor for the family, for the woman, but that translates back to them.

In any programming that you've had, do you have anything that you can report as a success or even moving the mark on this?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: I would again go back particularly to the project I cited that works with the Quebec-based NGO CECI, which works with survivors of sexual violence and supports the strengthening of these 11 associations of women throughout the region. They deal with a wide range of issues around sexual violence.

I wouldn't have specific details at hand about working with children born from rapes, but we could certainly look and see whether there's something specific that might go to your question.

Mr. Wayne Marston: In my generation our American cousins were in Vietnam, and when they left, a lot of mixed-race children were left behind who were extremely stigmatized. I don't know this, but I would presume that the Americans may have done some work in that area. All the implications of the shame factor are not a violent result, but it still might be a comparator to look at.

I noted your enthusiasm for the START program. It does sound really good. Overall, I think the international community has learned a lot of lessons from this. We've done a study in this committee about rape as a weapon of war. It's tragic and it seems to be in many other places. The one word that comes back in all of this is “impunity”. Is there any effort under way either through the United Nations or elsewhere to start to address the impunity that's related to these crimes?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Yes. I would refer to my opening remarks about the series of resolutions that have been passed in the Security Council and of Canada's role in co-sponsoring at least one of those and in being very much involved in their development. The United Nations now has a zero tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse. I'm sure you may have heard in years past of cases of sexual violence and abuse in the United Nations peacekeeping missions. It has a very traumatizing effect on a community when it seems that the people who came to help are part of the problem. The UN now has a zero tolerance policy and these rules expressly forbid sexual relations with prostitutes, with anyone under the age of majority, and also strongly discourage relationships with anyone who's seen as a recipient of assistance.

In June of this year the United Kingdom hosted a conference, the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence. This is the largest gathering that ever took place in the world.

● (1330)

Mr. Wayne Marston: We took part in that, did we?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: We took part in that, yes, very much.

That, I think, is a big indication of the change in global attitudes, and implementing that change in attitude into tools that help address things like immunity is a key issue.

Mr. Wayne Marston: I presume my time is—

The Chair: You have a little time left, but Ms. Norton would like to say something.

Ms. Leslie Norton (Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance Directorate, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Specifically, to get to the issue of fighting sexual violence and impunity in the Great Lakes region, at the Francophonie summit in Kinshasa, in October 2012, our Prime Minister reiterated Canada's commitment to fight against sexual violence by announcing a project called Fight Against Impunity and Support to Survivors of Sexual Violence. This is an initiative that builds upon results of Canada's engagement in the area since 2006. It's about fighting impunity by increasing access to justice in some of the underserved areas, establishing appropriate mechanisms to investigate sexual crimes and prosecute offenders, and building the capacity and independence of judicial personnel.

It builds the capacity of government and civil society organizations to continue to meet the medical, legal, psychological, and training needs of survivors and increases the involvement of communities in preventing SGBV, sexual and gender-based violence. It's an $18.5-million initiative and it runs from 2013 to 2018 and is implemented by the United Nations development program.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Are we paying for it?

Ms. Leslie Norton: Yes.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Good. Thank you.

The Chair: Now your time is up.

Ms. Grewal, please.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thanks to both of you for your time today.

I was in Rwanda about two years ago. I went to Kigali and met Kagame, but it was really sad to see what had happened there.

First, how effective have the Kagame regime and the Rwandan Patriotic Front been in executing justice 20 years later towards the perpetrators of the genocide? Does the wider Rwandan community feel that enough has been done in this regard?

Second, do Tutsis generally feel safe in Rwanda today, or are they still not fully accepted and integrated into society? Are there any checks and balances in place to prevent racial tension or genocide from happening again there in the future?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Mr. Chair, the issue of restitching a nation together following a traumatic event such as genocide is obviously absolutely critical to the question that's before this committee. I would suggest that the department is probably not prepared for that question today.

However, I think it's absolutely critical to understand the process in the country, and I believe you have a series of other witnesses in the future who I'm sure would be prepared to testify to that. If you would like a specific opinion or a view from the department, I would need to come back to you with further information on that. I didn't come prepared to speak about that today, Mr. Chair.

● (1335)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Thank you.

How effective was the UN peacekeeping mission after the genocide in the mid-1990s and what has been done in terms of peace building since the UN left Rwanda? You can answer that.

Ms. Leslie Norton: I'm happy to take that, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for the question.

Again, I think we would say the same thing in that today we didn't come prepared to actually speak to the peacekeeping mission per se. What we can say, or what we could comment on, is the humanitarian effort immediately following the genocide and perhaps some of the results of that. I think you're aware that Canada was a very active partner with a range of really important humanitarian organizations in responding to post-genocide humanitarian needs.

