

# The Round Table for Asia OSS as a First Step

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This paper is based on the author's experience as the chair of the round table for the Asia OSS symposium held in March 2003, gathering representatives from 16 economies. Starting by describing the author's idea toward a new global industry model and community development, this paper reports the goals, the purpose, and the process he is leading, using the five step approach for the model.

## 1. Introduction

The workshop named Asia OSS symposium 2003 was held on March 4-6, 2003 in Phuket, Thailand. It gathered 102 participants from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, USA, and Vietnam, including 26 representatives. (Representatives were: governmental institutes : software companies & organizations : academia by a ratio of 4 : 4 : 2 respectively.) Most of the representatives are in prominent positions for software development in their economies for the context of this purpose. This symposium was hosted by the Center of International Cooperation for Computerization, Japan, and co-hosted by the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, NSTDA, Ministry of Science and Technology, Thailand. The round table was held as a part of the Asia OSS symposium. March 6<sup>th</sup> was used entirely for the round table and led the creation of the Phuket statement at the end. The details for the Asia OSS can be found at its official site, <http://www.asia-oss.org/> and the author's personal site, <http://noa.sipeb.aoyama.ac.jp/asiaoss/>. This activity continues on the Internet and we will have the next conference in the Fall 2003. As a member of the organizing committee for the symposium, started in December 2002, the author compiled the plan for the round table, based on his view for the long term steps toward a new era. The purpose of this paper is to describe the author's personal ideas for the concept and the roadmap, including the interpretation of the round table held in March 2003.

## 2. Seeking a New Industry Model

In the context of free software advocacy, the author has been involved with activities in helping the Free Software Foundation of the USA for over ten years, mainly for the purpose of introducing the activities to

Japan. He is also a founding member of the Free Software Initiative of Japan (<http://www.fsij.org>). The primary motivation of the author is that it is the right thing to do to make Free Software wide spread in Japan. In the 80s, there was no common concept for Free Software, and the author felt the importance of stimulating software industries to put more effort into the spirit of “helping each other” in software production and so he started the work.

In the late 80s, the activities by Richard Stallman and the concept with the GPL were introduced in Japan. The author found that some misinterpretations were there, namely “Free Software is for distributing software with entire freedom, and making profits with software is un-ethical.” Unfortunately, this misunderstanding had sometimes led to a comparison of free software to communism. The author thought the Free Software community to be quite different from coerced equality. The Free Software Movement is not a movement toward controlled equality, but a movement toward a new industry model with healthy competition.

What are the details for this new industry model? Is it a successful and beneficial model for all? Business models for it should be made. The balance between freedom and control are the key. They are still open questions and, in fact, the movements activities itself is going to show the answers.

### **3. Importance of Community Making**

#### **3.1 Helping Each Other**

Community is important in two ways. The first is in a general way. To make something in a democratic way, we always need a community to surround the activities. If possible, a universal and/or global one world might be an ultimate goal. But, it takes long time to have that. Regional differences and cultural differences should be handled before having unique global community. The second is tied with the interpretation of Free Software. The GNU GPL and the copyleft concept are based on the four freedoms. These freedoms require community as a core, to make them wide spread, because the idea is not universally popular yet.

Furthermore, each region on this planet has had different histories, different natural languages, and different cultures. It is almost impossible to have a global integration at once.

Education and inheritance for the younger generation also requires an open group. Things developed in a closed environment would not have the opportunity to be improved by the input of various opinions.

#### **3.2 Computer is NOT a matured product YET**

Computer is NOT a matured product yet. Meanwhile, we sometimes find people who handle software as goods to transfer or sell as a final product. Software can grow, and should not be thought of as something

without capability to expand or to be modified. There might be bugs to fix. For such immatured goods, there are opportunities to find better methods and technologies that could substitute the current dominant technologies. We need to gather together to improve the technology. So, totally speaking, “free competition, equal access, and unbiased marketing” is the set of phrases the author likes.

