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Chair

Mr. Scott Reid

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

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• (1305)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): Welcome to the 37th meeting of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Foreign Affairs and International Development, this Tuesday, December 7, 2010.

[English]

It's December 7, a date from some 69 years ago that lives in infamy.

Today we have some very welcome guests with us who are here to talk about the unfortunate subject of the sexual abuse of women and children in situations of conflict. I believe Mr. Tougas will be focusing primarily on the DRC.

From the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, we have Peter Miller, vice-president for programs, and Sophie Toupin, project officer, and from Entraide Missionnaire, Denis Tougas.

What we normally do is allow our witnesses a 10-minute opening statement and then go to questions.

Am I right in assuming the two folks from Pearson will have one presentation but will answer questions together?

A voice: Yes.

The Chair: Perfect. Mr. Tougas will be separate.

In that case, I encourage you to start.

I will remind our members that we are televised today, so be on your best behaviour.

I will invite our witnesses to begin, please.

Mr. Peter Miller (Vice-President, Programs, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My name is Peter Miller. I'm a retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer presently working with the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. My comments will be based not only on my experience with the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, but also on my experience as a former police officer who served in three United Nations missions.

The subject today is sexual gender-based violence. From my perspective of having lived it and seen it on a day-to-day basis in missions since about 1996, I'd like to say that I sure wish we were doing a lot better now. I sure wish I'd be seeing progress today,

compared to 1996 in Haiti and 2001-03 in East Timor. We still see many of the problems that existed back then.

Despite the passing of various Security Council resolutions, women continue to be sexually abused. Children are abused when they're walking to school, and women going to get water are being abused. They can't carry out some of the basic daily necessities without their lives being at risk or being sexually assaulted.

It doesn't only happen in those countries I mentioned; it's happening all over the world where there is conflict. In Sierra Leone, for example, they estimate that between 50,000 to 64,000 women and children have been sexually assaulted, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 20,000 to 50,000. In Rwanda, between 250,000 to 500,000 people, women in particular, have been sexually assaulted.

The problem is not getting better, and I think one of the big issues there is the lack of the presence of women in police forces. The lack of women in the whole security sector is another issue and is a major problem as well. Women don't have a voice in the whole justice system, in the security sector, so there is a distinct need on that side in terms of integrating women into those processes.

Although attempts have been made to improve the representation of women, there is still less than 10% of them amongst police officers serving in UN missions. According to my colleague, I believe there's around 8% participation of women in peace operations today as police officers. The UN has set a target of some 20% by 2014, which will be a step in the right direction. However, there's a need for legislation in these countries, for laws to protect women and children, and we're just not there yet.

With respect to some of the other key issues, in Haiti right now, where I did serve previously, there are about 1.3 million people who have been displaced and are presently living in IDP camps. When women and children are living in IDP camps, they are even more vulnerable than when they're in their regular houses.

It's an epidemic. Haiti in particular is in crisis right now—it's no secret. And something needs to be done to address this. There are women and children being raped every day. As we're sitting here, somewhere in the world there's most likely a woman being raped right now.

With that, I'll turn things over to my colleague, who will add a few comments.

• (1310)

[Translation]

Ms. Sophie Toupin (Project Officer, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre): As was mentioned earlier, I am Sophie Toupin and I am the project officer.

The only point I would like to add to Mr. Miller's presentation is the importance of remembering that human rights are indivisible and interdependent. We are talking about civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights, and, of course, the rights to development.

One of the only ways to reduce gender-based violence, including sexual violence, is to adopt a holistic and systemic approach based on the four pillars mentioned in resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council, meaning prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery.

I will stop here for now. We can continue during the question period.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Tougas, the floor is yours.

Mr. Denis Tougas (Entraide Missionnaire Inc.): My name is Denis Tougas. Thank you for having me here. I represent the Entraide missionnaire, which has been part of the Table de concertation sur la région des Grands-Lacs since 1989. The Table de concertation brings together missionaries and international co-operation organizations that have been working there for a long time.

My presentation continues along the same lines as my predecessors, but it is more specific still. I would like to answer the following question. When faced with a situation like the one in the Congo, what can we actually do? What are we doing?

