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DALLAIRE



**CHILD  
SOLDIERS**  
INITIATIVE



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# Child Soldiers: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors

Second Edition



**unitar**

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

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## A Message from the Founder LGen Roméo Dallaire (Ret'd)

For the past several years, the Dallaire Initiative has striven to produce the world's most comprehensive security sector handbook on the phenomenon of child soldiers. We have done so because until today, the discipline of child protection has largely ignored the experiences and contributions of soldiers, police and the judiciary. Yet we know that these men and women play a fundamental, irreplaceable role in the protection of children during times of war. This first-of-its-kind handbook is intended to assist security sector actors in the fulfilment of this significant responsibility.

In time, it is my hope that this handbook will no longer be needed, as the recruitment and use of children in war will be a thing of the past. As security sector actors, this is our objective; but we cannot achieve it alone. It will only be possible if we open ourselves to collaboration with other security and civilian stakeholders who share a common interest in child protection.

I will continue working towards this important goal until it is accomplished—but I need your help. I firmly believe that with your cooperation and leadership, we can make a substantial contribution towards ending this crime against humanity. If we can end the use of child soldiers globally, we may go a long way in preventing conflict from erupting in the first place.



LGen Honourable Roméo A. Dallaire, (Ret'd)



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## Acronyms

**AAR:** After Action Review

**CAAF:** Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups

**CAR:** Central African Republic

**CFPS:** Centre for Foreign Policy Studies

**CO:** Commanding Officer

**CPO:** Child Protection Officer

**CYCC:** Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts

**DDR:** Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

**DMPP:** Dalhousie Marine Piracy Project

**DMTC:** Directorate of Military Training and Cooperation

**DPKO:** Department of Peacekeeping Operations

**DRC:** Democratic Republic of Congo

**GPS:** Global Positioning System

**HIV/AIDS:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

**ICC:** Interim Care Centre

**IDDRS:** Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards

**IDP:** Internally Displaced Person

**ILO:** International Labour Organisation

**IPEC:** International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

**LRA:** Lord's Resistance Army

**MONUC:** United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo

**MRM:** Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation

**PRT:** Provincial Reconstruction Team

**PSYOPS:** Psychological Operations

**PTSD:** Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

**RCMP:** Royal Canadian Mounted Police

**RDF:** Rwanda Defence Force

**ROE:** Rules of Engagement

**RUF:** Revolutionary United Front

**SA:** South Africa

**SOP:** Standard Operating Procedure

**SRSG:** Special Representative of the Secretary-General

**SSR:** Security Sector Reform

**UN:** United Nations

**UNAMIR:** United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda

**UNFICYP:** United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

**UNICEF:** United Nations Children's Fund

**UNITAR:** United Nations Institute for Training and Research

**UNODC:** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**UNPROFOR:** United Nations Protection Force

**UNSC:** United Nations Security Council

**USIP:** United States Institute of Peace

## Acknowledgements

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- Power Corporation of Canada;
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The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative gratefully recognizes and thanks the following individuals, organizations and companies who have invested in our work:

- Dallaire Inc.;
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- Kinross Gold.
- Joseph Skeff and PROTEC

Together we are generating tangible momentum towards eradicating the use of child soldiers worldwide.

Furthermore, the Dallaire Initiative is profoundly grateful for the committed support of many prominent researchers, representatives of various United Nations (UN) agencies including:

- The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict;
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),
- The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO),
- The Office of the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against children
- The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR);

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including Search for Common Ground and Child-to-Child Trust; individual representatives of the Canadian Forces and DMTC Camp Aldershot; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP); local Canadian police departments; the Government of Sierra Leone and its security forces; the Rwanda Defence Forces; the Rwanda Peace Academy; and the approximately 600 security sector personnel who have been trained by the Dallaire Initiative to date and to whom we are grateful for the insights and experiences they continue to share.

