Leadership and Influence

Khaled Nassar · Chevening Scholarship application

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In December 2023, a week before her online exam, a classmate's laptop stopped charging in the school in Rafah where our families were sheltering. I opened it on a desk in a classroom we shared with four families, found a broken charging port and bypassed it with a cable from a dead laptop. By the end of that week, thirty students had asked me for help.

I could not fix thirty laptops alone, and I soon saw that repairs were only half the problem: there was nowhere to charge them. I asked twelve engineering and IT students in the shelter to join me. We moved our one solar panel and battery into a single corner, set up a booking list on WhatsApp so that nobody queued for hours, and agreed the rules with the students who used it: exams first, then job interviews, then everything else.

Over the next ten months we repaired about 340 phones and laptops and kept a log of every one. When spare parts ran out, I took the log to a local organisation and showed them what each repair had made possible. They agreed to fund $1,200 of parts. The log did more convincing than I could have.

Not everything worked the first time. In the second month, two volunteers argued over whose own phones should charge first, and the queue stopped for an afternoon. We added one rule: volunteers charge last. Nobody argued about it again, and I understood that the people who run something have to be seen to follow its rules first.

The decision I am proudest of came in the sixth month, when I stopped doing repairs myself and spent my time teaching. Nine volunteers learned to diagnose and fix the common faults, so the point kept running on the days I was ill or away. I learned that leading in a crisis is not about being the person everyone calls. It is about building something that works when you are not there, with rules that the people it serves helped to make.

I want to study electronic engineering in the UK and then set up a repair and training workshop in Gaza, where young people learn a trade that keeps a whole community connected. Chevening's network would help me build it with partners rather than alone.