I will go back to the Canadian program on the prevention of sexual violence in eastern Congo and try to draw some lessons from it. At the same time, I will talk about what is being done and what could be done despite all the challenges. You must have also heard criticism of both Canada's interventions and those of the international community when it comes to supporting women or taking action on the ground in order to stop the violence.

So what I am going to talk to you about comes from the following sources and documents: two interim reports from CIDA; a confidential report from CIDA received under the Access to Information Act by the Canadian Federation of University Women; an independent evaluation report done in 2009 by Ideaborn on the joint project between Canada and Belgium; my ongoing communication with the members; and on-site visits.

I would like to give you a quick overview of the Canadian project. By a 2005 decision of the Minister of International Cooperation, Aileen Carroll, the project received \$15 million over four years. It started in 2006 and it will end in March 2011. It has three objectives: to help to prevent and reduce sexual violence; to assume responsibility for the victims; and to build the capacity of players and organizations to take care of the victims. There are five parts: the prevention of violence, providing health care, psycho-social follow-up, socio-economic support and the reintegration in communities, and legal support. We are talking about two provinces: North Kivu

and South Kivu, which have 8 million people. The territory is as big as the area between Ottawa and Toronto. It is 250 kilometres wide. The goals of the project—and they are decisions made as part of Canadian co-operation—are the following: to go through UN agencies and have enforcement officers, and especially to partner with Belgium to develop a joint project that covers all of the territories. There are three agencies: the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, merged with the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). UNFPA is run from Washington, but the operations are carried out in Kinshasa. Everything that has to do with relationships with women, care and so on, is done through on-site local and international NGOs.

For those of you who are in public administration, I am going to explain where this project is within the national framework. This project has to be co-ordinated with what is locally called the joint initiative, an umbrella organization that groups all the Congolese ministries, 10 UN agencies, major donors and major NGOs. In the case of the two provinces and the territories, things have to be coordinated with the Commission provinciale de lutte contre les violences sexuelles.

I will now go to the results. I am not doing full justice to the Canadian project because I don't have time, but I am going to point out what might be useful for us to improve things.

It is important to note that Canada's decision played a major role in the Congo. It was the first time a country contributed \$15 million to a project of this importance, in a particularly difficult area.

• (1315)

Trying to carry out this program jointly with Belgium was a second very good decision. Since 2005, Canada has assumed leadership in providing care to sexual violence victims.

The statistics are impressive. Here are some figures: 21,897 victims were provided with medical care and 22,500 with psycho-social support; 2,800 women partook in income-generating activities; 1,150 cases went to court. The strengthening of local medical clinics and the creation of mobile clinics—a Canadian invention—were the most significant measures. Yet—and this is where my presentation starts—the Canadian project has been and still is highly criticized locally by women's groups. I personally think that's very significant. I will read you comments that I heard and received in writing from women's groups. The following is from October 2007:

Ever since our country was devastated by war, humanitarian INGOs came...to help vulnerable people, especially people displaced by war, and to build the local civil society...National NGOs, so-called local, without sufficient resources, were helping the victims before the humanitarian organizations came in. The same "local" organizations provide the data to the INGOs that use them to develop their projects. But once the projects are funded, the INGOs no longer want to work with the local NGOs to implement the projects, on the grounds that the local NGOs are not credible or professional, or are too demanding.

A year later, a CIDA delegation went there to meet with partners in Uvira, a major small centre. The following was said:

When asked how the CIDA officers assessed the state of the victims, the delegation answered that there would be a special visit for that. When the meeting was over, the women were unhappy and discouraged because they were expecting to have enough time for discussion. Oddly enough, no one came from the NGO offices that received the CIDA funding. And they weren't asked any questions about the management of those funds.

I will end with a final quote. A year ago, in December 2009, at a meeting in Goma, 20 organizations issued an urgent call to re-think efforts to end sexual violence. And I quote:

It is essential that a common vision be developed by both national and international actors that take into account the realities facing victims of sexual violence, their immediate needs, their rights and long-term goals for the future. Victims need to be consulted regularly and involved in all phases of the decision-making process...We must start talking to victims and listening to what they have to say.

