

Geospatial data is any data which has embedded within it an explicit or implicit location 'tag'. Examples of geospatial data are post codes, words which refer to a location (e.g. Sudan), maps, satellite or aerial images, videos, pictures, spreadsheets with location tags, navigation system data logs, etc.

Globally, the UN, partner agencies, member states and other relevant institutions are becoming increasingly involved in a host of vital services from disaster response and peacekeeping to environmental protection and economic development. In doing so, they produce geospatial data they need to share in order to raise operational effectiveness and to coordinate efforts.

The global community of citizens is also becoming an increasingly valuable resource with the emergence of "crowd sourcing" of voluntarily contributed geospatial information.

Currently within the UN there is little capacity to leverage individual organization's investment in geospatial data obtained from a variety of sources for the benefit of all stakeholders. The CoE4UNSDI Project will improve on this situation in close collaboration with stakeholders by utilizing best-of-breed information and communications technology solutions.



Under the strategic direction of the UN Spatial Data Infrastructure (UNSDI) Steering Committee of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group (UNGIWG), the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) of the UN Secretariat in New York has established the *Centre of Excellence for UN Spatial Data Infrastructure (CoE4UNSDI) Project*. OICT, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Office in Geneva, Information and Communications Technology Services (UNOG/ICTS) are collaborating in this inter-agency undertaking as an UN System-wide harmonization initiative of the UN ICT Strategy endorsed by the General Assembly in 2010 (Section 29 (A/64/6)).

The goal of the CoE4UNSDI Project is to create a comprehensive, decentralized geospatial information framework that facilitates decision making at various levels within the UN by enabling access, retrieval, dissemination and use of geospatial data. The CoE4UNSDI Project will support the institutional and technical foundation of policies, data and interoperability standards and procedures to enable UN organizations to interact more effectively in managing geospatial data and technology assets. Further, by working together, economies of scale will result in reduced development and operational costs.

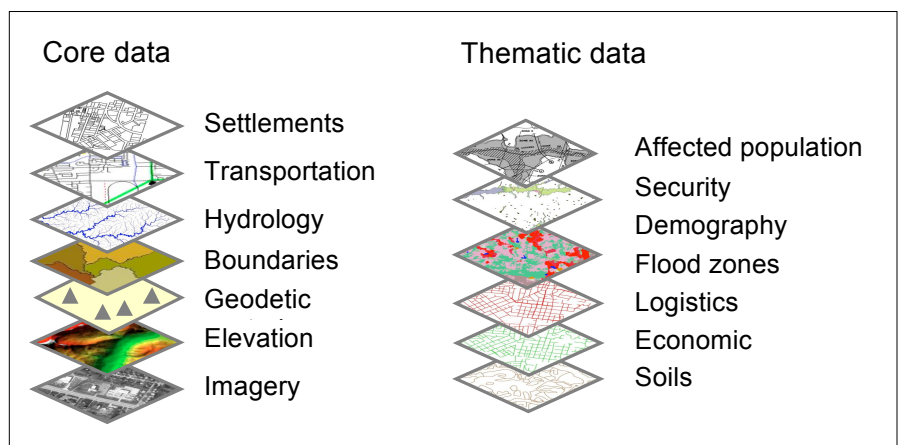
The three components of the CoE4UNSDI Project are:

1. Standards and Best Practices for Provisioning of Core Geospatial Data (OICT)
2. Geospatial Data Warehouse (FAO)
3. Visualization Facility (UNOG/ICTS)

The initial thematic areas of focus of the CoE4UNSDI Project are food security and water management, social and environmental protection, disaster management and sustainable development.

The CoE4UNSDI is an extra-budgetary project supported by the voluntary contributions of UN Member States to a Trust Fund established at the UN Secretariat.

THE GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION DOMAINS



THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR UN SPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

The three deliverables of the CoE4UNSDI Project to be completed within 24 months are the following:

Standards and Best Practices for Provisioning of Core Geospatial data	The UNSDI Gazetteer Framework will deliver a cloud-based infrastructure to enable research, access, maintenance and cross-referencing of gazetteers (directories of place names) as an example of core geospatial data of critical importance. The Framework will also establish a method for validating and incorporating crowd-sourced information to enhance authoritative source gazetteers.
Geospatial Data Warehouse	The Geospatial Data Warehouse will establish strong connections between the array of existing geospatial information systems of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes. It will also build new connections, using widely available software and common data-sharing practices. Users will be able to easily identify, access and re-use UN geospatial content such as maps, Geographic Information System data, remote sensing imagery and Global Navigation Satellite System data logs.
Visualization	Using the authoritative directory of place names and the aggregated geographic data of various UN organizations, the visualisation component of the UNSDI project will provide a holistic, common view of that information in a consumable and visually intuitive manner. The base layer of authoritative maps will include overlays of thematic information so that the various mandated tasks being undertaken by the UN and partner organisations can be viewed through the standard technology solution, or if necessary by the UN, Agencies, Funds and Programmes as well as partners through their own in house solutions.

MAJOR PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS

As a UN System-wide initiative, CoE4UNSDI Project is designed from the ground up to deliver the desired outputs, once it is sufficiently funded. Key UN organizations have actively contributed to the formulation of the project goals and the development of the implementation approach. To ensure wide adoption of its guidelines and tools, the CoE4UNSDI Project is seeking to align with the activities of global and regional entities such as the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI) Association, the Group on Earth Observation/Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEO/GEOSS) and the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Community (INSPIRE) as well as the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC).

The UN Secretary-General's Global Pulse Project (<http://www.unglobalpulse.org/>) with its objective of supporting social protection policy formulations at Pulse Labs around the world (such as the ones being established in Indonesia and Uganda) is providing initial use cases. UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is another organization aligning its infrastructure development efforts with the CoE4UNSDI Project. The Common and Fundamental Operational Datasets initiative of the humanitarian community lead by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Department of Safety and Security of the UN Secretariat are also early beneficiaries.

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