

OSHCA Report as on 1st December 2008 since registration
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Introduction

OSHCA (Open Source Health Care Alliance) provided an active platform for interested individuals to meet during the 1999 - 2003 period with strong support of various organisations. 2004-2005 saw OSHCA in hibernation. An attempt was made to resurrect OSHCA in late 2005 via discussions on the Openhealth List. This resulted in OSHCA going through the registration process to turn OSHCA into a legal, not-for-profit entity. The process of registration included holding the inaugural meeting on 25th April 2005 between 00.01 GMT – 24.00 GMT where twenty six (26) attendees login to the meeting to pass the resolutions to form OSHCA as well as to election its protem committee. (see http://oshca.org/oshca_manage/protem) The protem committee and the FOSS community then worked on the constitution which was then submitted to the Registrar of Societies (ROS) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for registration. The formal registration of OSHCA was dated 31st October 2006 with a registration number as 1482-06-WKL. During the registration waiting period, the OSHCA web-portal, membership registration form and its procedures, list of chapter regions and list of countries based on UNDP's HDI were developed, mainly through the efforts of Juliana Tang and a student on an industrial attachment assignment whose stipend was sponsored by Primary Care Doctors Organisation malaysia (PCDOM).

OSHCA is now a registered not-for-profit organisation that provides the collaborative platform and forum to promote and facilitate Free/Open Source Software in Health Care. OSHCA's membership comprises a community of people, civil societies and professional bodies in health care and informatics industries that promotes the Free/Open Source Software Concepts in Health Care. OSHCA helps policy makers, commercial enterprises, and users take advantage of the benefits of Free/Open Source Software.

OSHCA Conference 2007 & Conference Summary

The Committee then organised the OSHCA Conference 2007 from 8-11 May 2007 in Kuala Lumpur. Our co-organisers were MNCC, PCDOM and MHIA while the main funding came from IDRC with co-sponsors from InWent and UNDP-APDIP. The theme of the conference was “Moving the FOSS Agenda for Health: Setting the Framework for Interoperability” (see <http://oshca.org/conference/OSHCA2007/>)

This conference targeted interested open source Health ICT adopters and potential adopters, from developers to end-users, including senior management both from public and private sectors. 152 participants from twenty three (23) countries attended the conference and several luminaries joined the participants at the evening social functions which was organized in conjunction with the Conference.

The plenaries consisted of the Overview of FOSS and its role in the Health care arena, Legal issues impacting the use of open source software in health care, Health Information Governance, and FOSS and Open Standards. A lively debate on Proprietary vs. FOSS: Issues was held on day 3 with active participation from the audiences. The conference were held with three parallel tracks running concurrently, to cater to different audiences.

They were a good mix of software developers, academia, health care workers, the health ministry of Malaysia, civil service staff and the corporate sectors. The talks covered diverse topics from FOSS business concepts to FOSS applications and projects to interoperability and standards. Numerous

vertical applications such as Hospital Information Systems, Electronic Medical Records Systems, clinical applications complemented with remarkable related tools such as PDA applications or low-cost touch-screen devices, disaster management systems and data collection tools, to name a few, were showcased besides the sharing of experiences of open source health care implementations for different countries.

The solid scientific foundation of all these developments within the spirit of Open Source philosophy of sharing and collaborating is the main focus of the conference and which provide a path for other related institutions working on improving the quality of health care through the use of appropriate technology to follow. Participants were given the opportunity to understand the applications and programming languages in further detail in the hands-on workshops and training sessions. The training sessions co-organized by OSHCA, IOSN and InWEnt, Germany, provided technical training to new programmers from Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines and Vietnam.

The Complementary Social Events....

The conference started with the cocktail reception party at the hotel's pool on the night of 7th May. Fresh fruit drinks were served to everyone followed by dinner. It was a relaxing informal atmosphere, with groups of people chattering away, some meeting for the first time, while others were renewing contacts, but nevertheless all were getting familiar with each other and many found new friends there. There was music and many remarked that it was a nice and warm beginning for the conference, so that on the next day, when the conference sessions started, the participants could see familiar faces taking part of the conference already.

The official OSHCA dinner took place on the evening of 8th of May, it was attended by the guest of honour, the Director General of Kuala Lumpur City Hall, representing the Mayor. Entering to the banquet hall, the conference attendants were honour-guarded by the men and women wearing Malaysian national costumes, which was a pleasant surprise. The guests were entertained by a local musical group and a Malaysian Cultural Program which presented the dances of different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Director General of Kuala Lumpur City Hall gave a speech, where he welcomed the delegates to Kuala Lumpur, gave an overview of Kuala Lumpur's historical background and to the delight of everyone talked about Malaysia's Open Software policy and the co-operation between Malaysia and OSHCA. This was followed by a gifts exchange ceremony between OSHCA and City Hall Kuala Lumpur. The dinner served, was Chinese cuisine, a change from the food participants was given during the lunch breaks. It was a cheerful and memorable evening in Kuala Lumpur.

The important social part of the conference was the daily lunch, with separate tables organised for vegetarians. People took that opportunity to talk to each other, whether its about the conference thematics or about the more prosaic tasks of life, but mostly the talks were about Open Source and it's role in health care and why so many people had come together. And of course, they were eating too - it was Malay cuisine, which was served.

On the last day of the conference, a group picture of the participants was taken. Unfortunately some participants had left but some stayed till the end and many others stayed on for sightseeing, visit friends etc. The day after the conference a tour was organised by the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) of the Malaysian Prime Minister's Department to take the participants to the Open Source Competency Centre (OSCC) located in Cyberjaya. They also visited Putrajaya the new capital of Malaysia.

OSHCA's other activities

OSHCA participated in various activities such as:

1. OpenMRS developers Meeting in April 2007 in Capetown, South Africa.
2. GK3 Conference in December 2007 in Kuala Lumpur
3. Government of Malaysia's GOSSCON 2007 in December in Putrajaya, Malaysia.
4. UNU-IIGH Curriculum Development Workshop in April 2008
5. OpenMRS developers Meeting 2008/HISA Conference in June 2008 in Durban, South Africa
6. INCOSSH2008 in November 2008 in Penang, Malaysia.

OSHCA Membership and Management

Since OSHCA's incorporation, its membership grew from 25 who agreed to be members during the inauguration meeting to more than a hundred, the latest being a group of fourteen from Nigeria and Uganda and ten from Malaysia during the INCOSSH2008 conference in Penang. Unfortunately, due to the small membership fee and relatively high banking charges, some applicants for membership did not manage to pay for their membership which a smaller number paid but did not complete the process by not submitting the membership application forms.

OSHCA is also experiencing management problems because of its “global” platform while the communication among members are yet to be refined. Rules and regulations that go to support the Constitution had yet to be developed and operational resulting in post-registration hiccoughs. There was also a high number of resignations of the protem committee members and delay in holding elections to get new committee members. However, the recent formalization of the Asian Chapter of OSHCA on the 24th November 2008 in Penang with 15 attendees may provide the opportunity for decentralization of OSHCA activities so that communication and relationship among members will improve in the future. Unfortunately, the event could not be shared with other members who were not in Penang as there was no internet connection then. Members who were participants at the InWent programme could not attend as well because the InWent organisers had scheduled a Code Sprint during the same time as the formalization event.

The OSHCA Protem Committee would like to thank everyone who had in anyway contributed to OSHCA make OSHCA what it is today.