

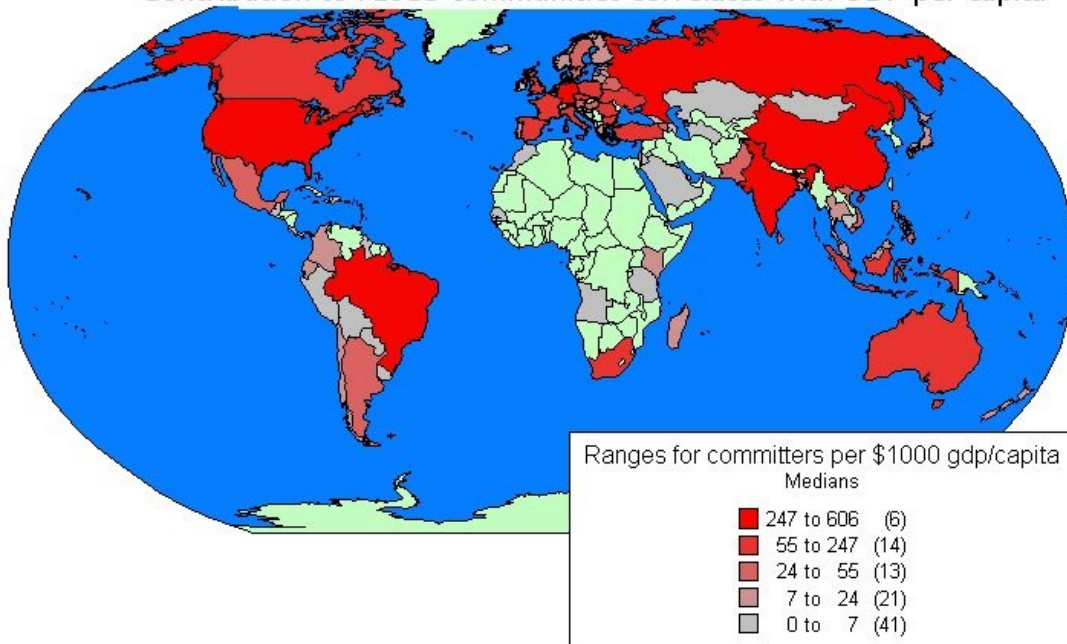
# FLOSSInclude

## Free/Libre/Open Source Software: International Cooperation Development Roadmap

*FLOSS is arguably one of the best examples of open, collaborative, internationally distributed production and development that exists today. With partners around the globe, the FLOSSInclude project (<http://flossinclude.eu>) will develop a roadmap for international cooperation to realise the potential of FLOSS as a tool for social and economic development.*

Free/Libre/Open Source Software (FLOSS) holds great potential for developing countries. FLOSS uses open standards, avoiding lock-in and allowing for flexible solutions. Programs can easily be translated into local languages. The international developers' community acts as a free-of-charge training environment. Yet FLOSS use and development in the global South has so far stayed below its potential.

The South lagging behind:  
Contribution to FLOSS communities correlates with GDP per capita



Source: FLOSSWorld.

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The FLOSSInclude project aims to help developing countries to use FLOSS to their advantage. Started in February 2008 and running for two years, it will study what is needed to increase the deployment, development and societal impact of FLOSS in Africa, Asia and Latin America. After these needs are identified, the project partners will develop innovative solutions to satisfy specific local ICT needs. These solutions will be tested in a pilot phase. The project will result in a roadmap outlining future possibilities for research cooperation between the EU and developing countries.

## ***Five steps: from analysis to roadmap***

FLOSSInclude consists of five core tasks:

1. analysis of available data to identify key problem areas and areas of blocked potential for FLOSS in the target regions
2. dissemination and networking, to identify and federate local and regional initiatives
3. requirements analysis, to show with concrete cases the specific technical, business and socio-political needs for the growth of FLOSS use, deployment and development in target regions
4. pilots, to ensure that FLOSS solutions, tools and services can be cost-effective and practical
5. prepare a cooperation roadmap, supported by regional initiatives, concrete cases for clearly identified requirements, with solution areas proposed that have been validated through pilots.

