A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF

AN ASSESSMENT
OF SOCIAL
ACCOUNTABILITY AND
SERVICE DELIVERY
MONITORING TOOLS IN
SOUTH AFRICA

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2018–2020
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ABBREVIATIONS

AG   Auditor General
APEA  Applied Political Economic Analysis
APP  Annual Performance Plan
ARV  Anti-Retroviral
BJC  Budget Justice Coalition
CBO  Community-Based Organization
CDW  Community Development Workers
CID  Civic Information Drive
CMAP  Community Monitoring and Advocacy
CoGTA  Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CPF  Community Policing Forum
DoE  Department of Education
DoH  Department of Health
DPME  Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA  Department of Public Service and Administration
DSD  Department of Social Development
DUT  Durban University of Technology
ECCF  Eastern Cape Communications Forum
ECHCAC  Eastern Cape Health Crisis Action Committee
EXCO  Executive Council (of a province)
HoD  Head of Department
IBP  International Budgetary Program
IDASA  Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IDP  Integrated Development Plan
IER  Integrated Emergency Response
JICA  Japan International Cooperation Agency
JRA  Johannesburg Road Agency
MACUA  Mining Communities United in Action
MDB  Municipal Demarcation Board
MPAC  Municipal Public Accounts Committee
MPAT  Management Performance Assessment Tool
MPs  Members of Parliament
MTSF  Medium Term Strategic Framework
NA  National Assembly
NCOP  National Council of Provinces
NDP  National Development Plan
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
<table>
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<tr>
<td>NHI</td>
<td>National Health Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>Ndifuna Ukwazi</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBI</td>
<td>Open Budget Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCL</td>
<td>Open Cities Lab</td>
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<td>ODAC</td>
<td>Open Democracy Advice Centre</td>
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<td>ODADI</td>
<td>Open Data and Democracy Initiative</td>
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<td>OGP</td>
<td>Open Government Partnership</td>
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<td>OTP</td>
<td>Office of the Premier</td>
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<td>PA</td>
<td>People’s Assembly</td>
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<td>PALAMA</td>
<td>Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy</td>
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<td>PMG</td>
<td>Parliamentary Monitoring Group</td>
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<td>POA</td>
<td>Program of Action</td>
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<td>PRA</td>
<td>Participatory Rural Appraisal</td>
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<td>PSAM</td>
<td>Public Service and Accountability Monitor</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>Public Service Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTC</td>
<td>Reclaim the City</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>State-Owned Company</td>
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<td>SACN</td>
<td>SA Cities Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>SALGA</td>
<td>SA Local Government Association</td>
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<td>SAN</td>
<td>Social Audit Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAPS</td>
<td>South African Police Service</td>
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<td>SASSA</td>
<td>SA Social Security Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBIP</td>
<td>Service Delivery Implementation Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCAT</td>
<td>Social Change Assistance Trust</td>
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<td>SCODA</td>
<td>SA Cities Open Data Almanac</td>
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<td>SDBIP</td>
<td>Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan</td>
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<td>SGB</td>
<td>School Governing Body</td>
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<td>SJC</td>
<td>Social Justice Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOE</td>
<td>State-Owned Entity</td>
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<td>TAC</td>
<td>Treatment Action Campaign</td>
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FOREWORD

This research is being published during the time of the COVID-19 outbreak. The pandemic and the South African government's response to it have highlighted the increasing gap between those who govern and the governed. Citizens are wary of trusting the government's response, particularly as enforcement of the lockdown has been seen by many as infringing on their civic rights. It is the most marginal citizens who have borne the brunt of COVID-19, which has impacted on their abilities to earn an income, run small enterprises and move freely. Food hamper distribution and relief efforts have become a potential space for favouritism and corruption as local councillors took charge of distributing relief supplies.

There is a growing sense that decisions made under the state of disaster are not transparent nor consultative and it is within this framework that one has to consider social accountability monitoring. While the initial weeks of the pandemic saw information regarding the spread of the pandemic being shared in South Africa, it soon became apparent that citizens need more than facts and figures. Mobile applications allow citizens to follow updates on the numbers and access necessary health information and other critical information on their legal and human rights under the pandemic.

However, citizens want to know why certain decisions were taken. They want to know what avenues are open to them if they believe their rights have been infringed. While this research was conducted prior to the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, it provides a lens to see how deepening social accountability monitoring can ensure greater transparency and provide opportunities for co-creation between those who govern and those who are governed.
It gives me great pleasure to present this publication, an audit of social accountability tools in South Africa, as part of a project to Promote Civic Education and Participation in South Africa funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The World Bank defines social accountability as an approach toward building accountability that relies on civic engagement, in which ordinary citizens or civil society organizations are able to participate in the governance of a country through a broad range of actions and mechanisms that allow them to hold public officials and public servants accountable. It is suggested that social accountability can contribute to good governance and the delivery of improved services by a state intent on realizing the rights of citizens. Without resolute, consistent public pressure, public and elected officials can become complacent and fail in their mandate to serve citizens and the country. Regulated community, civil society, and media-based monitoring and evaluation of government programs and public service delivery are critical to hold government to account and increase the quality of public services.

We believe that this research was relevant at a time when there seemed to be little space for citizens, community organizations, civil society and the media to influence or engage with public service delivery in South Africa. In 2018 Freedom House, in partnership with Pact,¹ commissioned an Applied Political Economic Analysis (APEA)² across the six provinces in which the project was being implemented. The findings of this analysis suggested that across all municipalities, a high level of capacity and resources were seen as a prerequisite to engaging with local government processes. Instead, engagement with local government has remained the preserve of established elites to influence local government and decision-making.

Freedom House contracted consultants Jaco Roets and Afesis-corplan³ to map and analyze service delivery monitoring tools used by the government across national, provincial and local spheres of government as well as those developed and used by civil society. It considered a variety of tools, both online and offline, recognizing that not all target areas will have high enough internet penetration to make online only a viable option. Their research delved into how the invited spaces (those created by government and civil society forums) compared to the ‘invented’ spaces (those informal spaces such as WhatsApp groups and community gatherings where average citizens come together to address problems or gaps, often in the form of protests). The intention of this study was to learn from the work being done so as to strengthen the service delivery contract between government and citizens.

This synthesis report was produced during the COVID-19 pandemic, although the initial research

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1 Pact is a non-profit international development organization founded in 1971. It works on the ground in nearly 40 countries to improve the lives of those who are challenged by poverty and marginalization.

2 This report has not been made public to protect the anonymity of respondents.

3 Afesis-corplan is a development non-governmental organization that works in the local government sector supporting communities to effectively engage with local government, exercise their rights to access services and social justice and to hold elected representatives to account. Afesis-corplan has over the years evolved as a think tank in research, pioneering and piloting alternative models to service delivery that are people-centred. Afesis-corplan continues to push the barriers for citizen participation in planning processes and in the implementation of development programs as well as influence various policy formulation processes.
was undertaken pre-COVID-19. The pandemic and subsequent lockdown regulations have necessitated citizens to think outside the box to ensure that their basic rights are upheld and that much-needed basic services continue to trickle down into their communities. The pandemic has highlighted two obstacles: i) the weaknesses in online accountability tools and ii) access to government. Relief efforts such as food parcel distribution and permission to operate informal businesses have created fertile ground for corruption and mismanagement of municipal resources to take root and in this instance few of these tools have been used by citizens or deemed useful.

With the exception of Ndifuna Ukwazi,\textsuperscript{4} which has been used to question forced evictions during this period, citizens have for the most part gravitated towards WhatsApp, radio and TV to ventilate their issues and seek clarity on government decisions. The importance of face-to-face organizing cannot be overstated in the society in which we live. While there is a plethora of service delivery tools that have been developed and are in circulation, very few have proved to be user-friendly. Several tools present an intimidating user interface that discourages anyone other than the adequately equipped middle class to attempt to use them. Similarly, few of these tools provide data-free access, which again restricts usage to those who can afford them and not necessarily those who need them the most. Inevitably, these tools have failed to achieve mass take-up by citizens and to provide a visible and institutionally embedded feedback loop that allows for continuous engagement between citizens and elected officials.

For long-term, sustainable change, for holding government to account, you have to be organized … you can’t just throw monitoring tools into a crowd and expect people to run with them.

\textit{Jaco Roets, Afesis-corplan}

It is my hope that this publication will provide better insight into how we go about social accountability in South Africa and the limitations of app technology. We can draw on the lessons learnt here, both as civil society and government, to start a conversation that focuses on co-created and co-facilitated monitoring. Government and civil society need to facilitate co-created spaces of shared commitment and accountability that are demand-driven and seek to build trust between the government and its citizens. This cannot be replaced by purely technical inventions.

\textbf{Mpangi Kwenge}
Project Director
Freedom House Southern Africa

\textsuperscript{4} Ndifuna Ukwazi, (Dare to Know) is an organization of activists and lawyers that use research and strategic litigation to campaign for justice and equality in poor and working class communities.
A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF

SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING TOOLS
USED IN SOUTH AFRICA
BY GOVERNMENT AND
CIVIL SOCIETY

PREPARED FOR FREEDOM HOUSE
2018–2019
Purpose of Section One

This report was commissioned by Freedom House South Africa and presents an overview of service delivery monitoring tools used by government across all three spheres of government as well as those that are developed and used by civil society. The objective of this report is to provide a critical reflection of the various social monitoring tools being used in South Africa to strengthen the service delivery contract between government and citizens.

Freedom House commissioned Afesis-corplan, an East London-based organization, and its partners to compile this report between October 2018 and February 2019.
1. INTRODUCTION

Government departments and agencies across the world are under pressure to provide goods and services effectively and efficiently. The democratic system of government in South Africa allows for active participation and the involvement of citizens in their development. Citizen participation is woven as a core principle throughout the Constitution (1996). Chapter 10 specifically outlines key principles for service delivery by government institutions and asserts, amongst other things, that people’s needs must be responded to and that public administration must be accountable and transparent. Building on these principles, the National Development Plan (NDP) (2012) notes that the State needs to have capacity to formulate and implement policies that serve national interests. Furthermore, the NDP argues that there are three elements that need to work together and to work well to propel South Africa forward; a capable state, strong leadership, and an active citizenry. This implies that government not only needs to provide goods and services efficiently but must do so in an inclusive manner.

Government has improved the lives of many South Africans in significant ways over the years, achieving great strides towards addressing the imbalances of the past. However, persistent challenges remain. It has become clear in the past few years that many South Africans are growing increasingly impatient with the slow pace of service delivery, the growing inequality and scarce employment opportunities due to slow economic growth in the country. Service delivery protests have highlighted major gaps in government planning, weaknesses in leadership and institutional capacity, poor intergovernmental relations, weak performance monitoring and evaluation systems, and a lack of a capacity to respond to citizens’ service delivery concerns timely and effectively. The protests have also highlighted poor coordination at both strategic and operational levels of government.

Rampant corruption across all spheres of government attests to not just poor leadership, but also weak oversight and accountability mechanisms, of which monitoring, and evaluation is part. Government has conceded in a number of its reports that it is performing poorly in monitoring and evaluation, especially in citizen-centric monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, it has conceded that consequence management is poor in the public sector. As a result, the credibility of government is compromised in the eyes of the populace.

In drafting the NDP, a mechanism to facilitate the monitoring of its implementation was established by government. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) was established for the purpose of developing and implementing a nationwide monitoring and evaluation system. This was an attempt to ensure that all of government’s efforts were targeted at achieving its set goals. At the time of the DPME’s establishment, government needed to create a multifaceted monitoring and evaluation system that would, at the highest level, track nationwide implementation of national priorities, while being versatile enough to track service delivery inputs, activities, and processes at low and intermediate levels to guide decision-making across all spheres of government. There was also a need to conduct monitoring – across departments and all spheres – that could predict risks, the kind that could forecast service delivery protests. As creating such a system in the absence of a coordinating center would have been almost impossible, the DPME assumed this central coordinating role.
The DPME is the department within the Presidency that is tasked with the overall responsibility for coordinating government planning, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure that the NDP is implemented. However, it is not the only department concerned with monitoring and evaluation. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has also embarked on a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to assess the performance of public servants and their adherence to the Batho Pele principles. In fact, as far back as 2004 then President Thabo Mbeki mentioned in his State of the Nation Address that, “Government is also in the process of refining our systems of Monitoring and Evaluation to improve performance of our system of governance and the quality of our outputs, providing an early warning system and a mechanism to respond speedily to problems as they arise” (PMG, 2004). This indicates that government has long been looking at ways to strengthen monitoring and evaluation.

The National Treasury does its own monitoring and evaluation. It is responsible for the annual performance plans of various departments, including local government. It has to ensure that plans are aligned with the anticipated revenue of each institution and that public funds are spent responsibly in accordance with approved plans. There are a number of other departments that also had functional monitoring and evaluation systems long before the establishment of the DPME.

The Framework for Citizen-Government Partnerships for Monitoring Frontline Service Delivery, developed by the DPME in 2011, is the first approach that located citizens at the heart of government’s monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in that it emphasized the need to strengthen accountability mechanisms for routine day-to-day interactions between citizens and the state, particularly at the point of service delivery. This included enabling citizens to provide feedback on the quality of service through Citizen-Based Monitoring (CBM). For this reason a great deal of attention is being paid in this section of the report to the DPME and its work.

This report explores the intergovernmental and integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation that the DPME was tasked to facilitate. It interrogates the DPME’s efforts to facilitate a citizen-centric approach to service delivery monitoring. While this report draws on the monitoring and evaluation processes of government, it also looks at efforts by civil society that are aimed at strengthening service delivery. The service delivery monitoring tools and processes cited in this report provide a broad overview of citizen-based service delivery monitoring across the country, highlighting successes and challenges in ways that strengthen service delivery monitoring going forward.

The significance of this report is that it does not only focus on government as the only entity responsible for citizen-based service delivery monitoring but draws on the innovative tools and mechanisms devised by civil society as well. Civil society in South Africa has long embraced service delivery monitoring and evaluation as an activity that can promote efficiency, effective utilization of public funds, improve performance and quality of services and improve accountability. This approach allows for a comprehensive picture across many sectors, and for meaningful recommendations to emerge.

The report’s limitation is that it could not cover all the tools that government and civil society have embarked upon over the years. Through a stratified selection process, it highlights just a few. The manner in which the report is structured allows for, to a degree, parallel comparison of some tools implemented by government with those implemented by civil society. As mentioned above, the report also draws a great deal from the CBM process of the DPME as this was the
first comprehensive government approach to service delivery monitoring which intentionally involved citizens in a structured manner. The diagram below summarizes the DPME’s approach to monitoring and evaluation.

**Diagram One:** Adapted from the DPME Framework for Monitoring (DPME, 2017)

From the diagram above one can see that the DPME’s framework approach cuts across all spheres of government, and conceptualizes programs targeted at monitoring service delivery at national, provincial, local, and community level. This report borrows a great deal from this framework in examining service delivery monitoring in the country.
2. METHODOLOGY

In this first section, this study sets out to conduct an overview of service delivery monitoring tools used by both government and civil society in South Africa. The scope of Section One focuses on the DPME because of its mandate and activities. However, the report does draw on service delivery monitoring in other departments and other spheres of government, as well as civil society. Using a stratified sampling process, a number of CBM tools are sampled and examined in Section One of the report. This particular sampling technique enabled the researchers to organize the tools by sectors, services, and implementing department and to select a sample from each.

The process began with a review of literature to identify broad framework approaches and tools that government has been using over time to monitor service delivery. It also assisted in identifying key people to be interviewed from various departments who provided in-depth information on some of the tools, frameworks and approaches, and also assisted in verifying information obtained from other sources. The interviewees were selected on the basis of their participation in a) the service delivery monitoring framework development processes of government, b) the implementation of government or civil society monitoring tools and c) monitoring and evaluation in government. A set of open-ended questions were developed and posed to the interviewees in telephonic interviews between November 2018 and January 2019. At the same time an intense secondary data analyses process was embarked upon to verify and triangulate information collected during the interviews.

Questions posed to respondents from government departments were:

- What has government’s approach to monitoring and evaluation been and how has it evolved over time?
- How has government responded to the legislative mandate to facilitate participatory monitoring and evaluation and what has its experience of approaching monitoring and evaluation in a participatory manner been like?
- What has your department specifically done to strengthen citizen-based service delivery monitoring?
- What has your role and experience been in your department’s service delivery monitoring efforts?
- What has worked overtime, what has not and why?
- To what extent has the DPME model facilitated an intergovernmental or an integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation? What lessons have you derived from the DPME approach to monitoring and how has that influenced your department’s approach?

How has government responded to the legislative mandate to facilitate participatory monitoring and evaluation?
Questions posed to respondents from civil society were:

- What was the rationale behind the service delivery monitoring tools that your organization embarked upon and what were you seeking to achieve?
- In your view, did your organization meet its intended goals with its service delivery monitoring tool?
- What impact did your service delivery monitoring process have and what changes did you observe that you think were a result of your organization's work?
- To what extent did your organization collaborate with government in implementing any of its service delivery monitoring tools and what was this experience like?
- To what extent has your organization been participating in the DPME's service delivery monitoring processes and what have you learnt from participating in these processes?
- What are your views on government's approach to service delivery monitoring? What works well, what needs to be strengthened, and what could be done differently?

