

FOSS@Work INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE-WORKSHOP, PHILIPPINES, NOVEMBER 12-15, 2006

# SMEs in the IT industry learn about FOSS



Over 50 participants from SouthEast Asian countries explored the chances for economic and social development through Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) at the “First FOSS@Work International Conference-Workshop for Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SME) in the 7.I.T. Industry”, held at the Heritage Hotel Manila, Philippines from November 12th to 15th, 2006.

In three days of high powered trainings, IT managers and decision makers of SMEs discussed with a range of international speakers, how FOSS can add value to their current business operations as well as allow them to enhance their network. Discussions ranged from IT management, FOSS

architecture and community management skills, software development to secure wireless networks.

InWent Capacity Building International, Germany, UNDP-Asia Pacific Development Information Programme (UNDP-APDIP) and the University of the Philippines, Manila jointly organised the event through the assistance of the UNDP International Open Source Network ASEAN+3 node.

The great interest of participants and media in FOSS@Work proved a growing demand for Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) among businesses in the region and potential benefits such as legal and affordable software solutions in

local languages for SMEs in the region. Industry sources consider widespread FOSS use would drastically reduce software piracy as the Philippines ranks among the 10 highest in the region with a rate of 71 percent as of 2005 study findings by the International Data Corporation (IDC), the information technology (IT) industry’s leading global market research and forecasting firm.

## FOSS@Work

Keynote speaker of FOSS@Work was Commissioner Emmanuel Lallana from the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) of the Philippines. In his speech, Lallana revealed

how his work in CICT Human Capital Development Group has expanded the market for ICT training especially in the remote areas of the country. Of particular importance was his proposal that state universities and colleges (SUCs) may serve as technical support hubs for SMEs who may choose to build their businesses around FOSS tools. Guest speaker Rep. Teodoro Casino reiterated the importance of his FOSS Bill now filed in the House of Representatives. He underlined the potential of FOSS for local and regional software development, the creation of a service industry and social justice.

Shahid Akhtar of UNDP APDIP underlined the value of SMEs in addressing the poverty issues of the region and how FOSS can catalyse SME development by taking advantage of the



## Open Source Software can empower Southeast Asian enterprises, says regional conference FOSS@Work

technology's low-cost and high quality. Balthas Seibold of InWent Capacity

Building International, Germany, stressed, that new business models, innovative local FOSS products and services offer exciting opportunities for SMEs and for countries in the region, but only if the human resource base is expanded through capacity-building and training. InWent - Capacity Building International, a human resources development organisation of Germany supports, among its various projects, the development and application of local Free/Open Source Software (FOSS)-based innovative software solutions and business models in the ASEAN region through its it@FOSS project financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (for more information, see <http://www.it-foss.org>).

The ASEAN+3 Regional Node, based in Manila, Philippines was created by the UNDP-IOISN as one of its three Free/Open Source Software (FOSS) centres of excellence in the Asia-Pacific region, which is primarily tasked to facilitate and network FOSS

advocates, experts, and developers to foster its adoption (<http://www.iosn.net/asean-3/countries/philippines/events/foss-at-work>). Email inquiries to ASEAN+3 can be sent via [asean3@iosn.net](mailto:asean3@iosn.net).

Participants of FOSS@Work came from Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Philippines, and Malaysia with delegates also coming from as far away as Fiji and India. For more details about this event, visit [http://www.iosn.net/asean-3/countries/philippines/news/fossatwork1\\_philippines](http://www.iosn.net/asean-3/countries/philippines/news/fossatwork1_philippines)

Alvin B. Marcelo is one of three sub-regional node managers of the International Open Source Network (IOSN). The International Open Source Network (IOSN) is a Centre of Excellence for FOSS in the Asia-Pacific Region. It shapes its activities around Free/Open Source Software (FOSS) technologies and applications. Via a small secretariat based at the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok and

three centres of excellence – IOSN ASEAN+3, IOSN PIC (Pacific Island Countries), and IOSN South Asia, based in Manila, Suva and Chennai respectively, the IOSN is tasked specifically to facilitate and network FOSS advocates and human resources in the region. The vision is that developing countries in the Asia-Pacific Region can achieve rapid and sustained economic and social development by using affordable yet effective FOSS ICT solutions to bridge the digital divide.

Alvin is a general and trauma surgeon with a strong advocacy for free/open source software. He is presently the project manager of the Community Health Information Tracking System, an open source health information system for local health centres in the Philippines ([www.chits.info](http://www.chits.info)). ■



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## Unleashing career potential in ICT

Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA) of Sri Lanka on its drive towards economic development in the nation is aiming to build capacity through its programme 'ICT Capacity Building Programme' (ICBP). First move in this direction would be the creation of ICT workforce enabling domestic ICT and IT Enabled Service (ITES) companies to grow. The capacity building is also extended to the vast majority of those pupils who are unable to make it to university. The programme, thus urges to build potential of such workforce by giving proper training and awareness. To develop awareness, ICTA also held an 'open day' session recently with an enrolment of over 300 students from many schools participating in the demonstration. There were 4 sessions comprising 2 hours each which gave the participants insight into the ICT landscape from an employee's perspective and the potential that exists. At the event, companies in the IT and ITES industry, such as Virtusa, Dialog and WNS spoke about careers in relevance to their respective organisations. They urged to students on the need to improve is the eligibility either a short entry level training programme or in soft skills. An announcement was also made of availability of over 500 scholarships by ICTA through the ICBP worth of Rs. 22,500.00 each to eligible students interested in following the International Call Centre Skills Passport (ICCSP) course offered by MMBL CyberSkills (NIIT), Ma Foi Academy, Gateway Centre for Information Technology or IDM Computer Studies.

Source: ICTA, Sri Lanka