Why is there ongoing criticism? As you heard, it has to do with the fact that we are not listening to what women's groups have to say and our actions don't reflect their realities. But these are two of the program's main objectives. One explanation is Canada's choice to go through UN agencies rather than through civil society groups, such as international NGOs, local NGOs, local institutions and churches that are ready to do this work and who have already been doing so. The choice that was made simplified CIDA's management process: fewer human resources and light supervision. The officers actually only went on site twice a year. The project was designed as an emergency measure requiring quick execution, which can be provided by international agencies.

• (1320)

However, emergency measures that last for so long should be reviewed. I will tell you about one challenge that you will quickly understand. Huge coordination and harmonization problems that were not anticipated in the beginning have occurred. You must surely be aware of that. Each UN agency has its own structure, its own methods, its own instruments. For example, in order to identify sexual violence victims, at one point, there were 12 different forms that could not be coordinated.

Obviously, there is also the dilution of funds. Canada sent funds to UNFPA, in New York, but between New York and the small Congolese village of Kamituga, there were many middlemen. Let me give you an example of the negative consequences. Here is a passage from the evaluation report:

In the relationships between the agencies and the various partners involved in carrying out these projects, not all partners were in the same boat. Sometimes there was the cascading effect of contracts that would go up to five levels. The agency has a contract with a partner who sub-contracts to another who then sub-sub-contracts to yet another, and so on. In this cascade of delegating and sub-delegating, there are at least two consequences. First, the more contracting levels there are, the more management and administration fees there are, and fewer resources for the players who are in direct contact with the victims and who actually carry out the activities. The capacity building of organizations was more beneficial for the major national or international organizations that receive more funds and that generally are also able to negotiate with the agencies.

Despite the initial good intentions, the project was not developed or implemented according to the needs and resources of local groups, as shown in the evaluation. Here is another passage from the evaluation:

Taking care of sexual violence victims has to be based on the victims' needs and context, not on the needs of organizations and agencies. The conclusion is quite obvious.

And here is a second explanation. The individual approach we use in the western world to address sexual violence is not appropriate and has completely discredited the abilities of the Congolese. Clearly, medical care has to be provided to each victim individually, one by one, even though there are around 200,000 victims. But everything else, including the psycho-social follow-up, support and reintegration in the communities, cannot be done individually. The project tried to provide for individual counselling for each victim. But that's impossible and it goes against the African tradition, just like the aboriginal traditions in Canada. This fact has been recognized. An interesting comparison can be done. The Congolese feel deprived, incompetent, dependent on international experts, who cost a lot more. The evaluation report says the following:

Community participation and volunteering on the players' part made it possible to reach those results. Without this community participation, if counsellors, psycho-social workers had to be remunerated, we wouldn't have obtained the same resource/result ratio.

This was neither wanted nor intended at the outset, but that's what happened. In cases where women's groups had some freedom, in villages, they used their own group counselling and support methods. The Ideaborn report does not recognize that there is a very different approach than the one used by all the international agencies on the ground. We have to take that difference into account.

• (1325)

I will close by addressing a very difficult issue, by looking at the outcome of the Canadian project and all the other projects too. Acts of violence continue and they are now spreading. It is no longer the rebels who commit them. It is now the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as more and more civilians. Impunity is the general rule. In terms of the two project objectives, which were to contribute to the prevention and reduction of sexual violence and to build the capacities of stakeholders, everything went wrong. I really think practices should be reviewed. Why? Here are some reasons.

First, the joint project evaluation indicates that all its activities present raped women as victims without recourse. Sexual violence has never been presented as a violation of human rights, or as a war crime, either at awareness meetings or in court. But this aspect is vital in supporting militant women's groups. They can really change the way of thinking in a region where equality between men and women, although promoted in legislation, is not integrated into the values and customs.

In addition, the joint project uses the same standards with respect to sexual violence as those used in bilateral projects to build roads and schools or strengthen political institutions. By doing so, the results were a bit distorted—I will stop here. The statistics are quite telling, and rightly so. Let's recognize that. However, by carrying out the program this way, by evaluating the results based on the objectives, and by using each component for our own ends, politics have been completely removed from the issue. But, in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sexual violence is a highly political issue.

Neither Canada nor the international community will be able to solve this problem for the DRC. The Congolese will have to do it themselves. But in terms of providing support and capacity building projects, we must ensure that our actions allow Congolese women, specifically, to be empowered, simply put.

