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Practicum Site:

Lwala Community Alliance
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Practicum Site Supervisor:

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Understanding NGO Operations in Globally Diverse Context

Introduction: This summer practicum experience was held with Lwala Community Alliance, a mid-sized Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) with offices in Nashville, Tennessee and Migori County, Kenya. The primary objectives of the practicum were to gain key competencies in NGO management through exposure to weekly executive-level strategy, management, and operations meetings and the Second Quarter Board Meeting.

Structure: The original key deliverables for the practicum included the development of an Annual Workplan, and Program Document; however, the scope of work expanded to include the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Guideline, Monitoring and Evaluation Implementation Plan, Project Charter, along with a Publication Guide. The key stakeholders for these products included the co-executive directors, board members, and team leaders from various departments including development, communications, finance, monitoring and evaluation, and program level managers.

Results: Despite the onset of the pandemic, all intended objectives were met. The development of the primary deliverables occurred through an iterative process that relied on cross-cultural collaboration across time zones. After initial drafts of the Annual Workplan and Program Document were developed, staff members of all levels on the Kenyan and American teams were invited to participate in one of four virtual focus groups. In addition, extensive interviews were conducted with team leaders for more detailed feedback. Following these conversations edited drafts were submitted for offline review and feedback.

Conclusions: Although this practicum focused on operations and management skills, it had direct impacts on public health issues. The Annual Workplan and Program Document inform the everyday activities of each department from research to clinical operations. The effort to collaboratively update these documents was driven by the overarching goal of improving efficiency and streamlining operations which by extension, improving the delivery of care to individuals.