

DALLAIRE INSTITUTE CHILDREN PEACE SECURITY

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 – 2024



LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This past year we have experienced the eruption and escalation of conflicts that have led to horrific impacts on children. There were approximately 452 million children – or one in six of all children on the planet – living in conflict-affected areas in 2022 (Save the Children). Two years on and we are witnessing unprecedented levels of attacks against children in armed conflict contexts as well as in armed violence situations. As a Guardian newspaper headline put it, "The world is waging war on its children, in an obscene mockery of international law."

It has been painful to witness the lack of a concerted global response to the plight of children in armed conflicts and armed violence contexts from Africa to the Middle East, to Latin America and Europe. However, those of us who have devoted ourselves to the cause of children, peace, and security have not succumbed to defeatist thinking.

The Dallaire Institute is responding with proactive approaches to advocate for new methods to prioritize the protection of children – through policy change and advocacy efforts with key partners and governments, capacity building with the security sector, and meaningful dialogue with community networks on prevention of the recruitment and use of children in armed violence. Over this past year, we have charted new territory in Colombia, Southeast Asia and Australia, and signed an agreement on the expansion of our programmatic work across 7 African nations to Promote the Vancouver Principles in Sub-Saharan Africa supported by Global Affairs Canada.

I have had the pleasure to work with an incredibly dedicated team that has a deep commitment to children, peace and security. We are inspired by the changemakers we have worked with in the security sector, our youth advisory council and the incredible women who joined our national dialogues with the security sector in the DRC and South Sudan. We are also grateful to our donors who have supported us to carry out meaningful work around the world.

Despite the global challenges that exist, these circumstances have furthered our resolve to work toward a better world, to finding new solutions, confident that peace is possible, violence is preventable, and children are at the heart of the solution.

Dr. Shelly Whitman



SPOTLIGHT ON WOMEN LEADERS

Mary Nyathiel is one of the 3,000 internally-displaced persons living in the Mangateen camp in Juba, South Sudan, where she became a community chief. She worried about the safety of the children on her site – many of whom are at risk of sexual violence and being recruited as child soldiers.

"I see children involved in gangs and some prone to drug abuse," she said. "They are at high risk of recruitment into armed violence as child soldiers. Organizations come, but their help is very limited."



To address this volatile situation, the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security tested an innovative approach, side by side with the community, to bring together women-led organizations and police forces to address and prevent child recruitment and abuse.

"This project has given me an opportunity to be part of the decision-making process amongst the men and to be a voice for the voiceless in protecting children from violence. The women from our committee are now managing to reduce the risk of child recruitment into armed groups, as women are essential in the prevention of violence against children."

Working with the South Sudan National Police Service and with community leaders, the Dallaire Institute organized awareness-raising dialogues, connecting groups of people who seldom talk with each other. Mary was part of those conversations.

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Following the initial dialogue with the community members, a special youth and women's committee formed, with Mary as designated Chair. Now conducting meetings twice a week, she has gone on to support and guide the younger participants. They discuss peacebuilding, as well as enjoy sporting events and cultural dances organized to bring the community, children, and youth leaders together.

To tackle problems associated with child recruitment and use – such far-ranging push-pull factors as drug abuse and sexual violence – the committee engages with youth as well as traditional chiefs and the local mayor in Juba.

Thank you to the Slaight Family Foundation for their longstanding support of this innovative and highly impactful program.

WHERE WE WORK

(program activities & advocacy)

Rwanda
Mozambique
South Sudan
Uruguay
Mexico
Colombia
Ghana
Canada
Cameroon
Nigeria
Democratic Republic of Congo

COUNTRY/REGIONAL OFFICES



2023/2024 KEY INTERVENTIONS IN STRATEGIC PRIORITIES





Accelerating action on the Vancouver Principles

- Developed course curriculum for a joint course on Children and Armed Conflict at the University of Rwanda.
- Presented at conferences and workshops in Australia, Lithuania, New York City, Washington D.C., Colombia, Mexico, and Rwanda.
- Held an International Symposium "Putting Children at the Heart of Peace and Security: From Vision to Action" in Kigali.
- Confirmed $19.4M from Global Affairs Canada over the next five years to Promote the Vancouver Principles in Sub-Saharan Africa (Rwanda, DRC, Mozambique, South Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon).

"This milestone is exemplary in advancing and showcasing effective implementation of the Vancouver Principles in general and principle Number Five concerning Doctrine, Training, and Education, which is paramount to achieving the other principles." – Francisca Mujawase, Deputy Director for Research and MEAL, Dallaire Institute's African Centre of Excellence.

Increasing the operational effectiveness of the security sector

- Released the 4th Edition of the Dallaire Institute's Handbook for Defence and Security Sector Actors.
- Conducted capacity building programming with the security sector on the prevention of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and armed violence in the DRC, Mozambique, Rwanda.
- Conducted police trainings in Musanze, Gako and Gishari in Rwanda, and Montevideo in Uruguay.
- Fully integrated the Dallaire Institute training curriculum with the Rwanda Defence Force and the Rwanda National Police.
- Began expansion of training curriculum integration into Ghana and Mozambique.

