



## **Mapping Africa for Africa**

Working Group endorsed by ICA

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## **Executive Committee Members**

### WORKING GROUP ON MAFA

The Working Group on MAFA has held one meeting since ICC ACoruna. This meeting was held on 2nd November, 2005 as a joint meeting with the CODI- Geo Working Group on Fundamental Geospatial Datasets. This meeting was held in Pretoria during the Africa GIS conference and therefore took advantage of those members who attended the Africa GIS 2005 conference. It is worth noting that all the members of CODI-Geo Working Group are also members of WG on MAFA.

During previous meetings it had been agreed that a project be undertaken to understand the Fundamental datasets that are available in individual countries in Africa. This would determine the existing gaps in Fundamental datasets and thereby propose remedies to filling the gaps as well as harmonising these datasets across Africa in a seamless manner.

### **Project Mapping Africa for Africa**

The purpose of the project is to achieve MAFA's aims so as to address the issue of a lack of accurate, reliable and up-to-date fundamental geo-spatial datasets essential for effective and efficient decision making and development planning in Africa.

The joint Working Group meeting held in Addis Ababa in May, 2005 concurred on an outline of the project plan which included the need to come up with what may be considered as the requisite Fundamental datasets for Africa. This would be followed by implementation of the yet to be developed Action Plan for each country in Africa as would have been reflected in the status of the availability of the fundamental datasets in each particular country.

### **Project Fundamental Geospatial Datasets for Africa**

The project results should be able to address:

1. What are the Fundamental geo-spatial datasets?
2. What datasets are available in Africa?
3. How can the missing datasets be provided?
4. Should there be data standards?

The Government of the Republic of South Africa through the Chief Directorate of Surveys and Mapping Department kindly offered to meet the expenses for this study by hiring Consultants. The institutions hired are Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa together with Environmental Information System-Africa {EIS-Africa}. These two institutions have been working with other key institutions and individuals from across Africa which are involved in various aspects of geo- information applications, training, capacity building and research.

These two institutions have been conducting a user needs analysis as to determine what can be considered as a set of fundamental geo-spatial datasets for Africa to encompass local, national, sub-regional and regional levels.

The project had been divided into two tasks as follows:

1. Determination of Fundamental Geo-spatial Datasets
2. Inventory of available Fundamental Geo-spatial Datasets

The first task is complete and the report was presented to the joint WG meeting in Pretoria. It was decided at the meeting to distribute the report for comment. It is upon receipt of the comments and being attended to, is when the final draft will be submitted to the joint WG for approval.

The second task that involves the inventory of available fundamental geo-spatial datasets is to follow upon end of task 1 and will be undertaken by each individual country.

Completion of tasks 1 and 2 will result into preparation of project proposal on "Project Mapping Africa for Africa" that will be submitted to NEPAD Secretariat and African Union to source for funding.

### **Next Meeting Of the Working Group On MAFA**

Due to financial constraints it has not been possible to meet as frequent as we would have wished. We have not had a meeting this year. However, it is proposed that the next meeting be held during the 6th AARSE conference in Cairo in October/November 2006 for those members of the WG on MAFA who will attend the conference.

### **Capacity Building in Africa-My Views**

- The real policy challenge for Africa is learning to tap the expertise of those in diaspora for national and regional development. The onus is on African Governments to design programs and offer incentives that enable their expatriate citizens to contribute to national efforts.
- What Africa has in abundance is talent but presently that talent is not appreciated or nurtured. As a result many African Professionals and Scientists have deserted Africa, both literally and symbolically and are so securely in hiding. They do not really care which way the continent goes. They are complacent. I believe there is a need for African Professionals and Scientists everywhere to pause and think. Think long and hard. Is there anything one can do to help the continent genuinely.
- While the west's initiative for Africa's development is a panacea to the ills that stalk the continent, Africa will never develop if the initiative is not sparked from within.
- Some of the African Governments are no respecters of the great human resources that we have in Africa. We consign highly educated individuals into dustbins and elevate our incompetent relatives and cronies to positions that they can not make head or tail. In desperation, some of our best brains end up in the west never to return.

Haggai Nyapola  
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