I will stop here. Although I took so much time, I still have many more specific suggestions and proposals for Canada in terms of its contribution to the DRC.

•(1330)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Tougas.

I would also like to thank all our witnesses.

[*English*]

We have enough time for seven-minute rounds of questions and answers. I'm going to try to end this just a wee bit early because there's a matter Mr. Marston has discussed with me that I think ought to be dealt with at the end of this meeting, and I want to leave enough time for it. We also have a motion that could be introduced by Mr. Hiebert.

I'm going to take advantage of the fact that I have the floor right now to ask Mr. Miller a question.

One of the problems we've had in dealing with this subject that I think is a problem for everybody who deals with it is that this is unlike mass killings, where it's actually relatively easy to figure out how many victims there were, all things considered. There can be efforts to hide them, as there were at places like Katyn, for example, but it's very hard to actually hide the evidence, the numerical statistical evidence, of how many people have been killed. The problem with this is that we tend not to get hard numbers when it comes to sexual abuse, rape, and so on.

You've mentioned some relatively hard numbers: 50,000 in Bosnia and somewhere between a quarter of a million and 500,000 in Rwanda. They were round figures, obviously. Just so we know, is there is a centralized source of this kind of data? That's my first question. Second, related to that, should we assume that these are numbers of victims or numbers of incidents?

Mr. Peter Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The figures I quoted for you come from UNIFEM. They are constantly monitoring these situations. But as we all know, figures with respect to rape, sexual abuse, and so forth are probably on the very low end, as these are some of the crimes that are the least reported.

There's a good reason for that. Women feel very uncomfortable with having a male police officer coming to see them and with going through a justice system that's predominantly male as well. There's not a great comfort level. Having investigated these types of crimes, I can tell you that when we suddenly had women police officers in my organization, we could tell the difference right away. The male police officers could tell that the comfort level of the victims was there. It had not been there before. That's a big factor. These figures, I am sure, are on the very low side.

The Chair: Thank you. It's very helpful.

We'll now go to the Liberal Party. I see that Professor Cotler will be starting out.

You have seven minutes.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will follow up right from your question as well, which was something I was going to ask.

[*Translation*]

I will ask Peter Miller and Sophie Toupin the same question. If we have time, I am also going to ask Denis Tougas a question.

[*English*]

Mr. Miller, you spoke about the phenomenon of sexual violence as really having a universal dimension. The examples you gave of Sierra Leone, Bosnia, and Rwanda—are only some of the examples. As you mentioned, one can go into—as you know only better than any of us—the DRC, Sudan, and the like.

In terms of problems, you mentioned two basic problems: the lack of women in both police forces and security forces and the need to integrate women into these processes, and the particular vulnerability in displaced camps such as the 1.3 million in Haiti.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Toupin, you talked about the need for a holistic approach to solve these problems.

[*English*]

I have the same question for both of you. What are the main impediments, in Afghanistan, in the Congo, in Haiti, in Sudan, and in Pakistan, to the protection of women and children from sexual violence?

•(1335)

Now, to assist, I'm going to make the questions specific, if I may.

[*Translation*]

Are there laws or government policies that prevent

[*English*]

the protection of women and children from sexual violence? That's question number one.

[*Translation*]

Are there laws or government policies

[English]

that foster an environment that fosters this sexual violence

[Translation]

done to women and children?

[English]

Mr. Peter Miller: Thank you, Mr. Cotler.

Some of the main obstacles in this regard seem to be that the countries we're working in and we're visiting.... Last week, I was in Uganda speaking to the head of the police from south Sudan. When I asked him what is the biggest challenge he faces, he didn't talk about referendum security. He talked about sexual gender-based violence and how they need international assistance to help them train their police officers.

He did mention that it goes beyond the police force as well. It points to the justice system to have the necessary laws to ensure the prosecution of these people, and to the court system as well.

There are a lot of structural impediments. You're talking about many new countries. In East Timor, where I worked, they had no laws when they started, basically, so that was an opening for people to just have carte blanche to go and do as they saw fit.

