



THE ROMÉO  
DALLAIRE



**CHILD  
SOLDIERS**  
INITIATIVE



**DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY**

# The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative: Sierra Leone Project

# Acknowledgments

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## The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

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# About the Dallaire Initiative



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.

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.

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.”

## 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. 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 2011 Human Development Index, Sierra Leone ranks 180th out of 187 surveyed countries. 67% of Sierra Leoneans live beneath the poverty line, 30% of primary school-aged children are not receiving an education and 70% of youth are either unemployed or underemployed. 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, at the same time, 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 mission in Sudan, and AMISOM mission in Somalia, and is looking to deploy to Mali.

These factors provide 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 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.





## Focus on Children

While many child-protection agencies are currently implementing child protection-oriented programs in Sierra Leone, none focus on child soldiers from a security sector angle, and none seek to discuss security issues with children themselves. The Dallaire Initiative has developed a youth-oriented training module on issues related to child soldiery and conflict resolution. Presented directly in primary schools across Sierra Leone, the module will educate 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;
- Reliable means of evading underage recruitment.

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.

Building on the successful introduction and dissemination of the module into Sierra Leonean primary schools, follow-up will focus on training local trainers and incorporating local security actors as participants. These next steps will guarantee the sustainability of the programming, as well as promote coordination amongst key stakeholders to tackle the child soldier problem.

Development of Teacher Training Resources – February to August 2013  
In coordination with the Dallaire Initiative, Child-to-Child Trust developed primary school teacher training resources for Sierra Leone that aim to build children’s capacity to understand and protect themselves in challenging contexts. The teacher training resources focus upon empowering children and their communities to prevent underage recruitment into armed forces or armed groups should conflict return to Sierra Leone.

To inform the design of this curriculum, in-country consultations were held in Moyamba District in April 2013. Moyamba District was chosen as a research site as it experienced high levels of child soldier recruitment during the Sierra Leone civil war. The consultations were designed to answer a set of specific research questions – which had been identified as the result of an extensive literature review – and to elicit qualitative information from ex-child soldiers, influential community stakeholders, parents of children in primary school, civil society actors, teachers, and government officials.

At the primary level, a gap was identified in the availability of teaching materials on issues relating to conflict, peacebuilding and child protection. Without exception, research participants stressed the need to ensure that out-of-school children were targeted as part of the initiative, as they were identified as being most at risk for multiple forms of abuse – and in a conflict situation, their vulnerability to underage recruitment is likely to increase. Integration of the Child-to-

Child approach in the teacher training resources would be a sustainable, operational, cost-effective way of ensuring marginalised children in the wider community are exposed to learning that takes place within the school.

When developing the teacher training resources, the input of ex-child soldiers proved to be incredibly valuable. A group of 27 ex-child soldiers was consulted—22 male and 5 female; they helped to provide constructive information for the teacher training resources with regard to pre-recruitment, after recruitment (while serving), and after demobilisation. Due to their many different experiences, the ex-child soldiers had different opinions with regard to age of recruitment, protection mechanisms, and life post conflict. Although their opinions varied, male and female ex-child soldiers agreed on the importance of school and its value as a protection mechanism. The ex-child soldiers provided more nuanced examples drawing from their personal experience, making their input to the teacher training very beneficial.

Community stakeholders, including the ex-child soldiers, felt that civil society actors and academics often visit Moyamba to research prospective programmes that never materialise. Creative solutions are needed to ensure that the teacher training resources will continue to be used by teachers beyond the pilot period. The first step is to ensure that the teacher training resources are designed to have minimal reliance upon external resources for its eventual delivery, as failure to do so will threaten its long-term use.



When asked for their input into the content of the proposed program, local research respondents prioritised the need to build children's skills in child protection, peacebuilding and life skills.

With both local and national priorities in mind, the structure for the teacher training resources include three core components:

- Child protection – with a focus upon prevention of harm in conflict situations
  - Peacebuilding and conflict prevention
  - Life skills – with a focus upon those skills that are relevant to conflict situations
- \*Gender mainstreamed through all topics above.

Ensuring consistency of the teacher training resources with national priorities helped to mitigate the risk of opposition by educators to the resources' focal areas, and will strengthen advocacy for its wider uptake and integration at the primary level. The three core components of the teacher training resources were chosen as entry points for exploring issues of children's rights in conflict situations. Also, they aim to assuage fears held by many research participants that the dominance of child rights approaches have been detrimental to family life and societal stability in Sierra Leone.

