



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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

SDIR • NUMBER 058 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 4, 2017

—
Chair

Mr. Michael Levitt

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

Thursday, May 4, 2017

• (1305)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone.

I'm going to call to order this meeting of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. This will be our first session on our new study, which is going to be on human trafficking in India.

I want to acknowledge MP Khalid. This is a study that she has brought to our subcommittee, and we're pleased to be moving forward on it.

I'd also like to welcome MP Duvall, who will be sitting in today for MP Hardcastle. Thank you for joining us.

This study will focus on human trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation in India. We'll focus on trafficking flows, the conditions facing victims of trafficking, and what Canada and the international community are doing about it.

Our first witnesses today, from Global Affairs Canada, are going to be Robert McDougall, acting executive director of the South Asia bureau of Global Affairs Canada; and also his colleague, David Drake, director general for counter-terrorism, crime and intelligence.

Gentlemen, welcome, and thank you for being with us today to initiate this study.

Mr. McDougall, I understand that you'll be presenting an opening statement. If we can get you to proceed for around 10 to 12 minutes, that would be great. Then, of course, we'll open it up to questions from the rest of the members.

Please proceed.

Mr. Robert McDougall (Acting Executive Director, South Asia Division, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As you have indicated, my name is Robert McDougall. I am currently in charge of the South Asia division in Global Affairs Canada, and I'll be providing remarks on behalf of the department.

[Translation]

My colleague David Drake, the director general for counter-terrorism, crime and intelligence, is also present. He can answer your

questions on Canada's multilateral engagement and on the international normative framework around trafficking in persons.

[English]

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today regarding the committee's plans to undertake a new study on human trafficking in India, with a focus on sex trafficking.

An issue of global importance, human trafficking is a crime and a serious violation of human rights that disproportionately affects women and girls. Global estimates of victims of human trafficking range from 21 million, according to the International Labour Organization, to 45 million, according to the Global Slavery Index. The real numbers are hard to identify accurately given that the crime is often poorly understood by the general public, law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges.

[Translation]

This can lead to victims being seen as criminals and prosecuted for crimes rather than being provided with the assistance needed. Victim identification is also a serious challenge. Human trafficking is a largely hidden crime and victims are often fearful or unable to self-identify to authorities or other first responders.

[English]

This global finding is reinforced in the case of India by conservative social norms in many parts of the country, *inter alia*, concerning the treatment of women and girls.

In 2016, the Indian Ministry of Women & Child Development reported that almost 20,000 women and children were victims of human trafficking in India, an increase of 25% from 2015, with the highest number of victims recorded in the eastern state of West Bengal. Outside experts estimate that the number of women and children victims in India is in fact in the millions. India is a source destination and transit country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Forced labour constitutes India's largest trafficking problem.

[Translation]

The majority of India's trafficking problem is internal. Those from the most disadvantaged social strata such as low caste Dalits, members of tribal communities, religious minorities, and women and girls from excluded groups are most vulnerable.

[English]

India is also a destination country; victims are also reported from several neighbouring countries. For example, Bangladeshi migrants have been subjected to forced labour in India through recruitment fraud and debt bondage. Nepal, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan also provide women and girls who are subject to both labour and sex trafficking in major Indian cities.

Finally, India is also a transiting country. According to open sources, following the April 2015 Nepal earthquakes, Nepali women transited through India and became increasingly subjected to trafficking to the Middle East and to Africa.

• (1310)

[Translation]

India's ministry of home affairs has revised its strategy on guiding anti-human trafficking units (AHTUs) to ensure more effective identification and investigation of trafficking cases and coordination with other agencies in referring victims to rehabilitation services. Several state governments have created or reactivated their own AHTUs, although the majority of districts remained without AHTUs.

[English]

Moreover, in recent years, India has improved efforts at collecting data on trafficking investigations, persecutions, and convictions. On the other hand, while the government has investigated and prosecuted some cases of official complicity, independent analysis indicates that it remains widespread.

The Indian government continues to fund shelter and rehabilitation services for women and children throughout India, and has issued additional directives to states to find and rescue missing children, some of whom may be trafficking victims.

