

Godfred Ahuma

I am a program assistant at the ITES Secretariat - Ministry of Communications, Ghana. I was first introduced to Internet governance by a colleague at the workplace. Initially I was a bit skeptical about the whole thing because as a fresh graduate from the Presbyterian University College and a technical person, I wasn't very familiar with issues even though I sometimes read related articles. My expectation was all about technicalities, but I have been exposed to a new dimension in the area of Internet governance. I am most grateful to Canada, the ITU and DiploFoundation for that.

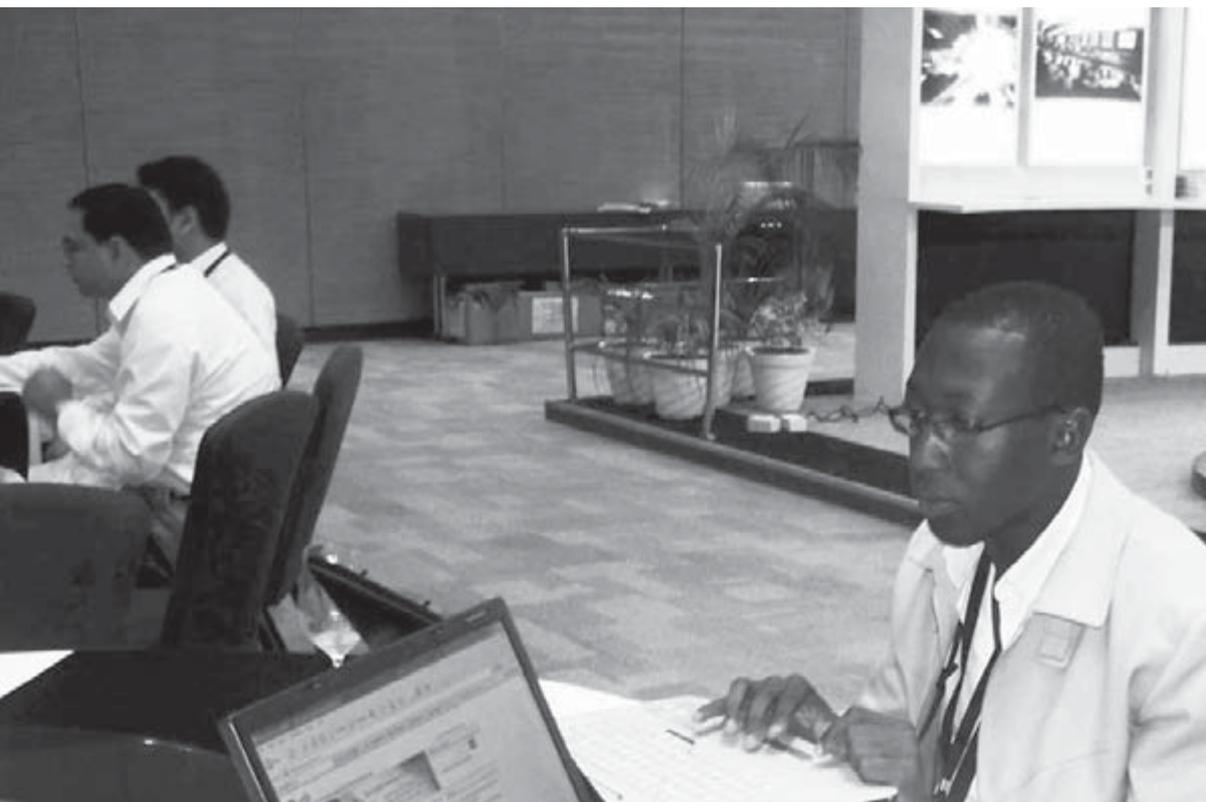
As a newbie at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), I realized one thing, that is that Africa, and narrowing specifically to the ECOWAS sub-region, has a low number of Internet users due to a myriad of problems; however the continent is not left out of the challenges plaguing the Internet, such as Spam, cyber security, privacy, data protection and child online safety.

