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China's Melamine in Milk Scandal: Failures All Around

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Timeline

July 24, 2008, 15 batches of baby milk powder produced by Sanlu were found to have significantly high content of melamine.

August 13, Sanlu decided to keep on selling the powder with less than 10 grams of melamine per kg.

September 9, public media released a report claiming that the 14 babies with kidney stones were victims of the Sanlu-produced tainted powder.

September 11, Sha'anxi, Ningxia, Hunan, Hubei, Shandong, Anhui, Jingxi and Jiangsu provinces reported that they found the same problems.

September 12, investigation team confirms that "melamine-tainted powder leads to kidney stones in people, especially children."



Consequences

- 6 babies died
- 300,000 babies hospitalized
- 60 persons arrested
- 2 sentenced to death
- 1 other death sentence with reprieve
- 4 sentenced to life in prison
- 12 sentenced 5 years or more
- Sanlu went bankrupt
- Huge financial losses to dairy companies and farmers



Institutional Building

Need to establish laws, regulations, and policies, including

- strict regulation of industrial inputs
- state level inspection system

Organization Building

- farmer's organizations to establish an internal self-controlled mechanism
 - government agencies
- No single government agency was responsible for food safety before the scandal.

Responsibility Building

- clear division of responsibilities among different players in food supply chain
- Several government ministries (MOA, MOHC, GBQSIQ, BFDSM) currently are involved in food production, inspection and regulation

Morality Building

- basic morality bottom line should be created in minds of all suppliers, producers, middlemen and processors



A woman, whose child died from drinking tainted milk, holds a sign reading 'Give me back my child' outside Shijiazhuang Intermediate People's Court

Regulating Food Safety: A Framework

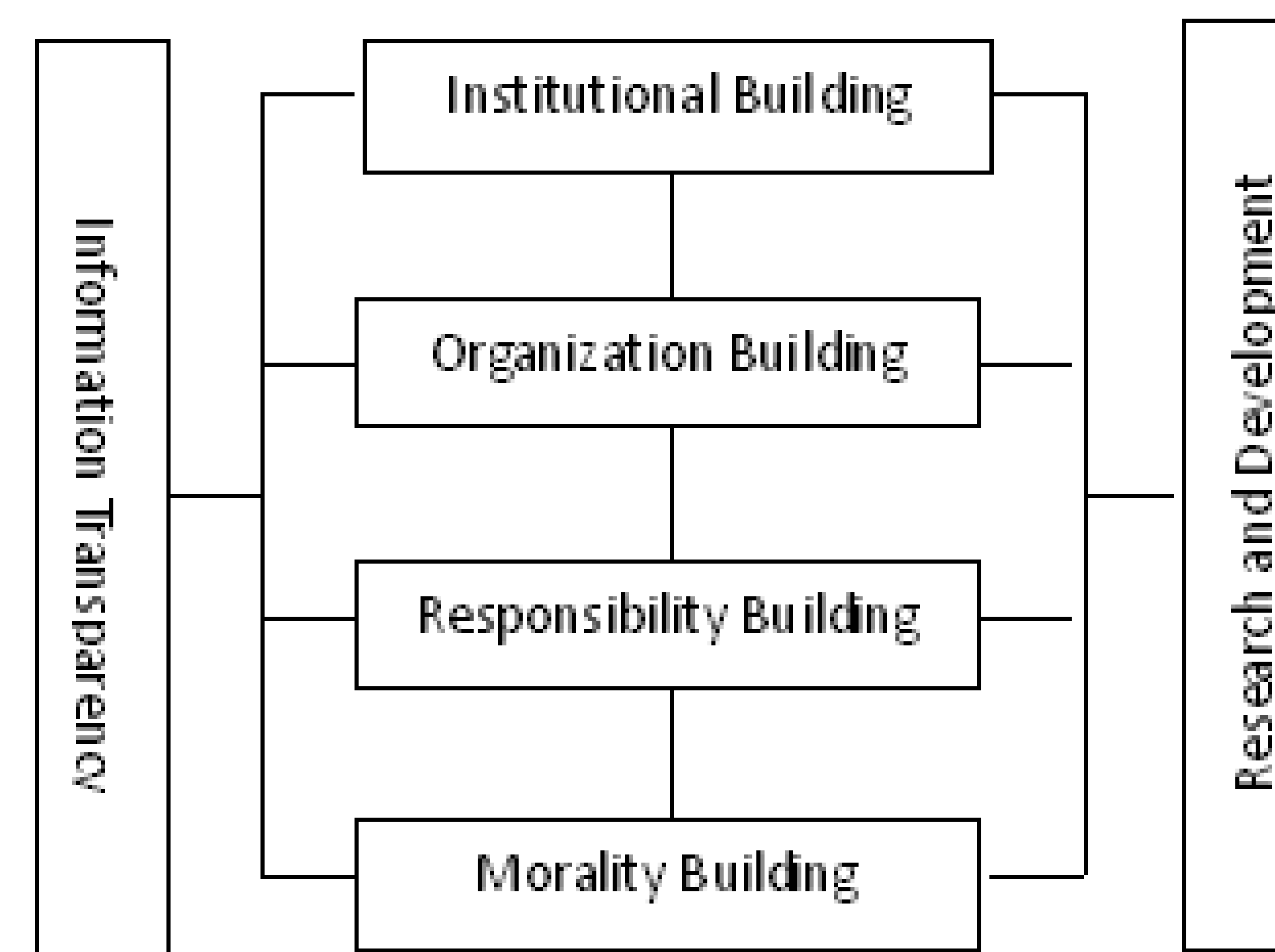


Figure2 Food Safety Assurance Framework

