

# CITIZENS' KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY INFORMATION ACCESS AND DISTRIBUTION IN GRAHAMSTOWN

## STUDY RESULTS

### ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The informants were asked about their thoughts regarding access to information related to service delivery and policy making:

**Access to information helps communities to make informed interventions.**

Communities should be informed so that they can **participate in meetings and know their rights.**

Information ensures communities **understand the services they are meant to receive** and capacitate them to **confront service providers when they don't deliver.**

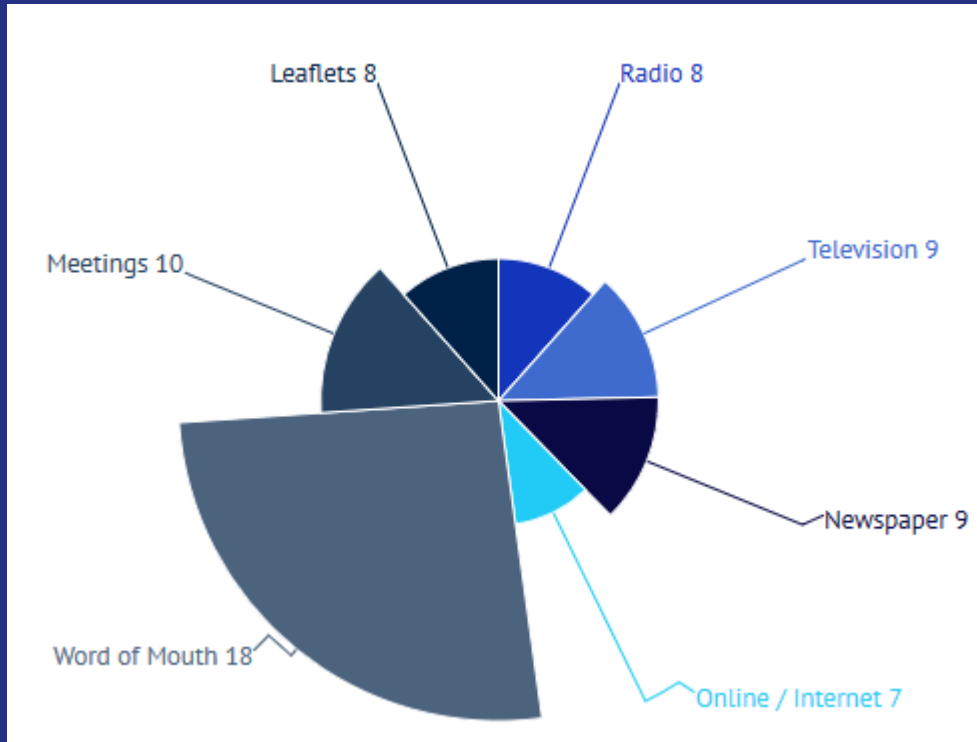
Being informed assists communities to **map out the various offices to visit when in need**, and also assist them to **monitor service delivery more effectively.**

It is important to **know who is responsible for what** so that they can be held accountable when they do not deliver.

