



Training for RTI Officers, RTI Unit and RTI Steering Committee, 9-13th April 2018, Prime Ministers Multifunctional Hall

Report

Right to Information Unit, DSPPAC, Prime Minister's Office

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Introduction

Further to an invitation from the Honourable Prime Minister to Heads of all Government agencies and relevant private entities to nominate a participant at a training for RTI Officers. The Prime Minister in collaboration with UNDP/UNODC undertook a training on Right to Information from 9-13 April 2018. The training in the first three days focused on building RTI Officers capacity in their role under the RTI Act and the process of dealing with RTI requests. The fourth day training was for the RTI Unit and recap on the first three days. The RTI Steering Committee members were invited to attend the last day. Please refer to Annex 1, agenda of the RTI Training.

Some agencies responded positively to the Hon. Prime Ministers invitation and participated actively in the training. The number of participants for the first three days was 28. The fourth day had 5 and last day was 10 participants.

The facilitation team consisted of:

- Ms Aylair Livingstone, UNDP's RTI Consultant
- Ms Lavenia Rokovucago, UNDP/UNODC representative
- Mr. Harold Obed, RTI Unit
- Mrs. June Naviti, RTI Unit

The training was supported by UNDP & UNODC and the Office of the Prime Minister.

The Training

All participants arrived on time and registration began before the official opening. The training was officially opened by Mr. Gregoire Nimbtki who is the Acting Director General of the Prime Minister's Office. Officials present includes the Director of Statistics, PSC Human Resource Manager, Government PRO and other senior government officials.

Day one started off with introductions from each participant stating their names and place of employments. Aylair gave a brief overview and scope of the RTI Law. Participants learnt what types of people can make an application to request information and the types of information in government. Presentation was also done on the role of the RTI Unit, role of the Information Commissioner and the role of the RTI Officer.

After lunch participants learnt more about their role as RTI Officers to support proactive publication in their various agencies and what proactive publication and disclosure log is. RTI Officers must provide a monthly report to the RTI Unit. At the end of day one participants took part in a Quiz activity which summarized all discussions held throughout day one.

Day two the participants focused on the process of handling RTI requests and ensure that request are provided/denied using timeframe provided by the RTI Act. Participants learned a lot from Aylair's discussions on RTI requests. At the end of day two participants took part in the Quiz which helped them show their understanding of Handling RTI requests. They worked in groups to discuss the quizzes.

Day three focused on exemptions and the grounds for denial of access, public interest test and protections, offences and penalties. Participants learned a lot through discussions on the days topics. The day ended also with group discussions on the quizzes to recap their discussions throughout the day. Discussions in these quizzes were led by a participant from the Ombudsman's Office.

Participants finished the training by filling in evaluation forms to provide their input into the three days training.

Day Four the RTI Unit staff were present including the some government agencies representatives who were not present at the three days training. Aylair had a brief discussion with the RTI Unit and recapped on the three days session with the other participants who were not present for the previous day.

The RTI Steering Committee members were present at day five. Harold Obed led the discussions for day five. The RTI Steering Committee is a strong committee with members from all stakeholders of the Right to Information Unit. The agenda for day five in included in Annex 2.

Outcomes of the training

The objectives of the training were to achieve:

1. A greater awareness and understanding of the RTI Officers role in facilitating the RTI Act in their respective agencies and entities including the process of handling RTI requests when made, providing information, timeframes and dealing with exemptions and denial or refusal of information requests.
2. Necessary knowledge and skills throughout the training for the RTI Unit and RTI Steering Committee to continue facilitating RTI Officers training in the future.

Summary of Evaluation

Right to Information Training Prime Minister's Multi-Function Hall Port Vila, Vanuatu 9-11 April, 2018						
Number of Participants: 28		Female Participants: 20 Male Participants : 8				
Total Number of respondents : 28						
A. Content	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
1. Prior Knowledge on the subject	Expert on topic				None	More than 50% of the participants had no prior knowledge on the subject.
	3.57	10.71	28.57	32.14	25	
2. Amount of material covered	Too much				Too little	60.71% felt that material covered was adequate.

