HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 017 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, June 2, 2016

Chair

The Honourable Robert Nault

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Thursday, June 2, 2016

● (1530)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC)): I call the meeting to order.

Welcome to our meeting on foreign affairs and international development. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our study on the Canadian government's countries of focus for bilateral development assistance will continue.

I want to welcome our witnesses today. Thanks for taking the time to be here. I'm guest-chairing today, or vice-chairing, as our chair is away on some official business.

What we'll do is start with your reports. I think each of you has about 10 minutes. We'll try to keep you to that as much as possible. Then we can have as much time for questions as possible.

I'm going to go according to the list that I have here.

Mr. Werker, welcome. We'll have you introduce yourself and give us a bit of your background. If you could start with your presentation, that would great.

Mr. Eric Werker (Associate Professor, Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University, As an Individual): Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to be here. It's an honour to be consulted before such an accomplished and experienced group of individuals.

I will give you a bit of background. I returned with my family to Vancouver last year after spending nearly 20 years based in Boston, where I did my education in economics at Harvard and then spent almost a decade with the faculty of the Harvard Business School. My research is on foreign aid primarily, but I also have looked into a number of areas of economic development. Part of the foreign aid research has been on aid allocation decisions by donor countries, so it is especially exciting to be a part of this committee.

I've also maintained a foot in the real world, working during grad school on refugee issues in Uganda and then briefly for the Millennium Challenge Corporation, a U.S. government aid agency, in the year that it was starting up, and then advising the government of Liberia on economic policy. Most recently, in my return to Vancouver I'm Simon Fraser's in-kind contribution towards CIRDI, the Canadian International Resources and Development Institute, where I'm working on issues of resource governance.

I'd like to make myself available informally to the committee—to the individuals and to the analysts—going forward, to the extent that it's helpful.

Canada has the tenth-largest economy in the world. Its contribution towards the GDP of advanced economies is just over 3%, meaning that on a good day we might be contributing 5% of the expenditure towards solving the global public good. Now, 5% is a funny number. Done well, that means we can target a handful of problems, work in a handful of places, and really push the envelope and lead the agenda in terms of generating change. Done without much focus, it might be like trying to boil the ocean.

How has Canada's focus on foreign aid been so far? I'm not sure how many of you have the handout that I sent in. Yes? Okay. I can refer to it.

I looked at the top 10 aid recipients in the last year for which OECD provided the data. The leader of the list is Ukraine, with around $130 million U.S., and then it goes down to Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza as numbers 9 and 10. Then I compared their GDP and the total aid from other donors to these countries. As you'll be able to see when you see the prepared remarks, to only one country do we actually give the equivalent of 1% of the country's gross domestic product, and that is Haiti. Most of the others are at less than half a per cent of their GDP.

If you look at the share of the aid received by all our recipient countries, you see that the two leading countries are the Ukraine and the Philippines, where we give close to 10% of their total aid, and those aren't aid-dependent countries. Those are middle-income countries that don't really rely on aid for much. If you were to look at countries where we give at least a half a per cent of their GDP in aid and we contribute at least 5% of the total aid received by those countries, you would see only two countries on the list, Mali and Haiti. That's a fairly low bar for being a real driver of those countries' inclusive development agendas.

That was exhibit A. The second one that I wanted to talk about, exhibit B, which corresponds to table 2, is the possibility of thematic focus, of leading the global agenda on a substantive issue.

In my world of economic development and resource governance, I admire a handful of programs by some bilaterals. Norway has a couple.

One is their support to countries around oil governance. Their annual spend on that is around $50 million Canadian a year. It's a relatively narrow issue, but that $50 million is well within the resource envelope of a country like Canada in terms of pursuing global leadership.

A second is their climate and forest initiative. Norway is by far the world leader amongst donor countries in trying to solve the problem of climate change that's caused by deforestation. They acted for a number of years when everyone else was kind of fiddling around and trying to understand the problem. Their spend on that is close to $500 million Canadian. That's much larger, but it's still well within possibility for Canada if we were to dream big on an issue like that.

● (1535)

The U.K., which, as you know, has hit 0.7% of its own GDP toward aid spending, is the world leader on being the smart donor. They spend around $600 million Canadian on research. Of course, they're spending across the gamut of development issues.

Perhaps not coincidentally, I'm working on two projects, one out of the LSE and the other out of the University of Manchester, that are basically applied research projects. We're working closely with advisers in DFID, the Department for International Development, in bringing economics research to bear on the challenges they're confronting.

Again, it's $600 million across the gamut. Canada could achieve leadership with a fraction of that on a select group of issues.

From the United States government, Obama's initiative, Power Africa, gives $390 million Canadian a year. Again, that's well within our ambitions.

Even the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is seen as the best bilateral aid agency that helps countries that are growing successfully, is only about $1.6 billion Canadian.

Substantive themes are also the way knowledge is organized. With a few exceptions, there are very few area specialists and many more specialists who know something about water engineering or financial regulation. The sustainable development goals are organized into substantive areas.

This is not to say there's no point in having a strong presence in any one or handful of countries.

My recommendation is a two-track approach, one of depth with breadth.

On the country side, we could search for a handful of countries where Canada could play an outsized role. By far one of the largest bilateral aid donors, contributing on the same order of magnitude as the World Bank, Canada can be involved in a whole-of-problem approach to creating inclusive growth. This would be good for us as well as for them.

It would be good for us because we would get exposure to the areas we might not have chosen to specialize in. We could have that on-the-ground presence that would allow us to see the issues that were rising in importance as well as to involve the whole of the Canadian ecosystem back home, from provincial regulators to city planners to university educators to high school teachers, or however we would choose to engage with that country.

Given the findings of the first table, to do this effectively Canada would need to choose a much smaller number than the 25 countries, particularly if we were also to take almost an equivalent amount of our budget and invest it in a handful of issue areas where Canada could aim to be the best in the world and could aim to involve, again, our ecosystem of actors, from our professors in the universities to our civil society leaders to our provincial and municipal leaders to our private sector and investment community as part of the change in these particular areas.

In table 3 I list some hypothetical Canadian focus areas. The countries might be....

These aren't based on any empirical process. That's my next point.

Imagine we're present in Haiti, Mali, Syria, Peru, and Mongolia, and we're working on substantive themes, such as maternal health, responsible mining, agricultural productivity, water management, and refugee welfare. This would be a representative portfolio on which Canada could have strong ambitions in a handful of substantive areas as well as in a handful of geographic areas. This would not be done in isolation from our multilateral engagement strategy.

Here again there would be strong investment in a handful of broad-reaching international organizations, such as the UN Secretariat or the G20, as well as in a handful of international organizations that have substantive expertise, such as the World Health Organization or the UNHCR, where our goal would be to be a leading voice, to be among the top two or three countries in terms of staff members, leading reform efforts, playing host to meetings, pushing initiatives, and, of course, funding.

How would we choose these areas? I suggest putting together a scorecard. Bringing in people and listening to Canadians is obviously important, but looking at a scorecard as well could identify and rate the need for us to be engaged in this area, and whether there's a gap that other donors aren't filling.

With Canadian capacity, can we be the best in the world at something? Can we provide it at sufficient scale?

● (1540)

Then, of course, there's the national interest. Can we engage a Canadian ecosystem outside of the international development constituency and can we make Canadian lives better by this engagement?

I look forward to your questions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you very much, Mr. Werker.

Now we're going to go on to Mr. Greenhill for 10 minutes.

If you could quickly introduce yourself, tell us a bit about yourself, and then give us your presentation, that would be great.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Greenhill (Executive Chairman, Global Canada, As an Individual): Good afternoon. I am extremely pleased to be here today. Thank you for inviting me.

[*English*]

In terms of a bit of background, these are obviously my personal views, not the views of Global Canada, which I'm in charge of.

I'm from western Canada. I was a consultant at McKinsey and Company for a number of years, and then I became global head of strategy at Bombardier and then president of Bombardier International group before working at IDRC as a scholar looking at Canada's role in the world. I was asked to serve as president of CIDA for three years under both the Liberal and Conservative governments, and then for six years I was managing director of the World Economic Forum, the folks who organized Davos, among other things, and who are very engaged in collective actions to share global problems.

It's with that background that I will provide my perspective here.

In terms of a strategic context, over the last 15 years or so we've gone from a G7 world to a "G7 billion" world in which a multitude of states and non-state actors can affect our collective future. In this kind of a world, innovations and improvements can be shared rapidly across boundaries. Similarly, negative developments, whether infectious diseases, cybercrime, or terrorism, can be shared with equal speed.

This world is at a crossroads. It is possible that over the next 15 years, we could eradicate absolute poverty. We could stabilize a number of the most fragile states in the world. We could have a record number of states and a record number of people entering the middle class. We could secure a more just and stable and prosperous world, all while respecting planetary boundaries. It is possible and it would be historic.

Unfortunately, I think it's less likely than the other alternative, which is that we'll actually go down a wrong path such that international co-operation will falter; a number of fragile states will collapse; key middle-income states will be captured by extremist groups or authoritarian vested interests; a number of western states will disengage or lash out; the world will enter a downward spiral of tension, conflict, environmental degradation, and, in some areas, ecological collapse; and we will potentially see a catastrophic failure of the international system.

Just because we haven't experienced it yet, we should not imagine that we will not experience it in the next 10 years. In a sense, we're sort of in a 1928-1929 kind of world—not with the tensions of fascism, but with collective challenges and pressures on the system. I think we need to appreciate that we really are at a historic crossroads.

