



BOTSWANA

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

INTRODUCTION

Access to information, or the right to information, is a critical element of any functioning democracy. It serves as a safeguard against corruption and impunity amongst elected officials and also empowers citizens to demand important information relevant to their daily lives.

Although Botswana currently enjoys a reputation as one of the most democratic countries in Africa, access to information is by no means guaranteed. Transparency, consultation and accountability are just some of the attributes that have always found resonance in Botswana's traditional participatory democracy, which predates independence, achieved in 1966. Like many other oppressive governments, the government of Botswana has increasingly shown traits of secrecy in its operations.

Contrary to the traditional style of leadership where decisions were made by leaders (Chiefs), who encouraged public engagement, the new form of government we have adopted under the banner of democracy has failed to engage the public in decision-making and restricts public access to information. Leaders in the traditional system were born into office, not elected, but the structures allowed the public to have an input on issues affecting them with representation at different levels. The arrangement had entrenched systems of checks and balances that ultimately made Chiefs accountable to the people over whom they ruled. The Chief frequently shared his thoughts with his people and always sought their input and guidance before making far-reaching decisions through Kgotla meetings (public gatherings). We have since witnessed the collapse of these structures between independence and now, as the old system of ruling was completely reformed. Under the current decision-making and information sharing structures all powers now lie within the Office of the President, which oversees the entire system under the authority of the President.

Initially, efforts were made to enable citizens to participate in decision-making through different forums that allowed them to hold their leaders accountable. Such arrangements continued long into independence, with Presidents always allowing for public consultation, albeit to varying degrees. As our independence matured and different Presidents came and went, we witnessed the silent death of such structures at the hands of the government in power.

However, it appears that these open and transparent practices from the Bogosi era (where tribal leaders were the highest authority) have not found their way into Botswana's modern form of government, and there have been growing complaints that government has been making important decisions without public consultation.

This low degree of engagement has been widely criticised, with critics arguing that it has reduced the role of the public in decision-making, as 'rubber stamping' decisions are made solely by those in power. This has led to numerous complaints that government only releases the information it wants the public to know about.

Critics within this country have repeatedly cried foul against State media, which they label 'government propaganda machinery', used by the ruling elite to control public perception. The absence of independent reporting in the State media houses has denied citizens their right to access factual information and balanced reports, as coverage and control is held by those in power. The enactment of the Botswana Communications Regulatory Authority Act 2012 and the Public Service Act 2010 confirmed the government's intentions to restrict and control the flow of information. This monopoly of information has also weakened the country's democracy in many ways.

Critics claim that without the sufficient provision of information, citizens have routinely been unable to make informed decisions on critical issues that affect not just their lives but also the direction of the country, as well as the national public discourse. This new form of government has long been condemned for a lack of political will to combat corruption, particularly in light of the perceived lack of independence of organisations like the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC). These issues have created a breeding ground for corrupt officials and proliferate injustice.

Oversight institutions like the DCEC and the judicial system have failed to work efficiently to prosecute several high ranking officials who have been accused of foul play on many occasions. We have recently witnessed a case involving a top security agent where government machinery is using all of its powers to prevent justice from taking its course. It was revealed in the previous survey that the Directorate of Intelligence and Security was the most secretive organisation and that such institutions with undefined powers may pose a danger to our democracy.

RATIONALE AND RESEARCH PARAMETERS

This year's study focused on eight ministries with the aim of assessing the degree to which they are accessible and responsive to the public's demand for information. The survey was conducted between the 18th of June and the 11th of July 2014. The study indicates 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. Ministry of Lands and Housing
2. Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology
3. Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs
4. Ministry of Education and Skills Development
5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
6. Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism
7. Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture
8. Ministry of Local Government

AIM OF THE STUDY

The main goal of this study is to assess the level of transparency of government and public institutions in the country. The survey results will serve as empirical evidence for the ongoing campaign to encourage government to enact access to information legislation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the level of transparency in government and public institutions against international standards and principles of 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 Botswana 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 social 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

- Of the eight government institutions surveyed, five had their own individual websites. The remaining three had brief pages hosted by the Botswana government website (www.gov.bw).
- The survey also revealed that only half of the surveyed government institutions had updated information on their websites. The remaining half had outdated information, eg the Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture website does not appear to have been updated since 2012.
- Of the eight government institutions surveyed, only one website, that of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology, featured a budget (but no expenditure report).

Category 2: Requests for Information

- Of the eight institutions surveyed, only the Ministry of Local Government rejected a written request for information upon submission, while the remaining seven written requests managed to reach the intended Public Relations office.
- One letter of request, for the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, had to be re-sent after follow up calls established that the initial one had reportedly been lost.
- All of the seven institutions that accepted the letters acknowledged receipt, but didn't respond to the questions, despite confirmation that they reached the Public Relations offices to which they were addressed.
- All ministries cautioned that information could only be released if the letter clearly stated the researcher's name and the intended use for such information.