	3.57	21.43	60.71	3.57	10.71	
3. Degree of difficulty	Too difficult				Too easy	64.29% felt that level of difficulty it was moderate and was not too difficult nor too easy.
	0	7.14	64.29	25	3.57	
4. Was there a logical process of the workshop from beginning to end?	No, seldom				Yes, always	Participants felt that was more or less a logical process of the workshop from beginning to end.
	7.14	0	50	17.86	25	
B. Organisation						
5. Overall organization of the workshop	Very vague				Very clear	Majority of the participants felt that the overall organization of the workshop was very clear
	3.57	3.57	10.71	53.57	28.57	
6. Expectations (i.e. what was expected of you)	Very vague				Very clear	Majority of the participants felt that expectations of participants were very clear.
	3.57	0	17.86	60.71	17.86	
7. The pace of the workshop	Too slow				Too fast	64.29% of the participants felt that the workshop was adequate and not too fast or too slow. There were however, 28.57% that felt the pace was fast.
	0	0	64.29	28.57	7.14	
8. Length of the workshop	Too long				Too short	More than 50% of the participants felt that the workshop was too short. None of the participants felt it was too long – general comments also reveal that they would have liked the workshop to be extended to one week.
	0	0	39.29	35.71	25	
C. Learning Support						
9. Usefulness of the presentations	Of very little use				Very useful	Majority of the participants felt that the presentations were very useful.
	0	7.14	3.57	25	64.29	
10. Usefulness of group discussions	Of very little use				Very useful	Majority of the participants felt that the group discussions were

	3.57	0	10.71	14.29	71.43	very useful and was also highlighted in the general comments.
11. How likely are you to use this learning going forward?	Not likely				Very likely	Majority of the participants stated that they are very likely to take use this learning going forward
	0	3.57	14.29	35.71	46.43	
12. Helpfulness of the organisers?	Very unhelpful				Very helpful	Majority of the participants felt that the organisers were very helpful.
	3.57	0	3.57	35.71	57.14	
D. Overall Evaluation						
13. How would you rate the content of the training?	Poor				Very good	Most (92.85%) of the participants rated the content of the training as good/very good.
	0	0	7.14	32.14	60.71	
14. How would you rate the presenter/facilitator?	Poor				Very good	Most (96.43%) of the participants rated the presenter/facilitator as good/very good.
	0	0	3.57	25	71.43	
15. How would you rate this overall workshop?						Most (92.86%) of the participants rated the overall workshop as good/very good.
	0	0	7.14	21.43	71.43	
General Feedback						
16. Good features that participants wanted to highlight						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was an overwhelming positive response from the participants who were particularly pleased with the opportunity to learn about the RTI in detail and specifics including proactive publications, channels of disseminating information, exemptions, the various timeframes and the rights of citizens to access information and how to handle RTI requests. • Participants commended the presenter for her knowledge on the content and the way it was broken down to help participants understand. They also commended the clarity in the presentations and the slides which they found very helpful. • Participants also commended the way the workshop was conducted and the effort to increase participation through the quizzes and the group discussions throughout the workshop. The quiz enabled participant to not only interact with other participants, but was a way of reflecting on the day's training to assess the knowledge acquired on a daily basis. • Participants also highlighted that through this training, the insight they obtained really helped them to realise the importance of the RTI act and the need to change their perspectives to recognize the right to information of clients and the responsibility that they have in providing the information within the requirements of the RTI Act. 						

- Participants also acknowledged the preparation, logistics, training room facilities and the food which they were also happy with.

17. Suggestions of how the workshop could be improved

Some of the suggestions that came from participants included:

- Provision of handouts prior to the workshop
- Increased use of local examples where possible and practical example or scenario of how to handle an issue under the RTI Act
- Where applicable, explanations of legal jargon
- Suggestion also that the workshop be extended to a week to enable more time for further discussion etc. to help participants really understand the specifics of their role under the RTI Act.
- One participant highlighted the need to be mindful of the language barrier when explanations are provided

18. Feedback on how the training has helped participants.

There was again overwhelming positive response from the participants, and how the training has helped them to under the RTI Act, they also feel confident and better equipped to undertake the role of an RTI officer, the need to be more effective in the provision of proactive publications, the importance of improving their records management, the importance of the RTI law and its implementation at the workplace.

Participants welcomed the training as it really helped them resolve some of the misunderstanding and misconceptions. They now understand the right of the public to access information, the timeframes and responsibilities of the RTI officers.

They also recognize the importance of sharing the learning from the workshop to enable better implementation of the RTI Act.

19. Next steps in terms of RTI – post RTI training

Some of the next steps highlighted by participants included:

- Sharing the information to colleagues and senior managers of their agency
- Make a presentation to senior management to inform them of the importance of RTI which they anticipate will lead to discussions on how they will implement the RTI Act in their agency -i.e. appointment of HR officer, unit etc.
- Review and improve records management system in recognition of its importance as a prerequisite for the implementation of the RTI Act
- Create an internal RTI policy guideline and processes and work towards increasing awareness internally to ensure colleagues are fully aware of obligations and responsibilities under the RTI Act.
- Discuss with HR on how to incorporate the role of the RTI officer or the appointment of RTI officer
- Increase awareness of RTI awareness with the support of the RTI unit
- Personally improve approach and services provided in terms of RTI requests.