This section of the report draws on the DPME’s frontline service delivery monitoring pilot which has been documented in detail, as well as the multi-stakeholder forum that it has been facilitating and conducting for years. The intention is not to present a detailed review of the theory underpinning service delivery monitoring and evaluation, but rather it acknowledges and draws from a great deal of research that the scholarly community has dedicated to the study of monitoring and evaluation in the public sector.

The literature this section draws upon establishes that monitoring and evaluation is an important activity in policy and program implementation (Armstrong and Bull, 2006; John and Rogers, 1999; Valadez and Bamberger, 1994), that it can assist in decision-making (Hebrew, Wike and Ries, 2009; Talluri and Sarkis, 2002; Clarinval and Biller-Andorno, 2014), and that it is necessary for public reform and transformation and for improving government efficiency (Hope, 2012; RSA, 1997; Schiavo-campo and Sundaram, 2001; Marwa and Zairi, 2009).
3. STRUCTURE OF THIS SECTION

Section One of the report begins with a brief background to institutionalized service delivery monitoring in South Africa, outlining the purpose and methodology followed in conducting the research for this report. A brief overview of the legislative framework guiding service delivery monitoring is then presented followed by a conceptual framing of service delivery monitoring. This is followed by a discussion of the different service delivery tools used by government and by civil society across the country. It presents a snapshot summary of tools used by government at national, provincial, and local level before unpacking the concept of supply- and demand-driven service delivery monitoring. This is followed by a closer look at the CBM pilot of the DPME which laid a foundation for grouping service delivery monitoring tools into two categories: those that government and civil society have used to monitor similar services over the same or relatively close period of time and those that are not as neatly linked. Broad lessons are drawn from the monitoring tools presented and concluding remarks are provided towards the end.
4. A SNAPSHOT OF THE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Constitution of South Africa lays a firm foundation for participatory governance across the three spheres of government. Flowing from it is a regulatory framework which gives greater detail on how the public is to participate in government planning, law-making, and monitoring and evaluation. Section 195(1) of the Constitution articulates the values and principles that must underpin public participation in governance as follows:

195. Basic values and principles governing public administration

Public administration must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution, including the following:

- A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.
- Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.
- Public administration must be development oriented.
- Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably, and without bias.
- People’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policymaking.
- Public administration must be accountable.
- Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible, and accurate information.
- Good human resource management and career development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated.
- Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

The Constitution also establishes a Public Service Commission (PSC) as a constitutional body whose function is to investigate, monitor, and evaluate the organization, administration, and personnel practices of the public service. The PSC is also mandated to evaluate the success or otherwise of government programs and is obligated to promote measures that ensure effective and efficient performance within the public service, as well as promote values and principles of public administration throughout the public service.

Section 196(4) of the Constitution states the following powers and functions given to the PSC:

- to promote the values and principles set out in section 195, throughout the public service;
- to investigate, monitor and evaluate the organization and administration, and the personnel practices, of the public service;
• to propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the public service;
• to give directions aimed at ensuring that personnel procedures relating to recruitment, transfers, promotions, and dismissals comply with the values and principles set out in section 195;
• to report in respect of its activities and the performance of its functions, including any finding it may make and directions and advice it may give, and to provide an evaluation of the extent to which the values and principles set out in section 195 are complied with; and
• either of its own accord or on receipt of any complaint -
  - to investigate and evaluate the application of personnel and public administration practices, and to report to the relevant executive authority and legislature;
  - to investigate grievances of employees in the public service concerning official acts or omissions, and recommend appropriate remedies (Chapter 10: Public Administration 101);
  - to monitor and investigate adherence to applicable procedures in the public service; and
  - to advise national and provincial organs of state regarding personnel practices in the public service, including those relating to the recruitment, appointment, transfer, discharge, and other aspects of the careers of employees in the public service;
• to exercise or perform the additional powers or functions prescribed by an Act of Parliament.

There are other pieces of legislation that regulate government planning, monitoring, and evaluation in various ways, and this includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Public Finance Management Act No. 1 of 1999; Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003; Public Service Amendment Act 30 of 2007;
- White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper), 24 November 1995;
- Public Service Regulations, 2001;
- Promotion of Access to Information Act (“PAIA”), No 2 of 2000;
- The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, Act No 3 of 2000 (“PAJA”)
- Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998;
- Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000;
- Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations, 2001;
- Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations of 2009;

Despite a well-established regulatory and policy framework for citizen participation, it is commonly acknowledged that effective citizen engagement at the local level is the exception, not the rule (Pieterse, 2013; CoGTA, 2016). Government has over the years battled to meaningfully involve the public in its processes, beyond compliance and perfunctory fulfilment. Reflecting on the facilitation of meaningful citizen engagement in service delivery, the DPME (2013) argued that government tended to monitor itself rather than creating meaningful moments for citizens to give feedback on their service delivery experience. At the time, the DPME identified a lack of consistent and systematic data about citizens’ service delivery experience.
What the regulatory framework does is to assign specific responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation to different entities and departments within government. For example, National Treasury derives its powers from the Constitution, Public Finance Management Act and a host of regulations and circulars it has developed over the years; the Presidency and Offices of the Premiers (OTPs) derive their mandate from the executive powers vested upon them by the Constitution; various government departments derive their mandate from agreed upon priorities which are drawn from an overarching national vision like the NDP.

**Diagram Two:** Legal and institutional framework for monitoring and evaluation (Presidency, 2011)
The Cabinet\(^1\) sets priorities for the short, medium and long-term priorities for the government and these are captured in a strategic framework document such as the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF). The DPME is the entity to which government entrusts the responsibility to monitor its performance towards the implementation of its strategic goals and set targets.

National Treasury is tasked with overseeing the development of departmental strategic, annual and quarterly performance plans, although in recent years it has shared this function with the DPME. Together with the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), National Treasury also regulates local government planning and performance monitoring. The illustration below summarizes the legal and institutional framework for monitoring and evaluation, highlighting the roles of different entities as articulated in the Policy Framework on Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME, 2013).

Clearly, there are a number of departments that are entrusted with oversight in government; some with constitutional authority, others with legal authority derived from various acts, regulations, proclamations, policy documents, etc.; and others who have positional authority as a result of their positioning and role within government. This report is cognizant of the oversight responsibilities of these different departments and the mandate upon which they derive such authority.

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\(^1\) A committee comprising the President, Deputy President, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and other senior government officials who are responsible for executive leadership in government, sometimes called the executive branch of government.
5. AN OVERVIEW OF SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING TOOLS

As mentioned above, service delivery monitoring happens across departments, in all the three spheres of government and through different institutions. Drawing from the conceptual framework of the DPME presented in Diagram One this report will consider service delivery monitoring in the various spheres and different levels of government.

5.1 SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING AT NATIONAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Service delivery monitoring at the level of national government seeks to assess the overall performance of government at the level of the population. It assesses the outcomes and impact of government policy and programs as well as the performance of State-Owned Entities (SOEs). It also assesses the satisfaction levels of the nation with government services, management practices and the general culture, skills, and capacity of the public service. There are various entities and departments that facilitate this kind of assessment. A few are noted below.

a. The Office of the President

The President as head of government and thus head of the executive branch has the ultimate responsibility for policy implementation in government. The Constitution empowers the President to structure government and to establish institutions necessary to deliver on the mandate s/he has. As mentioned above, the DPME was established and located in the Office of the President to coordinate an integrated government-wide planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting process. Beyond the DPME processes, the President has created other institutional mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, including:

- Cabinet meetings where high-ranking state officials meet to plan and assess their progress;
- Presidential Coordinating Council which aims to strengthen intergovernmental relations and cooperation between the three spheres of government;
- Inter-ministerial committees, as the name suggests, are small task teams the President sets up for a specific purpose and usually on matters that require regular input from various departments. These committees usually have clear terms of reference and a set timeframe;
- A presidential hotline is a whistleblower service that allows members of the public to raise issues pertaining to service delivery and governance in general with the President. This is a telephone service that is constantly in operation to facilitate information sharing and whistleblowing;
- Rapid response type operations that the President establishes to respond to certain issues as they see fit. For example, President Jacob Zuma drove an Integrated Service Delivery Program which was a platform to facilitate a coordinated approach to service delivery by government departments at a community (ward) level;
• The President from time to time hosts Imbizos. These are public engagements in which s/he goes out to meet members of the public where they are, affording them an opportunity to engage the President directly and raise their daily struggles.

b. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)

The role of the DPME, which is located in the Presidency, has already been captured in detail in this report. The DPME facilitates a coordinated government approach to service delivery monitoring. While the DPME coordinates a number of monitoring programs at different levels, its approach to service delivery monitoring at local level has been unique in that it seeks to draw lessons from citizens’ experiences at the coalface of service delivery monitoring. The table below presents some of the monitoring and evaluation programs implemented by the DPME over time in line with the goals of national government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core programs</th>
<th>Special projects to drive implementation</th>
<th>Improving management practices</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| • Program of action for outcome-based monitoring and evaluation frontline service delivery  
  • Citizen-based monitoring                                                   | • Siyahlola presidential monitoring program, Operation Phakisa  
  • Revitalization of distressed mining communities  
  • Special project                                                                 |
| • Management practices assessment tool  
  • Local government management improvement model  
  • Monitoring of the 30-day payment to service providers  
  • Heads of department monitoring |

**TABLE ONE:** Summary of areas of focus of Citizen Based Monitoring (DPME, 2017)

c. National Treasury

National Treasury is the custodian of the Public Finance Management Act as well as the Municipal Finance Management Act and in this role oversees how state institutions and departments spend public funds. Treasury does this by first providing oversight on the planning processes by perusing the Annual Performance Plans (APPs) of government departments, including the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plans (SDBIPs) of local municipalities. It then receives regular reports (in-year reports) from all these institutions (including SOEs) on the implementation of their plans and finance spending. In this way, Treasury is able to assess whether departments are spending public resources on what they are meant to and in line with their plans.

Furthermore, National Treasury issues grants to various government departments for specific projects and requires its grantees to submit regular reports reflecting how the grant funds are utilized. Finally, Treasury provides financial guarantees to SOEs and is mandated to do this in accordance with law and in ways that limit the country’s risk exposure. For that reason, Treasury requires SOEs to report regularly on their finances and risk mitigation processes.
d. The Auditor General (AG)

The AG derives its powers from Chapter Nine of the Constitution, the Auditor General Act, the Public Finance Management Act as well as the Municipal Finance Management Act. This legislative framework mandates the AG to strengthen government accountability by auditing and reporting on the operational activities of government departments (including municipalities and other state-owned institutions). The AG has a focused mandate in that it is tasked to look at the management of public resources as well as compliance with National Treasury regulations that are aimed at strengthening financial systems and management practices within government. The report of the AG is made public, thereby affording citizens an opportunity to see the manner in which government handles public funds.

In its efforts to strengthen government accountability, compliance, and the efficient use of public resources, the AG coined a phrase, ‘clean audits’, as a standard to be attained by each public institution. This means that the audited financial statements must be free from material misstatements (there must be no financially unqualified audit opinion) and that there must be no material findings on reporting on performance objectives or non-compliance with legislation. In 2009, then Minister of Local Government launched a nationwide challenge to local government to strive to attain clean audits. This was called Operation Clean Audit. This particular operation was useful in that it highlighted the limitations of the audit process in reflecting on the service delivery experiences of local citizens. Municipalities that did not receive clean audits or improved audit outcomes happened to be the sites of service delivery protests where citizens were disgruntled about the pace, quality, and manner in which services were delivered. This highlights that the audit process is an effective indicator of good governance, but has its limitations.

e. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA)

The Constitution is clear about the principles that must underpin the public service in South Africa and the Public Service Act determines the powers and functions of the DPSA. The DPSA is tasked with ensuring that the machinery of government works well. The Batho Pele principles refer to the values, attitude, culture, and standards expected of public servants, and they are the standards to which the public holds public servants to account. The monitoring and evaluation role of the DPSA seeks to ensure that the public service adheres to the Batho Pele principles. The diagram below presents a summarized version of the framework for monitoring and evaluation of the DPSA. It is important to note that in DPSA’s processes, the public lies in the periphery of its monitoring processes (and not at the center). In essence, the public service assesses its own performance through score cards, performance targets, staff performance assessments, etc. These processes rarely ever involve members of the public.
f. Other departments

There are other departments that assess their own performance in line with their strategic goals and performance targets. These departments develop their own internal performance assessment systems, for example, the AG has a score card, the Department of Human Settlements has a performance dashboard. Furthermore, the introduction of performance plans that are concluded between the President and Cabinet Ministers setting clear performance targets and indicators has strengthened accountability of Cabinet members. In this way, the public is able, through Parliament and the Office of the President, to hold Cabinet Ministers to account to the goals and targets they set for the departments they lead.

g. The legislatures

The national and provincial legislatures play an important oversight role over the executive arm of government. The Constitution empowers the legislature to not only develop laws but also to play an oversight role over the executive. The legislature then establishes mechanisms through which it facilitates this oversight responsibility, often through committees which interrogate the executive and various departments accordingly. The past few years have highlighted in great detail the oversight role of Parliament and the posture of Members of Parliament in relation to the public (their public duty) versus their political party allegiance through a number of Constitutional
Court judgments. These judgments not only apply to the national legislature, but also to the provincial legislature as well as local councils.

The oversight role of legislatures has therefore been clarified by these judgments in ways that make it easy for members of the public to use this channel to strengthen good governance. Parliament has also set up a petitions committee to oversee the processing of petitions received from members of the public, yet another mechanism to allow for whistleblowing and to draw Parliament’s attention to incidents of poor governance.

5.2 SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING AT PROVINCIAL LEVEL

Provincial administrations cut their patterns from the national government in structure and intent. While national government ministries are responsible for establishing policy, provincial government is meant to translate this policy in ways that are responsive to the local context. As such, national government implements service delivery through provincial departments that are closer to the sites of service delivery, are aware of the local context, and are in a better position to translate policy guidelines in responsive ways. Provinces are responsible for social services such as education, health, social development, economic development, sports and recreation, roads, and human settlements.

Service delivery monitoring at provincial level also seeks to assess the overall performance of provincial departments in delivering services in accordance with their strategic goals. It assesses the outcomes and impact of government policy and programs at provincial level as well as the performance of SOEs. Many departments use the same processes and frameworks developed by their national counterparts to assess their own performance. The roles played by key entities within provinces to facilitate monitoring and evaluation are noted below.

a. The Office of the Premiers (OTPs)

Like the President who is the head of government at national level, Premiers are the heads of government at provincial level. They derive their powers from the same legislation as the President and are empowered to establish structures necessary to meet the development goals of the province in consultation with national government. Unlike the Office of the Presidency, where the DPME coordinates monitoring and evaluation, the DPME has no presence in provinces and works through the Offices of the Premier. The following are some of the structures that various provinces have in place to facilitate service delivery monitoring:

- The Premier’s Coordinating Forum is modeled along the same lines, powers, and functions as the Presidential Coordinating Council. It is a platform through which the Premier, Members of the Provincial Executive (MECs) and municipal mayors meet. The forum is aimed at strengthening intergovernmental relations and cooperation between provincial departments and local municipalities (including metropolitan and district municipalities).

2 Including in United Democratic Movement v the Speaker of the National Assembly and others (22 June 2017) and Economic Freedom Fighters and others v the Speaker of the National Assembly (26 December 2017).
• Interdepartmental task teams that the Premier sets up for a specific purpose with clear terms of reference and definite timeframes.

• A hotline which is a whistleblower service that allows members of the public to raise issues pertaining to service delivery and governance in general with the Premier. This is a telephone service that is constantly ready to facilitate a response to issues raised.

• As part of their public engagements, the Premier (and MECs) also attend public engagements in which they engage citizens directly, listening to their service delivery concerns.

• Various provinces also implement versions of the Integrated Service Delivery program of the Presidency, for the same purposes as that at national level. The model (known as Operation Sukuma Sakhe in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), and Operation Masiphathisane in the Eastern Cape) was hailed as a great success in KZN but ran into serious problems in the Eastern Cape and in other areas in 2018, resulting in the Presidency requesting provinces to propose alternatives (DPME, 2017).

