

The Lushoto Community Foundation: How Public Engagement in a Municipal Partnership Led to Improved Service Delivery and Poverty Alleviation



This case study explores the results and lessons learned from an innovative municipal partnership between the Town of Drayton Valley, Alberta and Lushoto, Tanzania. The two municipalities extended the reach of their partnership by engaging the public and mobilizing civil society organizations.

OVERVIEW

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) is the national voice of municipal government in Canada. With more than 1,800 members, FCM represents the interests of municipalities on policy and program matters that fall within federal jurisdiction. Members include Canada's largest cities, small urban and rural communities, and 18 provincial and territorial municipal associations.

Adapting Canadian municipal expertise in developing countries through cooperation activities is a powerful tool for development. FCM draws on the strength of its municipal network to implement municipal capacity building programs in over 20 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, with support mainly from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Through peer-to-peer exchange, Canadian municipalities share their expertise and practical experience with their overseas counterparts, contributing to staff training and improved municipal service delivery, governance and management. More than 200 Canadian municipalities and municipal associations, and 1,500 Canadian municipal experts have participated in FCM's international programs since 1987.

Over the years, FCM has developed a body of knowledge on innovative management practices and methods of transferring knowledge in a number of thematic areas. This case study explores the results and lessons learned from an innovative municipal partnership between the Town of Drayton Valley, Alberta and Lushoto, Tanzania. The two municipalities extended the reach of their partnership by engaging the public and mobilizing civil society organizations. As a result, the partnership had a significant impact on poverty reduction and improved service delivery in Lushoto, while at the same time fostering increased collaboration between the Town of Drayton Valley and its own community.

Section 1. Introduction

The Municipal Partnership Program (MPP) is the cornerstone of FCM's international programming, and has historically been the main vehicle for developing partnerships between Canadian and overseas municipalities. The program aims to strengthen the local government sector in partner countries. Municipal partnerships form an integral component of the program, and aim to develop the capacity of overseas municipalities to respond to the needs of their citizens – specifically by helping them determine, design and implement efficient solutions in the areas of local governance, management and service

delivery. Each municipal partnership project depends upon Canadian municipal volunteers for political, technical, professional, and managerial expertise.

FCM encourages municipal partners to think creatively about their MPP project design and implementation, and to utilize key community resources from the municipality (citizens, community-based organizations, local associations, service groups, etc.) that can add value to or complement their projects. Faced with the abundance of need often encountered overseas, community resources can help fill service delivery gaps. As well, civil society groups have years of experience working to reduce the various dimensions of poverty in Canada and abroad. Synergy between municipalities and these kinds of citizens and networks can present a potent collaboration for identifying and implementing solutions to municipal service delivery problems.

The level and scope of community engagement in municipal partnership projects has varied widely in the history of the MPP. At the most basic level, it is common for Canadian partners to seek donations from citizens and small businesses, e.g. used books for libraries, used sports equipment for overseas teams, etc. These small-scale initiatives are important because they provide the overseas community with basic necessities they are lacking while helping to raise awareness in the Canadian municipality about the partnership project. This helps build public support for the project and goes a long way towards ensuring there will be continued political will for it throughout its duration.

In other cases, civil society organizations have taken a more active role in contributing to a municipal partnership project. For example, some partnerships have fostered linkages between sister organizations such as service clubs, youth groups, business associations or universities. This type of collaboration has strengthened local democratic and participatory practices overseas and has enhanced the results of partnership projects.

The municipal partnership between Drayton Valley, Alberta, and Lushoto, Tanzania, ran through two phases of the MPP. From 2004 to 2007, the partners focused on building the institutional capacity of the Lushoto Municipal District Council (LMDC) to improve tourism services and small farmer marketing systems. The second phase, which ran from 2007 to 2010, continued to focus on institutional strengthening of LMDC, particularly related to institutional strengthening to promote economic development in Lushoto. In addition to



Drayton Valley Town Manager Manny Deol shakes hands with Obed Mwashu, Executive Director of Lushoto Municipal District Council. Former Drayton Valley Mayor Diana McQueen pictured in background.

achieving results in these priority areas, the partnership also demonstrated what could be considered a best practice regarding public engagement and civil society collaboration. An entire civil society component was fostered by the partner municipalities and then managed and sustained by civil society groups in the two communities. It is a case in which whole communities got involved, and stronger connections were established between the municipalities and their communities. In Lushoto, a new civil society organization was established and its institutional capacity built, enabling it to become a mechanism for improved service delivery and poverty alleviation in the community.

