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The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

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WITNESSES

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

Joëlle Badman,
Education Program Manager

Capt. (Ret'd) Ken W.A. Hoffer, CD,
2016 VTECS Graduate

House of Assembly
Nova Scotia

HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MAY 15, 2018

STANDING COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

2:00 P.M.

CHAIR
Bill Horne

VICE-CHAIR
Ben Jessome

THE CHAIR: Welcome everyone. I'm glad everybody could make it on time and we'd like to get started. This is the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. I'm Bill Horne, the chairman.

I would ask people to put their phones on vibrate at least or turned off. Exits are out here at the door and to the left when you go out to go outside. So, if there's any emergency, that's the direction we'll head.

We are receiving a presentation from the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative and to begin I'll ask the MLAs to introduce themselves.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: Thank you, we'll ask our guests to introduce themselves, and from there we can go on.

JOËLLE BADMAN: Thank you so much for having us. My name is Joëlle Badman. I'm the Education Program Manager with the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative - and a constituent of Mr. Halman's, so nice to meet you.

I'll be delivering the first part of our presentation today, but I'm joined by my colleague and friend Ken Hoffer.

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: Good afternoon. Thank you very much for the invitation to come and speak today - and I'm also a member of Dartmouth East. Tim is our MLA there, so good representation there. I have 35 years in the Royal Canadian Navy. I retired as an Naval Captain in 2012 and had the good fortune to be on the first course for the VTECS which I hope to talk to you about today.

THE CHAIR: I believe you can go ahead and make your presentation.

JOËLLE BADMAN: I'm going to spend the first part of the program or the first part of our time together telling you a little bit about the program, where it came from, how it works, what the process is like, and then I'm going to pass it over to Ken to sort of share with you the impact based on his experience as a graduate of the program. I'll also tell you a little bit about our organization, what we do and why we're here.

THE CHAIR: Just a moment - the chairman will recognize you whenever you're going to speak.

JOËLLE BADMAN: Okay. So, for those of you who aren't familiar, the Dallaire Initiative, our shortened version of how we say the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, we are based out of Dalhousie University and we have a mission to progressively end these child soldiers through a security sector approach.

We work in a number of different ways, but the way that the organization came to be was based on Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire's experience in Rwanda and some encounters that he had had with children on the ground. And when he came back from that experience, he decided that he wanted to make it his life's mission to address this issue both domestically and internationally.

We, as an organization, have four specific pillars that we work on. We do research, so we're based out of the university here in Halifax and we do a lot of world-class research specifically on issues related to children affected by armed conflict; we conduct advocacy efforts at a local, international, and national level; most recently we were part of a partnership with the federal Government of Canada launching the Vancouver Principles, which are principles related to child soldiers internationally, which have been adopted by about 65 countries so far since we launched in November of 2017; and we also deliver training to military police and other security sector actors internationally on how to interact and prevent the use and recruitment of child soldiers.

We work in countries all over the world - Rwanda, Jordan, Sierra Leone, and Uganda to name a few. We also do education and the focus of our education is about changing attitudes and behaviours that relate to the prevention of child soldiers - this is actually where the VTECS program comes in.

VTECS was created in 2016 through a partnership with Wounded Warriors Canada and it came from a conversation that was had around the very specific skill sets that veterans come back to Canada with, and how those skill sets combined with further education could be used to protect children from around the world. Wounded Warriors supports veterans in a variety of different capacities, and so they wanted to invest in a program that would provide greater education skills and training for veterans.

They are our primary funder, and they've funded the program for the past three years. We also received funding from the Air Canada Foundation initially, but now we receive just from Air Canada as a whole, they provide transportation for the VTECS, who come from all over the country. We also have two private donors, who support the program by sponsoring spots for VTECS from particular regions. So, we have one donor who sponsors a spot for a VTECS from Québec, and we have one donor who sponsors two spots for VTECS from Atlantic Canada.

In terms of how the program works, veterans are invited to apply to the program. Initially, the program was only open to Canadian Armed Forces veterans; this year we opened it to Canadian Police veterans as well. So, you have to be a veteran of either of those two organizations. You have to be able to successfully complete a four-month online course that's offered through the Dalhousie College of Continuing Education. Our VTECS for 2018 are actually in that course right now; they're about half-way done writing their assignments and participating in online discussions. Then they have to be able to attend the program in Halifax for a month-long campus residency, and this happens in July of every year.

Our VTECS are selected through a panel of adjudicators that is comprised of Dallaire Initiative staff, as well as VTECS' alumni, who help select participants that they think represent the diversity of both the Canadian Armed Forces and the Canadian Police Force, the diversity of Canada geographically - we get VTECS who apply from all walks of life, some who are retired, some who are maybe younger retirees from the forces, of all ages and genders as well.

We select 15 participants each year and the program is fully funded in terms of the courses that they take and the credits that they get, in terms of the transportation, the accommodations - everything it takes to come and be in Halifax for a month as well.

While they're in Halifax, the VTECS take two campus classes with undergraduate students, one of them is on children and war and the other one is on UN and world politics. These are regular university classes, they participate in these with undergraduate students, and there's a really great synergy and learning between the experience the veterans bring, along with the experience that the students bring.

This is a photo from our 2016 VTECS who - impromptu - decided to offer tea and coffee to Dalhousie staff, to thank them for supporting them throughout their month on campus residency.

As part of our training, they do two weeks of full-time classes and then they switch to what we call our Dallaire Initiative specialized Training of Trainers. This is some of the training that we do internationally, with military and police forces, and the VTECS get that experience here.

In those courses, they learn things like facilitation skills and presentation skills, they learn how to talk about the issues of children affected by armed conflict and child soldiers. They also learn some scenario and interactive training that we do. Here you have an image of one of our scenario days, where they actually practice what some of those interactions are like in the field for military and police. They learn how to model and deliver those simulations, so they get some really great practical facilitation skills. This is another picture from our training last year, modeling a simulation - and that's actually Ken on the right-hand side, playing the role of a child soldier.

Some other components of the program that happen at the same time while the VTECS are getting their education, we do some public-facing events. We have two speakers series that we deliver in partnership with the Halifax Public Library that are focused on the realities of contemporary warfare, we bring in speakers from around the world who can speak to issues related to children affected by armed conflict.

In the past, obviously, General Dallaire has spoken of his experiences. Last year, we had Major General Patrick Cammaert speak about some of his experiences working with the UN in various countries. This year, we'll be bringing in a gender-based violence OB/GYN from the United Nations Development Fund. Her name is Rania Abuelhassan and she's going to be talking about some of her work with women being released from ISIS in Syria.

We bring in these speakers, these events are free and open to the public, and we get really great turnouts of about 300 to 350 people at Paul O'Regan Hall in July, which I think is really impressive for Halifax. Of course, we would love to have any of you join us this year for our two speakers series events, those two dates have already been identified. This is a really great opportunity for us to bring more discourse on this issue to the Halifax region and also to bring people together who are interested in the topic and create some learning opportunities in our community as well.

As we wrap up the program, after the month, we do a formal graduation ceremony for the VTECS. This is our cohort from last year, with a few folks missing from the photo. It's a really great celebration of the hard work and dedication that people have brought to the program.

"What happens after VTECS?" is oftentimes a question that we get asked - what do people do after they have done the program? Our focus is really that this is like any other educational opportunity, and what you do with it oftentimes relies on what you want to do with it and what you want to get out of it.

Some of our VTECS have thriving civilian careers, and they take what they have learned and apply it in their career in some capacity. For example, one of our VTECS from 2016 is a high school teacher, so he does a lot of learning in his classroom with his students about the issue of child soldiers. He also uses his learning to teach other teachers about the issue.

We have an RCMP officer from last year's cohort who works in the Lower Mainland of B.C. with gangs. He sees a lot of similarities in what happens with child soldiers internationally and some of the ways that young people are recruited into gangs in Canada. He's applying that learning in his field of work.

