

## AFRICA SOURCE II

### Workshop Report

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#### Introduction

Africa Source 2 was organised in January 2006 by the Tactical Tech Collective<sup>1</sup> as a meeting ground for various stakeholders in the use of Open Source Software to deliberate important tissues concerning its use in Africa.

The main objective of the workshop was to take a look at how technology, in particular Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), can be integrated into the project work of NGO's<sup>2</sup>. However, unlike most workshops, the objectives and expected outcomes for the gathering were allowed to flow around the specific objectives of the participants present.

#### Participants

Over 130 NGO support professionals and NGO staff working at the local level across the continent were present at this meeting. Together with a handful of field leaders from Africa, Europe, North America and Asia, participants explored how technology can best serve the non-profit sector in Africa both in terms of access and content. Over 450 people were invited to present applications and justifications for participation in the workshop. Due to resource constraints however, 130 were selected to participate.

These included:

- Campaigners, practitioners or project managers working within non-profits and interested in information and communication technology (ICT);
- System administrators within NGOs, or acting as technical support to non-profit organisations or community centres;
- Trainers and consultants to the non-profit sector, or working in resource centres who are interested in information and communication technology;

The author's participation was funded as part of IICD<sup>3</sup>'s Expertise Development support for CITRED<sup>4</sup> as an IICD training partner in Ghana.

#### Methodology

The workshop maintained three so-called 'tracks' which participants could choose to follow according to their interest and application environments. These were:

- Information Handling and Citizens Media Track
- Migration for NGO track, and
- Education and Resource Center Migration Track.



#### 'Speed Geeking'

As a methodology to better get to know organizations represented at the workshop, a methodology similar to speed dating was used. It revealed the wealth of experience and implementation capacity available at the workshop, some noteworthy organizations that took part were:

Arabdev ([www.arabdev.org](http://www.arabdev.org)),

Fantsuam Foundation

([www.fantsuam.org](http://www.fantsuam.org)),

Computeraid.org, Kubatana.net,

Ungana-afrika.org (South Africa),

Child soldiers (DR Congo),

Freedomtoaster.org (South Africa),

Wougnet.net (Uganda), Baldati.org

(Lebanon), Inveneo.org (USA), and

Linuxchix Africa.

<sup>1</sup> See [www.tacticaltech.org](http://www.tacticaltech.org)

<sup>2</sup> 'NGO' is used as an abbreviation for Non-Governmental Organisation;

<sup>3</sup> IICD, International Institute for Communication and Development, see [www.iicd.org](http://www.iicd.org)

<sup>4</sup> [www.citred.org](http://www.citred.org)

By virtue of the activities of CITRED, the author chose the Education and Resource Centre Migration track. The activities that follow in this report are therefore often related to the activities of this particular track, and are biased towards the use of Open Source for educational institutions and resource centres.

Activities in and around the thematic tracks were organized using a variety of methodologies, including:

- introduction / knowledge sharing exercises, e.g. *Speed Geeking*
- morning assembly in the plenary room, *Morning Circle*,
- discussion in the thematic meeting rooms / laboratories, *Labs*
- relevant case studies, *Case study for the day*
- optional sessions, *Elective workshops*<sup>5</sup>

### Expectations

At the start of workshop activities, *participants' expectations* related to the thematic track were shared. Varied expectations came up ranging from developing a migration plan for an institution, to setting up/troubleshooting servers. The most noteworthy expectations were:

- Development of policies to guide Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS<sup>6</sup>) deployment and implementation;
- Stories of success and failure;
- Making FLOSS more user friendly;
- Training on use of major FLOSS applications;



### Case Studies

Various case studies were presented in the Education track over the days. These included:

- the successful setting up a FLOSS based Internet cafe in the University of Lome - Togo;
- the successful migration of the Uganda Martyrs University in Uganda and the subsequent use of the KEWL Open Source Learning Management System<sup>7</sup>;
- the use of Moodle<sup>8</sup> (an eLearning product/ Course Management System) at the Strathmore University in Kenya;
- switching over of a Windows based server to Linux platform at a training center near the New University of Boya, Cameroon;

One of the case studies that was of particular relevance to CITRED's work with ICTs for Schools was the case of *tuxlabs* in South Africa. A slightly more in-depth account is given below.

