

THE ACCESS INITIATIVE

THE CORE TEAM REPORT TO THE TAI NETWORK

2012-2014
Bogotá, Colombia



INTRODUCTION

The Access Initiative (TAI) is in a very exciting period of change. Over the last two years the TAI network has:

- adopted new membership rules supporting the expansion of the network and the inclusion of individual members,
- welcomed organizations from new countries to our network, including Japan, St. Lucia, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago;
- developed the first ever Environmental Democracy Index (EDI) to be launched in 2015;
- participated in the creation of a regional instrument in Latin America and Caribbean to create new standards for access rights;
- served as the catalyst for the passage of new and exciting legislation on access rights (Paraguay, Gabon) and good practices (Mexico and South Africa).

We have a lot to be proud of, but these are still very challenging times. In some countries regressive steps have been taken to limit civil society space. In other countries, a demand for transparency and increased participation around large infrastructure projects has put members at the center of politically charged disputes. TAI partners have been threatened, unjustly arrested and accused of libel for speaking out against decisions that are unfair, inequitable or environmentally damaging. These challenges need to be addressed by the network in the coming years since the network is dedicated to using innovative and evidenced based approaches to support the principles that TAI stands for – a right to information, a space to participate and a demand for environmental justice. This report celebrates some of TAI's most important achievements over the last two years while highlighting some of our future challenges. It provides a report of the Core team and Secretariat activities over the last two years, including administrative (See Annex 1 and 2), funding and strategic decision-making processes.

LOOKING BACK AT THE RIO+20 GLOBAL GATHERING

The Fourth Global Gathering was held in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At the Rio+20 Global Gathering partners analyzed the decisions that came out of the Rio +20 Conference and highlighted 3 main issues to prioritize over the next two years:

1. Follow-up with Rio +20 decision-making

TAI partners committed to continue to invest in ensuring outcomes from the Rio +20 process were achieved, including following-up on the LAC P10 Process, and UNEP's proposed public participation and access to information policy decisions.

2. Open Government Partnership

A proposal was made that TAI partners engage with the Open Government Partnership (a voluntary international partnership with Government and civil society partners who make commitments on transparency, participation and use of technology) process in their respective countries to utilize this mechanism to obtain additional environmental and natural resource commitments. It was agreed that TAI would help TAI partners/countries to:

- Persuade their governments to join OGP
- Work with their governments to create commitments
- Monitor commitments
- Improve the participation process in developing commitments.

TAI agreed to monitor environmental commitments. A TAI working group was established to share lessons across the network.

3. Access for All – Eye on the Earth

TAI agreed to continue participating in the Abu Dhabi “Eye on the Earth” process especially through the Access for All meetings which involved multiple organizations. This work included facilitating the Environmental Democracy Index development as well as exchanges between Latin America and Europe on access rights.

In terms of the administration of the network, the Core Team agreed to work on 4 areas for policy decision-making:

- A rigorous response system to defend partners who are involved in controversial work;
- A new policy to deal with inactive TAI members;
- A mechanism to support regional fundraising;
- New mechanisms to energize the network.

This report outlines steps taken to achieve these outcomes.

PARTNER OUTCOMES 2012-2014

Since the Fourth Global Gathering in 2010 in Rio, Brazil, the TAI Network has achieved significant outcomes in access law, institutional and practice reforms. Below are highlights from some of the network’s most outstanding outcomes, which serve to:

- Provide lessons to partners on innovative new access work, and
- Address access rights within specific sectors.

Paraguay passes the 100th Access to Information law

On August 21, 2014, after 10 years of campaigning by civil society organizations for an access to public information law, the National Congress of Paraguay enacted a bill on access to public information. This law is the work of TAI partners from the Environmental Law and Economics Institute (IDEA) and the members of the Access to Information Task Force (GIAI).

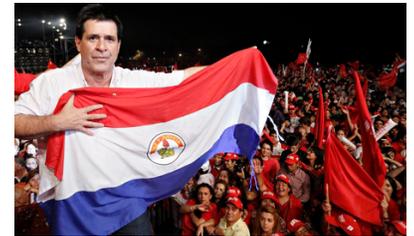


Photo credit: Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2014/sep/19/paraguay-freedom-information-law-transparency>



TAI partners get Environment and Natural Resource commitments within the Open Government Partnership (OGP) process

TAI partners across the network have been engaged in the Open Government Partnership Process. TAI members from South Africa, Peru, Costa Rica, Chile, Indonesia, Colombia, Ireland and Mexico have all engaged their Governments in dialogues and discussion on the requirements of action plans and implementation of provisions.

