Legislating and Implementing Public Access to Information in Africa: What are the Incentives for Government and Civil Society Actors?

By Gilbert Ronald Sendugwa

In the past decade there has been a strong focus on campaigning for the adoption of access to information laws in Africa and around the world. While efforts elsewhere have yielded positive results with over 80 countries adopting freedom of information laws in the period, the African response has largely been cold with a handful of countries passing and implementing access to information legislations. Civil society’s role in stimulating demand for information, creating public awareness about the right of access to information, public education about the law, monitoring government compliance with the law and continued engagement of government are vital for successful implementation.

The paper identifies and examines incentives for government on the one hand and civil society actors on the other in legislating and implementing public access to information initiatives.

Introduction

Incentives play an important role in helping decision-making at individual, family, community, country and international level. Since 1990, the right of access to

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information has grown rapidly in its appreciation as a tool to promote human rights and accountable leadership and democracy. During the past decade more than eighty countries have adopted national access to information legislations with governments and civil society groups playing active roles.

Africa has lagged behind the pace for the adoption and implementation of access to information laws with only half a dozen countries adopting national access to information legislations over the past decade.

**The Status of Access to Information in Africa**

The development of access to information in Africa is a relatively recent phenomenon. The continent is yet to adopt a specific continental -wide legally binding instrument on access to information. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights whose article 19 guarantees the right to seek, receive and impart information has been ratified by 51 African Union member states.

However, the continental body, the African Union (and its predecessor, the Organisation of Africa Unity), has adopted various instruments which either explicitly or imply the right of access to information. These include the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights which has been ratified by all African Union member states, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ratified by 8), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human And Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples Rights (ratified by 25) the Protocol of the Court of Justice of the African Union (ratified by 16 members) and the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption which has been ratified by 31 member states.

At country level one in four countries specifically provide constitutional guarantees to the right of access to information. These include Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde,
Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique. Others are Rwanda, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda. Sixteen other countries: Algeria, Botswana, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe provide the right of access to information as part of the right to freedom of speech.

Despite these constitutional guarantees only five countries: South Africa, Angola, Uganda, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Liberia have proceeded to adopt national legislations to facilitate the operationalisation of this right but the Zimbabwean and Angolan laws constrain, rather than, facilitate access to information.

Despite challenges of effective implementation, South Africa’s Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) of 2000, the first access to information law on the continent, also appears to be the most credible effort on the continent to empower citizens through access to information as a matter of right. Uganda adopted its Access to Information Act in 2005, but full implementation is still being awaited five years after. The mandated Regulations under Section 47 which are necessary to guide implementation are still not in place neither have ministers been complying with reporting requirements under section 43 of the Access to Information Act.

Ethiopia adopted the Law on Mass Media and Freedom of Information in 2008. Although merged with a media law, the Ethiopian law contains significant characteristics of a Freedom of Information law, however, it has not been brought into force yet which should have happened in 2010 but this was postponed arguably because public institutions were not ready for implementation.

No single country in two (Central and North) out of Africa’s five sub-regions has a freedom of information law.
World over, civil society organizations have played significant roles in the development and implementation of access to information legislations. The section that follows examines incentives for governments on one hand and those of civil society on the other, in the adoption and implementation of access to information legislations in Africa.

**What are the incentives for Governments?**

In light of the status of freedom of access to information legislation in Africa the main questions to ask in relation to government incentives in the African context are: what are the incentives for adopting and implementation of ATI laws, do they exist and are incentives universal?

Public authorities gain from taking the initiative to publish the information they hold. By disclosing information about government programmes, laws and decisions, the public gets to know about, and are able to contribute to, the country’s rule of law and development. It enhances government efficiency by ensuring more accountable spending of public funds. This promotes integrity in, and of, government. Disclosure of government data also ensures that the public has the information needed to participate in policy- and decision-making. Participation of the public in policy and decision-making ensures that public funds are directed at specific public needs and this reduces wasteful and fruitless expenditure.

Access of public information promotes participatory poverty reduction policy-making, where a ready and meaningful interaction between policy-makers and beneficiaries is desirable. With information, people can help ensure that other human rights are realized, especially socio-economic rights to clean water, adequate housing, health care and so on, and can help them protect themselves from discrimination and unjust allocations.