A lot of our VTECS go on to be great champions and advocates for the issue overall. They speak publicly in their communities, at Rotary Clubs and Lions Clubs, and at Remembrance Day ceremonies. They share their passion and their commitment to protecting children with others.

Then we also have some VTECS who, when they do really well in the program and demonstrate a lot of the skills that we're looking for in our international trainers, we invite to be on our training roster. Ken is an example of that, and he'll share some of his experiences in that realm. Then they become consultants and facilitators for the Dallaire Initiative and help support our work internationally.

I just added a couple of quotes from our partners. Scott Maxwell is the executive director of Wounded Warriors Canada. There is a quote from Dr. Ian MacVicar, who is one of our graduates from last year. The quotes are just sort of speaking to why they believe that the program and the impact that it has had are important.

I think what I'll do now is pass it over to Ken. I told you all about the program, but he'll tell you about his experience and why it was, hopefully, meaningful for him.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Hoffer.

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: You have to ask the question, why does an officer or an enlisted man or woman want to become a VTECS - in my particular case, after serving 35 years in the Canadian Navy?

I think you have to look at how our culture works - our military culture, or in the case of the RCMP, their culture. We sign on in terms of committing ourselves, committing our lives, to the betterment not only of Canadian society but of the world in general. We

want to share Canadian ideals globally. I'm sure you're all aware that as of last year, Canada was number one in terms of the most reputable countries on the globe.

From that standpoint, as a military officer, when I retired, I felt that the job was incomplete. I knew that I still have the very skills that General Dallaire was looking for to contribute to the program that he has in terms of his vision. I decided to apply and, sure enough, was accepted.

As a veteran, I feel responsible to continue to uphold the social values and the moral and ethical concept of human rights that we continue to project in our relationships with the United Nations and other countries of the world.

I was very fortunate in succeeding in the course. Let me tell you my first experience, the academic portion at Dalhousie. We're not just all veterans in a class, we're working with young students; it's about 50-50. Half of them are veterans, and the other 50 per cent are young students there for summer courses.

For me, and I think every VTECS who was in that training session, those two academic courses were perhaps one of the most rewarding opportunities I have had in my life, being able to work with these young minds and tell them what the real world was really like from my perspective, not just the academic aspect. The reward came at the end when we were all given hugs and claps on the back for the input that we provided on that course, which really taught me a lesson that we need as adults, as senior members of the military or as adults we need to mentor our young minds. We need to be involved in their lives. We need to share the good, the bad, and the ugly in terms of what life is like.

[2:15 p.m.]

Shortly after I graduated, I was called up on my first mission and I was tasked with one of the other Dallaire Initiative employees, Jennifer McNeil, to go to Sierra Leone and facilitate a training session of over 400 police officers - half of those were individual police officers; the other ones were force protection units. Think of it as a company-size contingent, all of them destined for a peacekeeping mission in Somalia.

Joëlle has talked about the interactions that we do. We do some simulations and one of my previous experiences as the commander of sea training was to design exercise scenarios that were straight out of the textbook of Hollywood productions, and so I actually injected a few ideas in terms of how we could create a realistic scenario, and to my surprise I was quite flabbergasted when I saw that the police officers were unable to de-escalate a situation, and you wonder what sort of an impact can a VTEC have in a situation like that. So through counselling or working with these individuals, I managed to show them how - from a Canadian military perspective - we try to de-escalate a situation before it gets out of hand.

So, what sort of an impact? Well, what happened was one of the police officers who was a co-facilitator took what I trained. If you know Sierra Leone following their civil war, Canada invested a lot of money through CEDA, and they bought motorcycles for the child soldiers who were now reintegrated back into society and provided them with jobs. They run what's called okadas, a taxi service all throughout Sierra Leone, and the police and these taxi drivers or these bike owners have a lot of problems. They get into arguments and it gets out of control and, unfortunately, people get hurt.

So, this police office took what I demonstrated, sat down with their traffic officers, told them how to properly de-escalate a situation and now the traffic situation in Sierra Leone - certainly around Freetown - is much easier and people are respectful of each other. That's just a small, little impact that we've had in terms of helping to change the culture and change the attitudes of people in a country such as Sierra Leone.

My second deployment was in Kenya. We had the opportunity to train both basic and the trainer of trainers course to future instructors. That was quite a challenge because we had five nations represented around the table - Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Somalia - and you certainly see the diversity of cultures and the differences that they all share. But the idea here is that from a Canadian perspective, we respect that. We foster this idea of inclusivity in our teaching and a lot of mutual respect. From there, I also teach how to mentor people in terms of not just the Dallaire Initiative but as officers mentoring enlisted or officers mentoring junior officers.

To give you another little vignette, we have an organization on WhatsApp. We can tap into what's going on in Somalia, see through a chat room, and they took some of those mentoring ideas that I shared and they now exercise those in the desert in the middle of the night and around a campfire in how to deal with child soldiers, but also how to mentor their own troops which is bringing a higher level of professionalism to the Somalia army or the Somalia police force.

And, finally, in my last trip, which was just only a couple of weeks ago was to Uganda. I had the opportunity to lead a team to instruct future instructors and once again, working with the team there, I discovered that the junior officers weren't very effective in giving orders, coordinating their activities. The interactions that I produced had never been tried before in their training system, but at the end of the course the general asked me for the copies of the interactions. He wants to interject those in the child soldier interactions, into their live training serials as they prepare for Mali and Somalia deployments. I have instructed them on how to better apply command and control training into his own armed forces, and so he is going to take those pieces and try to improve.

Once again, our experience as military officers or as military enlisted, in terms of how well we were trained, can have a very good influence in some of these countries that we are visiting. There is a huge impact that we are delivering, not just in terms of the child

soldiers, but also the quality of professionalism - in a very small way, but very effective. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Okay, the next step will be asking questions from different panels, and the first is Tim Halman.

MR. TIM HALMAN: Joëlle and Ken, thank you so much for your very engaging presentation. Thank you for the great leadership you show this program, and thank you, Ken, for your outstanding service to Canada.

I have so many questions, I'm sure like many of my colleagues. This is such an interesting topic. Ken, I was wondering if you could describe a typical day when you are on course, from morning until night. What are some of the courses you are taking? If you could take us through a typical day?

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: Here at Dalhousie?

TIM HALMAN: Yes.

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: In my particular case, living in town here, I wasn't staying in the residence, so it was a bit different than those chaps who came in. On a typical day, we'd get together and have classic Tim Hortons. The idea there is to share, and develop that camaraderie.

From a military perspective, we are all brothers or sisters in arms, and even though we are retired veterans, some of them had been released due to medical reasons. Some individuals were in my course with PTSD, so there was another aspect of trying to talk through that problem, and try to resolve some of their emotional issues or bad moments they were having, because this course does elicit some bad memories for some of those individuals. We try to talk that down, get everybody in a mindset for the day, and then we show up in a classroom and we would start our discussions with the professor.

We started off with a course on the UN for the forenoon, in terms of how the UN works or doesn't work, and in the afternoon, we do Dr. Shelly Whitman's course on child soldier issues.

The interaction between my fellow students, my fellow veterans, and the students, as I previously mentioned, was extremely rewarding. Some of the questions that these young minds would ask were somewhat naïve in their appreciation of what is really going on in the world, but really inquisitive on how they can make the world a better place.

We would get involved in morning discussions which would take up a lot of time, much to the professor's frustration, but very important in terms of life lessons. We were quite engaged in doing that, but we covered the ground.

The same thing with Shelly Whitman's course. It was very emotional at times. There were individuals, both military members and young students, who were very emotionally affected by what we were discussing. We don't hide anything. Nothing is hidden, nothing is glossed over. We want to get the facts out, exactly as what's happening.

In the evening when it's finished, we may have projects that we're working on, classroom presentations, papers, and we always work in groups to share ideas and share experiences. Then in the course of an evening, for those who were living in-house, usually around 5:00, one of our co-facilitators Major Brent Beardsley, who was with General Dallaire, was our co-facilitator for that particular training, would get us together and we would have a typical military potluck where we'd all sit around and share war stories or we'd share jokes. It's a huge camaraderie. It is a very cohesive group.