Specific commitments have been made on the following:

- Implementation of LAC P10 Process (Chile and Costa Rica)
- Second Action Plan, 4 commitments on natural resources and environment. Extractive Industries and EIAs, for example. (Mexico)
- Development of an Environmental Portal (South Africa)
- Implementation of requirements for proactive publication of information (Indonesia)
- Development and delivery of a training module to train staff in public bodies on access to environmental information as provided for in the Aarhus Convention (Ireland)

Gabon passes new legislation to improve access to information and participation

Gabon's parliament enacted a new environmental law (007/2014) on August 1, 2014 that contains provisions providing for public access to environmental quality and health information, public rights to participate in decision-making on projects with environmental impacts, and rights to seek justice through the courts. The law references public consultation or public surveys for obtaining the public expectations and views on the impact of the project. It also includes provisions that establish that "independent citizens, associations of environmental protection may complain to the courts for a decision that would affect the environment and allowing civil action in the criminal courts. These provisions were lobbied for vigorously by the TAI Gabon coalition (supported by TAI Francophone Africa lead Augustine Njamshi).

STRIPE partners use Indonesia FOI to obtain information about pollution of IKPP mill and use information to demand for cleanup of IKPP mill which results in completion of audit of the facility

The *Strengthening the Right to Information for People and the Environment Project* (hereafter *STRIPE* project) is a partnership between World Resources Institute (WRI) and the Indonesia Center for Environmental Law (ICEL), Thailand Environment Institute and several NGOs in Mongolia. The project aims to empower communities to improve their environmental health through improved access to information and better implementation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) laws. Communities in Indonesia utilized information obtained under this FOI law to advocate for changes in release of information of the factory's performance and an audit was completed on the instruction of the local parliament which exposed non-compliance with national pollution rules and requirements.

TAI influences the passage of a UNEP Access to information policy and African Model Law

TAI partners in Cameroon, Uganda and Zimbabwe worked alongside WRI to successfully influence a model African Union access-to-information law. WRI worked with partners to review and comment on an African Union model access-to-information law. WRI submitted official comments and provided recommendations to reduce exceptions to the law and include new provisions to better guide implementation and promotion of the policy. The majority of our specific recommendations were adopted in the final model law.

The TAI Secretariat negotiated and demanded the delivery of a new United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) access-to-information policy. Before Rio+20, WRI and TAI partners presented strong arguments to delegates and helped draft language, which were incorporated into UNEP's final decision to adopt an "access to information" policy.

Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) partners influence plan of action, vision and rules for participation of the LAC Principle 10 process

Nineteen TAI LAC partners have successfully influenced 18 governments from the region to become signatories¹ to the LAC P10 as well as create an agreed upon road map, action plan, rules of procedure and most recently draft agreed upon core minimum table of contents. This process has sustained and encouraged commitment and political will throughout the region to create a regional P10 instrument to improve the implementation of access rights.

Over 140 lawyers and TAI partners build their capacity by participating in the creation of the first Environmental Democracy Index

The Environmental Democracy Index (EDI) is a new interactive platform and tool being developed by WRI and TAI that allows users to track their countries' progress in protecting the public's rights to information, participa-

1. To date, eighteen governments of Latin America and the Caribbean have signed the LAC Declaration including four Caribbean countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

tion, and justice in environmental decision-making. Legal researchers--including many TAI partners--from 70 countries participated in the research and reviewed laws and practice in many countries. This is the first index in the world that addresses these 3 rights in one index and many lawyers gained new capacities to review legislation and practice in their country on the progress made to incorporate and implement these new rights.

New TAI partner Oxpeckers Center for Investigative Environmental Journalism maps rhino poaching court cases

In November 2012, the Oxpeckers Center for Investigative Environmental Journalism helped *New York Times* correspondent Jeffrey Gettleman to put together an article on rhino poaching in South Africa. It was published on December 31 2012 under the headline *Ruthless smugglers' rings put rhinos in the cross hairs*. Oxpeckers realized how difficult it is to access information on court cases involving suspected or convicted rhino poachers. In South Africa, citizens have to resort to internet searches, right to information applications, and trips to each individual court to find the relevant documents. Since then, Oxpeckers has tried to find an easy, accessible way to track court cases involving rhino poaching. Using official data and geo-mapping technologies, Oxpeckers was able to track and analyze the number of rhinos killed and the poachers arrested over the years. Oxpeckers made an application to the Government to provide the data needed. This information was released in the form of consolidated data to Oxpeckers in 2014 after an advocacy campaign. Oxpeckers transformed the data into an online map that provides the latest information on rhino poaching court cases around South Africa. The platform generated huge interest, doubling the number of users on oxpeckers.org and the Environment Minister and National Police Commissioner used it in August 2014 in preparation for a joint press briefing on strategies to protect rhinos. The court cases mapping platform can be found at <http://oxpeckers.org/maprhinos/>.

New citizen participation rules in Peru

The Peruvian Society for Environmental Law (SPDA) submitted a legal opinion and substantial comments to a new rule on public participation in Peru: Resolution N° 032-2014-OEFA/CD (<http://www.oefa.gob.pe/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/RES0032-2014-OEFA-CD ELPERUANO.pdf>).

