

## **Changing lenses: From Government-led Development to Community-led Development: The Contributions of Community Foundations in Mexico**

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### **Abstract**

Due to its historical past, the Mexican government has been the main motor of philanthropy and social development. Through the promotion of social assistance programs to address social injustice, government has led development in the belief that outside experts and resources are the only ones that can provide real help in the communities, an approach that has created dependency and discouraged the perception that people can lead and contribute to their own development. Within this scenario, community foundations have had an important role in changing thinking about the form development needs to take, based on a more comprehensive understanding of communities. In this paper, the author argues that, unlike government, which directly provides services to the 'needy' through patronage social programs, community foundations work at the grassroots level by looking to local assets – financial and otherwise – to help build local capacity and trust for the purpose of addressing community needs and priorities, consolidating themselves as community builders.

Ms. Mendez de la Brena presents a historical overview of the Mexican socio economic background to show the main characteristics of government-led development programs. In order to understand the relevance of Mexican community foundations in encouraging community-led development processes, three case studies are presented: Fundación Comunidad Morelos, Fundación Comunitaria del Bajío and Fundación del Empresariado Sonorense, Nogales Chapter. Each case study provides examples of community-led processes and extraordinary creativity to encourage social change. For the last section, Ms. Mendez de la Brena presents several examples of community engagement conducted by other overseas community foundations, and suggests incorporating similar experiences to improve the contribution of Mexican community foundations in community- led development.

For the full version of the paper, please click [here](#).

