



**Update report May 2013**  
**Mr Farhad Vladi**  
**Vladi Private Islands GmbH**



## Overview

MapAction is grateful for the generous support of Mr Farhad Vladi of Vladi Private Islands towards MapAction's operational activity. This committed investment has been an invaluable resource, with a full programme of capacity building projects alongside emergency missions, 2012 turned out to be the busiest year ever. The MapAction volunteer team responded to eight emergency deployments affecting up to 13 million people. During the course of 2012, missions included:

January: cyclone in the Philippines

February: food crisis in the Sahel

March: munitions explosions in Republic of Congo

March: tropical storms in Madagascar

April: floods in Comoros

June: floods in Paraguay

December: typhoon in the Philippines

December: the ongoing Syria crisis

So far in 2013, MapAction has deployed further volunteers to help coordinate the response to the Syria crisis and responded to a conflict-related emergency in the Central African Republic. At the time of writing MapAction is deploying a team to Myanmar in response to imminent landfall of Cyclone Mahasen.

In between emergencies, MapAction's operational equipment has been used on five disaster preparedness missions to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominica, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia.

### **Achievements from financial funding received**

The grants received have supported activity enabling MapAction to deliver a faster and more reliable service in the challenging environment of humanitarian emergencies. The following provides an insight into some of the achievements and work MapAction has been supporting.

### **Deployment Focus**

MapAction responded to severe flooding in Paraguay in July 2012. At the end of the mission the MapAction team was actively involved in creating a humanitarian funding proposal. This proposal went on to secure over \$2.5million of UN CERF (Central Emergency Response Fund) funding for Paraguay. Funding was used to aid the relief effort, helping more than 50,000 people with a package of emergency food aid, agricultural support and other humanitarian assistance.

Last Summer, MapAction participated in a 'light mission' in support of CAFOD and local partners on a project collecting data on violence in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). CAFOD and partners required assistance in analysing and communicating their data, primarily for advocacy. MapAction discussed and assessed their information and mapping needs, and provided basic map training.

### **Focus on Syria: information is the first need to help millions displaced**

At the time of writing the UN report around 1.2 million Syrian refugees are now registered. In February 2013 it was reported that 70,000 people have died so far in the civil war in Syria. As many as four million have fled the fierce fighting, with half a million having sought refuge in the surrounding countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Increasing numbers are also reaching Egypt.

Still, some vital aid is getting through. UN agencies, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and local and international NGOs are working across the country and the region, despite the constraints of a lack of information about the situation on the ground, and poor access due to insecurity.

MapAction has deployed several volunteer teams to different parts of the region to work alongside partner agencies creating a clearer picture of numbers affected, the humanitarian needs on the ground, and which agencies are responding and where.

The Syria crisis looks set to be a lengthy one, and vital humanitarian information support will be needed for many months to come.



MapAction's management team is assessing how the charity can best support the international humanitarian community as it seeks to bring much-needed help to people in need. This is likely to include continued support to the Syria Needs Assessment Project (SNAP) based in Beirut in Lebanon.

### Putting Theory into Practice

In between emergency missions, MapAction volunteers are devoting many hours to training, and also to transferring know-how to other humanitarian agencies.

While volunteers already have advanced GIS skills when they join the charity, these have to be adapted to MapAction's highly-configured operational procedures to ensure that teams achieve the necessary high productivity in the field.

Volunteers must acquire a wide range of knowledge about international humanitarian operations, and practical skills to enable them to operate safely and effectively in the very challenging operating environment of a disaster or other crisis. Much of this is achieved by ongoing activity within the preparations and training for emergency response.

