



The Ombudsman

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to this issue of “**The Ombudsman**” e-newsletter. The Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman has been admitted formally as an institutional member of the International Ombudsman Institute on Nov. 10, 2012. This will be a grate opportunity for the Institution to bolster its services as per the International standards.

The institutional membership of EIO to the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) will help the institution to exchange information and share experiences from other Ombudsman Institutions that would enhance its capacity.

The effectiveness of any ombudsman depends on the given mandate and the capacity of carrying out as per the letter and sprit of the law. Moreover ,the Ombudsman highly needs the collaborative work with stakeholders.

The mission, objectives and activities of the Ethiopia institution of the Ombudsman (EIO) are shared by a variety of stakeholders. Most of the key stakeholders, including the three branches of government, civil society organizations (CSOs), the media and, of course, citizens, stand to gain a lot from EIO’s efforts (as much as it needs their cooperation to meet its objectives). This is simply because all of these stakeholders and EIO have one important thing in common: they are all stakeholder of good governance. The three branches of government have the duty to exercise control over one another to ensure accountability; and collectively, to respect the rule of law. CSOs have a variety of principles to promote or such group interests as the rights of the disadvantaged to speak for. And the observance of important policies and the inclusion of the disadvantaged contribute to the overall quality of governance.

Like wise with the media, which labor to bring about transparency and build consensus by informing citizens and setting agendas for debate; as well as to ensure accountability and the rule of law through their investigations and reports. All of these contribute to the overall effort to strengthen good governance and implementation of Access to information. And there is the society that faces the true taste of the quality of government and to the strengthening of which it holds irreplaceable power.

Over all, the role of stakeholders is significant, on the one hand, because of the inherent nature of the EIO’s powers, missions and activities; and on the other, due to the relative potency of the stakeholders’ influence or power to.

As a result it is mandatory for EIO to make a proper assessment of the key role of stakeholders and to work to channel their attentions and actions to contribute to the best out come possible. Enjoy reading !

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The Ombudsman News

Chief Ombudsman urges to improve good governance in developing regional states

The Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman underscored the need to address problems of good governance to maintain the ongoing economic growth in states in need of special support.

The remark came at a good governance mobilization forum held under the theme, “Good Governance for Fair Development” in Jijjiga town on Thursday in the presence of leaderships drawn from the aforementioned states.

The Chief Ombudsman, Fozia Amin, speaking at the good governance mobilization forum held in Jijjiga urged regional state administrators to address problems of good governance in order to ensure continued economic growth. “ despite the encouraging economic growth, a lot need to be done to bring about good governance in states in need of special support. Accordingly, higher official in those regional states need to identify the administrative gaps and do their level best ,”said the Chief Ombudsman

Deputy Chief Administrator of Somali State, Abdihakim Ige, on his part said the state is currently undertaking activities that involve the public so as to quench their thirst for development and good governance. Hence, the good governance mobilization forum would contribute a lot towards assisting the activities underway to ensure good governance in the state, he said.



Deputy Chief Administrator of Somali State, Abdihakim Ige

Research papers on topics related to good governance were presented by scholar from Jijjiga University at the forum held in the presence of higher government officials drawn from Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella and Somali states.



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The Ombudsman News

Stakeholders vow to promote women rights

Government , Non Government and Civil Society representatives working on promotion of women rights have discussed over at to how to ensure gender equality by preventing maladministration against women in the seminar which was conducted by Institution of the ombudsman In Adama

With her opening speech Chief ombudsman w/ro Fozia Amin , said that working together is necessary as ensuring the rights and privileges of women needs citizens' active participation, commitment of public bodies and support of stakeholders.

Minster of Women, Children and Youth Ministry w/ro zenebu Tadesse on her part stressed that women should be empowered economically so that they would become active participant in social and political affairs. Otherwise, the dependency opens the door for maladministration and deprivation of their rights.

There is a growing consensus that the government and non-government organizations working in women's rights should strengthen network so that the rights-based framework within which public policies are developed and implemented and more particularly can support the administration of justice, and in particular the law enforcing bodies to strengthen adherence to the rule of law and ensure access to justice for victims of gender-based violence.

And so the advantage of connecting to women's rights or service organizations is their understanding of the culture of gender inequality and women's lived experiences of exclusion. They are also closer to the issues and have proximity to women who have experienced gender-based violence. Receptivity then to structured and periodic communications and partnership with women's organizations will be important for building the institutional capacity and impulse to engage with the administration of justice for addressing the range of issues that undermine access to justice

EIO conducts training of Stakeholders in four regional states

Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman has conducted training on Access to Information law in four regional states .

