EMERGING LEADERS

FOR THE DIGITAL WORLD

EXTRACT

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Zoniaina Fitahiana Rakotomalala from Madagascar is bridging the digital divide

I was born in Befelatanana, Madagascar in 1986 as the eldest of two brothers and one sister. Being the eldest instilled in me a strong sense of responsibility and maturity, as my father passed away when I was still very young. Since that time, I have worked hard in my studies to become more independent and to help people. What I can say is that perseverance is one key factor of success.

From a young age, I was very inquisitive and asked about anything and everything. Today, travelling and meeting new people are exciting experiences for me.

I spent my childhood and teenage years between 1991 and 2003 at College Saint Francois Xavier, where I earned my Baccalaureate degree in Literature. In 2004, I enrolled at the University of Antananarivo in the Faculty of Management, which is one of the most prestigious public schools in Madagascar. In 2008, I got a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), majoring in Finance and Accounting and graduating with Distinction. The same year, I was selected as an alumnus to participate in the ITU Telecom Asia 2008, held in Thailand.

Giving a little, getting a lot

Since 2007, I have volunteered and been president of a charitable association, called Youth of Tomorrow. Our main mission is to school and equip gifted children and young people from poor households. To these ends, we grant financial help to hundreds of students across the country by paying their school fees until they

graduate and by providing various educational training.

My experiences in leading people have pushed me to learn more about leadership. In a country like Madagascar, it is not an easy task to be a young leader. In 2008, I enrolled in the National Leadership Institute of Madagascar (NLIM), which was created by the government to form a generation of high-profile change agents.

In 2010, I decided to enter into public administration. I am now studying at the National School of Administration (ENAM) and am preparing my final thesis in order to obtain a degree in Taxation.

Madagascar is the fourth biggest island in the world and is located in the Indian Ocean off the southwest coast Africa. In recent years, the government and private sectors have made a joint initiative in building Madagascar as an IT-driven economy through the elaboration of our national ICT policy document and investment in setting up a national backbone and links through two international submarine optic cables (Lion and Eassy).

Internet governance (IG) is a new field which lacks expertise in Madagascar. Some of the pressing issues in Madagascar are the digital divide, IT illiteracy, and the inadequacy of national jurisdiction with technology advances. For instance, cybersecurity, electronic signatures, and e-commerce are some areas which require serious consideration. What's more, the lack of understanding of those issues by government bodies, legislators, and politicians is delaying the adoption of new laws.

Envisioning a bright future

My mission is to bridge the digital divide in Madagascar. In 2007, I initiated various ICT basic training programmes in partnership with local ICT centres, targeted at members of our association. In 2009, I organised an ICT workshop in the rural municipality of Fiadanana, where thousands of students saw a computer for the first time and learnt about the uses of the Internet. My future project is to set up a Computer Learning Centre, a one-stop-

shop lab for teachers, children, and youth in this region.

I envision Madagascar as a nation where the digital divide is bridged and the full potential of ICT is positively leveraged to benefit the whole population, as well as the private sectors, and public administration. I strongly believe that the appropriate use of ICTs presents a unique opportunity for developing countries to make up for missed opportunities.

