

**A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO MEETING THE
RESETTLEMENT NEEDS OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES**

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INTRODUCTION

This study is a description of how one Canadian community used a community development approach to meet a sudden and complex challenge to its ability to provide social services for its residents. The challenge was the sudden influx of hundreds of Indochinese refugees into the twin cities of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario (population: 200,000) between 1979 and 1982.

The Indochinese refugee influx was the largest refugee movement to Canada since the Second World War. Within Canada, Kitchener-Waterloo had the highest per capita intake of Southeast Asians. At the same time, the community's response to refugee needs was "among the most ambitious and extensive" of any community in Canada, according to a senior Canadian government official (Bell, 1982).

It is worthwhile to study how the Kitchener-Waterloo community accomplished what it did. It may help those currently working to resettle Indochinese, Central American, or other refugees. It can also provide lessons should there be another such large-scale human calamity in our conflict-battered world.

History of Indochinese Refugees in Canada

Before 1975 there were few immigrants from Indochina in Canada. After the fall of Saigon in April 1975, Vietnamese and Kampuchians (Cambodians) already in Canada as visitors and students were permitted to apply for permanent residence. They also became able to sponsor relatives in Indochina or in refugee camps as immigrants to Canada.

In January 1978, after a three-year period during which increasing numbers of Vietnamese tried to escape their homeland in small boats, this quota was increased to include 20 more families a month from those Vietnamese who had fled overland to Thailand. There were also special airlifts, for example from the overcrowded freighter *Hai Hong*, in November 1978. In all, 9060 Southeast Asians refugees were resettled in Canada between 1975 and 1978.

In June 1979, the Canadian government agreed to sponsor an additional 8,000 Southeast

Asian refugees. But as ever-increasing numbers of refugees thronged into the already crowded temporary camps, the economies of their host countries suffered serious strain. International concern for their plight grew.

In July 1979, just prior to a United Nations Conference on international joint action to tackle the problems in Southeast Asia, Canada announced it would accept 50,000 Indochinese refugees for resettlement by the end of 1980. This target was later increased to 60,000 (employment and Immigration Canada, 1982).

Provisions for Refugee Resettlement

Canadian immigration law guaranteed certain basic rights for all refugees admitted to Canada. But the manner in which refugee needs were met differed according to the type of sponsorship.

1. Government-assisted Refugees

Government-assisted refugees were met by Canada Employment Centre counselors when they arrived. The counselors helped them find lodging and learn about their new communities. The government provided funds for lodging, food, clothes, furniture, basic household needs, tools or other job-related equipment, and for a living allowance during language or job training. Refugees received direct government support until they found their first job, or for a maximum of one year.

2. Privately-sponsored Refugees

Private sponsors made a legal commitment to maintain refugees for one year, or until they were self-sufficient, whichever came first. Sponsors agreed to provide furnished lodgings, household effects, food, clothing and incidental expenses. They also agreed to arrange for registration in provincial medical and hospital insurance plans, to pay health insurance premiums and other health care costs, and to provide reception, orientation, counseling, transportation, and employment help for the refugees.

3. Refugees with Special Needs

Special needs refugees included those with tuberculosis or physical handicaps, unaccompanied adolescents, and people like the Hmong and Mien, whose cultural and economic background were widely divergent from the Canadian norm. Many special needs refugees who didn't meet immigration standards for either government or private sponsorship were admitted under the Joint Assistance Program (JAP), introduced in January 1980.

JAP refugees had their material needs met directly by the government, like government-assisted refugees, but also had the support of private sponsors who promised to meet their extra human needs. Such refugees would not likely have been accepted by any resettlement country if voluntary groups and the had not banded together to provide special help.

Government Services Available to All Refugees

The following section outlines the government services available to all refugees, all across Canada.

1. Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC)

The CEIC assumed immediate responsibility for refugee needs, until individuals achieved self-sufficiency. Through the Canada Employment centres, the Employment and Immigration Commission provided employment counseling, job placement, and language and vocational training for those refugees who would enter the labour market.

