



LESOTHO

2014 REPORT ON THE MOST OPEN AND SECRETIVE
GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN LESOTHO

INTRODUCTION

Lesotho is a signatory to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). However, the country has done very little to incorporate these instruments into domestic law. Lesotho is yet to promulgate a law that guarantees access to public information. It is, therefore, not easy for the public to demand access to public information where public institutions deny requests for information. There is no use requesting intervention from the judiciary, as existing laws do not grant access and therefore there is no legally enforceable right to access to information.

Section 14 of the Constitution of Lesotho guarantees freedom of expression, amongst many other freedoms and rights enshrined in the Constitution. However, media freedom is not explicitly protected. Lesotho is chiefly known for its laws that restrict media freedom. Lack of access to information impedes public participation in the democratic system. Citizens often have to rely on hearsay in order to know whether their country is progressing or stagnating. Lack of access to public information can contribute to the lack of context and background information of newspaper articles and research reports. It is very common to find journalists and independent citizens being denied information. The strict control of information has resulted in the public flooding press conferences. Many believe that journalists are given all the information and decide to give as little as possible to the public. This survey seeks to determine whether public institutions in Lesotho make information available to the general public.

There is little hope that the government will alter the status quo any time soon. After the 2012 general elections, where no political party achieved an outright majority, many had hoped for drastic reforms. The election results necessitated the formation of a coalition government for the first time in the history of Lesotho. The three former opposition parties – the All Basotho Convention (ABC), Basotho National Party (BNP) and Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) – joined forces to form the government. This marked an end of the 14-year rule of Mr Pakalitha Mosisili, who had served as Prime Minister since 1998. The new regime has not done anything to ease the restrictions on media freedom.

RATIONALE AND RESEARCH PARAMETERS

This year's study focused on eight ministries with the aim to assess the degree to which they are accessible and responsive to public demand for information. The survey was conducted between the 23rd of June and the 25th July 2014. The study shows how transparent each ministry is by using prescribed tools to measure the level of responsiveness for each chosen ministry within a given time frame.

The following government institutions were surveyed:

1. Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA)
2. Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA)
3. Office of the Ombudsman
4. Lesotho National Dairy Board (LNDB)
5. Ministry of Home Affairs
6. Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs
7. Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences (DCEO)
8. Office of the Prime Minister

AIM OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to assess the level of openness in government and public institutions in the country. The results of the study will continue to inform MISA Lesotho's campaign for legislation on access to information and a media policy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the level of transparency in government and public institutions against international standards and principals on access to information.
- To influence the adoption of practices, laws and a culture that promotes transparency and openness in government and public institutions.
- To inform advocacy and interventions by MISA Lesotho and civil society across the country.
- To encourage citizens to exercise their fundamental right to access information generated, held and under the control of government institutions necessary for accessing other socio-economic rights.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research adopts qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, and seeks to evaluate the level of public access to information held by government and public institutions. Each MISA Chapter conducts research by evaluating the websites of government and public institutions along with submitting oral and written requests for information. This method seeks to establish the transparency and efficiency of government and public institutions in providing information to the public.

DATA ANALYSIS

Category 1: Evaluation of government and public institution websites to determine the access and presence of credible and updated public information, which includes but is not limited to: powers and functions of the institution in question; vacancy and budgetary allocations; procurement procedures and contact details and reports.

Category 2: This category was divided into two sections, namely written questionnaires and oral requests for information. These instruments were adopted to determine the ease with which public information is obtained from government and public institutions.

Description of Assessment Criteria

The total number of points allocated to categories 1 and 2 is 20 points (n = 20) each. Points are awarded based on the researcher's answer: Yes (2 points); Partial (1 point); No (0 points). Government ministries and institutions fell into one of the following groups in accordance with the number of points that they received.

Category 1: Website Analysis

Group 1: (0 – 6) Absence of a website or an extremely poor website containing no or almost no relevant public information.

Group 2: (7 – 13) Average website containing some relevant public information.

