



# **BEYOND SURVIVAL: PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

## **Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

**Dean Allison  
Chair**

**JUNE 2015**

**41<sup>st</sup> PARLIAMENT, SECOND SESSION**

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

has the honour to present its

## **THIRTEENTH REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) the Committee has studied the protection of children and youth in developing countries and has agreed to report the following:





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# BEYOND SURVIVAL: PROTECTING AND EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Committee's Study

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (the Committee) studied the situation of children and youth in the developing world, and the role that Canada can play in the protection of children and youth, with a focus on bringing an end to harmful practices.<sup>1</sup> The Committee heard from a range of witnesses, including Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD), civil society and community organizations, experts and representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Testimony addressed a range of development challenges facing children and youth from a variety of perspectives.

### B. Overview

Throughout its study, heart-breaking examples of suffering and lost potential were brought to the Committee's attention. Testimony drew attention to the numerous vulnerable children and youth around the world whose rights are violated and who are, for example, trapped in the violence of armed conflict, who are pulled out of school and forced into early marriages, and who die from preventable causes – in other words, from something that the world knows how to cure or to fix. At the same time, the Committee heard from a number of organizations and individuals who are working to overcome these protection and development challenges and to build a better future for the world's children and youth.

The protection of children and youth is central to this report. But the report will also argue that protection is not, in itself, the end goal. It is a necessary condition that enables children and youth to participate fully in their societies and to benefit from development gains. In the same way, while ensuring that children live to see their fifth birthday is the essential starting point, it is not, on its own, enough. These children must have a future to live for: a life of their choosing that does not lead to isolation and neglect or result in their being trafficked, forced to do degrading and dangerous work or denied vital health care and other services. Children and youth have the right to an environment that allows them to reach their full potential, something that requires freedom from violence, exploitation and abuse. Indeed, the central message from the Committee's study was the need for a development approach that aims to ensure, as the end goal, that children and youth are able not just to survive but to thrive.

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE), [Minutes of Proceedings](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 9 April 2014.

This report is not intended as a definitive prescription for child protection and well-being. The Committee recognizes that its study touched on issues that are as vast in scope as they are complex in detail and that are the subject of extensive work – involving years of initiatives, experimentation and learning – by practitioners in the field. Rather, the sections that follow make the case for an approach to child protection and well-being that is integrated across Canada’s policies for international development, diplomacy, trade and humanitarian relief.

The report begins with a brief overview of the international framework for children’s human rights and development, as well as progress recorded to date and implementation gaps that remain. It then explains why the year 2015 is a critical juncture for children and youth as negotiations are nearing conclusion on the new framework that will guide the world’s development efforts for years to come. Moving from this backdrop, the remainder of the report is organized around thematic chapters, which, taken together, form a set of priorities for action on child protection.

The first thematic chapter addresses the importance of the “first 1,000 days,” a period that has a tremendous influence on the overall trajectory of a child’s life. The second deals with the realities of violence, poverty and exclusion in which so many children and youth are trapped and the need for an integrated, systems-based and child-focused response. The third is about the devastating practice of child marriage, its causes and consequences, and the measures needed to bring about its end. The fourth is focused on emergencies, situations in which services for children and youth are largely focused on meeting basic needs, without always tackling the broader gamut of protection issues that can also arise. The fifth is about recognizing youth in their own right, to ensure that their specific vulnerabilities, needs and aspirations are not overlooked. The sixth argues that, in the context of child and youth protection and empowerment, change can often be propelled by programs, leadership and capacity that are created and sustained locally. The final thematic chapter is about the need to embrace innovations, which can propel development progress, as well as data, which is needed to inform evidence-based evaluations and decision-making. The report concludes with the Committee’s recommendations to the Government of Canada.

## **SETTING THE CONTEXT**

### **A. The International Framework**

At the outset of this report, it is important to draw attention to the international framework that has been put in place to advance child survival, development, protection and well-being.<sup>2</sup> While not an exhaustive survey, this section highlights key legal instruments and international objectives. After noting some of the successes that have been achieved to date, it introduces some of the challenges that remain, issues that will be further dealt with in subsequent chapters of this report.

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2 Article 1 of the United Nations (UN) [\*Convention on the Rights of the Child\*](#) (CRC) defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”

The most comprehensive international legal instrument enshrining children's human rights is the United Nations (UN) [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC), which was adopted on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990.<sup>3</sup> It is also the most universally ratified international human rights instrument.<sup>4</sup>

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the CRC's articles can be grouped under four categories:

- **Guiding principles:** including non-discrimination; adherence to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and the right to participate.
- **Survival and development rights:** including rights to the resources, skills and contributions necessary for the child's survival and full development (e.g., the existence of, and access to, food, shelter, education and primary health care).
- **Protection rights:** including protection from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and cruelty.
- **Participation rights:** including the child's freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting the child's social, economic, religious, cultural and political life.<sup>5</sup>

UNICEF further notes that the CRC is based on rights – such as the right to non-discrimination – that are “inherent to everyone,” but it “also builds on concerns for the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children.”<sup>6</sup>

In the time since the Convention's adoption, three optional protocols have been developed that provide additional protections for children. The [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict](#) and the [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#) both entered into force in 2002.<sup>7</sup> The [Optional](#)

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3 Ratified by Canada in 1991.

4 As of [1 May 2015](#), there were 195 States Parties to the CRC. The United States has signed but not ratified the CRC.

5 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), “[Convention on the Rights of the Child: Rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).”

6 Ibid. UNICEF also notes that as the CRC “brings together rights articulated in other international treaties there are many parallels between the Convention and other treaties.” The [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR), which entered into force in 1976, for example, enshrines core civil and political rights, including the right to life, the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to freedom of opinion and of expression. Article 24(1) of the ICCPR provides the right – without discrimination – of every child “to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State.”

7 The [Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict](#) was ratified by Canada in 2000. The [Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#) was ratified by Canada in 2005.

[Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure](#) came into force in April 2014.<sup>8</sup>

Key rights related to child protection are also found in other international instruments, such as the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children](#),<sup>9</sup> which supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Treaties addressing forced labour and child labour are administered through the International Labour Organization.<sup>10</sup> There are also international standards to guide the implementation of actions taken to address child protection on the ground, including the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#). Diane Jacovella, Assistant Deputy Minister, Global Issues and Development, DFATD, explained that the minimum standards, the implementation of which Canada has supported, aim “to improve the quality, predictability, and accountability of child protection responses in humanitarian situations.”<sup>11</sup>

November 2014 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CRC’s adoption. Ms. Jacovella told the Committee that, “Twenty-five years ago, Canada played an instrumental role in negotiating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Canada has continued to champion children’s rights and child protection ever since.”<sup>12</sup> Ambassador Guillermo Rishchynski, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations, reflected that the CRC,

has had an extremely positive effect in terms of underscoring to member states, particularly those in a developing context, the need for them to undertake work to bring forward public policies that really put children at the centre of their agendas, whether it be in the health area or the education area. They understand clearly that their ability to progress as societies is intrinsically linked to their ability to ensure their children have the possibility of a future.<sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding that general purpose and intent, Ambassador Rishchynski acknowledged that there are, “in some cases, very limited abilities to do the kinds of things that [governments] know they ultimately must to ensure their children have a prosperous future possibility.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, while a robust and near-universally agreed-upon international

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8 Canada has not [ratified](#) the Optional Protocol for the communications procedure. As of 1 May 2015, there were 17 States Parties to this Optional Protocol.

9 Ratified by Canada in 2002.

10 See International Labour Organization (ILO), “[ILO Conventions and Recommendations on child labour](#)”; ILO Convention No. 29, [Forced Labour Convention, 1930](#), in force 1 May 1932; ILO Convention No. 182, [Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour](#), in force 19 November 2000; and ILO Convention No. 138, [Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment](#), in force 19 June 1976. Canada has ratified ILO Conventions No. 29 and No. 182; it has not ratified Convention No. 138.

11 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015. Note: standards are not binding under international law.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid

14 Ibid.

framework for children's human rights has been established, the implementation of these commitments in practice, and the availability of the resources and capacity necessary to do so, remains an issue.

Of course, child well-being is not only an issue of human rights but also of development. Ambitious objectives for children are a core part of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were established following a special summit of the UN General Assembly in September 2000. Since that time, the MDGs have provided a concrete framework enabling the coherent organization of international efforts aimed at improving the lives of the world's poorest. The goals relevant to children are:

- eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, including by improving child nutrition;
- achieving universal primary education;
- promoting gender equality and empowering women, including by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education;
- reducing child mortality by two-thirds;
- improving maternal health, including by reducing the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters; and
- addressing infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS and malaria.<sup>15</sup>

The MDGs – and their associated targets and indicators – were intended for achievement by 2015. They are measured against 1990 baselines.

A number of witnesses highlighted the MDGs on maternal and child mortality. Globally, under-five child deaths fell from an estimated 12.7 million in 1990 to around 6.3 million in 2013. Over the same period, maternal deaths were reduced from about 523,000 to an estimated 289,000.<sup>16</sup> Helen Scott, Executive Director, Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, described the efforts made towards these health-related MDGs as “among the greatest development achievements.”<sup>17</sup> In fact, David Morley, President and Chief Executive Officer, UNICEF Canada, called the progress of recent years a “child survival revolution.”<sup>18</sup>

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15 UN Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Official list of MDG indicators,” [Millennium Development Goals Indicators](#), effective 15 January 2008.

16 World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), The World Bank, and UN, [Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2013](#), Geneva, WHO, 2014, p. 25; and UN, “[Goal 4: Reduce child mortality](#),” Addendum, [The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014](#), New York, 2014.

17 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 31 March 2015.

18 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

Nevertheless, Mr. Morley reminded the Committee that 17,000 children still die “every day from preventable causes, where simple low-cost interventions exist to save them.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, despite significant progress, the task that the world set out to achieve almost 15 years ago has not yet been realized.

## **B. Surviving and Thriving**

In addition to the work laid out in the MDGs, testimony indicated that there needs to be a greater emphasis on ensuring that children and youth are protected and in a position to thrive. That objective requires action in a number of areas and in response to a multitude of challenges, from human trafficking and dangerous work to the many forms of gender-based violence. In a comment addressing the overall situation facing children and youth around the world, Ms. Jacovella commented that “the statistics on violence against children are alarming. Anywhere between 500 million and 1.5 billion children worldwide endure some form of violence, exploitation or abuse.”<sup>20</sup>

Susan Bissell, Associate Director, Programmes Division, Child Protection, UNICEF, set the context for the Committee by asserting that,

The time has come to say enough is enough and to centre the protection of children on the global stage. It is true that more children than ever before are being saved from preventable diseases. They are in schools, have access to potable water, and sanitary facilities have improved dramatically. As countries develop economically, the basics are being addressed, at least in part. What remains is a long list of child protection issues, from child labour to trafficking, female genital mutilation and cutting, child marriage, the sale of children, online bullying, and more. Sadly, no country is immune to violence, and to abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children.<sup>21</sup>

Ms. Bissell mentioned a number of examples to make this case. For one, she cited the global estimate that 1.2 million children are trafficked each year, even though the latter is an “old statistic” that she said is likely “a gross underestimation of the situation.”<sup>22</sup>

Another troubling situation is the many children around the world who are performing degrading and dangerous work. Ms. Bissell highlighted the example of children “who are sent down diamond mines daily, for whom daylight is an unknown.” Underscoring that she was speaking as of 2014 and “not 1768,” she stated that such a situation “is wrong.”<sup>23</sup> On this same issue, Elly Vandenberg, Senior Director, Policy and Advocacy, World Vision Canada, informed the Committee that, while there has been an overall reduction in the numbers since 2008, some “85 million children [are] still suffering in the

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19 Ibid.

20 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

21 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.



worst forms of child labour.” These are not, as she said, “paper routes” or “jobs on the farm.” They “are dirty, dangerous, and degrading jobs.”<sup>24</sup>

There are many global statistics that point to serious gaps in the protection of the world’s young people, including the following:

- Every two seconds, somewhere in the world a girl is married before her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>25</sup>
- An adolescent girl “dies as a result of violence” every 10 minutes.<sup>26</sup>
- Every year, around 70,000 adolescents in developing countries die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.<sup>27</sup>
- At least 130 million women and girls alive today – in countries in Africa and the Middle East where the practice is concentrated – have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting.<sup>28</sup>

Children are also suffering from conflict and displacement. The instability in the Middle East – the subject of a March 2015 report of this Committee – has taken a particular toll on children and youth in the region. UNICEF estimates that the ongoing violence in Syria and Iraq has now affected 14 million children. Within Syria itself, a country in its fifth year of crisis, up to 2 million children are living in areas that are largely out of the reach of humanitarian assistance.<sup>29</sup> Another example is Nigeria, where it was recently estimated that 800,000 children have been displaced as a result of the chaos and suffering that has been inflicted by Boko Haram and the associated armed conflict in the northeast of the country. In recent years and months, children have been killed, “subjected to extreme violence,” abducted from their communities and forced into marriage, among other violations. Moreover, schools have been destroyed and teachers and students targeted.<sup>30</sup>

Each of the challenges mentioned above is subject to its own complexity, something that is difficult to capture – much less compare – by stand-alone statistics. These examples do, however, reveal a general picture: a world in which, over a relatively

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24 Ibid.

25 FAAE, *Evidence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, [18 November 2014](#); [19 February 2015](#); and, [28 April 2015](#).

26 UNICEF, [A Statistical Snapshot of Violence Against Adolescent Girls](#), New York, October 2014.

27 UNFPA, [Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy](#), State of the World Population 2013, New York, 2013.

28 This figure is based on the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East for which data was available. UNICEF, [A Statistical Snapshot of Violence Against Adolescent Girls](#), New York, October 2014, p. 19.

29 UNICEF, [“14 million children impacted by conflict in Syria and Iraq: UNICEF,”](#) Press release, New York/Amman, 12 March 2015.

30 UNICEF, [Missing Childhoods: The impact of armed conflict on children in Nigeria and beyond](#), Child Alert, UNICEF, April 2015.

short period of time, millions of people have been lifted out of abject poverty and deprivation, in the midst of which many children and youth are still being left behind.

There are variations in the progress that is being made towards the realization of different aspects of child rights and development, with some areas recording fewer advances or little movement. That said, to make this point is not to privilege one sector at the expense of the others, or to consider one metric as a definitive picture of progress or failure. The main lines of effort – child survival, child development and child protection – cannot be disconnected from one another. They form pieces of the same whole: child well-being. Child well-being cannot exist where there is suffering and violence, just as it cannot be realized in the face of disease or in an environment devoid of learning.

