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CHILD
SOLDIERS
INITIATIVE



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“Who Will Weep For Them?”:

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative Chaplain
Roundtable Report: *Cornwall, Ontario – June 5-6, 2015*

Acknowledgments

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The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

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About the Dallaire Initiative



Retired Lt. Gen. Roméo Dallaire, former force commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), established the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative in 2007. Its mission is to develop new strategies and tactics for eradicating the recruitment and use of child soldiers worldwide.

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

1. It pursues rigorous, innovative research at a world-class university;
2. It engages in high-level advocacy to promote universal adherence to all international conventions that prohibit the use of children in war;
3. It delivers scenario-based, prevention-oriented training to security sector actors.

In every aspect of its programming, the Dallaire Initiative seeks to collaborate with concerned governments, security sector actors, academics, humanitarians and communities. In particular, its unique approach to working with military, 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 group – is both groundbreaking and critical to the interruption of children’s recruitment.

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. It is also an associate member of Watchlist, 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) at Dalhousie University.

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Child Soldiers: A Security Sector Concern

If in the past children were made to fight in spite of their youth, they are now made to fight because of their youth. Recognizing this phenomenon, the Dallaire Initiative has firmly based its approach in prevention. By focusing solely upon disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) the international community has merely attempted to fix the broken, rather than to protect the whole. The issue of child soldiery demands a more comprehensive approach.

By framing the issue of children in armed conflict as a specific concern for security sector actors, the Dallaire Initiative empowers security sector personnel to develop better policies and strategies to not only limit or prevent children's recruitment, but also to improve security sector interactions with children during hostilities, with

the ultimate aim of avoiding fatalities on all sides.

While pre-deployment training for security sector actors is improving—particularly with respect to children's rights and the protection of civilians—very little is currently being done to prepare service men and women for the possibility of confronting children in theatre. This presents security sector actors with a serious moral 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 Dallaire Initiative urges security sector actors to recognise that preparation for interaction with children during 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 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.

In order to solve this global problem, child soldiers must be recognized as a security concern and security sector actors must be included as part of the solution. Through its prevention-oriented approach, the Dallaire Initiative aims to create the necessary tools and training, supported by research, to better protect children from recruitment, and in so doing, help end this crime against humanity, community-by-community, country-by-country, once and for all.





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Background to the Chaplain Roundtable

The Dallaire Initiative Chaplain Roundtable is the culmination of a year-long process of meetings, research, and discovery. In February 2014, while presenting at a conference in Uganda, the Dallaire Initiative's Executive Director, Dr. Shelly Whitman, was approached by a member of the Ugandan clergy eager to learn how he, in his position as a priest, could contribute to the Dallaire Initiative's efforts to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers in his country.

Following this eye opening interaction, the Dallaire Initiative, being a strong proponent of strategic complementarity, explored the opportunity of working with religious leaders. The Dallaire Initiative began researching how religious and community leaders could be engaged in its comprehensive preventive approach. Secondary research conducted by Erica Weston, a visiting student from Colgate University, helped to distinguish various entryways for the Dallaire Initiative to involve religious leaders in the effort to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

Ms. Weston's research on religious leaders began a discussion on military chaplains and their engagement within communities while on deployment as well as their work with troops and their families. Ms. Weston's research—combined with the Dallaire Initiative's innovative security sector approach—manifested in the Dallaire Initiative reaching out to the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service. Productive preliminary discussions with Padre Lt(N) Matthew Ihouma in Halifax, Nova Scotia, led to the

Dallaire Initiative's engagement with the Catholic Women's League Military Ordinariate.

LGen Roméo Dallaire (Ret'd) and Dr. Whitman were invited to discuss the Dallaire Initiative's innovative approach with the leadership team of the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service, led by Canadian Chaplain General Fletcher, in Ottawa. The meeting revealed the significant potential of Canadian Chaplains to contribute to better preparation on the issue of child soldiers as a security concern. As a result, the Dallaire Initiative unveiled its plan to convene a roundtable meeting of military chaplains to discuss their role in the prevention of recruitment and use of child soldiers as well as their ability to mitigate moral injury stemmed from interactions with child soldiers. Backed by the Office of the Chaplain General the Dallaire Initiative gained the generous support of the Department of National Defence's Defence Engagement Program.

Prior to the roundtable event, LGen Dallaire and Dr. Whitman presented



Photo by The Dallaire Initiative

on the issue of child soldiers at Canada House in London, UK. During the event, Dr. Whitman had the opportunity to discuss the Initiative's prospective work with Reverend Clinton Langston, Assistant Chaplain General of the Royal Army Chaplains' Department, UK Armed Forces (RACHD). Reverend Langston then arranged for a representative of the RACHD to attend the roundtable event to further explore how the UK military can be equipped to address the global issue of child soldiery.