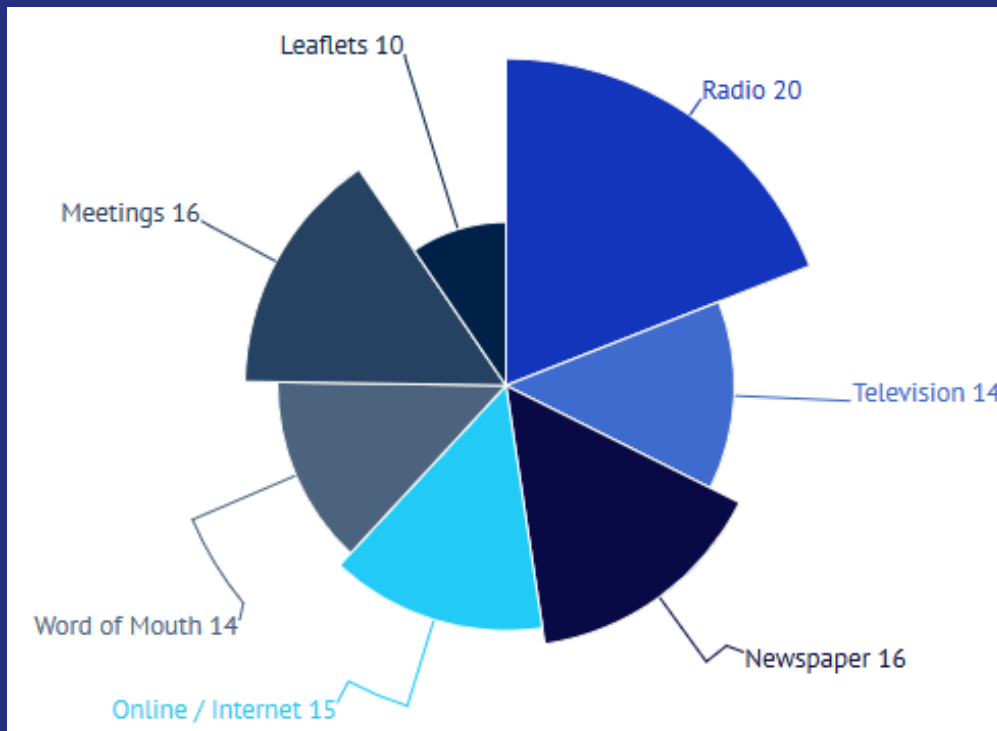
Being informed makes it easier **for the public to play an active, participatory role** in their own development and the monitoring of public officials.



# How DO you get Information?



# How would you LIKE to get Information?



# UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

## Role of Government in service delivery

Informants believe: The government's role is to **provide communities with services** such as water, sanitation, housing and roads.

*"I think their role is to bring services to the people not because they are doing us a favour, but because they are supposed to bring them to us".*

*"They have a responsibility, we elected them through votes"*

Other informants mentioned **budgeting and planning** as some of government responsibilities. Another stated that the government should **monitor the reach of the services and ensure that everyone is taken care of equally**. Informants stated that policies inform the services that need to be delivered. A few mentioned that policies serve as a guide to direct government officials on how to function and decide on the nature of service required by the community.

## Role of Councillors in service delivery

Informants thought councillors should: **represent the community; work hand in hand with communities**, ensure that their concerns are heard and **needs identified**. They are also responsible for ensuring **that the local municipality budget is used properly**, and **conduct quality checks** on the work of the service providers in their wards.

They are a spokesperson, **reporting back to the municipality the needs of the community**, ensuring the needs are budgeted for, and **ensuring the budget is spent wisely** by the municipality. Councillors are **accountable to the community** they serve, therefore **regular communication through meetings is essential** to ensure that councillors are well informed of their community issues.

They are **responsible for improving the lives of people** in their communities, especially the disadvantaged.

*"To make sure that everybody gets a better life, especially those who have no place to stay or food and jobless people, to ensure that kids have better schools*

## Role of the Public in service delivery

*and better education"*

Informants stated that: **The public needs to be informed** and understand the service delivery procedures to **effectively engage the service providers**. It is not enough to protest, they said. The public needs to advise officials on how to manage the world with dignity and integrity.

The role of the public is not merely to attend meetings, but to unitedly **inform the service providers of their needs** and **monitor that services are implemented**.

*"The role of the public is to unite, stand up and tell them (service providers) that A-B-C must be done, not just hold meetings in vain, we have to also monitor them in their works"*

# UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

## Role of Members of Parliament

The study found that informants had varying perspectives regarding the role of parliament in relation to service delivery and policy implementation. Some believe that the role of members of parliament was to **ensure that services get to people**, whilst others stated that it was to **monitor the municipalities**. Most informants stated that it was the parliamentary mandate to **enforce the laws and ensure that resources are equally distributed amongst citizens**. Others made the connection between the elected officials and members of parliament, indicating that parliament was to **ensure that those elected do not abuse power**, but put the needs of the citizens first.