A number of witnesses highlighted the connections that exist between and among the development objectives that have been established for children and youth, and their linkages to child protection. Evelyne Guindon, then-Vice President, International Programs, Right to Play, stated that it is increasingly recognized “that the exploitation of and violence towards children remains a major barrier to broader development goals, and it's undermining the very important gains we're having in health, education, and economic growth.”<sup>31</sup> Other witnesses also made this point, including Mark Lukowski, Chief Executive Officer, Christian Children's Fund of Canada, who argued that, “Without ending violence against children, it is almost impossible to finish the ambitious job that was started by the UN millennium development goals....”<sup>32</sup>

Throughout the Committee's study, witnesses emphasized the need to ensure that children not only survive but are also in a position where they can reach their full potential. For her part, while underscoring that child protection is “a minimum requirement to meeting our political and ethical responsibilities to girls and boys,” Patricia Erb, President and Chief Executive Officer, Save the Children Canada, argued that it “should not be an end in itself.” In her view, the goal must “be to enable children to become healthy, educated, and empowered citizens, engaged politically, socially, and economically, and actors and young leaders.”<sup>33</sup> Dr. Scott put forward a similar argument, stating, “It's not good enough that children survive birth and survive their first five years, they need to thrive.”<sup>34</sup> Mr. Morley illuminated the path ahead, referring to advancements that are needed going forward, such as birth registration, “quality secondary schooling” and legal frameworks protecting children from exploitation and abuse. As he said: “Now we need to take the next steps.”<sup>35</sup>

There is a clear moral and legal imperative for states to end violations of children's human rights. Furthermore, the strategic case for treating child protection as a core

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31 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014. Since 23 February 2015, Evelyne Guindon has been the Chief Executive Officer of Cuso International.

32 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

33 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

34 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 31 March 2015.

35 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

and necessary part of development efforts – and national policies – is supported by a study done by the United Kingdom-based Overseas Development Institute, which tried to quantify some of these issues. It looked at the economic toll of violence against children, estimating that the “global costs related to physical, psychological and sexual violence...are between 3% and 8% of global [gross domestic product, GDP].”<sup>36</sup> Emphasizing that the study’s estimates reveal a “massive cost,” the authors note that this cost is also “many times higher than the investment required to prevent much of the violence from taking place.”<sup>37</sup> To put things in perspective, when she spoke to the Committee, Sarah Stevenson, United Nations Representative, ChildFund Alliance, pointed out that the study’s higher-end estimate – 8% of global GDP – “includes the combined GDPs of Australia, Canada, India, and Mexico.”<sup>38</sup>

In general, the risks of not taking preventative action are amplified when the size of the global child and youth population is taken into consideration. In 2013, the total population of people from 0 to 24 years of age was an estimated 3.1 billion of the world’s total population of 7.2 billion people. In the least developed countries, children under the age of 15 comprised 40% of the population.<sup>39</sup> Ms. Jacovella summarized the policy context underpinned by these figures with her statement that, “Child protection is a fundamental element of achieving global stability, security, and prosperity.”<sup>40</sup>

## SEIZING THE MOMENT AT THIS CRITICAL JUNCTURE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### A. The Post-2015 Development Agenda

The world has reached a critical juncture in its pursuit of economic and social development. As the Committee was completing its study, representatives of the world’s governments at the UN were beginning the final negotiating process on the successor framework to the MDGs, known as the “post-2015 development agenda” and sustainable development goals (SDGs). The new agenda and goals are expected to be adopted at a special summit scheduled from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York.

The new agenda is significant for a number of reasons. First, it is supposed to be the high-level blueprint that will guide global development efforts from 2015 until 2030.

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36 Paola Perezniето, Andres Montes, Solveig Routier and Lara Langston, [The costs and economic impact of violence against children](#), Overseas Development Institute, London, September 2014, p. ix. The report was commissioned by the ChildFund Alliance. The researchers acknowledge that the “task of producing evidence in this field at a global level is a challenging one. The main limitation – recognised by all researchers working on studies on violence against children, particularly in relation to its economic costs – is the dearth of complete data in the majority of countries, making it difficult to calculate accurate national and global estimates.” See p. 6.

37 Ibid, p. ix.

38 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

39 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, [World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables](#), New York, 2013, p. 7.

40 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

Second, it is intended to be universal in nature.<sup>41</sup> Third, it is also ambitious in scope. While details are still being negotiated, the new agenda will generally address the full range of issues – economic, social and environmental – relevant to sustainable development. Fourth, where the MDGs sought reductions, several proposed SDGs would push for the elimination of problems, such as extreme poverty and hunger. Fifth, some of the goals and targets currently under negotiation would address issues that were not included in any form in the original MDGs.

Rosemary McCarney, then-President and Chief Executive Officer, Plan International Canada Inc., indicated that child protection was “absent” from the MDGs.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the negotiation of the new framework represents an important opportunity to secure the inclusion of child protection as a core development priority.

Doing so will require committed voices in UN processes and political will. In her testimony, Ms. Bissell underscored that the prevention of violence against children “must be a clearly articulated goal.”<sup>43</sup> Unambiguous language on specific issues is important in the context of a global framework like the post-2015 agenda. Goals that are compelling, understandable and easy to communicate become more than just words on a page. They can be a focal point for action as well as a tool for raising awareness and measuring and reporting on progress. They can also provide an organizational framework for resource allocation. Conversely, those issues that are not explicitly included may, in the process, be overlooked. In making the general case for child protection to be a visible part of the post-2015 agenda, which was not the case with the MDGs, Ms. Bissell related one of her team’s sayings, which is that “if you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu, and we’ve been on the menu throughout the MDGs.”<sup>44</sup>

In the time since Ms. Bissell’s appearance before the Committee, a document has been produced that is the main basis for the intergovernmental negotiations that are under way on the goals and targets.<sup>45</sup> The report of the Open Working Group of the United

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41 The proposed goals are meant to be an “integrated, indivisible set of global priorities for sustainable development.” The accompanying targets are described by the Open Working Group as “aspirational global targets, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition, but taking into account national circumstances.” See UN General Assembly, [Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals](#), A/68/970, 12 August 2014.

42 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014. In [June 2015](#), Rosemary McCarney became the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Office of the United Nations and to the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

43 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

44 Ibid.

45 [The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet: Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda](#), UN General Assembly, A/69/700, 4 December 2014. For further information on key dates and intergovernmental sessions, see UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, [2015: Time for Global Action for People and Planet](#).

Nations General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals proposed 17 goals and 169 targets,<sup>46</sup> some of which are still in the process of being refined.<sup>47</sup>

The current list of proposed goals and targets would address many issues relevant to child well-being. These include targets that address child poverty, stunting and wasting in children under five years of age and access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education. Another proposed target is to end, by 2030, preventable deaths of newborns and children under five years of age. Regarding the world's substantial youth population, a proposed target would seek to substantially reduce by 2020 the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.

From the perspective of child protection, one of the 17 proposed goals is focused on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. It currently includes a target on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children.

Reacting to these proposals in November 2014, Ms. McCarney observed that none of the Open Working Group's 17 areas of focus "included child protection." She reiterated her organization's desire to "see a stand-alone child protection initiative in the post-2015 agenda,"<sup>48</sup> along with other specific targets and indicators.

In consideration of the existing MDG framework and the one that will soon replace it, a number of witnesses emphasized the importance of adopting an approach that is premised on ensuring that no one is left behind. Reports that provide statistics on any aspect of development progress according to geographic regions, and particularly those that portray the situation at a global level, can obscure substantial disparities within and among countries. Zulfiqar Bhutta, Co-Director, Centre for Global Child Health, Hospital for Sick Children, argued that there has to date been "a lack of focus on equity," noting that "the bulk of the global progress and change has been driven by progress in a handful of countries, the Brazils and Chinas of the world." Maternal and child health are instructive examples. Dr. Bhutta told the Committee that "there are many countries that are still far away from achieving those survival targets."<sup>49</sup>

As the international community transitions to the post-MDG period, Ms. Erb suggested that "some issues are starting to become more important. One of them is the issue of poverty and the 'hardest to reach'."<sup>50</sup> Extending the reach of development prosperity so as to realize the new commitments that are envisioned will, she said, require a new development methodology. Along these same lines, Mr. Morley highlighted his

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46 UN General Assembly, [Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals](#), A/68/970, 12 August 2014. The group included representatives from 70 nations; its discussions began in March 2013.

47 At the beginning of [May 2015](#), the Co-Facilitators of the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda provided a revised targets document – including the rationale for the proposed changes – for the consideration of member states.

48 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

49 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

50 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

organization's belief that "an equity-based approach is essential to ensure that the most disadvantaged children are included in future development progress."<sup>51</sup>

The MDGs were not designed to address explicitly underlying issues that can contribute to vulnerabilities, including discrimination, inequality and insecurity. Many of the children and youth who are currently 'out of reach' or 'left behind' are those who are mired in armed conflicts, overlooked or marginalized by state institutions and living in rural areas. As one example, Ms. Jacovella told the Committee that, of the estimated 57 million girls and boys around the world who are currently not attending primary school, around 50% "are in conflict-affected and fragile states."<sup>52</sup>

Speaking from the perspective of maternal and child health, Patricia Strong, Senior Manager, Program Development, International Operations, Canadian Red Cross, observed: "More than half of all maternal and child deaths occur in countries affected by disaster, conflict, and fragility in some of the most remote and troubled regions of the world." She emphasized that it is in these "hard-to-reach and dangerous contexts that women and children face the greatest threats to their lives, to their health, and to their survival with dignity." Taking this observation to its conclusion with respect to the proposed SDGs, Ms. Strong commented that it is only by reaching women and children in these areas "that we will see true progress towards our global goal of ending preventable maternal and child deaths by 2030."<sup>53</sup>

While most witnesses focused their post-MDG commentary on proposals for new goals and targets – and on the rationale for a more expansive approach to achieve them – a few cautioned that existing commitments should not, in the process, be forgotten. There is, after all, important unfinished business from the MDGs. Dr. Bhutta advised against declaring "premature victory in the maternal and child mortality scenario." He reminded the Committee that,

We still have 6 million children dying every year. We still have close to 280,000 women dying around childbirth and in child birth every year. That's a huge global challenge. In the quest for new indicators and new targets we shouldn't lose sight of that core function.<sup>54</sup>

Dr. Scott expressed her concern that, while children and youth are reflected in the extensive list of targets that has been proposed to date, "there aren't specific goals relating to women, newborns, and children in the way there were with the [MDGs]."<sup>55</sup> Without the same goals, the worry is that they will be missed. As such, her organization is calling for renewed commitments under the Muskoka Initiative and Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, the "2.0" version of which will also be launched in September 2015. In so doing, Dr. Scott added the "need to support the ambitious but achievable goal of

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51 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

52 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

53 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

54 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

55 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 31 March 2015.



ending preventable deaths by 2030 in the post-2015 negotiations” and the need to tackle “inequality by focusing on those groups that are furthest left behind.”<sup>56</sup>

## **B. A Leadership Role for Canada**

In consideration of the major processes that are unfolding at the international level, and as a more general comment, several witnesses argued that there is an opportunity for Canada to assume a leading role at the global level in advancing child protection. That sector has, as Ms. McCarney argued, “been long neglected.”<sup>57</sup> For her part, Ms. Guindon reasoned: “As we mark the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child—in Canada, the 10th anniversary of A Canada Fit For Children—it’s a pivotal moment to take strong leadership in child protection globally.”<sup>58</sup>

One of Canada’s five priorities for international development assistance is “securing the future of children and youth.”<sup>59</sup> With respect to the post-2015 development agenda, Ms. Jacovella informed the Committee that Canada is working to ensure that the rights of children will have a “central” place. She further specified that,

Canada is advocating for child protection to be addressed through the inclusion of measurable goals and targets related to improving maternal, newborn, and child health; eliminating all forms of violence against women and children; empowering women and girls; and eliminating child, early, and forced marriage.<sup>60</sup>

Regarding the final issue in that list, a number of witnesses highlighted Canada’s already established leadership role in pushing for the elimination of child, early and forced marriage, an issue that will be addressed in a later chapter.

The Canadian government is well-positioned to take a leading role on child protection as it can build on its contributions to various global initiatives supporting children and youth, including the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and GAVI (the Global Alliance for Vaccines), among other programs.<sup>61</sup> Most recently, in April 2015,

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56 Ibid.

57 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

58 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014. The document, *A Canada Fit for Children*, released in 2004, was the Canadian government’s national plan of action developed in response to the 2002 United Nations Special Session on Children.

59 DFATD, “[Thematic Priorities](#),” *Development Challenges and Priorities*; and DFATD, [Safe and Secure Futures for Children and Youth](#).

60 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015. For further information, see DFATD, [Post-2015 Development Agenda – Government of Canada Priorities](#).

61 Canada pledged \$500 million for GAVI’s 2016–2020 Strategy. Canada announced a \$650 million commitment for the Global Fund for 2014–2016. For further information, see DFATD, “[Minister Paradis Reconfirms Canada’s Support to Gavi’s 2016–2020 Strategy](#),” *News Release*, 28 January 2015; and DFATD, “[Canadian pledge to Global Fund affirms Canada’s leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria](#),” *News Release*, 2 December 2013.

the Minister of International Development announced Canadian support for the Global Partnership for Education.<sup>62</sup>

As its top development priority, Canada has targeted improvements in maternal, newborn and child health, an initiative that was launched at the 2010 G8 Summit in Muskoka. From 2010 to 2015, Canada committed \$2.85 billion to this initiative. Last year, at the *Saving Every Woman, Every Child: Within Arm's Reach* summit in Toronto, the Prime Minister announced that Canada would commit a further \$3.5 billion for 2015–2020.<sup>63</sup> Dr. Scott told the Committee that Canada's leadership helped to galvanize support for the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, which was initiated by the UN Secretary-General in 2010.<sup>64</sup>

Looking ahead to the next phase of global development, some witnesses also raised the issue of financial resources. While not an issue that is exclusive to child protection, it is generally clear that implementing the new development agenda and SDGs, including those relevant to children and youth, will require substantial financial resources: domestic and international, public and private. Those resources, and the strategies needed to mobilize them, will be the subject of an upcoming UN Conference, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 13 to 16 July 2015. Ambassador Rishchynski told the Committee:

The key discussion right now around the post-2015 development agenda is a recognition that domestic resource mobilization, people paying their taxes, is going to have to be a critical element in giving countries the ability to invest their own funds in addition to what might come from official development assistance, from private investment, and from philanthropic organizations. The scale of the needs that exist in a world with seven billion people that will grow to nine billion by 2040 simply outstrips what we as donors can provide. We're now a drop in the ocean, we're 15% of the total financial need that's out there.<sup>65</sup>

Speaking from the perspective of someone who has experience working in both a grassroots development organization and the private sector, Debra Kerby, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Feed the Children, said, "I see very much that they have to work in harmony. They are not separate spheres, as all of us know." She also suggested that there is a need "to look at those streams, at the value chain, if you will, from the community up to the global level to see the interfacing points of [official development assistance – ODA] financing and development financing."<sup>66</sup>

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62 Canada is committing \$120 million to the Global Partnership for Education. See DFATD, "[Harper Government Announces Support to Improve Children's Access to Quality Education in Developing Countries](#)," News Release, 16 April 2015, Washington, D.C.