Those were just our typical days. We did have a couple of individuals who had a bad moment, and we'd always try to find them the appropriate level of support while they were on course, because as I mentioned, it does elicit some bad memories for them.

TIM HALMAN: Thank you very much for that description of a typical day. I am curious as to some of the coping mechanisms that are established within the school, as you indicated that there are some very raw, powerful conversations taking place. What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the supports are there?

JOËLLE BADMAN: Ken was part of our very first cohort, which was also a learning opportunity for our organization. We had this vision for a program, and I think we anticipated there would be some reactivating sentiments among the veterans and things that could be triggering. I think we learned a lot in that first year. One of the benefits of the first year of the program, which Ken was in, was that our program coordinator at the time lived on-site, Major Brent Beardsley, who sort of kept his finger on the pulse of what was happening for everybody, checking in with people on where they were.

I was brought on as the program manager in the second year. I'm a registered social worker and that was an intentional choice by the organization, to think about making sure that we're supporting people's emotional and mental well-being while they're in the program.

We want them to succeed academically, of course. We want this to be a great experience for them. We want them to become passionate advocates for children around the world. We also want them to be well. Part of my job was thinking about how we build some of those processes into the program more formally.

There is a lot of reliance, as Ken mentioned, on camaraderie. People rely on each other. They know how to support and talk to each other, but sometimes you need to take things a little bit further.

I do a lot of work on resilience with the new VTECS. We do a presentation on some of the differences between coping and self-care and what that looks like. We identify strategies very early in the program so that everybody sort of has a plan if they do get activated, if they do get triggered, by something. What is their plan, and how are we going to help support that plan?

I also do weekly check-ins with all the VTECS. Usually I start with an email every Friday. They get an email from me asking how the week went, what went well, and what didn't go well. Is there anything I can support them with? Do they want to meet with me in person? I get responses from all the VTECS, and I oftentimes get taken up on that offer to meet in person, to chat and debrief.

We also make sure that they're connected to Counselling and Psychological Services at Dal because they're registered Dalhousie students. They get access to the same mental health supports that regular students would get if they feel like they maybe need things to be a little more intensive, or if they just want to talk to somebody who's not connected to the program as well.

So, those are some of the ways, particularly after the first year. We sort of learned and implemented and recognized how much we needed to make sure that, as an organization, we were really fostering an environment of well-being.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: First of all, I want to thank you for being here today. I did bump one of the members off, as I said to you earlier, because this is a subject that I have been interested in - as I said earlier when we spoke - since I saw Ishmael Beah speak and read his book. I have actually given out about 10 copies of that book because I think it's a pretty powerful book.

I did just a quick search on the Internet looking at countries that still use child soldiers. It blows your mind. We have the Republic of Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, and Somalia. One of the things that stuck out to me was that in Syria, they're recruiting children as young as seven years old or four years old.

One of the most powerful things when I saw Ishmael speak I think five or six years ago when he was here in Halifax was - he was there with two other individuals. It was almost like - he had not come to terms, but he had started to get over it. But the other two individuals who were there were still very angry. They were still very upset. They were adults at this time.

How do you take a four-year-old, a seven-year-old, or a 12-year-old and rewire them? Essentially what's happening is they're brainwashing them. Some of the stuff that

they had mentioned in the book was that they were making them snort cocaine with gunpowder in it because it would make them go crazy. How do you rewire that?

I know you don't have all the answers, but do you know what I mean? You go into these countries. How do you prepare the VTECS? How do you prepare the military and the police force for a four-year-old? How do you prepare them? What do you say to these individuals? Do you tell them that there's a potential to be faced with a four-year-old or a seven-year-old? How do you cope with that?

[2:30 p.m.]

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: Let me address it from a military point of view. Under the Law of Armed Conflict, you always have the right to self-defence. This is one of the first questions I always get when I start with the training.

If I'm facing down a child who is obviously on drugs or alcohol, or is completely brainwashed, and I am about to receive the pointy end of an RPG - a rocket propelled grenade - what do I do? Am I supposed to talk the kid down? Unfortunately, that individual has to make the moral decision whether or not to protect themselves or their fellow troop from harm. Yes, he might have to make that decision, if the rules of engagement allow him to do that.

How do you rewire a young four-year-old? There is a video on YouTube that shows a four-year-old in Syria executing one of the regime members in Syria. How do you take that young child, who has no cognitive ability at that age, and try to restructure his mind so that he doesn't? Patience, patience, and it takes a long time. Ishmael Beah would say the same thing. It takes a lot of patience, a lot of love, a lot of frustration that goes with that, but eventually the mind is plastic and it will come out of that environment. But the younger they are, the harder it is.

An individual who might be 16 or 17 or 18 and who had a good, loving family relationship before the armed hostilities began, might be more salvageable than a young four-year-old who knew nothing but war from an early age. It's a difficult process.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: It's a whole level of evil, that I don't think we can fully understand from the comforts of our own home. We can read all the books we want and hear all the speakers we want, but - it's just simple evil.

I want to just follow up on Mr. Halman's question, because you have Roméo Dallaire, who is a trained, high-ranking member in the military who has seen a lot of things in his life, yet he ended up on a bench. He ended up as an alcoholic sleeping in a park. His life fell apart. So if you have somebody who is that prepared - as prepared as you are going to be - and somebody with that much experience and has risen to that high of a level in the

UN and in the military and they can't cope with it, how do we expect anyone to deal with this?

The support systems - the PTSD alone must be so - how do you prepare them for, or can you prepare them for what they are potentially about to see; not to say that everything is Rwanda; not to say that everything is Somalia, but, you know?

JOËLLE BADMAN: I agree 100 per cent that General Dallaire is exceptionally trained, but I think he would be the first person to tell you that he wasn't prepared in the fact that it hadn't been discussed with him - the possibility that children would be picking up arms. That, sort of, is the ethos that drives the organization. If we can't prevent it from happening in the first place - and that is a huge portion of our work, focusing on prevention. But if young people are recruited, how do we prepare members of the military? How do we prepare members of the police force for the reality that they may encounter children?

Oftentimes, we hear from our VTECS and we hear from other folks we interact with who say, I never knew that this was a possibility and that's what haunts me; the complete shock and surprise that it was a possibility. Our training that we deliver internationally, we would love to someday also deliver with the Canadian Armed Forces here domestically. The conversations that were happening were, how do we prepare people for the possibility so that they aren't as completely shocked and surprised when it happens?

Also, how do we prepare them for some of the things that Ken mentioned in terms of de-escalating situations that maybe don't need to go as far as they sometimes do. We know that sometimes it isn't the actual traumatic event that is most damaging, but it's the fact that you didn't know that it was a possibility and that it could happen in the first place, and so that is a really big part of our work. We want people to be prepared, we want them to know how to defend themselves, but we also want them to know how to look at children as children, to put children's rights up front and to recognize a child soldier as different than an adult soldier.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Hoffer.

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: When we talk about how you prepare, it's not just the preparation, it's also how you deal with it in the field. So, when an individual faces trauma - we always talk about PTSD but we don't think about the cognitive damage that's done which is called moral injury that goes hand in hand with the flight-and-fight response aspect of it. The more I read into it, the more complicated it gets. But it's not just how do we deal with it in the field, but how we deal with it at home and how we help those individuals to heal properly.

If you've had the opportunity to read General Dallaire's latest book, *Waiting for First Light: My Ongoing Battle with PTSD*, it gives you a very sobering insight into how an individual comes back from an event such as Rwanda and doesn't get the necessary

supports, or the supports don't come until much later. The longer that you delay the support, the worse the condition gets.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I've got a couple of questions, so the first two are just on numbers - the number of graduates you have had so far and maybe the number of individuals that have been on missions like Captain Hoffer has taken part in.

