A Holistic Approach to Preventing the Use of Child Soldiers:
Education, Integration, and Doctrine Change in Sierra Leone
The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Canada

Cover Illustration:
Erin Hollingshead

Written by:
Dustin Johnson
Victoria Bryce
Dr. Shelly Whitman
Darin Reeves
Jennifer McNeil

Design:
Josh Boyter
Megan Churney

For more information please visit us at:
www.childsoldiers.org

Follow us:
Twitter: @childsoldiers
Facebook: facebook.com/childsoldiers.org
Instagram: _childsoldiers

Acknowledgements
We would like to thank Unifor, the Slaight Family Foundation, and Child-to-Child UK for their support of our work in Sierra Leone.

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Dallaire Initiative</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins of the Sierra Leone Project</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Security Sector Actors</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Children</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Impact and Future Potential</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

The Dallaire Initiative began its work in Sierra Leone in 2012 due to its history with child soldiers in its civil war, its location in West Africa amidst other states facing instability and the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and the promising security sector reform programs underway at the time.

The Dallaire Initiative began partnering with the national security sector institutions and a local child protection organization to develop, pilot, and implement a holistic approach to preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers. This approach is the core of the Dallaire Initiative’s work, and involves the training of key security sector actors to become certified trainers, the integration of Dallaire Initiative training into national security sector training institutions, the writing of military doctrine on child soldiers, and working with children, schools, and communities to enhance the protection of children during peace and war, and promote children as current and future builders of peace.

The Dallaire Initiative has achieved considerable success working with our partners in Sierra Leone. Over 1,400 personnel from the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF), Sierra Leone Police (SLP), and Sierra Leone Corrections Service (SLCS) have been trained in basic, training of trainers (ToT), and pre-deployment courses. Some of these graduates have been deployed to UN and AU peacekeeping missions elsewhere in Africa, with several employed by the Dallaire Initiative to conduct further training and integration work in other African countries, particularly Somalia.

2016 and 2017 also saw the launch of the pilot phase of the Dallaire Initiative education project in Sierra Leone, implementing peace education clubs in three primary schools and expanding it to 12 more. Initiative impact surveys found significant improvements in how children treat their schoolmates, how they prevent violence in school and the community, and how their attitudes and behaviours are changed to improve safety, advocate for peace, and become leaders.

Overall, the Dallaire Initiative’s work in Sierra Leone has been critical for developing, testing, and proving our approach to preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and will continue to serve as a key example of success for the world as it seeks to end of the use of children as weapons of war.

Photo credit: Josh Boyter
OVER

1,400

SIERRA LEONE MILITARY, POLICE, & CORRECTIONS OFFICERS TRAINED

1 in 3

TRAINEES ARE WOMEN

14

BASIC, TOT, & PREDEPLOYMENT TRAININGS HELD
About the Dallaire Initiative

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative was established in 2007 by retired lieutenant-general the honourable Roméo Dallaire, former force commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR). Our mission is to progressively eradicate the use of child soldiers through a preventative security sector approach.

To achieve this important objective, the Dallaire Initiative conducts activities on three fronts:

- It conducts world-class interdisciplinary research to build—and share—knowledge, which in turn leads to new solutions;
- It engages in high-level advocacy activities to create and promote the political will to end the use of children as soldiers;
- It delivers tactical, prevention-oriented training to security sector actors, so as to promote broader security sector reform.

In every aspect of its work, the Dallaire Initiative seeks to collaborate with concerned governments, security sector actors, academics, humanitarians and civilian communities. In particular, its unique approach working with soldiers, police, prison personnel and private security operators – many of whom are the first point of contact for child soldiers outside of their armed force or armed group – is both ground-breaking and critical to the interruption of children’s recruitment.

Photo credit: Josh Boyter
“What the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative is doing is absolutely extraordinary, I beg you to take my word for it. There is nothing like it internationally anywhere.... They are fashioning a response to child soldiery that is utterly unique and is effective. It is almost beyond belief how effective it can be and is being. It is as it were, the gold standard to the response to child soldiers anywhere.”

Stephen Lewis
Origins of the Sierra Leone Project

During a brutal 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone that ended in 2002, some 10,000 child soldiers were active in the country, used by both government and rebel forces in a range of capacities.1

ALTHOUGH SIERRA LEONE HAS SUBSEQUENTLY ENACTED strict legislation that ensures the army cannot recruit or use child soldiers, there is a significant risk of a return to such practices should violence resurface. According to the United Nations Development Programme’s 2016 Human Development Index, Sierra Leone ranks 179th out of 188 surveyed countries, tied with Eritrea. 77% of Sierra Leoneans live in multidimensional poverty, 52% of primary school children drop out of school,2 and 70% of youth are either unemployed or underemployed.3 This combination of underdevelopment, poor access to education and unemployment put young Sierra Leoneans at a significantly increased risk of recruitment by militias and armed gangs.

