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Chair

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz

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• (1530)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC)):
I'd like to bring this meeting to order.

This is meeting number 23 of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan. Pursuant to the order of reference of Wednesday, March 3, 2010, we're continuing our study on the Canadian mission in Afghanistan.

Today we would like to welcome as witnesses the Canadian International Development Agency, known as CIDA, with Françoise Ducros, vice-president, James Melanson, director general, and Melanie Boyd, director.

We appreciate you being able to come in at such short notice.

I just want to remind the committee that we agreed last week that the aim of this committee is to preview CIDA activity in Afghanistan after July 2011, in part to identify opportunities for other Canadian non-military expertise. It would be helpful, we felt, to review the full range of CIDA activity in Afghanistan, explore what CIDA intends to do after July 2011, and then identify gaps or niches into which other Canadian non-military expertise might be deployed.

I'm sure we may range beyond that, but for those who were unable to attend our meeting last week, this is the general direction that we would like to follow.

The usual practice is to allow for an opening statement from our witnesses. Any time you're ready, you may go ahead. Welcome again.

Ms. Françoise Ducros (Vice-President, Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force, Canadian International Development Agency):
Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm glad to be here to provide information on CIDA's future programming in Afghanistan. I'd like to first contextualize our future programming within the previous development successes in Kandahar and within the context of CIDA's aid effectiveness agenda.

[Translation]

CIDA has a long history of engagement in Afghanistan. Before the fall of the Taliban in 2001, CIDA's assistance to Afghanistan consisted largely of humanitarian aid, and ranged between \$10 and \$20 million per year for basic human needs.

Following the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, held in January 2002 in Tokyo, Canada

responded to the Government of Afghanistan's appeal for long-term development investments by significantly bolstering our commitment to the country. Canada is now one of the world's top donors to Afghanistan, our largest-ever bilateral aid recipient.

[English]

Recently we've implemented the recommendations of the Honourable John Manley and the independent panel on Canada's future role in Afghanistan. We've progressed with our allies and development partners in securing a better future for the people of Kandahar, and we continue to work with them and the Government of Afghanistan toward common goals.

CIDA has been responsible for delivering on the three signature projects and Canada's six priorities in Afghanistan: strengthening Afghanistan institutional capacity to deliver basic services and promote economic growth; providing humanitarian assistance to extremely vulnerable people; and advancing Afghanistan's capacity for democratic governance.

• (1535)

[Translation]

The three signature projects have also been prominent among CIDA's activities since 2008 in Afghanistan.

In the first signature project, Canada is supporting the rehabilitation of the Dahla Dam and its irrigation and canal system, generating jobs and fostering agriculture. In our second signature project, we are involved in the construction of 50 schools in Kandahar. Through the third signature project, Canada is expanding support for polio immunization.

As we progress in our efforts, Canadian contributions are significantly benefiting the people of Kandahar. Our future programming in Afghanistan is intoned by these successes and reflects Canadian expertise and experience.

[English]

On November 16 the government announced four key areas of focus for Canada's post-2011 engagement in Afghanistan. The first is investing in the future of Afghan children and youth through development programming in education and health, especially for women and girls. The second is advancing security, the rule of law, and human rights, including through the provision of up to 950 trainers for the Afghan security forces. The third is promoting regional diplomacy. The fourth is helping to deliver humanitarian assistance.

[Translation]

Of these four areas, CIDA will be responsible for delivering programming in education, maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH), humanitarian assistance and, jointly with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, on human rights. CIDA's program will be based out of Kabul and will be national in scope.

[English]

Our programming priorities have been developed in consultation with the Government of Afghanistan, with Canadian and Afghan civil society, and with partner multilateral organizations. Canada's programming is aligned with the prioritization and implementation plan of the Afghan national development strategy, known as the ANDS, and directly reflects Afghan needs and priorities.

Since the London and Kabul conferences held last year, the Government of Afghanistan has established thematic clusters and national priority programs that have allowed the international community to focus its efforts on a targeted set of reconstruction and development priorities. Canada will continue to look for opportunities to support the development of the clusters and national priority programs, which are essential to enhancing the Government of Afghanistan's capacity, accountability, and ownership.

[Translation]

Before I get into the specifics of our areas of focus, I would like to emphasize that our future programming is also framed within CIDA's aid effectiveness agenda.

The Government of Canada has committed to making Canada's international assistance more efficient, focused, and accountable. Toward that end, CIDA has undertaken specific steps to make its work more effective in line with international agreements and recognized best practices.

[English]

As part of this strategy, the agency is focusing its efforts geographically and thematically. CIDA now has 20 countries of focus and three priority themes: increasing food security, securing the future of children and youth, and stimulating sustainable economic growth. In line with internationally endorsed principles, we are supporting efforts that demonstrate local country ownership and leadership of development policies and strategies, based on locally identified needs and priorities. Finally, we are committed to efficiency and accountability, including communicating clearly and openly with Canadian partners. As Afghanistan is one of the agency's 20 countries of focus, programming there between 2011 and 2014 will reflect these and other key aid effectiveness principles.

I am going to confine myself to the broad themes, beginning with education. Turning to our work in Afghanistan, we have had considerable experience and success in the education sector. Working with the Afghan Ministry of Education through the education quality improvement program, which I'll call EQUIP from now on, CIDA has supported the construction and rehabilitation of more than 800 schools across the country and funded the training of more than 110,000 teachers and principals. We have also supported the establishment of more than 4,000 community-based schools throughout the country, which have provided basic

education to more than 125,000 hard-to-reach children, of whom approximately 80% are girls.

Building on this experience, we anticipate that we'll continue to support enhancements to formal education through government programs and non-formal community-based education in order to increase access to education for girls. In respect of quality education, we are considering ways to improve primary instruction by supporting pre-service training, particularly to women teachers, and to standardize teacher certification and accreditation.

Finally, in order to enhance participation and Afghan ownership in education, we are considering approaches to increasing community participation, as evidence shows that strengthening community participation increases public sector accountability at local, regional, and national levels. We will also look for opportunities to promote meaningful ministry reforms that enhance the quality of education governance.

Moving to health, Afghanistan has been identified as one of 10 countries to be included in the roll-out of Canada's G-8 initiative on maternal, newborn, and child health. As in the education sector, our future plans in the health sector build on significant experience and successes to date. One of our signature projects, our support for polio eradication, is particularly well known. Through that signature project, Canada has supported the ongoing vaccination of an estimated 7.2 million Afghan children, an effort that has reduced the number of new cases to just 25 in 2010 as compared to 31 cases in 2009. Over time, the polio signature project has also been used as a platform for the delivery of other essential health services for children under five, including micronutrient supplementation and deworming treatments.

We will also draw on our experience in providing services to mothers and young children in Kandahar, using this experience to inform our work at the national level. For example, in Kandahar, we supported the establishment of a maternal waiting home, a model that has encouraged women and young children, many of whom had never seen the inside of a hospital, to access life-saving secondary and tertiary care.

Moving forward, Canada will continue to be a leading donor in polio eradication and will focus its efforts in supporting the delivery of maternal and newborn child health services to underserved areas of the country at a more national scale. Targeted at the neediest and most vulnerable mothers and children, CIDA's health programs will attempt to address major issues at all levels of the health care system from the community to the hospital.

● (1540)

[Translation]

To enhance the quality of health services, our program will support Afghan-led efforts that improve the health and nutritional status of mothers, newborns and children under the age of five. In keeping with the G8 Muskoka Initiative, Canadian assistance will help strengthen the national health system, improve nutrition, and reduce the burden of diseases and illnesses in Afghanistan.

I will now address the issue of humanitarian assistance. As one of the world's poorest countries, Afghanistan remains vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters. Humanitarian assistance is therefore another area where needs remain stark. Nearly one-third of Afghans are chronically or seasonally food insecure due to conflict, natural disaster, weak income and employment opportunities, as well as inefficient agricultural practices.

To reduce this vulnerability, CIDA will continue to assist the Government of Afghanistan in responding to natural and man-made crises with food and non-food aid.

[English]

Canada has been one of the top donors to humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan. We have provided significant support to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, including refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons. One of our most effective strategies has been to support the stockpiling of pre-positioned non-food items to promote timely and effective responses to emergencies. These stockpiles have been released to respond to localized emergencies in Kandahar and across Afghanistan, most recently in response to the flooding that affected Pakistan and many of the provinces of Afghanistan.

