

“Doing Something with Nothing”

Trying to Make Kampala’s Primary Schools Safer and Healthier

Practitioner Guide

JORRIT DE JONG AND ERIC WEINBERGER

Overview

A case study is a story about how a person or group of people faced and dealt with challenges or opportunities. It is based on desk research and interviews with key actors but does not provide analysis or conclusions. Written from the perspective of the protagonist(s), it is designed to raise questions and generate discussion about the issues they faced. Cases are meant to help participants develop analytic reasoning, listening, and judgment skills to strengthen their decision-making ability in other contexts.

A case-based conversation is a way to anchor a conceptual discussion to concrete examples. It can bring a case to life and allow participants to place themselves in the shoes of the case protagonist(s), while also allowing a variety of perspectives to surface. This guide is designed to help you lead a conversation about the case, “‘Doing Something with Nothing’: Trying to make Kampala’s Primary Schools Safer and Healthier.”

Role of Facilitator

The facilitator leads the conversation with a clear beginning and end, ensures that everyone is heard, and keeps the group focused. The conversation can be broken into three distinct segments: exploring the case, applying the central questions of the case to your organization’s challenges, and formulating takeaway lessons. Some facilitation tips and tricks to keep in mind are below.

BEFORE the discussion

Make sure everyone takes the time to read the case. When setting up the room, think about situating participants where they can see you and each other. Designate a notetaker as well as a place where you can take notes on a flipchart or white board. Plan for at least sixty to seventy-five minutes to discuss the case and takeaways and have a clock in the room and/or an assigned timekeeper. Mention that you may interrupt participants in the interest of progressing the conversation.

DURING the discussion

Encourage participants to debate and share opinions. State very clearly that there’s no right or wrong “answer” to the case; cases are written so that reasonable people can disagree and debate different ideas and approaches. Be careful not to allow yourself or others to dominate the discussion. If the conversation is getting heated or bogged down on a particular issue, consider allowing participants to

This case was developed solely as the basis for class discussion. It was written for the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative, a collaboration between Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Business School, and Bloomberg Philanthropies. It is not intended to serve as an endorsement, source of primary data, or illustration of effective or ineffective management. Copyright © 2021 President and Fellows of Harvard College. (Revised 3/2021.)



Attribution-noncommercial-noderivatives. [creative commons](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

talk in pairs for a few minutes before returning to a full group discussion. Do not worry about reaching consensus, just make the most of this opportunity to practice thinking and learning together!

Case Synopsis

By late 2012, well into Jennifer Musisi’s second year as executive director of the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), city revenues were improving. But there was little in the budget for schools, and no further assistance was expected from national government after paying teacher salaries and a tiny allocation for infrastructure. To improve the schools that were educating 61,000 primary-age students, KCCA would have to do something with nothing, or as Musisi put it: “I need to fix the buildings, but I have no money.”

At the time, student numbers were rising in Kampala, partly because of an influx of rural migrants and refugees who were entitled to a primary education. Kampala’s eighty-one primary “government-aided” schools, most of them built before the 1970s, were dilapidated and unsafe, lacking sufficient furniture, supplies, equipment, or even toilets. Roofs were made of asbestos, a carcinogen. Safety was further jeopardized by frequent trespassing by street vendors and local residents who might endanger the children (the premises were unfenced); girls were especially vulnerable. Fixing the schools was an urgent matter of public health and Musisi realized that presenting it as such could help attract support.

For Musisi, improving schools to the best of her ability was a moral imperative; “I respond to need,” she said. The private sector—local small businesses, charities, multinationals, NGOs, even foreign embassies—might be able to help, but first the KCCA would have to demonstrate competence and integrity, qualities not recently associated with Kampala city administration. Only then might she start to see progress and, perhaps, the best solution: increased regular funding from national government.

Conversation Plan

Part 1: Exploring the Case (30 minutes)

Begin by asking if someone will volunteer to summarize facts of the case and the question facing the reader, without stating an opinion. The goal here is to review the case from the point of view of the people involved. Suggested questions:

- *What was Jennifer Musisi’s strategy to improve Kampala’s primary schools?*
- *What stakeholders were involved, and what did Musisi and KCCA need from them?*

Introduce the general question(s) raised by the case:

- *Was the strategy sustainable or transformative? Why or why not?*
- *What could have been another motive for Musisi’s efforts in the schools, beyond trying to improve the facilities and provide for students? How would success have been measured then?*

Part 2: Application (20 minutes)

This part can be done either in pairs or small groups, or with the whole class. If adopting the small-group approach, bring back the larger group to share answers and discussion. Write this insight from Harvard’s Howard Stevenson on the board: “Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond the resources you currently control.” Ask the class:

- *What does this mean in the public sphere?*
- *How does “pursuit” of the opportunity create a path to identify the resources you need?*

Ask the participants to think of a project, program, or initiative that they have been (or will be) involved in, that has ambitious goals but currently lacks capacity and support to deliver on the proposed public value.

- *How might you generate support and secure the resources required to deliver?*

Part 3: Formulating Lessons (15–20 minutes)

This part of the conversation focuses on the lessons of the case that participants will continue to reflect on and apply to challenges in their work. High-level takeaways to review after a productive discussion might include:

- Public entrepreneurship is about pursuing big, meaningful opportunities and then navigating the stakeholder environment strategically to secure capacity and support.
- Demonstrating integrity and competence in government is a step toward unlocking greater support and resources from a wide variety of stakeholders.
- Focusing limited resources on a small project (because it may be all you can currently manage) may establish leverage for taking it to scale when the time comes.