No province appears to have a clearly defined and articulated framework for service delivery monitoring and evaluation that is interdepartmental and involves citizens. This is, however, not surprising as national government did not have one until the establishment of the DPME a few years back. The DPME framework, however, is intended to guide monitoring and evaluation across all of government, including provinces and local municipalities. The processes that the DPME uses to assess service delivery monitoring at national level are the same that it uses for service delivery monitoring at provincial level (refer to Table One).

b. The Provincial Treasury and the AG

Provincial departments form part of a decentralized policy and program implementation process of government. The Provincial Treasury and provincial office of the Auditor-General perform the same oversight functions as their counterparts at national level; the difference is that their scope is limited to provincial departments and local municipalities.

c. The provincial legislature

As mentioned above, the Constitution empowers the provincial legislature to conduct oversight over the executive. The legislature establishes mechanisms, mostly in a fashion similar to that of Parliament, to facilitate this oversight responsibility, often through committees which interrogate the work of various departments. The Constitutional Court judgments on the oversight role (and posture) of Members of Parliament applies to members of the provincial legislature and clarifies what role these members must play in strengthening executive accountability. Provincial legislatures also have petitions committees through which they process formal concerns of ordinary citizens. Interviews with officials who work on petitions in a few legislatures indicate that there is an immense backlog of petitions that have not been processed, a poor response from departments on specific issues raised in petitions, and a lack of political will in the legislature to hold MECs and departments to account for non-responsiveness to petitions. In a system where formal mechanisms to facilitate rapid response fail, citizens explore alternatives and in many cases protest action has become the default mechanism available to citizens to engage government.
5.3 SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Local government differs from national and provincial government in many ways. Its function, mandate, and powers differ. It is also different in the sense that it is the space in which all of government converges and where citizens experience the delivery of government services, irrespective of which sphere is responsible for that service. Hospitals, clinics, roads, schools, mines, big dams, etc, are located in municipalities. This requires great coordination and cooperation between local government and government departments at national and provincial level. Local government also has a rigorous and complex regulatory framework that guides its planning, implementation, and reporting processes. This was necessary because the practice of wall-to-wall municipalities was relatively new to South Africa and regulations have been developed in a manner in which national government in particular has sought to plug gaps identified in this sphere over the years.

The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is the key strategic planning document in local government and is meant to be developed in consultation with provincial government departments. The IDP articulates the short to medium term strategic goals of a municipality and states the kinds of projects (capital and otherwise) that the municipality plans to embark on within a five-year period. From this, a Service Delivery Implementation Plan (SBIP) is developed which is a service delivery contract between the municipality (both the administration and politicians) and the community it serves. As mentioned above, the process through which the IDP is developed and the budgeting processes of a municipality has regulated demands that local government involves citizens in planning and monitoring. The increase in service delivery protests, however, signal on the whole public dissatisfaction with the quality of engagement through these processes (CoGTA, 2018). The legislative framework also requires local government to facilitate inclusive service delivery monitoring processes (inclusive performance management). However research has shown time and again that local government fails to do this.

The separation of powers is not as clear in local government as it is in the other spheres in that the municipal council is vested with both legislative and executive functions. Only recently, the National Treasury, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and CoGTA have driven a process of establishing oversight mechanisms in municipal councils called the Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPACs). Many argue that the absence of members of the public in the composition of MPACs is a concern (MPACs can co-opt members of the public onto the committee but these members have no voting powers and only serve on an advisory basis). One could think of it as soccer players who suddenly decide in the middle of a game to appoint referees hoping that the referees would be objective enough to regulate the game fairly, without fear or prejudice, only to find out that the referees are biased and show fear and favoritism.

The ward committee is the local structure at a municipal level closest to the ground and it is intended to link communities with the municipality. There have been many past studies that have documented the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges of ward committees, so much so
that the governing party proposed many reforms of the structure over the years in an effort to strengthen citizen engagements with local government (Qwabe and Mdaka, 2011; Madumo, 2011; Ngamlana, 2016; Sekgala, 2016; Mbhele, 2017). Apart from ward committees, various government departments have established local structures to strengthen citizen participation in the delivery of their own services. For example, the police service introduced police forums, the Department of Health (DoH) has clinic committees, the Department of Education (DoE) has school governing bodies, etc. These are the points of contact between the various government departments and local communities where services are rendered.

Furthermore, there are Community Development Workers (CDWs) located at local level to facilitate information sharing between various government departments and local communities. Over the years there has been a great deal of contestation between ward councilors and CDWs as their roles overlap in places. Confusion over the seniority of CDWs resulted from the fact that their stipend is paid by the provincial CoGTA thus creating levels of seniority within the ranks of government with permanence in employment, whilst ward councilors are on the municipality's payroll and are in office for only a five-year period pending elections. The establishment of war rooms (e.g., Operation Sukuma Sakhe/Masiphathisane) did somewhat ease tension between the two in that it created a quasi-permanent secretariat role for CDWs and a chairperson role for ward councilors. This clarity of roles and the establishment of seniority of ward councilors as community leaders did, in some way, strengthen working relationships between ward councilors and CDWs. However, the war room model ran into numerous problems and almost failed at the start in a number of provinces (Respondents 7, 11 and 12), and it remains to be seen what role CDWs will play at local level in the absence of the war rooms.

CoGTA is the main department that provides oversight at local government level by monitoring compliance with legislation as well as local government’s implementation of the broad policies of government. As mentioned above, National and Provincial Treasury provide oversight over financial planning and expenditure in local government through in-year reports. The Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) also conducts municipal capacity assessments through which decisions on boundary determination are based. For a long time CoGTA had relied on the MDBs Capacity Assessment reports in many of its decisions to strengthen fiscal viability of municipalities. Local government is also audited by the AG for the same reasons as the other spheres of government are. Section 41 of the Municipal Systems Act mandates the Minister of CoGTA to produce and publish a report on the performance of local government in relation to the five objects of local government as articulated in Chapter 7 Section 152 of the Constitution. However, since its inception, CoGTA has never produced or published this report. As a result, the AG’s report on findings has emerged as a commanding voice on the state of local government.

Looking at monitoring and evaluation in government from national to local government, the intention to create mechanisms for oversight is clear. The mechanisms noted above, however, highlight that the government operates in silos, with each department doing its own monitoring at times and in ways that overlap with the monitoring processes of others. It is not surprising that the Presidency saw a need to create a department that would coordinate government’s monitoring efforts, however, this seems to work for national and provincial government only. Local government planning differs a great deal from that of the national and provincial spheres.

National and Provincial Treasury provide oversight over financial planning and expenditure in local government through in-year reports.
Where national and provincial government uses the MTSF as a planning and monitoring tool, local government uses the IDP and the SDBIP. This limits the DPME’s ability to assess services delivered by local government. The table below summarizes the service delivery approach of government.

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<th>GOV SPHERE</th>
<th>OFFICE OR DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING TOOLS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL GOVERNMENT</td>
<td>OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT</td>
<td>• Cabinet meetings</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Constitutional and Positional Authority</td>
<td>• Inter-Ministerial Committees</td>
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<td>• Presidential Coordinating Council</td>
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<td>• Integrated Rapid Response Operations for service delivery</td>
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<td>• Public <em>Imbizos</em> and community outreaches</td>
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<td>DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, MONITORING &amp; EVALUATION</td>
<td>• Programme of Action for Outcome Based M&amp;E</td>
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<td>Legal Authority</td>
<td>• Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring</td>
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<td>• Citizen-Based Monitoring</td>
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<td>• Siyahlola Presidential Monitoring Programme</td>
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<td>• Operation Phakisa</td>
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<td>• Revitalization of Distressed Mining Communities’ Special Projects Management Practices Assessment Tool</td>
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<td>• Local Government Management Model</td>
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<td>• Heads of Department Monitoring</td>
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<td>NATIONAL TREASURY</td>
<td>Constitutional and Legal Authority</td>
<td>• Oversight over the Production of Annual Performance Plans</td>
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<td>• Ensuring that performance targets are developed</td>
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<td>• Oversight over the annual reports</td>
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<td>• Oversight over in-year reports</td>
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<td>THE AUDITOR-GENERAL</td>
<td>Constitutional Authority</td>
<td>• Financial auditing, compliance with legislation and governance</td>
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<td>• Assesses risk mitigation and asset registry</td>
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<td>• Encourages good governance and sound financial systems and controls</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE &amp; ADMINISTRATION</td>
<td>Legal Authority</td>
<td>• Monitors public sector adherence to the Batho Pele principles</td>
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<td>THE NATIONAL LEGISLATURE</td>
<td>Constitutional Authority</td>
<td>• Oversight over the executive arm of government</td>
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<td>• Oversight over various departments and SOEs</td>
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<td>• Ensures adheres with court rulings</td>
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<td>GOV. SPHERE</td>
<td>OFFICE OR DEPARTMENT</td>
<td>SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING TOOLS</td>
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</table>
| PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT | THE OFFICE OF THE PREMIER Constitutional and Positional Authority | • The Premier’s Coordinating Forum  
• The Provincial Executive meeting Inter-departmental task teams  
• A hotline  
• Public Imbizos and community outreaches  
• Integrated Service Delivery Coordination |
| PROVINCIAL TREASURY Legal Authority | • Provides oversight over provincial department’s implementation of APPs  
• Ensures that performance targets are developed  
• Ensures that in-year reports and annual reports are produced and published |
| PROVINCEAL GOVERNMENT | THE AUDITOR GENERAL Constitutional Authority | • Financial auditing, compliance with legislation and governance  
• Assesses risk mitigation and asset registry  
• Encourages good governance and sound financial systems and controls |
| THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE Constitutional Authority | • Provides oversight over the executive arm of government  
• Provides oversight over various provincial departments |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT | THE MUNICIPAL EXECUTIVE Legal Authority | • Provides oversight over the executive  
• Ensures adherence with legislation  
• Ensures citizen engagement  
• Ensures an inclusive process of service delivery planning and budgeting |
| NATIONAL TREASURY, THE DEPARTMENT OF COOPERATIVE GOVERNANCE & TRADITIONAL AFFAIRS & THE AUDITOR GENERAL Legal Authority | • Ensures adherence with legislation  
• Ensures IDPs and SDBIPs are developed  
• Ensures that in-year reports are submitted  
• Ensures the annual report is produced and published in accordance with legislation  
• Audits the financial affairs of the municipality |
| WARD COMMITTEES & WAR ROOMS Legal Authority | • Monitors the implementation of projects and government programs at ward level  
• Monitors adherence of local government to its plans  
• Monitors the general performance of local and other government departments at ward level |

**TABLE TWO:** Summary of service delivery monitoring tools used by various government departments at national, provincial, and local levels
6. UNPACKING THE NOTION OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND-DRIVEN MONITORING

The concepts of supply and demand are borrowed from economics literature. Supply refers to how many products, goods, or services a market can offer while demand refers to how much the consumers (people) are willing to buy or how much they desire. In the concept of monitoring and evaluation tools for service delivery monitoring, supply includes all those tools that government supplies, either to monitor its activities and programs by itself or in partnership with communities. Demand refers to all those tools that citizens develop and implement themselves, sometimes with the support of and in partnership with government. In these citizens-initiated spaces, citizens hold the agenda and invite government to participate on their terms.

Neither of these two spaces (supply-driven or demand-driven spaces for monitoring) are co-created spaces. In the supply-driven monitoring spaces government holds the agenda, guides the process, and invites the public, as and when it pleases, to participate in the government-led process. This does not suggest that there is anything wrong with government creating mechanisms to ensure that it implements services in accordance with set standards, in ways that are responsive to citizens’ needs, and that it learns and improves its policies and programs. A healthy learning environment requires supply-driven and demand-driven monitoring and evaluation.

A challenge with most demand-driven service delivery monitoring and evaluation tools in South Africa is that they emerge at a point of crisis when citizens begin to notice weaknesses or challenges with a service being delivered. These are not intentional, systematic, or built into the service delivery process in ways that support learning. Generally, it is not in the culture of the South African government to hand over power and control to citizens in creative and meaningful ways. Citizens have therefore had to demand spaces to be seen and heard, often through confrontational means. Active citizen agency demands that citizens are not just passive consumers of services but active participants. The creation of citizen-driven spaces for service delivery monitoring is indicative of active citizen agency and should be welcomed and supported by government.

There is a third space of monitoring and evaluation, the co-created space, where both government and citizens share the power to co-create a space and tool for service delivery monitoring. The purpose and agenda for monitoring is shared equally and both partners assume responsibility and ownership of the monitoring process. In a co-created space, service delivery monitoring takes place whether one party is there or not, and both partners (government and citizens) share information freely about the monitoring process. There are very few examples, if any, of this kind of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa, partly because the trust levels between government and citizens are very low and government has not invested in building trust and ownership of the services that government renders.

Generally, it is not in the culture of the South African government to hand over power and control to citizens in creative and meaningful ways.
The CBM tool of the DPME is meant to facilitate this co-created space for service delivery monitoring where government intentionally involves citizens in service delivery monitoring. Many have argued that the war room approach was meant to facilitate this kind of partnership and co-creation, but the war room is chaired by the ward councilors who approve the municipal budget and its plans and who is in government’s employ. Its secretary is a CDW who is also employed by government, and the community has no power to enforce any of the decisions made in a war room nor can it hold any government department to account for failure to meet its promises. A truly co-created service delivery space is one in which the citizens have equal power to hold government to account for the decisions made and assume responsibility for some of the activities that must be done without waiting for government; each party has a clear role, and responsibility and power to make things happen. The diagram below presents a summarized version of supply, demand and co-created service delivery monitoring.

**DIAGRAM FOUR:** Summary of the supply and demand-driven monitoring model (Afesis-corplan)

In the model presented in Diagram 4, the co-created service delivery monitoring space is at the lowest level, closest to the people and at the coalface of service delivery. This is intentional in that government ought to move closer to the people and to meet them where they are. It is depicted in a manner that is not fixed in any particular way, allowing for flexibility and for communities to craft monitoring tools in ways that make the most sense to them, taking cognizance of their skills and capacity levels, service delivery issues, and context, etc. This is the highest form of service delivery monitoring, and in some way the CBM model of the DPME strives towards it.
6.1 LESSONS FROM THE CITIZEN-BASED MONITORING MODEL

The CBM model of the DPME is, ‘an approach to monitoring government performance that focuses on the experiences of ordinary citizens in order to strengthen public accountability and drive service delivery improvement’ (DPME, 2013, p. 7). CBM attempts to place citizens at the center of monitoring processes by allowing them to participate in deciding what gets monitored, how the monitoring happens, and what recourse mechanisms are put in place. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of public participation in ongoing monitoring of service delivery thereby facilitating inclusive and responsive service delivery.

For years, some government departments have been conducting monitoring and evaluation in efforts to strengthen service delivery; however, this was not a government-wide culture to learning as the DPME (2014) study shows. There was little appreciation within government of the importance of monitoring and evaluation as a core part of learning and improvement. The study also found that almost 40% of government departments were not planning or conducting any evaluation for any of their major programs and that evaluation was only applied sporadically. The study concluded that there was a widely held view in government that monitoring was an activity carried out by those who wanted to monitor others and was not necessarily carried out for the purposes of learning and enhancing service delivery.

From about 2011, the DPME initiated a number of interdepartmental monitoring and evaluation processes with the aim of fostering a culture of learning in government, but also to strengthen the coordination of responses to service delivery challenges that were emanating from communities. Some of these monitoring processes are noted above. The departments crafted their own core monitoring initiatives and special projects that were aimed at driving implementation of government programs and initiated processes that were aimed at strengthening management practices.

The DPME during this period sought to position monitoring and evaluation of frontline service delivery as an integral part of service delivery in order to improve the experience of citizens at the coalface of government engagement. CBM was understood as a distinct component of service delivery; however, it was not always clear how it could be operationalized given the distribution of powers and functions between national, provincial, and local government. It is for this reason that the multi-departmental pilot process was conceptualized and initiated.

The DPME pilot phase had two parts to it with the first kicking off in about October 2013 in Phuthaditjhaba in Free State and Tugela in KwaZulu-Natal. It focused on the South African Police Service (SAPS), SASSA, the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the DoH. This is because in its approach the DPME focused on those departments that already had formal and informal structures at community level through which they were engaging on service delivery, some actively, others less so. For example, the SAPS is mandated by law to establish Community Policing Forums (CPFs), the DoE is mandated to establish School Governing Bodies (SGBs) and
the DoH’s community health centers must have clinic committees. SASSA established pension committees throughout the country even though these are not mandated by law (DPME, 2017).

According to a few respondents, the first phase of the pilot was characterized by numerous challenges and it was a steep learning curve for the DPME. Meaningful lessons were derived which informed the design of the second phase. The second phase was implemented at the end of 2014 in a few more sites, including Temba in Gauteng, Tubatse in Limpopo, and Jouberton in the North West province. The second phase comprised three main activities:

- **SECURING BUY-IN TO CBM:** This was about securing buy-in of citizens and community groups, service site staff, as well as regional and provincial departments;

- **DATA COLLECTION:** This was to ensure that data collected by citizens in surveys and interviews was accurate, reliable, and representative;

- **FACILITATE ONGOING DIALOGUE ON COMMITMENTS:** The pilot sought to be catalytic in ensuring that ongoing dialogue continued between citizens and public servants over the services being monitored and that the implementation of commitments agreed upon was done by both citizens and public servants.