Section 2: Issue and Approach

The Town of Drayton Valley, Alberta, is located 133 kilometres southwest of Edmonton, has a population of 6,893 (federal census 2006) and serves as an economic node to a region of approximately 20,000 people. It is an affluent community that has benefited from the establishment of small businesses that service the oil and gas sector. True to its official town motto, “Pulling Together,” the town has a reputation for bold action and accomplishing the tasks it sets out for itself. The Town of Lushoto, which is located in the district of the same name, sits

high in the western Usambara mountains of northern Tanzania. The town’s population is approximately 23,000 (National census 2002) with 140,000 in the district. The Lushoto District Municipal Council is responsible for providing services to one of the poorer regions of Tanzania and faces insufficient means for raising resources, overwhelming demand for public services, and inadequate capacity for planning, management and resource mobilization. Further taxing the delivery of services is Lushoto district’s ominous distinction as having the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the Tanga Region at 9.2% (2007). AIDS-related deaths are the leading factor in a growing orphan population in the district (2,000 to 6,000 between 2002 and 2006).¹

Mobilizing Community Engagement

During the MPP project inception phase, the then Mayor of Drayton Valley traveled on mission to Lushoto and was introduced to a wide cross section of society by her Lushoto counterparts. The Mayor was struck by the high levels of poverty she witnessed, especially the great number of orphans, the overburdened orphanage, and the high number of grandparent caregivers. So while the primary objectives of the partnership were identified – which were to support municipal institutional strengthening, improve tourism and small farmer market systems – a second, almost entirely community-driven component began to take shape shortly after the initial diagnostic mission to Lushoto in 2004.



Toddlers sit down for a meal at Irente orphanage. Lushoto is faced with a growing orphan population caused largely by the AIDS epidemic.

¹ <http://www.ippmedia.com/ipp/guardian/2007/02/20/84741.html>

Upon her return to Drayton Valley, the mayor took it upon herself to raise awareness inside and outside government, engaging her colleagues and organizing and participating in public speaking events to tell the Lushoto story. She personally approached the Executive Director of the Drayton Valley Community Foundation (DVCF), asking if she would consider speaking to Lushoto government delegation members about the merits of community foundations during an incoming mission to Canada. The DVCF had been successful in meeting community needs in rural Alberta, so the mayor felt that her Lushoto counterparts would be interested in learning about its vision and structure.

While in Drayton Valley, the Lushoto delegation listened to two detailed presentations on DVCF. They returned home inspired and introduced the idea to their council and the community in Lushoto. Shortly thereafter, the LDMC requested assistance to establish a community foundation in Lushoto. The DVCF Executive Director, volunteering her time and covering her own costs, agreed to join the next mission to Lushoto to help develop policies, procedures and structures that would eventually give rise to the Lushoto Community Foundation (LCF).

Joining the DVCF Executive Director on the mission to Lushoto was the editor of the Western Review newspaper that serves Drayton Valley, whose participation was paid for by the Town of Drayton Valley as a worthwhile means of reporting the unbiased details of the Lushoto partnership to the people of Drayton Valley. These media relations efforts paid off and ultimately led to a fruitful relationship with the press. The Western Review published a series of articles on the partnership, which helped spark the community to rally support for Lushoto.

Between public events for returned mission participants, ongoing newspaper and radio coverage, some large publicly acknowledged donations, and word of mouth, the Lushoto cause became well-known in Drayton Valley and its surrounding communities and formal fundraising channels were established. One Drayton Valley resident had been looking for a meaningful way to remember her brother who had died of AIDS. Moved by the situation of AIDS orphans in Lushoto, she brought a group of volunteers together to form “HEARTS for Lushoto” (Health, Education, Awareness, Research, Training,

Support). HEARTS became an independent fundraising arm in Drayton Valley for the Lushoto Community Foundation (LCF). As a community-based organization, it offered a menu of options for donors including quilts, soccer balls, school bags, etc. The organization’s main emphasis, however, was strategic: soliciting cash donations for child education and AIDS prevention and awareness.