Sierra Leone is situated in a corner of West Africa that is troubled by violence. Its regional neighbours – Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast and Mali – have all experienced protracted bouts of armed conflict and there is a constant risk of violence spilling across Sierra Leone’s borders. Yet, despite these challenges, Sierra Leone has maintained a laudable degree of stability since the conclusion of its civil war. Notably, it has begun to establish itself as a key African peacekeeping nation, recently contributing troops to the UNAMID, UNISFA, and UNMISS missions in Sudan and South Sudan; the AMISOM, UNSOS, and UNSOM missions in Somalia; the MINUSMA mission in Mali; the UNOWAS mission in the Sahel; and the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon.4 Sierra Leone’s contributions to UN Peacekeeping demonstrate their post-conflict transition, and came immediately after the conclusion of UN peace and stability support to Sierra Leone, with the Integrated Peacebuilding Office closing in 2014. Consequently, the Dallaire Initiative’s work in Sierra Leone has occurred in tandem with the country developing its peacekeeping capabilities.

These factors provided compelling reasons for piloting a program in Sierra Leone, aimed at directly preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers in any future conflict. In 2012, the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative and the Pikin-to-Pikin Movement began to explore the idea of piloting a countrywide initiative that would encompass security sector training as well as the creation of a primary school education project. Since then, the Dallaire Initiative has created a ground-breaking training program for Sierra Leonean security sector personnel focused on the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and has begun working with our local partners in primary schools. Through Sierra Leone’s contributions to peacekeeping, our work is having an impact across Africa.
Focus on Security Sector Actors

In focusing solely upon disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and not upon the complete eradication of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, 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 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 and prevent child soldier recruitment, but also to improve security sector interactions with children.

While predeployment training for military, police and prison officials 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. The importance of this training for peacekeepers was reinforced in November 2017 with the adoption of the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and Preventing the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, which have so far been endorsed by 61 countries. As one of the founding members of the Vancouver Principles, Sierra Leone has committed to preparing its peacekeepers for the modern reality of child soldiers.
The country of Sierra Leone knows first-hand the long-term impacts of using children in war. Having endured 11 years in a brutal civil war, the current government is now committed to ensuring this will never happen again. Given their geography, it is crucial that the country remain vigilant and committed to the permanent eradication of child soldiery within its borders, since violence can quickly spill over from bordering countries in the region. The Dallaire Initiative partnered with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Defense and the Office of National Security, the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, Sierra Leone Police, and the Sierra Leone Corrections Service to introduce country-specific training that:

- Outlined the major security sector issues related to the phenomenon of child soldiery;
- Identified strategies for preventing the recruitment and re-recruitment of child soldiers;
- Improved interactions between security sector forces and child soldiers in the field, with the overall aim of protecting children from manipulation by armed groups and forces; and
- Worked with the legal instruments that guide the protection of children in conflict situations.

Following the initial success of three basic courses conducted in 2013, the Dallaire Initiative has continued its engagement with the security sector in Sierra Leone with additional basic courses, ToT courses, and predeployment training. Such coordinated instruction will help improve communities’ perceptions of both the military and the police, and will forge more trusting relationships between all stakeholders. It will contribute to the dismantling of destructive stigmas associated with rehabilitated child soldiers; all the while preparing troops who are deploying to complex peace operations where child soldiers are currently being recruited and used.

Building upon our momentum since January 2016, the Dallaire Initiative has reaffirmed our partnerships, strengthened and validated a domestic capability to execute training, and re-established and begun implementation of comprehensive plans to advance the third phase of integration of our training into the Sierra Leonean security sector.
Building Local Capacity

THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF THE DALLAIRE INITIATIVE’S approach is building the capacity within security sector institutions to train and prepare their personnel to confront and prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers. As part of the broader security sector reform agenda, the Dallaire Initiative trains personnel within the security sector to develop a group of ToT graduates who can serve as ambassadors of our approach, followed by the creation of doctrine on child soldiers and the integration of Dallaire Initiative training materials into normal security sector training and education.