Emerging as a leader

DiploFoundation's learning approach fostered my curiosity for various subjects I was previously unfamiliar with. The IG course has equipped me with an in-depth understanding of the impact of ICT and its relationships to other fields, such as the social sciences, economy, and finance. The course on ICT Policy Strategy has taught me how to successfully use ICT as a tool for development. As a future member of the Ministry responsible for Inland Revenue, I can now play a significant role in helping the fiscal authorities design a sound national policy and develop laws on international taxation.
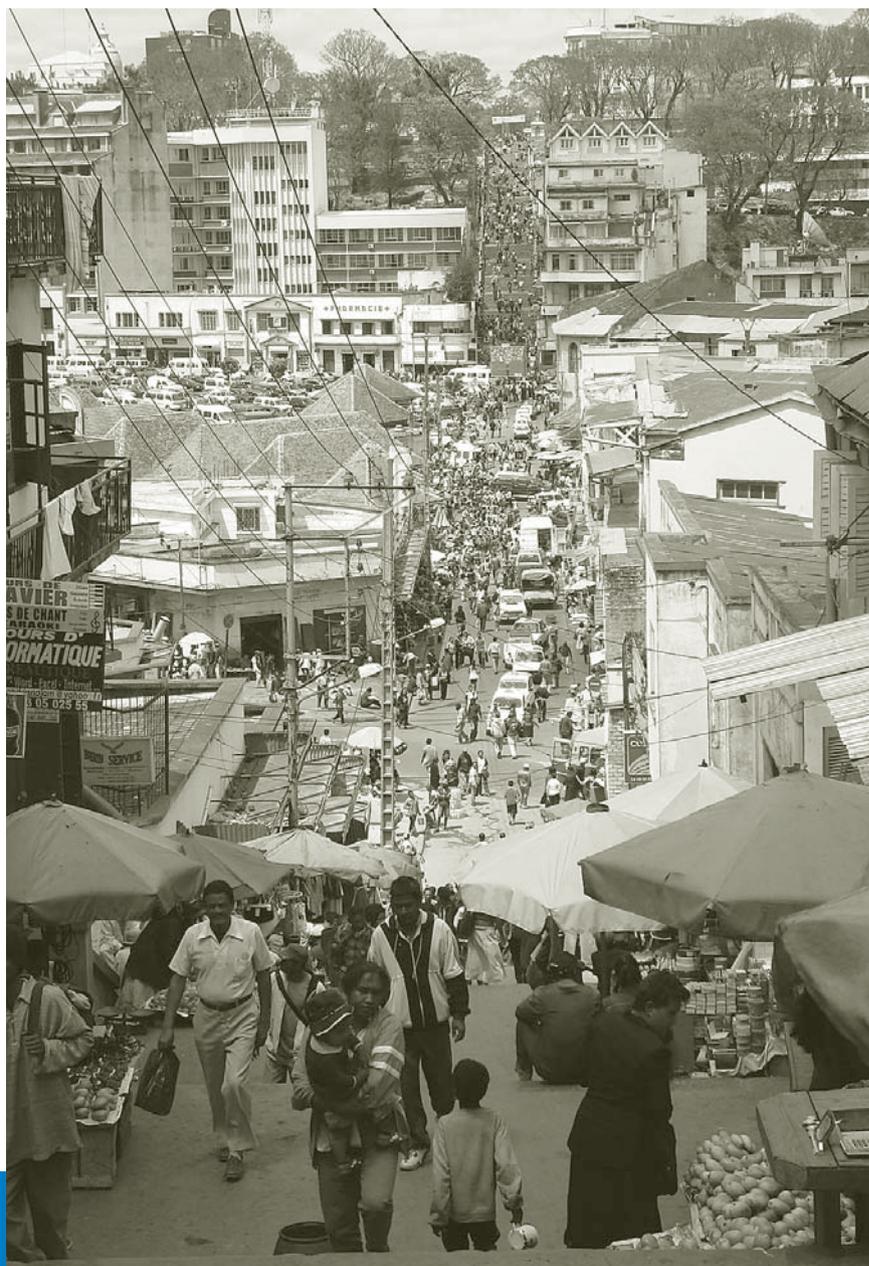
Moreover, the economic aspects of IG have been interesting for me. The course has given me insight into key public administration issues and other urgent issues regarding electronics.
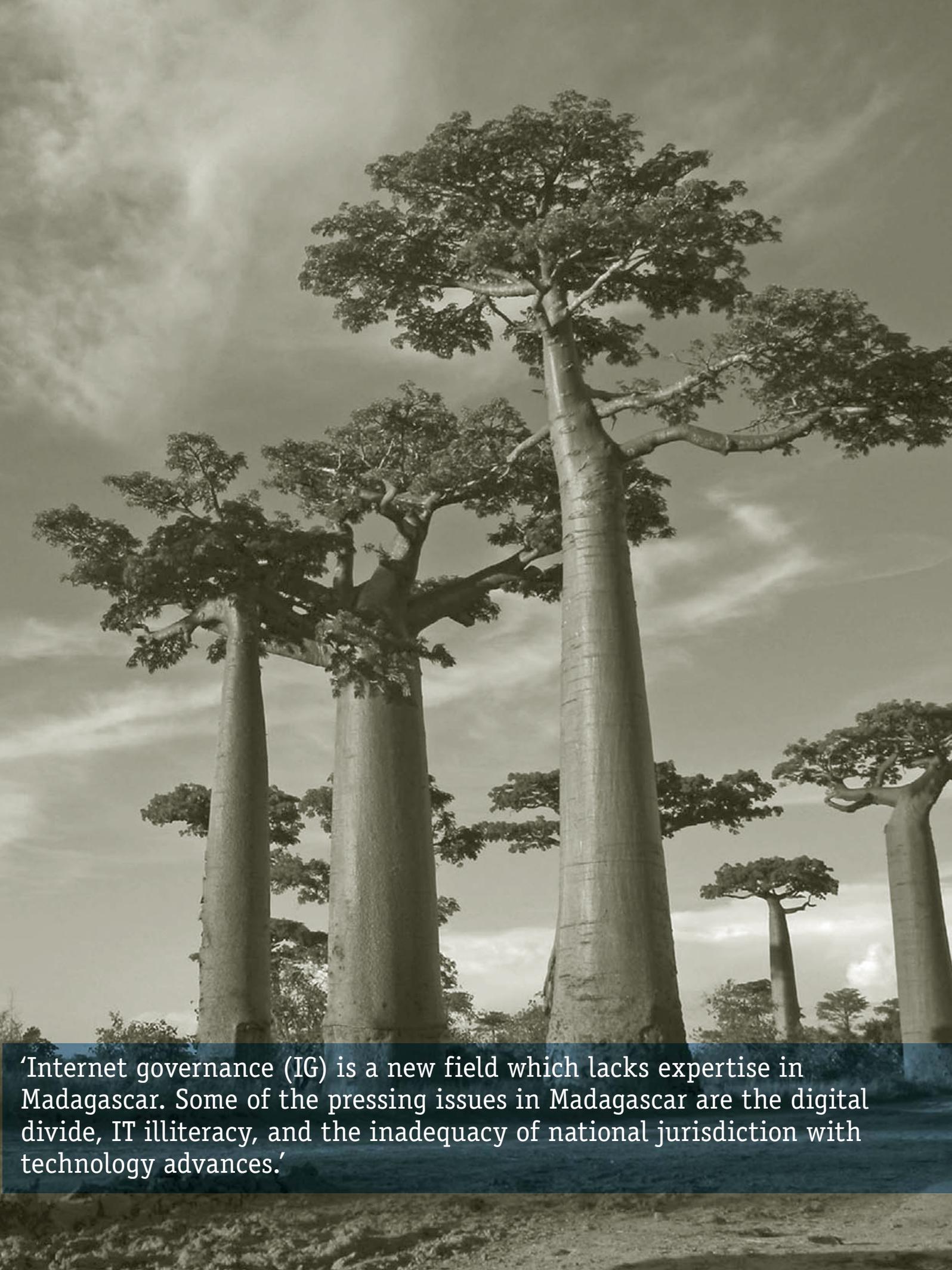
This interest has translated into my journey into IG research,

where I have chosen the specific topic of the taxation of electronic commerce in Madagascar. In fact, for the Malagasy fiscal authority, e-commerce is a new domain where many electronic transactions remain untraceable and may represent a huge loss for the state revenue if no measures are taken in the years ahead. It is worth noting that the Malagasy general code of taxes does not include directives on the taxation that will rule online commerce.

My journey into IG has been an amazing experience, and I feel proud and confident to be called an Emerging Leader. I would like to encourage others, particularly from developing countries to get involved in Internet governance.

Zoniaina Fitahiana Rakotomalala is studying at the National School of Administration (ENAM) and preparing his final thesis in order to obtain a degree in Taxation. ■

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