

DebConf12, Managua

May 14, 2013

DEBIAN DEVELOPERS' CONFERENCE 2012

Final Report



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Welcome message

Moray Allan, DebConf chair

DebConf is a highlight of the Debian year, when the community comes together for hacking, presentations and discussion sessions, and just to spend time face-to-face with other contributors who are normally only names on a mailing list or nicks on IRC.

This year DebConf took place in Managua, in the beautiful Central American country of Nicaragua. The main conference events were held in the Universidad Centroamericana in a central area of the city, while a day trip took attendees past a string of volcanoes north of Managua, to the Pacific Ocean at Las Peñitas and around the colonial monuments of León.

The DebConf12 schedule included talks ranging from introductory tutorials on getting involved in Debian to advanced kernel virtualisation features; discussions ranging from configuration management to package hijacking; and Q&A sessions with the release team, security team and technical committee. We also hosted a special series of events in Spanish to encourage more local people to get involved in Debian.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to attend DebConf. A special thank-you should go to our speakers, and to the huge group who volunteered to help the conference organisation in some way. In particular, we all benefited greatly from the great enthusiasm and hard work of this year's local team, while everyone who worked on the video team helped the event to reach out to others who could not attend in person, allowing people to attend events live in person and creating a web archive of recordings.

Finally, I would like to thank our sponsors, without whose generosity DebConf would not be possible. We hope that you appreciate the progress in Debian which came out of DebConf12!



DebConf12 attendees

The role of DebConf

Over the last ten years, DebConf has grown from its origins as a small meeting on the sidelines of another conference to become a large event in its own right. A team of volunteers works all year round, dealing with administrative aspects of the previous DebConf and preparing for the next one. However, it is the conference attendees themselves, rather than the organizing team, who ensure the success of DebConf, with benefits for Debian which go beyond the conference period and beyond the walls of the conference facilities. DebConf enables face-to-face interactions between the attendees, broadcasts its talks live on the web and archives them permanently for future viewing. It also provides focused time when attendees can work uninterrupted on Debian, especially during the DebCamp week before the main conference.

Even brief face-to-face interactions at DebConf can have important effects by improving subsequent communications between project contributors. A short meeting, or even an informal discussion over a meal, often helps to quickly find solutions to issues which had been stuck in long circular discussions on mailing lists. In an international project where most contributors rarely meet, it can be hard for contributors to gauge the tone of others online; the experience of face-to-face interaction with someone makes it much easier to correctly interpret later written communications. Each year we set aside some of the DebConf budget to provide travel bursaries to project members who it is important to have at the conference, and who would not be able to attend out of their own resources – it's not only the recipients of the bursaries who benefit, but the whole project.

The talks and discussion sessions at DebConf are important opportunities to raise new proposals for development, to let contributors know about new technical advances they can build on in their own work, and to manage the wide cooperation required for each new Debian release. While they are important in setting the agenda for those attending DebConf, they are also watched by many others, during and after the conference. Those watching talks live during the conference even have the opportunity to submit their own questions to speakers over IRC, along with those present in the room. The recordings are viewed for years afterwards by Debian contributors and others anywhere in the world. The live streams and recordings hugely scale up the benefits gained from the money spent to arrange talks at DebConf.

Anyone visiting the hacklabs during DebConf, at almost any time of day or night, will find people engrossed in work on Debian – some silently by themselves typing, others peering at computer screens in pairs, and others sat in a ring arguing out the technical details of a design. Many attendees find it hard to find uninterrupted time to work on Debian in their regular schedule, and value DebConf as a period when they can put aside their other usual responsibilities and focus on Debian work. The DebCamp period of DebConf is provided specifically to enable this uninterrupted work – teams may choose to arrange their own meetings, but there are no centrally scheduled conference events on these days except for meals, and fewer people are present than during the main conference, all keen to progress their work. The work done on Debian during DebCamp and the main DebConf period has a far higher value than the amount spent to arrange the conference.

Two other benefits from DebConf are worth pointing out here. First, coming to DebConf motivates Debian contributors. Many attendees find that their enthusiasm for working on Debian is renewed and increased, so that the impact of the conference continues long after everyone has

gone home. Secondly, DebConf motivates the local community in the region where the conference is held. Some people attend DebConf because it happens close to them, without having previously worked on Debian at all, and then end up becoming Debian Developers. Some existing contributors attend DebConf for the first time because it is close to them, and end up increasing their level of involvement in the wider Debian project.

DebConf, with all these benefits, is only possible due to the financial support given by our sponsors. DebConf sponsorship is extremely efficient, as the benefits it produces are much greater than the amounts spent, go far beyond the conference venue, and last long after the conference period.



Hacklab

Reports from DebCamp

Debian Press Team¹

DebCamp took place last week at the Universidad Centroamericana in Managua, Nicaragua. The week was very productive, as can be seen from people's reports:

- Christian Perrier described on his blog² his work on internationalisation, localisation and Samba packaging;
- Joey Hess mentioned his progress on git-annex assistant³ and Debian CDs⁴;
- Gregor Herrmann wrote about his work within the Debian Perl Group⁵;
- Steve McIntyre wrote about his preparations⁶ for the six sessions he is running;
- Gunnar Wolf reported that DebCamp has officially started⁷.

DebCamp has been followed by DebConf12, the conference for Debian developers, which started with the Debian Day⁸, an open event for enthusiasts, users, developers and anyone interested in finding out more about Debian and Free Software. The whole of DebConf is covered on video⁹ (which makes many people happy¹⁰).

¹<http://www.debian.org/News/weekly/2012/14/#debconf>

²<http://www.perrier.eu.org/weblog/2012/07/06#debcamp-work>

³http://joeyh.name/blog/entry/git-annex-assistant_milestone/

⁴http://joeyh.name/blog/entry/debian-cd_work_at_DebCamp

⁵http://info.comodo.priv.at/blog/debcamp_impressions.html

⁶<http://blog.einval.com/2012/07/06#debcamp1>

⁷<http://gwolf.org/blog/arrived-nicaragua-debcamp-has-officially-started>

⁸<http://www.debian.org/News/2012/20120706>

⁹<http://www.debian.org/News/2012/20120707>

¹⁰http://blog.debconf.org/blog/debconf12/hl_dc12_video.dc

Talks

Gunnar Wolf

During DebConf, We had a total of 98 scheduled activities — This is, including seven *social activities* (and some preparatory meetings), which, although not part of the stated, formal goal of our conference, are a very important part of its identity and what has given such a high cohesion to its attendee base. I will not get into details on the social activities, as they will be covered in other sections of this report.