The application of this work in Sierra Leone began in 2012, and continued with great progress until 2014, when the Ebola epidemic temporarily halted our work. The Dallaire Initiative returned to Sierra Leone as soon as possible afterwards, with a high-level visit in January 2016 to meet with security sector and education personnel. The momentum of the project was soon regained, with a new round of basic trainings, a new ToT, and two predeployment trainings for police preparing for UN and AU peacekeeping missions held in 2016.

In January 2017 the first integrated training in Sierra Leone was conducted, with all on the ground planning, organization, and facilitation carried out entirely by Sierra Leonean ToT graduates and the Dallaire Initiative's local coordinator, with remote support provided by staff in Canada. An increasing pace of integrated trainings has since taken place, with courses for RSLAF and SLP personnel in August 2017 and January and February 2018. These trainings have begun to have an international impact, with some participants in the RSLAF Intermediate Staff Courses coming from Liberia and Gambia, and the deployment of experienced ToT graduates to facilitate training elsewhere in Africa. This demonstrates that the Sierra Leonean security sector is becoming a West African focal point in preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as originally envisioned for the Sierra Leone project.

It is particularly interesting to note comments from the Liberian participants, who all reflected a desire for this training to be adopted by the Liberian Armed Forces, as they recognized the significant operational capability this training provided and the current lack of education and training they had received previously in this area. Like Sierra Leone, Liberia has experienced war and the extensive use of child soldiers that has left a legacy that impacts development, peace and security efforts.

The integration of Dallaire Initiative training in Sierra Leone achieved several important milestones over the course of 2017, with several trainings planned and executed entirely by ToT graduates within the Sierra Leone security sector. Having endorsed the Joint Doctrine Note on Child Soldiers, the second of its kind in the world, the retiring Chief of Defence Staff pointed out in his farewell address that “The RSLAF has made history and taken a leading role in Africa regarding the elimination of recruitment and use of child soldiers in conflict. We are also the only army in Africa that has drafted a doctrine on [child soldiers] and that doctrine will be used as a template to develop doctrines for other military and state security institutions.”

This accelerated pace of trainings planned and conducted by ToT graduates in Sierra Leone, with support provided remotely from the Dallaire Initiative in Canada and through our national staff on the ground, combined with the advances in integrating the interruption of child soldier recruitment and use into national military doctrine and security sector training curricula demonstrates the success of the Dallaire Initiative’s approach.
High-Level Support

MAINTAINING HIGH-LEVEL SUPPORT FOR THE DALLAIRE Initiative’s work within the upper echelons of the Government of Sierra Leone, RSLAF, the SLP, and SLC has been critical to the success of the project. A number of executive briefings with the senior security sector leadership of the RSLAF, the SLP and the SLC reinforced and demonstrated the strong partnership the Dallaire Initiative had developed with the Sierra Leone security sector.

Following these briefings and a meeting with the President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, Memoranda of Understanding were signed with RSLAF, the SLP, and SLC to outline the commitments of the respective parties and to ensure the success of the training integration process over the coming years. To reinforce this process and provide guidance to the entire military, a Joint Doctrine Note was endorsed by the Chief of Defense Staff in late 2017.

The training integration section of the program covers personnel from “recruitment to retirement” along three primary lines: professional development (formal career courses), operational capacity development (predeployment, re-currency training) and experiential feedback development (integration throughout the organization in order to achieve institutional, and individual, buy-in and establish a robust monitoring and evaluation process for further improvement and doctrine development). A staffing commitment by all security sector organizations was recommended to ensure the program’s integration from the doctrine and to support the widespread and sustained implementation of the training programs locally. There was complete support by the leadership for this foundational work to change doctrine and training and a commitment to begin the process immediately.

This staffing and the transition of training plans from the Dallaire Initiative to all three Sierra Leonean security sector institutions marked a significant milestone in the project. This commitment will set Sierra Leone apart as the first state in the world to have integrated the Dallaire Initiative’s approach to training and capacity building into the doctrinal frameworks of all branches of the security sector, and it signals Sierra Leone’s long-term commitment to integrating the prevention of child soldiers throughout their security sector.

In November 2017, Sierra Leone became one of the founding members of the Vancouver Principles, a set of best practices for training peacekeepers to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers, which were developed in partnership between the Dallaire Initiative, the Government of Canada, and the United Nations. As an early and enthusiastic proponent of the Vancouver Principles, Sierra Leone played an important part in their adoption by 55 nations at their launch, with six more having endorsed them to date.

These high-level successes were enabled by the hard work, passion, and dedication of the personnel in the Sierra Leonean security sector with whom the Dallaire Initiative has been working, and the benefits of the training approach that have been demonstrated within the country and by Sierra Leonean peacekeepers deployed elsewhere in Africa.

