

“digital Namibia” — a National Geographic Portal for Urban Planning

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SUMMARY

Geographic data for planning can help address rising informal settlement challenges in Namibia. Land delivery for housing has been a challenge due to the increase of urban population and slow delivery of land for housing coupled with unaffordability of land. Informal settlements emerge due to limited access to affordable housing, weak governance and exclusion of poor and low income in development interventions. The Namibian government recently declared informal settlements a humanitarian crisis due to precious conditions of limited access to water, sanitation and tenure security. The second National Land Conference led to the prioritisation of urban land reform. The use of spatial data in planning is central to effective project implementation. Spatial planning is the coordination of the relationship between space (including land), people and the space-based functions that influence the living conditions of people. It is the management of change, a political process whereby a balance is sought between all stakeholder interests. It also enables the visualisation of geographical locations’ attributes and metadata (such as terrain and demographic information, etc.) in reading, comprehending, and disseminating scenarios in a spatial development process. This information enables relevant authorities or institutions to implement evidence-based policy decisions and activities. Spatial data is managed in a Geographic Information System (GIS), which is an important tool in spatial planning as it allows for storing, analysing, and visualizing spatial data to better understand current needs for spatial units (be it urban, peri-urban, or rural areas). The Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) is the coordinating agency for the establishing of the National Geographic Portal (NGP). The National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) is managed by the NSA. The NGP host a varied geographic information generated by government agencies that can be accessed and used for planning, socio-economic development, and effective administration of government services. This paper will provide an analysis on the NGP, focusing on efficiency and effectiveness of spatial data retrieval. The paper highlights recommendations for the improvement of the Digital spatial ecosystem for efficient land use planning and land delivery.

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