## **4. For Roadmap and Milestones toward our Goal**

### **4.1 OSS and Linux Community**

It is understood that the current OSS movement has an agenda as an activity with the Linux kernel. Namely, that the Linux community is to be a winner over the current popular OS from a specific company. Is ‘Linux’ the next ruler of computer software excluding other choices? It’s quite different from the Free Software Movement as far as the author can tell. But we can share the basic conceptual elements for each piece of source code between the OSS activity and Free Software activity. Rather, the people in the OSS movement are standing at the entrance to the Free Software world, why not asking them to join? Anyway, Linux is a hot issue at least for a while and the one we need to help.

### **4.2 How To Cope with Centralized Source Code Management for Free Software**

Almost all the existing Free Software development activities have their center in spirit and their sense being in the place where the source code is managed. It is the mother place where the technology was born. Mostly, the development is done in English/American culture, which is sometimes quite difficult to join from regions with different languages and different cultures. Localization ideas arise.

Localization is a concept to split the core technology and its ‘frills.’ For the ‘frill’ parts, the basic concept is ‘import it and adjust it to fit our life.’ There are many good programmers in the world that cannot join to the central core development only because they lack adequate language skills or the location difference from the original core developers.

The Internet era seems to be providing good support for such situations. But it does not provide the whole solutions to this divergence issue. Rather, the Internet should be used to send the regional messages and the regional achievements to the world. Later, we can imagine the synchronization of the regional messages and the core development. To do so, the author proposes the following five steps.

- 1) gather the needs, and the opinions in the various regions
- 2) support localization
- 3) distribute available Free Software in the region, and support the comprehension of the technology in the regions.
- 4) gather the source code fragments developed in the region and create a server for them

- 5) communicate and synchronize with each group in different regions. Then we can have a distributed network of Free Software resources around the world.

## 5. The Asia OSS Round Table held in March 2003

At the March round table, the author designed and outlined the course of discussion with the issues in Table 1, to clarify what we can share as a first step, then, later, to define where we will go and the regional goals. He outlined the 14 issues, showing No.1 through No.13 first, and after the first round, he added the keywords for the last one.

Table 1. The Issues raised at the Round

Issue No.	Title	Keywords and Contents
1	Diversity and Industrial Strength	Source of Competitiveness, Cultural Inheritance Industrial Strength: Old model vs. New model
2	Localization and Globalization	Where do you stand? The US centric globalization?
3	Programs are written by People	If short of SOY sauce, why not asking the neighbor? New scientific achievements done through studying the past
4	Computer is not a matured product	We are in the middle of making computer a matured product We need more involvements of various people
5	The word "Software"	Three categories (application, basic, embedded). Which?
6	Keywords in Asia	Society of "Closed, Top Down, Order" to "Open, Bottom Up, Volunteer." Mosaic of the old and the new
7	Tough Issues	Natural language difference, educating young generation, inheriting our discussion
8	What is the definition of 'Linux'?	Linux kernel? Next ruler? A savior?
9	'Linux' in a stream toward what?	Another Windows? Another Unix? A Market?
10	Open Source?	Definition? Open Source = Linux? Platform independent Free Software?
11	Toward Open Community	With what? Source codes, GPL license
12	Open Community of Who?	Who can participate? Wizards? Artists? Craftpersons? Users?
13	For Better Open Community	Governance, Security, co-existence policy
14	Other issues?	Terminology, Commercial Viability, Government relation, setting up an organization

(The original slides are in <http://noa.sipeb.aoyama.ac.jp/asiaoss/asiaossRT.pdf>)

The author chaired the table and urged participants to discuss the supplementary explanation. He explained the main discussion issues of OSS for this session. Participants from each economy pointed out 2 items each. The 14 issues and main points of each participant's comments were summarized in Table 2.

Issue number 2 (localization and globalization), number 7 (tough issues), number 12 (open community of who), number 13 (for better open community), and number 14 (Other issues) seemed to have gotten more attention than the others by the participants. The author felt the atmosphere was to join the community for development, not to be only users. The appendix has the official record of the comments by each representative.