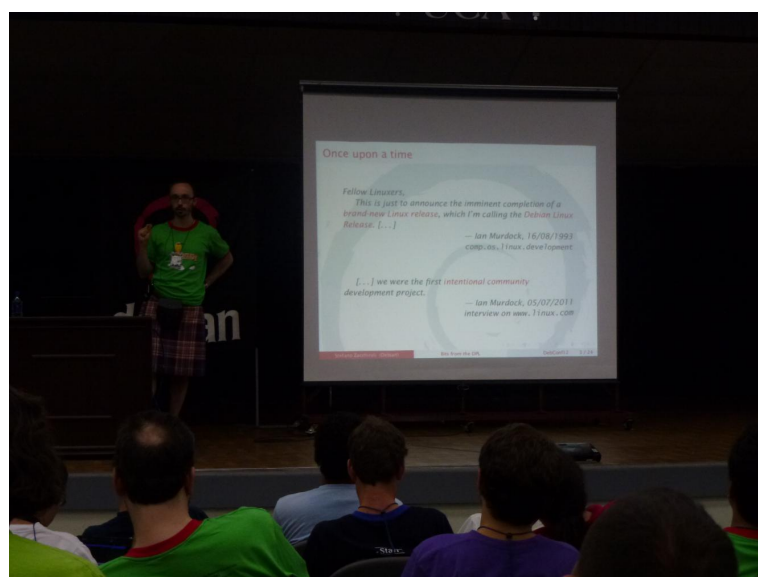
Each year, the list of *tracks* along which DebConf is organized varies greatly, as the tracks' topics reflect on one hand the perceived current issues of Debian development (and of the contributors in the geographic region), and on the other, a logical grouping of the already submitted talk proposals.

As we have done several years already, this year we had five different *tracks*:

DebianDay Although organized separately from most of DebConf, the 16 talks that were part of DebianDay were managed using the same infrastructure. A separate section of this report explains what DebianDay consists of.

Getting involved in Debian Given that so many individuals in the various Central American communities expressed a strong interest in getting involved in Debian, we planned a *getting involved* track — Contrary to DebianDay, which is more of a general overview of the many strengths of the Debian project, this track was meant to show participants how to start working in different areas of the project. This track consisted of seven talks; acknowledging that most of the audience for it would be local, presented mostly in Spanish (and only in English when the best speaker for the topic in question was not Spanish speaking).

Building and porting Seven talks were submitted regarding topics regarding specific architectures, multiarch support, or different ways of cross-building the archive.



Talk by Stefano Zacchiroli

Debian for the cloud Five talks covering the topics of available virtualization infrastructures, managing *virtual server farms*, integrating large upstream changes into the kernel were grouped under this topic.

Skills exchange Talks are usually grouped under this label, not formally a track, as they are not presented together in time nor in space as they are rather an answer to perceived needs that arise in the process of DebConf. This year we had only four proposals under this track, ranging from beginners' Spanish lessons to IPv6 in Debian.

52 further talks were presented without being part of any of the tracks, for a total of 91 presented talks.

DebConf offers a very rich environment not only for sharing finished products, as many conferences, but for building together during collaborative discussion sessions — we call them *BoF sessions* (from “Birds of a Feather”). 35 of the presentations were BoFs; most BoFs produce during the course of a session a collaborative document in our *Gobby* server summing up the discussion which can be used as guidelines for implementation months afterwards.

Finally, regarding talks pre-scheduling: As most major conferences, DebConf tries to provide participants with a talks schedule in advance, to help plan which of them to attend. This is done by having a talks team review submissions and rate them on three main vectors (relevance, actuality and acceptance), and pre-scheduling the best rated ones. However, talk submission is not closed until practically when the conference is over — This leads to a fairly good and attractive schedule to be produced by the talks team, with many spaces available for *ad-hoc scheduling*. This way, we got an almost completely full schedule, with many topics answering to needs that were detected in conversations even after the conference was already on its way.

Attendee impressions

*Stefano Zacchioli*¹¹

It's that time of the year again. No, not only the Debian biyearly freeze that has just happened, again (YAY!). It's DebConf time again. Yesterday night I arrived in Managua, Nicaragua, for DebConf12. I'm still jetlagged a bit, but the first impression is great. And that impression is also very green, shockingly green. The city is gorgeous: full of trees and plants (well, at least compared to my metropolitan European standards), and the campus of Universidad Centroamericana where the conference is hosted is even more so. Also, it's a great pleasure to have DebConf in a university campus where students are still swarming.

*Gregor Herrmann*¹²

I'm here in Managua since Sunday evening, & by now DebCamp is slowly getting to its end. So here are some of my impressions so far:

- as each year, it's great to have time to work on Debian stuff for longer times undisturbed;
- it helps to have other people around, & be able to ask them something just across the table;
- I'm spending a good chunk of my time with the other guys from the Debian Perl Group, both in my "work time" & in my "free time" – it's just a pleasure;

¹¹<http://upsilon.cc/~zack/blog/>

¹²http://info.comodo.priv.at/blog/debcamp_impressions.html



Attendees in hotel lobby

- most of my work was on the Open Tasks of the Debian Perl Group – preparing our meeting next week, working on bugs, preparing changes to our policy, cleaning up never-uploaded packages in our repos, updating our documentation, doing mass-changes across hundreds of packages, ...;
- hotel, university, food, etc. are all fine & the people are all friendly & helpful;
- yesterday evening we even had "una noche de la poesia" in a nearby bar.

thanks to all organizers & sponsors who make this experience happen!

*Vincent Sanders*¹³

My return from Debconf12 has been tinged with a little wistfulness, I had a great time but wish I could have spent a little more time there to justify the seventeen hours travel each way. I took a lot of pictures which gave me a good record of my trip.

The talks, BOFs and discussions were, as usual, very useful. The release team explaining what needed to be done for Wheezy was both informative and amusing.

The numerous BOFs from Steve McIntyre were a great source of discussion and ideas and appear to have generated progress on some quite contentious issues.

I especially enjoyed the Sylvestre Ledru talk on building the archive with clang and how this might be another useful tool in finding bugs.

Hideki Yamane gave a really useful talk "Let's shrink Debian package archive!" He gave a practical explanation on how Debian could benefit from using xz compression, where it is not appropriate and had a selection of real numbers to help the discussion. Given this was Hideki's first talk at a Debconf I must congratulate him on doing an excellent job.

There were many other talks which I have not singled out here but that says nothing about their quality or usefulness, more about why I should blog immediately after an event and not leave it a week. Though the video team have managed to capture many of the talks so you can go and watch them too.

The event was well organised and the accommodation was pleasant, if a little crowded with three to a room. The hotel had a pool which was the centre for evening activities most days, though I did miss Neil McGovern (one of my room mates) unintentionally swimming in his kilt.

The lunch and dinner catering was outdoors which was novel. The food was generally good if a little limited for those of us with less straightforward dietary requirements.

Some of us did venture out to have dinner at the continental hotel on one evening for a change of scene.

