



GISCorps Newsletter

July 2008

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Other Organizations

URISA

GISCorps Partner Agencies

EWB

GSDI

MMEX

UNDP

UNHCR

UNJLC

UNOSAT

VVAF

Volunteers for Prosperity

Relief Agency Links

Relief Web

global hub for time-critical humanitarian information on Complex Emergencies and Natural Disasters

A Message from the Core Committee

A Very Busy GISCorps

The Core Committee of GISCorps, and especially GISCorps volunteers, have been very busy in the last couple of months. Since our last newsletter we can report that volunteers have completed a major mission in response to the devastating cyclone in Myanmar (Burma), are working on three missions, and four new missions are in development with volunteers to be assigned. And the GISCorps is preparing presentations for, and will be very visible at, the ESRI Conference in August and the annual URISA Conference in October. Our feature story this issue reports on the Myanmar project and we also report on our other missions and activities below.

In addition to these activities behind the scenes we also have been working on an updated and revised web site which we expect to go live in August. It will have all the same information and features as the current site but with an improved design that will enable volunteers and partners to interact with the database. It will also provide enhanced query and reporting functions to help the Core Committee identify potential volunteers and manage projects. We will report more on this as the system is implemented.

All-in-all this has been a very productive couple of months and we believe that GISCorps is getting better all the time in fulfilling its mission and that of the volunteer GIS professional in providing service to those in need.

GISCorps Core Committee,
Mark Salling, Shoreh Elhami, Dianne Haley, Ingrid Bruce

P.S. Please email info@giscorps.org if you want to be removed from this list.

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Deployment and Partnership News

Completed Missions:

- **GISCorps Volunteers Provide Assistance to Myanmar (Burma) Cyclone's Mission:** In May and June of 2008, 31 volunteers were deployed for two missions at the request of United Nations Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). Read more about the project in [here](#).

Data/Information Links

Earthwatch Institute

Earthwatch Institute is an international non-profit organization that brings science to life for people concerned about the Earth's future.

Service at Sea

Service at Sea is a ship-based technology assistance program that will begin a circumnavigation of the earth in August, 2007, with a goal to assist conservation organizations who are using GIS technology to meet goals of their communities.

Society for Conservation GIS

A non-profit organization supporting individuals using GIS and science for the conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage

GISCorps Core Committee

Mark Salling, Chair
Shoreh Elhami, Co-founder
Dianne Haley, Vice Chair
Ingrid Bruce

Contact Us

<http://www.giscorps.org>

Email: info@giscorps.org

Missions in Progress:

- **Mission with Kabul Polytechnic University – Afghanistan:** In spring of 2008, KPU requested an instructor to teach two GIS courses (introductory and advanced) to their faculty. Carl Kinkade of BearingPoint of Atlanta, GA was selected for the project. Carl arrived in Kabul on July 3rd and began to teach shortly after. Follow the account of his mission from his [BLOG](#).
- **Mission with iMMAP – Iraq:** This mission is in partnership with Information Management & Mine Action Programs (iMMAP) and is still in progress. Four GISCorps volunteers are continuing their work of geo-referencing event information from Iraq security reports and narrative reports dating from June 2003.
- **Healthcare Volunteer:** GISCorps volunteer Tara Athan, from Alternatives to Invasive Species Inc. in California, has been working on this project since mid November 2007. Read more about the project in [here](#).

New Missions:

- **Mission with iMMAP – North Korea:** In November 2007, iMMAP in partnership with the World Food Program (WFP), Bureau for Asia sent a request for volunteers to compile a variety of features from hardcopy maps in North Korea. Karen Payne of University of Georgia (UGA) expressed interest in assisting with the project and reports that UGA has now approved the rectification protocol and is working on extraction protocol. Volunteer recruitment for this mission will start shortly.
- **Mission with (PRAD) and (FBR) – Myanmar (Burma):** This mission is in partnership with Partners Relief Development (PRAD) and Free Burma Rangers (FBR). The request is for one GIS trainer. The training will be conducted in Mae Sot, Thailand and the volunteer will also assist with database design and application development. Recruitment is in progress at this time.
- **Mission with EnterpriseWorks VITA (EWW):** The request is for one volunteer to assist EWW in developing a GIS model to assess the potential market for domestic rainwater harvesting in 20 countries around the world. Recruitment is in progress at this time.
- **Mission with AAAS – Guatemala:** American Association for Advancement of Science has asked for one volunteer with expertise in cadastral mapping and also fluency in Spanish to help verify/resolve a land dispute for an indigenous group in Guatemala. Recruitment is in progress at this time.

