

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.