Those are some of the impediments. The PPC, the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, has been doing a lot of work in Sudan in the UNAMID missions, and in the Sudan mission as well, UNMIS, in training police officers in how to investigate sexual gender-based violence. They are training not only the local police officers, but also the UN police officers as well, who are coming in from around the world not having the necessary experience themselves to investigate.

This is one of the big impediments: not having the appropriate expertise to investigate these very serious crimes.

I'll pass it on to Sophie. She may want to add something.

[Translation]

Ms. Sophie Toupin: I will draw a parallel to the laws that you mentioned. Recently, in 2008, the UN Security Council passed resolution 1820, which specifically deals with sexual violence. States have the obligation to integrate the sections and provisions of those resolutions nationally. The United Nations has therefore proposed that the member states prepare and implement action plans to ensure that this resolution is in place.

At the moment, only 22 countries have an action plan. Haiti does not have one and neither does Sudan. But Liberia, for example, has one. As you well know, Canada also has an action plan, which was just released last October 5. It is important to encourage those states to develop action plans, and then to make sure that the action plans are implemented by providing them with guidance and support.

Now let's go back to your first question about obstacles. In Haiti in particular, crowding is a problem in the IDP camps, in makeshift shelters. The camps that were created are overflowing. There could be 18 people, women and children living in a tent. This crowding promotes sexual violence.

That is why policewomen on foot patrol in these camps are very, very important. As Mr. Miller said earlier, women represent about

10% of the police officers who participate in MINUSTAH. This is not a lot. We hope that, through the joint efforts of the UN and other organizations, there will be at least 20% female police officers in peacekeeping operations by 2014.

• (1340)

[English]

The Chair: That uses up all the time we have, Professor.

We have to go to Madame Deschamps, *s'il vous plaît*.

[Translation]

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You've given us a lot of information. Your comments also bring many questions to mind. I'll try to get straight to the point.

Ms. Toupin, you mentioned the project aimed at training more women in order to integrate them in peacekeeping operations. We are told that to date there are still less than 10% of women in the force. I suppose you have a program and funding. Is the funding expiring? Will the program be extended? Is your core funding for this type of project threatened?

I will quickly move to another topic. Mr. Tougas, my understanding is that things are not working, in short, because we are not getting the civil society involved, we are not consulting with the civil society, and, internationally or as a donor country, we are not taking into account the context, customs, culture and values. That is why we are not getting the results we had in mind when we implemented the first project that will come to an end when the \$15 million from the Canadian government runs out.

We are told that the government action plan, which it issued because it wanted a seat on the UN Security Council, is a very good plan full of good intentions, but with nothing new both in terms of funding and objectives.

Could you comment on that? The floor is yours.

Ms. Sophie Toupin: The core funding from the Canadian government expires on April 1, 2012. We don't know what will happen after that. We have other sources of funding from other governments, for other projects, especially projects designed to build the capacity of the police in peacekeeping operations.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: Is the funding from the government?

Ms. Sophie Toupin: Yes.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: So the funding that expires in 2012 is the funding from the Canadian government.

Ms. Sophie Toupin: Precisely.

Mr. Denis Tougas: Your summary of the situation is perhaps a bit too narrow. But you are right, it is one of the major criticisms we hear. We are not taking into account the ability of the groups that are there. As a result, we believe—quite rightly in some ways, but wrongly in this particular instance—that we know everything and we think that the local groups must learn from us. That was the way of thinking in the 1960s.

When I was on site, they were very blunt and essentially told me: “You come here with your money. We were here when the problems started. You just come to carry out projects, and, when they are finished, you leave, but we are left with the problems.” Although it might be harder for us and we have to invest more time in analyzing the situation, we have to use the full potential of the groups that are there.

Also—and I will close with this—the issue has been completely depoliticized. A foreign country like Canada can do that. Michaëlle Jean did so when she went to the Congo, and Canada should continue to do so. It is known that commanders, senior individuals who were formerly members of militias and who were accused of committing rapes on a large scale and got away with it, are still in senior positions. It was suggested that the Department of Foreign Affairs make this public. Coming from Canada, this gesture would be accepted by the people. It might be just symbolic, but it might also be a wake-up call that enough is enough.

