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Living Within Armed Groups: A Gendered Perspective

Halifax, Canada | 7-9 May 2012



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The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative
Centre for Foreign Policy Studies
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Canada

Cover photo credit:

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Founded by retired lieutenant-general and celebrated humanitarian Roméo Dallaire, we are a global partnership committed to ending the use and recruitment of child soldiers worldwide, through ground-breaking research, advocacy, and security-sector training.

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Executive Summary

In May 2012, a workshop entitled “Living Within Armed Groups: A Gendered Perspective” was held at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada. The event was facilitated by the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, with generous financial assistance from Lush Cosmetics and the Harold Crabtree Foundation, and logistical support from Dalhousie’s Centre for Foreign Policy Studies. Participants were invited from Cambodia and the Canadian cities of Edmonton, Ottawa and Halifax; all had personally experienced armed conflict in some capacity and had since affiliated themselves with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on child protection and/or refugee rights.

In addition, participants had been invited from Haiti, Sierra Leone and Northern Uganda (via the United States) but, unfortunately, they were unable to attend due to visa complications.

The overall aim of the workshop was to raise awareness of the phenomenon of child soldiery as it pertains to girls and women. Because several women participants were denied entry to Canada, greater emphasis was placed upon the experience of refugee displacement and the tactics of prevention. While the focus was not exclusively upon aspects of sexual violence, the subject did figure prominently during the three-day event.

Particular attention was paid to individual participants’ experiences and stories, as the workshop was also intended as a means of facilitating connections between and soliciting lessons learned from former girl soldiers.

A number of key findings were made over the course of the workshop:

General

- **Education and skills training are both vital components of the socio-psychological rehabilitation and reintegration process.** Nearly every participant cited their fortuitous ability to continue their education while living as an internally displaced person or refugee as one of the main factors that contributed to their overall healing.
- **It is of critical importance for girls and women to be afforded the necessary time and space to articulate their wartime experiences in a safe setting.** Indeed, the single most important component of the workshop, as reported by the participants themselves, was the time taken to share personal stories. It served as a source of catharsis and reminded the women that in spite of their diverse backgrounds,

they had something very important in common.

- **There is a profound need for more workshops of this nature.** Many of the participants reported that this was the first workshop of its kind that they had ever attended. Moreover, it was the first time many of them had ever been encouraged to speak about their own experiences as girl soldiers. It is from these kinds of testimonials that practitioners can determine a set of best practices regarding the prevention of abduction and rehabilitation of child soldiers.

Tactical

- **In order to prevent their abduction or rape, many parents advise their girls to dress in ragged clothing, to cut their hair in a boyish fashion and act mentally or physically handicapped.** The assumption is that militias will not recruit girls who appear weak, unattractive or demented.
- **Militias may recruit children by playing loud music in a public area, encouraging them to come out of their homes and dance. This in turn makes them more vulnerable to abduction.** This tactic was reported in both Colombia and Sierra Leone.
- **Girls affiliated with armed groups may be forced to conceal weapons and diamonds by inserting them into their bodily orifices or headscarves.** This has meant that women wearing headscarves may be particularly vulnerable to random military searches.
- **One escape tactic for child soldiers involves running away after one has asked to go to the toilet and then seeking shelter in a well-concealed hole until one is presumed dead.**

This advice was shared by a former Sierra Leonean girl soldier, who had in turn been guided by other reintegrated child soldiers prior to her own abduction. This form of information sharing is invaluable and should be formally encouraged.

- **In conflicts where the middle class is being targeted, abducted child soldiers are advised to conceal their literacy.** This guidance was shared by a former Cambodian girl soldier, who pretended ignorance to avoid being seen as bourgeois.

Workshop Agenda

Day One: 7 May 2012

Time	Duration	Content
8:30-9:00	30 min.	Introduction to the Initiative and Overview of Workshop
9:00-10:30	90 min.	Participant Introductions
10:45-12:00	75 min.	Body Mapping Exercise: The Impact of War on Girls
13:00-16:00	180 min.	Village Exercise and the Experience of Young Women Inside Armed Groups

Day Two: 8 May 2012

Time	Duration	Content
8:30-10:45	135 min.	Discussion of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)
11:00-12:00	60 min.	Documentation
13:00-16:00	180 min.	Poetry Workshop with Ian Keteku
16:00-16:30	30 min.	Review and Introduction to Day Three