In reflecting on the lessons learnt during the pilot, the views of respondents can be summarized into the following categories; buy-in, data-collection, and process inputs. For the DPME to access the service sites where it eventually implemented the pilots it had to go through national departments and once buy-in was secured at this level, it approached OTPs, and then provincial departments who also assisted in identifying service sites for monitoring. One respondent noted that pilot sites were chosen based on different considerations at the discretion of provincial stakeholders – ‘in one province, for instance, the site was selected because it had experienced service delivery protests that disrupted schooling and was therefore seen as a high priority for improving service delivery and the relationship between government and citizens within the District’ (Respondent 8).

There is very little evidence that the pilot service sites were selected in line with national priorities, even those of the DPME; there is nothing to suggest that the pilots were aimed at complementing monitoring efforts such as the Siyahlola Presidential Monitoring program, Operation Phakisa, the presidential hotline, or any other monitoring systems that the DPME had established by that stage.

In its reflections, the DPME (2015) considers the challenges it experienced in attempting to secure buy- in to the CBM model and notes that OTPs and provincial departments were where the emphasis should be placed. This is because the provincial level is where resources would need to be availed to implement commitments agreed upon at service site level and where efforts for ongoing monitoring would be supported. Those who advocate for a bottom- up approach to development would perhaps argue that had the DPME focused on securing buy-in of communities to CBM as an approach to strengthening service delivery, it may have been more sustainable.

... had the DPME focused on securing buy-in of communities as an approach to strengthening service delivery, it may have been more sustainable.
Respondents note that conducting surveys at community level as part of the CBM pilot was not difficult and data collectors were trained by the DPME and its partners for data collection. They argue that communities were forthcoming with information and responded in detail to questions posed. The DPME (2015) in its reflection, however, notes that there are core basic skills that one would need to be able to implement the CBM model. These are:

- The ability to communicate and work effectively in a multi-cultural South African context;
- Experience in action learning facilitation methods;
- Surveyor training;
- Survey design, implementation, and analysis;
- Project management;
- Logistics and data capturing; and
- Excellent group facilitation skills.

This suggests that the CBM model is designed to be implemented with the support of technical personnel. This would make sense as the DPME had a team of highly skilled technical people, with the support of the Seriti institute, implementing the CBM model. It is unlikely that there are such skilled people in the community who have the time to conduct CBM, especially if the community is not supported by intermediary organizations or government officials. It could therefore be assumed that the CBM tool may not have been designed to empower communities to implement it on their own. It is also debatable if various departments at district and provincial levels have the requisite skills to facilitate CBM.

A few respondents noted that the average time staff members were required to be involved in the CBM pilot was between three to four days. They were expected to participate in a number of meetings, including a Ndive Ndikuve week. This was problematic according to respondents who were already operating in sites where the demand for their services was beyond what they could spare. They did not believe they had the luxury of taking time off to participate in monitoring exercises that were driven by a national department. This is significant in that it highlights the lack of ownership of the monitoring process by the staff in the local service centers who are meant to learn and improve the ways in which services are rendered at that level. It also suggests that the monitoring process was deemed cumbersome and an inconvenience and not an integral part of partnership-building between government and citizens.
6.2 SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CBM MODEL

The DPME in its reflection report notes a number of successes during the pilot phase. However, a visit to and conversations with key respondents in these sites at the end of 2018 indicated that while there may have been quite a few interventions initiated as part of the CBM pilot, those were not sustained. From the information collected it appears that the following elements were critical for the implementation of the CBM model and would also be crucial in sustaining it:

- Technical skills to conduct monitoring;
- Resources to implement commitments;
- People time (staff at service centers and community members);
- Links between the local issues raised and provincial and national planning.

The CBM tool is designed to be facilitated by government officials to monitor its service delivery. To this end, the DPME aimed to build the skills of public servants tasked with monitoring and evaluation to use the tool. It was hoped that as various departments implemented the tool, the DPME would find meaningful ways for the information emanating from local service sites to influence government planning at the highest decision-making levels. The tool does not transfer power from public servants to citizens in ways that facilitate co-creation, nor does it empower communities to embark on service delivery monitoring as a core responsibility and as an expression of their active agency; it is not designed to do this. One respondent noted that for as long as citizens participate as invited guests in service delivery monitoring, they remain limited in influencing development planning. He noted that in most service delivery protests that his department has had to respond to, citizens lamented on a lack of meaningful opportunities to engage government, on their terms, not as invited guests in government-driven processes. This is one aspect that the CBM fails to take into account.

It is worth noting that the DPME facilitated a multi-stakeholder platform for a number of years in which it invited civil society (and other entities involved in service delivery monitoring) to participate in and share lessons that strengthen service delivery monitoring across the country. At its inception, the agenda of the multi-stakeholder forum meeting was focused on learning and knowledge-sharing. However, in recent years the conversations have shifted to a focus on the development of a draft call for the DPME to be a ministry in its own right as opposed to a Department within the Presidency (Respondents 6 and 8). One of the civil society respondents noted that, ‘the multi-stakeholder forum these days almost feels like a political platform in which those in the room are canvassed to support the ministry positioning idea, the agenda has shifted to shared learning and strengthening coordinated efforts towards service delivery monitoring’.
7. CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATED MONITORING TOOLS

For years, civil society in South Africa has actively designed tools aimed at strengthening service delivery and participatory governance. While government was implementing the CBM pilot, civil society organizations continued to implement other models, in some cases monitoring similar services. For example, the Black Sash and its partners were implementing a Community Monitoring Advocacy Program (CMAP) in various parts of the country to monitor the social grants payment service. This was the same service that the CBM pilot was monitoring at about the same time, albeit in different parts of the country. In this section we will attempt to group the civil society-initiated monitoring tools into two categories; one category will be tools that were aimed at monitoring similar services as those monitored by the DPME through the CBM pilot, and the other category will look at other civil society monitoring tools more broadly.

As mentioned before, the CBM pilot of the DPME focused on monitoring the following services: police services with SAPS, social grants payments with SASSA and DSD, and stock availability and quality of services at clinics with DoH. The table below presents some civil society tools that were implemented in various parts of the country parallel to the DPME’s CBM pilots, all focusing on similar services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOVERNMENT INITIATED CBM PILOTS</th>
<th>CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING MODELS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring the payout of social grants</td>
<td>CMAP of Black Sash, the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT), and other community-based partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitoring policing services in Mitchells Plain</td>
<td>Monitoring policing services in Khayelitsha by the Social Justice Coalition and Ndifuna Ukwazi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring the quality of health services at community level, including availability of drugs</td>
<td>The Stop Stock-outs Programme of Action of the Treatment Action Campaign, Section 27, and others; Community journalism of the Eastern Cape Communication Forum and GroundUp</td>
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**TABLE THREE:** Summary of services targeted for monitoring by government and civil society

### a. Monitoring the social grant payment services

The implementation of the CBM tool by the DPME has been discussed in detail in Section 6 above. In this section, the focus shall be on the implementation of the civil society tool that was monitoring the same service. The Black Sash, the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT) and various other community partners embarked on a process of monitoring the quality of services rendered, first by SASSA and later by other departments, in rural parts of South Africa. To achieve this, they developed a mobile phone application with a questionnaire to respond to a set of questions assessing the quality of the service they have received or observed. The information was collected at a central point where it was collated, verified, and analyzed.
Black Sash through its regional offices and SCAT with its community advice centers across the country trained members of community-based organizations on the use of the App. What was unique about this project is that it built on a device that many households already had and used this as a tool for monitoring. People were able to take pictures as evidence, record conversations and take video clips, using their mobile phones. Furthermore, without employing more people with specialized skills, the implementing organizations used the resources they already had and built strategic partners with community-based organizations to drive service delivery monitoring from the ground.

It is through this work that the deductions from the grant payments of many people in rural South Africa were detected. It is also through this work that it was confirmed that the SASSA offices at local and regional level were not sufficiently equipped to deal with most of the service delivery queries that were forwarded to them. As a result, the implementing partners had to strategically engage with DSD and SASSA at national level to resolve what was initially thought to be localized challenges but which later emerged to be quite systemic. It is through this work that the injustice meted out against the most vulnerable in society—social grant recipients—was detected and through strategic advocacy was brought to the attention of the country and, finally, through litigation and the courts’ sustained supervision, that it was dealt with.

One would ask:

- Couldn’t the CBM intervention of SASSA and DPME detect the same problem?
- Did DPME have the power to get SASSA to abandon the contract with Cash Paymaster Services?

All the respondents interviewed agreed that it took a Constitutional Court case to get SASSA to concede that the contract was unlawful and to set a definite date on which the contract had to end. It would appear as though government, with its oversight machinery, could not on its own get SASSA to abandon this unlawful contract.

In this instance, one could argue that the CBM tool failed to assist government (and social grant beneficiaries) to strengthen the service that was rendered by SASSA (through Cash Paymaster Services) at that time. The CMAP tool of the Black Sash, SCAT, and others, on the other hand managed to bring to light gaps in the manner the service was delivered in ways that the CBM tool could not. The CMAP tool demonstrates that there is something powerful to learn from placing a service delivery monitoring tool in the hands of citizens and allowing them to use it in their daily routine in ways that make perfect sense to them. The CMAP tool can be used to monitor different services; respondents reported it was later used to monitor services at community health facilities and local Home Affairs offices. Incidents where the tool had been used to monitor other services such as public transport, municipal service, etc, were reported, but these were few and far between (Respondent 11 and 12).
b. Monitoring policing services

This section will only deal with the monitoring tools implemented by civil society organizations. As mentioned above, the CBM pilot assessed the quality of the policing service in, amongst other places, Mitchells Plain and Constantia in Cape Town, ‘using that to give a snapshot view of the quality of policing services in other parts of the country with similar characteristics’ to assist government in planning and delivery of the service elsewhere (Respondent 12).

Mitchells Plain has a population size of about 290 000 people, 90% of whom are coloured. Constantia has a population size of about 12 564 people, 75% of whom are white. This is useful information in as far as it assists in reflecting on the selection process for the CBM pilot sites. One wonders why coloured- and white-dominated areas were selected for the pilot and not a black-dominated area, when Nyanga, for example, with almost 98% of its population being black and ranks as the top crime hotspot in the SAPS crime reports (StatsSA, 2018).

At the same time that the CBM pilot was being implemented in the two areas mentioned above, the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) and Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU) were assessing the quality of policing services in Khayelitsha, an area on the outskirts of Cape Town with a population size of about 391 749 people, 93% of whom are black (StatsSA, 2018). As part of a campaign for sanitation, the two organizations followed cases that had been reported to the police of people either raped or killed on their way to use the public ablution facilities in the informal settlements of Khayelitsha. Their experience in engaging with the SAPS led them to conclude that there was a breakdown of a relationship between the police and the community of Khayelitsha. They called on the Premier of the Western Cape, then Hellen Zille, to use her powers to institute a Commission of Inquiry to investigate police inefficiency in Khayelitsha, which she did.

The O’Reagan/Pikoli Commission concluded in 2014 that, amongst other things, allocation of police resources across Cape Town was not equitable and that government had never revised the planning models of the then apartheid government where the allocation of government services prioritized predominantly white populated areas. In effect, the democratic government still allocated more police resources to areas that had a large white population and less to those with a majority of black and coloured residents (such as Mitchells Plain and Khayelitsha). The Commission also noted that this inefficient planning resulted in under-resourced and overworked police officers and compromised the quality of police services in these under-resourced areas.

After attempts to engage SAPS at national and provincial level to address the planning models in ways that addressed the inequalities failed, the partner civil society organizations (later joined by Equal Education) approached the Cape High Court to rule that the allocation of police resources in the Western Cape was discriminatory (Respondent, 2019). In December 2018, the court ruled in favor of civil society and confirmed that the distribution of police resources in the Western Cape discriminated on the basis of race and poverty.
The following questions were asked:

- Could the CBM tool not detect that there were disparities in the amount of police resources that serviced the Constantia community and those that serviced the Mitchells Plain community?
- If it did pick this up, did the DPME have power to influence the way another department (in this case SAPS) was allocating its resources?
- Did civil society have to approach the court to get SAPS in the Western Cape to realize that its planning methods were discriminatory?
- To what extent are the apartheid-era resource allocation methods that were used by the SAPS in the Western Cape used elsewhere in the country? If the DPME monitoring tool could not detect this in the Western Cape, can it be trusted to detect it elsewhere?

These questions remain and are critical in the assessment of monitoring methods moving forward.

c. Monitoring health services at community level

The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) was established in the 1990s when HIV/AIDS treatment was not freely available in South Africa. The organization had long fought for improvements to the health services. In time, many similar organizations were established, and they too contributed to strengthening health services in the country. When the CBM tool was piloted there were many organizations that were already monitoring the quality of health services at local level. TAC, for example, works through volunteers and a host of local partner organizations in the local communities where the health facilities are located.

The organization was able, through this network of partners, to quickly access up-to-date information and respond to local issues while organizing and mobilizing to engage collectively with more systemic issues at provincial and national levels. Between 2014 and 2015 a respondent that worked for TAC and later Section 27 reported that Limpopo had the most stock-outs of anti-retroviral and other chronic medications in its clinics and health facilities. Engagements by TAC, Section 27, and other partners with the Provincial Department of Health in Limpopo revealed that the problem lay with the department’s depot and its logistics management system. The medicine was not moving fast enough out of the depot to the healthcare facilities where it was needed the most. Once this challenge was identified and resolved, reports of stock-outs dropped drastically in Limpopo (Respondent, 2018).

This example is interesting in that it signifies a collaborative effort between the Provincial Department of Health and civil society to address a service delivery issue. In a public statement published in September 2015, the TAC saluted the then MEC of Health in Limpopo for the rapid manner in which the resolutions of a meeting between TAC and the department were implemented; the issue of high stock-outs was one of those that was speedily resolved. This example suggests that ideally monitoring should be a joint effort of both service users (the public) and the service provider (government). There are many other examples of monitoring done by TAC and its partners in other parts of the country where government went onto the defensive, leading to litigation, protest actions, and generally a breakdown of the relationship and trust between government on the one side and civil society and service users on the other. As mentioned above, there were many other organizations that were also monitoring the quality of health services at community level – the Black Sash with its CMAP tool was one of them.
8. OTHER CATEGORY OF SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING TOOLS

The second category of monitoring tools are those that were monitoring services not necessarily in alignment with those that the DPME’s CBM tool was looking at. Below we summarize some of these tools.

a. The community score cards

The community score card is a tool developed from the movement for rural development in India and forms part of the rubric of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodology. Organizations have used the community score card tool in different ways to monitor services across different sectors. CARE used it to monitor health services in Malawi, and in India it was used to monitor government services in agriculture, health, and education. The Bench Marks Foundation in South Africa has used the score card to assess whether mining businesses deliver the developmental promises they make as part of their beneficiation commitments in applying for mining licenses and Afesis-corplan has used the score cards to assess the quality of infrastructure development at local government level.

The community score card in its original form was a summary of indicators agreed to between service providers and service users to tell if a service was well rendered. The indicators were agreed upon through dialogue and it is through dialogue that the participatory assessment is done. Good facilitation skills are therefore required. The variations of the score card tool, at least the one used by Bench Marks Foundation and also that employed by Afesis-corplan, uses information in the public domain and contracts that government enters into with corporate entities to assess whether the service is rendered in ways that protect the interests of communities or not. Insights derived from the experiences of both organizations are that government fails to enforce the contracts it enters into and thus fails to protect citizens from exploitation by corporate entities.

The community score card tool works well in instances where the outputs or the quality of the service to be rendered can be physically verified against agreed upon specifications. This eliminates the element of subjectivity in the monitoring process. The methodology also works well where there are clear recourse mechanisms for poor delivery of services and where communities can evoke such mechanisms. The lack of clear recourse mechanisms in the work done by the Bench Marks Foundation is a clear indication that government-citizen monitoring is meaningless if there are no clear recourse mechanisms for poor service delivery.

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3 PRA is a participatory research method which uses a number of visual tools to enable differently literate persons to actively participate in the research, not just as informants but as co-creators in the information gathering process.
b. The ombudsperson

This is another common monitoring mechanism in South Africa. An ombudsperson is an official public advocate (or institution) tasked with representing the interests of the public by investigating complaints of wrongdoing. Many Chapter Nine institutions are institutional ombudspersons tasked with receiving and processing various issues raised by the public, such as the Gender Commission on gender-related matters; the Human Rights Commission on human rights violations; the Public Protector on matters where the public has been treated unfairly by government officials or institutions; and the Competition Commission on business practices and consumer-related matters. Many may argue that these institutions are part of government but in this report we include them along with civil society-based tools because in some way they are ‘outside’ what is generally understood as government. Other than submitting complaints, there is generally very little engagement between citizens and state instituted ombudspersons. However these platforms have proven useful in many respects in protecting the interests of the public against maladministration. For example, the Office of the Public Protector during the reign of Advocate Thuli Madonsela shall go down in history as one institution that diligently protected the interests of the public under trying times.

c. Social auditing

Social auditing is a participatory monitoring process through which project information is collected, analyzed and shared publicly in an effort to engage government in finding solutions to challenges. It is a relatively new tool in South Africa that is fast becoming widely used in different contexts. A social audit empowers service users to physically assess the quality of services rendered and to collect and analyze evidence to produce a written report that forms a basis for dialogue with the departments responsible for the services being audited. The SJC has done social audits on sanitation services in Khayelitsha, for example. This led to a relative breakdown of the relationship between the organization and the City of Cape Town, but the sanitation service itself has improved since the first audit (SJC, 2017).

