



HIU Highlights Report No.5: August 2 – September 30, 2004

The Humanitarian Information Unit serves as a USG interagency center to identify, collect, analyze, and disseminate unclassified information in preparation for and response to complex emergencies worldwide, and to promote best practices for humanitarian information management.

This report describes select initiatives underway, recent collaborations, key meetings, and upcoming items of interest. Your feedback is appreciated!

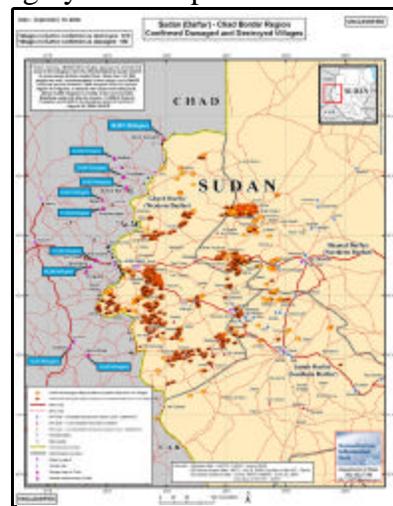
USAID Administrator visits the HIU:

USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios visited the HIU facility and met with its staff on September 27 to check on the unit he helped launch. The agenda included a review of HIU capabilities and a forward-looking discussion of interagency humanitarian information management challenges. The Administrator expressed his appreciation for the work of the HIU, specifically the value of its Darfur crisis information initiative. Attendees at this session also included USAID Deputy Administrator Fred Schieck and Assistant Secretary Tom Fingar of the State Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau.

Status of Select Initiatives:

Efforts Relating to Sudan:

The HIU has served as both a catalyst and a conduit for the dissemination of satellite imagery of camps for displaced persons, and the team is working to share imagery derived products and geospatial information with UNHCR. The HIU also continues to facilitate the sharing of data and maps showing damage and destruction of villages throughout Darfur (for a recent example, see the map to the right). A new prototype collaboration *eRoom* was created to organize, manage and provide critical information on the Darfur Sudan emergency to interested individuals both within and outside the US Government. The *eRoom* contains a calendar, a document archive, a website gateway, a map library, an image gallery, a data repository, a contact directory, and threaded discussion groups. Members of this *eRoom* include personnel from State, USAID, DOD, the UN, and several NGOs.



Populations at Risk Information Project:

The Populations at Risk Information Project is aimed at exploring ways of improving the estimation and management of sub-national demographic information for crisis-prone countries, as well as ways to elevate awareness of this critical information need. The project currently consists of two primary and parallel activities. 1) A committee of the National Research Council (NRC) will engage the science community in a study, benchmarking the use of science and technology to better estimate and identify populations at risk. The working group has made significant progress on this effort in terms of designing the study's statement of task and seeking funding. Given the interest among stakeholder agencies in commissioning this study, the NRC has identified the target level of funding as achievable. 2) The project also entails the development of prototype geographic information system (GIS) country packages for Mozambique, Mali, and Haiti that will explore the use of various types and quality of information to demonstrate sub-national vulnerability to factors in the areas of climate, conflict, and infectious diseases. The interagency group includes representatives from: NRC, NASA, Census Bureau, CDC, State/INR, State/OES, State/PRM, State/IRM, USAID/DCHA, USAID/GH, USGS, NGA, NOAA, CIA, DIA and non-USG partners. (POC: Noam Unger)

Iraq Information Management/GIS Coordination Efforts:

HIU continued efforts to coordinate GIS and information management (IM) support for Iraq reconstruction operations by maintaining weekly contact with key USG personnel in Baghdad and Washington, and by drafting a series of briefing memos and documents on data organization. This has resulted in better integration of GIS and IM efforts among USG agencies, and a wider appreciation within the USG of what information is currently available. These efforts include hosting interagency talks to assist the CPA After Action Assessment now under way. (POC: Tiffany Hill)

HIU Countries of Humanitarian Interest and Concern (CHIC):

An additional capability was added to the CHIC *eRoom*, i.e. a text-mining software called TextOre, that is available to all members of the *eRoom*. TextOre – developed by Northrup Grumman TASC – allows the user to search for concepts, keywords, synonyms, etc. that are buried in textual documents, perform Boolean searches, identify and visualize patterns and gaps in information, select websites and date parameters, and filter and extract data and information from large numbers of documents. TextOre is used by HIU staff and *eRoom* members to routinely collect key humanitarian indicators, such as the size of affected populations, crude mortality rates, global malnutrition rates, humanitarian assistance statistics, conflict events, etc. for selected emergencies and countries. (POC: Dennis King)

Emergencies Without Borders:

Instead of the usual geographic depiction of humanitarian emergencies as nationwide catastrophes, the HIU's Emergencies Without Borders project conceptualizes and visualizes distinct emergency-affected areas as sub-national or transnational humanitarian crises. Such newly-defined areas of displacement, food insecurity, conflict, and epidemics are mapped in a

Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS project will eventually be used to monitor and analyze emergency-affected areas around the world. (POC: Dennis King)

Collaboration Efforts:

Modeling and Simulation Staff Officer Course:

As part of an effort to put together an HIU gaming exercise that focuses on best practices in information management, an HIU analyst attended the Modeling and Simulation Staff Officer Course given by the Defense Modeling and Simulation Office (DMSO). The course introduced the basics of the modeling and simulation community used throughout the Department of Defense. These trainings in modeling and simulation exercises are part of a cooperative agreement between the HIU and the National Defense University. (POC: Victoria Jabara)

Other Items of Interest:

HIU Website:

The HIU website is in the last stages of development and approval before release to a larger community. HIU staff have been working hard to standardize content, improve the web interface, and ensure that the site is within the regulations of eGov initiatives. The HIU was successful in securing an appropriate URL through GSA channels. When these last stages of QA/QC are completed, the HIU community will be able to view and download all highlights reports as well as map products and descriptions of other initiatives. (POC: Tiffany Hill)

HIU staff:

- The HIU welcomed **Fred Smith** as Deputy Director. Mr. Smith is a Foreign Service Officer with 22 years of experience who comes to us from INR's Current Intelligence Staff, where he served for four years, including nine months as Director. He last served overseas as US Consul in Quebec City, Canada.
- **Dr. Deborah S. Belsky** joined the HIU through the AAAS Science and Technology Diplomacy Fellowship. As a physician who served in the USAF, and with a recent MPH from Johns Hopkins, she brings a unique skill set to the HIU. Dr. Belsky will focus on health issues, collaborating with the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator and other agencies on HIV/AIDS and various public health issues.
- Lastly, the HIU is welcoming **Dr. Melba Crawford** to the team. Dr. Crawford is a Jefferson Science Fellow at the State Department who will work with the unit during the next year. She comes to the HIU from the University of Texas at Austin where she is an Engineering Foundation Professor and heads the UT Center for Space Research program in remote sensing.
- The HIU also welcomed **James Stansell**, who is currently studying at American University and serving as an intern with the unit.

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