The Town of Drayton Valley, the DVCF and HEARTS became three pillars of an effective arrangement for collecting and transferring funds from Drayton Valley to Lushoto. HEARTS generated donations; the DVCF received the actual donations, set up a flow-through fund for the Town, and was able to issue tax receipts. Because of the small size of the municipality, members of these three groups overlapped somewhat, allowing common and collaborative approaches on some fundraising initiatives, such as matching particular donations to a donor’s wishes, provided that it met existing needs in Lushoto.

A Community Foundation is Born in Lushoto

In the early days of the project, donations from Drayton Valley were delivered by mission participants to the management of the Irente orphanage in Lushoto and put directly into the hands of destitute AIDS grandmothers. It was recognized early on, however, that a more permanent, dedicated, and dependable structure was needed in Lushoto to effectively channel greater volumes of monies to the needy in Lushoto. The community foundation model was appealing because it could meet the fund management and fund targeting objectives. If established and managed properly, it could further guarantee transparency and accountability to donors. The LCF was therefore established as a flow-through funds foundation to support children living in orphanages or being cared for by increasingly impoverished grandparents. It was not seen to be feasible to create an endowment fund where only the interest from a principle amount is used for fund services, but the possibility was left open nonetheless.

The Executive Director of the DVCF² worked with Lushoto to build the framework common to most foundations, including the development of the organization’s vision, mandate, bylaws, a policy and procedures manual, and guidelines and hiring criteria for the Board of Directors and the executive director. Emphasis was put on the need for full transparency in fund management and administration to maintain donor confidence,

² The Drayton Valley Community Foundation, a registered charitable foundation established in 1994, accepts donations to grow its permanent endowment fund and for flow-through funds that are not held permanently. These funds are used: 1) to benefit the community in the future; 2) to replace government funding and grants for community organizations that have been substantially reduced; 3) to serve as a vehicle to fund and support community organizations and projects; 4) to provide leadership and a catalyst for benevolent community projects.

the key to foundation success³. The LCF was structured to be run by a volunteer board and a volunteer executive director. While a district councillor would sit on the Board of Directors, the LCF was set up to operate at arms-length from government, as stipulated under its bylaws. The Lushoto town manager, admired widely for his early buy-in and comprehension of the foundation vision, diligently participated in the process and initiated a search among his civil society contacts for a suitable executive director for the LCF in accordance with criteria developed with DVCF. A retired civil servant with strong financial background and legacy of effective social work was then hired. The Town of Drayton Valley did the actual transfer of monies into the Lushoto Community Foundation accounts.



Jeannette Vatter and Barb Matheson of the Drayton Valley Community Foundation meet with the Lushoto Community Foundation and William Kusaga, Executive Director of Lushoto Municipal District Council (far right).

Section 3: Results

The results achieved in the Drayton Valley/Lushoto partnership project should be considered in the context of its unique features. In a sense, the large-scale civil society collaboration that developed as a result of the partnership meant that there were two parallel projects being implemented: the official capacity

building project between the two municipalities; and the complimentary project between two community organizations. On the one hand, the government pursued the official project focus of institutional strengthening and incorporating village level decision-making into district-level planning for farmer market group development and tourism. On the other hand, the Lushoto Community Foundation was an idea envisioned by the mayor of Drayton Valley and driven by citizens. After project inception, civil society in Canada and Tanzania developed a collaborative yet arms length relationship to municipal government. In Canada,

Results of the Official MPP Partnership Project	Value Added from the Establishment of the Community Foundation
One of the key sought after results of the Lushoto District Municipal Council was increased transparency at all levels of decision-making. This is an important prerequisite to enjoying the confidence of its citizens.	The LCF was a shining example of transparent governance at work in Lushoto with duty-bound volunteer management serving the community with altruistic ideals. Aspects of the LCF were often brought to the attention of the LDMC and councillors were encouraged to adopt similar practices.
The LDMC reviewed and made changes to its existing legislation, by-laws and policy to create an enabling environment for public participation.	An LDMC councillor sits on the LCF board of directors. Through this representative, the local government is able to observe and participate in joint decision-making with citizens and is thus able to work directly with citizens on the co-delivery of services to the community.
The LDMC established a tourism office that will be sustained by fees raised from hotel and tourism service operators.	LCF was used as a model of what could be accomplished with transparency and participation. The local government was encouraged to follow the example of LCF by involving the tourist industry in decision-making and planning and thereby building industry confidence that their fees would be applied to maintaining access to sites and maintaining the sites themselves.