Planact in Johannesburg implemented a version of the social audit to foster a collaborative relationship between residents in informal settlements and the entities responsible for basic service delivery. Their model was tested in the communities of Wattville and Harry Gwala within the city of Ekurhuleni. Afesis-corplan implemented yet another version of the social audit when it attempted to assess the quality of an infrastructure project delivered by local municipalities and tested this in Ngqushwa municipality and the Buffalo City Metropolitan municipality. The Mining Communities United in Action (MACUA), a social movement operating in mining communities, implemented a nationwide social audit in a number of mining communities to look at the impact of mining in these communities and the extent to which mining companies were keeping to the development promises they made when applying for mining licenses.

... there have not been great examples of cases where government has willingly partnered in a social audit process in ways that enhance service delivery.
The examples cited above point to a growing use of social auditing as a tool to strengthen accountability and its versatility for auditing different services. The Social Audit Network (SAN) argues that the greatest challenge with social auditing is that it depends a great deal on an analysis of technical documents such as municipal budgets, service level agreements, mining beneficiation agreements, etc – skills that community members might not have. Thus, communities wanting to undertake a social audit usually approach an organization with technical capabilities to support the social auditing process as well as to transfer skills to community members (Respondent, 2018). SAN also notes that there have not been great examples of cases where government, across the many organizations doing social auditing, have willingly partnered in a social audit process in ways that enhance service delivery. Those civil society organizations testing the collaborative social audit approach are working towards this.
CONCLUSION

The information contained in this report indicates clearly that there is a great deal of service delivery monitoring happening within and across government, in some instances in collaboration with civil society but in others not. The DPME as an institution tasked with the responsibility to coordinate planning, monitoring, and evaluation admits that government is yet to fully inculcate a culture of learning in its processes. It also is yet to include citizens in meaningful ways in learning. This section of the report also shows clearly that government-initiated monitoring tools fall within the ‘supply-driven’ part of the model presented herein. This means that government develops the tools and facilitates the monitoring process with little engagement and involvement of citizens. This is not necessarily bad or wrong, but it is expected that government should create ways to learn from its practice and improve as it goes along.

This section of the report presents tools that fall within what it refers to as ‘demand-driven’ monitoring and evaluation. These are largely civil society developed tools and methods for service delivery monitoring, usually developed at a point of crisis where the communities in which service delivery monitoring happens adopts an adversarial stance towards government as opposed to a collaborative one. These creative and out of the box ways in which civil society and citizens hold government to account are also necessary for strengthening accountability and good governance.

Section One advocates for new spaces for collaborative service delivery to be created. In these spaces, both government and citizens partner towards a common goal and there is no ‘big brother’ who holds the agenda and determines how the monitoring must happen and what role the other must play. Instead, the agenda and power are equally shared in meaningful ways and both government and citizens appreciate each other’s role in strengthening service delivery. The CBM pilot of the DPME was meant to achieve this; this section of the report partly reflects on the experiences of implementing CBM.

The tools presented in this report are not an exhaustive list of all tools used to monitor service delivery implementation across South Africa. This section only gives a snapshot view of the extent to which government and citizens are (or are not) co-creating in efforts aimed towards monitoring and evaluation. That citizens or government engage in some ways in the implementation of whatever tool each initiates does not mean they are co-creating or partnering in effective and meaningful ways. Co-creation speaks to the transfer of power; it speaks to shared accountability and shared commitment, empowerment and the building of agency and ownership of service delivery. This section shows clearly that in the development, design, and implementation of many of the tools presented here, this level of co-creation was not intended.

The monitoring processes described by the TAC on how it partnered with the Department of Health in Limpopo has some elements of the kind of co-creation this report advocates for but it lacks others. The same can be said for the CBM pilot of the DPME. The table below presents in summary the orientation of the tools presented in this report in accordance with the supply-
Monitoring service delivery is necessary to ensure that government meets its intended objectives, that it delivers services in ways that are inclusive and responsive to citizens’ needs, and it works to improve service delivery over time. The legislative framework requires government to facilitate spaces for engagement with citizens, and through the DPME, government has spent a great deal of time thinking through how integrated and coordinated service delivery monitoring can happen. This report shows that while the DPME has made inroads in encouraging a culture of monitoring for learning within government, it is, however, limited in achieving the kinds of results and shifts that civil society with its tools are able to.

The fact that government and civil society are meeting to talk and to compare notes through DPME stakeholder forums is commendable. However, given that civil society has had to go to court to force government to address gaps identified through monitoring is indicative of the limitation of this stakeholder platform as a space for government-citizen dialogue on monitoring and evaluation in the country. This report further indicates that while monitoring is happening in many sectors, whether initiated by government or civil society, there is very little co-created and co-facilitated monitoring happening. The facilitation of these co-created spaces is crucial to build trust between government and citizens and to harness the capabilities and energy that rests with citizens. Freedom House has explored creative and useful ways through which this could happen; this will be detailed in the next sections of this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONITORING SPACE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MONITORING TOOLS</th>
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</table>
| Supply-driven monitoring    | Monitoring spaces that are created by government for purposes of monitoring the quality of services it delivers for learning and improvement. Government invites the public to participate in the spaces and holds the agenda | • Internal government processes including those initiated in the Office of the President and OTPs  
• All the DPME tools mentioned herein except the CBM  
• Ombudsperson  
• Hotline Services  
• Public Hearings  
• War Rooms |
| Demand-driven monitoring    | Monitoring spaces that are created by citizens for the purposes of monitoring the quality of a service(s) rendered by government. Civil society holds the agenda for monitoring and guides the implementation of the tools | • Community Monitoring  
• Advocacy Program  
• Community Score Cards  
• Social Auditing |
| Co-created spaces for monitoring | Monitoring spaces that are created by both government and citizens for the purposes of monitoring a government service. The agenda for monitoring and the implementation of the tool is shared equally between government and citizens and there are no obvious ‘big brothers’. | • TAC Limpopo stop-stockout (to some extent)  
• Citizen Based Monitoring (to some extent) |
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AN ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING TOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA

PREPARED FOR FREEDOM HOUSE
2018–2020
1. INTRODUCTION

The previous section presents a snapshot of service delivery tools, and separately considers tools that have been initiated, funded and driven by government and those that have been initiated by civil society. Section One also highlights examples of collaborative service delivery monitoring by both government and civil society. The tools presented in Section One were selected through a process of interviews with government officials responsible for service delivery monitoring across the three spheres of government, and in conversations with leaders of various civil society organizations that have been involved in service delivery monitoring. There may be other service delivery tools deployed by government or civil society that were not mentioned in the interviews and therefore have not been included in this report.

This section, Section Two, builds on content and arguments presented in the first section. It focuses on the tools presented in Section One but seeks to further assess and unpack these tools. The assessment criteria used in this section considers the efficacy of these tools but can also be applied more broadly to those that may have been left out of the first section. The criteria developed to assess the efficacy of these service delivery monitoring tools are:

- **Brief description:** the purpose and aim for which the tool was developed and how it is used. To assess this, the focus is on both the intention at the time of development as well as during application.
- **Implementation costs:** the cost of implementing the tool looking at, where possible, planned budgets versus actual expenses.
- **Scalability:** how the tool has been used and whether it can be adapted for use in different contexts and to monitor different services. Furthermore, it assesses the ability of the tool to be rolled out at scale.
- **Ease of application or user-friendliness:** the simplicity of the tool and the extent to which the users were able to use it with little training or technical support.
- **Versatility of the tool:** the extent to which the tool has been used in different contexts, for different purposes, by different users. It also assesses different services at the same time.
- **Technical support requirements:** the extent of technical support required in the implementation of the tool and the accessibility of that support.
- **Reporting and integration:** this will assess the reporting process from the implementation of the tool, and the extent to which the reporting process is integrated into the planning, monitoring and evaluation cycle.

Service delivery monitoring happens across departments in all the three spheres of government and in different institutions. The assessment undertaken in this report considers service delivery monitoring tools applied in the various spheres and different levels of government. Table One presents a snapshot of various service delivery monitoring tools that are implemented by government. The assessment that is presented in Table Two draws from some of these tools.

A common thread in the tools presented in Table One is that they are all government initiated, government driven and government funded. This is important because it determines who holds and wields decision-making power in the process of service delivery monitoring. Research has
shown that in service delivery monitoring, the person who holds the power to make the decisions on the design, funding, scope and implementation arrangement in service delivery monitoring also decides on the extent to which the report influences planning.

This implies that government, or rather the various government departments that are responsible for the implementation of all the tools and models presented in Table One, hold and wield the power to decide the extent to which the service delivery process influences planning and practice. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Government ought to have its own mechanisms of ensuring that it is targeted and focused in approach and that its interventions deliver the desired outcomes. Inclusive governance demands, however, that government also facilitates mechanisms for participatory and inclusive service delivery monitoring. Very few of those government-initiated mechanisms seem to have worked very well because in the implementation process government officials have failed to release and transfer power to members of the public.

The set of tools that are presented in Table Two include those that members of the public have initiated themselves. While this is commendable and demonstrates agency, if it fails to influence and strengthen government planning and implementation, it is futile. Focus therefore is on finding service delivery monitoring tools which enable government and communities to collaborate.
### TABLE ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOVERNMENT SPHERE</th>
<th>OFFICE OR DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING TOOLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **National Government** | Office of the President Constitutional and Positional Authority | • Cabinet meetings  
• Inter-Ministerial Committees  
• Ministerial Performance Plans  
• Presidential Coordinating Council  
• Presidential Hotline  
• Integrated rapid response operations for service delivery  
• Public imbizos and community outreach |
| | Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Legal Authority | • Program of action for outcome-based monitoring and evaluation  
• Frontline service delivery monitoring  
• Citizen-based monitoring  
• Siyahlola Presidential Monitoring Program  
• Operation Phakisa  
• Revitalization of Distressed Mining Communities’ Special Projects  
• Management Practice Assessment Tool (MPAT)  
• Local Government Management Improvement Model (LGMIM)  
• Heads of Department monitoring |
| | National Treasury Constitutional and Legal Authority | • Oversight of the production of Annual Performance Plans (APPs)  
• Ensuring that performance targets are developed  
• Oversight of annual reports  
• Oversight of in-year reports |
| | The Auditor-General Constitutional Authority | • Financial auditing, compliance with legislation and governance  
• Assessment of risk mitigation and the asset registry  
• Encouragement of good governance and sound financial systems and controls |
| | Department of Public Service and Administration Legal Authority | • Monitoring of public sector adherence to the Batho Pele principles |
| | The National Legislature Constitutional Authority | • Oversight of the executive arm of government  
• Oversight of various departments and state-owned enterprises  
• Ensuring adherence to court rulings |
## GOVERNMENT SPHERE

### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office or Department</th>
<th>Service Delivery Monitoring Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Office of the Premier  Constitutional and Positional Authority | - Premier’s Coordinating Forum  
- Provincial executive meetings  
- Inter-departmental task teams  
- A hotline service  
- Public imbizos and community outreach  
- Integrated service delivery coordination |
| Provincial Treasury  Legal Authority | - Oversight of provincial departments’ implementation of APPs  
- Ensuring that performance targets are developed  
- Ensuring that in-year reports and annual reports are produced and published |
| The Auditor General  Constitutional Authority | - Financial auditing, compliance with legislation and governance  
- Assessing risk mitigation and the asset registry  
- Encouragement of good governance and sound financial systems and controls |
| The Provincial Legislature  Constitutional Authority | - Oversight of the executive arm of government  
- Oversight of various provincial departments |

