

Welcome to the SWALIM Newsletter

Well, another newsletter? Your question is right. In our age there is a real danger that one can get easily lost in heaps of information packages. We can promise at the very start that we are not going to overload you with information important only for us. We will try to share information that we consider useful for you in your work, actually in our joint work which we are undertaking for a better future in Somalia. As the Somalia Water and Land Information Management Project we are obliged to do that. The credit to our work will not be given in words; the best appreciation will be expressed just by using our information management products.

The format of our newsletter also reflects the above approach. We want the reader to be able to browse through it in a few

minutes and pick up the essential information he/she needs. So please, do not expect long, analytical articles printed with very small letters. We would rather flash brief pieces of information that can be followed up through our Client Service Platform (CDs, E-mail, hard copy, personal contact and our website to be launched soon).

All your comments, formal or informal, will be appreciated. Just send us a short note by E-mail or phone us and your comments will be followed up.

Yes, we would like you to read all our quarterly newsletters. Therefore I must keep my promise and be brief: WELCOME.

*Zoltan Balint, PhD
Chief Technical Advisor, SWALIM*

Who and what is SWALIM?

Last September I was traveling with a UN colleague to Puntland. We got to discuss about our work and as we went on, I decided to make self evaluations by asking her what she knew about SWALIM. I realized that although she knew many things about SWALIM, her expectation of SWALIM varied from drilling boreholes to providing satellite data. So, who and what is SWALIM?

SWALIM is an acronym for Somalia Water and Land Information Management. We are an information management project based on the fact that successful water, land and agricultural development in Somalia require realistic information on the available resources. SWALIM is funded by European Commission and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

We serve water and land information needs of Somali administrations, non-governmental organisations, development agencies and UN organisations. In doing this, we aim to improve the lives of Somali communities whose lives largely depend on water and land resources

(continued on page 2)

NEWS AND EVENTS

Somalia Liaison offices

In the next few weeks SWALIM intends to open two Liaison Offices in Somalia to improve access to SWALIM information products and services. The offices will be set up in Hargeisa, Somaliland and in Garowe, Puntland.

Somalia Water Sources Information Management System (SWIMS):

SWALIM has produced an Information Management tool for Water Sources professionals in Somalia that includes: Spatial data management capabilities; time-series management capabilities; past, current and future Interventions information management; metadata management in accordance with ISO 19115; automated validation and verification of data; user management capabilities; and automated reporting functions.

The software engineering work on the Client Application has been completed and testing has begun. The approach being taken is to enter data sets received from partners using different users, of varying technical expertise and computer literacy. Using different computers allows the SWIMS development team to simulate the conditions under which the system will be used, allowing us to test and de-bug. In addition we are developing the SWIMS Software Users Manual, taking advantage of the novice user's feed back to refine and hone this document.

Client Service Platform: Working to improve information access (By Lewis Njeru)

One of the key principles of the SWALIM Information Management (IM) policy is to make information created or held by SWALIM, easily accessible to users and to facilitate re-use of information i.e. create once for many users. To accomplish this, SWALIM is developing a Client Service Platform (CSP) that combines different access points (one Nairobi based Information resources Center and three Somalia Liaison Offices) and access platforms (SWALIM website, information CDs, reference library, AGRIS catalogue and customized databases). For clients, with internet facility, SWALIM website provides a very efficient means of accessing all the available information.

(continued on page 2)

Who and what is SWALIM? (Continued from Page 1)

Even in stable developing countries such as Kenya, lack of reliable information is a major factor hindering sustainable development of resources. The situation in Somalia is much worse following one and a half decade of civil strife that has led to loss and damage of most of the previously available information. SWALIM is trying to recover this information from all over the world and at the same time re-establish data collection networks in collaboration with partner agencies. Further, for planning purposes, we aim to turn raw data into the kind of information required by decision makers, donors and investors.

To achieve our aim, we (1) Collect the data needed to manage and develop water and land resources, (2) Generate user friendly information from this data, (3) Store the generated information in relational databases for easy access and (4) Build capacity in the three regions of

Somalia so that respective government ministries will be able to take over our functions in the future. Our activities include mapping of water sources (boreholes, berkads, shallow wells, etc), rehabilitation of the national rainfall and river flow data collection network, initiation of a flood warning system, evaluation of the potential for harvesting rain water, surveying of main irrigation systems, mapping land resources, evaluating land suitability and assessment of land degradation especially in the drier pastoral areas.

Our data and information products are freely available to anyone through different platforms including our website (www.faoswalim.org), email request, SWALIM information resource center and Liaison Offices in Somalia. Our dissemination media includes web downloads, searchable catalogue, information CDs, a reference library and stand alone databases and associated software applications. You are welcome to access our data and information products and can contact us anytime at enquiries@faoswalim.org

Client Service Platform: Working to improve information access (Continued from Page 1)

New information is given visibility and the most requested information is highlighted. Additionally, the website allows SWALIM partners to upload data which they require SWALIM to integrate into datasets. Clients can also contact SWALIM through a dedicated email based enquiries desk. The website is updated frequently. For clients with limited internet connectivity, SWALIM information CDs provide most of the information available at the website. SWALIM has already released two such CDs and more are scheduled. Previous versions will be available and where necessary, updated when more information is processed.

