

Spatial Data Infrastructure -The Missing Piece in Zimbabwe's Economic Recovery Plan

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Abstract

Africa as a continent and more specifically Zimbabwe as a country, faces several developmental issues which research has shown can be managed and minimized through open access to spatial data. Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) helps in the efficient use, management, manipulation and dissemination of spatial data for the benefit of communities and nations. Research results on evaluating implementation challenges have indicated that SDI is not yet at an acceptable level in most developing countries whose economies are weak. This paper reviews the economic policies employed in pre and post recession Zimbabwe and relates these to the financial benefits that an SDI can bring if viewed as a missing link in recovery policies. Zimbabwean economy is today characterized with high import indexes, poor health, education and sanitation systems. Her current economic plan focuses on increased investment, reduced fiscal expenditure and improved humanitarian standards. This paper motivates SDI as a powerful tool that Zimbabwe needs to attract investors and complete the thrust of her recovery plan. Most of the issues addressed in economic policies have a spatial component which SDI can easily manage. Key stakeholders in the economic recovery equation such as investors require open access to information to build confidence for decision making. The paper concludes by proposing SDI as a catalyst that was missing in facilitating economic restoration. It proposes a direct link between SDI implementation and economic growth using the Zimbabwe case. SDI is often an abstract issue in developing nations in the sense that decision makers fail to appreciate how it can improve the livelihood of ordinary citizens often because it is marketed under a highly scientific banner. Tying SDI to economic benefit creates a new language of discussion for its support and motivates its implementation in developing nations like Zimbabwe.