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## Preventing Child Soldiers: How Can The CAF Contribute?

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JCSP 47

PCEMI 47

Master of Defence Studies

Maîtrise en études de la défense

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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE – COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES

JCSP 47 – PCEMI 47

2020 – 2021

MASTER OF DEFENCE STUDIES – MAÎTRISE EN ÉTUDES DE LA DÉFENSE

**PREVENTING CHILD SOLDIERS:  
HOW CAN THE CAF CONTRIBUTE?**

By Major Mathew Berry

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## ABSTRACT

The international community has enacted laws, protocols and commitments to protect children, yet the atrocity of recruiting and using child soldiers continues to occur by armed actors at alarming rates across the globe. Canada has helped refocus international efforts from protecting child soldiers to preventing children from becoming child soldiers and the CAF has produced an interim Joint Doctrine Note and an online course on the subject. However, the CAF has a long way to go to ensure that the interim doctrinal note becomes integrated across a range of CAF doctrine. The CAF needs to find a way to ensure soldiers become educated on the subject of child soldiers and are executing training scenarios that will not only reinforce lecture based training on how to deal/interact with child soldiers, but how to prevent them. The force employers need to first ensure there is accountability, that TMST for all operations incorporate varying levels of child soldier awareness, and that they support the deploying tactical organization with targeted cultural awareness training that focus' on the risk factors to recruitment. The force generators additionally need to ensure that training is incorporated early and often, ideally using IED training/awareness program as a framework to build from. They are both complex, comprehensive weapon systems that will take years of exposure, experience and lessons learned to truly make a difference. However, education and training can only go so far. Soldiers may learn how they fit into the bigger picture and the importance of breaking the cycle of recruitment, but current monitor and reporting mechanisms are designed on the premise of reporting a violation *after* it has already occurred. In order to enable soldiers to help prevent that recruitment from occurring in the first place, the strategic leaders must put effort towards developing indicators and warnings to recruitment that are regionally based.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

When you think of combat or conflict, many will instantly picture the tanks, jets and ships that bring military might to bear. The World Wars, Desert Storm, Korean War, the Yom Kippur War and so many others have been contested by powerful states using troops and technology to influence the outcome. However, the truth is that conflict has been constant in some form and is often undertaken by rebel groups, criminal organizations, tribal or religious organizations, terrorists, and non-state actors who may or may not be supported by governments. Conflict can be unethical, illegal, and immoral; and unfortunately can often involve individuals that want nothing more than to avoid it. Children are one such group who are often caught up in the repercussions of conflict or in conflict itself, due to factors that either push or pull them towards armed actors. Historical studies have identified that children have been used by state actors for centuries in mostly support roles and away from directly participating in the brutality of conflict. However, since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, children have become increasingly employed by both state and non-state actors for conflict itself and we as an international society are beginning to become increasingly aware of this danger, immorality, and risk, and have taken increased measures to curb the trend. It is easy, and naïve, for Western societies to minimize this problem and say “just stop using them”. However, the use of child soldiers is significantly more complex than that, and requires the support from multiple levels of government and non-government organizations (NGOs) in order to force non-state and state actors into ceasing the use of child soldiers. The United Nations (UN) has developed multiple Security Council resolutions to help address this problem, countries have agreed to varying protocols and commitments (most recently the Vancouver Principles) and international human rights and humanitarian laws have been amended to reflect the growing trend and urge to eliminate the use

of child soldiers. Yet, it is estimated that there are still approximately 300,000<sup>1</sup> child soldiers worldwide and a UN report published in 2020 was able to verify that over 7700 children as young as 6, were recruited and used by both non-state and state actors in 2019.<sup>2</sup> Clearly more needs to be done.

It will continue to be a global whole of government effort to prevent the use of child soldiers, but security sectors actors (SSA) like the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), and in particular land forces, can support the strategic end state. Land forces have the capability to report violations, stabilize regions, support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts, and train local defence and security forces among other things. However, operating in an environment with child soldiers is significantly different than an environment without, and SSAs require targeted child soldier training; especially if they want to help prevent the recruitment of children from occurring. Unfortunately, the CAF has very limited experience and essentially zero training programs established on the subject of child soldiers, yet it will undoubtedly find itself in regions where actors employ child soldiers. The problem that now exists, is ensuring members of the CAF are ready for that type of environment, without making it worse.

Canada and the CAF are working to improve on that deficiency. Canada became the first NATO member to formalize a policy on child soldiers by releasing the *Joint Doctrine Note*

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<sup>1</sup> NATO Research and Technology Organization, *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force (Des Enfants Soldats Comme Adversaires)* (Jan 2011), 1-1; D. Rosen, *Child Soldiers: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2012, E-Book), 18.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations General Assembly Security Council, “Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General,” (09 June 2020): 2, [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S\\_2020\\_525\\_E.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2020_525_E.pdf).

(JDN) on Child Soldiers in March 2017,<sup>3</sup> with efforts now underway to incorporate the Vancouver Principles, which are “aimed at preventing and addressing the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups during United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations.”<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the JDN is an interim document that contains gaps and Canada is still trying to figure out how to truly implement the Vancouver Principles and frame new doctrine around it. The largest gap, and the subject of this paper, is that the JDN does little to identify how the CAF can further support existing efforts to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers. The flaw of the JDN, and many other guiding international documents, is that it informs members how to act in response of a child soldier, vice how to prevent the child from becoming a child soldier. In order to counter this, the CAF must ensure that doctrine and training on how to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers is integrated across the CAF. The CAF must also ensure that soldiers become educated on the subject of child soldiers and are executing training scenarios that will not only reinforce lecture based training on how to deal/interact with child soldiers, but how to prevent them. This training must be adapted early and often and can easily be integrated into current stability operations training programs, which is then reinforced through Theatre Mission Specific Training (TMST) and subject matter experts such as Child Protection Advisors (CPAs) and NGOs prior to and during deployment. However, deployed soldiers need to be further enabled with advanced research and the development of regional indicators and warnings of recruitment to ensure they can do more to prevent the recruitment of children by armed actors than simply responding to incidents that have already occurred.

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<sup>3</sup> Catherine Abidi, and Dustin Johnson, *Allons-Y: Journal of Children, Peace and Security* no. 4 (March 2020): 33, <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/allons-y/issue/view/924>

<sup>4</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence/Global Affairs Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles* (2019): 3.

This paper will attempt to add guiding information to support the research and development of doctrine and training programs in order to enable the CAF to meet the international commitment of preventing child soldier recruitment by armed actors. Even though some state actors continue to recruit and employ child soldiers, the primary focus of the research is on non-state armed groups however, many of the principles and recommendations can equally apply to both. The paper has been divided into three main chapters that lead up to answering the question: what can the CAF do to further support existing efforts to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers?

Chapter 2 summarizes the current state of the child soldier problem. The chapter itself is divided into two sections. The first section addresses the definition of a child soldier, risk factors that can lead to recruitment and why armed actors continue to use child soldiers despite the legal systems that have been put into place. The second section explains what the international community has done over recent decades to curb the trend of child soldier recruitment and then narrows the focus to what Canada and the CAF have done to support international efforts.

Chapter 3 is the meat of the paper and the research, and seeks to answer the question and provide recommendations on what the CAF can do to prepare its members for deployments and help prevent child soldier recruitment. This is completed through three sections that describe how the CAF should view training programs and what the strategic, operational and tactical levels should and can do to prepare members for a deployment.

Chapter 4 offers some thoughts on how the CAF can support prevention efforts once in-theatre by highlighting the required organizational structure and employment/use of key role players. Additionally, the paper will quickly examine the importance of mental health in order



to ensure CAF members can continue to remain operational, in spite of the atrocities and moral dilemmas that they may be presented with.

## **CHAPTER 2 – WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

### **Section 2.1 – Why do Children become Child Soldiers?**

The use of child soldiers by armed actors is not new but the dynamics are changing. It has been noted throughout history that children were employed in a number of conflicts to include the Crusades, the US Civil War and the Second World War as drummers, spies, support workers and in rare cases combatants.<sup>5</sup> Despite international efforts, the use of child soldiers continues to be a major global problem and in recent years, the number of child soldiers have begun to increase and their roles in conflict are changing. Children still perform many of the same support functions they traditionally have in the past, in the present; however, children have also become the primary source of combatants for many organizations. For example, Singer notes that in the Sierra Leone conflict from 1991 to 2001, children made up 80% of combatants.<sup>6</sup> The Sierra Leone conflict can no longer be considered an exception either. In recent decades, children now make up significant percentages of combatants utilized by both government and non-state actors across the globe including in: Liberia; Democratic Republic of Congo; Somalia; Rwanda; Turkey; Columbia; and many others.<sup>7</sup> Haer and Bohmelt found in their research that more than

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<sup>5</sup> P.W. Singer, *Children at War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005, E-Book), 18-23; D. Rosen, *Child Soldiers: A Reference Handbook*, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 23.

<sup>7</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 23-36; Bernd Beber, and Christopher Blattman, "The Logic of Child Soldiering and Coercion," *International Organization* 67, no. 1 (01, 2013): 67, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020818312000409>.

90% of child soldiers surveyed, stated they had served in combat rather than support functions.<sup>8</sup> Another staggering fact is that girls are now believed to make up between 30%-40% of child soldiers.<sup>9</sup> A recent study also found that 37% of girls recruited on the African continent were used directly in conflict and in Nigeria, it was found that 75% of suicide attacks were conducted by girls.<sup>10</sup> Research by academics and think tanks have helped bring awareness to the international community, as research has examined the psychological aspects and the structural factors, it has also examined the theory of forced vs voluntary enlistment and the effects of children attempting to reintegrate among civilian populations. Unfortunately, child soldier use is still widespread and globally dispersed. This section first defines what a child soldier is and provides some recent statistics that will highlight the likelihood of military intervention with children as the opposing force. The section will then summarize with risk factors to recruitment followed by some thoughts on why armed actors continue to employ children, in order to frame the remainder of this paper. It will be demonstrated that the adjective one-size-fits-all, is not something that can be applied to the prevention of recruitment and use of child soldiers; as it is complex, layered and often changes with time and regions. This understanding will be important to determining how and what the CAF can do to support international efforts towards preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

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<sup>8</sup> Roos Haer, and Tobias Böhmelt, "The Impact of Child Soldiers on Rebel Groups' Fighting Capacities," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 33, no. 2 (April 2016): 155, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26271417>.

<sup>9</sup> Roos Haer, "Children and Armed Conflict: Looking at the Future and Learning from the Past," *Third World Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (January 2019): 80, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01436597.2018.1552131>

<sup>10</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups: Lessons learnt and good practices on prevention of recruitment and use, release and reintegration* (December 2020), 8-9, [https://alliancecpha.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/tn\\_gaafag\\_eng.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=41543](https://alliancecpha.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/tn_gaafag_eng.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=41543)

### 2.1.1 – Definition

The Paris Commitments and Principles (2007)<sup>11</sup> are a development upon the original Cape Town Principles (1997) and provide definition and guidelines for both the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups, as well as guiding information on children's release from these organizations and reintegration into society. According to the Paris Principles, a child soldier (one associated with an armed force or armed group):

“refers to any person below 18 years of age who is or who has been recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.”<sup>12</sup>

It is important to highlight that the definition above makes specific reference that child soldiers do not have to carry a gun. Child soldiers are any child recruited and/or used by an armed actor for any reason. This definition has helped open the door to ensuring research, international laws and programs such as Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) expand their current view and support all children who have become associated with an armed actor. The Paris Commitment and Principles were a much needed step forward as they have paved the way for both peacekeepers and peacemakers to also address the recruitment of children by armed actors and not just the child soldier once they are part of an armed group or force. In addition, these principles identified that a child “refers to any person less than 18 years of age,”<sup>13</sup> which reinforces what is stipulated in the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child. One of the issues now is to adequately understand what factors influence the likelihood of

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<sup>11</sup> France Diplomacy, “What are the Paris Principles and Paris Commitments?” Last accessed 30 April 2021, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/human-rights/children-s-rights/protecting-children-from-war-conference-21-february-2017/article/what-are-the-paris-principles-and-paris-commitments>.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, *The Paris Principles: Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups* (2007): 7, <https://www.unicef.org/mali/media/1561/file/ParisPrinciples.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF, *The Paris Principles*, 7.

a child becoming recruited by an armed group or armed force in the first place. Governments and their professions of arms, such as the CAF, need to become increasingly educated on why and how these activities take place in order to better inform the soldiers that will be responsible to observe, report, prevent, negotiate agreements, provide security, and support the reintegration of children, among many other tasks. Soldiers are essentially the “eyes and ears”<sup>14</sup> of governments and international organizations and need to be adequately prepared before they are deployed, which is followed up with reinforcing knowledge once in theatre, in order to enable their understanding of what they are supposed to be wary of and how to respond appropriately when required.

The Government of Canada and the CAF will likely attempt to avoid placing soldiers in a situation such as the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda between 1993 and 1994 under Gen (Ret’d) Romeo Dallaire; however, it is very unlikely that CAF soldiers will be able to avoid deploying to regions where children are employed by armed forces or armed groups.

Highlighting how prevalent the continued use of child soldiers by armed actors is, the 2020 annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict indicates that in 2019 “7,747 children, some as young as 6, were verified as having been recruited and used. Among those, 90 per cent were used by Non-State actors.”<sup>15</sup> In contrast, the same report covering data and trends for 2015 reported only 3,884 cases of children recruitment by both state and non-state groups.<sup>16</sup> The number of verified cases of children being recruited nearly doubled in a four year

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<sup>14</sup> Claire Kupper, and Liza Young, “Peace Operations and Child Protection: turning early warning into early detection” (Observatoire Boutros-Ghali du maintien de la paix, December 2020), 3, [https://observatoire-boutros-ghali.org/sites/default/files/GRIP\\_Note\\_OBG\\_protection\\_enfants\\_ENG.pdf](https://observatoire-boutros-ghali.org/sites/default/files/GRIP_Note_OBG_protection_enfants_ENG.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> United Nations General Assembly Security Council, “Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General,” (09 June 2020): 2.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations General Assembly Security Council, “Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General,” (20 April 2016), [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2016\\_360.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2016_360.pdf).

span and includes at least 15 different countries. This number is lower than what was reported in 2017 with a total of 8,185<sup>17</sup> children recruited; however, we are far from claiming success.

