

REPORT OF THE MAY SESSION OF THE NORTHERN ICT4D SERIES
“Free and Open Source Software”

“A program is free software if users have all of the freedom to run the program for any purpose (freedom 0), the freedom to study how the program works and adapt it to your needs (freedom1), the freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour (freedom 2), the freedom to improve the program, and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits. (Freedom 3)”

The above were the words of Mr. Hassan Hamadu a members of the Northern Ghana Trainers Group. He said the above words when the members of the Northern Ghana Trainers Group took their turn at the May session of the Northern ICT4D series to share knowledge on the topic, “Free and Open Source Software” .

Mr. Hassan mentioned that Open source does not just mean access to the source code and that the terms of distribution must comply with the criteria of free distribution, source code, derived work, integrity of the author’s source code and no discrimination against persons or groups.

He added that free software is a matter of liberty, not price and that to understand the concept of free software one should think of “free” as in “free speech,” and not as in “free beer.” He said free software is a matter of the users’ freedom to run, copy, distribute, study, change and improve the software. He further went on to say that a program is free software if users have all of these freedoms explained above. Thus, one should be free to redistribute copies, either with or without modifications, either gratis or charging a fee for distribution, to anyone anywhere. Being free to do these things means (among

other things) that one does not have to ask or pay for permission. One should also have the freedom to make modifications and use them privately in their own work or play, without even mentioning that they exist. The freedom to use a program means the freedom for any kind of person or organization to use it on any kind of computer system, for any kind of overall job, and without being required to communicate subsequently with the developer or any other specific entity.

Mr. Ram Nanasta and Mr. Kubuga Kennedy were both supporting speakers at the forum. While Mr. Ram spoke on proprietary, Mr. Kubuga thrilled participants with a practical demonstration of some open source software.

During the networking session of the forum, members of the Northern Ghana Trainers Group made available free of charge to all participants a compilation CD of some open source software. The group was grateful to Martine Koopman of IICD who was present at the forum for making available empty CDs for the compilations.