Mexico City
Driving change with data-driven decision making

Mexico City
Mexico

Population
8.87m

Mexico City is facing a delicate balancing act: growing its economy while tackling the environmental risks that come with rapid urbanization and climate change.

Speaking to CDP, Beatriz Cardenas-Gonzalez, Mexico City's Director of Air Quality Control, shares her vision for a city driven by green growth.

As climate change increasingly makes itself felt in Central America, Mexico City is pushing forward on a strategy for sustainable growth.

The city has ambitious aims to reduce emissions on a trajectory consistent with keeping global warming below 1.5°C, while also managing the pressures of a growing economy and population. As Cardenas-Gonzalez puts it, **"we're all working towards a city that is cleaner, more sustainable, with lower emissions and better air quality."**

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Green growth will be vital to this, she claims. It's a question of boosting economic activity while considering environmental and social impacts. **"If you don't have green growth, you will have more poverty in the medium term"**, she says. **"And you will definitely have an even greater difference between the poor and the not-so-poor."**

The task is to communicate this vision to other policymakers. And there are reasons to be optimistic. By linking environmental issues to public health, quality of life and security, Mexico City's government has helped push the green agenda to the forefront.

For example, under the city's Climate Action Program (2014-2020) it has developed a tracking tool that allows for coordinated and integrated actions that reduce the environmental, social and economic risks associated with climate change.

And it has established ways of working across departments to seek win-win solutions to these intertwined problems: **"the Ministry of Environment has a lot of interaction with the Ministry of Mobility and the Ministry of Public Health,"** Cardenas-Gonzalez says.

Collaboration is key
"There are many issues that Mexico City shares with other states," she continues. Problems like deforestation, water security and air pollution cross administrative boundaries. That's why the city is working to strengthen the environmental capacities of its neighbors.

"We've seen that while many of the policies implemented in Mexico City have an impact, this is amplified if all of the regions take action."

Gathering information — and using it effectively — is a case in point. Disclosing to CDP has helped the city refine what Cardenas-Gonzalez describes as **"information-based decision making"**. It's leading Mexico in using data to inform policies. And the city is happy to share expertise with other states and municipalities.

"We review parts of their documents," explains Cardenas-Gonzalez, **"for instance emissions inventories or environmental plans for climate action programs that they design."**

Disclosing to CDP has helped Mexico City reach this position of national leadership. At an institutional level, external reporting **"gives us more certainty that our estimations are well done."** The city government also benefits from the experience of its counterparts across the world.

"Reporting data to CDP allows you to find out about the experiences in other cities — and to adapt them to your own", she says. **"It's a very rich experience to be part of this reporting project."**

By using CDP's platform, Mexico City has been able to accelerate its sustainability projects: **"you reduce the learning curve by joining and sharing information from the best cities."**

Power of information
Why does Cardenas-Gonzalez see data as key to the city's sustainability agenda? It's about informing better decision making.

"If you have better information, you have more ways to consider the potential for success that your actions will have."

Simply put, good environmental data allows Mexico City to put in place better policies – and gives it a basis to see what success looks like.

For example, by understanding the role of speed limits in decreasing car emissions, the city has been able to enforce stricter limits on its own roads, improving air quality and reducing emissions from transport. Combined with limits on the number of days the most polluting cars can operate, and improved efficiency and availability of public transport, Mexico City has been able to find a collaborative approach to tackling both climate change and public health.

This data-led approach has also helped the city find investment for its green development projects. It was the first city in Latin America to issue a green bond, raising one billion pesos (US$50 million) for projects including water security, energy efficiency in public lighting and subway infrastructure. **"We have to be a more energy efficient city"**, she says.

Next steps

The city's climate action plan sets out concrete policies to address all of these issues. And it's already having an impact on the ground. Cardenas-Gonzalez points to local renewable energy projects ranging from bio-digesters to solar cell installations.

While many of the changes have been incremental, Mexico City has now accelerated plans to boost its resilience — particularly in the wake of the 2017 earthquake.

"It was a tragedy," Cardenas-Gonzalez says. But dealing with the aftermath has offered the city administration **"an opportunity to implement policies to build resilience and environmental protection"** right into the urban fabric.

The administration's information-driven approach means it's well placed to encourage the development of a more resilient city, countering the threats from earthquakes, climate change and social inequality through policies to promote green growth.

And by disclosing to CDP, Mexico City has been able to hone its expertise in gathering the information it needs to make this vision a reality.

Key data reported to CDP in 2017

❐ **Climate hazards:**
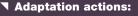
4 major climate hazards identified:

Forest fire

Flash floods

Vector-borne disease

Heat wave

❐ **Adaptation actions:**

4 climate-change related projects in development:

Prevent diseases related to climate change

Maintenance of conservation lands

Implement a climate change fund

Apply a resilience strategy

❐ **City-wide mitigation actions:**

12 emissions reduction opportunities identified, including:

Reduction of vehicular emissions

Valorization of solid wastes

Improve mass transit

Improve street lighting

CDP

CDP is a global environmental non-profit that helps investors, companies, cities, states and regions assess their environmental impact and take urgent action to build a truly sustainable economy. CDP works with over 500 cities on measuring and disclosing environmental data each year to manage emissions, build resilience, protect themselves from climate impacts and create better places for people to live and work. These cities are disclosing over 8,000 urban sustainability actions, demonstrating their commitment to building a sustainable economy and tackling climate change.

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