

Humanitarian
OpenStreetMap
Team

LIVING STRATEGY

2026

HOT’S LIVING STRATEGY

In 2022, HOT adopted a living strategy: a guiding document with elements that remain more fixed over time (e.g., values, vision) and others that need to change more frequently (e.g., audiences, strategic priorities).

In the past couple of years, HOT’s previous strategy underwent minor revisions. This year, it went through a more comprehensive review.

The primary goals of this strategy are:

- Grow local data and data use, helping hundreds of local organizations deliver the data and insights their communities need.
- In the process, ensure communities’ livelihoods benefit, dramatically scale HOT’s impact, and secure our financial sustainability.

ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY

STAYED THE SAME FROM OUR PREVIOUS STRATEGY

- Vision
- Values
- Priority geographies

REFRESHED IN THIS STRATEGY

- Mission
- Theory of change
- Future role
- Audiences
- Strategic priorities

THE MOMENT WE ARE IN

THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND US HAS CHANGED ACROSS FUNDING, TECHNOLOGY, AND DEMAND FOR OUR WORK.

DEMAND FOR DATA

- Governments and organizations increasingly need granular, integrated, and compatible local data that is ready to use.
- Climate adaptation, urban growth, and crisis response require better and faster decision-making.
- Open geospatial data and technology are becoming critical infrastructure across sectors.

POWER & PARTICIPATION

- Local mapping capacity, capability, and appetite for paid mapping employment have increased strongly in the past 5 years.
- Local actors increasingly expect ownership and agency over data generation, involvement in decisions, and professional recognition.
- Extractive data practices are facing greater scrutiny.
- Community expertise is gaining recognition.

TECHNOLOGY

- Data is a critical resource in the AI era. AI is affecting many fronts, enabling the turning of data into actionable insights, lowering barriers to using data, increasing demand for structured, detailed data, and accelerating data creation.
- Hardware and technology for capturing data/imagery are increasingly accessible.
- Cloud-native, AI-enabled, interoperable, and increasingly accessible tech platforms are lowering barriers to participation and analytics, enabling informed decision-making.

FUNDING

- Humanitarian and development funding is contracting, and where it does exist, it is highly competitive (the OECD framework indicates a nearly 40% contraction in humanitarian assistance).
- Funders want to see plans for organizational sustainability and measurable outcomes.
- 2026 reality: there is no philanthropic market for increasingly complex data, and we cannot rely on philanthropy alone to sustain us in the long term.

MISSION

HOT enables **people and organizations** to make **better decisions** through **collective local knowledge.**









VISION

HOT envisions a world in which:

- Community needs are addressed through mapping
- Everyone can access and contribute to the map
- Open map data is available and used for impact







VALUES

Put people first

- Being proximate to people, place, and problems
- Listening first & adapting to context
- Seeking informed consent & shared decision-making

Work in the open

- Supporting an open & accessible community
- Contributing to and building on open knowledge
- Catalyzing change through open data & technology

Build for inclusivity

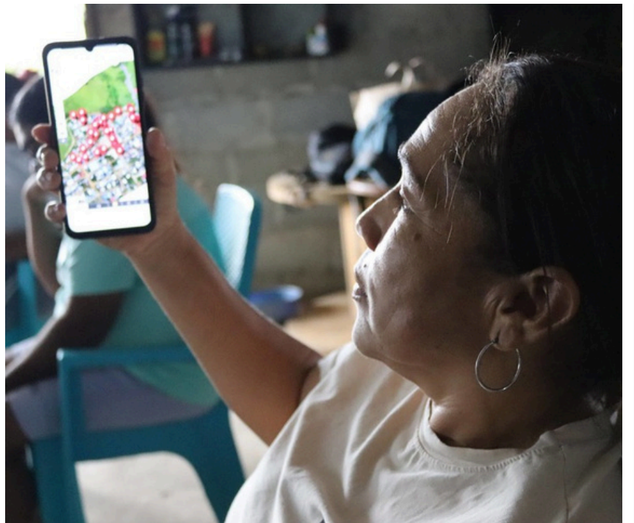
- Designing for access and utility
- Breaking down language & resource barriers
- Prioritizing marginalized voices

Collaborate for impact

- Acting in solidarity
- Enabling participation
- Investing in the strength of the network