These numbers indicate that the probability of CAF soldiers operating in regions where child soldiers are present is high and the myth that child soldiers is a problem confined to Africa is false. Tynes identified that from the period of 1987-2007 Africa had just 31.3% the global conflict that involved children, Asia had 31.3%, Europe had 13.3%, the Middle East 13.3% and the Americas made up 10.8%.<sup>18</sup> In fact, since 2000, the CAF has operated in regions that are known to use child soldiers; including Afghanistan, Mali, Nigeria, Iraq & Syria, Congo, Sudan and Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> The broad use of children by armed groups and armed forces highlights the complexity of the situation and the importance of ensuring soldiers are equipped to prevent these numbers from continuing to grow. So why should the CAF care? The use of child soldiers is not only contrary to international law, and inhumane, the use of child soldiers can create significant psychological impacts for both the child and those that encounter them, as well as longer term regional socioeconomic concerns. For these reasons, the CAF needs to address the child soldier phenomena issue as an independent problem with dedicated resources and training. However, not every child soldier is recruited for the same reason and via the same means. Child recruitment is a complex problem and cannot be assumed to occur for any single reason. The difficulty will be translating this information at the strategic and operational levels and educating soldiers at the

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<sup>17</sup> Anna Varfolomeeva, "Number of child soldiers involved in conflicts worldwide jumps 159% in 5 years," The Defense Post, last modified 11 Feb 2019, <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2019/02/11/child-soldiers-global-increase/>.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Tynes, "Child Soldiers, Armed Conflicts, and Tactical Innovations" (dissertation thesis, University At Albany, 2011), 8.

<sup>19</sup> Canada, Department Of National Defence, "Military operations," last modified 06 July 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations.html>; current, past and recently completed military operations can be compared to the 09 June 2020 Report of the Security General as it names countries verified to have recruited children.

tactical levels as to what these reasons are and appropriate actions to take, so they can support the early warning process by recognizing and identifying the risk factors that can lead to the recruitment of children.

### 2.1.2 – Recruitment Factors

Attempting to postulate a single source reason for child recruitment is an impossible task and would be wrong. Multiple reasons and factors that raise the risk of recruitment have been examined by academics and think tanks and research has continued to increase since the international recognition of the problem in the early 80s. In an effort to summarize research that has been conducted in this field, and to stay in line with UN concepts, the UN report *Cradled By Conflict*<sup>20</sup> will be used to frame this summary. As noted, not every child is recruited for the same reason; however, categorizing these factors will help organize the research that has been completed and enable a basic understanding of the complexities involved in child recruitment. The following material is not an exhaustive list of factors on why or how a child becomes part of an armed group or armed force, nor does it list all research topics in each category. This is a complex problem and requires continued research and application; however, the information presented below will enable the GoC and CAF to have a better understanding of the issue when developing strategic plans and targeted training aimed at supporting prevention efforts.

#### *Structural*

The environment in which a child lives in is built upon certain security, economic and cultural factors. These factors can influence a child, whether they know it or not, into becoming

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<sup>20</sup> Siobhan O’Neil, and Kato Van Broeckhoven *Cradled by Conflict: Child Involvement with Armed Groups in Contemporary Conflict* (United Nations University, 2018), [https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:6409/Cradled\\_by\\_Conflict.pdf](https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:6409/Cradled_by_Conflict.pdf).

recruited and employed into an armed group or force. Some key structural factors include the presence of conflict, the presence of non-state armed groups, and social cleavages and grievances.

### The Presence of Conflict

“For children to participate in conflict, there must be a conflict.”<sup>21</sup> Children do not often seek out a conflict, but rather become affiliated to it because of proximity. Singer noted in his 2005 book *Children at War* that almost half of the global conflicts at that time were seeing the rise of second generation fighters, and this is because in extended conflicts, those who have grown up in violence, view violence as the way of life.<sup>22</sup> Conflict has a way a creating or intensifying situations that can increase the likelihood of child recruitment.<sup>23</sup> Such as the destruction of homes and education centres, displacement, aid shortages and irregular access to food or the loss of loved ones.<sup>24</sup> However, the presence of conflict is now beginning to expand beyond geographic boundaries as technology and social media platforms are allowing groups to conduct significantly more outreach than they were able to do in the past.<sup>25</sup> This allows people to connect to conflicts even though they are not physically present.

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<sup>21</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 46-47.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Wessells, *Child Soldiers: From Violence to Protection* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 43-44; O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 43.

<sup>24</sup> Wessells, *Child Soldiers...*, 23-28.

<sup>25</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 44.

## Presence of Non-State Armed Groups

Non-state actors are the primary user of children<sup>26</sup>, therefore it should be understood that the proximity to conflict involving non-state actors further increases the likelihood that children become targets of recruitment. This is especially important when the state has been weakened and/or state actors have been driven from a region and the conventional institutions, laws and services that were in place have been uprooted. Non-state actors can see this as an opportunity to move in and fill the void left behind. In some cases, these groups may provide “security, dispute resolution and sometimes social services, among other functions.”<sup>27</sup> The groups and the members that are part of them, then become an acceptable alternative or even a role model to children. Further increasing their ability to recruit.

## Exacerbated Societal Cleavages and Grievances

Conflict has the tendency to increase societal cleavages, which are then exploited by armed groups. One such cleavage is that of intergenerational. It is becoming increasingly recognized that youth who fall out of the traditional norm may seek to join armed groups as a way of demonstrating opinion or making themselves recognized.<sup>28</sup> A second cleavage is that of gender inequality or discrimination.<sup>29</sup> As a reminder, it is now estimated that girls make up an estimated 30-40% of child soldiers. Although many other factors contribute to these numbers such as abduction, continued sexual exploitation and

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<sup>26</sup> The Annual Report of the Security General dated 09 June 2020 stated 90% of children confirmed recruited/use were by NSAGs.

<sup>27</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 48.

<sup>28</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 49.

<sup>29</sup> Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security, “Research for Prevention Concept Note” (06 November 2020), 2.



the lack of available education and/or child marriage may contribute to social cleavages.

Armed actors then motivate youth by appealing to these cleavages and children's frustrations as they seek to justify their cause.<sup>30</sup>

## *Social*

Social factors help shape how a child perceives the environment around them. They can influence a child's thoughts, ideas and beliefs. These factors are driven by the family, community, and peer networks that surround the child.

## *Family*

A child's family can serve both as a motivator to join armed groups and a deterrent. Strong family relationships can help shield and protect the child from the environment around them by educating their children, warning them, and keeping them from becoming idle. Nevertheless, family situations can just as equally push a child to join an armed actor. For example, a child may feel compelled to join an armed group if another family member already has already joined.<sup>31</sup> Whereas other families who live in poverty may force their child to join an armed actor because they are paid directly for their child's service, and that child has access to looted goods that can be brought home.<sup>32</sup> In addition, families may force their children to join armed groups if they are under threat from non-state actors. On the other end of the spectrum, children may also seek to join an armed actor as a way of seeking refuge from family violence and/or sexual abuse.<sup>33</sup> The

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<sup>30</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups...*, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 66.

<sup>33</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 48.

situations described above articulate the motivators and deterrents a family can provide a child; however, there are always situations where children have become separated from their families. These reasons may include something as simple as a child walking to school to those children that have become orphaned through conflict. Separated children, especially those who no longer have primary caregivers, can become a significant source for recruitment and abduction.<sup>34</sup>

### Communities

A community can be loyal to the state, have community self-defence groups or it may align itself with a non-state armed group for preservation reasons or stability.<sup>35</sup> As was discussed earlier, conflict can breakdown the normalcy a community is accustomed too. Children may then participate in self-defence groups out of necessity, which can lead the child towards association with armed actors as the conflict continues.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, if a state is no longer able to govern certain regions, non-state armed groups may fill that void and provide education, security and money to the local communities. If this is the case, children within the community have, for the most part, little choice but to follow along and in turn, become targets of recruitment based upon community affiliation. It has also been reported that non-state armed groups have used “recruitment by quota” policies where the community risks attack if X amount of children are not supplied.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 25-26.

<sup>35</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 52; Dallaire COE for Peace and Security, “Research for Prevention Concept Note,” 3-4.

<sup>36</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 41-42.

## Peer/Virtual Networks

Peer and virtual networks can equally influence children to join armed groups. Children are vulnerable to peer pressure, particularly that which comes from role models. In the factors identified above, this paper noted that family members who have already joined and non-state armed actors who have “stepped-up” to fill the void and provided basic needs can be seen as role models and/or proved peer pressure to children. Singer notes an example from Sri Lanka where the LTTE were entering schools to play propaganda videos and parade children in fine uniforms around the classroom as a peer pressure tool.<sup>38</sup> Much like how technology allows groups and people to bring/send the aspects of conflict beyond geographical boundaries, virtual networks can extend peer relationships and influence children outside of geographical regions as well.<sup>39</sup> For example, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant successfully recruited both adults and children to join their cause from the both the Americans and European nations through virtual networks and propaganda.

### *Individual Level Factor*

The above factors outline environmental risks that can exist, which can increase the likelihood a child becoming involved within an armed group, whether voluntarily or not. However, adding to the complexity of understanding why children may become involved with an armed actor, are the individual factors that will be discussed below. There has been criticism of whether or not a child truly “volunteers” to be a child soldier or if the situation they have been

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<sup>38</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 71.

<sup>39</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 53.

placed in makes that decision for them. Tynes notes that children may “volunteer” because it is the rational choice given the constraints placed upon them by the situation they are in.<sup>40</sup>

Regardless, individual factors are intertwined with each other and are important to recognize in order to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers. It is important to note, that the presence of one of these factors does not automatically mean children will become a child soldier, but they can exacerbate the problem further especially with the right structural and social pressures in place.

### Survival

Adults and child instinctually want to survive. If a child recognizes that there is a risk of losing their security, and their survival is threatened because they no longer have access to basic needs or they feel like they need protection, armed actors represent an opportunity that can provide them the best chances of survival. This can include those that are being abused by family members or who have become orphaned due to conflict. Singer states: “surrounded by violence and chaos, children may decided they are safer in a conflict group, with guns in their own hands, than going about by themselves unarmed.”<sup>41</sup> A study completed by numerous rights groups also found that this situation

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<sup>40</sup> Tynes, "Child Soldiers, Armed Conflicts, and Tactical Innovations" (dissertation thesis), 23-24.

<sup>41</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 66.

is not just for boys but girls as well, and that the need for physical protection is seen as a key factor for becoming associated with armed actors.<sup>42</sup>

### Poverty

Young children can fall victim to poverty by way of their caregiver's inability to regularly provide basic needs or because a child has become separated from their primary caregiver and cannot provide for themselves.<sup>43</sup> Alternatively, families may look to their children to help provide for the family and if legal/ethical job opportunities are not available, those children may feel pressured to seek employment with an armed actor.<sup>44</sup> Poverty in itself, is unlikely to cause young children to seek support from armed actors; however, the prospect of money allows adolescents to gain access to goods that have been previously unavailable. In studies completed in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in East Asia, almost 60% of surveyed child soldiers joined because of poverty.<sup>45</sup>

### Revenge/Trauma

Conflict has a way of creating negative consequences. Child who have experience a recent trauma such as the loss of loved one may seek revenge through affiliation of an armed actor.<sup>46</sup> It is also possible that a child, family or community has suffered by the

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<sup>42</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups...*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 54-55.

<sup>44</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups...*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 65.

<sup>46</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 49; Singer, *Children at War*, 68.

oppression of another actor, and by joining a competing actor, it gives them an avenue of seeking revenge.<sup>47</sup>

### Personal Significance

Children may also seek to join an armed group in order to give them an opportunity to serve a higher cause as armed actors can give the allure of a shared purpose or a way of expressing internalized beliefs.<sup>48</sup> Children may also seek to join an armed actor as a way of increasing their social status. Children may feel like their ability to stand out within their normal social hierarchy is limited, therefore armed actors can entice children by giving them an avenue to move beyond social norms. Singer notes that a survey completed in Africa showed that 15% of children volunteered “because they were simply fascinated by the prestige and thrill of serving in a unit and having a gun.”<sup>49</sup> Moving beyond the personal significance aspect, some organizations may seek adolescents and adolescent may seek them, because of the allure and promise of marriage, sex and/or romance.<sup>50</sup>

### Prosociality

Children may not always seek to join an armed actor for selfish reasons; they may do so because they believe it will benefit others.<sup>51</sup> For example, by joining an armed group a child may believe that it will prevent their siblings from recruitment through a

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<sup>47</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 56.

<sup>48</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 57; Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 45,51.

<sup>49</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 69.

<sup>50</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 58.

<sup>51</sup> Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security, “Research for Prevention Concept Note,” 6.

quota system or abduction. As was previously discussed, poverty may also drive children to seek money to financially support others, primarily their family.