There was of course the obligatory conference meal by the lakeside and an awesome day trip where I saw a mangrove swamp and (fortunately) no salt water crocodiles.

All in all I had a fabulous and productive time. I would like to thank Collabora for travel sponsorship to the event and to Neil who was a great travelling companion.

¹³<http://vincentsanders.blogspot.com/2012/07/travels-with-mr-brown.html>

*Christian Perrier*¹⁴

It's still good to be at Debcamp before DebConf and I'm not running all day long, contrary to what you might think by reading my posts.

Of course, I'm always busy with "social-like" activities such as doing my best for us to have a good Cheese and Wine Party as, now that I'm trapped into it, people expect it to be better and better each year. Or to revive the traditional Assassins game.

But Debian is not only about killing cheese with socks and I try to also achieve a few things while being here.

As of now, I can already count a few things:

- completing dpkg translation and dpkg manpages translations (I blessed Guillem Jover a lot for being so picky and changing so many details in dpkg messages....and I blessed Raphaël a lot for writing so detailed manpages). To be honest, that part was not achieved during Debcamp but during....the flight from Paris to Atlanta and partly during the Atlanta-Managua flight. Being upgraded to Premium helped as there are power sockets in seats there...:-)
- completing APT translation and APT manpages translations. Here, much work had been done by Justin Rye to bring more English in a big pile of Germish and I had to fight hard to check significant changes out of the typo and grammar fixes
- preparing a backport of samba for squeeze. We'll have samba 3.6.6 in wheezy and our squeeze users deserve it also
- go through a few leftovers from the Paris i18n sprint that created i18n.debian.org, such as creating a page for the I18n team.
- discuss (briefly) with David Prévot having the Debian website i10n pages point to material from i18n.debian.org and no longer i18n.debian.net

The only thing I nearly haven't worked on yet is... the talk I have on Sunday and that is supposed to explain to newcomers how to join the crowd of localization fanatics.

Oh, and I'm still jetlagged and go to bed daily at 10pm... :-)

*Jonathan Carter*¹⁵

It's the last day of Debconf 12 in Managua, it's the first ever Debconf I've attended and it has been just awesome.

There's so much I could talk about and it would take forever to put down, but here's a few highlights for me:

- My first time in Nicaragua and also Central America! First time I've ever seen a vulcano!

¹⁴<http://www.perrier.eu.org/weblog/2012/07/06#debcamp-work>

¹⁵<http://jonathancarter.org/2012/07/14/debconf-12-managua-nicaragua/>

- The Bits from the DPL talk was great, Zack pretty much hit several nails on the head of why I love the Debian project so much
- The Debian Cheese and Wine party was off the wall, the food and the drinks were awesome and it was a lot of fun
- I've been attending some of the Debconf organising sessions, I was considering getting a few people together so that we could put in a bid for Sherbrooke for 2016, but then I learned that a bunch of people are already getting together to put a bid together for Montréal in 2014, so I'll get involved with that instead. Stefano and I have also been talking about a hypothetical Debconf in 2018 or 2020 in Cape Town or Stellenbosch. As much as we want a Debconf in Africa, neither of us will have time to organise a team for that in the short term. I'm hoping that being involved in the Montréal bid (and hopefully an event) will give me good experience for the Cape Town one.
- The day trip in the middle of the week was great. I just spent the whole day lying in a hammock, drinking beer and staring at the ocean. I think I needed that.
- The Debian key signing party was good, I got my key signed by more than 20 Debian contributors this week.
- The sessions and BoFs were great. I learned a lot about the Debian project this week and filled up a few gaps in my knowledge.
- I got involved with the video team and played camera man for a few sessions for the live video feeds. It was surprisingly fun. I took some photos too during the week but my camera is really awful, I need to get a new one by the next Debconf.



Traditional performance during day trip

- The people of Nicaragua are awesome. Everyone here is so friendly and helpful. The local team has been absolute professionals from start to finish.
- There's probably too much other things to mention and I'll never get a blog entry out if I even try, but thanks to everyone who made this Debconf possible, even Pollito.

*Wouter Verhelst*¹⁶

As I write this, DebConf12 has actually been over for more than a week.

All I can say is that both DebConf and DebCamp have been a huge success for me again, this year. I'd started the second rewrite of ipcfg a few weeks before DebCamp, and spent most of DebCamp whipping the basic framework into shape. It's nowhere near ready yet, but I'm confident it'll get further this time than it did before.

¹⁶http://grep.be/blog/en/life/travel/dc12_over



Attendees on the UCA campus



Day trip – Isla del Venado nature reserve

Day trip

Daniel Pocock

The day trip was 11 July, the middle of the main DebConf week. After breakfast, the Debian community enthusiastically boarded buses and traveled north-east from Managua.

The journey passed Lake Managua and a small volcano on the way out of the city. Larger volcanos were visible on the horizon throughout the morning. The buses went through the centre of the city of Leon, and finally, just before lunch, arrived at the Pacific coast, at the “Las Peñitas” beach venue operated by Loro Trips.

Dancers dressed as giants, wearing traditional costumes, greeted the group on arrival.

The group quickly separated, just under half the people engaged in swimming while the rest immersed themselves at the bar. The surf was quite lively but not excessive, and some more adventurous swimmers ventured out about 150 meters from the shore to explore some rocks.

Lunch was served and the group spent about 90 minutes relaxing in the shade, enjoying the food and sipping cool drinks. More music and dancing was provided to enhance the atmosphere.

For the afternoon, the participants then split into 3 groups. One group stayed at Las Peñitas to enjoy a relaxing afternoon at the beach. A second group toured a local marine sanctuary. Participants traveled either by kayak or motorboat up river into the swamp. Those of us on the motorboat had a guide careful to point out the wildlife along the way, particularly birds.

The 3rd group boarded the buses again and traveled back to the city of Leon, which had been passed on the way to the beach. Arriving about 15:00, the buses left them right in the middle of the town.

No time was wasted locating the large cathedral, where the majority of people chose to take the guided tour up the bell towers and onto the roof. The rooftop provided a remarkable vista of volcanoes on the horizon in every direction.

The final event of the day was a tour of the revolutionary museum, operated by FSLN, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional. The guide informed us that Nicaragua was one of only two countries (the other being Vietnam) where the mighty power of the US military had been insufficient to overcome the power of the people.

The guide told us the story of Nicaragua in a factual manner, supported by photographs, documents and real items of military hardware that the US had supplied to the dictator Somoza. He took us through all the phases of the revolution, covering the role of US marines in the country, the assassination of Sandino, the dark years under Somoza's rule and the decade of reform under Sandinista control.

Finally, we had the opportunity to visit the rooftop of the museum building and see the city of Leon from another perspective. We spent the rest of the afternoon soaking up the atmosphere on the balcony/rooftop of a local restaurant, before a long ride back to Managua.

