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Mr. Michael Levitt

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● (1305)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everyone. I call to order this meeting of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. We are moving forward with our study on the trafficking for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation in South Asia.

I want to welcome our guest, Dr. Nipa Banerjee, Senior Fellow, Faculty of Social Sciences, School of International Development and Global Studies at the University of Ottawa.

As a little bit of background, Dr. Banerjee's area of expertise includes development issues in South and Southeast Asia. Dr. Banerjee has over 40 years of experience in her field. She has spent 33 years representing the Canadian International Development Agency in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Afghanistan, heading Canada's aid program in the latter four countries. Dr. Banerjee has also worked with the International Development Research Centre and Cuso International. Dr. Banerjee makes quarterly visits to Bangladesh and India, among other countries.

I want to welcome you before this committee today, Dr. Banerjee. If you would begin by taking 10 to 12 minutes for opening remarks, we'd then open up the floor to questions from the committee members.

Thank you.

Professor Nipa Banerjee (Senior fellow, Faculty of Social Sciences, School of International Development and Global Studies, University of Ottawa, As an Individual): Thank you very much for inviting me.

I want to mention that I was given very short notice, and it's a very huge subject area, so despite knowing and having researched it before, I was a bit concerned. As far as the questions are concerned, it's a huge region, so we'll see how I can handle it. I was thinking that if people wanted, later I could present a short written brief that will reflect on some of the issues that I might be able to just touch on today.

I have presented briefs before, on Afghanistan mainly, when Afghanistan was very high in our priorities, but we don't have that anymore. It's after a long time that I am making the presentation.

I will try to speak for 10 minutes. Pardon me if I am not complete, and I will not be complete, because it's a large subject.

This is only a background briefing on human trafficking in South Asia. The issues I will raise on human trafficking in South Asia will be limited to the following areas: scope of human trafficking, scale and nature of human trafficking, factors promoting human trafficking, and development measures to counter human trafficking in South Asia. I will only touch on that last topic. During the question period, perhaps I can talk a bit more on what measures can be useful.

On the scope of human trafficking, misconstrued definitions of human trafficking and a lack of common terminologies and framework have consistently hampered the fight against human trafficking. Therefore, I use the broader concept of human trafficking embracing trafficking in persons, not sex trafficking only. Exploitation is the overarching theme that subsumes all forms of human trafficking: forced labour and services, child labour, bonded labour, forced prostitution, economic exploitation, war children, and even the removal of organs, all in violation of human rights.

Non-consensual exploitation occurs when people are forced and lured into exploitation. It involves an element of coercion, fraud, or deception. Consensual exploitation occurs when economic vulnerabilities force victims to accept exploitative work arrangements. Consensual exploitation typically results from the victim's lack of access to other economic opportunities and leads to unfair treatment of the exploited. Trafficking in all these forms is found in South Asia.

Trafficking in persons in South Asia is intraregional, internal, within national boundaries, and transnational. Intraregional trafficking for commercial sexual prostitution in the movement of young women and girls from Nepal and Bangladesh to Indian brothels is common. So are transnational movements of all types from South Asia to the Middle East and other countries. Internal trafficking, both consensual and non-consensual, forced and indebted labour, and sexual exploitation of the most virulent type exist in South Asia.

I'll move to the scale of human trafficking. Human trafficking is globally acknowledged as a phenomenon present in all countries of the world with the majority of trafficked victims being from poorer countries. Due to the illegal nature of human trafficking, gathering accurate statistics on the scale of the problem is difficult. The statistics available and quoted most often represent an under-estimation.

● (1310)

The 2014 global slavery index estimated that there are over 36 million victims of human trafficking worldwide. Of that 36 million, nearly two-thirds are from Asia, and not South Asia alone. India, Nepal, and Bangladesh have the highest prevalence of human trafficking and are in the list of the top 10 countries with the highest number of known victims. India tops the list with 14 million victims. India is a source, transit and destination region for trafficking. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are source regions, and Bhutan and the Maldives are destination regions.

The dynamics of trafficking reach across the South Asia region, and similarities of patterns are clear, despite different historical and cultural circumstances.