Group 3: (14 – 20) Well organised, transparent website providing a good amount of relevant public information.

Category 2: Written Request/Oral Request

Group 1: (0 – 6) Denied access to reasonable information request or acted with high levels of secrecy.

Group 2: (7 – 13) Displayed an average level of openness in allowing access to public information.

Group 3: (14 – 20) Displayed openness in allowing access to public information. Institution was helpful and transparent.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Category 1: Website Analysis

Three out of the eight institutions surveyed have independent websites. The Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs did not have independent websites, but there is some information posted on the website of the Government of Lesotho. The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences and the Lesotho National Dairy Board did not have websites at all.

Category 2: Requests for Information

The Lesotho National Dairy Board and the Office of the Ombudsman were the most cooperative institutions. The Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs scored the least points in this category. The ministry does not even have an officer designated for information dissemination.

DETAILED FINDINGS

1. Lesotho Revenue Authority (LRA)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

www.lra.org.ls

The website has a lot of information relevant to understanding Lesotho's tax regime. However, the website could benefit from some more information, such as recruitment procedures and information about procurement, as well as creating an online platform for messaging and whistleblowing.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	•			
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?	•			
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?	•			
c) Reports, policies, programs?	•			
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?	•			
h) The contact details of public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?		•		

Total Score: 12/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Lesotho Revenue Authority:

1. What was the monthly revenue collected by LRA between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
2. How many mining companies were registered for tax purposes with LRA between the 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014?
3. How much revenue was collected from the mining sector per month between the 1st April 2012 and the 31st March 2014?
4. Have there been any cases of fraud/corruption relating to taxation that were reported to the authority between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
5. Does the LRA have any information dissemination or communication strategy?

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests? (Please state title of officials in 'Additional Information')	•		Public Relations Officer
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days? (If less than 7 please state in 'Additional Information')		•	
3. Did the Institution respond to a request for information?		•	
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•	
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested? (If partially please mark 'No', indicate in 'Additional Information' how much of the information requested was supplied)		•	
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information? (If information was not refused, please contact institution to find out what the policy is in this regard – if they supply written reasons for refusal mark 'Yes')		•	

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•	
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•	
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•	
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•	

Total Score: 2/20

2. Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority (LEWA)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

www.lewa.org.ls

The website of the Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority is by far the most open website of the surveyed institutions. If the institution were to add important features such as information about recruitment and procurement procedures, it would be even more useful to the public.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	•			
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?	•			
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?	•			
c) Reports, policies, programs?	•			
d) Budget and expenditure?	•			
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?			•	
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?			•	
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?	•			
h) The contact details of public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			

Total Score: 16/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority:

- How much electricity was generated in Lesotho per month between the 1st April 2013 and 31st May 2014?
- What was the electricity consumption per district per month between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
- What was the percentage of electricity adjustment for household consumption per annum between 2003 and 2014?
- How many stakeholders were consulted prior to approval of the electricity tariff adjustment application by LEC for the year 2014/15?
- How many consumer complaints were handled by the authority between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
- Does the LEWA have any information dissemination or communication strategy?

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests? (Please state title of officials in 'Additional Information')	•		Public Relations Officer
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days? (If less than 7 please state in 'Additional Information')		•	
3. Did the Institution respond to a request for information?		•	
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•	
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested? (If partially please mark 'No', indicate in 'Additional Information' how much of the information requested was supplied)		•	
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information? (If information was not refused, please contact institution to find out what the policy is in this regard – if they supply written reasons for refusal mark 'Yes')		•	
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•	
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•	
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•	
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•	

Total Score: 2/20

3. Office of the Ombudsman

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

www.ombudsman.org.ls

The website of the Office of the Ombudsman is by far the easiest website to navigate. However, it could have scored more points had it included information on recruitment and procurement procedures.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	•			
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?	•			
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?	•			
c) Reports, policies, programs?			•	The latest annual report uploaded is for 2010
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?	•			
h) The contact details of public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			

