By 2030, 60% of the world’s population will live in urban areas, up from 30% in 1950.

What is urbanization?
An increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas. Urban areas span a wide range of sizes and forms: central cities, peri-urban areas, city-regions, traditional suburbs, megacities, towns, metropolitan and micropolitan areas, and small- and intermediate-sized cities.

THE PACE OF URBANIZATION IS INCREASING
AFRICA AND ASIA—currently home to 90% of world’s rural population—are urbanizing faster than any other regions and will be 56% and 64% urban, respectively, by 2050.

40% urban  54% urban  48% urban  64% urban
2014  2050  2014  2050

Every country where USAID has a presence is experiencing urban population growth.

Close to half of the world’s urban dwellers reside in relatively small settlements of less than 500,000 inhabitants.
The fastest growing urban agglomerations are medium-sized cities and cities with less than 1 million inhabitants located in Asia and Africa.

Too often, urban growth is accompanied by increasing urban poverty.
But it does not have to be this way. Cities can and should be places that catalyze inclusive economic growth, reduce poverty and hunger, and build resilience to shocks and stresses while protecting ecosystems and combating climate change.
FOOD SECURITY
The urban poor spend a larger share of household budgets, 50-75%, on food, making them particularly vulnerable to food insecurity during food price spikes.

FRAGILITY/SECURITY
With 863 million people living in slums as of 2014, the urban poor are especially vulnerable to risky events, such as crime, forced eviction, or disasters.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESILIENCE
Improving resilience to shocks and disasters is key to reducing fragility. Nearly 80% of big cities are vulnerable to earthquakes; 60% are at risk from storm surges and tsunamis.

HEALTH
Nearly 50% of city dwellers in Africa, Asia and Latin America suffer from at least one disease caused by lack of safe water and sanitation.

SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION IS CENTRAL TO MEETING CRITICAL GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITMENTS.

USAID’S APPROACH
USAID’s new era of urbanization will focus on systems-based, holistic approaches to development that integrate food security, economic growth, health, education, climate change, and resilience programming in a context of urbanization. Partnerships, access to financing, local capacity building at the municipal government level, good data and technology will be central to our efforts. Together, we can help the cities of today become vibrant centers of the future with opportunity for all.

Contact USAID’s E3/Urban team at urban@usaid.gov, visit www.urban-links.org, or follow us at @USAIDUrban.