Read more about completed projects [here](#).

Read more about projects in progress in [here](#).

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URISA Announcements

Upcoming Conferences

- **URISA's 4th Caribbean GIS Conference - Register Today**
August 25-29, 2008 - Grand Cayman
- **URISA's 46th Annual Conference - Registration Open**
October 7-10, 2008 - New Orleans, LA
- **13th Annual GIS/CAMA Technologies Conference - Call for Presentations Now Available**
February 8-11, 2009 - Charleston
- **URISA's GIS in Public Health Conference - Call for Participation**
June 5-8, 2009 - Providence

What's New

- [Impressive Speaker List at URISA's Caribbean GIS Conference](#)
- [Call for Participation for URISA's Second GIS in Public Health Conference Announced](#)
- [Check out the Latest Job Listings!](#)
- [Coalition of Geospatial Organizations Formed](#)
- [URISA's GISCorps Working on Myanmar Cyclone Recovery](#)
- [California Endorses GISCI Certification](#)
- [URISA GIS Salary Survey](#)

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Shop for GISCorps Stuff!!

Do you find yourself in need of a new T-shirt, coffee mug, ball cap or tote bag? Do you want to advertise GISCorps and your association with the organization? Well, you are in luck! You can now find various GISCorps items at our online shop at: <http://www.cafepress.com/giscorps>

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ESRI's 28th User Conference

As in the past several years, GISCorps will be present at ESRI's 28th User Conference (San Diego, August 4-8, 2008) and involved in a number of activities there.

- This year GISCorps' booth will be located in the Map Gallery. Please come and join us on Monday August 4th during Map Gallery hours from 4:30 to 8:30 pm to meet the Core committee members and other GISCorps volunteers.
- This year several volunteers will be speaking about their experiences. All presentations are held in one session and on Wednesday August 6th from 5:30 to 7:00 pm in Room 28-A:
 - Ingrid Bruce will talk about GISCorps volunteers' participation in Cyclone Nargis disaster in Myanmar (Burma).
 - Carl Kinkade will talk about his recent mission in Afghanistan.

- David Allen will share his teaching experience in Biloxi. Mississippi.
- Peggy Wu will share her experience on a remote project (with AAAS) in Sudan and East Chad.
- Leeanne Pacatte will talk about the two K-12 projects (in Florida and Iowa) that she managed in 2007-2008.
- Core committee members Dianne Haley, Ingrid Bruce, and Shoreh Elhami will give an overview of GISCorps' missions and activities in 2007-2008.
- On Wednesday following the presentation, there will be a no-host gathering. You can join us anytime after 7:30 PM and meet the other GISCorps volunteers and Core Committee members.

Moose McGillicuddy's Pub
(619) 702-5595
535 5th Ave
San Diego, CA 92101

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46th URISA International Conference

Since 2003, GISCorps has been holding several events at URISA International Conference. We hope that you can join us in New Orleans (from October 7-10). This year's events are:

- Wednesday October 8th, 4 to 5 PM – GISCorps Core Committee members will give an overview on 2007-2008 projects and activities.
- Thursday October 9th, 8:30 to 10 AM – GISCorps volunteers are recognized for their service at URISA's Annual Breakfast Award Ceremony.
- Friday October 10th, 8:30 to 10 AM: Tom Ponte and Ingrid Bruce will talk about their experience with the Cyclone disaster mission in Myanmar (Burma).

To learn more about URISA Conference, visit the website at:
<http://www.urisa.org/>

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Featured Project

UNOSAT - Myanmar (Burma) Project

URISA GISCorps Volunteers Assist UNOSAT in Post Cyclone Nargis Relief Efforts

Cyclone Nargis made landfall in Myanmar (Burma) on May 2, 2008. This cyclone was the deadliest natural disaster in the recorded history of Burma. On May 9th, Einar Bjorgo, the Head of Rapid Mapping, Applications and User

Relations of UNOSAT, the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Operational Satellite Applications Programme, contacted GISCorps and shortly after that, submitted a request for 20 volunteers. GISCorps was being brought in to assist UNOSAT and the UNJLC (United Nations Joint Logistics Center) in their support to the international humanitarian relief effort and local government agencies.

Based on the request, a job description was developed and on May 9th, 2008, a call for volunteers was sent out to various groups and list serves. Shortly after that, emails started pouring in and Core Committee member, Ingrid Bruce, who had taken charge of the recruitment process, selected 20 volunteers for the project in less than 48 hours.