Total Score: 13/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Office of the Ombudsman:

1. How many complaints has the Office of the Ombudsman received per district between the 1st April 2012 and 31st May 2014?
2. How many complaints has the Office of the Ombudsman received per government ministry or institution between the 1st April 2012 and 31st May 2014?
3. How many of the cases filed with the Office of the Ombudsman between the 1st April 2012 and 31st May 2014 were attended to?
4. How many reports and publications were released by the Office of the Ombudsman between the 1st April 2012 and 31st May 2014?
5. Where could the public report cases of fraud/corruption relating to public service in the 10 districts of Lesotho?
6. Does the ministry have any information dissemination or communication strategy?

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests? (Please state title of officials in 'Additional Information')	•		Chief Public Relations Officer
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days? (If less than 7 please state in 'Additional Information')	•		Within 6 Days
3. Did the Institution respond to a request for information?	•		
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•	
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested? (If partially please mark 'No', indicate in 'Additional Information' how much of the information requested was supplied)		•	
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information? (If information was not refused, please contact institution to find out what the policy is in this regard – if they supply written reasons for refusal mark 'Yes')	•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.	•		
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•	
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	•		

Total Score: 14/20

4. Lesotho National Dairy Board (LNDB)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

The Lesotho National Dairy Board does not have a website.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?		•		
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?		•		
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programs?		•		
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?		•		

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
h) The contact details of public officials?		•		
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?		•		

Total Score: 0/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Lesotho National Dairy Board:

1. How many dairy farmers were producing milk in Lesotho between the 1st April 2013 and 31st May 2014?
2. How many liters of milk were produced in Lesotho per month between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
3. How many liters of milk were imported from the Republic of South Africa per month between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
4. How many liters of milk were exported by Lesotho between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
5. Have there been any reported cases of milk adulteration by farmers between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
6. Does the LNDB have any information dissemination or communication strategy?

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests? (Please state title of officials in 'Additional Information')	•		Marketing Officer
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days? (If less than 7 please state in 'Additional Information')	•		Within 3 days
3. Did the Institution respond to a request for information?	•		
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?	•		
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested? (If partially please mark 'No', indicate in 'Additional Information' how much of the information requested was supplied)		•	The institution is not collecting all information
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information? (If information was not refused, please contact institution to find out what the policy is in this regard – if they supply written reasons for refusal mark 'Yes')	•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.	•		
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?	•		
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	•		

Total Score: 18/20

5. Ministry of Home Affairs

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.gov.ls/safety/>

The Ministry of Home Affairs does not have an independent website. However, some information about the ministry is posted on the government website.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?		•		
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?		•		
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programs?		•		
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?	•			
h) The contact details of public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?		•		

Total Score: 4/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs:

- How many National Identity Documents were issued between the 1st April and 31st May 2014?
- How many IDs were issued each day for the month of May 2014?
- How many IDs were issued per district for the period between 1st April 2014 and 31st May 2014?
- Where can cases of fraud/corruption relating to issuing of IDs be reported?
- Have there been any cases of fraud/corruption relating to the issuing of IDs between 1st October 2013 and 31st March 2014?
- Does the ministry have any information dissemination or communication strategy?

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests? (Please state title of officials in 'Additional Information')	•		Chief Information Officer
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days? (If less than 7 please state in 'Additional Information')		•	
3. Did the Institution respond to a request for information?		•	
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•	
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested? (If partially please mark 'No', indicate in 'Additional Information' how much of the information requested was supplied)		•	
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information? (If information was not refused, please contact institution to find out what the policy is in this regard – if they supply written reasons for refusal mark 'Yes')		•	
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•	
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•	
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•	
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•	

Total Score: 2/20

6. Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.gov.ls/energy/>

The Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs does not have an independent website. However, some information about the ministry is posted on the national government website.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?		•		
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?		•		
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programs?		•		
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?	•			
h) The contact details of public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?		•		