³ For instance, this statement is found in the conflict of interest policy, "Lushoto Community Foundation must strive, as far as possible, to be above suspicion. It is not enough that those making decisions believe that they are operating from the highest motives, and that any particular action is innocent. So far as possible, actions and relationships must avoid any appearance of impropriety, which may raise questions in the minds of the public."

this evolution of the relationship was encouraged and is now praised. Even though the two projects were managed separately, the LCF had small but meaningful effects on the local government partnership project.

Results of Community Engagement

There were several notable results of the community engagement component of the partnership, included in the box below.

Section 4. Analysis

Drayton Valley and Lushoto achieved one of the highest levels of community engagement seen in an MPP partnership project, likely because of the combination of a wide range of public engagement approaches used. These included:

1. Outreach Activities

Public Speaking Events: Upon her return from her first mission to Lushoto, the mayor of Drayton Valley embarked on a personal speaking tour that included service clubs, annual



Drayton Valley team meets children in Lushoto. Soccer balls were among the many donations provided by the Drayton Valley community to the community in Lushoto.

events, community organizations and almost every church in Drayton Valley.

New Institution in Lushoto	A community foundation with a track record of channelling funds to the needy was established in Lushoto. The institution has a vision, mandate, policies, bylaws, and dedicated volunteer staff. This institution represents the culmination of concerted efforts between local governments and civil society in both Drayton Valley and Lushoto.
Board of Directors – Model of Collaborative Decision-Making	A Board of Directors was created for the LCF. It is representative of the community, faithfully steers the project, and serves as an exemplary joint decision-making forum for men and women from municipal government and civil society in Lushoto.
Advancing Gender Relations	The LCF Board of Directors has acted as a forum for strengthening gender relations in Lushoto. Women on the board are able to challenge and question men and have a growing perception that they sit as equals with men. Some women have used the board as a platform for entrance into politics, and are now vying for political office.
Poverty Alleviation	To date, approximately CAD 115,000 was channelled from the community of Drayton Valley to the Lushoto Community Foundation. This figure does not include in-kind donations (quilts, condoms, clothing, etc.) nor the larger contribution of in-kind management, in-kind project administration, and out of pocket expenses that have been entirely subsumed by DV volunteers.
Generation of Local Resources	Despite local resource scarcity and many competing social service needs, the LCF nevertheless managed to raise an additional amount of CAD 9,000 locally, or 8% of the amount received from Drayton Valley. Just like Drayton Valley, this amount does not include in-kind (e.g. donated office space, travel expenses, vehicle use, etc) nor salaries as all labour is volunteer.
Civil Society Action in Canada	Drayton Valley has witnessed the creation of a principled and well-organized volunteer network composed of citizens, community-based organizations, small business, local government, and media. After several years of activity, the network is still active and channelling funds to Lushoto.
Evolution of Practical to More Strategic Community Engagement	At the outset of community engagement between Drayton Valley and Lushoto, the priority was to get money into the hands of destitute grandmothers raising their grandchildren and money into the coffers of the Irente orphanage. However, the creation of HEARTS for Lushoto ushered in an additional more strategic HIV/AIDS education and prevention program. The LCF hired an HIV/AIDS educator to tour schools with the objective of empowering girls and young women.

The Media: Raising public awareness of the project was greatly assisted by a supportive and engaged local media. Drayton Valley's approach to the media is a noteworthy innovation. The editor of the local newspaper, the *Western Review* was encouraged to join a mission to Lushoto to witness and report to Drayton Valley residents from the source. The result of this and other media awareness efforts are that between 2005 and 2008 at least 35 *Western Review* news items brought attention to the Lushoto/Drayton Valley partnership and the tremendous efforts of community groups from Drayton Valley and surrounding areas.