I will move to the nature of human trafficking. Most of the trafficked victims come from the poorest strata of the national population in South Asian countries. Women, adolescents, and children in poverty-stricken conditions are especially vulnerable and powerless and fall prey to traffickers. Lower-caste people have less access to education and employment, and among them women have fewer options. The number of bonded labourers is also high in India. It is a cultural practice in the rural areas, where to repay parents' debts, people are forced into debt bondage. Child labour is a severe problem in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Child labour at low costs is used in hazardous industries, glass bangle making, and circuses.

A new and rising trend of trafficking in human organs has been detected, especially in Bangladesh. The practice of organ—mainly kidney—buying and selling at high costs within and outside national borders for transplantation is increasing.

Children recruited as soldiers and the young unemployed immersed in economic insolvencies recruited as Islamic jihadists are the newest human trafficking victims.

I will now move to the factors promoting human trafficking. Trafficking is exacerbated in South Asia due to weak economies, social and economic inequalities, and socio-cultural traditions. It is quite clear that economic and social exclusion and human deprivation are at the root of human trafficking. Poverty, or the necessity to meet basic needs, in combination with other factors, such as lack of education, a dysfunctional family, social exclusion, and culturally sanctioned discrimination against women and resulting gender discrimination and gender violence, are the most commonly identified factors promoting human trafficking. Young girls from rural areas of Bangladesh, India, and Nepal are trafficked for marriage and sold into prostitution.

Poor governance practices and law and order and non-operational social and criminal justice systems are responsible for promoting traffic. Natural disasters, especially, cause vulnerability in Bangladesh and Nepal.

Sadly, some governments in South Asia impose punitive measures against the trafficked. The phenomenon occurs mostly in cases of women victims of forced prostitution. Girls and women rescued from brothels in India are known to be sexually abused by the police and staff when they are kept in government remand homes.

● (1315)

Corruption and bribes involving public officials, law enforcement agents, lawyers, and traffickers both fuel traffic and hamper efforts to reduce it. In Bangladesh and India, evidence of collusion between organ traders and doctors, and between lawyers and traffickers is found. Trials of trafficking cases do not move without bribes. In India, police, judiciary, and border guards are found to be involved in trafficking and making profits. In Nepal, traffickers have been found to use contacts with politicians, business people, state officials, police, customs officials, and border police to facilitate trafficking and paying bribes for protection and favours. Such corruption perpetuates human trafficking.

I'll just touch on measures to counter human trafficking, which is a development threat.

Human trafficking thrives on poverty and the economic insolvency of those trafficked and also deters development by adversely affecting productivity and efficiency. Human trafficking promotes exploitation that leads to low or no wages, and low employment levels and is a detriment to development.

These negative impacts of exploitation can be handled through interventions in the areas of labour markets, social protection, social development, rule-of-law reforms, and other action measures. Most of these interventions will also have an indirect preventive impact. Poverty reduction programs reducing social, economic, and environmental vulnerabilities bear high potential for eliminating the factors that help promote human trafficking. Other vulnerabilities arising from illiteracy and lack of education, lack of awareness, discriminatory policies, social exclusion, and culturally sanctioned discrimination against women and gender can also be handled through development programming.

Thank you very much.

● (1320)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Banerjee.

We are going to begin our questions. MP Anderson is going to lead us off.

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

I want to thank you for being here today as our witness.

You referred to child soldiers. We've been exposed to the situation in which some young people find themselves and the consequences of that, but then you mentioned young men who were dispossessed. Most of them would be unemployed and bought and paid for by jihadists. I'm wondering if you want to talk a bit more about that. I don't know if that would fit into your definition of consensual exploitation, but people are bought and then trafficked, I guess, into terrorism. Would you comment on that a bit more?

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Yes.

Regarding child soldiers, like this issue about consensual and non-consensual, because they are very young and totally unaware, it is probably non-consensual. In the cases of young men who don't have employment, I can give you an example of Afghanistan and the people I talk to.

The other day—and this is a live example—I had ordered some Afghan food, and a young Canadian Afghan who speaks only halting English delivered the food. I have a replica of a Bamiyan Buddha. Bamiyan is a province in Afghanistan, and the Taliban destroyed the Buddha statues—wonderful Buddha statues. I visited the caves. There are no statues now, but I still visited, and you can get replicas. I bought replicas, and it was on my wall at the entrance.