Information disclosures can help governments and communities combat corruption. MKSS in Rajasthan in India successfully used information disclosures to expose corruption, improve service delivery and advance basic service delivery to the poor.
Transparency regimes encourage better information management, improve a public authority’s internal information flow, and contribute to increased efficiency. In countries with access to information regimes, proactive disclosure has another benefit, which is to reduce the burden on public administration of having to process requests for information that may be filed under an access to information law.

An examination of what occasioned the adoption of access to information legislation in South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe sheds light on incentives for African governments in adopting access to information legislations on the continent. The repressive apartheid government in South Africa was characterized by a culture of secrecy and non-responsiveness among public and private bodies which may have most of the time resulted in gross violations of human rights, abuse of power and non-accountability.

In framing and driving the adoption of the Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000, the new government in South Africa was in compliance with section 32 of the constitution but also to specifically address challenges that the country had experienced under a secretive apartheid regime. This created a mood across the population, and leaders, of the need to create and operate a government based on the principle of openness, accountability and human rights, hence constitutional provision 32 (1) (a) which provides that everyone has the right of access to any information held by the State and 32 (1) (b) which provides for the horizontal application of the right of access to information held by another person to everyone when that information is required for the exercise or protection of any right.

Uganda, like South Africa, had gone through a difficult history of repressive regimes, tyrannical rule and gross abuse of human rights. In fact the new constitution promulgated in 1995 guarantees the right of access to information under article 41. However,
government did not take initiative to develop and pass a law that would enable citizens enjoy this right until ten years later when civil society organizations working with an opposition Member of Parliament initiated a Private Members Bill. Following these developments government took up, “owned” and presented the bill leading to its passing in 2005.

Seven years since the adoption of the Access to Information Act, government has not passed regulations to operationalise the law, many of its officers and the population are not aware of the law while the few requests that are made under the law go unanswered. It could be argued that these actions could be due to lack of capacity and means but the history of the Act raises suspicion as to whether the adoption of the law was not motivated by the desire to avoid embarrassment and “demonstrating commitment” and not transparency, human rights and accountability as stated in the Act’s objectives.

In Zimbabwe the process was entirely government driven without civil society involvement. The adoption of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act was occasioned by the Presidential Elections of 2002, the emergence of a strong opposition—the united Movement for Democratic Change, the waning popularity of the then ruling ZANU PF and the relatively weaker controls of information reaching the public domain through The Daily News which was countering official government propaganda. These developments led to increasing reports exposing government excesses such as the violent crackdown on opposition, corruption and politicisation of land reforms as well as the exposure to the public of ZANU PF officials and allies’ embarrassing private lives, which raised more questions on their integrity.

Upholding principles of international obligations and commitments have provided national governments as reference points they should adhere to. Fifty one member states of the African Union have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and recognise the Universal Declaration of Human Rights both of which guarantee the right of access to information.
The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa adopted by the 32\textsuperscript{nd} Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights in October 2002 have increasingly become a major standard for assessing best practice in Africa. Article IV(1) of the Declaration provides in part that: “\textit{Public bodies hold information not for themselves but as custodians of the public good and everyone has a right to access this information, subject only to clearly defined rules established by law.}” Although the Declaration establishes the right of everyone to access information held by public bodies, it is apparent from the above text that the right only exists subject to clearly defined rules established by law. This goes further to reinforce the necessity for the adoption of freedom of information laws which contain such clearly defined rules.

Although the provisions on access to information are still weak in the voluntary African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), it is becoming a central feature of assessments and follow-up on national plans of action. A recent review of Uganda’s implementation of the APRM plan of action highlighted in various sections the lack of progress with implementation of actions for taking forward the right of access to information. This came at a time when the country’s own self assessment under the United Nations Convention against Corruption revealed lack of progress at the implementation of several measures against corruption. Clearly governments do not want to be portrayed negatively and try to comply with legislative or policy frameworks.