DETAILED FINDINGS

1. Ministry of Lands and Housing

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.mlh.gov.bw/>

This website falls into Assessment Group 2, as it scored 13 points. The website captures recent events and activities. Despite having up-to-date information and useful features there is still substantial room for improvement.

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: 13/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to Ministry of Lands and Housing:

1. In total how many plots have been allocated nationwide so far?
2. How many of those plots are residential, commercial or industrial?
3. Which district still has more land available for allocation and which one is topping the list of land scarcity?
4. How many land ownership transfer cases have been registered in the past three years?

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.		•	

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
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. Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology

CATEGORY 1 - WEBSITE

<http://www.mist.gov.bw/>

This is a good website with excellent user interface and content. There is a need for improvement in keeping content up-to-date. The website scores 14 points, putting it in Assessment Group 3. Though it contains outdated information, it should be noted that of all the eight websites surveyed this was the only ministry which had its budget on the website.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?		•		No information from 2013 and 2014
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?			•	Only telephone numbers
h) The contact details of public officials?	•			
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?			•	There are email addresses for certain officials

Total Score: 14/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to Ministry of Infrastructure Science and Technology:

1. How is Botswana ranked internationally in its technological advancement?
2. Which area needs more work to be done?
3. Who benefits from more of the tenders issued by the ministry annually?
4. How many Botswana contractors have benefited from the tenders issued by the ministry? If possible please indicate in figures (the total amount allocated to tenders and the percentage won by local contractors owned by citizens).

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. Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.gov.bw/en/Ministries--Authorities/Ministries/Ministry-of-Labour--Home-Affairs-MLHA/>

The website scored 13 points out of 20, putting it in Assessment Group 2. The website looks good and contains mostly relevant information. There is, however, room for the ministry to improve the website through the inclusion of annual budgets and expenditure as well as a description of powers and responsibilities of the administration.

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?	•			Very limited
c) Reports, policies, programs?	•			
d) Budget and expenditure?		•		
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?	•			
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?	•			Job search available
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?		•		Only a telephone number
h) The contact details of public officials?			•	Only a switchboard line
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			Direct email address of the Public Relations Officer

Total Score: 13/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs:

1. How long does it take to acquire a work permit in this country?
2. Which sector of the economy has made more requests for such permits over the past three years? (Please provide statistics)
3. Do any of our national policies give privilege to those candidates from SADC member states to easily attain permits in Botswana over other candidates from different parts of the world? That is, is there any special consideration for them?
4. In total, how many people were deported from Botswana in the past three years? How many of these were from:
 - a) SADC member states
 - b) Other African countries
 - c) Other parts of the world

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

4. Ministry of Education and Skills Development

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.gov.bw/en/ministries--authorities/ministries/ministry-of-education-moe/>

The ministry scored five points in this analysis, putting it in Assessment Group 1. This is an extremely poor website that needs significant improvement. This ministry has the largest share of the national budget, which therefore equates to an even greater need for transparency by sharing information with the public. It must be noted that this is not an independent website but rather a page on the national government's 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?	•			

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
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: 5/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Ministry of Education and Skills Development:

1. Which district has performed best in past PSL examinations and which one was the worst?
2. What was the ministry's budget allocation specifically for primary school education for the past three financial years?
3. How many children have been enrolled back to school through the out of school programme for the past three years?
4. How many of those have sat exams and passed?

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

5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs And International Cooperation

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.mofaic.gov.bw/>

The ministry scored four points in this analysis, putting it in Assessment Group 1. This is an extremely poor website with only superficial content.

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?		•		

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
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?		•		Only a switchboard line
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 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation:

1. How many embassies does Botswana host currently?
2. What is the total number of years that one can occupy an embassy office?
3. Which countries does Botswana have offices for ambassadors in?
4. What is our stand as Botswana regarding the recent abduction of school' girls by militants in Nigeria?

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

6. Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.mewt.gov.bw/DMM/index.php>

This website is extremely poor, scoring five out of 20 points. It does not contain any relevant public information despite having recent data. There is a need for more work to be done to make the website more user friendly by improving the user interface.

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?	•			List of awarded contracts also available
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?		•		Only a postal address and a switchboard line
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: 5/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism:

- How many cases of wild animal theft have been recorded in Botswana for the past three years?
- Does Botswana have any agreement with neighboring countries on efforts to curb wild animal theft?
- How involved are Botswana at community level in tourism in general and environmental protection? Please state examples to support your case.
- Do we have any environmental regulation tool in Botswana in place to regulate pollution, especially from the booming mining sector?

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.		•	

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional Information
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

7. Ministry Of Youth, Sports and Culture

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.mysc.gov.bw/>

This is an appealing website in terms of design, but has very limited public information. It must be noted, however, that this is the only website containing full names and direct contacts of relevant public officials.