---

Photo credit: Georgia Scott
THE DALLAIRE INITIATIVE BELIEVES THAT WOMEN’S equality and empowerment are of critical importance to security sector reform and peacebuilding. We work to ensure that women are well represented in our courses, can use their training from the Dallaire Initiative to help advance their careers and obtain leadership positions, and can serve as rolemodels to attract more women into the male-dominated security sector. The Dallaire Initiative’s training materials themselves also promote gender equality and combat sexual- and gender-based violence to help transform and professionalize the culture and practices of the security sector.

Due to the gendered roles common in society, women peacekeepers are often able to interact with and have conversations with children and women who may not speak to or be open with male peacekeepers. Consequently, having women peacekeepers who are trained in preventing the use and recruitment of child soldiers is critical for modern peacekeeping missions by improving communication and trust with local communities and therefore enhancing reporting of recruitment, enabling communities to better protect children, and encouraging them to seek help and protection from peacekeepers.

In Sierra Leone, fully 1/3 of the Dallaire Initiative’s training participants have been women. In comparison, as of early 2018 approximately 6% of RSLAF’s personnel and recruits were women. This represents a significant representation of women in the security sector, which helps to normalize their presence and reduce gender discrimination.
Impact Interviews

AS STANDARD PRACTICE, SIX MONTHS AFTER COMPLETING a Dallaire Initiative training, our core staff follow up with all participants in order to assess how the training has impacted their life and work. In-person interviews are always preferred for the face to face contact, however, if it is not possible to interview in person, core staff may call, email or text participants (via WhatsApp, for example) and ask the same questions. These follow-up interviews help the Dallaire Initiative understand the level of impact the training has had on participants, and allow us to hear participants' stories and opinions, which help shape future training courses.

The Dallaire Initiative conducted in-person follow-up interviews with RSLAF and SLP training graduates in January and November 2016, and April 2017. In-depth questions were posed by a Dallaire Initiative staff member and audio recorded for transcription and thematic analysis back in Canada. Each participant was requested to partake in a new electronic survey tool with the assistance and oversight of a local Sierra Leonian staff member. The development and use of the electronic survey tool will permit us to collect survey and interview data more regularly, and with a much wider range of program participants and graduates, enabling better monitoring of impact.
Key Findings from interviews

A KEY INSIGHT EXPRESSED BY SEVERAL PARTICIPANTS WAS that this was the first time someone had followed up with them to collect evaluation data after any training - ever. They stressed that they appreciated their stories and opinions being heard. That alone expressed to the Dallaire Initiative the importance of following up with participants to confirm the efficacy of our training, and that we must maintain contact with training graduates and continue to nurture these relationships.

Overall, the interview participants all spoke in detail about how they have applied the pedagogical tools that they were taught in Dallaire Initiative training. Many basic training participants also stated that they would like more opportunities to practice the techniques they had been taught. This is being addressed through the integration of operational training in the form of pre-deployment and refresher training and shows the necessity of our interviews to continually improve our own program. The interviews also helped to identify strong candidates for future Training of Trainers (ToT) courses, some of whom have also been engaged with the Dallaire Initiative – Rwanda partnership to deliver the national programme implementation in 2017.

Interviews with police participants were very revealing as many graduates talked about how their perceptions of vulnerable children, and in particular former child soldiers had changed, and the resulting change in their approach to and conduct of investigations involving children. This evolution in approach was also applied to former child soldiers who, now adults, came into conflict with the law. As an example, police expressed that the motorcycle taxi community, or “Okada drivers”, were widely known to be a difficult community to work with for law enforcement officials. While many knew that the majority of these Okada drivers are themselves former child soldiers, little thought was given to this fact, or the trauma that the Okada drivers must have faced as children. Based upon the Dallaire Initiative training, SLP officers shifted their approach towards Okada drivers and in so doing found that they could de-escalate previously dangerous situations and achieve better, safer results. In part based on this success, further suggestions for training improvement were received, with requests for additional psycho-social training to deal with children.

The SLP participants interviewed also expressed significantly more opportunities to use their training regularly, due to the fact that their job involves interacting with children on a daily basis. A participant interviewed in November 2016 stressed their constant use of the knowledge gained from the Dallaire Initiative when they are training new recruits, and another shared about opportunities they have had to speak about child soldiers as a lecturer at the Sierra Leone International Peacekeeping Academy. Community sensitization effects have also been put in place by the SLP to sensitize parents and community leaders about the need to protect children in Sierra Leone. A greater application can be expected in the future from military trainees as they are deployed into peace operations such as South Sudan, and we plan to continue on our follow-up with them once they return home.