Research findings also emphasised the role of parents, religious leaders and Chiefs as essential to ensure effective child protection in the local context; their participation in the development and delivery of the teacher training resources must be maximised. Chiefs are integral to the effective functioning of child protection, as they play a role as 'connectors' between formal child protection systems (which are sometimes inaccessible or lack legitimacy in the eyes of communities) and informal child protection mechanisms at the grassroots level. However, at the same time, the research identified the ambivalent role parents, Chiefs and teachers can play in child protection by sometimes undermining child wellbeing. For this reason, it is important for children to understand the roles of a diverse range of protection actors who belong to both the formal

and informal systems, and for the teacher training resources to support parents and other stakeholders to play consistently positive roles in child protection. In particular, acute capacity and knowledge gaps among teachers on issues of child protection will need to be addressed in the training manuals that will be developed as part of this pilot programme.

The development of the teacher training resources will contribute to the creation of an enhanced protective environment for children in which they have the increased capacity to protect themselves from harm through a better understanding of the impacts of conflict. There is scope for a broader child protection and peacebuilding programme that seeks to support formal and informal child protection actors at multiple levels to better fulfill their mandates.

## Project Materials Developed

Based on the research findings, the Child-to-Child Trust developed the Let's Stay Safe teaching materials:

- Teacher Training Resources; (picture)
- Teacher's Guidance Notes for using the resources; and (picture)
- Story books for children on the subject of 'Children Affected by Conflict'. (picture)

“ Literacy Rate  
2008 – 2012  
youth 15-24 years

Male – 70.5 %  
Female – 52.1 %



Photo Supplied by Pikin to Pikin

## Training Validation Exercise – November 2013

In November 2013, the Child-to-Child Trust and Pikin-to-Pikin Movement presented the draft training materials to key stakeholders in Moyamba for their input. These stakeholders included the District Education Inspectorate, Department of Social Welfare, Red Cross, parents and community leaders, who all participated in an opening ceremony that preceded the training on 4th November 2013 and chaired by the acting Deputy Director of Education (DDE) of Moyamba. The opening ceremony was followed by a five-day validation-training workshop for 25 participants, comprising 20 primary school teachers from Moyamba District, and 5 former child soldiers (from Lungi District).

### Training Objectives

- To gain valuable input from teachers on the draft teaching resources to ensure they are relevant, easy-to-understand and effective;
- To build a basic understanding of child protection;
- To build an understanding of principles of child participation and how this contributes to resilience;
- To understand basic concepts of peace, conflict and approaches to dealing with conflict;
- To explore ethical approaches when teaching children about issues relating to child protection;
- To understand the role and potential of the Child-to-Child Methodology in promoting children's safety and approaches to peace; and
- To practice using the Child-to-Child approach in a school setting.

Follow-up from this validation session will include a Ministry of Education focus group in early 2014 to obtain Ministerial feedback and endorsement.

### Evaluation of Workshop

Overall the training carried out with community stakeholders was a success. The material was appropriate and 73% of participants said the level of the training in terms of difficulty was 'just right' and 85% of participants said they had 'definitely' learned skills they could use in their everyday work.

Through interpretation of the data collected before and after the workshop it is evident that the workshop was a success. Knowledge of the types of abuse children face in Moyamba and in war was greatly increased. The participants' ability to retain and display their knowledge is encouraging moving forward into Phase II.

Area of Knowledge	Pre-training	Post-training
Ability to name three types of abuse children face in Moyamba	28% of participants had this knowledge	76% of participants had this knowledge
Ability to name three types of abuse children face in war	52% of participants had this knowledge	80% of participants had this knowledge
Ability to name three child protection actors other than parents	60% of participants had this knowledge	72% of participants had this knowledge

### Outcome of the Workshop

The participants found the workshop very useful and enlightening as it provided them with relevant knowledge and skills on how to work effectively with children using participatory and child centered teaching methods in the classroom. They also acquired knowledge in peace building and child protection and how to impart this knowledge to children using Child-to-Child methods.

On day four, primary school children were brought into the classroom to test some of the activities. Participants used stories, role-play, songs and other activity based methods to teach the children topics on conflict and peace building. The session gave participants the opportunity to practice the

activities in the activity pack with the children to gain valuable feedback from the children.