It's also clear that the more likely scenario is the negative one, which would be disastrous for Canada and a terrible legacy for our children. I believe that is the context.

I also believe at this critical moment that Canada can play a more significant role than any we've had in the last 60 years. Probably we're positioned to have the kind of influence we had in the late 1940s and early 1950s, for two reasons.

The first is our capacity to make a difference. We actually have the fiscal room and the domestic support for decision-makers in Ottawa to make bold moves internationally if we choose to. There is Canadian support for a globally engaged Canada.

The second is that we have the mindset and the skill set that correspond with any of the challenges of today, and we have international credibility. We are trusted to do the right things for the right reasons, so in an absolute sense, we can make a difference.

Perhaps even more striking—and, in a sense, more worrying—is that in a comparative sense, we really stand out, because although we are the smallest G7 country, we are perhaps the G7 country today that has the greatest unused capacity to make a positive difference, since many other G7 partners are tapped out. The United States is going through a very difficult period politically. The U.K. is tapped out in terms of its fiscal commitments to defence and development, which are well beyond ours or those of many others, and it's also going through an existential crisis. France is in a very challenged space. Italy and Japan are in a financial morass. If you look through the G7, we're the ones left standing in terms of being able to actually engage in a significant way if we choose to.

Given that context, I believe we have the opportunity and also the obligation to engage in a way that's consequential: not just to be present, but to actually make a real difference.

So how does one do that in this complex world? I would argue we do it by being very focused and very determined.

● (1545)

What I'm going to lay out in the next five minutes is a development diamond with four points.

The first point is a very sharp focus. There are, as Eric mentioned, a number of geographies where we can be very useful. I would argue that there are only a limited number where we can truly be game-changing.

If we look at countries that have regional or global significance in terms of world stability and that are also countries where we can actually make a difference in outcomes, there are two.

The first is Haiti, which Eric mentioned. It is the only fragile state in Latin America or in the Americas—although Venezuela is trying to catch up—and it has a huge impact on the entire Caribbean region. It's at a critical point in its own political and economic development. We are, together with France and the U.S., the three major players there, but we have a credibility and objectivity that the other two do not. We can make a unique difference there, should we choose to.

The second is Afghanistan. It's obviously one of the poorest countries in the world. It's a critically challenged country. It is very important not just for its own sake, but also for the impact it has on Pakistan and the region. It is a place with which we have a unique relationship, not just because of the sacrifice of treasure and blood that we've collectively made, but also because of the capacity that we have in our civil servants, in our leaders, and in civil society here in Canada, and the tremendous respect with which Canada is held from the lowest level right up to the president of Afghanistan. It is another place where, should we choose to, we can make a real difference. These are the two.

Let me go to the other part of focus, which is thematic. When looking at our way in the world, think about this as a T. We can go very deep in a limited number of countries, and there are a few areas where we can engage globally in a way that again would make a difference.

These aren't exclusive. There are other things that we will be doing as well, but in terms of the places sectorally where there is again a great unmet need that has global implications—not just that it's nice to improve them, but that they could actually change the track of the global outcome—and where we have a unique contribution to make, I would argue that again there are two.

The first is reproductive health. In international development programs, people have too often tended to cherish girls but abandon or forget about women. In some developing countries that we're involved in, a girl has an 80% to 90% chance of being immunized or going to school. She has less than a 10% to 20% chance of having access to modern contraception when she becomes a woman.

The impact of 200 million women being without the contraception they are often dying to get means 100,000 women and 600,000 children perish every year. The implications on the development of a country go beyond that.

When women are empowered to choose when they have children and how many they have, they tend to have smaller families. These smaller families allow more workers per dependent, which increases per capita economic growth by up to 30%. It also tends to reduce the ecological burden on the country and, in fragile states, the chance of resource-based conflict. Therefore, empowering women is not only good for rights; it actually changes the demographic destiny of countries and regions. If we look at issues like the Sahel, we see that countries like Mali and Niger will collapse in the next 30 years unless there is full empowerment of women there.

This is therefore not just a rights issue: it is a geopolitical issue. It's a place where Canada is uniquely positioned because of our credibility on MNCH, which the present government is continuing, and because of the present government's focus on women and girls and our general credibility on dealing with sensitive issues. That would be one theme.

The second one is within our own DNA: it's peace, order, and good government. When looking at the world and looking at development, we see that whether it's fragile states or low- and middle-income states or states that are more developed like Brazil, governance is key. To paraphrase James Carville, it's the state, stupid. That's the key issue.

Canada has a great tradition of working on governance. It's a place that we have understood right from the beginning of our own country. Particularly within peace, order, and good governance is the peace and order aspect: policing, judiciary, penitentiary systems. These are places that the world needs help and these are places where Canada has a tremendous credibility. I would argue that peace, order, and good government are Canada's strongest competitive advantage and the world's greatest unmet need.

Those, then, are the geographical and sectoral points of focus.

The third point is how we do it. We need the right resources, focused at the right level. That would mean that for these countries and for these particular areas we need to invest with the intention of becoming the best in the world. If we're going to focus on good governance, including the resource governance that Eric mentioned, we should say that Canada and Ottawa are going to become global centres of good governance. There's no UN institution for good governance in the way that the WHO is for health. This is something we can own.

● (1550)

Beyond the idea of putting resources into a specific area, there is the question of resources overall. In my last two minutes, I want to note where we are in terms of overall commitment in order to make sure our resources can match our rhetoric.

I draw your attention to the next four slides.

The first shows where Canada is compared with its peers, those being other G7 countries and mid-sized open economies such as Norway and Sweden. We are well below average in that group. In 2014, we contributed about 0.24% of GNI; in 2015, it was about 0.28%. The average is almost twice that, at about half a per cent of GNI. If you look at countries that we refer to as “like-minded”—the Scandinavians and the U.K.—you can see that our minds are in the same place, but our pocketbooks are not. We're generally spending one-half to one-third of what our real peers are spending.

The second point, as shown in the third slide, is that not only are we spending less than our peers, but we're now spending much less than we have spent historically. For 30 years, across Conservative and Liberal governments, there was a strong commitment to development. We were leaders, at about a half a percent of GDP. In the early 1990s, with our fiscal and constitutional crises, that fell, and it hasn't come back.

The situation today will be the worst we've been in if we continue at this level. Last year was the second-lowest commitment of our resources in history in relation to GNI. Today we're at about 0.28%; under Prime Minister Chrétien, it was 0.31%; under Martin, it was 0.3%; under Prime Minister Harper, it was 0.3%.

Don't think of these hundredths of a decimal point as a fraction of a per cent. Each one-hundredth is about $200 million—more importantly, it's about 25,000 lives. It's about 50,000 refugee families, 2 million girls going to school, and 1.5 million women having access to family planning. That's what you can do with one one-hundredth of one per cent. This isn't a fraction of a decimal point—this is millions of lives.

If we continue at this level, we will have the lowest level of commitment of any Canadian government in the last 50 years. With respect to our campaign for the UN Security Council, one of the reasons we lost was that we were seen as not being committed to international development. Our commitment at that point was 0.34%. To go back up to a level seen as too low several years ago, we would have to commit an extra billion dollars a year.

This isn't to be defensive about the past; rather, it is to point out that we need to be determined about the future. We need to step up and move forward.

The U.K. is the only G7 country that has reached 0.7%. It reached it across three administrations—Labour, a Social Democratic-Conservative coalition, and Conservatives. It reached it over a period of 15 years of sustained commitment. They started on this journey in 1997, and they realized this end in 2013.

The U.K. in 1997 is almost identical to us today. Their unemployment rate was about 7%; ours is about 7%. Their deficit was about 2%; ours is about 2%. Their commitment in terms of ODA, official development assistance, to GNI was about one-quarter of 1%, which is where we are today. Where the U.K. was then is where we are now. The question is whether we have the collective ambition to be, 15 years from now, where the U.K. is today, which is in a position as a true leader in international development.

We're not talking about aid and we're not talking about assistance. We're talking about an international investment in our collective well-being. This is about investing in preventative maintenance for the planet. That's what international development engagement is in the 21st century. That's why I think the role that you're playing in reviewing bilateral development assistance is so critically important.

Thank you for your time.

● (1555)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you, Mr. Greenhill.

We're going to start our first round with the Conservatives.

Go ahead, Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you gentlemen, both of you, for some provocative, thought-provoking messages.

I sense from the testimony we've heard and from the questions and discussions among members since we began the countries of focus study that there will be encouragement to the government to be more ambitious in moving our aid percentage, if not to the 0.7% ideal, then at least closer to the historic point between those two levels.

I'd like to ask you, Mr. Greenhill, for comments, and perhaps Mr. Werker as well. You suggest that two countries that we might be very wise to focus on enthusiastically are Haiti and Afghanistan, two countries where we had ambitious initial investment in both security and development. I think the Canadian government's performance in the immediate aftermath of the Haiti earthquake, along with the other major donor countries, was highly effective. It was probably a model for international response for whole-of-government interdepartmental co-operation and focus on the ground. However, six years later, there are still slums on hilltops. Haiti is basically under a military administration, the Brazilian-led MINUSTAH, and the biggest problem there is just the complete inability to restore proper governmental administration.

We've seen, I think in both Afghanistan after the withdrawal.... The cause of the withdrawal of our military forces was partly that Canadian public support for those two countries had visibly diminished, given the lack of results that perhaps were expected and given the total dollar amount of investment. I am just wondering what Canada would do differently in terms of making Haiti.... Let's take Haiti. There's a political reason to be in Haiti as well as a developmental logic. I'm wondering what you would suggest we do differently to achieve a better outcome sooner.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I think those are fantastic questions, and they outline the fact that these are very challenging areas.