Prior to the Chaplain Roundtable, the Dallaire Initiative held focus group of military chaplains at CFB Halifax to pilot different topics for discussion. Key points that emerged from the focus group are as follows:

- The chaplains spoke of helping to build spiritual resiliency among the troops. They defined spiritual resiliency as a foundation of wholeness and emotional well being that is not necessarily ecumenical but defined with a universal meaning;
- The role of the military chaplain is highly dependent on their branch, Commanding Officer (CO) and mission;
- The chaplains stated that they do not principally operate in places where child soldiers are present, unless something has gone drastically wrong. The chaplains discussed the possibility of speaking with community and religious leaders about the issue but they said that there are obstacles that make this communication difficult. One chaplain used an example from Afghanistan, affirming it was difficult to connect with the community leaders because they did not agree with the Canadian Forces having women in their ranks; and
- The chaplains mentioned that it is difficult to tend to the needs of the troops following deployment because chaplains go on leave or get moved to a new post. They may be reunited with their group some months or years later but there is no guarantee. The lack of continuity makes it very difficult to have a proper debrief.

The focus group expanded the scope of the Dallaire Initiative's understanding of military chaplaincy and proved to be a great aid as the Dallaire Initiative prepared for the roundtable event. The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative Chaplain Roundtable was held in Cornwall, Ontario 5-6 June 2015.

Purpose of the Chaplain Roundtable

The Dallaire Initiative sought to achieve the following objectives throughout the roundtable event:

1. Provide a detailed understanding of why child soldiers are a security concern and what the Dallaire Initiative is doing to progressively end the use and recruitment of child soldiers through a security sector approach.
2. Consider how knowledge on issues related to child soldiers can help foster resilience in Canadian troops and security personnel.
3. Explore entry points for the discussion on the use of child soldiers within the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service training and education programs.

In an effort to reflect the diverse international and cultural makeup of the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service, the Dallaire Initiative wished to have broad representation of faith groups and ethnic backgrounds, as well as both men and women.

Although the purpose of the roundtable was to specifically engage with military chaplains, the Dallaire Initiative also invited representatives from the RCMP and the Canadian Department of the Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development; as well as Canadian Forces personnel representing the Peace Support Training Centre, Directorate of Army Doctrine, and Canadian Defense Academy to engage a wider audience and solicit further guidance. Also in attendance with the representatives from the Royal Canadian Chaplain Service, the Dallaire Initiative had the pleasure of including representatives from the RACHD and New Zealand Defense Force Chaplaincy.



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Outcomes of Chaplain Roundtable

The Chaplain Roundtable event expanded the Dallaire Initiative's understanding of the military chaplaincy and precipitated in-depth discussion of how the Dallaire Initiative will be able to engage further with military chaplains.

Prior to the roundtable event, the Dallaire Initiative identified specific areas for discussion: *Interactions with Child Soldiers*, *Religious Leader Engagement*, *Caring for the Spiritual Wellbeing of Troops*, and *Enhancing Training for Military Chaplains*. However, it became clear that those chaplains in attendance were well versed in caring for the spiritual wellbeing of troops and therefore, due to time constraints, the facilitators felt it was best to focus on the other topics.

Day One

Participants worked through two of the Dallaire Initiative's interactive exercises: body mapping and village mapping. A technique developed by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, body mapping uses visual narrative to enable participants to portray the physical, psychological, and social impacts of

war on an individual. Specifically for the Chaplain Roundtable, participants were asked to consider how the experience of a child soldier could affect a child *spiritually*. Although there were some cross overs with how a child may be affected psychologically, the injection of spirituality sparked a great amount of conversation. Discussion expanded to how the body mapping exercise could possibly be used with soldiers to map out how their own traumatic experiences affect them.

During the village mapping exercise participants used a visual depiction of a village to identify high-risk recruitment areas for children as well as possible strategies they could use to make these areas safer. It was apparent throughout the exercise that, due to the nature of their position, chaplains have a distinct sense of community and are able to understand and interpret certain community dynamics that other military personnel may not be able to. Discussion also stretched to include religious leader engagement (RLE), and key leader engagement (KLE), as a specific strategy for identifying and

mitigating risks to children within the community.

