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CAF - The Development Bank of Latin America

Regional Development

GeoSUR, making geospatial information available for policy makers in Latin America

GeoSUR is a regional program whose aim is to implement an effective inter-institutional mechanism for generating, disseminating, and exploiting geospatial data useful for decision-making in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The Program has developed five main components: i) a Regional Geoportal, ii) a decentralized network of map services, iii) a LAC regional Map Service, iv) a Topographic Processing Service, and v) focused regional geoprocessing tools for energy assessment and disaster early warning. Funding and oversight for this initiative is provided by CAF the Latin American Development Bank, while counterpart support and coordination is provided by the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) and technical assistance is provided by the USGS and the national geographic institutes of Colombia and Spain. More than 100 spatial data producers participate in the GeoSUR Program. GeoSUR has adopted a decentralized system architecture; one that keeps data close to its producers. Participating agencies implement their own internet map services, spatial data catalogs, and other geoservices. They receive training and on-line technical support as they operate and maintain these on-line tools. Today more than 300 WMS services, 10,000 digital maps, 18 metadata catalogs and more than 150,000 metadata records can be found through its regional portal (www.geosur.info). The Program has recently expanded its reach to incorporate several geoprocessing initiatives at a regional scale. These include detailed hydropower assessments that allow governments to decide what are the best locations for hydropower plants and early warning systems for disaster prevention and mitigation in South America. These new endeavors are possible due to the increasing volume of spatial datasets that are daily being added to the GeoSUR regional network by participating agencies and international organizations. The GeoSUR Program has been instrumental in making available on the web a vast array of geospatial and environmental datasets that, until now, have scarcely been distributed, and have had insufficient impact on decision making. GeoSUR sets the example for the development of regional SDI Programs in other regions of the developing world.