In order to address human trafficking globally, the Government of Canada was an early adopter of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, ratifying both the convention and the protocol in May 2002. India, I would note, ratified both in May 2011.

Under the protocol, states parties are encouraged to implement a 3P approach: prevention, prosecution, and protection. Canada has added a fourth P to its work: partnership. Human trafficking is a global problem that must be addressed through collaborative partnerships in all regions.

[Translation]

Presently, through Global Affairs Canada's anti-crime capacity building program, Canada is supporting the work of international organizations to combat trafficking in persons through three projects in the Caribbean and Latin America. Investment in those projects totals \$2.1 million.

The complexity of this crime requires a multi-disciplinary approach and a collaborative response encompassing legislative, programming, and policy measures.

[English]

This crime of human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls. For young girls, sex trafficking can have particularly far-reaching impacts, including impeding their education, increasing their risks of early and forced marriage, early pregnancy, and putting them at a higher risk for contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

At the heart of Canada's international assistance is the promotion of gender equality and rights, as well as the empowerment of women and girls. Canada is committed to working with global partners to ensure that these principles guide us in our efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

[Translation]

Canada does not have a bilateral development assistance program in India. It ended in 2009 at the request of the Indian government. Canada does, however, provide development assistance through partnerships between Indian and Canadian non-government organizations and through multilateral programs.

Through the partnerships for development innovation branch, Canada invested \$2.1 million in 2015-16 to support 15 projects in India.

[English]

The main programming sectors include innovative food security research, improving the health of children, integrating community development, and advancing governance and human rights with a focus on gender equality.

Partnership programs in India have a number of aims.

First, they aim to reduce violence against women. Oxfam Canada's creating spaces program addresses violence against women in both informal and formal settings with interventions that aim to counteract domestic violence, and early and forced marriage, as well as strengthen support services for women and girl survivors.

Second, they aim to find innovative solutions to nutrition and food preservation problems.

Third, they aim to test innovative solutions to health issues, including developing tools for earlier diagnostics, advancing affordable health care solutions, and promoting mental health care.

Fourth, they aim to support community health education and economic growth, such as providing free ophthalmic examinations to children.

Fifth, they aim to create self-sufficient communities with satisfactory standards in education, health, sanitation, food security, income generation, women's rights, environmental sustainability, and political stability.

Canada continues to contribute indirectly to the achievement of development results in India through its core funding to multilateral and global organizations, such as the World Bank, the United Nations and its agencies, and the Asian Development Bank. In fiscal year 2015-16, Global Affairs Canada contributed approximately \$32 million to India through long-term institutional support to such international organizations.

• (1315)

[Translation]

Canada's International Development Research Centre, or IDRC, also has an active presence in India, supporting a number of research projects focused on reducing violence against women and promoting gender equality.

Projects have explored issues such as violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, police procedures when dealing with victims of rape and sexual violence, and child sexual abuse.

Others have focused on the interaction between economic growth and its impact on women's economic opportunities, and the unpaid care economy and its impact on women's economic empowerment.

This research fills knowledge gaps, informs discussions, and assesses programs and policies to effect policy change.

[English]

By the way, I understand in this context that the IDRC has indicated it would be happy to appear before your committee if called.

The Canadian High Commission in Delhi also supports local projects and advocacy initiatives to advance women's economic and political empowerment; the elimination of violence against women and girls; and ending child, early, and forced marriage.

For example, in 2015-16, through the Canada fund for local initiatives, the high commission supported a local organization with \$15,000 to increase coordination and capacity among stakeholders to address human trafficking in the state of Maharashtra. Canada fund projects aimed at addressing child, early, and forced marriage have also raised awareness of trafficking issues.

In conclusion, all that said, more needs to be done. The fight against human trafficking will remain a priority for Canada globally. In that context, we will continue to be alert to opportunities to advance this cause in India, in collaboration with other foreign governments and with civil society partners in both countries.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you very much for those remarks, Mr. McDougall.