63 Prime Minister of Canada, "[Canada's Forward Strategy Saving Every Woman, Every Child: Within Arm's Reach](#)," Toronto, Ontario, 29 May 2014.

64 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 31 March 2015.

65 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

66 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 May 2015.



For its part, the Canadian government has been exploring new mechanisms for development financing that could harness these different streams. For example, in September 2014, Canada, along with the World Bank, Norway and the United States, announced the creation of the Global Financing Facility in Support of *Every Woman Every Child*, an initiative focused on improvements in maternal, newborn and child health. According to the World Bank, this mechanism is intended to act “as a pathfinder in a new era of financing for development by pioneering a model that shifts away from a focus solely on [ODA] to an approach that combines domestic financing, external support, and innovative sources for resource mobilization and delivery (including the private sector) in a synergistic way.”<sup>67</sup> It will be launched formally during the July 2015 financing conference.

Even though the emphasis on sources of financing for development has shifted, Mr. Morley argued that ODA still fulfils an important role. He observed that,

Private and innovative sources of finance will be of increasing importance in financing the new SDG framework, and we welcome Canada’s leadership in promoting innovative ways to finance development. But official development assistance remains critically important for countries that have limited capacity to raise public resources domestically, as does halting the decline of ODA to the world’s poorest countries. Official development assistance and concessional finance should be targeted at those countries with the greatest needs, and an increased amount of ODA allocated for spending on children.<sup>68</sup>

With respect to the July 2015 financing conference, UNICEF Canada is encouraging the Canadian government “to work to introduce and support strong language on investing in children....”<sup>69</sup>

## **BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING**

Child protection requires a strong foundation. Realizing the twin objectives of surviving and thriving starts with interventions targeting early childhood development, and in particular the period known as the “first 1,000 days.” It is in that critical stage that child protection must begin. Otherwise, children will be setting out in their lives from an already vulnerable position and are much less likely to reach their full potential.

This point was the central message of the presentation made by Dr. Peter Singer, Chief Executive Officer, Grand Challenges Canada. He argued that “Canada’s approach to child protection should begin by protecting children’s brains in the first thousand days of life, starting from just before conception through to two or three years of age.”<sup>70</sup> In support of this approach, Grand Challenges has launched an initiative which it calls “saving

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67 The World Bank Group, “[Global Financing Facility in Support of Every Woman Every Child: Executive Summary](#).” With respect to newborn, child and maternal mortality, the summary further notes that, “A large funding gap remains – US\$33.3 billion in 2015 alone in high-burden, low- and lower-middle-income countries, equivalent to US\$9.42 per capita per year – that can only be addressed by dramatic increases in financing from both domestic and international sources.” For further information, see The World Bank, “[Global Financing Facility in Support of Every Woman Every Child](#),” *Brief*, 17 May 2015.

68 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

69 Ibid.

70 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

brains”. Speaking about the work championed by Grand Challenges Canada, Dr. Singer drew attention to simple innovations that can improve maternal health and newborn care. Those innovations can save lives, but “also save brains and help children reach their full potential.” He called this “the double dividend of Canada's commitment to maternal, newborn, and child health.”<sup>71</sup>

Other witnesses also drew connections between healthy mothers and healthy children. For example, John Button, President, Kiwanis International, informed the Committee that, in developing countries, 89% of children reach school-age – 10 years of age – if their mothers survive the neonatal period, which is the first 28 days following the birth of a child. Conversely, that statistic is only 24% in the case of children whose mothers died during the neonatal period. As Dr. Button made clear, the loss of a mother has devastating long-term effects for a child.<sup>72</sup> Ms. Kerby explained why focusing on women as a way of increasing the health and well-being of children is also central to her organization's work. Echoing the idea of a double dividend, she argued that advancing women's health and economic empowerment has a positive corollary impact on children because the women in question are better able to provide their children with nutritious food, keep them in school and pay for basic necessities.<sup>73</sup> Thus, healthy and empowered women are an integral part of ensuring that children are beginning their lives in an environment that will allow them to thrive.

Dr. Singer explained why the very early stages of a child's life are so important. He cited studies, including one from Guatemala, for example, which indicated that “children who received a more balanced nutritional supplement prior to three years of age earn 46% more as adults.” Another study, from Jamaica, “showed that children who received stimulation in those early years had lower rates, by two-thirds, of violent crime when they were teenagers.”<sup>74</sup>

Dr. Singer's testimony suggested that more needs to be done to act on this body of research and to reach children in this critical period. He told the Committee that it is “estimated that at least 200 million children fail to reach their full potential because of lack of attention to the early years.” There are three main risks to children's brains in that period, including those that are biological – such as insufficient nutrition – those that fall within the category of “enrichment and stimulation” in relation to “responsive parenting,” and external factors, such as exposure to conflict, maltreatment and violence.<sup>75</sup>

In making the case for focusing first on early brain development, Dr. Singer observed that such an approach is necessary because early childhood is the period in which children are at their most vulnerable. He said,

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71 Ibid.

72 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 May 2015.

73 Ibid.

74 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

75 Ibid.

If you don't pay attention to the survive and thrive in the early years, the first thousand days, you're essentially going up the down escalator, even in school. You'll have more behavioural problems. You'll have more difficulty learning, so you really need to lay the fundamentals in the maternal neonatal child health space.<sup>76</sup>

Targeted investment in those same early years can have multiplier effects throughout a child's life.

Malnutrition is, as noted, one of the risks that can confront young children and potentially impair their development potential. This challenge was highlighted in particular by Joel Spicer, President, Micronutrient Initiative, whose remarks focused on nutrition as “a key component of child protection.”<sup>77</sup> While malnutrition is typically treated as a health issue, Mr. Spicer articulated why it is a child protection issue by illustrating the connection between nutrition levels and child vulnerability. He relayed that,

Every night, 300 million children go to bed hungry. Every year, almost three million children under the age of five die due to poor nutrition. They lack the resilience that is needed to fight off opportunistic infections and disease. That is nearly half of all child deaths in the world, 8,000 children every day, one every 10 seconds. Over 160 million children are stunted, small for their age, and they don't have enough of the basic nutrients they need to function, to grow, and to develop to their full potential.<sup>78</sup>

Mr. Spicer also drew attention to the cycles of vulnerability that can be created by malnutrition, observing that,

A girl who looks like she is 10 or 11 is actually 16 and about to be married. Her chances of dying during childbirth, and her baby's chances of dying or being damaged for life due to malnutrition, are that much higher, and the cycle repeats itself. Malnourished adolescent girls have low birth weight babies, who become stunted children, who grow to be stunted adolescents, and the cycle goes on.<sup>79</sup>

As will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, true development progress – the kind that encompasses the very children and youth who are currently marginalized and at the highest risk of falling behind – will not take hold so long as such cycles of vulnerability endure.

Mr. Spicer also suggested that there is an opportunity for Canada to capitalize further on its history of leadership in the field of nutrition. He argued that “there is much more we can do to harness that leadership to influence others around the world in a way that would have a transformative impact on children.” Canada can do so, Mr. Spicer said, “by increasing [its] influence with other donors, other countries, and geopolitical blocs.” He added: “Canada can use its voice to make it more of a priority by using our

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76 Ibid.

77 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 31 March 2015.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

significant development, trade, and diplomatic capabilities together in order to serve as force multipliers.”<sup>80</sup>

Witnesses highlighted birth registration as another early intervention that can have a significant influence on a child’s long-term development trajectory. There are many children in the world today, some 230 million under the age of five, whose birth – i.e., their existence – was never recorded. Having the document that typically accompanies such registration, a birth certificate, translates into a legal identity, which is of fundamental importance for child protection. Indeed, Ms. Bissell told the Committee that UNICEF refers to birth registration as “a child’s passport to protection for life.” She pointedly said that, without it, “the risks of being bought and sold, trafficked without legal documentation, and other potential harms are great.”<sup>81</sup>

There are particular complexities to obtaining legal identity when children are born in situations of armed conflict, particularly when their mothers are children themselves. This challenge was highlighted by Linda Dale, Executive Director, Children/Youth as Peacebuilders, who spoke to the Committee about girls who have been forced to be “wives” for Lord’s Resistance Army fighters in northern Uganda.<sup>82</sup>

Several witnesses underscored that birth registration allows children to access social services, such as health care and school enrolment. It is also a means of protecting their rights under the law. For example, Mr. Morley drew the connection between valid birth certificates and the enforcement of minimum age legislation, which “can protect children from early child marriage, recruitment of children in armed forces, or some of the worst forms of child labour.”<sup>83</sup> Ms. Jacovella noted that registration also enables children “to be traced if they become separated from their families, displaced, or trafficked.”<sup>84</sup> Overall then, if birth registration is a form of armour, its absence is akin to being draped in a cloak of invisibility, with dire consequences for the child. Among his proposals related to the post-2015 development agenda, Mr. Lukowski called on Canada to continue its support for the inclusion of a specific target on universal birth registration.<sup>85</sup>

Ms. Bissell also highlighted birth registration as part of building civil registration and vital statistics systems of “a high standard,” an issue that will be dealt with again in the final chapter of this report. She referenced a UNICEF guide book that was developed on this very topic. It indicates that, “Improvements in birth registration are rarely possible unless the civil registration system as a whole is improved.”<sup>86</sup> From the perspective of development assistance, the same guide also states that international donors “can and

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80 Ibid.

81 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014. For further information, see UNICEF, [Every Child’s Birth Right: Inequities and trends in birth registration](#), New York, 2013.

82 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 May 2014.

83 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

84 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

85 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

86 UNICEF, [A Passport to Protection: A Guide to Birth Registration Programming](#), UNICEF, New York, 2013, p. 21.

should assist with advocacy and financial and technical assistance to achieve what can be complicated civil registration reform processes.”<sup>87</sup>

One such form of technical assistance is working with countries to harness the potential of information and communications technology. Kiernan Breen, Director, International Programs, Cuso International, described his organization’s volunteer-driven work in Tanzania “to increase the spread of birth registration by raising the importance of registration with parents and using mobile-phone technology to aid the process.” After noting that “most countries in Africa have not progressed much in reforming their civil registration and vital statistics systems,” Mr. Breen suggested that this area “is a critical development issue to which Canada has much to offer.”<sup>88</sup>

## **BREAKING THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE, POVERTY AND EXCLUSION**

In addition to a solid foundation, children and youth need a path to development and prosperity. As is clear from the issues dealt with in this report, there are risks and adversity confronting children and youth along the way that may divert them or even push them off that path completely. Some fall into a trap that can endure across generations. Those risks take many forms, including extreme poverty, poor health, inadequate education and discrimination, as well as violence, exploitation and abuse.

Many of these development challenges do not fall easily into contained categories. One or more of them can be the cause or the result of the others. Gender inequality and the low value placed on girls in many societies – something that was highlighted by several witnesses – is one example. Jacquelyn Wright, Vice-President, International Programs, CARE Canada, told the Committee that, in all the countries where her organization works,

...girls and women are disproportionately affected by poverty and discrimination. This poverty comes from a chronic scarcity of basic necessities: clean water, food, and protection from deadly diseases such as malaria or dengue fever. The scramble to survive on limited resources inevitably creates a pecking order, the bottom of which is almost always occupied by young girls.

Once you are considered expendable, the road from being pulled out of school to help with chores, to going to bed hungry during lean seasons or times of crisis, to becoming a victim of gender-based violence can be surprisingly short.<sup>89</sup>

Nutrition and maternal and newborn care, as discussed previously, are other examples. Dr. Bhutta drew attention to them in demonstrating how vicious cycles can take root. He observed that,

...close to a fifth of all stunting in children at six months of age is determined by the nutritional status of the baby. The nutritional status of the baby in turn is closely

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87 Ibid, p. 45. Note: the issue of civil registration will be discussed again in the final thematic chapter on “Embracing Innovation and Data.”

88 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

89 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

dependent upon the nutritional status of the mother. The nutritional status of the mother in turn depends upon what she was like when she was a girl. If you just do the statistics, it turns out that for around a third of all small-for-gestational-age births worldwide—babies who were born less than five pounds in weight and are therefore exposed to a developmental trajectory that's very different from their normal counterparts—the root cause lies in the way we support young mothers, young girls, in opportunities for development and education.<sup>90</sup>

Thus form cycles of vulnerability. Within them can be found many of the people who are the individual human reality of descriptors commonly used in the lexicon of development, such as 'marginalized' and 'left behind'.

Witnesses generally emphasized the need to address the root causes of the violence, exclusion and poverty that are experienced by too many children and youth. Doing so, as Ms. Erb emphasized, requires “a holistic approach,”<sup>91</sup> and one, as advocated by Ms. Guindon, which integrates “child protection into all interventions.”<sup>92</sup>

Children and youth face a range of vulnerabilities. As such, a number of witnesses stressed the importance of child protection systems. Ms. Bissell explained that the child protection sector has evolved over the years “from more issue-based, response-driven programming to one that focuses on systemic, holistic approaches that address the multiple underlying vulnerabilities of children and their families.”<sup>93</sup> Given the number of potential vulnerabilities, Ms. McCarney noted that the idea behind building “strong child-based community protection systems and national child protection mechanisms” is to avoid interventions, as she said, which could “actually set the child up for more vulnerability.”<sup>94</sup> As a comprehensive approach, the focus on systems strengthening is also intended to avoid a situation in which certain problems – that is, specific protection issues – and children could be missed and fall through the cracks.

Ms. Vandenberg described the “systems-based approach” as one that aims to strengthen a child and at the same time the “protective shield” around that child.<sup>95</sup> The basis of the approach was detailed by Ms. Erb, who pointed to four pillars of protection. One is comprised of government laws, policies and regulations. Another is services, including those provided by governments but also by non-governmental organizations. The third pillar is the work done with the children themselves to ensure they are strong and empowered. The final pillar is focused on strengthening communities, including families and religious authorities, so that they “are also involved with protection.” Each of these

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90 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

91 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

92 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

93 Ibid.

94 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

95 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.



pillars is “essential.” As Ms. Erb attested, “You cannot get a good system that is sustainable without any of those pieces.”<sup>96</sup>

It was also emphasized that effective child protection does not come from a one-way or top-down model. Several witnesses stressed the central importance of children's participation in the programming and the decision-making that concerns them. As Ms. Guindon insisted: “Children must be provided with meaningful and inclusive opportunities to express their views and to engage in mutually respectful dialogue with adults, and they must take action in order for child protection to work.”<sup>97</sup> In addition to being a right guaranteed by the CRC, Will Postma, Vice President of Global Partnerships, Save the Children Canada, emphasized that participation is “also a very powerful means to achieve the protection of girls and boys and to support them and build their resilience.”<sup>98</sup> Indeed, Cicely McWilliam, Senior Advisor, Policies and Campaigns, Save the Children Canada, argued that child participation is important precisely because it is the children themselves who are “able to articulate what the greatest risks are that they face.”<sup>99</sup>

Given the vulnerabilities that child protection seeks to address, testimony also indicated that such work must be thought of as a cross-cutting international issue, relevant to diplomacy, development and trade. Related to the first stream, diplomacy, initiatives that were highlighted included those aimed at raising awareness so as to build momentum for change. Resolutions and campaigns at the UN and in other multilateral bodies are examples of such efforts. So is the work that goes into pushing for the inclusion of strong language and commitments in the agreed texts that emerge from such bodies.