Total Score: 4/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs:

- How many vehicles consumed or made use of 50ppm diesel per month between 1st March 2012 and 31st March 2014 in Lesotho?
- How many households have been connected into the electricity grid per district for the period between 1st June 2012 and 31st May 2014?
- Where could consumers of petroleum products file their complaints against suppliers and distributors of Liquefied Petroleum Gas in Lesotho?
- How many new fuel filling stations have been constructed per district between 1st March 2005 and 31st March 2014?
- How many projects have been financed through the funds collected by the Petroleum Fund of the Government of Lesotho since its inception?
- Does the ministry have any information dissemination or communication strategy?

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests? (Please state title of officials in 'Additional Information')		•	
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days? (If less than 7 please state in 'Additional Information')		•	
3. Did the Institution respond to a request for information?		•	
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•	
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested? (If partially please mark 'No', indicate in 'Additional Information' how much of the information requested was supplied)		•	
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information? (If information was not refused, please contact institution to find out what the policy is in this regard – if they supply written reasons for refusal mark 'Yes')		•	
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•	
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•	

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?		•	
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•	

Total Score: 0/20

7. Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

The Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences does not have a website.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?		•		
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?		•		
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programs?		•		
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?		•		
h) The contact details of public officials?		•		
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?		•		

Total Score: 0/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences:

- How many corruption suspects have appeared before the courts between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
- How many corruption cases have been reported to DCEO per district between the 1st April 2013 and the 31st March 2014?
- Have there been any cases of corruption relating to issuing of mineral rights between the 1st March 2013 and the 31st March 2014? (If so, how many?)
- Does the DCEO have any strategy to promote and protect whistleblowing?
- Does the DCEO have any information dissemination or communication strategy?

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests? (Please state title of officials in 'Additional Information')	•		Public Relations Officer
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days? (If less than 7 please state in 'Additional Information')		•	
3. Did the Institution respond to a request for information?	•		
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•	

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested? (If partially please mark 'No', indicate in 'Additional Information' how much of the information requested was supplied)		•	
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information? (If information was not refused, please contact institution to find out what the policy is in this regard – if they supply written reasons for refusal mark 'Yes')	•		
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•	
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•	
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•	

Total Score: 8/20

8. Office of the Prime Minister

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.gov.ls/pm/>

The Office of the Prime Minister does not have an independent website. However, some information about the ministry is posted on the government website.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?		•		Captures recent events
2. Does the website contain the following:				
a) A description of its powers, as well as data on the organisational structure, the functions, and the responsibilities of the administration?		•		
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		•		
c) Reports, policies, programs?		•		
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?		•		Tenders are listed
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		Job vacancy list available
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?	•			Only switchboard line and toll free number
h) The contact details of public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?		•		

Total Score: 4/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Office of the Prime Minister:

1. How many complaints did the Office of the Prime Minister receive between the 1st April 2012 and 31st May 2014?
2. What is the Office of the Prime Minister doing to reduce the number of days it takes for one to get a police clearance, which currently takes 90 days? I was informed of that wait time by the police officers at Maseru Central Charge Office when I went to their station on Friday 27 June 2014.
3. Does the Prime Minister or the Office of the Prime Minister have a social media account?
4. Where can individuals file complaints about poor service delivery and nepotism within the Government of Lesotho?
5. How many policies have been formulated and presented to the Cabinet for approval by the Office of the Prime Minister between the 1st June 2012 and 31st May 2014?
6. Does the Office of the Prime Minister have any information dissemination or communication strategy?

