

Arrangements & components

Limitations

When the ReliefWeb Map Center has geospatial dataset it can share with FIS for field operations and vice versa.

At times OCHA has used the GIST FTP site and the data repository for internal geospatial data exchange between FIS and the field.

When field operations need data for preparedness or Emergency response, FIS produces a compilation of minimum base map layers which is either sent to the field or delivered in person by the GIS staff deploying to the emergency.

General lack of awareness of the utility of geospatial analysis and visualization.

Lack of standards for geospatial data management

Lack of a consistent mechanism or a unified platform for Geospatial data exchange.

Discovery and retrieval based on personal communications between those who have possession of the data and those who know who to ask for to have access to the data.

This situation is gradually changing with the implementation Of GeoNetwork opensource by OCHA at the HQ and the field offices.

Internal Geospatial Information Access

Organizational side
Technical side

OCHA has begun using GeoNetwork opensource to Document its geospatial data assets both at the HQ and the field under a project names Maps-On-Demand.

OCHA is also implementing ArcSDE to assist map production at the HQ level.

There are plans for the ReliefWeb Map Center offices in Geneva and New York to share the same ArcSDE geobase which will assist versioning and data management tasks across the Atlantic as well.

The GIST data repository has a very rudimentary metadata Catalogue and as such does not go beyond a remote shared drive. ITOS which is hosting the GIST data repository is now exploring migrating its data holding to GeoNetwork opensource.

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The GIST is one institutional framework which allows for data dissemination among humanitarian actors.

OCHA as the Secretariat of the GIST, oversees the activities of the GIST Task Teams that address data preparedness, data standards and administrative matters.

The GIST data repository is not a publicly accessible site and is not very user-friendly.

The OCHA GeoNetwork opensource node hosted by FAO is not populated enough to reach a critical mass to attract users.

Geospatial Information Dissemination to partners

Organizational side
Technical side

GeoNetwork opensource and the GIST Web site hosted and maintained by the Information Technology Outreach Services (ITOS) of the University of Georgia at Athens, GA constitute the technical components of a data and services platform for OCHA.

Early in 2006, OCHA engaged in a proof-of-concept project named Field Information Geospatial System (FIGS) to demonstrate the feasibility of an online mapping facility using exclusively opensource software components that adhere to OGC interoperability standards.

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The GIST provides an institutional framework, albeit on a voluntary basis, for accessing external spatial information for humanitarian purposes.

OCHA is also leading the UNGIWG group which is pursuing avenues of technical cooperation with Google Inc. which is committed to acquire geospatial data with a view to meet the UN's requirements as well as publish UN's data using Google Earth.

OCHA has signed a Cooperation Framework agreement with UNOSAT which focuses on rapid mapping services using satellite imagery. The release of the the raw data for the satellite imagery to UN entities is under discussion with UNOSAT which would distribute it via its portal.

Geospatial data and service providers are not adhering to interoperability standards.

The standards themselves are not fully developed.

There is a general hesitancy to share data partly due to competition for funds, confidentiality and liability concerns and lack of trust among humanitarian actors.

External Geospatial Information Access

Organizational side
Technical side

Maps-On-Demand/GeoNetwork opensource

The GIST data repository

The UNOSAT portal

Other online data service such as those provided by software vendors such as ESRI and various public sources constitute the technical components of accesing external geospatial data and services.

UNSDI expectancies:

SERVICES

Provide enterprise spatial data infrastructure implementation models and best practices for organizations who want to follow the UNSDI road map and reference architecture. The UNSDI team of evangelists and technical support staff can consult to OCHA as it transitions to a service oriented architecture advocated by UNSDI.

If the UNSDI team has computational resources of its own, it could host core applications that facilitate metadata creation, discover, retrieval and visualization as well as serve core datasets (e.g. UN-certified base map layers, composite gazetteer) and deliver specialized services (e.g. universal geocoding and address matching).

Provide geospatial services and data repositories.

STANDARDS

Encouraging proprietary systems to adhere to interoperability standards.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Engage in capacity building programs.

ORGANIZATIONAL

Establish policies for data sharing.

Building partnerships with technology companies.

Build partnerships for data distribution and visualization, etc.

Build bridges with national and regional SDIs.

Encourage donors to report projects that have a geospatial component and to invest in infrastructural projects, to foster the development of a community of practice, and more (per the UNSDI Implementation Strategy document).

Engage in the activities of standards setting bodies to voice the requirements of the UN.

Ensure that all related coordination activities the UN engages in is aware of and takes advantage of UNSDI products and services.