

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security (previously known as the Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative) is an Institute based out of Halifax, NS but operates globally. The goal of the Dallaire Institute is to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict through policy development and advocacy, training security sector actors, community engagement, and research. The initiative was originally started by Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire in 2007 in response to his experience as a peacekeeper in the Rwandan Genocide but was eventually adopted in conjunction with Dalhousie University in 2010. In 2020, the Initiative was renamed the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security, an internationally minded institute with a dual lens focus on the protection of children and understanding the operational impacts on security sector actors. The institute is active in Canada, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Mozambique, and Rwanda primarily, but carries out capacity building and guides policy development in other countries like the United Kingdom, Uruguay, Sierra Leone and more.

The Institute highlights the many different ways that children are used in armed conflict which is why it no longer uses the term child soldiers. From combatants, to sexual exploitation, to spies, to suicide bombers, to simply managing base camp, children under the age of 18 are used every day in combat zones even if their role is not what one would consider a traditional soldier role. The Dallaire institute focuses on collaborative research, advocacy for policy development and change with a focus on children's protections and rights, and

prevention-oriented training for security sector actors. One of the major projects that the Dallaire Institute has successfully developed is the creation of the Vancouver Principles in conjunction with the Canadian government. The Vancouver principles are a set of political commitments that focus on child protection in peacekeeping and have been endorsed by over 100 countries.

My role in the Dallaire institute primarily revolved around research within training for the Institute. I met with my advisor Ashley in December to construct an approach for my practicum in the new year. We agreed that a standard work week would include: 4 hours working in-person at the Dallaire Institute's office on campus on Wednesdays from 8:30 to 12:30; and 3 hours of independent work that would be done at my convenience, and which would need to be completed before we meet the following week.

The first week, Ashley was away so I reviewed the mandate of the Dallaire institute and training tools and modules to understand the organization and its mission better. I then crafted a minimum of six questions that I had during and after reviewing the material. I sent these to Ashley in advance of our first in person session the following week. When we met on the week of January 18th, Ashley spent some time discussing our training approach and looking at some of our training materials, photos and videos. We also spent some time discussing the list of questions that I had put together. Finally, we discussed the two main projects that I would work on during my time at the institute: preparing our training calendar for the upcoming year or two and preparing an analysis of recent training evaluations and training After Action Reports. She

also introduced the digital component of my time: completing the UNICEF Rights and Results Based Management course.

For the following couple of weeks I organized the training schedules. I looked through all of the training events that had taken place in 2022 and were planned for 2023 and organized them in a table in excel. For each of these events I recorded what the related project the training was connected to; where the training took place, the type of training it was; when it took place; who ran the training; the group and gender breakdown in the training; whether the After Action Reports, Evaluation reports, participant list, and evaluation forms were submitted, and any additional information that might have been useful. During this time I also started the UNICEF course and completed the Introduction, Rights, Principles and Programming frameworks, Understanding the Context, and Theory of Change modules. Each week I would complete one or two modules from the course and then discuss them with Ashley during our in meeting sessions. Sometimes the conversations would be more informative while other times they would be more practical and we would apply what I had learned to developing a hypothetical project.

In the second week of February I began reading through After Action Reports and Evaluation forms, then began compiling the information from these documents into an excel table. I categorized the information from the reports into the following categories: course type and place, the dates when they took place, gender Breakdown of each training, type of report, the general contents of each report and training, the training exercises conducted, the training material used, the teaching methods used, time management, logistical challenges in training and

travel, general feedback, lessons learned, and recommendations. During this time I completed the Sound, Smart and Realistic Results, Risk Overview and Management, and Aligning Results to Resources modules of the UNICEF course.

Starting mid-March I started working on my recommendation report derived from the 2021 After Action Reports from the excel sheet. This report was based on 18 After Action Reports (AARs) from the training conducted by the Dallaire Institute from March to November 2021 in Rwanda, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Canada. These AARs are prepared by the training facilitator and are used to describe: the types of training (i.e. Training of Trainers (ToTs), Pre-Deployment Training (PDT), Professional Development (PDs), Basic Training (Basic)), how successful the training was, what it consisted of, how it was conducted, and what can be done differently in the future as well as general administrative information. Each AARS analyzed was previously broken down into an excel sheet to compare and isolate potential trends in the report's Lessons Learned and Recommendation sections. The report presents recommendations for changes the Dallaire Institute should implement in the areas of financial and consultant management, pre-training planning, PDs and PDTs, training materials and in-training recommendations, and possibilities for future work based on concerns raised across multiple AARs.

My time at the Dallaire Institute was overall a very positive one. My supervisor was incredibly supportive, communicative, and provided so much perspective and valuable insight to project management, development, and general information about NGOs. I would absolutely

recommend an experience at the Dallaire institute for any student in Political Science or LJSO who are interested in a research centric placement experience. The Dallaire Institute is located on Dalhousie campus, right next to the Killam Library so is very convenient for anyone living close to the university. Most of my work could have been done remotely so there is probably that option as well for individuals who want a less in-person experience; however, working in an office setting was one of the parts that I enjoyed the most about this practicum so I would highly recommend working in-person. The work not related to the UNICEF course was highly individual so I think that is an important consideration when potentially choosing the Dallaire Institute for future students choosing their top placement choices. While not particularly intensive, I think that I gained valuable research skills and experience throughout my time at the Dallaire Institute and I would recommend it if you find the NGO's mission engaging and interesting.

References

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security. (n.d.). Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://www.dallaireinstitute.org/>