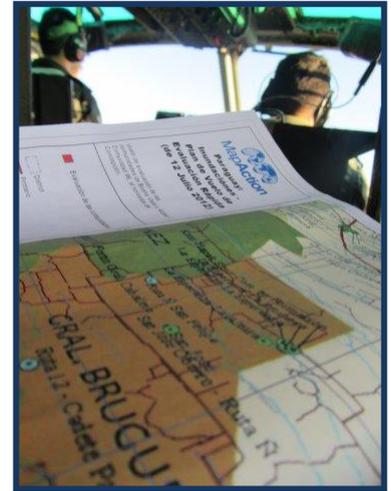


Photo above: MapAction map being used for a field assessment trip in Paraguay

### Training missions

During 2012 in addition to the eight emergency deployments, MapAction completed:

- Three Disaster Simulation Exercises
- Nine Capacity Building Missions
- Ten Training Course Programmes

Operational Support Team (OST) volunteers attended several face-to-face training weekends in the UK. In between these events, OST members progressed development projects and by providing technical support to emergency missions through a variety of forums.

Deployable Team members made themselves available for emergency and other field missions up to two weeks in duration. Their training commitment involved six-eight weekends throughout the year.



*MapAction volunteers gather at a weekend training session to practise advanced GIS methods for use on humanitarian missions.*



*MapAction volunteer Christine Radestock coaches a staff member of the medical NGO Merlin in Nairobi in August 2012.*

## **Disaster Preparedness and Innovation**

MapAction supports low cost emergency preparedness through data management methodologies. Current activity includes a number of development projects which complement its rapid deployment capability. These projects seek to ensure that technology is adapted to the demanding humanitarian environments in which MapAction's team operates ensuring that the team can achieve enhanced response times and improved information sharing in difficult emergency contexts.

**Web Mapping** - In many humanitarian situations internet connectivity can be lost making it difficult to share information. MapAction has been developing a specialist web mapping facility where users will be able to access situation maps using just a browser on their laptop, tablet or smart-phone, over a local wireless network – even when internet access is not available. A prototype for this innovation was tested using the laptops purchased during a NATO simulation exercise in Georgia in October 2012 and continues to be developed by our technical team for operational launch later this year.

## **General Organisation Update**

MapAction welcomed Liz Hughes as the new CEO in January 2013. Liz took the reins from Nigel Woof, who served with the charity since 2003. Liz has worked in humanitarian and development work for 18 years. She brings with her experience of many different emergency situations including conflict and disaster. Previous work involved planning and management of humanitarian operations with Non Government Organisations (NGO's) and organisations such as the British Red Cross.

Passionate about strengthening the effectiveness of the humanitarian sector, Liz believes what happens in the first stages of an emergency response is critically important to laying the foundations for recovery and transition for people affected by crisis into the longer term. Likewise, that this contributes to reducing their vulnerability the next time a crisis strikes.

Liz arrives at MapAction during a time of strength in terms of organisational health; however she has seized the opportunity to commence a Strategic Review. This decision is not for the sake of change, but more importantly to ensure that MapAction remain ahead of the game, keep their finger on the Technology pulse and remain alert through an increasingly changing humanitarian environment. This ensures the organisation is fully equipped, trained, up to date and deployment ready at all times.

Providing direction and essential support to the professional volunteers Liz leads cadre of fulltime and part time staff with support from an independent board of trustees. Professional volunteer membership falls into two groups: the Deployable Team and the Operational Support Team (OST). MapAction has 72 volunteers half of whom are available to deploy.

### **Why our service is so important**

The importance of our service was highlighted in an independent evaluation during 2012, carried out for the Department for International Development (DFID):

*“The contribution of MapAction services and products to the humanitarian sector is significant. Feedback about MapAction’s work from external stakeholders all over the world was incredibly positive. The speed of deployments and map production to meet operational needs was praised.*

*MapAction carries out work in a manner that is effective and efficient. Its organisational, technical and procedural infrastructure is said to far exceed that of other volunteer communities and in some respects of UN agencies. The organisation has a cost conscious ethic. Its volunteer model enables MapAction to keep costs low.”*

Excerpts from Independent Progress Review Report on MapAction for DFID, October 2012

### **Your support is important - Very Many Thanks!**

On behalf of everyone at MapAction, we would like to thank Mr Farhad Vladi and Vladi Private Islands for their generous support. Financial security has helped ensure successful emergency response support to Paraguay, the Philippines, Syria and Central African Republic, and will continue to play a critical role in our emergency information and mapping service well into the future.

We look forward to continuing to develop this valuable relationship.

Liz Hughes

lhughes@mapaction.org.uk

