

## A CHARGE D'AFFAIRS AT UGANDA HIGH COMMISSION

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### **Applicability:**

The case is written for MBA on Management and Organizational Behavior, leadership and strategy implementation. The case can be taught towards the end of a Management course to learn about organization and its behavior. This case can be used in the segment focusing on action and leadership.

### **Case overview**

The case is generally about my one week experience as the Charge d'affaires at the Uganda Embassy, when the Ambassador was out of station. This task had a lot of challenges and lessons as narrated in the case.

### **Case Study**

#### **Absence of the Ambassador at the Embassy**

As the policy is at the Embassy, in the absence of the Head of Mission (High Commissioner), another Officer next to the Head, is always appointed and assigned by the Ambassador and he/she is termed as Chargé d'affaires. The main purpose of this person is to oversee the Embassy activities and smooth running of the Mission for a given period of time. This duty is usually assigned to the First secretary's, Second or Third and other administrators because their daily activities are in lines with demands of the assignment.

Being the Financial officer at Uganda High Commission this assignment hardly crosses my office. So, I often stick to my account's duties leaving me with limited or no time for administrative or other activities at the mission.

### **Appointment as Chargé D' Affairs**

It was happened that Ambassador, First Secretary, Second and Third Secretary were out of station for Official duties in Indonesia, I was the only senior person left at the mission as per our structure. This automatically meant that I was to be the Charge d'affaires for one week.

The week as the charge de affairs started as normal, with the usual activities of the embassy, all departments operating smoothly a till this one consular case that made me put to hold all the other activities pending on my desk. I had worked more closely with other departments other than consular, just had a slight clue of what happened but nothing in detail. A young lady walked in the chancery primes a few minutes passed 9am, pretty early. As usual the officer in charge stepped in and accorded her the need assistance till it was beyond his capacity. I stepped and immediately notice vulnerability written on this young lady's face, she had been a victim of tracking.

I got a chance to experience how emotionally draining this duty is, seeing an individual completely helpless, with no money, home, personal identification and a victim of such a vulnerability was an experience like no other. Assisting this lady required more than I initially thought, it's on that day that I learnt of the different home shelters that helped to provide habitant for individuals like this lady at the embassy. After the endeavour of figuring out some of these places, I had to take an extra step to locate them physically. I was amazed at the hospitality that this organisations' accord to vulnerable people after sharing with some of the leaders at the shelters, which surely left me the moved.

The passionate hearts of the officers to extend a support in forms of shelter, cloths, food and hope for this people to be united with their families again at no cost was noticeable. It was one week but this one scenario I will never forget because it enabled me to explore in detail part of the activities of the consular department that left me appreciative of individuals and organisations that come out to the call of vulnerable persons. It was at this point that I also learnt how being the Head of a Mission isn't an easy task, where it involves taking decisions that are very sensitive and this always done on behalf of your county.

### **Administration as Chargé D' Affairs**

Organizational administration was one of the tasks that were added to my duties during that week which was truly challenging and edifying concurrently. I didn't understand the challenges that came with the responsibility to make the final decisions regarding organization matters and staff, or the power that comes with a signature, neither did I recognize the bravery needed to say no or yes and stand by it regardless of the feelings and opinions of those under you.

It had never occurred to me that getting persons (adults at that) to work together and have respect for each and those of higher hierarchy was a great deal of work till that week. The staff (some) made it very clear that they knew that I was not confident in the shoes that were left behind for me to occupy as charge affaires of the mission for that period. So, with that in mind, they found it hard to

comply with my directions and regulations during my reign as charge d'Affairs of the Mission. This triggered my thoughts about flexibility at places of work and ways organisation can help workers and supervisors enhance their flexibilities skills while on duty.

One way I can came up with, was regular rotation with in and out of different departments, this enable individuals to have a clue of the different activities all around the mission with less pressure which enhances quick learning and confidence when allocated duties solely.

This period was not only challenging for me as the newly appointed supervisor but the subordinates too. With rotation in leadership, workers learn that different approaches by different supervisors can be used to achieve the same goal. The other way was the need to delegate these responsibilities more often, because I had been at the mission then, for 2 years and an administration assignment has not been assigned to me. This got me thinking how much easier the assignment would have been if had been assigned probably a smaller responsibility earlier on. In addition, this is office brought along with it all the pressure of the different activities that needed to be coordinated and organized attached with deadlines which seemed unbeatable. I however, successfully, had a great adventure and came to the end of my term with stronger self and more resistant to pressure, new fields, people attitude and decision making abilities.

### **Discussion question**

#### **1. What lessons did u learn as a leader in that period?**

- Motivational. I leant to be a multi task employee. The Ambassador entrusting me with the Embassy was such a motivational aspect in my career and it of course improved on my CV. The excitement was much when I executed all the duties to her expectations.
- Behavior and perception of individuals, different people have different perceptions over different aspects. As I was the new boss, some staff had a negative perception and others believed that I would lead them well. So to influence behavior at work, I had to assess how people perceive their work and there leader.
- Make better decisions by recognizing perceptual biases and decision-making errors. Learning about these problems doesn't always prevent us from making mistakes, but it helps not to make the same mistakes in future.
- Influencing moods, as a leader it is always paramount to ensure that your subordinates' moods are good. Since it was a short period of time, I would ensure that I use a good sense of humour by appreciating and praising the ones that have performed well.

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