Of the 20 volunteers, 11 of them who had remote expertise began working, under the direction of Tom Ponte, a GISCorps volunteer from Oregon. They were tasked with performing change detection analysis for various features such as: roads, buildings, bridges, monasteries, and etc. from Google Earth environment.

The team also collected features such as roads and bridges from pre-disaster imagery. However, most of the features in phase one were collected from post-disaster imagery. Two examples were; Destroyed Buildings and Villages.

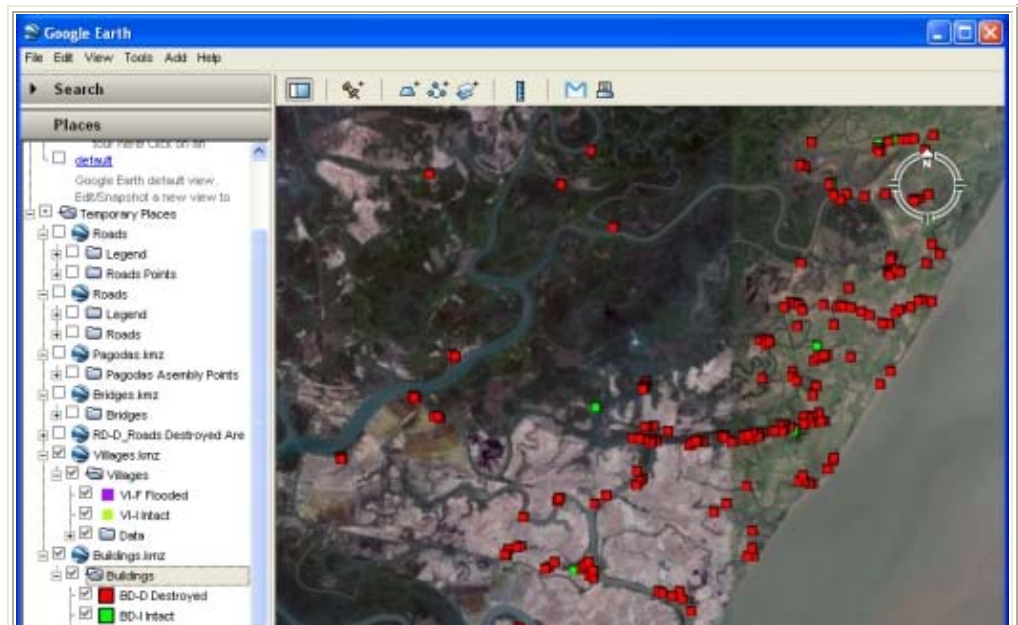


Figure 4: Destroyed Buildings

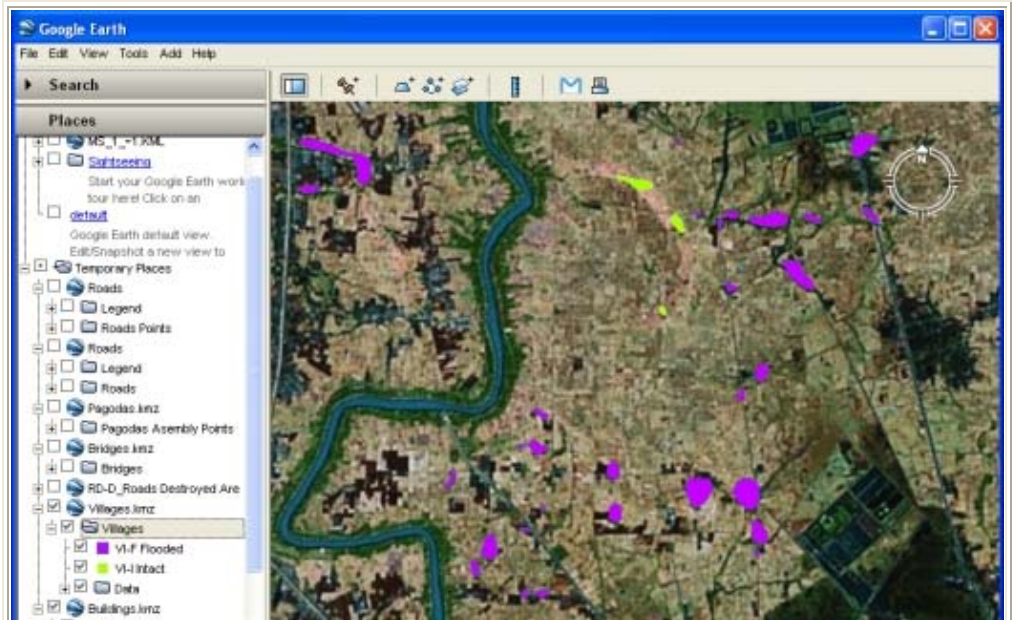


Figure 5: Destroyed Villages

As of May 21st, the first group of GISCorps volunteers (11) wrapped up their work and on May 22nd, UNOSAT requested another twenty volunteers to collect additional data in the delta region. As in phase one, 20 more volunteers were selected once again within 48 hours and 18 of them started collecting additional features from pre-disaster imageries. They came from US, Canada, various European countries and Karl Tiller from Germany was selected as the Project Manager for the second phase.

The main task for the second group was identified as digitizing as many additional structures from pre-cyclone imagery as possible. During the second phase, Karl Tiller assigned the volunteers to pre-designated regions. In some cases two to three volunteers were assigned to one region. They organized the areas to digitize among themselves and sent emails to the project manager to keep him informed of their progress. In general, communication via emails worked fine when providing instructions to a small group. However, for general communications the use of a wiki proved more effective. Every volunteer was easily able to add text or correct text in wiki environment.

