



PRESS RELEASE

Apia, Wednesday 27 October 2021 – “Open Access” and “Access to Information” Awareness Raising Workshop for Public Servants

A 2-day workshop on “Open Access” and “Access to Information” for public servants held this week focussed on unpacking critical concepts that facilitate the right of access to information of the public led by the Ombudsman Office also the National Human Rights Institution in partnership with UNESCO and the Open Educational Resources Foundation under the Samoa Knowledge Society Initiative.

This workshop is a follow-up work from the high-level dialogue with heads of Government Ministries held on 13th October 2021. The workshop aimed at raising awareness among public servants about (1) open access in facilitating access to open education resources that in turn helps build knowledge communities and (2) access to information within the public administration context which aims to empower the participation of citizens in discussions of issues affecting them by having access to accurate and relevant official information.

Access to information is a critical component in promoting transparency and good governance among public institutions. However, Government's obligation to fulfill its duty to share and make available information to the public cannot be achieved if its institutions do not have in place solid mechanisms and systems to facilitate the control and management of such information to be shared with the public.

In sharing such information held by public institutions it was also emphasized by the Ombudsman that this does not mean that all information held by Government will be accessible and available. Disclosure would be subject to restrictions set by legislation. Therefore, capacity building and awareness-raising among public servants are key in building a culture of disclosure within the public service guided by a clear understanding of restrictions and set criteria to determine the information that can and cannot be disclosed.

Participants also got the opportunity to hear from various speakers on matters including open access in the academic space, processes, and procedures that currently exist within some public institutions to share official information, storing of and access to, archived records, and also about the components of the soon to be finalized policy on freedom of information.

The outcome of the workshop will greatly contribute to ongoing efforts by the Government and its various partners in the development of a freedom of information policy and legislation that are currently being undertaken.

The Office acknowledges the partnership of UNESCO and the Samoa Knowledge Initiative Society for supporting this work.



Participants who took part in the 2-day workshop on “Open Access” and “Access to Information” for public servants

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