

# Assisting Ukraine by planning for post-war reconstruction

Heading-off bad actors through effective infrastructure planning for Ukraine

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If you are anything like me, you have been glued to the news from Ukraine since the unprovoked Russian invasion began. The tragedy unfolding across a sovereign democratic nation and mounting loss of innocent life is too much for many to bear.

We hope the senseless attack ends soon, and should Ukraine succeed in reaching an agreement with Russia, concerned global citizens must be prepared for a long rebuilding effort. As Russia continues missile strikes and wanton destruction across the country, the concern increases that reconstruction will take years to accomplish. Critical infrastructure, such as roads, water, natural gas lines and electrical grids have been severely damaged from massive bombardment - not to mention the impact on services related to schools, hospitals and businesses needed for the eventual resumption of basic life, however distant that may be.

And it is not simply a matter of rebuilding infrastructure. The resumption and control of critical social services to the public is of high importance. Drawing on lessons learned from other conflicts throughout the world, outside bad actors are often quick to fill the post-conflict void for all services. We have learned that bad actors frequently exploit the needs of suffering people and create an avenue for long-term control and influence over critical services such as water, power, education, and other services. Bad actors may utilize this opportunity to wrestle control from a democratically elected government by seeking to restore a sense of stability. While different in many ways, this dynamic has been prevalent throughout countries in the Middle East, South America, Central America, and North Africa for many years. As a result, democratic improvement has been slow to take hold, if at all.

To prevent bad actors from gaining influence and hindering democracy's prospects, action needs to be taken now to begin planning for the rebuilding effort. Beyond identifying critical infrastructure needs, the creation of a rapid, agile, and non-traditional plan is needed to provide the services to critical areas most in need, particularly those in outlying areas. This plan should involve Ukrainian citizens, it should be data centric, and it should use best practice standards for asset management such as ISO 55000, which focuses on the value or impact of assets on the intended benefactors. Lastly, the plan should be flexible for non-profit actors involved with execution to offer the most assistance possible.





We can have expectations of positive outcomes that help the citizens of Ukraine because infrastructure planning and resourcing have become much more effective over the past five years with greater technological advancement, more focus on the professionalization of asset management and its value, and the corresponding inter-relationships to governance. Recent integration of low-cost mobile technology, Geospatial Information Systems (GIS), and Commercial off-the-Shelf (COTS) software has made sound organizational, collaborative, and seamless response more feasible. The impact of rebuilding efforts and outcomes are now more easily evaluated through such technological innovation and asset management value standards. As European Union neighboring countries have provided great aid to Ukrainian refugees, their proximity to Ukraine will be needed to stage many of the necessary resources to aid in the reconstruction process. Importantly, to make this process rapid and impactful, a coordinated effort with Government and non-profit actors should be established to provide on-the-ground aid quickly. We have seen effective examples of this achieved by organizations like World Central Kitchen, the Footprint Project and New Use Energy who delivered food and establishing microgrids respectively across a war-ravaged country within days of the Russian onslaught. SpaceX also delivered thousands of Starlink satellite internet kits establishing a vital communication and management network for essential services. The many activities required to rebuild Ukraine must be coordinated through state-of-the-art technology and governance mechanisms.

While the prospect of rebuilding Ukraine may appear premature given the urgent need of the victims of this unjust invasion, and the priority of ceasing hostilities, there are many ways to assist the many needs that now exist. It is never too early to begin the planning process for restoring the country as a viable place to live once the war ends. A lack of planning now will create an opportunistic environment for bad actors to fill the vacuum left through destroyed infrastructure and services and will sabotage Ukraine's long-term stability. To be effective, this coordinated planning effort should be driven by data-centric information that enables rapid, effective deployment of resources, influenced by best practices standards of asset management, and prioritized by areas of greatest vulnerability. By planning for future service provision and leveraging recent advancements in technology and professionalization of asset management the world can largely prevent the impacts suffered in other post-conflict regions.

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