

## TravlerPack - 2019 GMAT Competition Submission

The Syrian civil war has displaced millions of people from their homes. Many of these refugees are unprepared to face the extreme winters that plague the Middle East. Children are especially vulnerable to sickness, and many families struggle to survive the coldest months of the year. High costs of fuel and wood, poor housing conditions, and a lack of alternatives for staying warm make life even harder. We offer TravlerPack as a solution.

TravlerPack is a high quality, multi-purpose sleeping bag that we specifically designed to help refugees in the Middle East stay warm during the winter.

A TravlerPack costs \$60 to manufacture and distribute. Through a crowdfunding campaign, we have raised enough money to fund two distributions totaling 1,000 TravlerPacks in Syria. Our custom bags have been distributed in Idlib, Syria by our nonprofit partner NuDay Syria.

At the center of our efforts is a user-centered design process. We have worked with NuDay Syria to interview refugees to learn more about the challenges they face and create a comprehensive solution. Using their input, we identified features and designs to incorporate into a sleeping bag to meet their needs. TravlerPack has undergone several iterations involving field testing and evaluative feedback from refugees in Syria, and we are continuing to improve our design.

Pockets are placed throughout the bag for convenient storage and protection of documents and belongings. TravlerPack is lightweight and compact and can be easily carried over a shoulder, allowing refugees to keep their hands free to hold children or other supplies. A full length zipper allows multiple TravlerPacks to be combined together or fully unzipped to cover more people as a blanket, which is more culturally accepted.

Our on-the-ground team collaborates with democratically elected local area councils to secure lists of all beneficiaries. We identify beneficiaries through households with female breadwinners, children, elderly, and others with vulnerabilities such as disabilities and sickness. This breakdown ensures that we support those who face the most hardship.

We come from humble beginnings. When we first started TravlerPack in September of 2016, we sewed together our first prototype in our dorm room with a Singer sewing machine we had borrowed from a professor and sourced wool from a local Massachusetts Shepherd for insulation. From there we have built a partnership with a manufacturing firm and two nonprofit organizations to aid with distribution.

We have been featured by [The Associated Press](#), [The LA Times](#), [NBC News](#), [MIT News](#), [CBS Boston](#), [NBC Boston](#), [Boston.com](#), and [Newton TV](#) so far.

Looking forward, we are currently in the process of turning an existing partnership with our second nonprofit partner, the Kayany Foundation, into our first paying customer to make our project more sustainable. In this situation, we would sell TravlerPacks to the Foundation to strengthen their aid packages and ability to help refugees. We envision TravlerPack improving the lives of refugees in the Middle East by providing efficient, reliable warmth for the continuous future.