There were a few informants who expressed concern about how they viewed the role of parliament in South Africa as stated below:

*“It has been a shambles, members of parliament are not free to make their own informed decisions but a collective decision, too many ill informed decisions by parliament has cost the economy billions.”*

*“I do not think they have a role in managing or have a say in the country’s budget and resources other than debating about it after the budget speech.”*

## Preferred Information To Receive

Informants indicated that the social accountability information they wanted to receive included:

- *“Information that concerned them as community members and civil society.*
  - *Basic Rights and grants information .*
- *Municipalities expenditure records and the mismanagement of resources where applicable.*
- *The Integrated Development Plans (IDP), their budget allocation and how they are spent, as well as having access to the [municipal] 5-year plans and progress reports.*
  - *How the government advertises their posts and recruits officials?*
    - *Tenders and the criteria to accessing them.*
- *Who gets the services and the various steps an individual needs to take to access adequate services and employment?*
- *Water and sanitation issues, especially when they affect the community, like water shortage, etc. and be regularly informed about municipality affairs.*
  - *Who to approach and where to report when your rights are being violated?*
  - *Would like transparency concerning the management of resources.*
  - *What resources are there that the municipality can provide for the people?*
- *How government officials ought to behave because seem to be all corrupt starting from parliament to local and provincial?*
- *The process of editing [financial management within the municipality] and the nature of services being delivered.*
- *The basis under which the needs [of the citizens] are identified and the strategies that inform service delivery.*
  - *What happens when the resources are not being managed adequately?*
- *Where can we go to get resources to start our own business and what help can we get from the government to pursue those businesses?”*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is necessary to create a bridge of information flow between the various stakeholders of the social accountability sector. The availability of an organogram of the government officials and qualified personnel in every public institution will assist the public to direct their concerns to the right people.
- Social accountability practitioners should consider creating more knowledge sharing platforms where they can engage the general public. The majority of people do not have access to information and knowledge sharing platforms that will empower them to be active citizens.
- Social accountability practitioners and knowledge distributors should consider a multiple media approach when distributing information. No one method is able to reach everyone.
- Because the majority of study participants seem to prefer to be receivers of news and not become makers of news, it is important for knowledge distributors to understand their target's information needs and expectations when disseminating information.
- Capacity building for grassroots civil actors might assist them to interpret the information in a productive manner and increase their awareness of the issues and the need to get involved. The knowledge gained might also assist them to translate the information to improve their interventions.
- Information distributors need to be cognizant of the characteristics of their target audience when designing knowledge sharing platforms. Paying careful attention to economic, resource and time constraints, accessibility to informal and formal meeting spaces, and difference in national or community culture amongst other things.
- It might be helpful to create platforms where diverse groups or individuals can congregate to share their expertise and/or experiences. This will ensure that information does not remain restricted to certain groups or individuals.
- To merely be informed without action is not enough. Therefore, it is important for both the government and the civil society sector to establish mutually beneficial relationships to share skills and expertise, and build solidarity.
- Civil society practitioners need to consider establishing systems that will allow for a consistent flow of information between government officials and the citizens, especially at the grassroots level, where people are most affected by lack of service delivery. This will ensure that citizens take ownership of the state of affairs and work in collaboration with the government to improve conditions.

## **THIS ANALYSIS IS BASED ON:**

The data collected from the Grahamstown community focused on their understanding of social accountability related knowledge and the knowledge circulation practices. Three UPM researchers identified ten individuals each to interview. An equal number of females (15) and males (15) were interviewed, and they were between the ages of 18 and 61 years. The majority of the informants lived in townships including Joza, Vukani, Hlalani, Ethembeni, and Fingo. Other participants were from Grahamstown Central and West. This study utilized a semi-structured questionnaire that comprised of open-ended and closed questions, which required both qualitative and quantitative responses. These questionnaires were used to guide the face-to-face interviews conducted by the UPM activists when collecting data for the study. The questionnaires were administered using both English and Xhosa languages.



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