Significant conclusions that demonstrate the impact that the Dallaire Initiative training has on participants in their life and work are as follows:

1. Our training is memorable, leading to long-term retention by participants. Six months or one year later, they still describe in detail the activities and tools they learned and used in training.

2. Our training helps security sector actors understand how children and youth can be vulnerable and must be treated differently than adults. It supports better outcomes when they encounter children and youth in different situations: “As an officer in charge of police stations, whenever a child is brought to the station I know what to do with that situation perfectly, because I’ve gotten that training” (January 2016 interview participant).
3. Our training on strategic complementarity has encouraged participants to collaborate with other organizations: “Collaboration is a key factor – that you should always be collaborating whosoever that you’re working with especially on peacekeeping operations. That collaboration helps you a lot to achieve your goals” (January 2016 interview participant).

4. Participants frequently pass on the information they learned in our training to colleagues going into peacekeeping missions where they may encounter child soldiers: “It [the training] has been helpful and important to our work...with the knowledge regarding child soldiers in combat, I think it will go a long way to have to in our deployment training” (January 2016 interview participant).

5. Our training has encouraged participants’ educational pursuit and interest in the topic of child soldiers. Several participants are now studying peace and development studies focused on child soldiers, while another has written a concept paper on how to help former child soldiers who are now living on the street.

6. Our training has shaped how participants view children impacted by war, encouraging empathy and understanding: “Because of the training, we empathize with them [children]. We judge or see things from their perspective...” (January 2016 interview participant).

7. Many participants have used our training activities, tools and modules to conduct their own related training, presentations, and lectures in their daily work: “I would say it has greatly assisted me in my day to day activities as commander...even though this course was specifically meant for mission theatres but the skills we learned in the training course I’ve been able to pull some of them into practice” (January 2016 interview participant).

8. Our training, knowledge, and tools were useful during the Ebola crisis, and many participants spoke about how they adapted the different tools we taught them (such as body mapping) to teach others about the effects of Ebola. They also recognized how children are as vulnerable during a crisis such as Ebola, as they are during times of conflict.

9. Participants recognized that our training would be very useful prior to being deployed into conflict zones where there are child soldiers, and that if they are deployed again, they will be certain to use the information they have learned: “If I had received this training before going [into peacekeeping missions] I would have had a different kind of... perception about child soldiers...If I am given a chance for another mission, I think I’ll make very good use of what I learned from the training “(January 2016 interview participant).

10. Training has increased knowledge on how and why children must receive special protection: “There is no way you can be a soldier without knowing how to protect children. It is not all about protecting children from the other end. It should also be about you protecting the child as well” (April 2017 interview participant).

11. Our training has brought awareness to an issue that people may not have known previously was an issue. One participant shared their personal story about how the training made them realize that the way he was treated personally as a child was a form of child soldier recruitment and violence. It caused him to reflect on his life and now desires to stop other children from being used and recruited in the same way. That awareness and recognition of the problem will lead to participants being able to prevent recruitment and stop potentially destructive and violent behavior towards children: “I believe the future will be brighter because people know about who a child soldier is, and only when you know who, you can be able to prevent the use of child soldiers, and to protect the child soldier in the field of operations” (April 2017 interview participant).

These important conclusions help the Dallaire Initiative see where the training has the most impact on participants as well as where there is room for improvement. The next step in the monitoring impact process is to be able to interview participants who have then been deployed onto a mission, to understand how the training has influenced their behavior on the ground in peacekeeping operations.
Sierra Leonean ToT graduates have helped to conduct and lead Dallaire Initiative trainings in Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, demonstrating Sierra Leone as a leader in this area.

The Dallaire Initiative has been able to secure high-level support for our work in Sierra Leone, with positive commitment from the leadership of all three security sector institutions and the President of Sierra Leone.

First steps taken to establish Sierra Leone as a West African focal point in the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, with Liberian and Gambian officers taking part in two of the Dallaire Initiative integrated trainings in 2017 and 2018.

In 2017 Memoranda of Understanding were signed with all three Sierra Leonean security sector institutions (RSLAF, SLP, SLC) to formalize and extend our working relationship.

Sierra Leonean ToT graduates have been deployed in UN and AU peacekeeping missions in Darfur, South Sudan, Mali, and Somalia, directly applying their knowledge, educating colleagues, and improving child protection.