JOËLLE BADMAN: The way that the program is set up is, we have the capacity right now through the financial support that we received to accept 15 program participants per year. We've had two cohorts that have graduated so 30, and we have our current 2018 graduates, 15, taking the e-learning course at the moment and they'll be in Halifax in July. By the end of July, we'll have 45 graduates of the program.

In terms of deployments into our training roster - I don't work in our training department - I think there are about 10, four in the first year and four in the second year and some of those people like Ken have been deployed multiple times. One of the things that we're also considering is that we're looking to build the capacity of our trainers, so we want to deploy people so that they can train but we also model a train-the-trainer approach. We also want to give people a repeat opportunity so that they can become trainers, not just facilitators but train the trainers and can lead missions, particularly as demand for our training increases internationally. Most recently for example - with some support from Dallaire Initiative staff - Ken was the first VTECS to lead training in Uganda on his own without one of our training staff members leading it, which was really great and sort of one of the ways we want to grow the program.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I know you left some correspondence with us and stuff. I did notice on the back "Donate Now", so funding for the program, you said it's covered for all the participants. Does the majority of that come from Canadians? Is it international? Just kind of a breakdown, you know. I don't need to know dollars and cents, but kind of where does the funding coming from and how do you get it?

JOËLLE BADMAN: For VTECS specifically, we are funded by Wounded Warriors Canada, Air Canada, and two private donors. The program was initially conceptualized as sort of a three-year - we don't call it a pilot but Wounded Warriors Canada said that they would look at doing it for three years and we would re-evaluate. We're coming to the end of that three years. We'll be having some conversations on whether or not the program will continue which I hope that it will and I think our funders are very proud of the program and what it has accomplished so we're hoping for continued support because we'd like to continue to grow it.

We're looking at also incorporating some of the lessons that we've learned after the last three years and do a little bit more of a formal evaluation and think about some of the

ways that the program might need some tweaking or modifying to better suit the objectives that we want to achieve.

As an organization as a whole, we get funding from a number of different sources. So we do receive sort of private philanthropic funding from some donors who are maybe interested in supporting a particular arm of our work. We most recently just received a $3 million grant from Global Affairs Canada for a project that we're launching in South Sudan, so we have a little bit of government funding that we're starting to get and then we also just get regular people who are really committed to the work that we do and who donate whatever they can that will help support us and that goes over a long way.

HON. DAVID WILSON: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: Mr. Hoffer, first and foremost, thanks for having Canadians' backs. To both of you, thanks for your commitment to this initiative.

Mr. Hoffer, you made comments about a CO's discretionary use of the program for deployments to countries where they're likely to run into this sort of stuff. I'm curious about why this type of training is optional, period. There's extensive training, I would envision, for any soldier. Given the work that you do to bring light to the issue, how does that component of potential training to the entire Canadian Armed Forces get overlooked at all?

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: You will recall that recently the Canadian Armed Forces has recently released a new doctrine with respect to child soldiers. That had a lot to do with the advocacy of General Dallaire and Dr. Shelly Whitman from the Dallaire initiative. They have been working very hard over the last five or six years to get the Canadian Forces to adopt it.

I don't know why it has taken this long. With the number of cases of PTSD, I would suggest that that might be a factor in trying to help figure out how we're going to resolve and prepare our troops, our sailors, and our airmen before they deploy - whether it be on peacekeeping missions or back to Afghanistan at the time.

On that note, there is a program. You will recall that the government has announced that there will be a peacekeeping mission to Mali later this year. The CDS has directed that the first contingent that will go to Mali will be trained on this issue, the prevention of use of child soldiers, to help better prepare those individuals before they go over. That training is currently in the hands of the Canadian Army Doctrine and Training Centre. I believe that training will start taking place some time this summer.

We're on the right track. It has just taken a long time to get to this point.

BEN JESSOME: I think that's reasonable to take place. I wish for the speedy implementation of the program.

How many countries would you say solicit your organization for the training?

JOËLLE BADMAN: I'm just going to name them off because it will help me think about all the areas where we work. We have done training in Sierra Leone, in Rwanda, in Somalia, and in Kenya with AMISOM forces, the African Union Mission in Somalia. We have done training in Jordan as well. Ken was in Uganda very recently. We're having discussions with the Canadian Armed Forces on the training that Ken just mentioned. We have a project that is just emerging in South Sudan, another project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and discussions in Nigeria as well. So it's about a dozen different countries.

Because of the advocacy of General Dallaire and our executive director Dr. Shelly Whitman, we get approached all the time and have conversations frequently with different forces - military state forces, police forces, and peacekeeping forces. Part of our job is also to manage our capacity because we're a pretty small organization. We only have about 16 staff people. I think we could be doing a lot more training than we are. We're just trying to manage the capacity that we have.

We also look to make sure that we're establishing strong partnerships in the countries where we do training so that we're not just coming in and doing training one time and then leaving but that we're actually working towards some sort of integration and capacity strengthening with those forces so that the folks in those forces are getting trained, and then they can disseminate that training even further to a broader number of forces, so that it isn't always reliant just on us. We do ask for a longer-term commitment when people are looking to receive training from us, that they are working towards an integration plan.

BEN JESSOME: Okay, bravo, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Hoffer, do you have anything?

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: Just to maybe finish up a question that you had. Currently the training that we're looking at is for rapid-deployment forces or high-readiness forces that are going out the door, but there is a plan to look at taking this training down to the basic recruit level and then expand and growing that all the way up through staff college and strategic generalship courses. We're looking at establishing that doctrine right across the full spectrum of the Canadian Armed Forces, all environments at all rank levels.

THE CHAIR: Ms. DiCostanzo.

[2:45 p.m.]

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: Thank you so much. I hate to say that just hearing about it just brought emotions inside of me that were very strong. I guess I'm a very lucky Iraqi child who left without seeing war, but I do remember when the war started in Iraq in 1992. I found it very, very difficult, but I've detached myself by saying I can help the ones that make it here, but just speaking, it's all coming back.

My issue is, it's not just the soldiers that are in Iraq. I know you work in Jordan. How do we get the local people to stop? Are you working with them? It's one thing to have the soldiers, but it's the preventative that is more important. So, how are you working with that aspect of it?

JOËLLE BADMAN: In my very early slides that I quickly went through, I showed you the four pillars that we work on: research, advocacy, education, and training. We're a pretty young organization - we've been around for about eight years - and one of the ways that we are growing most at present is in terms of making sure that any work that we do in any country is a four-pillar approach.

We want to make sure that we're doing training, that it's supported by the research that we do. We're also doing high-level advocacy in those countries to talk about these issues, to talk about the issues so that they're contextually specific to the country that we're in. We really want to focus on education, and education looks different in every country that we work in. In some of the countries that we're working in, we're formulating what that education looks like.

One of the countries where we have had the most success of our four-pillar approach and where we've worked the longest is in Sierra Leone, and we have community education projects that really focus on making sure that we are doing a bottom-up, top-down approach at the same time.

So, yes, we're providing training for police forces, yes, we're providing training for military forces, but we are also going into schools and working with organizations that work locally with schools, talking about the concept of peace with students, talking about issues that oftentimes underline conflict - things like bullying, things like marginalization and stigmatization. We're educating kids about what recruitment looks like, how they could end up being recruited into a group, because sometimes they don't know that, but that's what's happening when it happens.

We also have a radio project where we're telling stories on the radio in the hopes that parents and people listen to the radio, and they come home and they have these conversations. We did some radio programming specifically around the election in Sierra Leone just recently, because there can be a lot of contention around election issues, to make

sure that people are having these dialogues about children, about peace, about security, about conflict, and that that conversation that's happening at the dinner table when mom comes home from the police force, and the child comes home from the peace club, and dad was listening to the story on the radio, and they can have a conversation.

That's sort of where we're looking to grow as an organization. We have a similar vision of that four-pillar approach that we want to incorporate into our new project in South Sudan that is just getting off the ground, and we're hoping to model that in all the countries that we work in, as we continue to grow and evolve.

