



PHOTO CREDIT: YAVUZ SARIYILDIZ

# USING ASSESSMENTS TO UNDERSTAND URBANIZATION IN THE JOURNEY TO SELF-RELIANCE

## UNDERSTANDING URBANIZATION

Massive, rapid urbanization is visibly reshaping the developing world, enabling transformation and creating challenges for every sector in which USAID works. By 2050, two out of every three people will live in urban areas. USAID is well-positioned to partner with countries to harness the power of urbanization for development, prosperity and self-reliance.

## WHAT ARE URBAN ASSESSMENTS?

**An urban assessment is a strategic planning tool** that can be used to better understand and address a country's unique challenges and opportunities related to urbanization. USAID's Urban Team in the E3 Bureau can provide on-demand urban assessments as one of several customized services available to missions through the USAID Communications, Evidence and Learning (CEL) project.

Distinct from evaluations, urban assessments are forward-looking processes that untangle complex issues to inform the design of a specific program or a Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). An urban assessment helps articulate pathways in a country's Journey to Self-Reliance, such as:

- Enabling environment for local economic development and job creation, particularly for youth
- Quality public services that protect the environment and are locally funded
- Resilient, integrated and citizen-responsive urban systems
- Domestic resource mobilization in urban areas

**Assessments analyze the elements and interactions of urban systems** in the context of urbanization, decentralization, and local governance. Urban assessments

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The Urban Assessment was indispensable for us to articulate the key issues, flash points, opportunities, and stakeholders in our new urban platform; we and our wide array of stakeholders identified urbanization and rural-urban migration as key threats and opportunities that Ethiopia faces in the next twenty years. The assessment gave us essential access to technical experts with whom to think through the issues and develop activities.

- USAID ETHIOPIA

## ETHIOPIA URBAN ASSESSMENT

In 2017, USAID/Ethiopia sought E3/Urban assistance to conduct an urban assessment. Working hand-in-hand with mission staff from different offices, the assessment team provided essential analysis for the mission's new CDCS as part of the Journey to Self-Reliance Wave I. The assessment helped the mission understand and identify positive trends and opportunities across sectors — education, economic growth, women's empowerment, agricultural transformation, private sector engagement — and establish cross-cutting sustainable urbanization priorities and programming. This eventually led to a new Global Development Alliance with a major textile producer and cross-sectoral programming around the Hawassa industrial park.

can take a **broad view of the dynamic factors driving urbanization**, the implications and impacts, and the opportunities for strategic activities and programming to harness benefits while mitigating challenges.

Sector-specific assessments consider the challenges and opportunities of one sector within the complex context of a broader urban system. An assessment **can focus on strengthening specific sectors in urban settings**, such as water and sanitation, waste management, pollution, local governance, local economic development and private sector engagement, health, gender, youth, food security, resilience, domestic resource mobilization, and transportation.

### **WHEN IS AN ASSESSMENT NEEDED?**

Problems in cities are often plain to see: congestion, poor water access, social inequality, underinvested infrastructure, costly informal services, and crime. Urban assessments **provide actionable recommendations** for addressing such challenges.

Working with partner governments to **design viable solutions for urban problems** requires addressing the functionality of the system and understanding how its parts – public, private, political, economic, fiscal/administrative, social, and environmental – relate to each other.

Urban assessments ensure that USAID programming **builds local capacity and sustainability** by integrating political and economic considerations.

A few scenarios where missions may consider undertaking an urban assessment are:

- As part of the CDCS development process to understand how urbanization may catalyze or derail development progress in priority sectors.
- To learn more about systemic causes of urban pollution to identify effective urban programming.
- To better understand the current characteristics, challenges, and opportunities of urbanization to ensure informed policy dialogue.

### **WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF AN ASSESSMENT?**

Assessments provide analysis, insights, and practical recommendations through the following process:

**Step 1. Reach out to the E3/Urban Team (urban@usaid.gov).** Our team will help guide the mission through their options and identify questions the product can answer.

**Step 2. Co-create scope with assessment team.** Before launching the assessment, there is a co-creation process between interested missions and the assessment team/consultants to determine the right assessment size, scope, and budget to fit an individual mission's needs.

**Step 3. Assessment team will collect data to answer the question(s).** Through a combination of desk review and deploying a team of qualified experts to collect data in the field, the assessment team will develop an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the issue.

**Step 4. Assessment team presents findings to mission and partners.** The team debriefs with the mission and key stakeholders on the assessment findings.

Insights and recommendations provided by assessments inform strategic investment decisions by missions on programs and activities, and can be integrated into their planning, partnerships, and activities.

### **WHAT ARE OTHER CUSTOMIZED URBAN PRODUCTS?**

In addition to urban assessments, the E3/Urban team and the CEL program can support missions' understanding and responsiveness to urban issues through several other tailored, on-demand products including case studies, evaluations, issue briefs, and policy analyses. As with urban assessments, these can be highly customized to the operational needs of the mission.

#### **CEL SUPPORT TO MISSIONS**

The USAID Communications, Evidence, and Learning (CEL) Project – managed by the E3/Urban Team – is currently available for buy-ins from missions and operating units for urban assessments, evaluations, or research services through 2023.

The CEL consortium, which includes TRG, Urban Institute, and NORC at the University of Chicago, has a broad range of geographic and sector expertise that can mobilize quickly. Through buy-ins, missions can easily access CEL services for urban assessments without going through procurements.

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