Development in a Haiti or an Afghanistan, which are like South Korea or Taiwan, for example, 40 years ago, is not a five- or 10-year issue; it's a 30- or 40-year issue.

In Haiti during the 1980s and 1990s, per capita income was dropping, environmental devastation was increasing, and there was increasing political violence. There was a downward spiral. Haiti has now, despite the earthquake and the other challenges, stabilized. There are certain indicators of education of young people, particularly girls, and certain elements of per capita growth that are starting to be positive, but it's going to take a lot of work. A lot of the best officials were the ones who were killed in the buildings during the earthquake. Rebuilding capacity takes decades, not years.

What can we do? I think Canada, both in Haiti and Afghanistan, did some excellent work. What do we need to do? Keep the focus at a high level. It's complex and challenging and it's not nice to work in these areas, but it's necessary, so what it requires is a cross-partisan parliamentary decision to stay by it. We have to decide that although there are ups and downs, we're going to keep pushing.

What can we do to build on this? We can continue to do the security sector reform in Haiti by reforming the police, the judiciary, and the penitentiary system so that MINUSTAH eventually can leave; we can continue to build some of the key institutions and create the rule of law that will allow private sector and other growth; we can have someone at an assistant deputy minister level charged with Haiti, either the ambassador or a special envoy; and we can lay out in Haiti and Afghanistan not a two- or three-year commitment, which is what we're presently doing, but a conditional 15-year commitment.

If we want to make a difference in Afghanistan, we have to say, "We're there." If certain things are realized, we're there for 15 years at $300 million a year, which was what we did at the peak civilian engagement. That's a $4.5 billion commitment. We're going to have an assistant deputy minister, or a special envoy retired deputy minister, as someone there to oversee it. We're going to report back to this group every quarter, as we did before. We're going to keep pushing. We're going to do it not because there's a partisan reason or a political reason, because it's not that popular; it's just important. I think that's the level of commitment we have to have.

I mentioned South Korea because it's interesting. In the case of South Korea in the 1960s, a decade after the end of the conflict, the World Bank and others were in despair. It was a terrible mess. There was a military dictatorship. Why did they stay the course? It was because they had to. We couldn't let South Korea collapse. If you look at what happened in the 20 years since, you see that things bore fruit. That's because there was strategic persistence. I think that's another element we can bring to it. Those would be the parts.

To conclude, one difference in development compared to 30 years ago is that the key remaining development challenges are fragile states. These are the toughest of the toughest nuts to crack. If we're going to make a difference, we have to be prepared to make a difference in a different way.

● (1600)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you very much, Mr. Kent.

We're now going to move over to Mr. Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): I'm going to defer this question to Karina Gould, and Michael will defer his question to me.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Okay. That sounds good.

Go ahead, Ms. Gould.

Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): We want to keep you on your toes, Mr. Allison.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Karina Gould: Thank you very much. Thank you both, Mr. Greenhill and Mr. Werker, for being here today and for sharing your insights. I thought they were interesting and unique in terms of what we've heard so far on this committee.

I want to follow up on one question. We're talking about countries of focus, but we're also talking about the global challenges and how we address those. Mr. Greenhill, you mentioned specifically the region of the Sahel, which I thought was interesting because I just returned from the World Humanitarian Summit, where I had a chance to speak with a special rapporteur on this issue. When I asked him to name the key challenge, he brought up exactly what you said about the importance of empowering women and about maintaining a sustainable population in regions of the world where there's already a lot of fragility and conflict.

The question I have is in terms of development assistance. How can Canada be influential, or have a positive impact, on some of these more global thematic challenges while still working with our existing partners? I'm hoping you can elaborate a little more on that.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: That's a great example. The Sahel is an area that, without a change in demographic trajectory, will collapse. In Niger there is a fertility rate of about seven children per woman right now, and Mali is at about five or six, and they are so resource-constrained and water-challenged that they can hardly support the existing population.

How does one adjust this? Part of it is working with the existing government, building on the great work that was done in MNCH—work that is being continued and expanded in a lovely cross-partisan way—and then working with some of the most creative partners there.

The Ouagadougou Partnership, which is basically a partnership of a lot of the francophone countries in the Sahel, is doing outstanding work on family planning and is working with religious leaders and community leaders there in a way that embeds empowering women within the culture rather than presenting it as some foreign imposition.

My sense is that we actually have a unique role to play in that area. I think the issue is making sure that we're providing the additional resources to do it. To really change the needle on sexual and reproductive health and rights would probably require the equivalent of about 5% of our present ODA, meaning that about $250 million a year would empower probably 18 million girls and women. That's equivalent to all the women in Canada today. If we were able to do that over the next four years, working with partners like Family Planning 2020, we could to help change the demographic destiny of that region.

What would it take? It would require a very structured, focused approach with resources and then building the internal capacity here to really program this properly.

Ms. Karina Gould: My follow-up question is that in talking about countries of focus, one of the things that we hear from the OECD-DAC and from other bodies is that with focus comes influence, but, Mr. Werker, you talked about the fact that in many instances we're not even contributing to 1% of a country's budget. In line with the question that I asked, how do we use our limited resources to have these tangible impacts and to make that influence and work sustainably and tangibly with partner countries?

That's to either of you.

● (1605)

Mr. Robert Greenhill: One example is building off what Eric talked about, which is about resource governance.

Influence isn't just about money; it's about excellence. Canada played a critical role in Vietnam during its transition out of a kind of closed society when we had Marc Lalonde and a couple of key former officials working for 15 years with the central committee of the Vietnamese government on changing its way of governing itself to become more effective and more responsive. That was about a governance involvement. We didn't spend as much money as other countries, but we had more influence than other countries because we were involved in the design.

We've done the same thing in terms of environmental governance in China. In fact, I think, Mr. Kent, you've been sitting on the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development. It is probably the most influential body in China in terms of its development policy. It was set up in 1990 or 1992 and has been sustained for over two decades. It's a fraction of the spending that others are contributing to that. It's had outsized impact, and it's because of this idea of focusing and persisting.

I think what we do is we don't try to be everywhere, but in those few things that we are engaged in, we try to be the best.

Mr. Eric Werker: Could I just add? I'm not sure if you've seen the working group report from CIPS, “Towards 2030: Building Canada’s Engagement with Global Sustainable Development” that I worked on with Margaret Biggs, John McArthur, Kate Higgins, David Moloney, and Julia Sanchez.

In response to your question, what we argued is to build up the Canadian ecosystem. What could we do differently? Sometimes it would be planting the seeds in Canada in the institutions and the organizations and maybe cross-institutional collaborations that have Canadian capabilities in this area, and then giving them the challenge to go out to do great stuff. Their networks are going to be different from the official development channels. They're going to connect sooner to communities of practice in those countries and they might just happen to do the sort of thing that Robert talked about in China.

It's really one of those. It's almost like a venture capital approach in investing in biotech. You can invest in 50 companies, and if two of them change the world, you've made a spectacular portfolio.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you, Ms. Gould.

Thank you very much.

We're now going to move back over to this side and to Mr. Aubin, please, for six minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Thank you very much.

Thank you for being here, gentlemen.

My first question is for Mr. Greenhill, but please feel free to jump in if you wish.

Obviously, we are not surprised by the charts you showed us, even if we are disappointed. We are even more disappointed when we hear the Prime Minister tell us that the 0.7% objective is too ambitious.

I would like you to tell us about the United Kingdom's model. Fifteen years ago, the British were where we are at today, and now they have met the 0.7% target. What was the catalyst? How did they manage to get there? Was it simply a policy decision, or was it combined with a public awareness campaign in which it was explained to people that this was not an act of public charity but actually a real investment? In all of our ridings, people are favourable to Canada helping the poorest countries, but they also recognize that poverty exists here as well. We need to be able to separate the two issues. I think we can work on both at the same time.

I would like to hear your thoughts on the United Kingdom's model. How did the British manage to achieve this milestone?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: After talking to people and reviewing some of the documentation from that time, my impression was that it was an enlightened geostrategic decision. So there was some leadership. It is clear that the Labour government was elected with a mission to show the world that the United Kingdom could play a positive role. In addition, public servants had already laid the groundwork. They thought about what they could to with that money to bring about real change. Civil society was also very involved.

Planning for the long term was the key. The working document for the development policy review clearly showed that it would be impossible to do it over three or four years. I am of the same mind. The idea is to ask what we can do in the next 10 or 15 years. That's what the British did. They said it wasn't just a matter of charity, but also a question of shared prosperity and global stability. I think that, in the United Kingdom, perhaps because of its history, people were more sensitive to the issue than we were 10 years ago. Today, I believe that we, too, can become a bit more sensitive to this reality.

In order for Canada to become a leader like the United Kingdom, between now and about 2030, we will need to increase spending by 12% per year. That's not insignificant—it's a lot of money—but it's not impossible. In such a situation, the Department of Finance may say that it doesn't want certain things, but that it is willing to do others. These are some of the current options.

● (1610)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Werker, would you like to add anything?

[*English*]

Mr. Eric Werker: I think the only thing I would add is that the tendency toward the focus areas that have been previewed, where Canada might have its strengths, might not bring in the broader Canadian public in the same way the social side and the gender side would. Those are extremely important areas.

