

ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAWS IN THE CARIBBEAN

An important outcome of the **2013 Regional Conference on Freedom of Information in the Commonwealth Caribbean** was the creation of an **Action Plan** which prioritized actions to improve FOI in 11 Caribbean countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Cayman Islands, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. Each of these countries are in varying stages of FOI implementation region. It is anticipated that participants in the countries can refer to these priority actions and work towards improving the status of FOI implementation in their own countries.

STAGE 1: NO FOI LEGISLATION			
Country	State of implementation	Priority actions	Status
St. Kitts and Nevis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft FOI Bill 2006 • No movement forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate possibility of demonstrating the importance of transparency through best practice 	•
St. Lucia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No legislation exists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with media executives • Contact business houses • Build broad coalition • Invite experts to talk to decision makers 	•
STAGE 2: FOI LEGISLATION PASSED BUT HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED			
Country	State of implementation	Priority actions	Status
Bahamas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOI Bill 2012 • Never gazetted • Implementation unlikely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find resources to bring in expert speakers to talk to potential supporters • Seek support through the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) with help from Carolyn Gomes (Jamaica) 	•
Guyana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Information Act 2011 • Workable document, but lack of political will to implement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost the already strong interface between environmental and FOI NGO's 	•

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived lack of resources • NGOs are willing to push it forward due to concerns about corruption • Strong culture of secrecy 		
STAGE 3: FOI LEGISLATION PASSED AND IMPLEMENTED, BUT SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS EXIST			
Country	State of implementation	Priority actions	Status
Antigua and Barbuda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOI Act 2004 • Newly appointed Information Commissioner is setting up his Office, expanding staff • Assistance needed in training, public education, media promotion • Civil servants are unaware of their legal responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved networking in the region by creation of a lasting Caribbean FOI Committee/organization • Use of e-communication to network and share information and tools • Have more regional conferences • Creation of regional press list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Belize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOI Act 1994 • Only a handful of requests have been made • Public, NGO's and media remain unaware of the law • Present legislation is inadequate • Not fully implemented, e.g. no access officers appointed • Powers of Ombudsman too limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build broader coalition including media, to focus on public education • Push for review of the legislation • Organize expert workshops and presentations • Gather evidence of what is wrong with the present situation (e.g. make requests and document how they are dealt with) • Put pressure on government to appoint access officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

STAGE 4: FOI LEGISLATION IS FULLY BEING ENFORCED

Country	State of implementation	Priority actions	Status
Cayman Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOI Law 2007 fully operational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek more help from civil society groups to promote the Act • Law review in process – formulate updated recommendations 	•
Jamaica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOI Act 2002 • Strong support from broad coalition incl. media and civil society that assists with implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicize the Act more • Educate regarding right to appeal • Improve compliance monitoring • Amendment of Act forthcoming • Amend appeal form (too legalistic) 	•
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOI Act 2003 • Appeal by judicial review only (not many appeals) • No compliance monitoring, no reporting • Little awareness of the Act in the general public • Insufficient resources for FOI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boost public education • Networking with others in the region • Seek amendment of legislation re appeal mechanism 	•
Trinidad and Tobago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FOI Act 1999 • Appeal by judicial review (narrow time limit and costly) • Too many exemptions • Little public awareness -not being used a lot • FOI Unit was cut- undermines the operation of the Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build broad coalition, including trade unions and business organizations • Conduct letter-writing campaign • Increase public awareness • Network with others in the region 	•

ACTION ITEMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION BY ALL COUNTRIES

Priority actions	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual press releases sent from each country to national media houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done in Jamaica, Guyana, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, Cayman Islands (<i>others?</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Caribbean Freedom of Information Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done – Hosted by Jamaica Environment Trust with technical support of Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (Email address for network - cfoin@lists.elaw.org)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture case studies of FOI use and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build broad coalition, including trade unions and business organizations • Conduct letter-writing campaign • Increase public awareness • Network with others in the region 	

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