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Editorial

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1. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

International development is a global challenge, a challenge that becomes more acute in an urbanising world. Clare Short, in her foreword, has emphasised the importance of the skills of engineers and planners if solutions are to be found for current problems. This edition of *Municipal Engineer* seeks to raise the profile of International Development. It includes papers and material from twelve authors from eight different countries. Each of these authors has addressed different, but related issues. There are two major themes: urbanisation and globalisation.

The demography of the world is changing and most of the world's population are now urbanites. Most of these urbanites belong to countries with low socio-economic and human development indicators. These countries are frequently known collectively as 'low income', 'developing', 'third world' or 'the South'. While we are aware of their existence, most of us are unfamiliar with the complex interaction of the factors which have determined their current status, for example population growth, unstable social and political context, the absence of good governance, low national income, etc. The majority of these urban populations lack even the basic municipal services for acceptable quality of life. Most of the new urbanites are poor; some are 'absolutely poor'. This is also a gender issue—women constitute the majority of poor. Understanding this gender dimension adds to the already complex tasks of municipal engineers who must work to address the problems.

For municipal engineers, addressing these issues represents an exciting challenge, not only from the complexity and scale of the problems but also from the possibility of using innovative approaches. The papers in this edition include different technical approaches for solving the immediate problems and capturing spin-offs such as employment creation and environment improvement (Mara, McCutcheon, Howe), different organisational relationships (Sohail and Baldwin), the use of asset management approach (Howard) and the use of IT for scaling up upgrading settlements (Goethert).

The second theme is globalisation. The Department for International Development (DFID) has emphasised the need for making globalisation work for the alleviation of poverty and has set targets for international development.[1] The professional bodies are currently in the process of seeking greater understanding of the implication of globalisation on practices. In addition, it is clear that the notion of a connected world has materialised. Access to information, knowledge and skills has increased. How can these advances be used to alleviate poverty? In our view, globalisation should be taken as an opportunity and not just a threat. One of the main tasks for municipal engineers and allied professions is to explore ways to contribute to achieving the international development targets using the opportunities offered by globalisation. All of the papers, features and reviews indicate different aspects of such contributions.

There are a number of implications for us all. The solutions to the problems of international development demand more than technology. Municipal engineers are increasingly expected to handle issues which historically have not been their domain. Knowledge of subjects such as finance, economics and law have increasingly become a necessity. The issues raised in this journal highlight the additional need for engineers to appreciate the softer, human factor issues. This is particularly true in the context of working with communities (Symington and McCutcheon). This is not simply a matter of using information generated by other professionals in decision-making, but working with people to identify and meet common objectives. This has increasingly important methodological implications for engineers and their interaction with other disciplines and also implications on how we perceive reality and how we conduct our professional duties (Hamdi).

Why should we bother about these problems? Apart from the humanitarian aspect, put simply, in the world today we depend on a global economy and cannot be isolated from what happens in different parts of the world. Increasingly, capital engineering work will be focused in 'the South'. New markets for educational and professional services will lie predominantly in 'the South'. Unless we understand the whole world we will not be able to compete in the global economy. International development helps to create a sense of equity which assists in maintaining a balance among nations. It is in all our interests to help other nations to both improve their quality of life and help develop the potential for new markets. Only time will tell how effectively we accept the challenges of international development and proactively engage in the development of policies, strategies and practices to wipe out the poverty from the globe. This edition seeks to contribute to current debate and encourage professionals to become more engaged in the issues of international development. We hope that it succeeds.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This edition would not have been made possible without the efforts of many individuals and organisations. We should particularly like to thank Clare Short for her Foreword and all the contributors and the referees, particularly those who do not regularly undertake this role for the Institution but were willing to contribute their energies to the success of this edition.

3. AWARDS

A journal's reputation depends on the quality of its published papers. Every year awards are presented to the authors of particularly meritorious papers. We are pleased to announce the following award winners for papers published in *Municipal Engineer* during 2000.

- Telford Prize: *The agenda for the future of waste management*, J. Ferguson, September 2000, 123–129
- Parkman Medal: *Langstone oysterbeds restoration*, S. Mountain, December 2000, 217–225
- James Hill Prize: *A new framework for road management*, R. Robinson, March 2000, 39–48
- Rees Jeffreys Award: *Sustainable reuse of highway materials in hot and cold bituminous mixes*, A. R. Woodside, W. D. H. Woodward, P. Phillips and A. Mills, September 2000, 181–186

Congratulations to these authors! The papers are well worth reading again. The Telford medal is the highest award of the Institution. The Parkman Medal is awarded to the best paper in the year on the practical aspects of the control or management of a specific scheme. The James Hill Prize is for the best paper on a municipal engineering subject. The Rees Jeffrey Award is for the best paper on highway engineering.

The challenge to all our readers is not only to write a paper for *Municipal Engineer* but also to achieve an award!

4. REFERENCE

1. Department for International Development. *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalization Work for the Poor.* White Paper on International Development. The Stationery Office, London, 2000.