In late 2017 Sierra Leone became the second country in the world to fully adopt a military doctrine on preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

The Dallaire Initiative has been able to secure high-level support for our work in Sierra Leone, with positive commitment from the leadership of all three security sector institutions and the President of Sierra Leone.
Training statistics

3 security sector institutions in Sierra Leone

1,400 Sierra Leonean personnel trained

38 TRAINED TRAINERS in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone contributes to

1 AU and 8 UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

37 TRAININGS facilitated by ToT graduates elsewhere in Africa

1/3 training participants are WOMEN

10,000 CHILD SOLDIERS in Sierra Leone’s 1991-2002 civil war

The Dallaire Initiative has been in Sierra Leone since 2012

14 TRAININGS held in Sierra Leone
Sierra Leone and Peacekeeping: International Impact

THE DALLAIRE INITIATIVE’S PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SECURITY sector in Sierra Leone has produced a broader impact across the African continent. The trainees from our courses have gone on to serve in multiple African peacekeeping missions, and Sierra Leone serves as an example to other African states and the African Union of how they can better prepare their security personnel to address the use of child soldiers and protect children in their work.

Several graduates of our training in Sierra Leone are now deployed to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), helping to create peace and security, develop the Somali government’s security forces, and defeat the insurgency of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. Sierra Leonian Major Musa Gbow is currently employed as a Child Protection Advisor within AMISOM, the first such position within an AU peace support mission. His work in increasing cooperation and coordination between AMISOM, Somali security forces, and government and civil society child protection actors, training Somali and AMISOM personnel, and carrying out advocacy work has already had a substantial impact in Somalia.

For more on the impact of our work in Somalia, read our recent report Child Protection Capacity Building in Somalia.

Major Gbow’s work in Somalia has led to the training of over 500 Somali and AMISOM personnel in Dallaire Initiative courses, held both in Somalia and in Kenya in partnership with the British Peace Support Team (East Africa). His work with the Dallaire Initiative has also been a key part of our work in partnership with the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack and the African Union.

Graduates of Dallaire Initiative ToT courses from Sierra Leone have also helped to facilitate and lead a number of trainings in other African countries, including at the Rwanda Peace Academy, and in Uganda with the Ugandan People’s Defense Force, and with the Jordanian police. In addition to their direct work with the Dallaire Initiative, multiple ToT graduates have deployed to UN missions in Mali, Sudan, and South Sudan, and the cohort of Dallaire Initiative trained Formed Police Units (FPUs) and individual police officers (IPOs) will deploy to MINUSMA in Mali in February 2018.
Sierra Leone contributions to Peacekeeping Missions (as of January 2018) and Presence of Child Soldiers in Africa

Sierra Leone also contributes to UNIFIL in Lebanon and UNOWAS in West Africa.
THE DALLAIRE INITIATIVE HAS DEVELOPED A YOUTH-oriented training module on issues related to child soldiery and conflict resolution. Presented directly in primary schools in three districts across Sierra Leone, the module educates Sierra Leonean children about three topics:

- Basic legal rights, as guaranteed by national and international legal conventions;
- Primary motives, tactics and strategies of child soldier recruiters;
- Staying safe in the community through understanding and counteracting fighting, bullying, and unsafe areas and behaviours.

This work was undertaken through an established partnership with the Sierra Leonean Pikin-to-Pikin Movement (PPM), managed by Child-to-Child Trust based in the UK. The Dallaire Initiative is also working in partnership with former Sierra Leonean child soldiers, whose experiences serve to remind us all of the need to prevent any future recruitment.

The Ebola virus crisis unfortunately delayed the implementation of the project as schools were closed for one year. Three Dallaire Initiative staff members returned to Sierra Leone in November 2016 to conduct a training of key Pikin-to-Pikin staff and teachers in the three pilot schools.

In December 2016, the Pikin-to-Pikin staff and teachers set up the peace clubs in each of the three schools. Each peace club consists of 48 members, half boys and half girls, in grades 3 to 5. Each club is split into four committees. These clubs meet biweekly to conduct various exercises to teach the members about peace and child protection, and conduct a variety of formal and informal events to spread their message to the rest of the school and the broader community.

Over the first two weeks of April 2017, the Dallaire Initiative conducted a monitoring and evaluation visit to Sierra Leone to interview the teachers, Pikin-to-Pikin staff, and children about the activities of the club to assess the preliminary impact of the peace clubs, and to make recommendations for their future implementation and expansion. A second monitoring and evaluation visit was conducted in November 2017 to follow up on results from April, and visit the new schools where the project was expanding.