To enhance the quality of our assistance, we'll be looking for innovative and aid-effective approaches that bridge gaps between emergency relief and sustainable development, while we integrate gender perspectives into our humanitarian interventions. For example, experience in other countries in the region has pointed to the importance of considering such issues as the design of camps, how and to whom supplies are provisioned, the importance of providing sexual and reproductive health services as part of the humanitarian response, and violence prevention. As part of our effort to move from emergency relief to sustainable development, we'll be looking for opportunities to support preventative measures that assist local officials who respond to predictable or recurrent emergencies.

[Translation]

On the human rights front, CIDA, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, is specifically looking to promote women's rights by addressing barriers that prevent women and girls from accessing services such as health and education.

We are also looking at options to continue our work to enhance the ability of human rights institutions to educate and empower citizens regarding their rights and to monitor, document and investigate abuses.

Finally, building on our past success in supporting women's participation in elections, we are looking to support initiatives that increase the role of women in decision-making bodies.

Agency-wide, governance, gender equality and the environment are important cross-cutting themes that contribute to enabling and sustaining our results.

● (1545)

[English]

No success has been as transformative as the increased numbers of girls attending school in Afghanistan. Study after study has

demonstrated how critical investments that help reduce gender inequality are helping to alleviate persistent poverty. Going forward, as our minister outlined on November 16, we will be placing a particular focus on women in all of our programming.

[Translation]

While significant progress has been achieved by the Government of Afghanistan and the international community in improving the situation and rights of Afghan women and girls, gender inequalities remain significant. Pervasive gender-based violence and human rights abuses continue, ranging from forced underage marriage, honour killings, trafficking, domestic violence and abuse.

Insecurity and lack of basic services also temper many of the gains made. Indicators pertaining to women's health, education, poverty and rights remain among the lowest in the world. CIDA will therefore work with the Government of Afghanistan and civil society to ensure that progress towards gender equality continues by enhancing the quality of, and access to, education and health services, as well as humanitarian assistance.

[English]

Finally, in all of our work, we're placing an emphasis on promoting accountability and responsible stewardship. This includes improving the Afghan government's capacity to manage public finance and execute projects. It also includes emphasizing participation and transparency in decision-making processes.

[Translation]

Our work in Afghanistan has delivered impressive results since 2003, but a continued investment is necessary to help Afghans rebuild their country.

[English]

I'm glad to take any questions. You have me here for a long, long time.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Ducros.

I'm sure there will be plenty of questions.

As is our usual practice, we'll begin with the official opposition, the Liberal Party. Mr. Wilfert, you may go ahead.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I hope, Ms. Ducros, that it doesn't seem like a long time.

First, I'll just follow up on something I raised with you at our last meeting, and that was on the issue of robust mechanisms dealing with internal and external audits. If I recall correctly, you were going to follow up with some information to the committee, but I don't remember receiving it.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I think it was forwarded. We certainly forwarded something to the committee. Oh, sorry, it had to go through PCO. I'll follow up again.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I was going to say, because I was looking for it. Okay, so the road for that information is PCO. So you'll let us know?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Sorry. I will let you know. We'll follow up. It was coordinated through—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Thank you. I apologize.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: In listening to your presentation, obviously I'm very interested in specific objectives, and you talk about this aid effectiveness agenda. One of the elements in the Afghan national development strategy is on the issue of governance, rule of law, etc. I am of the view that CIDA is far too spread out. I would rather focus on one key element in this national strategy. My own is, of course, the issue of human rights, rule of law, governance, capacity building.

The report indicated that, yes, other than the signature projects, which are supposed to be on time, we're going to deal with really a well-focused aid effectiveness agenda. Given all the things you presented, how is that going to be a clear focus? Why don't we, in concert with the Afghan government and our other partners in Afghanistan, do one thing and do it really well, and then have the ability to measure those projects in a way that will have helped develop the capacity of the Afghans to govern themselves?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Thank you for your question.

We could not agree more at CIDA that the issue around aid effectiveness is both focusing and accountability. We will be focusing on three themes that were outlined by the minister on November 16. Given the fact that the CIDA focus will be on children and youth, we will be focusing on basic primary education, where we've been a leader in the field, and access for women and girls to that education; ongoing efforts in humanitarian assistance; and maternal and newborn child health, which was part of the Muskoka initiative. We are developing that programming, and it will be focused primarily on those initiatives.

On the issue of governance and human rights, we certainly are going to continue to work on human rights. It will be a foreign policy lead, so it will be led by DFAIT, but CIDA will continue to build on the work it has been doing on human rights, basically through the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and other such initiatives.

•(1550)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Is it fair to say we have roughly 120 Canadian personnel on the ground in Afghanistan? I don't know how many Afghans we have at the present time. My question is, in terms of redeployment, what that will entail. What is the specific budget you're looking for? How, again, are you going to be looking at how effective you are, in terms of the benchmarks you're setting and the ability to measure them?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Thank you for your question.

I think the number of Canadians on the ground on last count—I can't speak to all of the Canadians on the ground—was about 128. With regard to actual CIDA personnel, we have 26 people on the ground, of whom 17 have been posted in Kandahar. Upon force withdrawal, those people will be redeployed to Kabul or to Canada.

With regard to accountability mechanisms, in all of the programming we put together we have what we call a log frame—a logical framework for moving on—of ongoing results that are set out from the beginning of the program and would be measured. Some of the programming we do in Afghanistan is done through mechanisms to address all of the issues around potential corruption,

so we work in some instances through the world banks. Some of our major education initiatives are done through those mechanisms, but even in those instances we work at the very beginning to establish which results have to be achieved.

In the context of past programming, that was established through the benchmarks. We've learned a lot from that, in how best to measure. Some of those things will be refined as we move forward, but there's no suggestion that we wouldn't continue to have indicators and results that are measurable.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Since I'm a visual learner, are we able to get that? I'd like to see that information to see what it is that you've set out, what measurements you're using, how you are deciding what is the most effective course of action, and the kinds of dollars that are going in.

In terms of personnel, you said redeployment either into Kandahar or back to Canada, so the suggestion is that it would be purely Kandahar or...?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Sorry—it would be Kabul.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I'm sorry. It's not Kandahar; it's Kabul as the focus.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: No, I think that.... Sorry, but I don't exactly understand your question.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Would the personnel be redeployed only to Kabul?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: CIDA employees working on the Afghanistan program will be working out of Kabul or out of Canada, yes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Out of Kabul?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: They will basically be based at the Canadian embassy in the way they are with other countries—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Okay.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: —which doesn't mean that they can't continue to work around the country from Kabul, which they've done in other countries.

On the issue of getting back to you with regard to visual frameworks, we are developing this program now. The announcement was made on November 16. We go through a consultation process following the established priorities. We meet with the Afghan officials. We meet with civil society in Afghanistan. We've had a scoping mission and we have begun that work. We meet also with an Afghan reference group, which is basically the Canadian partners, some of whom work with us and others who work in Afghanistan, and that meeting took place in late January.

The program is currently being developed. Those results to be achieved and measures to be used are developed in conjunction with how we develop the program in consultation with those partners, so we are not at the point now of listing the results because the programming is still being developed. Some of that programming, which I'd be to glad forward results on.... For some of the programming that is ongoing or will build upon past programming, we can certainly send you examples of that with regard to education.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I would appreciate that.

Can you tell me if you have evaluated or who has evaluated the delivery capacity of Afghan ministries or community development councils, etc., in order to deliver these programs? At the same time, how do you think we could be more effective in assisting that delivery system?

• (1555)

The Chair: That will have to be your last question.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: On the issue of capacity building, we have done a lot of capacity building through a project that we call the CGSO, the Canadian governance support office, whereby we work with various government ministries in Afghanistan. We also work on capacity building through other organizations, including the World Bank, and measures are developed through that project and through various indicators that are sometimes determined by the World Bank and sometimes by us. I can certainly send a summary of that particular project.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now go on to the Bloc Québécois. Monsieur Bachand, please.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Is it a ten-minute round now?

The Chair: It's a seven-minute round.

I realize that Mr. Wilfert went over. He had eight minutes. I'll allow you eight minutes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I think he had ten minutes.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: No. I can assure you that it wasn't ten minutes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Was it nine minutes? Can we settle for nine?