Canada has strongly criticized the Congo and has taken a stand by exercising its veto to prevent the Paris Club from eliminating the debt of the Congo supposedly to improve the business climate. That created a scandal in the Congo, but Canada did it, and the scandal passed. So Canada can take an equally strong stand on human rights.

• (1345)

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: What is happening with the action plan in response to resolution 1325 that the government shared with us?

Mr. Denis Tougas: I think that, in the Congo, much remains to be done in this area. I must point out that Canada is one of the major countries involved, in terms of justice, in the issue of sexual violence, particularly in the army. That aspect must be strengthened. The European Union will soon develop a plan to support the justice reform. Canada should join in and be responsible for this particular aspect.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: You are probably giving Ms. Toupin a bit of hope.

Mr. Denis Tougas: Yes.

Ms. Sophie Toupin: In terms of the action plan, I think we have to build on the fact that it exists and ensure that it is implemented. In order to do so, we could create a working group of NGOs, academics and researchers who, together with officials from departments, agencies and organizations that have responsibilities under this action plan, would monitor the process and make recommendations. So a working group might be one solution.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: We talked about deploying more women to the police force. We gave some statistics, but I feel it's unrealistic to think that they reflect the number of victims. Generally, women do not disclose the sexual abuse they've experienced. They lie low and hide. We know the consequences that these situations can

have in countries in conflict. Being a victim of sexual assault is much more than that: families and villages are destroyed. Hiring more women may help us to see things in a different light. A woman who was raped has a hard time trusting a male officer in terms of being reassured and getting support.

Ms. Sophie Toupin: Yes, absolutely. I have recently spent a number of weeks in Haiti. During that time, I followed the female police officers who were on patrol in IDP camps. I saw the role and the impact they had, and how they established a relationship of trust with women who were victims of any form of violence.

The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre made a short documentary on the role and impact of these policewomen. It is available on our website. I urge you to watch it. It really pinpoints the importance of these women's role and it shows that a woman who is a victim of violence opens up more—as difficult as it may be—to a woman than to a man.

The Chair: We will now go to Mr. Marston.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We've had a number of witnesses before us here. One of the things that seem to come through in the testimony we have received is that in conflict or wars where sexual assaults are a tool of war, they also seem to spread into society. In many of the societies we've heard about, women in particular are demeaned in those societies prior to any of this.

It sounds, too, as if in some of the conflicts, the military leadership is at least ignoring if not encouraging this activity, because of the stain it puts on another tribe or group. It was noted at a previous meeting how women were targeted.

Well, I would suggest that it's the men who are actually targeted and it's the women who are the vehicle through which others can get to the men in a community. If you have a society where the women are shunned following an attack on them that's no fault of their own, there is nobody is there to catch them.... Listening to the testimony here today about the efforts made to help them at that point, I'm really quite curious as to the other side.

What efforts are being made to change the thinking, both at the military level and at the societal level, to, first of all, valuing women? I would suggest to you that putting women into positions as you're referring to is certainly a part of that process, but it sounds to me like it has to be a much broader educational process.

Would anybody like to comment?

• (1350)

Mr. Peter Miller: Thank you, Mr. Marston, for your comments.

Many of these abuses, you rightly point out, occur even before the conflict, obviously during the conflict, and also after the conflict. Quite often this type of behaviour seems almost like a declaration of open season on women.

We have to do something about that. A lot of it is education. It starts in the schools. It's also in the department of health, as well. NGOs can also be of tremendous assistance, and also the justice system, including the training of police officers and the hiring of women. It has to be attacked on many different fronts.

What you need is a national strategy, similar to what some countries are doing in trying to combat corruption, for example. It has to be attacked on many different fronts if you want to be successful. It's not just about putting more police women officers on the street. That will make a little bit of a dent, but it goes far beyond that.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Tougas, you talked about the victims. One of the things we heard in testimony recently was that the victims have reached the point where they don't want to deal with this anymore. They're tired of being paraded as victims with nothing following that up. Do you know of anything specific that's happening to address that?

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Tougas: Other programs have been implemented. These programs resulted in the victims playing a crucial role in bringing the community together. I will not hide the fact that these projects were submitted to CIDA in 1996-1997, but were rejected on the grounds that no scientist had shown the usefulness of something like that.

