

DRAFT
TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION GROUP - NEPAL

Background

In Nepal, multiple entities from the government, UN, International Organizations and NGO communities use geographic information for humanitarian and development purpose. The information and the added-value processed out of the geographical data are useful to all members of each organization as well as to the larger aid community. In most cases, however, the baseline data offers technical challenges in terms of format, projections or exhaustiveness. Also, the surveys used to gather the information and the databases used to manage the data are not standardized, coordinated or consolidated among the agencies. As a result, considerable useful information is not effectively used within or shared between organizations.

The majority of organizations working in GIS have a core set of data and final products that can be of use to all. If these agencies coordinate how this information is collected, formatted, processed managed and made available, it could both relieve the burden of work on individual agencies and provide a single, coherent dataset that can be used by all. The latter would dramatically facilitate and increase the effectiveness of all entities.

To achieve this, OCHA establishes a ‘Geographic Information Group’ (GIG) including a representative from each UN agency and INGO, and from the government units involved in GIS activities.

The GIG would undertake the following:

- **Information sharing on GIS activities**, through regular meetings and shared communications to provide a forum for the exchange of information on upcoming studies, database tools, remote sensing analysis, etc. The GIG will encourage agencies to share which data is available, their experience on how data was processed, analyzed and disseminated and exchange their data and/or final products.

The GIG will provide summary information on which data are being held and by whom. The GIG will not seek to centralize data but would rather be a source of ‘information on

information', which can help directing interested parties to the agency where specific data are held.

- **Agreement on spatial data standards**, such as Place Codes, projections, and basic geographic layers such as administrative boundaries, road network, etc. When agencies develop individual systems for naming or coding places this makes data and huge amounts of potentially useful information go unshared, are manually re-typed or filed and forgotten. Spatial data standards agreed by all agencies provide a single source for key files, allowing the exchange of data between participating agencies.
- **Coordination of GIS activities**, to define whose role and responsibility in the event of a major earthquake / natural disaster. This includes data collection, data sharing, data process and diffusion.
- **Platform of technical support**, whereby agencies with staff skilled in GIS and database development can offer technical assistance to those that have not such technical expertise. The GIG will aim to be a technical focal point where the exchange of support will be encouraged.

Frequency of the meeting: every month

Participants: Organizations from UN, government, donor, NGO and INGO community running activities related to geographic/ spatial information. The meeting is chaired by OCHA.