## Education

Education is generally considered as a way of deterring children from armed actors as it occupies their time, gives them broader views and teaches them how to think and analyze situations.<sup>52</sup> Children also view educational systems as a place to gather and be with friends. However, school houses can also be used as a place that armed groups target children for abduction. As well, if a community has failed to maintain an educational system, an armed group may move into the region and establish education systems that are tailored to suit the armed group's needs such as an indoctrination program.<sup>53</sup>

### 2.1.3 – Why are they Used?

Above highlights the varying structural, social, and individual factors that may influence whether a child becomes involved with an armed group or armed force. Above also highlights, the complexity of the problem and that a comprehensive approach to solving it is required. Security Sectors Actors, such as the CAF, or NGOs will not put an end to child recruitment on their own. In order for the CAF to contribute, it must first understand that every situation is unique and children join for a variety of reasons. It is also important to note, that the presence of any one of these risk factors does not automatically mean that children will be recruited by an armed actor (voluntarily or forced). What the above factors do not highlight though, is *why* armed actors continue to use children. It is illegal and by failing to adhere to the laws, both

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<sup>52</sup> O'Neil, *Cradled by Conflict...*, 59.

<sup>53</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 70.

armed groups and armed forces will face consequences from the international community, so why continue to recruit and use children? This paper is not designed to explore current research on the subject in depth, nor compare or contrast the validity of one reason to another. However, this paper will highlight some key reasons why organizations continue to use children. Having a clear understanding of why actors continue to use children, combined with an understanding of the risk factors identified above, will enable the GoC and the CAF to effectively contribute to preventing the recruitment of children through both research and tactical actions.

According to the NATO statistics listed above, approximately 90% of children employed by armed actors are done so by non-stated armed groups with government forces making up the remainder. According to Tynes, regardless of whether it is a non-state armed group or state organization, these actors use children in order to increase political opportunities. In essence, children are a tactical innovation that can help force the hand of the opposition.<sup>54</sup> Tynes further postulates that these political opportunities are gained because using children as soldiers leads to three main dimensions that when combined, pressure the opposition. These dimensions are:

1) creating a moral dilemma in the opposition – when one has to make a choice to a complex problem when morally both answers are right but, you can only pick one. For example, choosing to kill an enemy knowing the enemy is a child. This problem can create delays in response and lingering psychological problems.<sup>55</sup> This dimension speaks to the need for understanding alternative methods than engaging a child, resiliency gained

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<sup>54</sup> Tynes , *Tools of War, Tools of State...*, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Tynes , *Tools of War, Tools of State...*, 22-23.



through physical scenarios and mental health services, and clear mandates, legal frameworks and rules of engagement.

2) fortification of troops – actors wishing to make a statement or replenish the ranks in order to continue pursuing their end state, may seek to fill them with children, as they are abundant and may be easier to recruit based upon the risk factors listed above.<sup>56</sup> This speaks to need to develop programs to try and prevent recruitment from occurring in the first place including warnings and indicators of possible recruitment. Basically, stop the supply.

3) the relocation of fear – If fear is being used to maintain control of the social order, either by an armed actor, rogue regime or state, the opposition will look to use children in order to upend that fear and redirect it towards the ruling party and civilians.<sup>57</sup> This then puts significant pressure on the current ruling party and/international community in order to gain an advantage. Having a good understanding of the cultural dynamics, tribal or religious feuds, and political situation will aid in ensuring security sectors actors are approaching the problem from the right direction.

However, not all armed groups utilize children and they still aim to gain political opportunities. So why do some use children and others do not? This paper suggests that there are other compounding factors that may help determine the likelihood of an actor attempting to use children as a tool to gain political opportunities.

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<sup>56</sup> Tynes, *Tools of War, Tools of State...*, 23; Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 34.

<sup>57</sup> Tynes, *Tools of War, Tools of State...*, 24.

Once such factor, is that explored by Singer. He argues that armed actors use children because of the vast prevalence and availability of weapons, and that the technological advancements in small arms allows children to be just as deadly as an adult;<sup>58</sup> but, it is a theory that is not agreed upon by all.<sup>59</sup> For example, the AK-47 weighs almost 10lbs and has been in existence since 1949, with only minor modifications.<sup>60</sup> However, the availability of arms has increased substantially over the last few decades and according to Wessels's research, topped 500 million in 1999.<sup>61</sup> The sheer quantity and availability of small arms across the globe makes acquiring weapons easy and cheap. The small arms theory may not completely fill the gap as to why a group would use children to gain a political opportunity versus other means; however, it gives governments and soldiers a plausible indicator to be cognisant of. For example, both the availability of small weapons and the availability of children may drive some armed actors to utilize children in order to achieve their end state. The availability of small arms gives armed actors the option of using children as that tactical innovation, which according to Rosen, 11 of the 12 commonly used small arms by children all weigh under 10lbs.<sup>62</sup>

Another contributing factor to child soldier use, is built on the argument that the sheer abundance of children can drive actors to use children vice adults. For example, Africa's median age is 19.7,<sup>63</sup> whereas the median age of Niger is 14.8.<sup>64</sup> This gives armed actors greater access to children and increases the risk that children will be recruited/abducted into an organization.

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<sup>58</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 49

<sup>59</sup> D. Rosen, *Child Soldiers: A Reference Handbook*, 162.

<sup>60</sup> Britannica, "AK-47:Soviet Firearm," last modified 30 October 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/AK-47>.

<sup>61</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 18.

<sup>62</sup> D. Rosen, *Child Soldiers: A Reference Handbook*, 170.

<sup>63</sup> Worldometer, "Africa Population", last accessed 03 May 2020, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/africa-population/>.

<sup>64</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: Niger," last modified 27 April 2021, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/niger/#people-and-society>.

Understanding demographics will be important for CAF members entering a region to support operations. However, it is important to note that a states median age is not where the demographic understanding should end. For example, some regions within a state and/or communities may have a population pyramid that is not representative of the state, so it behooves an organization such as the CAF to clearly understand regional dynamics as well as state dynamics. This understanding of regional dynamics, compounded with a firm understanding of the regional armed actor's recruitment strategies, will be important for governments and the militaries they deploy. For example, in some cases, concentrating children in an area, such as refugee and IDP camps, puts them at a larger risk of abduction then if they were dispersed. In Tyne's research, he found evidence that armed groups who had access to refugee camps tended to have an increase share of child soldiers.<sup>65</sup> Greater the abundance of children, the greater the percentage of child soldiers.

In conclusion, the use of child soldiers is continuing to perplex governments and international organizations. It is unfathomable to think about a child being subjected to an environment surrounded by conflict, let alone partaking within it. Yet armed actors are continuing to recruit children specifically to be employed in armed conflict, and it is continuing to occur at alarming rates. The international community has made it clear that this practice is unacceptable and illegal and it is making concerted efforts to stop this practice. However, professions of arms such as the CAF will continue to be called upon to directly support UN peacekeeping operations aimed at the protection of children, or they may be called upon to partake in Full Spectrum Operations in regions where child soldiers exist. As highlighted above, despite popular belief, child soldiers are not just an Africa problem. Child soldiers are utilized on

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<sup>65</sup> Tyne, "Child Soldiers, Armed Conflicts, and Tactical Innovations" (dissertation thesis), 23-33.

almost every continent, in at least 15 different countries and by over 100 state and non-state actors.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, it is very likely that CAF members will be exposed to child soldiers and will need be appropriately prepared, trained and equipped to deal with the situation and help prevent further recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.

Prior to and during a deployment, CAF members will need to understand the structural, social and individual level risk factors discussed in this section, as they are risk factors that have the potential to lead to recruitment and use of children by armed actors. Some of these factors will be easier for CAF members to be recognize, such as the presence of conflict, a weakened state and poverty. Whereas others are more complicated, such as the involvement of peer networks and a need for a child to fulfill personnel significance. Either way, the reasons why children become involved with armed actors are complex, intertwined and will vary by state, region and community. It must also be understood that CAF members will not be able to recognize everything or solve all the problems. They will be placed in situations where they will need to work with and support the prevention efforts of other government departments (OGDs) and NGOs. Additionally, it is critical that CAF members be given the opportunity to understand why armed actors use children in order to be wary of indicators to possible recruitment scenarios. In theory, if an armed actor is desperately seeking political opportunities, the availability of weapons as well as the availability of children, are cause for concern. However, it is also important not to assume that the same reasoning and deductions can be used from one conflict to another. This speaks of the need to have specific strategic and operational direction and tailored cultural

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<sup>66</sup> From data extrapolated from the Annual Report of the Security General dated 09 June 2020.

intelligence prior to tactical engagement and a close connection with NGOs and local civilians in order to truly support prevention efforts.

## **Section 2.2 – Where does the CAF fit in?**

The international community and the GoC have already made some strides on the subject of prevention and it is important to understand what has and is being done that will support CAF efforts. The international community has clearly recognised that the recruitment and use of children by armed actors is wrong. International laws have been written or amended, multiple UNSCRs<sup>67</sup> have been drafted and states have agreed to several protocols, such as the Optional Protocol, all in an effort to stop the practice of using children in conflict. The written documentation about child soldiers would indicate that the global community is united and in agreement that the use of child soldiers needs to end. Yet, we know that the use of children in conflict continues and has in fact increased in recent years. There has been criticism lately that the majority of effort and initiatives thus far by the international community have focused on stopping the use of children once they are already involved with armed groups or forces.<sup>68</sup> More simply put, it is difficult to prevent the use of children in conflict, if they are already involved. Therefore, focus has begun to shift towards understanding the factors that surround how and why children are becoming recruited and employed by armed actors, in order to prevent the children from becoming recruited in the first place. Wessels suggests that there are currently three

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<sup>67</sup> A reference list can be found at Canada, DND, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Dr. Shelly Whitman, and Sam Holland, *Working Paper: Understanding the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers as an Early Warning Indicator* (The Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 2015), 15, <https://dallaireinstitute.org/publications/understanding-the-recruitment-and-use-of-child-soldiers-as-an-early-warning-indicator/>.

prevention strategies in place including; the legal strategy (criminalization and enforcement), the conflict prevention strategy (address the core problem and prevent conflict from occurring) and a systemic prevention strategy (address the structural, social and individual factors that can lead to recruitment).<sup>69</sup> In order for the CAF to be effective in any one of these three strategies, they first must know what the legal system is in order to enforce it, which will be discussed below, whereas the conflict prevention and systemic prevention strategies require a comprehensive approach to tackle and will be addressed indirectly throughout this paper.

Security Sector Actors, who are deployed to regions at risk of using, or known to be using, child soldiers are the eyes and ears of both government and non-government organizations and are vital to helping prevent the recruitment and continued use of children by armed actors. Therefore, it is important to explore what has already been done to support the prevention of child soldiers, which will/could enable the CAF when deployed. This will be completed by first addressing key efforts the international community has undertaken with respect to the subject of this paper, followed by more narrowly focusing on what Canada has done to support CAF members.

One of the mostly widely recognized and ratified conventions is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),<sup>70</sup> which came into effect in 1990. This convention outlines the basic rights of children and also notes that 15 years is the minimum age for recruitment and use of children in combat by armed groups and forces. However, there were critics who argued that armed groups and forces more often target children 15-18 years of age;

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<sup>69</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers*..., 232-233.

<sup>70</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Convention on the Right of the Child," last accessed 03 May 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>.

therefore, more needed to be done to address the gap and protect children's rights.<sup>71</sup> In 2002, the United Nations enacted the Optional Protocol<sup>72</sup> to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which set the minimum age of 18 years for the recruitment and use of children in conflict by armed groups. It also established 18 years as the minimum age for compulsory recruitment by state actors. Additionally in 2002, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court came into effect, which declared it a war crime for any actor to recruit and/or use children under the age of 15 in hostilities.<sup>73</sup> Canada has both signed and ratified the CRC and the Optional protocol and in fact, helped create the Optional Protocol, indicating that Canada stands firmly against the practice of recruiting and using children in hostilities.<sup>74</sup>

It is important to highlight that only Mauritania, Equatorial Guinea, North Korea, United Arab Emirates, and Papua New Guinea have neither signed nor ratified the Optional Protocol, whereas South Sudan has acceded.<sup>75</sup> This means that in most instances where CAF members will be deployed, the host nation has recognized that children are considered as *children* when they have yet to reach 18 years of age and their use by either armed groups or armed forces is illegal via the Rome Statute and the Optional Protocol signed by the state. So what has the international community done to hold those who break the rules accountable? Notably, in 2001 the UNSCR 1379 mandated that a list of groups who recruit or use child soldiers be included in the annual

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<sup>71</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers*..., 234.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict," last accessed 29 April 2021, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPACCRRC.aspx>

<sup>73</sup> International Criminal Court, "Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court" (The Hague, Netherlands, 2011), article 8, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/NR/rdonlyres/ADD16852-AEE9-4757-ABE7-9CDC7CF02886/283503/RomeStatutEng1.pdf>.

<sup>74</sup> Canada, Government of Canada, "Children and Armed Conflict," last modified 15 November 2017, [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/human\\_rights-droits\\_homme/armed\\_conflict-conflits\\_armes.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/armed_conflict-conflits_armes.aspx?lang=eng).

<sup>75</sup> The Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, "Child Soldiers World Index," last accessed 03 May 2021, <https://childsoldiersworldindex.org/>.

Children and Armed Conflict report from the Secretary-General. Essentially this list is about naming and shaming both non-state and state actors who recruit and/or use children. However, this generated little success in preventing the recruitment and the use of child soldiers. One reason for this is that there are groups and state forces who publicly condemn the use of children but continue to do so in secrecy.<sup>76</sup> “To put it another way, one cannot shame the shameless.”<sup>77</sup> In an effort to curb the trend of groups hiding their true actions, the UN implemented UNSCR 1612 in 2005, which put in place monitoring and reporting mechanisms with respect to what has been identified as the six grave violations by either state or non-state actors. These violations include: killing and maiming of children; the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups; sexual violence against children; attacks against schools or hospitals; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access for children.<sup>78</sup> But, it was not until the implementation of UNCR 2225 in 2015 that “promoted the establishment of country-specific sanctions committees that can establish sanctions against individuals who persistently use children in armed conflict.”<sup>79</sup> In addition to the international community’s ability to use sanctions against both armed groups and armed forces, the International Criminal Court has stepped up efforts to bring to justice to those who recruit children.<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, the development and implementation of the legal standards has been far more successful than compliance to them.<sup>81</sup> One can argue that stronger enforcement measures by the Security

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<sup>76</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 237.