Other services designed to facilitate refugees' economic, cultural and social adaptation to Canada were provided by fee-for-service contracts with existing non-profit community organization, under the commission's Immigration Settlement and Adaptation program. From 1979 to 1981, the Commission's Indochinese Refugee Settlement Grants program subsidized the administrative costs of over 60 new community organizations which emerged across Canada to meet refugee needs.

As well as providing services directly to refugees, the Commission recognized the needs to prepare Canadians to accept the refugees into their communities and help them become integrated. To stimulate the mobilization of community services, and to provide a link among local groups, Employment and Immigration hired fifty-five Refugee Liaison Officers to identify refugee needs in the communities, work with local groups to provide for those needs, and help with public education.

2. Department of the Secretary of State

The Department of the Secretary of State was responsible for integrating into Canadian society immigrants who had been in Canada longer than three years. However, it could—and did—work with newer arrivals.

The Department provided language training and citizenship courses for Indochinese refugees (primarily through transfer dollars to provincial governments) and gave grants to voluntary organization that provided immigrant and refugee support and services.

THE KITCHENER-WATERLOO (K-W) EXPERIENCE

Special Characteristics of the K-W Community and Its Refugees

The response of the Kitchener-Waterloo community to the Indochinese refugee movement was distinct in many ways.

The Kitchener area had the highest per capita intake of Southeast Asian refugees in Canada. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the first organization to sign an umbrella private sponsorship agreement with the Canadian government, has its provincial headquarters in Kitchener, and the MCC played an important leadership role in recruiting and training private sponsors. Its policy of aiding hard-to sponsor cases, such as the preliterate, non-industrial Hmong and Mien people, resulted in a proportionally high influx of Joint Assistance Program (JAP) refugees. At the end of 1980 there were 20 JAP families in Canada; 11 of these were Hmong and Mien families living in Kitchener. By 1984, there were 51 Hmong and Mien families living in Kitchener. By 1984, there were 51 Hmong and 12 Mien families in K-W.

Even before the influx of Southeast Asian refugees, the K-W community was an active, cooperative community, attuned and responsive to human needs. Its numerous churches were a major social force in the community, and exercised a strong commitment to social justice.

Within its social service agencies and community organizations was a core group of people committed to a community development approach to solving community problems. The individuals knew one another and had been involved in cooperative efforts with each other. They represented organizations such as the Waterloo Country Board of Education, the Department of the Secretary of State, Kitchener Waterloo Multicultural Centre, Mennonite Central Committee, K-W Friendship Families, and Employment and Immigration. They were strategically placed to meet refugee needs.

When the South East Asian Refugee Coordinating Committee (SEARCC) was formed early in K-W resettlement, the informal links among these individuals were strengthened. Representatives of all agencies actively involved in refugee resettlement were eventually included on the committee. The Refugee Liaison Officer's task of mobilizing and coordinating community services was made simpler because of the Committee's existence. The Committee took an active role in sharing information and resources, planning for long-term needs, identifying needs and resources in the K-W community, coordinating services and programs, and advocating new programs and initiatives that were required. At the same time, the Committee's ambitions were helped by having, effectively, a full-time staff member—the Refugee Liaison Officer—to coordinate its efforts.

All these factors contributed to Kitchener-Waterloo's response to refugee needs being “among the most ambitious and extensive” of any community in Canada (Bell, 1982).

Community Development Approach to Community Problem Solving

The Refugee Liaison Officer attributed the extensive achievements of the K-W community to the Coordinating Committee's use of the community development approach, which was described as:

“a development or process approach that involves working with, not for, people to identify their needs and formulate solutions that enable them to take greater control over their lives and community, by mobilizing human and material resources, and facilitating

the coordination and cooperative use of resources” (Montgomery, 1981).