Day Three: 9 May 2012

Time	Duration	Content
8:30-10:30	120 min.	Discussion of the Prevention of Recruitment and SGVB
10:45-12:00	75 min.	Prevention of Recruitment and SGVB (Continued)
13:00-15:00	120 min.	Thinking About the Future and Closing Discussion

Day One: Monday, 7 May 2012

Introductory Discussion

In order to introduce the participants to one another – as well as to the overarching theme of the three-day workshop – the women were asked to provide oral or written statements regarding various aspects of their personalities and experiences. The following is a sample of paraphrased responses:

- I am attending this workshop in order to learn, listen and contribute;
- My greatest heroes in life are Mother Theresa, Michelle Obama and my mother;
- When I think of peace, I feel alive, happy and relieved – it also reminds me of the ocean;
- The most important thing in the world to me is my family;
- I think my best qualities are my friendliness, my open-mindedness and my persistence;
- My greatest pet peeves are war, the abuse of power, when I have to watch someone else vomit, not being prepared, when someone in front of me walks very slowly and I'm in a rush, and hate without justification.



Body Mapping Exercise

The workshop's first interactive component entailed a body mapping exercise. The methodology of body mapping was first introduced as a means of encouraging war-affected women to express the impact that conflict has had upon their bodies. It offers participants a safe space in which to share emotions, thoughts and reflections in a creative way.

During the exercise, participants sketch visual representations of different physical and psychological ailments that accrue from the experience of soldiering on an outlined drawing of a girl's body. This allows every participant – including those with literacy challenges – to contribute in equal measure.

What follows is a partial list of observations made by the workshop's three breakout groups:

Physical Effects of Girl Soldiery

- In Sierra Leone, it was common for recruiters to drug their underage soldiers and then 'brand' them by cutting into their arms, legs or breasts;
- In addition, girl soldiers who disobeyed their commanders faced potential amputation of their ears, nose, eyes or breasts, or even forced organ donation;
- Sierra Leonean commanders would occasionally place bets on the sex of a child wife's unborn child and then cut open her stomach to resolve the wager;
- Girls' hair was often shaved so as to rob them of their femininity and create an impression of unity within the militia;
- Girls affiliated with armed groups may be forced to conceal weapons and diamonds by inserting them into their bodily orifices or headscarves;
- Child wives are repeatedly used as sexual objects (often by multiple commanders) and when they are raped, it is usually considered 'their fault';
- Girls who have been raped are seen as having been 'devalued' in the eyes of their religion and community, making it much more difficult

for them to be reintegrated;

- Many former girl soldiers who are poorly reintegrated end up addicted to drugs, dependent upon prostitution or linked to gangs.

Emotional Effects of Girl Soldiery

- Sometimes, girl soldiers are given new names so as to strip them of their old identities and affiliations – this is especially true when soldiers are ‘promoted’;
- Women are frequently used in rituals in which they are drugged and charmed before being sent to the front lines for good luck;
- Girl soldiers are taught that their parents are not important (or indeed, that they are the enemy) and that the only people who can be trusted are their commanders – this often makes girls feel afraid that they will no longer have a family to return to once the conflict is over;
- Many girl soldiers fear that once they have escaped captivity, they will not be able to find a man who will love them, nor will they be able to have children;
- It is very common for girl soldiers to experience recurring nightmares pertaining to their time in the bush;
- Once reintegrated, girl soldiers struggle with severe stigmatization and the sense that they have been rendered outcasts, in addition to profound hatred towards those commanders who victimized them;
- While fighting in the bush, some women may enjoy relatively equal status with their male counterparts but when they return home, women are once again relegated to the kitchen, thereby provoking social tension during the reintegration process.

Miscellaneous Observations Regarding Girl Soldiery

- Poverty is a key driver of the child soldier phenomenon, as impoverished parents will frequently send their children off with militias in exchange for food or money;
- In the absence of a strong and accessible education system, many children end up spending their days on the streets, making them

more vulnerable to capture and exploitation;

- Sometimes, militias maintain gender quotas for child soldiers, as boys and girls are often made to perform different tasks;
- There is the perception that once one has experienced life in the bush, it becomes much more difficult – both logistically and psychologically – to immigrate to another country;
- Rehabilitation requires the initiation of reintegration programs that cater to the unique needs of girl soldiers, most particularly, programs that create ‘safe spaces’ for women to discuss their experiences and continue their education.



