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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY/DALLAIRE INSTITUTE FOR CHILDREN, PEACE AND SECURITY Building Bridges for Prevention: Women and Security Actors Prevent Child Recruitment and Use in South Sudan

Context

Ongoing political instability, economic devastation, and food insecurity in Sudan have perpetuated civil conflicts in the country, leading to the widespread recruitment of child soldiers. Within this context, gender equality remains elusive. South Sudan has the world's highest maternal mortality rate, as well as one of the world's highest rates of child marriage and sexual & gender-based violence. Women and girls are also disproportionately affected by conflict, which has been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The persistence of traditional attitudes towards gender have hindered the implementation of peace agreements and resolutions led by women. Their contributions remain under-recognized, posing a threat to peace and security.

The Innovative Solution

Supported by FIT, the Dallaire Institute tested an innovative solution aimed at encouraging women's engagement in the peace and security sphere in South Sudan, with the ultimate goal of preventing the recruitment of child soldiers and conflict-related sexual violence against children. This was done by empowering women to contribute to these processes and creating communication and exchange platforms for members of the police in South Sudan to engage with women-led civil society organizations. Round tables between community groups and local security actors, as well gender responsive training for police, were held to help increase dialogue and coordination between women and local forces. Although the humanitarian sector does direct aid toward the protection of child soldiers, very few focus on prevention and fewer still engage with national forces or directly engage women in peacebuilding processes.

Advancing Gender Equality

This innovation examined gender inequalities related to how children are vulnerable to different forms of conflict-based violence, the ways in which women and men can be perpetrators of violence, and the spaces that women and men can access to remedy and prevent violence perpetrated against children.



COUNTRY	AMOUNT
South Sudan	\$248,963

TESTING PERIOD
11 months
Ended April 2022



SDG 5: GENDER EQUALITY



GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE (GE3)



THEME: SOCIAL JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

By engaging community members, civilian professionals and police officers, the innovation aimed to positively transform root causes of gender inequalities by making child soldier recruitment prevention strategies more gender-responsive and thereby addressing the protection needs of both boys and girls. The innovation also aimed to transform women's participation in peace and security spheres.

Testing Framework

A participatory baseline study was conducted to inform on the context and needs – enabling women partners to help inform the innovation and its analysis. Pre and post evaluations were conducted as part of all workshops as a tool to gauge participants' understanding of all relevant issues. The Indicators were monitored monthly by The Dallaire Institute and women-led organizational partners to analyze progress and to consider mitigation strategies. An end-line study was also conducted to determine the effectiveness of this approach.

Results and Impact

At endline, 95% (72 out of 75) of targeted Women's National Network members (40 women, 5 men) and 27 police officers (14 women; 13 men) reported awareness of the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, compared to 26% WNN (17 women, 3 men) and police officers (4 women, 3 men) reported at baseline. In addition, 74% of CSO leaders (35 women) and police officers (11 women, 10 men) reported that their organizations now include and prioritize the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers as well as conflict related sexual violence against children (a 37% change since baseline). Both police officers and participating youth leaders reported that the community dialogues were the most effective platform for communicating.

Key Lessons

1. When working with police in design sessions, target participants contributed directly to the tailoring of the curriculum and plan for police trainings. This ensured women's leadership and roles in prevention were prioritized in the modules.
2. The approach had a limited scope in that it focused on urban centers. The participants recommended including other states and additional community stakeholders to ensure a wider reach.
3. Over the course of the testing, it became essential to provide financial support for the women's transportation so they could participate fully in activities.
4. Holding women-only meetings enhanced women's participation in initiatives.

"This project gave me an opportunity to be part of the decision-making process amongst the men and to be a voice for the voiceless in protecting children from violence. The women from our committee are now managing to reduce the risk of children's recruitment with armed groups, as women are essential in the prevention of violence against children". Mary Nyathiel, Community Chief

PARTNER ORGANIZATION

- Dallaire Institute South Sudan Office

TARGET PARTICIPANTS

45 Women's National Network (40 women, 5 men) and 64 police officers (24 women, 39 men)

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ABOUT FIT

The Fund for Innovation and Transformation supports Canadian small and medium-sized organizations (SMOs) testing innovative solutions that advance gender equality in the Global South.