A number of you, including Robert, have made the argument that they are geostrategic, but it's also to have the geostrategic and prosperity linkages that are connected with our Canadian international development so that it's not preaching to the choir. Those who might not see international development as being in their interests recognize that it is when their son gets an internship in China or when their company is able to reach the Caribbean market.

That can still be linked with global development, because the goal of it, of course, is to create economic growth and then to make that growth inclusive. The first part of the problem is the harder one to do, as we've seen in the case of Haiti.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: My next question is about Canada's credibility in a number of countries we send assistance to, particularly Haiti, which you had talked about. Has our credibility remained intact or has it taken a hit when, for example, Canadian mining companies give us a bad name or when we are ranked near the bottom among OECD countries? At the moment, has our credibility taken a hit internationally?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: In general, Canada is probably one of the most credible countries in the G7. All countries have their shortcomings.

As for mining policy, it presents a big challenge, but it's also a great opportunity for Canada. Responsible mining development is not easy to do, but it's important. It's important for us and for our mining companies, and it's essential for those counties.

After I left CIDA, the government decided to get involved in this area. It was quite controversial, but honestly, I think it was a good idea. If there are things that need to be improved, we should do so, but we cannot ignore what is an essential sector for many developing countries, nor can we ignore our role, for better or for worse. Working together to achieve the best possible results is, strategically, good for everyone. But it's not easy.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Provide a quick response, Mr. Werker. Thanks.

Mr. Eric Werker: Norway has started by potentially being one of the largest hydrocarbon contributors to global warming per capita just because of its large oil production, but it has used it. Rather than run away from it, with a much smaller economy than Canada's it has taken the lead in creating solutions to climate change. It can be done. It's completely changed the perception others would have of Norway vis-à-vis the environment.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you very much.

Thank you very much, Mr. Aubin.

We're now going to move back to the Liberal side for the final round. Mr. Levitt has given his time to Mr. Fragiskatos. We'll turn it over to you, sir.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Greenhill, in 2012 you wrote an op ed for the *National Post* focusing on Afghanistan. Your general point was that development can happen in conflict zones. You took on a stereotype or a myth that development could not happen in conflict zones. I wonder if you could focus on that. I ask the question particularly in light of what's happening in the Middle East, in Syria.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Here's the point. These are the most difficult areas of the world, and if you want to look for failure, you can find it. These are failed states. If you want to find a failure in a failed state, you can find it, but if you want to find successes and you do it the right way, you can find them as well.

There were some extraordinary successes in Afghanistan. Every year 40,000 or 50,000 children are alive who would have died under the old regime. Maternal mortality is still one of the highest in the world, but it's fallen by record rates. Not only are eight or nine million girls and boys in school, compared to a million under the Taliban, but about 500,000 are graduating from secondary school every year. The elements of the future are being laid. The point is, though, that it takes time and engagement.

I'll give you an example. As one of our flagship projects, we tried to build 50 schools in Kandahar. It was very difficult. They kept getting blown up. In the meantime, working with the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, BRAC, CIDA supported the creation of over a thousand schools in rural Afghanistan. That ended up having tremendous success, particularly for girls. Why was that done? It didn't have a Canadian flag. It worked with an NGO from Bangladesh who knew how to work with poor, rural, conservative Muslim communities, and it did it well.

That was interesting. We weren't trying to wave the flag. We were trying to change the conditions on the ground. We can do great things in these areas, but it requires senior leadership, as well as consistent, persistent support and a willingness to learn.

Interestingly, that article came because of a hatchet job that was done using reports that the CIDA team had commissioned to have third parties give them the unvarnished view of what was working and what wasn't working every six months. That's very unusual, but it was felt to be necessary. There was a learning curve. That's what was used to find criticisms, but that's the kind of approach one needs in order to succeed.

This will only work if it isn't a Liberal or whatever government initiative doing development, but a Canadian initiative with cross-partisan parliamentary support. If we're going to make a real difference in Afghanistan or Haiti, things will go wrong, so there'd better be strategic support for us to be engaged, or else we shouldn't try.

● (1615)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I like witty quotes, but this one was wonderful: “It's the states, stupid.” I agree with you. States are so critical to this. When states break down, we see what we see in Afghanistan and in Syria and beyond.

What about regions? We've heard from witnesses here at the committee that by focusing exclusively on states, by having a state-centric approach, we might be hampering an opportunity to be nimble, to be flexible. If we're concentrated in a limited number of states, what happens when a regional issue breaks out? It could be an issue around refugees as a result of some humanitarian crisis or a war or something related.

What do you think about that? Is a state-centric focus potentially hamstringing us, Mr. Greenhill and Mr. Werker?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: A number of issues, such as infrastructure and economic security, are regional, but the base is the state. When Pascal Lamy, the former head of the WTO, was asked what he had learned, he said he used to think we needed global solutions to national problems, but he now realized we need national solutions to global problems. You need to build the building blocks.

Take West Africa; you need regional approaches, but boy, it was great to help stabilize and improve Ghana and Senegal because they then became pathfinding nations for anglophone and francophone West Africa. If we're going to focus, regional engagement is good, but country focus is essential.

Mr. Eric Werker: What about sub-national entities? If we're going to approach places such as India or Peru, being able to move that needle would necessitate working at the sub-national level.

To come back to the fragile state question, I think the fundamental problem in places such as Haiti and Afghanistan is that the business and political elite benefits to some extent from the status quo—at least enough of them do—so that in terms of simply doing good projects as part of a regional approach—good projects that trickle into countries here and there—without being involved in the backroom conversations around individual investments, individual reformers, and rising technocrats in different ministries, it's impossible, I think, to change the dynamics of those elite interests.

Of course, trying to do so is perhaps a bit of a challenge. In my work in Liberia, there was only one country that was able to have those conversations, and that was the United States, for historical reasons and of course for reasons of size. They were present in the entire spectrum of Liberia's development challenges. Not coincidentally, they were also the ones able to respond most vigorously to Ebola, which came completely out of left field. They had the credibility and the relationships, including at the social level between the ambassador and the president, to be able to tackle the challenges of a relatively weak state. Even with the presence of Ebola, it has seen fairly sustained economic growth.

● (1620)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Fragiskatos.

We're going to go to our last round. We have time for two more questioners. We'll make it probably four minutes for each round, just so we can get in under the time.

We're going to turn it over to you, Mr. Saini.

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): First of all, thank you very much for being here.

I want to switch the channel a bit.

Mr. Werker, there's something you wrote in that report that I found fascinating and that I don't think has been discussed a lot. One of the things you talk about is the corporate responsibility when it comes to international aid. In your report, you highlight that. You give the example of UN Global Compact, an endeavour in which 8,000 firms are involved. Out of those, only 54 firms are Canadian. You wrote about these firms making up 0.065% of global membership, although we have 2.3% of global GDP, 2.5% of global trade, and 4% of global FDI, as compared to other countries such as Australia, with 74 involved, the Netherlands with 86, and Sweden with 194.

You also highlighted something about the ecosystem and how important it is to have an ecosystem, but part of that ecosystem also governs or includes corporate responsibility, especially when investing in other countries. As a background, how do you see the government harnessing the talents of the private sector and business in order to advance Canada's aid goals?

Mr. Eric Werker: I want to be quick in order to turn this over to Robert, who is really our key informant on this question.

Ultimately, it has to come from the companies themselves. The government can facilitate this to the extent that it signals that it's important, but this is a chance for Canadian companies to take leadership, whether it's through reporting and accounting or investments.

Part of the way the government can do it is through the institutions, such as the pension investment funds, which are huge and enormous actors in the private sector, and through the banks, which are heavily regulated, and then of course through the regulation of companies, such that if there were the desire to be world-leading on reporting, for example, the Canadian regulators would be able to work with them. It also suggests that a lot of people who aren't in this room would need to be part of that conversation.

Let me turn this over to Robert.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: It's a critical issue. I was actually on the board of the UN Global Compact for a number of years. We're working right now on how we can increase Canadian engagement.

There are a couple of concrete things. One is that Global Canada did a workshop with the Global Compact, a number of Canadian businesses, and the Business Council of Canada two weeks ago on how we get them to hard-wire the sustainable development goals into their strategic planning and their risk review processes. Using that framework of 17 indicators, 17 SDGs, for opportunities and risks, it starts building it into their mindset.

The second is that there are specific issues. Pensions are a great way for Canada to play a role globally. Minerals—resources—are another, and construction is a third. We need to get better at having constructive conversations among the different stakeholders so that we can raise our game in that space. For example, if resource companies want to make a difference, they need to step up, become members of the Global Compact, and engage with NGOs. Then NGOs and government here will meet them halfway and they can work together. Historically, we haven't done a lot of that. I think there's a chance for us to do more of that collectively.

Mr. Raj Saini: I have a quick follow-up. You mentioned mining. It seems for us that mining and insurance or financial services are the two biggest, but infrastructure is also important. What are your comments on infrastructure? Do you think that's something we should focus on also?

Mr. Eric Werker: It is an area in which they do invest. Our largest pension funds are among the best long-term investors in the world. This comes from my Harvard Business School alumni circle. We do this really well. We can invest for 25 or 50 years. From that perspective, there's an enormous possibility to be leading the way and doing responsible long-term infrastructure investment, partnering with the private sector, which is ultimately the way it has to go.

What do they need to get there? Maybe they'll be able to answer that question.

● (1625)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Saini.

We're going to finish off with Mr. Genuis.

You have four minutes, sir.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, both, for absolutely fascinating testimony. I probably have more than four minutes of questions here, so I'm going to talk as fast as possible.