Validated pilots and a coordinated roadmap for future EU development research cooperation will ensure that the impact of FLOSSInclude will be sustained far beyond the duration of the project.

FLOSSInclude is funded by the European Commission's 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, with a total amount of 703,462.65 Euro. Started in February 2008, the project will run for 24 months.

## ***Testing solutions***

Having analysed the available data and identified what must be done for target countries to reap the benefits of FLOSS, the project partners will design solutions specific to each region, group and case. They will then test these solutions during the pilot phase of the project.

Though the exact nature of these solutions will depend on the requirements that are found, we can already give an indication of some possible activities. The focus is on connecting players in the field; actual software development will be the exception rather than the rule.

In India, bringing ICT to rural communities is a key challenge. Quite a few organisations are working on the topic. In a FLOSSInclude pilot, these organisations will share their expertise with groups that have expertise in FLOSS. Together, they will look for FLOSS-based solutions to ICT-related problems in rural regions, laying the basis for long-term cooperations.

As the FLOSSWORLD<sup>1</sup> study and other research have shown, participation in FLOSS developer communities is still strongly biased in favour of developed countries. At the same time, FLOSS offers great potential for the transfer of knowledge and skills to the global South. Universities are key leverage points for familiarising students with FLOSS use and development, and seeding business ventures based on FLOSS development and services.

This is the sort of specific issue that the FLOSSInclude project is finding solutions to. After a thorough analysis of the situation in each target area, these solutions will be tested and refined through pilots. A FLOSSInclude pilot may e.g. implement a distributed mentorship and internship programme with the aim of increasing local developers' ability to participate in international FLOSS projects.

Another potential pilot is the localisation (translation) of FLOSS programs. This way,

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1 <http://flossworld.org/>

linguistic communities may for the first time gain access to computing in their own language, greatly lowering hurdles to the adoption of ICTs. These are just two examples of the specific approaches that the FLOSSInclude partners will develop and test.

These and other validated solution will have a prominent place in the final research and cooperation roadmap produced by FLOSSInclude. Thanks to the project's networking activities, future cooperation between the EU and the target regions will be easier and more effective.

A public interactive platform is currently being constructed at <http://flossinclude.eu>. Here, interested organisations, groups and individuals will find a common place to exchange ideas and concepts for promoting FLOSS use, development and deployment in the global South.

### ***A powerhouse consortium***

The FLOSSInclude consortium partners bring to the table an unrivalled amount of expertise in using FLOSS as a tool for social and economic development. The **MERIT** institute at the United Nations University and the University of Maastricht, acting as coordinator, is home to Europe's leading research group on the economics of FLOSS and boasts a long record of fundamental research on the subject. The **Universidad Rey Juan Carlos** in Madrid, Spain, is a pioneer in the empirical and quantitative study of FLOSS development.

**Fundecyt**, a regional agency of the Spanish province of Extremadura, has engineered Europe's first large-scale deployment of GNU/Linux in schools and public sector institutions. **Canonical** is the company behind the hugely popular Ubuntu GNU/Linux distribution, with ample experience in using FLOSS for social ends especially in Africa.

**Via Libre** is a free software NGO with policy expertise in Argentina and Latin America. The **University of the Western Cape** (UWC) is the leading research institute in Africa for the study of FLOSS. The **Ghana-India Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT** (AITI-KACE) has a solid track record in ICT capacity-building and has partners located throughout Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas.

**IT for Change** (ITfC) from India works on information society (IS) issues at global, national and local levels. The **Sarai** programme at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), one of India's best-known independent research institutes, is playing an important part in shaping the intellectual and creative map of this part of the world.

The **Open Institute** in Cambodia has localised to Khmer languages a complete set of FLOSS applications, as well as a distribution of the GNU/Linux operating system. The **China Education and Research Network** (CERNET) is China's first and largest national academic Internet backbone, and currently the second largest network backbone in China.