

For Immediate Release

February 12th, 2018

Dallaire Initiative Announces National Program on Child Soldiers in South Sudan with 3 million grant from Canadian Government

Three year capacity building project will work with international and national security forces to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers as critical to the overall efforts to achieve peace in South Sudan.

Halifax NS—The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative is bringing its world-leading prevention oriented approach to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers to South Sudan with the awarding of a 3 million dollar grant from Global Affairs Canada.

“Our experience and approach to protecting children from their recruitment and use as soldiers across the African continent and beyond make the Dallaire Initiative uniquely equipped to bring a progressive elimination approach to the challenging environment that is South Sudan” states Dr. Shelly Whitman, Executive Director of the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative.

The current crisis in South Sudan has seen massive and widespread use of child soldiers by all parties to the conflict resulting in the country being listed as a state violator on the 2016 UN SRSG’s report on Children and Armed Conflict.

The project will seek to protect girls and boys in South Sudan from recruitment and use as child soldiers by working with security actors—such as the national forces, UN peacekeepers – as well as civil society actors—to strengthen strategies to protect children becoming weapons of war. This will be accomplished through training and sensitization activities undertaken by Dallaire Initiative staff with local partners that aims to change attitudes and behaviours with respect to the use of children as weapons of war.

The Government of Canada’s commitment to this project and the prioritization of the protection of children are reflective of the commitment made at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver in November 2017. At this conference, the Dallaire Initiative and the Government of Canada launched a new set of global standards called the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers.

Work undertaken in South Sudan will be based on the Dallaire Initiative’s pioneer national level model of protecting children from war. Through top down security sector training and bottom up community sensitization and education initiatives, the Dallaire Initiative builds a holistic approach to protecting children from violence, conflict and war—a model that has been developed and trialed in Sierra Leone and now is being implemented in Somalia.

The Dallaire Initiative will seek to facilitate learning and exchanges, and provide training and technical assistance as-needed to develop practical child protection strategies and community-based peacebuilding mechanisms within South Sudan upon the formal launch of activities on April 1st. The project will run for a total of three years and be officially completed in 2021.

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For Press Inquires

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About the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

The Dallaire Initiative, based at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, is recognized as the only organization in the world taking a prevention-oriented, security sector focused approach to the crime against humanity that is child soldiery. Founded by retired lieutenant-general and celebrated humanitarian Roméo Dallaire, The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative is a leader committed to ending the use and recruitment of child soldiers worldwide, through ground-breaking research, advocacy, and security-sector training.

About the Project

The current crisis in South Sudan has seen massive and widespread use of child soldiers by all parties to the conflict resulting in the country being listed as a state violator on the 2016 UN SRSG's report on Children and Armed Conflict. In 2016, the United Nations verified 169 incidents of child soldier recruitment and use affecting at least 1,022 children, 61 per cent of which were attributed to SPLA (574) and other government security forces (50). Children were also recruited and used by the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (115), the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition allied with Taban Deng Gai (207), and several other opposition groups.

By framing the issue as a specific priority concern for security sector actors, the Dallaire Initiative will empower those engaged in peace operations in South Sudan to improve policies and strategies to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Overall, the project's goal is to protect girls and boys in South Sudan through the progressive elimination of the recruitment and use of child soldiers by supporting the SPLA, UNMISS, international and community based organizations in the following areas:

- Improve capacity of security sector actors to prevent the recruitment and use of boys and girls as soldiers.
- Integrate the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in the overall peacemaking process in South Sudan.
- Strengthen child protection strategies by civil society and communities to protect at-risk boys and girls from being recruited as child soldiers.