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ROLE

CITY COUNCIL TREASURER

The Mayor had been quite enthusiastic about the visit to the City of Urbana of the State-level Director of Public Works, Water and Sanitation. Mayor Zambene had informed you that your presence at next week's multi-stakeholder dialogue will be critical. The mayor and yourself will then have a follow-up meeting with the Director of Public Works, Water and Sanitation to iron out the details on how the city of Urbana can formally submit a proposal to access national funds to create a community savings and loans association so people can borrow money to build toilets in their houses and contribute funds to construct piped water systems in selected sites within the community.

You too are keen to pursue potential financing for the city of Urbana. As Treasurer of the city council you are aware that the local government finances are in a shambles. Aside from the national budget allocation to the city, there are few sources of revenue. Farms have been abandoned. Men work for daily wages in the nearby industrial zone. A large percentage of households are headed by women who do not generate resources as they spend their time in childcare and household chores. There are very few households able to engage in small business activities like weaving baskets, pickling vegetables, collecting honey.

You long for your life as Finance Officer of a medium-sized enterprise in the neighboring industrial zone. That was your goal in life – a comfortable job that brings a stable income, the opportunity to hone your financial analysis and accounting skills, your ability to contribute to the family income and help provide for the financial needs of your pre-school son and daughter as well as to care for your 90 year old mother-in-law who lives with your family. It was difficult at first to commute between Urbana and the neighboring industrial zone, but eventually the family adjusted to the idea of your being home only from Friday evenings till Monday mornings. But all of that had to change three years ago when your spouse became desperately ill. You quit your job in the nearby industrial zone and returned home to Urbana. Fortunately, you and your spouse were able to invest some funds into the water truck business and that has provided your family with supplemental income. And when the newly-elected mayor invited you to be a member of the city council, your financial management skills became very useful and you were made the city council Treasurer.

You are trying to assess whether the Mayor's new program proposal will affect the water distribution business. If people can access community water taps near their homes, why will they need to buy water from the water trucks?

And the plan to create community savings and loan associations can provide you an exciting opportunity to use your financial management skills. How can you be selected as the Head of the community savings and loan association? You will readily quit your post as the Treasurer of the city council to become the head of the community savings and loan association!

There is a desperate need for clean water and toilets in the city. There will be a huge demand for small loans, and you expect to be busy processing loans and monitoring loan repayments.

But you remind yourself that this dream job can only materialize if the mayor's program is approved by the State-level Director of Public Works, Water and Sanitation.

You must be an active listener during this dialogue. You know there will be vocal opposition to the mayor's plan ..even if the program is meant to address a basic and urgent need of the people of Urbana and specifically the municipality of Zealandia. You and your spouse will also need to discuss with the owner/manager of the Water Trucks how the new program will affect the water business. And explore whether there are ways to continue to grow the water business by addressing sanitation-related issues, though these have to be identified and its profitability assessed.

You have a good relationship with your community as your family has been regarded as successful entrepreneurs. You and your spouse have a small family business – pickling vegetables from the farms of friends and neighbors. You and your spouse were always ready to respond to the request for loans from friends and neighbors in times of financial need.

You are quiet and soft-spoken. You tend to shy away from participating in meetings where insults are traded among one another so you are not looking forward to the dialogue with the multi-stakeholder group. So much of your aspirations for the future rests on the group coming to a durable agreement to pursue the program and collaborate to make the program successful on all fronts – that this program provides clean water and toilets for the community and that the community and savings loan association is managed well.