Cheese and Wine Party

Didier Raboud

For the 8th time, the now-traditional “Cheese and Wine party” has taken place at the local “CIPRES”¹⁷ on the evening of the second day of the conference, on July 9th.

Though the focus of this party lies in tasting the vast variety of wines and cheese brought by participants from all over the world, a great variety of different food and different alcoholic beverages was available. The party was enjoyed by hundreds of DebConf attendees, who enjoyed socializing in the warm evening while tasting smelly (and less smelly) cheeses and beverages.

This successful party has been orchestrated by a team of more than twenty dedicated “Cheese Assistants” under the gentle but tight direction of Christian ‘bubulle’ Perrier, our beloved “Cheese Master”: handling the logistics of gathering, cooling, transporting, labelling and disposing the 37 kilograms of cheese and the dozens of bottles and containers of beverages was quite a challenge and it has once again been handled with mastery; congratulations!

¹⁷Centro para la Promoción, la Investigación y el Desarrollo Rural Social - Centre for Promotion, Investigation and rural social development.



Cheese and wine party

Video

Víctor Martínez

DebConf12 is the 7th DebConf with video coverage. This year it proved to be a challenge, first to set up our equipment, and adjust our workflow, as within Debian the video team is mostly made up of volunteers, so even with the fantastic venue, and the ready to use sound system, it took us some time to decide how best to take advantage of the equipment and get the best shots, where to set our cameras, and how best to use each talk room. Also, having a multi-cultural and multiple-language team provided a really interesting mix resulting in smart approaches to making the best of our group's talents.

One very useful thing that the video team improves each year is its documentation. Most of the workflow, roles and pitfalls are available to review online and on cheat sheets on site, and this has proved important when problems arise.

The importance of video to DebConf can be seen from two main points. First, it provides a historic record of the conference for referencing talks, BOFs, meetings, but also since DebConf is intense and things happen in parallel, the video recordings allow people to attend a talk and later check out another that happened at the very same time. In addition, the streaming video allowed a lot of our fellow developers, friends and the general public to watch and also participate in the sessions via IRC, even without being in the same time zone. That alone gives people a great sense of involvement, with the opportunity to see events live and not only to read later what the presenter answered.

We are really thankful to our sponsors HP (hp.com) and IRILL (irril.com) for providing great support and making our work easier and more professional. Having dedicated equipment for the DebConf video team has reduced the setup time and contributed to increasing the quality of the recordings.

In total, we recorded and streamed 77 sessions over seven days. These recordings are available in two different qualities, resulting in 33 GB of files for the high quality recordings and 5.9 GB for the low quality ones (good for streaming). The team was formed of 49 “official” members and countless unofficial helpers.

One notable thing this year was that 24 hours after the closing ceremony we had all the recordings uploaded and available to download.

This has provably been very useful for many Debian enthusiasts around the world who have been downloading these videos after the conference: Mattias Wadenstein explained to the debconf-video mailing list¹⁸ that for the July & August months, 3653.8 GiB of data had been downloaded by 7162 unique IPs, spread over 455029 HTTP requests.

¹⁸<http://lists.debconf.org/lurker/message/20120906.123046.3c8e6f1a.en.html>



Conference dinner

Cultural accompanying activities

Fito Taleño and Felix Delattre

For the first time in a Debian Conference we had a dedicated team which was in charge of providing cultural and free time activities around DebConf and they give the participants of the conference a cultural impression of the country they are visiting, exchange of other ways of arts, besides Computer Science and excellent programming.

On the inauguration during Debian Day the folkloric dance group of the cultural department of the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) participated generously by showing performances of traditional dances and actions of cultural intervention.

On Thursday 5th of July an International Poetry Night was organized in the cultural bar and restaurant El Panal. Besides all of the participants of DebConf12 local individual artists and the literate collective LITUS from the university had been invited to share publicly poems and literate arts in all thinkable languages. During the wonderful evening celebrating diversity of languages, words, feelings and meanings the following artists participated: Poet Ruiz (Nicaragua), Poet Vladimir Hernández (Nicaragua), Poet Douglas a.k.a. el Che (Nicaragua), Franjaz (Nicaragua), Flavia Rodríguez (Nicaragua), and from the DebConf participants Rhonda (Austria), Tiago (Brazil), Edgar (Mexico), Marco (Italy), and others. To underline the magic of this moment it is worth mentioning that the literate collective LITUS decided to change their name during the event to the BUJIA.

To round up the public Debian Day a concert took place after the main activities close to the venue in the installations of the National Dance School on Saturday 7th of July. A great selection of upcoming local underground bands played to the amusement of the participants of DebConf, visitors of Debian Day and party people. The following bands played during the concert called "Mueve tu Mouse con Libertad": Q69K (Nicaraguan punk), Rebel-A-Zion (Caribbean reggae), Ocarina Banda Show (Nicaraguan and Latin ensemble), Unidad de cuidados intensivos (Experimental

rock). Further there was a presentation of a fire juggling show by the GuateBuena collective from Guatemala.

The conference dinner was held on the 10th of July on the Laguna de Managua, a volcano crater lake located in the center of the capital, besides the special food served this evening the group Juan López y grupo Karma was providing the musical background with typical Nicaraguan and Central American folk music, ballads and revolutionary songs.

Individual initiatives lead to an excursion to the hot springs in Tipitapa, a town next to the capital Managua, where in a tropical surrounding a natural sauna and thermal water swimming pools were enjoyed by a small group of DebConf participants that realized that sauna is not only healthy, but even a pleasant experience in a tropical country.

On Saturday 14th of July a Good Bye Party was organized spontaneously to close DebConf together with all participants dancing and enjoying Latin American music.

The venue

Felix Delattre

As the venue for this year's Debian Conference the private, non-profit university in Managua, Nicaragua, Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) has been chosen. The university was founded in July 1960 and became an important institution for higher learning in the whole region, playing a decisive role in the transformation of the unjust society offering access to education for ambitious people independently of their financial resources and researching with a focus on social studies and concrete development matters in Central America. Today UCA is one of Nicaragua's biggest universities with over 5000 students in undergraduate and post-graduate education.

The very nice and green campus and the academic atmosphere was a great place for all to work together in a relaxed and comfortable way. In a tropical climate, but with air-conditioned rooms, attendees were enjoying the perfect surroundings for successful and enthusiastic collaboration. For DebConf the four biggest auditoriums were placed at the disposal and used intensively by all participants.

The UCA was not only the venue, but also platinum sponsor for DebConf12. Hand in hand with the authorities, professors and students DebConf had been made possible. The participation of the university staff and student volunteers tendered the spirit of the tropical DebConf and the lovely environment of the Nicaraguan culture. For a DebConf, which claims to be a more integrative conference of people working together the UCA has been the perfect place, where everybody was welcomed as a human and respecting the individual expression of each participant as well as the base of Free Software fit perfectly in this libertarian environment. The feedback from the university was incredible and everybody was very happy with the result of the conference in their facilities. A lot of students got infected by the collaborative spirit and the local Linux User Group grew in ideas and people. The professors and the higher authorities of the university were very interested and received via talks, discussions and explanations huge motivation to implement more Free Software in their institutional work, such as in education as well as administration.