We're going to move right into questions, and we're going to start with MP Sweet, please.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

For the record, I'm very grateful to Ms. Khalid for this motion and this investigation on human trafficking. From the numbers we were just given by our officials, 21 million to 45 million, it's easy to see why many people say that slavery today is greater than it's ever been.

Down the street from where I live in Ancaster, Canada's largest human trafficking arrest to date took place, which was a forced labour arrest. A gang of organized criminals was bringing people in from Hungary and threatening them, causing them not only to work 14 or 16 hours a day and turn over all their income but also to do illegal things, such as apply for welfare, etc., and break into post office boxes. Generally speaking, the people who do this kind of crime will do any other kind of crime as well.

The reason I lay this groundwork is how much human trafficking in a country such as India is organized crime versus individual gangsters taking advantage of a culture that has the caste system endemic within it?

Mr. Robert McDougall: The first answer to that question is I don't know. If you wish me to speculate, having spent some time in India, it's probably a combination.

It is a very traditional society. Among other things, they still have arranged marriages and other social phenomena that involve young children. They also have forced labour, which as I said in my remarks, is a bigger problem. Within India, it seems to be a bigger problem than sexual trafficking specifically. But it certainly involves indentured labour and other things.

Some of these things will be handled, I'm sure, by organized crime. Others will be family by family. I don't know of any actual statistics on that, but it's not something I deal with on a day-to-day basis, to be honest.

David, do you have anything to add?

• (1320)

Mr. David Drake (Director General, Counter-Terrorism, Crime and Intelligence Bureau, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development): With regard to the definition of organized crime, the UN treaty on organized crime defines organized crime as anything involving three or more people. In this particular case, there's a lot of what we might consider to be organized crime on a large scale, but it's hard to differentiate that from others. I think I would agree with Mr. McDougall that there's a wide variety of different types of human trafficking, and those will depend on region and area. There are instances of children, for example, being forced to work in mines. You also have sexual slavery. These things differ from place to place.

Your point is a good one, but our inability to respond to you is also undermined by the fact that, as Mr. McDougall said in his initial comments, much of this is essentially a series of issues related to crime, and it's only recently that people have been prepared to come out and actually deal with the authorities and self-identify. It's hard to track, particularly in India, where it's a relatively new thing, what the phenomenon actually is. Measuring it is a real difficulty, and I think that will be an essential part of your work.

Mr. David Sweet: It's hard to track everywhere.

According to your preparatory or other research, where does India sit, as far as the severity of the problem goes, with respect to other countries in the region or even globally? Do you have an idea in that regard?

Mr. Robert McDougall: We don't have independent statistics on that. There is a recent assessment available, which was put out by the U.S. authorities and which I don't have with me, but we don't have an independent Canadian evaluation of that. The overall impression I get, and it's only an impression, is that there is a lot of it happening in India, because India has a billion people, and therefore a comparatively small proportion of that is still going to be a lot of people. In terms of the general intensity of the problem, the reading we have from the sources we've seen is that it has a problem, but it's not the worst in the region.

Let me get back to you on that specifically.

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you.

On another matter, in the recent past, we did a study in regard to the psychological damage caused to people who are victims and offspring of rape. Obviously human trafficking is much worse than that. It's a continuous situation in which people are forced to do what they don't want to do and in the worst kinds of ways in many cases.

Because of the conservative nature of the culture you mentioned, after these people are victimized, is there also another subsequent ostracization from the culture because they've been raped and used in this fashion?

Mr. Robert McDougall: I would say that's probably likely in almost any country, India as much as any other.

• (1325)

Mr. David Sweet: You mentioned that the caste system—I can't remember if it was in the researcher's notes or your comments—is primarily within the Hindu community. Has that now spread to most of the population or do we see a diminishment of that now as India becomes more and more an economic force and moves more and more into the first world?

Mr. Robert McDougall: India is certainly changing a great deal. The middle class in India, particularly the urban middle class, is becoming much more important at a much larger percentage of the economy and the society. But it is still a predominantly rural country, so I think conservative social norms are still prevalent and important—as I said, particularly outside the large cities, but even within the large cities.

