

Changing performance long-term with GIS technology

The Central Statistical Agency (CSA) plays a critical role in collecting data. Since 2009, ESSP has worked closely with the GIS department at CSA to create the first Population and Housing Census Atlas using geographic information systems (GIS) software in order to map important population characteristics by woreda.

Now, CSA operates independently to map and publish spatial data. CSA creates atlases using mobile GIS devices and GIS software, as well as organizing and delivering training activities to maintain a sustainable level of expertise within CSA headquarters.

The advantages of using GIS applications in Ethiopia have permeated from CSA to other departments, and consequently the demand for this business-critical tool grows, along with the challenge of retaining staff with the skills to utilize increasingly sophisticated GIS software applications.

ESSP has brought change to the geospatial capacity of CSA, however it also recognizes that learning GIS is an ongoing process and requires regular input to maintain good levels of skill.

ESSP has supported the CSA through: i) Capacity building through training events and supervision ii) Introducing new ways of entering data and ensuring data quality iii) Technical input and help with computers iv) Practical assessments to embed learning



Photo 1 – Hand-held Trimble device to capture points and boundaries

CSA is one of the pioneering African statistical institutes that has embraced the use of advanced data entry tools to improve data collection methods in Africa. In the same vein, the GIS services department, has developed mapping activities using templates and data cleansing techniques initially introduced by ESSP in 2010. This includes the new Ethiopia Rural Facilities and Services Atlas, and a whole program of using Mobile GIS with hand-held devices for data capture (Photo 1).

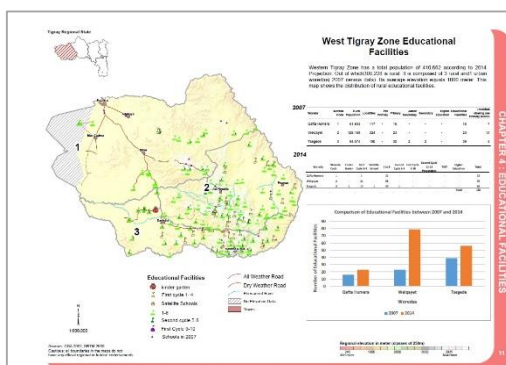


Figure 1 – A page from the new Ethiopia's Rural Facilities and Services Atlas

The new atlas marks a significant step in not only providing updated maps of Ethiopia's nine regions, but it also illustrates data in tables and graphs (Figure 1). The power of these data can create a lasting visual impression of the status of Ethiopia's facilities and services, and hence show policy-makers where the gaps lie.

Working alongside CSA to build a solid understanding of GIS, along with the processes and procedures involved in building a structured spatial database, ESSP has imparted relevant and reusable training to support and empower users to move forward independently. The long-term impact ESSP has had on the GIS department at CSA is apparent, although the department is not without its ongoing technical challenges, such as customization of GIS software, web GIS and data

handling. The partnership forged over the last 6 years between ESSP and CSA has resulted in competent GIS users plus exposure to many possibilities, which could be realized with further training, and greater collaboration between government departments to extend the use of GIS in Ethiopia.

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