The children had a lot of fun and it was interesting to note the confidence of the teachers and high participation level of the children during the session. They understood key messages in the materials, though they only had a couple of hours to interact with the participants and materials. The teachers were amazed at how much children were able to accomplish given the right information combined with appropriate child-centered and participatory activities.

### Moving Forward

The Dallaire Initiative will partner with Don Bosco Fambul, a local Freetown based organization that has well established programmes working with street children. It is estimated that there are 50,000 street children in Freetown alone; these children are the most at risk for potential recruitment and destabilization in Sierra Leone. This partnership will enable the delivery of training to Don Bosco Fambul social workers and the sharing of skills and tools to out-of-school children in Sierra Leone.

## Focus on Security Sector Actors

In focusing solely upon disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and not upon the complete eradication of the 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 pre-deployment 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 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 has quickly spilled 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 Prisons 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
- Worked with the legal instruments that guide the protection of children in conflict situations.

Given this initial success, the next step is to embark upon the Training of Trainers in each security sector to in turn assist with the delivery of training materials to their respective audiences. 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 used.

Republic of Sierra Leone  
Armed Forces (RSLAF)  
Sierra Leone Police (SLP)  
Sierra Leone Prisons Service (SLPS)





**Training Methodology**

**Participatory:** The training methods are very interactive. Following adult learning principles, facilitators allow participants to take part in collaborative activities promoting knowledge retention and active learning. Some examples of activities include brainstorming sessions, plenary discussion, syndicate working groups and role-playing.

**Village Mapping:** Using a visual depiction of a village, participants are asked to identify high risk recruitment areas for children as well as the strategies they will use to help protect these areas during times of conflict. This activity is also used to identify other stakeholders that security sector actors must work with in order to enhance protection of civilians.

**Scenarios and Interactions:** 11 potential interactions with child soldiers have been identified. In order to practice intervention methods, case studies have been developed and are role played during training. Time is allotted for participants to prepare and they are encouraged to use props and costumes for the role-play. A thorough debriefing takes place after each scenario identifying important points to consider.



“Imagine a 12 year old girl named Fatu. She was abducted at the start of the war and conscripted into an armed faction. She was subjected to unwanted sex. She seemed older than her age, and ends up with an unwanted pregnancy...”



**Body Mapping:** Body mapping is a unique methodology that empowers participants to portray the physical, psychological and social impacts of war on an individual and a community. In this section, we see the power of visual narrative as participants, many of whom had never drawn before, created images that act as both art and information. (This technique was learned from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative).

**Application of Multimedia:** In order to demonstrate certain themes and concepts, videos are used as a learning tool. Visual learning tools are essential to share knowledge with audiences with high illiteracy rates. Visual media paired with thorough discussion afterwards is a highly potent teaching tool.

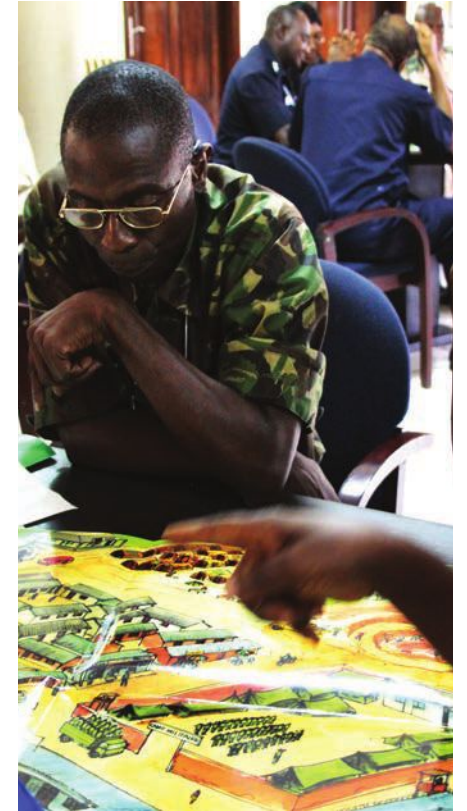
Following a research mission in February 2013, the Dallaire Initiative conducted three training sessions, one in May 2013 and two in November 2013. The courses included participants from the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, the Sierra Leone Police and the Sierra Leone Prisons Service. Carried out over a three-day period, the course helped to identify individuals that could be part of the Training of Trainers course to be piloted in May 2014.

To assist with the logistics of the course, two former child soldiers were employed for the duration of this project. Both proved to be very helpful and their involvement in the course provided valuable insights.

