Community OpenStreetMap Haiti-St. Marc (COSM-HA-STM)

A group of 30 young Haitians from St Marc were trained by the Community OpenStreetMap Haiti (COSMAH) team to provide better mapping and GIS information for the region. They formed a chapter of COSMAH in St Marc (COSMAH.STM) to continue to voluntarily map out the region, train other young people on mapping, and contribute to other volunteer mapping projects.

What can other communities learn from COSMAH.STM?

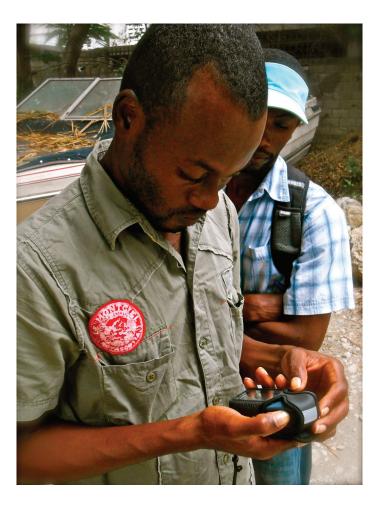* Basic mapping techniques

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History of the organization

OpenStreetMap is a global platform for open-source geographic data. The Humanitarian OpenStreetMap team is a group of volunteers who go into countries post-disaster and help to build a more robust geographic data set to help with relief and recovery. Haiti's maps were notoriously bad, and this was a great obstacle to the earthquake relief in 2010. The Humanitarian OpenStreetMap team trained a group of Haitians on how to use a GPS, collect geographic data, and edit the data on OSM's online platform, contributing greatly to the availability of data post-earthquake (in addition to the effort of hundreds of remote online volunteers).

Summary of the work

After the success of the trainings in Port au Prince, the Haitian mappers formed an organization called COSMAH (Community OpenStreetMap Haiti) in order to create more mapping capacity in Haiti. Humanitarian OpenStreetMap and COSMAH implemented a project with USAID to train 30 young Haitians from the St Marc region to map their own community and create a professional map of the area. This exercise mapped all of the points of interests: schools, roads, churches, businesses, etc. The map was then edited and uploaded to an open source platform for the use of anyone who wants to use it.

Now that the official project is over, the mappers in St Marc decided to create their own group called COSMAH.STM, to continue to map out the region, training other young people on mapping, and contributing to other volunteer mapping projects. They are now a group of young professionals who are thinking about how to use their skills not just for themselves but for their community and their country.

What can other communities learn from this initiative?

Other communities can learn about the basic mapping techniques, and how geographic information can help them make better decisions and demonstrate what they are doing. GIS may seem a bit abstract to many communities, but it has concrete applications in almost every aspect of life.

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