ZAMBIA

2014 REPORT ON THE MOST OPEN AND SECRETIVE

GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN ZAMBIA

INTRODUCTION

Over the past number of years, media bodies such the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Zambia, the Zambia Union of Journalists (ZUJ), the Press Association of Zambia (PAZA), the Zambia Media Women Association (ZAMWA) and the Press Freedom Committee (PFC) of the Post Newspapers have campaigned tirelessly to mobilise support for the enactment of a law that will guarantee Zambians greater opportunities to access information.

Under the previous regime, several appointed Ministers of Information and Broadcasting Services (MIBS) each promised to enact an access to information law. The Patriotic Front (PF) government campaigned strenuously on the premise that as soon as they came in to power the first thing they would do was enact an access to information (ATI) law, and even formed a task force, of which MISA was a part of, that would assist with both the drafting and enactment of such a law.

The PF government has since changed its rhetoric and despite various promises to bring an ATI Bill to Parliament, has introduced delaying tactics on each occasion, which indicate no real willingness to do so.

However, despite the unwavering campaign for the enactment of a law, which has stressed the importance of citizen's access to information. The growing perception, especially by government and some sceptics within the public, is that the Bill, by and large, aims to benefit the media more than everybody else, as journalists would have considerably easier access to information than the general public, especially to information held by public officials. This notion has been challenged by both media bodies and other advocates who support the Bill, who maintain that the purpose of an ATI law is to empower the Zambian people and ensure a more participatory and democratic society, where the public can interact with government and influence public policies that affect their daily lives.

RATIONALE AND RESEARCH PARAMETERS

The researcher submitted written requests for information, as well as evaluated the websites of the selected institutions. Thereafter, the researcher made physical follow-ups as well as telephone calls to the institutions. This method sought to establish the transparency and efficiency of government and public institutions in providing information to the public.
The research was undertaken between the 9th of June and the 11th July 2014. MISA Zambia selected government departments and public institutions which play a vital role in Zambia's economy and development, and the welfare of the Zambian citizenry. The institutions include:

1. Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC)
2. Patents and Companies Registration Agency (PACRA)
3. The Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA)
4. The Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA)
5. The Ministry of Health (MoH)
6. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Services (MALS)
7. The Lusaka City Council (LCC)
8. The Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ)

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to assess the level of transparency and openness in government and public institutions in the country. From this survey it becomes evident that Zambia is in critical need of a freedom of information law.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Some of the objectives of the research were to:
- Assess the level of openness and transparency in government and public institutions against international standards and principles of access to information.
- Encourage citizens to exercise their fundamental right to access information generated and held under the control of government.

Influence the adoption of practices, laws and culture that promotes transparency and openness in government and public institutions

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.

Challenges and limitations of the research
Most organisations asked for the researcher's occupation or which organisation they were coming from. The researcher's assessment was that government and public institutions respond quicker to organisations rather than to an individual.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Category 1: Website Analysis
All eight institutions selected for this research have websites, some good and some with very little information, as you will see from the tables below. It is encouraging, however, to see that most government and public institutions have an online presence as a tool for disseminating information to the public.

Of these, the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) has quite a dynamic and informative website with very recent information. It also has an online social media presence, which is appealing to young people.

All other public institution websites are adequate, despite the fact that they are not being frequently updated. The Lusaka City Council (LCC), although they have an online presence, still have some pages under construction. However, LCC are one of two public institutions that have a designated contact person for the information required.

None of the eight public institutions outline or disclose their budgets on their websites. The provision of reports, programs, and signed contracts on websites varies between institutions.
Although all of the institutions did provide contact details and addresses only two institutions, the LCC and the CEEC, have contact details for designated public officers.

Category 2: Request for Written and Oral Information
Of the eight institutions written to, the Lusaka City Council (LCC) and the Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC) responded verbally on the tenth day. The LCC's Public Relations Officer, Mulunda Habeenzu, provided the answers to a written request for information and advised that he could not answer the question regarding waste management, and directed the researcher to the responsible unit. The researcher subsequently visited the waste management system and was also provided with answers by a courteous Ms Idah Shaputu, who added that if the researcher needed any more information on waste management, they should not hesitate to call back. The researcher was given all the necessary information regarding garbage collection in accordance with the request for information, and was provided with contact details for the person responsible for garbage collection in area requested.

Although the CEEC could not trace the letter of request sent to them on 9 June 2014, the answers to the request were provided telephonically by Mr D. Kambilo.

The other six institutions did not respond to the request, suggesting that most public institutions are secretive and are not responding to individual citizens' requests unless they can demonstrate that they are asking on behalf of an organisation.

In a democracy like Zambia, access by the general public to information held by public institutions and government is crucial, as this holds government accountable for how they are spending taxpayers' money.