This gentleman asked, looking at that, “Do you know Afghanistan? Have you been there?” I said that I had. Then, in very halting English, he kept talking about how terrible it is in Afghanistan for people, for common Afghanis, and particularly for young people who don't have jobs. They don't have education either. If they don't have money, they can't get any education. Schools are closing as well, and there is no employment. He said, “I am so pleased that I was able to get out of Afghanistan, because I would be a Taliban today. I would join the ranks of the Taliban, because I had no other source of income. I am pleased that Canada took me as a refugee and I am here.”

It is very important, and it is happening everywhere. It's not only there, but even in the European Union. What I have researched and read is that when the refugees from some of the African countries migrate, they go to Arab countries, to the European Union countries. They're not integrated with the society. They're playing by themselves. These are young people, not children exactly, but young people who are playing by themselves—

Mr. David Anderson: I am sorry to interrupt, but I have one question that I think is important that follows from this. I'd like to ask it, because I'm going to run out of time and the chair will cut me off.

Building on what you're saying, we have put a lot of focus over the last years on international development for women and children. I want to come back to this issue of dispossessed and unemployed young men. We're sending aid into countries where there are basically a lot of unstable governments, low-functioning economies, and human rights frameworks are not in place.

Should we be more holistic in the approach we're taking? Are we doing the right thing by focusing basically on one group of people when most of the trouble we're facing seems to be from these young men who don't have education, don't have jobs, and don't have hope for the future?

● (1325)

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: I think I would agree with you, if you are saying that.

I started with this, actually. My definition of human trafficking is not restricted to women and children only. It is also men, and it is very important that we include them. Yes, it is true that women are the weaker section of the society, but so are these young men without employment and jobs.

I don't know if you've been to one of the conflict countries, say Yemen or Afghanistan, but the situation is really terrible. They are begging in the streets. These are the people who the Taliban will target, and ISIS also. ISIS is targeting in the European Union countries.

I would say it is extremely important, given the current situation—I'm not saying there should be no focus on gender—that we focus, as well, on young people in conflict countries or post-conflict countries.

Mr. David Anderson: I have a bit more time, so do you want to talk a little more about the role of corruption in your experience? You talked about weak economies, inequalities, and social traditions. Typically, when we go in and try to change things, we're fighting all three of those things. I wonder if you could talk a bit more about corruption and how it impacts this notion of exploitation and trafficking.

Also, you talked mainly about trafficking being regional. From your perspective, how much of this is international rather than regional? Is it mostly regionally that you've experienced it, or do you see it as a global issue primarily?

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: On the issue of whether or not it's mostly intraregional but also transnational, it is very much transnational, particularly the consensual trafficking. It happens with both men and women.

In Bangladesh, the contribution to the GDP is highest from remittances. Remittances are the financial support that those who are trafficked send, after their work in different countries. It's in the Middle East. It happens in Canada and North America as well.

Maybe you remember the case of Khobragade, who was a diplomat, in fact, with the Indian embassy. She brought in a woman who was working at a very low salary. The woman was working more than 15 to 18 hours a day. These kinds of things are happening, particularly in the Middle East.

I have met women and men in Bangladesh who have returned from this kind of...it is not forced labour; it's consensual labour, but it's exploitation because they are paid very little.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move to Ms. Khalid.

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Ms. Banerjee, for your testimony today.

Human trafficking, as you said, is an international and very much a global phenomenon. It exists in Canada, and I believe that on our Washington trip we heard from various members of Congress that it is an issue in the United States as well.

It's very interesting. You mentioned a number of factors that contribute to human trafficking, and in this case, specifically to sex trafficking. You indicated that poverty in South Asia is one of the predominant factors. Poverty is not that big a factor in places like Canada and the U.S., perhaps.

You spoke a little about some other factors, including social exclusion. I would like to ask you about that.

We had a very good conversation about young men and their vulnerabilities as well, but I still hold that women are very vulnerable. Forced marriages are an example in which people who are illiterate force their daughters, who are often considered to be a burden on the family, into being trafficked.

Could you speak about the social culture and the discrimination of women?

● (1330)

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: That is well known. I'm sorry I didn't talk about corruption. Maybe at the end I will say two or three things very quickly.

There's no doubt there is a socio-cultural tradition in South Asian countries, all of them. I was born in India and I was there until high school. Then I moved to Canada.