Village Mapping Exercise

During the second interactive component of the first day, participants were made to watch clips from the film *“Rebelle”* (which was still in production at the time of the workshop and is also known as *“Komona”* and *“War Witch”*). They were then asked to conduct another mapping exercise, this time at the village – rather than individual – level. While brainstorming and sketching threats, participants were asked to keep five main questions in mind:

1. Where in the village are girls most vulnerable to recruitment?

2. What is the profile of the ideal girl soldier?
3. What kinds of tasks will recruited girls be made to perform?
4. How is trust gained within the ranks of an armed group (i.e., how do you gain respect and move up the chain of command)?
5. Do girls have the opportunity to interact with security forces? If so, where, when and how?

What follows is a partial list of observations made by the workshop's three breakout groups:

- Girls are most vulnerable to recruitment in open market places, village squares, schools, at rivers when collecting water or washing clothes, in forests when scavenging for wood, in poorly protected refugee camps and at church (where rebels know they can find many children at a single location);
- Girls are comparably safer in well-protected internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, hospitals and military camps;
- The ideal girl recruit is young (but over the age of 10), strong, attractive, isolated from her family (e.g., an orphan) and a virgin;
- Girl soldiers may adopt the roles of combatant, guard, porter, clothes washer, child wife (i.e., sex slave), bodyguard, cook, drug mule, witch doctor, etc.;
- In order to gain respect within an armed group, girls must be courageous, lucky, willing to kill and/or have sex with their commanders, and must never attempt to escape;
- Girl soldiers may interact with security forces so as to distract them or to obtain information from them – they are particularly well-suited to these interactions, as women tend to be seen as more unassuming than men.

Day Two: Tuesday, 8 May 2012

Participant Roundtable: Personal Reflections on Sexual Violence

Throughout the workshop's second day, participants were encouraged to share their reflections and personal experiences of sexual violence during armed conflict. The morning was set aside as a special 'women only' discussion, so as to encourage openness and a sense of security.

Case Study: Participant from Sierra Leone

One Sierra Leonean participant was captured twice by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) between the ages of 12 and 13. At the time of her second abduction, when four young rebels attacked her home, she had been with her father and mother. The rebels attempted to rape her in front of her parents, with the intention of shaming her into remaining with the RUF. At the time, she had been a virgin. When her father protested, he was publicly dismembered. After the attack, she became pregnant but lost the baby shortly thereafter.

While in the bush, the participant reported having witnessed several instances of foetal vivisection from mothers' bellies.

Apparently, the commanders – who often shared one girl wife amongst four of them – wished to determine the sex of the unborn children. She and other women were also forced to conduct hard labour while pregnant.

When she returned to her village after the war, she was rejected by her community; with the exception of her mother, there were no organizations in place to offer her support. Even then, her mother eventually advised her to leave the village, as it had become clear that reintegration would be impossible.

The participant eventually went through college and is presently attending university. She is 26-years old and teaches at a secondary school to earn money. Her new role as a teacher has encouraged greater acceptance of her in her home village, although she still remains far closer to friends who had similar experiences in the bush.

Case Study: Participant from Cambodia

One participant from Cambodia noted that in her country, a wife is like an object whose sole purpose is to remain at home and keep things tidy. In light of this proprietary stereotype, if a woman is raped in the bush, it is perfectly normal and acceptable for her husband to reject her, as she is no longer seen to be his property. If, however, the woman is unmarried, she is often forced to wed her rapist, as she has been rendered 'tainted goods' and is no longer desirable.

The participant also emphasized that following the Cambodian genocide, the UN's presence was largely a 'political façade' and that UN personnel were often complicit in the perpetration of sexual violence.

What follows is a partial list of observations made by the workshop's various participants:

- Child wives are often shared amongst as many as four commanders at a time;
- UN personnel are frequently seen as being complicit in the perpetration of sexual violence against women;
- In order to prevent their abduction or rape, many parents advise their girls to dress in ragged clothing, to cut their hair in a boyish fashion and act mentally or physically handicapped;
- UN peacekeepers occupy a unique position within war-torn societies and if a local woman is seen to have a relationship with one, she is similarly elevated. This dynamic therefore necessitates prudence and social awareness on the part of peacekeepers, who may be at risk of abusing their power;
- While rape is normally considered a major event that mobilizes condolence and support from the entire community, it becomes so common during times of war that the community's ability to respond is completely overwhelmed;

- When a woman is raped, it is often acceptable for her husband to reject her, as his sole 'ownership' of her has been brought into question and disrepute;
- Education is widely considered to be a vital component of the rehabilitation and reintegration process.

