

BUILDING BRIDGES FOR PREVENTION: WOMEN AND SECURITY SECTOR ACTORS PREVENT CHILD RECRUITMENT AND USE IN SOUTH SUDAN

KEY RESULTS

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security:

- **Trained 45 representatives** from women led CSOs, creating what became known as the Women's National Network (WNN).
- **Conducted two workshops and two roundtable discussions** that brought together key security sector stakeholders and government ministries and provided the WNN with a platform to engage in dialogue with the security sector on how to best prevent grave violations against children.
- **Led dialogues** in partnership with WNN members that engaged local community leaders, youth groups, women CSOs and members of the police.

KEY FINDINGS

By the end of the project:

- **95%** of targeted women-led CSO members & police officers reported awareness of the Vancouver Principles in South Sudan with emphasis on VP #11: Women's Role in Preventing the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, **compared to 26% at baseline.**
- **74%** of CSO members & police members reported that their organizations' programs prioritized prevention of recruitment & CRSV against children, **compared to 30% at baseline.**
- **56%** of women-led CSO members demonstrate improved knowledge & skills that promote prevention of recruitment & CRSV against children, **compared to 0% at baseline.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women in South Sudan lack meaningful participation in the country's peace and security processes, particularly in preventing the recruitment and use of children in armed violence and efforts to respond to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) against children. This is due, in part, to varying levels of mistrust between the police and women-led civil society organizations (CSOs). To help address this, the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security piloted an innovative project (Fund for Innovation and Transformation, FIT) that ran from **1 June 2021 to 30 April 2022** and that created a collaborative approach to the prevention of the recruitment and use of children by creating space for women's contributions and leadership in child protection.

IMPACT

Through the Dallaire Institute's mentorship and technical assistance to the Women's National Network (WNN), women have been actively engaged in leadership roles in South Sudanese peace and security processes. Leading community dialogues gave members of the WNN more confidence and a sense of achievement. Eventually these women became an important resource for the police to consult when developing approaches to the prevention of the recruitment and use of children, the prevention of CRSV against girls and boys and the creation of a broader children, peace, and security agenda in South Sudan.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACHES TO PREVENTING THE RECRUITMENT AND USE OF CHILDREN & CRSV

With support and input from partners, the Dallaire Institute **created a training curriculum** for the Women's National Network that focused on the concept of prevention - preventing the recruitment and use of children in armed violence and preventing incidents of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). These trainings were designed to include gender sensitive approaches that focus specifically on how conflict impacts girls, namely: the gendered recruitment of girls and boys in armed violence; the gendered roles they play and duties they perform after recruitment; the gendered reasons as to why girls and boys are recruited; the gendered impacts of recruitment on boys and girls and finally, the role of women's leadership in preventing recruitment.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support activities aimed at **creating community awareness** on the issues of the recruitment and use of children and conduct community dialogues across South Sudan.
- **Support WNN** to implement their strategies through fundraising and lobbying for more partnership.
- Support the **formation of Police Community Relations Committees** in the community comprised of police officers, community leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, religious leaders, and CSOs representatives.
- Support CSOs and police to **continue with FIT innovation activities** through fundraising and sub granting to women led CSOs across the ten states in South Sudan.
- **More police training**, both junior and senior ranking, across different localities, on the laws and instruments that govern the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers and CRSV.
- **Scale up training and dialogue to other states** in South Sudan where capacity and awareness are low and where recruitment and use of child soldiers are reported to be higher.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



FIT Intro Video

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TESTIMONIES FROM THE WOMEN'S NETWORK

“This project gave 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 children’s recruitment with armed groups, as women are essential in the prevention of violence against children.”

– Mary



Mary Nyathiel, Community Chief



Members of the WNN in South Sudan

“Before, I never had access to government stakeholders, but this roundtable gave me the opportunity to interact freely and ask questions directly to the National Defense Force and the National Police Force in relation to the recruitment of children in armed conflict. As a legal aid officer, I was fearful to approach the security sector actors, especially the army and the police, in handling issues of children in conflict. Issues related to law or child protection were out of reach because of the lack of access to information. Given that I was a woman, it created fear in me, but thanks to the Dallaire Institute, as a CSO’s legal aid, I am now able to speak for the voiceless through the forums.”

– Christina