Canadian best practices in building local governance for peacebuilding

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Effective local governments play a dual role in conflict prevention: they promote democratic processes at the local level through consultation and public engagement, and they deliver basic services. Strong and effective municipal governments have five distinct characteristics that have significant implications for their role in security, peacebuilding and conflict resolution: legitimate and transparent

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leadership; improved service delivery that touches people's lives directly; collaborative relationships with communities; participatory and transparent governance; and acting as a focal point for facilitation and coordination of services and decision-making.

As building these capacities in municipal governments is a key element in enhancing local security and supporting local development, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has implemented local governance capacity-building programs in the Palestinian Territories and Sri Lanka.

The Palestinian Municipal Management Project

The FCM has worked in partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) since 1997 to help reduce poverty and contribute to peace and human security in Rafah and Khan Younis, two cities in Gaza. Both cities suffer from very high unemployment, large refugee populations (making up 70 percent of the populations of 140,000 and 180,000 respectively), weak institutional structures, and inadequate and deteriorating infrastructure. Compounding these factors is the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The program's goal is "to support development and peace initiatives that improve the quality of life of citizens and achieve sustainable development

in the Palestinian municipalities," particularly considering the impasse between the Israelis and Palestinians at the national level. The program's key successes, results and best practices include:

> Improved local economic development capacities through the implementation of a **Local Initiatives Support Fund** (**LISF**), which built social capital by bringing together a committee composed of members of the municipal council, senior staff, and community representatives (including a women's group and neighbourhood and refugee camp representatives) to manage a fund designed to respond to the community's priorities. The LISF sowed practices of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness at the community level and strengthened linkages between community groups and municipalities through the proper group management of local economic development projects, thereby addressing some of the roots of violence at the local level.