



Somalia Water and Land Information Management System
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SWALIM establishes a shared GIS facility in Somaliland



GIS Facility - SWALIM Liaison Office, Hargeisa.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) constitutes the hardware and software for creating, storing, retrieving and using maps and other spatial data. GIS play an important role in land and water resources management, since maps are very useful for sharing information, planning and implementing activities, and conducting discussions and negotiations. Today, most water and land information management projects use GIS. SWALIM is certainly no different, and has invested significant resources in its GIS capacity.

Realizing this potential, the three line ministries (Agriculture, Pastoral development and Environment, and Water and Mineral Resources) in Somaliland requested SWALIM to support them with computers, software, furniture and training to build their capacity to incorporate GIS in their water and land resources management activities.

GIS is expensive to set up and maintain. It is therefore not feasible for SWALIM to set up a separate facility for each ministry. Following several discussions with the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee comprising representatives from the three ministries, a decision was reached to establish and support a shared GIS facility at the SWALIM liaison office in Hargeisa. The facility will focus mainly on helping the three ministries use and manage spatial data on water and land that they collect in the field, as well as information produced by their partners, including SWALIM.

The facility was officially launched on 20th February 2007. It is fully equipped with furniture, a computer terminal, a printer and a map cabinet. ESRI ArcGIS and FAO Dynamic Atlas

have been installed on the computer, as well as other data processing tools and software. ESRI ArcGIS is the software used by most organizations to process, analyse and store spatial data. FAO Dynamic Atlas is a free electronic atlas that users with no previous GIS skills can use to access, browse, analyse and represent spatial data. A second computer terminal shall be installed later if demand at the facility increases.

Access to the facility by the participating ministries will be coordinated by the SWALIM liaison office in Hargeisa. The ministries will bring their own data for processing but they will also have access to all existing datasets. Other SWALIM partners and clients will be able to access and use the facility in a limited way.

To start the ministries in using the facility, personnel had to be trained. Three staff members from each ministry have now completed a course in basic information management, Dynamic Atlas and basic GIS skills. Competence in GIS is developed over time and through regular practice, SWALIM will provide technical support through its Liaison office in Hargeisa and with backstopping from SWALIM experts in Nairobi.

We will continue to monitor how the facility works and use this opportunity to learn together how GIS can be sustained and mainstreamed into the ministries' information management tasks. This approach, as refined by lessons learned, will be replicated in Puntland and in the Central and Southern regions of Somalia in the near future and as conditions allow.



Dynamic Atlas Training - FAO conference hall, Hargeisa.

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