Various governments have come up with different interventions to address these challenges, like cybersecurity which is on the rise. The development of human resource and capacity building has been identified as one of the stumbling blocks, because there is no platform or training programme in the ECOWAS sub-region which creates in-depth awareness and addresses Internet governance in all dimensions.

Upon completion of the DiploFoundation capacity building programme, my research in cybersecurity and my participation in the IGF, I have initiated a move to create the ECOWAS IGF. The objective is to help build a regional Internet Governance Forum with complementing national forums. All stakeholders, including governments, industry, academia and civil society will be brought together to discuss identified problems and emerging issues, explore solutions, build capacity and forge ahead while contributing to the annual UN Internet Governance Forum.

To achieve this objective I have appealed to persons in the sub-region who have had any form of training or involvement in Internet governance to bring their experience in this initiative. I am happy to say the response so far has been good and I believe that with the support of like-minded organizations this will become a reality.





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I am also in consultation with the Principal and the ICT Head of Department of the Presbyterian University College to begin a capacity building programme in Internet governance for students and all stakeholders. I have so far introduced over twenty people to Internet governance after the Hyderabad forum and am expecting an appreciable number to become involved.

Currently, I am furthering my research in Cybersecurity and Critical Information Infrastructure Protection. This is in preparation to helping develop curricula for plans for DiploFoundation, the ITU and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy for further training and research in Cybersecurity.

I commend India for positioning itself very high on the global Information Technology hierarchy. I realized this position was achieved through the commitment of the Government, industry and all stakeholders. The top down approach to the development of Information Technology and issues related to it, is something worth emulating by other countries especially developing nations. The host country did a great job for the organization and hosting of the event; the conference centre was well-prepared and included an effective transport system.



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Ghana is now at the stage of promulgating laws to create an enabling environment for the daily usage of Information Technology and Industry. As a program assistant in an office dealing with the private sector, my participation in the Internet Governance Forum has enlightened me on the concerns of the private sector and coming from Government bodies as well. I now know and understand these concerns, as well as approaches to be adopted in resolving bottlenecks to foster good relations between the private sector and Government. Both stakeholder groups are of critical importance, and their relationship should be that of collaboration.

With my interest in Cybersecurity, the different sessions and workshops attended on the subject has equipped me with an approach to deal with the challenges of Cybersecurity and policy formulation considerations and strategies.

I must say my participation in the Hyderabad IGF has not only broadened my horizon but has really widened my scope of thinking and knowledge. It has sharpened the way I look at Internet governance issues. My career profile has been enhanced. I am now poised and well-rounded, ready to contribute and help address the growing menace of cyber crime in Ghana and the global challenges of Internet governance.