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office or Department</th>
<th>Service Delivery Monitoring Tools</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| The Municipal Executive  Legal Authority | - Oversight of the executive  
- Ensuring adherence to legislation  
- Ensuring citizen engagement  
- Ensuring an inclusive process of service delivery planning and budgeting |
| National Treasury, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the Auditor General  Legal Authority | - Ensuring adherence to legislation  
- Ensuring that Integrated Development Plans and Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans are developed  
- Ensuring that in year reports are submitted  
- Ensuring that the annual report is produced and published in accordance with legislation  
- Auditing the financial affairs of the municipality |
| Ward Committees and War Rooms  Legal Authority | - Monitoring the implementation of projects and government programs at ward level  
- Monitoring adherence of local government to its plans  
- Monitoring the general performance of local and other government departments at ward level |
### TABLE TWO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOOL</th>
<th>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>INPUT COSTS</th>
<th>SCALABILITY</th>
<th>USER-FRIENDLINESS</th>
<th>VERSATILITY</th>
<th>TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT REQUIRED</th>
<th>REPORTING &amp; INTEGRATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet meetings</td>
<td>Coordinated planning and policy implementation</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Has been extended to provinces</td>
<td>It is a widely accepted and used structure for coordinating high-level planning and service delivery</td>
<td>Very little. It is specific and has a specific purpose</td>
<td>Very specific and for a specific purpose</td>
<td>Cabinet decisions have implications for all of government planning and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Ministerial Committees</td>
<td>Special purpose vehicles for high-level functions as tasked by the President or Cabinet</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Need-specific</td>
<td>It is commonly used within Cabinet only</td>
<td>Different Inter-Ministerial Committees established for various reasons</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Reporting requirements specific and limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Performance Plans</td>
<td>Performance contracts agreed to by the President and Cabinet</td>
<td>Budget votes approved in line with the budget framework of government</td>
<td>Very specific to each minister</td>
<td>Policy statements and strategic plans are accessible to the public but the performance agreements are not</td>
<td>Not accessible to the public</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Reporting requirements specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Coordinating Council</td>
<td>An intergovernmental relations strengthening and coordination mechanisms</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Has been extended to provinces</td>
<td>Not open to the public</td>
<td>It is inclusive in that provincial leaders participate at a national level and municipal leaders participate at provincial levels</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Deliberations influence government planning and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Hotline</td>
<td>A telephone whistleblower service to enable the President or presidency to receive and respond to service delivery complaints from the public</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>A few respondents argued that the cost of facilitating the hotline ran into millions of rands.</td>
<td>Quite user-friendly. All it takes is a phone call to register a complaint. Some challenges with the tool were reported by some respondents</td>
<td>Quite versatile. Various service delivery issues are reported through the hotline</td>
<td>Requires and demands high level of technical support</td>
<td>Service delivery incidents and challenges reported through the hotline are forwarded to the various departments for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated rapid response operations for service delivery</td>
<td>Mechanisms through which the President facilitates coordinated responses to service delivery</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>The model is adaptable and there was a move to establish it in every province and local municipality. However, not all provinces and municipalities established the model</td>
<td>There were many challenges with the implementation of the model ranging from coordination, poorly aligned planning, reporting and budget issues</td>
<td>The model was intended to create a space in which a rapid response to service delivery challenges could be facilitated in a coordinated way. It worked in design but ran into problems in implementation</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Reports from the local meetings are meant to influence planning at various levels and spheres of government. Respondents argued that this worked well for coordinating rapid response but not for general in-year planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOOL</td>
<td>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>INPUT COSTS</td>
<td>SCALABILITY</td>
<td>USER-FRIENDLINESS</td>
<td>VERSATILITY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community out-reach/ public imbizos</td>
<td>Mechanisms through which the President conducts visits to local communities to engage and connect</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Used by many political leaders in various spheres of government</td>
<td>Relatively easy to facilitate, coordinate and engage</td>
<td>Minimal. The modus operandi in which the public outreach events is facilitated is the same</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Issues raised in outreach rarely influence planning. There are instances where service delivery challenges are responded to following an out-reach event, but this is not the norm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program of Action for outcome-based monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>A coordinated outcome-based approach to monitoring and evaluation in government</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Was meant to trickle down to provinces and various departments</td>
<td>Training intensive in that responsible personnel were to be trained in the use of the monitoring and evaluation tools</td>
<td>The monitoring and evaluation approach was intended to measure government performance against all of its key strategic goals</td>
<td>A heavy investment in establishing ICT systems to support monitoring and evaluation was done</td>
<td>Outcome-based reporting, improved and influenced planning and budgeting processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontline service delivery monitoring</td>
<td>A government-driven approach to monitoring and evaluation that was localized and was meant to involve members of the public</td>
<td>Information not available - respondents claimed that millions of rands were spent on the implementation of the pilot phase of this model</td>
<td>Was tested in a few areas (services) with intent for wider roll-out. Respondents reported that the wide roll-out was not successful</td>
<td>Training intensive in that responsible personnel and support people were to be trained in the use of the tool</td>
<td>The model was tested in various services and in different localities</td>
<td>A heavy investment in data capturing tools was necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen-based monitoring</td>
<td>A government driven citizen-centric service delivery monitoring model</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Was tested in a few areas with a focus on different services and was never really implemented</td>
<td>Intensive training of responsible personnel needed</td>
<td>The model could be used to monitor different services. Respondents argued that the tool works well for localized services</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>The model is designed to provide reports to influence planning. This happened to a limited extent during the pilot phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siyahlola Presidential Monitoring Program</td>
<td>Presidential special project to monitor service delivery implementation</td>
<td>Information not available - a few respondents argued that funding for this model ran into millions of rands</td>
<td>Somewhat. The President determined where the model was deployed</td>
<td>Respondents argued that there was a lot of support for the model wherever it was deployed</td>
<td>Somewhat. The model was used to monitor different services</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Respondents believed that because the reports were directed to the presidency they may have influenced decision-making at that level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOOL</td>
<td>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>INPUT COSTS</td>
<td>SCALABILITY</td>
<td>USER-FRIENDLINESS</td>
<td>VERSATILITY</td>
<td>TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT REQUIRED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation Phakisa</td>
<td>A special vehicle for coordinated service delivery driven from the office of the presidency</td>
<td>Information not available – respondents argued that millions of rands were spent in implementing this at national level and as provinces created and resourced their own, this amount increased</td>
<td>Intensive support had to be given to municipalities to assist them in establishing this model. This is the level at which most of the challenges were identified</td>
<td>Various services could be discussed and monitored through this model</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Respondents argued that one of the weaknesses with the model was that secretariat services rests with community representatives undermining the quality of reports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revitalization of Distressed Mining Communities’ Special Projects</td>
<td>A special project driven from the presidency with a focus on improving service delivery in mining areas</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Somewhat. The model was designed to facilitate a participatory approach to service delivery planning and monitoring</td>
<td>Somewhat. The model was meant to facilitate planning of various services involving numerous government departments</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Specific reporting requirements. A few respondents argued that it was not clear how the reporting process influenced planning and budget spending</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Practice Assessment Tool (MPAT)</td>
<td>A special mechanism to strengthen management practices in government</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Limited. The model had a limited focus</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Moderate as parts of the model were computer-based</td>
<td>Respondents argued that little feedback was shared on how gaps in management practices were addressed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Management Improvement Model (LGMMI)</td>
<td>A special project intended to support local government improvement in service delivery</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Limited. The model had a limited focus</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heads of Department monitoring</td>
<td>A model aimed at assessing the performance of Heads of Departments</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOOL</td>
<td>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oversight of planning and implementation</td>
<td>A model to provide oversight and support in the development of Annual Performance Plans, Integrated Development Plans, Strategic Goals, and Performance Targets</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Support provided to all government departments in different spheres and state-owned enterprises</td>
<td>Guidelines and templates developed to support Heads of Departments and other relevant staff</td>
<td>Tools and guides are specific and are used for specific purposes</td>
<td>Respondents alluded to a shift towards standardization and that for some this necessitated a great deal of investment in ICT</td>
<td>The standardization process is aimed at facilitating a level of uniformity in reporting and greater integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversight of reporting (annual and-in year reporting)</td>
<td>A model to support regular and high-quality reporting across all of government</td>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>Support provided to all government departments in different spheres and state-owned enterprises</td>
<td>Guidelines and templates are developed to support Heads of Departments and other relevant staff</td>
<td>Tools and guides are specific and are used for specific purposes</td>
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<td>The standardization process is aimed at facilitating a level of uniformity in reporting and greater integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial auditing, compliance and governance</td>
<td>A mechanism to assess the efficiency of financial systems and controls, compliance with legislation and governance practices in government</td>
<td>Budget vote for the Office of the Auditor-General at national and provincial level</td>
<td>An annual audit is performed in all government departments and at various spheres</td>
<td>Relatively. Respondents argued that because an audit is performed annually, requirements in support of an audit process were now fairly standard</td>
<td>Limited. The audit process itself is fairly standard. However, respondents argued that the Auditor-General was becoming aware of the assessment of non-financial outcomes</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>The consolidated report from the auditing process is shared publicly to Information and to strengthen oversight and the report of the Auditor-General institutional practice, systems and controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oversight of risk mitigation and asset registry</td>
<td>A mechanism to ensure that government departments and entities were proactive in mitigating against risks</td>
<td>Budget vote for the Office of the Auditor General at national and provincial level</td>
<td>An assessment of the asset and risk registry is performed in all government departments and at various spheres annually as part of the audit process</td>
<td>Relatively. Respondents argued that because an audit is performed annually, requirements in support of an audit process were now fairly standard</td>
<td>Limited. The audit process itself is fairly standard. However, respondents argued that the Auditor-General was becoming aware of the assessment of non-financial outcomes</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>The consolidated report from the auditing process is shared publicly to Information and to strengthen oversight and the report of the Auditor-General institutional practice, systems and controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOOL</td>
<td>BRIEF DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>INPUT COSTS</td>
<td>SCALABILITY</td>
<td>USER-FRIENDLINESS</td>
<td>VERSATILITY</td>
<td>TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT REQUIRED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPACs)</td>
<td>A mechanism to facilitate oversight of the executive in municipal councils</td>
<td>Respondents argued that MPACs receive a very minimal budget if any funding at all</td>
<td>Even though this is yet to be legislated, all municipalities have established MPACs</td>
<td>Respondents argued that MPACs are not well understood by their municipal councils and thus their work is either hampered or not supported</td>
<td>The MPACs’ role is to advise council on oversight matters. Its power is limited to that which council has determined. Its versatility is therefore limited</td>
<td>Minimal. Respondents argued however that MPACs required a great deal of research and administrative support</td>
<td>MPAC reports directly influence council decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Committees and War Rooms</td>
<td>To facilitate the participation of the public in municipal planning, implementation and monitoring</td>
<td>Varies from municipality to municipality</td>
<td>All municipalities across the country have Ward Committees</td>
<td>A Ward Committee is a widely known and accepted mechanism for participating in local government. Its challenges have been documented widely. A War Room is a relatively new mechanism that is less documented. Evidence however is beginning to point to serious challenges with it</td>
<td>Various service delivery issues can be discussed in both Ward Committees and War Rooms. Ward Committees are focused on and report to the local municipal council through the office of the Speaker while War Rooms have participation from provincial departments</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Reports from both Ward Committee meetings and War Room meetings are submitted to the municipality and provincial departments, respectively. This is done to influence planning decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Monitoring Advocacy Programs (CMAPs)</td>
<td>To support social grant recipients to monitor the quality of the services received</td>
<td>Was funded over several years (±R1.5 million per year)</td>
<td>Was piloted in a few localities and scaled up to several provinces</td>
<td>Local community members were trained on the use of the cell phone app. The app works on ordinary phones which many households already have</td>
<td>Only the social grants payment process was assessed in the program. However respondents argued that the tool could be adapted to monitor various other services.</td>
<td>High. Cell phone-based and app-based</td>
<td>The reports from each app user were aggregated into one report which painted a picture of how the department wasfairing in the delivery of the service</td>
</tr>
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**LOCAL MUNICIPIALITY**

**SOME EXAMPLES OF CIVIL SOCIETY-INITIATED SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING TOOLS**

**BLACK SASH**

To support social grant recipients to monitor the quality of the services received. Was funded over several years (±R1.5 million per year). Was piloted in a few localities and scaled up to several provinces. Local community members were trained on the use of the cell phone app. The app works on ordinary phones which many households already have. Only the social grants payment process was assessed in the program. However respondents argued that the tool could be adapted to monitor various other services. High. Cell phone-based and app-based. The reports from each app user were aggregated into one report which painted a picture of how the department was fairing in the delivery of the service.
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<th>REPORTING &amp; INTEGRATION</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN</strong></td>
<td>Stop Stock-Outs</td>
<td>To monitor the quality of primary health care, especially the availability of medicine, including chronic medicine, in remote primary health care centers</td>
<td>Input costs are minimal; the work is mostly done by local volunteers.</td>
<td>The campaign has been rolled out to almost all the predominantly rural provinces in the country</td>
<td>Respondents argued that the campaign is highly user-friendly and depends on feedback from service users for information. Volunteers are activated through a tip-off from the service users if any of the primary health care centers are out of stock of chronic medicines</td>
<td>While mostly used to monitor the health care service, respondents argued that the model could be adapted to monitor various other services, particularly in rural and remote areas</td>
<td>Minimal. Volunteers do however depend on a cell phone service to report stock-outs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL AUDIT NETWORK</strong></td>
<td>Social Auditing</td>
<td>To support various communities and community groups to conduct an audit of the quality of social services that they have received, paid for through public funds</td>
<td>Varies from one organization to another (several organizations have conducted social audits across South Africa)</td>
<td>Social audits have been conducted in many communities in South Africa</td>
<td>While there is a great deal of technical expertise needed to analyze technical documents like government budgets and implementation plans, much of the social audit is conducted by community members and requires no technical skills</td>
<td>Social audits have been conducted in different contexts to assess different services. They have proven to be a highly adaptable tool</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EASTERN CAPE COMMUNICATION FORUM</strong></td>
<td>Community journalism</td>
<td>To offer a platform for community members to share stories about service delivery on a public platform</td>
<td>Minimal. Input costs are absorbed as part of the operating costs of the media outlet</td>
<td>Could be done by any community and government media house</td>
<td>Quite user-friendly. Various accessible and cost-effective ways of submitting stories for publication have been put in place to make it easy for members of the public to report service delivery stories</td>
<td>Highly. Any service delivery matter can be reported making the platform accessible and versatile</td>
<td>Moderate. One would need either a telephone or a computer to engage with the media outlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOOL</td>
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<td>Community score cards</td>
<td>To facilitate a mechanism through which both government and communities monitor service delivery and an agreement over performance indicators</td>
<td>Varies. Is influenced by context</td>
<td>The tool itself can be used in various ways but performance indicators can be specific to a service or location</td>
<td>Relatively user-friendly. Once an agreement on the indicators and the tool itself is reached and community members are trained on how to use it, it could work fairly easily. However, it needs that initial input</td>
<td>Highly versatile. A score card can be developed for monitoring various services. The monitoring process itself can be modified to suit different contexts and different services</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>After the scoring process a report has to be developed to interpret and unpack the scores. This report can influence planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. CONCLUSION

It is clear from the tools presented above that there have been attempts over the years by both government and civil society to strengthen service delivery. The DPME’s attempt to facilitate a participatory citizen-centric approach to service delivery monitoring is a step in the right direction in that it has become clear that government cannot grapple with service delivery alone. Inclusive governance, especially local governance, demands that citizens play a meaningful part in strengthening governance. Government has to create an environment conducive to partnering with civil society in monitoring service delivery. To achieve this, government may need to allow itself to be vulnerable at times, and hand over control and power in ways that will allow a meaningful service delivery monitoring culture to thrive.

The overview report dealt with the notion of supply and demand-driven monitoring in detail. It advocated for a collaborative process of monitoring service delivery. This does not mean that government ought to abandon its existing service delivery monitoring processes that are aimed at facilitated integrated planning, resource mobilization and effective use of skills and talent. It must, over and above this, create an environment conducive to developing co-created mechanisms for service delivery monitoring, where it shares power with community groups and civil society. There are very few such examples in South Africa at present.

The tools presented here are not an exhaustive list of all tools being used to monitor public service delivery in South Africa but rather present a snapshot of the extent to which government and citizens are (or are not) co-creating in their efforts to monitor and evaluate. There are instances in which citizens and/or government engage in the implementation of some of the tools mentioned here but this does not mean that they are co-creating. Co-creation speaks to the transfer of power arrangements; it speaks to shared accountability and a shared commitment. This level of co-creation does not happen as commonly as it should in the implementation of many of the tools captured in this report. Monitoring service delivery is necessary to ensure that government meets its intended objectives and that it delivers services in ways that are inclusive and responsive. Legislation demands that government facilitate spaces for citizen engagement and, through the DPME, government has spent a great deal of time thinking through how integrated and coordinated service delivery monitoring can happen. This report highlights that while the DPME has made inroads in inculcating a culture of monitoring for learning within government, it is yet to achieve the kinds of co-creation that supports the vision of a participatory democracy.

That government and civil society are meeting to talk and to compare notes through the DPME stakeholder forums is commendable. However, the fact that civil society had to go to court to compel government to address gaps identified through monitoring is indicative of the limitation of this stakeholder platform as a space for government-citizen dialogue on monitoring and evaluation in the country. While monitoring is happening in many sectors, whether initiated by government or civil society, there are very few examples of co-created and co-facilitated monitoring and this should be the focus of both.
SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MONITORING: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

PREPARED FOR FREEDOM HOUSE
2018–2020
Purpose of Section Three

This research was commissioned by Freedom House South Africa, in conjunction with complementary research conducted by Afesis-corplan. The research consultant on the project was Mr Jaco Roet. Sections one and two of this publication provide a broad overview of service delivery monitoring tools implemented by the government of South Africa across national, provincial and local government as well as those that are developed and used by civil society. This section will explore social accountability monitoring as a component of service delivery monitoring.

The research for this final section was conducted between October 2018 and April 2020 and included revisiting some of the interviews conducted in the earlier research and making the research more accessible to a broader audience outside South Africa.
1. INTRODUCTION

This research aims to increase understanding of the various existing online and offline tools and approaches implemented by South African civil society to deepen social accountability monitoring. The research seeks to elicit thinking about social accountability monitoring as a concept and as an approach, building a conceptual framework that practitioners can use to guide the design, assessment and adaptation of new and existing social accountability monitoring tools.

At its core, social accountability monitoring is about restoring relationships between citizens and government. This relational component is considered in terms of how citizens relate to each other and how they relate to civil society. Social accountability monitoring is different from service delivery monitoring or advocacy. Social accountability monitoring is more than conducting social audits or applying community score cards. It includes a dimension beyond quantifying gaps in government service delivery or highlighting corruption. Social accountability monitoring is also different from advocacy, as it does not only seek to be in an adversarial relationship with government through highlighting gaps in delivery of services. Social accountability monitoring, it is argued, holds the potential for greater collective action and restoration of trust between those who govern and ordinary citizens, reconnecting broken feedback loops to give citizens a clearer voice, but also ensuring that their voices are heard and that their inputs are acted upon.

Social accountability monitoring, at its core, has the potential to restore networks of trust, and open avenues of cross-sectoral collaboration and co-creation. Social accountability monitoring is mindful of specific local context, including the attitudes and expectations of ordinary citizens.

This third section of the report will focus on tools that are developed and implemented by civil society in South Africa. It also explores social accountability monitoring as a component of service delivery monitoring. The difference between the concepts of service delivery monitoring and social accountability monitoring will be unpacked in the conceptual framework. While aiming to be comprehensive, this section does not include a complete overview or analysis of all experiments, tools and approaches utilized by civil society to enhance public participation and social accountability monitoring in South Africa. Each of the interviews conducted for this section captures an important insight into social accountability monitoring, culminating in a summary of insights that those looking to work in this field should be mindful of.
2. METHODOLOGY

The research for this report unfolded through a number of stages, each informing the next. Below is a recap of the process leading up to the production of the third section of this report.

2.1 LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS AND INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE REVIEW (OCTOBER 2018 TO NOVEMBER 2018)

From considering existing international literature on social accountability monitoring, available tools and current projects, this desktop review laid the foundation for the conceptual framework. It also allowed for further identification of organizations, projects, tools and initiatives that are active in South Africa at present.

This phase culminated in grounding international literature in the South African context, identifying organizations or tools that speak to what was found in the international desktop review. During this phase, the initial individuals and organizations to be interviewed were selected, contacted and an interview schedule was set up. The research looked at a scope of work from selected organizations to learn as much as possible from a variety of different contexts, while being able to connect insights across issues and focal areas.

An initial landscape analysis can be viewed in Diagram One, with all interviews highlighted in color. They are loosely classified under the organizations’ main activities. The classification of focus areas is not rigid, but rather situates a broad segmentation of all potential partners into broad focus categories.

The research looked specifically at the tools (online or offline) implemented by organizations interested in supporting and deepening social accountability monitoring in South Africa. Each organization is loosely placed on a spectrum speaking to the main aim of the project/tool. As an example, the Public Service and Accountability Monitor (PSAM) falls more into the research, information and civic education space, with their work also including advocacy and public participation. Grassroot’s work also spans these spheres and includes their community organization focus. Others, like Thetha Nathi, focuses exclusively on service delivery (right side of the spectrum). Namola perceives its mandate as more information and civic education.

On the left of the table is a cluster of organizations that focus on research, sharing information or conducting civic education. As an example, one can see think tanks and research organizations such as the PSAM and the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) in this quadrant. Their work aims to inform and educate, building on continued research.

Linked to research, information and civic education are activities such as advocacy and public participation. Organizations such as PSAM and PMG are also located in these spheres. Namola, GovChat, Vulekamali and DearSA are examples of organizations utilizing tools that are located more in the information, education and public participation space. As stated earlier, advocacy is not the only aim of social accountability monitoring, but it is definitely a component of its various activities. Grassroot, Vulekamali, Black Sash, OpenUp, Ndifuna Ukwazi and the Open Cities Lab...
(OCL) span more categories, including community organizing, as some of their main aims. These organizations include activities that strengthen the capacity of social movements to organize in order to be heard and to make sure that their concerns are addressed once they are heard.