Main auditorium

Food

Fernanda Siles

After considering many options during the organization process, the Food team for DebCamp and DebConf12 decided to go with a small catering business as the principal provider of the food for both events. This decision was made after considering both quality, especially regarding vegetarian and vegan options, and price.

Two meals, lunch and dinner, were served everyday in an open area set up for this purpose on campus. Breakfast at the hotel was included in the accommodation fee. The arrangement of the food area implied an extra logistical effort and required the support of volunteers to be done in time; the participants were active in offering help.

Each meal had a cost of USD 5.50. They were ordered in advance using the registration numbers from Pentabarf (starting with 49 for the first day of DebCamp, peaking to 163 in the middle of DebConf). Approximately 10% of the attendees were vegetarian, 3% were vegan and another 3% had special dietary needs related to allergies.

Food tickets were handed out by Front Desk during registration for DebCamp and at the beginning of DebConf; they also collected the tickets from people that were going to eat outside the conference and sold some to people that wanted to eat on campus and were not sponsored. The Food Team had to compare the numbers in Penta and those from Front Desk, and report any change in the order to the provider at least two days in advance. The attendees were asked to report their decisions in time. A constant communication and a good relationship with the provider ensured that the system worked.

The Conference Dinner was provided by the same caterer. The food cost did not differ from that of the regular meals.

This year's local team decided to propose measures to ensure that the event in general, and more specifically food related consumption, would have a very low environmental impact. Water



Preparations for serving a meal

fountains could be found around campus. Organic coffee was bought from a local enterprise and was served in porcelain cups that were given to attendees at the beginning of the event, and all meals were served in reusable dishes.

The general impressions regarding food during the event were very positive. People appreciated the variety of the dishes, especially the vegan and vegetarian menu.

Networking

Daniel Kahn Gillmor

Debconf wouldn't function well without an effective network for the participants to share. We made it happen.

Uplink

The conference had a fiber connection (100Mbps symmetric) to Yota de Nicaragua¹⁹, and Yota provided us a set of 5 public IPv4 addresses and connectivity from there to the rest of the Internet. This uplink was maintained for the full two weeks (DebCamp and DebConf). We also had tunneled IPv6 addresses via a free tunnel to Hurricane Electric²⁰'s Miami PoP.

The Yota uplink came into a server room provided by the University Centroamerica (UCA), and connected to a gigabit switch there, which connected via fiber links to the various rooms we used on the campus. UCA generously provided us with media converters so that each connection effectively terminated in gigabit copper ethernet, which matched our in-room equipment.

We also placed a single wireless access point directly in the server room, since that was close enough to the main hacklab to connect in the event that a media converter or fiber link failed.

Hacklabs

The main hacklab, Xabier Gorostiaga, hosted several dozen people consistently over the course of the conference, up to about 80, with at least one active, network-connected machine per person. Wireless on its own seemed likely to be congested.

We placed two TP-Link devices at the media converter where the connection to the server room came in, and connected them to two additional Buffalo access points on the far side of the room.

Using a handful of 10/100 copper ethernet switches, we ran cabling to most of the tables, so that wired connectivity was available to those who wanted it. This reduced some of the potential wireless congestion.

The second hacklab, Amando Lopez, was significantly smaller, and hosted at most 20 people during the course of the conference, providing ranked rows of seats. We provided only wireless connectivity in Amando Lopez, using a TP-Link and a pair of Buffalo APs.

Talk Rooms

Our primary priority for providing network links in the talk rooms was for the video team and for the talk presenter. The secondary priority was to provide wireless access to the attendees. We had one fiber connection between each talk room and the server room, which terminated in the talk room with a TP-Link device on which we had disabled the wireless device (the "room gateway"). Video team traffic was entirely over gigabit wired ethernet.

¹⁹<http://yota.com.ni>

²⁰<http://tunnelbroker.net>

We used VLAN tagging on each room gateway to split traffic and networks between these two groups, so that traffic could be prioritized both at the gateway and at the switch in the server room, and attendee network chatter would be isolated from the more timing-critical video streams.

In addition to the room gateway, the larger talk room (Aula Magna) had another TP-Link device, two normal Buffalo access points, and a Buffalo WZR-HP-AG300H (also in access point mode).

The smaller talk room (Roberto Teran) had two Buffalo APs in addition to the room gateway.

Wireless Access Points

We used a mixture of 5 TP-Link WR-1043ND, 8 Buffalo WHR-G54 and one Buffalo WZR-HP-AG300H wireless access points (WAPs), as mentioned above.

All WAPs were running OpenWRT trunk firmware because of some bugs affecting the ar71xx boards in the latest release at that time (10.03.1). The TP-Link and Buffalo WZR-HP-AG300H are based on the Atheros (ar71xx) platform, which is well supported in modern kernels. But the Buffalo WHR-G54 devices are based on a Broadcom chipset and had to be run with a legacy 2.4 kernel (brcm-2.4) because of stability issues with the kernel 2.6 based firmware builds.

Local Servers and Network Configuration

We ran one main local server, “homer”, which was used as a router, a DHCP and DNS server for the local networks, and as a local mirror of the debian repositories.

We considered a couple possible variants of how attendee network traffic could be managed. Under one model, we could have an isolated layer 2 domain in each room; under another model, we could provide roaming wireless connectivity, so that a person moving a device between rooms would retain the same connectivity.

The roaming campus model meant more layer 2 chatter across rooms, but the isolated networks model meant more interruptions for individual users. We opted for the roaming campus model, and it seemed to work fine (the video team’s separate subnet’s traffic had priority over the attendee chatter).

While our uplink to Yota was successfully tested at 100Mbps, our connectivity to the rest of the ‘net was often significantly less than 100Mbps. It looked like there were regular bottlenecks between Yota and the next hops. However, the local mirror relieved a significant amount of the network traffic, and the conference stayed online most of the time, barring a few brief power- and thunderstorm-related outages.