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?			•	Only information on the structure is available
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?			•	Information is outdated
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?	•			More detailed system with an enquiry form

Total Score: 7/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to Ministry of Youth Sports and Culture:

1. What is the total number of people living in this country who qualify to be referred to as youth?
2. In which part of this country do most of these people live?
3. How many youth offices are there nationwide?
4. How many youth are unemployed and not studying, including those in the Ipelegeng, national internship programme and tirelo sechaba? (If possible please provide statistics of each programme)

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

8. Ministry of Local Government

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

<http://www.gov.bw/en/Ministries--Authorities/Ministries/Ministry-of-Local-Government-MLG1/>

This website falls into Assessment Group 1, scoring seven points. It must be noted that this is not an independent website, but rather a page on the national government's 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?		•		Has a separate page allocated for such
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?			•	Only a Switchboard line
i) A mechanism to request and receive a response to electronic messages and requests for information?	•			

Total Score: 7/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Ministry of Local Government:

1. How many marriages have been registered in the past three years?
2. How many divorce cases have been registered in the past three years?
3. What is the current limit for lobola?
4. Do our current laws have any provision for a lobola refund?

The request letter was never delivered to the Public Relations office, as receipt was rejected at the records desk. The officer who attended the researcher rejected the letter, stating that the information requested was confidential. The researcher was advised to resubmit a more detailed request stating the intended use for the information, their full identity and more information about them or the organisation requesting the information.

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: 2/20

RESEARCH CONCLUSION

Taking into account surveys conducted in previous years, it is evident that government ministries and departments are still not freely providing public information. Many citizens in Botswana find government departments inaccessible and information continues to be disseminated only on a selective basis. If the situation continues this way, with authorities starving their citizens of information, there will be no further development and democracy will remain vulnerable. Public information should be freely and willingly provided to the information seeker at any given time within a reasonable period. In past years the study managed to identify the most open institution, which is not the case in this year's study due to the low scores by the respective ministries. All the ministries failed to respond to the questions that were sent to them within 21 days.

THE MOST SECRETIVE PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN BOTSWANA

All eight institutions surveyed scored the majority of their points through websites, as they all failed to respond to the questions or requests for information. This then meant the institutions can only be distinguished through their website scores to determine their level of openness. This continuing practice of government officials not responding to requests for information is a worrying trend as it denies the public their right to access and benefit from information held by officials.

MISA Botswana is very concerned with the worrying trend of some public institutions scoring less points than the previous year and little or no improvement overall observed over several years of studies. This supports MISA Botswana's call to the government to enact a Freedom of Information Act. It is MISA Botswana's view that this law would go a long way towards making the government Public Relations offices much more open and useful to the information seeker.

The most secretive institution for this year is the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**, with a total of six points.

This was the lowest score, followed by the MoESD and MEWT, both scoring seven points each. Despite having accepted and acknowledged the researcher's letter of request for information, unlike the Ministry of Local Government, these three ministries failed to accumulate points for their websites. The low scoring by the three ministries can be attributed mainly to the limited information provided by their websites, which deny users the right to access common/public information through these sites. The other feature common amongst the three is a poor user interface, which makes it difficult for users to maneuver through the websites.

Special mention should also be made of the Ministry of Local Government, which refused to accept the written request for information. The reasoning behind the rejection of the letter was that the letter requested confidential information, and therefore

couldn't be taken to the Public Relations office for a response until 'certain requirements' were met by the information seeker. Subsequently, the majority of the points scored by this ministry were from the website survey.

THE MOST OPEN PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN BOTSWANA

All the ministries surveyed had independent websites or pages within the Botswana government website, for which they should be commended. It should be noted however that not all these institutions had all the relevant information available in these platforms.

MISA Botswana made sure that it did not reveal its identity throughout the study to avoid influencing the results. As was the case with previous surveys, government institutions continued to display signs of secrecy. All the approached institutions demanded further explanation with respect to what the information requested would be used for, as well as by whom it was being requested. At the end of the study there was no response from any of the participants, which left MISA Botswana with no other option than to identify the most open institution based largely on an evaluation of the institutions' websites. It seems the secretive culture is well cultivated within the government enclave. MISA Botswana believes that a culture of secrecy is dominating our government institutions, while members of the public are tirelessly thirsty for service delivery and information dissemination.

Although the Ministry of Infrastructure, Science and Technology scored well with a total score of 16 points, we could not recommend it as the most open public institution. The reason behind this decision is that like other institutions selected for the study this ministry also failed to respond to the request for information sent to them. It must be noted though that this is the only organisation, including those from previous years, which has included their budget on their website. It is critical for ministries to share such information with members of the public, due to the fact that the money spent is taxpayers' money.

Due to poor performance across the board, no Public Institution will receive the Golden Key award in 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MISA Botswana received the same responses from Public Relations Officers (PROs) as in previous years, ie they wanted to know how the information would be used. MISA Botswana is of the opinion that government PROs should receive training to educate them on the importance of access to information. The issue of PROs having to sign non-disclosure forms should also be revisited, especially when it comes to employees who hold information of public interest.

It is recommended that MISA Botswana should continue to seek more support from different stakeholders to join efforts to influence legislators to enact a Freedom of Information Act, which has become a necessity for this country.