

Dallaire

continued from page 3

and lived what is happening to 80 percent of humanity. And bring that passion back and change it.

TSN: Sir, about a year ago – as you were just talking about this new media – we saw a viral video that became a news story in itself, and it was about Joseph Kony. You’ve been doing work around the issue of child soldiers; you created the Will to Intervene Project. Can you talk a little bit about the work you are doing today and how every-day people can plug into it – because there is obviously a deep hunger right in this country to try to make a difference there.

RD: I think the awareness in this particular cause can have legs, where maybe other causes are more difficult to explain or difficult to engage people in. We’re talking about young boys and girls who have been turned into weapons of war because of the proliferation of small arms, and because of their availability. Adults in these conflict zones, in these imploding nations, are using the simplest tool – yet it’s become the most effective tool of combat in these developing countries.

So the argument that I present is that in our country we put everything in motion when we have an Amber Alert, when we have one of our own who is abducted or something like that. And yet we are standing by and letting over 200,000 children at any time of the year to be used and abused and drugged up and raped and so on, as weapons of war. And they are now the primary weapon of these wars.

And this is where, I think I can argue, that it’s not good enough to simply rehabilitate and reintegrate them after, we’ve got to actually prevent this. We’ve got to reduce these numbers and that’s why my research and the research we’re doing in the field is important.

I actually sent a team into Sierra Leone yesterday because the president of Sierra

Leone has given us the mandate to retrain his whole army, all his police forces, and to influence the content of the curriculum of primary schools in regards to how to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers.

We give new tactics and methodologies to the police and to the military when they face child soldiers — without having to kill them. And so we’re actually into a five-year program there and we’re spreading it out throughout sub-Saharan Africa right now, and actually neutralizing that weapon.

So when we talk in terms like that we are specifically talking about the peers of our children and pulling them out of the war zones, out of being the weapons of war, and



Gen. Romeo Dallaire

vidually or through what this new power base is around the world which is the NGO community – they can influence public opinion and policies. These kids can either join one or create their own, and through them be able to coalesce tremendous amounts of influence in order to create these international policies and certainly influence public opinion.

And that’s where I think the effort’s got to be, encourage them to join and engage in NGOs, go out there for a

week, a month, get your boots dirty, come back, and with that zeal, that passion, of what you’ve seen and heard and felt and tasted, you can create through the revolutionary communications a coalescing of the youth that influence ultimately their par-

tive itself, out of Dalhousie University which is leading the charge in the countries where conflict is going on. We’ve been working through Rwanda, Botswana, South Africa; we’ve been training even into countries like Cote D’Ivoire. We are looking at this new phenomenon of child pirates, where they’re using the youth of Somalia to be pirates, so we’re actually looking at resolving that problem. So one is, support that Child Soldier Initiative and it’s on the web, it’s easy to find.

And then secondly, we do work with certain NGOs who I think are the more progressive ones in trying to reinforce our efforts. And that would be UNICEF International, although that is a UN agency. And Save the Children. They are, to me, excellent – my experience in the field in Sierra Leone and of course Rwanda reflects that.

TSN: Are there other colleges with a Romeo Dallaire scholarship for their students?

RD: Well that’s very interesting. There is one that is being done at Dalhousie, and it’s from the Romeo Dallaire Child Soldier Initiative that’s got a scholarship for two students every year. The funds for that were put together by the Royal Military College of Canada – your equivalent to West Point. And they climbed Kilimanjaro and collected over \$30,000, and their effort continues.

And these cadets realize that one day they may have to face child soldiers. By supporting us they hope to actually reduce that possibility. It’s a long term effort – perseverance – and the fact that this is not building a school; this is preventing, ultimately, countries to recruit children to destroy schools. And that’s what we’re after.

For more information on Dallaire’s work go to www.childsoldiers.org. To get involved in NGOs, go to www.unicef.org, or www.savethechildren.org.

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more importantly, preventing them from becoming one.

TSN: And what can we do to help with that because I’m guessing everyone’s on board with you.

RD: Your optimism is the greatest encouragement. What you can do in fact is rather interesting – is encourage the youth of our nations to be engaged. Because I believe that their engagement – either indi-

ents, and start that attrition of the use of children as weapons of war.

TSN: So I know people are going to read this and they are going to rush right to their phone or computer to sign right up. Are there any organizations that you know of that are NGOs that are actually providing people with the opportunity to plug in that way?

RD: Well there is the Child Soldier Initia-

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