The work of development policy and programming as concerns child protection is wide-ranging and is covered in all chapters of this report. One example relevant to this chapter's overarching theme is development assistance that is focused on building and implementing strong national protection frameworks. Such laws and policies are, as noted above, one of the pillars of child protection systems.

When Ms. Bissell appeared before the Committee, she decried the “dearth of examples across the sector where there are scalable programs to achieve results for children.”<sup>100</sup> She then pointed optimistically to a couple of examples of projects that are under way, including one being supported by Canada in partnership with UNICEF in Ghana. As it is described by DFATD, the project aims “to better protect children from violence, exploitation, abuse, and discrimination by strengthening national child protection laws and policies, improving child and family welfare and justice services, and promoting positive and protective attitudes and behaviours towards children.” Support will, among other things, target the development of a National Child and Family Welfare Policy and a Juvenile Justice Policy. DFATD further indicates that the project is focused “on the

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96 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

97 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

98 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

99 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

100 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

five most deprived regions of Ghana and expects to help 4.5 million children.”<sup>101</sup> In Ms. Bissell’s assessment, the project “holds great promise.” She continued by underlining that, “It is a substantive grant that will allow the team and its partners to take child protection efforts to scale. Such investments are rare. They need to be encouraged.”<sup>102</sup>

Janine Maxwell, Co-Founder, Heart for Africa, was asked about the role of child protection laws during the presentation of her organization’s work with orphaned children in Swaziland, which is centered on their farming initiative known as Project Canaan. The country is, as Ms. Maxwell underlined, a case study of child vulnerability. For example, it is estimated to have “the highest HIV rate in the world.” Moreover, there are an “estimated 15,000 households headed by orphans, where the eldest person at home is 15 years old or younger.”<sup>103</sup> Some 90 orphans or abandoned children, all under the age of four, live at the children’s campus on Project Canaan.

Child protection legislation – the *Children’s Protection and Welfare Act, 2012* – was put in place by the Government of Swaziland. From Ms. Maxwell’s perspective, “It does all of the things we would like it to do.” The Act contains a number of parts, including general principles and rights – among them, for example, the right to birth registration and the right to be protected from harmful practices. It also contains parts on children in need of care and protection, as well as parts that address the sale, harbouring and abduction of children, and protective measures relating to the health of children.<sup>104</sup> In Ms. Maxwell’s view, citing the provisions regarding children who have been orphaned or abandoned, the Act “is well used.”<sup>105</sup> Even so, given the systemic challenges faced by children in Swaziland, enforcement of those rights and protections will likely continue to be an issue and a priority for many years to come.

On issues related to trade and Canada’s international trade policies, Ms. Vandenberg pointed to the importance of examining supply chains and trade agreements from the perspective of child labour. Addressing these issues, she said, also requires the existence of “safe alternatives” to child labour.<sup>106</sup> The Canadian government’s general position, as articulated in its policy on corporate social responsibility abroad, is that it “expects and encourages Canadian companies working internationally to respect all applicable laws and international standards, to operate transparently and in consultation with host governments and local communities, and to conduct their activities in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.”<sup>107</sup>

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101 DFATD, “[Project profile: Support to Child Protection Programme](#),” Project No. D000306-001.

102 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

103 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 March 2015.

104 Reference document provided to FAAE by Janine Maxwell (Heart for Africa).

105 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 March 2015.

106 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

107 DFATD, [Corporate Social Responsibility](#). Voluntary provisions on corporate social responsibility have been included in recent Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreements and Free Trade Agreements, including those agreed to by Canada with Peru, Colombia, Panama and Honduras.



Some witnesses spoke about ensuring that all children, including those living in impoverished communities, benefit from economic development. Mr. Postma argued that, “without attention to children's rights and protection, business operations can...have unintended negative consequences, including an increase in the worst forms of child labour: unsafe working conditions, violence, and sexual exploitation.”<sup>108</sup> He and other witnesses highlighted the Children’s Rights and Business Principles, which were launched by Save the Children, UNICEF and the UN Global Compact in 2012. They were developed, as Mr. Postma explained, in response “to a call from the UN for companies in the private sector to better address the rights of children.” The principles “are intended to guide and encourage businesses to respect and support children's rights as part of their activities in the workplace, marketplace, and community.”<sup>109</sup> Ms. Jacovella confirmed that Canada has welcomed these principles.<sup>110</sup>

Commenting on the principles from the perspective of private sector engagement in development, Ms. McCarney argued that,

As Canada moves towards a greater emphasis on public-private partnerships for development, which we highly support, clear standards and expectations must be articulated in terms of how we do business overseas.

As part of a comprehensive due diligence process, we encourage the government to actively promote the necessary tools and resources to see that these business principles respecting children's rights are put into place. As a first step, this would include integrating the children's rights and business principles into the terms of reference, for example, for all DFATD private sector partners.<sup>111</sup>

Mr. Morley expressed that his organization is also encouraging the Canadian government “to tie the children's rights and business principles and child rights impact analysis into any funding that goes to the private sector overseas.”<sup>112</sup>

The connection between economic development, business practices and human rights are also relevant to the discussions on the content of the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs. Among his other proposals, Mr. Lukowski’s organization, for example, is asking the Canadian government “to support the implementation of targets for the immediate elimination of all child labour by the year 2025.”<sup>113</sup>

The issues discussed in this chapter have illustrated roles that can be played, and experience and expertise that can be offered, by governments, civil society organizations,

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108 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

109 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014. For further information, see Children’s Rights and Business Principles, [“Introduction.”](#)

110 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015. For further information, see DFATD, [“Government of Canada Welcomes Release of Business Principles to Protect Children’s Rights,”](#) *News Release*, Toronto, Ontario, 13 February 2014.

111 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

112 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

113 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

businesses, international organizations, communities, and children and their families, all towards the realization of child protection. What it indicates is that building an integrated response to child protection, and one that is centred on systems-strengthening, requires the engagement and partnership of all stakeholders.

## ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

The lives of many young women are scarred by violence, poverty and exclusion because of early marriage. The Committee received detailed information on this issue during the course of its study. It learned that child marriage is an abuse of human rights and impedes development. As such, the practice is relevant to a host of development challenges that include maternal and child mortality and gender inequality. Thus, while the issue will be discussed at length here, it is also relevant to a subsequent chapter focused on adolescents.

Sarah Degnan Kambou, President, International Center for Research on Women, explained that child, early and forced marriage “includes any legal or customary union involving a boy or girl below the age of 18, or any marriage without the free and full consent of both spouses.”<sup>114</sup> In the developing world, one in three girls is married before the age of 18; one in nine is married before the age of 15. Dr. Degnan Kambou noted that child marriage “is a worldwide problem that crosses cultures, religions, and geographies.”<sup>115</sup> Providing the same statistics, Mabel van Oranje, Chair, Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage, noted that the practice is “most common in South Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa.” She specified that, “In South Asia 46% of all girls are married by the age of 18 and in sub-Saharan Africa it's 39%.”<sup>116</sup>

The Committee heard from two grassroots organizations that are each working in one of those regions to address the problem of child marriage as part of the Girls Not Brides network. Ashok Dyalchand, Member, Institute for Health Management, Pachod, described the situation in India. There, it is estimated that, from a population of 113 million adolescent girls, some 45% – the “national average” – are expected “to get married before 18 years of age, which amounts to 51 million girls.”<sup>117</sup>

Amina Hanga's organization, Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative, is based in Kano, in the northwestern part of Nigeria. She told the Committee that, while child marriage is declining in the country's urban areas, “in the rural areas it's still very common for girls to be married off at the age of 13, 14, or 15.” The primary reason in her view is the “low value placed on girls.” In an area where poverty and illiteracy are both high, there is “also ignorance and no appreciation for the value of education, especially for girls.”<sup>118</sup>

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114 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

115 Ibid.

116 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

There is a reason that child marriage is considered a harmful practice by human rights bodies and labelled as such in UN human rights resolutions. The consequences, as described by many witnesses, are decidedly negative, and in many cases, long-lasting.

Ms. van Oranje provided several examples illustrating how child marriage is an abuse of human rights and “also undermines our efforts to end global poverty.” The goal of ending maternal mortality will not, for example, be achieved so long as there are “girls with 13-year-old and 14-year-old bodies delivering babies[.]”<sup>119</sup> Ms. van Oranje reinforced that these “child brides are themselves still children.” Another example she mentioned is education. Any push towards universal education cannot be achieved so long as “girls are pulled out of school in order to get married[.]” The deprivation of education is problematic for many reasons, including lower earning power, which not only affects girls but the prosperity of communities. Altogether, Ms. van Oranje pointed out that “child marriage is linked to six of the current eight millennium development goals that have been set to help eradicate poverty—six out of the eight.”<sup>120</sup>

Testimony also established a connection between early marriage, adolescent pregnancy and heightened risks of maternal mortality and disability from childbirth. For her part, Dr. Degnan Kambou told the Committee that, “When a girl is forced to marry, she may face serious health complications, even death, from early pregnancy and early and repeated childbearing. She is often at higher risk for HIV infection and intimate partner violence.”<sup>121</sup>

In pointing to the connection between early marriage and maternal health, Ms. Jacovella emphasized that “complications for pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of death for girls in the developing world, and many of them are married young.”<sup>122</sup> Indeed, Ms. van Oranje indicated that “if you are 15 or younger when you have your first child, the chances that you will die in childbirth or that you'll have complications are five times greater than if you are in your early twenties when you have your first child.”<sup>123</sup> James Chauvin, Member of the Board of Directors, Canadian Society for International Health, also underlined the health complications that can result from an early marriage, which include “limited access to health services, and premature labour.”<sup>124</sup> Ms. Wright pointed to many of the same challenges, indicating that these girls “will often give birth alone, without a trained birth attendant.”<sup>125</sup>

Witnesses also traced the links between early marriage and poor child and infant health. Ms. van Oranje said that, “Infant mortality is 60% higher for children of those young

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119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

121 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

122 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

123 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

124 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

125 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

child brides.”<sup>126</sup> Mr. Chauvin noted that “malnutrition indicators have been found to be worse for children born to mothers married as minors.”<sup>127</sup>

The isolation that often results from child marriage also warrants attention. Dr. Degnan Kambou described these consequences by noting that a girl who is forced to marry “is often isolated, taken away from her family, school, and peers, and given little to no opportunity to participate in community life.”<sup>128</sup> Ms. Wright similarly commented that “child, early and forced marriage is especially pernicious because it pushes young girls farther and farther beyond the reach of those who would help them.”<sup>129</sup> The troubling spectre of marginalization was also mentioned by Ms. Hanga in her discussion of the reasons why girls are being withdrawn from school early by their families, based on her work in Nigeria. She explained that sometimes they “are afraid of the girls bringing shame on the family, that is, maybe having children out of wedlock, or suffering sexual harassment. They would rather marry these girls off.”<sup>130</sup> Ms. Hanga’s organization is working to help families understand the associated consequences, including maternal health risks and child malnutrition.

With respect to the causes of child marriage, Ms. van Oranje told the Committee that the “exact drivers of child marriage vary from one context to another....” That said, she highlighted “four key drivers.” These are poverty, security – including in the context of refugee camps –, tradition and gender inequality, including the lower value placed on girls.<sup>131</sup> Dr. Degnan Kambou informed the Committee that, “While different traditions and socioeconomic circumstances perpetuate the practice in different contexts, child marriage tends to be more prevalent in poor and rural communities and households, and in countries and communities where women and girls have limited educational and economic opportunities.” She noted: “In many societies women’s primary role is seen as reproductive.” Moreover, she also stated that, “Laws and policies that govern birth registration, marriage registration, property rights, education, and health may be key variables in regards to the practice of child marriage.”<sup>132</sup>

From the perspective of Sandeep Prasad, Executive Director, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, gender inequality is a key driver. He argued that the causes of early and forced marriage,

...are deeply rooted in gender-based inequalities, norms, and stereotypes, including traditional patriarchal perceptions of women’s status and roles in society, as well as social control of women’s bodies and sexual choices. Early and forced marriage constitutes one example of how these root causes are manifested in societies. Other examples include

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126 Ibid.

127 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

128 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

129 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

130 Ibid.

131 Ibid.

132 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

female genital mutilation and acid attacks, as well as keeping or pulling girls out of school, which of course is often a precursor to their being forced into early marriage.<sup>133</sup>

Mr. Prasad also pointed to other exacerbating “factors of inequality such as poverty, lower education level, and rural location.”<sup>134</sup>

Witnesses identified a number of steps that can be taken to address this harmful practice. Ms. van Oranje identified four key interventions. The first is the empowerment of girls. The second is “community dialogue with parents, with men and boys, and with traditional and religious leaders, to help them understand that there are alternatives to child marriage that are actually in the interest of the girl and the community.” The third is the provision of services for girls, particularly services that are “tailored to the needs of young adolescent girls.” Ms. van Oranje remarked: “Often when we look at health care services, including sexual health services, they target adult women but not young girls.” The fourth is the enactment and enforcement of laws prohibiting child marriage.<sup>135</sup>

For her part, Dr. Degnan Kambou identified five strategies that have been used to delay marriage. Along the lines of the interventions mentioned by Ms. van Oranje, she highlighted the empowerment of girls “with information, skills, and support networks” as the first strategy. The second is the education of, and engagement with, parents and communities, who in most cases have significant decision-making influence with respect to the timing of marriage. The third strategy identified by Dr. Degnan Kambou is ensuring that girls have access to high-quality education. She elaborated by noting that,

Girls with no education are three times as likely to marry as those with secondary or higher education. When girls are in school, they are less likely to be seen as ready for marriage, and they can develop supportive social networks and the skills to advocate for their needs. Incentives such as free uniforms and scholarships, programs that improve the safety and girl-friendliness of schools, and curricula that are relevant to girls' lives can help girls enrol and, most importantly, stay in school.<sup>136</sup>

The fourth strategy Dr. Degnan Kambou identified is economic support. Here, she observed that, “Providing a girl or her family with a loan, cash transfer, or an opportunity to learn an income-generating skill can yield immediate relief for struggling households, and can help girls be seen as bringing value to the family.” As indicated above, a fifth strategy focuses on the institution and implementation of laws and policies.<sup>137</sup> While child marriage may seem like an entrenched practice, Dr. Degnan Kambou commented that, “We have abundant evidence that harmful practices can and do change, even those enshrined in culture.”<sup>138</sup>

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133 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 21 April 2015.

134 Ibid.

135 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

136 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid.

