

# INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESSIBILITY - UNDERSTANDING ACCESS TO SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY INFORMATION IN GRAHAMSTOWN

## BASELINE 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.**

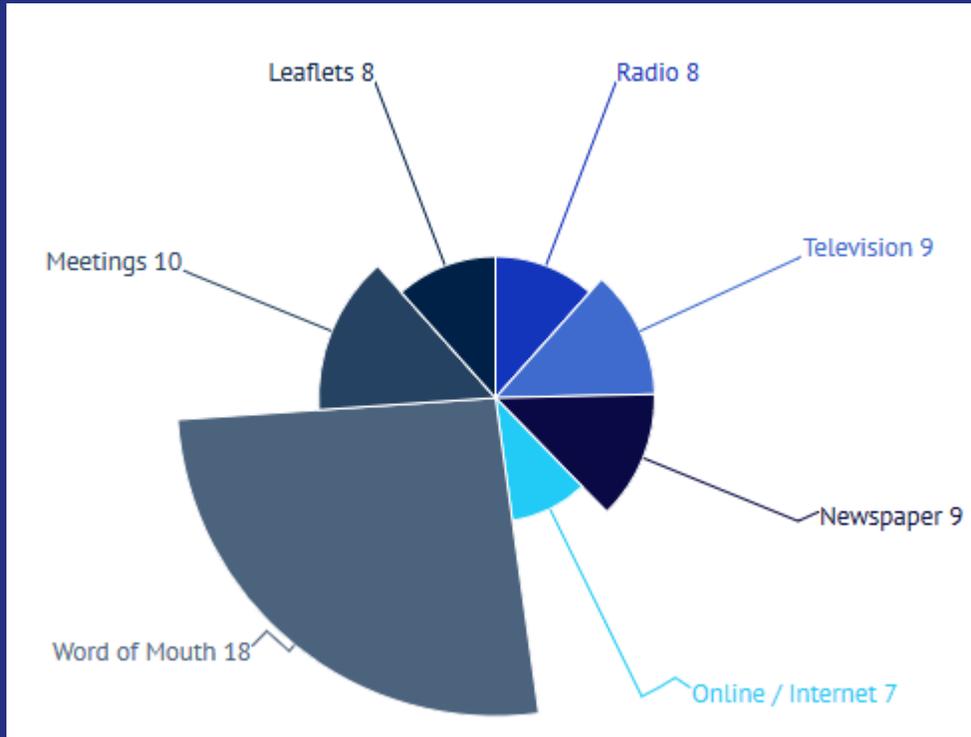
Being informed assists communities to **map out the various offices to visit when in need**, and also assist them to **monitor service delivery more effectively.**

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

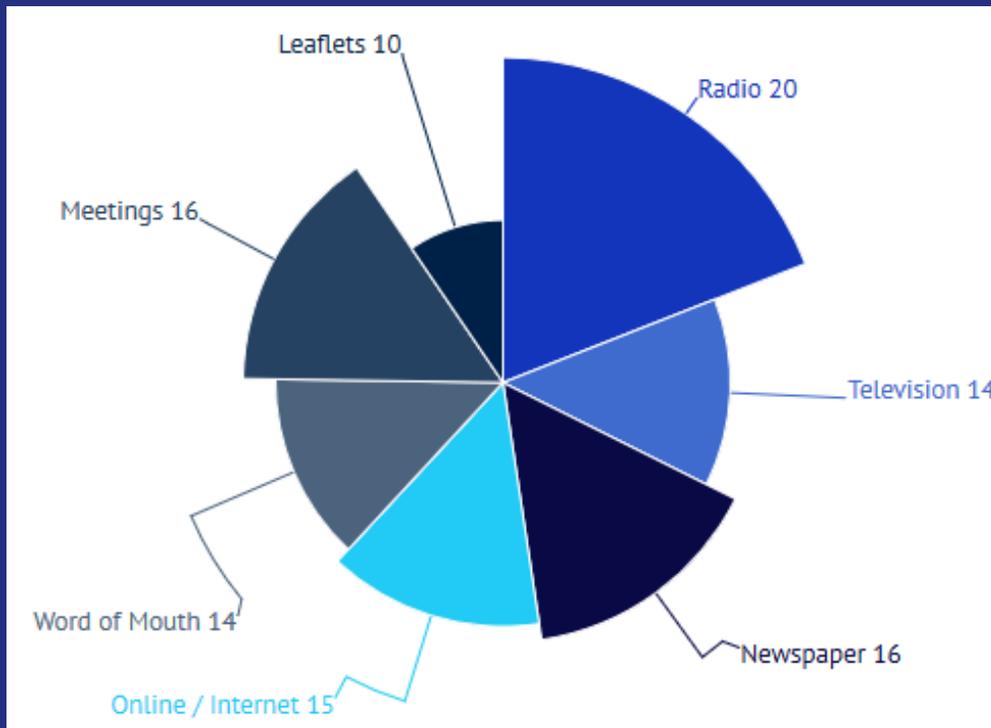
Being informed makes it easier **for the public to play an active, participatory role** in their own development and the monitoring of public officials.



# 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 and better education"*

## Role of the Public in service delivery

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"*

## Role of the 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.”***

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Social accountability information should be made accessible to grassroots organisations by government officials and civil society organisations that advocate for human rights, in an empowering manner. It is necessary to create a bridge between the various stakeholders of the social accountability sector.
- Practitioners should consider creating more platforms where they can engage the general public, seeing that most of the information produced in the sector is circulated online and rarely ever reaches the public. It is important to find methods of reaching the masses.
- Even though citizen frustration is understandable, being apathetic about the public resources processes will not improve the management of these resources. Citizens need to care because not caring means giving their voice and power away. It is their responsibility to make sure that the government utilizes public resources in a conducive manner that is fair to everyone.
- To merely be informed without action is not enough. Just because corruption has been happening for centuries does not mean that it cannot be mitigated. One purpose of the social accountability sector is to ensure the breakdown of corrupt systems so that they can be replaced by socially accountable systems.

### 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.