

GIS capacity building in Malawi to support HIV/AIDS monitoring, evaluation and response
Teleconference 19.05.2008

Participants: Patrick Naphini and Chris Moyo (MOH), Wellington Kafakalawa (NAC); Zuze Dulanya (University of Malawi), Peter Fleming (University of Pennsylvania), Lucette Maure (consultant), Steeve Ebener (WHO)

1. Context and objective of the teleconference (Steeve)

Context:

- Equity project
 - GIS capacity and data availability analysis (July 2006)
 - visit in April 2007
 - meeting in September 2007
- => identified opportunities and need to go beyond the equity project
- Facilitated work between NRA, CSO and Survey Department in preparation for this year population census
- => technical capacity, skills and material could be leveraged if there were better working connections and sharing of resources among the different partners involved in GIS Health related activities in the country
- => organization of this first teleconference
- => start by focusing on HIV/AIDS to be extended further to other conditions afterwards

Objectives of the teleconference:

- putting people in contact
- have a more clear pictures of the current needs and resources at disposal
- see how we could move forward from there

2. Round of introduction, description of the needs and capacities (all participants)

Lucette Maure (international consultant)

- needs: Is currently managing a program for orphan in Malawi and trying to allow for them to go back to their community. They looking at addressing the needs of these children in terms of care, education and food
- capacity: none at the moment. Plan to do something but would like to avoid duplication of work

Patrick Naphini and Chris Moyo (MOH).

- needs: would like to go beyond what they are currently doing and be able to use GIS to do planning. There is therefore a need for training at both the central and the district level

- capacity: have been using GIS since 2000 but Patrick is the only staff working on GIS at the MOH

Wellington Kafakalawa (NAC).

- needs: GIS is just being introduced at NAC. They have an obligation to transfer statistics into maps. Wants to use GPS devices to locate all the health facilities providing ART sites.
- capacity: Wellington has already been using GIS in several context. Consultant being hired to create the GIS database.

Zuze Dulanya (University of Malawi, Chancellor college, Zomba).

- needs: increase the limited number of staff (2 directly involved in GIS and remote sensing) and to also improve their availability of hardware (limited number of computers for the moment)
- capacity: teaching capacities (3rd year in Geoscience). They also provide courses in health geography (covering general issues).

Peter Fleming (University of Pennsylvania)

- needs: being able to access a GIS database which is up-to-date and standardized.
- capacity: Access to a large network of institutions in the country (including NGOs). Also have graduate students in the US working on cleaning data and would be willing to provide training in Malawi.

Steeve Ebener (WHO)

- needs: to demonstrate that a different capacity building approach, aiming at leveraging the already existing capacities in countries, can be developed and serve everybody's needs from the sub national to the global level
- capacity: network (private sector, donors, UN, academies), development of content oriented standards and protocols, data cleaning capacities, skills in spatial analysis and spatial modeling

3. Way forward

The round of introduction as well as the discussion which followed allowed to identify 2 main areas of potential synergy among the participants to the teleconference:

- 1. Training:** The MOH has expressed a need to receive training in order for them to expand their use of GIS both at the central and the district level. NAC as well as other public health institutions would also benefit from some health specific training.

The University of Pennsylvania would be ready to provide trainings in the country if they could have access to a computer lab. The University of Malawi and some other potential external partners (e.g. ESRI, Loma Lynda University, CDC,...) could also contribute to this exercise and help ensuring some continual training capacity in the country.

Peter would be staying for a year in Malawi starting from July 2008 and could therefore facilitate this process as well as the production of short user manual to facilitate and standardize the work of GIS technicians in the different institutions.

2. Collaboration/coordination: There is a need to standardize the way GIS data are collected and ensure that the institutions involved in data collection are coordinating their efforts in order to avoid duplication of efforts (e.g. for health facilities).

This process would need the involvement of other key GIS stakeholders such as the Survey Department or the National Statistical Office as well as the NGO community. This confirmed the outcomes of last September meeting, the need to better connect the GIS health community with the other sector and to organize a GIS stakeholder meeting such as the one organized in Lusaka last year

The meeting mentioned in the second point could also serve as forum for further discussing other collaborative efforts issues such as:

- the pooling/sharing of existing hardware (e.g. GPS devices, printing facilities),
- the documentation (metadata) of existing data set and projects and the availability of this documentation for further use (example of the database currently under development by the University of Pennsylvania)
- the creation of an expertise directory in order to allow peoples in the country to connect and also benefit from the already existing expertise

All of this with the objective to solve a health related problem such as, for example, access to HIV/AIDS care.

It is expected that bringing the different institutions together would not only reduce duplication of efforts and produce data of better quality but would also demonstrate a more integrated way of working which might be attractive to donors as it would be more cost-effective than what is done now.

4. AOB

It has been agreed that a new teleconference would be organized in June in order to continue the discussion on the points mentioned in point 3 and maybe already extend the discussion to the Survey Department and the National Statistical Office.