**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.

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| **STAGE 1: NO FOI LEGISLATION** |
| **Country** | **State of implementation** | **Priority actions** | **Status** |
| **St. Kitts and Nevis** | * Draft FOI Bill 2006
* No movement forward
 | * Investigate possibility of demonstrating the importance of transparency through best practice
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| **St. Lucia** | * No legislation exists
 | * Meet with media executives
* Contact business houses
* Build broad coalition
* Invite experts to talk to decision makers
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| **STAGE 2: FOI LEGISLATION PASSED BUT HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED** |
| **Country** | **State of implementation** | **Priority actions** | **Status** |
| **Bahamas** | * FOI Bill 2012
* Never gazetted
* Implementation unlikely
 | * 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)
 | * New government claims it is reviewing legislation for implementation during current term.
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| **Guyana**  | * Access to Information Act 2011
* Workable document, but lack of political will to implement
* Perceived lack of resources
* NGOs are willing to push it forward due to concerns about corruption
* Strong culture of secrecy
 | * Boost the already strong interface between environmental and FOI NGO’s
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| **STAGE 3: FOI LEGISLATION PASSED AND IMPLEMENTED, BUT SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS EXIST** |
| **Country** | **State of implementation** | **Priority actions** | **Status** |
| **Antigua and Barbuda** | * 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
 | * 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
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| **Belize** | * 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
 | * 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
 | * Oceana Belize recruited a few media members to group and help work on this. First meeting with main protagonist -Dyon Elliot (media) on Wednesday May 8, 2013 to discuss issues.
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| **STAGE 4: FOI LEGISLATION IS FULLY BEING ENFORCED** |
| **Country** | **State of implementation** | **Priority actions** | **Status** |
| **Cayman Islands** | * FOI Law 2007
* FOI office needs additional funding to bring staff levels back up to normal, budget cuts have hampered its ability to monitor and enforce the law.
 | * Seek more help from civil society groups to promote the Act
* Law review in process – formulate updated recommendations
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| **Jamaica** | * FOI Act 2002
* Strong support from broad coalition incl. media and civil society that assists with implementation
 | * Publicize the Act more
* Educate regarding right to appeal
* Improve compliance monitoring
* Amendment of Act forthcoming
* Amend appeal form (too legalistic)
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| **St. Vincent and the Grenadines** | * 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
 | * Boost public education
* Networking with others in the region
* Seek amendment of legislation re appeal mechanism
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| **Trinidad and Tobago** | * 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
 | * Build broad coalition, including trade unions, NGOs and business organizations
* Conduct letter-writing campaign
* Increase public awareness
* Network with others in the region
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| **ACTION ITEMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION BY ALL COUNTRIES** |
| **Priority actions** | **Status** |
| * Individual press releases sent from each country to national media houses
 | * Done in Jamaica, Guyana, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, Cayman Islands (***others?)***
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| * Establish Caribbean Freedom of Information Network
 | * Done – Hosted by Jamaica Environment Trust with technical support of Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (Email address for network - cfoin@lists.elaw.org )
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| * Capture case studies of FOI use and implementation
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| * 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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**Updated: May 5, 2013**