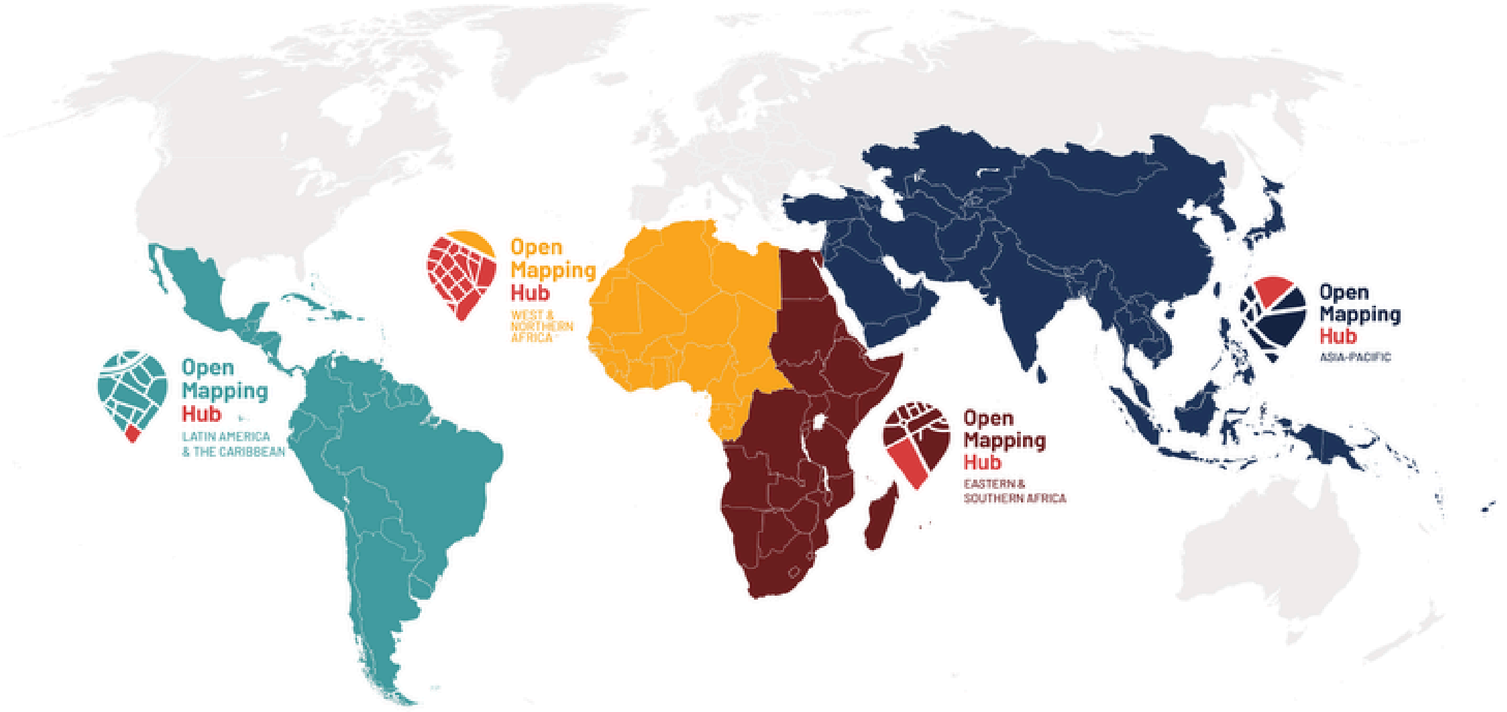






PRIORITY GEOGRAPHIES

HOT’s work is coordinated through four regional Open Mapping Hubs.
The map below reflects HOT’s current areas of focus and engagement, though activities vary over time based on partnerships, funding, crises, and community priorities.