The importance of education was emphasized repeatedly in discussions about how harmful practices can be prevented and attitudes changed. Ms. McCarney indicated that experience from programs on the ground, research and data indicate that “if we can get girls into secondary school, they’re six times less likely to be married off as children when compared to girls who’ve completed primary education only.”<sup>139</sup> That said, she too emphasized that the schools themselves need to be safe environments for learning, free from sexual and gender-based violence, “so that parents can be convinced to send their children to school as a safer alternative than marriage, which is often their motivation.” Ms. McCarney suggested that further progress is needed on this front, indicating that “violence against girls continues to be pervasive in the institution that all of us should be able to trust the most: their schools.”<sup>140</sup>

There are some positive signs in the response to the problem of child marriage. Recently, it has taken on increased prominence as an issue of international concern. Several witnesses highlighted Canada’s leadership – working in partnership with other governments and civil society organizations – to push for an end to child marriage. For the first time, in 2013, the United Nations [Human Rights Council](#) and the [General Assembly](#) adopted stand-alone resolutions on child, early and forced marriage, both of which were co-sponsored by Canada. The momentum generated by those initiatives continued to build at the UN. Ms. Jacovella informed the Committee that “in the fall of 2014 Canada and Zambia led the most substantive international [resolution](#) to date on child, early, and forced marriage.” She said, “We are proud that the resolution was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly.”<sup>141</sup> Dr. Degnan Kambou suggested that Canada’s engagement had helped to ensure the resolution’s adoption “and will, hopefully, lead to the inclusion of child marriage prevention in the adoption of the SDGs this fall.”<sup>142</sup>

Witnesses called for Canada’s continued support towards the inclusion of a stand-alone target on ending child marriage in the post-2015 agenda. The current package – as put forward by the Open Working Group – does contain a goal on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Under that goal, there is currently a target that would seek the elimination of “all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.” Another target is focused on the elimination of “all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.”

When asked her view of the way in which child marriage has been addressed in the current package, Ms. van Oranje replied that her organization was “happy” with the articulated target. While adding that she “would always love to see stronger language,” she indicated that they “can absolutely live” with the current formulation.<sup>143</sup> She also noted that, as one of the countries that had led on this issue in the negotiations, Canada had, in the

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139 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

140 Ibid.

141 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

142 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

143 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.



process, also reached out to countries with “high prevalence” rates “to bring them on board.” Regarding the work that still lies ahead, Ms. van Oranje stated that,

What we don't know as we enter the negotiations now for the open working group document is whether there will be pressure to merge some of them. What we don't want to see happen is that child marriage ends up being associated just with violence against girls and women, or just with education, or just with maternal health, or just with equality. That's not what child marriage is. Child marriage is related to all of these things.<sup>144</sup>

Mr. Prasad provided his view that, while it is unlikely that any one stakeholder “is perfectly pleased with the final outcome”, there is at present “quite a robust gender-equality goal, and at this point, we need to make sure we keep that package intact.”<sup>145</sup> Ms. Stevenson was of a similar opinion, believing that the next step is ensuring that the current target on child marriage is safeguarded in the final negotiations.<sup>146</sup>

While awareness is increasing and political will galvanizing within the multilateral context around the need to end the practice of child marriage, it seems that the international community is still closer to the beginning, rather than the final stages, of achieving that goal. This reality was implied by Mr. Prasad's observation on the current global trajectory of the problem. He said that, “In the next decade alone, 142 million girls will be forced into early marriages, so at the present time whatever efforts are happening are not sufficient to curb those numbers.”<sup>147</sup>

Witnesses made a number of suggestions regarding steps that are needed going forward. Ms. McCarney indicated that she would like to see “concrete action” on the part of the Canadian government,

...by developing a robust programmatic initiative that challenges child, early and forced marriage at multiple levels simultaneously. This should include a dedicated new funding envelope for child, early and forced marriage similar to the START mechanism of the older Foreign Affairs, because it's important that we put together not just the advocacy and our voice at the global level, where Canada is considered a well-regarded champion, but that we match that with real action on the ground.<sup>148</sup>

In Ms. McCarney's view, projects also need to target the women and girls who have already been married. This includes support for them to re-enter school, to have access to vocational opportunities and to be able to access health care, “including sexual and reproductive health.” Abandoning these girls would be a mistake, she argued, “because they will quickly become child mothers of a new generation of children.”<sup>149</sup>

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144 Ibid.

145 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 21 April 2015.

146 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

147 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 21 April 2015.

148 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

149 Ibid.

Ms. van Oranje encouraged continued leadership and long-term commitment – including funding and programming – to address child marriage. Some of this financial support should, she argued, “go to the grassroots organizations that are making a difference in the daily lives of the girls, and in their communities.” Ms. van Oranje also advocated that Canada streamline work on child marriage throughout its development interventions. Moreover, programs that are demonstrating results need to be scaled up.<sup>150</sup>

Ms. Wright emphasized the long-term nature of any efforts seeking to address child marriage and to help those women and girls who have already been married. She argued that, “Reversing something that is so ingrained in the fabric of a community is not done in four months, and it's not done even in four years.”<sup>151</sup> Ms. Wright framed the issue as follows for the Committee:

When we are able to change hearts and minds, and authorities become willing to enforce the laws that are on the books, what happens to these girls? They may be rescued from an early marriage, but who will take them in? Often the families do not want them and there are no shelters for them, no referral services, no child welfare agencies with trained staff that will provide a safe place to stay and help them get an education. Short-term funding does not allow for any of this. It may allow us to say we are addressing the problem, but it does not give us the right to think that we are. If we are going to see results, real comprehensive results, we need to make this a long-term development priority. That means that child, early and forced marriage must be at or very near the top of the pile on the desk of Minister Paradis.<sup>152</sup>

In Ms. Wright's view, what is needed going forward is “focus, patience, and the funding to back up the commitment.”<sup>153</sup>

In many ways, child marriage is a case study of the challenges discussed in the other chapters of this report. It can be the cause and the consequence of cycles of vulnerability. It can be used as a coping strategy by girls and their families in situations of armed conflict and displacement. It leaves young girls and women isolated and facing significant risks to their well-being. Moreover, addressing child marriage requires international support combined with work at the local level and with grassroots organizations. And all of these initiatives must be driven by data and best practices that can help to identify the programs that can make a difference.

## **PRIORITIZING PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES**

While the Committee's meetings on this study did not address in detail the issue of children in situations of armed conflict – and emergency settings more generally – two main points were brought to its attention. The first is that children and youth are suffering enormously from the effects of armed conflicts and from the deprivation and dislocation that they cause. In many of these areas, children and youth have fallen out of

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150 Ibid.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.



the reach of global development progress. The second point concerns funding and programming. Even though protection needs are a reality of emergency settings, it appears that the resources required to address them are not receiving sufficient priority as part of emergency responses.

The general situation was captured by Ms. Vandenberg, who noted that, in conflict situations, “many children are separated and without the protection of caring adults. This exposes them to high levels of violence, including gender-based violence, exploitation, abuse, and deprivation.”<sup>154</sup> Other witnesses discussed the issue from the perspective of health risks. Dr. Bhutta highlighted that “around a third of all under-five deaths and maternal deaths worldwide are now in geographies that are affected directly or indirectly by conflict.”<sup>155</sup> Ms. Strong noted that often during disasters and conflicts “health systems collapse or are unable to cope.” She pointed to the current example of Syria in this regard, describing how the “crisis has contributed to the resurgence of diseases that we thought were eradicated, such as polio, and children have no access to treatment for pneumonia or diarrhea.”<sup>156</sup>

On the second issue, programming and funding, Samantha Nutt, Founder and Executive Director, War Child Canada, told the Committee that, on balance, the summary of evidence on child protection indicates clearly that “education and economic development are strongly, positively correlated with the protection of children and youth across the developing world without exception.” From those central findings, she suggested that,

...to fully capitalize on these beneficial effects, Canada's strategy when it comes to emergency humanitarian assistance ought to evolve to reflect these realities by continuing to prioritize protection programming as part of our early intervention strategy.<sup>157</sup>

Dr. Nutt illustrated how protection gaps can emerge using the context of the refugee crisis that has been created by the ongoing war in Syria. In Jordan and Lebanon, when families are unable to work or to find work, children can be sent out to earn income through a variety of means, “such as prostitution, or other things such as begging in the streets or hard labour.” Dr. Nutt added that there can also be higher risks of early marriage and “some cases of the trafficking of children.”<sup>158</sup>

The Committee heard that, even in the initial response to a crisis or emergency, there is an opportunity to focus on the prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse. Lorna Read, Chief Operating Officer, War Child Canada, indicated that, in addition to

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154 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

155 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

156 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

157 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

158 Ibid.

response mechanisms targeting issues of immediate concern, “we also need to build in right away a dialogue around prevention in the long-term strategy.”<sup>159</sup>

Ms. Guindon echoed the need “to prioritize child protection as not only essential in the development sector but also in the humanitarian sector.” She highlighted one mechanism in particular, the creation of protective environments, which can “contribute to the safety and the well-being of children before, during, and after emergency.”<sup>160</sup> Ms. Vandenberg similarly suggested that “one practical thing Canada can do is ensure that creating safe spaces for boys and girls is prioritized as a key life-saving intervention.”<sup>161</sup> This issue has been brought to the Committee’s attention as part of its previous studies of crisis situations, which have all emphasized the need for children to have access to safe spaces where they can learn, play and interact.

Mr. Postma raised the issue of targeted funding in relation to humanitarian responses. He said that child protection “is one of the lowest-funded sectors in humanitarian response, second only to education in emergencies.” His organization is therefore calling on the Canadian government “to ensure that adequate funding is available for the protection of children in emergency responses and to strengthen the capacities of its staff and partners to implement the minimum standards on child protection.”<sup>162</sup>

Humanitarian and development assistance are distinct. There can be delays as well as missed opportunities in the transition from one to the other, particularly as different personnel and agencies are often involved. However, as the Committee heard, the actual challenges faced by children and youth in emergency situations are not so neatly defined or segregated. Dr. Nutt suggested that there is a need to take a closer look at the types of interventions that are defined as being part of emergency relief with the view to including other areas “that go beyond basic human needs,” such as education, employment and safe spaces. Dr. Read stated that “there has been some ongoing dialogue of late between what has been the traditional humanitarian arm and the more long-term development arm.” That said, she conceded that it is “really a struggle” to conceptualize and put in place the “bridge between the two.”<sup>163</sup>

According to Dr. Nutt, there has recently been “a greater willingness” to look at some of the activities mentioned above that traditionally would have been considered “non-emergency activities.” While acknowledging that the rationale for focusing on basic needs is clear and understandable, she said that “by not including, in that emergency strategy, education, both formal and informal; literacy, both formal and informal; activities

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159 Ibid.

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid.

162 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

163 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

for youth, both formal and informal, we are missing an opportunity at that very early stage of a crisis to actually create a more protected environment for girls.”<sup>164</sup>

While it has not come at the early stage of the crisis, Leslie Norton, Director General, International Humanitarian Assistance, DFATD, indicated that there has been a concerted effort to build in “resilience type programming” as part of the most recent UN appeals for the Syria context. This “much greater focus” on protection involves consideration of issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, educational needs and safe spaces, in addition to addressing the situation of unaccompanied minors and ensuring “psychosocial support for children who are traumatized.”<sup>165</sup> Ms. Jacovella informed the Committee that Canada is contributing to the “No Lost Generation” initiative, which is a partnership of UN agencies, international donors, governments and non-governmental organizations. She said that the initiative “supports Syrian and Iraqi children with the protective environment and learning opportunities they need.”<sup>166</sup>

The Committee heard that having an impact in all of these areas requires long-term commitment and funding cycles. Dr. Nutt provided the general comment that, “It takes a generation to see the effects of well-managed aid.” As such, within the context of child protection work, she argued that,

...funding cycles that are at a minimum of three to five years, even in those emergency phases, provide the kind of structure and the kind of continuity that allow families to actually have a more positive outlook, to not be fearful for their future, and to not engage in high-risk activities for themselves and for their children.<sup>167</sup>

These comments mirror those raised in the previous chapter regarding work to address child marriage and those that will be discussed in a later chapter on organizational and community capacity-building. Taken together, such testimony reinforces that the work of child and youth protection is a complex endeavour. In many cases, it involves activities – such as efforts to strengthen systems, create safe spaces and change entrenched social norms – that are necessary, but not easy nor likely to lead to quick results.

## REACHING AND EMPOWERING YOUTH

In 2014, people aged 10–24 comprised 25% of the world population, with the strong majority living in developing countries.<sup>168</sup> Dianne Stewart, Director, Information and

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164 Ibid.

165 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

166 Ibid.

167 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

168 UNFPA, [The Power of 1.8 Billion: Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future](#), State of the World Population 2014, New York, 2014, p. 115. Approximately 9 out of 10 of these young people, aged 10–24, live in what the UNFPA classifies as “less developed countries.” The less developed regions “comprise all regions of Africa, Asia (except Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean plus Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.” See p. 4 and p. 118. The UNFPA further clarifies that, “In the world’s least developed countries (a United Nations category that includes 33 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, eight in Asia, six in Oceania and Haiti in the Caribbean) the age group makes up 32 per cent of the population.” See p. 5.

External Relations Division, UNFPA, underscored that the current generation of young people is the largest in history. Moreover, it includes “600 million adolescent girls.”<sup>169</sup>

In general, the Committee heard that youth – and particularly adolescents<sup>170</sup> – face a number of specific challenges and vulnerabilities, from a lack of opportunities to heightened health risks. However, it seems that youth, as a distinct group, can be overlooked by development initiatives when compared to the global interventions that have been put in place for children under five years of age. Targeted support is required to ensure that this massive generation of global youth is equipped to lead healthy, hopeful and productive lives. Ms. Stewart argued that, “We cannot talk about sustainable development without ensuring that the needs of young people are met, and this requires investment and commitments.” The dividends from such investments, she suggested, would be substantial. If protected, educated and empowered, young people “will become powerful agents for social change and will shape a better future for us all.”<sup>171</sup>

Currently, many adolescents face impediments to the realization of that vision. Ms. Stewart stated that, “In many countries, adolescence is a time when life opens up for boys but closes down for girls.”<sup>172</sup> She cited a number of factors that contribute to this disrupted path for adolescent girls, including harmful practices, as well as sexual violence and adolescent pregnancy. Ms. Stewart added that,

Millions of adolescent girls and young women live in deep poverty. They may be working in domestic service or under unsafe occupations or be engaged in exploitative sex work. They may be migrants or affected by conflict or disaster, situations in which young women and girls are often at the highest risk of poor sexual and reproductive health, violence, and exploitation.<sup>173</sup>

Ms. Stewart again argued that promoting and protecting the human rights of these adolescent girls and women can enable them to “become powerful agents of social and economic development.”<sup>174</sup>

Some witnesses highlighted youth unemployment as a particular challenge. Sarah Moorcroft, International Program Manager, Street Kids International, estimated that the global youth unemployment rate is currently higher than 12.6% and “can be as high as 30%” in some regions. In this context, she maintained that many children and youth are living, working and begging on the street. Ms. Moorcroft made the following general observation: “There is also a growing security threat, with a stagnant youth population and

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169 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.

170 The UN defines adolescents as persons between 10 and 19 years of age.

171 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.

