

## The Carter Center

A not-for-profit, nongovernmental organization, The Carter Center has helped to improve life for people in over 80 countries by resolving conflicts; advancing democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity; preventing diseases; and improving mental health care. The Carter Center was founded in 1982 by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, in partnership with Emory University, to advance peace and health worldwide.

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CARTER CENTER



*Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope.*

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### GLOBAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROGRAM

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## GLOBAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROGRAM

Access to information (ATI) is a fundamental human right that serves as the cornerstone of good governance and democracy and is vital to meaningful citizen participation. Enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right of access to information is a multidimensional tool serving both governments and citizens that can:

- assist public administration to be more effective and efficient
- encourage better use of scarce resources
- strengthen citizen confidence in government and participation in public life
- help people to secure basic rights and social services
- prevent corruption
- reduce poverty
- assure greater social inclusion

Since 1999, The Carter Center has worked with governments and civil society in diverse regional contexts to ensure that all citizens, including women and other marginalized groups, can enjoy their fundamental human right of access to information. Additionally, the Center supports intergovernmental organizations and initiatives, such as the Open Government Partnership, to advance the right of access to information around the world. By increasing governmental transparency and accountability, The Carter Center seeks to ensure that citizens can more fully participate in political processes and exercise their other human rights, such as the rights to land, a safe environment, basic social services, security, and education.

## 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



*Liberia made history in 2010 as the first West African country to enact a comprehensive freedom of information law.*

with government and civil society in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, the Center's work goes beyond passage of legislation to advancing 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 Center 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 people should have the same opportunity and facility to exercise the right of access to information, and that women face barriers in the exercise of this right, The Carter Center has developed programs to bolster equal access for women. The Global ATI Program works with local partners and key stakeholders in Guatemala, Liberia, and Bangladesh to raise awareness regarding unequal access to information; increase engagement of thematically relevant civil society organizations, particularly those focused on women's economic empowerment and women's rights; and encourage key ministries and agencies to implement right to information instruments with gender sensitivity. Moreover, the Center supports reviews of ATI legislation and policies with special consideration for gender, and works to raise awareness among international and regional organizations about information inequities and the importance of explicitly including the right to information in international and regional women's agendas.



*A 2015 Carter Center study found that women in Guatemala face many obstacles to accessing information.*

## Advancing Implementation

The past decade has witnessed incredible achievements in the right of access to information with more than 115 countries having passed access to information legislation. However, many countries still are failing to fully and effectively implement their laws. 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 implementation benchmarks
- identify the extent to which a ministry or agency has implemented its law
- provide a roadmap for improvements
- contribute to dialogue and scholarship on implementation, including successes and challenges



The IAT isolates implementation, assessing the extent and quality of public agencies' efforts. Using a spotlight methodology, at the conclusion of the application of the IAT indicators, the Center provides a report demonstrating where good practice has been achieved and areas that need additional progress. Following three phases of testing, the refined tool is available for Carter Center application in ministries and agencies within countries that are interested in strengthening implementation.

## Serving as a Resource and Contributing to Scholarship



*Through events and collaboration with other organizations, the Center helps advance scholarship on global access to information.*

More than 5 billion people around the globe are afforded some legal rights to information; however, in many countries this right has not been made meaningful or transformative for their citizens. The Carter Center supports colleagues through scholarship and by serving as a resource as we collectively seek to highlight challenges and advance good governance, transparency, and the right of access to information. Specifically, the Center engages with key international, regional, and country partners; leads on working groups, such as the Open Government Partnership Access to Information Working Group; provides technical assistance as requested; develops papers, materials, and presentations; and maintains the international access to information and transparency events calendar.