Sector	Number of Participants
Military	34
Police	24
Prisons	22
Government	5
NGO	4
Unspecified	6

The course held in May included 35 military, police and prison personnel as well as the Sierra Leone Management Committee. 54 military, police, and prison personnel attended the November courses, with the exception that the first course was also attended by one of the Office of National Security Representatives. The trainees of all three trainings were of high caliber and show promise moving forward into Phase II.

A number of candidates have been selected for the Training of Trainers course scheduled for summer 2014. These candidates have been selected based on a set of pre-determined criteria and performance in the awareness-raising courses. They will help ensure the delivery of co-facilitated training courses with the Dallaire Initiative and Sierra Leone Trainees by end of 2014.





### Key Lessons Learned

The Dallaire Initiative provides training at the highest level, therefore we consider lessons learned from each session and adjust our trainings accordingly to ensure our training is of the highest quality. Here are some of the lessons learned:

### Methodological Considerations

- Conducting a course in a country that has experienced war and the use of child soldiers provides a unique dynamic. Give ample space for participants to talk openly and relay their experiences during the war in the time allocated for the course.
- Allow time for participants to share their views on both negative and positive experiences of the course delivery and adjust methods or content when required for optimal effect.
- In the May 2013 session, participants

were given a personal body map to take home to map out the effects of child soldiery related to girls. This provided a unique opportunity for participants to have discussions in their home environments with family members on difficult matters pertaining to girls' involvement in war.

### Participation Considerations

- For the first time, the Dallaire Initiative had Prison Officers partake in the course. The Dallaire Initiative was made aware that these officers are seconded to peacekeeping missions and yet receive no pre-deployment training. Additionally, Prison Officers must deal with the domestic concerns related to underage incarcerated prisoners. As a result, course materials have now been adjusted to reflect these challenges.
- Further requests for increased

participation also emerged from the Office of National Security and the Freetown Police. The Office of National Security is a coordinating body across the country and given their role as watchdogs for security threats, it is important that they can recognize early warning indicators, which include the recruitment of children.

- As a peacekeeping contributing country, Sierra Leone is deployed to areas like Somalia, where it is reported that there are high levels of child soldiers. However, the current pre-deployment training of the UN and AU does not reflect the reality that the peacekeepers will be confronted with. Due to the gap in training, peacekeepers return from deployment without the proper reporting mechanisms and resources in place to address the issue.

### Content Considerations

- The spiritual dimension is a major factor to consider in Sierra Leone, from the various religious dynamics to the traditional and local spiritual beliefs that exist. Understanding the power of both the negative and positive elements of the country's spiritual beliefs as they relate to the prevention of the use of children as soldiers are under explored and could greatly enhance the material.
- Sections of the course that stood out to participants were those that dealt with the resource extraction sector and child soldiers, aspects related to child trafficking, the tactical disadvantages of using children as soldiers, and aspects related to the Rules of Engagement and Standard Operating Procedures as they pertain to children in armed conflict. Each of these sections also employed new methods of teaching and class participation in the November training course, which led to improved delivery of information.
- Although this course's focus is on child soldiers, the course takes a holistic approach to protect vulnerable children in times of peace and war. This dynamic was understood by the participants; they gave examples of current potentially destabilizing elements that exist in Sierra Leone that relate to children, such as, the use of children in election violence, sexual violence, child labour, child trafficking, the employment of youth in motorcycle taxi operations, the lack of educational opportunities, and the indoctrination of young people into secret societies or religious sects.





**Evaluation Results – May and November 2013**

Out of the 80 security sector personnel trained in Sierra Leone, 31 participants had encountered a child soldier in the field. Most encounters occurred while part of a United Nations Peacekeeping Mission abroad, underscoring the importance of pre-deployment training on this issue.

18% of the participants in Sierra Leone were female. Although there was relatively low female representation, it did not affect their participation and involvement. In particular, during the second November session, female participants made themselves heard and brought new perspectives to the training, especially with respect to modules on girl soldiers, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and stigma.