Integrating children's and community perspectives into security sector responses to prevent the recruitment and use of children

- Convened dialogues between communities and the security sector in Kinshasha, Kitona, Lumbumbashi, Juba, and Kenanga to enhance collective identification of early warning indicators and formation of intervention strategies.
- Updated our Gender Mainstreaming strategy and centralized the necessity of intersectional analysis.
- Maintained a Youth Advisory Council for youth in various countries to inform our work as an Institute.

The project is part of a global initiative launched by GAC under its Pan-Africa and Regional Development Program, which advances regional approaches that can address trans-boundary issues, strengthen African institutions, and complement bilateral efforts. It supports Canada's commitment to advocate for strong child protection measures in UN peacekeeping mission mandates, as well as in key UN documents relating to peacekeeping.

OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

4,703 police and military trained this year from 8 different countries.

2 new training courses – Child Protection Focal Point Trainings and Lead Training Courses.

74 community stakeholders from two countries participated in two community dialogues that included men, women and the security sector.

11 new partnership collaborations created

138 in person workshops held globally.

7 new publications issued.

33 international visitors hosted.

5 graduate students mentored.

8 new capacity building training tools and methodologies created.



MOVING FROM RESEARCH TO ACTION

The goal of research at the Dallaire Institute is to innovate holistic, localized, gender-transformative, and prevention-oriented solutions for protecting children in armed conflict and preventing their use in armed violence. Research helps us understand why and how children are recruited and to develop effective intervention strategies—but without action this knowledge doesn't lead to real change.



Early Warning to Early Action

The recruitment and use of children in armed violence and conflict has significant, long-term impacts on both the children involved and the security forces who encounter them. The involvement of children is also likely to increase the duration of a conflict and the chance of its recurrence. The Dallaire Institute prioritizes the prevention of recruitment and use as an effective way to break cycles of violence and sustain long-term peace and security. Supported by the Waverley House Foundation, the Dallaire Institute's Early Warning to Early Action System began as a pioneering research initiative predicated on the notion that the most effective approach to preventing recruitment and use is the undertaking of "upstream" action that serves to de-escalate conflict and reduce the likelihood of violations against children.

The system employs data analytics and predictive modelling to identify patterns and trends in conflict dynamics. Through this analysis, situations charactered by high risk for recruitment and use (as well as early signs of this activity) can be identified. This is then used to inform approaches for undertaking preventative early action. The application of this system has allowed the Dallaire Institute to identify specific indicators which suggest high risk for recruitment and use. This information is then used to help the Dallaire Institute identify strategic directions and priorities.

Moral Injury

Moral injury refers to the profound distress experienced by individuals who witness or participate in situations that conflict with their deeply held values or expectations. These experiences can lead to symptoms such as guilt, shame, anger, depression, and a sense of moral dissonance, resulting in severe emotional and psychological distress and potentially leading to long-term mental health issues.

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security was awarded funding through Veterans Affairs Canada in 2021 to lead a multi-phased research project titled "The Effects of Encountering Children in Armed Conflict During Military Service". This project, the first of its kind, aims to explore the connections between morally injurious events and the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. The objectives of the research are to improve understanding of the nature of encountering children during military deployments, identify the mental health impacts of encountering children in conflict, unpack how the experiences of specific groups (male and female) may differ, and determine the types of training and support needed to assist military personnel deployed in regions where children are present in armed violence. The overarching aim is to inform and enhance training, policy, and prevention strategies to better prepare personnel for complex deployments involving children and to improve care for those who have experienced mental health difficulties afterward.



SPOTLIGHT ON LATIN AMERICA

Since opening the Latin American Centre of Excellence (LACoE), the Dallaire Institute has made some impressive strides toward preventing the recruitment and use of children in armed violence in that region. Over the past year, the LACoE was proud to:

- Address the gap on children victimized in situations not classified as armed conflict, who are therefore not afforded international protections.
- Forge a partnership with Latin-American Association of Peacekeeping Training Centers (ALCOPAZ) and advocated for Children, Peace and Security to be a focus in 2024.
- Build a network of experts on recruitment and use of children in armed violence in Latin America.
- Form a partnership with University of Guadalajara and its Peacebuilding Center of Tlajomulco.



- Send a delegation to Colombia to meet with key government authorities, security sector actors, civil society organizations, community leaders, survivors of recruitment, and international agencies working to prevent children from recruitment and use.
- Sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Defence in Colombia.
- Engage with Colombian women's organizations toward uplifting gender perspectives and the voices of youth.
- Partner with Coalition Against the Involvement of Children and Youth in the Armed Conflict in Colombia (COALICO) and Benposta, two key organizations working on the issues of recruitment and use, to hear directly from children about their personal experiences, and their methods for overcoming exposure to violence.
- Conduct a training at Uruguay's National School on Peacekeeping Operations.
- Host a roundtable on the impact of armed violence on children with FLACSO (the regional organization of social science universities) and the Interamerican Institute for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, to learn about the strategies organized crime uses to recruit children in the region.

Huge thanks to the Intact Foundation for supporting this important work for children affected by violence and conflict in Latin America.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Grand Total

$4,169,083

$236,056 Advocacy and Research

$838,750 Operating Expenses

$3,094,278 Program Activities

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