

28 SEPTEMBER  
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR  
**UNIVERSAL  
ACCESS TO  
INFORMATION  
2019**



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals

# Access to Information: Leaving No One Behind!

CONCEPT NOTE

#AccessToInfoDay  
#RightToKnow



# INTRODUCTION



UNESCO marks 28 September as the “International Day for Universal Access to Information”, following the adoption of a resolution (38 C/70) in 2016 declaring 28 September of every year as International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI).

The IDUAI has particular relevance with Agenda 2030 with specific reference to SDG 2 on investment in rural infrastructure and technology development, SDG 11 on positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas and SDG 16 on initiatives to adopt and implement constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information.

Infrastructure and technology development are essential elements in building knowledge societies as inequalities of access to information sources, contents and infrastructures cast doubt on the information society’s global character and, consequently, hamper the growth of knowledge societies. UNESCO promotes, through the Global Broadband Commission, for accelerating broadband rollout worldwide and examine applications that could see broadband networks improve the delivery of several social services, including education, environmental management and safety.

However, despite the growth in Internet penetration in the world, the distribution of access between developed and developing countries, between urban and rural communities and even between different age groups and genders is still inequitable. These problems reveal the necessity for new approaches to Knowledge Societies as promoted through UNESCO’s Knowledge Societies Policy Handbook. Generating and updating public policies for Knowledge Societies is a never-ending task, which runs together with the evolution of the Internet and other emerging technologies.

The adoption of freedom of and/or access to information laws has been noted as a global trend during the last decade with more than 120 countries (including some independent jurisdictions) having legal frameworks in 2019. Nevertheless, according to UNESCO’s *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development 2017/2018 Global Report*, there is much to be done globally to improve awareness of such laws and their especially their implementation.



# UNESCO's role

Knowledge societies must build on four pillars, namely freedom of expression; universal access to information and knowledge; respect for cultural and linguistic diversity; and quality education for all. UNESCO is committed supporting Member States efforts to introduce Knowledge societies that empower local and disadvantaged communities by increasing access to information and preservation and sharing of information and knowledge in all of UNESCO's domains.

UNESCO's two intergovernmental programmes, the Information for All Programme (IFAP) and International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) promote these knowledge Societies and are playing a key role in mainstreaming universal access to information.

IPDC is advocating the importance of access to information for all sustainable development efforts around the world and is compiling data from different sources on how far its Member States have gone in implementing progress on indicator 16.10.2. Indicator concerns the adoption and implementation of constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information. The piloting of the instrument is currently taking place in 43 developing countries that will report at the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019. In addition, the piloting aims to support states' efforts in developing/strengthening focused and sustainable systems to monitor and report progress on public access to information – both nationally and globally.

IFAP advocates governments and citizens the important role of information in addressing development issues and its role to promote inclusive knowledge societies. Support is also provided in monitoring information regarding the implementation of Right to Information legislation and efforts to align it to international standards and efficient implementation of the provisions.

## By celebrating IDUAI, UNESCO will:

- Enhance information for development as a necessary complementary dimension to the right to information, by encouraging adoption of ICT, open access policies, and stimulating the development of Media and Information Literacy competencies.
- Highlight that the right to information can only be effectively exercised and implemented on the basis of laws, regulating this right in accordance with international standards, and efficient systems of implementation.
- Promote awareness that the right to information is essential for transparent and accountable governance and a prerequisite for public involvement in formulating social policies and in the decision-making processes of governance.



# FORMAT



To mark IDUAI, UNESCO will continue to organize a series of ‘Open Talks’ at the global level in Lima, Peru and at the regional level in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States and Europe. The events aim to create worldwide discussion on how to foster open societies, open access to information and sustainable development. The events will adopt a dynamic conference format inspired by TEDx Talks with 3 to 4 speakers addressing specific topics during two fast-paced 45-minute sessions. Possible topics include:

- Implementing access to information laws and policies and diffusion of best practices, based on international standards;
- Sharing national and international lessons learned and best practices in reporting on SDG indicator 16.10.2 (public access to information);
- Mainstreaming of access to information as catalysts for achieving the UN 2030 Agenda, and presenting UNESCO’s World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development *In Focus* report on access to information.
- Community radios and multimedia access centres and its role to provide access to rural populations;
- Best practices in investing in Infostructures in an inclusive way, that promote multilingualism and local content development;

Through inspiring storytelling and short but powerful speeches, global public and community leaders, journalists, NGOs, policymakers and digital pioneers will share their initiatives that have contributed or could contribute to inclusive infostructures, access to information laws and policies that abide to international standards, grass-roots media initiatives and ICT initiatives that promote local multilingual content. Special attention will also be given throughout the sessions on the needs of women and underserved communities.

# Global event in Peru

Open Talks on 27 September 2019 in Lima, Peru During the week of IDUAI, UNESCO will contribute to a reflection on best practices and challenges in achieving universal access to information in cooperation with the government of Peru. The focus of the celebration will be on leaving no one behind and empowering citizens through access to information.

## Regional events in Malaysia and Mexico

For Asia, the celebration of IDUAI will be celebrated through Open Talks on 12 September 2019 in Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. The Open Talks event will be a side-event to the Next Big Tech Asia event on 11 and 12 September 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

For Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional meeting titled “Strengthening Open Access to Information in Latin America and the Global South” will be held together with Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México in Toluca, México.

## National Events

National events to commemorate IDUAI 2019 are also planned in:

- Côte d’Ivoire
- Cuba
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Ghana
- India
- Indonesia
- Kenya
- Morocco
- Nigeria
- Palestine
- South Africa
- Senegal
- Sweden
- Thailand
- The Gambia
- Tunisia
- Uganda
- Zimbabwe



For more information, visit:  
[en.unesco.org/commemorations/accesstoinformationday/](https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/accesstoinformationday/)

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