As to the religious or caste structures, caste specifically is originally, as you said, a Hindu phenomenon, but it is also an important part of the whole society and in fact, part of the government structures. For example, in a large number of government programs there are reserved places, quotas for certain castes—they're not called castes anymore—or certain scheduled peoples. The Dalits are assured places in universities and things like that, so it also still exists.

The society is largely Hindu, but there is still, for example, a very large Muslim community in India. I think 150 million people are Muslim. And that's still, although not the same kind of social conservatism, a significantly conservative society as well. The

problem you're looking at here is a problem of the whole country and the whole society, not just certain aspects of it or certain castes.

Mr. Chairman, if I might, I've been asked by your people to make a couple of corrections, which I believe have to be read into the record to be corrected.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Robert McDougall: They are just numbers. In the section where I talked about Global Affairs Canada's anti-crime capacity building program, I believe I gave a number of \$2 million. It should have been \$5.1 million. I can give you the notes on where they come from.

In the section where I talked about the partnership for development innovation branch, I apparently said that there was \$2 million donated to 15 projects in India. It's actually \$3.1 million.

I apologize if I made those errors in my oral presentation.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll update the record.

We're now going to move to MP Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you very much Mr. McDougall and Mr. Drake for your testimony today.

Sex trafficking is part of human trafficking. It's a very important issue, and in my opinion, it's a symptom of the vulnerabilities and difficulties women face, especially in terms of economic and social challenges in regions like Southeast Asia.

You mentioned in your testimony two different types of sex trafficking, one being internal and one being transiting. I know there is a lack of data, but can we say roughly how much of it is internal within India and how much of it involves the surrounding regions?

Mr. Robert McDougall: As I said, India seems to be a source and transit country as well as a destination in some cases. The short answer to your question is no, I don't have the numbers, but I'll see whether we can find them for you.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

Thank you for providing the information as to what Canada has contributed in terms of the epidemic of trafficking in general across the world. You mentioned that the way we support women who have been trafficked is through institutions and organizations from the Canadian embassy funding local projects. When we look at the lack of data, which I'm sure the government is trying to fill the gap on, how possible is it? How effective are we in getting to the grassroots, that very poverty-stricken mother who has a couple of children she gave birth to through being trafficked in a red light district, etc.? How much help is actually getting to that population, as opposed to those who are actively going out and seeking that help?

•(1330)

Mr. David Drake: Perhaps I can clarify that a bit. The Canadian assistance that goes to India is relatively constrained. It focuses largely on big-picture issues, working through the multilateral organizations to help India and perhaps states, and so forth, to build capacity to be able to deal with the issue themselves. The Indian authorities and many of the states are very much seized with the issue. Our focus, to the extent that we haven't...because this is not a major priority for Canada. Among other things, we had not had a formal aid program in India since 2009, as mentioned, so it tends to be at the more institutional level where it's really required. The Indians have a very significant process in place. They are parties to the protocol and convention and want to address this issue, and of course they have a free press that is very much seized with this issue.

The points that were made about the Canada fund—which is actually quite a small amount of money that is just run out of the Canadian high commission—are quite specific. If I understand what you're getting at, namely, whether we are dealing with grassroots problems, I think the proper answer is actually no. We're trying to focus on capacity and in a much smaller way to focus on individual areas where we might be able to do something. But as I'm sure your secretariat will be informing you, there is an enormous effort by non-governmental organizations, both Indian and non-Indian, at the grassroots level, but that's not really where we concentrate our focus.

I hope that helps clarify it.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: Thank you.

You'd mentioned the bilateral development agreement with India, which ended in 2009. Can you please outline what that agreement involved and why it ended?

Mr. Robert McDougall: I'm not a development specialist, but my understanding is that it was ended at the request of the Indian government, not because India had anything against Canada or Canadian aid, but simply because it changed its policy on accepting bilateral aid programs from across the world. It wasn't that we decided that India wasn't an important country for development assistance; the Indian government decided it wasn't going to accept bilateral development assistance from anybody.

