



MAY 2008

UNOSAT IS A PEOPLE-CENTRED PROGRAMME INTEGRATING SATELLITE SOLUTIONS FOR HUMAN SECURITY, PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS.

Regional capacity building - Nigeria

From April 23 till May 23, UNOSAT provided at its office in Geneva, four weeks of practical training to five Nigerian experts in the frame of the BayelSAT project. The purpose of this project, under the umbrella of a UNITAR programme in the Niger Delta Region, is to strengthen the capacity of the Bayelsa State Government to use and benefit from space-related technologies and geographic information system (GIS) in the implementation of its local development strategy, in particular by putting in place the dissemination chain and inserting information generated in the decision making process.



A programme manager, a computer analyst and two surveyors from Bayelsa State and an invited consultant from the neighbouring Rivers State were trained in the use of satellite imagery and GIS tools and introduced to satellite-based telecom solutions.

The course encompassed lectures, computer-based practical work, field surveys as well as workshops during which the trainees analyzed

Bayelsa State on five key issues (environment and land management, human settlements, networks, economy, education and health), and mapped the strengths and weaknesses of this territory. External speakers from the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR/WHO), Swisswifi, the Canton de Genève and the IT department of CERN kindly contributed to this training.

Forthcoming steps of the BayelSAT project include the setting up of a sustainable development information sharing platform, the creation of the GIS center at the capital city, Yenagoa, improvement of internet connectivity, as well as provision of distance education and on-site capacity building.

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Humanitarian rapid mapping support, May 2008

The month of May saw two major disasters where UNOSAT provided satellite imagery, maps and analyses to the humanitarian community and national disaster managers:

- [Myanmar](#) cyclone Nargis
- [China](#) earthquake in Sichuan

The Myanmar operation was very complex and took most of the efforts of the Rapid Mapping team during May, while the involvement in the China earthquake geared up in June, with the attention to the quake lakes. This will be reported on in the next issue.



On Saturday 3 May, UNOSAT received a phone call on its 24/7 hotline from UN OCHA's Field Coordination and Support Section in Geneva. There had been a strong cyclone, Nargis, passing over Yangon, Myanmar, the previous day and no contact could be made with UN staff in the city. To ensure no time was lost, OCHA and UNOSAT agreed to activate the Rapid Mapping Service. UNOSAT on-call staff immediately started to collect information on the event and within a few hours an evaluation of the most likely affected areas was ready. UNOSAT then triggered the International Charter "Space and Major Disasters", based on the demand from UN OCHA, by sending the Space Charter request to UNOOSA in Vienna who forwarded this to the Space Charter On Duty Operator.

Within 24 hours, the first map was distributed to the humanitarian emergency response community, showing cyclone track and likely most affected areas. This was followed by satellite derived overview of flood surge the next day. As appointed Project Manager (PM) by the Space Charter, UNOSAT coordinated with the various data providers who made available over 60 satellite scenes in support to the emergency operation. Over 30 satellite maps were produced by UNOSAT, who also coordinated the mapping effort by bringing in partners Sertit and DLR in the Respond project working on Space Charter data.

The use of satellite imagery for the humanitarian coordination of the relief operation became particularly valuable due to the difficult access to the affected areas by the international community. Thanks to the imagery, detailed information on flood affected villages and rice producing areas, as well as damage assessments of individual houses could be included in the planning and implementation of the emergency response. This information became also important for the in-field village assessments when teams could finally be deployed to the disaster area.



Maps and analyses were used by more than 60 international organizations and a wide range of NGOs as well as Government offices, such as the Department of Forestry and the Department of Agricultural Planning.

In addition to the data from the Space Charter, detailed imagery was provided by the Pacific Disaster Centre (PDC). These were used for damage assessments and pre-disaster building identification at village level. With the large volume of data and

User Talk – Myanmar

The satellite mapping and analyses over Myanmar were used firstly by early responders and emergency managers. However, UNOSAT was also contacted by Google to provide the imagery-derived flood data for public dissemination on Google Earth. This allowed for large scale awareness raising and numerous positive comments from the general public as well as media sources. The use of the satellite maps even reached the individual level when as an example a Myanmar student in London approached UNOSAT to learn if the house of her family had been affected, as communication lines were down and she had no news from her parents. Fortunately, in that case the building was not damaged. This shows the social dimension of satellite mapping as well.

Although we always strive to improve and take into considerations lessons learned, the various comments from the user community, including national actors, illustrates that these types of products are now an integrated part of international response and the role of UNOSAT in making useful satellite analyses available to international and national actors working at the local level, as well as regional and headquarter offices, is on track and counted on. Some quotes from the community of users illustrates this:

- *"very informative, useful and timely"*
- *"Thanks [...], the flood maps were very useful [...] Went like hot cakes at this morning's IA meeting" [IA meeting = Inter-Agency coordination meeting]*
- *"the data are great – thanks for sharing"*
- *"thank you for assisting my country during this terrible disaster"*