Harari Regional State President Ato Murad Abdulhadi in his keynote speech said that Access to Information law enables the governments to have a proper system in place to create and maintain reliable records thereby providing efficient public services

The Institution's trainers during their training sessions have explained to the stakeholders that Access to Information law provides that each government body publish descriptions of its operations and procedures. Each public body must also make available opinions, orders, and statements of policy that affect the public. Any person or organization can also obtain data from a government agency through a Access to information law request.

Chief Ombudsman Fozia Amin in her opening speech at Harri



Harari Region President Ato Murad Abdulhadi

Hrari,Somali,Benshangul-Gumuz and Afar regions sectors' Stakeholders such as public relations Head, archive officers, public prosecutors, judges and registrars have been trained on access to information and pertinent issues

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Improving records management: a core for access to Information

Eskinder kebede

At the core of the right to information are records – papers, documents, files, notes, materials, videos, audio tapes, samples, computer printouts, disks and a range of other similar items of data storage. Records are a government, as well as a public, asset. They contain the evidence that helps citizens understand the ‘how’ of governmental actions and the ‘why’ of official decisions.

Accurate records produce accurate answers. Without an effective system for creating, managing, storing and archiving records, implementation of access to information law will be more difficult. It will be harder to reply to applications within the time limits set by the law. If the information requested cannot be located in a timely manner, it will also undermine the law if information has been stored so badly that the records are no longer in a fit state to be inspected or copied

Governments must have a proper system in place to create and maintain reliable records. Otherwise, even the most well meaning officials can be defeated by their working environments. More troublingly, without proper systems, records can be manipulated, deleted or destroyed and the public can never be sure of their integrity. The methods of manipulations are as varied as human ingenuity but increasingly sophisticated technologies are making verification easier.

New technology poses opportunities for managing records well and making information readily available to larger numbers of people than ever before, but electronic record-creation and storage also throws up complex challenges. Paper-based systems are tangible and relatively easily centralized. Increasingly though, official communication is becoming virtual and being done via email. Communication is faster, but more records are created and more are stored in personal spaces rather than common work areas. Details of sequencing, opinions and decisions can be easily distorted or lost unless modern systems of storage and retrieval are in place.

The authenticity of records can be seriously compromised if electronic records and paper records do not correlate. If not managed carefully, institutional memory will be severely harmed and governments’ ability to remain accountable to the public can disintegrate.

In Ethiopia access to information law specifically require that records should be managed in a way that facilitates access and go further to require that records should be computerized and networked.



Although this may take time, at the very least, at the outset of implementation the government will need to review current records management processes, not only in terms of collation and storage, but classification and archiving as well. Best practice requires that records are created and managed in accordance with clear, well-understood filing, classification and retrieval methods established by a public office as part of an efficient records management programs. With new technology being developed all the time, it is important that records management guidelines deal with how to manage electronic records as well.

The Ombudsman News

The Institution calls the media to promote Access to Information Law

Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman has conducted a two-day consultative meeting for public and private electronic media outlet journalists at Adama ,Keriyu International Resort

Chief Ombudsman Mrs Fozia Amin on her opening speech said that Mass media is the most important vehicle for information, knowledge and communication in a democratic polity. They are pervasive and play a significant role in shaping societies; they provide the public sphere of information and debate that enables social and cultural discourse, participation and accountability, said Chief Ombudsman

According to the Chief Ombudsman, Mass Media is the most accessible, cost-effective and widespread source of Information and platform for expression and the media not only has an important stake in what the Access to information Law Purports to provide and achieve, but also in catalyzing and entrenching the Implementation and enforcement of this significant piece of legislation.

Access of the right to information law not only facilitates active participation of the people in the democratic governance process, but also promotes openness, transparency and accountability in administration, said the Chief Ombudsman.

She also noted that Access to information regime can enable credible, evidence-based and factual reporting on key issues of public interest and it can enable the media to expose mal-administration, corruption and inefficiency and to propagate stories and instances relating to accountability, transparency, effective administration and good governance.

During the two-days consultative workshop the Institution presented papers that evokes

During the two-days consultative workshop the Institution presented papers that evokes discussion on Access to Information Law and pertinent documents with a due emphasis to the role of Media in promoting the implementation of the law.



Partial view of the participants

At the workshop it was also discussed the Media's role of acting as a Watchdog on behalf of the Citizens: The best service that the media can provide to the public, whether in a mature or emerging democracy, is that of a community watchdog. Journalists should see and perform their role keeping in mind public interest. Using Access of the right to information, the media can expose corruption and inefficiency. However, in performing a watchdog role and digging out the truth, journalists should be careful in interpreting facts and evidences.

It has been stressed that media is important to play the role of an honest broker of information for its readers without deliberate bias or favoritism. The media must consider its independence to be its most valuable commercial, editorial and moral asset. Maintaining its independence through professional behavior and a code of conduct that is subscribed to by all journalists, the media can be a powerful user of the Access of the right to information Law and an agent for the empowerment of people through an Information Society.

