

# ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR POLITICAL & SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

**Lungile Penxa**

**Local Government Researcher**

**Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM), Rhodes University, Grahamstown, Eastern Cape**

**046 603 8829, 083 966 5076 & e-mail: [L.Penxa@ru.ac.za](mailto:L.Penxa@ru.ac.za)**

# PRESENTATION OUTLINE

2

- Introduction
- Defining Accountability
- Forms of Accountability
- Conclusion

# INTRODUCTION

3

- Access to Information in government institutions for Political & Social Accountability.
- Workshop participants must Access Information through the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) guidelines to monitor government use and management public resources in order see whether they serve the needs of citizens.
- This is an invitation for participants to access information for learning and understanding how the Public Service works, & know that they have a responsibility to hold government accountable for the use and management of taxpayers money.

# ACCOUNTABILITY

## 4

- Accountability defined as the “proactive process by which public officials inform and justify their plans of action, their behaviour and results and are sanctioned accordingly” (Ackerman, 2004, p. 3).
- We need to understand accountability as the process whereby citizens require government to account on their plans of execution through explanations, justifications and remedial actions when necessary.
- Accountability must be implemented in the use and management of all state or public resources where public servants, as social service providers are obligated to give account to citizens, civil society and oversight bodies through explanations, justifications and corrective action when necessary.

“

We vote every 5 years but we can  
make ourselves heard every day

”

Be curious about how Your Tax is Used and Managed

“Accountability is your responsibility. Ensure that  
your public officials are accountable all the time”

5

# FORMS OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

6



Political  
Accountability

The diagram consists of two large, stylized arrows pointing towards each other. The left arrow points to the right and contains the text 'Political Accountability'. The right arrow points to the left and contains the text 'Social Accountability'. The two arrows meet in the center, creating a sense of interaction or balance between the two forms of accountability.

Social  
Accountability

# POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

7

- Political accountability refers to the responsiveness of governmental policies to the preferences of the voters (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006).
- The governing political party must be accountable to citizens & citizens, as voters, must hold their parties accountable during elections .
- At the local government level, the municipal council through ward councillors must account to the citizens (i.e. voters).
- Political oversight bodies (e.g. municipal council, portfolio committees) in government need to use all their powers and be robust, to effectively hold government administrations accountable in the delivery of social services
- Ward councillors are obliged to account to citizens (as political party appointed representatives of the electorates) and their political party (as party representatives)
- Are ward councillors accounting to the political party or citizens?

# SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

8

- Social accountability is defined as “an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement where ordinary citizens and civil society organizations directly and indirectly demand accountability [from government actors]” (Malena, Forster and Singh, 2004, p.1).
- Social Accountability is therefore about the interaction between the people, civil society and government demanding accountability from government for the use of public resources.
- Social accountability monitoring must be done so that leaders in government are able to acknowledge and taking responsibility for policies, decisions and actions on administration and governance.
- Leaders in government are also obligated to report, explain and justify for resulting consequences , and take corrective actions.



# SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY CONTINUES...

9

- Citizens & CSOs have a responsibility to monitor oversight bodies so that they can see whether they are using all their powers to effectively hold government administrations accountable in the delivery of social services & actions are taken on those who misuse taxpayers money.
- Citizens must hold their political representatives accountable to ensure that their socio-economic rights are realised through the maximum use of available public resources.
- Citizens (as clients & right holders) must hold state organs accountable for use and management of public resources to deliver social services
- CSOs must hold state organs accountable for use and management of public resources to ensure that people's socio-economic rights (as entitlements) make their lives better today than they were yesterday.

# SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MONITORING TOOLS

10

- Tool 1: Planning & Resources Allocation
- Tool 2: Expenditure Management
- Tool 3: Performance Management
- Tool 4: Public Integrity Management
- Tool 5: Oversight Monitoring

# CONCLUSION

11

- Accountability is our responsibility. We must ensure that our political representatives & employed public officials are accountable all the time.
- Political accountability requires politicians who prioritize the interests of the people and over the political party. It further requires voters who vote for the party that delivers on its promises & voters who will actively hold the party accountable.
- Social accountability requires active citizens (i.e. rights holders) & robust CSOs who make an effort to understand how government works, so that they are robust through evidence-based information & knowledge.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

12

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

# LIST OF REFERENCES

13

- Peruzzotti, E. and Smulovitz, C. 2006. *Social Accountability: An introduction*. University of Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Malena, C., Forster, R. and Singh, J., 2004, July. The Role of Civil Society in Holding Government Accountable: A Perspective from the World Bank on the Concept and Emerging Practice of “Social Accountability.” *International Society for Third Sector Research Sixth International Conference* (pp. 11-14).
- SALGA News: <http://www.salga.org.za/Salga%20News14.html>.