A reference library with key reference materials is being developed both at the SWALIM resource center in Nairobi and Liaison Offices in Somalia. Of specific interest are reports of pre-war studies and other key reference materials such maps and FAO water and land guideline reports. To help clients easily identify information products that meet their needs, SWALIM is cataloguing all its information products using the FAO AGRIS software. Access to the catalogue is provided through the web, email query request, CD ROM and on a computer terminal at the resource center and the upcoming Liaison Offices. The catalogue provides access to the information resource for download. SWALIM is developing a number of customized databases and data processing tools for a number of specific datasets. These include a water sources database, an irrigation database, a land resources database and a climate and river flow database.

Have you signed the SWALIM LOA?

SWALIM would like to team up with interested partners, in the collection, sharing and dissemination of information on Somalia. Download the Letter of Agreement (LOA) from <http://www.faoswalim.org/workshop/Workshop%20Proceedings/loa.pdf>, sign it and send it to us today!

Some useful websites, newsletters and tools for spatial information in Africa

Monitoring agricultural vegetation in Somalia using SPOT VGT Vegetation Index, AFRICOVER and ECMWF Global Meteorological Modeling. This site provides Crop Monitoring for food security in Somalia (also rest of Horn of Africa). 10 days update through email (to which users can subscribe) and website (<http://agrifish.jrc.it/marsfood/>).

EIS-Africa: A network for co-operative management of environmental information. EIS-Africa is an Africa-wide organisation promoting greater use of harmonized geo-spatial information. EIS-AFRICA publishes a monthly newsletter available at their website (www.eis-africa.org). You can also subscribe by sending email to svorster@eis-africa.org with subject as "subscribe".

Spatial Data Infrastructure - Africa (SDI-Africa) is a free electronic newsletter for people interested in GIS, remote sensing, and data management issues in Africa. It aims to raise awareness and provide useful information to strengthen national SDI initiatives and support synchronization of regional activities. Back issues of the newsletter are available. Subscribe at <http://www.gsdi.org/newslist/gsdisubscribe.asp>

Free Downloads. GPS file format converter can at <http://www.gpsbabel.org/>. **Free GIS, Remote Sensing, Hydrology software** at <http://www.spatialhydrology.com/freedownload.html>.

Did You Know?

That you can search for datasets, maps and information resources available at SWALIM online via the SWALIM website? Visit www.faoswalim.org for this and more related information.

Remote sensing in land resources management and development in Somalia (By Laura Monaci)

Satellite imageries are digital images of the earth surface collected from the Space. They can be used to extract or infer different types of information on the natural (Landform, Soils, Land Cover, etc) and human (Land use, Settlements, etc) environment. Furthermore they allow temporal changes in the environment (natural and human) to be observed and quantified. The use of satellite imagery is particularly useful in areas where accessibility is not good or the area to investigate is very big (such as area covering an entire country). These two criteria apply for Somalia.

Extraction of information from satellite images is a complex process, usually referred to as “photo interpretation” or “image interpretation”. The process leads to the production of digital maps and is carried out in two stages. In the first stage, a preliminary map is produced from visual interpretation of the images.

The second stage involves field checks on the preliminary map and ground data collection.

The data collected during the field checks provide a basis for validating the information coming from the preliminary interpretation.

The detail of the information obtained is strictly dependant upon the spatial resolution of the satellite imagery used and the accuracy is mainly dependant upon the skillfulness of the interpreter.

Integration of Remote Sensing, GIS (Geographical Information System) and GPS (Global Positioning Systems) provide the best solution for land resource assessment. In the case of SWALIM, the use of these technologies is aimed at undertaking an assessment of a physical Land Suitability and Agricultural Production Potential of the Juba and Shabelle river valleys in Southern Somalia and Dur-Dur / Gebiley catchments in Western Somaliland. The exercise involves collection and analysis of existing datasets, production of baseline land information (i.e. land cover, landform, soil, vegetation, land use, etc) and integration of this information to assess land suitability and potential.

Somali Experts Workshop (By Enid Sirengo)

The Somali Experts Workshop held from the 30th January – 1st February 2006, at the Safari Park hotel, was a follow up of the Stakeholders Workshop held in Nairobi on the 15th September 2005.

Among those present at the workshop were, representatives from the European Commission, which is the main donor in Somalia, representatives from PACSU – A European Commission funded project for Rehabilitation, Agriculture and Capacity Building, selected representatives from different ministries from each region of Somalia (Puntland, Somaliland & the Transitional Federal Government) and the SWALIM team.

Mr. Luciano Mosele from the EC conducted the official opening of the workshop. He welcomed the effort made to ensure Somali experts’ participation and reiterated the EC’s continued commitment to financing support for relief, rehabilitation and development activities in Somalia. He highlighted that information on land and water related activities are key to the sustenance of the Somalia Livehoods.