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: The more you do that, the lower the time remaining.

You have eight minutes. Go ahead.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: I would like to thank Ms. Ducros and her team for being here.

Ms. Ducros, you will see that I have with me the Quarterly Report to Parliament. I have also learned that the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan, made up of the five ministers who signed that document, has been dissolved.

What is the consequence in terms of the motion passed by Parliament on March 13, 2008? How do you intend to report to Parliament or the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan, which was also created by that motion? Will you have a separate document? Are you going to wait until you are invited to meet with us?

What will be the consequence of that for the overall picture?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Mr. Chair, I just want to clarify the question and understand it properly.

In terms of the dissolution of the committee, everything that was reported to the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan will be reported to FAD, the Cabinet Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence—I forget the French name. The secretariat in the Privy Council Office still exists. Things that were previously reported to the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan will be reported to FAD.

For the quarterly reports after 2011, particularly for the last quarter, I don't think a decision has been made about how the reports will be made to Parliament. However, it is very clear that they will continue to be made. It is also very clear that there are other mechanisms, including the Departmental Priorities Report and the Report on Plans and Priorities—I apologize for the English terms. All the reports that are made on the separate activities of the various departments will continue.

In terms of the report to Canadians and Parliament, I think the method that will be used after 2011 will be the subject of discussions.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Would you confirm something for me, please. FAD means Foreign Affairs and Defence. Is that right?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Yes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: So CIDA is not in...

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Yes, our Minister sits on FAD.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Your Minister is present.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Yes.

Mr. Claude Bachand: But she reports to the FAD Committee.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: No. FAD is the ministerial committee. The ministerial committee where Afghanistan was discussed, in the past, was the Cabinet Committee on Afghanistan. The secretariat that was at the Privy Council Office is still there.

Mr. Claude Bachand: You talked...

[English]

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I'm a little bit out of my purview in discussing PCO machinery.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: You talked about three projects, which are still more or less the same and are very important to you.

I'm going to talk about the Dahla Dam first. I think I read, five or six months ago, that security around the dam had changed rather significantly. The security contracts had been changed to security that revolved more around the Karzai government.

Are you aware of that fact?

• (1600)

Ms. Françoise Ducros: The security measures put in place by our partners in Afghanistan are their responsibility, not ours. We are well aware of the security conditions around the dam. I don't think there has been a change in the company employed by SNC-Lavalin to handle security.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I'm going to come back to the subject because it seems to me I saw that SNC-Lavalin had been put out. It's a security agency that is associated with Karzai and his brothers that replaced it.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I think you're talking about Watan, which is associated with SNC-Lavallin's activities. It has always been the security company employed by SNC-Lavallin.

That being said, you can come back to this question.

Mr. Claude Bachand: I will come back to it.

On the issue of the reorganization of the schools, I would like to talk about the Afghan-Canadian Community Centre. I think that will mean something to you. I am somewhat fearful about its future.

Why does CIDA seem to be reluctant to provide funding? The funding up to now has come largely from the private sector. I am referring to the article in the *Toronto Star*.

[English]

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I've read the *Toronto Star* article on that. CIDA has supported and worked with the Afghan Canadian Community Centre since 2008. It has funded it. There is a *Toronto Star* article, to which you referred, that suggests that funding came from a different organization. It has come directly from CIDA in the field. We are currently in negotiation with the ACCC and we do not believe that the sustainability of the ACCC will be affected. We're currently in discussions as to what would happen going on.

The article to which you refer I think is not entirely correct. It infers that CIDA would have turned down ongoing funding to CanILF. Currently, we fund the ACCC directly, which has an independent association with CanILF.

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Did Ryan Aldred meet with the Minister about that?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Mr. Aldred met with the Minister. The grant is made directly to the ACCC and it was not made through Mr. Aldred.

The question about renewal of the funding is factually incorrect.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Are the figures I just gave you correct?

In 2012, CIDA's contribution to Afghanistan will be about \$100 million. In 2013, it will be \$80 million, and in 2014, \$75 million.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I think the Minister has spoken to that. The contribution to Afghanistan would be about \$100 million for the three years. That includes the figures you just quoted, plus the contribution for the Muskoka Initiative, which would be \$75 million over five years.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Thank you.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris, please.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

Welcome to our committee.

I didn't know there was an Afghanistan-Pakistan task force, but apparently there is. And I gather there's no Afghanistan task force, from Mr. Bachand's question, but perhaps you can deal with that when you answer.

I was a little concerned about your report. Some of the stuff is rather general. And I appreciate that you're trying to find a focus, but I was surprised to hear that although we did have a goal of building 50 schools and training 3,000 teachers, neither of which we've achieved to date, your paper talks about 800 schools across the country and training 110,000 teachers and principals. I'm assuming that some money was given to a program.

What's going to be the effect of reducing the aid commitment to Afghanistan? We see a reduction. I think there was \$232 million spent in 2008-2009 and we're going now to \$100 million a year for only three years. What's going to be the effect of two things, first of all the lack of a long-term commitment beyond three years? Because I think many of the needs of Afghanistan are not short-term needs, they're obviously, clearly, long-term needs. If there's going to be any significant success and progress in Afghanistan, it's going to require a significant indication of commitment for the long term. And the reduction of funds of that significance, does that mean that programs you've supported in the past are going to be ignored or shut down? Or are we going off in a whole different direction here now?

I'm a little concerned about that, because the three years that you've identified and the focus on children and youth I don't object to, but there are other important things Canada was involved in that don't seem to be mentioned here. Can you tell us what's going to be left out, if you're stuck with the \$100 million and these particular things?

•(1605)

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Sure.

Mr. Chair, if I could, I struggled with the statement because I was trying to give a broad picture of Afghanistan and not focus just on Kandahar. But I do want to assure the committee, as I stated when I was last here, and as I continue believe, that we are well on track to meeting.... The 50-school commitment was 50 schools to be built or rehabilitated in Kandahar, and we are on track to do that. For the 3,000 teachers to be trained in Kandahar, we believe we are fully on track. So I wouldn't want to leave the impression that we aren't going to finish that.

I did want to say, though, that we were doing work throughout the country, not just in Kandahar, which leads me to the 110,000 teachers and the 800 schools and other stuff that we've done.

On the question of the long term and the focus, as we developed, for planning purposes, the ongoing program post-2011, we are very deliberately trying to build on those successes that we've had, which is why we're focusing on education and we're focusing on children, which we believe is where we play a leadership role as we move into 2011. By the same token, we're continuing to work where we've had success on the health side, including polio immunization, and how we can build upon that.

On the issue of some of the things that we're not doing, the programming in Afghanistan was a little over \$200 million, and pursuant to the Manley panel, half of that was to go to Kandahar. We achieved, I think, between 48% and 52%, depending on when you measure it. The ongoing programming will be focused nationally, which doesn't mean that we won't continue to hopefully get some drawdown and reach into the provinces, but our \$100-million-plus will be focused on national programs that will try to build upon the past successes that we've had.

As to things that we will or won't do, by focusing on education and on health there are other issues that we won't be doing, we won't be moving onwards. We were doing economic growth, particularly around the agricultural improvements around the Dahla Dam. We believe—and we have examined it with other donors—that work will be ongoing. It won't be done by us at this point.

On the issue of capacity-building, we will continue to work and build upon past lessons. I'm hoping to—

Mr. Jack Harris: Okay, but if I can be a little bit specific, some of the things that we talked to officials in Afghanistan about last spring included the suggestion, for example, that Canada has a lot of qualified and trained Afghan expatriates who have technical skills and abilities, and if Canada had a program, that would provide support for them to return to Afghanistan for a period of time. You don't have languages issues, you don't have culture issues, you have skills that are there. The Minister of Agriculture himself was an example of someone with Canadian training and experience, and of course there are others, the governor of Kandahar City.

Those kinds of programs are not possible under the mandate that you've been given, I take it. So if our committee were to recommend such a thing, that would involve either a change of the mandate or some other government program to take place. You can't do it under your current mandate is what I'm thinking.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: No. I'm sorry if I left you with that impression.

We will have ongoing capacity-building. With the examples you talk about of providing technical assistance through Minister Rahimi and other ministers we've worked with through CGSO, we would continue to build on the capacity-building side of things.

