Addressing the world: an address for everyone
In most industrialized countries, having a physical address is something that we take for granted. But in many developing countries, as well as in some emerging economies, the majority of people do not have an address. Yet addresses are an essential tool for economic and social development.
Addressing the world

“The Universal Postal Union (UPU), as the primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players, is very active in the field of addressing. Four different areas of work were defined by the 2008 UPU Congress:

- **Addressing standards**: these enable interoperability of name and address information. The UPU develops such standards in coordination with other organizations working in this domain. Standards can also provide guidelines for building and maintaining address infrastructures. The UPU also encourages countries to develop national postal standards, which facilitate mail handling.

- **Databases and technical tools to manage addressing information**: the UPU has developed an international address database which is distributed to public services and private companies. The UPU also trains countries in the use of databases and promotes their development, as they are essential to postal delivery, direct marketing and customer management, among others.

- **Electronic addresses**: the UPU is working on ways of linking physical and electronic addresses, with the objective of providing technical solutions to support the development of e-commerce.

- **Physical addresses**: these are used to identify a location by naming streets and numbering buildings, which allow goods and messages to be delivered to them. The UPU helps governments to establish clear addressing policies and raises awareness of the importance of addressing systems. The UPU also assists developing countries in the development of their national addressing systems.

“Four billion people are excluded from the rule of law, as the lack of a legal identity often prevents them from enjoying their rights as citizens. Setting up an addressing system is the first step towards tackling that issue.”

Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, United Nations Development Programme
Addressing is a key component of the UPU’s activity. Yet addressing is not only about receiving mail at home, or direct marketers being able to reach their target audience. The addressing issue goes far beyond the postal sector and needs to be understood as a major concern in many countries, both developing and industrialized.

Addresses are one of the bases for national and international communication and trade.

Governments need addresses to help individuals secure a legal identity, to facilitate the planning and implementation of public policies and services, to fight against natural disasters and diseases, to reinforce national and international security, to enable better tax levy, or to better dispatch emergency services.

Businesses also need accurate addressing systems to provide essential services like water or electricity, to develop new markets and to approach new clients, to facilitate access to their services and products, to locate clients and providers, to deliver goods – including those ordered via the Internet –, to send mail, or to develop marketing campaigns.

Finally, people need addresses to be recognized formally as members of their community, to take on the rights and obligations attached to their social role and to have a better and simpler access to national and international markets. Furthermore, development partners need addresses to design and implement their actions in an effective manner.

This is why the UPU is launching the “Addressing the world: an address for everyone” initiative. This campaign will focus on creating synergies between UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations and any other interested parties, such as academia, non-profit organizations, development banks or businesses, in order to better understand the problem, define a common action plan, and implement it efficiently. Its ultimate goal is to provide everyone with an address.

The lack of a complete, correct and unique national addressing system constitutes a major socio-economic challenge for a number of developing countries.
Botswana’s national addressing project

Physical addressing in Botswana is receiving a boost from a new government-backed campaign. The Addressing Botswana project is expected to pave the way for implementing a comprehensive system of street names and property numbering throughout the country.

According to government and postal officials, the project will enable service providers like BotswanaPost to efficiently offer targeted services to the market. Many government departments, international organizations and businesses indicated their interest in working together on this issue, recognizing the positive impact the project would have on their businesses and services.

The project
The project was launched following a study on the methodology to develop and disseminate physical addresses and postcodes in Botswana, carried out in cooperation with the Universal Postal Union. The analysis revealed that a comprehensive system of street names and property numbering does not exist throughout Botswana. This has a detrimental impact on the provision of services and affects businesses’ ability to operate efficiently. In Botswana, the city councils and municipalities are responsible for street-naming and numbering.

The national project involves putting in place a methodology for creating and disseminating national postcodes and addressing standards. It specifies the prerequisites for a national address database that can be used by all stakeholders in their bids to deliver services to the nation.

BotswanaPost’s project is directed to the national and governmental levels to ensure that each planning authority works with the same aims and follows similar procedures for street-naming and numbering.

Addressing Botswana should lead to improvements in the country’s socio-economic status. Moreover, it complements current national efforts to improve service delivery and helps the country to attain the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals.

“Addressing Botswana” is expected to:
- lead to economic growth by reaching all sectors of society;
- improve the reach of social services (health, education, etc);
- give equitable access to communication and other services to all members of society;
- improve targeting and thus extend access to public utilities;
- allow greater financial inclusion of individuals in banking services;
- provide businesses with opportunities to reach more customers and extend services;
- enable authorities to provide and deploy emergency services faster and more effectively;
- allow for more efficient delivery of products and services and specifically home delivery of mail and packages; and
- permit development of databases for customer management and marketing campaigns.
Where physical addresses do not exist, a significant effort needs to be initiated by governments, in coordination with national, regional and international stakeholders. In emerging economies the action could be focused on improving current addressing systems to extend them to each individual and to put in place modern tools to manage and disseminate addressing information. Industrialized countries, which face very different problems in the field of addressing, are not a focus of the UPU campaign. Nevertheless, they can serve as a benchmark to prepare case studies and/or to transfer knowledge and build capacity.

To help countries in the implementation of national addressing projects, all regional and international stakeholders must work together in finding solutions, funding projects or transferring knowledge.

“To ensure and promote the social and environmental sustainability of urban and rural settlements, an effective urban governance system is a necessity. Down to the personal level, it means that for individuals, one of the most important needs generated by rapid urbanization is to have addresses.”

Message conveyed to the 2008 UPU Congress from Anna K. Tibaijuka, executive director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)
Addresses are one of the basic elements of communication between individuals, businesses and public institutions. Therefore, the UPU invites international donor agencies, intergovernmental organizations and any other interested parties, such as academia, non-profit organizations, development banks or businesses to join this initiative to assist national governments and regional authorities in finding solutions to this problem.

Campaign objectives

The UPU has been assisting countries in designing a methodology to develop and disseminate the use of postal addresses. This includes introducing postcodes, specifying the prerequisites for developing a database able to contain physical and postal information, and assessing the needs for reorganizing mail processes based on the new addressing and postcode systems. The UPU campaign aims to assist countries in providing everyone with an address by:

- raising awareness of the issue and getting commitment from the international community by setting up a high-level group to work on this subject;

- sharing and shaping our vision, identifying all activities led by the international community and establishing a common plan;

- forming a first multi-agency working group dedicated to addressing issues;

- producing detailed impact studies about the lack of addressing systems on various socio-economic and business indicators and on the development of postal exchanges;

- identifying the need for national and regional projects, evaluating the resources needed in terms of know-how and funding;

- identifying potential donors and gaining their support, creating ways to channel funds, and establishing a model to fund regional and national projects;

- organizing an international summit on addressing and launching an “Addressing Fund”.

Effective addresses enable authorities to better locate victims and dispatch emergency services in times of catastrophes and natural disasters

( Photo: Doctors without borders)
Contact

Patricia Vivas
Coordinator, “Addressing the world: an address for everyone”
T +41 31 350 35 83
F +41 31 350 31 10
E addressingtheworld@upu.int

International Bureau
Weltpoststrasse 4
P.O. Box
3000 BERNE 15
SWITZERLAND
www.upu.int