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Participatory Governance: Addressing the Problem of Rising Groundwater Level in Cities

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ABSTRACT The 'rising groundwater level' in the cities has become a major concern all around the world. Due to the increasing level of groundwater, it is not only endangering the structures and properties but also causing major environmental problem affecting the health of the city, habitats, and the biotic of the land community. The author proposes an interdisciplinary planning strategy to deal with the issue of rising groundwater level. The fabric of a city reveals the past, present, and the future growth of the city. The technical and non-technical issues are closely interlinked. The groundwater level gets seriously affected due to increasing pressure of various man-made activities. Once the natural flow of the groundwater is affected, it can result in raising the level or lessen the level creating large number of environmental problems. In any democratic society, it has to go through a lengthy complicated process of formalities to respect the individual and social values. Socio-political decisions have always played the most important role in the execution of any project. The *utilitarian* attitude of the democratic government has become counter-productive in the name of maintaining democratic sanctity. The technical advises are overlooked to win the mass support for the political gains. Hence, the author strongly feels that the success of a project, especially if it is related to environment, does not depend on technical knowledge and solution only. The planning body should evolve a policy of 'participatory governance' constituting a well-coordinated multidisciplinary forum comprising experts from the cross-section of the society consisting the technical experts, finance experts, management experts, social organizations, community-level representatives and government agencies is the most essential component.