What we were thinking as we program—and none of the program is established yet, and we drew from those experiences on the fact that Canada was quite successful on that—would be to focus some of that capacity-building where the rest of our program is focused.

So we have provided experts to the Ministry of Education in the past, to the Ministry of Finance, to the Ministry of Agriculture, and that is a component of the current programming.

• (1610)

Mr. Jack Harris: In the—

Ms. Françoise Ducros: It falls under.... Sorry.

Mr. Jack Harris: Go ahead.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: If you look at the six priorities, there is a governance and human rights priority, and the capacity-building actually falls under that.

Mr. Jack Harris: It can be without changing the mandate, so this committee can feel that we're not necessarily overturning the apple cart by making these kinds of recommendations.

In relation to education, you refer here to training for teachers, particularly female teachers. Obviously I think this is key for transformation in Afghanistan.

Would you have the same focus in the area of health, in terms of training female health workers? We're dealing with reproductive health, we're dealing with family health, we're dealing with maternal health. Clearly the training of women in that field is going to leave a lasting impact. You talked about exposing people to—and I never heard of this term before....

Ms. Françoise Ducros: At Mirwais?

The Chair: You'll have to wrap up your time here.

Mr. Jack Harris: Is there going to be a focus on training women to provide these health care workers in Afghanistan as part of that?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: We're currently establishing what the programming would be with regard to maternal and newborn child health. But in all of the programming—particularly in newborn and child health—there would be a women focus. So we would certainly examine the possibilities.

That, by the way, has been identified by Afghanistan as one of their priorities, to train women health workers, midwives, and others and to provide other incentives to ensure that we have access of women to those institutions.

The example of Mirwais was actually to bring women into a situation where they would have a place as they waited before they gave birth that provided certain protections and was conducive to good health care.

So while we have not yet established that programming, because it follows the announcement that was made in Muskoka, we are currently looking at that.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

My apologies, Ms. Brown. I mixed up the two rounds. So we'll actually have the seven-minute round on the government side and the five-minute round back to back.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): You gave me the eight-minute round.

The Chair: Actually, I've been giving everybody eight minutes.

Go ahead, Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for being here.

I'm new on the committee, so I have a lot of reading to do to catch up to where the rest of the committee is, but I appreciate some of the reading material that I have been provided.

I would like to pick up on the issue of education. In some of my reading I found that there were some differences in literacy rates in different pieces of material that I had read. So as one of the benchmarks that we established, I wonder if you could just expand on that issue of education. I read the minister's notes when she said women and girls are now pursuing an education, which is one of the strongest tools we can provide them as they pursue their futures. So I wonder if you could expand on where we are.

One of the things you did identify were some of the barriers that we see to girls being in school. Are those starting to be mitigated? Are we seeing some changes? What response are we getting from women in having access to education, and what are they choosing to pursue in those things?

If I could just wrap one other thing into this question—just following up on what my colleague Mr. Wilfert said earlier—about doing one thing and one thing well, I wondered how well the education component will work if there isn't security attached to that. What do we need to do in concert with education in order to ensure that these programs go forward?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Thank you. This is great as we plan our ongoing programming.

I just pulled the numbers on literacy before I came here. Afghanistan is at the very bottom of the human development index on literacy. It's at the very bottom of the human development index on maternal and child mortality. The additional thing with Afghanistan is that there is a significant difference between the literacy rates of women and those of men. There is a 4.5% general rate of literacy in Kandahar, and a 1.5% rate for women. The figure of 4.5% is pretty low anyway, but 1.5% is lower.

The same thing goes for the overall literacy rate in Afghanistan, which is about 14.5%—I'm thinking from memory—and 12.5% for women.

Before we began our work there in 2001, there were about 400,000 kids in school. They were almost entirely boys. The Afghan numbers themselves put the number of children now in school at 6.2 million.

The barriers to women going to school or girls going to school, aside from various other issues, include things like security. Besides working on what we've done in the training of teachers and in providing access to school, we've had to deal with things like providing boundaries around the school so that mothers will feel comfortable taking their kids to school. We've had to deal with providing transportation to get them to school.

Often the issue is having women teachers. Parents won't send their girl children to male teachers. Obviously there's always been a focus, as we've looked at teacher training colleges, on providing not only training for women teachers but also the same sorts of security mechanisms, including lavatories for women and barriers around the teacher training colleges so the women can go there, as well as transportation for the women to get there.

One of the projects, which seems very local but becomes very general, is actually providing a female dormitory in a teacher training college that allows women to train. We can then disperse them around Kandahar province or around the school.

We're also looking at working with parents and communities in the various communities and at the different sites so they can identify those issues that are the barriers, whether those be transport, security, or other aspects or other types of things that prevent them from going to school, including the ability to get there at a different time. We've tried to work with the communities to look at those issues.

We're looking at working with the communities and community ownership and dealing with community-based education in some instances where no matter what you do, you're not going to get kids to go to school. As much as you train those teachers and provide those schools or rehabilitate them, you also have to have an alternative, which in some instances, in those areas, means providing community-based education, either in someone's home or in another type of community. Aside from the schools, we've established 4,000 community-based schools.

Just very quickly, one of the issues to point out as we move on in forward programming is that Canada, very early on, was the leader at what was then called the education review board, working with the Ministry of Education, to deal with problems that were national in scope. Then they could draw down locally. It eventually became like a human resource development board.

It's as important to work at the local and community level as it is to work with other donors, so that when we move from \$200 million to \$100 million, we're still leveraging other efforts, and we'll continue to do that.

• (1615)

Ms. Lois Brown: So we really do need to work in tandem with governance issues—

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Absolutely.

Ms. Lois Brown: —because education isn't going to stand on its own. However, I think what I'm hearing from you is that even though the time has been rather short by comparison, we have made some incredible gains, particularly in seeing girls in school, and we can expect that is going to continue with this new focus.

There is one other thing I want to be sure we clarify here. When you talk about rehabilitating schools, it's not just putting up a new wall or patching something. You're actually adding capacity. Is that correct?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: That's absolutely correct.

In order to avoid the notion of any rehabilitation being very small, and in order for a school to be deemed rehabilitated, we had to add at least a whole new classroom, which would increase capacity to add 32 children. So in some instances, schools were built from the ground. In Kandahar City, we got 400 kids. In other instances, there were schools that were rehabilitated. But in order for them to be counted, you had to have an additional 32 children that would attend a class. Is that number right?

Ms. Melanie Boyd (Director, Planning, Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force, Canadian International Development Agency): It could in fact be more if you have multiple shifts.

Ms. Lois Brown: And is that happening? Do you see multiple shifts in the schools?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Oh, absolutely. Most schools throughout the country have two shifts.

Ms. Lois Brown: So we've moved the benchmarks, and we've increased the number of girls in schools.

What about female participation in schools? Is the literacy rate for women increasing?

• (1620)

Ms. Françoise Ducros: We aren't yet in a position to measure increases in the literacy rate. We are in a position to say that when the benchmark was set there were no children that we saw in formal schooling. There were 400,000 boys. There are now between 6.2 million and 7 million kids, of whom one-third are children in the community-based education programs. We can identify where girls are going. We have 110,000 extra teachers trained in the country, of whom one-third are women. We have trained 3,000 teachers in Kandahar, and we're working with the Ministry of Education on the capacity-building side to encourage training and accreditation focused on women.

The Chair: We're going to have to wrap it up there.

Mr. Dechert.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My thanks to Ms. Ducros and her colleagues for being here today.

When this committee visited Afghanistan last year, I was impressed with the work that CIDA and all of its staff and associates were doing. Canadians know quite a bit about what the military is doing there, but I don't think they know enough about the good work that CIDA is doing. I was proud of the work that I saw your colleagues doing in difficult circumstances. And I think Canadians need to know more about it.

I would like to pass on a message, through you, to CIDA: please do more to communicate to the Canadian people the success of the many programs and good work that Canada has undertaken in Afghanistan. They need to know how we're making positive changes in their lives. It's partly the responsibility of all members of Parliament to do that. I've been trying to get that message across when I speak in my riding and elsewhere, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do likewise. We need to get that message out, because Canada is taking a leadership role in bringing about a positive change for the people of Afghanistan, a change that will benefit the people in that region and further the cause of world peace for many years to come. So thank you for that.