We still contribute indirectly. We contribute through multilateral agencies, through the UN, the World Bank, and other bodies. We contribute money to them and a lot of their money goes to India with our approval. We also have the partnership branch, which basically gives money to Canadian NGOs to establish partnerships with Indian NGOs to carry out projects there. Strictly bilateral aid in which Canada as a country supplies money to India as a country was phased out at the request of the Indian government as a general policy decision.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: We understand, and you'd mentioned as well in your testimony, that information gathering and really understanding the problem in terms of numbers is not what it should be. Is there any role that Canada can play in helping the Indian government? I know they've taken some measures. Is there a role that Canada can play in assisting them with information gathering, maybe through the country or through the funding, not NGOs, etc.?

Mr. David Drake: Perhaps there is, but to give you a bit of a context here, let me say that the protocol on trafficking in persons

defines four tiers of countries in terms of how they are addressing the problem. From one to four, in descending order of how much effort they're putting in, Canada is a tier one country, but so is India.

The Indians are putting a lot of effort into this, it's quite clear. Much of the statistical problem comes from the fact that this is essentially crime of an organized fashion, whether it's formally organized crime or not, and is very difficult to detect. One thing the Indians are trying to do in their own plan of action under the protocol is to get a better sense of it.

My sense, and I stand to be corrected on this, is that funding for it is not actually a problem. The Indians are focused on it. They have access to money, funds coming from international organizations and elsewhere. I think, as you were pointing out earlier, much of the issue comes at the grassroots level, and that's where there's a very vibrant NGO focus.

It's not a perfect response to your question, but this gives a little context.

•(1335)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: We talked a little about trafficking in other countries that are also involved. Is there a role they're playing with respect to reducing sex trafficking or human trafficking generally within the region, as distinct from specifically within India?

Mr. David Drake: The Indians are party, as we are, to a whole series of international obligations, including for human smuggling, which is about the smuggling of people across borders. The Indians are certainly very much involved in trying to prevent it, for a whole series of reasons, including just trying to control their borders, which are porous and very large. They are trying to address these issues, but it's part of the indefinable question about whether there is something illegal in the movement of the person who's been coming across the border. I note that there have been a couple of reports, notably by the U.S., which indicate that the Indians are having more success in stopping people at borders. That is due to better organization both at the federal and at the state level.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Drake.

We're going to move along to MP Duvall, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Thank you, gentlemen, for coming this afternoon to bring this important information to us. It's very appreciated.

In my experience, human trafficking is international in nature. It's very seldom that networks are operating in a single country alone. You mentioned Bangladesh and Nepal in your opening remarks. Would you mind elaborating upon the international dimension of the sex trade? In particular, where do the victims usually end up?

Mr. Robert McDougall: I can give you only a partial analysis there.

As far as I'm aware, and I was the High Commissioner in Bangladesh a few years ago, the human smuggling trade out of Bangladesh is largely workers, not sex workers, and they are largely going into India, because the economy is much more vibrant in India. We're talking about millions of people illegally smuggled into India as workers.

The biggest example in Nepal is the one I gave, which was that when the economy collapsed after the 2015 earthquake, there was a major movement out of Nepal—not so much into India, although there are many Nepalese working in India, but through India to the Gulf states and the Middle East, again as workers.

In regard to your preliminary statement, although as I say the numbers are soft, our indications are that much of the labour-related human smuggling—indentured labour—in India is in fact internal. It has more than a billion people. It's such a big country that it in fact has its own internal human smuggling markets, which are very significant.

In general I would agree with you that most of the human smuggling we're looking at is international, but India is one of those places that are so big it's like they have their own climate: it has its own human smuggling network.

● (1340)

Mr. Scott Duvall: Thank you.

Is the Indian government aggressive on its penalties or deterrence measures? Does it have any place to reduce the trafficking? Are there aggressive penalties?

Mr. David Drake: Yes.

Again, your support staff can do more searches on this, but the Indians have very aggressive penalties in place. They have engaged on the issue for a whole series of the different parts of the human smuggling process.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Do we know what the drivers are for demand of these sexual services? Is it tourism? I know you mentioned that there was a lot of poverty, but where's the greatest demand coming from? Is it people coming in to visit, special events, or is it just anything?

