

Exploring the Ability to Expand Community Engagement for Open-Source Tools to Support Humanitarian and Development Applications

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The ability to use open-source tools in the humanitarian and development sector is not a new concept, as their very nature opens themselves up to incredibly innovative and wide-ranging functions. However, one aspect about open-source tools that receives less attention is the work taken to create and expand the lively and committed communities that support and improve these tools. The Humanitarian OpenStreetMaps Team (HOT) has completed a qualitative and quantitative analysis of its community to identify the various factors that have led to both the growth and decline of user interactions and participation. Our community is vital as they take part in “Crowdmapping” efforts that create relevant and needed data for many humanitarian and developmental partners and projects. Considering the value of HOT as a tool, these findings are important as a data-driven understanding of an open-source community can lead to increased and expanded user commitment, interest, and participation, all of which flows into greater volumes of data for the NGO community. Extending beyond HOT, this information is also valuable to the broader development community and other open-source tools as it can lead to improvements in their communities, which would only further improve humanitarian and development goals. Additionally, making information readily available is the heart of the open-source mentality.