In Kitchener-Waterloo a conscious decision was taken to use and further develop existing community resources, rather than establish new agencies, and to decentralize services in the appropriate agencies rather than establish one central point of refugee services. In part, resources dictated this. K-W could not support an ongoing centralized refugee service. The Coordinating Committee also believed decentralization would better promote independent action and initiative by the refugees. The Committee felt community-based solutions would meet refugee needs more effectively in the long term than a one-to-one, direct service approach. In the community development model, the Refugee Liaison Officer played a catalytic role. She worked with refugees, service providers and the community-at-large to identify needs and formulate solutions. Then she helped them implement needed programs and find ways to support the refugees' growth toward self-sufficiency.

Significant community initiatives in Kitchener-Waterloo

Between November 1979 and October 1982, various community initiatives in K-W showed the imprint of the community development philosophy.

1. Volunteer Sponsorship Development

As elsewhere in Canada, private sponsors were recruited for the incoming refugees through church connections in Kitchener-Waterloo. One of the Coordinating Committee's first tasks was to help these sponsors meet their responsibilities.

Sponsorship training workshops. Initially, many private sponsors needed information. Rather than provide one-to-one counseling, four workshops were organized to train new sponsors and to discuss common problems and solutions. The workshops were organized by the Refugee Liaison Officer, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), Operation Lifeline¹ and a few experienced sponsors. Workshop reports, including participants' names, addresses and phone numbers were sent to all present and provided the base for an informal sponsor support network. As new sponsors came forward, they were referred to one or two active, experienced sponsors for training and support.

Friendship Families Program. A program initiated by a private citizen, Friendship Families matched every government-assisted refugee with a Canadian Family who agreed to provide human support services with no financial obligation. Later, the Friendship Families Program received operating funds from the Employment and Immigration Commission, the Secretary of State, and local churches. The Coordinating Committee worked with Friendship Families to develop training programs to meet these families' self-identified needs.

¹ Operation Lifeline, formed in 1979, initially offered sponsorship information, translation services and emergency clothing, furniture and shelter, on a direct service basis. As its one-year grant from Secretary of State ended, and as the Coordinating Committee began to form, Operation Lifeline transferred its resources to appropriate community agencies.

Hmong sponsorship. Because Hmongs had very large families, little education, and no experience in industrialized society, this minority ethnic group from the mountains of Laos was regarded as hard to settle. With Mennonite Central Committee support, six families arrived under the Joint Assistance Program in 1979. Before their arrival, the Refugee Liaison Officer organized workshops for the sponsors. Later, workshops were conducted with both sponsors and Hmong people. These contributed greatly to Hmong adaptation and adjustment, and paved the way for the arrival of seven more families in 1980. The work of Lao Chai Vang greatly helped Hmong resettlement. One of Kitchener-Waterloo's first Hmong immigrants, Lao's knowledge of English soon established him as an unofficial interpreter for his fellows. This role was formalized when the Mennonite Central Committee hired him as Hmong community worker. Funding assistance was received from Employment and Immigration. Kitchener now has the only significant settlement of Hmongs in Canada, some 51 families.

2. Development of Community Support

In some Canadian communities, one person or agency met refugee needs on a direct service basis. The decentralized approach chosen by K-W's Coordinating Committee entailed more initial work since it meant contacting relevant employees in all community service agencies, introducing them to refugees and their circumstances, eliciting their sympathy and empathy and keep them informed. But in the long term, there was less danger of refugee dependency on one person or agency.

Kitchener-Waterloo's South East Asian Refugee Coordinating Committee was an important liaison mechanism for community agencies and government departments involved in resettlement. Workshops and training sessions were often initiated by the member agencies of the Coordinating Committee, including the Refugee Liaison Officer, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Friendship Families, Region of Waterloo Social Services, the Multicultural Centre and the ethnic organizations themselves. Through these events, Coordinating committee representatives educated other members of their own agencies, and also reached out to involve new agencies and individuals in refugee resettlement.