Both phases highly benefited from the assistance provided by a Burmese born GISCorps volunteer, U Win, of California who not only digitized hundreds of features himself but also led a group of four other volunteers who worked independently on this project and digitized locations of thousands of buildings and places of worship. His knowledge of the area, culture, and geography was an immense asset to this mission.

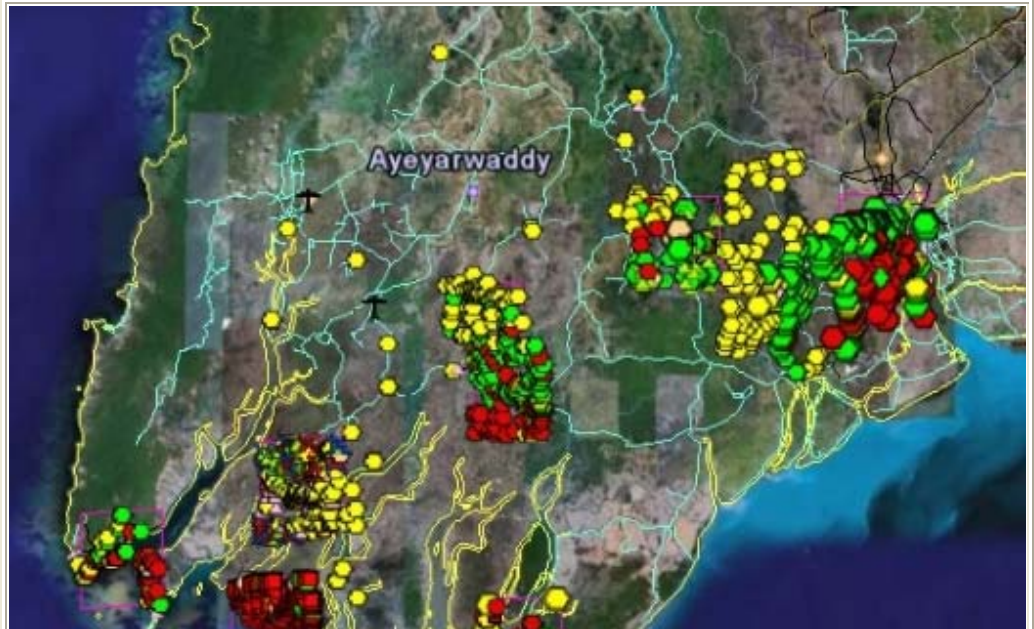


Figure 8: Various Features Collected by GISCorps Volunteers

Overall 31 GISCorps volunteers participated in this project and collectively they contributed over 1,300 hours and digitizing over 60,000 features in the delta region. Though this mission was one of its first kind for GISCorps; an emergency response mission conducted fully on remote basis, the outcome helped many humanitarian organizations in a variety of applications. Perhaps a quote from Einar Bjorgo describes their organization's appreciation for GISCorps volunteers services the best:

"GISCorps is really helping towards making a difference here."

"....what I can say is that the work done by GISCorps is very highly appreciated by the actors in the field, both as input to our maps, but also as standalone databases which they include in their various local GIS assessments. Every single volunteer should be proud of the work done and rest assured that the data are being used - and will continue to be used as we move into the reconstruction phase of this disaster."

Read more about this mission [here](#). And read an article by Einar Bjorgo, Tom Ponte, and Karl Tiller [here](#).

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