

Are we building the house without foundations – reflections on current international development practice

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Introduction – the problem of urban services

Despite the best efforts of governments and international agencies, conditions in low-income urban settlements in many developing countries continue to stagnate. All too often, the rhetoric of good governance, decentralisation and citizen's voice is not matched by improved social and physical conditions on the ground. The available information on progress towards the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets suggests that progress in relation to sanitation and slums is particularly poor. The 2006 Millennium Development Goals Report (UN 2006) notes that half of developing country populations still lack basic sanitation. The situation with regard to water supply appears better, with the overall percentage of the population receiving water from improved sources increasing from 71% in 1990 to 80% in 2004. However, field experience suggests that these figures should be treated with caution. In South Asia, for instance, most users of water from urban piped water systems receive water for only a few hours a day and water is often faecally contaminated. Recent water quality tests in Jaranwala, Pakistan revealed that almost all samples taken at consumers' taps were contaminated despite the fact that water was unpolluted at source. If this experience is typical, which it certainly is in Pakistan, it would seem that reliance on coverage targets alone will generally lead to an overestimate of the number of people receiving satisfactory services.

Service deficiencies are likely to be particularly acute in low-income areas. The MDG Report reports slum growth rates in Africa, Western Asia and Southern Asia of 4.5%, 2.7% and 2.2% per annum respectively, only slightly less than the corresponding overall urban growth rates of 4.6%, 3.0% and 2.9%. New informal developments are unlikely to be serviced at the time that they are built and so these figures suggest that servicing such areas presents a huge challenge in towns and cities across the developing world.

The problem in perspective

Rapid urban development and the formation of slums is not a new phenomenon. Slums formed in Kolkata in the 19th century and have continued to form since (Thomas 1999). The mainstream focus on demolishing such areas so that they could be replaced by formal housing was soon challenged by a minority who calling for efforts to improve rather than replace congested and insanitary settlements. Patrick Geddes, for instance, was proclaiming the benefits of 'conservative surgery' and condemning what he described as death dealing 'Haussmanning', the colonial authorities' replacement of existing housing with regularly laid out developments, as early as 1914 (Ramaswamy 1995). Despite the efforts of original thinkers such as Geddes, the prevailing view until the 1970s was that the response to rapid urbanisation should be for government to build or sanction sufficient housing units to meet demand. In the 1970s, partly influenced by the ideas of Charles Abrams and John F.C. Turner, The World Bank began to promote the concepts of sites and services and upgrading¹. The assumption underlying both was a division of responsibilities between government and householders, with government doing what it did best, provide services, while individual

¹ Geddes had, of course, been promoting upgrading over 50 years previously, that there are relatively few completely new ideas.

householders did what they did best, providing their own shelter. The state was still clearly seen as the senior partner in the development process and the overall impacts, particularly those of sites and services schemes, were limited. Between 1970 and 1980, the World Bank helped 20 countries to provide about 310,000 plots through sites and services. (Baum and Stokes 1985). This represents an average of under 40,000 plots per year, housing a population of perhaps 300,000, which is less than 1% of the total annual population growth in urban areas in developing countries.

The widespread belief in state-led development came under pressure from the early 1980s onwards as neo-classical economists argued that private sector activity in an open market must inevitably be more efficient than state intervention. At the same time, there was an increased emphasis on the need for citizen participation in service provision. However, market driven development does not work particularly well for services that are public or merit goods while participatory approaches have not achieved wide service coverage, partly because existing institutional structures and attitudes discourage participation (Tayler 2005). In recent years, international agencies, including DFID and the World Bank have emphasised the need for good governance and have emphasised the importance of citizen's voice. Advocates of citizen's voice argue that conventional forms of political representation and accountability often fail to adequately address the needs and concerns of citizens. The response to this must be to establish better vertical channels of communication and new accountability relationships between state agents and citizens (Goetz and Gaventa 2001). The underlying assumption, sometimes explicit but almost always implicit, is that the key to development problems lies in developing people's ability to lobby for improved services. Increased 'voice' will create pressure on service providers, who will react by improving performance and providing the services demanded by customers to a standard that they find acceptable (World Bank 2003).

Where we are now – key aspects of current thinking

This brief and inevitably simplified survey of changes in development thinking suggests a shift from an initial concern with direct supply of housing and improved services via various efforts to facilitate supply by harnessing people's energies and resources to the present strong focus on creating demand for improved services. The implicit assumption is that basic systems are in place and will be able to respond to focused pressure for improved services from service consumers.