<sup>77</sup> Singer, *Children at War*, 140.

<sup>78</sup> United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, “Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Violations,” last accessed 29 April 2021, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/monitoring-and-reporting/>.

<sup>79</sup> Roos Haer, “Children and Armed Conflict: Looking at the Future and Learning from the Past,” *Third World Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (January 2019): 82, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01436597.2018.1552131>.

<sup>80</sup> Haer, “Children and Armed Conflict...”, 82.

<sup>81</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 237.



Council are required in order to hold those responsible/accountable for their actions. Regardless of the success that the international legal system has on enforcing the legal standard, the CAF has a duty to be aware of and report any of these violations in order to uphold the international laws and agreements that Canada is a member and cultivator of.

Many of the UNSCRs, legal frameworks and agreements that had been put in place pre-UNSCR 1612, were focused on the protection and reintegration of a child once they had already become associated with an armed actor. However, the Paris Commitments and more particularly the associated Paris Principles released in 2007, are focused more broadly at implementing programs to:

“1) to prevent unlawful recruitment or use of children; 2) to facilitate the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups; 3) to facilitate the reintegration of all children associated with armed forces and armed groups; and 4) to ensure the most protective environment for all children.”<sup>82</sup>

The Paris Commitments and Paris Principles are aimed at providing guidance to a range of actors and acknowledge that in order to solve the problem, there needs to be a coordinated comprehensive approach per what Wessels referred to as the conflict prevention and systemic prevention strategies. The commitments also opened the definition of a child soldier to one who is associated with an armed group or armed forces, which allows governments and NGOs to target their support to children beyond those directly involved in conflict.

Canada then used the framework from the Paris Principles to initiate the *Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers*.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> UNICEF, The Paris Principles..., 6.

<sup>83</sup> Canada, Global Affairs Canada, *Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers*, 2017.

“The Vancouver Principles (VPs) are aimed at Member States, and focus on the challenges posed by child soldiers in the context on UN peacekeeping operations and the specific role of UN peacekeepers.”<sup>84</sup> The 17 principles outlined within the VPs are centered on preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers by highlighting the importance of appropriate mission mandates, doctrine, planning, peace processes and the reintegration of children. The VPs clearly articulate that in order to prevent child soldiers, a comprehensive approach needs to be taken early and not just action once children are already involved. In 2019, the GoC followed up the VPs by issuing the *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles (IGVP)*. The IGVP is a strategic level document “to help Member States translate the Vancouver Principles into the national-level guidance, plans, and capabilities required to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers in the context of UN peacekeeping operations.”<sup>85</sup> Additionally, it has given the CAF a handrail with respect to how to prepare for and operate in an environment that has the potential to have, or already has, child soldiers.

The principles contained within the VPs, which are more specifically targeted towards peacekeepers and are particularly important for the CAF to understand, implement and resource are: VP#2) Planning; VP#3) Early Warning; VP#4) Child protection focal points; VP#5) Doctrine, Training and Education; VP#6) Monitoring and Reporting; VP#7) Protection and Care of Children; VP#8) Prevention; VP#9) Detention; VP#10) Conduct and Discipline; VP#11) Contribution of Women; VP#12) DDR; and VP#13) Mental Health. However, the VPs were drafted for Member States who are supporting a peacekeeping operation with peacekeepers. This paper argues that the majority of the principles, specifically those highlighted above, should be

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<sup>84</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 7.

<sup>85</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 7.

incorporated into military planning, conduct and follow-up actions at all times, not just when a Member State is directly supporting blue beret mandates. Especially considering the CAF has already deployed to regions that employ child soldiers and will inevitably do so again in the future. For example, both the Taliban and Afghan National Security Forces were confirmed to have recruited and used children in 2019<sup>86</sup>; however, the GoC conducted an investigation that was released in 2016 indicating the likelihood of sexual abuse of children by Afghan National Security Forces dating back to 2006.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, there is significant value in looking at the intent of these principles beyond that of a UN peacekeeper, as the proper integration of these key principles is vital to ensuring the CAF will be effective in their efforts to support preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers whenever and wherever deployed.

Interestingly enough though, the CAF released the Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) on Child Soldiers in 2017.<sup>88</sup> This JDN was released the same year as the VPs and two years prior to the release of the IGVP, therefore it did not use either as a reference when it was drafted. But, it did lean heavily on UN and NATO documents as well as the second edition of the Security Sector Actors Handbook produced by the, then, Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative. Unlike the VPs, the JDN is not specific to peacekeepers participating on UN operations but instead focuses on the CAF supporting either a NATO or UN mission/mandate with stability operations being the dominant operational activity vice blue beret peacekeeping operations. The CAF, via the JDN, recognizes that soldiers will likely be deployed to regions where child soldiers are present

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<sup>86</sup> United Nations General Assembly Security Council, “Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General,” (09 June 2020): 5.

<sup>87</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, “Board of Inquiry — Allegation of assault of a civilian by Afghan National Security Forces and the Canadian Forces response to such incidents (redacted),” 2016.

<sup>88</sup> Canada, Department Of National Defence, *JDN 2017-01, Canadian Armed Forces Joint Doctrine Note — Child Soldiers* (Ottawa. Canadian Forces Warfare Centre, 2017).

and produced the JDN with the aim “to provide the interim guidance required to address and mitigate the broad challenges posed by the presence of child soldiers in areas where the CAF undertakes missions.”<sup>89</sup> As the statement suggests, the JDN is also not mission or mandate specific, nor is it country or region specific. Instead, it is an overarching guidance for the incorporation of child protection into the planning of CAF operations and highlights Strategic level planning considerations (legal aspects, mandates, and analysis of the operating environment), Operational level planning considerations (mission analysis, course of action development guidance and rights and responsibilities) and tactical level planning considerations (targeted pre-deployment training for stability operations). However, most of these planning considerations are focused on ensuring the CAF is ready to react when in the presence of child soldiers, with little direction on how to help prevent the recruitment in the first place, outside of monitoring and reporting. Nor does it provide guidance once soldiers are in theatre or how to support soldiers once they come home. This document is an *interim document*, and there is room for improvement and further integration of the VPs, which focus on the prevention aspect of child soldiers vice reaction.

Within the CAF, the Canadian Army (CA) developed the *Basic Child Soldier Awareness* course, which is available via the Defence Learning Network. This course used the JDN as the foundation and is designed with the following objectives: 1) Describing the impact of the JDN; 2) Defining child soldiers; 3) Describing why children may become child soldiers; 4) Describing the desired end state of the CA; and 5) Listing foundational training themes to prepare CA members.<sup>90</sup> This course does a good job of getting basic information on the subject of child

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<sup>89</sup> Canada, DND, *JDN 2017-01...*, 1-2.

<sup>90</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, “Basic Child Soldier Awareness course” (Defence Learning Network), slide 3.

soldiers across but it does little to educate members on regional dynamics, targeted prevention strategies or mental health techniques. However, nor should it. This course is a familiarization course and the CAF needs to enhance and reinforce child soldier knowledge and skills in other manners that will be discussed in chapter 3.

Much has been documented with respect to the practice of using child soldiers. Multiple UNSCRs have been written, legal frameworks have changed or added, and conventions such as the CRC and its Optional Protocol have been widely ratified. Yet, the trend of using child soldiers continues to grow, despite the hard work from numerous non-government and non-for profit organizations. Some of this can be attributed to the lack of teeth from the UN Security Council to hold perpetrators accountable.<sup>91</sup> However, it also has to do with that fact that until recently, much of the work towards child soldiers has been focused on supporting children once they have become associated with armed actors. The Paris Commitments and its associated principles, as well as UNSCR 1612, opened the door for the international community to better target prevention efforts for children beyond those directly associated with conflict. Canada has been a leader in this regard and led the development of the Vancouver Principles (VPs) then drafted the Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles (IGVP) in a collaborative process with invited member states and representatives from the UN as well as child protection actors.<sup>92</sup> However, like many other agreements, the VPs themselves are just a political endorsement. Without action, political endorsement will achieve nothing. In the meantime, the CAF JDN on child soldiers will serve as an interim guiding document. However, it is not without its flaws as well, as it is focused on planning considerations for how CAF members can prepare

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<sup>91</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers...*, 237.

<sup>92</sup> Canada, Government of Canada, "The Vancouver Principles," last modified 14 April 2021, [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/human\\_rights-droits\\_homme/principles-vancouver-principes.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/principles-vancouver-principes.aspx?lang=eng).

for encounters with child soldiers. Canada has since reinforced its effort and commitment to preventing child soldiers with the creation of the Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security, based out of the Canadian Defence Academy.<sup>93</sup> This centre will direct its efforts towards the integration of the Vancouver Principles into new CAF doctrine and will help advance research on the subject of child soldiers as well. The following chapter will be aimed at supporting the Dallaire Centre of Excellence with the task of integrating of the VPs into CAF doctrine. Emphasis will be placed on how the CAF should train, prepare and support its members and tactical organizations who are deployed to regions that use child soldiers and will be expected to help stop or at least slow down the cycle of child soldier recruitment.

## **CHAPTER 3 – HOW DO WE PREPARE TO SUPPORT**

### **Section 3.1 – Background**

As already explored in other sections of this paper, child soldiers are continuing to be used across the globe and on almost every continent. Much more worrisome is that the rate of recruitment and use of children by armed actors has only increased instead of waned, despite the numerous UNSCRs, laws and agreements to cease the recruitment and use of children in conflict. Section 2.1 highlighted the risk factors to recruitment and illustrated the complexity of the situation. Whereas section 2.2 identified some of the existing material/documentation designed to protect children and child soldiers. However, it has only been about 15 years since programs and research has shifted focus from protecting child soldiers to preventing child soldiers. SSAs such as the CAF, are recognized to be a vital resource in helping prevent the recruitment and use

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<sup>93</sup> Alan Okros, “Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces to Address Child Soldiers,” *Canadian Military Journal* 20, no. 1 (winter 2019): 65.

of children, especially when deployed under a UN mandate that specifically address's the need to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

However, it was not until UNSCR 2143 (2014) that formal recognition was made from the UN, that states deploying SSAs on peace operations must ensure that those being deployed receive formal pre-deployment training, that is then followed up with targeted training once in theatre.<sup>94</sup> Prior resolutions such as UNSCR 1612 (2005) simply called for pre-deployment awareness training.<sup>95</sup> Which is broad, vague and has a variety of standards that could be applied. UNSCR 2143 is important because “security sector actors are frequently the initial points of contact with children, both before they are recruited [by] armed [actors] and when they are employed as child soldiers, during times of peace or during armed conflict, and it is their training and education that must demand additional attention.”<sup>96</sup> It is therefore imperative that in order for the CAF to help break the cycle of child soldiers that they are prepared to do so. Studies have shown that soldiers who have not partaken in training on the subject of child soldiers often have a narrow view of child soldiers as combatants<sup>97</sup> and are ill prepared to identify risk factors, engage with children (either in combat or conversation) and otherwise support the prevention of child soldiers. In certain cases, ill prepared SSAs can be counterproductive.

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<sup>94</sup> United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 2143 (2014)” (dated 07 March 2014), 3,6, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2143>.

<sup>95</sup> United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 1612 (2005) (dated 26 Jul5 2005), 4, <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1612>.

<sup>96</sup> The Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, *Child Soldiers: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors (third edition)*, (Halifax: Dalhousie University, 2017), 5.

<sup>97</sup> Save the Children International, *Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviourial Change Among Security And Defense Forces: Experiences and Lesson from East, West and Central Africa* (Save the Children International and the International Bureau for Children’s Rights, March 2014), 33-38, [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/8116/pdf/assessment\\_on\\_change\\_in\\_knowledge\\_attitude\\_and\\_practice.pdf/](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/8116/pdf/assessment_on_change_in_knowledge_attitude_and_practice.pdf/)

The GoC has clearly articulated the role that the CAF has to play in the domain of child soldiers, by identifying the prevention of recruitment and use of child soldiers as a priority and an element of one of the eight core missions of the CAF, in the release of the GoC's new defence policy, Strong Secure, Engaged (SSE).<sup>98</sup> With that guidance, the CAF now needs to focus on integrating the Vancouver Principles (VPs) into training, doctrine and services so that CAF members can truly help break the cycle of recruitment and meet the GoC's priority. A recent article published in *Allons-y* identified that in order for SSAs to be effective in prevention efforts they must be equipped to handle the following:

“1) for encounters and potential interventions with children in armed conflict; 2) to identify and counteract recruitment tactics; 3) to recognize and respond to high-risk recruitment areas; 4) to support escape by children from armed groups and forces; 5) to protect those who have escaped; 6) and to understand the gender dynamics of the recruitment and use of children as soldiers.”<sup>99</sup>

Existing programs, such as the training put on by the Dallaire Institute, the Department of Peace Operations and Save the Children, all aim to target the factors outlined above, but do so in their own way. The question now is, what can the CAF reasonably do or change to support existing efforts to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers; taking into account the six functional areas listed above? Currently the CAF has implemented the Joint Doctrine Note (JDN), which is temporary and lacking details, but it does focus on the need for training beyond just peace operations. The CAF has also established a non-mandatory “basic” *Child Soldier Awareness* course, but more needs to be done. As mentioned earlier, the Dallaire Center of Excellence for Peace and Security is working to turn the Vancouver Principles into policy and direction vice just political principles, and the remainder of this chapter will help frame some thoughts for how

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<sup>98</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 17.