These comments were reflected in the final law approved last year, which promotes citizen participation under the framework of “The Organization for Environmental Assessment and Oversight” (a governmental agency in charge of the environmental oversight of mining, hydrocarbons, electricity, fishery and industry activities in Peru). SPDA also published new books this year titled *The Citizen Participation in the Forest* and *Citizen Participation and Prior Consultation in hydroelectric projects* aimed at providing information that facilitates and promotes citizen participation in the forestry, wildlife, and electricity sector.

National Working Group on LAC P10 Process formed in Mexico

Communication and Environmental Education, the Mexican Center for Environmental Law and Ecological Culture, all members of the Access Initiative Mexico coalition, have been working at the national and regional level to develop a regional instrument to ensure compliance with Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration in Latin America and the Caribbean. An exciting national working group was formed with representatives from various national institutions including Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, with the participation of the Coordinating Unit for Social Participation and Transparency, the Coordinating Unit for International Affairs, and the Federal Institute for Environmental Protection; also is included the Federal Institute for Access to information and Data Protection, the body guaranteeing access to information. This team, composed of around 14 people, has met regularly to address LAC P10 processes and has responded to multiple requests for information.





New Provisions on Public Participation in law-making passed in Thailand

In Thailand, the King Prajadhipok's Institute persuaded over 10,000 voters to propose the "Public participation in law making bill" to the Thai parliament. After a long period of advocacy in the parliament as part of a Standing Committee, the "Public participation in law making ACT" was passed in December 2013. This act allows ordinary people to initiate and propose laws as well as have an opportunity to improve requirements for public participation within the parliament, the Office of Legal Reform Committee and the People Politics Council.

South-South Initiative to establish Access to Justice and Green Tribunal in Madagascar

From March 20-23, 2013, Ritwick Dutta of LIFE/Access Initiative India visited Madagascar, responding to an invitation by DELC/Access Initiative Madagascar. The trip and program were supported by GIZ, the German Cooperation through its Civil Society Organizations Program. The objective of the visit was to share India's experience on the Green Tribunal, drawing lessons for Madagascar in its earlier process to establish a Green Tribunal.

The first two days were focused on training of CSO representatives from all over Madagascar. Trainers included Ritwick, Lalaina, and 4 other Malagasy environmental lawyers. Training subjects included overview of Malagasy legal system, Common law vs. Civil law systems, national and international environmental law, Court procedures, international environmental disputes, and the experience of India on the establishment of Green Tribunal.

A public conference-debate about "Green Tribunal and Madagascar special Court for Rosewood and Ebony" was held on the afternoon of March 22, 2013 at the Ibis Hotel, Antananarivo. Were invited to attend the conference with representatives from the Government, Civil Society Organizations, and NGOs.

We are grateful to Madagascar GIZ-Environment Program for supporting such an important mission for Madagascar, and Ritwick for coming to Madagascar to share his experience in India. This South-South cooperation would be extended through other subjects such as the extractive industries.

GOVERNANCE CHANGES

TAI Revamps Its Membership Rules

TAI updated its membership rules in 2014. The new rules, which can be found in full [here](#), were drafted by the Core Team, commented on by the TAI network, and came into force on May 1, 2014.

Highlights of the new rules include:

- Until now, the TAI network had consisted solely of organizations. The new rules extend membership to committed individuals champions of Principle 10. The rationale is that while organizations are essential to TAI's work, individual champions can be hugely influential in advocating change. Having them in the network will enhance TAI's credibility and influence.
- The new rules establish an international chapter in addition to country chapters. Individuals joining the TAI network can opt to be assigned to a country chapter or the international chapter. The international chapter is meant to accommodate individuals from countries where there is no country chapter and those who are working at the international or regional level.
- The new rules also clarify the rights and duties of TAI members, how chapters are opened and established and how the nomination process works for new members.

- The rules specify how the TAI network deals with inactive members.
- Finally, the rules state how membership of the TAI network is maintained by a biennial affirmation of partners' desire to remain in the network.

Since the new rules came into effect, 9 individuals and 4 organizations have joined the network from 12 different countries. We have had requests from a diversity of countries including Italy and Lebanon to join TAI since the rules came into effect. The Secretariat identified chapters and members that no longer want to be a part of the TAI network. This was completed by August 2014. By 2015, inactive chapters will be removed from both the TAI google group and website list. The Core Team looks forward to working with all of our new and existing members in the years ahead.

CT Election Process

A Democratically Elected Core Team:

Since its inception in 1999, the Core Team has been TAI's governing body. Originally, the Core Team members were the founding organizations of TAI. Gradually the Core Team was expanded to include new regional representatives. On a proposal from the TAI Secretariat in 2011, the Core Team made a decision to gradually convert the Core Team into an elected governing body for the TAI network. Beginning in 2012, the Core Team has been elected for 4 year terms of office on the basis of the schedule shown in Table 1.

