

## Stepping up to the challenge? Climate risk assessment practices among planners in urban Ethiopia

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Climate change and the risk it poses has emerged as one of the most important issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that threatens the physical well being of urban infrastructures. Academic and professional planners have taken a leading role in assessing the implications and in drafting planning instruments designed to deal with the impending climate risk. Current research in third world countries provides limited anecdotal guidance regarding appropriate responses to the challenge. The paper analyzes the extent to which urban planning authorities in Ethiopia have stepped up their risk management efforts. It specifically questions the extent to which various municipalities have incorporated the major elements of the integrated risk management process - including among other elements risk planning, risk prediction and risk management. The analysis also deciphers the major factors that drive the adoption and/or non-adoption of risk management best practices by some municipalities. Empirical evidence relate to a Delphi study in which a panel of 114 urban planning experts drawn from 19 cities and/or towns were interviewed. Study results reveal that the bulk of municipalities have not adopted credible risk management practices. Their understanding of climate change related risk is limited towards economic and/or commercial risk as opposed to environmental and social risk. Virtually all municipalities had no meaningful loss management plans. Lack of co-ordination with national disaster management agencies, limited resources and the general absence of an active constituency have compounded the situation. A multiple scale approach that hinges on raising awareness would be the first initial step towards solving the existing challenges. Such a paradigm shift would require that each planning authority propose a sound climate related policy that is guided by a clear vision.

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