Presentation by Aboke Girl and Former LRA Child Soldier Grace Akallo

Grace Akallo is a former child soldier who was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda at the age of 15. She was invited to speak via teleconferencing, to share her gendered perspective on the LRA conflict.

One evening in 1996, while Akallo was attending the Aboke high school for girls, LRA rebels came to her dormitory and abducted 139 students. Upon being alerted, the headmistress chased after the rebels and offered her own life in exchange for the girls. She successfully negotiated the immediate release of 109 students but 30 were retained. Unfortunately, Akallo was part of this latter group.

Akallo spent seven months fighting on the northern side of the Uganda-South Sudan border before she managed to escape.

However, upon returning to northern Uganda, her suffering did not end. Reintegration proved to be extremely challenging; her old neighbours would taunt and abuse her, claiming that she had become the wife of Joseph Kony (i.e., the leader of the LRA) and a killer. Akallo does not blame her community, though. She is aware of the great pain her neighbours had experienced and understood that they'd received no education regarding what child soldiers may have undergone in the bush.

Today, Akallo is a Master-level graduate. She is aware of how precious her academic achievements have been, in light of how few former girl soldiers are offered similar opportunities. She explained how, in northern Uganda, land and power is acquired through marriage. As such, if a girl has been raped and



UN Photo: Eskinder Debebe

is therefore no longer marriageable, the only way for her to sustain herself is by engaging in prostitution or returning to her erstwhile captors.

What follows is a partial list of other observations made by Akallo during her presentation:

- Child wives are often made to fight with their babies strapped to their backs;
- Child wives may also be given to commanders as a 'reward' for good performance;
- New child wives are made to compete for influence over their commanders – this creates a dynamic of profound mistrust between older and younger girl soldiers, as well as a tendency for girl soldiers to be more aggressive than their male counterparts;
- Although bonds between girls tend to be weak while in captivity (due to the tacit encouragement of competition between child wives, as previously mentioned), they are extremely strong during the rehabilitation and reintegration process, as former girl soldiers are able to relate to one another in ways that the community cannot;
- There is frequently a great deal of misunderstanding and a critical lack of empathy within communities that are made to accept rehabilitated girl soldiers, which points to the necessity of community-wide sensitization programs during the reintegration phase;
- In northern Uganda, the International Criminal Court (ICC) is seen to be not doing enough to try perpetrators of rape.

Poetry Session with Ian Keteku

During the afternoon of the second day, workshop participants were joined by Ian Keteku, a Canadian-Ghanaian poet who in 2010 earned the title of World Slam Poetry champion in France. Keteku prompted critical, creative thinking about the issue of child soldiery by asking participants to write poetic accounts of their experiences while employing incongruous metaphors.

Day Three: Wednesday, 9 May 2012

Presentation by Linda Dale on Children/Youth as Peacebuilders (CAP)

The workshop's third day began with a special presentation given by Linda Dale, the director of an organization called Children/Youth as Peacebuilders (CAP). CAP primarily operates in Colombia, northern Uganda and Cambodia, working on issues such as transitional justice, reintegration and sexual violence.

According to Dale, CAP has established four main findings in its operations:

- In Colombia, it was determined that boy soldiers who had committed sexual crimes experienced a 'fracturing' of their identity and faced great difficulty when attempting to converse openly with other girls;
- In northern Uganda, CAP has found it far more difficult to work with girls while employing their usual technique of art therapy and that those women who have experienced sexual violence now feel that their identity is intimately bound up with the men who exerted control over them;
- In Cambodia, it is common for girl victims of sexual violence to feel 'betrayed' by their parents. Indeed, they would rather run away from home and live on the streets than face stigmatization at home;
- In general, sexual violence as a war crime is impossible to address on a case-by-case basis – as there is often no definitive proof of the crime or the identity of the perpetrator – and as a result, the voices of girls are often silenced.