As such, the Core Team is now a fully elected body. In 2012, organizations from Thailand, Ecuador and Kenya were elected to replace those in the table above. In 2013, organizations from India and Ireland replaced those in the above table by election. In 2014, organizations from Cameroon and Mexico were reelected. In a 2013 special election an organization from the Philippines replaced the Thailand organization following a recall. The future electoral rotation of the Core team will be as shown in Table 2.

The eight Core Team members represent TAI regions as follows:

1. 2 Core team members, representing South and South East Asia
2. 2 Core team members representing Anglophone and Francophone Africa
3. 2 Core team members representing Latin America and the Caribbean
4. 1 Core team member representing Europe
5. The TAI secretariat representing North Americana and the MENA region *ex officio* (by default)

TABLE 1

	2012	2013	2014
Thailand	x		
Chile	x		
Uganda	x		
India		x	
Hungary		x	
Cameroon			x
Mexico			x

TABLE 2

	2016	2017	2018
Philippines	x		
Ecuador	x		
Kenya	x		
India		x	
Ireland		x	
Cameroon			x
Mexico			x

NETWORK ACTIVITIES

Aarhus Meeting of the Parties and fundraising meetings

TAI partners Andrea Sanhueza (Chile), Danielle Andrade (Jamaica) and Daniel Barragan (Ecuador) attended meetings in Maastricht and Brussels from June 30 to July 8, 2014 sponsored by funds raised through the Access for all process led by the Regional Environment Center and European Environment Bureau.² Also attending were TAI partners from Turkey, Macedonia and Hungary. Members of the TAI Secretariat also attended.

TAI members held meetings with various Government delegations and there were two side events sponsored one on the idea of an Aarhus Convention Index and the other on the Latin America and Caribbean Principle 10 Process. The Governments of Chile and Costa Rica also participated in most meetings.

In meetings held to discuss the LAC P10 process its main challenges were explained including the relationship in the LAC region between access rights, exploitation of natural resources, poverty and inequality. TAI partners indicated that the process needs political support, technical assistance and financial support. TAI established that financial support is needed for:

- Outreach at the country level with the objective that more organizations and people participate in the process begin a dialogue;
- Training and raising awareness of civil society and public officials on access rights;
- Civil society organizations to travel and attend LAC P10 Focal Points and Working Groups Meetings;
- Development of a website in English and Spanish.

The meeting was used as an opportunity to try and raise funds for both the LAC P10 process and also the idea of an Aarhus Convention Index to supplement the Environmental Democracy Index. Follow-up ideas for funding were identified for each government agency representative partners met with. This activity is ongoing.

Eye on Earth Summit 2015

Following the first Eye on Earth (EoE) summit in 2011, the TAI secretariat has been engaging with the EoE secretariat in Abu Dhabi and participating in various activities. Some TAI partners have also joined the Special initiatives that were a result of the 2011 summit. In particular there is a special initiative on Access for All covering Principle 10 related activities. In 2013, AGEDI provided \$250,000 to WRI to seed fund the Environmental Democracy Index – a collaborative project between TAI and WRI. EoE was managed by AGEDI in Abu Dhabi and UNEP. In 2014, it was decided to expand the core management of EoE to an EoE Alliance and WRI together with IUCN and GEOS has been invited to join. WRI has become part of the Alliance and is helping shape the 2015 EoE summit. The 2015 summit will focus on the demand and supply sides of environmental information and the enabling conditions needed to facilitate collection, analysis, dissemination and uptake of environmental data and information. WRI, as the TAI secretariat is participating in these activities to also ensure that TAI partners are invited to the summit and can actively contribute to its outcomes.

UNEP – Environment Assembly

The United Nations Environment Program held the United Nations Environment Assembly in Kenya this year. As part of this program, a conference was held that brought together Chief Justices, Attorneys-General, Judges, Auditors General and Public Interests Lawyers from around the world in a Symposium on the Rule of Environmental Law. The symposium covered issues of transparency, participation and access to justice as well as legal issues related to the illegal trade in wildlife. WRI was represented by Dr. Lalanath de Silva, Director of the Access Initiative (TAI) who made a presentation on the Environmental Democracy Index (EDI) being developed by WRI and TAI. EDI was well received by the over 150 participants, several of whom commended

2. The meetings in Brussels were possible thanks to the financial support from CEDA (Centro Ecuatoriano de Derecho Ambiental).

the initiative. Dr. de Silva also presented EDI at two other side events on the margins of the UNEA. He also participated in negotiations relating to the new UNEP Stakeholder Engagement Policy and UNEA Rules of Procedure. Exposing EDI to key stakeholders in Nairobi was important because the results from the index need to be converted to legal and institutional reforms. With a reliable biennial measure through EDI, government and civil society will be able to prioritize reforms and ensure progress

LAC P10 Meetings

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, the Declaration on the application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was signed. In this Declaration, signatory countries committed, with the support of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as technical secretariat, to develop and implement a Plan of Action for 2014, in order to advance the implementation of a regional convention or instrument for the right to information, participation and justice in environmental matters. To October 2014, the Declaration has been signed by 18 countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay. The process has continued through regular meetings of focal points during the past two years. The focal points have adopted a Road map to 2014, a Plan of action and the Common vision for a regional instrument as well as minimum content for the instrument. Two Working groups were created on the Action Plan: i) Working group on capacity-building and cooperation; and ii) Working group on Access rights, consultation and the regional instrument.

