

# **“MAPPING-IN-A-SHOEBOX” A GRASSROOTS APPROACH FOR DEVELOPING THE GEOSPATIAL LITERACY OF ELEMENTARY CHILDREN?**

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Maps are invaluable for visualizing spatial ideas as well as the spatial analysis of phenomena. As such, they are a significant tool for visualizing, portraying and understanding spatial data crucial for sustainable development - a major issue facing all nations. In the developed world there has been the acknowledgment that visual spatial skills need to be nurtured. In many of these countries, a large variety of hard copy and electronic resources are available to school teachers and their students to facilitate the teaching and learning of map and mapping skills. There are, however, many countries where teachers and children have no access to such resources.

The decade 2005-2015 has been declared the ‘UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development with the objective of attainment of universal primary education by 2015. Children are our greatest resource and the future stewards of ‘spaceship earth’. In the many environments that lack paper and pencils, electricity or means of generating energy, what resources are available for fostering and developing primary children’s basic awareness of the nature of maps and appreciation of mapping? In such environments, how can primarily locally available resources be used to foster map literacy?

In the mid-1990’s, UNICEF created the “School-in-a-Box” kit. Initially this kit provided basic schooling to children in refugee camps in Africa and Eastern Europe.

This poster explores and elaborates upon the idea of developing and producing a prototype of a kit, Mapping-in-a-Shoe-Box” designed to assist the development of elementary students map literacy. The poster identifies some of the issues and challenges that need to be addressed in order to develop such a kit. These include the specific goals of the kit, its contents, and how to approach the challenge of producing a culture-free universal guide for teachers, using locally available resources and materials. There is also the question of how such a kit should be evaluated. The development of

this kit is a work in progress. As such, your comments and feedback related to its development, future evaluation, production and implementation are welcomed.

The cartographic community cannot afford to ignore the issue of graphic illiteracy in the developing countries. Many of today's children lack any access to instruction about the nature, role and value of maps. It is hoped that the development of "Mapping-in-a-Shoe-Box", will be a tool which will enable children, in disadvantaged environments, to make more informed decisions when maps are used in issues concerned with sustainability, particularly when related to their community.