



NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION CENTRE

Building the Evidence – **EVALUATION SUMMARIES**

2007-ES-4

DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE PROJECT

Downtown Eastside in Vancouver is a community facing serious crime and social problems. The Downtown Eastside Project was launched in 1999 to address the roots of crime and victimization. This project involved many partners working in collaboration. The official project ended in 2004 and its legacy continues through the on-going collaborative work by the City of Vancouver.



The purpose of the project was to mobilize the Downtown Eastside community and build capacity among residents, agencies, and business representatives to address some of the known risk factors for involvement in crime and victimization such as alcohol and drug use, inadequate and unsafe housing, lack of appropriate role models for youth, poverty and family issues.

The Downtown Eastside Project was designed for Aboriginal people, children, youth and women who were living in this inner-city neighborhood, as well as the service providers working there. It consisted of five main components, each with specific goals:

- **Community Directions:** To mobilize and build capacity in the community.
- **Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee:** To strengthen the capacity of agencies and businesses in Chinatown.
- **Coordination and Community Cohesion:** To link initiatives in the community and facilitate communication among partners.
- **Youth Employment:** To provide training opportunities for youth.
- **Communications and Information:** To educate the broader community about the root causes of crime.

Project assessment

Both process and outcome evaluations were conducted. The evaluation sought to assess the contribution of community development and mobilization in building capacity among residents and at-risk populations living in this inner-city neighborhood. The hypothesis was that increased community capacity would lead to more integration of at-risk populations and more opportunities for social inclusion and the reduction of crime and victimization.

The evaluation followed a participatory model. The evaluator facilitated planning with an Evaluation Advisory Committee made up of community representatives. A crime and victimization survey was administered which involved 1,281 residents and visitors. Focus groups comprising approximately sixty participants were held. Interviews were also conducted with 150 community and government representatives and 158 residents completed a community perceptions survey.

Key findings

The process evaluation revealed that:

- The project required a wide range of resources and its effectiveness was based on good project management skills, coordination, availability of office and community spaces and long-term support for programs.
- Approximately 175 residents, business owners and agency representatives were involved at any given time including First Nations, Chinese-Canadians, Latinos and people with disabilities.
- The Community Directions Component of the Project successfully involved low-income residents and women in the community but was unable to reach many residents, businesses and agencies.
- The project had difficulty in building the leadership capacity to link with the Vancouver Agreement and other government initiatives in order to effectively impact policy changes.



Conclusion

Although community capacity building projects are difficult to evaluate rigorously, the results of the Downtown Eastside Project indicate that many residents felt that the Project had successfully addressed many of the risk factors associated with crime and victimization.

Overall the Downtown Eastside Project has been effective in increasing resident's involvement in community decision-making and First Nation's participation in activities to increase community safety and well-being.

The outcome evaluation found that:

- The Downtown Eastside Project successfully increased resident involvement in community decision making and planning.
- 79% of key respondents felt that these activities were more inclusive and 85.2% of respondents felt that the participation of First Nations residents had been strengthened.
- 94% of respondents believed that there was a greater opportunity for leadership development since the project began.
- There was a general feeling among residents that some of the common risk factors associated with crime and victimization had been successfully reduced.

Lessons learned

The Downtown Eastside Project generated a number of important lessons, for example:

- It is important to clearly articulate the relationship between crime prevention and comprehensive initiatives and capacity building in communities.
- Participation should be inclusive with an emphasis on making links between various populations and service sectors.
- All community processes should have clearly articulated decision-making processes with appropriate accountability mechanisms.
- It is important to have staff continuity throughout the life of the project.
- Planning for sustainability is important to ensure participants are engaged in community planning beyond project resources.
- Basic human needs must be met if people, who are homeless, drug addicted or who have mental health issues are going to be interested and engaged in community mobilization and prevention efforts.

For more information or to receive a copy of the final evaluation report please contact the National Crime Prevention Centre at 1-877-302-6272, or visit our website at: www.publicsafety.gc.ca/ncpc

You can also visit the City of Vancouver's website at: <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/dtes>