The Electoral Commission of Zambia acknowledged the researcher's request in less than seven days via email, but still did not provide the requested information. The Zambia Revenue Authority asked for an electronic copy of the request for information, which was duly sent, but this was neither responded to nor acknowledged.

The general response to requests illustrates why an ATI Bill must be enacted, as this would make it easier for citizens to verify information about their public facilities.
Best practice and standards must be exhibited by these institutions and public institutions must be required to respond to all requests, whether the request came from an individual or an organisation, within a reasonable time.

DETAILED FINDINGS

1. Lusaka City Coucil (LCC)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE
http://www.lcc.gov.zm/

The Lusaka City Council website has very little information. It only has a welcome message from the Mayor. Most pages still show that they are under construction.

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?			●	Talks about projects but no reports or 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?			●	Working hours not provided
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 Lusaka City Council:
1. Is there an indication as to when our compounds will have flushable toilets and clean running water?
2. Is there information as to where we are supposed to go regarding information on garbage collection?
3. How often does the Council collect garbage in John Laing and on which days specifically?
4. How much are we, the residents, expected to pay to the Council if we want our garbage collected?

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')	●		The Public Relations Office
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)		●	The PRO referred the researcher to the WMU dept and they provided the info the researcher was looking for
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')		●	Information was provided by phone
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?	●		**Asked if the information was for research purposes**
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	●		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	●		

Total Score: 14/20

2. Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE
http://www.elections.org.zm/

A very good website, dynamic and frequently updated with a lot of information.

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?			●	**There's a section for tenders and procurement but nothing published currently**
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?	●			**There's a section for vacancies, but no jobs were advertised**
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?	●			**Contacts are provided but not working hours**
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: 15/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Electoral Commission of Zambia:
1. I would like to know how much the ECZ has spent on all the 17 by-elections since 2011?
2. How much does one by-election cost?
3. What preparations go into one by-election?

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')		●	**The Public Relations Department**
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?		●	

n = 20	Yes	No	Additional 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 PRO referred the researcher to the WMU dept and they provided the info the researcher was looking for
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')		●	Information was provided by phone
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?	●		Asked if the information was for research purposes
9. Did the institution acknowledge your request for information within 7 days?	●		
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?	●		

Total Score: 10/20

3. Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MALS)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE

http://www.agriculture.gov.zm/

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock website is very attractive. It is not frequently updated but contains a lot of information.

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?	●			The site provides the powers, but does not have an organisational structure nor the responsibilities of the administration
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?		●		
c) Reports, policies, programs?			●	Some reports provide information on policies
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?			●	The physical address is provided but no postal address
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: 6/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock:
1. The Zambian Government, though the Minister of Agriculture, recently announced the good news that it has recorded a bumper harvest for the 2013/2014 season.
2. What strategies has government put in place to make sure that no harvests of the bumper go to waste, as has been the case in the past?

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?	●		They responded saying it was sent to another department and would subsequently be attended to
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: 6/20

4. The Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE
https://www.zra.org.zm/

The Zambia Revenue Authority website is not frequently updated and is not user friendly, but has useful information.

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?			●	The budget available is the national budget
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?	•			**Does not stipulate working hours**
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: 14/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Zambia Revenue Authority:

1. How much revenue do private mining companies contribute to the Zambian coffers in terms of tax per year?
2. Approximately how much revenue does ZRA collect in the form of duty tax per month or annually?
3. There are hundreds of vehicles being bought in the country every day, how much revenue does the ZRA make from this?
4. What other services does the ZRA provide and how can people access information about the Authority?
5. What are some of the penalties that one can encounter should they fail to pay tax?

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

5. Ministry of Health (MoH)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE
http://www.moh.gov.zm/

The MoH website is very basic, but has improved from last year. However, it can still do better.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?			•	**The only recent information is the commemoration of World Tobacco Day in 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?			•	
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: 7/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following requests for information were sent to the Ministry of Health:

1. Has the Ministry ever embarked on any awareness raising on non-discrimination for patients with mental health? If so when and what were the outcomes and results?
2. People with epilepsy are shunned in most cases. How much awareness has been created around this?
3. What percentage of the main budget is allocated to the Ministry of Health?
4. I'm aware that the Ministry has been involved in a campaign on male circumcision, what is the target and what are the current figures standing at? How many males have been reached so far?