Dale then facilitated a brief brainstorming exercise in which workshop participants were made to critique a hypothetical intervention by the International Criminal Court (ICC) intended to address crimes of sexual violence. The participants responded by drafting the following list of pros and cons for the proposed initiative:

ICC Pros	ICC Cons
Promotes justice and healing	Victims and witnesses could be at physical risk
Former girl soldiers are given a voice	Fear of stigmatization and rejection
Provides a sense of accountability	Impracticality due to limited resources
Restoration of identity	Long-term duration of any ICC intervention
Reminds victims that they are not alone	Dire political implications of failure
Secures emotional or financial compensation	Cultural pressure to be uncooperative
Peer support and identification of role models	Labelling that sets victims apart from others

The participants also warned Dale of potential trust issues arising from the fact that government and national army figures may have been implicated in abuses. In such instances, the stakes for girls who wish to tell their stories are particularly high.

In order to mitigate potential stigmatization on the part of the community, it was suggested that the ICC could hold educational workshops before its intervention began, so as to promote open dialogue and acceptance, and provide basic information on how to help victims cope with trauma.

Participant Roundtable on Personal Reflections of Child Soldiery and Armed Conflict

Throughout the afternoon of 9 May, workshop participants were encouraged to share their remaining reflections and personal experiences of child soldiery. Unlike the roundtable facilitated on 8 May, this discussion was not restricted to women; as such, the focus was less upon sexual violence (which is highly personal) and more upon the gendered experiences of underage soldiery.

Case Study: Participant from Sierra Leone

The first participant to share her story had been abducted in Sierra Leone along with several of her brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, a number of these siblings were killed while in the bush.

According to the participant, the most disturbing part of being a child soldier was the spontaneous murder that commanders would commit in rebel camps. According to her testimony, it was relatively common for children to be killed at random while eating; they would be shot without warning in the back of the head, "...their faces falling into their bowls."

This was presumably a tactic intended to keep the children in a constant state of fear and obedience.

On the day of her escape, she asked a guard if she could go to the toilet. When she was alone, she took the opportunity to run. Hearing her footsteps, the guard started to shoot into the bush, forcing her to lie down and seek shelter in a hole between two banana trees. She had heard about this evasion strategy from other children who had previously escaped the militia. She remained still and pressed herself into the ground until the guard thought she had been killed and the gunfire ended.

The following morning, she managed to flag down a passing truck, and the driver gave her a lift to a nearby town. From there, she entered an IDP camp. Eventually, she managed to reunite with her husband and move to Canada as a refugee. She returned to Sierra Leone for the first time 2009.

Case Study: Participant from Cambodia

This participant had been living with her well-educated, middle-class family at the outset of the Cambodian genocide. Shortly after the violence began, the Khmer Rouge arrived in the capital and seized her father, who had been working as a judge and the presiding Minister of Justice. Everyone else in her family was forcibly moved into the countryside.

After spending some time at a home in the country, the Khmer Rouge returned, forcing everyone to flee into the bush. During the confusion, the participant's sister was captured. Although her mother had begged the soldiers to spare her life, she was still killed.

At the age of 10, the Khmer Rouge succeeded in capturing her from her mother and recruited her as a child soldier. Initially, they asked her whether she was able to read and write. The participant lied and said that she was illiterate. Today, she firmly believes that she survived because of this subterfuge; had the Khmer Rouge discovered that she was educated, they would have probably killed her for being bourgeois.

In the beginning, when the participant was told that she had become a child soldier, she felt proud and was glad to have such an adult function, even if she was not entirely aware of what the role entailed. To indoctrinate her and demonstrate friend from foe, soldiers would murder captives in front of her. She also remembers one of her friends being raped, presumably with the intention of instilling fear into the young captives.

As the war between the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese army began to escalate, many children – including this participant – were deployed as human shields. Fortunately, she managed to survive and on one occasion was captured and arrested by Vietnamese soldiers, along with two of her friends. She was subsequently released and reunited with her surviving family.

In time, the participant's family was able to escape Cambodia to an illegal refugee camp in Thailand (it was considered illegal because of its high proportion of Khmer Rouge residents). The flight took place at night and the children had to follow one another in single file, so as to avoid detection. While in the camp, she performed voluntary translation services for the camp doctor.

Although she had expected to feel safer under Thai authority, she instead witnessed widespread rape at the hands of Thai soldiers and police.

