

## THE DALLAIRE INSTITUTE'S APPROACH TO BUILDING A WORLD WHERE CHILDREN ARE AT THE HEART OF PEACE AND SECURITY

For well over a decade, the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security has been working to end the recruitment and use of children in armed violence. We have extensive first-hand knowledge of how generational war is insinuated into community consciousness through the manipulation of the minds of children and both the intended and unintended long-term consequences.

The Dallaire Institute works in countries across the world at the invitation of governments, security institutions, regional and international organizations seeking to advance the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Children as Soldiers. We prioritize working in areas where there may be active or past recruitment and use of children in armed violence, the country has significant contributions to peacekeeping operations or is a host of a peacekeeping mission, or where there may be concern for potential recruitment and use in the future.

Wherever we work, our focus is on protecting children and keeping them out of the conflict. Our mission is more important than any political agenda. Additionally, we take all allegations of child rights violations seriously and utilize our abilities to hold difficult conversations with the aim of empowering change that leads to improved protection of children. It is critical to have organizations such as ours to explore dialogue, raise awareness and build capacity to effect the desired change – to protect children and create lasting peace.

At the Dallaire Institute, our approach is to pursue meaningful engagement that prioritizes the safety of children and equally recognizes the moral dilemmas faced by the security sector actors operating in areas where children are being recruited and used. We aim to help all parties fully understand the long – term socio-economic, psychological, and structural harm caused by recruiting and using children for armed violence. In doing so, we aim to change attitudes and behaviour patterns, as we support partners through the processes required to prevent child recruitment and use – from the security sector to the policy makers and in collaboration with local community organizations and networks.

Globally there are 106 nations that have endorsed the Vancouver Principles and we have reminded the political leaders of their responsibilities as endorsers. We continue to keep lines of communication open and engage with the leadership and military personnel of countries we work in to ensure that children are protected as a priority even in times of conflict. Additionally, we empower community groups to convey their concerns with respect to the protection of children. From Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Mozambique, Nigeria, Cameroon and Somalia we understand that change cannot occur without trust or relationships being created. The Dallaire Institute believes in the power of prioritizing the protection of children as central to creating lasting peace and security in the world. Now more than ever the world needs a unified commitment to protect children from grave violations. Peace is always possible, war is preventable, and children deserve a better world.