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')		•	**There is a person designated to receive mails, but not necessarily to deal with information requests**
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?	•		**They acknowledged the request but referred the researcher to its sister Ministry, the Ministry of Community Development and Mother and Child Health**
10. Was the information received clear and understandable?		•	

Total Score: 2/20

6. Patents and Companies Registration Agency (PACRA)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE
http://www.pacra.org.zm/

The PACRA website is a good website with a lot of information. It is also frequently updated and user friendly.

n = 20	Yes	No	Partial	Additional Information
1. Does this website contain up to date information?	●			The site does have up to date information, although the registration fees are in the old currency, which then becomes a bit misleading to the public
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?			●	Has functions but not responsibilities and no organisational structure
b) A list of laws, Acts etc. issued within the scope of its powers?	●			
c) Reports, policies, programs?	●			
d) Budget and expenditure?		●		There is no provision for the budget and how much is allocated to the Authority
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?	●			Information on signed contracts is not available
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		●		There is a jobs/vacancies section but nothing listed
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 Patents and Companies Registration Agency:
1. How many companies has the Agency registered in the first and second quarter?
2. What type of companies does PACRA register?
3. How easy is it to register a company with PACRA?
4. Lastly, how many companies are currently registered with PACRA?

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')	●		The Public Relations Office
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: 4/20

7. Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE
http://www.zppa.org.zm/

The ZPPA website is very plain and basic and is not frequently updated. It needs improvement and more pictures to make it more attractive to the reader.

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?		•		There is no provision for a budget and how much is allocated to the Authority
e) Information about procurement procedures, signed contracts?	•			Information on signed contracts has been provided
f) Vacancy and employment procedures?		•		
g) The name and address, telephone number, and the working hours of the respective institution?	•			Working hours are not provided
h) The contact details of public officials?	•			For the Director General
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 question was sent to the Zambia Public Procurement Authority:

1. I write to request information on how I can go about bidding for government tenders.

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?		•	**But did acknowledge receiving the letter**
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

8. Citizens Economic Empowerment Program (CEEC)

CATEGORY 1: WEBSITE
http://www.ceec.org.zm/

The CEEC website has dynamic pictures that make it attractive to the eye. It also has adequate information for the reader.

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?			•	**Working hours are not provided**
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: 15/20

CATEGORY 2: REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The following questions were sent to the Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission:

1. What are the requirements to obtain a loan from CEEC?
2. What is the maximum amount of money an individual is entitled to?
3. Is there a deadline in the year for applications to be done?

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: 10/20

RESEARCH CONCLUSION

This year's study shows that public institutions and government departments are still not open and do not freely give information to Zambians.

Although all of the institutions evaluated have a public relations or communications department responsible for public affairs and engagement with the general public, none of the eight institutions responded initially to the written requests for information, and only two of the eight institutions responded to the follow up oral requests.

With the exception of the LCC, all the government departments and public institutions had either misplaced the requests or lost them altogether. When the researcher followed up, she was either asked to bring another copy or send an electronic copy of the request for information. Although the ECZ acknowledged receiving their request in less than seven days, they still gave no answers to the questions. Other Institutions claimed they passed the letter on to another department, but it was clear this was a mere strategy to deny access.

Even though there are Information and Communications Officers in public institutions, it seems that this role is used to portray a positive image of the institutions and not to provide proactive tools of engagement with the general Zambian Citizenry. Most information officers do not act as a conduit of relevant information to the general public and other stakeholders.

THE MOST SECRETIVE PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN ZAMBIA

Of the eight public institutions, six did not respond to the written requests for information. Despite having very well updated websites, the ECZ, PACRA, and MALS acknowledged receiving the request, but failed to provide answers.

The least deserving is the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA), as they misplaced the letter, asked for an electronic copy and subsequently did not respond to it. After making follow-up calls to the Public Relations Officer (PRO), Mr Kufekisa said he sent the letter to another department so that the information could be simplified as it was too technical for the researcher to decipher. The next time the researcher called to make a follow up, the PRO said he was away for work on the Copper-belt attending a trade fair but someone was dealing with the request

However, with a very basic website and failure to respond to the written request for information, the **Ministry of Health** is the recipient of this year's Golden Padlock award for the most secretive public institution in Zambia.

THE MOST OPEN PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN ZAMBIA

Looking at last year's report, The Lusaka City Council is the most improved organisation, as they have upgraded their website, even though some pages are still under construction. They are also one of the two institutions that telephonically answered questions, and where the Public Relations Office could not respond to questions, the researcher was redirected to another department, which also provided the answers within the stipulated time.

Even though the Citizens Empowerment Commission (CEEC) misplaced the letter requesting information, they deserve a special mention, as they provided the requested answers over the telephone.

The **Lusaka City Council** is the recipient of this year's Golden Key award for the most open public institution in Zambia

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is highly recommended that the government stick to their campaign promise and enact an ATI law. Also, government needs to work with the employees of public institutions to educate them with respect to their roles as public officers, therefore information must be accorded to the people of Zambia.

Enacting an ATI law will help the citizenry in accessing information from public offices without suspicion or being asked questions. It was clear from the research that most government departments or public institutions do not respond to individuals, as this researcher experienced.