It is not often that we are able to bring together representatives of government, military, and RCMP around the same table to engage in focused discussion on an issue such as child soldiery. So, during the interactive exercises the participants were divided into small syndicates with representation from the various branches of the military, non-military, and male and female personnel in an effort to bring together an array of perspectives into the conversation. The Input from the non-chaplain personnel proved to be valuable as their experience and expertise provided new insight during the exercises.

Day Two

Throughout the plenary discussion on interactions with child soldiers it was clear that all interactions that chaplains might have with children are very context and situation specific. Although chaplains may interact with children in similar situations as their armed counterparts, the nature of their interactions differs. Several chaplains

revealed that since they are unarmed they are able to engage differently with the public because they are not seen as a threat, children feel more comfortable approaching chaplains while they may keep their distance from armed military personnel. Participants described many of their interactions with child as having minimal risk because they interact with children where children *are* supposed to be, rather than on a battlefield. Chaplains regularly take part in “good works” projects helping to open field hospitals, schools, and orphanages within the communities they are operating in.

Chaplains involved in maritime operations have different experiences, and therefore different interactions, with children than those engaged in ground operations. Maritime chaplains very rarely interact with children at sea, however when they are in port they interact with community organisations, such as orphanages and schools, and may have interactions with children in those spaces.

Participants discussed that while they may not be directly involved in particularly high-risk interactions—such as a firefight—they do engage with troops who have experience with high-risk interactions. Following these high-risk interactions chaplains assist soldiers to understand that interactions with children will occur and help to counsel the soldiers who experience moral dilemma while in theatre.

With respect to moral injury, the participants expressed that the moral dilemma of encountering children in theatre is a regular occurrence while on mission and after deployment. Participants articulated that the belligerents actually use the moral dilemma to their advantage by placing children in harm’s way or leaving the deceased in areas where they know that allied forces will find them. Several participants explained that they were not prepared for this particularly



morally challenging aspect of warfare—there is no doctrine to reference for these situations—and therefore are rendered ineffective on the ground.

Throughout the introduction to the discussion on RLE and KLE it became apparent that this topic was contentious among the participants. Participants voiced that all the information requested by the Dallaire Initiative was explicitly written in Canadian Army Doctrine and “was not up for negotiation.” A chaplain’s mandate is to care for the spiritual wellbeing of the troops and their families in times of conflict and peace. Chaplains have no executive authority, however they do have influence that varies mission to mission. This influence depends on the commanding officer and may vary from chaplain to chaplain.

With regard to how chaplains engage within communities while on deployment, a participant described the chaplain’s role as being a “bridge builder”—one needs to take the time and care and build strong relationships before they can really engage with the

community. However, with regard to the interruption of the recruitment and use of child soldiers there was spirited debate over the role and capability of chaplains.

Chaplains also have a role in reporting what they observe and witness while in theatre, yet many chaplains expressed that the nature and quality of reporting could be enhanced. Chaplains may not necessarily be the first ones to report certain observances—such as the presence of children in an area—however chaplains do provide an interpretation, with respect to a spiritual or moral dynamic, that can be vital for the mission.

While discussing the various roles of military chaplains, the facilitators sought to explore the possible difference in experiences of men and women and organized breakout groups divided by gender to facilitate open conversation. In this particular breakout session it was evident that female chaplains do have a significantly different experience than their male counterparts.



Photo by The Dallaire Initiative

Although there are not many female chaplains within the military chaplaincy as a whole, their presence is felt when engaging with communities. Women have different perceptions of community and they empathize and nurture in ways that differentiate them from male chaplains. As an example, in some cultures, the female chaplains are able to comfort by using touch while men are not allowed. Particularly in the Afghan context, female chaplains are able to interact with civilian women on a different level than men. Female participants explained that women and children would flock to them for care and share their stories and experiences. In Afghanistan, these types of interactions were not available to men due to the strict adherence to conservative local traditions. Female chaplains also have unique ways of engaging with communities: in Afghanistan they would engage with hairdressers. Being creative and interacting with women in a secure space, such as a hair salon, opens up a new avenue for information and understanding. Female chaplains are also able to tend to the needs of parents, as well as respond and deal with cases of harassment and sexual assault.

According to Canadian Army Doctrine and procedure, chaplains draft After Action Reports and are encouraged to submit Lessons Learned from their experiences while on deployment. However, in the breakout group sessions it was voiced that this kind of reporting does not always happen. In spite of their desire to share their different interactions and abilities, the female chaplain participants stated that they do not feel that they are given the opportunity to share lessons learned while on deployment or once they return home.