The African regional conference on freedom of information held in Accra, Ghana in February 2010 could have been a significant development for access to information in Africa. The Government of Ghana tabled the bill that had almost been forgotten to parliament in the week of the conference; the Government of Liberia promised to pass a Freedom of Information law within the year and this happened; processes were revived in Nigeria and strengthened in Sierra Leone. The adoption of a freedom of information law by Liberia has in itself been significant. It is the first country to do so in West Africa, the sixth in Africa; it has put pressure on big brothers like Nigeria and Ghana.
Governments want to strengthen public confidence and trust in the public service by providing information on programmes, policies and activities that would enhance this objective. In line with this thinking the Government of Uganda for example appointed information officers for every ministry and district local governments with a main mandate of informing the public about government programmes.

The internet has supported not only the adoption but also implementation of proactive disclosures of large-scale government data at low cost. Almost every government department on the African continent has a website and can easily access internet services. On the one hand this has limited the number of requests for information to be made to officials but on the other millions of citizens do not have access to internet services. This however, should not be a justification for not adopting statutory legislation because imparting information is a right and what public institutions publish may not necessarily satisfy the public’s need for information.

The fight against corruption is one of the drivers for adoption and implementation of access to information legislation in Africa. In what appeared to be a response to public’s concern about corruption and poor service delivery President Museveni of Uganda on January 26, 2011 issued a directive on community dialogue on accountability on service delivery. The directive among others required Resident District Commissioners in each district to organize dialogues on how much funds a particular district received from central government and how these funds have been used. However, like the access to information act itself, the scheme was hijacked and implemented as a project by central government ministries. This had implications on cost of implementing it and disincentives for local governments who are themselves autonomous.

The directive attracted wider attention as a positive instrument that would combat corruption and improve service delivery. However, civil society observed that it should
be extended to cover central government ministries and departments which were taking 77% of the national budget.

Donor and multilateral agencies have played an important role in legislating for public access to information. In Pakistan for example civil society pressure for a right to information law has been present but without impacting on policy. In 2001, however, Asian Development Bank offered a US$ 130 million loan subject to the condition that records of all financial transactions would be open to public scrutiny.

In Uganda it is said that the World Bank played an influential role in getting government to take over a process that had started as a civil society and private members initiative. In Zambia the government had given its draft bill to the World Bank for review ahead of its tabling to parliament. However, this became an “official” explanation for delay. This continued until AFIC inquired from the World Bank only to be informed that the Bank had long returned the draft bill to the government. There is debate among civil society activists on the desirability of access to information law as conditionality for development assistance.

The outgoing military rulers in Guinea-Conakry and Niger have unilaterally signed decrees on access to administrative documents. The timing of signing these laws at the very end of their time as leaders raise questions as to whether they were motivated by genuine commitment to open government and human rights.

Why are African governments slow at adopting and implementing access to information legislations?

2 Message in support of and appreciation for H.E The President on the establishment of public accountability fora by Uganda Debt Network)
While there have been substantial gains in terms of adoption of access to information laws around the world, it has become very clear that both the implementation and enforcement of ATI legislation is enormously challenging. In countries with weak rule of law and/or poorly capacitated institutions of governance, the question is being asked whether a comprehensive ATI law will do more harm than good by raising expectations that cannot be met.

There has been a systematic lack of political will on the part of leaders who ideally have the responsibility for putting such laws in place. For example a week after the February 2010 Accra conference at which the Government of Zambia had committed to expedite the consideration and adoption of a freedom of information bill, an access to information provision was removed from the draft constitution of Zambia. A month later a senior government official informed AFIC that progress to adopt an access to information law was being delayed by the World Bank which was later to be found inaccurate.

The lack of political will itself derives from a number of factors, including the fear by government officials that greater public access to information will make them vulnerable to their political opponents as such laws are likely to expose them when they misconduct themselves or fall short in other ways; put their personal interests at risk; expose the failure of government programmes and policies.

Secondly, national governments have for long evolved and operated under a secretive culture and as such the notion of public scrutiny is an alien concept. In many African countries, government officials are obliged upon appointment to subscribe to various oaths of secrecy in which they undertake not to disclose any information which comes to them in the course of the performance of their duties. Many countries, especially those that were colonies of Britain, have Official Secrets laws which have guided the operations of officials for decades. Most government officials are therefore used to not being asked questions. After decades of operating in this manner, there has emerged an ingrained culture of secrecy among civil servants and public officials and it has become extremely difficult for many of them to change. There is a need for massive public
education to enlighten both those in power or authority, the public service as well as the larger society about these issues.

