

GeOnG 2008, 1er Forum de la Géomatique au service de l'humanitaire



1. During the two days of the conference, two working directions emerged:

-An update on intra-NGO geographic information and the challenges faced in the context of emergencies and development

-The maintenance of UNSDI-T and the development of other humanitarian Open Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) based on the UNSDI-T

The discussions presented the different existing models, thematic models, information sharing models, collaborative models based on different inter-operable technologies. The round tables and practical workshops allowed the development of an approach to UNSDI-T.

A spatial information infrastructure needs to have common standards, terminologies and working procedures through which all the collaborating organizations can relate. (Standardization of the attributes and defined domains, e.g., type of roads with predefined attributes, attributes that correspond to a definition and a common followed standard). Standardization serves to integrate a large volume of valuable information that can be shared among all actors. The user base of UNSDI-T is composed of international agencies, UN bodies, private actors, ministerial departments, etc. The UNSDI-T model applies the cluster approach and the idea of developing humanitarian SDI coordination is put into practice through information sharing.

For information on the presentations and the results of round table discussions, click here:

http://www.cartong.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=109

And for GeOnG 2008 photos, follow this link:
http://www.cartong.org/index.php?option=com_expose&Itemid=122

For the sake of practicality the programme may have been a little too ambitious in combining the strategic debate and the practical training techniques into a such a short timeframe.

2. The use of geomatics in humanitarian organizations

GeOnG was rich with discussion and exchanges of ideas. Many things were said, and while lots of questions were without concrete answers, other questions formed starting points for new work plans.

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So then, who has heard us? Everything that came out of the discussions must be analyzed and acted upon. Questions were so numerous that we can only begin by presenting the point posed the most frequently.

2.1 Key points

-Technical problems are not the main issue. The developers and application are all interoperable from a logistics viewpoint.

The following fundamental problems were determined:

-Human resources: Lack of competence in geographic information, turnover, inadequate training, lack of cross cutting and the lack of internal capacity to use geomatics in a shared manner.

-Organizational problems: As well as the difficulties intra and inter-organizational communication.

-Financial issues, certain initiatives (e.g., Respond) were presented to demonstrate the possibility of gathering geographic information. On this subject, it is imperative to have a minimum budget allocated for the harmonization of information between actors.

-Access to logistics and use of harmonized information.

2.2 Quality of data and use of standards

In the case of development programs there is the potential to ensure quality in data provision, while in emergencies quality is limited by opportunity, thus pointing out the need to find a balance between the two. Augmenting quality as soon as possible will help with crisis prediction, limitation and prevention. As a result, the data sets should be created for susceptible zones (e.g., areas prone to natural disaster, failed states, fragile states). It is important to be aware of the already existing standards in addition to the humanitarian standards.

2.3 The use of GIS

-It is difficult to convince decision makers to employ GIS since it is hard to justify the cost-effectiveness of their investment, especially when the plan is a pre-emptive strategy.

-In terms of budget, GIS needs to be integrated into all aspects of the project within which it is being employed.

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- There is no financial return for investors.
- A team of convincing technicians is required to find ways to engage NGOs by developing an inter-organizational public relations strategy
- Political direction carries the development priorities for GIS and geographic data.
- For NGOs that do not specialize in geomatics, provisions should be made to develop an internal GIS with the support of NGOs that are competent before developing standards for harmonization.

2.4 UNSDI-T

An institutional anchor is necessary. The institutional context of the UN can generate a path without boundaries. How will the common public good of UNSDI-T evolve? It is necessary to reinforce the community of users.

UNSDI-T is in need of a strong technical community to define its future. In a transitional period, UNGIWG9 will certainly bring some answers.

3. Proposals

An international and inter-organizational GeOnG network following the structure of the cluster approach will be branded along with the development of a framework to create an open network after assuring the durability of the UNSDI-T project through operational use.

3.1 Maintenance of UNSDI-T

UNSDI-T is a very useful and interesting platform that must be broadened and used at maximum capacity to capitalize and harmonize CODATA for humanitarian and development operations.

UNSDI-T needs to be promoted as a platform of real-time information exchange and a coordination vehicle on all fronts. The inter-organizational partnership requires encouragement for continued and increased use among institutions. A change in mindset and a move towards data management culture is a fundamental change that is necessary to capitalize on the growth of an increasingly effective SDI system.

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Financing these projects should be presented to donors in terms of maintenance for a common system.

This common maintenance will be carried out by the following means:

- GSDI Cookbook
- Documenting the UNSDI-T process in French and English
- Capacity building that can pass by the trainings in universities with sessions dedicated for the UNSDI-T
- Generalization of the use of GIS and demystification of OGC¹ and ISO².

It is necessary to reinforce the community of users/developers and to apply using initiatives like Wiki and Open Street Map (OSM). For the first platform of Wiki can be used.

The real idea is to use a community approach, with the creation of sub-groups and certain management duties in material transport to be determined.

4. Harmonization of data: Towards a framework for humanitarian SDI

An Open-SDI characterized by an inter-operable technical solution, the organization of data with a data model, documentation on the architecture, attributes, definitions and procedures, defining notably the roles of use.