172 Ibid.

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

a ‘scarring effect’ for youth excluded from the labour market for significantly long periods of time.”<sup>175</sup>

Mr. Breen told the Committee that the phenomenon of youth unemployment “can also be linked to the growth of gang cultures and the rise of violent lifestyles, especially for young men.” He pointed to youth projects with “a strong emphasis” on employment and business development that are being implemented in such countries as Honduras, El Salvador, Jamaica, Nigeria, Peru and Bolivia.<sup>176</sup>

Livelihoods and self-sufficiency are important aspects of youth empowerment. Mr. Breen told the Committee:

It is worth stating the obvious, that the sense of achievement and pride that comes from young women and men starting their own business often transfers into other areas of their life and might, for example, lead to a young woman being better able to negotiate when she will get married and have children, and how many children she will have. It is also the case that young people who see economic opportunities before them are less likely to be attracted to gangs and criminal activity.<sup>177</sup>

Ms. Moorcroft similarly observed that, when youth are “empowered with essential economic and development life skills, they can thrive, and they do.”<sup>178</sup> Among other recommendations, she called for “increased investment” in youth that would be targeted at “formal and alternative education and training with specific programs for youth entrepreneurship, apprenticeship and vocational training, life skills, financial management, and literacy training, job search counselling, and job matching.” Ms. Moorcroft’s organization is also calling for Canada’s support regarding “employment creation and livelihood diversification” and with respect to “investments for youth to access safe credit, insurance, and savings programs to reduce the economic drivers of child and youth poverty.”<sup>179</sup>

In addition to creating livelihoods and fostering entrepreneurialism, other strategies that can help to empower youth are the creation of safe spaces and support for young leaders. Patricia Pelton, Member, YMCA Canada World Relationships Committee, YMCA Canada, told the Committee that safe spaces are a “hallmark” of the YMCA’s work.<sup>180</sup> The importance of safe spaces was also raised by Mr. Chauvin, who described initiatives that had been implemented a few years ago by the Canadian Society for International Health and the Canadian Public Health Association in the post-war Balkans. He said that they “demonstrated the value of youth-led safe places where they could discuss issues

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175 Ibid.

176 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

177 Ibid.

178 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.

179 Ibid.

180 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

they face and come up with strategies to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, sexual exploitation, drug use, and abuse.”<sup>181</sup>

Regarding leadership skills and development, Mary Anne Roche, Vice-President, Global Initiatives and Governance, YMCA Canada, told the Committee that the YMCA places “a strong emphasis on youth leading youth.” She summarized the rationale for that strategy as follows: “By building community among young people, we build their resilience and encourage their positive involvement in civil society.”<sup>182</sup>

Ms. Roche highlighted a “youth empowerment model” that is used by the Africa Alliance of YMCAs. It is called “subject to citizen”. The model’s name, she said, “reflects the goal of the Africa Alliance of the YMCA, which believes its mission is to empower young people to move forward toward an African renaissance, which is a way of talking about the renewal of Africa as designed by Africans themselves.” Rather than feeling as if they are “subjects to the conditions in which they exist,” the idea is to encourage these young people to feel a sense of agency. As Ms. Roche explained, it begins with the transformation of a young person’s mind-set “from that of being a subject to that of being a citizen, and a citizen being a young person who has a sense of agency, who believes that they can make a contribution to the community, that they can have a life of hope and contribution, education, jobs, and so on.”<sup>183</sup>

Agency was a theme that was also echoed by Mr. Breen, who said that his organization, Cuso, views “children and young people as active participants and agents of change and not simply consumers of services.” He argued that Canada “should seek to ensure that the voices of girls, boys, young men, and young women are ever present in all decision-making about children and young people, and should support innovative practice that seeks to empower and give a voice to children and young people.”<sup>184</sup>

Ms. Dale spoke about resiliency and leadership in the context of young girls in northern Uganda – many who are between the ages of 11 and 14 – who have escaped forced marriages and survived sexual violence. After emphasizing the “enormous resiliency” of these girls, she commented that, as a result of their experiences, they can often be treated “as victims in ways that enhances passivity.” Ms. Dale argued that these girls should instead be provided with “opportunities for them to learn about the meaning of citizenship in civil society” and to strengthen “their capacities and the avenues for them to contribute to their communities.”<sup>185</sup>

According to Caroline Marrs, Director, Centre for Gender Justice, Oxfam Canada, barriers to youth participation are rooted in “unequal power relations.” She said that youth are under-represented in different decision-making forums, and “their needs and insights

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181 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

182 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

183 Ibid.

184 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

185 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 May 2014.



are ignored or unknown by decision-makers in these same spaces.” Gender discrimination can compound the effects of this marginalization. Ms. Marrs explained why an understanding of these root causes is important in “meaningfully addressing barriers to participation.” She commented, for example, that, “Young people and children, particularly young women and girls, may be experiencing violence in the home or in the community, preventing them from benefiting from excellent programs.”<sup>186</sup>

When empowered, youth can be engaged in positive ways in schools, families, communities and societies. Ms. Marrs made this point in citing the example of young women and men who “are playing extremely active and transformative roles in Oxfam programs to change attitudes, norms, and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women and girls.” She said, “This is essential long-term work.”<sup>187</sup>

In all, testimony reinforced that investing in young people is an investment in the future, and, more pointedly, in a new generation of global leaders. This point was evident in the presentation made by Wilfrid Wilkinson, Past International President, Rotary International, who described his organization’s Peace Centers Program. He reported that the network of alumnae from that program has gone on to do important work, including in the field of child protection. As just one example, Mr. Wilkinson mentioned an alum who is now the Latin America and Caribbean policy director of the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which is based in Brasilia, Brazil. The investment in young people has therefore had a multiplier effect, as some of these same people are assuming leadership positions from which they will now help others.<sup>188</sup>

Youth, however, are much less likely to be in a position to capitalize on the leadership opportunities described above if they are not equipped to live healthy lives. The Committee heard that adolescents – including married girls – have health care needs that require targeted support. A couple of statistics are indicative. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), each year approximately 16 million women who are between the ages of 15 to 19 give birth. Some 95% of these births “occur in low- and middle-income countries.”<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, the WHO notes that, while maternal mortality among adolescents has “declined significantly since 2000”, it still “ranks second among causes of death of 15–19-year old girls globally, exceeded only by suicide.”<sup>190</sup> UNAIDS provides another revealing statistic. It estimates that “adolescents are the only age group in which deaths due to AIDS are not decreasing—this while all other age groups combined experienced a decline of 38% in AIDS-related deaths between 2005 and 2013.”<sup>191</sup>

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186 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 31 March 2015.

187 Ibid.

188 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 May 2015.

189 WHO, “[Adolescent pregnancy](#).”

190 WHO, Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health, “[Summary](#),” *Health for the World’s Adolescents: A second chance in the second decade*, WHO, Geneva, 2014, p. 2.

191 UNAIDS, [All In to #EndAdolescentAIDS](#), 2015.

As Dr. Dyalchand explained, interventions focused on adolescent girls would contribute substantially to the accelerated achievement of global goals on maternal and neonatal mortality. The reason, as he said, is simple. Maternal mortality among adolescent girls “is five times higher as compared to women of more than 20 years of age.”<sup>192</sup> After noting the global statistics on adolescent pregnancy, Ms. Stewart told the Committee that, “Many of those pregnancies result from non-consensual sex, and nine out of ten of those take place within early marriages.”<sup>193</sup>

One of the drivers of these health risks is insufficient access to sexual and reproductive health services and commodities. When asked how donor countries could help to improve the situation of adolescents, Ms. Stewart replied that “there are two key missing pieces here.” The first that she pointed to “is a huge demand for reproductive health commodities that is unmet.” Ms. Stewart told the Committee that there “are currently 221 million women who would like access to contraception and do not have it.” She further indicated that global programs focused on that area are underfunded. In reference to the UNFPA program that supplies commodities “to countries that aren’t able to manage those supplies on their own,” Ms. Stewart said that for 2015, “we are \$100 million short in that program, and that’s not even talking about a scale-up. That’s talking about meeting current demand.”<sup>194</sup>

The second missing piece from Ms. Stewart’s perspective is “youth-friendly services.” She reported that, for many young girls, “access to those kinds of services and products is curtailed by a lack of services that will even accept young women, and also a lack of availability of any kinds of services.” Reaching these young girls in the first place is often a challenge. Ms. Stewart observed that, even in the case of young women who have been married, they are “not old enough to seek those services on their own, and they don’t have permission to seek those services.”<sup>195</sup>

Mr. Prasad put forward his view that, as part of its focus on improving maternal, newborn and child health internationally, there “is certainly scope for greater investment by Canada” in respect of specific funding for family planning. Referring to Canada’s Muskoka Initiative, he said that \$30.87 million was allocated specifically for family planning funding for the fiscal years between 2010 and 2014. In his words, “Of the \$2.565 billion spent to that point overall through the Muskoka initiative, that was only 1.2% of the Muskoka initiative funds.” Mr. Prasad argued that investments in sexual and reproductive health – including family planning – support the fulfilment of human rights and “are also smart investments.”<sup>196</sup>

Mr. Prasad also drew specific attention to the issue of unsafe abortions. He commented that “if an adolescent girl experiences an unwanted pregnancy, she may

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192 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

193 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid.

196 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 21 April 2015.



lack access to safe abortion services and post-abortion care.” He listed a number of factors that may affect this access, including a given country’s laws, “the availability of the service, and, once again, spousal consent requirements.” Mr. Prasad said that, according to the most recent estimate, 48,000 women and girls die each year worldwide as a result of unsafe abortions.<sup>197</sup>

When speaking about access to abortion in the context of international development work, and Canada’s funding policy on that issue, Ms. McCarney commented that, “In most countries, what we would ask for is that it be rare, legal, and safe. In most countries in which we all work, it is none of those. It’s not available and it’s not legal.” She indicated that international development actors cannot “work against the laws of a particular country, so it’s limited, regardless of policy.” Ms. McCarney added that, “Other donors are trying to change laws, etc., sometimes effectively, sometimes not quite so effectively.”<sup>198</sup>

In addition to reproductive health services and commodities, there is also the issue of education. In discussing the need for “comprehensive sexuality education,” Ms. Stewart stated that, “It is a right of young people to understand how their bodies work and to have basic information about how to protect themselves and how adolescence and puberty is going to affect their lives.”<sup>199</sup> Mr. Prasad argued that such education is important from a preventative perspective “but also in terms of ensuring that adolescent girls and young women have the information they need to carry out fertility decisions, to protect themselves from HIV, and so on.”<sup>200</sup>

While young women and girls are often the focus of discussions about adolescents – including in the realm of sexual and reproductive health – several witnesses noted the importance of integrating young men and boys in the consideration of youth issues and programming meant to address those issues. Dr. Dyalchand observed that, over the years, “we have been addressing issues related to women and girls, but we’ve really never considered boys and men. We’ve never believed that they also had reproductive and sexual health problems that needed to be addressed.”<sup>201</sup>

Dr. Dyalchand indicated that, in addition to having their own needs, boys and young men can also be part of the solution to the problems facing young women and girls. One of the components of the strategy his organization implements to address child marriage in India is “dealing with boys and young men and making them gender sensitive, making them caring individuals, and reducing sexual abuse and domestic violence in our communities, because that is an additional load of morbidity that these girls suffer from.”<sup>202</sup>

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197 Ibid.

198 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014. For further information, see DFATD, “[Where we work in international development](#),” and United Nations, “[World Abortion Policies 2013](#),” Data Table.

199 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.

200 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 21 April 2015.

201 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

202 Ibid.

Working with male leaders at the local level can also, as Ms. Stewart indicated, help to change attitudes and practices. She commented that, “You can have the law on the books, but if local leadership and local government is not going to enforce it, you can't get anywhere.”<sup>203</sup>

As the end date of the MDGs draws near, witnesses argued that youth – and the issues affecting them – need to be addressed specifically in the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs. While her organization is “very encouraged” by the current formulation of the SDGs, particularly with respect to preventing child marriage and preventable deaths, Dr. Degnan Kambou indicated that they would like to see “an increased focus particularly on adolescent girls, because we feel that they are most vulnerable.”<sup>204</sup> Ms. Stewart similarly argued that, “as much as we know that the goals under maternal, newborn, and child health have not been reached, we have to factor in that adolescent health aspect in the post-2015 process.”<sup>205</sup> On the same issue, Dr. Bhutta expressed his hope that, in the finalization of the goals, “boys will not be ignored just because our focus has been on adolescent reproductive health in girls in particular.”<sup>206</sup>

Ms. Roche indicated that her organization is encouraging the Canadian government to invest in youth empowerment strategies, including “by advocating for more emphasis on young people and their concerns in the post-MDG agenda.” When asked if she felt that the current list of proposed SDGs sufficiently reflected the needs of youth, Ms. Roche replied, in short, “no.” She then argued that there is an opportunity to put “a greater emphasis on youth within the targets.” In her words, “There's always a risk that, if we don't mention youth by name, they may inadvertently be left out.”<sup>207</sup>

## SUSTAINING LOCAL CAPACITY

While empowerment must be nurtured through initiatives that target children and youth directly, it can also be facilitated by strengthening the communities in which children and youth reside. Local governments, organizations, leaders and community-based mechanisms all have a role to play in advancing the protection of children and youth. As is the case with most effective development work, local capacity is integral to sustaining the work of child protection.

The Committee learned from the experiences of two charitable organizations that provided an indication of how targeted training programs can build local capacity for child protection. The first was Paul Gillespie, President, Kids' Internet Safety Alliance (KINSA), who focused his remarks on strategies needed to combat the online abuse of children in the developing world. Mr. Gillespie emphasized that the problem of online abuse is by its very nature a global challenge. Addressing it therefore requires that “countries around the

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203 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.

204 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

205 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.

206 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

207 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

world have highly trained cybercops on the electronic beat, because it is inevitable that if we train them, cyber investigators from Brazil to Botswana to Belarus will tell us more about what predators in Canada, Colombia, and China are up to.”<sup>208</sup>

The ability to conduct “sophisticated online investigations” was a key challenge identified by Mr. Gillespie. He provided the Committee with several examples of the “cost-effective” training that KINSA is providing to bolster the capacity of law enforcement agencies in countries ranging from Romania and Brazil to South Africa. KINSA uses trainers from a number of police forces that are considered “global leaders” in the field, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Training programs have, for example, helped to enable the formation of a specialized unit to tackle Internet child pornography investigations in Romania, as well as the development of a national strategy in South Africa to deal with Internet crimes against children.<sup>209</sup>

Going forward, “KINSA will deliver regional training to 1,000 police officers and prosecutors in East Africa over the next five years.” The training is being done in conjunction with the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization. Mr. Gillespie further indicated that “100 of these officers will be trained as trainers.” Building the capacity of police services in developing nations in Africa is important, he argued, because many of those services “are only beginning the process of looking beyond the physical world’s policing technology requirements and are faced with the prospect of starting from scratch, while local criminals are using the developed world’s latest technologies.”<sup>210</sup>

Capacity-building assistance, which can enable local actors to address child protection challenges, is not limited to one issue or type of intervention. The Committee heard about a different example from Rachel Pulfer, Executive Director, Journalists for Human Rights (JHR). She described her organization’s mission as being “to strengthen media in developing countries, societies in transition, and other places where the media sector is traditionally weak.” This work has been carried out by her organization in countries in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years. It involves sending “journalism trainers to work side by side with local journalists, providing skills development and vocational training.” The end result, according to Ms. Pulfer, “is a form of tough, hard-hitting accountability journalism that foregrounds local human rights issues and holds local authorities to account for their actions.”<sup>211</sup> She argued that this capacity-building leads to sustainable results because it catalyzes local initiative to address local problems.