DebConf12 in numbers

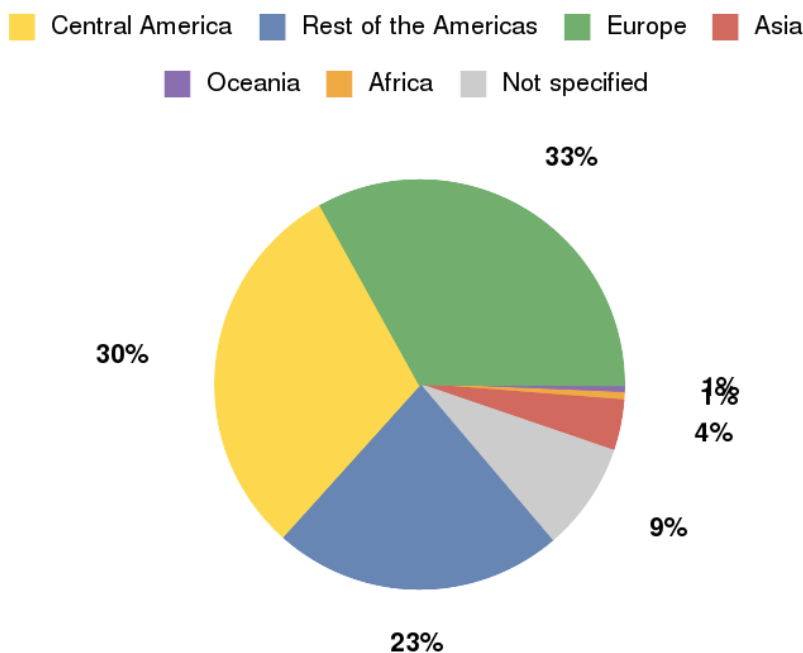
Gunnar Wolf

One fun thing about running such a big conference as DebConf is to look at the numbers' dance year after year, and find trends and explanations underneath the facts. So, looking at the attendance numbers we have every year.

Our conference is truly international in its scope. This year, people from at least 32 different countries²¹ attended our conference. As every year, even though we strive to alternate the continent where DebConf is held to balance out the costs and ease for people interested in joining. For the full list of attendees by country, please refer to the table on page 30.

Having a DebConf in Central America brought along a strong departure from our usual attendance distribution: Central America is a region with strong, committed Free Software user and development communities, but with an income level strongly lower than the developed countries. Having a DebConf in Central America meant that, among the countries that form the region²², we had 53 attendees. 40 further participants were from the rest of the American continent; 58 people came from Europe, 7 from Asia, 1 from Africa and 1 from Oceania.

Attendees by region



An inescapable data point is that this was a rather small DebConf by our historical standards — We had 270 people registered (this means, who expressed interest and at some point seemed likely to attend); 188 people reconfirmed, and 176 arrived. This comes as a big contrast with previous numbers — For DebConf11 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, we had 662 registered, 451 reconfirmed and 335 actually attending; for DebConf10 in New York, United States of America,

²¹ 15 people kept their country of origin private

²² Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize

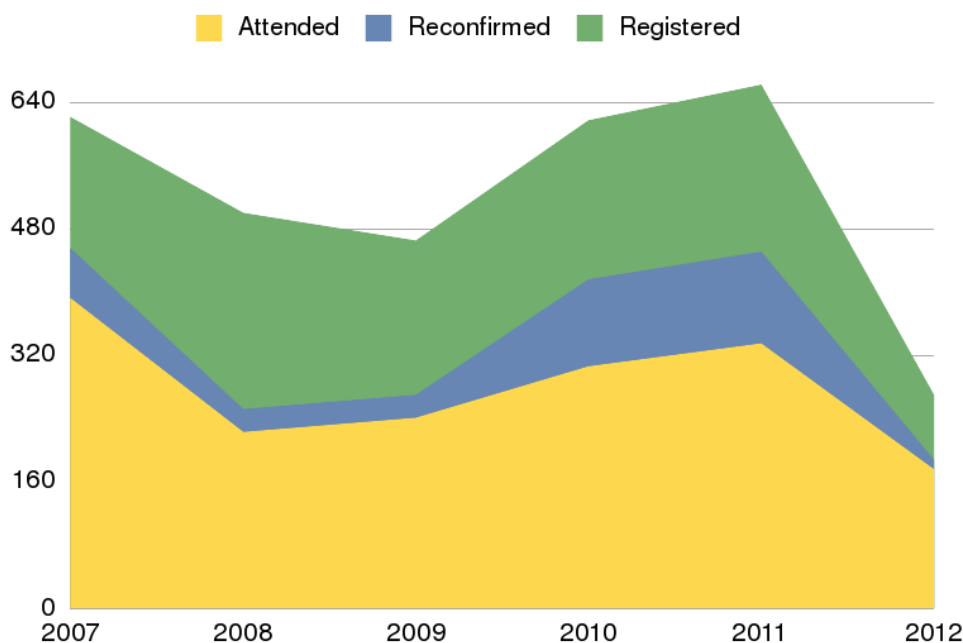
617 registered, 416 reconfirmed and 306 arrived; for DebConf9 in Cáceres, Spain, 465 registered, 270 reconfirmed and 241 arrived; numbers are much more comparable to DebConf8, in Mar del Plata, Argentina, with 500 registered, 252 reconfirmed and 223 attending.

We think this decrease is due to two factors, although it's very hard to determine the role each of them played: First, in 2012 the global economy (and particularly the European Union's) underwent a severe crisis. Many people interested in attending, as well as their employers, expressed concerns for investing their time and money at a time there is no economic certainty.

On the other hand, Nicaragua is farther off regional air transport hubs than most of the previous conferences — As, notably, DebConf8 had very similar attendance numbers.

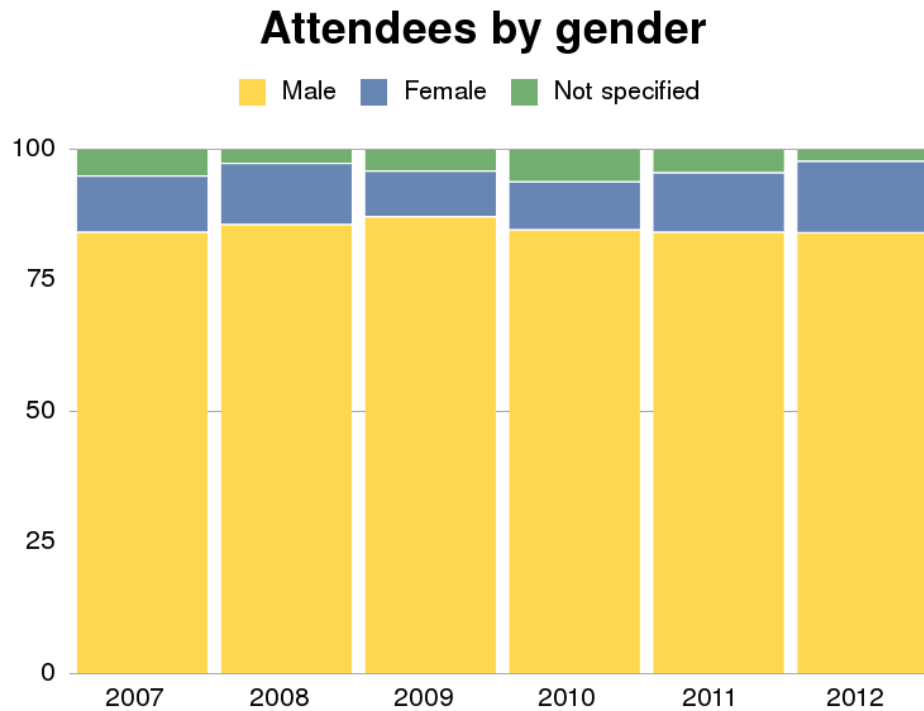
Worth noting, however, is that we managed to get an attendance estimation much closer to reality than in previous years. We often close the reconfirmation period around two weeks before DebCamp starts, and our expenses (mainly the hotel bookings) are made according to those numbers. While DebConf8 and DebConf9 were almost in our acceptable 10% mis-estimation margin (with respectively 88.4% and 89.2% rates), DebConf10 had just 73.5% and DebConf11 74.2%. DebConf12 registered a 94.1%.

