

UN launches guide for countries to improve location-based data management to better inform decision-making

The UN Statistics Division and the World Bank launched [a new guide](#) on Wednesday to help nations worldwide, especially in low- and middle-income countries, better manage data that contains geographical information – known officially as geospatial data.

The guide includes advice on how to collect, access and use geospatial information to develop effective policies, and more accurately support decision-makers in directing aid and development resources; ensuring that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

“Geospatial information is a critical component of national infrastructure and a blueprint of what happens where, and with proven societal and economic value,” said Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the Statistics Division, which is part of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs ([DESA](#)).

High-quality, timely geospatial information is often overlooked in policymaking – *Anna Wellenstein (World Bank)*

“Better understanding and management of digital location-based data and services, and good geospatial information integrated with urban planning and census data, can enable more efficient resource allocation for better service delivery,” he explained.

The guide, titled ‘Integrated Geospatial Information Framework’, makes concrete recommendations on establishing national geospatial information management processes and putting that information to use.

According to the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management ([UN-GGIM](#)), with more reliable geospatial data, policy-makers, international organisations, civil society and others, will have better insights into the distribution of needs and ways to optimize development planning and investments.

“High-quality, timely geospatial information is often overlooked in policymaking, yet is fundamental to achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development,” said Anna Wellenstein, who leads land and geospatial activities at the World Bank.

Currently, all governments hold a considerable amount of geospatial information, including databases on who has access to education; communities most affected by poverty; areas at risk of disasters; as well as mobile data that can keep more people informed about disease outbreaks and weather

patterns.

But the information, although critical to improve lives and livelihoods, is often not current, shared, or integrated with other necessary data.

“The Framework will help countries in building capacity for using geospatial technology to enhance informed government decision-making, facilitate private sector development, take practical actions to achieve a digital transformation, and bridge the geospatial-digital divide.”

The UN-GGIM stressed that this guide is also meant to help low- and middle-income countries move toward developing their “e-economies” to provide better social and economic services to citizens. For example, integrated geospatial information management can enable Small Island Developing States ([SIDS](#)) to better monitor climate change impacts, plan mitigation, and manage disaster risks.

Representatives from governments and geospatial information experts are attending the Eighth Session of the UN-GGIM in New York from 1 to 3 August to discuss efforts to enhance collaboration, coordination, and coherence in global geospatial information management. In November, high-level stakeholders will meet in Deqing, Zhejiang Province, China, at the UN World Geospatial Information Congress to ensure the widest and fullest use of geospatial information to advance social, economic, and environmental development.

[New cluster of Ebola cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – World Health Organization](#)

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) announced on Wednesday that preliminary laboratory results indicate a new cluster of cases of the deadly Ebola virus in North Kivu province.

The announcement was issued just eight days after the Ministry of Health declared the official end of an Ebola outbreak in Equateur Province, some 2,500 km from North Kivu. A total of 29 died during the most recent outbreak, which was declared over when two weeks had passed without a new case emerging, following the release of the last patient from care.

Concern heightened in the early days of the outbreak, when cases emerged in a major urban area on the Congo River.

“Ebola is a constant threat in the DRC,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,

Director-General of the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#). “What adds to our confidence in the country’s ability to respond is the transparency they have displayed once again. Working closely with the Ministry of Health and partners, we will fight this one as we did the last.”

The Government informed WHO that four out of six samples tested positive for Ebola virus at the Institut National de Recherche Biomédicale (INRB) in Kinshasa but that further testing is ongoing.

“Since we are coming out of another Ebola outbreak, we have kept staff and equipment in place,” said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa. “This allows us to have a head start in response to this cluster.”

The majority of the cases are in the Mangina health area which is 30 kilometres from the city of Beni. “This new cluster is occurring in an environment which is very different from where we were operating in the north-west,” said Dr. Peter Salama, Deputy Director-General of the Emergency Preparedness and Response team at WHO.

He explained that given that North-Kivu is an active conflict zone, “the major barrier will be safely accessing the affected population.”