There are various issues. This marriage issue is a very important one. What can I say? This is happening, and it is still happening. One problem, however, is that the educated classes—and they're not necessarily rich, in India—who could have some influence are not conscious enough and not ready to address these issues. I think it is very difficult for foreign countries to work in this area of the socio-cultural traditions. You can go and lecture to them, but such things don't work. You cannot do anything about it. There are thousands of years of tradition. There are activists and NGOs working there. I wouldn't say that they have had no impact; they have had impact, but at the same time, though, for better impact, you need the educated classes to do something.

Of course there is national legislation; however, the national legislation is not always implemented. These countries are so populous that it is impossible. Again, corruption, to bring in that issue, also prevents this.

Ms. Iqra Khalid: You also spoke about the transiting of people across borders to different parts of the world. Can you speak about the measures the South Asian region has taken to collaborate, countries with each other, to deal with issues of sex trafficking? Are there any success stories? What are the biggest challenges they face? You mentioned corruption as one of them, but what other challenges do they face?

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Regarding intraregional co-operation, SAARC is the organization they work with; however, SAARC, in my view—and I've been looking at it for a very long time—is not really working all that well. One of the main reasons is that two countries, Pakistan and India, within SAARC are not getting along and have not made efforts to co-operate and work together. That is not only on this issue but on various other issues.

That is the only one. On top of that, there are international NGOs that co-operate, by which means regional co-operation is brought in. They are effective to some extent, but I personally right now don't have any specific example of this co-operation having worked, except in some cases in which girls or young people have been rescued and various NGOs came together in a regional area and worked to help them.

● (1335)

Ms. Iqra Khalid: This is my final question for you.

I would think that human or sex trafficking has a massive commercial component in which organizations are profiting from the sale or the usage of persons, whether for sex or for forced labour. Is there a differentiation among ideological organizations, for example, such as Daesh, which has been mentioned before to be using human trafficking as a method of perhaps intimidation? Wouldn't you agree that there is a bigger component of commercial trade in this, as a money-making scheme as distinct from ways of intimidation, for these organizations?

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Yes, I have to agree that commercial exploitation is very important, and even the corruption we see is for commercial profits and benefits.

It will not sound too good, but I will mention the remittances that Bangladesh gets out of some of these people who go abroad and are exploited for labour. The Bangladesh government hasn't made any provisions. The Bangladesh government, in fact, encourages the practice and says that it is consensual. It is indeed consensual; however, when they go to the different countries, particularly the Middle East, there is nobody to protect them. There is no international law that can protect them. Nobody watches them. UNODC is responsible for human trafficking, but at the same time, there's nobody watching properly.

I've met people who have returned from abroad—from the Middle East, women particularly—who have said there is social stigmatization against them. They haven't necessarily been prostituted. They were working, but at the same time, when women go to Arab countries like that, there is a social stigma. They say our government and some of the non-governmental organizations should help them, but I think there is a profit motivation for the Government of Bangladesh in the form of the remittances, and they will not really make any moves to do anything.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Hardcastle.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much, Dr. Banerjee, for being here.

I'll ask one question and let you use up my time talking about the difference and the distinctions between the source and destination countries. I'd also like you to expand on your ideas about the root causes of social tradition, the capacity for law enforcement, and where each is most useful in terms of addressing sex trafficking.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: What was the last question?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: It was about the usefulness of employing education programs to address the social root causes, and about the capacity for law enforcement. I'm asking because we need both in order to address this, but there are probably different tactics and strategies that you use when you have defined or recognized a country as being a destination country versus being a source.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Mostly the poorest countries in South Asia are the sources. As I'm saying, economic insolvency is the major problem, even in terms of sex trafficking, so the poorest countries are the sources. Bangladesh is never ever a destination country. It's a source country.

Now, India is a source country, and that comes out of the traditions, the social traditions, etc., for the gender trafficking. Also, there is some consensual labour that goes out to the Arab countries, the UAE, but in the UAE you will find it is mostly people from Bangladesh who are there.

There are source countries, destination countries, and also transit countries. The Maldives and Sri Lanka are destination countries because their economic situation is better, and therefore, you see it clearly that the Maldives does not have people moving out of there to go in search of employment. Those are the two main destination countries.

India's GDP has increased very fast. It's an emerging country, so it is becoming a destination country, but at the same time for Nepal and Bangladesh for prostitution purposes, it's the major destination country. It is also a transit country. Actually, people from Nepal go to India, and India is the central area where these traffickers are working for recruitment. That is how it is working.

What was the second thing that you talked about?

