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Dallaire Institute Report

Overview of the Institute:

The Dallaire Institute is an international non-governmental organization focused on training, capacity building, research and learning around the prevention of child soldiers. The Dallaire Institute was founded in 2007 by General Roméo Dallaire, who was the Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda during the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. Because of his firsthand experience with fighting child soldiers in Rwanda, General Dallaire recognized the need to create trainings to learn how to navigate the issue of child soldiers, both for prevention of their recruitment and when encountering them in conflict, and he also sought to bring greater attention and international cooperation to end the use of child soldiers. Since then, the Dallaire Institute has worked within the security sector to educate thousands on how to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers and how to react to child soldiers in combat. The Dallaire Institute has also worked to establish their own academic journal and regularly contributes to publications such as *International Peacekeeping* and has worked with agencies such as the UN to bring attention and action to the problems of child soldiers. One important mission that they spearheaded was the creation of the 2017 Vancouver Principles

which sets out guidelines for interaction with children in peacekeeping. They also have dedicated funds into understanding the effects of “moral injury”, which refers to the trauma faced by military personnel. This is a new and important branch of the Research and Learning team that will help establish support for people who encounter child soldiers in combat. All of these different aspects of the Dallaire Institute strengthen its well-rounded mission to end the use and recruitment of child soldiers, and it also makes it interesting as not every placement will be the same.

Experience in the Placement:

My particular placement was within the Research and Learning team under the supervision of their MEAL manager, Nisreen Abou Mrad. My first week was spent reading several documents on training and organizational benchmarks. These consisted of benchmarks collected from different organizations to give myself a broad background on the benchmarks that my supervisor had already considered in her work. This laid the foundations for my literature review, which I will go into more detail on in a moment. It also introduced me to the kinds of training evaluations I would conduct, and the training forms I would be getting data from. This proved to be especially useful when we did not have field information synthesized and I needed to conduct reviews for trainings that hadn't had information inputted into spreadsheets. During this first week, I was also introduced to the people I would be working with over email and I would meet the majority of the team during my second week.

My first project in my placement was establishing a literature review for organizational benchmarks that would serve as companions to the monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and

learning (MEAL) guidance that my supervisor had worked on. For this literature review, I read through numerous articles and consulted different humanitarian organizational benchmarks to be able to give the most updated and specific recommendations for the categories of training, research and learning, advocacy, communications, and operations. Some challenges that I encountered completing this review were the many benchmarks created for humanitarian organizations that operated in crisis scenarios. Considering the Dallaire Institute's focus on training and also shaping research and policy, these benchmarks were not always the most applicable despite being designed for humanitarian NGOs. I ended up narrowing my literature review to focus on benchmarks developed by Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), the Sphere Project's Standards in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management, People in Aid's Code of Good Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel, and the Core Humanitarian Standards on Quality and Accountability (CHS).

The next project, and the one that I primarily spent time on, was going through evaluation files from security trainings completed in 2021. I first connected with the training coordination and evaluation office to be able to establish what documents the organization had and who I needed to get in contact with in order to get outstanding evaluation reports. Afterwards, I needed to connect with our offices in Mozambique, Rwanda, South Sudan, and the DRC. The actual collection of information from offices was one of the more challenging aspects of the evaluation reports. There were changes in staffing due to many people being on temporary contracts which made it more difficult to track down reports. Another aspect was the difference in time zone. In order to communicate with staff in our African offices, I would most often have to get up early in the morning or have anticipated responses and scheduled messages to send during their shifts. The actual completion of the evaluation reports was fairly straightforward. I would look over the

excel spreadsheets provided and input data based on age, gender, and country of origin. I would then analyze percentages and record answers for the different questions being asked of participants in the trainings. I would then complete qualitative analysis to summarize the strengths of the training, what changes needed to be made, and any overall comments. This could be tedious, as the evaluation reports consisted mostly of summarizing data, but I feel grateful to have worked on something that I know will be utilized heavily by the organization. Namely, these reports will be provided to shareholders and donors to support the continuing and expansion of funding for trainings. I know having these data will be important to continuing the work of all aspects of the Dallaire Institute and I am glad to be able to have provided that within my practicum.

Recommendations and Review:

Overall, I would recommend this placement. I found the people I worked with to be without fail incredibly generous with their time, welcoming, and true examples of excellence in their field. If I ever expressed any concerns (either personal or based on the work I was doing), they went out of their way to offer to accommodate me. I've felt that they had a vested interest in me and my work, and I could not thank them enough for their support during this placement. I will say that students considering this work should be self-motivated and have great time management. I completed this placement remotely, in part due to COVID, but I did not have frequent meetings with my supervisor, and I was required to manage the time that I had allotted for the practicum on my own and virtually. This could be a challenge for some students, but I do think some of that concern stems from this practicum placement being completed during a

COVID year. I strongly encourage any students who are interested in the work of the Dallaire Institute to apply, and I have absolute confidence that they will take away incredible insights into humanitarian work and leave with an appreciation for the quality of work that the Dallaire Institute does.