You mentioned in your opening comments that one of our priorities is the rule of law and human rights. I'd like to explore the justice system in Afghanistan and what we're doing to further its development.

We heard from a number of commentators when we were in Afghanistan that one of the few things the local population actually liked about the old Taliban regime was the justice system, which they found impartial and not corrupt. If you had a land dispute between two farmers, they felt that they could get a decision and that the decision would not be based on who bribed the judge with the most money. We're doing a lot to train the Afghan police to make

sure that they're the front line of the justice system and that they're using proper investigative techniques. I think our Canadian police officers there are doing a wonderful job in that regard.

Is CIDA or any other branch of the government doing any training or mentoring of judges, prosecutors, or other personnel in the court system there? If not, should we be doing that? What would you suggest?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I had the benefit of speaking with my colleagues on the priorities being addressed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. DFAIT will be focusing on justice and the rule of law. They are developing that programming. I am not privy to where they are going on that programming, but it has been identified as a priority for capacity-building.

CIDA would work with our colleagues to share the lessons of capacity-building and placing people in the Ministry of Justice and elsewhere. It's not my lead, although I can assure you that it is something they are looking at.

With respect to programming in 2011, the Department of Foreign Affairs has been doing some work, particularly in the area of legal drafting, and on capacity-building in the Ministry of Justice. I can't speak to the training of judges and prosecutors, although I understand they're looking at a broad-based approach through GPSF, the Global Peace and Security Fund.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Okay. That's not the thing in my car that tells me how to get to Parliament.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: They've certainly looked at the problem and have come up with the same diagnostic as you have and they're looking at where they will work on that.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you very much for that. It's obviously important to build the confidence of the Afghan people in the democratically elected government there, so I certainly encourage you to look into that more.

Can you tell us how, in your view, the transition of Canada from a military role to a non-military role will affect aid provided to Afghanistan?

• (1625)

Ms. Françoise Ducros: The transition out of Kandahar and a specific focus on Kandahar with the withdrawal of the forces will mean that beyond 2011 we won't be doing specific programming from an aid perspective in Kandahar. We have every reason to believe that in those projects that we've started, we have built in sustainability and we will certainly be in a position to share that experience with our colleagues as they take over. There's a huge American surge, including on the civilian side of things.

Our projects were designed to be finished in 2011, and hopefully, and I believe, will be sustainable because of the mechanisms we've put in place, including through mechanisms like the ACCC, which we heard about earlier.

Based on the experience we have and the lessons we've learned in Kandahar, we're hoping to be able to draw on that experience and feed into the national programming so that we have an understanding of how the programming on the ground affects the national programming. The national programming will be impacted by the drawdowns and we'll continue to work on that. The issue is more that it won't be Kandahar-specific.

On the issue of programming, we have a pretty broad experience of working in Afghanistan. Most of that programming outside of Kandahar existed prior to that and will continue to go on.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Dion, please.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon and welcome, Ms. Ducros, Ms. Boyd, Mr. Melanson.

[*English*]

I have two sets of questions. The first one is about costs and money and the second one is about capacity-building.

On the money, according to the Government of Canada, the submitted cost of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan for 2011 to 2014 is \$700 million per year, over three years. The final cost will be known in 2014, but that is the estimate.

I am a bit confused by the numbers you gave to Mr. Bachand. Can you tell us exactly what CIDA's share is of the \$700 million per year?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I can't speak to the question of the total cost and the question of the training we are working on with the Government of Canada.

However, in terms of CIDA, our programming has already been announced by the Minister. It will be nearly \$100 million a year over the next three years. That is connected with the \$700 million in costs that were announced and the \$75 million for five years that was granted in the Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

To answer Mr. Harris's question, CIDA is there for the long term. There is no reason to think that CIDA will not continue to be in Afghanistan after 2014. This is about \$100 million a year for the next three years, including the initiative you referred to and the Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We might still be surprised that a military mission that is becoming a civilian mission is spending only one dollar out of seven on the responsibilities you have.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I will leave it to my political masters to answer questions about the mission.

[*English*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: How much of that money will be allocated to humanitarian assistance through CIDA?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: We're still working through the programming initiatives and the division between the \$100 million as we draw up on what we're currently trying to do. The division of the \$100 million into the three priorities has yet to be fully established, depending on how we design the program.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Can you give us a range of what will be for humanitarian assistance?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: No, I can't. I can tell you what we've put in humanitarian assistance up until now.

What has been the allocation for humanitarian assistance over the last three years?

Ms. Melanie Boyd: It varies from year to year, but it can be \$25 million per year, \$30 million per year, on that order of magnitude.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Do we expect that it will be more, since now the mission will stop being focused so much on the military?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I don't want to start guessing at how we're

Hon. Stéphane Dion: But it's the logical shift of the mission.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: The logic of the mission is that we are doing much development work in two places. We're doing development work that will continue to draw down in the various regions but will be focused on a national program. We have had a long term of being a principal donor on humanitarian assistance, particularly with regard to food security. We believe we will continue to do that. But to break it down further would be disingenuous of me.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: In terms of construction capacity, your document shows how hard CIDA is working. But Canadians certainly want to learn what knowledge and know-how we are transferring to the Afghans themselves.

In response to Mr. Dechert's question about the three signature projects, you said you were confident because the Americans are there to take over. But are the Afghans themselves capable today of vaccinating their population against polio? Are they capable of building schools and training their teachers? And when it comes to water management and dam management, have we helped to train engineers and skilled workers or have we instead done everything by ourselves and made little effort to be sure they take over in their own country, which is the purpose of our presence there?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: That is my favourite question. I hope I didn't give the impression that we were trying to turn our projects over to the Americans.

[*English*]

There is the issue of capacity-building in all of the projects we raised. So on the issue of teacher training, we not only taught teachers, but we worked with the Ministry of Education to develop curricula and teacher training programs, including to train the trainer. On water resourcing and governance structures, for the Dahla Dam we developed a water usage council. So everything we've done has been designed to turn that over to the capacity and the local governance of Afghans.

I want to correct an impression I may have given about the projects with regard to Kandahar, the building of teacher training schools, and curriculum-building. Given the fact that Afghanistan is a 50-year or longer project, in every project we've done, to the best of our knowledge, we are ensuring that Afghans will have that local ownership, local capacity, and sustainability to take it over.

The Chair: You're over time. Sorry.

We'll go over to Mr. Obhrai next, please.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you.

Thank you for coming and giving us an update.

Post-2011 it will become one of CIDA's major involvements after the military mission is gone. Then, of course, we have the Department of Foreign Affairs and all the other ones coming in to form the larger picture of Canada's involvement in Afghanistan.

We have been there with signature projects and everything. Can you give us an idea of the level we have reached compared to the past, and the money we've spent? The opposition was talking about the money going now, but we seem to have forgotten about all the investment we have made already. So talk about the investment that has been made to date, and then what in the larger picture or scheme we have accomplished in Afghanistan.

Let me add a little caveat here. Every time we talk about a military mission we seem to hear about setbacks. In the development mission, the idea of course was that Kandahar... I met with CIDA, and as Bob said, I was highly impressed. But if you were to leave us with an impression, what have you achieved for all the money? What are we going to do there for the next three years? And in the overall objective, where does Canada stand?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I'll leave aside the signature projects, as you said.

On indicators and successes, according to the minister herself, on where we've come from, today 66% of the population has access to primary health care within two hours' walking distance of their homes, up from 9% in 2000; 1,450 doctors, nurses, midwives, and community health workers have received training from Canada; and seven million children have received polio vaccinations. That's an immunization project almost entirely funded by Canada.

There are 4,000 community-based schools and learning centres that have been established in areas of the country that were critically under-served in the past, and where some of schools didn't exist. In Afghanistan there are 158,000 trained teachers, up from 21,000 in 2002, and 29% of them are women. Six million children are in school and a third of them are girls, up from 400,000, of whom virtually none were girls.

There have been 500 square kilometres of land cleared of land mines, and more than 500,000 Afghans have received education on the risk of land mines. That's outside of the three signature projects.

In addition to that, on the capacity-building issue, we've worked in close consultation with the Ministry of Education there in developing curricula and working with community processes to develop school boards. We've worked on legislative drafting. We've worked with institutions that have become fairly independent and

renowned, including the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission.