<sup>99</sup> Abidi, *Allons-Y: Journal of Children, Peace and Security*, 32.



we can get there. This will be done by first discussing a generalized vice tailored approach to training, followed by an examination of what the CAF strategic, operational and tactical levels can do to ensure deploying soldiers are prepared; with a focus on pre-deployment training.

### Section 3.2 – Generalized or Tailored Training

Preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers is a massive undertaking, and there is more consensus on the importance of preventative measures vice how to achieve them.<sup>100</sup> It is recognized that children become associated with armed actors for a variety of reasons, which can change by region, community and even time – as the situation changes and armed actors change their tactics. *Cradled by Conflict* notes that children join armed groups for many reasons however, those reasons are generally “rooted in local dynamics – long-time grievances, conflicts between local communities, and community structures and expectations.”<sup>101</sup> *Cradled by Conflict* also notes that in conflict regions, children can become associated due a range of coercion tactics, and it is practically impossible for children to remain neutral and unaffiliated.<sup>102</sup> For these reasons, it would be logical to assume that the CAF should specifically tailor its training to a region and/or mission, yet it is not that simple.

The CAF is a busy organization that is routinely cycling through Force Generation (training) and executing operations through Force Employment commands (deployed operations). With the increased pressures on the CAF to support OP LENTUS activities,<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Wessels, *Child Soldiers*..., 232.

<sup>101</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict*..., 253.

<sup>102</sup> O’Neil, *Cradled by Conflict*..., 253.

<sup>103</sup> Operation LENTUS is the CAF response to natural disasters in Canada, see <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/current-operations/operation-lentus.html>.

which arguably they don't have the current structure and capacity to do,<sup>104</sup> as well as being able to meet the demands of SSE,<sup>105</sup> it begs the question of how much more the CAF can do. The reason why this issue is brought up, is because it will be extremely difficult for the CAF to find the time and resources to specifically tailor child soldier prevention training to each mission. Deployments, and specifically UN deployments to regions of complexity, can also arise fairly quickly depending on the event that is unfolding. Specific and tailored training will require multiple levels of the GoC and CAF to be constantly reviewing global situations and amending training requirements and SOPs. Now, this is not wrong and in fact is highly encourage; however, this can be time consuming and requires significant flexibility. Two areas the CAF does not excel in mitigating. However, it is important to remember that the prevention of child soldiers from recruitment and use in conflict is not just a CAF or SSA problem to solve. This is a comprehensive approach that will require political efforts as well as support from the multitude of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and NGOs that are dedicated to ceasing the use of children by armed actors. Organizations such as UNICEF, the International Bureau for Child Rights and Save the Children all have members spread across the globe working in this field and are excellent resources when looking at specific regional issues. Not to mention the local officials, communities and children that have been exposed to the realities of conflict. In some regions, mandate specific, the UN will assign a Child Protection Advisor (CPA) who will be the regional subject matter expert (SME). CPAs, or focal points, are a key component to UNSCR

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<sup>104</sup> CBC News, "Canada's military feeling the strain responding to climate change," last modified 24 June 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-s-military-adopting-climate-change-1.5186337>.

<sup>105</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy* (2017), 17.

2427 and help “prioritize, coordinate, inform and monitor child protection activities in a mission setting.”<sup>106</sup> This includes the coordination of activities with IGOs, NGOs, and local communities.

With the above in mind, it would make sense for the CAF to continue to use the framework that it has already built, to prepare and deploy soldiers to regions that have or may have child soldiers. Currently the CAF, and specifically the Army, prepares soldiers to deploy by placing them into a high readiness cycle – otherwise known as the Managed Readiness Plan.<sup>107</sup> In short, the formation which has been warned off to support deployments is subjected to a series of training events and exercises that culminates at large collective training exercise such as Ex MAPLE RESOLVE in Wainwright AB.<sup>108</sup> Ex MR is the Army’s premier collective training event that gives the Division and Canadian Army Doctrine Training Centre (CADTC) Commanders the ability to declare their organization Operationally Ready for deployments. However, Ex MR, like many other CAF training events, is designed based upon full spectrum operations (offense, defense and stability operations) and prepares soldiers for a war, not thee war.<sup>109</sup> Internal to this high readiness cycle is the *CONSUME* phase, where some sub-organizations may be tasked to support a specific deployment. The Force Employer (CJOC in most cases) then drafts the theatre mission specific training (TMST) that is required, which can include cultural awareness. This sub-organization must meet the specific TMST outlined by the Force Employer prior to deployment in theatre. Those units in the COMSUME phase that *are not* assigned to deploy are expected to instead focus on foundational training.<sup>110</sup> Once the formation

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<sup>106</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 22.

<sup>107</sup> The MRP is currently transitioning – see Army G3 presentation. Currently the MRP is transitioning to the Adapted MRP, which is addressed per the following source: Army G3, “Adapted MRP,” dated 11 March 2020.

<sup>108</sup> Capt Tough, “MRP & Resumption of CT,” slide 11.

<sup>109</sup> I was posted to the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre as both the Engineer Observer, Controller, Trainer, and as the formation G1; in these roles I helped design and execute Ex MR.

<sup>110</sup> Capt Tough, “MRP & Resumption of CT,” slide 7-11.

has begun to deploy soldiers, the high readiness cycle commences for the next formation, ensuring a formation always has soldiers prepared to deploy on predicted or short notice operations.

The cycle described above is effective and helps reinforce foundational knowledge learned throughout a member's career, which can be enhanced with TMST. However, it requires some modification as it does not prepare soldiers to deal with or prevent child soldiers. Mostly that is because soldiers are not exposed to child soldier training in their developmental courses, nor is it addressed during the high readiness cycle (Ex MR inclusive) or the TMST required by the Force Employer prior to deployment. Therefore, there is no foundation to build upon.

Considering the complexity of the factors and variation in reasons why children become associated to armed actors, as well as the hastened timelines for certain mission, it is beyond the reach of the CAF to have specific and tailored child soldier prevention and protection training for each mission. If however, the CAF were to develop the foundation (similar to that which is done for Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)), which is then enhanced by TMST and cultural awareness training supported or delivered by regional experts, it would help transition "generalized" child soldier prevention training into regionally "tailored" training. Additionally, once soldiers get to theatre, there will be resources such as IGOs, NGOs, CPAs and locals available to integrate them, educate them, and support them in the preventing child soldiers— as long as the CAF commanders and staff recognize and utilize these resources.

### **Section 3.3 – Pre-deployment Preparations**

The CAF currently utilizes the concept of – develop a foundation, enhance it with targeted TMST. This concept remains valid with respect to preparing CAF members to deploy

and possibly interact with child soldiers, as it will help to: 1) ensure they are ready to perform the tasks at hand such as patrolling, interacting with locals, conducting information operations, providing security, etc; and 2) reinforce what not to do that could be counterproductive to the tasks and the desired end state. Pre-deployment training usually builds upon years of foundational training and experience that has been gained through individual training, collective training and operations. Unfortunately, the subject of child soldiers is a new topic being introduced to the CAF and soldiers need to be educated in order to help support the efforts of preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Canada can no longer pretend that it is an expert at peacekeeping. Canada also has very little experience dealing with child soldiers, let alone preventing the recruitment of child soldiers. On the other hand, there are others who have significantly more experience than Canada,<sup>111</sup> who could provide guidance and share best practices; which is the premise for Vancouver Principle 16 – Best Practices.

Emphasizing that child soldiers is a new topic to the CAF, is the fact that the CAF does not currently have any mandatory child soldier awareness, protection or prevention training built into the system, or at least none that could be found during the research for this paper. The CA *Basic Child Soldier Awareness* course available on the Defence Learning Network (DLN) highlights the need for soldiers to be prepared to encounter child soldiers however, while conducting the research for this paper and in discussion with multiple CAF members who participated on a wide variety of missions, no one could verify they completed it.<sup>112</sup> Yet the basic

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<sup>111</sup> Three UN Peacekeeping missions currently have a child soldier mandate associated to them, which includes: MINUSMA, MINUSCA, and MONUSCO of which Bangladesh currently contributes over 4K troops to, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.

<sup>112</sup> Personal communication and class discussion with members of JCSP 47. Discussions included members of the CA, RCN, and RCAF who have participated on OP UNIFIER (Ukraine), OP REASSURANCE (Latvia), OP MOBILE (Libya), OP IMPACT (Iraq/Afghan/Kuwait), OP ATHENA and OP ATTENTION (Afghanistan).

awareness course articulates that the end state on child soldiers within the CAF is “1) Doctrine is developed 2) Training is integrated across the CA and 3) All CA personnel are trained and prepared in the event of encounters with child soldiers.”<sup>113</sup> Therefore, there is clearly an understating in the CAF, and the CA in particular, that more needs to be done but, it is unclear when this connection is going to be made. Currently, the only training CAF soldiers receive with respect to child soldiers is if they are part of a UN mission and complete the UN Core Pre-deployment Training material (CPTM) prior to arriving at the Peace Support Training Centre (PSTC) in Kingston for the United Nations Military Expert on Mission (UNMEM) course.<sup>114</sup> Lesson 2.7 of the CPTM covers child protection and according to the lesson plan, only requires 60 minutes of classroom time.<sup>115</sup> In fact, Canada is leading the development of the doctrine and training material for the UN Engagement Platoon<sup>116</sup> and the only pre-requisite for arriving on course will be the UN CPTM, with the *Specialized Training Material (STM) on Child Protection* as a recommendation.<sup>117</sup> That is not good enough, as the *STM on Child Protection* addresses the legal aspects, how soldiers should interact with children, do’s and don’ts and many other valuable topics that would greatly benefit anybody that is part of an Engagement Platoon. It is also unclear how many CAF soldiers receive training or complete the *UN Military STM on Child Protection*, as the STM is not currently incorporated into any program at the PSTC.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Canada, DND, “Basic Child Soldier Awareness course,” slide 15.

<sup>114</sup> The UNMEM course is not currently being offered at PSTCs, see <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/education-training/establishments/peace-support/courses.html>; personal corresponded with Maj Dave Tofts, PSTC Trg Sqn OC, confirmed that PSTC does not teach anything specific to child soldiers except the lesson within the CPTM.

<sup>115</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping Resource Hub, “Core-Pre-deployment Training Materials,” last modified 22 December 2020, <https://research.un.org/revisedcptm2017>.

<sup>116</sup> Additional material for the Engagement Platoon can be found at [https://protectionofcivilians.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Breakout-Inclusiveness\\_PAX-Presentation-Magee-Engagement-Platoon.pdf](https://protectionofcivilians.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Breakout-Inclusiveness_PAX-Presentation-Magee-Engagement-Platoon.pdf).

<sup>117</sup> Personal correspondence from Ted Howard, PSTC/UN lead developer of the Engagement Platoon Specialized Training Material.

<sup>118</sup> Personnel correspondence with both Maj Dave Tofts and Ted Howard; the STM can be found at <http://dag.un.org/handle/11176/400883>.

In other words, the only child soldier training a CAF soldier currently receives is if they are on a specific UN mandated blue beret mission and are pushed through the PSTC in Kingston. Yet neither the CPTM, STM, JDN or *CA Basic Child Soldier Awareness* course address how CAF soldiers can help prevent the recruitment of child soldiers from occurring in the first place. But instead, how to react once they encounter an active child soldier. So how do we ensure the CAF and in particular the land forces that will be interacting with children and child soldiers are prepared to support the prevention efforts? They must be trained to be effective, much like CAF soldiers do for any other subject. This section will focus more on the tactical level preparation of soldiers however; it will touch on how the strategic and operational levels each have key roles to play in the pre-deployment phase as well.

### 3.3.1 – Strategic Support

The strategic level, both national and CAF, will not be interacting with children, running Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) programs or using the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms to report any contravention to the six grave violations; however, the strategic leaders are responsible for setting the conditions of success. The strategic level “is the level at which a nation or group of nations determines national or multination security objectives and deploys national, including military, resources to achieve them.”<sup>119</sup> The Vancouver Principles (VP) attempt to reaffirm that the strategic level must fight to establish mission mandates with “child protection provisions, including the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers.”<sup>120</sup> Again, the VP are specific to peacekeeping mandates however, it does not mean that GoC and CAF strategic leaders should not and cannot prioritize child soldier

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<sup>119</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *B-GL-300-001/FP-001: Land Operations* (2008), 3-2.

<sup>120</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 9.

prevention strategies for all missions. The wording within *Strong Secure and Engaged* (SSE) as well as the JDN would suggest that the national and military strategic levels are beginning to prioritize and recognize that child soldiers are a very real possibility in regions the CAF deploys. The JDN itself specifically highlights planning considerations for the strategic level; however, the planning considerations are on the premise of CAF members encountering child soldiers. One planning consideration, which is mentioned within the JDN, that is vital at the strategic level is the Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment (IPOE).<sup>121</sup> However, a glaring omission is the need to develop regional warnings and indicators of recruitment.

Warnings and indicators to recruitment have yet to be standardized or drafted by any organization and they are currently a subject of research by the Dallaire Institute.<sup>122</sup> However, if the CAF is to support the prevention of the recruitment of child soldiers, the development of these warnings and indicators is crucial and is the main subject of VP#3 - Early Warning. An assessment of three UN missions in Africa specific to VP#3 highlighted that each of the Mission Directives noted the importance of early warning. However, they each failed to provide clear and observable indicators, which led each mission to develop reporting procedures focused more on the reporting of grave violations and less on warning systems to prevent such incidents.<sup>123</sup> Section 2.1 addressed several risk factors to the recruitment of children, but it cannot be assumed that soldiers are going to be aware of or capable of recognising such risk factors at all times. It is therefore imperative that the strategic level work with other governments departments and NGOs to identify and provide direction on the warnings and indicators that will enable tactical forces to support early warning, per the desired end state of VP#3.

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<sup>121</sup> Canada, DND, *JDN 2017-01*..., 2-3 – 2-5..