The author is very curious to know what the responses will be in South America.

As a conclusion of this paper, the author puts the final comment: more mutual understanding and contributions will give us better future.

Table 2. Responses by the participants

Issue No.	Responses by the participants
1	Need cooperation for member economies (Lao) Educate people to have an alternative on open source (Thailand)
2	Emphasized the significance of localization and globalization (China), Need standard platform/architecture (Chinese Taipei), Focus on Development community (Indonesia), Make Multi lingual usable for all (Thailand), Make standard for both localization and globalization (Malaysia), Should be globalization for the benefit of localization users and education sectors (Myanmar), How to increase the Asian community contribution (Vietnam), Focus on open source community end users (Vietnam)
3	Should have OS theory for technology (Thailand)
4	Use computer effectively, wise uses (Singapore)
5	Need support government policy (Brunei), Two methods of patent and copy right (Japan), Clarify the term of OSS (Malaysia)
6	- (none)
7	Natural language difference, educating young generation, inheriting our discussion OSS for young generation and curriculum improvement (Cambodia), Produce the document of OSS (Thailand), National policy support the curriculum for OSS in schools and universities (Thailand), Need internet access for sharing information on OSS (Chinese Taipei, Japan, Singapore), Start with young generation in education sectors (Myanmar), Have strategies to encourage young generation (Vietnam)
8	Direction towards to the users (China), Three most important characters of Linux: open, worldwide resources/local force, and security (China), Mutual direction to use Linux (China), Have tendency for collaboration (Japan)
9	Strategies for software development (Cambodia)
10	Make the equal opportunity for Open Source and Linux (Chinese Taipei), Term of open source (Germany), Re-defined terms of open source (Singapore)
11	Work closely with the community (China), Share experiences and success stories about OSS (Philippines)
12	Should develop software to meet users' requirement (Indonesia), Three main issues to solve; legal, business model, and open source innovation (Japan), Need to educate people in school about basic issues (Germany), Promote resolution for open source community (the Philippines), Create citizenship training scheme (Singapore)
13	Lack of expertise in software application (Brunei), Suggest government have white paper to apply to every government economy (Chinese Taipei), Should have policy model for government (Lao), Should have possible concept for all to make business survive (Thailand), Government role to support (USA), Government should play the key role for OS development (Philippines), Set the mechanism to build open source community by using knowledge and technology (Philippines), Recommendation policy for OSS, started from government administration, research institutes, and business sectors in ordinary. (Vietnam), Build awareness movement from government sectors (Vietnam)
14	Need regional policy toward regional market (Chinese Taipei), Maintain promotion of open source (Korea), Should have organization to handle legal issues (Korea), Should have standardization and document exchange (Japan), Create more PC in the future (Japan), How to make business survive (USA), Cooperate with international organization (Malaysia, Singapore), Start project from involvement from government and business sectors such as education and hospital information system (Malaysia)

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## Appendix: The official record of the round table

(The following texts are excerpted from the official record of the Asia OSS symposium. Name for each individual is deleted in the following sentences and indicated with “<>”.)

41. The discussion was chaired by Dr. Masayuki Ida, Professor, Global Info. Systems Lab. Graduate School of International Management, Aoyama Gakuin University, the chairman urged participants to discuss on the supplementary explanation. First, he presented the objectives of the discussion which were to find the start line and to have a ‘Phuket Statement’. He explained the main discussion issues on OSS for this session. Participants from each economy pointed out 2 items each.

