

STOPPING “DON’T KNOW, DON’T CARE”

The need for Access to Information legislation in Papua New Guinea



THE ISSUE

Citizens do not fully participate in policy and decision making process and development activities because citizens do not have access information.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGE NEEDED

In compliance with the PNG Constitution, a specific legislation should be enacted to enable the public to have access to information. The specific legislation “Access to Information Act” will enable greater participation of citizens in public affairs.

Pursuant to s 51 (1) of the Constitution it states “Every citizen has the right of reasonable access to official documents subject only to the need for such secrecy as is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society”. Further in s 51 (3), it states “Provision shall be made by law to establish procedures by which citizens may obtain ready access to official information”. Although the Constitution allows for “Access to Information” legislation, PNG did not enact a specific legislation allowing citizens to have access to information.

EXPECTED USAGE OF LEGISLATION

This commitment to enact the “Access to Information” legislation is expected to be a key instrument contributing towards transparency and accountability to build more open institutions, and generating useful public knowledge. Furthermore, it is a valuable tool to allow for greater engagement of citizens in the management of public affairs.

TIPNG IS ADVOCATING FOR INFORMATION

Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) is a community based organisation whose mission it is to inform, educate and empower Papua New Guineans to take action against corruption and to work together to ensure demonstrated high standards of accountability at all levels of society.

TIPNG has been pushing for Access to Information (ATI) legislation almost since its inception, even going so far as to assist in drafting the framework for such legislation.

Most recently TIPNG has attempted to work with the Government through the Open Government Partnership (OGP). This is an initiative where Civil Society and State Agencies come together to identify commitments to make the State more open to citizens - one such commitment was to Freedom of Information, of which ATI is a fundamental component.



The OGP National Action Plan, envisions the ATI legislation as being the foundation required for state agencies to share information with each other and also create a means by which citizens can exercise a constitutional right.

WAY FORWARD FOR ADVOCACY

TIPNG will continue to push for this legislation through OGP and through other means of engagement such as the PNG Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (PNGEITI) with key stakeholders to ensure that a bill is brought before Parliament and that essential ATI enabling legislation is passed.