

Ensuring Access to Environmental Information in the Digital Age

International Day for Universal Access to Information (IAID) is on 28th September, 2025. The theme appointed by UNESCO is “*Ensuring Access to Environmental Information in the Digital Age*”. This year’s conference will take place in Manila, celebrating ten years since access to government held information was marked as a fundamental human right.

Key stakeholders, such as the International Conference on Information Commissioners (ICIC), Open Government Partnership (OGP), and the Freedom of Information Advocates Network (FOIANet) will be taking part, bringing together experts from all over the world!

More than 50 UN member states lack dedicated access to information laws. Hence, the conference aims to explore:

- Ease of implementation of ATI (Access to Information) laws for the remaining member states.
- Leverage integration of big data and digital innovations.
- Tackle issues such as data privacy, misinformation and the digital divide.



Why is access to environmental information important?

Timely access to environmental information can mean the difference between safety and disaster for citizens in vulnerable economies, particularly small island developing states.

A press release by the UN in April 2025 highlighted that:

- 11 out of 30 (Asia Pacific countries including (Mongolia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Nepal) are highly exposed to climate risks.
- Climate impacts could slash nearly 9% of these economies every year by 2100, especially in densely populated coastal areas.

To build climate resilient economies, timely environmental information is key to driving immediate action by various stakeholders.

How can information access be improved? Through open data platforms. Environmental governance frameworks (Paris Agreement and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development) have advocated for them as well. Open data platforms and dashboards work to improve information access, through transparency between the individual and government on policy implementation.

How HOPE fits in:

HOPE’s slogan “think globally - act locally” calls for individuals to make informed choices, leading to positive environmental change. We do this by spreading awareness and promoting action on environmental issues. Our advocacy initiatives help hold stakeholders and legislators accountable.

How you can get involved:

In Queensland, we have the Right to Information Act (2009), and at a federal level, Australian Government uses data to support decision-making under the EPBC act (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act), including the Freedom of Information (FOI Act). Australia is one of the 120 nations to guarantee citizens’ right to information.

We need to be inspired to:

- Support campaigns that demand transparency on climate initiatives
- Fund grassroots organisations supporting these critical issues.
- Track the government's progress towards climate goals.
- Participate in public consultations for new policies.

When we know more, we can hold policymakers accountable, thus creating a greener, more equitable planet. Join HOPE in celebrating the International Day for Universal Access to Information!

References:

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