If you'd like views on the effectiveness of the peacekeeping mission itself, that's something we would have to provide at a future date.

Mrs. Nina Grewal: In looking at the children of rape and sexual abuse in Rwanda, is there a practical first step to improving the quality of life through education, through training, or through care homes or something else? What can the international community do in that respect?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Thank you for this question, which is fundamentally a development question, and a very important one.

As we have discussed today, following the genocide the role of the international community was initially very much a reaction to the immediate consequences of the genocide, but it very quickly transformed into addressing the fundamental needs of any nation, such as ongoing health care systems, not just emergency health care, education systems, public transport, judicial systems. All of those issues have been supported through Canadian bilateral programming in the years following the genocide.

As you are surely aware, Canada no longer has a bilateral development program with Rwanda following decisions by the government to focus development assistance on fewer partners. However, for many years following the genocide, Canada was an important bilateral partner of Rwanda and invested very heavily in a wide range of programs, including addressing health care issues, judicial issues around reconciliation, land use and land tenure issues, the whole range of the tissue of a society that is necessary for moving out of a post-genocide period into a period of normality.

Those kinds of initiatives continue now with some support from Canada through the United Nations family of organizations—our core contributions, for example—and through one ongoing project where we work through the World Bank, as well as the CECI project that I mentioned earlier.

● (1340)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Chair, do I have some time left?

The Chair: You do not, unfortunately.

Ms. Sgro.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Thank you to our witnesses for coming today and reminding us about the atrocity that occurred.

A lot has been done by Canada and from around the world, but is enough still being done? It was 20 years ago. As much a genocide as it was, people have a way of moving on to other things. It would be terrible to think that, but that is sometimes the realism that happens.

Currently how much attention is being spent on the survivors of the Rwandan genocide by the United Nations and elsewhere? How much attention is still on that issue, or do people just want to put it aside and not think about it?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Thank you for the question.

I think we saw, with the 20-year anniversary recently, that this incident is still very much on the minds of the world, and that there is a lot of attention still paid to this. There are ongoing efforts, including the efforts I cited earlier in my statement, supported by Canada, to address the needs of the people who survived this terrible tragedy.

I think it's clear that this is still very much a present issue for people, and will be for a long time. A lot of the children now in Rwanda were born after these events, so I'm sure to some degree there's also a desire by some people to compartmentalize this and have a memory, but then also to seek some sort of normality in the society.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Ms. Norton.

Ms. Leslie Norton: I will just add a few points.

We are of the view that the Rwandan genocide has had a really profound impact on the way Canada and the international community actually provide humanitarian assistance now and how we go about protecting crisis-affected populations, including women and girls.

You may know that after the genocide, there was the first ever multi-donor evaluation of the international humanitarian response. It was the single most comprehensive system-wide evaluation of an international response at the time. It found many weaknesses and strengths in the humanitarian system around the areas of early warning, coordination, accountability, protection of civilians, security of humanitarian workers, as well as the provision of relief. That triggered quite a transformation in the international humanitarian system. There has also been a whole range of far-reaching efforts to professionalize the humanitarian system itself and the workers. We saw, for instance, the creation of what we call the Sphere standards, which is a set of universal minimum standards that are there to try to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance that's provided, as well as the accountability of humanitarian actors.

Very importantly, then we saw the creation of a code of conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in disaster relief. There are also a couple of other landmark elements that have arisen. While you might not be able to trace a direct link back to the post-genocide response, that really did lead to a lot of transformations in the system that we see today.

It also led to and was part and parcel of why today Canada requires our partners to be signatories to this Red Cross code of conduct, why they follow the guidelines for gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings, and why they have gender policies. They have to report back to us when they receive grant funding from the Government of Canada. It's led to more studies on the need to protect women and girls in humanitarian settings and why they've created protection mechanisms out there such as a thing called GenCap, which is a surge capacity, in that they can draw upon a pool of candidates when there is a gap in the humanitarian response. That type of tool exists.

I also want to say that we're also very, very vocal in all of the multilateral settings where Canada sits as a board member or a member state to the UN or with regard to our other partners that have donor support groups. We are one of the most vocal on the need to ensure that policies are engendered and that, if there is not enough awareness through their programming and their policies about gender-based violence.... Many of the partners have moved there because of Canadian stances in these international fora.

● (1345)

Hon. Judy Sgro: I think Canada can be applauded for the leadership it has shown on this issue.

In many other countries, rape continues to be a weapon used against many, many women. It seems as if it is always done with impunity. It never seems as if anyone ever pays a price, except for the woman and the children that result from these rapes.