Refugee experience kit. A kit explaining refugees' experiences was developed to prepare Canadian children for the arrival of their new neighbours. Global Community Centre, a Third World education centre in Kitchener, coordinated the production committee of teachers, an English as a Second Language (ESL) consultant from the Waterloo County Board of Education, community workers, and two university students. Funding came from the Secretary of State and the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation. One hundred copies were distributed across Canada. Teachers on the production committee pre-tested kit materials locally, and encouraged other teachers to become involved. Subsequently, they helped set up workshops for teachers on refugee needs, and developed ways to help Canadians and Southeast Asians adapt to each other.

Workplace public education. A university student worked with the Refugee Liaison Officer to devise a six-week series of workshops on the world refugee situation. This was an attempt to reach people who would come into daily contact with refugees but would not likely attend open public meetings. Police, bus drivers, and social service workers were invited to attend. It was hoped these workers would help organize similar workshops in their own workplaces, but this

follow-up never occurred. Nonetheless, the workshops left a positive impression that was still being mentioned by participants two years later.

Public speaking, loan and distribution of print and audiovisual materials. In 1979 the coordinating Committee received many requests from service organizations for speakers. These, in turn, were directed to a core of sponsors who had emerged from the sponsor training workshops. During this period the film *Neither Here Nor There*, about the world refugee situation, provided very popular and the Kitchener Public Library purchased a copy that became a permanent community resource. The multicultural Centre increased its library of resources on refugee resettlement and made information accessible to refugees and sponsors. Secretary of State produced and distributed useful documents on the refugee experience.

3. Meeting Refugee Needs and Fostering Self-Sufficiency

Directory of services, information and referral. As the number of agencies and individuals involved in the resettlement increased, so did the need for a central information and referral centre. Rather than establishing a Refugee Hotline, as some larger centres did, in K-W a member-group of the Coordinating Committee, the Community Information Centre, undertook this role. The centre had already produced an excellent directory of services for sponsors.

With a one-year grant from Employment and Immigration, the centre hired a worker to update its files and encourage refugees to come to the centre. During English classes for immigrants at Conestoga College, the worker presented weekly orientation sessions, and worked with refugees when they came back to the centre for more information. When the grant ended, the centre's regular staff carried on the information and referral service. Refugees already familiar with the centre referred others to it.

A subcommittee of the Coordinating Committee produced three bilingual directories of services for Southeast Asian refugees—in Vietnamese and English, Lao and English, and Hmong and English. The ethnic organizations helped distribute these personally to each refugee family, answering questions as necessary. Funding from Secretary of State and Employment and Immigration helped this project.

Health care, family planning and child care. Stimulated by their involvement in the Coordinating Committee, Waterloo Regional Health Unit personnel researched the best ways of presenting information to the newcomers. They hired three ethnic workers to set up clinics specially geared to the refugees' cultural and social backgrounds, with backup print information in their own languages. The unit's standard slide-tape shows were revised to include pictures of both Canadian and Southeast Asian men and women.

Mental health network. The Coordinating Committee was asked to devise a method of coping with refugees' emergency mental health needs. Following a subcommittee study, the Canadian Mental Health Association, a Coordinating Committee member, requested and received a one-year Employment and Immigration grant to develop a volunteer mental health network. The funding paid for a worker who taught social workers and counselors about the cultural back

ground of refugees, and trained refugees to act as volunteer cultural interpreters in crisis situations. In addition, the professionals and para professionals were taught to work together as a team.

In its first year of operation, interventions by these counselor and cultural interpreter teams prevented cultural misunderstandings from snowballing into lawsuits or the laying of criminal charges. However, one year later, when the funding ended, the links between professionals and the refugee community broke down.

In retrospect, it seems a counseling service might have been a better sponsor / coordinator for this program. It could have more easily added maintenance of this network to its regular program, and might have had stronger community connections and interest that the Canadian Mental Health Association, and education organization.