North Kivu hosts over 1 million displaced people. The province shares borders with Rwanda and Uganda with a great deal of cross-border movement due to the trade activities, which could increase the risk of possible spread of the virus. WHO said it will “continue to work with neighbouring countries to ensure health authorities are alerted and prepared to respond”.

‘Exercise restraint,’ UN urges Zimbabwe after post-election violence

After reported attacks on demonstrators protesting election results in Zimbabwe that have left three dead, the United Nations called on the country’s leaders on Wednesday to reject any form of violence.

“We are concerned about reports that there have been incidents of violence in some parts of Zimbabwe,” UN deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters in New York at a regular briefing.

According to media reports, at least three protesters was killed in the capital Harare after troops were deployed to quell presidential election protests. The violence erupted days after Zimbabwe’s first general elections since former President Robert Mugabe was pressured to step down after more than three decades in office, last year.

Mr. Haq reminded current office holders and political parties of the commitments they made through the Peace Pledge, signed on 26 June, and the agreed Code of Conduct for a peaceful electoral process.

“We call on the political leaders and the population as a whole to exercise restraint and reject any form of violence while awaiting resolution of the disputes and announcement of the election results,” he continued.

Trouble on the horizon

Back in June, [UN Secretary-General](#) António Guterres condemned an explosion that took place at an election rally in Zimbabwe, shortly after sitting President Emmerson Mnangagwa – who is running again for a full term – left the stage.

And in July, amid increasing reports of voter intimidation and coercion linked to the ruling ZANU-PF party, the UN human rights office, [OHCHR](#), underscored the need for a peaceful and [credible election](#).

According to news reports, official results so far, show that while ZANU-PF has won the most seats in the parliamentary ballot, the opposition Movement for Democratic Change is alleging ballot-rigging and impatience has been growing at the delayed release of full results.

Mr. Haq concluded by saying that the UN was monitoring the situation and again called on all the people of Zimbabwe to respect electoral law, the peace pledge and code of conduct, and to “desist from any inflammatory statements and refrain from violence.”

[Death of local UN staffer in latest Afghan suicide attack highlights tragic toll of violence against civilians](#)

The bombing is the latest in a series of attacks attributed to the ISIL terrorist group, also known as Da’esh, that have killed or wounded hundreds of people in eastern Afghanistan since mid-June amidst growing political and territorial rivalry between ISIL and the Taliban, according to news reports.

“There is no justification for such acts of terror,” IOM underscored, calling her “one of thousands of Afghans who form the backbone” of the UN’s daily work in the country “to help the most in need, supporting development and contributing to the restoration of peace and stability.”

According to [figures](#) released mid-July by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, known as [UNAMA](#), 1,692 civilians were killed and another 3,430 injured in the first six months of 2018 – a record high number for the first six months of any year, despite an unprecedented ceasefire between the Government and Taliban extremists in mid-June.

Referring to the young IOM worker, Tadamichi Yamamoto, head of the UN Mission in Afghanistan, UNAMA, said: “We mourn the loss of our colleague and, in tribute, commit ourselves to re-double our work to serve Afghanistan and its peoples.”

IOM stressed that deliberately targeting civilians and their places of work, such as the department in Jalalabad, is an “appalling crime.” The agency called for the “architects” of the attack to be brought to justice.

[FROM THE FIELD: Indian Ocean perfume islands threatened by climate change](#)

Farmers living on the Indian Ocean Comoros archipelago are being supported through a UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) initiative, to adapt to climate change in an effort to ensure they can continue to prosper in one of Africa’s poorest nations.



UNDP Comoros/James Stapley

Some 200,000 Comorians rely solely on agriculture to make a living from crops such as ylang-ylang, vanilla and clove; fragrant plants which have led many to name the small island nation, the perfume islands.

But, changes to the climate are upending traditional agricultural practices and threatening the islanders’ livelihoods.

UNDP has partnered with the Government of Comoros to mentor farmers in a new agricultural approach.

For more information on this story please click [here](#).