

# Preface

At any given time, hundreds of EWB members - across the country, and across the Atlantic - are living a life in support of human development. They are going to work at partner organizations in Burkina Faso, visiting farmers in Ghana, working with small-scale entrepreneurs in Zambia, and running monitoring and evaluation workshops in Malawi. They are selling fair trade coffee on their university campus in Newfoundland, and symbolically “smashing poverty” in the Maritimes. They are presenting to school students on world water issues in Quebec, meeting with Members of Parliament in Ontario, attending meetings on Canada’s foreign aid policy in Manitoba, and hanging Make Poverty History banners from overpasses in Saskatchewan. They are talking about corporate social responsibility in offices in Alberta, and teaching about international issues in engineering classes in British Columbia.

EWB is now one of the leading international development organizations in Canada, but we started from humble beginnings. Nine years ago, EWB was just an idea. An idea founded on the hope that we could create a better world.

That idea began in a coffee shop, and it was also in a coffee shop where we first hit upon the idea for this book. In the hot and humid summer of 2008, George Roter, Parker Mitchell, Laura McGrath, Samina Hashmi, and Levi Goertz met for a 7am meeting at Le Gourmand in downtown Toronto. Laura and Samina huddled over coffees, Parker ordered a latte, Levi raved about his apple danish, and George clutched his Blackberry. Samina updated us on the EWB chapter president meetings, Levi talked about the recent round of Junior Fellow training, and we all shared our impressions from interacting with so many EWB members during summer leadership retreats. Chapter members across the country were expressing a real curiosity about the beginnings of the organization. As they stepped into leadership roles, they were asking how EWB had started, and how it got to where it is today. Did EWB really begin on the back of a napkin? Did chapters really used to run their own overseas projects? Was it true that the organization went through four mission statements, and at least as many websites?

As we talked about our own memories of EWB's beginnings, stories tumbled out of us. The first overseas volunteer. The first major donor. The first EWB conference. The first paid employee. And the many, many changes the organization has gone through since then.

On the spot, we decided to create this book.

*From Humble Beginnings: The EWB Story So Far* describes how the many early leaders of EWB poured their heart and their life into

building an enduring institution to fight for Dorothy. They were young engineers and engineering students, some just out of school, some not even out of their teens. Some of them are still here at EWB, some have passed the torch on to others, some are returning to push the organization further. In the midst of reading their stories, we hope you'll catch a reflection of your own hopes and fears and passions.

EWB is an ever-evolving organization. Here you will read about our roots and our past. Now, looking forward, we are united in our passion to build a better world for Dorothy. The strategy and tactics of how to do so, however, continue to change. What we will be doing five years from now, and how we will be doing it, is an unwritten chapter. It is a story that will be written by you, the current generation of passionate change agents.

The stories you're about to read, the contributions of hundreds of EWB members past and present, were brought together by Laura McGrath. Since the first day Laura became involved in EWB, just before the 2004 national conference, she's been helping to shape and share our stories. She has keenly listened to EWB, both to the individuals and the collective, and drawn on her deep passion for the organization to breathe life into the pages that follow.

We hope you enjoy reading the story so far, and we hope you will be part of the story to come.

*George & Parker*