Attendees by year



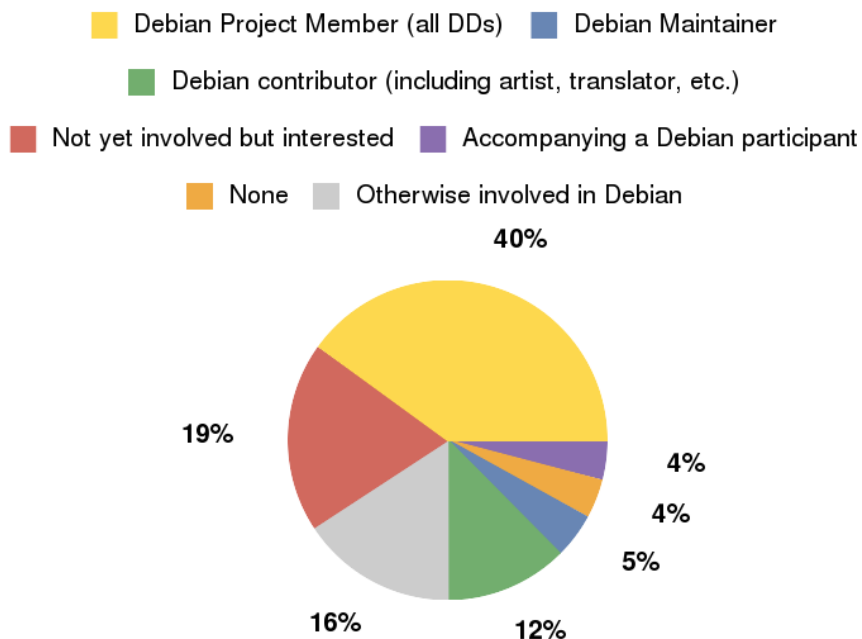
One topic that has been championed by Debian since it was brought to our attention, in the DebConf4 session where the Debian Women group was formed, is the hostility technical, “geeky” conferences usually carry towards women, and the lack of women involved in Free Software projects. From having approximately 3% woman participation back in 2003, we have grown to have around 10%. While this number is still far from showing a healthy balance, the trend is positive. Worth noting is that shortly before DebConf, in May, the Debian project voted a General Resolution ratifying the Diversity Statement²³.

²³http://www.debian.org/vote/2012/vote_002



As for DebConf's focus: Our conference aims at making Debian better, and our main focus is to provide an environment for already involved people to work together. As a secondary target, we try to increase Debian (and, in general, Free Software) development in the geographic region where we meet — This year, 40% of the attendees were Debian Developers, 5% were Debian Maintainers, 12% were unofficial contributors, 16% were otherwise involved in Debian — This means that 45% already had a long-term commitment to the project, and that 73% were active contributors. From the remaining 27%, 19% are not yet involved with the project but interested in becoming so.

Attendees by role in Debian



Attendees per country of origin

27	Nicaragua
18	United Kingdom
17	United States
15	Not specified
12	El Salvador
8	Canada, Mexico, Switzerland
7	Costa Rica, Germany
6	France
5	Japan
4	Austria, Guatemala, Spain
3	Belgium
2	Colombia, Greece, Honduras, Ireland, Martinique, Sweden, Venezuela
1	Argentina, Australia, Belize, China, Panama, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Taiwan

Budgeting

Henning Sprang

Budgeting for DebConf is hard work, and involves a lot of people. The work starts early with planning the budget and seeking sponsorship, both financial contributions and more material forms of sponsorship such as wiring and network hardware, furniture and other equipment for hacklabs and food areas, space for the conference, and discounts on items that need to be purchased or rented.

The people involved in the budgeting, sponsorship, and accounting team balance the available resources, needs of the attendees, and constraints of the location, fitting the pieces together to make a conference that's good, productive, and enjoyable for everyone.

Budget planning

The budget for DebConf 2012 was based on an assumption of 75 DebCamp attendees and 150 DebConf attendees. The following table outlines the original budget, including some indirect sponsorship in the form of discounts.

Hotel	45 000 USD
Convention Center	11 500 USD
Food	22 000 USD
Internet connection	5 000 USD
Equipment and infrastructure	4 000 USD
Local transportation costs	1 000 USD
Conference Attendee Package (T-shirt, Cups, Programme Sheet, Namebadge, etc.)	3 600 USD
Daytrip	3 000 USD
Social Dinner	2 100 USD
Flight Sponsorship for Developers	30 000 USD

No further costs were budgeted for personel and organization, as DebConf is traditionally organized by volunteers who graciously contribute a substantial part of the time and energy needed to run the conference.

At the time of the initial budget calculation, the projected costs were only partly covered by committed sponsorships, which amounted to 72,000 USD. As a result, a great deal of work was invested in getting further discounts and more sponsorship. When fundraising efforts didn't meet the full projected budget above, the team trimmed the overall budget by reducing the amount budgeted to travel sponsorships for the participants.

Sponsorship

The total amount of sponsorship, as well as the number of companies sponsoring, went down for DebConf12. There is no single, clear cause for this reduction, but several factors may have had an influence. For one thing, the sponsorship team consists purely of volunteers (as with everything in Debian), and this year there were fewer people available to work on seeking sponsors, compared to previous DebConfs. Another possible influence could be that in previous years DebConf received

substantial governmental support locally, and so other sponsorship was less critical to the success of DebConf, and gradually became less of a focus. We hope that we can optimize the sponsorship process for the next DebConf. Ideally, each DebConf will conclude with a balanced budget, though we can certainly survive a few lean years, as long as the average over time remains positive.

Accounting, Finance management and transfers

Accounting in an environment as spontaneous and chaotic as the ant-hill of a DebConf hacklab is an interesting task. It's challenging, especially when you don't even have a closed room or a desk for all the papers. But it's also fun, and you get to connect with about every team working on organizing the conference. It's just great!