4.1 Short term without overload of work/cost)

-The development of interactivity and interoperability at the regional level is the core functional aim of UNSDI-T. The existence of different data models does not make the sharing of coordinates impossible. The creation of a light model base will facilitate exchanges.

-Establish a contact list of emails and contributors on certain aspects after the standardization of information fields.

-Establish a Wiki approach and collaboration methodology for collecting and creating an inventory of all the types of existing formulas. This will allow indicators to be taken by thematic and profession in order to standardize the fields of attribute information for

¹ <http://www.opengeospatial.org/>

² www.iso.org

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different sectors (e.g., WatSan, health centres, population movement). This Wiki approach can be deployed either under Google Groups or the actual CartONG Wiki (<http://wiki.cartong.org>) where there is a section to be developed by anyone with the user rights for developing.

- Scan the topographical maps and allow access to the data already in geographic format existing on the FTP server.

4.2 Midterm

- Establish a working Group constitution (3-4 annual meetings) after defining a dossier of responsibility concerning the specification of standards for other SDI models (the theme of health seems to be the priority).

- Hosting web platform

- Sharing address, contacts will allow the minimum finance necessary to guarantee success. Each organization should make a financial contribution towards the project, either by organizing working group meetings or to support the harmonization platform.

- Partners interested in supporting this global federation can contact us based on the example of proposed action.

- One of the principle difficulties will be the effective use of time between the working group meetings. Though the actual system is more based on voluntary contribution and interested benevolent colleagues it is important to systematically accomplish the duties of each working group. It is important to dedicate a percentage of time to the cause.

5. Intra-NGO geographic information development

- Using the existing base data (administrative units, rivers, UNSDI-T routes) and reflecting on the thematics that are relevant to the organizations

- Utilization of a file system (e.g., CICR, UNJLC or UNHCR) that have effective models which are adaptable to NGOs.

- The most difficult aspect is to convince decision makers through lobbying. There is the possibility of creating a successful regional pilot project after demonstrating interest and the practicality of using GIS.

- It is apparent that unspecialized NGOs welcome the expertise, technical assistance and the development of specific applications for programme support. The possibility of using the expertise of NGO specialists in information management (3 were presented: Imap, Mapaction, CartONG) to guide general NGOs.

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-To form information management and the data structure, GIS technicians need to conceive a more globalized information system to be applied by IT professionals.

-Expertise should be budgeted systematically to acquire data regardless of project importance.

-Spatially referenced data justifies funds and budget lines. It also serves as a tool to provide the necessary preparation to initiate and carry out projects and programmes in the humanitarian field. Prediction is necessary. Through prediction using GIS, lives are saved.

-Donors can see that a greater importance needs to be placed on the employment of geomatics to improve the coordination of humanitarian and development. New frameworks must be proposed to the donors.

6. Proposal of a working calendar

31 October 2008 – FTP server access to upload the different formulas by thematic

Mid-November 2008 – Structuring the web site for GeOnG participants, preferably through a Google Group (sufficient humanitarian resources permitting).

-31 October 2008 - Also on the FTP, set the geographic data of each organization that intends to contribute to the shared base data (e.g., shp, Tab maps, topographic maps, etc.) A document will follow with regard to the organization of this data on the server.

-For 31 October 2008 – Volunteers will be assigned to thematics and responsible for the coordination of the sub-working groups. Each person will be in charge of assigning the duties to their own working group.

With regard to thematics, two important thematics are: 1) knowing the data for a federated SDI Wat/San that is created since our formulas; and 2) a more structured cartographic/protection (SDI), based on the UNHCR WebGIS. For certain, UNSDI-T must be maintained. Therefore, there are three levels of investment for three data models

- 5-7 November 2008 - GeOnG participant UNGIWG 9 (in discussion) <http://sites.google.com/a/ungiwgsec.org/ungiwg9/Home>) The GeOnG meeting is planned.

- Mid December 2008 – Framework and study of collected files.

-Mid January 2008 – Once the defined fields are structured as a web interface to visualize the first thematics (CartONG)

-January 2009 – UNOSAT User Conference

-New discussions between the NGO specialists and OSM in information management to assign the roles in the maintenance of the UNSDI-T

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CALENDAR

Prior to the next meeting in Vienna 5-7 November 2008 at UNGIWG, there will be a GIST session. This point of institutional approach is also necessary for coordinating in the initial action to know how to produce base data for a country. Ideally, a GeOnG session will also be available after presenting GeOnG's point of view.

8. References and actions

FTP Server

82.246.15.132

User: geong /

Password: geo10ng08

The Wiki <http://wiki.cartong.org/index.php?title=SDI> allows to consult/upload docs , assessments in order to build SDIs

The server is structured in three files, formula_assessment (sub-divided into WatSan and camp_mapping_protection).

Specify as many of your sources and meta-data attributes as possible.

List the emails attached to the document.

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October 2008							November 2008							December 2008						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
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January 2009							February 2009							March 2009						
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