

Insan NPO: Working as a Nonprofit With Syrian Migrants in Egypt

Teaching Notes

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PREVIEW

Teaching Notes Case Summary

The founder of Insan NPO, Mona Akram, is trying to determine how to provide schooling, vocational training, and various services to the Syrian community in Egypt. She started by knocking on doors to collect data and offering informal schooling to Syrian children, then progressed with the services to cover an educational center, a certified training program for vocational workers, and a brand of children's toys and baby clothes.

Egypt's receptivity of Syrian refugees has fluctuated over time, and has been influenced by political dispositions and media coverage. At times Syrians were perceived as competitors to the Egyptian workforce and made to feel unwelcome. Competition over scarce donor resources from other NGOs serving migrants and refugees in Egypt, along with complex procedures around foreign funding, influence Insan's decisions, as do government regulations regarding where the NPO can have its headquarters, whether in a residential or a commercial district, which present a hurdle to the continuing operation of the school.

Mona Akram is working to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of Insan NPO and to provide for its future needs.

Teaching Objectives

By reading and discussing this case, students should be able to:

- Outline public policies that impact the relationship between Egypt and Syrian migrants and refugees.
- Identify tools and techniques Insan applies to innovate and survive.
- Discuss strategic management concepts and tools that could enhance the effectiveness of a nonprofit working with migrants and other vulnerable populations.
- Evaluate approaches to management decisions that must be made under difficult circumstances.

Target Audience

This case is suitable for undergraduate and graduate students in public policy, public administration, migration and refugee studies, and business administration and management, in courses such as Essentials of Public Policy and Administration, Management of Nonprofit Organizations, and Ethics and Ethical Deliberation in Government and Business. It may also be appropriate in executive business training and executive training for government or the nonprofit sector.

Within these programs and others, the case text can bring context to the following topics:

- Political and socio-economic factors that complicate how recipient countries manage migrants and refugees.
- The dynamic relationship between government and the nonprofit sector.
- The need for nonprofits to investigate strategic management tools to enhance their effectiveness.

Suggested Teaching Strategy

Distribute the case for students to read before the class session. In class, divide students into teams of three or four participants. A team leader can be elected as the spokesperson for each team and can present the result of their team's deliberations. Another group of three students may act as "Devil's Advocates" and may be assigned the role of challenging the chosen responses of each team.

Another option is for students to work on the case as a take-home assignment, answering discussion questions based on the concepts and principles they have covered in their course.

The following guidance is provided for leading discussion or debate around the question prompts:

For Question 1, students can research international migration treaties and the commitments countries make, especially with a focus on Syrian migrants in Egypt.

For Question 2, students may debate whether continuing to operate the school for migrants in a residential area, rather than a commercial area, is acceptable and ethical. Some students may express personal opinions about how they would respond in the manager's situation.

Presenting a lecture or reading about ethical approaches can help guide discussion. A suggested reading is Chapter 4, "Ethical Deliberation," in R. B. Denhardt, J. V. Denhardt and T. A. Blanc (2014), *Public administration: An action orientation*, 7th edn, International, Wadsworth. The reading discusses the different approaches to ethical deliberation including ethical philosophy, ethical psychology, and ethical action. Students can apply the principles of each approach to their decision-making process in order to identify a possible outcome. Any other textbook or article covering ethical deliberation approaches can be used.

Applying Ethical Deliberations to Case Issues

- Ethical philosophy
 - Utilitarianism dictates that the ethical decision is that which leads to the greater good for the greatest number of people. Building the school in the residential area will bother a few neighbors but will benefit the migrant community; hence its benefits outweigh its costs, and it is therefore an ethical decision. However, another opinion is that violating laws and regulations will harm the community at large and benefit a small group of migrants, and therefore it may be perceived as unethical. The point is that we have to weigh the costs against the benefits of each decision to try to figure out to what extent it is ethical or unethical. There is no one right answer.
 - Deontology says that people should act in accordance with what they perceive as their duty. Helping migrants is our duty, even if it results in violation of regulations. Again, on the other hand, abiding by laws is a duty, so we may opt for closing down the school. There is no one right answer.
- Ethical psychology
 - Pre-conventional stage: The Insan NPO manager will be guided by rewards and punishments and may be afraid to violate laws if the government is perceived as strict, therefore they will not operate the school in a residential area.
 - Conventional stage: The Insan NPO manager will be guided by a drive to conform to the societal values and legal system, so will not violate laws and regulations.
 - Post-conventional stage: The Insan NPO manager understands the need to conform to societal values and laws and the reason why. In the case of Insan NPO, most probably because of the existing NGO law and the high penalties imposed on violaters, the pre-conventional stage may be the dominant line of thinking influencing the decision-making process. However, there is no one right answer and this is a learning insight in itself.
- Ethical action
 - The Insan NPO manager understands the reason behind abiding by norms and values and acts with integrity.

For Question 3, in developing a SWOT analysis, refer to Chapter 5 in J. M. Bryson (2011), *Strategic planning for public and non-profit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement*, 4th edn., John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

For Question 4, students can organize responses by stating overall strategies, then identifying potential barriers to implementation, then presenting a refined proposal.

Suggested Answers to Discussion Questions

1. How can a country such as Egypt balance economic considerations with humanitarian values when accepting migrants and refugees? Can there be a win-win situation? How can the government work more effectively with nonprofit organizations

like Insan?

Egypt is a developing country with limited resources but as signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it has agreed to consider a human rights perspective when accommodating Syrian migrants and refugees within its lands.