The adoption and implementation of the law imposes what may be seen by some officials as stringent and cumbersome procedures for responding to requests in defined time periods. The chaotic records management system many times becomes a major disincentive for government compliance. The few countries that have adopted ATI laws have not had a meaningful experience of implementation and this experience in itself has become a disincentive for other countries to adopt access to information laws.

The nature of the law sometimes affects its implementation. For example the Ugandan Access to Information Act does not provide for an independent oversight body other than courts which are inaccessible, costly and beyond the reach of average citizens. In Zimbabwe the main purpose of the law is to protect rather than promote access to information by citizens.

The attitude of political leaders as saviours of their nations has also provided minimum opportunities if at all for openness. The leaders believe that citizens are too ignorant and one often observes a dismissive attitude towards people and their ability to contribute to the making of important decisions about issues that affect them or how they want to be governed.

The emergency of terrorism since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and twin bomb blasts in East Africa two years earlier provided many governments with excuses to go slow on legislating for openness but rather strengthen measures for opaqueness. In Nigeria for example the then President Olusegun Obasanjo refused to sign into law the Freedom of Information Bill passed by the National Assembly in 2007, arguing that it would undermine Nigeria’s national security, especially in the light of the fact that a decision by the head of a public institution to deny access to information would be subject to judicial review. It should be recalled that the government had been foot
dragging on the bill since 1999 and the legislature only moved out of pressure. The President only used terrorism as a convenient excuse. Terror attacks in Kampala in July 2010 provided government with opportunity to push through the phone-tapping bill which parliamentarians had refused to pass for almost three years.

Experiences with the Secrecy Bill in South Africa, constitutional review processes in Zambia, legislative processes in Zambia and implementation in Uganda demonstrate that the development of ATI is not a one way process. Sometimes it goes in the positive direction while other times it tends to take a negative turn depending on prevailing conditions in the country. When governments are confident and have done so well on a particular matter there is a tendency towards openness. On the contrary when it feels things have not been necessarily positive there is caution towards openness.

It has been argued that legislating for public’s access to information will undermine the power base of governments and cause regime changes. However, this may require further debate and research. There is not sufficient evidence showing that countries that implemented ATI legislations for centuries have had change of governments as a result of openness. On the contrary, absence of free flow of information has sometimes proved a serious disincentive for governments. For example, lack of free flow of information proved fatal during the early stages of the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in China. In Romania, absence of information made the then president lose touch with reality when on December 21, 1989, after days of local and seemingly limited unrest, President Ceausescu called for a grandiose meeting at the central square of Bucharest to rally the crowds in support of his leadership. In a stunning development, the meeting degenerated into anarchy, forcing the president out of power and was killed two days later.

Incentives for the Civil Society

The role of civil society in the development of access to information regimes in Africa as elsewhere has been significant. They have created awareness about the right and
motivated the population to demand for legislation, they have developed draft bills (e.g. Uganda, Kenya, Zambia & Mozambique); they have trained civil society coalitions and government agencies on access to information; they have monitored and provided the other voice where it has been lacking. What then has been their incentive and motivation in the face of difficulties in dealing with governments on the issue?

Like on the supply side, incentives for civil society should be looked at from the perspective of different stages of campaign for the development and implementation of an ATI law. In countries like Uganda, civil society enthusiasm went down following the adoption of the Access to Information Act in 2005. Six years since the adoption of the law, civil society that was active during campaigning for legislation has just as government gone silent with very isolated calls for implementation and enforcement. This could be due to a number of reasons.

1. Establishing and building the need for an access to information legislation through awareness raising and advocacy creates an ongoing understanding of the importance the law and makes such a law a means to an end and not vice-versa. Since the adoption of the law fewer organizations have used it to demand for information.

2. Putting emphasis on getting the law adopted and not what it is intended to achieve. Civil society and donor agencies have sometimes fallen into the trap of believing that the law itself will deliver expected outcomes. Yet public education, capacity and attitude of public institutions, independence and activism of judiciary have been found to be important pillars that need to be brought on board following the adoption of the law.

