



The Global Access to Information Initiative

Access to information is a fundamental human right and a multi-dimensional tool serving both governments and citizens. Enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right of access to information is the cornerstone of good governance and vital for meaningful citizen participation. The right of access to information can:

- Assist the public administration to be more effective and efficient;
- Encourage better use of scarce resources;
- Strengthen citizen confidence;
- Provide a clearer understanding of government policies;
- Increase capacity to help determine priorities;
- Allow fuller engagement in public life;
- Serve as a key instrument for people to secure basic rights;
- Be useful in the fight against corruption;
- Reduce poverty; and
- Assure greater social inclusion.

For almost 15 years, The Carter Center's Global Access to Information (ATI) Initiative has served as a leader in advancing the right of access to information. Since 1999, the Initiative has been working in partnership with governments and civil society groups to pass, implement, and enforce ATI laws in key countries. From its inception in the Center's Americas Program, the Initiative has expanded its programming to work in other regions and support international efforts. The ATI initiative collaborates closely with international and regional bodies, shares international experiences, provides technical assistance, and serves as a resource to advance the right around the world. Most recently, the Initiative has been instrumental in bringing awareness to the need for full and effective implementation of ATI legislation through its Implementation Assessment Tool, and works to address the inequities that women face in exercising her right to information.

Supporting National Efforts

In a number of core countries, the Carter Center has been instrumental in providing technical assistance in drafting and passing access to information laws. In partnership with government and civil society in Latin America, Africa, and China, the Global ATI Initiative extends efforts beyond passage of legislation to advance effective implementation, enforcement, awareness, and use. When necessary, the Center explores other mechanisms to create a platform for transparency and deepen the process of transformation through access to information. To ensure sustainability in access to information advances, the ATI Initiative often employs local field office representatives who are well connected in the community and engage local, national, and international actors.



Reducing Gender-based Inequities

Recognizing that all persons should have the same opportunity and facility to exercise the right of access to information, and that there exist important gender-based inequities in the exercise of this right, the Carter Center has developed programming to reduce information asymmetries. The Global ATI Initiative will work with local partners and key stakeholders in pilot countries to raise awareness regarding unequal access to information; support reviews of ATI legislation and policies through a gendered lens; increase engagement of thematically relevant civil society organizations, particularly those focused on women's economic empowerment; and encourage key ministries and agencies to implement right to information instruments with gender sensitivity. Moreover, the Center will work with international and regional organizations to raise awareness about gendered information asymmetries and the importance of explicitly including the right to information in international and regional women's agendas.



Creating Tools

The past decade has witnessed incredible achievements in the right of access to information with more than 5 billion people around the globe now afforded some legal rights to information. However, many countries are failing to fully and effectively implement their law. Understanding that implementation is instrumental to making the right of access to information meaningful, the Carter Center developed the access to information Implementation Assessment Tool with the objectives to:

- Establish a comprehensive set of ATI implementation benchmarks;
- Identify the extent to which a ministry/agency has implemented its law;
- Provide a roadmap for improvements; and
- Contribute to scholarship on implementation, including successes and challenges.

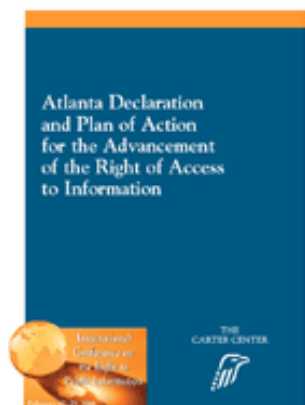


Currently, the Center is testing the tool in a series of pilot phases and intends to share the tool broadly to encourage and support stakeholders working to strengthen ATI implementation.

Advancing Norms & Building Consensus

Regional and international organizations, such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the World Bank, play an important role in promoting transparency. The Carter Center works with these organizations to help solidify global norms regarding the right of access to information. In past years, the Center assisted the OAS in creating a model access to information law and accompanying implementation plan and will continue to provide technical assistance as needed.

The Center also convenes stakeholders to build consensus, increase collaboration, and encourage scholarship. In 2008, the Center hosted an international conference which produced the *Atlanta Declaration*--a blueprint for advancing access to information globally. The Center has since hosted two follow-on conferences in the Americas and Africa. Additionally, through materials development, scholarship promotion, and responding to inquiries, the Center serves as a key resource to the international community of practice and countries striving to advance the right of access to information around the world.



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