



**IUPUI**

# ***When Partners Have Real Autonomy-Managing a Program Cancellation***

**An Ethics in Action Case Example**

## **The Scenario:**

You are the program manager for a medical student clinical rotation that occurs in a developing country. This program embeds US medical students, under the supervision of local physicians, into government-sponsored health care facilities for low income families. One month before the beginning of your program, you receive word from your local partner that the government has temporarily suspended the necessary approvals for foreign doctors and students to see patients in government hospitals and clinics. Though the government says the suspension is for the reevaluation of such programs, there are rumors that this action may be in retaliation to recent US foreign policy.

As the program manager, you are experiencing pressure from administrators and students to “rescue” the program. Your concerns include:

- How do you ensure that your students have a positive an international global health experience?
- How do you respect the autonomy and concerns of your international partners?
- How do you help the University administration understand the political complexities of the situation?

***How do you respond to this pressure?***

## **Questions to consider:**

- How might you use the **core principles** in responding to this scenario?
- How do you use this as a “teachable” moment for students?
- What resources are available for you in responding?

## **Some Tension Points:**

- Organizational/Program Survival- often ethics are overlooked in order to keep organizations and programs alive
- Campus and Community relationships- is it possible to stay in relationship with communities and organizations now that the program is not active

Please cite as: IUPUI Working Group on Ethical Community Engagement in Global Learning (2019). *When Partners Have Real Autonomy-Managing a Program Cancellation: An Ethics in Action Case Example*. Retrieved from: <https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/handle/1805/21362>

## **One Resolution:**

When discussing how to proceed given this new information, the program manager and the international partner referred to the core principles for global ethical engagement to guide the responses to all parties: international partners, students and University administration.

- Principle 1: An appropriate cross cultural and ethical collaboration always respects the right of the host partner(s) to define the program, including the needs to be addressed and the role of the host.
- Principle 3. All programs should demonstrate a respect for local governance and abide by the legal and ethical standards of the host partner(s) and host country (ies).
- Principle 4. In the recruitment, preparation, and supervision of program participants, every opportunity should be taken to educate and remind participants of the ethical and cross-cultural pitfalls of volunteering when there are disparities in power and affluence.

Responding to the situation from a principled stance rather than reacting based on emotion, privilege and power allowed this to become a learning situation for all, especially students.

In both written communication and face-to-face meetings with students, partners and administration, these core principles (outlined above) served as the foundation to respect the decision of the host country government. The program was cancelled.

While students were disappointed not to be able to travel, they gained valuable knowledge around ethical and respectful interaction with host countries where there are disparities in power and affluence. Interestingly, this key learning would most likely not have occurred had the program not been cancelled.

## ***How did your response compare to the one above?***

*This case example was adapted from: Price, M.F., Leslie, S., Brann, M., Mulholland, J., Christy, L., Custer, J., Brann, M., & Besing, K.L. (2018). Supporting university-wide institutional change in global health volunteerism: A case in progress. Global Service-Learning Summit 5, Notre Dame, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018*