Is there any action being taken to go after those who do these terrible things?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Yes, thank you. Absolutely, this is an issue that Canada, along with the international community, is very seized of and has taken a lot of concrete actions as I alluded to in my statement. The Rwandan genocide and the sexual violence that was an integral part of that and following it can be seen to have been a moment of change of international attitude. A number of very concrete resolutions have been taken, and a number of very concrete measures in order to implement the intent of those resolutions have been taken.

The most recent forum was the meeting, which I mentioned, in the U.K. in 2014 where the global community got together to discuss how to first of all work to prevent sexual violence and then to find ways to remove the impunity of those who use this as a weapon of war. I don't think there's any doubt that this is a work that is very much ongoing and in historical terms very recent and very new, but I think the efforts that have been taken recently really show the determination and the will of the international community to do whatever can be done to address this issue.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Mr. Schellenberger, please.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Thank you very much for your presentation today.

Does sexual violence as a weapon of war come from the tribal history of the Hutu or Tutsi, or is this a religious tool used by certain groups as we see happening in so many places today?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: The roots of sexual violence as a tool of war must surely be a very complicated and fraught subject. I'm not prepared to address that question. I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that this is the kind of question I would take note of and go back to my department for the guidance on.

● (1350)

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Okay.

Do we totally understand the tribal history in this region? After all the sexual violence and this terrible event, have any of these women returned to their former homes, or have they been shunned by their families and former communities? After all, as Ms. Sgro said, this was 20 years ago. Has there been some...returned for these people?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Mr. Chair, I would ask that we be able to come back to the committee with details of this. However, I can say that Rwanda had a very active and widespread truth and reconciliation process, which was supported by the international community, and there has certainly been a considerable normalization of the society in Rwanda in the years following the genocide.

Ms. Leslie Norton: If I could just add—

The Chair: I apologize for interrupting you, Ms. Norton, but I just wanted to ask, did the truth and reconciliation commission produce a single final report? Was that the nature of how its process worked? The reason I ask, of course, is that this may prove to be a useful source of material, if it exists, for us vis-à-vis such chimerical questions as the one raised by Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: I would have to come back to you on exactly what the product was. My understanding is that it was more aimed at dealing with divisions at the community level.

The Chair: Right, but it would be a unique data source, in that it was working in a very widespread way across the country in a manner not likely to be replicated by any other process.

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Understood.

The Chair: Ms. Norton, I interrupted you.

Ms. Leslie Norton: Thank you very much.

I just wanted to add that on the question of returns following the genocide, the focus of the humanitarian and development programs in Rwanda by the Government of Canada was really on repatriation and reconstruction back in Rwanda and on creating the conditions for return. While I can't give you the numbers of women versus men versus children who returned, there were substantial numbers, and the majority of our focus was on making sure those conditions were created so people would return. Also, the focus of our assistance was really on shelter, water, and sanitation, as well as on making sure there were schools, along with relief supplies.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Are some of these programs there meant to help the children of these raped women? If they've been outcast, right now they're getting to be of quite an age. Were they accepted back into some of these communities, or have they been totally shunned?

Ms. Leslie Norton: My recollection is that some of the NGO partners who were implementing these programs and projects for us focused on female-headed households as well as child-headed households. Certainly at the time, the international community recognized that and focused on trying to ensure that people who were in such a situation were able to return to their communities.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Schellenberger.

Mr. Benskin, you're up.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Genocide, the attempt to eliminate a people, is a very complex and layered process, and the reaction to that can be as complex and layered as the act itself. The immediate reaction is to help those who have been afflicted, the women and the families who endured these atrocities, but from some of the reading I've come across, the ones who have fallen through the cracks are the 20-odd thousand children who were born of these rapes. In many cases, governments—and I can't speak for the Canadian government—put their efforts into helping the women who were raped and their communities. But the children who were born of these acts were not considered victims of genocide. Thus many of the programs that were available did not include them, and they could not access these programs.

These children are now 19 or 20 years old. They will become the parents of the future communities in Rwanda. My interest is in what we can learn from them, from what they experienced, and also in cases of mothers who could not look at their children because of the reminder of what they had gone through and what they were. Hutus would not accept them because they were born of Tutsi mothers, and Tutsis would not accept them because they were children born of “genocidists”, to coin a phrase.

What, if anything, have we done and what can we do to better prepare ourselves for our intervention in future cases? This is still happening in the DRC. Using rape as a weapon of conflict is a very targeted thing. What can we glean from this horrible experience to better prepare ourselves to help those who will need our help in the future?

● (1355)

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: The work that's been done through the United Nations family of organizations, as my colleague Ms. Norton pointed out, has been deeply influenced by the experience and has adopted new norms and procedures and commitments to working in contexts such as this. Part of that, I would argue, will guide future interventions.