HOT'S **ROLE**

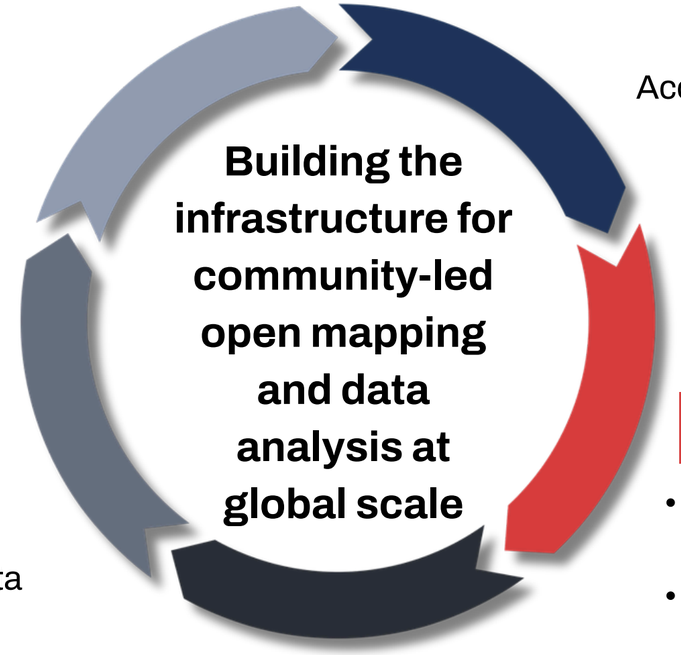
We believe the people closest to challenges are best positioned to define priorities, collect relevant data, and drive lasting change. HOT's role is increasingly to enable those efforts through open infrastructure, shared standards, accessible technology, ecosystem coordination, and sustainable financing pathways.

Data use for impact

Helping organizations turn local data into better planning, advocacy, and service delivery

Marketplace enablement

Connecting local delivery capacity with organizations needing geospatial services and data



Open technology

Accessible tools for mapping, field data collection, drones, AI-assisted workflows, and analysis

Ecosystem growth

- Strengthening local organizations, mapping communities, and service providers
- Connecting communities, governments, NGOs, funders, and technologists around shared goals

Standards & quality assurance

Supporting trusted, interoperable, high-quality open data at scale

THEORY OF **CHANGE 2026-2030**

Inputs | Process | OUTPUTS | OUTCOMES | IMPACT

Strategy & Plans, Values, People, Funding

Programs, Projects, Activities

Partnerships Established

Data Entrepreneurs have access to funds

Data Entrepreneurs networked with Ecosystem Actors

Data Contributors Engaged

Innovative **Open Mapping** Tech Tools Created/Enhanced / Maintained

Knowledge Products created (Maps, Research, Models, etc.)

Data Entrepreneurs Trained on **Open Mapping** Service Delivery

Data Contributors and **Data Users** Trained on **Open Mapping** and on benefiting from Open Geospatial Data

Data Contributors, including **Data Entrepreneurs**, increase capacity in **Open Mapping** and/or service delivery

Data Contributors create quality Local **Open Mapping** data

Data Users increase interest and capacity on data use for impact

Data Entrepreneurs engage **Data Contributors**, and continue delivering **Open Mapping** services over time

Data Users have increased access to quality Local **Open Mapping** data/ imagery and **Knowledge Products**

Open Mapping Ecosystem has strengthened collaboration and financial sustainability

Data Users increasingly use **Knowledge Products** to inform advocacy, planning, and policy for improved social interventions

NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES IN VULNERABLE AREAS ARE ADDRESSED MORE EFFECTIVELY

OUR **KEY AUDIENCES**

DATA CONTRIBUTORS — *THEY CREATE*

The people who gather imagery, put places on the map, and contribute to tool development, either as paid work (data entrepreneurs) or by donating their time and skills (volunteering).

- Local Mappers
- OSM chapters
- Remote mappers
- Small enterprises
- Validators
- Drone pilots
- FOSS developers
- Corporate volunteers

DATA USERS — *THEY DISTRIBUTE, INTERPRET, FUND, AND ACT ON*

The people and organizations that pay for and/or use the information to make decisions. This includes the people who make the data findable and turn it into usable information, and those who fund it and act on it to make decisions.

DISTRIBUTORS AND ANALYSTS

- Researchers
- Data Analysts
- Data/Tech institutions with open platforms

FUNDERS AND DECISION-MAKERS

- Development banks
- Philanthropy
- Aid agencies
- Governments
- NGOs
- Private sector (socially aligned)
- First responders
- Humanitarian Orgs
- UN agencies

THE COMMUNITY — *THE PEOPLE THE MAP SERVES*

People in vulnerable areas, reached because the data became actionable.

