

**> Increased public participation in municipal decision-making:**

Community groups have come to see real benefits in engaging with the municipalities, viewing them as partners in community development. Likewise, the municipalities have learned to value support and cooperation with the community, and see their role in serving the community more expansively, reducing potential tensions and improving perceptions on both sides.

**> Enhancing municipal leadership skills and management capacities:**

Providing municipal staff and administrators with leadership skills, the ability to facilitate public participation and forge strong community bonds are essential contributions to peace, particularly at a time when other authorities are less capable of doing so and where local authorities are being forced to operate in much greater isolation from the central authority.

In the absence of support from central government, local governments' proximity to populations is vital to addressing acute economic and social disruptions. By improving human security and stimulating local economic development, local governments can help to stem the effects of ongoing violence by alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people and helping to preserve social and economic stability at a critical juncture.

### **The Canada/Sri Lanka Municipal Cooperation Program**

FCM has also partnered with CIDA since late 2005 to increase local government capacities to support national Sri Lankan post-tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in a conflict-mitigating manner. Four urban governments in Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Galle and Kalmunai are receiving technical assistance to improve local governance, primarily

in areas of operations management, service delivery and strengthened participatory mechanisms. Financial support is being given to municipalities to help fund sub-projects that affect the quality of life of the local population. In restoring basic services (such as water, sanitation and emergency services), basic management capacity (for conflict-mitigating land use planning), and necessary governance and accountability tools (including public participation mechanisms), the program should contribute to strengthening the conflict resilience of these fragile municipalities. ●

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**Local economic development projects, supported by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian International Development Agency, are discussed at a public meeting in Khan Younis in the Palestinian Territories.**