We know that prevention starts in just the regular lives of people making sure that people are living well, in community and in family, and so we want to make sure that while we are absolutely addressing the security sector dynamic which, is our focus as an organization, we're also thinking about prevention more broadly beyond that.

THE CHAIR: Another question?

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I started by thanking you because this is what true Canadians are. I've always been so proud of being a Canadian and for the work that we do, and how peace is the most important thing. Truly, one of the reasons that I got involved in the Liberals was when Chrétien said no to going to Iraq and bombing Iran. That triggered something, and that's what started it for me.

The other thing that I was wondering is, can you include some of the people from those international countries to take the courses? Would that help them? Is there a future plan to include people from international countries?

JOËLLE BADMAN: That is actually one of the things we are doing this year that is really exciting about our VTECS program. With our Training of Trainer model that we deliver in different countries, after having worked in places like Sierra Leone for a while, we have some amazing trainers. We have these people who are within the Sierra Leonean military who are just becoming leading experts on this issue, and who have worked with our organization for a long time.

We will be bringing some of them to the VTECS program this summer to actually share their knowledge in the field with our veterans. We have three of our trainers and one who is our lead project consultant with the UNSOM mission on Somalia. His name is Musa, and he will be coming along with two of the other trainers to actually teach and participate in the VTECS program and enrich it with their experience.

Another thing that we are doing with some of the graduates of our Training of Trainers internationally is that we want to make sure that there is opportunity for the different countries that have received our training to learn from each other. In our training in Jordan that happened earlier this winter, we brought some of our Sierra Leonean trainers

to actually deliver the training to the Jordanian forces. Again, just thinking really about how important it is for people to be learning from each other, and sharing their experiences and expertise across nations, is something we are trying to incorporate into our work.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: I just want to say a big thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Maguire is next on my list.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: One of the questions that I wanted to ask was, there are all these different countries that you are going in to help assist with this, and obviously there are some cultural sensitivities. My question is, how do you prepare for the cultural sensitivities, and are you getting any pushback from some of these governments and some of these individual groups about you coming in?

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: One of the unique things about being a military officer is that any time you went on a deployment, you tried to learn as much as you could, not only through intelligence, but by research about the country or the area that you are going into. For example, I was deployed to East Timor in 1999-2000, so I grabbed every book I could get off the library shelf, or anything off the Internet - including language, all the culture and customs - to try to understand what the nature of the region was, what the demographics were of the region I was going into? We do that naturally.

My recent deployment of Uganda, for example, was exactly that. I'd go in and assimilate as much information as I could about Uganda - not just the culture, the religion and the people, but also the politics of the area. What are the threats in the area, not just in terms of hostilities, but what about medical threats as well like malaria, dengue, things like that? We put together a profile of the country.

The Dallaire Initiative has just adopted this concept. For every VTEC who goes in or every team that goes in a country, we are now preparing a pro forma on the political situation and the risks that are involved - both medically health wise but also in terms of terrorism, for example. From there we take calculated risk, but we mitigate the risk to the best of our ability.

In some countries, in Uganda, there's been an issue concerning - I don't know if we can talk about the MOU at all - but there has been a changeover in the political climate in Uganda, and as you are aware, it's a corrupt state. It is ranked as one of the highest corrupt nations in the world. Notwithstanding that, there is a cadre of leadership in there that sees the benefits of this program. Using a facilitator within the country, we can actually work that to our advantage in giving us the access to the necessary personnel who need the training and work sideways around any of the issues.

That's the other unique thing about having somebody in the military. We look for solutions. You know, if somebody puts up a roadblock, we'll try to figure out how we get

around that and negotiate it in a nice, diplomatic way so that we can deliver the objective that General Dallaire wants to share with the world. It's a bit of a challenge, but we've had a lot of success at it.

JOËLLE BADMAN: I'll just add as well that in terms of - I think Ken highlighted the ways in which we don't follow a standard format in achieving those partnerships, because they're so relational. A lot of that comes from the relationships that our executive director, our training team, or General Dallaire are able to establish with sort of key military contacts, let's say, in this example.

We also want to make sure that we're not - we don't want to go into a place and say, "We want to give you this training, whether you like it or not." We want that buy-in. We know that buy-in is essential for the training to have the impact that we want it to have, so those relationships are really important.

In terms of our VTECS program and also just how we operate as an organization, we are constantly striving to enhance and better our understanding of cultural competency and what it means to work cross culturally. We integrated that into the VTECS program last year, and we'll continue to do it this year, where we do focused modules on working across cultures that we think are really important for the VTECS to have - as a skill in terms of education, but also, in particular, in terms of if some of them do end up working for us, we really want that.

We also look to make sure that our training and what we do is localized and contextualized to the place we're going into, and I think that helps generate the buy-in for people. We recognize that there are differences in Uganda versus in Sierra Leone, and we want to make sure that what we're training people on is relevant to what they're experiencing. We do a lot of that work in house to ensure that we're staying up to date on what's happening on the ground in different places and how our training needs to modify to suit those needs.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I would think that it can't be easy, especially in a continent like Africa, where there's a history of colonization by France, Belgium, England - pretty much everybody who has stepped foot in it. When they see outsiders coming in to try to help, I would think that there can be a mistrust there, especially when - anyway.

The last question that I'll have - I could ask you many questions, but I won't take up all your time. Have you ever thought of expanding this program to civilians? Would it work?

JOËLLE BADMAN: We have gotten that question before. We do have a lot of interest in some of the different educational programming that we offer.

For example, we've had lots of people who are interested in taking Dr. Whitman's Children and War course at Dalhousie, which is only offered once a year in July. She only takes 25 to 30 students, and 15 of them are VTECS, so it's a rough shot to get into that class. Like, it fills up on the day it's offered.

The online course that the VTECS take is offered through the College of Continuing Education at Dalhousie University and it's through their Police Leadership Certificate Program. Police officers from across the country are able to take that course online. We are looking to make that more accessible to people for credit or to take it as an online course to do more learning. I think there's a great demand, and I think there are civilians who would definitely - if we offered it, it would be available.

THE CHAIR: What was the first course?

JOËLLE BADMAN: The online course or the campus class? Children and War. It's a political science course cross-listed with International Development Studies. Registration usually opens in February, and you want to register on the day it opens. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Mr. Hoffer.

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: Just to add to that point, I recently gave a lecture to a Grade 9 class at Ellenvale Junior High school last February. A group of girls 13 or 14 years old came up and asked, where do I sign on, I want to be part of this organization.

You can see the whole program is having a tremendous effect. We need to get this information out to more schools - high schools - because we're shaping the minds of the future. If we can convince them that this an important issue, they'll become our future leaders. You know - 15, 20 years future Prime Minister, future MLAs. We need that level of compassion within our young kids.

[3:00 p.m.]

THE CHAIR: Mr. Harrison.

LARRY HARRISON: Thank you very much for your presentation. You're lucky to have Mr. Hallman as your MLA and he's very lucky to have your hearts and minds in his constituency.

Mr. Maguire took all my mindset in his first question. He went where I wanted to go, so I just want to carry that a little bit further.

In our culture, children are valued highly - I mean, all people are, but our children are. We try to keep them away from violence, and whenever they do make mistakes, we

bend over backwards to try and get them rehabilitated and so on. Then you step into another culture, where they're actually training the children to perform violence.

So you have those two cultures, and I'm sure they're probably using our culture against us, because the folks who are there are going to be hesitant about taking the life of a child.

Are children taken prisoner by the Forces, and if they are, what do they do with them in these other countries?

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: The only case that I can - I assume they have in Afghanistan, because I don't have the stats on that.

One thing is, we don't call them "detainees" or "prisoners." We retrieve children - children who are in hostilities, if they are child soldiers. I'm sure that when I say the words "child soldiers," you're thinking of a young boy armed with an AK-47. Don't forget that there are multiple roles that children play in hostilities. They can be spies, they can be porters, they can be bush wives, in some of these cases. So they are classified as "child soldiers" in that context.