Another important aspect of current thinking is the emphasis on measuring the results of development interventions. Different institutions use different approaches to assessing the results of their projects. Most use logical frameworks to define the outputs and outcomes to be achieved by their projects. The World Bank defines performance indicators, which may or may not be linked to logical frameworks, and also uses what it terms 'benchmarking', comparing the performance of different organisations in order to encourage the less effective to aspire to the standards achieved by their more effective peers.

Whatever means are used to measure outputs, project targets continue to be challenging. A typical World Bank or Asian Development Bank project will aim to disburse anything from \$50 million up to \$150 million or more over a period of 5 years. The World Bank normally requires that contracts for at least 20% of a project's total planned disbursement should be ready for award by the time the loan for the project is agreed. This means that there is little scope for a project to develop momentum over time as capacity builds. It is true that, for many urban projects, the total disbursement is spread over many municipalities and it may be argued that this reduces the pressure on individual municipalities. On the other hand, the

greater the number of towns and cities covered by a project, the greater the burden of supervision, a factor that becomes particularly important if the participating municipalities are institutionally weak and have limited capacity to manage projects on their own. Driven by the need to meet the MDG targets, bilateral agencies also appear to be moving towards funding fewer larger projects.

The increased emphasis on governance has also led to an emphasis on working through mainstream government departments rather than specially created project management units (PMUs) and project implementation units (PIUs). The rationale for this move is clear and hard to argue with on theoretical grounds. PMUs and PIUs are almost always temporary units, with staff either seconded from mainstream government departments or hired on contract for the period covered by external funding. Such units are unlikely to continue beyond the cessation of external funding. However, working through mainstream government departments presents significant difficulties. They often lack the basic capacity to carry out the duties assigned to them through large externally funded projects. Governments and international agencies often respond to this reality by hiring hire consultants to plan, design and supervise implementation of schemes. The danger here is that the consultants end up doing all the work so that there is no long-term development benefit.

The move towards working through government rather than specially created PMUs and PIUs has taken place alongside another important development, the almost universal emphasis on decentralisation. One commonly cited justification for decentralisation is that it brings politicians and officials closer to service users and thus allows the latter to exert more pressure to obtain better services (World Bank 2003). The validity of this argument depends on the extent to which decentralised systems encourage local leaders to listen to citizens and their representatives rather than following the dictates of political powerbrokers, including particularly higher levels of government (ADB/DFID/World Bank Undated).

Regardless of this, it is legitimate to ask whether giving voice to community members is a sufficient condition for change. If not, what other barriers to change exist and how might they be overcome? To provide a basis for answering these questions, the experience with a component of one DFID-funded project in Pakistan is now examined. Lessons are then drawn and some generally applicable strategic implications are identified.

Pakistan – water and sanitation in one town in a decentralised system

The Strengthening Decentralised Local Government in Punjab, Faisalabad District Project is a DFID-funded initiative, designed to improve governance in one district in Pakistan. It was formulated following Pakistan's 2001 decision to decentralise local government responsibilities and has an explicit focus on improving decentralised systems. The project's stated purpose was to put efficient, effective, democratic and non-corrupt local government systems into place in Faisalabad District. These were to be responsive to the needs of local communities and suitable for replicating elsewhere in Punjab Province. From the beginning, the project had a specific focus on education and, in response to a request from the District Government, a water supply and sanitation component was later added to the project. This paper draws mainly upon experience with the water supply and sanitation component of the project.

The objective specified in the logical framework for this component of the project was that Tehsil Municipal Administrations (TMAs) should use improved systems and ways of working to enhance access to and quality of water and sanitation services. Three indicators were given for the achievement of this objective:

- an increase in the percentage of effectively maintained drinking water and sanitation schemes in selected TMAs;
- an increase in the percentage of people who are aware of the linkages between health, water and sanitation in selected TMAs
- An increase in the supply of drinking water and sanitation services in response to community demand.

The third indicator clearly links to the concept of voice in that it emphasises the need to devise schemes in response to user demand rather than in a purely supply-driven way. Activities related to the outputs included supporting the District Government and selected TMAs in the development of capacity for district-wide planning and coordination for safe water supply and sanitation and developing innovative approaches to the provision of safe water and sanitation in response to community needs.