However, recent projects have shown the merits of working not only with victims, but rather with a group of women. The final project I am referring to was carried out by the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Church in three territories. This project has been very successful. Women have not been cast aside; they have participated in education, literacy and economic activities.

I would like to go back to the first question you asked. In Congo, rape was not common practice before 1996. There was violence, but never of this magnitude. It was not pressure but the moral convictions of leaders and tradition that prevented it. In a village, there was no such thing as someone being raped.

Then the war came and the militia enlisted young people. They became armed and rich, and they defied the authority of the churches. They defied traditional authorities and mocked them. Everything fell apart.

As you have heard, the acts we are now talking about are not acts of sexual desire. When women are being raped in front of their husbands and their children, the goal is to break something. Unfortunately, it works very well.

In the Congo, there is now starting to be a new type of reaction. When there are mass rapes, like in Walikale in September when 300 women were raped in seven villages, the husbands, instead of sending their wives away, got together and said it was an attack against them as men with wives.

I think that's the type of approach we should take.

● (1355)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston: I agree with you. My point was the fact it is an attack on the men. It certainly is the total abuse and humiliation of the women, but the goal was to disrupt the society, to disrupt the community, and to leave ongoing damage after they left.

Have any of you had any dealings with Afghanistan? We had testimony at the last meeting in our hearings about a particularly nasty thing that's occurring there, which they call "boy dancing". The young men are paraded dressed as girls. They dance for a few hours and then are sold off to the highest bidder. That's occurring in police stations. But if you haven't heard of that, I'll just pass on it.

Do I have much more time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have one more minute, Mr. Marston. Use it wisely.

Mr. Wayne Marston: That works.

How effective overall would you say that Security Council Resolution 1325 is? Are we seeing results at the United Nations?

Mr. Peter Miller: Well, Mr. Marston, we are seeing results. I think resolution 1325 was the first of, I believe, four Security Council resolutions, and each of the subsequent ones was built on the first one. We are seeing progress, but it is painfully slow, unfortunately. We need more of an international response to this.

Canada has stepped forward and funded the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre to do some work in some of these countries to educate police officers and give them the tools to investigate. But when we're out there and are doing that, we're not bumping into a lot of other countries that are also involved in trying to deal with the issue as well. I think we need a greater international response.

Mr. Wayne Marston: I just have one point, Mr. Chair. We've heard that funding for this by the Canadian government is ending in 2012. Perhaps we might consider recommending that the funding continue.

The Chair: Right. Hopefully, colleagues will take that into account.

We will now move to Mr. Sweet, and then Mr. Hiebert. They are going to split their time, so they will have three and a half minutes each.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll be brief due to the fact we have some other business to take care of, although this business is crucially important as well.

Madame Toupin, you mentioned a video that's on the site. Of course, we will access that, but in what country were the camps where the policemen were patrolling?

[Translation]

Ms. Sophie Toupin: In the video, you can actually see policewomen, currently involved in MINUSTAH, in Haiti, on foot patrol in the camps. However, the video also focuses on the status of women in the UNMIS in Sudan. Sudan and Haiti are the case studies used in the video and you can really see the role and impact of these women.

[English]

Mr. David Sweet: I asked you because I know that in some of these countries we're dealing with, just the fact that a woman is wearing a uniform would also be a serious issue in some of these cultural circumstances, and you'd need to provide added protection for them.

Mr. Miller, I certainly laud the goal of having women make up 20% of the security and police forces by 2014. But I don't know of any police force right now or any military that has a 20% ratio of women. Are there some significant strategies in the plan to make sure that this capacity is built up in local police establishments and in the UN forces?

Mr. Peter Miller: There are. Just in terms of Canada, we're working in 25 countries in Africa right now, through funding from the Government of Canada and the Government of Germany.

One of our top priorities when we go in to speak to the minister of foreign affairs, the minister of the interior responsible for the police, and in fact, the head of the police forces, is to talk to them about increasing their participation in peacekeeping. In particular, we encourage the participation of women in peacekeeping. In several of these countries we went to in Africa, it's a big issue. It's a big problem, because they don't even have women in their organizations. So how can they deploy them on peacekeeping operations?

We have been successful, in several cases, in having police institutions change their regulations and start hiring women for the first time in over 100 years. So that's a step in the right direction. We continue to pursue that and to work with countries to try to encourage that and to in fact increase their participation.