3. Failure of civil society to work together through coalitions and alliances. In countries like Angola and Zambia civil society have found it difficult to work together through a coalition to advance legislation for access to information. This is true in many other places, mainly arising from mistrust among players, fear of domination and competition.
The formation of effective civil society coalitions has re-inforced energies for real change to openness. In countries like Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Liberia and Ghana civil society coalitions bringing on board non governmental organizations, media organisations, lawyers and private players have been built and have proved an important voice for legislating on access to information. Coalitions build bridges beyond internal organizational challenges and enable effective campaigning.

The extent to which ATI can be used to increase accountability is dependent on whether actors such as the media, NGOs, researchers and academia are willing and able to work and support each other. The state naturally is bent on obscuring its workings and retaining power which they fear to lose through releasing information. It is in light of this inherent resistance to ATI that organised civil society has carved out a role as the primary driver of information requests, and in many cases, legislation to support this right.

Civil society organizations and coalitions in parts of Africa have received exposure, training and other capacity building in advocacy and access to information. These initiatives have helped them to draft bills, articulate the need for the law and actively engage with policy makers in the executive and legislative arms of government. Enhanced capacities are quite visible with civil society campaigners for freedom of information in countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Zimbabwe among others. The same cannot be said of civil society groups in some countries such as Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Where civil society capacity is weak the adoption and implementation of access to information legislation faces even more challenges.

The emergence and increase in the use of internet has facilitated the task of civil society campaigners in several respects. It has facilitated accessibility of certain information more readily available in a timely manner and helps to ensure that there is equality of access for all members of society without the need to file requests. More importantly, the internet has facilitated mobilization, sharing of ideas, campaign strategies among civil
society groups and learning. Proactive disclosure regimes particularly when they are automatic and close to real-time, make it harder for public officials to subsequently deny the existence of, or to manipulate, the information.

Positive legal regimes including regional instruments and constitutional provisions to some extent have been a reference point for civil society groups to hold governments to account in relation to the adoption and implementation of access to information legislations. Even without litigating, instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa have provided compelling grounds for governments to listen to and debate these issues with civil society.

Civil society groups have been driven, in part, by the desire to use the right of access to information to promote participatory democracy. Better quality information allows citizens to engage more meaningfully and fully with their government and thereby hold them to account. It has potential to invert the power relationship between state and citizen thereby empowering the common man not only to question the basis for decisions but also to shape government policies and programmes.

Civil society groups have used awareness campaigns to make information available to ordinary citizens. Information makes anti-poverty programmes relevant, facilitates meaningful debates and makes it possible for targeted communities to participate. Information can empower poor communities to battle the circumstances in which they find themselves and help balance the unequal power dynamic that exists between people marginalised through poverty and their governments.

Support to civil society in the form of training, funding and technical assistance has been an important incentive for their work in advancing campaigns for adoption and implementation of access to information legislations. Funding has enabled designing and
implementation of campaigns in countries like Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ghana and Nigeria. It has facilitated drafting of bills and monitoring compliance.

Despite this progress many civil society groups on the continent are still not able to access the much needed funding to design and implement effective campaigns for adoption and implementation of legislation. This has reduced many civil society groups to merely calling for the adoption of freedom of information laws. They are not able to speak confidently about it and correct misleading or inaccurate information being used to confuse and divert attention. In Zambia for example, some members of the constitutional review commission were deliberately misleading the population that the right of access to information will, if guaranteed in the constitution, have the same effect as promoting homosexuality well knowing that this will deny positive provisions the much needed support in this conservative society.

Limited funding on the other hand affects awareness creation among members of the public which severely limits public demand for adoption of freedom of information laws. Most ordinary members of the public do not readily see the link between freedom of information and their struggles in different areas of work or in different aspects of their lives. They therefore do not pay a lot of attention to the issue.