**Example Case Study:** **TuxLabs**, [www.tuxlabs.org.za](http://www.tuxlabs.org.za) Tuxlabs is a programme set-up by the Shuttleworth Foundation, and focuses specifically on the use of Open Source ICT tools for Education in South Africa. The organisation has successfully setup

<sup>5</sup> For the available electives, see Annex 1;

<sup>6</sup> FLOSS and FOSS abbreviations are used interchangeably; FLOSS is a more universal abbreviation, since it includes the 'L' for French/Spanish terms for Free 'Libre';

<sup>7</sup> <http://kewl.uwc.ac.za/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://moodle.org>

up dozens of computer labs across South Africa using only Open Source Software. *Edubuntu*<sup>9</sup> is the software used in most of the laboratories setup by tuXlabs and this actually makes the use of thin client networks<sup>10</sup> very advantageous. The successes of tuXlabs as well as the challenges faced by tuXlabs were looked at. The mistakes made by tuXlabs were also of interest to participants - the major mistake as seen by all was tuXlabs failure to develop manuals for most users and administrators of the labs setup.



A major theme to span the workshop was *general technology planning for migrating* any institution from a proprietary software environment to an Open Source environment with particular reverence to Education institutions and resource centres.

### *Thinking like Shuttleworth*

During Morning Assembly, Mark Shuttleworth<sup>11</sup>, founder and patron of the Shuttleworth Foundation was present to give a short speech.

The main point in his speech was: "Change brings opportunity and is always visible but it is usually a very painful and slow process"

Another famous quote by Mark Shuttleworth of relevance here is:

'If we are to lift Africa from her current circumstances, we will need a generation of learners that are gifted with curiosity about the world in which they live, and the tools to understand and shape that world' - *Mark Shuttleworth*

Mr. James Wire, an open source activist and user, took participants through other (non-technical) factors to be considered when *migrating to open source*. Some of these include:

- Training of staff
- Start with more familiar software such as office applications
- Sensitisation/ advocacy

For more on James, see <http://www.tacticaltech.org/node/218>

### **Collaboration tools for FLOSS**

One of the practical hands-on session looked at setting up of a *wiki*<sup>12</sup>. In a few minutes participants acquired the skills of creating, editing and signing up on a wiki. With the newly acquired skills participants agreed to create a wiki where they would capture statements that can be used in FLOSS advocacy.

Another session looked at the various uses of *blogs*<sup>13</sup> worldwide and the future of blogging.

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<sup>9</sup> Edubuntu is a version of the Ubuntu operating system that is particularly geared towards use in educational institutions; for more information see <http://www.edubuntu.org/>;

A **thin client** is a computer (client) in [client-server](#) architecture networks which has little or no application logic, so it has to depend primarily on the central server for processing activities. (see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thin\\_client](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thin_client) )

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.markshuttleworth.com> , <http://www.shuttleworth.foundation.org>

<sup>12</sup> A collection of websites of hypertext, each of them can be visited and edited by anyone. "Wiki wiki" means "rapidly" in the Hawaiian language.

<sup>13</sup> Blog is short for weblog. A weblog is a journal that is frequently updated and intended for general public consumption. See [www.bytowninternet.com/glossary](http://www.bytowninternet.com/glossary) ; You can create your own blog by visiting [blogger.com](http://blogger.com)



### Breaking the work

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> day, a day different from the usual processions was organized. After the morning assembly participants went on organised trips which included bird watching, boat cruising, trekking through the forest and community work for the Kalangala community.

This helped to take off the 'brain-steam' built over the days due to the continuous cycle of input-process-output activities going on within. It also helped participants to get to know each other on a more social platform and was the foundation of a number of relations built up among participants.

In the evening there was a hilarious open microphone with participants at their funny wits ends.

Like the previous activities of the day this also helped to take off the steam, allowing participants to interact in fresh and exciting ways. It was interesting seeing technical brains - who are generally perceived to have no sense of humour - doing things that could get even the world's best comedians jealous. Participants gradually began to perform in groups to portray one thing or the other about their respective home countries or regional blocks.

#### Who to talk to?

One of the discussions highlighted the main stakeholders that need to be convinced if we want to effectively introduce and use FLOSS in the education sector.

These are:

- Staff members
- Students
- Parent Teacher Associations
- Ministry of Education

#### Other sessions

- A short play was put on to demonstrate a migration that was done improperly without a plan;
- A session focusing on things to put in place to ensure independence of end-users after a migration to open source has been successfully carried out;
- A session looking at the ICT policies in the various countries represented in the track. It was realised that most African Countries are still at the rudimentary stages of their ICT development especially with regards education.

### Last day

It was not until this day that participants were rudely awoken to the reality that soon they'd be leaving the beautiful Kalangala Island. But before this 'unwanted' departure would take place, members of the track decided to impose certain tasks upon themselves:

A question was put across to all participants "What three things will do when you get back home?"

My plans were as follows:

1. To get more active in the formation of a Tamale Open Source gathering;
2. To migrate CITRED to Open Source in a period as short as practically and

- reasonably possible;
3. To migrate at least one IICD partner in Tamale in a period agreed by all parties concerned;

Much of the time afterward these last sessions was spent in exchanging contacts. Eight days of knowledge sharing, networking, and fun around all there is to the Open and Free aspects of the (ideal) world were coming to and end. It was time to return to the real world, where it is not just your interest in using Open Source Software that counts, but rather national, sector and organisational policies which are much bigger than you and your individual commitment to using and advocating Open Source.

