

Rasha Hameed

I work as the planning manager for the State Company for Internet Services, one of the Iraqi Ministry of Communications companies.

I can say that DiploFoundations's Capacity Building program was my first interface to Internet governance, and this allowed me to connect the dots with the current situation in Iraq.

During the two wars and siege in the 90's, Iraq faced the destruction of its telecom infrastructure. Not only that, Iraq was ignorant of most matters relating to cybersecurity and protection operations that were carried out through email monitoring or allowing Internet access to a certain segment of users with access levels varying according to the user's importance.

After the war, things started to change. The Iraqi market has been opened to large and random ISPs and users of the Internet, whereby the private sector began to enter the sector after years of monopoly by the government and the absence of regulation and rules. This presented lots of challenges for us.

Given this background, the top priority in our public policy is to rebuild the damaged infrastructure and to address policies and regulations as a key part of the reconstruction process.

The first step was educating our employees. The private sector has an important involvement in the process through partnerships, which have proved effective within a very short time.

Additionally, there is the importance of establishing e-Government to facilitate transactions. One of the leading achievements is a project on wireless broadband, which will start its technical development phase very soon.

This work on advancing e-Government starts with awareness-raising and the education of the whole community, and those in charge in the Iraqi ministries in particular. Some of the accomplishments have been the active involvement of the Prime Minister in the project, and the involvement of the ministries. We had the first e-Government





workshop in November 2008, one month before the IGF in Hyderabad. At the workshop, the private sector played an important role with a number of presentations about their ambitions and vision to develop the sector.

As a follow up, there will be a new conference entitled “Cyber-security and the Government Role” that will take place in February 2009. In April, the first large Internet event, Internet Expo2009, will be held in Baghdad, Iraq. So the country is moving at a fast pace towards setting up the right information environment, and the IGF was a valuable opportunity for me to get exposure to the best practices around the globe that can help my work in this process.

My expectations for the IGF were high, since during Diplo’s courses we had analyzed many times what had been discussed at the previous IGF meeting in Brazil 2007. During the discussions I understood the importance of participating in the next IGF in Hyderabad. I realized I needed to take part in order to get an image of what other countries and regions acting in the process were doing, and to apply this to the reconstruction process in Iraq. The value I got from connecting with leading experts from all over the world with deep experience in ICT and IG debates was immense.

My fascination with the IGF made me want to join all of the workshops and meetings during the forum, but unfortunately it was impossible as many debates I wanted to see were being held at the same time. So I directed my focus to the themes of multilingualism, youth, Summer schools, and the IPv4 to IPv6 transition. I also followed Challenges for the Future, which was a presentation of projects that offer a wider involvement for youth within the Internet governance process, as is done in Egypt, which works to involve the youth in programs and activities.

Now I want to develop and implement capacity building programs to multiply the value I got from the IGF in Hyderabad. I see the importance of educating people on cyber threats and child online protection, and ensuring youth involvement in the process. One project I would support is to assess how we can deliver Internet service to urban and rural areas in the country with a better QoS (Quality of Service).



It was really great to hear about the achievements around the world and the many strategies used to bridge the divide; how everyone was proud of sharing their country's experiment for each issue during the hallway short stops or during lunch time or even on the way to the hotel.

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Iraq has the intentions and capabilities to solve its problems, but has to direct this capacity in the right direction. One of the necessary elements is to promote the country's openness to the outside world after long years of isolation. To me this seems like a long path, since there is still the need to legislate and define laws and regulations governing the process, and I'm willing to pursue this challenge.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the ITU and to the Canadian Government for helping me to participate in this meeting, and for their efforts to involve Iraq by including me as a member of the IGF Hyderabad fellowship program. My sincere thanks to all of my colleagues in the fellowship program, and the meeting participants for their valuable information, which I am now working hard to reflect in my ministry. I hope to meet with everyone at the next IGF meeting in Egypt. ■

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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:
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Forum empowered people from developing countries*

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:

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