There are some tremendous examples out there of countries that are contributing close to 30% of women. I think of Nigeria. I think of Ghana. They come to mind. These are significant contributors. South Africa is another one. But I'll tell you that for the most part, the numbers are very, very poor. They are the exceptions. There are not very many that in fact are contributing over 20%.

• (1400)

Mr. David Sweet: Thank you very much. Thank you for your expertise and for your care as well.

I was just going to say, finally, Mr. Chair, because of the time, that Mr. Tougas mentioned that he had other proposals. Also, he mentioned some NGOs that were contracted and then didn't deliver the services. I understand that there may be some confidentiality in the communications he got from the localities that expressed their concerns about that, but I would hope that he had some names of those NGOs. Because if there are countries making investments in them and they're not doing the work, then we need to know that. If he would table those with the clerk, that would be great.

The Chair: If that's possible, Mr. Tougas, we would very much appreciate that. If there are any confidentiality concerns, we can treat those as documents that will only be looked at in camera.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Tougas: I was not talking about Canadian NGOs or the like. You'd be surprised to see the methods used in Congolese villages to "de-traumatize" people, so to speak.

In some villages, I met with representatives from international American and German NGOs that were using the eye movement technique from California. You make the eyes move in a certain way. It is a method that works in the U.S. to "de-traumatize" people who have gone through a major traumatic experience.

In the Congo, that has no meaning. The Americans are heavily funded. That's the type of example I was talking about. The victims and villages accept these NGOs because they receive no other support. But they are actually like Martians to them; nothing really makes sense.

[English]

The Chair: That used up a bit more time.

Mr. Hiebert, you have a minute and a half.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): No, thank you.

The Chair: Okay. You'll pass.

In that case, I have one last question myself that was suggested to me by our analyst, Melissa Radford.

Mr. Miller, as a former RCMP officer, do you have any knowledge of the number of female officers that the RCMP is deploying abroad? I gather that there are about 100 officers deployed abroad at any given time. Do you have any idea of what percentage of them are women?

Mr. Peter Miller: I wouldn't be able to give you an accurate figure because there are so many rotations of police officers in and out. I do know for a fact that when I was serving in mission myself, the RCMP tried to keep their numbers up to a good level. At any given time it was usually around 10%. That goes back several years ago. They are making efforts and trying to recruit more women.

The problem is that women police officers are also needed here in Canada. It's sometimes difficult to get them released by their commanding officers. The same problem exists in other countries as well. They're a very valued asset within your police force, and therefore you might be a little reluctant to release them.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That was very helpful.

Thank you to all of our witnesses.

Please feel free to leave now. We have to turn to a couple of items of committee business.

[Translation]

Just a minute. Go ahead, Ms. Deschamps.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps: I just have a quick question about the procedure. In his testimony, Mr. Tougas referred to some reports on a number of occasions. Under the rules, I am not sure whether I can ask him to submit the documents to the committee.

[English]

The Chair: All right. Let's do that.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Tougas: Absolutely. I will send them to you. They are available.

The Chair: Great, thank you.

[English]

We'll turn now to two other items of business.

On the first one, I'll go directly to Mr. Marston and invite him to take the floor for a moment.

• (1405)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm sure the government side is well aware that Saeed Malekpour, the web programmer in Iran, has been sentenced to death. I don't have a motion, but one of the things this committee could do is call upon the Iranian government to set aside the death sentence.

It is my experience—and I'm sure people around this table are aware—that in most Muslim countries if there's a sentence of death it's carried out very rapidly. If it's delayed for any reason there's usually an opportunity...they're trying to make a political statement. Since this young man has been held since 2008 and he was just sentenced last Saturday, I suggest there's a possibility of some intervention here.

I'm sure the government is doing all it can, but something from this committee may be well worthwhile. If we can't do it today, then I'll try to get a motion ready to bring back to the next meeting. But I don't think it has to be that comprehensive, other than to say we are shocked at the sentence that has been pronounced on this individual and that we ask them to set it aside.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Chair, can we go in camera for a frank dialogue on this?

The Chair: Yes.

There's a motion to go in camera. All in favour?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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