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## Vietnam: Right to Information Law Weak

Vietnam recently adopted a Law on Access to Information, which gives citizens the right to request and receive information from public bodies (known internationally as right to information or RTI laws). This follows a long period of discussion and debate about adopting such a law. According to the RTI Rating, a globally recognised methodology for assessing the strength of such laws, the Law earns 68 points out of a possible total of 150, putting it in 86<sup>th</sup> place globally from among 112 countries, well into the bottom one-third.

*“We are happy to welcome Vietnam into the group of countries with right to information laws”, said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD). “This is a good start and hopefully local people will start using the Law, which can then grow and be developed.”*

Although the Law is weak, some improvements were made over the August 2015 version, which was assessed at the time by the CLD. The August version of the draft Law only earned 59 points on the RTI Rating. Experience in other countries suggests that what is important at this point is for people to start using the Law and testing its boundaries. It can then grow in strength over time.

CLD urges local organisations and individuals to make requests under the Law when it comes into effect (which will be July 2018) and to see what information they can obtain. In due course, we call on the Vietnamese authorities to review the Law with a view to introducing amendments to strengthen it.

The RTI Rating is available at [www.RTI-Rating.org](http://www.RTI-Rating.org). The August CLD analysis is available in English and Vietnamese at: [www.law-democracy.org/live/vietnam-draft-right-to-information-law-a-good-start/](http://www.law-democracy.org/live/vietnam-draft-right-to-information-law-a-good-start/).

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