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Other toponymic issues

Activities of Survey of Kenya towards Standardization of Geographical Names[*]

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ACTIVITIES OF SURVEY OF KENYA TOWARDS STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

- Survey Of Kenya Is The National Mapping Organisation
- Responsible for all Surveying and Mapping work in the country.
- The head of the department is the chair of the **STANDING COMMITTEE ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES** (SCGN) that approves all geographical names used on maps in Kenya
- The chair is responsible for nomination of ten (10) other members of the committee whose duties are to advise the minister of the parent ministry (now ministry of Lands) on the authenticity and appropriateness of the geographical name. (spelling, orthography cultural meaning etc).
- The pronunciation is based in Swahili language except for the exonyms that is based in English.
- Names are in concurrent with the local residents of the specific areas.
- A gazetteer on all geographical names used on the existing maps is available as hard copy. It is outdated as it was published in 1977. Efforts are underway to create a database in line with Toponymic standards, principles and procedures.
- The Kenya National Spatial Data Infrastructure (KNSDI) was established to ensure that spatial databases conform to International standards and that queries and disputes are diminished.
- Collection of geographical names is done during field verification when undertaking map revision. (Collection of geographical names is one of vital tasks in field check for map revision.)
- In the field, the Cartographer has special forms to document all the information acquired in the field.
- After fieldwork any new or modified name must be ratified by the SCGN before publication.
- The local authorities have the responsibility of providing the street names for their respective areas.
- Appeals for change of names can be initiated by the interested party for deliberation by the SCGN

Challenges

- Creation of the database is slow as it is dependent on the pace of topographic map revision that is subject to availability of funds.
- Lack of training for the data collection teams as no full course on toponomy is available in local institutions for the task. Survey of Kenya has an Institution called Kenya Institute of Surveying and Mapping (KISM) courtesy to the Government of Japan that teaches Diploma, Higher Diploma courses in Surveying and Mapping. It also conducts short courses in emerging technologies e. g. GPS, GIS, Photogrametry and Remote Sensing. With sponsorship there is the facility to offer training in toponymy.

Problems

- Lack of awareness by various users on the need to use official geographical names. Use of unofficial names has lead to disputes among communities.
- Lack of updating the gazetteer to include new place names has made commercial map makers use unofficial names that are contestable with the local communities

By Africa East Division delegates (Survey of Kenya)