Inform Women, Transform Lives:
Priorities for Advancing Women’s Right to Information

Tuesday, March 20, Conference Room 11, UN Headquarters
4:45 – 6:00 PM

Concept Note

Access to information, entrenched in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is critical for the exercise of civil, political, social and economic rights, and is instrumental in improving governance, transparency, and accountability. A genuine right of access to information is particularly important for women, as it allows for more effective decisions regarding education, land ownership, business opportunities, and the exercise of socio-economic rights. It enables women to participate in public life, have meaningful voice, and hold governments and service providers accountable.

Yet, despite the over 115 countries with access to information legislation and the increased emphasis on transparency, accountability, and participation, the benefits have not reached many women due to the myriad socio-legal, institutional, and structural factors that prevent the meaningful exercise of this right. Reality is a stark reminder of the gap between aspiration and practice, as many of the most basic rights, including the right of access to information, remain elusive for half of the world’s population.

This panel will discuss the value proposition of the right to information for women, and how it is critical for women’s economic empowerment and the promotion and protection of rights. The panel will share obstacles to women’s right to information that were identified in a three-country study on women’s ability to exercise the right to information undertaken by The Carter Center, as well as findings from the International Conference on Women and Access to Information, “Inform Women, Transform Lives,” which took place in February. This conference was the first to bring together experts and practitioners from the gender and transparency, accountability, and access to information community. The conference culminated in the Atlanta Declaration for the Advancement of Women’s Right of Access to Information. The panel will continue the conversation from the conference on mechanisms for improving women’s access to information and the way forward, including discussing the Atlanta Declaration.

Each panelist will be asked to speak from their perspective of the value of the right of access to information for women, as well as their experiences around this issue and the realities they have faced in promoting this fundamental right.

The panelists will use the following guiding questions to facilitate their discussion:

1. What has been your experiences around women’s rights of access to information?
2. Do you agree with the recommendations that came from the international conference? Was anything missing?
3. What are the most immediate priority actions?
4. Who can/should take the lead and how might you want to be involved?