

Panel: Open Source Software/Systems in Humanitarian Applications (H-FOSS)

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In the past few years we've seen many catastrophic natural disasters, most recently the Haitian and the Chilean Earthquakes. Others include the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami, the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, and Cyclone Nargis that hit Myanmar in 2008. Because these events are rare and often impact poor countries, the development of information systems that support humanitarian and crises response may not be profitable, and thus rarely developed. Systems needed to track medical services to populations of poor nations are often not developed nor deployed because there is no profitable business model for such products. Commercially systems typically require expensive training and hardware not practical in poor underserved places on the planet.

Humanitarian Free and Open Source Software is FOSS developed to support humanitarian, crises response and health care applications. Example H-FOSS projects include the Sahana Disaster Management System, Open MRS Medical Record System, and Crises Commons with its CrisesCamps. This panel will examine this emerging category of FOSS, its trends, challenges, and opportunities. Panelists will come from these and other H-FOSS projects.