Project activities were to be coordinated by a Strategic Planning Unit created within the District Government and reporting directly to the District Nazim, the political leader of the District and the District Coordination Officer (DCO), the senior civil servant in the District. The situation was complicated by the fact that responsibility for water supply and sanitation lay with the tehsils, the layer of government below the District².

Initial investigations revealed that the existing situation was far from satisfactory. Faisalabad District has more than 800 villages but only about 200 of these had water supply schemes and some of these were no longer functional. The situation in urban centres outside Faisalabad itself was not much better with no town providing water to more than 50% of its population, usually for no more than 3 hours per day. The situation with regard to drainage was, if anything, even worse. Most urban households had access to water-borne sanitation, normally in the form of pour-flush latrines and discharged wastewater, either directly or via household septic tanks to open drains. These conveyed water to pumping stations, from which wastewater was discharged untreated either to agricultural drains or to fields, where it was used to irrigate crops. There was no separate storm drainage system and the lack of spare capacity in existing drains would inevitably lead to some flooding with polluted water during severe storms. Maintenance was at best sporadic and in most cases virtually non-existent.

While the physical situation was unsatisfactory, institutional factors gave more cause for concern. Planning systems were lacking. In theory, development funds were to be allocated through a bottom-up planning process, which involved the initial identification of schemes at the Union Council level³ and the consolidation of these schemes into the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for the tehsil as a whole. In practice, investigations suggested that schemes were often selected by the political leadership of Union councils. Most involved drains and street paving and the typical value was in the range Rs500,000 to Rs 1 million (roughly £5000 to £10,000). It seemed that politicians preferred to use available funds for several small schemes, spread around their constituencies rather than on a smaller number of strategic improvements. Investment decisions were clearly driven by political rather than technical considerations and there were few proposals to improve water supply systems or replace drains with sewers. The resulting piecemeal schemes were sometimes

² The population of Faisalabad District is about 6 million and the populations of its six tehsils range from around 300,000 to over 1 million.

³ The Union Council was and is the lowest functioning level of local government. The Punjab Local Government Ordinance (PLGO), the key government document governing the arrangements for decentralisation, provides for the formation of a lower tier of village and neighbourhood councils but this aspect of the Ordinance has never been implemented.

useless and almost always less effective than if they had been conceived in the context of a proper overall plan. This finding raises important questions about the link between decentralisation and responding to citizen's voice.

As the project progressed, much of the responsibility for planning and design was returned to the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), a Provincial Government body. Unfortunately, the PHED, and indeed some of Pakistan's largest consulting firms, continues to take a supply driven approach to planning, paying little attention to either consumer demand or the capacity of TMAs to operate and maintain facilities once they are in place. For instance, the PHED is currently implementing a scheme that will increase the number of tubewells supplying water to Jaranwala Town from the present 7 operational wells to a total of over 30. Assuming that each tubewell operates for around 8 hours per day, this will provide around 100 litres per person per day to every inhabitant of the town. From a supply-driven perspective, this seems reasonable. However, the financial records for Jaranwala TMA show that income from customers averages only about 10% of operating expenditure (Rs 260,000 against Rs 2.62 million in 2003/04 and Rs 465,000 against Rs 4.3 million in the first 11 months of 2004/05). With such a poor financial record, it is hard to see how the TMA can pay the greatly increased operational costs associated with the new scheme.

Investigations revealed two reasons for the extremely poor cost recovery, first the low flat-rate tariff (Rs 15 or about \$0.27 per month per household) and second the low number of consumers actually paying their bills. Analysis of payment vouchers held by the TMA revealed that only 1465 customers, about 30% of the 4856 registered customers, had paid a bill in the period have paid a bill in the period 2002 - 2006. This may be partly explained by the poor state of consumer records but is also likely to reflect a lack of willingness to pay. Formal surveys carried out in the course of a World Bank study in eight larger municipalities and informal discussions with elected representatives in Jaranwala Town suggest that the main reason for low willingness to pay for services is the poor quality of the service delivered, with dirty water being supplied intermittently at low pressures. When asked, consumers repeatedly said that they would be willing to pay more for a better service, suggesting that there was demand for an improved service⁴.

