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Editorial Advisory Panel

Editorial

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This special issue revisits the theme of international development, following our first issue on the topic in 2001.¹ We were pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming response to the call for papers. We received so many high quality papers that we will run another special issue on the topic in December 2008.

The world politics of today have changed since 2001. Geopolitical issues affect the working life of most professionals, including those of municipal engineers. International development remains a global challenge, a challenge that has become more acute in an urbanising and politically and socio-economically unstable world. This issue of *Municipal Engineer*, like its predecessor, seeks to highlight the significance of international development in the context of the world economy.

According to UN figures, more than half of the world's population, some 3.3 billion people, will be living in cities from 2008. At least 1 billion of the world's urbanites, however, live in slums with low socio-economic and human development indicators. Many of these countries lack basic governance, natural resources and the human capabilities to face the current challenges of providing sustainable municipal services to their people.

Municipal engineers are also faced with the consequences of climate change and its impact on infrastructure and highly vulnerable populations. For example, engineers will need to build infrastructure that is resilient to disasters and climate variability. We are also faced with the challenge of the 'credit crunch' together with high energy and food prices, with the poorest countries and the poor hardest hit.

For municipal engineers, addressing these issues represents an exciting challenge, not only because of the complexity and scale of the problems but also because of the possibility of using innovative approaches. The papers in this issue highlight a variety of different approaches to solving problems faced by municipal engineers.

Risks of corruption, though a very sensitive issue and in professional circles not much talked about or at best occasionally scandalised, is one of the key challenges faced by organisations

and individuals dealing with international development. Ackerman provides a useful briefing on the topic in the context of government infrastructure projects. She points to the importance of procuring standardised goods and services where faced by the risk of corruption. It remains to be seen whether such approaches could be applied in the event of a disaster or a large novel project. The message is that we need to move towards creating benchmarks so that if something 'unusual' happens it would trigger a reaction.

Moraes and Abiko present fuzzy logic as an approach to capture the perceptions of slum dwellers about upgraded environments. It is important to capture information related to customer satisfaction with a service provided. Geyman *et al.* present an urban information system for local government to support public participation. The socio-economic impact of Cairo's Metro line is explored by Massoud in his paper. Done's paper is specific to spot improvements. Readers needing specific information about this topic in a rural context will find it particularly interesting. Kirk describes a student bridge-building expedition in Malawi. Global and sustainability issues for engineering graduates are explored by Bourn and Sharma.

One of the main tasks for municipal engineers and allied professionals was and is to explore ways to contribute to achieving the international development targets (UN poverty reduction targets aiming to reduce absolute poverty levels, increasing primary school enrolment, reducing environmental degradation, etc. by 2015). Many observers have already started thinking about post Millennium Development Goals (eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges set at the UN millennium summit in September 2000) with the sinking feeling that yet another chance to reduce poverty and increase access to water and sanitation is likely to be missed. These papers, however, present the inherent optimism of engineers. No matter how big the challenges are, we must get our heads down and continue to contribute towards sustainable infrastructure to improve the quality of life of our fellow citizens, wherever they live. International development is not a problem of 'them' that we can afford not to engage with. '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'.²

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

REFERENCES

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2. SOHAIL M. and BALDWIN A. Editorial. *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Municipal Engineer*, 2001, 145, No. 4, 265–266.