

Support for Camp Mapping

UNHCR is coordinating the activities in over 300 refugee camps and some countries have estimates of 200 to 300 camps for IDPs. Mapping all those locations to provide an exhaustive and homogenous management tool is obviously a complex task where priorities have to be set; priorities that must take into account the feasibility of the exercise, the costs, the pre-conditions, etc. Although there are different approaches to camp mapping, which can have different levels of precision and can serve different purposes, it is important that an organization-wide planning guides this work.

The Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS) of the Division of Operational Services (DOS) is developing guidelines for camp mapping that identifies the methods and techniques available for camp mapping, including the use of satellite imagery. These guidelines also provide standards for data collection and data presentation. FICSS has the expertise to design, coordinate and implement camp mapping activities based on geographic information systems (GIS). It can assist field operations in identifying and organizing existing data, and in preparing a data collection programme using global positioning system device (GPS) and other field techniques. GIS support can be provided in the preparation of the activity and on location for the mapping exercise. FICSS can also prepare and deliver relevant training programmes to develop the local capabilities required for the data collection phase but also for the maintenance and regular updates of the information.

The GIS Team of FICSS in Geneva is supported by a dynamic group of GIS Officers and GIS Assistants in over 10 countries, including at the Regional Hubs of Nairobi and Accra. Those GIS Champions are directly involved in the registration and repatriation operations and act as focal points for an important number of countries for spatial analysis and general data management issues.

In Geneva, Mr. Luc St-Pierre, Senior Geographic Information Systems Officer, is the contact person to discuss opportunities and needs for camp mapping (stpierre@unhcr.org, Tel: +41 (0) 22 739 8835). In addition to the technical support, FICSS works at securing financial and technical resources to implement the global programme of camp mapping in support to camp coordination and camp management. Currently, a European Space Agency programme (RESPOND) facilitates access to satellite imagery and their interpretation for camp mapping and other initiatives are being developed.

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