Mr. Werker, it's great to hear about the work you're doing with LSE, which happens to be my alma mater. I was curious to know what impact the British government's emerging interest in happiness measurement and the interest in the subject of happiness, in particular at the LSE, has on the discussion around development in the U.K.

Mr. Eric Werker: Not much, to my knowledge. I also had a colleague at Harvard Business School, who was one of the world's leading scholars on that. It's not, I'd say, mainstreamed in development practice. Maybe it should be.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Right.

We've had some discussion at this committee about the question of how aid interacts with Canada's strategic interests. We've certainly had some witnesses who don't want to see any contamination of our aid discussion with Canada's strategic interests. I thought it was interesting, though, Mr. Greenhill, how you talked about South Korea, and how the intersection of an aid opportunity with western strategic interests created the political capital to be involved there in an effective way and to be involved there for a long term. It seems to me that in any event there's some value in trying to kill two birds with one stone by trying to address poverty at the same time that we advance what may be very good and noble strategic interests.

I wonder if you can talk a bit more about how we should think about Canada's strategic interests in the context of the broader aid discussion.

Mr. Robert Greenhill: I guess it comes back to the system.

We have a very complicated interdependent world, which is in danger of failing at various places. Our health care system is only as strong as Liberia's health care system or Brazil's health care system, because Zika and Ebola drug-resistant bacteria are all coming from developing countries with poor health care systems. The safety of our people is only as safe as that of other countries around the world, because of the link with international criminality and terrorism.

I think the strategic case isn't that we're going to help this country because we're necessarily going to do business with this country; we're going to help this country because stabilizing that country means they become a positive, responsible member of that region, which leads to a more stable and prosperous world that we all benefit from. That's a strategic case we have to make. It is a little more complicated as a narrative, but I believe it's the reality.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: That's a great point: regardless of whether or not we're considering commercial interests, we have to think about strategic interests because they're very much connected to our aid objectives.

I want to pursue your comments about Afghanistan and Haiti and pick up on what my colleague was talking about, but in the context of Afghanistan, I guess one of the unfortunate things is that there are ongoing issues of human rights. I hear about very dire circumstances facing religious minorities, Sikhs and Hindus in particular, and that's a concern to people across parties. We've put a lot of money in Afghanistan and we still have these human rights issues, so how do we do that? How do we engage for the long term and try to have an impact while at the same time drawing some clear lines and saying we don't want to be positively engaged with governments that are doing things that are deeply at odds—

Mr. Robert Greenhill: You don't want to be complicit to the abuses.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Exactly. We don't want to be complicit. In fact, we want to be the opposite: we want to be fixing human rights problems at the same time that we address development issues.

What are your thoughts on that, in Afghanistan or other spots?

Mr. Robert Greenhill: Ethiopia is a great example. Under Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, great development took place, but there have also been real issues of human rights abuse and restrictions of journalists.

I came across this twice, once as president of CIDA when there had been a very bad election in Ethiopia, and then another time as the managing director of the World Economic Forum when we were deciding whether we should do an event in Ethiopia when two Swedish journalists had been put in prison at that time.

I asked the opinion of a very thoughtful Ethiopian Canadian, Bekele Geleta, who is a political refugee from the Meles regime who came to Canada and ended up becoming the global head of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. His view was to engage, shed light, and open up the space, so that's what we did.

We had the conversation with Meles. We said we were going to come in, going to be respectful, and going to talk about whatever people wanted to talk about. He said he couldn't imagine an issue not worth discussing, and he was good to his word. Now, did abuses stop the next day? No. But did things move in the right direction? I think yes.

Again, one of the challenges when we're looking at a fragile state is not just judging where it is but where the direction is, and whether there is a way we can be a positive force while recognizing it will not be in the place we would like it to be today, or tomorrow, or next year, but that if we work together, in 30 years there may be great success. If we're involved in stabilizing in the meantime, we're helping people there as well as around the world.

That again is part of the challenge of these things.

● (1630)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

To our witnesses, thank you very much for great testimony and some very thought-provoking ideas for us.

We're going to suspend for two minutes and bring our new witnesses in, and then we'll start the second round.

Thank you.

● (1630)

(Pause)

● (1630)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Welcome back, and thank you, everyone, for getting back to your seats so quickly.

We have a couple of guests with us. I'm going to get you both to introduce yourselves and give a bit of your background before you speak.

Evelyne, you have been here before. It's great to see you.

Wendy, you have as well. It's great to have both of you back as we talk about this focus.

I'm going to start with you, Ms. Harris. Please introduce yourself and give a bit of your background, and then you can get right into your presentation. You have 10 minutes each, and then we'll get a chance to have our members ask some questions over the following 56 minutes.

Thanks.

Ms. Wendy Harris (President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Executive Service Organization): Thank you very much.

I'm Wendy Harris, president and CEO of the Canadian Executive Service Organization.

My background is in the private sector. I'm a chartered professional accountant. I bring that lens to international development. I got involved with CESO seven years ago, and believe in the power of wisdom, experience, and strong business fundamentals to catalyze transformative change.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you also to the honourable members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for inviting us here today. We are delighted to participate in the international aid policy review and to provide our perspective with you today.

CESO is an international economic development organization dedicated to sustainably reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth in many countries around the world and within indigenous communities in Canada. Our main focus areas are private sector development and institutional strengthening.

Because we work in both national and international settings where we leverage key learning and best practices from both programs, we hope to bring a unique perspective to the committee today, one that helps to connect the dots between Canadian international aid and development efforts and those here at home, a challenge posed by Prime Minister Trudeau to the Canadian aid and development community on May 9, 2016.

At CESO, we live and breathe these connections every day, and we look forward to sharing our experiences with you. Importantly, our work is locally driven, and our main responsibility is to our clients and partners; everything we do moves through this lens. Our expert volunteers transfer their knowledge and skills to our clients, who then develop the tools they need to break the cycle of poverty to become not only the owners but the creators of their own long-term prosperity. This approach contributes to their self-sufficiency and resiliency long after our work is done.

As an organization dedicated to sustainable poverty reduction, we emphatically support the new global agenda and the main goal of eradicating all poverty by 2030. As many of my colleagues and peers have mentioned in testimony previously, this goal, and all 17 sustainable development goals more generally, represents a substantial commitment on the part of the international community to address the biggest issues and challenges faced by the world's most vulnerable in every country, including Canada. It also provides the opportunity for the many stakeholders around the globe, including local partners, to collaborate, communicate, and innovate in ways that have not necessarily been intuitive within the development and trade environments so far.

It is an exciting time to look at solving these complex problems with fresh eyes, fresh approaches, and fresh partnerships. We also firmly support and applaud the new government's related focus on the poorest of the poor, on fragile states, and on women and girls.

Seen through the lens of economic development, helping to break the cycle of poverty and closing the wealth gap extends beyond the individual. Systems and institutions, whether in low- or middle-income countries, must have the capacity to provide and manage adequate social and economic programming to ensure that the opportunities and supports for all individuals are not only present but also working, both equitably and well.

It is CESO's position after nearly 50 years of experience that generating economic value and developing a strong economic infrastructure lie at the heart of sustainable change and growth, including the eradication of poverty. We commend both the previous government and the current government for acknowledging the role economic development plays in these objectives and we strongly advocate for a deep commitment to furthering this thematic focus area in the revised international assistance framework. However, it's important to recognize the interconnectedness between economic and social development, and the critical need to address both focus areas in reality.

This connection is not always obvious. Often social and economic efforts are considered, and even approached, either separately or as competing priorities. From CESO's perspective and lengthy history in working in both international and national contexts, we know how inextricably intertwined they really are. This link is perhaps most visible and obvious in our work with Canadian indigenous communities.

In many of these communities, simply addressing economic activity A or social development activity B isn't sufficient. Often, a more holistic approach of addressing multiple issues simultaneously is required. On the side of economic stimulation, the stronger the economic infrastructure is—including well-operating, transparent institutions and governing structures, job creation opportunities, a diversified economy, etc.—the greater will be the ability for an individual, community, country, or region to invest and reinvest in both social and economic initiatives.

● (1635)

In fact, Minister Bibeau recently commented:

> Economic growth is not only about creating jobs for individuals: it can also generate revenues for governments to help provide inclusive social programs and services for their citizens, such as education and health care.

CESO's work in strengthening tax and audit efforts in Guyana is a great example of this ability to generate revenues that can then be applied to ensuring that additional economic and social programs are created and sustained.

On an individual level, the opportunity to plan ahead and move beyond daily survival is critical. When people have a relatively stable and predictable income, they can begin to invest in other important areas, such as their children's education, food and nourishment, preventive health care, and reliable housing or shelter.

The other consequence, which is often overlooked, is that they begin to engage in consumer-oriented activities, such as buying goods and services from local micro, small, and medium-sized businesses, thus injecting much-needed stimulus into the local community and economy. In turn, these individuals can use their predictable income to improve their families' health and well-being and to contribute to the community's economy. This is the multiplier effect. Research shows that this individual and community reinvestment occurs at a higher rate when women are economically empowered.

The most obvious and immediate beneficiaries of these investments are children and youth, not only because their quality of life improves but also because opportunities to improve their future become increasingly available. Stability and predictability lead to resiliency, adaptability, and the ability of individuals and institutions to recover quickly from shocks or disasters, whether they are natural, economic, political, or social.

On the side of social development, the stronger the social infrastructure—including health, education, and equality measures—the greater the ability for individuals, communities, and institutions to participate in the economic activities around them.