When we retrieve a child - and this is one of the things we train for security sector actors in other countries - we disarm the individual, and then we demobilize them by sending them to a UNICEF child protection officer. The protocols are really well established. We don't arrest them. We can go into some other political issues that came out of Afghanistan, but the protocol is that we turn those children over to a child protection officer who works through UNICEF and then get them properly rehabilitated into this DDR program. It's not perfect, but those are the protocols from a Canadian Forces point of view that we follow.

When it comes down to things like piracy at sea, it becomes a little bit more difficult. We've had cases where pirates were seized at sea, and some of them were children, but there's no facility ashore or onboard a ship to maintain that child. We have to release those children back to sea with appropriate supplies, and "That's your home in that direction. Sail off."

That makes it a little bit more difficult depending on the environment that you're running in, but certainly, from a hostility point of view, there are protocols and there is doctrine there that children are retrieved and rehabilitated.

LARRY HARRISON: I love that term. Thank you.

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: We don't say they're in prison. We say they're "accommodated" or "detained." We retrieve and accommodate.

LARRY HARRISON: Exactly. I love your language in reference to the retrieving of children, which is great.

Does the UN have any influence at all on some of these countries that are using children as soldiers?

JOËLLE BADMAN: There's a list that's released every year on the countries that do use child soldiers. The approach is a bit of a naming and shaming to bring the international community's attention to what countries are using child soldiers, and whether those are state forces that are using child soldiers or whether they're non-state actors - rebel militia groups and so on and so forth.

Those countries get named every year. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict releases this list and it has had an impact in the sense that some countries have reacted very much to being listed and are actively sort of trying to want to get delisted, so wanting to get their names removed off that list.

Some other countries have not responded to being listed and it has less of an impact but part of that is sort of to bring to the global community's attention where child soldiers are used and how we, in our international advocacy efforts, can put pressure on some of those countries to work on changing practices that lead to child recruitment and engagement in forces.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: I'll follow up with what my colleague just mentioned - is there anything adopted at the UN? Is it through the Security Council Committee? I know there may be a list but is there something that other jurisdictions are pushing for? Often you see adoption of a resolution that pretty much states what they are trying to achieve - is there anything like that at the UN level?

JOËLLE BADMAN: Yes, there's a couple of different guiding principles or documents that countries have been invited to sign on to over the years.

The Universal Rights of the Child is one, which has been signed by every country in the world with the exception of the United States and Somalia, I believe - I don't think that has changed. That's one that sort of lays out a series of principles around how children are expected to be treated by all societies and what their rights are as children. We also have the Paris Principles specifically that look at addressing some of the experiences of children in conflict that are a guiding document as well.

Most recently, which I mentioned, we were part of launching the Vancouver Principles with the Government of Canada in November 2017. Those look specifically at principles around interactions, prevention and use of child soldiers specifically. I won't

have the exact number right because the countries are actually signing on. Every day our communications team is in coordination with that but it was around 65 countries that have signed on - the last I heard from all over the world.

As an organization we're also working to activate some of our allies in some of the countries we work in to engage and support signing on to those declarations. We actually helped craft the principles as well, based on some of our expertise and experiences internationally on what we think state forces should be committing to when they think about preventing child soldiers, but also interacting with child soldiers that have already been recruited.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Halman.

TIM HALMAN: I'd like to go into the field of operations a little bit if that's alright. I was wondering if you could describe some of the techniques used to - you referred to de-escalating situations and you referred in terms of re-socializing an individual, a lot of patience and a lot of love.

I'm curious as to the techniques employed, that are utilized in the field of operations with respect to de-escalating a situation with a child soldier.

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: Once again it depends on the situation. Every situation is different. We use an acronym that basically tells the individual that first off, you have to assess whether or not it's a low, medium or high-risk situation. If there's a weapon present it's high risk, right away. If it's low risk, it could be children who are acting delinquent, throwing rocks, throwing bottles, things of that nature. It could be somewhere in between like medium risk - a child coming up and selling sex, for example, prostitution, a child that is trying to de-mobilize - but you don't really know whether or not he has a hidden IED underneath. Right away we have to make that assessment: is it a low, high, or medium risk?

Then you want to do a quick assessment on the individual. Is that individual under the influence of drugs - you mentioned earlier about the mixture of cocaine and gunpowder. It's called brown-brown which is kind of a cocaine derivative - marijuana, cocaine, heroin. You really don't know until you actually confront an individual like that. If the situation is under control, we know what to look for in terms of hostile intent. How is that individual carrying the weapon? Does that young child have his finger on the trigger? Is he well-disciplined and keep his finger off the trigger? Does he just have it slung over his shoulder?

The objective there is to maintain a level of firmness and a level of calm and then try to convince the individual through a number of mechanisms. You want the individual to try to give up his or her weapon, if they happen to be carrying one. How do you do that?

One of the tricks that we do came out of General Dallaire's experience in Rwanda, with an AK-47 pointed up his left nostril, with a child with his finger just off the trigger. He reached in and pulled out a candy bar, because he knew that the kids were hungry. He handed the child a candy bar - it's still in the wrapper. Of course, what's the child going to do? He's starving, and he has to use both hands to open up the candy wrapper. He puts his gun down on the ground. Right away you have established a level of trust, and that is your opening in terms of engagement.

There's a video that we now use of two peacekeepers in a LAV approaching a child road block. In the first vignette, it shows how the soldier causes a level of escalation with a hostile voice or a hostile action through body movement. He didn't come at it calmly, he came at it very defensively. In the next scene, there is a gun shot, and you see the child lying on the ground.

In the next scene, they replay it again. What does that individual do when he comes up in the LAV? He puts his weapon down on top of the LAV, he looks at him, and he says, hey can I come down for a minute? It's nice and calm. He stands in front of the child, salutes, and says something in whatever language - good morning commander. The child takes his hand off the weapon and salutes back and thinks, holy crow, I'm getting some respect here as a child soldier. Then the soldier drops on his knee and starts talking to him eye to eye.

The secret to how to interact with these children is to try to get yourself in a level of security. You always have somebody watching your back while you're doing this. You know that you still have control over the situation, and you start to develop a rapport with the child, and you start to develop a level of trust. From there, it blossoms.

You might be able to demobilize the individual, or you might gain some valuable information with respect to the disposition of forces in the area. Every situation is different.

It could be a young girl who's pregnant, or has a young baby because she was a bush wife. How do you deal with that situation? A 14-year-old girl with a three-month-old baby could be carrying an IED underneath, and this is the situation they found in Somalia. Warlords or armed groups were using young girls with live babies as weapons of war, as a weapons system to deliver it. Who's going suspect a young girl with a baby would have an IED under her dress?

We now train our security sector actors to assess the situation, understand the politics or the threat situation that they're in, and then provide what we call defence in depth. "Please put the baby on the ground and step away." We'll go check the baby to make sure it's not armed with a grenade or something, and then we'll send somebody over to her to check her out. This is the type of tactics of these armed groups, and they become more inventive every day. The level of risk grows exponentially, so we have to be very vigilant. We have to use this process time and time again.

Situational awareness is key, but every situation is different. I wish I had a good answer for you, but that's long-winded with a couple of examples.

TIM HALMAN: There's no substitute for experience. Your experiences are certainly giving us a better sense of what it is that VTECS are faced with.

I would like to take a few steps back in terms of the field of operations. You're confronted with that situation, but I'm curious, though, as to what recruitment looks like in some of these countries. I recognize that of course it's going to vary from nation to nation. What does recruitment look like?

[3:15 p.m.]

JOËLLE BADMAN: It does vary quite a bit from nation to nation. I think oftentimes the underlying causal factors are different in some ways. Frequently, in terms of recruitment, we talk about voluntary, forced, and coerced.

