

international best practices, encouraged a participatory lawmaking process and convened and facilitated a series of joint civil society and government workshops.

In furtherance of our goals to support both government and civil society in their important efforts, in March 2004 The Carter Center opened a local office in Kingston, Jamaica. Our project is dedicated to sharing the growing body of international experiences and best practices through such potential activities as:

- Seminars and workshops to discover the importance of the right to information and how the Access to Information Act 2002 can serve individuals and organizations.
- Supporting public awareness campaigns,
- Helping create systems for monitoring the successes and impact of access to information requests,
- Serving as the interim Secretariat for the newly established Volunteers Attorneys Panel, a group of attorney's prepared to provide *pro bono* assistance in access to information appeals for persons and non-profit organizations who cannot afford to hire a lawyer, and
- Providing expertise and support to government agencies, as requested.

In partnership with our civil society partners, including Jamaicans for Justice and the Government of Jamaica, The Carter Center remains dedicated to supporting the culture of greater openness and transparency for all persons.

THE
CARTER CENTER



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ACCESS TO INFORMATION: JAMAICA



THE CARTER CENTER
ACCESS TO INFORMATION
PROJECT



THE
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Waging Peace. Fighting Disease. Building Hope.

The Carter Center

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, in partnership with Emory University, founded the Carter Center in 1982 to advance peace and health worldwide. The Center is guided by a fundamental commitment to human rights and the alleviation of human suffering. The Carter Center's mission is to prevent and resolve conflicts, enhance freedom and democracy, and improve health. The Carter Center has been working in Jamaica since 1999 on a Transparency Project, which has included activities to support the passage, implementation and enforcement of the Access to Information Act 2002.

Access to Information

Access to Information is a key to democracy. Through a free flow of information citizens can participate more fully in public life, help determine priorities for spending, and influence decision-making. Access to information serves to foster transparency and prevent corruption and backroom-deals. It offers government a system to increase their efficiency and effectiveness, and provides a means for holding public officials accountable. Perhaps most importantly, access to public information is fundamental in allowing persons to seek and receive documents and data related to their basic

human rights to education, health, and housing, and to ensure that all persons enjoy equal access to justice. The Center has long recognized the importance of transparency for good governance, and the role that access to information can play in ensuring civil-political and socio-economic rights and in rebuilding trust between a government and its citizens.

“Everyone has the right . . . to seek, receive and impart information and ideas . . .”

Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Access to Information Project

In 1999, The Carter Center began an initiative to support the promotion of access to information at the hemispheric level, and to help advance the efforts in a number of specific countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the past decade, a worldwide trend toward transparency has emerged with more than 45 countries passing new legislation.



Recognizing, however, that passage of the law is only the first step, The Carter Center has committed to supporting both governments and civil society in their efforts to implement and enforce the right top public information.

The Jamaica Presence

At the inception of the project, The Carter Center received an invitation to support the government and Government of Jamaica and civil society efforts to establish a new culture of openness. Carter Center activities included the production of two widely distributed guidebooks on fostering transparency, as well as seminars and workshops.

The establishment of an information regime is a dual responsibility. While government must pass a comprehensive access to information law and establish proper processes for creating and imparting information, citizens have the responsibility to request information and monitor the state's accomplishments. If people are not using the new law, it soon will atrophy and not meet its great potential.

Thus, The Carter Center has sought to engage all sectors at each stage of the establishment of the new culture of openness. We have provided observations to the draft law based on the emerging