PRESS RELEASE

UNITAR and Google showcase their collaboration on humanitarian mapping

At the Shanghai World Expo 2010, the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and Google[1] are organising an event entitled *"Humanitarian Mapping Applications of Google Map Maker Data"*. Several interactive, informational sessions will be held in the UN Pavilion at the World Expo on Friday, 24 & Saturday, 25 September 2010 from 10:00 to 13:00. These sessions will showcase the achievements of the cooperative initiative between UNITAR and Google that provides tangible benefits for the international humanitarian community.

Speakers from UNITAR and Google will share with the general public how geographic information such as accurate place names and locations of roads, generated by Google Map Maker volunteers around the world helps UNOSAT produce better and quicker geospatial products and maps. The data from Google Map Maker contains vital information about affected populations, transportation and key infrastructures, and is central to organizing and coordinating life-saving humanitarian operations as well as planning the early phases of recovery and reconstruction operations.
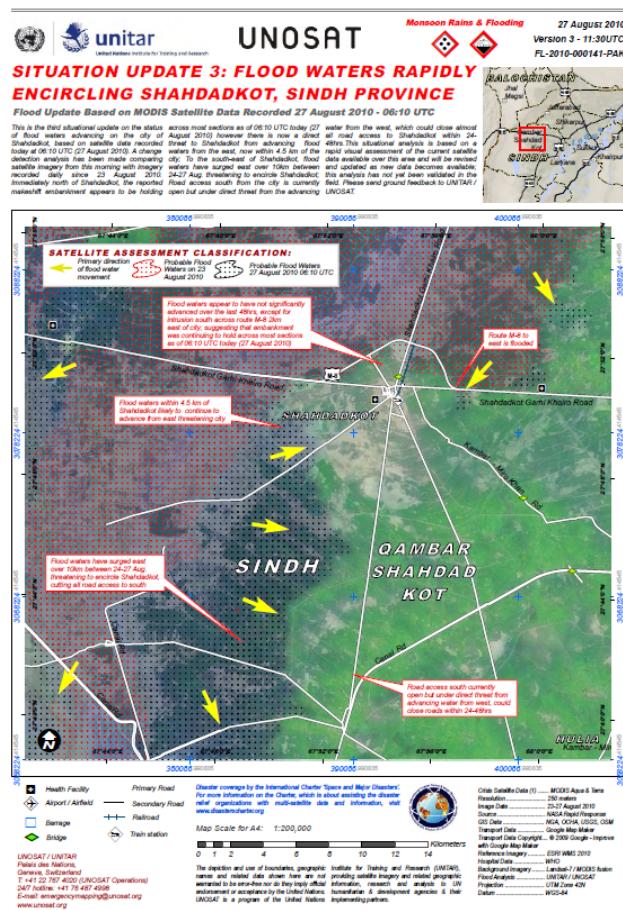
UNOSAT[2] has been supporting UN agencies and Member States with innovative geo-spatial tools for 10 years as a strategic applied research Programme of the UN Institute for Training and Research. Working with Google to integrate Map Maker data into UNOSAT satellite analysis has been a monumental development in UNOSAT's ongoing efforts to make geographic information a key part of providing modern humanitarian relief. It also aligns with other major developments. such as the support provided to the United Nations by the International Charter Space and Major Disasters, from which UNOSAT obtains satellite data at no cost in case of major natural disasters.

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[2] UNOSAT is the operational satellite applications programme of UNITAR. Part of the Research Department of the Institute, it is a technology-intensive programme active in all aspects of applied research relating to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and satellite solutions. The objective is to turn technology into concrete and usable applications for UN agencies, member states, and communities in a variety of areas ranging from emergency preparedness and response, to peace and security, climate change and environment preservation. More information at www.unitar.org/unosat

The result is that the time spent hunting for relevant data is now invested directly in to analysis; it improves the accuracy and confidence of UNOSAT results, and it raises the overall value and utility of satellite based mapping. For over a decade the geospatial community within the UN has explored ways to continue improving access to very high resolution data. This collaboration is a critical and long-awaited step towards improving the usability of high quality map data for humanitarian projects.

The event will be opened by Mr. Carlos Lopes, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNITAR.

Here above is an example of a map integrated with Google Map Maper data and produced by UNOSAT in response to the recent flood event in Pakistan. Additional maps that relate to this emergency are accessible at www.unosat.org