I think we have achieved great ends in a country that had virtually nothing and was seized with 30 years of war. Where that happens, it would be disingenuous of me not to point out that all of the human development indicators are still very low for Afghanistan, from literacy rates to health care indicators, so there's a lot to do.

We would continue to do that by building, taking into account other comments that have been put on those successes. We would continue to focus on education; use the polio initiative and deal with that; and contribute wherever we could on the capacity-building side, while not losing the role we've played as a good donor on the humanitarian front.

So I think the investment has been well served. On the issue of magnitude, it's fine to say it's from \$200 million to \$100 million, but it's still one of Canada's biggest development initiatives ever, and will be one of the top five development recipients of Canada's development aid.

• (1635)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: In reference to our other partners there, where do we stand?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: It's difficult to tell where we stand post-2011. We were about the third or fourth donor until 2011. Because the pledging is still happening post-Kabul, we'll probably be sixth or seventh in terms of bilateral donors, including the very large donors, but below the large donors like the Americans and the Europeans.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Is the \$100 million for three years over and above the new initiative announced by the Prime Minister on child mortality? Afghanistan is a focus country for that.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Afghanistan is a focus country.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Is there additional money going in now, or is it part of your \$100 million?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: On MNCH, Afghanistan is one of the eight focus countries. That money is in addition to what was announced on November 16.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes. So this will be over and above what we allocated for over there.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Yes.

The Chair: I'm sorry, we have to wrap it up. When you have good news, five minutes goes by so quickly.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Why do you give them an extra minute and not me?

The Chair: You actually went over time quite a bit. That's why I said that when you're hearing good news, time goes by quickly.

Monsieur Dorion, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Thank you for being here with us, Ms. Ducros, Ms. Boyd, Mr. Melanson.

Ms. Ducros, are the other donor countries that are active in Afghanistan at present tending to keep their projects going, or are they pulling out? That was felt to be the case on the military side. On the development side, are they keeping their projects going?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: It is hard to know what they are going to do. Certain commitments were made at the Kabul conference. The ones who were already there continue to be there. In terms of the ones who have pulled out, like the Dutch...

[English]

I don't know if the Dutch pulled out their aid.

[Translation]

I will send you that information, but certainly the ones who have pulled out militarily still have some initiatives. Other donors who are not there militarily, in particular the Japanese, have made significant donations on the development side. We can easily provide you with those figures.

Mr. Jean Dorion: I would be very interested in that.

My other question is about the situation of women. You talked about progress in the area of education. The figures you cited are impressive. I do think that if we can change the situation of women in Afghanistan by better education for women themselves, that is a fundamental factor.

How can CIDA get involved? You said that the situation of women was still precarious. What resources need to be mobilized, with the exception of education, to achieve concrete results in terms of promoting the status of women in Afghanistan?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: In fact, by focusing on education and health, we are taking specific measures in those areas. In terms of our other initiatives, there are ways to target humanitarian assistance so that it encourages participation by women. There is the whole area of governance and capacity development. We try to make sure that government policies take those needs into account.

In terms of what we have done to date, there was a lot of training in democratic development, including training for women parliamentarians and candidates. And 70% of the candidates in the last provincial elections were trained through Canadian initiatives. In fact, our projects relating to human rights development will focus mainly on women. All the work that will be done with the human rights commissions will address those issues comprehensively.

Mr. Jean Dorion: In terms of the overall situation, there is also a very important political factor. We can imagine that two kinds of developments could cause setbacks in the situation of women. In particular, there is greater control on the ground by the Taliban themselves. Do you feel that? Is the effect it is having to raise fears about the situation of women? The other kind of development is the desire of the Karzai government to negotiate, to some extent, with the Taliban, and try to find some common ground with them. There again, it may well be that women would be sacrificed in those kinds of negotiations. Do you feel that on the ground?

● (1640)

Ms. Françoise Ducros: In terms of the negotiations and reintegration, the Government of Canada and its allies have spoken to the fact that our approach had to take into account the impact on women. In fact, the work done by the Government of Canada through the Department of Foreign Affairs and CIDA at the human rights commission has taken this issue into account.

In terms of what I feel, it would be a little pretentious on my part to say that I feel something when it comes to the Taliban. However, in all the discussions about policy development within the departments, we stress that this question and these issues have to be taken into account.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Physically, there are effects. When the Taliban take control of an area, some projects can't be continued. Is that the case? Do you feel the Taliban are gaining ground?

[English]

The Chair: We'll have to wrap it up there quickly.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I can't speak to that question. I have the same reports as you have.

Mr. Jean Dorion: Thank you, Ms. Ducros.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hawn, please.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses.

Madame Ducros, I'll just go back to something that was mentioned earlier. Just because the military mission is changing, CIDA's mission fundamentally doesn't change. I mean, the location may change and the dollars may change, but fundamentally the mission is the same.

You'll be centred in Kabul. You still plan to get out and about in the countryside to the projects and so on. How do you see the degree of difficulty with that—or do you see it changing at all—with the Canadian military now back in a training role and relying on other people for security? Do you have any concerns?

● (1645)

Ms. Françoise Ducros: CIDA will continue to work the way it works in other areas of similar difficulty: through trusted partners in certain instances, and in certain instances our partners will need to get security arrangements. The Kandahar situation was a very particular situation, and there are other conflict-ridden situations, but we've certainly done it.

Is there a degree of difficulty? It's difficult to work in those areas, but do we do it elsewhere, such as in Sudan and in other failed conflict-affected states? Yes. So we will have to take into account how we do that work. We will have to continue to implement those training measures we have, whereby we provide hazardous environment training to our people and train them for situations, and we will work through other security measures. I'm confident that we will continue to work in those areas.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you.

I'd like to explore literacy a little more. How are we defining literacy in the Afghan context? Is it the three Rs? Is it more the practical literacy? How do you measure that and how do you test it?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I have the literacy expert with me, so on this one, with the chairman's okay, I'd like to turn it over to Mr. Melanson.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. James Melanson (Director General, Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force, Canadian International Development Agency): We have various approaches to literacy.

Ms. Ducros mentioned community-based education. That's in the less formal part of the education system that draws in girls especially—eventually to the formal education system.

There is of course the formal education system as well.

Then we have literacy training for adults, which is a program that we've sponsored for some time. It involves the World Food Programme and UNICEF. Adults in food-insecure areas have an opportunity to come forward. They get a food ration to offset the opportunity cost to their time, because these are poor people. They have a nine-month program that allows them to attain some level of functional literacy, which they are assessed on at the end of that program.

Those are the three planks to improving literacy.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: So a lot of it is not, like I said, the three Rs. It's practical literacy, if that's what you can call it.

Mr. James Melanson: That's right. Especially for adults, it is.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: How about sustaining that literacy? Obviously we want to increase the literacy rate in terms of the number of people we consider literate. What's your view of how we or they will be able to sustain that literacy so that people who we determine are literate today will still be literate in 20 years?

Mr. James Melanson: That's a challenging question. The 20-year question is about youth, primarily, and I think that revolves around the quality of education they're getting. Our focus is on teachers and improving the capacity of teachers. You've seen some of the articulation of our teacher-training mission there, not only in the formal system, but in these community-based education venues where you can really reach a lot of people who otherwise wouldn't be reached.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: This probably will go back to Madame Ducros. To me, and I think to those of us who have been there and observed, confidence is a major factor in allowing the Afghans to move forward—the Afghans having the confidence that they can actually do this. The average life expectancy is 43 years and they've been doing this for 33 years, so most people know nothing but what this is. How do you view our ability to help them build up that confidence that gives them the hope they can move forward to do this themselves?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Well, that's a very subjective question. My very subjective answer is that the more we work on local ownership and on working hand in hand and ensuring—as was

commented—that it isn't us doing it, but that they're building it up, the more we'll see that confidence.

My very subjective answer, though, is that at multiple round tables, when I've met with civil society, the Ministry of Education, the director of education in Kandahar who's had death threats and has continued to do it, and the ACCC and people who are providing vocational training, this confidence is building. The issue is that this is a long-term project and that there are going to be multiple donors, of which we are one, and we have to be committed on the development side for the long term.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Chair, I have a fairly specific question. It's short.