Mr. Robert McDougall: If I can parrot the wise words that Mr. Drake just mumbled in my ear, it's not so much a pull factor as a push factor. It really is that you have people who are dirt poor. India is doing much better now than it was 20 years ago, even as an economy and a nation, but it still has an enormous population of extremely poor people who have enormous difficulty making ends meet.

In a sense, it's more a push that is driven by the supply factors than the demand. There's always demand for cheap labour and forced sexual services. Unfortunately, that's going to happen. That's prevalent everywhere. However, India's involvement is largely because it has such an enormous pool of really poor people who have very few other places to turn.

Mr. Scott Duvall: For my last question, can you describe the forms of coercion that are used to keep the women and children in the sex trades? You've maybe already answered that by saying that it's just poverty.

Mr. Robert McDougall: I wouldn't belittle the fact that there are constraints, physical and otherwise, that force people to do things. I don't have details.

If you want, we can pursue that issue. I have never actually probed into that degree of detail on the subject.

Mr. David Drake: If I could add a bit more to that, again, the roots are in poverty—extreme poverty. In many cases, what you have is an indentured service of one sort or another. You have very poor parents, or in the case of children who have lost their parents, a family member essentially selling them into slavery. These are common issues at the lowest levels in India, and, of course, you have those who are prepared to take advantage of those situations.

Once again, the principal driver is poverty, and I think the Indians are very clear about that. At the same time, we need to recognize that there are those who will enable when the situation is provided.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to MP Tabbara.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll be splitting my time with Mr. Fragiskatos.

You mentioned in your opening statement that there are reports of around 20,000 women and children who were victims of human trafficking in 2016. That number rose 25%. A lot of these women and girls who are being trafficked are coming from Nepal and Bangladesh.

How does corruption affect the enforcement? I read in the briefings that there is a 77% acquittal rate. Again, how does the Indian government...and how can Canada help with this high rate of acquittal charges and help end corruption, so that we can find the root causes and bring these perpetrators to justice?

● (1345)

Mr. Robert McDougall: I'm sure this is a valid point. It's something to look into. I don't know the answer. To begin with, I'm not sure how that 77% would compare to, for example, dismissal rates in other countries. One of the problems you do have in this whole area, as I mentioned tangentially in my remarks, is it's very difficult getting witnesses to actually complain to set things off. There is coercion of the workers; there are people who are afraid of what will happen to their families back home. This is not just related to India, this is related to everything. I'm not sure; the 77% acquittal sounds bad, but I don't know how that compares to anybody else. I do have to say, it's not an area we've been involved in. Corruption is, as a whole, not limited to the areas of trafficking or sexual trafficking. It is a continual problem, not just in India but in a lot of places.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: How can we dismantle some of these trafficking hubs that are coming from Nepal and Bangladesh?

Mr. Robert McDougall: You have to decide what you want to do. The workers who come in from Bangladesh, for example, are filling a need in India. They're there because there are jobs there to be done. They're being taken advantage of by the people who employ them and by the organizers of the mass movements. We're not talking about individuals going across; we're talking about organized movements of indentured labourers who are getting underpaid when they get to India but are still getting paid more than they would be getting paid at home. It becomes a very complicated issue, morally.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara: I'll pass it on to you.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you very much.

Thank you for being here today.

My sense is that as a middle power, Canada's options, I won't say are limited, but are certainly circumscribed as far as what we can do. I want to point to two areas. I, as a member of the foreign affairs committee, have travelled to Guatemala and Colombia, to Ukraine, and to other areas. Mr. Levitt is also on that committee. We've seen Canadian development assistance executed on the ground that is having a concrete and positive impact on people's lives in the realm of agriculture and legal aid. I bring those two areas up not because they're the only areas that we could focus on—obviously, there's much more to our development policy than that—but as far as the problem of human trafficking is concerned. There is a plethora of articles that this committee has looked at in preparation for this study. They look at the problems that farmers are having in India: the debt, for example, they find themselves in; the drought right now in southern India that is quite bad, that is forcing folks into a situation of poverty. These problems are leading them to, in many cases, unfortunately make the decision that their children are going to be trafficked.