<sup>122</sup> Personnel correspondence with Dr. Catherine Abidi and Laura Cleave of the Dallaire Institute.

<sup>123</sup> Kupper, “Peace Operations and Child Protection...”, 11-14.



Regardless of the indicators and early warning systems that are developed, soldiers must train and be educated on the subject of child soldiers. The JDN is a CAF strategic military document and notes: “Training to deal with child soldiers should not be limited to just deploying troops, but should be given consideration in all force generation activities to adequately prepare CAF personnel both militarily and mentally.”<sup>124</sup> This paper cannot answer the question of why training on this subject has yet to be included beyond what the PSTC delivers to UNMEM candidates; however, it is now up to the operational and tactical levels to put this direction into action and begin educating and training soldiers.

### 3.3.2 – Operational/Force Employer Support

The operational level, or the Force Employer, is the link between the strategic and tactical levels. The operational level translates the strategic guidance and direction into operational objectives. Operational commanders will assign tactical organizations with missions/tasks and enable them with the resources, logistics, and guidance to meet the strategic end state.<sup>125</sup> The Force Employers are also responsible to identify training requirements and organizational structures required in order to meet the intent of the strategic leaders. Within the JDN, it highlights that Mission Analysis, Course of Action Development and other areas such as information operations, guidance on rights and responsibilities regarding child soldiers, mental readiness and the capturing of lessons learned as key areas that require special attention/consideration by operational commanders and staff with respect to child soldiers.<sup>126</sup> These planning consideration areas pointed out by the JDN are valid. However, there are a few additional areas that the operational level/force employers should focus on, to further support the

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<sup>124</sup> Canada, DND, *JDN 2017-01...*, 2-3.

<sup>125</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *B-GL-300-001/FP-001: Land Operations* (2008), 3-3.

<sup>126</sup> Canada, DND, *JDN 2017-01...*, 2-6 – 2-11.

tactical level during pre-deployment training, in order to aid in preventing children from becoming child soldiers once deployed.

The first, by making child soldier training a mandatory component of TMST. The tactical organizations (force generators) must develop the foundational knowledge (to be discussed next) but if the force employers fail to make child soldier training a component to operational readiness, then the CAF is failing to ensure their soldiers are trained and conversely, improperly trained soldiers may be liable to make the situation worse. The force employers must ensure that the troops they are deploying have met a particular standard with respect to knowledge, awareness and training. The IPOE that is completed at the strategic level will help shape the analysis and mission training requirements dictated by the force employers, who will in turn determine the level of training that is required for each soldier on a particular subject for each mission. It is therefore imperative that the force employers determine to what degree members require training on child soldiers because at this point...there is no requirement. This lack of accountability on behalf of the force employers has 1) not met the intent of the strategic level that child soldier training is integrated at all levels prior to deployment and 2) does nothing to ensure that CAF members can aid in efforts to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers. With that in mind, there are simple fixes to this problem using systems and programs that are already in place, in order to ensure all soldiers have had an opportunity to receive training on child soldiers; regardless of the level of knowledge a soldier may or may not have received from the force generators.

The recommendations are as follows:

- 1) The CA *Basic Child Soldier Awareness* course is made mandatory for all CAF members scheduled for any deployment. As discussed earlier, this course is very

basic but it does cover some of the legal frameworks, the six grave violations, the importance of reporting, basic reasons as to why a child may become a child soldier and risks of engagement. These items are the basis to ensuring CAF members can: 1) support prevention efforts; and 2) are effective in identifying and supporting those who have already become associated to armed actors. As has been previously noted, this course is more about CAF members understanding how to interact with a child soldier and less about prevention; however, CAF members cannot prevent child soldiers if they don't first understand what is contained within this course.

Additionally, the *CA Basic Child Soldier Awareness* course is superior to the module used by the UN for its CPTM as it covers much of the same material but it is more narrowly focused on a military audience. Whereas the CPTM is broad and not as applicable to junior members of the CAF, who will in fact be the ones interacting on the ground. Therefore, the *Basic Child Soldier Awareness course* should be the pre-requisite to the *STM on Child Protection*. However, the hope of this author is that this will be a very basic review because the force generators should be imparting this knowledge much earlier on. More on that in the next section. Additionally, the strategic level documents already in place have identified the need for child soldier training, therefore it only makes sense to implement a course that is already built by the CAF; and unfortunately is inadequately used. With some review of the course and updating based upon documents such as the Dallaire Institute *Handbook for Security Sector Actors*<sup>127</sup>, this could become a very effective tool. Additionally, as the international community and the strategic levels become better educated on

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<sup>127</sup> The third edition is currently in draft format as was articulated in personal correspondence with the Dallaire Institute and was not made available for distribution while conducting the research for this paper.

prevention concepts, this course can always be updated at a later time, to include lessons learned.

- 2) Incorporate the *UN Military STM on Child Protection* into CAF TMST material. The *STM on Child Protection* advances the knowledge learned on the *CA Basic Child Soldier Awareness* course but it is not a substitute; therefore, the *Basic Child Soldier Awareness* course must be a pre-requisite. The incorporation of this material will help ensure CAF soldiers can: 1) begin to identify the risk factors to recruitment; 2) know what to monitor and how to report; 3) understand the roles of varying OGDs and NGO partners; and 4) the do's and don'ts to interacting with children while on patrol. However, not all CAF members require the same education level for each mission; therefore, it is a recommendation that the CAF, led by the doctrine and training centres, package this material into a deliverable pre-deployment package per Fig 1.
  - a. Mod 1-3 of the *UN Military STM on Child Protection*: Modules 1-3 are designed to give the trainer a solid foundation by: 1) defining who is a child soldier; 2) how conflict impacts children; 3) the legal frameworks designed to protect children and how soldiers can apply them; and 4) how to interact with children including how our own culture can affect our attitudes and behaviours towards child soldiers. This training is highly recommend for the command and staff (C2) elements planning and executing any mission the CAF deploys on. Much like deploying a Gender Advisor on all CAF missions, ensuring the C2 elements have the knowledge contained within Mods 1-3 will enable better integration and analysis of all those potential impacted by the ongoing situation. In addition, if the IPOE has assessed that there is the

potential for child soldiers to be used or recruited, the soldiers (field forces) who will be interacting with adversaries and/or locals on the ground will highly benefit from this material.

- b. Mod 4-6 of the *UN Military STM on Child Protection*: Modules 4-6 of the STM focus on how deployed soldiers can and should operate with external partners such as NGOs and the importance of CPAs and the use of Child Protection Focal Points (CPFP). They also highlight what roles and tasks the military can perform and how to respond to the challenge of operating in an environment with child soldiers. This package is highly recommended for C2 elements if the strategic IPOE determines that there is the potential for CAF members to be operating in an environment with child soldiers. This information will enable commanders and staff to plan and issue appropriate directives if the situation changes. If the IPOE identifies that the operating environment has or is very likely to employ child soldiers, all field forces who will be interacting with children plus the C2 elements will greatly benefit from the full package in order to ensure soldiers can effectively support prevention efforts. In addition, the Dallaire Institute's *Handbook for Security Sector Actors* includes several tactical interactive charts for how to respond in varying situations, which would be of significant benefit to be include with the UN STM modules 4-6.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Dr. Shelly Whitman, Tany Zayed, and Carl Conradi, *Child Soldier: A Handbook for Security Sector Actors (second edition)* (Halifax, Dalhousie University: 2014), Part IV 59-85; this reference will have to be verified with the release of the third edition.

<b>Organization/ Mission Threat</b>	<b>All Missions</b>	<b>Potential To Recruit/Use CS's</b>	<b>Known To Employ/Recruit CS's</b>
<b>All CAF mbrs</b>	A	A	A+B
<b>Field/Land Forces</b>	A	A+B	A+B+C
<b>C2 elements</b>	A + B	A+B+C	A+B+C
A- Basics Soldier Awareness Course			
B- UN SME on Child Protection for Mil Pers - MOD 1-3			
C- UN SME on Child Protection for Mil Pers - MOD 4-6			

Fig 1: Child Soldier TMST requirements by component

The second area of focus that the operational level/force employers should add to the child soldier pre-deployment toolbox is, appropriate cultural awareness training. It is common for CAF members to receive cultural awareness training prior to deployment; however, it is typically broad in nature and is meant to give a general familiarization of the region members are deploying to. Highlighting the gap in existing cultural awareness programs is the findings of the Board of Inquiry conducted on the subject of sexual assault allegations by Afghan Security Forces. The board noted within the inquiry: “without specific orders or instructions on what practices in a foreign culture are illegal, some soldiers believed that the practice of sexually

abusing children was condoned by the Afghans and was therefore not considered reportable.”<sup>129</sup>

This statement and action not only contravenes the six grave violations, it is also culturally inaccurate and shows the inability of CAF members to address child protection and identify risk factors to child soldier recruitment.

In order for CAF members to become capable of supporting child soldier prevention efforts, there is a requirement for a deliberate agenda item that covers this subject. The cultural awareness brief should utilize the risk factors to recruitment identified in the initial section to frame the training. It is also highly recommended that actors who have spent time in the region and understand the cultural dynamics deliver the cultural awareness training. Whether it be a representative of an organization such as UNICEF or a CPA. It is good to remind the reader here that not every region recruits or uses child soldiers the same way or for the same reason. In some regions, schools may be a source of protection whereas in others, they are a source of recruitment. Also, some regions regularly degrade and devalue girls, who in turn are now attempting to gain rights and independence by seeking to join an armed actor. As well, some cultures believe adulthood is 15 vice 18, therefore their view of child soldiers is different than the international standard. So how do we interact with a child soldier who believes they are an adult? The value of targeted cultural awareness training with individuals and organizations cannot be overstated, as it will greatly increase the ability for CAF members to respond appropriately. As well, this early interaction and integration with OGDs and NGOs will aid in developing integrated solutions to protect children and prevent their recruitment, once the soldiers are deployed to theatre.

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<sup>129</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, “Board of Inquiry...,” 1.22.

### 3.3.3 – Tactical/Force Generators

The force generators (or the tactical level organizations) within the CAF have a significant role to play in educating and preparing soldiers to deploy to regions that may recruit or employ child soldiers. As was noted earlier, child soldiers are employed by armed actors because they are a means of providing a battlefield tactical innovation; therefore, it is difficult but fair to say that child soldiers are a weapon system.<sup>130</sup> Preventing this weapon system from becoming operational and causing harm is a task that the CAF should expect to take on and is annotated in the strategic documents highlighted previously. Soldiers are the eyes and ears of the international community and are a vital tool to identifying and reporting possible recruitment situations and/or violations that have already occurred. CAF members will likely enter regions that have been inaccessible to NGO partners or they will provide security to regions and venues known to recruit children, amongst many scenarios, and these soldiers need to be prepared to react and support in a variety of ways. This preparation falls upon the force generating units within Canada.

Similarly, there is another weapon system that the CAF has had to adapt to and prepare for in recent decades...improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Like child soldiers, IEDs are common in today's conflicts with certain regions being saturated with them, and other regions less so. Much like child soldiers, IEDs are a tactical innovation and are designed to harm, bring fear and deter or delay operations. However, unlike IEDs, child soldiers are not built in a shop. They are recruited via a variety of structural, societal or individual level factors that are not synonymous with IEDs; making the child soldier weapon system much more difficult to

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<sup>130</sup> Whitman, *Working Paper: Understanding the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers as an Early Warning Indicator*, 17.



understand, predict and prevent. While they differ in many ways, there is value in comparing how the CAF views and prepares for the IED weapons system, in order to hoist lessons learned aboard and apply a similar methodology of training and education by the force generators for child soldiers. The three lines of operation (LOO) to counter IEDs are ‘prepare the force’, ‘attack the network’ and ‘defeat the device’.<sup>131</sup>

Preventing and stopping IEDs requires the three LOO to be synchronized and mutually supporting. Much like preventing child soldiers, it is a comprehensive approach. The first C-IED LOO, ‘prepare the force’ occurs via individual and collective training in order to ensure soldiers become familiar with the IED system, develop SOPs, learn how to identify and report and in certain situations, respond to the weapon system.<sup>132</sup> This is a critical LOO to preventing child soldiers and is the basis to this section of the paper. If you cannot prepare the force, then you cannot conduct the other LOOs. The second C-IED LOO ‘attack the network’ includes tactical tasks such as predict, exploit and prevent.<sup>133</sup> This requires soldiers to have a certain degree of skills to predict, subject matters experts (SME) to exploit and a team effort to prevent. With respect to child soldier recruitment and use, this LOO should be viewed as ‘attack the recruiting network’ and requires soldiers to have a thorough understanding of the MRMs, risk factors to recruitment, regional actors involved, and the use of SMEs such as NGOs, CPAs and locals. The final C-IED LOO is ‘defeating the device’. The tactical tasks of this LOO related to child soldiers are detect, protect, mitigate, and if the situation arises, neutralize.<sup>134</sup> In terms of preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers, defeating the device means soldiers need to

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<sup>131</sup> Canada, Department of National Defence, *B-GL-365-021/FP-001 - Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) For Land Operations* (Kingston, ON: Director of Army Doctrine – Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre, 2012), 4-1 to 4-2.

<sup>132</sup> Canada, DND, B-GL-365-021/FP-001, Chapter 11.

<sup>133</sup> Canada, DND, B-GL-365-021/FP-001, Chapter 6, section 2.

<sup>134</sup> Canada, DND, B-GL-365-021/FP-001, Chapter 6, section 3.

be able to recognize a child soldier, support DDR programs, protect children from becoming a soldier and supporting efforts of the international community to mitigate the risk factors to recruitment. ‘Defeating the device’ should be viewed as ‘stop the recruitment cycle’ and can be executed by appropriate intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance plans, information operations and influence activities, applying SOPs developed during ‘prepare the force’ as well as lessons learned.