The Chair: Last one.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: You talked about 1,450 health care workers being trained by Canada. Do you have any idea of how many have been trained overall in the country?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I could find that quickly. It's in the quarterly report. We can get it to you before we leave today. It's thousands.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Okay, it's a significant number.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Yes, it's a significant number, and we can get it to you before we leave this room.

• (1650)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Monsieur Dion, please.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two brief questions.

Your answer to Mr. Dorion's question about whether the Taliban are gaining or losing ground concerned me. We can't say this is a purely military question that doesn't affect you, since the Taliban gaining ground would jeopardize your programs, your schools. In fact, it would jeopardize everything. So I am giving you a second chance to answer that question.

The other question dealt with capacity development, the possibility that the Afghans will act autonomously. Do you have studies that measure the results for that and your programs? If so, could this Committee be provided with those studies?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: In answer to your first question, I'm not trying to avoid a question. In terms of CIDA's projects, I have seen no incursion that has caused interruptions. In some situations, there has been an impact on projects. There has been no project where the Taliban gaining ground has halted progress on a project.

I don't feel able to say whether they have gained or lost ground. In terms of our education projects in Kandahar, capacity development projects, local governance projects in Kandahar, and all the projects we have undertaken, I see only progress. Sometimes it's very slow. Sometimes it stops, but there are stops and there is progress.

In terms of capacity development studies, we can send you several. There are some on the current issues or efforts of various departments. They are the ones that play a leadership role in terms of developing education projects, for example, or the finance department where the Afghans themselves are doing the work. Previously, it was done by technical experts. We can give you that in the context of...

[English]

CGSO report on capacity-building and how we measure that. So we can just forward that.

The Chair: Ms. Neville.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Thank you.

Thank you for being here.

Can you tell me how the UN resolution 1325 and the subsequent four other resolutions on women, peace, and security have guided your activity and how you are planning to build it into future development?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: We're certainly very well aware of them, and we work with our colleagues at the Department of Foreign Affairs on developing impacts and statements that are made in those contexts. All we can say is that in every instance we take into account those resolutions and the fact that we have to continue to work in a situation where there are lines that we won't cross in capacity-building with regard to women.

I don't know exactly what you're seeking to do....

Melanie is the expert, so I'll turn it over to Melanie.

Ms. Melanie Boyd: Maybe not an expert, but maybe I could just add that we certainly were consulted on Canada's national action plan on the UN resolutions. As a sister department to the Department of Foreign Affairs, we'll be looking at the action plan very seriously in terms of how we can contribute through our work in Afghanistan to the indicators in that action plan.

Hon. Anita Neville: Will you be building in indicators on gender-based analysis? Will you be building peace and security indicators into that?

Ms. Melanie Boyd: That's actually part of our standard practice in terms of CIDA's planning process. So when we develop country strategies, they're always accompanied by a gender equality strategy that has specific measures. We also do, particularly in contexts such as Afghanistan, a conflict analysis as part of our country strategy process. So we'll be very much looking at those issues.

Hon. Anita Neville: Do I have more time?

The Chair: You have one minute, approximately.

Hon. Anita Neville: The Auditor General indicated that there really has not been the capacity for gender-based analysis within most departments, and I'm pleased to hear that you have done these analyses. Are you in a position to table them with this committee?

Ms. Melanie Boyd: At this point they are under development. As Ms. Ducros described, we're in the process of developing our strategy moving forward, but with respect to internal capacity, one thing to point out is that we're in a very fortunate position on the task

force. We actually have in-house gender equality expertise inside the task force itself.

• (1655)

Hon. Anita Neville: Within CIDA?

Ms. Melanie Boyd: We have it within CIDA, within CIDA's task force.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Within the APTF.

Ms. Melanie Boyd: Yes, within the APTF. Actually we have a full-time gender equality specialist working right inside the task force who works with us both on strategic planning and on our more detailed program planning. That is a very special advantage we have in terms of taking forward seriously the questions you're raising.

Hon. Anita Neville: That's quite singular. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Okay, Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Perhaps my question should be directed toward Ms. Boyd, then, if you don't mind.

In Canada, in our own status of women objectives, we have identified as one pillar the participation of women in the electoral system, and we're looking at Afghanistan doing the same thing. I actually find it quite a dichotomy that we have, on one hand, great difficulty seeing girls get into school historically, and yet we're seeing that there are women who are being elected to office and we're encouraging female candidates.

Can you tell me what practical education we're assisting with in helping women succeed in those areas?

I should have said, Mr. Chair, I am sharing my time with Mr. Storseth.

Ms. Melanie Boyd: In advance of both the provincial council elections that took place in 2009 and also in advance of the parliamentary elections in 2010, we supported women candidates to participate in campaign schools, and those were very practical kinds of things. How do you speak in public? How do you network? How do you raise funds? What do you do about the resistance of your family to your participation in the political process? How do you formulate a platform? Then once the elections were finished, we went back and looked at how we could support the actual successful candidates. What does it mean to be a member of Parliament, particularly for women who are new members of Parliament? They may not fully understand the role of a member of Parliament, let alone how to be effective as a woman inside a very challenging context.

One of our partner organizations is looking at twinning incumbent female MPs with new female MPs. There are a variety of strategies that we're supporting.

Ms. Lois Brown: Perhaps we could expand on that and have them paired with members of Parliament in Canada.

Ms. Melanie Boyd: That would be interesting.

The Chair: Mr. Storseth.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for coming today.

Going 400,000 to six million children is really quite remarkable. I assume we're talking about the basics: education, primary school, grade school education. What kind of capacity does Afghanistan have for post-secondary education, that next level? And is there a plan to increase capacity so they're not reliant on leaving the country to get that?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Actually, the issue of post-secondary education is one of the priorities that's been identified by the Government of Afghanistan in their national priorities, and the capacity is low.

You can give specific details, Melanie, if you'd like.

It is something other donors will be involved in and we're not involved in, but we would work with other donors if we can bring any additional input to the table.

Do you want to answer, Melanie?

Ms. Melanie Boyd: No.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: It's very low. There are a couple of major universities that are well known and well regarded in the region. They were decimated during the civil war, including one in Kandahar City, frankly.

Mr. Brian Storseth: Just quickly, we talk about immunization and we talk about education and the great things that have been done over the last decade. My question is on the sustainability of this. Are we seeing leakage, as it is now? Going out for the next 50 years, as you're talking about, do we see this as being sustainable and being able to grow on this? Are we encountering problems in that?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I can speak to the issue of the Ministry of Education, for example, because that's where we work. Very early on, we were working with people who were identified, including an Afghan Canadian, frankly, who's there at the director general level in the Ministry of Education and has been there for some years. We work closely with her. She's bringing on new people.

The only way it will be sustainable is if we build on the capacity they have in the different ministries. We've actually seen building of that capacity in the Ministry of Education, where we work, in the Ministry of Finance, where we've provided technical assistance, and they're going to have to bring on people and own it. There are some returns to Afghanistan of expats, including those who have been named the Governor of Kandahar, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Finance, all of whom have been trained in Canada.

It's going to be a long-term process, but we are seeing sustainability in those areas.

We also work on identifying where there are ministries that are demonstrating that sort of growth in capacity-building, and we try to target some of those instances at some of those places. We work with other donors to identify how they do it.

Yes, we are seeing sustainability in some issues, and in some places you see backwards steps, depending on how things are going.

But even around various governors, you see the slow building of the governance structure around them across the country.

• (1700)

Mr. Brian Storseth: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Harris, do you have any more questions?

Mr. Jack Harris: Indeed I do, thank you.

One of the areas we've been talking about, obviously, is gender. The communiqué from the Kabul conference references the national action plan for women in Afghanistan and a benchmarking process. I guess there are two questions. Are we in line with that, or supportive of that, or partners in that? And I just want to ask about the Ministry of Women's Affairs as a department that's responsible internally for that sort of work. We've been told that the ministry is underfunded, comparatively speaking, that it doesn't have the resources to do the job it's set out to do.

And I'll just add the other piece to the Kabul conference—we heard this as well—the expectation and the commitment by participants to contribute half of the development aid directly to government to increase the government's capacity to deliver and be seen to do that in Afghanistan.

Is part of our work in supporting the women in Afghanistan supporting the Ministry of Women's Affairs? If not, why not?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I'm going to let Melanie answer the specifics.

