

Esri, Space42, and Microsoft Partner to Develop Comprehensive Basemap for Africa

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Esri, the global leader in location intelligence, today announced a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UAE-based AI and space technology company Space42, and Microsoft. This collaboration will power the ambitious five-year **Map Africa Initiative**, an endeavor set to produce the most comprehensive, high-resolution, and scalable geospatial basemap of Africa, benefiting over 1.4 billion people across all 54 countries.

Africa's current mapping landscape often suffers from fragmentation, outdated information, and limited accessibility. This data gap poses significant challenges for infrastructure development, investment, and governmental decision-making. The Map Africa Initiative, formalized earlier this month at the 2025 Esri User Conference in San Diego, California, aims to directly address these issues by enhancing institutional capacity for African nations through locally managed geospatial data, fostering smarter governance, business operations, and community development.



“We are incredibly proud to support the Map Africa Initiative alongside Space42,” said Jack Dangermond, Esri president. “Transforming satellite imagery into detailed, accurate basemaps at a continental scale demands advanced geospatial technology and sophisticated production workflows. These are the same capabilities that have driven successful national and regional mapping efforts globally. With Map Africa, we are establishing a foundational resource that will be instrumental in driving infrastructure planning, fostering economic growth, and enabling sustainable development across the entire continent.”

Under the terms of the MoU, Space42 will spearhead fundraising, project management, and provide crucial satellite data. Esri will leverage its GeoAI and remote sensing capabilities to orchestrate basemap production workflows and support regional hubs dedicated to training local teams and building long-term capacity. Microsoft will provide the secure cloud infrastructure and AI framework via Azure, facilitating large-scale data processing, sharing, and integration.

“Partnership is fundamental to the UAE’s ethos and central to Space42’s operational philosophy,” stated Hasan Al Hosani, CEO of Smart Solutions at Space42. “This collaboration with Microsoft and Esri is not merely technical; it is strategically vital. It advances Space42’s business objectives, strengthens our role as a trusted partner to governments, and delivers tangible benefits to communities across Africa. Accurate, high-quality mapping and the intelligence solutions built upon it are essential for growth, resilience, and inclusive innovation. With reliable data, communities and economies truly prosper.”

The Map Africa Initiative is poised to unlock long-term value across numerous sectors, including:

- **Ports and Logistics:** Enhanced terrain and infrastructure mapping will optimize route planning and significantly reduce inefficiencies.
- **Renewable Energy:** Advanced site selection models will facilitate the optimized deployment of solar and wind energy projects.
- **Security and Disaster Response:** Governments will gain powerful tools for border monitoring, resource management, and efficient emergency response coordination.

- **Smart Cities and Digital Economies:** Accurate maps will provide critical support for urban planning, public service delivery, and technology deployment.

Map Africa data will be licensed directly to national governments, ensuring local ownership and enabling long-term updating by National Mapping Agencies. Over time, this initiative is also expected to foster a new commercial ecosystem of African startups. The data will ultimately be housed in G42 and Microsoft-managed data centers located across the African continent.