As my colleagues before me have pointed out, over 70% of the world's poorest live in middle-income countries. This jarring statistic points to a variety of complex causes and issues that often occur simultaneously, including limited economic opportunity, gross levels of inequality, and the various consequences of climate change. It also points to weaknesses at both institutional and systemic levels. This goes back to the interconnectedness between social and economic development. These two focus areas must work in tandem to achieve sustainable poverty eradication.

Considering the knowledge and experience we've accumulated over our history, we ask the Canadian government to consider the following three recommendations relating to international aid assistance.

First, we strongly recommend that local perspectives play a bigger role in the identification and direction of Canadian development priorities. By elevating the role of local contributions, we ensure that development efforts are truly addressing local needs, regardless of the framework of prioritization or delivery. This is also necessary in similar work with indigenous communities in Canada. We can't emphasize enough the value of local collaboration. For sustainability to take hold, local ideas, processes, and approaches must be organically incorporated along each step of Canadian intervention so that beneficiaries are not simply recipients of the impacts, but co-creators and owners.

Second, we often assume innovation is all about new ideas and ways of doing things. However, sometimes innovation simply comes from applying previous successes in new contexts in ways that yield positive change. In a development context, programmatic success should be leveraged as much as possible to replicate impacts when it makes sense to do so. We would also recommend that the Canadian government consider opportunities to fund replication models based on thematic orientation, even when they're outside current countries of focus.

● (1640)

As an example, our work in e-governance in the Philippines is highly sought after by many of our other program countries, including Tanzania, Ecuador, and Senegal.

In brief, the e-governance program uses technology to streamline government systems, increase transparency and efficiencies, reduce government corruption, increase tax revenues, and give many more benefits. With some locally or regionally oriented adaptations, this type of innovative program could easily be replicated in many different countries and regions.

Finally, the world is opening up, and in many ways frontiers are dissolving. Many of the complex challenges discussed today aren't constrained by territorial borders. Likewise, looking at issues only in terms of individual country impacts inhibits the potential for innovative solutions generated from multiple collaborators with different perspectives and experiences. I would be happy to expand on an example of our work in West Africa relating to regional food security and agriculture.

We strongly encourage the Canadian government to consider addressing regional thematic issues in broader ways than by country alone.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the review process. I look forward to your questions.

● (1645)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you very much, Ms. Harris.

We'll now move to Ms. Guindon.

Ms. Evelyne Guindon (Chief Executive Officer, Cuso International): My name is Evelyne Guindon.

[*Translation*]

First of all, I would like to wish everyone good afternoon.

Thank you for inviting us to appear before the committee.

[*English*]

I'm going do my presentation in English, but please don't hesitate at any point to ask me questions in either language.

I've had 25 years of experience as a development worker. I started off my career working in sexual and reproductive health. I've worked in environmental sectors. I started off in the volunteer sector. Working for Cuso has been a very meaningful part of my career. What's also very important is that my practice throughout my career has been framed by my steadfast belief in the power of partnership. I've worked in all sectors that are working at the forefront of development. Over the years, I've learned how important as well as how complex partnership and dialogue are, and how key and critical they are to addressing poverty and inequality. You'll hear that reflected in my presentation today.

Cuso International, for those of you who don't know it well, is a long-standing Canadian international development organization working to eradicate poverty and reduce inequality around the world. Since our inception in 1961, we've mobilized more than 16,000 highly skilled volunteers to build the capacity of local partners, governments, civil society, and private sector partners. We've done so in over 80 countries.

We're currently working in 19 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and now here in Canada in partnership with indigenous communities. We welcome the current government's commitment to review and refine bilateral development assistance so that it reaches those who need it most.

Today we have six key points in response to the pertinent questions that you presented for our consideration.

First, we believe that bilateral development assistance should focus on supporting poor and marginalized people and communities rather than just poor countries. We believe that the current country-of-focus model offers both advantages and limitations. Focusing narrowly on certain countries means that programming is confined by geography and is less responsive in times of crisis or in times of opportunity. Middle-income countries are home to five billion of the world's seven billion people and 73% of the world's poorest people.

I'll give you an example. Colombia is considered an upper-middle country, but it's also one of the most unequal countries in the world. More than 13 million Colombians live in poverty, and more than six million are internally displaced people. Colombia is second in the world after Syria in terms of displaced people. Therefore, we believe that poverty, inequality, and exclusion are the factors that should guide our efforts and should be considered outside the overly simplistic categorization of poor countries, which ignores the existence of pockets of extreme poverty and exclusion.

Second, effective development programming requires long-term vision and commitment. Meaningful and successful initiatives do take time. Our most successful partnerships with local stakeholders took years to develop and to yield results. The support we provided through technical assistance and volunteers allowed partners to become self-sufficient and to deliver on their mission and projects—which is what my colleague was talking about—rather than simply being beneficiaries.

Our recommendation to the committee is to make as few changes as possible to existing priority countries in the short term, thereby ensuring the stability of programs and partnerships in the countries where we collectively work.

Linked to this, we encourage funding opportunities and mechanisms that promote long-term accompaniment. Achieving sustainable results through international assistance requires a long-term approach, and it is important that funding cycles reflect this reality. This means honouring five-year predictable funding cycles, providing opportunities to access funding for subsequent phases of successful scalable programs, and, ideally, providing longer-term funding beyond the five-year cycle.

● (1650)

We must build synergies between aid, diplomacy, and trade, but we must avoid models in which trade defines aid priorities. As well, we must build synergies between multilateral, bilateral, and other funding tracks, such as the partnerships for development innovation branch.

Third, the Government of Canada should align its development agenda with the SDGs, the sustainable development goals, building on the previous thematic focus areas of food security, sustainable economic growth, and children and youth, but with a wider and more holistic approach to development programming.

Cuso's approach has been to build its expertise and programming in particular thematic areas where we feel we can be most effective, where we can create a robust body of knowledge and expertise, and where there are strong returns on investment. Today we focus on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, access to quality health services, gender equality, and social inclusion.

Putting women and girls at the centre of Canada's development agenda is critical. The promotion and protection of women's and girls' rights and gender equality is our priority. As an organization leading innovative programming in mental health, reproductive health, and midwifery and capitalizing on Canadian expertise to deliver that impact, we would really like to see the Government of Canada move beyond maternal, newborn, and child health programming to support women's and girls' rights for a more holistic approach.

We would also encourage increased resources and programming directed towards young people. Many of the world's 1.8 billion young people are concentrated in the countries in which Cuso International works. This creates both demand and opportunity for working with them to improve education, health, and employment opportunities and can constitute a dynamic force of political change and social transformation.

While Canada may not focus on all 17 SDGs, we encourage the committee to consider key thematic priorities that work together to reduce poverty, inequality, and exclusion, all with gender and social inclusion lenses.

Fourth, as an organization that focuses on capacity-building, we believe that strengthening and building on existing country capacity is key to supporting an enabling environment for development aid to be effective. Enhancing local partners' capacity and fostering local ownership are good practices and reduce the risk of dependency on foreign aid. Even in cases of humanitarian crises and long-term, protracted emergencies, building the capacity of local partners, including civil society, to address long-term development needs has to be included in the plans, or else we see only short-term needs addressed while poverty, instability, and fragility continue.

Cuso International has a successful track record in building meaningful partnerships and mobilizing highly skilled Canadian volunteers from our rich mosaic. This includes diaspora volunteers and e-volunteers, people who sit in the comfort of their homes and volunteer by using electronic means. We encourage the prioritizing of initiatives that focus on building the capacity of local agents of change to design and deliver effective and innovative solutions to development problems within their own contexts and needs.

We also encourage the Government of Canada to complement humanitarian interventions with long-term initiatives that focus on building resilience and local capacity through strategic partnerships between organizations with different but complementary types of expertise.

Fifth is promoting stable, flexible, and innovative programming that recognizes the transaction cost and benefit of partnerships. Moving from supporting initiatives based on fixed models or program parameters towards funding mechanisms that are flexible and that promote piloting, testing, and scaling up of innovative cross-sectoral initiatives gives Canadian organizations like ours the space to collaborate, think, and innovate inside project life cycles. The Government of Canada should consider facilitating partnerships to ensure cross-sectoral innovation and contributions.

● (1655)

Canada's NGOs need funding to engage meaningfully in these types of collaborative efforts. My experience has shown that the impact is greatest when collaboration between sectors is intrinsic to the program, but it takes time and effort and funding to do it right. We can no longer collaborate from the side of our desk, which is what we do, and we've been doing it through organizations like the Devonshire Initiative and other wonderful initiatives that you might have heard of already today, but it must be central to our approach to delivering aid effectively.

Sixth, we encourage continued support to international volunteering as an effective tool to eradicate poverty, inequality, and exclusion. Volunteering is a primary and integral cultural value and is recognized as central to the fabric of a healthy and democratic civil society. It is a primary means of expressing local, national, and global citizenship. Canada is recognized the world over as having developed the most extensive and innovative models of volunteering in international development. We are two examples here with our organizations, and it's a reflection on the role played by Cuso International and many others.

Volunteers can contribute to the transformational delivery of the SDGs across all thematic areas, but I want to bring your attention to goal 17, which explicitly highlights that volunteer groups are critical for implementation of all the goals. Volunteering is an effective and cost-effective way to mobilize Canadian expertise and, as stated by Robert Greenhill, Canada's excellence to build the capacity of those local partners and obtain results.