TAI partners have participated in both virtual meetings, workshops and focal point meetings, influencing both the substantive and procedural decisions of the parties with tremendous success. TAI partners have reached out to civil society groups in Haiti, St. Lucia and Guyana, urging them to join the process. The ultimate objective is for a legally binding instrument in the LAC region.

Open Government Partnership

In 2014, TAI members both attended and supported regional OGP meetings in Ireland and Indonesia. At the regional meeting in Indonesia, Lalanath de Silva spoke alongside a representative from TAI partner ICEL on natural resources and openness and the role these commitments play in the OGP process. WRI used this opportunity to consolidate its request for the Government of Indonesia to join the Natural Resource and Openness Working Group. WRI was made a co-chair of this working group in August 2014 and intends to use this Working Group to help encourage a greater number of impactful OGP natural resource commitments. So there is an opportunity/need in the region to build bridges between CSO's working on TAI and related efforts and the OGP.

A panel on the P10 Regional Instrument Process will take place at the OGP Americas Regional Summit, to be held in San José, Costa Rica on November 18-19.

Manish Bapna and Mukelani Dimba are now part of the OGP Steering Committee after significant efforts to campaign for their nominations by TAI partners and the Secretariat. TAI needs to take advantage of that fact. Strategically as well the Open Government Steering Committee now includes South Africa, México and Peru.

Environmental Democracy Index

WRI worked with 140 lawyers from 70 countries to score and review the indicators. In order to benchmark countries' progress against the UNEP Bali Guidelines on Principle 10, TAI developed indicators under each of the legal guidelines and commissioned two environmental lawyers for each country (140 total) in 2014 to score their national laws against these indicators. These indicators which make up the Environmental Democracy Index (EDI) are intended to enable governments and civil society to assess their laws and performance in relation to the Bali Guidelines and determine clear next steps for improved alignment. In addition to the legal index, there are 24 supplemental indicators which provide key insights into how well laws are being implemented in practice.

The purpose of the Environmental Democracy Index is to enable governments, civil society, and other interested stakeholders to assess, through systematic measurement, the degree to which their country's national laws harmonize with the Bali Guidelines. While there are other indexes that measure governance or access to information, there are no indexes which measure procedural rights in relation to the environment. The EDI indicators are designed to be actionable—meaning that users should be able to easily identify what improvements need to be made to increase an indicator's score. WRI plans to release EDI biennially, which will allow for the benchmarking of progress over time. While policy-makers are ultimately EDI's target audience as they are responsible for making improvements, indexes can also be effective tools to gain public and media attention to address the need for reforms. The funding also helped to create an EDI website, which will launch in March 2015.

TAI Website Renewal

In late 2014, the TAI Secretariat and a select number of member volunteers began the process of upgrading the TAI website (see below). This process should be completed in early 2015.

The Access Initiative
THE NETWORK | CREATING CHANGE | GET INVOLVED | BLOG | RESOURCES

**A right to know
A space to participate
A demand for environmental justice**
The Access Initiative is the largest network in the world dedicated to ensuring that citizens have the right and ability to influence decisions about the natural resources that sustain their communities.

a right to KNOW | **a right to BE HEARD** | **a right to ACCESS JUSTICE**

WATER
Lead in Our Water: A Washington DC Mystery
[READ MORE +](#)

FORESTS
Environmental Groups Voice Concern over Logging Survey at Lawachara Forest
[READ MORE +](#)

MINING
Citizen Voices in Mining Governance
[READ MORE +](#)

CAMPAIGNS

RIO+20
RIO+20 defines pathways to a safer, more equitable, cleaner, greener and more prosperous world for all.
Initiated: World Resources Institute
LOCATION: Brazil
[HELP TEST OUR NEW POLICY +](#)

Campaign for Environmental Justice
Organized by EDC, this highly successful campaign helped to keep the uranium mines off the map.
Initiated: Environmental Support Group
LOCATION: India
[SUBMIT INFORMATION REQUEST +](#)

FEATURED RESOURCE

Environmental Democracy Index
EDI scores how well a country protects the rights of access to information, public participation, and access to justice in matters related to the environment.
[ALL RESOURCES](#)

UPCOMING EVENT

October 29, 2014
2014 Global Gathering
LOCATION: Bogotá, Colombia
[ALL EVENTS](#)

BLOG POSTS

September 24, 2014
Global Gathering Funding and Registration Updates
AUTHOR: Sally Brackman
MEMBER: World Resources Institute

September 28, 2014
La Iniciativa de Acceso participa en la Quinta Reunión de las Partes del Convenio de Aarhus
AUTHOR: Daniel Bergman
MEMBER: World Resources Institute