Working in a country where wire transfers between local banks just don't work, so that even very large amounts are paid in cash, is also quite interesting.

Final numbers

The final calculation of expenses amounted to a total of 101,100 USD, grouped into the following major expense categories:

Hotel	35 500 USD	-
Convention Center	11 500 USD	=
Food/Coffee/Nutrition	24 200 USD	+
Internet connection	4 400 USD	-
Equipment and infrastructure	1 900 USD	-
Local transportation and Team Travel costs	700 USD	-
Conference Attendee Package (T-shirt, Cups, Programme Sheet, Namebadge, etc.)	3 400 USD	
Daytrip(only food)	2 000 USD	-
Social Dinner	<i>included in food</i>	
Flight Sponsorship for Developers	16 800 USD	
Bankfees	700 USD	

The grand total of financial sponsorship raised for DebConf12 was just under 88,000 USD, divided into the following main categories:

Sponsorship and Donations	59 000 USD
Professional attendee fees	27 500 USD
Sales of Merchandise (Tshirts, Cups, Stickers, etc.)	1 100 USD

Comparing the total sponsorships to the total costs, DebConf 2012 closed with a negative balance of -12,300 USD. This loss was covered by a positive balance remaining from previous DebConf.

Registration

Registration to attend DebConf happens in several stages. Several months before the start of the conference (16 April), coinciding with the Call for Papers, registration opens. People can then start to apply for sponsored registration via Pentabarf, a conference management system with a web interface. After approximately a month (15 May), the deadline to apply for sponsored registration passes. Those who register after this point are no longer eligible for sponsored registration, and are encouraged to use paid Professional or Corporate registration. Registration remains open until the conference period for those who will arrange hotel accommodation themselves, or who live nearby.

Corporate registration (US\$1300 in 2012) is intended for organisations who wish to send their employees to attend DebConf. This registration fee optionally includes accommodation and food during DebConf. We also offer a *Professional* registration category (US\$600 in 2011), which covers only the direct costs to the conference from the attendee.

As DebConf approaches, a few weeks before the event, the reconfirmation phase begins. Attendees are required to log in once again to Pentabarf, and indicate that they really do intend to come to DebConf. The initial registration process gives the organising team an estimate of attendee numbers, while the reconfirmation process gives more precise numbers. This in turn facilitates the process of assigning rooms, arranging catering of meals, and so on.

Finally, in the first few days of DebConf itself, the registration team's work flows into that of the front desk team, and the two teams tend to have a few members in common. Upon arriving at DebConf, attendees are checked in by members of the front desk team, and receive their name badge, and their conference bag, with a t-shirt, materials from sponsors, and information about DebConf itself and the local area.



DebConf registration desk

Credits

It would have been impossible to make such a large event reality without the outstanding help of a great group of volunteers – starting with those whom we can’t name here, since they just volunteered during the conference to do various tasks, and ending with the core team, who started organising this year’s DebConf right after the last one ended.

It’s impossible to list everyone who contributed to make this event happen; there were too many contributors. We apologise for every name we forgot to mention here.

DebConf Chairs	Moray Allan Gunnar Wolf	Holger Levsen
Global coordination	Moray Allan Gunnar Wolf	Holger Levsen Philip Hands
Local coordination	Leandro Gómez Norman García	Felix Delattre
Sponsorship	Denis Cáceres Hector Oron Rodrigo Rodríguez Norman García Gaudenz Steinlin	Holger Levsen Anto Recio Jennifer Vargas Luis Uribe
Budgeting	Richard Darst Holger Levsen Felix Delattre	Henning Sprang Leandro Gómez Norman García
Registration and travel	Phil Hands Andrew McMillan Norman García	Mauricio Dinarte Rene Mayorga Gema Jiménez Cantarero
Travel bursaries	David Bremner Didier Raboud Luca Capello Neil McGovern Tiago B. Vaz	Christian Perrier Giacomo Catenazzi Norman García Gaudenz Steinlin
Visas	Diana Herrera Hansel Miranda Wave	Gema Jiménez Cantarero Leandro Gómez
Accessibility	Marcelo Gutierrez Tássia Camões	Rodrigo Rodríguez
Pentabarf	Gunnar Wolf	Adolfo Fitoria
Room assignments	Ana Guerrero	Leandro Gómez
Talks selection	Gunnar Wolf	Daniel Kahn Gillmor

	Joerg Jaspert Andreas Tille Micah Anderson Giacomo Catenazzi	Blars Blarson Luciano Bello Tássia Camões
DebianDay Talks selection	Aura Lila Gutierrez Tejada Norman García	Leandro Gómez
Talks scheduling	Gunnar Wolf Giacomo Catenazzi	Tássia Camões
Website and art	Felix Delattre Jen Vargas	Leandro Gómez Aura Lila Gutierrez Tejada
Networking team	Andrew McMillan Philipp Kern Franko Ramirez	Bayardo Luis Uribe Samuel Gutiérrez Avilés
Hotels	Diana Herrera	Norman García
Local transportation	William Centeno	
Food	Denis Cáceres Fernanda Siles	Diana Herrera Gema Jiménez Cantarero
Debian Day	Aura Lila Gutierrez David Gonzalez Blanchard Norman García Iris Cortes Solano Hansel Wave Ibel Zuniga	Jaime Alberto Narvaez Quintanilla Oscar Gutierrez Jonathan Muñoz Vanegas Yorsbill Leonardo Bustos Castillo Randy Boudier
Day trip	Aura Lila Gutiérrez Felix Delattre Moray Allan Randy Boudier	Leandro Gómez Sharon Gómez Hansel Wave Ibel Zuniga
Fun and free time	Fito Taleno Mejía Felix Delattre	Rodrigo Rodríguez
Cheese Master	Christian Perrier	
Cheese team	Adolfo Fitoria Claudia Rosales Didier Raboud Esteban Monge Gema Jiménez Hector Colina	Cathy Nonet David Calderon Enrique Nabet Eva Ramon Gunnar Wolf Henning Sprang

	Hideki Yamane Jim Kolvenback Judit Foglszinger Mònica Ramírez Arceda Philipp Hug René Mayorga Simó Albert i Beltran Zamir Flores Rossman	Jennifer Vargas Gonzalez Josué Abarca Keyla Merino Phil Hands Regina Daichman Roger Orellana Tiago Bortoletto Vaz
Final report typesetting	Gunnar Wolf Didier Raboud	Moray Allan
Video Team Coordinator	Holger Levsen	
Video Team	Eduardo Rosales Tássia Camões Enrique Nabet Giacomo Catenazzi Randy Boudier Jamie Narvaez Michel Gallant Simó Albert i Beltran Víctor Manuel Martínez	Tiago Vaz Marcelo Gutierrez Henning Sprang Fernanda Siles Hansel Wave Franko Ramirez Ibel Zuniga



Attendees on day trip

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Moray Allan

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