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
1. Is there an official designated to take and respond to information requests? (Please state title of officials in 'Additional Information')	•		
2. Did the institution reply within 21 days? (If less than 7 please state in 'Additional Information')		•	
3. Did the Institution respond to a request for information?		•	
4. Does the authority publish their procedures for dealing with information requests?		•	
5. Did the institution provide all of the information requested? (If partially please mark 'No', indicate in 'Additional Information' how much of the information requested was supplied)		•	
6. Did the institution provide written reasons for the refusal of information? (If information was not refused, please contact institution to find out what the policy is in this regard – if they supply written reasons for refusal mark 'Yes')		•	
7. Did the institution disclose information about its operations, budgets, structure etc.		•	
8. Did the authority provide information without questioning the aims and motivations of the applicant?		•	
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	•		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•	

Total Score: 4/20

RESEARCH CONCLUSION

The survey has revealed the secrecy within government ministries and public institutions, which serves to deny citizens their right to information. The Office of the Ombudsman has a balanced approach to the provision of information. It has a well-resourced website and is able to respond to written requests for information. It is utterly unacceptable for very important ministries and public institutions not to have updated websites. This is a weakness that even the best performer, the Office of the Ombudsman, has to overcome. Two out of the eight institutions were found not to have a website. The Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs had very little information posted on the national government website. This makes evaluating the work of these institutions a near impossible task for citizens.

The written request was addressed to the officer designated for information dissemination at all of the institutions. Public institutions like the Office of the Prime Minister and the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Offences requested that the researcher write another letter to the Principal Secretary and the Director General respectively. A request addressed to the officer designated to disseminate information should be enough. The red tape only serves to delay or deny access to information. A journalist or researcher requesting the information could easily fail to meet deadlines, due to unnecessary requests to address letters to different people, especially when the content is the same, the only difference being the person addressed in the letter.

THE MOST SECRETIVE PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN LESOTHO

The Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs is the most secretive of the eight public institutions and ministries surveyed. The ministry was the only institution without an officer designated for information dissemination. It does not have an independent website and it only considers requests that have authorisation from certain institutions or researchers affiliated with those institutions, effectively denying information to freelance journalists, independent researchers and the general public. This excuse was given regardless of the fact that the Principal Secretary requested that the Department of Energy process the request. However, the researcher was denied information on the basis that he would only be given information if he was affiliated with a research or academic institution. The denial of information to an independent researcher only highlights the secrecy within which the ministry is operating. This means that citizens of Lesotho do not have a right to know what the ministry is doing unless they are affiliated with certain institutions.

THE MOST OPEN PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN LESOTHO

The Lesotho National Dairy Board (LNDB) scored highest when it comes to handling requests for information. The only challenge for the LNDB was the lack of a website. The organisation could better reach stakeholders if it were to have a small website with manageable information. That would go a long way towards ensuring that the public has access to information about the regulation of the dairy industry in Lesotho.

The **Office of the Ombudsman** is the most open public institution in Lesotho. The officer responsible for disseminating information was able to arrange a meeting for the researcher with the head of the organisation. The Office of the Ombudsman seems to be consistent in handling information requests, as it was the second highest scoring in 2012's study, when this research was last conducted in Lesotho. Information is easily accessible and anyone who is computer literate can send a message to the office through its website. It is, therefore, imperative that the public make use of the accessibility of the Office and file their complaints about poor service delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study underscore the need for Lesotho to make public participation a priority. That would compel public institutions to provide the public with relevant and updated information. Access to information should be part of a liberal media policy. Lesotho must consider the formulation of a Public Participation Act and an Access to Information Act. These Acts would ensure that citizens have the information and tools to make informed decisions.

It is imperative that all public institutions have officers designated for information dissemination. In that way, the public would be able to approach such officers whenever they need information about the institution. It would make life very easy for the public if all public institutions were to have independent and up-to-date websites. It is very important that journalists, researchers and the public have access to updated information on the work of public institutions. Some of the people who may need information about Lesotho may not have the privilege of being able to visit the offices of these public institutions. Websites could save resources such as time and money used to search for information, which could be put towards other uses. The Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Energy, Meteorology and Water Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs should have their own independent websites. A developing country like Lesotho should opt for efficiency in information dissemination in order to propel innovation and economic development.