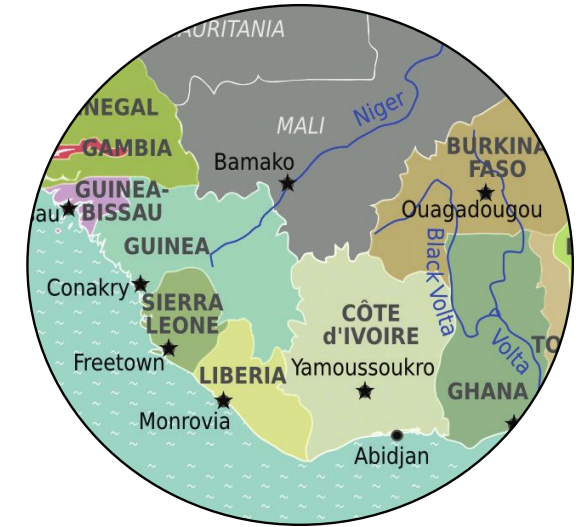
In addition, course evaluations are administered to determine whether or not training format, materials, and facilitators’ training methods are adequate for the audience. The feedback from the course evaluations led to increased use of visual aides, the addition of new child soldier interactions, the inclusion of new stakeholders, such as prison staff, as well as the addition of examples for better collaboration with civilian organisations. The Dallaire Initiative has begun to work with the Resilience Research Centre in an effort to bolster its evaluation methods.

A 6 month post-course survey was handed out in person to the participants from the May pilot course. Given the limitations related to Internet access, these will be mailed back to the Dallaire Initiative’s Head Office for analysis.

“31 participants have encountered a child soldier in the field”

# Sierra Leone and Peacekeeping

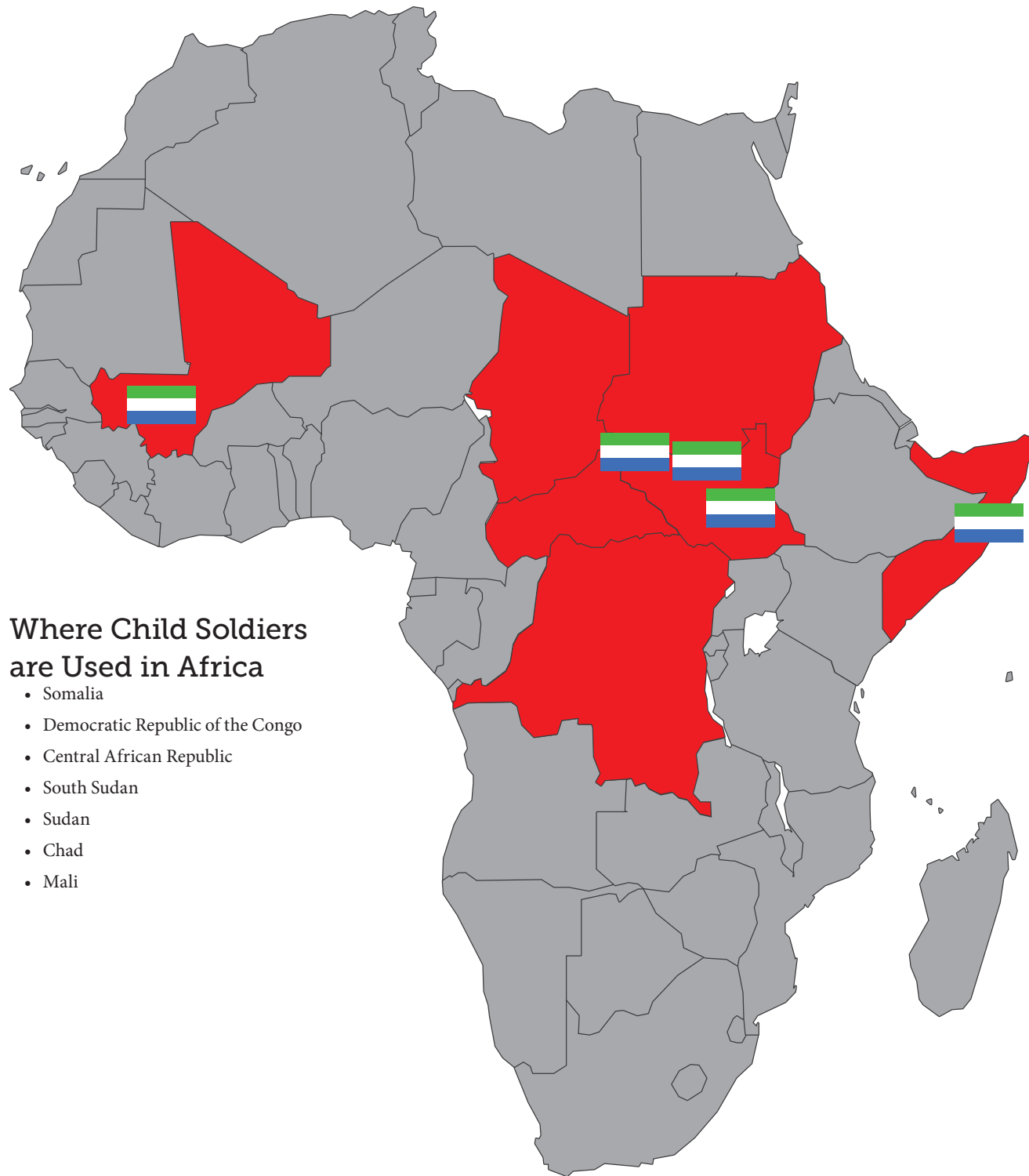
Through the pilot project in Sierra Leone, the Dallaire Initiative’s aim is to introduce the set of Core Competencies developed in 2013, for child soldier-related training across the entirety of Sierra Leone’s security apparatus. An iteration of the training module described above will focus on relevant policies and activities related to child soldiering, highlighting their relevance vis-à-vis Sierra Leone’s participation in peace operations (particularly in light of Sierra Leone’s recent contribution of troops to the UNAMID force in Sudan and AMISOM mission in Somalia). Given the country’s past experiences, Sierra Leone’s peacekeepers are uniquely placed to become African ambassadors and global leaders in the prevention of child soldiery. Below is a visual representation of Sierra Leone’s involvement in peace operations stretching the African Continent and beyond.



