



Somalia Water and Land Information Management Programme
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SWALIM Hosts Remote Sensing Experts



Workshop participants attentively listening to the presenter

Since the beginning of the project, SWALIM has relied heavily on remote sensing technology to produce information on land resources for Somalia. Throughout the last two and a half years, we've gained a lot of practical experience, and, among other things, have entered into a number of the technical debates on what can and cannot be done with remote sensing. It seemed to us that many of these debates would benefit from a wider forum for discussion, and a peer review of actual remote sensing work done in the region. It was around these points that SWALIM organized its planned workshop on remote sensing, which was held in Nairobi 12th and 13th June.

Initially we wondered whether we as a project would garner enough interest in such an event. However, from the first days of our call for papers, the positive feedback by the many interested institutions – African, European and American – made it clear that there was no cause for concern, and that the prospect of exchanging ideas and practices in this field had a lot of appeal. More than sixty participants, some from as far away as Laos and Finland, packed in the conference hall to attend the two-day workshop. In total, 31 institutions were represented. As well, SWALIM sponsored the participation of technical representatives from 12 Ministries from Transitional Federal Government, Somaliland and Puntland.

After the keynote lecture, 28 real-life case studies were presented, as well as a very interesting summary by FAO on trends in global terrestrial observation systems and related international standards. The presentations generated challenging questions and animated discussions – exactly what an expert workshop should do.

It was perhaps too ambitious to expect firm conclusions regarding the “potentialities and limitations in the use of remote sensing in detecting and monitoring environmental change in the Horn of Africa” – the title of the workshop – but the workshop certainly succeeded in meeting its other objective of bringing the numerous remote sensing practitioners for the Horn of Africa in Nairobi together in hopes of sparking more collaboration and enhancing the quality of remote sensing work produced. While most know each other and the broad areas of interest each is investigating, there has been little in the way of networking and exchanging details of their work. A major achievement of the workshop was reaching a common understanding of the importance of keeping in touch with each other and abreast of each other's work, and a commitment by all to do this. In this spirit, SWALIM will take the initiative to set up a network for remote sensing practitioners.

Please check our News & Announcements section at www.faoswalim.org in the coming weeks for the proceedings of the workshop.



Final plenary conclusions session

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