Highly skilled volunteers embody Canadian values of global citizenship, openness, diversity, and respect. We recommend the volunteer co-operation program be central to Canada's international development programming. International volunteerism should not be restricted to north-south interventions, but it should encourage national volunteerism, south-south volunteerism, south-north volunteerism, as a means of maximizing the human resources available all around the world.

In summary, we recommend a focus on poor people and communities; a long-term vision and commitment to build sustainable partnerships for development; building on previous thematic areas and aligning with selected SDGs but with a more holistic approach and a focus on women and youth; supporting initiatives that build local capacity; prioritizing stable, flexible, and innovative programming; and continued support for Canada's leadership in international volunteering to eradicate poverty, inequality, and exclusion.

Thank you so much.

[*Translation*]

Thank you very much for your invitation

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you, Ms. Guindon. We appreciate that.

We'll start the first round.

I want to get this out to the committee. Is it okay if we go with five-minute rounds so that we can get more people in, versus six-minute rounds? We could probably get six people in and get as much questioning in as possible.

We'll start with Mr. Genuis. You have five minutes, sir.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much to both of the witnesses.

I have a number of different questions. Ms. Harris, I really appreciated your presentation. I don't know if I heard specific recommendations about countries of focus in terms of whether we should have a bigger list, a smaller list, no list at all, or a more flexible list. In the context of the very important general recommendations you made, I wonder if you could comment on the list question.

Ms. Wendy Harris: I purposely didn't comment on the number because I don't think there is a right number.

One of the things that's important is to be reliable as a partner, so in relation to the five-year funding cycles and things like that, to pull out of a country because of a change in a list is not something I would support. Pulling out of a country because we've been able to fulfill our mandate and have a strong exit plan, I think, is the way to go.

When CESO looks at who we are going to work with, we look for a level of readiness. We look at the local context. What's the level of engagement? Is there alignment with national priorities? Is there alignment with Canadian priorities? Is there enough commitment from our local partners that they're willing to have skin in the game and are willing to cost-share? That's the angle we would take.

● (1700)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

I wanted to ask you as well about the issue of bringing about economic development. Of course, one major potential barrier to economic development is policy issues. How should our government in the context of aid be engaged with other countries in trying to encourage policy change that is necessary to facilitate economic development?

Ms. Wendy Harris: I think that goes directly to the heart of the interconnectedness between private sector development and institutional strengthening. To have a strong and vibrant private sector, or one that is strengthening, is key for social and economic reasons. At the same time, you have to pay attention that those institutions build their own capacity not only to operate, regulate, and service their customers but to create policy that works in the local context.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: In practice, would you say it's important for us to be having conversations with other countries about policy reforms at the same time as we're providing assistance, just with those goals in mind?

Ms. Wendy Harris: Sure. Absolutely. For example, I have a roster of more than 700 volunteer advisers, experts from the public and private sector. I have many retired, high-level, very highly qualified public sector and CIDA retirees. They're in very high demand around the world for their knowledge not only about process and people but about policy.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you very much.

Ms. Guindon, first of all, I really appreciated your comments about building synergies between different objectives. Our trade objectives shouldn't drive our aid objectives, but if I understood you right, we can kill multiple birds with one stone as long as we give priority to doing the best we can in the context of aid as well.

I wanted to dig deeper on the point you made about exclusion. You were saying that there's poverty in countries that themselves may not be the poorest of countries. I was just thinking about India. We have a close and important relationship with India, a country where there are significant issues of gender equality, high levels of early and forced marriage, high levels of poverty, and issues of caste and religion-based exclusion. Canada doesn't provide direct bilateral assistance, I believe, to India. There are a lot of issues there, but India is a growing economy.

Maybe just by way of example, with the frame you've set up, how would we engage India or a country like it, a country that's middle income but that has significant issues that deserve attention?

Ms. Evelyne Guindon: I can't speak to India specifically in the case of Cuso International, as we don't work there, but we did many years ago. In previous parts of my life, I have worked in India, and definitely India is a country where there are pockets of the population that are excluded and are in great need. What I've learned is that you need to have, in many cases, the support of government and the support of civil society. If civil society is not existing and thriving, then there are opportunities to build and help build a thriving civil society.

I gave the example of Colombia, and that's the one country where I've been recently where we really see all of those winning conditions. Yes, there are trade considerations in Colombia for Canada, where great Canadian companies are building and growing, but what there is in Colombia is a very important peace process. We understand and see that the country is very committed to the peace process and sees development as key to both the peace process and to economic prosperity.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Genuis.

We're going to move over to Mr. Sidhu now for five minutes.

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, and it's good to see you again. Thank you for your testimony.

I like your approach: local and international help. Housing is a main issue locally and internationally. The question is whether Canada, instead of focusing on the countries, should focus on international assistance on a needs basis. That is, you touched on the eradication of poverty and inequality, promotion of gender, equality of women in Parliament, and advancement of good governance and global health. What's your view on that? What's the spin you'd like to put on that?

● (1705)

Ms. Wendy Harris: I think there are areas in which Canada has a competitive advantage. A focus on those areas will lead to greater impact, and CESO does focus on them.

We talked today about limited resources and having to maximize what we can do with limited resources. When I look at those Canadian comparative advantages, one I hear consistently from around the world is a softer skill: the ability to listen. When our Canadian volunteer advisers work with our clients, the feedback is "They don't come in and tell us what to do. They come in and listen. They figure out a solution that is culturally and contextually appropriate." That generates not only great results but also a ton of goodwill.

I'm sure Evelyne will talk about gender and equality, which is a huge thing, but the tack I'd like to take on it is slightly different. That involves areas of our competitive advantage—the strength of our financial institutions and our tax system, the ability to use that expertise around the world to mobilize domestic resources and lower reliance on aid, and responsible natural resource development, something that Canada is known for around the world. It's not easy and not without some issues, but responsible natural resource management is something that Canadians can export proudly.

That's something we can do internationally as well as here at home. We've been working with Mushkegowuk Council with regard to the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario, bringing multiple communities together to build strong enough governance so that they can engage effectively in the economic opportunity that is before them in a culturally and environmentally appropriate way. The other industry sectors are agribusiness and agriculture and hospitality and tourism. I also mentioned the strength of experience and knowledge around public sector governance.

Those are the themes on which I suggest a focus would be appropriate.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: If I have it right from the last time we talked, your funding is all private sector. Is the assistance funding all private sector?

Ms. Wendy Harris: No. The majority of our funding comes from the Government of Canada on the international side and the national side. We also work directly with the private sector and directly with foreign governments.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: Going back to the question—

Ms. Wendy Harris: Sorry.

Mr. Jati Sidhu: —let's say you do focus your work on where the work is needed and not where the country is. How do you measure your success, and how does the money transaction work? How do you measure the efficiency of your work if you don't go with a country of focus for Canada?

Ms. Wendy Harris: We're involved in the partnership branch, a volunteer-sending program involving multiple countries. From an evaluation perspective, the same robust evaluation process happens, whether it's a country of focus or not a country of focus. At CESO, whether we're funded by the Government of Canada or, honestly, the Government of Kazakhstan, our internal standards of monitoring and evaluation are the same. That's what we use to judge whether we are making a difference and whether the investment makes sense.

The transaction is different, depending on the funder. I'll use Kazakhstan as an example, as I just came back from there; I'm still a little jet-lagged.

They haven't a diversified economy. They have a heavily oil-based economy that is fragile. The government is committed to investing in their SMEs so that they can start having a more diversified and robust economy. That level of government commitment, the local context being conducive to the type of support that CESO provides, catalyzing SME development and aligning with Canadian priorities, would all factor into whether we do that transaction.

● (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Sidhu.

We'll move over to Mr. Aubin, please, for five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank both of you. We didn't ask you whether you were comfortable taking and answering questions from each member for five minutes at a time, as it requires you to make your answers even more succinct. Thank you for doing this.

I have two questions. I will ask them and then give you time to answer. In your opening statements, both of you spoke of the importance of a holistic approach. Intellectually, I understand very well what that approach entails. I'd like you to take a few minutes to outline a holistic experience that was successful on the ground, so that we may delve into it for a few moments.

My second question may be more for Ms. Guindon, but please feel free to jump in, Ms. Harris.

We talked about volunteering. Lord knows how difficult it is, for all organizations, to retain volunteers. We don't have a natural tendency to think that international aid, especially when it comes to long-term and stable development, can function with volunteers. Could you describe a typical volunteer you work with?

Mrs. Evelyne Guindon: I will begin with an example of a holistic approach. We have a really interesting partnership program in Nigeria. It's a development program for small and medium-sized businesses, and youth.

We also have a broader bilateral program that's built on that program. This larger program provides the most disadvantaged youth with small business training.

With these two programs, we are able to help the most excluded communities and, above all, work on gender issues. As part of our gender-issues programming, we work not only with women, but also with boys, men, and fathers. These are integrated programs.

We could call this an economic development program, but it's really a holistic program. It's been an all-round success.

Your question on how to retain volunteers is a good one. Many of us are so busy these days. But, more and more, we're seeing a whole new generation open up to the idea. The average age of volunteers working in our organization is 42. Very few of them are in their thirties. Most of them are in the middle of their careers and are ready to make the move, often for three months, but sometimes for up to two years. A lot of our volunteers leave for one year but end up staying for two. More and more volunteers are getting involved after their retirement, like my colleague.

[*English*]

Ms. Wendy Harris: On the first question, as an example of a holistic approach, I'll go back to the national context, as it illustrates it well.