Unfortunately, the ability of TMAs to provide improved services was hampered by severe supply side deficiencies. Few towns had any record of their water supply and drainage systems and those records that did exist were inadequate, comprising nothing more than a sketch of the system with no record of the location of valves. No water supply system had any form of metering and so it was difficult to know how much water was being produced and where it was being used. None had a system of spare parts and the resultant delay in effecting repairs meant that a broken pipe or failed pump might result in a system being out of service for some considerable time. Many drains were badly silted and site investigations revealed that wastewater pumps were generally in bad condition. In some cases, only one pump was installed while in others one of the two installed pumps was out of action so that the whole drainage system discharging to a pumping station depended on the operation of one unreliable pump. Billing systems were very poor with many discrepancies between the central register of connections and the ledger book used to record payments. The use of untrained staff for billing and financial record-keeping duties and frequent changes in staff deployment contributed to the poor state of records.

There were also problems with the implementation of new schemes. Visits to ongoing water supply schemes within Faisalabad District, revealed that pipes were being laid with no

⁴ Based on unpublished report on a willingness to pay survey carried out by the consulting firm Fichtner as part of the Punjab Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Reform Study.

proper bedding and poor backfilling. There was no evidence that any pressure testing had been carried out and indeed some recently laid water mains were clearly leaking. One visit to an ongoing drainage scheme, implemented by the PHED revealed that a sewer manhole was being built around an existing water main. Not altogether surprisingly, many deaths attributed to drinking poor quality water have been reported in Faisalabad District in the summer of 2006.

Taken together, these findings suggested that there were real constraints on the capacity of both provincial and local government departments to supply adequate water and sanitation services in response to user demand. These constraints related not just to resources but also to the systems for ensuring that available resources were used effectively.

The project's response and its limitations

The Project's response to the needs of the District was to establish a Strategic Policy Unit (SPU) within the District Government. According to the Background Project Document produced by DFID, the SPU was to be 'headed by an Additional Director supported by a small staff of carefully selected officials and national and international consultants'. Faisalabad District would 'fully staff the SPU and designate counterpart staff'. The Additional Director was to remain in post for the duration of the project. The role of the consultants was to support the SPU and help to develop the District Government's capacity to plan, prioritise and manage its resources⁵. The initial focus was to be on developing capacity in District level planning and coordination and this was to be followed by efforts to pilot innovative approaches.

The project responded to the fact that water and sanitation were tehsil level responsibilities by initially focusing on improving water and drainage management systems in one tehsil, in the hope that this would provide lessons to be applied by other TMAs. Jaranwala TMA was chosen, mainly because it had a proactive Nazim (mayor), who was committed to improving services in his TMA. In order to deal with the wide range of problems and constraints identified in the previous sub-section, the SPU adopted an integrated approach to change, which sought to:

- Develop awareness of the need for strategic planning – planning that starts from recognition of the realities of the situation and engages with institutional and financial issues as well as the need for new facilities.
- Provide guidance to technical staff on improved procedures for contract design and documentation
- Provide guidance to technical staff on improved contract implementation procedures
- Develop improved billing systems and financial records, initially for water supply.
- Develop improved systems for managing the operation and maintenance of water supply and drainage systems

A timetable for carrying out each of these activities was prepared by the SPU consultants and specific objectives and objectively verifiable indicators were set for each activity. The aim throughout was to use the results from fieldwork to inform the higher-level policy decisions that would help to bring about improved governance throughout the District. In practice, the results were disappointing. Because of the very limited capacity available within the TMA and the lack of awareness among staff of the need for change, the onus for driving efforts to introduce improved systems has rested largely with the SPU consultants. Without

⁵ In practice, the SPU is staffed almost entirely by consultants, mainly Pakistani nationals, suggesting that it is essentially an old-style PMU rather than a new and dynamic organ of government.

incentives from higher levels of government, local government officials proved to be reluctant to engage with the need for change.

DFID has recently reacted to this situation and a degree of uncertainty about roles and responsibilities relating to the water and sanitation sector by instructed the SPU to cease activities in individual tehsils and instead focus on the development of a management information system (MIS) covering the whole of Faisalabad District. Its concern is that the Project has devoting too many resources to 'fixing' problems in one town and that the involvement of international consultants in town level activities means that these activities are not replicable. There is some truth in this view but it rather begs the question of why it proved necessary for project personnel to become deeply involved at this level in the first place. Part of the answer to this question relates to the lack of capacity at tehsil level but the work in Jaranwala also revealed the problems associated with existing systems and procedures, as will become clear as lessons learnt are described and conclusions are drawn.