So how does the CAF prepare to deal with the IED weapons system? First, CAF members receive all arms C-IED training early on as part of developmental phases (DP) one and two.<sup>135</sup> This training is continuously enhanced through collective training events to include formation activities level activities such as Ex MAPLE RESOLVE (MR), which can be tailored or adjusted based upon the perceived IED threat environment of future deployments.<sup>136</sup> This training then allows soldiers, commanders and staff to develop their skills per the three LOO discussed above. However, even with this foundational training, Force Employers, namely CJOC, will still identify IED awareness as a TMST requirement in order to ensure standardization of the deploying organization.

So how can we and when should we deliver child soldier training to CAF members? The recommendation of this paper would be as early as possible, in a process very similar to what is described above. Exposing soldiers early on in their careers will increase their awareness, knowledge, capability and effectiveness. The JDN identifies the need to train and educate soldiers on the subject of child soldiers as well as the importance of preventing child soldier

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<sup>135</sup> Canada, DND, B-GL-365-021/FP-001, 11-1-1.

<sup>136</sup> As the lead Engineer OCT during Ex MR, I helped design IED scenarios and would operate events based upon analysis and discussions with the Exercise Director and Validation Authority.

recruitment and use during all missions, not just peace operations, yet statements within the document itself counter others. For example, the statement such “the CAFs assigned mission will ultimately determine what preparation and precautions will be taken,”<sup>137</sup> is not synonymous with the statement “CAF personnel must be well-prepared and trained, at the tactical level, to respond appropriately to situations where child soldier are present.”<sup>138</sup> Waiting to complete child soldier training until the mission requirement arises does not meet the strategic intent discussed earlier because child soldiers can still be present even if the mission mandate does not account for it. As well, the CAF does not operate that way for IEDs so why would it for child soldiers?

The CAF needs to address this problem early and often. Considering that stability operations are the likely type of operation where the CAF would be able to support prevention efforts, it would only make sense to integrate child soldier training and awareness into stability operations training programs. Stability operations are conducted “in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or re-establish a safe and secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.”<sup>139</sup> Therefore, the subject of child soldiers should fit seamlessly and will be complimentary to other subjects, task and activities members are expected to know and perform. Studies, such as that completed by Save the Children, have noted the requirement of a balanced approach to include both classroom and scenario based training events as well as programme delivery and content recommendations.<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, this paper does not have the space or resources to examine the details of integrated child soldier training into existing stability

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<sup>137</sup> Canada, DND, *JDN 2017-01...*, 1-5.

<sup>138</sup> Canada, DND, *JDN 2017-01...*, 1-6.

<sup>139</sup> US Department of Defense, *JP 3-07: Stability Operations* (29 Sept 2011), vii.

<sup>140</sup> Save the Children International, *Assessment of Knowledge...*, 20-27.

operations lectures; therefore, it is recommended that organizations such as the Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre (CADTC) do so.

To conclude this chapter, the planning, preparations and training that CAF members complete prior to mission deployment are critical steps to ensuring deployed organizations and individual soldiers can participate and support external partners in preventing the recruitment of children by armed actors. Currently the CAF, despite the strategic guidance, has done an extremely poor job of integrating training and doctrine beyond the PSTC. Even then, only soldiers that are scheduled to complete UNMEM missions are required to complete the UN CPTM material, which talks very broadly about child protection with very little detail above preventative measures that soldiers can utilize beyond the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms (MRMs). The CAF has a long way to go to ensuring that the interim doctrinal note becomes integrated across a range of CAF doctrine. As well, the CAF needs to find a way to ensure soldiers become educated on the subject of child soldiers and are executing training scenarios that will not only reinforce lecture based training on how to deal/interact with child soldiers, but how to prevent them. The force employers need to first ensure there is accountability, that TMST for all operations incorporate varying levels of child soldier awareness, and that they support the deploying tactical organization with targeted cultural awareness training that focus' on the risk factors to recruitment. The force generators additionally need to ensure that training is incorporated early and often, ideally using IED training/awareness programs as a framework to build from. They are both complex, comprehensive weapon systems that will take years of exposure, experience and lessons learned to truly make a difference. However, education and training can only go so far. Soldiers may learn how they fit into the bigger picture and the importance of breaking the cycle of recruitment

but current MRMs are designed on the premise of reporting a violation *after* it has already occurred. In order to enable soldiers to help prevent that recruitment from occurring in the first place, the strategic leaders and departments must put effort towards developing indicators and warnings to recruitment that are regionally based. This information, once forwarded to the tactical organization, will be a vital tool in ensuring soldiers can do more to prevent the recruitment of children by armed actors than simply responding to incidents.

## **CHAPTER 4 - IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Section 4.1 – In theatre prevention efforts**

Once soldiers are deployed into theatre, the hard work begins. The deployment is a culmination of the training that the CAF has put its soldiers through and their execution is a testament to how well the CAF prepared those soldiers. This paper has highlighted the complexities to the child soldier phenomena, the difficulties around preventing the recruitment of children in the first place, and the need to ensure soldiers are ready to support the prevention efforts that are articulated in the Vancouver Principles (VP). Regardless of the mission and mandate, CAF soldiers will always have the duty to utilize the MRMs to communicate through their chain of command any violation of the Six Grave Violations. However, simply using the MRMs will not prevent the recruitment of children. Stability operations, enabled with appropriate mandates, will greatly increase the ability for CAF members to aid the international community in preventing child soldier recruitment, and the previous chapter highlighted how the CAF should prepare soldiers to do so. This section will summarize efforts that the CAF should take or at least keep in mind once units are deployed, in order to ensure members can support prevention efforts. However, this section will not discuss how the CAF and its member should respond to active child soldiers as the research for this paper was contained to the prevention of

the recruitment of child soldiers. Instead, it is highly recommended that further research be conducted on if the CAF is doing the right things when it comes to interacting and responding to the needs of child soldiers. Such as Detention (VP#9), DDR programs (VP#12) as well as the Peace Processes and the integration of child protection provisions (VP#14).

The CAF has and will continue to deploy soldiers on stability operations. Unfortunately, very little is contained within the current stability operations doctrine that addresses child soldiers. Which is unfortunate, as stability operations are conducted across a wide spectrum of military operations, Fig 2, and offer the best opportunity for CAF members to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers. In contrast, the VPs are aimed narrowly on peacekeeping operations (PKO), which is a subset of peace operations (PO).<sup>141</sup> Peace operations (PO) fall within the spectrum of stability operations and “encompass multiagency and multinational crisis response and limited contingency operations involving all instruments of national power with military missions to contain conflict, redress the peace, and shape the environment to support reconciliation and rebuilding and facilitate the transition to legitimate governance.”<sup>142</sup> Conversely, the JDN recognizes that the CAF must consider child soldiers in all stability operations and this paper has discussed the importance of the GoC and the CAF to push the VPs, including principle #1 – mandates, beyond that of just UN PKOs. The VPs are attempting to address the doctrinal gap and do so by specifically noting the need for further doctrine development within VP#5. However, until such a time that the CAF and its allies have appropriate child soldier doctrine, the CAF must use VP#8, Prevention, as a guiding principle to support in-theatre child soldier prevention efforts. VP#8 addresses the need for security sectors

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<sup>141</sup> US DoD, *JP 3-07*, I-5

<sup>142</sup> US DoD, *JP 3-07*, I-5.

actors (SSA) to “act effectively in response to credible information, and where authorized by the mission mandate and our rules of engagement, to protect children at risk of recruitment or use as child soldiers and other grave violations.”<sup>143</sup> In order for CAF members to be able to address the concerns of this principle, they must; first be trained to do so; second, enabled with right organization; third, be supported with SMEs; and fourth; engage with local communities. We have already address the need for appropriate training in the previous chapter therefore; this section will focus on the remaining three key factors listed above.



Fig 2 – Stability operations Across the Range of Military Operations<sup>144</sup>

If the CAF is going to be effective in preventing children from becoming child soldiers, they must be deployed with an organizational structure that enables it. First, is the use of Child Protection Advisors (CPA) and Child Protection Focal Points (CPFP), per VP#4. CPAs are civilian advisors to mission leadership who oversee the identification and reporting of the six grave violations, establish dialogue with those accused of violations, train partners on child protection, coordinate with other child protection actors and advocate for the protection of

<sup>143</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 42.

<sup>144</sup> US DoD, *JP 3-07*, I-4

children, all while overseeing a team of Military Child Protection Focal Points.<sup>145</sup> These CPFPs help integrate daily activities and child protection policies throughout the military chain of command and require specialized training prior to deployment; a responsibility that falls on the sending nations.<sup>146</sup> Even though CPAs are not formally required unless the UN peacekeeping operation is relevant, there is no reason why the CAF cannot and should not have a pool of trained CPFPs that are ready to support training and can be deployed on all operations, much like a GBA+ advisor. The current issue within Canada, is that Canada and the CAF have yet to establish a training program for CPFP.<sup>147</sup> There is an annual course held in Sweden to support this training however the selection of nominees is completed by the United Nations<sup>148</sup> and gives no guarantee that Canada has or will have a spot. Therefore, Canada has no capacity to integrated and utilize CPFP in either training scenarios or deployed operations. The second item to be addressed is the use of Engagement Platoons. Currently, Canada is developing the UN doctrine/training package for engagement platoons; which is a sending nation's responsibility to force generate if they are contributing a Battalion+ sized element to a PKO.<sup>149</sup> However, depending on the mission and the expected threat addressed by the IPOE, there may be value in Canada employing Engagement Platoons in missions beyond those designated as peacekeeping. The IGVP gives examples and addresses the importance of the contribution of women in prevention efforts,<sup>150</sup> so why limit that to just peacekeeping operations. Engagement Platoons

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<sup>145</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 22-23.

<sup>146</sup> United Nations Security Council, "Resolution 2427" (2018), 4; Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 25.

<sup>147</sup> No research found evidence of this course existing and within correspondence with the PSTC, they could not confirm the existence of such a course within Canada.

<sup>148</sup> Swedish Armed Forces, "United Nations Child Protection Course," last accessed 03 May 2021, <https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/en/swedint/courses-at-swedint-and-how-to-apply/uncpc/>.

<sup>149</sup> Personal correspondence with Ted Howard (lead developer of the Engagement Platoon STM) of the PSTC.

<sup>150</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 56-59.



enhance an organizations operational effectiveness and have the mission “to enhance the situational awareness of the battalion by engaging with the local population and mapping the human terrain of the [Area of Operation] in order to identify vulnerable areas and at risk populations.”<sup>151</sup> These Engagement Platoons increase the diversity of the organization, which promotes the principles of GBA+ and will allow the CAF to equally address the concerns of boys, girls, women and men. This in turn will help the CAF “to be more flexible and adaptable in the face of diverse local populations, including in the context of child protection.”<sup>152</sup> However, the roles of CPFP and the Engagement Platoon need to remain separate as their roles and responsibilities are not synonymous but rather reinforcing. The IGVP noted the need for a standalone CPFP as well.<sup>153</sup>

On the subject of SMEs, the above paragraph touched on the need for CPFPs and Engagement Platoons however, certain NGOs may already be active in the region and have been working on child protection issues for some time. Civilian organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children, and the International Bureau for Children Rights can bring a wealth of experience to security sector actors like the CAF once they arrive in theatre. As articulated in the previous chapter, appropriate cultural awareness training is required prior to deployment, and in an ideal setting the relationships built during the pre-deployment phases between the CAF organization and external partners, such as NGOs, are expanded once CAF units arrive in theatre. In addition, this pre-deployment training should at minimum, give command and staff elements an awareness on identifying good local partners and how to reach out to them upon arrival. These civilian

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<sup>151</sup> LCol (ret'd) C. Magee, *Inclusiveness in Training for Security: From Numbers to Effectiveness or It is more than “add women and mix,”* slide 5, [https://protectionofcivilians.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Breakout-Inclusiveness\\_PAX-Presentation-Magee-Engagement-Platoon.pdf](https://protectionofcivilians.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Breakout-Inclusiveness_PAX-Presentation-Magee-Engagement-Platoon.pdf).

<sup>152</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 57.

<sup>153</sup> Canada, *Implementation Guidance for the Vancouver Principles*, 25.

organizations can help give regional and even community specific information that commanders and planners can use to further develop the skills and knowledge of their soldiers and construct tailored prevention packages. However, working with NGOs must be balanced; NGOs can have internal priorities and often compete against each other or have a different task set and knowledge base, which was noted by Dr Glasser during his tenure as the Secretary General of CARE.<sup>154</sup> In order to mitigate some of this risk, the CPA and military assigned CPFPs can help navigate the waters with these external partners, and/or work with CAF deployed Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) operators, in order to analyse the roles and responsibilities of the civil actors in the region and advise commanders on appropriate military courses of action.

Finally, but just as important, the CAF organization(s) deployed in theatre must embrace and communicate with the locals, community leaders and regional leaders. The civilians are the ones exposed to the conflict and suffering, and may have been a victim of child soldier recruitment themselves. They understand the dynamics and are a source of knowledge that the CAF must lean on in order to ensure their prevention efforts are supportive vice counterproductive. Multiple research papers have noted the need for an approach that addresses the concerns of the locals. In a report completed by Save the Children, it was noted: “the lack of children’s participation in conflict prevention, in humanitarian response, in development and in peace building...are major barriers to the best possible response to children impacted by conflict.”<sup>155</sup> This includes DDR programs itself, which have been scrutinized for being adult

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<sup>154</sup> Robert Glasser, Robert, “Why we need to look hard at the NGO’s flaws,” *Europe’s World* (Spring, 2008): 152-153, <https://www.care-international.org/files/files/publications/Aid-Effectiveness-CI-Secretary-General-Robert-Glassers-on-NGO-Accountability-2008.pdf>.