**Peacekeeping Numbers by the Mission**



1. UNIFIL (UNITED NATIONS INTERM FORCE IN LEBANON). 3 CONTINGENT TROOPS AS OF JANUARY 31ST 2014
2. MINUSMA (UNITED NATIONS MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTERGRATED STABILIZATION MISSIONS IN MALI. 5 CONTINGENT TROOPS JANUARY 31ST 2014
3. UNMISS (UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN. 7 MALE POLICE 8 FEMALE POLICE AS OF JANUARY 31ST 2014
4. UNISFA (UNITED NATIONS INTERM SECURITY FORCE FOR ABYEL. 3 EXPERTS ON MISSION AS OF JANUARY 31ST 2014
5. UNAMID (AFRICAN UNION/UNITED NATIONS HYBRID OPERATION IN DARFUR. 42 MALE POLICE, 38 FEMALE, 10 EXPERTS ON MISSION AND 6 CONTINGENT TROOPS AS OF JANUARY 31ST 2014
6. AMISOM (AFRICAN UNION MISSION IN SOMALIA. 850 PEACEKEEPERS (NO GENDER OR ROLE BREAKDOWN PROVIDED). STATISTICS PROVIDED VIA WWW.AMISOM-AU.ORG/. EACH FIGURE REPRESENTS 10 INDIVIDUALS ON MISSION