Ms. Pulfer argued that the accountability fostered by enhanced local journalistic capacity can have an influence on local governance practices, including with respect to child development and protection. In making this point, she described the work of one journalist in Liberia, Theophilus Seeton, who had worked with JHR as part of a recent program. He pursued an investigative story on “why, despite millions of international donor

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208 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 May 2014.

209 Ibid.

210 Ibid.

211 Ibid.

dollars flowing to the Liberian Ministry of Education, a school in the capital city was in a terrible state of disrepair.” His story was picked up by JHR’s network of reporters, which resulted in additional stories being produced on the same theme. Ms. Pulfer indicated that the ultimate outcome of this coverage was the suspension of the Minister of Education and an internal investigation ordered by the country’s President. That same minister was subsequently “sacked” for corruption and replaced with “a more accountable successor.”<sup>212</sup>

As was the case with KINSA programs, Ms. Pulfer emphasized low-cost interventions that can have high-impact results, including the empowerment of local actors who can carry on the work of child protection themselves. She told the Committee that the “average JHR trainer works with a minimum of 20 journalists during their time in-country.” She further commented that the increased scrutiny generated by local media development can help “to ensure greater aid transparency and better development outcomes.”<sup>213</sup>

The Committee also heard that the existence of effective local organizations can ensure the continuation of services during difficult times. Speaking from the experience of the Red Cross movement, Ms. Strong noted the importance of “strengthened and resilient health systems in communities and of working with and building the capacity of local partners, especially during times of disaster, conflict, and fragility.” These local actors are able to gain access to, and acceptance from, local communities in situations where government structures may be limited or absent altogether. She pointed to the particular example of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in Syria. The Red Cross system had worked to strengthen that local partner’s capacity prior to the conflict, and Ms. Strong told the Committee that this “strength has enabled them to continue functioning throughout the crisis. They have an unparalleled reach throughout Syria, delivering emergency and primary health care services in the most marginalized areas.”<sup>214</sup>

Another key aspect of local capacity is well-equipped communities. Ms. Guindon emphasized the importance of building “community capacity and mechanisms,” which she argued “must be at the core of any meaningful intervention.”<sup>215</sup> Ms. Guindon had recalled her organization’s recent experience working in Mali to illustrate both the complexity of child protection work and the importance of community capacity in preventing and responding to protection challenges. Recalling this experience, she noted:

We had been working with the government on the development of laws, and this has been through Canadian government-funded programs, but we also recently began working with a series of clubs. We’re building these child protection clubs. One of the goals of these clubs has been to try to identify and report cases of child abuse. As a result of the training and the sensitization activities on child rights and child abuse in a particular community called Bougouni, all of a sudden we started seeing the number of child abuse cases reported increase. These laws, again, these systems, had been in

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212 Ibid.

213 Ibid.

214 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

215 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 14 May 2014.

place, but the difference was the child protection clubs, and one of the things we saw was that this led recently to the first arrest and conviction of the first child trafficker in Mali.<sup>216</sup>

At the highest level, child protection work is about laws, but, as Ms. Guindon emphasized, “it’s also about those community-based mechanisms.” As she said, strong communities “can be a driving force to raise awareness of, prevent, monitor, and respond to child protection issues.”<sup>217</sup>

Ms. Roche discussed the importance of community building from the perspective of the YMCA’s emphasis on the principle of “nothing about us without us”. The idea is to ensure the self-reliance of local YMCAs, rather than reliance on external support. As Ms. Roche told the Committee,

All YMCAs are formed, owned, and operated by local leadership. This means that local grassroots YMCAs, with their capacity, know-how, deep roots, and networks are frequently able to serve communities experiencing conflict or instability. When Canadian YMCAs get involved overseas, they do so through a partnership model, providing financial and technical support to match local social capital for projects that respond to local needs.<sup>218</sup>

In the context of the YMCA’s work, Ms. Roche also called for the strengthening of civil society in local communities, including as a means of “creating a strong and resilient social platform that can be leveraged in many ways for different purposes.”<sup>219</sup> Local ownership of issues can, in general, also help with bringing about change. Ms. Roche observed that social change “requires a level of trust,” which can be facilitated by local leaders who enjoy that trust and are perceived as having “an understanding of the realities of that particular community.”<sup>220</sup>

Mr. Breen also highlighted the importance of working closely – and over the long term – with communities. His organization, Cuso International, places volunteers who can provide expertise and technical assistance with partner agencies. These skilled professional Canadians typically spend two years in a community in a rural setting. As he explained to the Committee, Cuso’s approach allows for the time necessary to build effective partnerships and relationships and to learn about and understand the local context in which the work is taking place.<sup>221</sup>

In general, investing in local organizations and building effective capacity at the local level requires patience and a long-term outlook. This point was made by Mr. Chauvin, who argued that, “Organizational capacity-building is something that has fallen out of favour, and unfortunately we’re now paying the price.” It is, he emphasized,

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216 Ibid.

217 Ibid.

218 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 26 February 2015.

219 Ibid.

220 Ibid.

221 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

time-consuming work. Speaking about the example of what goes into building a properly functioning public health institute in another country, he estimated that it might take 10 to 12 years. Investing in such organizations therefore requires sustained input. When asked for an example that could be used as a template, Mr. Chauvin mentioned his former work with the Canadian Public Health Association, which had implemented a program to help “nurture the creation and organizational capacity development of non-governmental public health associations.” He indicated that, in the 25 years that the program was funded, it was able to assist in the creation of 32 public health associations. Today, he added, “Some of these are now leading public health associations in their own right.”<sup>222</sup>

## EMBRACING INNOVATION AND DATA

As previous chapters have argued, child and youth well-being must be built on a healthy foundation. Furthermore, that well-being requires strong protection systems and empowering environments. Yet within that broader picture, there is a constant process of investigating and evaluating specific interventions and models to determine which among them can have the most significant positive impact on the lives of children and youth. In addition to the many strategies covered in previous chapters, the Committee heard that some ideas have emerged from innovative practices and partnerships. It also heard that a full understanding of the nature of the challenges facing children and youth is currently obscured by incomplete data, which hampers efforts to reach those who are the most vulnerable.

Beginning with innovation, a number of global health innovations are being supported by Grand Challenges Canada. In fact, the organization’s own model is an example of an innovative approach. Dr. Singer explained that Grand Challenges leverages “additional resources from the not-for-profit, for-profit, and academic sectors to match greater than one-to-one the government funds.” Using these resources, the organization aims to harness and integrate scientific, technological, social and business innovations to improve global health.<sup>223</sup>

One example is kangaroo mother care. It was designed to respond to the fact that some 15 million babies are born pre-term every year, 90% of them in the developing world. Dr. Singer indicated that, “Around a million children die due to complications of pre-term birth, but many survivors face a lifetime of disability including learning disabilities, visual and hearing problems.” He explained the innovation as follows: “Kangaroo mother care is simple, a baby is held close to the mother for a period of time after birth. It’s a simple innovation. It provides nutrition, warmth, and bonding.”<sup>224</sup> It also saves lives.

Another innovation was conceived of by a graduate student from the University of Guelph who went to Cambodia and became aware of the problem of iron deficiency in that country. As Dr. Singer explained,

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222 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

223 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 2 June 2014.

224 Ibid.



This is a problem that affects two billion to three billion people in the world and causes billions of dollars of lost income. Children are listless. Women go into pregnancy with lower blood counts, so if they do hemorrhage around the time of birth, they're more likely to die.<sup>225</sup>

The student came up with an idea to address the problem by using an iron ingot in cooking pots. To ensure that this product was popular – and thus actually used by people – the student manufactured the device in the form of a lucky fish from Cambodian folklore. He also managed to make the fish at a relatively low cost – they are \$5 each and last five years. Dr. Singer indicated that Grand Challenges is supporting this social enterprise in Cambodia “in part with a grant, but part of that is actually a loan, so it's bringing a type of business discipline to their social enterprise as well as tackling the problem of iron deficiency anemia.”<sup>226</sup>

Another example of innovation in the health field is the work of the Micronutrient Initiative, an organization that has been focused on improving child nutrition for a number of years. As Mr. Spicer explained, the organization focuses on “scaling up low-cost, high-impact nutrition interventions that are recognized as some of the best buys in global health.” For example, the organization provides Vitamin A capsules to children to protect them against disease and illness. Mr. Spicer indicated that each of these capsules costs only two cents to make. Mark Fryars, Vice-President, Programs and Technical Services, Micronutrient Initiative, further indicated that his organization recognizes “that there are many people in the developing world who are essentially beyond the ready reach of health systems or the ready reach of commercial markets.” As such, they are looking at ways in which their organization can also help those people.<sup>227</sup>

The Committee also heard about different models for partnerships that can lead to improved health for children and youth. A few witnesses who appeared are working to prevent severe acute malnutrition through the manufacture and delivery of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF). Mark More, Chief Executive Officer, MANA Nutrition, described the components of RUTF, which he called “a very simple thing.” He told the Committee,

It's peanut butter, powdered milk, a little bit of sugar, and some vitamins. It's the equivalent of a glass of milk, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and a vitamin. It's very tough for aid workers to put those things in their pocket and have them available at the end of a long day, but this stuff has a two-year shelf life. It's flushed with nitrogen to be stored and can be shipped through various supply chains, through the UN and through the World Food Programme, and other entities, to get it to children who need it.<sup>228</sup>

While it may be based on simple ingredients, given the life-saving impact of RUTF, it reflects significant innovation.

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225 Ibid.

226 Ibid.

227 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 31 March 2015.

228 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 21 April 2015. Note: Canada contributed more than \$350 million to the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2014, making it the third-largest country donor to the WFP that year. WFP, “[Contributions to WFP 2014](#),” *About*, as of 31 May 2015.

The Food for Famine Society, which sources its RUTF products from MANA Nutrition, has supplied RUTF to eight countries in Africa in partnership with World Vision Canada. The organization's Founder and Executive Director, Maria Martini, told the Committee that, "One hundred per cent of the donations we receive goes toward the purchase of RUTF, allowing the greatest possible impact."<sup>229</sup>

The RUTF product known as Plumpy'Nut was developed initially in 1996 by Nutriset, whose Chief Executive Officer, Adeline Lescanne-Gautier, also appeared before the Committee. It is now being given to 25 million children around the world. She told the Committee that Nutriset also created the "PlumpyField network," so as to encourage local production to meet local needs. Her organization has partners in developing countries, "who are manufacturing the product using the same international quality standards as those in France or the United States." The network has transferred expertise to partner plants in Haiti, Niger, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Ethiopia, Madagascar and India. Ms. Lescanne-Gautier expressed her pride that, "in 2012, all Niger's needs were met using local production."<sup>230</sup>

There are currently eight partners in the PlumpyField network. Ms. Lescanne-Gautier's view is that encouraging such local production is a means to build local capacity. As she put it, there is an "opportunity to develop a high-quality, local agriculture industry using local ingredients." She argued that it is important to buy locally-sourced products where possible, thereby assisting local economies, "if, one day, we want to stop sending products to malnourished children."<sup>231</sup>

Development innovation is not limited to the health sector. An example of another innovative practice was provided by Ms. Moorcroft in the context of the work done by Street Kids International on entrepreneurship and employment programs targeting vulnerable youth. She told the Committee that many of the youth who participate in her organization's programs "have little to no literacy skills and schooling." Recognizing this reality, the organization has adopted "low-literacy and youth-centred approaches such as storytelling, games, discussions, and visual aids to help make every single aspect of our programs meaningful and relevant to youth." Ms. Moorcroft further indicated that these programs build on the experiences and knowledge that the young people have themselves acquired so as "to strengthen their abilities to earn money and earn it in safe and decent ways."<sup>232</sup>

When speaking about the innovative work that is being done by organizations at the grassroots level to prevent child marriage, Dr. Dyalchand argued that supporting such innovation is only the first step. Far more important, he said, is the subsequent scaling of these practices. In his words, "we can't be experimenting and innovating for the rest of our

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229 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 21 April 2015.

230 Ibid.

231 Ibid.

232 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.



lives.” As such, Dr. Dyalchand argued that the efficacy of different innovations needs to be evaluated so that they can then be scaled up and replicated.<sup>233</sup>

In general, the ability to monitor and evaluate which development initiatives are succeeding and which are failing, and who is prospering, who falling behind, depends on the availability of good data. It provides the evidence necessary to make sound decisions about the programs and resource allocations needed to overcome development challenges. Furthermore, data about children and youth is integral to their well-being because it makes the adversities they face known to decision-makers in concrete, statistical terms. Put simply, being counted ensures that a child counts.

At the global level, Canada has worked to draw attention to the importance of strong civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in the context of work to advance maternal, newborn and child health. In September 2014, the Prime Minister announced Canada’s contribution to the new Global Financing Facility for *Every Woman Every Child*, which was highlighted earlier in this report. Part of the purpose of this new facility is to establish a “multi-donor platform to help developing countries build and strengthen” their CRVS systems.<sup>234</sup> Canada has committed \$100 million of its contribution specifically for that purpose.<sup>235</sup>

Ms. Jacovella underlined that registration is important not only “from a development perspective, but also from a human rights perspective.” As was discussed in a previous chapter, the registration of a child will be linked to establishing future access to services, to determining a young person’s age at marriage and to enrolling a child in school, among other things. Despite their fundamental importance, Ms. Jacovella informed the Committee that more than 100 developing countries “lack a well-functioning CRVS system.” What this means in practical terms, she explained, is that “approximately 40 million, an estimated one-third of the world’s births, are not registered; and two-thirds of deaths, 40 million again, are not legally recognized as well.”<sup>236</sup>

Ms. Stewart indicated that the UNFPA works on mapping and data. She remarked that “you cannot protect those young adolescent girls if they don’t exist and they’re not registered anywhere.” In addition to work on CRVS issues, which are the starting point, UNFPA’s work on national censuses is intended to ensure that “gender and age [disaggregation] is seen as a vital part of all census operations....”<sup>237</sup> Mr. Chauvin also made the case that efforts to build capacity in this area should not end at civil registration. He argued for investments targeting improved national census capacity, stating that such

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233 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 18 November 2014.

234 Prime Minister of Canada, “[Global Financing Facility for Every Woman Every Child: Building Critical Financial Infrastructure and Capital for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Post-2015](#),” New York City, New York, 25 September 2014.