<sup>155</sup> A Stromme, E. Sapiezynska, G. Fylkesnes, K. Salarkia, and J. Edwards, “Stop the War on Children: Gender Matters” (Save the Children, 2020), 41.

male centric and have failed to address the dynamics of girls.<sup>156</sup> If the CAF wants to address prevention efforts, ensure that DDR programs are successful, and that children do not become recruited or re-recruited it is important to include children and their needs/wants during both the peace processes and the integration of DDR programs. This can be supported by the use of community liaisons that help the CPA/CPFPs to remain integrated, up-to-date, and engage with community concerns, needs, and wants.

DDR is the typically method that symbolizes military efforts to support children in a conflict area. However, there is much more that SSAs and the CAF can do in theatre to support the prevention of recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed actors, well before DDR programs are implemented. The CAF must first deploy an organization, which is equipped to recognize risks and support prevention efforts. CPAs, CPFPs and the use of Engagement Platoons will enable commanders to expand their networks, integrate with external partners and understand regional and community dynamics. SMEs, such as CPAs and NGOs, can be a wealth of knowledge that should be leaned upon prior to and during the deployment. These actors will further enable a commander and their soldiers to be better informed, culturally aware and regionally sensitive. This knowledge, paired with regular communication and integration of the locals and the children, will allow commanders to build targeted prevention strategies, whether it be: reducing pathways to recruitment; supporting DDR programs; or aiding in peace process. However, it is critical that the CAF consider the above when preparing to deploy on any stability operation. Stability operations will require the CAF to engage in activities beyond that of typical “war” scenarios, and in doing so, will have an ability to engage, interact and influence the local

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<sup>156</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Girls Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups...,” 20-22.

populace and regional threats. Helping prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers is an international priority and the CAF must be prepared to do so at every opportunity, not just when directed by a UN mandate driven by a PKO.

## **Section 4.2 – Mental Health**

A subject which has yet to be discussed throughout this paper is the mental health aspect of responding to child soldiers. The reality is, if the CAF deploys into a region where soldiers are expected to support efforts to prevent the recruitment of children, chances are they will encounter active child soldiers. In 2001, British Forces deployed in West Africa “faced deep problems of clinical depression and post-traumatic stress disorder among individual who had faced child soldiers.”<sup>157</sup> Fighting and possibly killing children is not what any member of a profession of arms signs up for, and these events can be extremely traumatizing. Ensuring that members have resilience and adequate support is essential in order to ensure that members who fight children one day can still effectively prevent the next day.

Tynes suggests that armed actors use child soldiers as a three-pronged strategy of creating moral dilemmas, fortifying troops, and relocating fear in order to gain political opportunities. The strategy of creating a moral dilemma is exactly the situation that Romeo Dallaire walks the reader through in Chapter 8 of *They Fight Like Soldiers, They Die Like Children*. He gives the reader a graphic understanding of the struggles, tragedy and psychological impact of operating in an environment that uses child soldiers and at one point notes: “I had shot a girl, dressed as a rebel and acting as a warrior and projecting all the attributed of a rebel combatant bent on killing...I was paralyzed by what I was seeing and what I

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<sup>157</sup> NATO Research and Technology Organization, *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force...*, ES-1.

had done.”<sup>158</sup> It is this that the CAF must be prepared to combat before, during and after troops have been deployed to a region where they were, are, or will be exposed to child soldiers. The NATO document *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force* was drafted in response to a British Ministry of Defence inquiry into how to support soldiers who return from such an environment. The findings were that very limited data and research were available that related to the armed force personnel and the psychological impact that child soldiers have on them.<sup>159</sup> In the conclusion of the study, it was noted that soldiers need to develop resiliency through training prior to deployment and must be given support during deployment to including scenarios, laws and ROEs. The study also concluded that post-conflict support needs to be made available to returning soldiers but that no current system exists that specifically targets how to deal with child combatants.

The IGVPs addresses (via VP#13) the need for signing nations to ensure they support continuing research in this field and that mental health services and training needs to be conducted before, during and after conflict. Additionally, the CAF JDN on Child soldiers highlights that CAF members “must participate in the Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) program, both before and after deployments, as a means of enhancing mental resiliency to the challenging and traumatic situations that may be encountered during operations.”<sup>160</sup> The pre-deployment training aspect was addressed earlier in this paper, and if the CAF were to embrace the recommendations of its own strategic documents and this paper, it would set soldiers up well for being resilient. If it does not, the CAF will not and should not operate in such an environment as there is a chance that soldiers without requisite training will not only make the tactical

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<sup>158</sup> Romeo Dallaire, *They Fight Like Soldiers, they Die Like Children: The Global Quest to Eradicate the use of Child Soldiers* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2010. E-Book), 151.

<sup>159</sup> NATO Research and Technology Organization, *Child Soldiers as the Opposing Force...*, ES-1.

<sup>160</sup> Canada, DND, *JDN 2017-01...*, 2-10.

situation worse but, also degrade their own mental health faster than those who have been pushed through the R2MR program. This then has the potential to limit their capability to effectively perform in other operations or even every day tasks. However, the current mental health screening prior to deployments and the screening that is completed when members return, is generalized and is not based upon specific factors or stressors such as child soldiers. Much more research needs to be completed on targeted mental health training prior to deployment and the support services that are offered once a soldier returns from such an environment, as no evidence could be found on how the CAF intends to conduct post-deployment screening when soldiers return from such an environment. Beyond the direct impact to the mental health of the soldiers, there is the psychological impact of deploying CAF soldiers to a region where engagement with child soldiers is possible for the citizens of Canada. Although no research was conducted into this topic, this paper would suggest that the media both internal to the CAF and external will have a significant role to play, and the strategic leaders within both the GoC and CAF need to prepare themselves for it.

Mental health is a delicate subject, and one that the CAF has come a long way both in research and recognition since the start of the Afghanistan war; however, child soldiers is a new operating environment for the current generation of CAF members and more needs to be done. Mental health injuries can influence and limit a soldier's capacity and capability much like physical injuries can. The CAF needs to, and wants to, contribute to the efforts of preventing the recruitment and use of child soldiers however, it can not do so blindly and without both the training and support services integrated, which will enable a soldier to perform their job and support international efforts in eliminating this terrible crime against humanity.

## CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION

Child soldiers, and the prevention of them, is an international whole of government problem to solve; however, the CAF can be a key contributor to the solution. Unfortunately, beyond an interim joint doctrine note (JDN) that discusses planning considerations of working in an environment with child soldiers, and a non-mandatory *Basic Child Soldiers Awareness* course developed by the CA, the CAF has very little capacity to be an effective part of the solution in its current form. In some instances, the CAF may make the situation worse. This is mostly due to the simple facts that doctrine on child soldiers has not been developed beyond the interim product produced in 2017 and there is currently no training that is conducted in the CAF that targets child soldiers and more specifically, how members can help prevent child soldiers. Current national and military strategic documents indicate that the prevention of child soldiers is a priority and that the CAF needs to take the subject seriously. The GoC has done so by noting child soldiers as a priority within Strong, Secure, Engaged but, they have also addressed their priority on the world stage by being a significant contributor to the Vancouver Principles and the implementation guidelines that support them. The Vancouver Principles are focused narrowly on what member states can do to prevent child soldier recruitment but unfortunately, the Vancouver Principles are specific to UN peacekeeping missions that have child soldier protection mandates. On the other hand, the CAF strategic leaders have indicated the need to address the child soldier problem with the release of the JDN that remarks on the importance of ensuring soldiers are educated and trained appropriately. It also notes that the CAF must be prepared to operate and

contribute in an environment with child soldiers across the spectrum of stability operations, not just peacekeeping operations. Unfortunately, these two key documents have yet to be integrated.

To support current efforts integrating the concepts of the Vancouver Principles, into usable CAF doctrine by the Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security, this paper examines the current child soldier problem and seeks to answer the question: what can the CAF do to support existing efforts to prevent the recruitment of child? Chapter 2 addressed the definition of a child soldier per the Paris Principles, which can be summarized as any individual below the age of 18 and employed or used by an armed actor for any purpose; including spies, cooks, wives, fighters etc. A key aspect of the Paris Principles was defining that a child soldier does not have to take part directly in hostilities. This opens the door for international support to provide greater protection of children and allows disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs to be reconfigured. However, much still needs to be done to understand and address the international crime of recruiting children in the first place. Risk factors to recruitment can be generally categorized under three categories: structural, social, and individual level factors. However, despite the ever increasing international laws and commitments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol, the Paris Commitments and the associated Paris Principles; the recruitment of children continues to occur. The UN has additionally implemented several UNSCR on the subject, to include the naming and shaming approach to those who are known to recruit children (state or non-state) and the identification of the six grave violations and the associated Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms. The research found that the child soldier problem is extremely complex and it is critical that the CAF be educated on the subject. Complicating the situation even more so, is that not every region or actor recruits or uses a child soldier the same way or for the same reason. This can include how



and where actors target children, how children and especially girls are treated, and if the local culture views an adult as anything different from the international standard of 18.

Chapter 3 of this paper tackled the question of what can the CAF do to support international efforts to prevent child soldier recruitment. This is an important question to answer because regardless whether or not soldiers are deployed on a specific peacekeeping mandate or deployed to support a range of mandates, they are often the first point of contact into outreach regions and communities. Essentially, they are the eyes and ears of the international community and represent hope, security, and stability to those that are struggling. As noted, every region and community can be subjected to a different set of complex factors that feed child soldier recruitment; therefore, it is important to ensure CAF leadership and soldiers do not approach the child soldier problem with a one size fits all solution. The CAF, and specifically the CA, has become accustomed to developing a broad set a foundational knowledge and tools within individual soldiers that are reinforced through years of individual and collective training. Prior to any deployment, tactical organizations are subjected to the high readiness cycle, which is then capped by pre-identified Theatre Mission Specific Training. In essence, the CAF starts with a wide foundation and then narrows the education and training to specific deployment requirements. So why not do the same for child soldiers? Stability operations is an ideal subject to integrate child soldier prevention and protection training into as it these type of operations are the likely venue for CAF members to prevent child soldier recruitment. However, in order to ensure child soldier doctrine is developed, training is integrated, and all personnel are prepared to operate in an environment that recruits and employs child soldiers, the strategic, operational and tactical levels each have a key role to play.

At the tactical level, the force generators must integrate child soldier training early and often and should use the IED training/awareness program as a framework to build from. Although they are different, these two subjects are similar in that they are both complex weapons system that require a comprehensive approach and special education and training to defeat. The force generators can develop the foundation, which is then honed during any pre-deployment high readiness cycle. However, the operational level (the Force Employers) must articulate the requirement for child soldier training and be held accountable to ensure all deploying members have an appropriate level of child soldier knowledge and training. The Force Employer is additionally responsible to narrow the broad foundational knowledge imparted by the Force Generators into something that is more regionally specific. They must ensure soldiers are not deploying with a one size fits all mindset. This can be done by ensuring there is cultural awareness training that has a deliberate agenda item that focus on child soldiers. By using subject matters experts (SME) that have operated in the pending deployment theatre such as child protection advisors (CPAs) or NGOs such as UNICEF, they will be able to educate CAF members on specific recruitment factors and advise on prevention methods. With that in mind, the strategic leadership needs to ensure the mission has the right mandates and that they support the deploying units by researching and communicating known indicators and warnings to recruitment. CAF members need to be resourced to prevent the recruitment of children by armed actors and that they are not simply responding to a violation of the six grave violations after it has already occurred.

Once deployed, CAF members must put their training into practice in order support prevention efforts; however, they must be equipped to do so. Chapter 4 addresses three key themes that the CAF must consider if they are going to be effective. The first is that they must be

enabled with the right organization. This includes the use of CPAs, Child Protection Focal Points (CPFP) and the use of Engagement Platoons in all operations where interaction with locals is expected. The second is the use of SMEs, which includes the use of NGOs. The third is constant communication with the locals and the integration of their concerns into plans, peace processes and programs. If the deploying organization has been appropriately trained prior to deployment and they keep these three themes in mind when deploying, they will undoubtedly contribute to the international efforts to cease the recruitment and use of child soldiers. However, the mental health system needs to be prepared for this type of environment. Interacting with children and child soldiers can be extremely traumatizing and the medical system must support soldiers who are and have returned from deployment in order to ensure they can continue to effectively contribute in the future.

The CAF can be a part of the solution but there is a long way to go. Strategic documents point to this being a priority, yet the current actions by the operational and tactical level on the child soldier subject indicate that this has yet to percolate from higher as anything more than words. Children are having their lives stripped away from them at alarming rates across the globe; therefore, it is critical the CAF position itself as part of the solution in the very near future. This paper has given guidance and recommendations on how the CAF can close the gap on doctrine and training, which can be used by organizations such as the Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security. The recommendations are summarized below:

- 1) Be prepared to support and prevent child soldiers in all stability operations, not just specifically mandated UN or NATO PKOs;

- 2) Develop a foundational knowledge within all soldiers on the subject of operating in an environment with child soldiers early and often, ideally integrating it into stability operations training;
- 3) When conducting the IPOE for a potential deployment, ensure child soldiers are a consideration per the JDN. TMST must be adjusted to reflect the operational environment with Fig 1 as the recommended guideline;
- 4) During TMST, deliver a targeted cultural awareness brief on child soldiers that focus's on the risk factors to recruitment and is delivered by SMEs such as CPA or NGOs;
- 5) Develop a CPFP course and train CAF members. Once trained, integrate these members into collective training exercises such as Ex MR and deploy them regularly, much like the CAF deploys GENADs;
- 6) Once deployed, conduct further research on if the CAF is doing the right things when it comes to interacting and responding to child soldiers such as detention, DDR programs, and the integration of child provision into peace process; and
- 7) Conduct further research into targeted mental health training, resiliency and screening prior to and post deployment.

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