Targeted Phone Calls and Meetings: Understanding that she could not manage the implementation of poverty alleviation on her own, the Mayor targeted groups and individuals in her community who she felt could increase and maintain the momentum. The CEO of the Drayton Valley Community Foundation was one of these key contacts, able to share her knowledge of foundation establishment and management with Lushoto.

Word of Mouth: Multiple references to the Lushoto cause from all corners of the community motivated the founder of HEARTS for Lushoto to get involved. She became one of the driving forces behind fundraising efforts in Drayton Valley, assertively getting the word out to friends, family and neighbours. Not only did these efforts establish the Lushoto Community Foundation as one of the main charitable causes in Drayton Valley, but the Lushoto fundraising initiative has become a regional phenomenon, with requests for public event speakers coming from neighbouring communities.

In Lushoto, community outreach efforts to raise awareness of the kinds of benefits that could be expected from the newly created Lushoto Foundation included: pamphlets translated into Swahili; a series of talks at schools to raise awareness by the Executive Director DVCF; and a substantial amount of word of mouth which is an important means of sharing information in Lushoto.

2. Leadership

Government Leadership in Drayton Valley and in Lushoto. The DVCF/LCF success would not have been possible if not for the leadership demonstrated by key government officials from the Town of Drayton Valley and Lushoto District Municipal Council. The Drayton Valley Mayor identified the critical need for support to orphans and then convinced the municipal team that this was a priority that the wider community could address. On the Tanzania side, the Town Manager was instrumental in setting up the enabling



Drayton Valley Councillor Keith Ebbs holds infant in Lushoto.

conditions for the development of the LCF, including the recruitment of a very effective volunteer manager.

Community Leadership. After meetings with Lushoto mission participants in Canada, the DVCF Executive Director was struck by the potential for a foundation as a force for poverty alleviation in Lushoto. Covering her own expenses, she traveled to Lushoto twice to help build the organization and its staff and Board capacities.

3. Strong Volunteer Ethic

The spirit of volunteerism runs throughout this project. This principled approach began at the outset of project activities and has inspired and attracted many volunteers in Drayton Valley and Lushoto alike.

4. Issue Identification

Donors and volunteers were engaged by deep feelings of connectedness to work done by the Lushoto Foundation. Some examples include:

- One of the main founding members and driving forces behind the "HEARTS for Lushoto" fundraising group in DV was seeking a suitable way to honour her brother who had died of AIDS in 1996. She was thinking about contributing to the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation, but chose the more immediate, personal and local option of collaborating on Drayton Valley's efforts to support the community of Lushoto.

- Shortly after her return from a volunteer placement in a Ghanaian orphanage, a young Drayton Valley resident was tragically killed in a car accident. A fund was established in her honour. Her parents considered two options: World Vision and Lushoto's orphans. HEARTS for Lushoto was able to meet the family's needs by demonstrating its flexibility through renaming the Irete orphanage office and classroom space "Lindsay House" and applying the funds to vocational instruction.
- Senior citizens in the community of Elk Point (in the same region as Drayton Valley) wished to donate to HEARTS in part because of strong identification with the immense burden placed on grandparents in Lushoto.
- HEARTS and the DVCF demonstrated a good amount of flexibility with donations. In one case, business leaders wanted to contribute to a water project. While outside the immediate focus of the project, water is a universal concern and water scarcity and poor water quality are at the root of many health problems. When this interest was identified, the LCF and the LDMC's public engineering staff agreed to jointly implement the water initiative.



This grandmother is claimed to be 114 years old. She is the caregiver of her great-great grandchildren and her son of 63, who has AIDS.