September 29, 2014
Civil Society in Brazil Engages on the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Principle 10 Process
AUTHOR: Denika Jagtapar
MEMBER: World Resources Institute

[ALL BLOG POSTS](#)

The Access Initiative
10 E Street, NE Suite 800
Washington, District of Columbia 20002
PHONE: 202 779 7600
FAX: 202 779 9991
EMAIL US +

FACEBOOK | TWITTER | LINKEDIN | YOUTUBE

FOR US | NEWSLETTER SIGNUP +

PRIVACY POLICY | TERMS OF USE

The Access Initiative
THE NETWORK | CREATING CHANGE | GET INVOLVED | BLOG | RESOURCES

Vision
TAI works to create a world where people everywhere have and use the rights of access to information, public participation, and access to justice in government decisions in decisions affecting the environment.

Challenges
The root cause of many of our most challenging environmental issues is a lack of strong and effective governance. An informed and empowered public has the following characteristics:

- Monitor government and corporate performance
- Is able to demand resource management teams
- Challenges the conventional wisdom of government or corporate decision-makers
- Discusses the issues
- Organizes social and political change
- Demands improvements.

When independent citizen groups monitor and submit robust political interference, the public can better hold decision makers accountable for environmental protection.

Goals
When independent citizen groups monitor and submit robust political interference, the public can better hold decision makers accountable for environmental protection.

A Right to Know
When we have the information we need, we can shape our lives better. TAI's mission is to ensure the use of the freedom of information law to access to diverse types of environmental and pollution control information, the availability of information on air and water and the challenges faced by communities and activists to timely preferred uses to obtain information on air and water quality.

A Right to Be Heard
TAI supports access to participation. TAI combated significantly in this manner, helping to convince members of the Governing Council to formally adopt, rather than merely "hear" the guidelines. As a result, CSDH has a mandate to pressure the implementation of the guidelines.

A Right to Access Justice
TAI helps people everywhere access justice mechanisms when laws are not followed. The Global Gathering, hosted by TAI, addresses how to use information, data and technology to improve environmental governance and strengthen community rights.

How We Work
The vision is how The Access Initiative creates change through their global-based approach. The Environmental Democracy Index assesses how well a country protects the rights of access to information, public participation, and access to justice in matters related to the environment. In 1992 the international community recognized that sustainable development depends upon good governance through adoption of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Principle 10 of the Declaration sets out the fundamental elements for good environmental governance in three "access rights": access to information, public participation, and access to justice. In 1992 the international community recognized that sustainable development depends upon good governance through adoption of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Principle 10 of the Declaration sets out the fundamental elements for good environmental governance in three "access rights": access to information, public participation, and access to justice. Some governmental decisions make us able to be environmentally damaging, developmentally unsustainable, and socially inequitable. Access rights facilitate more transparent, inclusive, and accountable decision-making in matters affecting the environment and development. Access to information empowers and motivates people to participate in an informed and meaningful manner. At the heart of The Access Initiative's (TAI) work is an awareness toolkit that helps civil society mobilize grassroots strength and weaknesses to environmental governance in their countries and identify opportunities to make positive change. Using a framework of case studies and indicators that evaluate [see our toolkit +](#)

TAI at a Glance

250 MEMBERS	54 COUNTRIES
19 CAMPAIGNS	927 RESOURCES

The Access Initiative
THE NETWORK | CREATING CHANGE | GET INVOLVED | BLOG | RESOURCES

Principle 10
In the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the international community recognized that sustainable development depends upon good governance. Principle 10 of the Declaration sets out the fundamental elements for good environmental governance in three "access rights": access to information, public participation, and access to justice.

Access rights facilitate more transparent, inclusive, and accountable decision-making in matters affecting the environment and development.

These are based on the experience that governmental decision-making fails to include these essential elements of access will produce outcomes more likely to be environmentally damaging, developmentally unsustainable, and socially inequitable. Access rights facilitate more transparent, inclusive, and accountable decision-making in matters affecting the environment and development. Access to information empowers and motivates people to participate in an informed and meaningful manner. Participatory decision-making enhances the ability of governments to respond to public concerns and demands, to build consensus, and to improve responses of and compliance with environmental decisions because citizens feel ownership over these decisions. Access to justice facilitates the public's ability to redress their right to participate, to be informed, and to hold institutions and persons accountable for environmental harm, that explains the background of Principle 10 and what TAI is doing to ensure it.

The Network
Members from around the world carry out evidence-based advocacy to encourage collaboration and innovation that advances transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in decisionmaking at all levels.

Find a country

Democratic Republic of the Congo

3 MEMBERS
How many countries have joined the Access Initiative?
[ALL MEMBERS](#)

Interested in Joining the Network?
[LEARN MORE](#)

SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF TAI PARTNERS AND FRIENDS

We want to recognize TAI partners and allies for their work supporting the objectives of the TAI network.