One day, the Canadian Ambassador to Thailand and the Quebec Minister of Culture and Immigration visited her camp. The participant's mother encouraged her to speak with the two dignitaries and demonstrate that she was not Khmer Rouge. This conversation resulted in an invitation to move to Canada.

From her new home, she was able to determine that only five members of her 35-person family had survived the genocide. Two of these relatives – her mother and sister – joined her in Montréal.

Case Study: Participant from South Sudan

The third participant to share her story grew up on the border between Kenya and present-day South Sudan. When the Sudanese civil war broke out, she was 11 years old.

On the night that the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) entered her village, there was great confusion; all of her neighbours were running into the bush and nobody knew where anyone else had gone. In this turmoil, she was separated from her family; she simply followed everyone else, without knowing where they were going.

She continued to walk through the bush for nearly three weeks, surviving on small fruits and berries the whole way. Eventually, she succeeded in finding transportation to a larger city, where she was able to seek shelter in a church. However, this sanctuary was unfortunately a centre of human trafficking; wealthy individuals would come to the church on a regular basis, purchasing IDPs to fill domestic labour jobs.

In spite of having been purchased herself, the participant had the good fortune of being able to continue her schooling in the afternoon after she had completed her domestic duties. She saved money and in time managed to travel to the city of Juba, where she had cousins and several other acquaintances. She stayed with these people until she completed high school. Later, she would learn that every member of her family had been killed, including her mother, father and eight brothers.

She eventually moved to Canada as a refugee where she now assists members of the Sudanese community in Edmonton, acting as an intermediary between Arabic and English members of the community.

What follows is a partial list of other observations made by the workshop's various participants:

- Militias may recruit children by playing loud music in a public area, encouraging them to come out of their homes and dance. This in turn makes them more vulnerable to abduction;
- Commanders may occasionally murder recruited child soldiers at random, so as to instil fear in the hearts of their young peers;
- One escape tactic involves running away after one has asked to go to the toilet and then seeking shelter in a well-concealed hole until one is presumed dead;
- In conflicts where the middle class is being targeted, abducted child soldiers are advised to conceal their literacy;
- It cannot be taken for granted that child soldiers ascribe to the cultural or historical norms that are prescribed to them (as was the case for one Eritrean participant who had always believed that she was Ethiopian);
- Like UN personnel, the managers of IDP and refugee camps often have a bad reputation amongst inhabitants for being complicit in the perpetuation of sexual violence;
- Escaped child soldiers are often at risk of falling prey to human traffickers, some of whom may even disguise themselves as humanitarians;
- Education is continually cited as being one of the most important components of any rehabilitation process;
- Escaped child soldiers and refugees are frequently abused by their foreign hosts;
- Refugees often struggle with the practical and psychological implications of not being able to do work that is reflective of their level of education.

Annex A

Evaluation Form

1. Did you find the workshop:
 - a. Relevant Yes No
 - b. Useful Yes No
 - c. Practical Yes No
2. If yes, how? Please give examples. If no, why not?
3. Which sessions of the workshop did you enjoy most and why?
4. Which sessions of the workshop did you enjoy least and why?
5. What would you recommend to make this workshop better in the future?
6. What are three things that you learned during this workshop?
7. Will you apply the things that you learned during this workshop? Yes or no and why?
8. If we were to plan future workshops, what topics would you like to have covered?
9. Other comments?

Annex B

Evaluation Summary

1. All participants reported that they found the workshop relevant, useful and practical.
2. Participants were especially pleased with how encouraged they felt to share and listen to one another's stories; this was where the most profound learning took place.
3. In general, participants most enjoyed the sessions that involved sharing and learning from one another's experiences. Two or three mentioned that they found the body and village mapping exercises to be illuminating, insofar as they had not been aware of how profoundly child soldiery can affect the individual and the community.
4. Only one participant mentioned feeling somewhat alienated during the discussion on sexual violence, as she felt she had nothing to contribute. Aside from this one criticism, there were no complaints.
5. While the participants were generally very pleased with the content and structure of the workshop, several of them suggested that more time be set aside for personal storytelling during the first day so as to facilitate stronger bonds. There was also the suggestion that more multimedia material be incorporated into the presentations.
6. The most striking 'take away' was that in spite of the diverse sets of experience represented amongst the workshop participants, there was a strong sense of unity (and therefore empathy). Other participants mentioned the importance of education as a tool for both prevention and rehabilitation, the physical impact of soldiery upon girls' bodies and the surprising fact that girls and women can actually perpetuate abuses against one another.
7. The four main suggestions were to include: a) a discussion on prevention strategies; b) a greater focus on female empowerment (rather than on female victimization); c) details regarding other IGOs/NGOs working on the child soldiery issue;

and d) ways for women to become involved in child protection work.