The Chaplain Roundtable concluded with a plenary discussion about the possible inroads for the Dallaire Initiative to incorporate its training into existing chaplain training and

education programs. Many of the participants had different opinions as to where the Dallaire Initiative's training would best fit within the chaplains' training framework. Recommended entry points included:

- The Chaplains in Deployed Operations course, which is required for all chaplains who are deployed;
- Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) to help increase awareness and to receive further input on how to package and market the training;
- The chaplain's resiliency training;
- The introduction of child soldier scenario based exercises into the chaplains' ethics course; and
- The packaging of the Dallaire Initiative's materials as a Distance Learning (DL) package to be distributed to chaplains before they take part in training.

The participants also suggested the Dallaire Initiative's training could assist chaplains in building the case for more spiritual depth in the officer corps—helping to reduce casualties of Canadian soldiers and child soldiers.

As the Chaplain Roundtable event came to a close, a participant voiced that although reserve chaplains work with troops who may have had interactions with child soldiers while deployed, reserve chaplains are not afforded the same access to training and education programs as chaplains who deploy. Therefore it is imperative that reserve chaplains be considered when integrating the Dallaire Initiative's training materials into existing chaplain training and education programs.

Evaluations

The Dallaire Initiative strives to provide comprehensive, practical information and training. In order to maintain the highest quality of content and delivery the Dallaire Initiative recognizes evaluation as vital to the exercise. Following the Chaplain Roundtable event, evaluations were distributed to the participants to garner immediate, anonymous feedback. The evaluation included the following questions:

1. Do you feel that the issues discussed during this roundtable are of relevance to your own work? Please explain.
2. What do you feel was the most important thing that you learned during this roundtable?
3. Are there any other existing chaplain materials (e.g. training curricula, pedagogical tools, etc.) that the Dallaire Initiative should be looking at?
4. What do you think should be the Dallaire Initiative's next steps regarding its work with military chaplains?
5. Was there any subject that you'd have liked to discuss during the roundtable that we failed to address?

The Dallaire Initiative received constructive and encouraging feedback from all of the participants and will use this information as it further develops its work with military chaplains. As with all of its programs, the Dallaire Initiative will monitor and evaluate the progress of its work with military chaplains to continue to build on its culture of accountability and excellence.



Photo by the Dallaire Initiative

Participant Feedback

- “Mapping was very useful. Communications on all parties helped to explain the stance from which we all come from.”
- “I am impressed with proactive and results oriented modus operandi of the NGO. Perhaps we can find ways to work together.”
- “Work more closely with the Office of the Chaplain General and get a strategic mandate and mission to work with the CAF orgs.”
- “Assist with scenarios for chaplain courses and preparing chaplains to draw others on this issue.”
- “I am very impressed and expecting more.”



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Conclusion and Next Steps

The Dallaire Initiative successfully met the objectives established for its chaplain roundtable event; namely, providing detailed understanding of the Dallaire Initiative’s mission and existing programs as well as exploring entry points for discussion on child soldiers in existing chaplain training and education programs. Since the Dallaire Initiative was unable to fully engage in a discussion around how its training can encourage resiliency, it will make sure to further explore this opportunity in future engagements with military chaplains.

That Dallaire Initiative was pleased that one third of the chaplain participants were women. This allowed the opportunity to open up conversation to discuss the different experiences of both men and women in military chaplaincy. The Dallaire Initiative also welcomed the opportunity to engage an audience of both Anglophone and Francophone chaplains.

The roundtable had considerable participation from chaplains of various Christian denominations, however only one Jewish chaplain was in attendance and there were no Muslim chaplains present. In future engagements with military chaplains, the Dallaire Initiative will work to engage a more diverse representation of faith groups and have a more broad international representation around the table in an effort to gain a wider perspective on the child soldier issue. As such, the Dallaire Initiative still views the roundtable as having been a marked success.

Roundtable participant, Lt (N) Matthew Ihuoma stated that the “comprehensive training on the prevention of child soldiers

will arm members of the RCChS with an additional distinct capability for military deployments in theatre of operations. In addition, it will also enhance the resilience of chaplains as both military personnel and caregivers to CAF members and their families.”

Over the coming several months, the Dallaire Initiative will build off this positive experience and propel its work with military chaplains forward.

As the Dallaire Initiative moves forward with its work it will take the following key steps:

1. Disseminate the present summary report to all interested parties;
2. Follow up with Canadian Forces Doctrine;
3. Follow up with the RACHD to explore inroads to working with the UK military;
4. Further examine the experience of female chaplains, and how their experience differs from their male counterparts;
5. Explore possible integration of training into the Annual Chaplain Training Event and field exercise in 2016; and
6. Explore the use of a Training of Trainers approach to better facilitate dissemination of the Dallaire Initiative’s material to the military chaplaincy.



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