The Dallaire Initiative is appreciative of the continued support of Dalhousie University, its Institutional home, and in particular for the support of President Richard Florizone and Dean Robert Summerby-Murray.

Lastly, the Dallaire Initiative is deeply grateful for the guidance and advisory support provided by Major Brent Beardsley (Ret'd), Constable Jeffrey Hirsch and Séraphin Kajibwami Shuni. Their contributions to the present handbook are of incalculable value.

“For soldiers with any sense of honour at all, fighting children offers a no-win situation. To be defeated by children would almost certainly bring death, derision and disgrace, while to win would carry the taint of having killed mere children.”

*-LGen Roméo Dallaire (Ret'd)*

# Part I:

## Introduction

## About the Dallaire Initiative

### 1.1 What is the Dallaire Initiative?

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative is a global partnership that is committed to ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers worldwide. It strives towards this goal by researching practical solutions, advocating for policy change and conducting comprehensive, prevention-oriented training for security sector actors.

The Dallaire Initiative's unique approach to working with military, police and prison personnel – often the first point of outside contact for child soldiers – is groundbreaking and critical to the interruption of the cycle of recruitment by armed groups.

In every aspect of its programming, the Dallaire Initiative seeks to collaborate with concerned governments, security sector actors, academics, humanitarians and communities.

In 2012, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) appointed the Dallaire Initiative as its subject matter expert for all issues pertaining to child soldiers. The Dallaire Initiative is also an associate member of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a supporting entity of the 100 Series Rules on the Use of Force (RUF), and an integral part of the newly inaugurated Institute for Children and Youth in Challenging Contexts (CYCC), housed at Dalhousie University.

### 1.2 Guiding Principles

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative is guided by the following core values:

- Respect for all stakeholders and their diverse viewpoints;
- Acknowledgement of the transformative power of education;
- Avoidance of the duplication of efforts via coordination and collaboration;
- Value of local organisations and community-based efforts;
- Encouragement of bold, forward thinking.

## A Unique Approach

### 1.3 Children in Armed Conflict: A Security Sector Priority

In focusing solely upon disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and not upon the complete eradication of the use of child soldiers as a phenomenon, the international community has merely attempted to fix the broken, rather than to protect the whole. Until this issue is elevated within the security agenda, the international community will continue to squander excellent opportunities to prevent the recruitment of children into armed forces and groups.

By framing the issue of children in armed conflict as a specific priority concern for security sector actors, the Dallaire Initiative empowers military, police and prison personnel to develop better policies and strategies to not only limit or prevent child soldier recruitment, but also to improve security sector interactions with children during actual armed conflict, with the ultimate aim of avoiding fatalities on all sides.

While pre-deployment training for military, police and prison personnel is improving—particularly with respect to children's rights and the protection of civilians—very little is currently being done to prepare security sector actors for the possibility of confronting child soldiers before or during active hostilities. This presents security sector actors with a serious dilemma, as they are forced to juggle ethical considerations and their rules of engagement (ROE) with the basic need to protect themselves, their colleagues and affected civilians.

This handbook urges security sector actors to recognise that preparation for interaction with children in armed conflict is as important as preparation for any other aspect of a mission. It also stresses that there should be strong coordination and cooperation with agencies that usually bear primary responsibility for children during times of war. Such collaboration enables security sector actors to draw upon the wealth of intelligence that is generated by these civilian organisations and to contribute to the strengthening of child protection in general.

#### Important

The recruitment and use of children in hostilities is a crime under numerous widely ratified regional and international treaties and is the focus of many UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. As such, in the eye of the law, child soldiers are victims of a crime and are therefore entitled to special attention and protection.