On the right side of the spectrum lie those tools located within the service delivery monitoring space. Many are not operational, such as the Johannesburg Road Agency (JRA) Find&Fix App and Makana Municipality’s MobiSAM tools. Service delivery tools were excluded from this research as they do not fit into the broader assessment of social accountability monitoring.

**a. Why exclude these service delivery tools?**

The initial research found that while these tools were pervasive, many of them were not being utilized fully or were defunct. For example, the OR Tambo Municipality (Eastern Cape) developed the Thetha Nathi mobile application (designed by Boxfusion). While it allows residents of the municipality to identify and contact their particular ward councillor, many of the councillors telephoned to test the application were not aware of its existence, or the telephone numbers were outdated or non-existent. The same applies to the eThekwini Municipality application. While they provide value to a certain extent, the research team felt that they would not present any insights relevant to the research findings for this section.

Moreover, service delivery-focused tools do not address the feedback loop, meaning that they do not contain an accountability component. While they do provide avenues for civic concerns to be raised, many of them fall outside the formal delivery structures of local, provincial or national government. As such, they can exaggerate tensions between citizens and government, in that...
the concerns that are raised are not adequately addressed. Service delivery monitoring tools rely on a capacitated government that can provide an appropriate response. Social accountability monitoring tools and approaches acknowledge that government and citizens need to be capacitated firstly to raise issues and secondly to respond to issues. For this reason, the research focuses on social accountability monitoring approaches, as far as it explores the relationship between those who govern and the governed.

2.2 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS (OCTOBER 2018 TO MARCH 2019)

Nine in-depth interviews were held with selected organizations that were identified as leading initiatives and experimenting with ways to deepen social accountability in South Africa. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to provide texture to the analysis, often highlighting direct quotations to allow the reader to critically reflect on each highlighted approach. Additional interviews were secured, as participants identified other individuals or organizations that could form part of the study.

The semi-structured interviews were recorded and lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. This approach allowed for deeper engagement with the information provided, while also allowing interviewees to identify other potential individuals or organizations or individuals to be included.

2.3 PRELIMINARY REPORT ON KEY FINDINGS (APRIL 2019 TO AUGUST 2019)

During this phase, the transcribed interviews were analyzed, furthering understanding of social accountability monitoring as a concept and how it pertained to the South African civil society landscape.

2.4 PRESENTATIONS OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS TO INTERVIEWEES AND CONTEXTUALIZATION (JANUARY 2020 TO APRIL 2020)

During the final stage, the research had to be further contextualized to ensure that it would be accessible to a larger audience outside South Africa. Interviewees were sent the initial case studies, allowing them to clarify components, correct mistakes or elaborate on examples. Each case study was also expanded to include more organizational history and additional information to give readers information that was not captured in the initial interviews.

Key insights and lessons were harvested from the interviews, challenging the notion that social accountability monitoring can be improved solely with the introduction of new tools or online approaches.
3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social accountability is defined by McGee et al. (2018) as tools, approaches and practices that can “amplify the voices of citizens and enable governments to listen and respond”. These tools enable ordinary citizens to receive more information about services and processes that governments are mandated to deliver, and more able to act collaboratively on the information that they have received (Tembo, 2013). Social accountability monitoring tools should give those who govern the ability to respond to civic inputs. Enhanced social accountability has the potential to “root out corruption, reduce inefficiencies, enhance the distribution of resources … while improv[ing]… services” (McGinn & Lipsky, 2015). This is how accountability can enable ordinary people to realize their respective rights (Newell, 2006). Looking at this initial definition, social accountability monitoring is a broader term than service delivery monitoring. Social accountability monitoring puts ordinary citizens at the centre, understanding that they need to be empowered with contextual information but that they also need channels for action (Baez Camargo, 2018).

Tembo (2013) argues that social accountability approaches should be centred on enabling relationships that can, in turn, “enable actors to facilitate, or even enforce change”. McGinn et al. (2015) sees it as a more sustainable relationship, one that reinforces the connections between citizens and government. McGinn & Lipsky (2015) state that this is where social accountability is different from advocacy, as the latter is more adversarial. This means that social accountability has the potential to “bring fundamental principles of good governance and democracy to life,” facilitating the flow of actions and information between three components: information, civil society action and government response (McGinn & Lipsky, 2015).

At its core, social accountability monitoring is about restoring the relationships between those who govern and the governed. It is not merely about quantifying gaps in service delivery or highlighting corruption. Baez Camargo (2018) reflects that social accountability has three building blocks; giving citizens a voice; making their demands enforceable; and making government answerable for demands. In this way social accountability monitoring is seen as deeper than service delivery monitoring. Social accountability monitoring should restore networks of trusts, open more inclusive opportunities for active citizen engagement while capacitating government to respond to civic input.

Service delivery monitoring focuses mostly on supply and demand, highlighting lacking services to government and addressing shortfalls. Galtung (2019) describes this as principal and manager-driven approaches, inviting citizens to use existing tools to address service delivery gaps. Social accountability monitoring extends beyond the spaces created by government (invited spaces). Instead, it looks towards identifying the potential for co-creation through linking the spaces that are invented by citizens to these invited spaces. As noted earlier, it is important to find ways to tap into the invented spaces, allowing practitioners to understand the barriers and enablers to social accountability monitoring in spaces in which they are working.
3.1 SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MONITORING: OFFLINE OR ONLINE?

ICT can contribute to opening up “government and allow[ing] more fluid communication between citizens and governments” (McGee et al., 2018). Mobile applications and online platforms are also able to give ordinary citizens space to “voice their concerns to local government, promoting evidence-based engagement and ideally resulting in a noticeable increase in meaningful citizen participation, leading to improved service delivery” (Thinyane et al., 2015). On the other hand, approaches need to be mindful of the limitations of online engagement in spaces that are fraught with distrust, as online approaches can struggle to address a situation where there is not a lot of trust. Baez Camargo (2018) implores practitioners to consider the historical, political and cultural context together with the attitudes and expectations of citizens. This allows practitioners to find approaches that speak to the existing social norms and patterns for problem-solving (Baez Camargo, 2018) instead of importing a technocratic solution that does not fit the context. Tembo (2013) warns that technical processes are often “removed from the contextual reality in which the citizens and state actors operate”. This means that practitioners need to consider which modality would be best located to enhance broad-based social accountability monitoring.

3.2 SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IS POLITICAL AND RELATIONAL

Grandvoinnet et al. (2015) argue that “an over-emphasis on tools unrealistically depoliticizes a fundamentally political process”. Social accountability monitoring happens within deeply political spaces, with each actor firmly “embedded in a complex web of interest and incentives,” which means that even though the public face common problems, they will not necessarily be able to act collaboratively to address these shared problems (Tembo, 2013; Baez Camargo, 2018). Tembo (2013) argues that the existence or identification of a common problem is not enough to get people to work together in a collaborative and collective way. In fact, even when confronted with common problems, one cannot simply assume that all stakeholders will become involved in finding solutions (Tembo, 2013). For Tembo (2013), the only thing that we can assume is that a common problem means that there is potential for collective action. Practitioners should be aware that politics and agendas permeate this space, meaning that one cannot assume that every civic movement has civic goals. The mere existence of a movement at a local level does not mean that it is a movement that is aiming to address social injustice or exclusion. In short, not all social movements have democratic aims.

As highlighted earlier, social accountability approaches must acknowledge this relational component beyond the creation of technical infrastructure. Social accountability is not just something that governments provide to citizens; it should also be created from below, led by those who are affected by a particular problem, with support from more technically savvy organizations or individuals (Newell, et al., 2006, Baez Camargo, 2018). Smith (2011) argues that a “more articulate voice is not necessarily a more powerful voice if the state refuses to listen or respond”. This poses a critical question for those interested in social accountability monitoring. Within the current political landscape in South Africa, is there a willingness to listen to the public and what it has to say when it comes to improving service delivery? (Smith, 2011).
3.3 CIVIL SOCIETY: ACTING AS A BRIDGE FOR CITIZENS

Tembo (2013) says civil society has the potential to act as interlocuters, with the ability to bridge the gap between citizens and government. In this way, social accountability approaches should not merely be led by civil society on the behalf of citizens, but they should rather be interlocuters, able to cultivate champions (McGinn et al., 2015). Practitioners should again be wary of assuming that civil society presents the only bridge that can connect the governed to those who govern. Due to the political nature of social accountability, practitioners should understand why there is distrust from the side of citizens when it comes to government and also those organizations that claim to speak on their behalf. Social accountability monitoring approaches, when implemented thoroughly, will also create more voices and opinions, highlighting more challenges. Civil society is seen as part of this complex political process. For this reason, civil society should also be transparent and accountable regarding its own actions and projects. Civil society is part of the feedback loop that it is trying to restore. Without transparency and accountability, civil society can easily lead very uncivil approaches, deepening distrust and a sense on the side of citizens that the process has been hijacked by rent-seekers.

A critical component of building stronger social accountability monitoring approaches is to restore this broken trust, and understand what realities underpin the communities’ vulnerability, doubt and apathy (Baez Camargo, 2018). As one can see from the above, lack of trust and systemic challenges can mean that “bureaucrats tend to be risk averse and drive delivery through technocratic means that stifle creative approaches to local governance” (Smith, 2011).

Smith warns that in South Africa, despite “numerous invited spaces for public participation,” deep public participation remains limited as invited spaces are limited in “their effectiveness in addressing citizens’ service delivery concerns,” and as such they “have largely become a tokenistic exercise that reasserts partisan control of local resources rather than opening the space for different actors to debate how best to plan and distribute public monies that bring about real change” (2011).
3.4 DUCKS IN A POND: WHY IS INFORMATION NOT ENOUGH?

This section argues that providing access to information and creating platforms where citizens can highlight service delivery gaps are largely unable to penetrate society and create the necessary waves of change. What keeps social accountability monitoring tools from gaining momentum and shifting conversations around social justice in a sustainable way?

DIAGRAM TWO: Ducks in a pond: Why information is not enough

Imagine a raft of lazy ducks congregating in a still pond. They have no interest in moving. They are quite happy to be the leisurely ducks of malaise. How can we encourage them to move? If we see the pond as society, the clever disruptor will think about making large waves to create movement in the still waters. A rock thrown into the center of the pond will create waves that will in turn move the ducks, relative to the size of the rock and where it hits the water. In this analogy, a large rock will move the disinterested ducks. The bigger the rock, the larger the waves of change that will ripple through the pond. As practitioners, we can think of our communities or societies in this fashion. An open society will see the rock (information) causing large waves that will radiate from the point of impact, meaning all ducks will move in relation to the size of the rock and the extent of the impact. Practitioners might still think that the only way to get all disinterested citizens to act is to provide more information. Ever larger chunks of information can surely disrupt entrenched thought patterns, resulting in a driven, active and participating population?

Consider now that the ducks have invaded a swimming pool. The goal is the same. Move the ducks by causing large waves, disrupting the lazy ducks and making them active ducks. It can be argued that modern societies are best represented by a swimming pool and not an open pond. Swimming barriers have been installed to minimize disruption to ducks by waves that could negatively affect them. These barriers can be due to government control, lack of social cohesion, the impact of the media, social media and social fragmentation. Our modern ducks are not even aware that they are sharing a pool; all they can see is their lane.
This means that even if they are aware of problems in other lanes that are similar to their own, they still do not consider collaborating with ducks in other lanes. When information is thrown into this barriered pool, it disproportionally affects the duck in that particular lane, while ducks in other lanes may be unaffected. Throwing larger information clusters into closed lanes will cause more disruption for those in that lane, even leading to them leaving a lane rather than dealing with the subsequent waves. The larger the waves, the more overwhelmed the ducks will feel. It will not spur them into action. In fact, it will overpower them, making them feel helpless and even lead to them fleeing the lane or the pool to reach stiller waters. These barriers represent the broken feedback loop in social accountability monitoring. Waves are not able to radiate through the entire pool and overlap. Instead, all ducks are now stuck in water that is increasingly turbulent and disconnected from other lanes.

The picture above seeks to clarify why trying to disrupt entrenched thought patterns with large chunks of information will not be able to bridge the divides between citizens, government and civil society. The challenge of those working in the social accountability field is thus not just getting more information to the ducks. Approaches need to be aware of social divisions, and ways to permeate barriers so that information waves can radiate throughout the entire pool.

Baez Camargo (2018) describes social accountability as made up of three building blocks, namely voice, enforceability and answerability. As such, we need to look at social accountability tools and approaches in this way – are they able to generate and articulate the voices of the users? Are they able to generate spaces for office holders to answer to the questions being raised? Is this relationship able to be enforced? To add to this, do social accountability approaches allow us to hear and understand what is happening around us? At its core, social accountability monitoring should involve generating and articulating citizens’ voices, building on the collective potential of communities (Baez Camargo, 2018).

Those working in the field of social accountability need to focus on more than just feeding information to citizens. Practitioners of social accountability monitoring should be aware of the blockages and barriers that keep information from permeating all stakeholders in a society and allowing the waves of change to feedback and continually overlap.

3.5 INVITED SPACES ARE NOT ENOUGH: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Constitution of South Africa makes clear provisions for public participation in the National Assembly (NA), the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) and the provincial legislatures in Sections 59, 72 and 118 (SALS, 2013). The key components of the approach for public participation are set out below as the government’s duties to inform, consult, involve and collaborate (SALS, 2013). The goal of these provisions is to give ordinary citizens more power to be informed and collaborate with decision-makers. In theory, this will allow ordinary citizens to identify more agency within themselves, while also restoring trust in the governance system as they are able to hear their own voice in the whole (even if it is different to their own).
While invited spaces create opportunities for citizens to be informed and even consulted, many argue that they are unable to foster deeper involvement and ultimately collaboration. During the research, it was clear that government and practitioners can get stuck in the ‘inform’ stage. This brought up pertinent questions for the research team. How can social accountability monitoring tools support deeper involvement, fostering cross-stakeholder dialogue and interaction? How can collaboration be strengthened, enabling all stakeholders to see that they are sharing a pond, instead of just focusing on particular lanes?

3.6 GUIDING QUESTIONS

Interviews explored institutional or societal blockages in social accountability monitoring. Respondents reflected on the attitudes of ordinary people when it came to other actors in various spheres in society. This allowed us to reflect on identifying potential ‘game-changers’. During the interviews, reflections were centred on how invented and invited spaces could create spaces to ‘involve’ citizens and create space for citizens, government, business and civil society to ‘collaborate’.

In the next section harvested and contextualized components of more than nine hours of transcribed interviews are presented.
4. DEAR SOUTH AFRICA (DearSA)

DearSA is a registered non-profit online platform, aiming to involve the broader public to ‘co-shape all government policies, amendments and proposals’ (DearSA, 2020). Since its launch in 2018, DearSA has built up a national and international database of close to 700,000 individuals (DearSA, 2020).

The DearSA platform creators found that despite formal channels for public participation at the national and provincial levels when it comes to proposed policy changes and legal amendments, active public participation is limited (Hutchinson, 2018; O’Reilly, 2019). The platform, which was founded by Rob Hutchinson, argues that this is because the formal mechanisms to channel public input are cumbersome and difficult to understand. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity on how decision-making processes operate at the national and provincial levels, meaning that most individuals are not aware of when they should engage or how to structure their inputs. These realities impact public participation, limiting space for sustained public input on policy proposals or legal amendments that ultimately affect citizens directly (Hutchinson, 2018). DearSA, as a platform, hopes to enable the broader public to navigate the complexity of the public input process (Hutchinson, 2018; O’Reilly, 2019).

Hutchinson notes that citizens are unaware of the fact that all proposed policy changes that will be considered by the National Assembly are published in the Government Gazette, giving the public at least 30 days to comment. In Hutchinson’s view, government is limiting broad participation to fast-track implementation, meaning that decisions may already have been made prior to the public outreach process. Going back to the conceptual framework, DearSA argues that the invited and formal avenues created by government for public participation are limited in their reach. For Hutchinson, the public participation process is heavily focused on informing the public of a policy change or decision at best, with no real intention of creating a deeper relationship where citizens can provide input and collaboration with decision-makers.

Government has already made the decision, they just put it out for comment so that they can tick the box and say that they have abided by the law.

(Hutchinson, 2018)

DearSA looks at ways of making it easier for ordinary people to be more informed and involved in public policy decisions, via its online platform (Hutchinson, 2018). Its website provides information on the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA), an overview of why public participation is important and guides users on parliamentary submissions (DearSA, 2020; O’Reilly, 2019). Hutchinson (2018) adds that platform users are informed about the importance of public submissions to Parliament, including information on how these submissions should be structured. The platform and the information shared aim to ensure that interested citizens (or groups of citizens) can make more informed, useable and timely inputs regarding any proposed new policy.
or policy change (Hutchinson, 2018). DearSA continues to fundraise through its online #IamActive crowdfunding campaign and in 2019 secured R400,000 in funding from the Indigo Trust (O’Reilly, 2019).