Formation of ethnic associations. The Coordinating Committee knew that the existence of ethnic support was second only to the ability to learn English in effecting successful resettlement of Southeast Asians (Montero, 1970). Thus, the various refugee communities were encouraged to identify their goals, and to obtain the information and skills they needed to form their own associations.

Members of the Coordinating Committee acted as resource people for the different ethnic communities. Secretary of State and Multicultural Centre representatives played key roles in the Vietnamese and Laotian communities, while the Mennonite Central Committee and the Refugee Liaison Officer were active in the Hmong community.

The founding meeting of the Hmong Society of Ontario was convened in September 1980 by Lao Chai Vang, Hmong community worker, with assistance from the Mennonite Central Committee. The Lao Association was formed in 1981 and the Free Vietnamese Association in 1982.

The ethnic associations performed important social roles for their communities. They organized social gatherings, such as New Year's celebrations and children's festivals; offered mutual support for individual problems; and, in liaison with the Coordinating Committee, organized several educational sessions to meet common needs, for example, a workshop with Legal Aid representatives on the Landlord and Tenant Act, and workshops on income maintenance, employment, and income tax training. After Kitchener's Community Mediation Services was successful in resolving several refugee disputes outside the courts, the Hmong Society sent two of its members to a six-week training course sponsored by Community Mediation Services.

After refugees had become economically self-sufficient, or had been in Canada for three years, the Multicultural Centre, with Secretary of State financial assistance, became the main community contact with the ethnic associations. As well, the three associations had links with other community groups through their active participation in the Coordinating Committee.

Hmong volunteer network. In an effort to increase the self-sufficiency of the Hmong and Mien communities and make them less dependent on the Hmong resettlement worker, the

Coordinating Committee attempted to develop volunteer networks. A short-term Employment and Immigration grant paid for a team to assess each Hmong family's needs, then to set up networks linking five families to one Hmong volunteer "helping person" who understood those needs and could help the families find out how to meet them. After the networks were established, two Hmong Society members visited the largest U.S. Hmong settlement, in St. Paul, Minnesota, to help anticipate the Kitchener-Waterloo community's long-term needs.

The networks did not thrive. Experience showed that many of the "volunteer helpers" chosen did not have high enough levels of English communication skills and local knowledge to effectively help their fellows.

Hmong women's life skills. Hmong women were unfamiliar with Canadian cooking and housekeeping practices. The coordinating Committee undertook to provide special training in life skills for Hmong women.

The Coordinating Committee did not impose its own priorities on the women. Instead, a social work student on work placement with the Refugee Liaison Officer interviewed each Hmong family to determine the women's precise needs and desires. Working with their private sponsors, she began to teach each family Canadian hygiene and housekeeping practices. In the course of this instruction, she identified three or four Hmong women with leadership skills who later taught the others.

The women wanted to learn to operate sewing machines so they could apply for industrial sewing jobs. The student worked through the existing 4-H Club Program offered by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food to organize sewing classes. Then Canada Employment Centre counselors used their Special Needs and Work Adjustment Training program to place four Hmong women in permanent jobs.

Hmong women said they wanted to learn to cook and enjoy Canadian Foods. A step-by-step program was devised to teach table manners and basic social rituals, as well as the preparation of Common Canadian foods. Private sponsors, senior citizens and members of many different community organization were recruited to help—partly to meet the mushrooming demand from the refugee community, but also to increase the number of people involved with refugees.

English Classes. Because of their very different linguistic background, Southeast Asian refugees were a challenge to English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers.

A Waterloo Country Board of Education consultant felt it was very important for ESL teachers to get a broader view of the resettlement needs by getting involved in more than teaching activity. She became an active member of the Coordinating Committee, where she helped organize workshops for teachers on the refugees' cultural background. Spurred by her enthusiasm and example, other ESL teachers became similarly involved. One teacher organized a community benefit where a refugee family's house burned down. Others acted as counselors on everyday problems and gave referrals to relevant community agencies.