I talked about working with Mushkegowuk Council, a group of first nations, on their ability to strengthen their governance structures. Very frequently if not always when we're working in the national context, there is an economic goal related to our project. In this case it's the supply chain around Ring of Fire, but there are more social issues that are a preoccupation of the local community, whether it's weak governance, weak financial management, or inadequate health planning and management. Sometimes, honestly, it goes down to working on team-building skills to bring a group together to function properly. For us the holistic approach means recognizing that there's an end-game economic goal, so you have to start investing early in a holistic way in the community so they have not only the skills but the attention to shift to engaging in that economic activity.

● (1715)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you. That's all the time we have.

We're going to move over here to Ms. Romanado.

You have five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Thank you so much for being here today, and thank you for your work in the field of international development.

I will be asking my questions in English.

[*English*]

because it will be easier for both of you.

We just had testimony from two individuals who had a very different approach. They are focusing more on a smaller group of countries with smaller specific themes so as not to dilute efforts. I want to get your thoughts on that approach, because what you're explaining is pretty much keep the status quo: 25 countries, spread the wealth, spread the assistance, and so on.

I'm wondering if we're going to be able to make a meaningful difference in terms of addressing specific themes by having that spread of countries. Could you elaborate?

Ms. Wendy Harris: I think it's not about the number of countries but about having the flexibility to assess the level of readiness in a country or a region and then to deploy resources in that area.

For example, we work in five countries in West Africa, but we work in agribusiness with an organization called AFEX, and AFEX has the scope of 17 West African countries.

We started working with AFEX through their individual members and their regional offices, but we were able to tell there was strength and possibility in the organization to scale up those results we were getting on a local basis and to move it into their regional hub and then to the head organization.

For us, it's about the flexibility to start operations on the ground when the context is going to support impacts.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Thank you.

Madam Guindon, would you comment?

Ms. Evelyne Guindon: Our perspective would be first and foremost on that notion of partnership. It is very much about the long-term accompaniment that is required, and the notion that we have to remain flexible and to look at the humanitarian long-term development and the building of resilience together. In order to do that and to do it well, that notion of nimbleness has to be there. When we focus only on a certain number of countries, that limits us.

The notion is that we, as a country, don't have limitless pockets. We, as organizations, want to be able to focus. We want to build that expertise. We want to build on Canada's expertise. As volunteer-sending agencies, we lean on what Canada is very good at. You talked about the sectors where we have strengths; these are the volunteers who step up with that added value.

I think what we need to do is not get too bogged down by the notion of the number of countries, but focus on the quality of the partnership, and most importantly on the long-term view to be able to have results. Working in these short-term grants makes it difficult at times to do that.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: We didn't hear much today—and it's something that's my background—about the importance of education. I'd like to get your thoughts on that, because we didn't hear a lot of today about giving that capacity to other nations to develop on their own. Could you elaborate on that?

Ms. Wendy Harris: From CESO's perspective, it goes to the interconnectiveness between economic autonomy and the power of choice, in this case to invest in education.

I'll give you an example. In Tanzania we work with the Tanzanian Federation of Cooperatives, which is the national organization that runs all the co-operatives and individual co-operatives. One that we work with is called the Nuronga Dairy Women Cooperative, and they're an amazing entrepreneurial group of women. They built their co-operative and ended up being able to produce in quality and quantity enough that they can sell. They can invest the proceeds from the sale into things like better housing.

One thing that was amazing was the transformation in terms of education of the younger generation. They were able to build schools and they were able to support the children in going through them. I think they had a 100% graduation rate from primary school and a 95% graduation rate from secondary school. The next generation will be very different, because that economic investment was made, and education was absolutely key.

● (1720)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you.

Thank you very much, and it was great to have you sitting at our committee today. That ends the first round, and we have time for two more interventions.

We're going to back to the Liberals with Mr. Saini, please.

Mr. Raj Saini: Thank you very much to you both of you for being here today.

I have one specific question, because it seems that both of you in your testimony....

I know, Ms. Harris, you intimated during your comments about local collaboration, sustainability, and the owners of the impact that one of the choices we have as a committee is to determine how we would choose a criterion for the country of focus, and one of the current criteria in place is the ability to accept and utilize foreign aid.

It's a conundrum, because without foreign aid you can't build capacity. Do you think that should be a criterion? The reason I ask the question is to prevent any kind of aid orphans from being created.

Ms. Wendy Harris: We're talking about development. If there is a circumstance in which aid is needed, I think that is more straightforward. It is delivered.

When you're talking about development efforts, I think that engagement and commitment from local clients is key. It makes the difference between sustainable and non-sustainable impact. For us, the criteria would be in looking for successful local solutions that we can help build, scale up, and expand to other regions.

Mr. Raj Saini: You're talking about a system that's already in place as opposed to creating a new system.

Ms. Wendy Harris: Ideally, we would use local expertise to identify solutions we could scale up. The other way it can be done is seeing the local potential. It might be at an earlier stage, when the structure isn't there. We might come in and help build the structure, such as a co-operative to bring women together who are producing shea butter, and work with them as a unit to improve their purchasing and marketing power.

Mr. Raj Saini: This is like Moroccanoil. Are you talking about financing also? Do you arrange that, or is it just intellectual or business help, as opposed to microfinancing?

Ms. Wendy Harris: Our direct program is organized on business fundamentals, mentorship, and business coaching. We work with local microfinance organizations to build local capacity so that loans are available to owner-operators.

Mr. Raj Saini: To those who are already on the ground...?

Ms. Wendy Harris: Yes.

Mr. Raj Saini: Ms. Guindon, as a pharmacist I wonder how you deliver medications and the expertise to use them. How do you educate the public? What kind of formula do you use?

Ms. Evelyne Guindon: We have a variety of programs. We don't actually deliver equipment or medication. We transfer skills.

A program we are now launching is Midwives Save Lives. We are working with the Canadian Association of Midwives, our key partner. Their expertise is midwifery and building a midwifery system in Canada. They'll be working in four countries. We'll be working with government entities and civil society organizations to help build midwifery associations of a similar nature in the countries where we'll be working.

There will be midwives who will be transferring the practical, concrete skills of midwifery. Some of the most modern of these are in use in Canada, because our system is so new. They'll also be working on governance. As organizations that are going to be setting standards at the country level, they will need a good governance system. They'll need people who understand filing systems. There will be a variety of technical help, along with volunteers and our own technical assistants. We will work to build the system. The system for us includes not only government partners but also civil society partners, working side by side.

● (1725)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you.

We're going to finish off with Mr. Kent.

Hon. Peter Kent: Thank you, and my thanks to the witnesses for your testimony and advice today.

Ms. Harris, I'd like to come back to the point you made about reluctance to take countries off the list or change the amounts of funds going to countries still on the list.

You talked about end strategies. I know NGOs tend to be discreet about their advice on specific countries and whether or not they should stay on the list of countries of focus, because this advice could contradict the decisions made by the government. Should government begin thinking about developing a completion strategy, as opposed to an abrupt-end strategy, to conform to whatever the new criteria would be under a new list of countries or regions of focus?

Ms. Wendy Harris: My short answer is no. My longer answer is that I look at it from the perspective of the individual clients within the country we're working in.

For example, about a year ago we finished a six-year program with the partnership branch, and we started a new one. We graduated one of our clients, a chamber of commerce in Colombia. Speaking of Colombia, there are still lots of needs in Colombia, as well as huge inequities, so it's not a country to take off the list. It is a client that has built its skills and experience to the point where it can function on its own, but I think it's a little messier than countries that are ready to graduate. I think it's about really designing those exit strategies honestly at the beginning of programming.

I'll give you a very quick example. We had a bilateral in the Philippines working to support small- and medium-sized enterprise development, so our VAs, our volunteer advisers, would go in as business coaches. A few years before the end of the bilateral, we set up a local CESO. Staff or volunteers were local national Filipinos, who then could continue the business coaching after the bilateral was dismantled.

Hon. Peter Kent: Ms. Guindon, I'm not sure if you were here for all of the previous witnesses' testimony, but there was a suggestion from one that if Canada were to be really daring, it might focus specifically on two countries—Haiti and Afghanistan—where there are still existing challenges, although there have been substantial improvements in terms of education, security of girls and women, and maternal, infant, and child health.

I'm just wondering what you would think about emphasizing or prioritizing, as per their example, two countries out of whatever the eventual countries of focus list might be, and really, perhaps with new funding, focus on those two countries, whatever the perceived downsides or risks might be.

Ms. Evelyne Guindon: I'll give you a diplomatic answer to that, because I'd say that it would be great to be daring and it's important to be focused. As a nation, I think we owe it to ourselves, but most importantly we owe it to the people whom we are aiming to serve. To be daring, I think we should do what Canada has always done in the world, and that is to share our excellence in the best way we know how.

I would like to speak on behalf of the more than 16,000 Cuso volunteers who have served. In early days, I think the volunteers took in a lot more than what they were ever able to give. What we have seen from that, and what I have seen through my career in working for non-Canadian entities, is the unique touch of Canadian expertise in so many countries where the need has been greatest. Whether it was Biafra in the 1960s or Vietnam decades later, we were always there at the right time. I would want to make sure that we were and that we would continue to do that. “Daring” to me would mean something a little bit different, and I think there are many other ways in which we could be daring.

● (1730)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Dean Allison): Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Kent.

To our witnesses, thank you very much for your great testimony today.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: http://www.parl.gc.ca

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : http://www.parl.gc.ca