**Time to Listen: Hearing People on the Receiving End of International Aid**

**By Mary B. Anderson, Dayna Brown and Isabella Jean**

***Time to Listen*** summarizes the experiences and analysis of nearly 6,000 people in 20 aid receiving countries, and the reflections of aid workers themselves, on the effectiveness of international aid efforts as captured through *The Listening Project*. Local people describe how the current international aid system delivers things, techniques, approaches, and ideas that are developed in donor countries without a sufficient understanding of the local context, and without much involvement of people whose lives will be affected. While they do appreciate international assistance, cynicism among people in aid recipient communities is high and they are eager to see real efforts to make international aid more effective and for the results to be sustained. They want to be more engaged and to have more voice and decision-making power in how aid efforts are conceived, funded, carried out and evaluated. They are calling for a shift from an externally driven aid delivery system to a more collaborative aid system.

**ELEMENTS OF TWO PARADIGMS: A COMPARISON**

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| **Externally Driven Aid Delivery System** | **Collaborative Aid System** |
| Local people seen as beneficiaries and aid recipients | Local people seen as colleagues and drivers of their own development |
| Focus on identifying needs | Focus on supporting/reinforcing capacities and identifying local priorities |
| Pre-planned/pre-determined programs | Context-relevant programs developed jointly by recipient communities and aid providers |
| Provider-driven decision-making | Collaborative decision-making |
| Focus on spending on a pre-determined schedule | Fit money and timing to strategy and realities on the ground |
| Staff evaluated and rewarded for managing projects on time and on budget | Staff evaluated and rewarded for quality of relationships and results that recipients say make lasting positive changes in their lives |
| Monitoring and evaluation by providers on project spending and delivery of planned assistance | Monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up by providers and recipients on the results and long-term effects of assistance |
| Focus on growth | Planned draw down and mutually agreed exit/end of assistance strategy |

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