Perhaps because of their expanded personal involvement, many Waterloo County teachers

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developed some very creative ways to teach English to Southeast Asians. Several classrooms had bilingual teaching aides. In the summer of 1982 the Board of Education and the Coordinating Committee co-sponsored a Summer Canada Student Employment Program worker, paid by Employment and Immigration funds, to set up informal English conversation circles with volunteer teachers. A bilingual volunteer mediated between teacher and pupils to find out what techniques worked, and helped both parties suggest changes.

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Board of Education trustees also became involved in resettlement. Many became private sponsors and thereby gained a personal concern for the quality of ESL teaching. They in turn supported improvements in the local ESL program—a benefit for all immigrants.

At Conestoga College's adult English classes, orientation and information about community services and laws were combined with language training. When refugees persistently had problems learning English at the college, the Coordinating Committee advocated the investigation of different teaching approaches and adoption of improved methods. This investigation is an ongoing concern of the Committee.

4. Liaison and Coordination of Community Resettlement Initiatives

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South East Asian Refugee Coordinating committee (SEARCC). In 1984, some four years after its founding, the Coordinating Committee continued to meet regularly. The ethnic associations—the refugees themselves—played a more active roll than they had during the first two or three years. With the influx of large groups of Polish and Central American refugees, the membership and focus of the Committee broadened to include all refugees. Though some committee members came only when directly affected by an agenda item, there remained a strong, consistent core group.

The Coordinating Committee evaluates its existence annually. There is a commitment to keep working together on resettlement needs as long as necessary, and a recognition that not all problems are solved. Currently, funds are needed to provide settlement workers for the Hmong, Vietnamese and Laotian communities; the community's English as a Second Language classes still need improvement; more sponsors are needed for additional Southeast Asian refugees and for increasing numbers of Central American refugees; and there is also a need for a program to help the unemployed.

Standing Conference of Organizations Concerned for Refugees. This national organization, spearheaded by churches, is concerned with larger refugee issues such as admission criteria and world refugee needs, and has advocated changes in government policy and delivery of services.

The Coordinating Committee's membership in the conference spurred several K-W community agencies to become involved with it as well. Their participation in turn brought a global perspective to their local work.

EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO MEETING

RESETTLEMENT NEEDS

In 1983, founding members of the South East Asian Refugee Coordinating Committee reflected on their choice of a community development approach to meet the resettlement needs of Indochinese refugees in Kitchener-Waterloo. They noted several advantages and some disadvantages of this approach.

Advantages of a Community Development Approach

- A community development approach was less likely to set up an intensive dependency on one or a few services providers than, say, a direct service approach. Responsibility to the client/ refugees was highly decentralized, and termination of any one position or any one employee was less likely to be traumatic for the community. Ideally, the catalyst (Refugee Liaison Officer—RLO) could disappear and the process of cooperative needs-identification and solution-finding would continue apace—though the K-W experience suggested that a certain maturation period was crucial. The Kitchener RLO program was slated for termination on March 31, 1981 and again on March 31, 1982, but each time community pressure, mobilized by the Coordinating Committee, resulted in its extension. When the Refugee Liaison Officer position was terminated in October 1982, a strong working relationship among Coordinating Committee member organizations had been established. The various social agencies and ethnic associations had developed common goals and priorities for the use of community resources.
- A Community development approach was more likely to involve the intended service recipients in the planning process, and was thus more apt to meet their true needs. Many K-W initiatives, 4-H sewing classes for example, weren't anticipated by the Coordinating Committee but met refugee needs exactly.
- A community development approach stimulated existing agencies and organizations to increase their activities and to develop expertise in new areas.
- A community development approach could make agencies more sensitive to the needs and situations of different social sectors. In K-W, closer, more egalitarian contact was initiated between service providers and “clients,” in problem-solving workshops and on bodies like the Coordinating Committee. The quality of service delivery could thus be improved.
- Because of its stress on decentralization, the community development approach greatly increased the number of community members who interacted with the newcomers. In Kitchener-Waterloo, the result was an increased general awareness of Third World situations and of the world refugee situation.
- A community development approach stimulated the involvement of community volunteers much more than a direct service approach would have done. This in turn had positive effects. It increased the general level of awareness of services available in the community; and it may have aroused criticism of service quality or delivery, and mobilized energy to improve these.