About 200 journalists drawn from public and private electronics media attended at the workshop

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Public Relations Heads discussed on the first report on Access to information

Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman has organized a workshop for Federal and Regional Government Offices' Public Relations Heads that discussed on Access to Information implementation reports collected from government bodies.

The Freedom of Mass Media and Access to Information Law was issued in 2008 taking note of the fundamental importance of transparent conduct of government affairs in a democratic society and the right of individuals to access information held by public bodies.

The implementation and enforcement of the law is believed to promote and consolidate the values of transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs, and to impose a legal obligation on public officials to facilitate access of individuals and the Mass Media to information so that matters of public interest are disclosed and discussed publicly.

In November 2011, the implementation of the law was launched nationally in Ethiopia with the necessary preparations undertaken. The law gives the Institution of the Ombudsman responsibility to monitor the implementation of the law on the bases of reports submitted to it. These reports are expected to be collected from each public body not later than May 30 each year.

The reports from each public body should include the activities of the public body in implementing the provisions of Chapter Three of the proclamation which deals with Access to Information.

After collecting the reports, the institution of the ombudsman prepares an annual report to the council of peoples' representatives on the national implementation of Access to information. The ombudsman can make recommendation to the House of Peoples' Representatives regarding the development, improvement, reform and/or amendment of the proclamation and for development, improvement or reform directed at specific public body.



Chief Ombudsman Mrs. Fozia Amin and Access to Information Director Ato Kassaye G/Hiwot



The Institution has received reports from 76 government bodies while 44 government offices haven't submitted their report to the institution as per the law.

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EIO receives membership accreditation from International Ombudsman Institute

The Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman was formally admitted as an institutional member of the International Ombudsman Institute on Nov. 10, 2012.

The international Ombudsman Institute (IOI) established in 1978, is the only global organization for the cooperation of more than 150 Ombudsman institutions. The IOI is an organization established to strengthen Ombudsman institutions, foster regional and international information exchange, and common understanding of Ombudsman functions. It is organized in regional chapters in Africa, Asia, Australasia and Pacific, Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America and North America. The Secretariat of the IOI is hosted in Vienna, Austria whereby the Ombudsman of Austria serves as the Secretary General of the institute.

Concurrently, the Ombudsman of New Zealand organized pre-conference workshops for members and non-members to receive trainings on topics such as “Systemic Investigations and Effective Complaint Management”. (Nov 6-7, 2012).

Under the theme “*Speaking truth to power – the role of the Ombudsman in the 21st century*” the IOI and Ombudsman of New Zealand successfully organized a three day world conference in Wellington. The conference was organized under three main streams – Good Governance (including challenges to Ombudsman practice and improving public administration); Access to Justice (with an emphasis on Human Rights) and Transparency and Accountability (with a focus on freedom of information). Conference papers and speakers included current and former head of states (former Prime Minister of New Zealand John Key and Hon Helen Clark) members of parliament (Speaker of the New Zealand Parliament), academics, civil society leaders, Ombudsman, international organization representatives, and several other stakeholders.

It currently comprises of 147 institutional members from 81 different countries. (15 from Africa, 9 from Asia, 8 from Australia and Pacific Region, 8 from Caribbean

At the opening day of the conference, Rt Hon Helen Clark, administrator of UNDP, addressed the audience as a keynote speaker. She outlined and talked about the challenges and opportunities for strengthening integrity of institutions and the relationship with the work of the Ombudsman.

In addition, the General Assembly adopted the Wellington Declaration. In the declaration, the Assembly reiterated the following key points:

- Emphasis on the role of an Ombudsman as an integral part of constitutional reality and Rule of Law, Transparency, Good Governance, Democracy and Human Rights



Left to Right: Chief Ombudsman Mrs Fozia Amin and Rt Hon Helen Clark, administrator of UNDP,

- Emphasis on the fact that in times of economic crises, financial and social hardship affecting large parts of society, strong Ombudsman institutions are essential to guarantee the fundamental rights of all persons,
- Encourages increased cooperation between ombudsman and national human rights institutions, anti-corruption commissions and other agencies

As IOI accreditation letter sent to Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman IOI Secretary General has formally accepted the membership institutional IOI membership of EIO was accepted by the IOI Board of Directors at its last meeting which took place in the course of the IOI World Conference in Wellington, New Zealand from 12 until 16 November 2012.

IOI letter sent to EIO says that “the positive decision regarding the application is based on the fact that your institution fulfills the criteria for institutional membership set out in the 2009 IOI By-laws, art 6.1. This regards the establishment of the institution, its independence, its mandate and powers as well as the requirements regarding the appointment and dismissal of the incumbent. ...”

IOI in its letter urged EIO has written to take an active role in the IOI at both the regional and global level.

Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman is the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association (AOMA) & East Africa Coordinator of the Association .

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