- ◆ A representative from Brunei Darussalam, <>, System Analyst, University Brunei Darussalam, raise no. 5 and no. 13. She was a lecturer in University and just start having e-Government in this year. She suggested that the government is in the good role to support to have the actual policy. She also mentions about the lack of expertise in software application.
- ◆ A representative from Cambodia, <>, Permanent Member of Government Administration Information System (GAIS), National Information Communications Technology Development Authority, raised no. 7 which emphasized for young generation for support the OSS end users after graduated, and government should improve curriculum by the Ministry of Education. For issue no. 9, he suggested that the software development should have the strategies to compete.
- ◆ A representative from China, <>, Vice President, Beijing Software Industry Productivity Center, mentioned no. 2. He emphasized the significant of localization and globalization. He mentioned about the limited of contribution and software loan. For no. 8, he realized direction towards to the public/users.
- ◆ A representative from China, <>, Senior Vice President, Red Flag Software Co.,Ltd., raised no. 8. He informed about three most important issues on Linux; open, local, and security system, and another suggestion he made was the mutual direction to use Linux. For no. 11, he proposed to work closely with the community.
- ◆ A representative from Chinese Taipei, <>, Distinguished Research Fellow & Director, Institute of information Science Academia Sinica, raised no. 13. He suggested the government to have white paper to apply every government economy. For no. 10, he proposed to make the equal opportunity for Open Source and Linux.
- ◆ A representative from Chinese Taipei, <>, Vice President, Acer, Inc., raised no. 2., pointed out the need of standard platform or architecture which is easier for government to work out a national policy or regional policy. For no. 7, he emphasized the need of internet access for sharing information on OSS. He also recommended to form an open architecture such as IETF (for internet) to develop OSS standard and platform. In addition, for no. 14, He suggested the need of regional policy toward regional market.
- ◆ A representative from Indonesia, <>, Lecturer and Researcher, Department of Informatics Engineering, Institute Technology Bandung mentioned no. 2. He would like to focus open source development in community, and for no. 12, he recommended to develop software to meet users’ requirement.
- ◆ A representative from Korea, <>, Professor, Seoul National University, raised no. 14. His opinion was to maintain promotion of open source, and should have organization to handle legal issues.

- ◆ A representative from Lao PDR, ◇, suggested on issues no. 1, that he need cooperation for member economies. For no. 13. he recommend the government to have policy model for government sector.
- ◆ A representative from Germany, ◇, President, Free Software Foundation Europe (FSF Europe) raised no. 10. He would like to identified the term of open source. For no. 12, He raised the need of educate people in school for basic issues of OSS.
- ◆ A representative from Thailand, ◇, General Manager, Ice Solution, a Division of DHA Siamwalla Ltd., raised no. 3. His point of view was to have OS theory for technology. For no. 13, he suggested that the possible concept should be handled for all to make business survive.
- ◆ A representative from Thailand, ◇, Director of Computer Center, Burapha Computer Center, Burapha University, mentioned no. 7 he suggested that the National policy should support the curriculum for OSS in schools and universities.
- ◆ A representative from Thailand, ◇, Director of R&D Division, NECTEC, raised no. 1. His opinion was to educate people to have alternative on open source, and for no 2. He emphasized to make multi lingual usable for all.
- ◆ A representative from Japan, ◇, Project Leader, Information Services Industry Division, Commerce and Information Policy Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, mentioned no. 5. He suggested that there were two methods of patent and copyright. And for no.14, he emphasized the significant of standardization and document exchange.
- ◆ A representative from Japan, ◇, Senior Researcher, National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology, raised no. 8. He recommended to have tendency for collaboration, and for no. 7, he also agreed with the suggestion from ◇ from Chinese Taipei, regarding the need internet access for sharing information on OSS.
- ◆ A representative from Japan, ◇, Professor, Department of Computer Science, Waseda University raised no. 12, he proposed three main issues to solve which were legal, business model, and open source innovation. For no. 14, he suggested to create more PC in the future.
- ◆ A representative from U.S.A., ◇, Chair, Open I 18N/Open Internationalization Initiative, Free Standards Group, raised for no. 14. He proposed to find out how to make business survive. For no. 13, he suggested the government should have the role to support OSS.
- ◆ A representative from Malaysia, ◇, Manager, MIMOS Berhad, raised no. 2. His suggestion was to make standard for both localization and globalization. For no. 14, he proposed for the cooperation with international organization.
- ◆ A representative from Malaysia, ◇, Director, Technology WorldCare Asia Pte Ltd raised no. 5. He would like to get the clarification the term of OSS. For no. 14, he proposed to start project from involvement from government and business sectors such as education and hospital information system.
- ◆ A representative from Myanmar, ◇, President, Myanmar Computer Federation (MCF) mentioned no. 2. He presented that there should be globalization for benefit localization users and education sectors. For no. 7, he recommended to start with young generation in education sectors.
- ◆ A representative from Philippines, ◇, Director, Advanced Science and Technology Institute raised no. 11. His recommendation was to share experiences and success stories on OSS. For no. 13, the government should play the key role for OS development was suggested.
- ◆ A representative from Philippines, ◇, Managing Director, K2ia, raised no. 12. His opinion was to promote resolution for open source community, and for no. 13, his recommendation was to set the mechanism to build open source community by using knowledge and technology.
- ◆ A representative from Singapore, ◇, President, Linux Users Group Singapore (LUGS) raised no. 10, he would like to re-defined terms of open source. For no. 12, he proposed to create citizenship training scheme. For No. 14, , he also agreed with the suggestion from Mr. Wu, Chinese Taipei, regarding the need internet access for sharing information on OSS.