- **Aid arrives** — responders know what exists.
- **Services** planned around real needs.
- **The risk is visible** before disaster strikes
- **A say in decisions** about their neighbourhoods and towns.

THE LOOP CLOSES — Local mappers come from the communities the map serves

*Some of the example audiences might overlap (e.g., OSM chapters also being data users), but we chose to group them by their most prominent activity

STRATEGIC **PRIORITIES**

HOT will grow two complementary routes through which local knowledge becomes useful data: HOT-led delivery for complex work, and a Marketplace for work that local providers can increasingly deliver. Both depend on an integrated technology and data infrastructure, and on HOT changing how it operates.

Our priorities are:

Routes to greater impact and financial sustainability

- **1. Build and grow the Open Mapping Marketplace**
- **2. Build and grow HOT-led projects**

Capabilities that make both possible

- **3. Build technology and trusted data infrastructure that works in real-world conditions**
- **4. Build a more focused and adaptive HOT**

Across all priorities, HOT will continue centering openness, participation, local ownership, and practical impact.

1. Build and grow the Open Mapping Marketplace

The Open Mapping Marketplace is designed to bridge the gap between users with data needs (customers) and skilled open mapping community members and organizations (entrepreneurs) who can earn income by meeting those needs, enabling impactful open spatial data at a greater scale and increased value for local communities and organizations. It is envisaged that the majority of projects in the Marketplace will create local map data or drone imagery.

Current state

In mid-2026, the marketplace model moved from research to pilot mode. In collaboration with our first customers and entrepreneurs, **we are developing and testing critical elements of the marketplace concept's implementation**: entrepreneur onboarding and certification, quality-assurance thresholds for products and services, and the infrastructure necessary to support community entrepreneurs' success and new business development.

Future state

- By the end of 2026, we will have completed a limited number of pilot projects, tested critical elements, and laid the foundation for a scaled rollout in 2027.
- By the end of 2027, our aim is to have delivered at least $150,000 in business through the marketplace with certified community entrepreneurs.
- Our menu of standardized products and services will be established.
- Over this period, rapid iterations in how we work, in response to customer and entrepreneur feedback, will be prioritized, and lessons learned will be documented.

Success means

- **A marketplace model that makes open mapping products and services more accessible to customers across sectors** (government, NGO, CSO, commercial, etc.) without sacrificing data quality, equitable pay for entrepreneurs, or data ethics and protection thresholds.
- High customer satisfaction and repeat customers established across multiple sectors and regions.
- A growing pool of certified **local entrepreneurs who benefit financially and professionally** from marketplace engagement.
- HOT teams increasingly focused on enabling new business and developing the next generation of products and services.

1. Build and grow HOT-led projects

Grow HOT’s earned revenue through high-impact geospatial services that help governments, NGOs, multilaterals, and other partners generate, analyze, and apply local geospatial data to real-world decision-making.



Current state

HOT-led projects currently account for ~25% of HOT’s income. We need to grow this to secure our sustainability.

We also need to improve our current documentation on how our mapping changes decisions, improves outcomes, or justifies continued investment.

Future state

By 2027:

- HOT has a stronger, more diversified earned revenue base built on repeat partnerships with governments, multilaterals, NGOs, and consortia.
- We are recognized for high-quality mapping delivery and helping partners apply open geospatial data to real decisions: resource allocation, service planning, intervention targeting, policy development. We have robust evidence in each of these areas.
- Deeper sector expertise, stronger impact evidence, and clearer positioning support revenue growth and mission credibility.
- HOT-led projects are ~50% of total income.