When we say "voluntary," we don't ever mean that children can legally volunteer to join an armed force group, but some people sort of go and find a group to join. Oftentimes, they're driven by a need to have some basic needs met that aren't being met in their communities. They're looking for a community. They're looking for recognition, something. They may go and find a group sometimes. We call it voluntary, but recognize that children can't actually make that choice for themselves.

We also see forced recruitment. This is actual abduction of children. We have a member of our international advisory committee, Michel Chikwanine, who is from the Congo and who was someone who was forcibly recruited. An armed group came into his community, basically rounded up some children, threw them into the back of a truck, and gave them some of the drugs that Ken mentioned to start training them and teaching them to become adaptable to violence. They maybe make them kill somebody they know and care about to force them into that life. That's what we call forcible recruitment.

Then we also sometimes have coerced. This is where there's a little bit more back and forth, really trying to coax people to join up. They may threaten, "If you don't join us, we'll kill your family, so you have no choice but to come with us." Those are some of the different ways that people do it.

I will say, too, that some of the things that we see around recruitment - there are some different strategies, quite sophisticated strategies, that we talk about. We call them the "net" and the "funnel." These are really strategic approaches to going into a community and getting people to buy into supporting the armed group in some capacity.

We're actually seeing that these strategies, which are used in rural remote communities in different parts of the world, are the same strategies that are used in Canada, for example, for recruiting kids into gangs. Similar strategies are being used in recruitment for violent extremism in Canada online. So it's actually quite sophisticated, and there are a lot of parallels in this case.

That's a short summary, but it does vary quite a bit depending on the geographical context that you're in.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I'm going to go back to examples where you provide foreign training. I'm just curious about where that funding comes from. Is it from the country that's using your services, or is that through your organization?

JOËLLE BADMAN: Again, that varies depending on where we are. For example, with this new project in South Sudan, we're funded by Global Affairs Canada for three years to deliver. That's one source of funding for a particular area.

In some other cases, we have had a grant or philanthropic funding from large donors who have supported us delivering training in a particular country for a particular period of time. With our partnership in Jordan, for example, the partnership was really positive and moving really quickly. We made a decision as an organization to use some of our general funding to make that happen in the initial phases to support how much momentum and enthusiasm there was for training in that country.

It really depends. We do rely a lot on donations and philanthropic grants to make things possible.

BEN JESSOME: The follow-up is two parts. Do you actively seek relationships with countries to provide the service, I guess, compared to countries that reach out to you? Are there countries that, when approached to provide the training, have refused to accept your offer?

JOËLLE BADMAN: To my knowledge, no one has ever refused when we've initiated a partnership. As I said earlier, we really firmly believe in having buy-in and having that commitment from senior leadership, and the government and state forces, because that's how the training will be most effective. We don't want to force or push this on anybody. Can you remind me of the first part of your question?

TIM HALMAN: I just wanted to know if you seek out relationships, compared to countries that would reach out to you?

JOËLLE BADMAN: Yes, thank you. I think it's a little bit of both. Some of our partnerships have come about - as I've said, they've been relational. For example, we work in Rwanda, General Dallaire has a long history and some really strong relationships in Rwanda that have lasted over the years, so we work there.

In other cases, we've also looked specifically at targeting countries that we know are using children, and we've actively pursued grants and opportunities to be able to go in and offer training to those countries. That's where some of our more emerging projects have come out of. For example, South Sudan is one of those. We have another project that should be starting soon in the Congo. Those are some where we targeted and really wanted to look at countries that we know are actively using children.

In some other cases, I think they've come out of various relationships and expressions of interest from state forces that have maybe heard about our work in a different country and approached us to see if it was possible if we could come there instead.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Martin.

TAMMY MARTIN: Thank you to both of you for your presentation. It's quite eye-opening - shocking, a lot of it, and sad as well.

Thank you for the work you do. To think that you could be getting contacted from these countries, or in war-torn situations or violent situations, that has to be positive, that they are looking to Canada for training that is provided from us. That gives me some hope.

I'm curious, if you could talk a little bit, is there a difference between young girls and young boys? Is there a different recruitment process? Are there equal numbers of girls and boys who are being recruited?

JOËLLE BADMAN: I'll start. Ken will supplement with his knowledge from the VTECS Program. There are some differences between girls and boys that we know of, but I do think it's important to state that Ken made the point earlier where he said, "I imagine when you are thinking of a child soldier, you are thinking of a young boy with an AK-47."

We know that young girls also carry AK-47s, that they are also on the "front lines" but there are some very specific gender dynamics that we consider in our training. We know that some of that sexual, and reproductive, and house labour that happens is offered by girls and supported by girls in camps. Boys in some places perform those functions as well.

The risk for sexual gender-based violence is obviously much higher for girls. We don't have numbers specifically; even internationally we don't have numbers on the amount of child soldiers that exist. It's a very difficult thing to put a number on. There are some different organizations that have thrown numbers around over the course of the years.

We don't use those numbers, because we don't necessarily consider them to be reliable, so we definitely don't even have a breakdown between boys and girls as to what that would look like.

We do know, based on our experience, based on the experience of the forces we trained and what they say they are seeing, that girls are used, and very common, in the same ways and particularly targeted for some specific vulnerabilities that are different than boys. Can you add anything, Ken?

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: On that note, one of the things we've gleaned from our discussions with some of these officers that we've been training, particularly in Uganda - I mentioned several countries that we trained in Kenya, Somalia in particular - where girls are being employed in the roles of bush wives, or the reproduction roles or cooks, porters.

In some cases, the girl has an agency where she will accept a bush husband and the protection of that bush husband, in order to protect herself from being raped by multiple men or other boys. In that particular case, some of these girls are becoming wives to commanders and they will become more savage, if you will, or more competent as warriors, to the extent that they are actually more violent than the boys are, so they can preserve their security.

So, we found in cases like the LRA, the Lord's Resistance Army, that was in Uganda that was formed by Joseph Kony, who has now fathered 250-some children through bush wives, that some of the women that were in that army, based on my discussions with some of the Uganda officers a few weeks ago, were some of the most competent commanders in the field, and some of the most savage commanders in the field.

So girls have unique challenges in that capacity, and there was another train of thought but, I forgot.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Badman.

JOËLLE BADMAN: I was just going to add that as well there is a strategic choice in recruiting girls into armed forces, in the sense that girls breed more child soldiers, so a force can actually increase its numbers by having girls have more children to increase their numbers. Over a long period of time there are some children who are born into armed groups who are born for the purpose of being child soldiers, and that increases the number of that particular forces contingent.

So there's a strategic choice to it as well, beyond just the other roles that they perform, but thinking long-term for your cause and for the armed conflict that you're a part of, that that's a decision that's made to actually grow children into the force.

TAMMY MARTIN: Wow, that's pretty disheartening to hear those comments, to think especially coming from my little corner of the world in Cape Breton, it's just unbelievable. As members of the Legislature, what is it that we can do to help you, or what can we do?

JOËLLE BADMAN: That's a great question, and thank you for asking it. We frequently get the question - even when I started working for the Dallaire Initiative, it was a question I asked in my interview: Why are you here in Halifax? You know, of all of the places in the world that this international organization could be, why is it based in Halifax?

There are a lot of reasons why we're based in Halifax that are great; our partnership with Dalhousie University is one of them. Our executive director is from Nova Scotia and brings those roots. Even General Dallaire has committed to Halifax and has moved here in recent years, but he's never here. (Laughter) He lives here, but not really. We are sort of in this tiny pocket of the world where you don't traditionally see organizations that are doing the work that we do, usually they are in Toronto, or in New York or wherever.

[3:30 p.m.]

In terms of how you can support our work, I think that one of the things that we would like to do is to increase our support locally, of people who know that we're here and what we're doing internationally, spreading the word about what we do, connecting people to our organization. I mentioned very briefly, specifically to the VTECS program, we're finishing up three of three years and we would really love to continue this program, and as a committee and as supporters of issues related to veterans, if there was a possibility to see some sort of support that would help us with the longevity of the program, that would be something that we as an organization would love to explore and talk more about.