- ◆ A representative from Singapore, <>, Executive Manager, E-Learning Competency Center, mentioned no 4. His opinion was to use computer effectively, wise uses, and for no. 14, he also agreed with Malaysia related to the cooperation with international organization.
- ◆ A representative from Vietnam, <>, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Science and Technology raised no. 2. How to increase the Asian community contribution was suggested. He agreed to appoint representative to participate to the organizing for the future structure and activity. For no. 13, his recommendation on OSS policy which started from government administration, research institutes, and business sectors in ordinary. He welcomes the idea to form an open architecture to develop OSS standard and platform.
- ◆ A representative from Vietnam, <>, President, Computer Communication Company - CMC Co., Ltd. raised no.2. He would like to focus on open source community end users. For no. 13, the build awareness movement from government sectors was recommended.

After round table discussion, the chairperson of the session pointed out other issued for issue no. 14 which consisted of the terminology issue-FOSS or Collaboration Software, Commercial Viability, Setting up an org. , Users community or developers, relation with government. Then, he also asked for comment from Dr. Virach of NECTEC, and Dr. Tashiro of METI .

The representative of NECTEC, by Dr. Virach, he emphasized the main issues as follows: the OSS for young generation, build up regional business model for business and industry for sustainable, and the government support and funding in order to create benefit among regional.

The representative of Information Services Industry Division, Commerce and Information Policy Bureau, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Japan by Dr. Shuichi Tashiro. He explained that the preparation meeting had agreed that the meeting designed not to define the meaning of open source. And he informed that there will be the similar symposium next year which be announced in the website.

42. The discussion on the future collaboration was led by Dr. Masayuki Ida, and he urged participants to discuss. Some of the key discussion issues were:

- ◆ A representative from Thailand, <>, informed that it was on process to prepare the document for the ASEAN OSS sub-working group which Vietnam was the co-leader. We would like to have ASEAN OSS sub-working group meeting to identify further on concrete and realistic action plan on OSS before e-ASEAN Working Group meeting on last week of April 2003.
- ◆ A representative from APDIP/UNDP, <> proposed the APDIP action plan proposal on OSS (<http://www.apdip.net/iosn>). This proposal had described the initiative for OSS which explained the project concerning with the mapping of the program, how to start the OSS in every economies, the effort to taking, the development of the software of the region, and the research and development supports.
- ◆ A representative from Japan, <>, had shown the Phuket Statement which would be discussed on the Wrap Up session. The statement was included with 3 parts; sharing expectations for OSS in Asia, sharing vision of OSS, and future activities. The statement was the contribution of the symposium.
- ◆ The participants discussed on the venue and date for the next OSS symposium, and agreed to work on a future structure for AP OSS symposium as a regular meeting or activity. Singapore, Chinese Taipei and Vietnam would like to be the location for the future AP OSS symposium.
- ◆ The participants name list and contact address including e-mail address would be posted at the website, <http://www.asia-oss.org/>