

The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions

By Matt Andrews

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Institutional reforms are common across the globe. Think of efforts to build new governments in Afghanistan and Iraq; or decades worth of interventions intended to improve fiscal management, reduce corruption or introduce efficient public sector service delivery in African countries.

These reforms often have limited results, however. They lead to new laws that are not properly implemented, and new organizations that have poor capacities and fail to function as needed.

In this book, Matt Andrews explains why reform results are frequently limited and suggests ways to overcome these limits.

In the first half of the book, Andrews argues that reforms fail to make governments better when they are introduced as signals to gain short-term support--from donors and others. Reforms as signals introduce unrealistic best practices that do not fit developing country contexts and are not considered relevant by implementing agents. The result is a set of new forms that do not function properly.

Andrews uses examples to prove this point, ranging from efforts to introduce fiscal rules in Argentina to reforms aimed at international accounting standard adoption in many African countries, and anti corruption interventions in Malawi and Uganda.

In the second half of the book, Andrews notes that there are instances where reforms are not being introduced as signals, and are having more of an impact on government effectiveness. Examples include local government reforms in Rwanda, anti corruption initiatives in Indonesia, and a variety of initiatives ranging from results based management to civil service modernization and internal control regime adoption in governments like Kenya, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

Andrews uses these examples to discuss ways in which reforms can actually provide realistic solutions to governance challenges in developing countries. Lessons from these experiences suggest that reform limits can be overcome by focusing interventions on problem solving, and promoting incremental and localized processes to find solutions, involving multiple agents who can

authorize and implement reforms.

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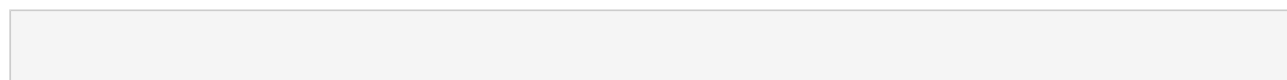
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The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions By Matt Andrews **Bibliography**

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Editorial Review

Review

"Deep analysis, excellent practical advice, and some really useful catchphrases. Do take seriously reforms as signals, getting inclusive about agency and reforms as overspecified and oversimplified."

Mick Moore, Professorial Fellow, Institute of Development Studies

"[The book] draws attention, among other things, to the widespread use of governance and related reforms that are 'best-practice' in design ... The time is ripe for a weighty tilt against this paradigm. The evidence that Matt has assembled is certainly weighty. It is also persuasive and has the potential to begin shifting the paradigm."

Martin Johnson, Founding member of REPIM consulting firm and the PFM Board

"Essential Reading" "Another possible title for this book could have been why do so many governance and institutional reforms fail? This book explains why so many institutional reforms in developing countries have limited success. It also suggests concrete ways to overcome these limits, making fascinating reading for Evaluation and Development professionals."

Pierre-Joseph Kingbo, The African Development Bank Operations Evaluation Group

"I am thrilled that researchers and academics are turning their attention to this important piece of the development equation ... Big, top down, comprehensive reforms look good and elegant on paper. But alas real life and real people, with all the messiness that comes with them, get in the way... By contrast, focusing on small problems and creating the space for local actors to solve them leads to some progress, develops capability, and builds confidence to go for more."

Nadim Matta, President of the Rapid Results Institute

"Developing countries have been told to improve their institutions by copying the institutions of rich countries as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. Matt Andrews tells why this approach has not worked: this landmark analysis will change the way we both understand and design institutional reform."

- Ha-Joon Chang, University of Cambridge, author of *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism*

"[This] book is a must-read for anyone interested in international development. It is already shaping debates related to the post-2015 development agenda, and is bound to trigger important new scholarship on institutional change in international development and beyond."

Prakash Kashwan, *European Journal of Development Research*

"... this book deserves wide readership among those concerned with the improvement of public institutions in developing countries."

Scott Wisor, *Global Governance*

About the Author

Matt Andrews is an Associate Professor at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, where he is a fellow at the Center for International Development. His numerous articles have appeared in journals such as Governance, the International Public Management Journal, the Public Administration Review, Oxford Development Studies, Public Administration and Development and the Journal of Development Studies. Prior to working at Harvard, Professor Andrews worked at the World Bank and before that he supported various government leaders in South Africa during the transition from apartheid. He has worked in more than twenty-five developing and transitional countries. Dr Andrews received his PhD from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University.

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