### 1.4 The Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook aims to highlight and reinforce the various roles that security sector actors (i.e. military, police, prison personnel and peacekeepers) can play in protecting all children affected by war. In particular, it focuses upon national and international military, police and prison officials who, by accident or design, are in direct contact with child soldiers in the field. This handbook should serve as a resource to accompany in-class training and simulations developed by the Dallaire Initiative

No individual country or regional organisation has yet developed coherent policies or military and police doctrine for dealing with children during complex peace operations. Similarly, there is little substantive guidance on tactics, techniques and procedures to handle armed groups that use child soldiers. With this handbook, the Dallaire Initiative takes an initial step towards filling those identified gaps, by raising awareness of the problem amongst security sector actors and by providing basic operational guidance for action.

The Dallaire Initiative bases its recommendations upon research from primary and secondary sources conducted over several years, including security and humanitarian actors in conflict and post-conflict settings.

### 1.5 Who Should use this Handbook?

This training handbook targets national, regional and international security-focused organisations, such as national militaries, local police departments, private security companies and national prison services. It is also meant to educate, inform and change the attitudes and behaviours of all security sector actors who have participated in training sessions led by the Dallaire Initiative with the overall aim of preventing the use and recruitment of child soldiers.

In the field, security sector actors serve as critical points of contact with children, both before they are recruited into armed groups during times of peace and during times of war.

### 1.6 Key Concepts

This handbook offers insight, lessons learned, good practices, training tools and tactical procedures that should be implemented by security sector actors in the field. It demonstrates that:



- In addition to being a serious legal, human rights and child protection problem, child soldiering is a significant security issue that can potentially cause, sustain or expand armed conflict. The use of child soldiers may also have direct bearing upon whether a peace operation is successful or not. As such, the international community should view child soldiering as an important problem of prime relevance to the security agenda;
- The role of security sector actors in protecting children during armed conflict has previously been under-appreciated. Security sector actors are therefore encouraged to assume greater responsibility for this role by adhering to the menu of tactical and operational recommendations made in this handbook.
- Solutions to child soldier-related challenges are best achieved through concerted, collaborative and mutually reinforcing action amongst security sector actors and other agencies working within their respective spheres of influence.

As Margot Wallström, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, stated on 6 April 2011, “...sexual violence has been recognised by the international community as a security threat that demands a security response.”<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the Dallaire Initiative believes that the use of children by armed forces and armed groups should also be considered a security threat that demands a security response.

## 1.7 Progressive Elimination

In 1992, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) founded the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). This noble effort to progressively end the problem of child labour aims at strengthening the capacity of countries to deal with the phenomenon and at catalysing a powerful global movement.

In keeping with the ILO’s philosophy and approach, the Dallaire Initiative promotes the progressive elimination of the recruitment and use of child soldiers. This strategy has also been supported by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict and her “Zero Under 18” campaign.

The progressive elimination approach affirms that the ultimate goal of eradication can only be realised via concrete and incremental action, such that:

- The very youngest children are given priority attention in terms of protection from recruitment and use by armed groups. DDR programmes and subsequent academic studies have repeatedly shown that the younger a child is when he or she is recruited, the more difficult it will be for him or her to successfully demobilise and reintegrate;
- Awareness-raising and security sector training campaigns operating in line with the Dallaire Initiative’s core competencies are implemented in a concerted, country-by-country manner;

## 1.8 The Scope of this Handbook

This handbook is intended to complement already existing efforts to protect children. The Dallaire Initiative wishes to acknowledge the many related achievements that have already been made by local, regional and international organisations. Rather, this handbook is intended to provide impetus to focus and strengthen security sector actors’ role in protecting children during armed conflict.

Wherever possible, other supporting documents will be highlighted as potential reference points, to complement the information presented. In particular, it is suggested that this handbook be supplemented by the following external resources:

- The “Do No Harm” Principles;
- The UN DPKO Child Protection Policy;
- The UN Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) Handbook;
- Humanitarian Negotiation: A Handbook for Securing Access, Assistance and Protection for Civilians in Armed Conflict;
- All other national and international legal instruments that concern the protection of children during armed conflict.

