

Communiqué

Issued at the end of a Two-Day Freedom of Information Training Workshop for Journalists and Civil Society Organizations organized by Media Rights Agenda (MRA) on November 12 and 13, 2025, in Ojokoro, Lagos.

Media Rights Agenda (MRA) convened a two-day Freedom of Information (FOI) Training Workshop for Journalists and representatives of Civil Society Organizations on Wednesday, November 12 and Thursday, November 13, 2025, at D & G Hotel and Suites in Lagos.

The workshop, which was supported by funding from Luminate, brought together 33 participants from the media and civil society organizations across States in the South-West geo-political zone of Nigeria in an effort to strengthen their capacity to utilize the Freedom of Information Act, 2011, as a tool for promoting transparency, accountability, and participatory governance.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- Enhance the participants' understanding of the FOI Act, including its provisions and how to put it to effective use in the course of their professional duties.
- Equip participating journalists and civil society actors with practical skills for making effective requests for information under the Act.
- Engender greater public awareness and use of the Act as a mechanism for ensuring good governance in Nigeria.
- Share strategies and experiences for overcoming challenges in obtaining information under the Act; and
- Foster and strengthen collaboration between journalists and civil society actors in using the Act, including for investigative journalism, advocacy and accountability initiatives.

Over the two days, participants engaged in plenary sessions, expert presentations, and practical exercises, including analysis of key provisions of the FOI Act and related jurisprudence; hands-on drafting of FOI requests and other simulated exercises; how to use responses to FOI requests for reporting and advocacy; as well as monitoring government's implementation and compliance with the provisions of the Act.

Observations

Following the various presentations and other sessions, participants made the following observations:

- Despite being in force for nearly 15 years, the implementation of the FOI Act remains weak and inconsistent across public institutions and different levels of government.
- Most government agencies still operate in secrecy, in disregard for the clear provisions of the Act by failing to comply with their proactive disclosure obligations, their annual reporting obligations as well as other duties and obligations imposed on them by the Act while frequently ignoring or unjustifiably denying requests for information.

- Awareness and utilization of the Act by citizens, journalists, civil society actors and other members of the public remain low due to inadequate public education, institutional resistance to the Law and lack of public trust in government, among other reasons.
- The Act is a powerful tool which the Media and CSOs can leverage to demand information with which they can hold those in authority accountable. Journalists and civil society actors should therefore see the Act as a handy tool that they use in their everyday work.
- Having regard to the fact that journalists and civil society actors require a good knowledge of the Act to effectively use it for improving transparency and governance, they should educate themselves thoroughly about the provisions of the Act to put it into effective use, including for the purpose of combatting misinformation and disinformation
- There is insufficient political will at various levels of government to promote transparency and accountability through enabling access to information for members of the public and, in particular, to make the FOI Act effective.
- Some public officials clearly lack adequate understanding of their obligations under the Act, contributing to delays and wrongful denials of requests for information.
- Collaboration between the media and civil society on FOI-related advocacy and monitoring remains limited, at best, with the result that the overall impact of transparency initiatives has been very low.

Recommendations

Participants consequently resolved and recommended as follows:

1. Journalists and civil society actors should actively, strategically and routinely use the FOI Act in their work to promote and enforce transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance.
2. Continuous sensitization, training and mentorship programmes should be organized for journalists and civil society actors across the country to improve understanding and implementation of the Act. Further to this, awareness-raising and training activities should also be extended to civil servants and public office holders across the different levels of government to improve their knowledge of the Law, sensitize them to their obligations under the Act and their duty to fully implement and comply with its provisions.
3. Media and civil society actors should intensify advocacy for full compliance by public institutions with both the proactive disclosure of information and responsiveness to requests for information pursuant to the provisions of the Act.
4. Stakeholders should more actively use the administrative and judicial remedies provided in the Act to challenge denials of access to information, delays in responding

to requests for information or complying with other obligations under the Act, or other violations of its provisions.

5. Media organizations and CSOs as well as individual journalists and civil society actors should form alliances on different levels and share information, particularly with respect to monitoring compliance with the provisions of the Act, reporting non-compliance, and promoting success stories in the usage of the Act.
6. There is a need for sustained public enlightenment and education campaigns targeting different parts of the country and various constituencies to raise the awareness of citizens all over the country of their right to information and how to exercise it.
7. Federal and State Governments should demonstrate stronger political will by institutionalizing transparency initiatives and mechanisms, including appointing dedicated FOI Desk Officers, ensuring regular reporting as required by law, adopting effective procedures for processing requests for information, and sanctioning officials who disregard or otherwise fail to comply with the provisions of the Act
8. Stakeholders, particularly journalists and civil society actors, should leverage digital technology to track requests, analyze disclosed data, and make information more easily available to members of the public in order to ensure the full realization of the purpose of the Act. Further to this, public institutions should also develop and adopt digital tools and platforms that will simplify information requesting procedures and the processing of requests for information.

Conclusion

Participants commended Media Rights Agenda for its commitment to promoting freedom of information, media freedom, and accountability in Nigeria. They expressed appreciation to the facilitators and sponsor that supported the successful hosting of the workshop.

Participants reaffirmed their commitment to working collaboratively to advance the effective implementation of the FOI Act and to uphold the public's right to know as a cornerstone of democracy and good governance.

Adopted in Lagos this 13th Day of November 2025.

Signed:

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Executive Director

Media Rights Agenda (MRA)