● (1340)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: It was education, the root causes, and law enforcement.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Education is one of the root causes. You see, if among the poor people, even among the unemployed, there were a raising of awareness of the evils of trafficking and what could happen if, without knowing, just for money, you go there, there would be less and less trafficking, I would say.

As I said, though, even the educated classes of people are not really helping the situation. You talk to very educated Indians, and they will say, “Oh, well, we have no problem here. All the problems are in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, mostly Muslim countries.” That's what they would come out and say, but you have to include them. You have to embrace them in your target group for education.

Awareness raising should be both for those who could be trafficked and also for others in the society who could be of help in eliminating trafficking.

Have I more or less answered your question?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Yes. To expand on that, do we really need to educate, or do we need to encourage or promote civil activism, in speaking up about certain traditions even such as the forced marriage issue? That is a human rights issue. Do you put that into education?

● (1345)

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: No, the thing is that they have national legislation on early marriage, forced marriage, against caste discrimination, etc., but the problem is that these are not implemented. In education, I'm talking also about formal education like raising literacy. Raising literacy will help. They have done it with family planning. With posters you could raise people's awareness of the evils of trafficking so that you deter them from falling into the trap. That's one thing.

Another one is promotion of activism. Among educated people there are a large number of organizations in Bangladesh and India. In Nepal there are maybe fewer numbers, but they travel from India to Nepal. In Bangladesh there's an organization called BRAC that works only on issues of trafficking. Therefore, they are there, but at the same time, as I was saying, it is extremely difficult to identify victims and to control it.

These things are ongoing and these things are required, but the government needs to be.... I would say that political will is one of the major things that is lacking.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Fragiskatos.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Thank you for being here today.

In your comments you mentioned that a number of variables are responsible. You listed weak economies as being a primary culprit when it comes to explaining why this problem exists in the first place. I wonder if you could follow up on what you spoke about with respect to poverty reduction programs as a way to deal with that particular problem, and, in effect, help to combat the problem of human trafficking. I wonder if you could answer the question with the following perspective in mind. I know that you worked with CIDA. I wonder as far as development policy goes, Canada as a middle power has been contributing a great deal in terms of global development, and we've done a very good job of this in our history, but there's always more to learn. How do we engage in ways that prevent us from imposing our approach or view and instead allow individuals to have ownership over particular projects?

Let me give you an example. Much has been made of microcredit, for instance, and its potential in terms of allowing individuals on the ground to actually have ownership over their own lives through economic projects. I wonder if projects like that are particularly useful in helping to generate a sense of self-esteem, and generate the sense of self-ownership necessary to combat problems of inequality that exist in weak economies, and in effect help us deal with the whole issue of human trafficking in a way that is not authored by us, but by the people on the ground, with our only intervening to help as necessary.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: As you know, I worked for many years in CIDA. I couldn't say this if I worked in the government, but today I can say that I could count on one hand the programs that have been really successful in reducing poverty and attending to some of the other problems.

Microfinance is a program you mentioned. That program has been very successful, despite having a lot of problems. I will not talk about the problems. Those problems are brought to the attention of the activists and the non-governmental organizations that implement them. Despite those problems, they have been very successful in doing exactly what you have brought up, which is self-esteem and awareness of ownership of what they can do.

I will give you the example of my own experience in Bangladesh. I had my first posting there in 1983, and I was there until 1986. Now I go back. I have a practical program offering field courses for our students from the University of Ottawa and I take them to practical projects, the projects that operate on the ground by non-governmental organizations mainly, because the government does not have the capacity to run these kinds of programs. They are supported by the government, but run by non-governmental organizations.

I was there when these programs started about 10 years after Bangladesh got independence. These are mainly women's gender-focused programs.

What I saw then with some of the programs that even we financed —and I will talk about it—and what I see today in the women is that the difference is several-fold. I can't even compare. The same women who most likely could not even talk to me—I speak the language and I am a woman—without putting their veils up are now in open public meetings in front of men, and this is a Muslim society. They are criticizing the government, the non-governmental organizations themselves, and the men.

For instance, talking about their seeking justice, BRAC, a very well-known organization, is asking them to complain at the court in the district. A woman said it was fine for me to say that she should complain at the district about gender violence, but her husband would come to know and he would kill her. What was I going to do about it? This shows that probably a lot is still to be done, and women still cannot do things on their own because of some of the social and cultural traditions and barriers, but at the same time, they have the courage to speak up.