Disadvantages of a Community Development Approach

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- It may take much longer to see results. Rather than meeting needs directly, initial time had to be spent meeting people, assessing existing community processes and creating interpersonal dynamics, building networks, etc. This seeming inaction can be very frustrating for both refugees/clients and the community-at-large.
- It was hard, demanding work. It required great flexibility and creativity from the catalysts. It required great personal energy, commitment and perseverance. In addition, there could be very strong pressure for a direct service approach. Thus, those who followed the community development approach often faced the added stress of challenging the existing power structure and a “status quo” attitude.
- It was heavily dependent on volunteers who were not always dependable, or available. Refugee volunteers who were not always dependable, or available. Refugee volunteers had many other commitments—they had to earn a living and attend to family needs and to their own resettlement problems.
- It depended on staff people in agencies seeing a community development approach and client self-sufficiency as being of high priority. Even if they agreed, they had to be willing and able to juggle their many other responsibilities to work on this demanding one.
- It involved simplifying the very complicated infrastructure of social service agencies. The big challenge was to find ways people could be brought out of sometimes very bureaucratized organizations into new, more flexible working relationships.
- The community development approach in itself could not overcome deep-set personal resistance within key service providers. Nor could it obviate persistent conflicts between important segments of the community. Other methods of meeting community needs might be able to work around such obstacles.

Factors in the Success of the Community Development Approach

Following is a brief list of the factors which led to the community development approach being effective in Kitchener-Waterloo. An assessment of these or similar conditions in other communities may be useful in deciding whether or not to implement a community development model in dealing with community needs or problems.

- The community had a core group of people philosophically committed to a community development approach to solving problems. Each was involved, through paid or volunteer work, in a critical aspect of refugee resettlement.
- There was a full-time liaison worker, the Refugee Liaison Officer, who had an educational background and extensive practical experience in community development, and who was very enthusiastic and determined about using this approach.
- The community organized a coordinating committee at an early state of resettlement. This step helped speed up the lengthy assessment and discovery stage of community development. More importantly, it brought together like-minded, strategically placed people and increased their power to determine the tenor of resettlement needs fulfillment in Kitchener-Waterloo.
- Without the Refugee Liaison Officer or some other full-time liaison worker, implementation of a community development approach by the Coordinating Committee

would have been much slower and more difficult. On the other hand, a community-development minded resettlement worker without organized community support would have been seriously impeded. The working partnership between the refugee Liaison Officer and the Coordinating Committee was crucial to the success of refugee resettlement in the Kitchener-Waterloo.

- The K-W community had a history of interacting and cooperating. Many informal links were already established. Many people on the Coordinating Committee had already worked together, and their trust and mutual respect grew with increased interaction.
- The Mennonite Central Committee was involved in refugee resettlement long before the major influx of Southeast Asians reached K-W. MCC had a good sense of the community's abilities and needs which it shared with others via the Coordinating Committee.
- The local Canadian Employment Centre, employer of the Refugee Liaison Officer, provided both extended funding and moral support for her work in community development.
- Both government and non-government bodies were prepared to innovate and overcome their initial resistance to the new, then untried community development approaches. The personalities of the key people on the coordinating committee were very suitable for their catalytic roles in the community. Along with flexibility, good organization skills and persuasiveness, they had the ability to walk in the other person's shoes.
- The K-W community was fortunate in receiving a great deal of outside (mostly government) financial assistance to effect its plans. This was partly due to the community's insistence on fully understanding its resources and needs before applying for any funds. As well, officers for several key funding bodies were involved in the Coordinating Committee.

The above factors made a community development approach workable in the Kitchener-Waterloo. The commitment and willingness of key people to go the extra step accounted for its high degree of success.

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