5. Diversified funding sources in Drayton Valley

Funds for the Lushoto Community Foundation came from a number of sources, including:

- Municipal payroll deductions – one of the first sources of income developed to support orphans and AIDS grandmothers were at-source payroll deductions from municipal workers (\$2.00/employee per pay period)⁴, somewhat like United Way;
- United Church fair trade initiative where the proceeds of coffee, chocolate, dried fruit from small producers in Latin America are sold within the community and the proceeds are donated to the HEARTS/Lushoto Community Foundation. This has been coined as a classic “win-win” scenario;
- The proceeds from entrance fees or raffles at various events such as the International Women's Day Celebration, Alberta's 100th birthday, Hearts and Hands Quilt show, Tastes of Drayton Valley (an annual food show);
- Donations collected during and after public presentations (senior homes, service clubs, community groups, etc.);
- Individual donations and bequeathments; and
- Community challenges – e.g. furnish a house.

Drayton Valley Parallel Budget. The Town of Drayton Valley was able to establish a Lushoto support budget equivalent to approximately 25% of the MPP project budget from FCM. These funds supported activities for Lushoto delegation members and paid for such things as the journalist who joined the Drayton Valley delegation in 2006. The seven Drayton Valley councillors were unanimously in favour of the budget, likely because all had been to Lushoto. One councillor became a major personal donor.

6. Transparency

An appropriate system of accountability was developed for LCF fund management and allocation in Lushoto. Donors received proof of how their monies were spent via an annual financial report and quarterly updates via personal contact, e-mails, and phone calls. There was a regular flow of Drayton Valley visitors to Lushoto who actually saw how their money was being used and heard testimony from fund recipients. Given the extent of needs, the Executive Director of the LCF also distributed funds upon receipt and sent pictures of the recipients immediately. Confidence in the LCF's management of funds was high and there was no indication that any individual donor questioned the system.

⁴ In fact, the municipal payroll deduction program began well before the LCF was established, but these funds were channeled through the LCF once it was established.

0% Administrative Cost. During the formation of the Lushoto Community Foundation a decision was made – in the spirit of enhancing transparency, simplicity, and to grow the donor base – to have every single dollar raised go directly to the people and institutions in Lushoto taking care of AIDS orphaned children. In Canada and in Tanzania, all management and administration are volunteer and all operating expenses are in-kind donations.

Section 5. Sustainability

There are factors that support and challenge the long-term sustainability of the LCF. On the positive side, the Foundation has a firm grasp of its responsibilities, understands how it needs to operate to be effective, and has a dynamic Board of Directors. Despite the growing needs in Lushoto, the LCF has channelled CAD 115,000 directly to the needy in support of one of Lushoto’s most precious resources: its children. On the Canadian side, the fundraising network in Drayton Valley and its surrounding communities appears to be expanding. Stable sources of fundraised income are in place (annual events, municipal payroll deduction) and key fundraisers are planning their own delegations to Lushoto in the coming year. Lushoto is being advertised as a “working tourist” place to visit, increasing the number of Drayton Valley residents who have been to Lushoto.

On the other hand, the official linkage between the Town of Drayton Valley and the Lushoto District Municipal Council has recently come to an end, so there will no longer be funds to support exchange missions between the two communities. This may decrease communications and erode their relationship. Drayton Valley’s participation in the partnership is recognized by businesses and citizens and lent credibility to the Lushoto cause. The town’s annual budget that was used for hosting Lushoto officials may also end with the project, resulting in reduced fundraising revenues for LCF.

Changes in Personnel

One of the challenges for both Lushoto and Drayton Valley was the unfortunate passing away of the Lushoto Town Manager in 2006. He was the project’s key contact and one of the first to buy into the community foundation concept. He located and hired the LCF Director and created understanding among his government colleagues about the benefits of a community-based organization able to provide practical and strategic interventions to break the cycle of HIV infection. In the absence of this community leader, the government to government project slowed somewhat and the relationship between the LCF



The Lushoto Community Foundation funded a project to install water filters in Lushoto with financial support from Drayton Valley business leaders.

and LDMC ended. After a lull, the void was filled in part by the Lushoto District Commissioner who is a great defender of women’s rights and a strong proponent of the LCF. However, a change in personnel (both in terms of political leadership and LCF management) is a risk that could affect the longer-term sustainability of the LCF.