235 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

236 Ibid.

237 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 19 February 2015.

data “is critical to determining the effectiveness of health programs and how they protect women, children, and youth.”<sup>238</sup>

There may also be room to harness innovation as part of efforts to improve registration and statistical capacity. As was discussed earlier, Mr. Breen mentioned the possibility of using simple technologies to help with data collection, including the now ubiquitous mobile phone. Furthermore, his view is that there is “a real role for skilled Canadian professionals to go and work alongside counterparts, building databases, looking at information systems.” Mr. Breen suggested that there could be opportunities for “that kind of person-led, volunteering-type accompaniment development over a longer term to work with people to develop [such databases], rather than just dumping a system on them.”<sup>239</sup>

A final note on data – and the systems necessary to collect it – relates to the post-2015 development agenda. Ambassador Rishchynski told the Committee that,

As we begin now to negotiate and finalize the post-2015 development framework, the requirements of monitoring and tracking have to be at the centre of the agenda, so that we are able to disaggregate data and ensure that the money is actually going to those segments of populations with the greatest need in a specific area. In fact, this is part of the discussion now in terms of how we set up the indicator frameworks that will allow us to do this on a fulsome basis as the program rolls out subsequent to adoption in September of this year.<sup>240</sup>

Given the needs and gaps identified above, ensuring that robust national systems are in place that can generate the reliable and disaggregated data needed to support such a monitoring framework will likely be an area requiring capacity-building and technical assistance for some years to come.

## CONCLUSION

The Committee’s report touches on a wide range of issues relevant to child protection. A study of any aspect of international development, as the broad subject area is known, can be overwhelming. It is so because the very business of tackling questions relevant to international development combines the challenges of massive scale and granular detail, an endeavour which must somehow grapple with the intricacy of different economic, social, and political contexts, and the realities facing specific communities and individuals. The conditions and fates of millions, if not billions, of people around the world are literally at stake. The Committee is mindful of the complexity and the importance of the issues that it set out to address.

The Committee was equally struck by the compelling nature of the testimony it received and the personal dedication and resolve exhibited by so many who appeared before it. As is the case in most policy spheres, ideas – and the change they are seeking

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238 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 23 April 2015.

239 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 28 April 2015.

240 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, 12 March 2015.

to bring about – require champions. The will to end the violence, exploitation and abuse that continue to be perpetrated against so many children and youth was evident throughout the Committee's study, as was the commitment to building something better: healthy, productive and hopeful futures. To this chorus of voices, the Committee adds its full support.

However complex the subject matter may be, a number of core ideas and recurrent themes emerged from the study. As a starting point, the diversity of witness presentations indicated that development objectives cannot be neatly broken into silos. If the ultimate goal is child well-being, then health, safety, dignity, equity and equality are all part of the same picture.

In the same way, the relevancy, necessity and urgency of focusing on the protection of children and youth is not limited to the policy domain of international development. It is clear that an integrated and coherent approach to child protection is necessary. As a mechanism that brings together Canada's policies, resources and personnel dealing with trade, development and diplomacy, DFATD should be well-equipped to face this task. Building on its already substantial investments in global health and global education, there is a leadership role for Canada to fill in child protection.

Changing mind-sets must be one target. Gender discrimination and the low value placed on girls are the basis of many development challenges. While the Committee heard that changing entrenched social norms is not easy, it is possible, particularly if approached with patience and through locally-based partnerships. Human history is replete with examples of harmful practices that persisted for a time, but are no longer tolerated. In the same way, negative attitudes toward women and girls must be viewed for what they are: an anachronism that has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

Another imperative is empowerment. It is an idea that extends to children and youth themselves – who must be treated and thought of as agents, rather than passive recipients – but also to communities and organizations. If empowered, together they are the key to building protective environments and to implementing commitments that are undertaken at the international level. In turn, these actors must be supported with international political will, and their efforts backed with funding and capacity-building assistance that is put in place for the long term.

The negotiation of the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals represents a significant opportunity. The Committee is of the view that children and youth must be prioritized in that new agenda. Ensuring the well-being of all children and youth will also require that all efforts – including those promoting better health, nutrition and education and those seeking to prevent violence, exploitation and abuse – are fully supported and designed to work together. It is only by that path that the ultimate vision can be realized of a world in which all children and youth are not only surviving, but thriving.

The Committee puts forward the following recommendations to the Government of Canada:

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to emphasize the protection of children and youth internationally, and that it integrate child protection across its international policies and programming.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to advocate for children and youth and gender equality to be at the centre of the post-2015 international development agenda and sustainable development goals, and that, in the context of the intergovernmental negotiations finalizing the new agenda at the United Nations, it support the inclusion of specific targets on:**

- **ending all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse against children and youth;**
- **the elimination of child, early and forced marriage;**
- **free and universal birth registration;**
- **the elimination of all forms of child labour by 2025;**
- **ending all preventable maternal, newborn and child mortality by 2030;**
- **ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health care, family planning and education for all adolescents; and**
- **youth empowerment, employment, skills training and education.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada consider the ways in which it could more effectively address child and youth protection as part of its responses to international emergencies, while ensuring that these efforts respect the *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

The Committee recognizes the leadership that Canada has shown in saving the lives of mothers, newborns and children. Specifically, the Committee recognizes that Canada kept its 2010 Muskoka pledge to spend \$2.85 billion on the initiative. The Committee further recommends the government meet its recent commitment made at the Toronto Summit to spend \$3.5 billion from 2015–2020.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

The Committee recommends that, further to the resolution presented at the United Nations General Assembly in the fall of 2014, the Government of Canada continue efforts to galvanize funds and support from other donor nations and funders with a view to establishing a robust international programming initiative to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage, that it give due consideration to long-term funding cycles in the implementation of these programs, and that, among other components, this initiative include targeted assistance aimed at:

- increasing educational opportunities in safe and secure learning environments;
- supporting grassroots and community-based organizations working to prevent child marriage; and
- helping girls who have already been married, including with respect to sexual and reproductive health, vocational training and access to education.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada consider ways, including working with private sector and philanthropic partners, in which it can provide further capacity building support for community-based and civil society organizations within developing countries that focus on child protection and the empowerment of children and youth.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada integrate the Children's Rights and Business Principles into the terms of reference for all Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development partnerships with the private sector. These principles should apply equally to partnerships with the private sector under the proposed Development Financing Initiative to be housed under Export Development Canada.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to work with the private sector – and find innovative solutions to help save lives and grow economies to lift people out of poverty – and specifically it encourages the government to make use of the Development Finance Initiative included in Economic Action Plan 2015.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 9**

**The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to provide capacity-building support and technical assistance to help strengthen civil registration and vital statistics systems in developing countries.**

## APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<b>Right To Play</b> Evelyne Guindon, Vice President International Programs <b>UNICEF</b> Susan Bissell, Associate Director Programmes Division, Child Protection <b>War Child Canada</b> Samantha Nutt, Founder and Executive Director Lorna Read, Chief Operating Officer <b>World Vision Canada</b> Elly Vandenberg, Senior Director Policy and Advocacy	2014/05/14	28
<b>Children/Youth as Peacebuilders</b> Linda Dale, Executive Director <b>Journalists for Human Rights</b> Rachel Pulfer, Executive Director <b>Kids' Internet Safety Alliance</b> Paul Gillespie, President	2014/05/28	30
<b>Grand Challenges Canada</b> Peter Singer, Chief Executive Officer <b>Restavek Freedom Foundation</b> Christine Buchholz, Vice President <b>Save the Children Canada</b> Patricia Erb, President and Chief Executive Officer Will Postma, Vice President of Global Partnerships	2014/06/02	31
<b>CARE Canada</b> Jacquelyn Wright, Vice-President International Programs <b>Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage</b> Ashok Dyalchand, Member Institute for Health Management, Pachod Amina Hanga, Member Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative	2014/11/18	34

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<b>Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage</b> Mabel van Oranje, Chair	2014/11/18	34
<b>Plan International Canada Inc.</b> Rosemary McCarney, President and Chief Executive Officer		
<b>Save the Children Canada</b> Cicely McWilliam, Senior Advisor Policies and Campaigns		
<b>Save the Children Canada</b> Olivia Lecoufle, Child Protector Advisor	2015/02/19	46
<b>Street Kids International</b> Sarah Moorcroft, International Program Manager		
<b>United Nations Population Fund</b> Dianne Stewart, Director Information and External Relations Division		
<b>ChildFund Alliance</b> Sarah Stevenson, United Nations Representative	2015/02/26	48
<b>Christian Children's Fund of Canada</b> Mark Lukowski, Chief Executive Officer		
<b>YMCA Canada</b> Patricia Pelton, Member YMCA Canada World Relationships Committee Mary Anne Roche, Vice-President Global Initiatives and Governance		
<b>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</b> Rachael Bedlington, Director Human Rights and Indigenous Affairs Policy Division Diane Jacovella, Assistant Deputy Minister Global Issues and Development Leslie Norton, Director General International Humanitarian Assistance Guillermo Rishchynski, Permanent Representative of Canada to the United Nations Julie Shouldice, Director Education, Child Protection and Gender Equality	2015/03/12	50
<b>Egg Farmers of Canada</b> Tim Lambert, Chief Executive Officer	2015/03/26	52
<b>Heart for Africa</b> Janine Maxwell, Co-Founder		



<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Heart for Africa</b> Ian Maxwell, Co-Founder	2015/03/26	52
<b>Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health</b> Helen Scott, Executive Director	2015/03/31	53
<b>Micronutrient Initiative</b> Mark Fryars, Vice-President Program and Technical Services Joel Spicer, President		
<b>Oxfam Canada</b> Caroline Marrs, Director Centre for Gender Justice		
<b>Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights</b> Sandeep Prasad, Executive Director	2015/04/21	55
<b>Food For Famine Society</b> Maria Martini, Founder and Executive Director		
<b>MANA Nutrition</b> Mark Moore, Chief Executive Officer		
<b>Nutriset</b> Adeline Lescanne-Gautier, Chief Executive Officer		
<b>As an individual</b> Zulfiqar Bhutta, Co-Director Centre for Global Child Health, Hospital for Sick Children	2015/04/23	56
<b>Canadian Society for International Health</b> James Chauvin, Member of Board of Directors Eva Slawecki, Interim Executive Director		
<b>UNICEF Canada</b> David Morley, President and Chief Executive Officer		
<b>As an individual</b> David Stevenson, Managing Director Howard G. Buffett Foundation	2015/04/28	57
<b>Canadian Red Cross</b> Patricia Strong, Senior Manager Program Development, International Operations		
<b>Cuso International</b> Kieran Breen, Director International Programs		

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Cuso International</b> Astrid Bucio, Program Development and Funding Officer	2015/04/28	57
<b>International Center for Research on Women</b> Sarah Degnan Kambou, President		
<b>Canadian Feed The Children</b> Debra Kerby, President and Chief Executive Officer Sohel Khan, Senior Program Advisor Food Security and Environmental Sustainability	2015/05/12	60
<b>Kiwanis International</b> John Button, President		
<b>Rotary Foundation</b> Bryn Styles, Trustee		
<b>Rotary International</b> Robert Scott, Chair Emeritus International PolioPlus Committee Wilfrid Wilkinson, Past International President		

## **APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS**

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### **Organizations and Individuals**

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**Canadian Network for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health**

**Journalists for Human Rights**

**World University Service of Canada**



## REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this Report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 28, 30-31, 34, 46, 48, 50, 52-53, 55-57, 60, 64-65, 67](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Dean Allison

Chair



## **Supplementary Report of the New Democratic Party of Canada**

The New Democratic Party agrees with a majority of the recommendations in the present report. However, we believe the report does not emphasize enough several points made by witnesses during this study, notably, that development happens over the long-term, requiring long-lasting partnerships. Consistent and sustained efforts are required to face the complex challenges faced by children and youth in developing countries.

We add the following recommendations:

1. The Government of Canada should increase its contributions to Official Development Assistance (ODA) in accordance with a multi-year timetable to fulfill Canada's longstanding commitment to the internationally-agreed upon goal of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI). Consistent and predictable ODA funding, directed where it is most effective - at the poorest and least-developed countries - will improve children and youth-targeted programming. As noted in the report, child and youth protection is complex and takes into account issues and challenges that transcend numerous themes and fields. Canada's civil society sector therefore requires predictability and flexibility in order to achieve development outcomes for children and youth in rapidly changing circumstances.
2. As part of its response to international emergencies, the Government of Canada should adopt a systems-based approach to tackling problems faced by children and youth in developing countries. This includes the strengthening of public health, education and governance systems; prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse; and basic health interventions and access to education including the establishment of safe spaces. These interventions reduce poverty, save lives, help in post-conflict and post-emergency reconstruction and reduce risks of further crises. Strengthening governance systems is essential to preventing and reducing conflict and ensures governments are more accountable to the needs of their populations, including children and youth.
3. The Government of Canada should integrate women's and girl's rights, including reproductive and sexual rights, into all development programming and ensure all international cooperation initiatives reflect our international obligations to fulfill women's rights and gender equality. Programming should focus on economic, social, and political empowerment of young women and girls in developing countries. Sexual and reproductive health education and access to family planning and reproductive and sexual health, including abortion, is a critical part of the empowerment process. When young women and girls have access to information, services and tools relating to sexual and reproductive health, they are able to take control of their lives, learn, grow and contribute to their communities.

We would also like to add the following notes:

- We regret that some of the report recommendations do not reflect the testimony of witnesses and instead promote the government's own policies. In particular, we believe Recommendation 4 does not accurately reflect witness testimony during the course of this study.
- The New Democratic Party opposes Recommendation 8, given our concerns regarding the establishment of the government's Development Finance Initiative (DFI). We note that, at the Finance Committee, the Conservatives rejected all NDP amendments that would have ensured the DFI contribute to poverty reduction and act according to international human rights standards. Therefore the NDP cannot support the DFI as currently designed. Further, the NDP does not support the 2015 Federal Budget, also known as the Economic Action Plan 2015.
- With regard to the discussion of reproductive rights within the report, the NDP would like to highlight that United Nations data<sup>1</sup> shows that abortion is legally permitted to save a woman's life in 49 out of the 51 countries Canada considers either "countries of focus" or "development partner countries." 18 out of 51 countries legally permit abortion to save a woman's life, to preserve mental and physical health or in cases of rape or incest. Only one of the 51 countries has a total ban on abortion. See footnote 198.

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<sup>1</sup> World Abortion Policies (2013), United Nations Population Division: Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/policy/world-abortion-policies-2013.shtml>



Liberal Party of Canada – Supplementary recommendations for Report on Youth and Child Development

The Liberal Party of Canada does not support recommendation 4 as written and prefers the following wording:

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to provide targeted international support for newborn care and that it continue to invest in early childhood development and nutrition.

Further, the Liberal Party of Canada does not support recommendation 8 as written and prefers the following wording:

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue to work with the private sector – and find innovative solutions to help save lives and grow economies to lift people out of poverty.