Ramesh Agrawal

TAI congratulates Ramesh Agrawal for winning the Goldman Prize. Ramesh an RTI advocate and TAI member was shot after organizing villagers to demand their rights in relation to one of the largest proposed coal mines in Chhattisgarh.



Claudia Amegankpoe

Claudia, a proud TAI member, unfortunately passed away earlier this year. She founded the NGO “Eco Ecolo” and led the TAI coalition in Benin. Claudia is quoted in the press as saying “The woman is the pillar of development. She has a role in all areas and it is not a job for men only.” She will be sorely missed for her leadership, passionate defense of access rights, and dedication to the TAI network.

Sutthi Atchaisai

Although not a TAI partner, Sutthi Atchaisai was part of a coalition of groups in Thailand including the Thailand Environment Institute working on the TAI STRIPE project. Sutthi, a community environmental advocate and activist in Thailand, was shot in July this year. The cause of death is still being disputed by his friends and other community members in Thailand. He was an environmental defender in his community and a right to information activist as well. His death is a huge loss to Thailand and the Map ta Phut community. It was a privilege to work with him and TAI will miss him greatly.



FINANCES

The tables below outline the fundraising for Secretariat activities and TAI related project activities from 2012-2014. Fundraising efforts represented a wide variety of projects and regions. Overall, the TAI Secretariat raised over \$1.5 million US for joint TAI projects around the world. Of this, over \$225,000 US was allocated to TAI partners for work on various projects. The TAI Secretariat also contributed around \$28,000 US of the \$145,000 budget for the 2014 Global Gathering in Colombia. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, a number of efforts to raise funds for the TAI LAC P10 and other efforts have been unsuccessful so far.

NETWORK FUNDS RAISED BY THE SECRETARIAT FOR NETWORK ACTIVITIES

PROJECT	FUNDER	YEAR GRANTED	AMOUNT (USD)
Civil society capacity building to shape public policy reform in the Caribbean for biodiversity and ecosystem services	CEPF	2013	\$ 249,697.00
STRIPE II	OSF	2014	\$ 200,000.00
Environmental Democracy Index	AGEDI	2013	\$ 250,000.00
TAI network activities	Bilateral funds (WRI)	2014	\$ 411,013.00
TAI network activities	Bilateral funds (WRI)	2015	\$ 300,000.00
Aarhus Convention Index	Dutch government	2014	\$ 125,000.00
			\$ 1,535,710.00 TOTAL

PARTNER FUNDS RAISED / FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

PROJECT	TAI PARTNER	REGION	FUNDER	YEAR	AMOUNT (USD)	RESULT
2014 Global Gathering	Ateneo School of Government	Asia	SENSA (SIDA in Asia)	2014	\$ 37,280.00	Not Approved
P10 in ASEAN Region	Ateneo School of Government	Asia	SENSA (SIDA in Asia)	2013	\$ 2,266,174.00	Not Approved
Civil Society Engagement in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Access to Justice	CEDA	LAC	NORAD	2013	\$ 2,851,199.00	Not Approved
Access Rights for Vulnerable Communities	IDEA Paraguay, FARN Argentina, GAIA Uruguay, FIMA Chile	LAC	Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives	2013	\$ 600,000.00	Not Approved
Access Rights for Vulnerable Communities	Cultura Ecológica, CEDA, Ambiente y Sociedad	LAC	National Endowment for Democracy	2013	\$ 120,000.00	Not Approved
Promotion of Access Rights in Communities Related to Extractive Industries	CIAM	LAC	Inter American Foundation	2013	\$ 288,830.00	Not Approved
Promotion of Access Rights in Communities Related to Extractive Industries	FIMA	LAC	Inter American Foundation	2013	\$ 160,000.00	Pending
Webpage for TAI LAC	FIMA, CEDA	LAC	Heinrich Böll Foundation	2013	\$ 36,328.00	Not Approved
Trip to Europe for Outreach and Fundraising for TAI Participation	WRI, CulturaEcológica	LAC	ECLAC	2014		Not Approved
Strengthening TAI participation in LAC process: national and regional outreach and advocacy strategies and fundraising trip to Europe	CEDA	LAC	Think Tank Initiative	2014	\$ 250,000.00	Not Approved

FUNDS ALLOCATED TO PARTNERS

PROJECT / PARTNER	YEAR GRANTED	AMOUNT (USD)
CEPF	2013	\$ 101,615.00
STRIPE II	2014	\$ 21,082.00
EDI	2014	\$ 32,900.00
Andrea Sanhueza	2013	\$ 49,024.74
CEDA	2013	\$ 4,500.00
Aarhus Convention Index	2014	TBD
		\$ 209,121.74 TOTAL

FUNDS FOR CONFERENCES, GLOBAL LEARNING, OPERATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

PROJECT	YEAR GRANTED	AMOUNT (USD)	
2014 Global Gathering	2014	\$ 145,006.34	Note: TAI contributed \$20,875.20

CHALLENGES AHEAD

There are a number of challenges that will be faced by TAI partners in the years ahead.. A few of them include:

- Fundraising for TAI activities including regional activities
- Inactive chapters
- The challenge of expanding our membership, creating more effective partnerships and continuing to learn from each other
- Ensuring the environmental democracy index spurs innovation and the adoption of good practices around the world
- Addressing the safety of our partners and supporting partners' campaigns within this context.

