



## “Using Technology to Promote Good Governance and Economic Transparency in West Africa”

May 30, 2013

Mobilizing communities to fight corruption, monitor public service delivery, and advocate for improved transparency are top priorities in West Africa, and technology can play a key role in inspiring collective action. “While we have experienced a lot of instability and infrastructure challenges in the region,” **Kwami Ahiabenu** noted, “there are huge opportunities for technology to make a difference today.”

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*“The stage has been set for governments, media, civil society, and private companies to harness the power of digital technologies to transform the region through participatory decision making processes. This will guarantee the judicious use of West Africa’s natural resource wealth, thereby ensuring that the dividends of democracy are made tangible for all citizens.”*

—Kwami Ahiabenu, II  
*Technology Expert, Ghana*

Ahiabenu, founder and president of the International Institute for ICT Journalism ([www.penplusbytes.org](http://www.penplusbytes.org)), called on civil society, media, state actors, and international stakeholders to back innovative projects, invest in information and communication technology (ICT), and ensure a supportive legal environment that effectively harnesses the power of ICTs. By utilizing technology to strengthen civic participation and collective action, he said, the region can better manage its natural resource wealth, encourage poverty reduction, and promote transparency.

Discussant **Larry Diamond**, founding coeditor of the *Journal of Democracy* and co-chair of the research council of the International Forum for Democratic Studies, argued that West Africa must develop new strategies that employ ICTs to generate political incentives among elected officials to push for better governance. Incentive structures must be linked to a real fear among politicians that they may not win re-election if they govern poorly. He emphasized the need to expand the number of civil society organizations utilizing new technology platforms throughout the region, especially during elections.

In response to questions, Ahiabenu identified evaluation of new technologies in promoting good governance as a major challenge in the region. To maintain their integrity, ICT platforms focused on curbing corruption and monitoring public service delivery must have built-in security and safeguard the identity and privacy of users.

*The Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program enables activists, practitioners, scholars, and journalists from around the world to deepen their understanding of democracy and enhance their ability to promote democratic change. The views expressed in this presentation represent the analysis and opinions of the speaker and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for Democracy or its staff.*