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It is evident that Nigeria is just developing in the aspect of Information Technology literacy. Most of the youth do not have access to the Internet at home and the cyber cafes are yet to be enough to meet the needs of the users. Digital education is therefore not well-accepted because of the high level of IT ignorance in the country. My attendance at the IGF 2008 afforded me the opportunity to see the various benefits of digital education and the possible backlash that this great opportunity may present.

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However, the government of Nigeria is making a giant stride to improve the situation by rolling out programs that would in one form or the other include Information Technology in the curriculum of primary and secondary students. This effort through the Ministry of Education both at the national and state levels is hoped to increase IT awareness among students by catching them young, and thus, forming a future generation that is exposed to the dynamics of our time.

At the session “Challenges facing Internet Operators in Developing Countries” I got in-depth knowledge on the possible problems such as redundant policies and regulations which are not in tune with the dynamics of technology advancement. In Nigeria, due the high level of illiteracy, most IT policies and regulations are difficult to comprehend for the common man. Also, the basic amenities needed to encourage the establishment and smooth running of IT business are not fully put in place. Market and competition, as well as the high cost of equipment and materials remain a challenge in Nigeria, as it is in other developing countries.

At the IGF the relationship between cybercrime and traditional crime, and the extent to which violators would go to achieve their objectives, became clear to me. As I listened at the Dynamic Coalition: Safety Child Online presentation by the representative of the Youth Protection Round Table (YPRT) and heard about their practice of merging technology-enhanced and education-based strategies for youth protection, I saw the signifi-





cance of educating users about the importance of the Internet, and then offering solutions to the dangers youths may encounter with Internet usage.

It was also made known that though accountability and self-responsibility are issues of protection for the Internet, parents, as guardians, should take care of the safety of their children who are young users of the Internet. This is more so in Nigeria where the law differentiates between crimes that can be committed by an adult and by a juvenile. It means therefore that in Nigeria, the regulation on self-responsibility and accountability should be a major focus of government if the dangers posed by the Internet use are to be averted. Of particular interest is the increasing rate of child abuse and molestation even amongst a people that are presumably “Internet-ignorant”.

It has become imperative to educate parents and the rest of the public on these issues and to begin to work with the government in order to control these problems.

To commence this effort, I touched base with a civil society organization: HOPE Worldwide, which works mostly with youths to reduce early sexual debut in young people, as well as to reduce sexual violence in communities where they work. The HOPE representatives were excited at the increased concern of individuals and organisations for the youths of today. I have now joined the HOPE worldwide youth program as a volunteer, to educate youth and adolescents who benefit from their program, and of course we are also looking at how parents can be involved as well. This is also intended to be brought forward to the attention of the government by the organisation.

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Based on my relationship with this organisation, I intend to start a forum that will include youths, adolescents and their parents, which can set in motion lasting ideas that can strengthen government ideas on IT and legislation, on child abuse, trafficking and child pornography. This meeting will be held twice a month, and hopefully in all of the local government associations of the federation. These fora will, over time, become an advocacy group or pressure group that will advocate and press for strengthening of government policies and legislation around Internet issues in Nigeria. We are also looking forward to developing a column on IT in a popular national daily.

The world has indeed become a global village and in 2008, India was a melting pot with the hosting of the annual IGF in Hyderabad which brought together faces from different parts of the world. My gratitude goes to the ITU, who through the sponsorship from the Canadian government and in collaboration with Diplo Foundation sponsored me to attend the IGF annual meeting in Hyderabad. This provided me with a great opportunity as a young Internet enthusiast to meet with and network among the world’s best in IT. The alliances and networking opportunities provided by this learning experience will further enhance my efficiencies using IT and thereby enhance the ideals of the civil society where I work. ■



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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, italicized, sans-serif 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:

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empowered people from developing countries**