20. Additional Comments/Kind of workshops you would like to see more of

Participants reiterated that they were very pleased to be part of the workshop and thankful for the learning in the three days – for some it was more than what they expected to learn.

Some of the participants stated they would like to attend refresher trainings on RTI in the future and also workshops that will also include their superiors which would help in the implementation of the RTI act in the various agencies.

For workshops in the future, some of the participants highlighted workshops on exemptions, also on legislations that have an impact on the RTI i.e. some participants highlighted that there were some agencies still required to sign the Secrecy Act and they wanted to know the implications of these – particularly at policy level.

Participants also stated how they would like more assistance, particularly in the implementation of the RTI act, information relating to the setting up of RTI committee or unit within their agency.

To continue with the learnings and information from the workshop, participants also highlighted the need for an RTI association or group where they could continually provide updates and support for one another – this would also be an avenue for the RTI unit to disseminate information and updates regarding the RTI Law and its implementation in Vanuatu.

Recommendations

The recommendations below are the outcome of what was learnt from the training and is expected to be implemented in preparation to facilitate right to information in each agency. Below are some recommendations made by participants of the RTI Officers training on must do activities required to be implemented.

1. Include position of RTI Officer in organization structure
2. Proper records management systems must be in place
3. Implement a Records Management Policy
4. Schedule a consultation date and time for the RTI team to conduct an awareness session within the agency.
5. All government agencies staffs must understand the RTI Act and its implications
6. Establish an RTI Team
7. Consider internal process of information disclosure that may change according to RTI Act requirements.
8. Prepare RTI Budget to be included in 2019 Budget

Annex 1

Government of Vanuatu
Right to Information Unit

RIGHT TO INFORMATION 3 DAY TRAINING COURSE

Facilitator: Ms. Aylair Livingstone

AGENDA

DAY 1

8:30am – 9:00am	Registration
9:00am – 9:45am	Launch Ceremony
9:45am – 11.30am	Objectives & Scope of RTI Law Who Can Apply Types of Information RTI Stakeholders
11:30am – 11:45am	Coffee Break
11:45am – 12:30pm	Role of RTI Unit/RTISC Role of Information Commissioner Role of RTI Officer
12:30pm – 1:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm – 3:30pm	Initial Statement of Organization Proactive Publication Disclosure Logs Reporting RTI Requests Basics
3:30pm – 3:45pm	Coffee Break
3:45pm – 4:30pm	DAY 1 QUIZ & DISCUSSION

AGENDA

DAY 2

8:30 am – 9:00 am

9:00am – 10:30am

Registration

Handling RTI Requests

- Deadlines
- Requests
- Transfers
- Extension of Time

10:30am – 10:45am

10:45am – 12:30pm

Coffee Break

Handling RTI Requests

- Records Review
- Full/Partial/Deferred/Denied Grants
- Response Letter
- Forms of Access

12:30pm – 1:30pm

1:30pm – 3:30pm

Lunch

Handling RTI Requests

- Fees
- Release of Records
- Amendment/Annotation of Records

3:30pm – 3:45pm

3:45pm – 4:30pm

Coffee Break

DAY 2 QUIZ & DISCUSSION

AGENDA

DAY 3

8:30am – 9:00 am

9:00 am - 10:30am

Registration

Exemptions

10:30am – 10:45am

10:45am – 12:30pm

Coffee Break

Exemptions

12:30pm – 1:30pm

1:30pm – 3:30pm

Lunch

Other Grounds for Denial of Access

- The Public Interest Test
- Grounds for Appeal & Timeline
- Protections, Offences & Penalties

3:30pm – 3:45pm

3:45pm – 4:30pm

Coffee Break

DAY 3 QUIZ & DISCUSSION

Annex 2

DAY 5

RTISC MEETING

Friday, April 13, 2018

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Legal Framework – Assessment/Review of policies & laws prohibiting disclosure
2. Official Secrets Act – s. 2 - 5
3. RTI Regulations –
 - Reproduction fees;
 - Forms (RTI Application/Amendment/Annotation)
 - Forms – Monthly to RTI Unit/RTI Unit Quarterly Report forms to IC
 - Authentication of Copies
4. Training Resources – Phases 1 & 2 RTI Officers
5. Public Education/Awareness Budget
6. Appointment of RTI Officers – s. 10
7. Appointment of RTI Information Commissioner – Appointment Status