Lessons learnt

Planning The work confirmed that there was little understanding or acceptance of the need to plan strategically. In one workshop, government officials said in effect that the concept of planning was meaningless in their situation since politicians would always decide what was to be done anyway. The experience in Jaranwala suggests that most politicians and municipal officials still see capital expenditure as the solution to most problems. There is little interest in planning for improved management and making effective use of existing facilities. If TMAs, and indeed Districts, are to engage in effective information-based planning, nothing less than a change in mindset is required. The need for this change extends far beyond TMAs to encompass Districts, Provincial Government and many consultants. Over and above this, the fieldwork confirmed findings from earlier work on strategic planning for sanitation (Tayler and Parkinson 2005). Local government currently lacks people with the analytical and technical skills required to identify and develop viable responses to service deficiencies.

Contract design, documentation and implementation Some progress was made with efforts to improve contract design and documentation. In particular, the standard Conditions of Contract were translated into Urdu, thus making them more accessible to the many small contractors who have limited English. A guidelines document on contract implementation procedures was produced. However, it is unlikely that these interventions, in themselves, will lead to significant change. In a workshop, Tehsil engineers said that the proposed implementation procedures might be good in theory but the reality was that they could not be sensibly implemented for the large number of small schemes that had resulted from the way in which decentralisation had been implemented. There is a problem of perception here. Engineers see little wrong with the way in which they are designing and implementing schemes at present, although the examples given earlier in this paper show that their methods are clearly deficient in some key respects. This is also true of engineers working at higher levels in the government system, a point well illustrated by the fact that PHED schemes are often poorly executed.

Financial systems Efforts to improve billing records were hampered by the existence of incompatible information systems. Between 2001 and 2005, the then Tehsil Nazim, in a commendable attempt to improve systems, had engaged NGOs to survey customers but the information obtained from these surveys was difficult to reconcile. One important point that emerged was the absolute necessity of having a generally agreed means of identifying existing and potential consumers and illegal water users. The best option for doing this appeared to be to develop a house and street numbering system linked to mohallas (neighbourhoods). This

was possible in Jaranwala because a good base map of the town was available but most towns do not have such a base map. Unfortunately, the experience in Jaranwala has shown that existing records are so bad that it is often difficult to link individual consumers to specific properties. It seems that nothing less than a complete customer survey and the introduction of a new system of registration will be required to establish reliable billing records. Even if such a system is introduced, it is unlikely to be sustained unless staff are trained and motivated to maintain it over time.

Management systems Efforts to improve financial systems were hampered by the lack of a workable management structure for water supply and drainage. At present, responsibilities for billing and financial record keeping rest with the Regulation Department of the TMA while those for operation and maintenance rest with the Infrastructure and Services Department. Water supply and drainage operation and maintenance are peripheral concerns for both departments. Detailed investigation suggested that there is no 'professional' input into the day to day management of either financial or operation and maintenance systems.

Basic requirements for improved service delivery The normal response to the deficiencies described in the previous paragraphs is to call for the introduction of better system and billing records, the development of improved operational procedures and staff training. Unfortunately, such operational improvements are unlikely to be sustained unless basic institutional conditions are in place. By early 2006, attention had turned to what these basic conditions might be. Four key requirements were identified:

1. An appropriate legal and regulatory framework
2. Systems to provide guidance and support to service providers
3. Oversight of the activities of service providers
4. Appropriate management systems.

The first and second require action by higher levels of government. Adequate oversight can be provided for a limited period by a concerned political leader but requires wide acceptance of standard systems and procedures if it is to be institutionalised in the long term. It might be provided by a water board or some other body, preferably with a fair degree of autonomy. The public sector is clearly failing to provide adequate management at present. There are indications from elsewhere in South Asia that the private sector could usefully be involved in some aspects of urban water supply and drainage management, provided that effective oversight arrangements were in place. However, Pakistan's private sector includes few companies and individuals with experience of managing public services. The expertise that does exist relates to discrete facilities such as tubewells and small water desalinisation plants, from which water is distributed in tankers and containers and does not extend to the management of networked services.