● (1350)

This is happening with microfinance. They have the courage to speak up because they are able to earn an income, get a position in society, in the family, and earn dignity. This is extremely important.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: What I take from your comments is that there are particular programs that are best suited to combatting problems like human trafficking. I know there is limited time and I think I've used my time, but you mentioned a written brief. If perhaps you do go down the path of writing a short brief for us, I wonder if you could touch on specific programs that you have found have been successful in generating the kinds of outcomes you've touched on here, and therefore, would help best to combat problems of human trafficking.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: I would love to do that. I was disheartened about this because in 10 minutes you can't talk about it.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: I know.

The Chair: Thank you. We appreciate the offer of sending us additional information.

We do have time for one final question from MP Sweet.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Thank you, Chair. I hope we have just a bit more than that. I think we have five minutes left. I have a couple of things.

I just want to point out to our research team, before I ask a question, that one of the things I think we need to deal with in our report at the end is with Dr. Banerjee's testimony today, as well as a couple of briefing notes that we have from today and one earlier.

We have five different figures. We have from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,150,000 people trafficked; Agape Research notes 150,000 women and girls; the Indian government is saying 20,000 women; the International Labour Organization is saying globally forced labour is 20.9 million, and we know a large percentage of that is from Southeast Asia; and, a global slavery index that Dr. Banerjee introduced has 36 million. I'm wondering if we could try to assemble a graph on that and see if we could get our heads around trying to—I know the numbers are tough—add in our report some legitimacy or veracity to the numbers as best as we can.

There is another issue too, Chair, to focus on as well when we come to our conclusions. Dr. Banerjee mentioned something that we often don't trace, in that the most vulnerable people are women and girls, but in her example, which is a very good one, because of the inequities in economies, a young man becomes victimized by the Taliban or ISIS and then he's the very one who goes about revictimizing women and trafficking them. I think we could try to focus on that, too, to see exactly how much of a problem it is with disenfranchised young boys and men who are becoming part of the problem because of that inequity.

One of the aspects that we have in our briefing note is in regard to —and I think you may have mentioned it, Doctor, and I apologize, as I was trying to listen and make notes—the organ harvesting aspect of it. That brings a different dimension into human trafficking, because it means there is a very sophisticated talent that's required to extract the organ to keep it, of course, safe and alive so that it can actually be transplanted and so it's worth something. Do you have any evidence that this is on the increase in southern Asia?

● (1355)

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: I will have to look for that evidence.

There is collusion because it is such a sophisticated process. I mentioned that there is collusion between doctors and the traffickers. Both profit from this. This is definitely mentioned in several research studies talking about the organs. I think even in the UNODC protocol or report that they produce there is a.... You mentioned the focus on getting better statistics. UNODC's 2016 report is available. I will look into that. I have looked at it and you can get better statistics there, too.

Mr. David Sweet: Okay.

I have a last, quick, question, Chair.

We've talked a lot about poverty in regard to the proliferation. I'm not discounting that. I like what my colleagues said that it's really about economic disparity, because when somebody is wealthier, they can victimize the person. Disparity plays a big role in that as well.

I want to say something or maybe posit this to you. I think one of the reasons this crime continues to proliferate at the degree it does is it's easy to get away with because of the cultural aspects and the kinds of profits that can be made. If you're in possession of drugs in some of these countries, you will go to jail for 20, 30, 40 or 50 years, but you can traffic people and make a lot of money and you can get away with it very easily, particularly when they are in poverty. I know in the North American aspect, you get them hooked on drugs and then they are not even a good witness against you.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: It is very true that not enough attention is being paid to identification of victims. With identification of victims, you can get to some of the problems more easily, and it is not done. That is an issue that should be looked into.

● (1400)

Mr. David Sweet: I just want to make the point, Chair, around profit and corruption being part of that equation, along with poverty.

Thank you very much, Doctor.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Dr. Banerjee. We greatly appreciate your testimony before us here today. We also appreciate your offer of doing a little homework for us and sending it in, so that we can more fully address some of these issues.

Prof. Nipa Banerjee: Thank you very much for inviting me and accepting my presentation.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to go in camera for a couple of minutes, if we can. There are two additional items that we're going to discuss.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Chair, I'm going to have to bring mine another day. I have to leave.

The Chair: Then the meeting is adjourned.