I do want to address it, though, because it's been raised at a couple of committee hearings, the issue of 50% support directly to the Government of Afghanistan. We do not support the Government of Afghanistan directly. We support them through other mechanisms because we have concerns about that.

Mr. Jack Harris: So we didn't sign on to that?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: No. The Kabul conference basically talked about an objective of providing direct budgetary support up to the amounts of about 50%, direct budgetary or on budget. What we're trying to do is in order to meet the real valid concerns about how you fund government directly, we're trying to fund according to the Afghan principles, so to meet the principles of the Kabul conference of being on budget-type support but not direct budgetary support.

On the issue of funding the Ministry of Women's Affairs, there was a project whereby through UNDP, capacity-building and support was provided to the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Some of that has been done. There's certainly nothing that prevents us from looking at that in an ongoing fashion.

There are ways to build that capacity, or ensure they have the capacity to do the work they need to do, which we have done in the past.

Mr. Jack Harris: That seems to be a bit of a contradiction. Either we're supporting them or not.

I'm reading the communiqué, and I've been assuming we are party to the communiqué. It actually directly says that they restate "their strong support for channeling at least 50% of development aid through the Afghan Government's core budget within two years".

We are supporting the ministry. How are we doing that, if not through money? Are we asking them what programs they want and then supporting those? How does it actually work?

Ms. Melanie Boyd: Maybe I could just go back to the initial framing of your question. You were talking about the NAPWA and whether or not we support the overall national action plan for women in Afghanistan.

Part of the NAPWA is what happens inside the Ministry of Women's Affairs, but much of what happens with respect to NAPWA is what happens inside other ministries. So there will be benchmarks in the NAPWA associated with what the Ministry of Education needs to do to ensure that women's interests are advanced in the context of education. It is similar for health and for a variety of different areas.

It's possible for us—and we have the intention to do this and have done it in the past—to ensure that the ministries we're working with are actually implementing their NAPWA commitments. That's one piece. Then there's the piece you're asking about, of direct support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

As Ms. Ducros said, we can look at that. Our understanding is that there are two issues here. One is the issue of the political will of the government of Afghanistan; then there's the issue of funding. If there's not the political will to advance the NAPWA across ministries, and not just within the Ministry of Women's Affairs, you could potentially fund and support the Ministry of Women's Affairs without making much progress on women's rights.

So it's a complex picture, and we need to look at the full picture.

• (1705)

Mr. Jack Harris: The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission was mentioned; it is one of the success stories, I think. We heard from a fine representative of theirs last spring. Will we be continuing to support the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, in your view? Is that part of the plan?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: We are certainly looking at that. None of the programming has been finalized. The strategy has to go before the minister, so I wouldn't want to say anything, but we're certainly currently looking at ongoing relationships and support for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Going back to a question that was asked earlier, just so I'm clear on this, once Canadian military operations are concluded, how are we going to secure the security of the development personnel? Is it going to be through PSCs, private security contractors, and if it isn't, how are we going to work with ISAF countries in order to ensure that our own personnel are protected?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Currently, the personnel will be based out of Kandahar, which is one issue. On the issue of securing personnel in Kabul, we would use the security arrangements that are currently undertaken by the embassy. Some of it is just embassy security, and some of it is done through private security companies. Some of the work we currently do is also through trusted partners.

We are currently travelling around the rest of the country. CIDA officers visit other parts of the country and other projects, and those arrangements would be ongoing.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: How would we be affected, then, by President Karzai's decision of December last year that all PSCs will have to leave the country?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I think Mr. Karzai said that he's currently looking at disbanding private security companies, and the heads of mission, including our own ambassador, are currently working through the issue and how they would stage that with the president. We would be in the same position as other donors to work through the various arrangements that are currently being made.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Will you be able to apprise this committee of those arrangements once they have been...? Obviously we can't go forward with the plan that has been put forward unless we are very clear that security is in place.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: It's a DFAIT lead, but I think I can undertake to have my colleagues provide the committee with updates as to what is happening on that front.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: I think that is extremely important in terms of our ability to deliver.

This is probably not in your bailiwick, but on the issue of political reconciliation and the issue of whether or not there may be.... This is all in the backdrop, obviously, of not only security but the issue of political reconciliation and whether extremist forces may come back into the parliament of Afghanistan or start to wind up.

Are there any red lines that you can see in this process that we should spell out in order to be conditional on the kind of assistance we are providing to Afghanistan?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I have to apologize. It's only the first time I've done it in the whole meeting, but I have to defer to my colleagues in the Department of Foreign Affairs to speak to that question.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Okay, but you understand the nature of the question.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I understand the nature of the question—

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: It's absolutely critical.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: —which is why I'm deferring to my colleagues at Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: Okay, so that will be something....

Just as a general comment for you, I am still at a loss as to what we're really doing. In terms of interfacing with you and with the government, one of the jobs is supposed to be to provide—and the chairman and I have had a discussion about this for next week—coherent and constructive recommendations. The difficulty is that we don't always have all of the information, and on the other hand it's a very fluid situation.

I would certainly welcome any suggestions as to how we can interface more productively as a committee, since we are charged by Parliament to do so in order to provide the kind of assistance that I think would be helpful in fulfilling the mandate we were given as of March 2008.

• (1710)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert: That's a question to you but also to all members of the committee. I would welcome—not necessarily now, obviously—anything you could provide us. It would be helpful.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Okay.

The Chair: Okay, very good. We have committee business coming up in about four minutes.

Mr. Bachand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Ms. Ducros, I have here a rather lengthy study done by the Library of Parliament. One section of the study talks about the role of Canadian development and democracy assistance. I would like to quote a passage where the Canada-Afghanistan Solidarity Committee makes the following argument:

If CIDA is to continue as Canada's lead agency for humanitarian aid and basic services in Afghanistan, the agency must come to terms with its own shortcomings in Afghanistan – its cumbersome bureaucracy and its lack of coherent, long-term direction. Also, CIDA should step up its efforts to raise Canadian awareness of its work in Afghanistan, and CIDA should be required to make a clearer accounting of its activities, expenditures, and achievements. Similarly, CIDA-funded NGOs should be required to place a higher priority on informing Canadians of the work they are undertaking in Afghanistan.

I would like to hear your reaction to that.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Can I know the date when that report was produced?

Mr. Claude Bachand: It's dated September 27, 2010.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Thank you.

I think it is important to convey information about our achievements in Afghanistan. We are making every possible effort, and that includes all our young and not so young people working in Afghanistan. When they come back from Afghanistan, we have them travel all around the country so they can talk about their various opinions.

Personally, I meet with our partners fairly formally, but also informally. For example, on January 18, I met with 25 partners who are working in Afghanistan. I am prepared to communicate effectively and the Minister also communicates on the subject. When I meet with various associations, including

[*English*]

the CDAI, the Conference of Defence Associations Institute,

[*Translation*]

I encourage them and I provide them with various reports. I am prepared to listen to all suggestions for improving communications with Canadians.

In terms of the cumbersome bureaucracy, I am prepared to acknowledge the possible failings of CIDA, but I would not talk about cumbersome bureaucracy when it comes to the efforts of our task force and CIDA's efforts in Afghanistan. I have experience with it, so I can say that our bureaucracy is quite flexible and we are actively working on it. I am totally prepared to hear suggestions in that regard.

Mr. Claude Bachand: That's fine.

What do you have to say about the lack of long-term direction?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: I think we are working on establishing a long-term direction, with consultations here and with our partners. I think it is a very coherent approach that will focus on three priorities: youth, humanitarian assistance and governance.

Mr. Claude Bachand: You say "that will".

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Well, I think...

Mr. Claude Bachand: Do you admit this was not the case in the past?

Ms. Françoise Ducros: No, I don't admit that it was not the case in the past, at all. We had six priorities and three signature projects. You can't say on the one hand that we were not coherent, and on the other that we were too limited.

[*English*]

Either we're focused or we're limited, but we can't be both.

[*Translation*]

I think we have got results.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

I'd like to thank you, Madame Ducros, and Ms. Boyd and Mr. Melanson for coming to the committee.

I wish more Canadians could hear some of the things that are happening there. As a new chair of this committee, it's been an eye-opener for me. I just wish the good news could get out.

Thank you again very, very much.

Ms. Françoise Ducros: Thank you very much for having us.

The Chair: We will suspend for a brief moment as we move in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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