I noticed that in your statement you outlined a number of areas that we're helping within India. A few of those focus on food security and agriculture in general terms. I wonder if you could point to that and perhaps make the link that this is an area where, indirectly, there is support available for combatting human trafficking. Also, and Mr. Tabbara touched on it, as far as the punitive aspect of the matter is concerned, I wonder if you can look at whether or not Canada has made support available now or in the past when it comes to legal aid programs within India. Obviously there are concerned advocates there who want to take this issue forward, even though public attitudes might not be where one would hope at the moment. There are always human rights advocates who are pushing issues forward no matter the circumstances. I wonder if legal aid might be an area to look at.

Mr. Robert McDougall: I think the general answer to your first question is, it's a matter of priorities and having too many things we could be doing to help and not being able to help all of them. There's no question that human trafficking is a really bad problem and that the sex trafficking end of it is a particularly poignant and appalling part of that larger problem. Our aid priorities have not focused strictly on that. They could. As a general observation we have to choose what we focus on. In India, we have not focused very much specifically on human trafficking. I would say it's a larger problem; it's not just an Indian problem. I think it would be something we'd have to look at as a broader thesis. In that regard, if I can speak personally, I would say it's a great study that you're setting out here. I look forward very much to learning from your results, frankly.

To follow up on your second question, the legal aid, I'm not aware of anything we've done on legal aid, but I will follow up on that question and get back to you on that specific issue.

• (1350)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: No problem. The question comes from a recognition that, first of all, as I say, Canada is a middle power. What we can do is limited on that basis, but there's also a recognition of the

fact that trafficking, whether it's in India or elsewhere, is really a symptom of a much larger set of problems, problems in the plural sense. Let me emphasize that.

If Canada can continue to help in certain areas, in agriculture, for example—I mentioned legal aid, and there are other examples—then we can help indirectly this problem of human trafficking rather than channel all resources into one particular area, which, if it's a symptom of a problem, I'm not sure that is the most effective way to carry out our aid policy.

Mr. Robert McDougall: It's a sure point. I think we can say that there are certain areas we are focusing on, to follow your lead in your earlier point. We are able to move over on it. Women's and children's rights and sexual and other violence, domestic violence, is an area in which we are focusing a lot of our efforts in India, as elsewhere. As you suggested, these are areas that could very easily be linked up very much with the human trafficking aspect.

As for agriculture and other things, I think that is the link behind that link, which is that, in virtually all of our programs now, gender and particularly women's and children's rights, there is a requirement in our development program to say what effect will this have on women and children. In a more general sense, that's happened.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you. For the final question, we're going to move to MP Anderson.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): I have a question, gentlemen. You talk about the Indian government recognizing that there are thousands, 20,000 or whatever, people trafficked. Outside estimates put it at millions. Does the the Canadian government have any position on that? What's the Canadian government's official position on the number of people who are being trafficked in India, or do you not have a position?

Mr. Robert McDougall: We don't have a position. We don't have an independent data source; therefore, having a position on the number would not make sense.

Mr. David Anderson: Okay, so the only really specific thing that I think we can find from your presentation today is that you talked about a Canadian fund for local initiatives supporting a local project to increase coordination and capacity to address human trafficking in the state of Maharashtra. I'm wondering, prior to coming here, did you check into that project, and can you tell us how successful it has been, and what has been done there? It was specifically geared towards trafficking issues. Do you have any information on that? What happened? What results did you get out of that?

Mr. Robert McDougall: No, but it would be easy to get you that, and we will.

Mr. David Anderson: You know what? It would have been easy to have it here, too, because this is specifically.... We spent quite a bit of time preparing for this study. Ms. Khalid's taken the lead on that. I think we're pretty much disappointed in the content of what we're getting here today.