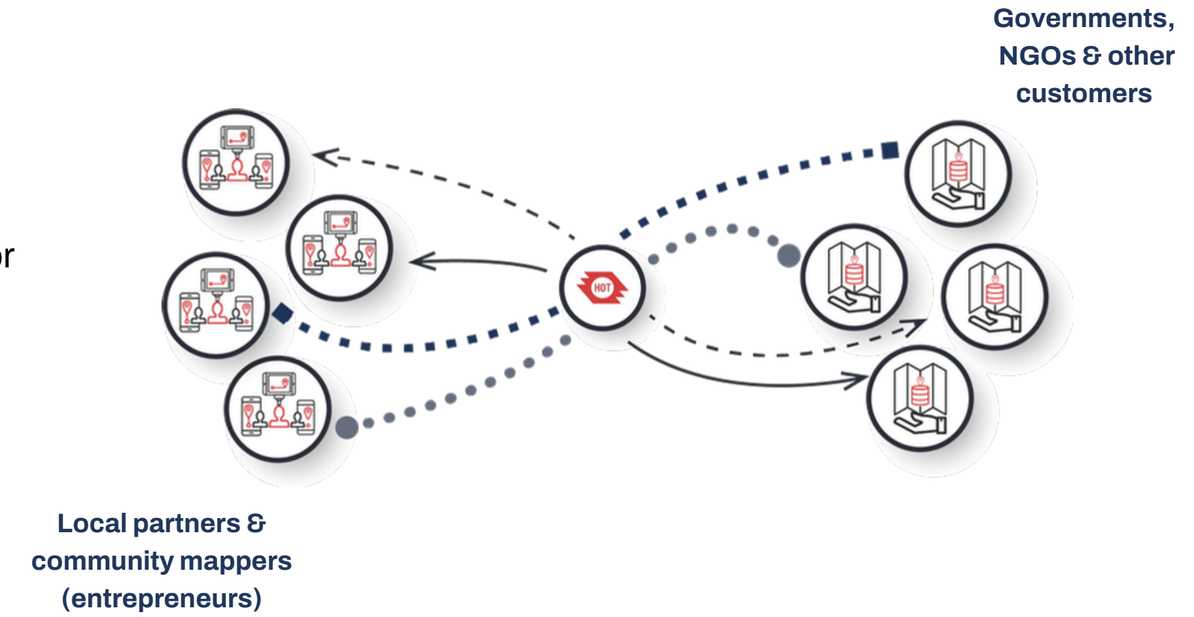
Success means

- Repeat contracts with strategic partners across at least three sectors.
- Project teams systematically capture and communicate how HOT's data was used and what decisions it informed.
- Stronger positioning within major consortia and implementation partnerships.
- HOT's evidence of impact is compelling enough to support both earned revenue pitches and philanthropic proposals.

THE OPEN MAPPING MARKETPLACE

The marketplace is a good fit for work that involves:

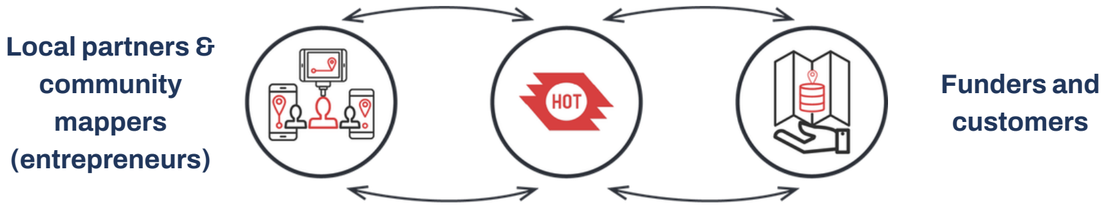
- Smaller, focused projects with clear scope & deliverables
- Run by community mapping groups, associations, individuals, or small businesses who are trained & certified with HOT (entrepreneurs)
- Customers have specific, well-framed needs and resources
- Highly replicable
- HOT plays a smaller, enabling role



HOT-LED PROJECTS

HOT-led projects are a good fit for work that involves:

- Complex or multi-country projects, large data volumes
- Subcontracts to local mapping groups
- Customer may be new, may need help scoping, or may be a combination of actors
- Testing/innovating new methodologies
- HOT leads the project



3. Build technology and trusted data infrastructure that works in real-world conditions

HOT will build technology, standards, and workflows that enable partners to produce, validate, maintain, share, and use trusted open data. Our data strategy will define what data we prioritize: quality and fitness for use; interoperability; documentation and maintenance; local ownership; open access; responsible AI; and how we measure data use and influence on decisions.

Current state

HOT has built a strong portfolio of open mapping tools, but the overall user experience remains fragmented and overly technical for wider adoption. We also do not always design data collection projects around their intended use or track whether they inform decisions. This limits adoption, reuse, creates operational dependency on HOT, and constrains the Marketplace's scalability and HOT-led delivery.

Future state

By 2027:

- HOT’s tools and workflows operate as a connected system through which local partners can independently create, validate, maintain, and share open geospatial data that meets clear standards and is fit for its intended use.
- HOT has an agreed data strategy with clear standards that make data quality and fitness for use transparent.
- Responsible AI increases speed and scale without compromising quality, local ownership, or human oversight.

