

## **The Societal Value of Geoscience Information in Developing Countries**

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Most countries, including developing countries, have a national geological survey organisation which is funded from government revenues and whose major function is to carry out systematic geoscience surveying of the country and act as a national geoscience information service. A fundamental assumption underpinning the funding of geological survey organisations is that geological and other geoscience mapping programmes realise diverse economic and social benefits and that these benefits far outweigh mapping costs.

At a time when many developing country geological survey organisations are under great financial pressure so that, for many, their programmes of data collection, such as geological mapping, are virtually moribund, there is need to be able to demonstrate to their state paymasters the real value of geoscience information. It is only by being able to demonstrate that the costs avoided in many major development projects, due to the availability of good geoscience information, far exceed the costs of providing that information, that governments might be persuaded to properly fund the providers of such information, namely their geological survey organisations.

A recent research programme funded by the UK Department for International Development and implemented by the British Geological Survey, together with the geological survey organisations of Indonesia and Zimbabwe, has investigated ways in which the value of new geoscience information, with special reference to geological and geochemical mapping, can be estimated. These results have a wide application in demonstrating the value of geoscience information to society in developing countries.