

Geospatial Data Infrastructure for the Sustainable Development of East Timor

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Abstract

East Timor became independent from Indonesia in August of 1999 and shortly thereafter an Indonesia backed militia destroyed critical natural resources and infrastructures. A host of overseas development agencies assisted with humanitarian aid, reconstruction and nation building. East Timor is unique since its Constitution includes sustainable development as a key principle. Accurate and timely geospatial data can assist sustainable development decision-making. Geospatial data infrastructures (GDI) are the inter-sectoral, cross-domain and inter-departmental consensus making mechanisms by which a nation can manage its geospatial data assets. Aid agencies compiled much data and rendered some maps but these were project specific limiting their utility in other contexts. Currently no formal body is coordinating these information resources. East Timor has many data requirements and an East Timor GDI will help meet the constitutional mandate for sustainable development. Seven GDIs are examined as possible models and elements selected from these inform the creation of a hybrid GDI for the nation. It is argued that the major need is for institutional rather than technological development.