I'll switch over to something else that maybe you do know, then. You talked about the fact that in Latin America and the Caribbean we've spent \$5.1 million on anti-trafficking programming there.

Mr. Drake, would you be familiar with that? What are we doing there with \$5.1 million that we could perhaps suggest we might be able to do in India as well?

Mr. David Drake: Thank you very much. In fact, I was looking to comment on that.

This is a part of our anti-crime capacity building program. It's under me in our department. It's not foreign aid per se, and it's very much designed to strengthen the ability of the local governments to deal with smuggling. As you know, with human smuggling, as in trafficking, there is a particular stream that comes from Central America, up through Mexico, through the U.S., and up to Canada. We're focused on that.

This is quite a small fund. It's quite effective. We're doing some very good work, but I should point out that this is designed to work beside our own public safety and portfolio attempts to work with local governments.

• (1355)

Mr. David Anderson: Can you give me some specifics, then? If it's working effectively, what kinds of things is it accomplishing? I know we put money into particular development of legal systems, supporting justice, and supporting police training in some of these South American and Caribbean countries, but specifically what is this doing to impact trafficking?

Mr. David Drake: Well, certainly I'll get back to you with more details, but the intent is to make sure that we support police border control and judicial systems in dealing with this. In many cases, they simply do not know how to properly process from a judicial perspective. We're certainly focused on that to work across borders, because there are multiple countries involved. So we're helping. I'll certainly provide you with more information on that, detailed information.

Mr. David Anderson: Can you come back a little bit and talk to us about the caste discrimination? I know they're changing the names of this. How does that come into play here? I understand that almost

two-thirds of the women trafficked in India are from the Delhi caste. Can you talk a bit about that?

Mr. Robert McDougall: The caste is the poorest in the country. To go back to Mr. Drake's earlier statements, since one of the major drivers of human trafficking is poverty, that's where they come from.

Mr. David Anderson: Do you find particular religious minorities are impacted as well? You mentioned a couple. It sounds as if, talking about religion, it's maybe a function of some of the religious communities. Is there any particular religious community that's affected more by this than others?

Mr. Robert McDougall: I don't think so, proportionately, but I can confirm that.

Mr. David Anderson: Geographically, in India?

Mr. Robert McDougall: No. The biggest indicator appears to be poverty. It's the economic status and not the social status.

It's going to be mostly Hindu, because the country is mostly Hindu. Also, it's going to be mostly rural, because the country is mostly rural. That's the only pattern I've been able to detect.

Mr. David Anderson: That means we won't find the same patterns that we're finding in other countries, where there are ethnic divisions, and people are specifically targeting other groups. You're saying that within the Hindu community, it's probably.... It just takes place within the Muslim community. It takes place....

Mr. Robert McDougall: I'm saying that I haven't found it, sir. I'm sure you'll have deeper research than I've been able to do in the last week that I've had to look into this matter.

Mr. David Anderson: Let's go back to Mr. Drake. You said the Indian government has some fairly heavy penalties on this.

Mr. David Drake: They do.

Mr. David Anderson: I know they have, apparently, a law that was introduced in 2016 and was revised, but it hasn't been put into place yet. How do they track...? Do you have any familiarity with their tracking system in terms of these crimes and the prosecution of them?

Mr. David Drake: To be honest, I don't know in detail.

I know there is some very good information about that, including a U.S. report. The U.S. focuses on this, I think. I've been noting that a lot of your indicators are coming from that report, such as the 77%, and so forth. Although I can't provide it—I can certainly try to provide more—there is a lot of information out there to satisfy your request.

Mr. David Anderson: It's a good thing it's out there because it's not here.

The Chair: With that and it being 1:59, I'm going to call this meeting to a close.

I think there is a fair bit of information that wasn't made available, either because it wasn't known or.... Anyway, there are a number of points that can be followed up on.

Again, we lead with Global Affairs because we hope to get a bit of a grounding and background as we move forward. It's the place we

generally start. I think all members of this committee would appreciate getting some of that information provided to the clerk so that we can use it as we continue on in this very important study that Ms. Khalid has brought to us.

Thank you very much.

We are 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>