Politics & Context: The International Public Sector

Introduction: It is the summer of 2015. You and your team run an entrepreneurship competition (YEE) for an event (TBS) within a UN Organization (UNTA). The competition runs based on sponsorships and is currently behind its expected numbers. TBS's director has two potential sponsors interested in running competitions on refugee issues. Europe, including Carpathia, the host for this year's TBS, is in the middle of a severe refugee crisis. The crisis, and the UN System's response to it, have led to sensitivities around politics, jurisdiction and framing. Carpathia is at the heart of these sensitivities, having recently elected a far-right government led by Perdo Andalow, with strong anti-immigrant views. You now need to work together and decide how to proceed. Should you run this competition? How should you frame it? What organizations or states should you partner with? What can you say to Carpathia and Prime Minister Andalow to sort things out?

The International System: In order to navigate the issues related to this challenge, an overview of the various actors in international politics is valuable. Note that this is a general overview and does not necessarily fully capture all the details or complexities of the system.

Formally, all actors are expected to collaborate openly. However, in a world of political sensitivities, personal egos, limited budgets and overlapping responsibilities, there will be conflicts between many agencies with similar responsibilities.

Member States: The nation state is the basic actor in international politics. Generally, in the UN system, these are defined as Member States, which come together to make decisions in the UN General Assembly, Security Council and many of the Agencies. Note that not every organization has the same set of Member States, some such as Palestine are members of some organizations and not others and some organizations, such as the OECD have a limited set of members.

In addition to participation in the organizations, countries have several ways of interfacing with the UN System. *Missions* work like embassies which officially represent countries to the UN System, they are headed by *Official Representatives* who speak for the country at many functions. The *Ministries of Foreign Affairs* are also a major element, defining the stances of the countries toward international politics. Many countries also have *Development Agencies*, such as USAID or GIZ, which are separate entities that provide official support from the country for development and humanitarian issues. Finally, countries interact directly with one another using *Embassies,* headed by *Ambassadors.*

UN System: The UN is one of the most significant actors outside of states in international relations. It has tremendous authority and resources on most topics related to international politics, but often must work around political or bureaucratic constraints.

Officially, the UN has 6 organs. The *General Assembly* (GA), *Security Council* (UNSC) and *Economic and Social Council* (ECOSOC) bring together member states to make decisions and declarations. The *International Court of Justice* (ICJ) makes decisions on certain matters of international law. The *Secretary General* (UNSG) and the Secretariat handle most of the day to operations of the organizations and have the ability to take certain executive decisions and actions. The 6th organ, the Trusteeship Council, was focused on decolonization and has been suspended.

Most operations undertaken by the UN itself are handled not through these bodies, but through a collection of *Funds, Programmes, Offices, Special Representatives, Commission and Commissioners.* These cover a wide range of topics and are organized many different ways. Broadly, if something other than a decision is done "by the United Nations" it is the action of one of these groups.

UN Specialized Agencies: These 17 organizations are independent institutions with their own membership. Some, such as the WHO, ITU and UPU are older than the UN system, others were created after, but all their leaders are part of the UN's Secretariat. Often, these Agencies have subcommittees and regional offices, with structures that mirror the UN's as a whole.

Regional Organizations: These institutions, such as the EU, ECOWAS and The Arab League can range from deliberative bodies designed to coordinate regional responses to free trade and immigration treaties to full bodies for regional governance. The EU is the most developed of these, but many other are relevant players.

NGOs: These institutions range from small and hyper specialized to enormous organizations. They are connected by the fact that they are private, with individuals or other organizations, rather than governments as members. They have more political and operational flexibility than the UN organizations, but may not have the same resources or legitimacy.

Other IOs: Some institutions, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), World Economic Forum (WEF), World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are not strictly NGOs in the sense that member states are directly involved in their operations, but are also not integrated into the UN System. They tend to fall between the UN and NGOs in terms of their operations.

PPPs: Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are specific projects or institutions that bring together public sector actors, such as NGOs, IOs or UN organizations and private sector companies. In this, they benefit from the legitimacy and political buy in from the public sector and the dynamism and often the funding from the private sector.

UNTA, TBS and the YEE: The United Nations Technology Alliance (UNTA) is a UN Specialized Agency founded in the 1970s to act as a link between private and public groups in the technology sector. They have a mixed membership including governments, private companies and academia. Their core missions are to foster innovation in the technology sector, support and regulate the responsible use of technology and encourage the use of technology for social good (commonly referred to in the UN system as information and communications technology for development or ICT4D).

Within the UNTA, the Technology-Business Summit (TBS) is an annual event that serves as a showcase of innovation in the tech sector and collaboration between the public and private sectors. It operates on a separate budget from the rest of UNTA, using what staff refer to as an "eat what you kill" model. Almost all of the summit's funding comes from sponsorships and sales of event space and tickets. The first and biggest donor each year is the host country. Governments bid to host the event providing both cash and in-kind support to the event. Because of this model and in the interest of fairness, the event rotates host country each year.

The UNTA-TBS hosts a special event connected to the summit, the Youth Entrepreneurship Event. This is a competition for young people, 18-30, with ideas in ICT4D. It runs as a series of challenges, each focused on a technology or a social issue, each with a unique sponsor. Most of the challenges require outside experts as mentors, guest speakers and judges since they often touch on topics outside of UNTA's specialization. The program suffers a chronic lack of sponsorship and often runs at a net loss for the event.

TBS 2015: The 2015 Technology-Business Summit will be held in Carpathia. Carpathia is an EU member in Eastern Europe. They recently elected a Far-Right Prime Minister, Perdo Andalow whose anti-immigrant policies have created conflict with many other EU members.