Partners need to continue to utilize the TAI network as both a resource and safety net to ensure action learning and achievement of the network's vision. The Core Team will continue to consult with TAI partners to address these issues throughout the next two years.

ANNEX 1: MEETING ATTENDANCE

ORGANIZATION	NAME	2014						2013			PERSONAL ATTENDANCE	NOTES	
		16/10	7/8	18/6	22/4	3/3	20/1	4/11	25/7	15/3			
IRELAND	Friends of the Irish Environment	Andrew Jackson	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8	FIE joined the CT on 1 April 2013
PHILIPPINES	Ateneo School of Government	Arvin Jo / Tony La Vina	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	7	ASG was confirmed as CT partner for 25/7 meeting
CAMEROON	BDCPC	Augustine Njamshi	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	
ECUADOR	CEDA	Daniel Barragan	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5	
MEXICO	Iniciativa de Acceso	Olimpia Castillo / Tomas Severino	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	8	
KENYA	ILEG	Benson Ochieng / Benedette Mutuku	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3	
INDIA	LIFE	Ritwick Dutta	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	
MEMBER ATTENDANCE			4	4	5	3	3	6	5	4	3		
USA	TAI Secretariat	Lalanath de Silva	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	
USA	TAI Secretariat	Carole Excell	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	
USA	TAI Secretariat	Jesse Worker	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9	
USA	TAI Secretariat	Cait O'Donnell	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8	
USA	TAI Secretariat	Elizabeth Moses	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	Invited to CT meetings 16/10
USA	TAI Secretariat	Rachel Mulbry	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	Invited to CT meetings 22/4
USA	TAI Secretariat	Free de Koning	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	Invited to CT meetings 18/6
USA	TAI Secretariat	Stephanie Ratte	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	Invited to CT meetings 22/4

ANNEX 2

STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CORE TEAM DECISIONS

TOPIC	DECISION	IN CHARGE	DEADLINE	STATUS	CT MEETING
Branding	Develop guidance on branding	?	Oct-14		
Core Team	Elections held in SE Asia for new regional CT member	Secretariat	Feb-13	Completed	Jan-13
Core Team	Recall TEI as Core Team member	Secretariat	Mar-13	Completed	Mar-13
Environmental Democracy Index	Present EDI at Aarhus Convention Meeting in Maastricht	Andrew/Jesse	Jul-14	Completed	Apr-14
Environmental Democracy Index	Approved structure of EDI website and recognition of involved partners	Jesse	Aug-14	Completed	Aug-14
Environmental Democracy Index	Present EDI at LAC P10 meeting in Chile	Jesse/Carole	Nov-14	Not implemented because of delays	Aug-14
Environmental Democracy Index	TAI partner should speak at EDI launch	Jesse	Mar-15	Ongoing	Aug-14
Fundraising	Ateneo would fundraise to bring TAI partners from SE Asia to Global Gathering	Arvin	Jun-14	Completed	Apr-14
Fundraising	Encourage partners to apply for GFW small grants fund	Secretariat & CT	May-14	Completed	Apr-14
Fundraising	Apply for GEF funding for LAC P10 activities	Lalanath	Apr-15	Preparing application	Aug-14
Membership	Establish guidelines on national coalition operation	Andrew, Lalanath, Tony, LAC member	n/a	Assignment of responsibility not yet made	Jul-13
Membership	Approval of membership rules; agree on inclusion of individuals and international chapter	Membership taskforce, Secretariat	May-14	Rules implemented	Mar-14
Membership	Send membership rules to network for comments before being finalized	Secretariat	Apr-14	Completed	Apr-14
Membership	Inactive partners will be removed if they fail to respond to biennial email sent to all network members	Secretariat	Dec-15	Ongoing	Apr-14
Membership	CT will reach out to current national lead orgs in Uganda, Malaysia, Ukraine, Zambia, Tanzania, DRC; if not interested, will hold election with all country members	Core Team	May-15	Not yet implemented	Jun-14
Network Expansion	LAC partners with MOU status should be nominated using membership rules protocol	Secretariat	Nov-14	Yet to be implemented	Jun-14
Network Expansion	Reach out to partners for nominations	Core Team	Dec-14	Ongoing implementation	Jun-14
Network Expansion	Develop strategy for membership expansion	Carole, Andrew	May-15	Ongoing strategy development	Aug-14
Network Expansion	Share updated list of TAI members with CT	Rachel	Oct-14		Aug-14
TAI Commissions	Establish TAI sectoral commissions	Secretariat	Jul-13	Pilot Forest Commission established	Jul-13