

The Challenges of Implementing Metadata in Developing Countries: A Case Study for Zimbabwe

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SUMMARY

The demand for spatial data is continuously increasing at a faster rate. With the rapid increase in the development of spatial data collection tools such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and remote sensing technologies, the amount of spatial data being collected and stored on computer network is becoming vast. Data collection is the most expensive part in any project, which uses spatial data, and it costs about 70% of the total cost of the project. Knowing what data is already available for an area is of great benefit to many spatial data users. This will reduce duplication of efforts and time for data collection. Metadata is descriptive data about data. If metadata is provided for all the data that is collected by different organisations, the cost of data collection will be reduced.

Metadata is an essential and vital vehicle in the economic and sustainable development of any country. For any development there is need for information to be available at the right time and in the right format. Without up-to-date and accurate information, proper decisions cannot be made. Decision-making, at all levels in society is only effective when the appropriate information is available. Metadata is the tool that can be used to improve the efficiency of collecting data by providing users with information about data.

This aim of this paper is to present the status of metadata development in Zimbabwe. The paper looks at the level of use of metadata and the challenges that organisations are facing in implementing metadata. The paper further discusses efforts that are being done to develop metadata in Zimbabwe. It also examines the challenges that Zimbabwe is facing in developing metadata. Finally the paper will discuss the different standards for metadata records that have been developed (nationally, regionally and internationally) and makes some recommendations for Zimbabwe. Recommendations on how to implement metadata in organisations taking into considerations technological and institutional issues are also going to be discussed.