8. The participants were overwhelming grateful for the workshop, believed that there should be more trainings of this sort across the country and thankful for the expertise that the facilitators brought to bear.

Annex C

Facilitator Biographies

Shelly Whitman, PhD

Executive Director, The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

Shelly took up the post of Director of the Initiative in January 2010. Prior to this she has had an academic career teaching in International Development Studies and Political Science at Dalhousie University, Saint Mary's University and the University of Botswana. Her research interests have been broadly focused on issues related to peace, development and human security. More specifically she has conducted research on small arms and light weapons in Southern Africa, gender and conflict, children and conflict, the international criminal court, the Great Lakes region and peace and reconciliation efforts in post-conflict societies.

From 2000-2002, Shelly worked as Head of Research on the inter-Congolese dialogue, under the direction of Former Botswana President, Sir Ketumile Masire. Previous to this post, she was a Research Consultant at UNICEF, NY and worked under the direction of Ambassador Stephen Lewis on the OAU Rwanda Genocide Report. Shelly recently introduced a new course on Children and Armed Conflict at Dalhousie University and took on the additional role of Director of the Child Soldiers Initiative in November 2009.

Tanya Zayed

Senior Project Officer, The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

Since joining the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative in 2008, Tanya Zayed has acted as a focal point for all military and police training programmes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Botswana and Canada. Proficient in curriculum design and facilitation, Tanya graduated from Saint Paul University with a Master's degree in Conflict Studies.

Prior to joining the Initiative, Tanya worked with Save the Children (Canada) in Bogota (Colombia), where she contributed to the "Rewrite the Future" programme on Education in Emergencies. Tanya has also worked in Cochabamba (Bolivia) with various programmes dealing with at-risk children and youth who are living on the streets and in prisons.

Linda Dale

Director, Children/Youth as Peacebuilders (CAP)

Linda Dale is the Director of Children/Youth as Peacebuilders (CAP), an international federation of organizations and young people dedicated to the rights of children and youth living in conflict and post-conflict situations. It is designed to promote relationships amongst equals and operates under the belief that young people and adults have much to offer and learn from one another. CAP has past and present projects being managed in Cambodia, Colombia and northern Uganda.

Kirsten Johnson, MD

Program Director, McGill Humanitarian Studies Initiative (HSI)

Kirsten Johnson is an Assistant Professor of Family Medicine, an Affiliate Faculty member at the Institute for Health and Social Policy at McGill University and an Affiliate at the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative at Harvard University. She is also the Director of the McGill Humanitarian Studies Initiative and the Director of the Department of Family Medicine's International Division.

Dr. Johnson has extensive experience in humanitarian relief and development. She has both worked and conducted research in over 30 countries with 16 organizations. Her current research has focused on the mental health of populations affected by conflict, sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) and child combatants. She was also the first to conduct a country-wide study of the civilian population's mental health in post-conflict Liberia.

Dr. Johnson was awarded the Segal Centre's 2010 Janusz Korczak award for her work on promoting the rights of children in conflict and the Award of Excellence for her work in global health by the College of Family Physicians in Canada in 2010.

Ian Keteku

Poet, Musician and Freelance Journalist

Ian Keteku is a poet, musician and freelance journalist. Born as Ian Nana Yaw Adu Budu Keteku, his birth name mimics his diverse talents and interests. Raised in Canada and of Ghanaian heritage, Keteku earned the title of World Slam Poetry champion in France in the summer of 2010.

LIVING WITH ARMED GROUPS

Keteku's poetry and music are refreshing in the sense that they speak to a universal audience. He is also known as Emcee E. He defines his poetry as "critical oratory," feeling compelled to speak on the issues he feels are not thought about regularly. He loves to use his words to inspire messages of peace, action and critical thought. Keteku feels that using his voice to speak for the voiceless is an honourable calling that can never stop.

He has performed all over Canada, as well as West and East Africa. In addition, he had the opportunity to perform his poetry for the Governor General of Canada on two occasions.

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