Strategic implications

In their legitimate concern to ensure that service providers respond to demand, international agencies have tended to ignore or trivialise supply side problems and constraints. In South Asia, these include extremely limited planning capacity, lack of information, restrictive rules and regulations, which constrain innovation and at worst paralyse government officials, and a lack of appropriate knowledge and skills. Efforts to facilitate development will continue to be unsuccessful until greater attention is paid to developing realistic strategies for addressing supply side deficiencies.

The experience in Faisalabad District and elsewhere suggests a need for fairly radical changes in systems and procedures before there is any realistic prospect of addressing supply side deficiencies and thus effecting improvements in water and drainage service delivery.

These changes need to cover the attitudes and assumptions of service providers, the development of appropriate skills and the introduction of organisational arrangements that provide positive incentives for improved service delivery. This, in turn, suggests that development initiatives will continue to fail as long as governments and international agencies assume that the basic conditions for development are in place, when the reality is that they are missing. It may be possible to achieve temporary gains at great expense by using international consultants to substitute for unavailable local resources but this is unlikely to result in long-term change and development.

The experience in Faisalabad also suggests that the required changes will not be brought about by individual projects, working primarily at the local level. Rather, there is a need to engage with higher levels of government to ensure that underlying assumptions and the policy environment that flows from those assumptions are conducive to effective service delivery. Activities at a more local level do have a place in testing and demonstrating ideas and approaches but governments and donors need to be more realistic about the limitations of such initiatives and be aware that local options are very much governed by higher level systems, even in nominally decentralised systems. Even with such concerted action, change is likely to be slow. The historical development of water and sanitation services in the West is instructive in this regard. A recent briefing note (WELL 2005) shows that improvements in water supply and sanitation services in Britain took place over a many years and were driven by a complex mix of political reform, policy legislation and economic drivers of change.

Recognition that change may need radical changes in attitudes and assumptions and is likely to take time is not compatible with narrowly target-driven approaches to development. The water and sanitation indicators originally suggested by DFID for the Faisalabad project were clearly unrealistic, given the need for radical reform in the water and sanitation sector. Even the more limited objectives established for the work in Jaranwala Tehsil could not be achieved within the time and with the limited resources that were available.

This illustrates an extremely important point. If the interventions of international agencies are to be confined to those areas in which short-term improvements can be clearly measured, there appears to be little scope for those agencies to engage with fundamental constraints upon development, at least in those countries in which service delivery systems are poor. So, their interventions are unlikely to have any significant long-term effect. As Lindblom (1959) pointed out almost 50 years ago, the assumption decisions are reached on the basis of careful evaluation of all potentially relevant information is rarely justified. Rather, the reality is that decisions are normally made in a more incremental way, based on the limited information that decision-makers can absorb and process. It might be argued that the computing power that is now available should facilitate a more thorough analytical approach to decision-making and this is undoubtedly true in some cases. However, as emphasised throughout this paper, many of the problems of development relate to attitudes and the procedures that flow from them, which are not readily amenable to quantitative analysis. Also, without improved systems, the basic information required for decision-making will not be available, a point illustrated by the difficulties experienced in obtaining anything like an accurate record of registered and paying water service customers in Jaranwala.

This point has major implications for the development 'industry'. It suggests a need for a greater emphasis on dialogue and demonstration, designed to bring about fundamental institutional changes and improvements before any attempt is made to achieve targets that depend on effective institutions being in place. This will require an initial focus on process indicators, rather than performance indicators, which are only likely to be relevant when at least some of the conditions for change are in place.

The experience in Pakistan suggests that there is a need to move beyond simplistic statements on concepts such as decentralisation and participation to consider how these concepts play out in practice. Decentralisation has resulted in a plethora of small, unplanned schemes and has thus tended to undermine efforts to promote a strategic approach to service delivery. This situation can only be changed if capacity to inform and respond to demand is developed and this in turn will require fundamental changes to remove the constraints that have tended to make government systems rather dysfunctional. Efforts to decentralise responsibilities to lower levels of government without tackling these basic problems tend to transfer problems rather than addressing them. Similarly, there is a need to engage with what participatory approaches actually achieve rather than with how they work in theory, taking account the institutional constraints presented by limited resources and hierarchical systems and attitudes.

Unless development professionals start to engage with the points raised in this paper, I fear that we will continue to build without foundations and the inevitable result will be that the edifices that we build will continue to collapse.

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