Win-win situations can be sought where both the Syrian migrants and refugees and the government end up with acceptable solutions—in other words, the government of Egypt is not overly harmed and the Syrian refugees are well taken care of. In consultation with the UNHCR, there may be an acceptable quota set for each country in terms of numbers of migrants and refugees that will be allowed residence. Support from developed countries and the international development organizations can help Egypt as a recipient country by offering to cover some of the costs incurred as a result of receiving the Syrian refugees and providing them with public education and health services. The international community should also support the recipient country in the necessary rehabilitation, training, and capacity building programs.

The government can also work to help Syrian migrants in Egypt obtain their registration papers without complicated bureaucratic procedures, or to raise awareness in public schools about treating Syrian students with respect. The government of Egypt can work more effectively with NPOs such as Insan to accelerate bureaucratic procedures required to regulate operations for NPOs working with refugees by establishing a task force that acts as a liaison between the NPOs working with migrants and refugees and government organizations responsible, such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health.

2. To open the school for the Syrian refugees, Insan NPO ignored governmental regulations and operated in a designated residential district. The NPO manager also allows children to skip formal schooling. What kind of ethical deliberation approach can be used to justify or argue against these decisions?

- Arguments for Insan NPO continuing operation in the residential area: Since Insan NPO cannot afford the expensive rent of space needed in the commercial area, it should continue operating in the residential area, but make sure to minimize noise to avoid disturbing neighbors. It will be violating governmental regulations but thereby continuing the education of the migrant children, and education is a human right.
- Arguments against Insan NPO continuing operation in the residential area: Part of being ethical is obeying and respecting national rules and regulations. If we allow each citizen—or, in this case, also migrants—to interpret laws and regulations according to their own logic, we will end up with a chaotic situation. Rule of Law is a core dimension of good governance.

3. Prepare a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, challenges) analysis for Insan NPO.

Strengths: Vision, Diverse Programs, Creativity, Commitment

The NPO had a clear vision stating: “investing in individuals to fulfill their potential and have a positive impact in their community.” This vision is broad and inclusive of both Syrians and non-Syrians.

The NPO had different types of programs to cater to the different needs of the Syrian migrants and refugees.

The NPO shifted from offering basic services to offering more creative services that are in line with its vision of investing in individuals. Its branding of the crochet products and the insistence on offering certificates to the graduates from the vocational training program demonstrating innovation and creativity.

The founder and manager of the NPO is committed to serve Syrians and is always looking for diverse ways to overcome challenges met.

Weaknesses: Limited Financial Resources, Informal Education Program

The NPO is struggling to cover its operation costs and sustainability of its operations is not guaranteed. Political events influence the flow of donations dramatically.

The education program offered within the NPO's school is an informal parallel system and therefore is not recognized by the recipient government. The students have to attend a regular public school even for one or two days in order to try to receive a recognized educational certificate.

Opportunities: International and Local Donor Funding, Potential Empathy by Egyptians Toward Syrians

Further fundraising can occur if the government of Egypt streamlines the security approval process.

Insan could expand revenue-generating activities to cover its operation expenses and help support the migrants and refugees.

Insan could collaborate rather than compete with other Egyptian NPOs and development organizations offering similar training and skills development services. There may be an opportunity to integrate the Syrians more into their community by getting them to attend similar classes and trainings by other regular local NPOs offering their services to Egyptians in need. As mentioned in the case, Caritas Egypt and StARS organizations offer capacity development courses to their migrant beneficiaries. Insan NPO can collaborate with these organizations and others in offering joint classes and lectures.

Threats: Stricter Imposition of Laws and Regulation by Government Preventing Operation of Schools in Residential Areas, Continuing Complications of Foreign Funding Approvals

There may be continued difficulty in getting government approvals on foreign funding to Insan NPO.

Closure of the school is possible if Insan cannot resolve its location issue by either finding a donor to pay for new premises in the commercial zone, or getting special permission to continue operation in the residential zone.

4. Suggest potential strategies to pursue over the coming five years. What strategic and tactical improvements can enhance the nonprofit's effectiveness?

- Overall strategy: Develop an advocacy campaign for Syrian migrants' rights in Egypt.
 - Potential barriers: Lack of funding, lack of necessary creative experts in media advocacy.
 - Basic proposal: Develop an advocacy campaign for Syrian migrants through partnership with the International Office of Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), clarifying misconceptions about the Syrians, such as their affiliation to the perceived terrorist group of Moslem Brothers, or their coming to Egypt to capture job opportunities from the Egyptians.
 - The campaign should explain how Syrians can be an added value to the Egyptian society and provide much-needed services and products wherein they are known to excel, such as culinary services and handicrafts. Emotional messages and pictures can be one way of encouraging support for the Syrian cause.
- Overall strategy: Fundraise to establish a formal school for Syrian migrants in an administrative zone of the district.
 - Potential barriers: Lack of fundraising expertise.
 - Basic proposal: Hire a fundraising expert to develop and implement a fundraising campaign to establish a Syrian migrant school in an approved administrative zone; experiment with new IT tools for fundraising such as crowd funding and donating through phone or text messages; coordinate with shops to allow customers to leave change to support Syrian refugees and migrants in Egypt; or prepare joint proposals with other NPOs serving migrants

- in Egypt and submitting proposals to international development organizations.
- Overall Strategy: Find job opportunities for the graduates of the vocational program.
 - Potential barriers: Unemployment problem in Egypt.
 - Basic proposal: Contact industries in need of skilled labor and tune vocational training programs to fill these needs in return for securing paid internships or job opportunities for graduates of the vocational program.

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