Photo credit: Ben O’Brien
There is no good war or a bad peace.
April 2017 Assessment Visit

THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES IN APRIL 2017 took place at each of the three schools involved in the project at that point:

- Rogbere Junction Primary, Port Loko District
- UMC Primary, Makeni
- St. Michael’s Primary, Moyamba

At each school, three different evaluation activities were undertaken:

1. School mapping, based on the village mapping exercise commonly used by the Dallaire Initiative, with two groups each of 10 students (half boys, half girls);
2. Group interviews with each of the two groups from the first activity, each with a different set of questions;
3. Triangulation interviews with teachers and Pikin-to-Pikin staff at each school.

Interviews with the teachers and Pikin-to-Pikin staff were conducted by the author in English, and were recorded and transcribed. The group interviews with the students were conducted in a mix of Krio and English, depending on the comfort level of the students, by Pikin-to-Pikin monitoring and evaluation officer Bai Kamara and Dallaire Initiative project coordinator Kadiatu Conteh. These were recorded, and sections in Krio were translated by the interviewer during the recording. They were then semi-transcribed, with all answers to the questions either fully transcribed or summarized, and repeat answers condensed (e.g. many students would answer that the mosque or church was an important place in their community, but this would only be recorded as one answer in the transcript).

Impact on Students, School, and Community

THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ALL IDENTIFIED A NUMBER of positive impacts on the children themselves, the school, and the broader community. Since the creation of the peace clubs, children were less likely to fight or bully other children, and more likely to intervene to mediate disputes or bring problems to the attention of teachers. Children were more aware of their rights and responsibilities, more thoughtful about risky activities, and more vocal in talking to their parents about issues.

They also reported a reduction of fighting at home, and better appreciation by parents of the perspectives and agency of children. In several cases students and teachers reported concrete actions taken to improve child protection and promote peace. These included the removal of two groups of people from near the school in Rogbere Junction who caused problems for children, the engagement of students and teachers with local authorities to learn and promote peace, and club members promoting peace during the general election during voter registration activities near the schools.

It was also noted that these were the only prevention-focused child protection activities taking place in the communities. Other NGOs and the government were primarily focused on responding to violations of children’s rights.

Photo credit: Dustin Johnson
Knowledge Transmission

THE INTERVIEWS FOUND THAT KNOWLEDGE IMPARTED through the clubs moves from the teachers to the club members to the broader school and community through a number of formal and informal mechanisms. Within the clubs, teachers use lectures, discussions, learning songs, and drama as the primary methods of knowledge transmission to members.

Club members pass their message on to friends, other students, parents, and the broader community through a number of formal and informal channels. The clubs engage in skits, singing, presentations, home visits, and field trips to local chiefs and courts. Individual students also talk to the friends and families about peace, intervene to mediate and prevent fights and bullying, and bringing peace and safety matters to the attention of teachers.

Conclusions

OVERALL, THE CLUBS APPEAR TO BE HAVING A SIGNIFICANT positive impact on the schools, the parents of students, and the broader community. The focus of the clubs on educating children about their rights and responsibilities, encouraging their agency, and educating on and promoting peace at the family to national levels all impact the behaviour and attitudes of students who are members of the club, who pass these changes on to their friends, classmates, and family members. Students and teachers reported concrete examples of the efforts of the club leading to addressing ongoing child protection concerns near the schools and engaging with local authorities to better protect children.

Photo credit: Ben O’Brien
Fall 2017 Assessment Visit and Baseline Survey

Pikin-to-Pikin’s expansion of the peace clubs to 12 additional primary schools in Sierra Leone provided an important opportunity for gathering more data on the impact of the clubs. In particular, obtaining comparable quantitative pre- and post-implementation data from the new schools will be critical to further demonstrating the potential and impact of the clubs.

Based on the information gathered from this evaluation visit, Pikin-to-Pikin staff carried out a baseline evaluation across the 12 new schools in October 2017, and this will be followed by an impact assessment gathering the same data at the end of the school year. Pikin-to-Pikin staff gathered data from the students and their parents when they obtained consent for the children’s participation in the clubs.

The Pikin-to-Pikin staff asked each student and at least one parent of each student a series multiple choice and Lickert scale questions about peace and the peace clubs.

- Parents were asked about their perceptions of peace in the community and country, their perception of the role of children in society, and how often fighting occurs at home;
- Students were asked about their perception of peace in the community and country, how often they witness fighting and bullying at school, whether they intervene or otherwise try to prevent it, and their perception of the role of children in society.