Success means

- Streamlined workflows between tools.
- Local delivery partners can onboard and begin delivering services using HOT tools within a defined timeframe without specialist support.
- By mid-2027, AI-assisted workflows demonstrably increase mapping speed for standard feature-extraction tasks, with quality validated against trained human mapper benchmarks in defined use cases.
- An organization-wide data strategy guides all projects.

4. Build a more focused and adaptive HOT

Strengthen HOT’s organizational foundations so the organization can sustainably scale impact, adapt quickly, and operate effectively in a rapidly changing humanitarian, technology, and funding environment.

Current state

- HOT’s operating model was designed primarily to deliver grant-funded programs.
- As the organization evolves toward a more ecosystem-enabled, revenue-generating model, many internal systems, structures, and ways of working are under strain or are still emerging.
- The current operating model is not well socialized or used within teams.

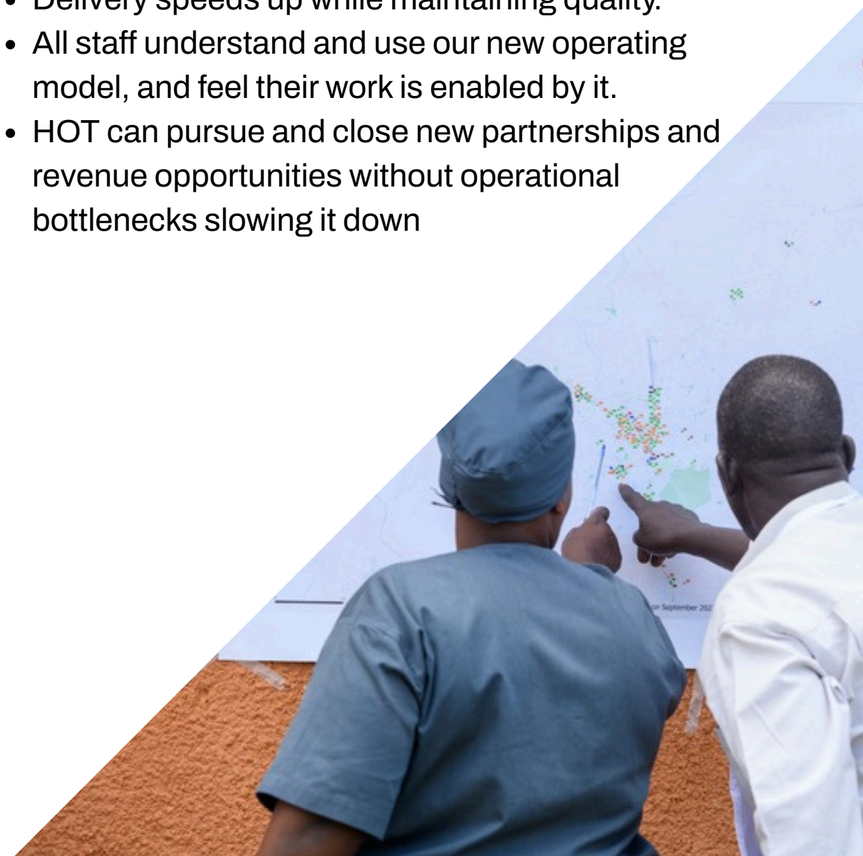
Future state

By 2027:

- Staff spend less time navigating unclear processes and more time on work that matters, and are clear on how we work.
- Decision-making is faster and better understood.
- Teams know how their work connects to HOT's impact and revenue goals.
- Experimentation is expected and resourced.
- HOT can respond to new opportunities without being slowed by internal friction, and its external positioning clearly communicates the value it offers to partners, funders, and the ecosystem.

Success means

- Delivery speeds up while maintaining quality.
- All staff understand and use our new operating model, and feel their work is enabled by it.
- HOT can pursue and close new partnerships and revenue opportunities without operational bottlenecks slowing it down



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We believe that the active participation of communities living in vulnerable areas is crucial in geospatial data collection. Therefore, we co-create with them the technology, know-how, and resources for accurate maps, ensuring they are active participants in the decisions made about them so they can live safer, more sustainable lives.

www.hotosm.org

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2026