As has already been suggested, more practical and specialised training on security sector actors’ potential interactions with child soldiers is needed, so as to assist these personnel in developing keener awareness, knowledge and skills that will enable them to better protect both themselves and children who are associated with armed groups. As such, this guide should ideally be used as a complement to in-class or online training. If the first time an interaction occurs is during mission, then it is already too late. One requires multiple practice opportunities before a reaction becomes second nature.

Finally, each conflict and post-conflict environment exhibits unique dynamics and characteristics that demand different strategies and actions to address the recruitment of child soldiers. By regularly soliciting input from users and incorporating lessons learned via research, this handbook will remain a living document that will be periodically updated so as to reflect good practices and the ever-evolving challenges posed by the phenomenon of child soldiering.

Feedback on the handbook is welcome and can be sent directly to the Dallaire Initiative at [info@childsoldiers.org](mailto:info@childsoldiers.org).

## 1.9 The e-Learning Course

At the time of publishing, final edits were being made to a comprehensive child soldier e-learning course for security sector actors, written and designed in collaboration with UNITAR's Peacekeeping Training Programme. Please refer to the Dallaire Initiative's website – [www.childsoldiers.org](http://www.childsoldiers.org) – for the most current information pertaining to this online course.

“The objective of this course is to advance a better understanding of the phenomenon of child soldiering and to give basic operational guidance for field personnel.”

–UNITAR

# Core Competencies for Security Sector Training

## 1.10 Why Core Competencies are Important

Despite the existence of a global normative legal framework and extensive international programming, the phenomenon of child recruitment and use in armed conflict persists. The Dallaire Initiative believes that widespread standardised training for security sector actors on the prevention of the use of child soldiers is one crucial way to address this failure. No such standards currently exist and this is why the Dallaire Initiative has collaborated with UNITAR to develop a set of core competencies for all security sector trainings related to interactions with child soldiers

### Core Competency #1:

Security Sector Actors Must Demonstrate a Clear Understanding of the Definition of a Child Soldier.

Following any child soldier-related training, security sector actors should be able to properly define and explain:

- National and international legislation on the issue;
- What constitutes child soldiering (i.e. the various roles and responsibilities a child soldier might have in an armed group);
- How child soldiers are recruited;
- How child soldiers are used strategically;
- The unique roles played by girl soldiers and the gender-specific challenges they face (e.g. giving birth to children within the armed group, etc.).

**Core Competency #2:**

Security Sector Actors Must Begin To See Child Soldiers As A Security Concern That Demands Unique Attention

Training should encourage security sector actors to “see the child first and the child soldier second.” Course participants may demonstrate their new understanding by successfully explaining:

- Why child soldiers should be on the security agenda;
- The types of interactions that may occur between a security sector actor and a child soldier;
- The moral dilemmas associated with confronting a child soldier;
- The risks associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD);
- How security sector actors might improve their interactions with child soldiers in non-lethal interactions.

**Core Competency #3:**

Security Sector Actors Must Understand The Importance Of Effective Reporting And Collaboration With Other Concerned Organisations

Because of the unique role that they play in conflict and post-conflict environments, security sector actors have access to information that humanitarian organisations do not—and vice versa. Course participants should therefore be able to explain:

- How to effectively recognise, monitor and report human rights abuses committed against children;
- How to successfully take part in child protection activities;
- The importance of collaboration, coordination and information sharing, particularly with humanitarian and civil society organisations.

# Part II:

## Concepts & Strategies

# Part III:

## Operational Framework

# Part IV:

## Tactical Response

# Part IV:

Tactical Response – Interaction Charts

# Part V:

## Cross-cutting Issues



# Part VI:

## Annexes

## Feedback

Through ongoing input from our colleagues and users, this handbook will remain a living document that will be regularly updated to reflect lessons learned that have been collected from across the globe.

Please send feedback to [info@childsoldiers.org](mailto:info@childsoldiers.org)

Please include your contact information if you wish to be included on the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative's mailing list.

## Our Supporters

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