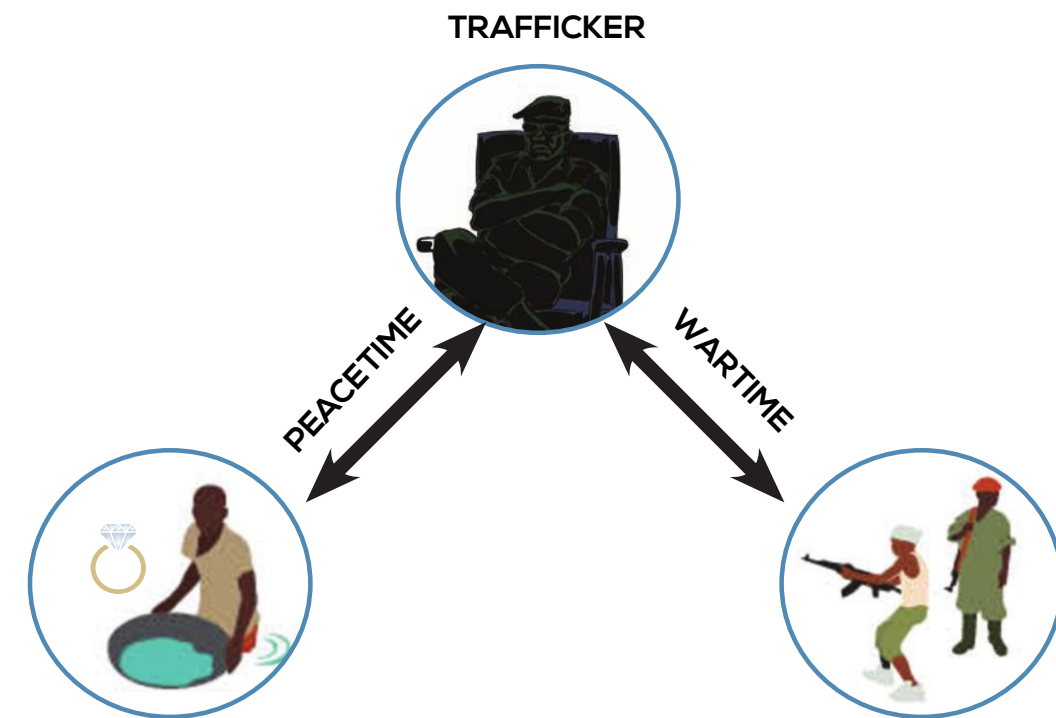


**Where Child Soldiers are Used in Africa**

- Somalia
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Central African Republic
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Chad
- Mali

Represents where Sierra Leone contributes to peacekeeping missions on the African Continent

## Prevention in Times of Peace and Times of War



As the Dallaire Initiative conducts its work in Sierra Leone, it is important to bear in mind the relevance of such prevention activities in times of peace and times of war. The legacy of the use of child soldiers during the civil war is one that still reverberates in the current societal context of Sierra Leone. The UNDP estimates that there are over 800,000 youth between the ages 15 and 35 in Sierra Leone who are currently searching for employment. Many former child soldiers are still struggling to integrate into every day life and to deal with their past trauma due to the high levels of stigma that continue to exist. The Dallaire Initiative is hopeful

that the project's overall efforts will contribute to the dismantling of such stigmas by creating awareness and changing attitudes and behaviours across the country.

Additionally, there are multiple dangers that exist with respect to children in Sierra Leone, ranging from sexual violence, to child labour and child trafficking. It is estimated that 250,000 of the boys and girls trafficked worldwide are for the purpose of being child soldiers. Recognition of these dangers requires an understanding of the vulnerabilities of children during peacetime and the different vulnerabilities during wartime.

The impact of the Dallaire Initiative's work in Sierra Leone has reached beyond the school and security sector training. We have helped foster new relationships between civil society organizations and government institutions, as well as helped to raise awareness for the need for deliberate action to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers. These relationships and connections are only some of the unquantifiable benefits that have occurred since the Dallaire Initiative's involvement in Sierra Leone.

## Conclusion

“Our work in Sierra Leone is proof that changing attitudes and behaviors is possible in a post conflict environment. With practical steps we can build the momentum towards a world where children are protected from their use and recruitment by armed groups...one country at a time.”

-Dr. Shelly Whitman, Executive Director,  
The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative



Discussion with respect to children and armed conflict is most often directed toward generic child protection strategy and less toward security sector interactions with children during actual armed conflict. It is important to understand the implications of child soldiers on terms of mass atrocity prevention and security sector reform. The Dallaire Initiative strives to incorporate security sector training into the global strategy for the prevention of mass atrocities. A co-facilitator from Zimbabwe encompassed the value of the Dallaire Initiative's training with this statement, “one cannot eat an elephant all on their own, everyone has to take their bite.” The inclusion of the Dallaire Initiative's security sector focus into the

global system for the prevention of mass atrocities contributes to a holistic global prevention strategy.

The Sierra Leone project has the potential to demonstrate this holistic approach very powerfully. Given the opportunity to work with the security sector as well as with the education sector, to develop a comprehensive long-term approach to preventing the use of child soldiers, the project represents an opportunity to develop a model of prevention that can be transferred to other nations around the world. Sierra Leonean forces are now deployed to peacekeeping missions where the impact of such knowledge has the ability to be imparted upon

other troop contributing-countries. Additionally, the educational project has the potential to reach children, teachers, parents, and communities in an effort to alter attitudes and behaviours, as well as encourage long-term change. It will contribute to an innovative approach in assisting the prevention of future recruitment of child soldiers in concert with security sector training and reforms.

If we can tackle the problem of child soldiery, country by country, and complement already existing efforts on the social, economic and development fronts, we can create a momentum that will lead to tangible change – one bite at a time.



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