The projects CTA, Mr. Zoltan Balint, led the formal introduction of participants. He underscored the aims and objectives of SWALIM. He further appreciated the presence of the Somali experts and remarked that their contribution was significant to achieving the overall objectives of the project which is to address the need for structured water and land information, to support relief, rehabilitation and development programmes in Somalia.

The workshop was an interactive session whereby presentations were made by representatives from the functional units of SWALIM (Water, Land, IRU) and from the different ministries/regions of Somalia with discussions on the different matters affecting water and land in Somalia.

The SWALIM Water theme, elaborated on their areas of focus which include i.e. i) water sources (rural/urban) ii) Irrigation and iii) Water resources/hydrometry.

The Land/GIS team stressed on the importance of the study of these inter-related attributes of which are affected by both human and physical pressures. Understanding the cause-problem-symptom effect relationship is key to arriving at solutions for sustainable management of land resources.

SWALIM plans to carry out Land Resource Survey Mapping in selected potential agricultural areas to provide basic information useful for planning agricultural programmes in future.

The Information resources unit’s Information Management (IM) and access structure lays emphasis on the end users/ stakeholders who include clients, Somali administrations etc. The Information Management process is systematic and can be seen to comprise of two main stages i) information warehouse and ii) client service platform.

Representatives from Somalia summarized the key issues as:

- Water quality reduction due to chemical/microbial contamination especially in major cities
- Need for geophysical data/maps available worldwide as well as primary data collection .
- Need for data on biodiversity and soil erosion, by locating the old maps as well engaging in the collection of new data .
- Need for provision of data on the use of water resources.

The discussions outlined the future activities as:

1. Establishment of Somalia Liaison Offices
2. Inter-Ministerial Capacity Building
3. Recruitment of IRU Officers
4. Identification of the physical locations
5. Inter-ministerial Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with FAO

(continued on the next page)

The FAO Officer-in-Charge for Somalia, Mr. Graham Farmer thanked participants for the fruitful discussions. He urged all to look for solutions rather than at problems and to continue with informal discussions.

He extended his appreciation to the Somali experts for their time and vital contribution and appreciated the efforts of the SWALIM team, and the EC for their foresight into the need for reconstruction of information that will benefit Somalia.

EC reiterated that a right attitude from the beneficiaries was key and would determine the progress.

The deliberations of the Somali experts workshop forged a new insight and created a new awareness and partnership between SWALIM and the Somali partners.

After the formal workshop, training sessions were also conducted at the project's offices and the respective Unit Coordinators and their teams undertook practical training sessions in the different functional units within SWALIM.

PICTORIAL :

Somali Experts Workshop Participants Group Photograph



Standing from Left : Christine Kenyao (Liaison Officer, SWALIM), Anwar Mahfoudh (Information Management Officer, SWALIM), Gulled Abdulkadir (Principal Engineer, Water Resources- Puntland), Hussein Iman (Director, Somali Centre for Water and Environment-Transitional Federal Government), Ismail Mohamed (Director General, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development- Puntland), Jos Bonnemayer (Land Use Expert, SWALIM), Abdulkadir Mohamed (Senior Agronomist, Transitional Federal Government), , Chris Pappas (Operations Manager, SWALIM/FSAU), Abdinasir Warsame (Director General– Ministry of Planning and Internal Cooperation), Zoltan Balint (CTA,SWALIM), John Cody (Water Coordinator, SWALIM)

Sitting from Left : Enid Sirengo (Project Assistant, SWALIM), Michelle Downie (GIS Coordinator, SWALIM), Abdirahman Geyre (Technical Advisor, Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Environment, Puntland), Nicola Vemmie (Irrigation engineer, PACSU), Polly Wangari (Admin Assistant, SWALIM), Said Duale (Senior Water Resources Expert, Ministry of Water and Mineral Resources, Somaliland), Abdulkarim Omar (Director of Range and Surface Water Department, Somaliland), Monique Saucez (Transport, Urban Development and Mine Action, EC), Laura Monaci (Photo Interpretation Coordinator, SWALIM), Abdullahi Magan (Director of Land and Water Department, Ministry of Agriculture-Somaliland), Musse Alim (Land Coordinator, SWALIM).

Comments?

The Editorial Board of SWALIM Update invites Letters, Comments and Opinions from readers that will help SWALIM to provide a wider coverage on Water and Land Information Management issues in Somalia. Kindly address your comments to

The Editor, SWALIM Update,

3rd Floor Kalson Towers, Parklands, P.O.Box 30470,00100, Nairobi Kenya

Tel:+254 (0)203743454/64/86 , Fax :+254 (0)203743498 , E-mail :enquiries@faoswalim.org

Subscribe/Unsubscribe?

To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to enquiries@faoswalim.org with the word “subscribe” as the subject. To Un-subscribe, send a blank mail to enquiries@faoswalim.org with the word “unsubscribe” as the subject.

The Somalia Water and Land information Management project (SWALIM) is funded by the European Commission in conjunction with UNICEF and implemented by Food and Agriculture organization of the United Nations (FAO).