Fostering accountability has been advanced as a key incentive for civil society to demand for access to information through proactive disclosure and requests on the basis of statutory mechanisms. Information is critical for enabling citizens to exercise their voice, to effectively monitor and hold government to account, and to enter into informed dialogue about decisions which affect their lives. It is seen as vital for empowering all citizens, including vulnerable and excluded people, to claim their broader rights and entitlements. But the potential contribution to good governance of access to information lies in both the willingness of government to be transparent, as well as the ability of citizens to demand and use information – both of which may be constrained in low capacity settings.
A key question in this regard is: To what extent can access to information, and government transparency, advance the claims of poor and marginalised groups and make governments accountable?

It has been argued however, that access to information does not necessarily lead to greater citizen participation, state accountability and state responsiveness. In many developing countries, there are real structural and political barriers which hinder both the capacity and incentives of governments to produce information, and the ability of citizens to claim their right to information and to use it to demand better governance and public services. These barriers include:

- Government may not be actively supportive of the right to information, particularly in contexts where there is a legacy of undemocratic political systems or closed government.
- Citizens may not be aware of their legal right to information, or, in some cases may be reluctant to assert it, either because of fear of a repressive regime, or a prevailing culture of not questioning authority. In other cases, there are structural barriers to poor people accessing and using information. For example, access to the Internet remains low in many developing countries, particularly in remote areas.
- The capacity of public bodies to provide information may be weak, and officials may be unaware of their obligations. In low capacity environments, record management and statistics generation may be insufficient to support access to information.

The most meaningful answer comes from public and civil-society agencies with the power not only to reveal existing data, but also to investigate and produce information about institutional behaviour. This capacity to produce answers permits the construction of the right to accountability.

Addressing hard accountability involves dealing with the nature of the governing regime and civil society's capacity to encourage public accountability institutions to do their jobs.
It should also be noted that as far as the accessibility of ATI laws are concerned, it is preferable to keep cases out of court if possible. Once a case reaches the point of litigation, it effectively moves out of the hands of the citizen and into the hands of the professionals. And while cases which affect large groups of people (public interest cases, usually brought by professional civil society) can have far reaching implications stemming from their precedents, for the purposes of everyday FOI applications, it is clear that the courts are not the ideal forum for these requests to be enforced. Furthermore, courts are expensive and often the most disadvantaged groups are the least likely to know about their rights or to have the means to pursue them through the courts” which is hardly appropriate to the needs of those whose socio-economic rights are under threat.

It is important to stress that the role of civil society in the ATI arena is an indispensable, although not an unproblematic one. And as was illustrated in the country examples, it is, almost without exception, organised civil society that has driven these processes forward towards successful outcomes. Their ability to become highly skilled at the management of the politics of ATI, and their capacity for providing what one might call ‘specialist companionship’ to communities that need to access information to create political space to engage those in power, is critical.

It would seem that when that capacity exists, and there is sustained work with a community, roots can be planted to enable those communities to adopt FOI over time as a more natural or even habitual tool for democratic engagement. So, in turn, it would appear that the capacity to do what ODAC and MKSS have done in South Africa and India is fundamental: to work in a sustained fashion at local community level, but with a sharp understanding of the macro political environment that may impact on the capacity of the information-holders to respond to demand for information.

**Conclusion**

The slow progress towards the enactment and implementation of access to information legislations in Africa is a combination of inadequate incentives for both government on
the one hand and civil society on the other. Actors on both sides have not seized on the existing incentives, however limited to provide a spring board for greater forward movement. Clearly lack of successful implementation in countries that have such laws has been a disincentive for those that lack them to adopt ATI legislations. This situation increases the burden on civil society to take the lead on behalf of citizens to draw governments’ attention to existing and new incentives to legislate and implement access laws. NGOs can play this role by generating demand and supply of information. On the supply side, AFIC has started request campaigns by filing and motivating other civil society groups to make information requests to public bodies in Uganda to prompt responses. Further, NGOs should support coalition-building with NGOs and organisations across sectors given that ATI is a cross-cutting issue. Research is an equally powerful advocacy tool. AFIC is implementing studies in Mali and Senegal; these findings will inform advocacy initiatives in francophone Africa and beyond. Success stories in countries that have adopted and are implementing ATI legislation can be shared with countries without legislation to enhance incentive for adoption. As seen in the discussion, incentives work differently in different countries. Focussed attention will provide learning and movement forward.
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