Participation in our public events, we do a number of events in Halifax. We really try to bring this conversation to the community - as I mentioned, our speaker series events that come up in July. We very recently just did an event at the Rebecca Cohn with Emmanuel Jal who is a former child solider; it was a great sort of musical celebration and discussion. Getting your constituents, or people who are interested, out to those events is a great support to us in continuing this conversation and raising the profile of this issue.

Of course, there's our advocacy work. A lot of our advocacy work is at an international level, but we have had some great success recently doing some federal advocacy with the Government of Canada and getting support in that way. If there were ways in which we could see some of that same success provincially, it would be really wonderful.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Ms. Martin touched on some of the stuff I was going to ask. I was thinking that it must be difficult because people's attention span now is about 30 seconds, and I'm guilty of that sometimes. You get this outrage when Boko Haram and things like that happen, and people ask, what can I do? They don't realize the next day or the next week, when they are on to something else, that this issue is still ongoing, and it takes years to settle if it ever gets settled.

I'm not even going to ask you a question. I just want to thank you. I think the term hero gets thrown around quite easily nowadays. Everybody is a hero for whatever they do. The work that you do is truly heroic, and people don't know. I don't claim to be an expert about this, but I have read lots of books and have spoken to lots of people and have been to lots of these different public speaking events. I do think that people need to open their eyes and see what's happening out there and how common it is.

I want to thank you for all the work you do and for continuing to bear this cross that most of us go to bed at night and don't even think about. I was reading from notes because I didn't want to cry.

JOËLLE BADMAN: Thank you for giving us this platform to share what we do, our programs, and the impact of our programs, how they impact veterans' lives and also children's lives.

That really is our goal as an organization, to make sure that the discourse about children's rights is at the forefront of everything. Before we think about military intervention, we are talking about the impact on children. It's at the forefront of education and everything like that. We want to make sure that children's rights and children are part of that conversation. Getting offered a forum like this to share what we do and to continue that dialogue is really important. Thank you all for having us.

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: Once again, I'll just echo what Joëlle mentioned. Thank you very much for this opportunity to share. We have a lot of veterans in our community in Nova Scotia. I represent just a handful who have been trained to go off and do this great work of General Dallaire.

As I mentioned before, a lot of our veterans who are out there have just retired. Some of them are young, they have been to Afghanistan, and they are suffering PTSD. We need to start thinking about how we can employ people with these skill sets to work within our communities to make our communities even stronger than they are today.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

THE CHAIR: I do have three more questioners. You can still do a final reply.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Sorry, I wasn't trying to cut anyone off. (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Mr. Jessome.

BEN JESSOME: I just have a curiosity. You have some material here, and your presentation indicates some of your partners locally and nationally. I am curious to know whether you have international partners. Are there other countries that support it, perhaps as part of a coalition? Are there other countries that have like programs?

JOËLLE BADMAN: There are definitely other organizations and other countries that are working specifically on the issue of child soldiers. We are the only one doing it through that sort of preventative security sector lens.

Ken talked a little bit about the DDR process - demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of child soldiers. That's not an area where we work specifically, but there are lots of other organizations internationally that are really focused on what happens after, particularly after a conflict. How do we deal with the trauma that young people are experiencing? How do we rebuild society? There are some organizations that focus on that specifically.

In terms of international partners, our work is quite significant. At the international level, we work really closely with a variety of different UN agencies and groups, for example, in some different capacities. I mentioned AMISOM already, the African Union Mission in Somalia, working with some sort of bigger peacekeeping groups that are deploying or have already deployed.

I also see that Ken has a note on his piece of paper because he reminded me in relation to your question, Mr. Wilson, around other sort of international guiding things. There's something called Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) that is really sort of driving this idea that schools and what they call the Safe Schools Declaration - that we should make sure schools are always protected in times of conflict - so we had a role in crafting some of the guiding documents around GCPEA as well. Those are some of the various international partnerships we have that are always ever-changing and ever-growing, too, as our work continues to expand.

THE CHAIR: Ms. DiCostanzo.

RAFAH. DICOSTANZO: I just want to end it by really a big thank you for the children of the world, especially the children of Iraq, if you have ever worked with them. I can't imagine that children like me have gone through things that I could never imagine. I can't imagine a father or any family in any country or any culture that would put their kids to this. These are very difficult times in those countries, not the norm. Nobody does that, it doesn't matter what the culture is, so I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

THE CHAIR: Last question to Mr. Wilson.

HON. DAVID WILSON: It's not a question, it's just a request to my committee colleagues - if we could, as a committee, write a letter indicating that we've had a presentation and that we recognize the important work they do.

I know maybe we can't get the private donors they have but definitely to send that letter to Air Canada Foundation, Wounded Warriors, Dalhousie, indicating that we hope they could continue supporting this initiative - a letter of support for the Child Soldiers Initiative.

THE CHAIR: Do we have an agreement?

HON. DAVID WILSON: Nobody's going to vote against it - I hope not.

One more. Ms. DiCostanzo.

RAFAH DICOSTANZO: To continue with Ms. Martin's, if you have an event that you'd like some support, email us, please. I meant to add that.

THE CHAIR: Okay, follow-up, if you have any final words. (Interruptions)

HON. DAVID WILSON: I think everybody just said yes - we're pretty laid back here. (Laughter)

JOËLLE BADMAN: I will just say in response that as I mentioned, we do have two events upcoming in July that will be hosted at the Halifax Central Library, so I will make sure that information gets out to all of you. We'd love to have you attend and have your constituents attend as well, if that's something that's feasible for them. It's a free event and it's a really great opportunity to learn more about us, about this issue, and to participate in the conversation.

THE CHAIR: That's July 4th and the 25th?

JOËLLE BADMAN: Yes, the Halifax Central Library. Mr. Hoffer, final comments?

CAPT. (RET'D) KEN HOFFER: Again, thank you very much for this opportunity. It was a great pleasure interacting with all of you, and I hope we can do this again. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Badman, anything you would like to say?

JOËLLE BADMAN: I will just say for those of you who didn't see me when I was standing, I am going on maternity leave in a couple of weeks so I actually won't get to see

the VTECS program to its full fruition this summer. However my wonderful colleague Molly, who is our director of education and research, will be at the helm. If you need to get in touch, I included our VTECS@ChildSoldiers.org email, which is sort of the general program email to make sure you get somebody who is filling in and not my out-of-office reply for the next year.

That's all of our social media stuff on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and our website as well, where you can get access to lots of our materials, publications, and some of the videos that we've produced recently. The one that Ken mentioned with the differences and interactions is just a really great illustration of how our training works.

Again, I just want to thank you all for the invitation and for giving us this forum to share the work that we're passionate about and I appreciate the passion and interest that you've shown in this issue so, thanks so much.

THE CHAIR: My pleasure, thank you very much on behalf of the committee. It's a difficult subject for a lot of reasons. People from those different countries, we can't understand why this has happened and we can't seem to stop the countries from doing that, that's what it would appear to me, it's a very difficult issue. We had almost 20 questions and supplementaries, so there's a lot of interest. Thank you so much and I know it's not easy for you guys either.

We have just one issue. So, we'll just let our presenters leave if they wish.

[3:41 p.m. The committee recessed.]

[3:42 p.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: Just a couple of items. First one is a letter we received back from Randy Delorey, Minister of Health and Wellness. I don't know if there's any follow-up to that particular memo. Everybody has received it, so you must have had some time to think about it.

Next, if there's nothing, we do have a meeting on June 19th and it could also include an agenda setting if you wish, or we could leave it until September for agenda setting.

DARLENE HENRY: There's only one meeting scheduled for September 18th, and there's nothing after that.

THE CHAIR: What's the consensus? Is there a consensus? September, okay. On the June 19th meeting, there's an update from the Department of Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Health Authority on the federal-provincial Camp Hill agreement. That will be the topic.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 3:44 p.m.]