These data were collected on paper, and then transcribed into a spreadsheet for analysis, which will be completed upon the gathering of the second survey results at the end of the school year in Summer 2018.

These data will also be complemented by future in-depth interviews. Collection of similar data from a broader range of community members outside of just parents of the club members would also be beneficial for assessing the broader impact of the clubs, but might not be possible due to constraints on resources. These would include other teachers and administrators in the school, local leaders such as police and traditional chiefs, and community service providers that interact with children, such as medical personnel.
Dustin Johnson visited Sierra Leone again in November 2017 to conduct follow-up monitoring and evaluation activities. During this trip all 15 schools involved in the program were visited. Group interviews of the children and teachers were conducted once more at the three original schools. The 12 new schools had not had sufficient time to begin program activities, so only brief discussions were held with the students and teachers there, rather than full interviews. These interviews revisited many of the same questions asked in April, and found similar results in what the children were learning, how they were acting on the messages of the peace clubs to reduce fighting and bullying, and where they were doing so. It was reported that in Rogbere Junction the police have been seeing fewer incidents of domestic violence and believe this is caused by the peace club’s activities, which is a potential impact that will need to be examined during future monitoring and evaluation activities. This indicates a consistent delivery of the program in the original three schools, and that the new club members are doing well.

The meetings with the new schools revealed some additional challenges that the teachers, students, and communities face, including child labour and trafficking, the presence of transient workers in the mining industry who are not well integrated into the community, and frequent concerns about the proximity of schools to roads. It was also noted comparing the new schools to the old that the students in the old schools were significantly more willing to raise their hands and answer questions, indicating an increase in confidence due to participation in the clubs.

**Future & Impact**

The expansion of the program to 15 schools in 2017/18 and the baseline and follow-up surveys will allow for a substantial evaluation of the impact of the project. A radio program component of the project was also launched in early 2018, with episodes on themes related to the school club activities.

So far, the education component of the Dallaire Initiative’s work in Sierra Leone has seen great promise. Continued and improved monitoring over the remaining year and a half of the current project will provide a foundation for possible future education work in Sierra Leone, and in other countries of interest for the Dallaire Initiative such as Nigeria and South Sudan.

Photo credit: Ben O’Bright
Education Statistics

179th on the Human Development Index

70% of youth are either unemployed or underemployed

77% of Sierra Leoneans live in multidimensional poverty

52% of primary school children drop out of school

15 schools have peace clubs

15

Schools are in 3 districts

720 children in peace clubs

48% of children think their country is somewhat or very peaceful

36% of children think their community is somewhat violent

Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative
Education Project Baseline Survey Results

When you witness fighting or bullying among your fellow students, do you try to stop it, or get an adult to stop it?

What do you think the role of children is in your community?

How peaceful is your school?

Port Loko District

Bombali District

Moyamba District

- I encourage them to fight/bully
- I ignore the fighting/bullying
- I watch the fighting/bullying
- I often intervene to stop it
- I often get an adult/teacher to stop it

- Children should play an active role
- Children should be little involved
- Children should play no role

- Very peaceful
- Somewhat peaceful
- Neither peaceful nor violent
- Somewhat violent
- Very Violent
Overall Impact and Future Potential

THE DALLAIRE INITIATIVE’S WORK IN SIERRA LEONE since 2012 has been a great success, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Initiative’s training work, serving as a pilot for the integration of training and doctrine into the national security sector, and showing the importance of a holistic approach to preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers involving children, communities, and the security sector.

The accelerating pace of training in Sierra Leone organized, managed, and conducted by Dallaire Initiative ToT graduates, the signing of MoUs with the security sector institutions in the country, the adoption of a Joint Doctrine Note by RSLAF, and Sierra Leone’s support for the Vancouver Principles has demonstrated what a child soldier prevention-focused security sector reform program can achieve. These successes provide a model and an example for the expanding work of the Dallaire Initiative in Africa, with similar ongoing or planned projects in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda.

The successful pilot phase of the Dallaire Initiative’s education project has shown that delivering peace-focused education to primary school children can have a substantial impact on their attitudes and behaviours, changing the school and community environments and encouraging the school administration and community members to better understand and react to issues of child protection, and to work collaboratively to address threats to children during peacetime.

As Sierra Leone develops into a West African focal point on the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers, its military and police are deployed as peacekeepers on AU and UN missions where confrontations with child soldiers are common. In support of this, Dallaire Initiative ToT graduates continue to work across the continent to train their comrades, and the country now serves as a prime example of the success and potential of the Dallaire Initiative approach.
Bibliography