The other important element of our intervention in the area has been through non-governmental organizations and community organizations, such as the 11 women's associations that I mentioned earlier. Because they are at the community level and they are formed of either people who are directly affected, or neighbours and family members of those who are deeply affected, they have a very detailed understanding of what the consequences are and what actions are required. Those organizations have that knowledge and are implementing programs in Rwanda and in the region—DRC, Burundi, and Uganda—using the experience of their work in Rwanda.

That, I think, is the answer to your question, sir.

Ms. Leslie Norton: Could I add a few things?

I was quite taken with your question about what we can learn and how we can prepare for the future. In fact, the future is here today.

Currently, through our humanitarian assistance programming, we support a range of efforts around the world that work to prevent sexual violence in humanitarian crises and to assist survivors.

For example, in 2014 we provided $10 million to experienced humanitarian organizations so that they could expand their capacity to prevent and reduce sexual violence, and to strengthen the overall international humanitarian system and its ability to protect women and girls from violence in emergency contexts.

A case in point is in Iraq. We are supporting both the UNHCR and the ICRC in their efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence. These organizations are providing medical treatment as well as psychosocial counselling and legal assistance to survivors.

You have probably also heard that in October 2014, in addition to the humanitarian assistance for Iraqis affected by the crisis in Iraq, we announced a $10 million contribution to address sexual and gender-based violence in ISIL-affected areas.

Other examples are Somalia, South Sudan, DRC, Mali, and Central African Republic. We are also supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross to work with national governments to increase the prosecution of violations through strengthened national laws and policies, and to strengthen emergency preparedness and responses to sexual violence in conflict.

The limelight is on issues of sexual and gender-based violence in humanitarian crises today as it has never been before. I do believe that the system has learned a lot from the case in Rwanda, and we continue to learn with each new crisis.

● (1400)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Do I have time left?

The Chair: Your time is up, Mr. Benskin, but you can do one more, since you are our last questioner.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: I want to ask a quick question. Do survivors include the children born of sexual violence? I think that was the biggest issue. From a number of people I've spoken to, and from things that I've read, that was something it was felt was not there enough and did not come to mind. Are the children considered survivors as well, or is it just the women who have endured these horrible acts?

Ms. Leslie Norton: Maybe I can kick off with an answer. In the immediate aftermath of any humanitarian crisis, there is a robust vulnerability assessment done by our partners. If these children and women were considered vulnerable, then they would absolutely have had access to humanitarian assistance, absolutely.

If you are asking about the particular case of Rwanda, I was actually the desk officer between 1998 and 2001 on the humanitarian desk for the Great Lakes, and there was no discrimination whatsoever between children who were born as a result of rape, versus children who were orphans for other reasons, versus female-headed households. The lens the humanitarian community puts on when they're approaching these situations is indeed vulnerability. That's what they look at, because they are upholding the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence. If there's need, they will respond based on the need.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin: Thank you.

The Chair: With the permission of the subcommittee, I have a number of factual questions I'd like to raise.

I recognize that you may not be the individuals who are able to answer these questions for us, but these are the kinds of quantitative questions that would be helpful to us to have answers for, and I'm hopeful that you can shed some light on them.

Our analysts, who always prepare some background material for us in anticipation of these meetings, inform us that approximately two-thirds of the women who were raped during the genocide were infected with HIV at that time. Of course, surviving 20 years with HIV is difficult in any circumstances, and these would not have been ideal circumstances. Do you know how many of these women have since passed away as a result either of this infection or just of the attrition that occurs over a 20-year period?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: No, I wouldn't have those figures.

The Chair: Okay.

Second, if two-thirds of the women who were raped developed HIV and AIDS, may I assume that a substantial proportion of the 20,000 children are now orphaned as a result of that, in that their only parent who would have had any contact with them would since have passed on? Do you have any information as to the numbers in regard to those 20,000 children who were effectively orphaned?

● (1405)

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: I wouldn't have those figures with me, no.

The Chair: For my third question, which is related to this, we know there has been a widespread social rejection of the children. Do we have any information, quantitatively again, as to what percentage of them were effectively abandoned, orphaned, or had to be raised outside of a normal family context, that is, to the degree that one was able to establish a normal family context under any circumstances? In an attempt to categorize where they are, do we have any idea of that information?

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: I wouldn't have that information here.

The Chair: All right. That's very helpful. We'll keep looking around. I wanted to find out. It would be a shame to not get that if you did have it at your disposal.

We very much appreciate both of you coming in and taking the time to be with us today. Your information has been very helpful. We are very grateful indeed that you've come here.

Mr. Kenneth Neufeld: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Is there anything else, colleagues?

The meeting is adjourned.