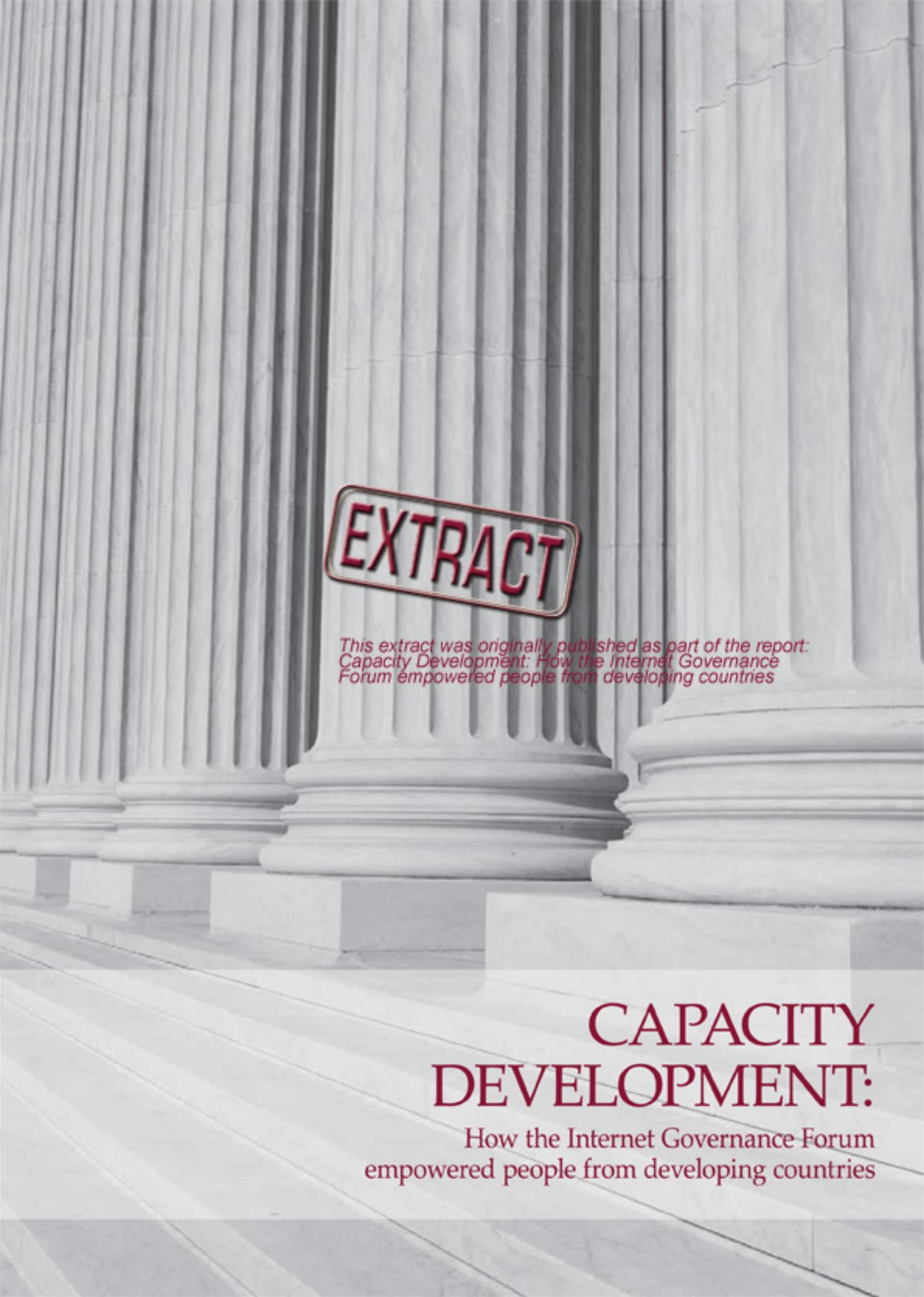
The forum offered me the opportunity to meet diverse groups of people such as colleagues Ammar and Rasha from the Ministry of Communications in Iraq and Chinese blogger Isaac Mao just to mention a few. I have been able to establish useful links with people involved in all aspects of the Internet governance process.

Before the conference I anticipated a situation where the big players and countries would come and do all the talking, imposing their views and plans on the rest. I was surprised to witness a liberal environment where different stakeholders presented their views and made contributions which were discussed by all. There was rapport between all stakeholders during discussions. This promoted healthy debates. From what I witnessed and looking at the mandate of the IGF, I think that as the five-year tenure of the IGF draws nigh, the term of the of the IGF should be extended, and avenues should be explored to increase the participation governments of developing nations in future IGFs. ■

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A row of white classical columns with a red 'EXTRACT' sign. The sign is a red-bordered rectangle with the word 'EXTRACT' in red, slanted, capital letters. The background is a grayscale image of the columns, with a semi-transparent dark gray area at the bottom containing the main title and subtitle.

EXTRACT

*This extract was originally published as part of the report:
Capacity Development: How the Internet Governance
Forum empowered people from developing countries*

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:

**How the Internet Governance Forum
empowered people from developing countries**