Need for Diversified Funding Sources

One of the most striking features of the LCF is that all of its external donations to date have come from the Drayton Valley region in Alberta. While it is beneficial to have a source of funds from a more affluent part of the world, this exclusive relationship presents risks. The risk to the LCF is that funds flowing from Drayton Valley may diminish or disappear over time due to reduced communications with Lushoto, community interests changing to other causes that need support, or economic downturn. While the LCF has submitted proposals and many individual petitions for funds to LMDC, the LMDC has been unable to fund to the LCF directly. Given the importance of the LCF to Lushoto, diversifying funding sources can be considered a joint challenge for both the LMDC and LCF.

Section 6. Lessons Learned and Replicability

Perhaps one of the greatest accomplishments of the partnership was the creation of a “buzz” in Drayton Valley such that residents were able to hear about the Lushoto cause from

multiple sources, such as their local government staff and councillors, newspapers, radio, churches, service clubs, hair salons, word-of-mouth from their friends, colleagues and neighbours, and booths and speakers at annual events. Key informants from Drayton Valley believe that the achievement of this level of information saturation was a function of: 1) the modest size of their town (less than 7,000 inhabitants); 2) citizens who routinely volunteer and cross-communicate between multiple organizations; 3) the ease at which citizens have access to their government representatives; and 4) the community's level of affluence.

Municipalities with similar characteristics may try to replicate the public engagement approaches used by Drayton Valley. It is more plausible and perhaps more advisable, however, to start slow and try to replicate parts of the experience, allowing engagement to reflect the unique character of the communities involved.

The following are some lessons learned that should be considered in any attempt to replicate an experience found in the Drayton Valley/Lushoto partnership.

Citizens Respond to International Issues

Drayton Valley outreach efforts demonstrated that if an issue is communicated in a way that captures the imagination or inspires a sense of duty, there is a strong likelihood that citizens will respond to pressing international development issues. Skilled volunteers in Drayton Valley were interested in becoming involved when they became aware of the needs in Lushoto. This lesson is likely one that can be generalized across all Canadian municipalities.

Modest Efforts Provide Significant Returns

The Drayton Valley case demonstrates that modest levels of front-end public engagement efforts can yield significant benefits for participating municipalities and their communities. In their role as conveners/facilitators, municipal officials exponentially increased the volume of social service delivery and thereby alleviated poverty with minimal amounts of effort on their part. The key to leveraging community efforts in this way was that the municipalities knew the issues and knew how to involve their communities in developing solutions.

Establishing a Firm Foundation at LCF

Community foundations are on the front lines of managing and allocating donor monies and must be fully transparent to gain and maintain trust. Substantial effort was put into establishing a sound policy framework, a universal understanding of conflict



The Lushoto Community Foundation Board of Directors. The LCF established a governance structure that ensured transparency and accountability in the management of funds.

of interest, and attracting and engaging suitable people on the Board of Directors of the LCF.

Municipal Role in Lushoto

The LDMC had an appropriate level of involvement in the LCF initiative, by virtue of being represented by one LDMC councillor on the LCF Board of Directors and providing technical advice in ensuring that needy recipients were located and assisted by the program. It can be very advantageous for a government to have a say in the way in which foundation monies are spent, without having the initiative negatively perceived as “yet another government controlled program.” The LDMC was close enough to the initiative to encourage and ensure that all was running smoothly, yet “hands off” enough to allow citizens to take the lead in helping themselves.

Political leadership

Having buy-in and commitment from the highest level of elected representation in the Town of Drayton Valley proved extremely beneficial. The Mayor brought instant credibility to the issues of Lushoto. Together with her passion and tireless efforts to get the word out, she has been credited by most key informants as the driving force behind the entire relationship that developed between the two communities.

In conclusion

The Lushoto/Drayton Valley partnership won the 2008 FCM Award for Outstanding Volunteer Cooperation (Institutional Category). Drayton Valley municipal volunteers assisted their counterparts in Lushoto to build organizational capacities and skills in priority setting, planning, soliciting and using public/business input. Yet the award also acknowledges the tremendous outpouring of effort and funding from citizens and civil society organizations in Drayton Valley who banded together to support an orphanage and the so-called “AIDS Grandmothers” who take on child care duties for AIDS orphans. The municipal partnership was enhanced significantly by the secondary community foundation partnership that was facilitated by the two municipalities.

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