One thing that was very evident however, was the fact that, from the newbies to the most technical, everybody left with a valuable amount of inspiration and was spurred on to preach the gospel that brought the group together in Kalangala.

*Should you want more information on my participation at Africa Source II, please don't hesitate to get in touch at [kkubuga@gmail.com](mailto:kkubuga@gmail.com)*



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## Additional Reading

### Related to Africa Source II:

- All about the **workshop and activities**, see [www.tacticaltech.org/africasource2](http://www.tacticaltech.org/africasource2)  
Or visit the wiki (you have to register to have access, registration is for free and worth it for all the inside scoop!) <http://wiki.africasource2.tacticaltech.org/register/>
- **Who was there?**, see <http://wiki.africasource2.tacticaltech.org>  
<http://wiki.africasource2.tacticaltech.org/post/main/02bm0ioKXMQM3gWA>
- **The Venue** <http://www.pearlgardensbeach.com>
- Read **interviews, thoughts** and more from some premier open source activities on the Africa Source **blog**: <http://wiki.africasource2.tacticaltech.org/pub/blog/>
- On **Getting started in [FLOSS] localisation, some tips you could use**  
<http://wiki.africasource2.tacticaltech.org/post/main/02o8ragIeldATdy>

### Other:

- free and **open source software and civil society organizations** forum: <http://foss4us.org/>,  
incl. <http://foss4us.org/recommended/texts/list>
- **Open Source in Africa: Take it or Leave it?** IICD research report  
<http://www.iicd.org/articles/IICDnews.import2164>
- The foundation that 'started it all', **Free Software Foundation**, <http://www.fsf.org/>

### For Linux/FLOSS applications, references and downloads:

- <http://www.freshmeat.com/>
- <http://www.sourceforge.net/>

**Annex 1: Available Electives and Skills Share sessions<sup>14</sup>**

| Skills Share A:   | Skills Share B:  | Skill Share C:   |
|---|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FOSS handheld gaming</li> <li>2. Wiki websites</li> <li>3. Creating FireFox extensions</li> <li>4. Content management systems</li> <li>5. Building a spell checker in your language</li> <li>6. Simple accounting</li> <li>7. How to trace hackers</li> <li>8. Linux on old laptops</li> <li>9. <b>Basic Linux networking</b></li> <li>10. Introduction to GIS</li> <li>11. Introduction to iScribe</li> <li>12. Creating posters using GIMP</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Journalism in jiffy</li> <li>2. Advocacy film making</li> <li>3. Wireless Peer to peer networks</li> <li>4. Localization</li> <li>5. Group Advertising</li> <li>6. <b>Gateway/Firewalls setup in Linux</b></li> <li>7. Cluster computing</li> <li>8. Asterisk at home</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) Server</li> <li>2. Small Office Security</li> <li>3. Internet connection Sharing</li> <li>4. Advocacy Film making</li> <li>5. how to organise events</li> <li>6. dual booting</li> <li>7. linux on old hardware</li> <li>8. Drupal</li> <li>9. Programming desktop applications</li> <li>10. RSS and Synchronisation</li> <li>11. Digital Audio ( Audacity )</li> </ol> |

| Skills Share D   | Skills Share E   | Skills Share F   |
|--|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Alternative access</li> <li>2. FOSS for Advocacy</li> <li>3. Making money out of Open Content</li> <li>4. Thin client networking</li> <li>5. <b>Security</b></li> <li>6. Women and FOSS</li> <li>7. Programming the cluster computer</li> <li>8. Sahana - a disaster recovery tool</li> <li>9. Localization</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shuttleworth foundation - how it works</li> <li>2. eRiders</li> <li>3. ICTs and human rights</li> <li>4. Thin Clients</li> <li>5. Mobile phones and FOSS and Ringtones</li> <li>6. <b>Using the command line in Ubuntu</b></li> <li>7. Localisation</li> <li>8. Content management Systems</li> <li>9. Alternative Access</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creative Commons</li> <li>2. Digital Divide</li> <li>3. Asterisk at home</li> <li>4. Why are we so excited about ICTs when there are many more fundamental problems in Africa</li> <li>5. Fund raising on line</li> <li>6. Alternative Access</li> <li>7. <b>Samba (Linux-window networking)</b></li> <li>8. Using the internet for campaign, advocacy</li> <li>9. Using GIMP</li> </ol> |

<sup>14</sup> Sessions attended by the author are highlighted in **bold**;