

# How to Change the World: New Working Paper Analyzes How Leaders Promote Development

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Leadership that develops 'change space' is best suited to promote positive development within a country. That's the finding in a new Harvard Kennedy School Working Paper.

[“Development as Leadership-Led Change - A Report for the Global Leadership Initiative and the World Bank Institute \(WBI\)”](#) is co-authored by assistant professor Matthew Andrews; Jesse McConnell, Reform Development Consulting; and Alison Wescott, World Bank Institute.

The authors investigate the role that leadership plays in the change process in [developing nations](#).

“Change is often limited even when countries adopt proposed solutions in their proposed forms, in apparently good faith and on time (or in reasonable time). We wonder why, and believe research should ask how to close the gap between the change intended in development (what is proposed) and the change we actually see in evidence,” they write.

The analysis culminates in four primary conclusions, as presented in the paper:

- Leadership is more about groups than individuals, given that there are likely to be multiple people exercising leadership in any successful

change event.

- ‘Leaders’ are identified more because of their functional contribution to change than their personal traits or authority (and the ‘connecting’ function stands out).
- Leadership contributes to change when it builds change space—where leaders foster acceptance for change, grant authority to change (with accountability), and introduce or free the abilities necessary to achieve change. Change space is especially enhanced where leadership facilitates open access societies and learning organizations in which members are empowered—in groups—to pursue change through problem solving.
- Leadership manifests in different ways in different contexts, depending on contextual readiness and factors that shape change and [leadership](#) opportunities; but the key characteristics of plurality, functionality, problem orientation and change space creation are likely to be common to all successful leadership-led change events.

Matthew Andrews is assistant professor of public policy at Harvard Kennedy School. His research focuses on public sector reform, particularly budgeting and financial management reform, and participatory governance in developing and transitional governments.

Provided by John F. Kennedy School of Government

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