This is a critical moment in Europe; in 2015, 1.8 million irregular migrants enter the EU, including over 1 million refugees. Questions over how to organize, provide services to and vet such a huge flow dominate political debates across the continent. Moreover, there are serious questions over whether to admit such migrants. Some, such as Prime Minister Andalow, say that "European Identity" is at risk and want to block all migration. Others take less extreme views, such as wanting improved balance, funding and screening of refugees on the continent, which would still result in potentially serious restrictions.

A plurality of the refugees were fleeing the war in Syria, but many also came from Iraq and Afghanistan and from various countries in Africa. While the term "refugee crisis" was used for the situation overall,

many people were defined as asylum seekers or economic migrants rather than refugees, and there was a parallel issue of internally displaced people in many of the home countries of the refugees. (See below for these terms) Major routes to Europe went through Turkey into Eastern Europe and Greece and across the Mediterranean Sea into Italy and Spain.

A major issue was that because of the shared immigration regime, if a refugee arrived in Europe, they could stay, but they were expected to remain in the country where they first registered themselves. This, combined with severe restrictions on admittance of arrivals, many migrants entered the country covertly or relied on human traffickers to move into or across the EU. It also led to tensions between EU members as countries with greater numbers of refugees felt that they were being asked to take on an undue burden to deal with the crisis.

International Refugee Response: The system for handling refugee flows is complicated. There are many organizations operating in parallel, these include state actors, NGOs, other organizations, the UN and private sector actors. Many of these specialize in an area, either in terms of their beneficiaries or the service they provide.

To begin, there are several key definitions:

- *A Migrant* is anyone who moves away from their permanent residence.
- *Irregular or Undocumented Migrants* are migrants who move outside of formal systems, usually across international borders.
- *Involuntary or Forced Migrants* include migrants who move due to adverse conditions, which may include natural disasters, economic crises or humanitarian crises.
- *Internally Displaced People (IDPs)* are involuntary migrants, who move within a country.
- *Refugees* are forced migrants who cross international boundaries.
- *Asylum Seekers* are involuntary migrants who seek personal protection from dangerous situations in their home countries.

The international system makes a clear difference between migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs. If someone leaves their home voluntarily, they are covered by one set of rules. IDPs are covered by a different set of rules and agencies, refugees by another and asylum seekers by another.

National governments are often the key actor for migrants in general. They provide most of the legal regimes. They also support many programs, both within their country and, through foreign ministries, development agencies and other dedicated agencies abroad. Some of the notable actors in this space are USAID, GIZ and Norwegian Refugee Council. However, political issues within and between states often shapes the work of these groups or how it is received.

Regional organizations, such as the EU, work to coordinate the response from various national governments. In some cases, there is a shared immigration system, such as within the Schengen Zone. In others, there is a shared stance or expressed point of view. Certainly, in the 2015 crisis, the EU was a major player because of the geography.

The leader in refugee issues from the UN system is the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which has the core remit to oversee all issues related to refugees, including coordinating efforts between key actors and managing refugee camps. However, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) oversees migration in general, which gives it remit over many migrants, such as IDPs, asylum seekers or other forced migrants who might not meet the definition of refugee. This leads the two agencies toward a rivalry on these issues.

A third agency with a major remit is the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) which oversees international response to humanitarian crises and natural disasters. They rarely have a direct hand in migration issues, but with their role in the issues surrounding forced migration makes them significant.

Other UN organizations, World Food Program (WFP), Population Fund (UNFPA), UNWomen, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Health Organization (WHO) among others, have specific roles to play in dealing with refugees, based on their areas of expertise. These roles sometimes extend to IDPs or general migrants, but because refugees enjoy special protections, more emphasis is put there.

There are a few major players among NGOs and other organizations as well. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has tremendous responsibility in this space, because it works to protect people in conflict zones. Doctors without Borders (MSF) and Medecins du Monde (MDM) both work to ensure the health and safety of those in conflict zones. Save the Children and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) both work directly to help refugees, IDPs and others. Amnesty International works to document human rights abuses against migrants of all sorts.

There are a few PPPs in these areas. Several tech firms work together with both IOM and UNHCR to create apps to help migrants navigate legal systems, remain safe or locate services. IKEA has a notable role in providing supplies to refugee camps.

There are myriad other organizations involved in refugee issues on various levels. Smaller NGOs often focus on narrower specializations, have specific political or social stances or have other issues. However, they are always looking for opportunities to promote their work.

The Proposal: The crisis means that refugee issues are a hot topic and the director of the TBS has suggested that YEE should run a challenge on refugee issues, but is worried about the specifics on how to frame and organize such a competition. Given the political sensitivities, there is even a risk that Carpathia may withdraw part or all of their support if the challenge isn't handled very carefully but they believe the challenge is still worth the risk. The organizing team has identified 2 potential sponsors:

MOID, the development agency of Mitteland, one of Carpathia's neighbors, has advocated for a better EU refugee response and is interested in innovation on the topic. Mitteland and Carpathia have come into conflict in the EU and EC over these issues.

Gemma, Inc. is a major EU tech company which has been a long-time sponsor of various TBS activities. They have agreed to put money into the 2015 event and in sales negotiations have indicated that a YEE challenge on refugees would be of interest.

A key issue in developing this kind of challenge is the need for outside experts. They can be drawn from various actors in the international system, from academia, the private sector or national governments. In selecting these experts, the YEE will need to consider overlapping jurisdictions as outlined below. The framing of the challenge will help define these partners and shape the politics around the challenge.

To run the competition, you (the YEE team) will need to define:

1. Which proposal should be accepted or if they should be accepted at all.
2. How the challenge will be described and framed.
3. How Carpathia's concerns on the issue can be addressed.
4. What partners will be brought in.