**Freedom of Information Workshop**

Mauritius

11 December 2015

**Thank you for being here today! Your participation both today and in the future is important to ensuring access to information in Mauritius. We hope this will be the start of meaningful engagement on this topic!**

Breakout 1: Drafting a Freedom of Information Act

There are many considerations in drafting a FOI law. What will the process entail? What will the law address? This breakout will include brainstorming ideas for both the process and substance of a FOI law.

Questions for discussion:

What should be the objective of a FOI law?

Should there be an affirmative statement about the intent for public access or the right of the public in the law?

Process:

* Who should lead the process?
* Who should be involved?
* Should there be a drafting committee? If so, who should be part of it?
* Should the government take the lead? If so, should they seek input from stakeholders and the public? How would that engagement best work?

Substance:

* Which ministry or office should administer or oversee a FOIA? Should it live in an existing ministry or should a new centralized office be created?
* Who will have responsibility for overseeing FOIA in the ministries?
* Not all information created or maintained by government is public information. What categories of information should be considered non-public and excepted from release? How do we ensure any exceptions are not so broad as to cover information that should be released?
* If a requester disagrees with the government’s decision, what options should exist for recourse? Appeals? Seeking assistance from an Ombudsman or Information Commissioner?
* What type of reporting should ministries produce? What would reports include? How often would they be published?
* Should information released to a requester be automatically released to the public?

Breakout 2: Implementation

Once a FOIA is enacted, the public will begin to use the law and the government must be prepared to respond to requests. What considerations will be needed on both sides and how do we begin to prepare for that now?

Questions for discussion:

For government:

* What are the various roles involved and what duties might correspond to each?
* Will regulations, guidance or other best practices be needed? What would they entail?
* What must be included in training for government employees? Who should receive the training?
* How can government build awareness of a new law and educate the public on what it does (and what it does not do)?

For requesters:

* What roles do requesters and the general public play?
* What type of training or education is needed? Who can assist with this?

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Breakout 3: Using a FOI law

Think about the role you will play once a FOI law is enacted. What are your expectations? What challenges do you foresee? What benefits?

We will do a short role play to consider the different roles involved in using a FOI law.

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Role Play

Information Officer

You have just received a request from Mr./Mrs. Mauritian seeking information about road repairs in Madipola. Walk through the process from beginning to end, interacting with Mr./Mrs. Mauritian and with the Transport Expert who you must seek the records from.

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Role Play

Transport Expert

A person who calls himself/herself the Transport Ministry’s Information Officer has just arrived at your office asking for records on a road repair project in Madipola. You have never heard of this person or this position and you are very busy. You are not inclined to be helpful.

(In this role play, you should act confrontational toward the Information Officer and resist his or her efforts to retrieve records from you.)