While DearSA agrees that potential users are inundated with information daily, Hutchinson (2018) argues that the average user still lacks information on particular issues, such as how they can use information constructively and collaboratively. The platform seeks to provide good, easy-to-use information as a starting point, thereby enabling users to make high-quality parliamentary submissions that clarify their viewpoint and proposed options (Hutchinson, 2018; O’Reilly, 2019). For Hutchinson this means that information must be shared strategically, making it both accessible and understandable in various languages and contexts.

Hutchinson describes the DearSA portal design as uncluttered. It provides a digital form on which citizens can record whether they are for or against a policy amendment and why. The online form also captures an individual’s details (Hutchinson, 2018). In this way, DearSA can generate detailed reports on a particular issue, by locality, including individual comments as well (Hutchinson, 2018). The platform is also expanding to include local participation platforms targeting municipalities. By the time of writing this report, DearCape Town, DearJoburg and DearTshwane sites had already been set up with plans to launch DearEkurhuleni sites in the future (DearSA, 2020). These platforms engage citizens by making them aware of active campaigns (such as electricity tariff increases or proposed infrastructure developments). They also contain information on key contact people, management, financial statements, demographics, service delivery, etc. (DearCape Town, 2020).

What is the definition of democracy? It is not about marking a piece of paper once every five years. It is actually about being involved in the decision-making processes which happen on a daily basis. [Ordinary people] have the ability to shape [their] democracy. You can’t just elect an official and leave them to do whatever they want and then shout at them when they become corrupt!

(Hutchinson, 2018)

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1 https://dearsouthafrica.co.za/iamactive/
3 https://www.dearcapetown.co.za/
4 https://dearjoburg.co.za/
5 https://deartshwane.co.za/
4.1 AMENDMENT OF SECTION 25: A CASE STUDY OF DEARSA PARTICIPATION

A proposed amendment to Section 25 of the South African Constitution (1996) seeks to address historical land ownership injustices by speeding up land reform in South Africa (Ngcukaitobi, 2019). Under this proposed bill, land (and improvements on land) can be expropriated by the state with no compensation (Ngcukaitobi, 2019).

DearSA received a total of 229,857 individual submissions on this proposed amendment, with 100,308 in favor of amending Section 25 and 129,549 against it (DearSA, 2020). For Hutchinson (2018), the key component of submissions like these are that all proposed amendments are presented in an objective matter, not as a petition, but as a space where anyone can comment, from all points of view. Strategically, this ensures that government cannot treat submissions as a single petition or submission, ensuring that a broader range of public perspectives and comments on proposed amendments are included in the final policy or legal decisions (Hutchinson, 2018; O’Reilly, 2019). The submission does not come from the DearSA platform, but as an email to the representative from the user that submitted the comment (Hutchinson, 2018). This ensures that thousands of individual inputs are not merely recorded as a single petition (Hutchinson, 2018). DearSA can also produce reports on submitted views to challenge government decisions that do not reflect the public input into the process (Hutchinson, 2018).
Hutchinson (2018) mentions that these broader reports enable participants to share their location (such as their province). This is a strength as it can give Parliament an overview of what citizens of different provinces are saying about a proposed amendment (Hutchinson, 2018).

The online platform provides an opportunity for ordinary people to read other comments by other individuals using the site (Hutchinson, 2018). This is currently limited to usernames as personal
information cannot be shared (Hutchinson, 2018). Hutchinson sees this as an opportunity to expose all users to the diversity of comments, giving each individual a deeper understanding of different viewpoints. The main focus for Hutchinson is to minimize the *echo chamber effect*, exposing people to views different from their own while encouraging lateral thinking across societal and political divisions.

Here are the risks, or from your point of view, what do you have to say about that – please participate in this. Meet on this platform and let us drive this thing further. It is about understanding the argument, the counter argument ... understanding the complexity of what we are dealing with and the multitude of options that we are presented with.

*(Hutchinson, 2018)*

An example of Gauteng provincial comments captures the diversity of views on the Section 25 amendments.

**TABLE ONE:** Screenshot of selected Gauteng comments on the proposed Section 25 amendment

However, DearSA has found that Parliament is often too busy to read through all the individual submissions on particular topics (Hutchinson, 2018). The DearSA submission reports are a way...
to condense hundreds of thousands of submissions, making it easier for Parliament to reach decisions (Hutchinson, 2018). However, Hutchinson reports instances where individual submissions are cherry-picked because they support a pre-conceived idea regarding a parliamentary decision. For Hutchinson cherry-picking is problematic, as it excludes divergent voices and broad public participation. Selecting some of the inputs and discarding others reinforces the perception that decisions have already been made at higher decision-making levels (Hutchinson, 2018). Hutchinson also mentions that without the ability to link opposing views constructively, civic apathy can deepen. This includes a growing frustration between citizens themselves, and between citizens and government. Hutchinson argues that the DearSA index of submissions provides a more solid foundation for advocacy and disputing the legality of decisions, especially if it can highlight that the democratic process was not followed.

While DearSA provides a space for divergent views regarding public policy, there is a threat that users will not engage regularly should they find that their particular views are not considered seriously (Hutchinson, 2018). Hutchinson also speaks about the dangers should there be a lack of parliamentary feedback on submitted views.

While the platform works on mobile handsets, Hutchinson says access to data remains a constraint. DearSA aims to give mobile users the information that they need in under two minutes, but this is curtailed by the cost of access (Hutchinson, 2018).

Another limitation of the platform is that more people are eager to engage on contentious issues (such as land reform) instead of more positive or procedural issues (Hutchinson, 2018). He fears that should highly emotive and deeply political problems be the only interactions, it can further erode social trust through deepening social divisions, instead of strengthening a shared civic narrative.

During the interview, lack of social cohesion and social solidarity were raised as concerns. Social media has a way of galvanising people into affinity groups where there is less engagement with alternative views and a greater tendency for those who think alike to be exposed to views that they agree with, according to Hutchinson. He says the platform creates spaces that will expose users to the multiplicity of views for or against a particular policy proposal or amendment.

People tend to group into their little bubbles and that is the danger of social media.

(Hutchinson, 2018)

DearSA attempts to create an inclusive space where opposing groups can discuss a particular issue (Hutchinson, 2018).
4.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERVIEW: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MONITORING?

The future and penetration of DearSA will rely on how the creators strategically manoeuvre among complex political realities and the social fragmentation around particular issues in South Africa. Another risk is that the feedback loop from government will need to be strengthened, otherwise citizens who bought into the #iamactive campaign will become disillusioned and potentially even more disengaged. While the platform provides links to parliamentary hearings that happen offline, the main activities take place online. A risk is that online discussions are not able to constructively engage with deep political divisions, meaning that users will not really gain an understanding of what those with opposing views are actually trying to say. There is a real risk that adversarial political views will be curtailed by the platform’s limited space for inputs. How can we deepen ordinary people’s engagement with views different from their own utilizing an online platform?

As Tembo (2013) indicated, the mere existence of a common problem does not mean that people will see opportunities for common action. A potential strategy for DearSA could be linking up with existing partners or platforms. For example, its platform could be linked with the likes of Vulekamali, Municipal Money, PMG or the Public Assembly.

DearSA as a platform will need to think strategically about ways to expand its footprint through building rapport with others in the same field. In addition, we cannot simply assume that people will be objective when presented with facts. Emotions play a big part of our ability to make decisions, especially in a politically charged atmosphere. Therefore, it is important to create common spaces, spaces where people can engage across divisions and provide input in a constructive manner. There should be ways to strengthen the online activities with targeted offline town hall-style meetings, for example. It is easy for people to feel isolated, marginalized or powerless, which lead to apathy. It is important to create outlets for people’s frustration.

Should users be stuck in a space where objectivity remains elusive, it is likely that attempts to broaden public participation will be increasingly captured by political opportunism and populism. Creators also need to navigate the reality that deliberate misinformation can also be shared to disrupt deep public engagement.

One of the more obvious threats remain the cost of internet in South Africa. This goes hand-in-hand with the problem of education. Those who are unable to access data are also likely to struggle to access information to make more informed decisions. They are more likely to be influenced by local leaders or political parties or individuals who have the ability and opportunity to present their arguments. Also, those who have online access are unable to understand the context and thoughts of those that are not online. This disrupts attempts at public participation, fosters distrusts between different socio-economic groups and ultimately deepens othering, a real opportunity for the political players. Participation is not yet normalised in our day-to-day life. In fact, it is very low on people’s list of priorities.

Hutchinson also mentions that capacity at the bureaucratic level could be a determinant for engagement. He states that parliamentary inputs are often ignored because those engaged in decision-making simply do not have the capacity to deal with real engagement on issues (Hutchinson, 2018).
DearSA, as an online platform, can add value if it is able to expand to a common space where people are not merely presented with facts. Its approach needs to continue to allow for divergent views and inputs to be shared as objectively as possible. In this way, the platform can contribute to social accountability monitoring through the creation of civic relationships that span ideological divides, a space where ordinary people can ask questions, respond to opinions and engage with each other. Beyond this, it should also include avenues for government to respond to the civic inputs that are gathered.
5. PARLIAMENTARY MONITORING GROUP (PMG)

5.1 THE CREATION OF PMG AND THE PEOPLE’S ASSEMBLY PROJECT

The Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) was established in 1995 as a partnership between the Black Sash, the Human Rights Committee and the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA). PMG launched its first website in 1998, aiming to make parliamentary information available to a larger public. PMG registered as an independent NGO in July 2009 (PMG, 2020). PMG has been described, by one of its subscribers, as “a reliable place to go for the information that Parliament should provide, but does not” (PMG, 2013). Partnering with Code for South Africa (later renamed OpenUp), the current PMG website was launched in 2015 (Kempe, 2015). Currently, PMG covers all parliamentary committees in the National Assembly and National Council of Provinces, as well as joint, standing and ad hoc committees, except for the Standing Committee on Intelligence, which is closed to the public (PMG, 2013). Its extensive website contains records, and a searchable database, of all meetings and documents from January 1998 to the present (PMG, 2013).

PMG aims to provide accurate, objective, and current information on all parliamentary committee proceedings in the form of detailed, unofficial minutes and documents and since 2007, sound recordings of the meeting. PMG’s key activity is the attending of all Parliamentary Committee meetings, where a monitor will tape and minute the proceedings and obtain all documents tabled in the committees. Immediately after the meeting, the audio recording is published on the PMG website. Once a detailed written report has been compiled, it passes through an editorial and quality control process. It is then published on the PMG website within three working days of the committee proceedings along with all the relevant committee documents such as public submissions, working drafts of bills and briefings on policy & legislation. (PMG, 2020)

PMG also notifies the public through its website of calls for comment, details on public hearings and parliamentary programmes, and provides a daily Bill Tracker and additional research on the functioning of Parliament (PMG, 2020). The PMG platform also links to another platform called People’s Assembly (PA). The PA platform is a project of PMG developed in partnership with mySociety8 (2019). It was launched in February 2014, utilizing an innovative coding process that

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7 https://www.pa.org.za/
8 https://www.mysociety.org/
allows for complex information regarding the activities and statements of individual Members of Parliament (MPs) to be sliced various ways (mySociety, 2019). This coding allowed for a complete overhaul in social accountability monitoring, allowing users to track MPs, building a stronger framework for keeping all MPs accountable (mySociety, 2019).

5.2 FORMAL PROCESSES, BUT LACKING PARTICIPATION

PMG research indicates that only 8% of submissions to Parliament come from individuals, with the bulk coming from civil society groups, experts or business (Fullard, 2018). Like DearSA, this presents PMG with a real challenge to get average citizens participating in parliamentary processes, including how ordinary people can give Parliament a better understanding of what they are saying about a particular issue (PMG, 2018).

PMG (2018) notes that Parliament is very prescriptive when it comes to public participation, with very specific timelines and prescribed formats for all submissions. This cumbersome process was also highlighted by DearSA. This means that even though the structures are technically in place, actual navigation of the processes can make it extremely difficult, even impossible, for broad public participation, as is evident from the low submission rate for individuals (PMG, 2018). During the interview with the PMG team (2018), it was highlighted that broader public participation in parliamentary processes remains a concern. This confirms that the formal and invited spaces for public participation are not having the desired impact by increasing active input from citizens.

The PMG team also argued that more and broader inputs will also need expanded capacity for decision-making committees, as they will have to be able to make sense of these civic inputs (2018). PMG is aware of how decision-making committees often grapple with thousands of inputs, many of them one-liners which are not of much use. As an example, PMG elaborated on public inputs on the proposed Political Party Funding Bill (2018). On 6 May 2017, Parliament finally resolved to establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Political Party Funding, with the Political Party Funding Bill being adopted on 27 March 2018 by the National Assembly (Grimwood, 2018). This Bill was the first drafted legislation to provide for and regulate private funding to political parties, including a disclosure regime for private donations to political parties (Grimwood, 2018).

Despite receiving 630,000 public submissions on the proposed Bill, just over 50% met the criteria set out by the Committee on Political Party Funding (Fullard, 2018). Parliament of South Africa (2020) sets out what a submission should include:

- A heading, indicating:
  - The name of the committee that the submission is being made to, and
  - The full title of the Bill or topic;
- The name of the person making the submission;
- The full contact details of the person making the submission;
- The name of the organization that the writer represents; and
- Details on the writer’s support base.
PMG (2018) also speaks about the main factors that impact on the public participation processes. People need enough time to participate, and they need awareness and information on proposed Bills or policy amendments, including understanding of how this can impact them (PMG, 2018). Beyond this, PMG also sees public education as important, as policy frameworks can be very high-level and sophisticated. This means that not everyone has the time to read proposed legislation and follow up with insightful input (PMG, 2018). The final component is access, and this is where the online platforms seek to give people what they need to navigate the process (PMG, 2018).

5.3 FEEDBACK LOOPS AND THE LACK OF AN ADEQUATE RESPONSE

During the interview, the PMG team used one example to show how inadequate feedback loops negatively impacts public participation processes. One team member reported a case where citizens reached out to them because their own cities were unresponsive to their queries on, for example, service delivery (2018). This impacts the PMG team, as they end up becoming involved and spending time with people, talking them through the various contact points available to them (2018).

> When they eventually find someone, we get copied in on those conversations and then we really see how painful it is to get some feedback.

*(Fullard, 2018)*

The PA platform was based on the idea that citizens should be able to connect with and track the work of their elected representatives as a strategy to restore the relationship between representatives and constituents (PMG, 2020). The representative locator tool (RepLocator) allows a user to find out who their local representative is and where they can find their closest constituency office (PA, 2020). The website uses information from multiple sources (PA, 2020). Coding is done by mySociety, and the project was funded by the Indigo Trust.⁹

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⁹ [https://indigotrust.org.uk/](https://indigotrust.org.uk/)

¹⁰ [https://www.pa.org.za/position/member/parliament/?order=name&a=1](https://www.pa.org.za/position/member/parliament/?order=name&a=1)
(Fullard, 2018). PMG notes that even with the tool in place, responses have been disheartening. As an example, the team confirms that between February 2018 and the interview in November 2018, more than 1,300 messages had been sent via the tool, but fewer than 10% of MPs had responded (Fullard, 2018).

As much as we encourage the public to participate and engage … and hold representatives accountable, representatives also have the duty to engage back. Just close the loop. I think this is missing in South Africa. MPs know that they are public representatives, but do they really know how to convey that or put them into action? I see this in the poor response rate to Write to an MP.

(Fullard, 2018)

MPs are your elected representatives - they must be accountable to the people and they must act in the public interest. Write to an MP if you want to petition or lobby them to assist you with a problem (no private disputes and only issues to do with government services), offer suggestions or support a campaign you feel strongly about.

Search for MPs by name, or select from the drop-down.
You can send your message to up to 5 people.

- Select a valid choice. 170 is not one of the available choices.

Select Some Options

DRAFT MESSAGE

DIAGRAM EIGHT: MP search feature (RepLocator), PA website (2020)

The same lack of feedback also applies to the Right to a Committee tool11 (Fullard, 2018). The PMG team acknowledged that many of the messages concern issues that are not the roles and responsibility of an MP, but one of the larger concerns they have is that there is “seemingly no will to even acknowledge messages from ordinary South Africans”. PMG has raised this lack of rapport with the various political parties, but the response has been that the onus is on individual MPs to respond.

11 https://www.pa.org.za/committees/
5.4 CONSTITUENCY OFFICES: ANOTHER MISSING LINK

The PMG team noted that the work of the constituency offices is varied and there are no real measures as to what they should be doing. Constituency offices represent the first point of contact for citizens, and there should be more than 350 offices located throughout the Republic (Letshele, 2020). Parliament’s program has two main components; firstly, parliamentary sessions and committees and secondly, constituency periods. Political parties get a monthly allowance for each MP to run a constituency office, and each party makes its own constituency arrangements. PMG confirms that these offices are under-utilized. The People’s Assembly platform tracks which MP is allocated to each office (PA, 2020). Despite the money spent on these offices, there is no public information about them. Letshele (2020) confirms that by March 2020, PMG was only able to get details for constituency offices from nine of the 14 political parties represented in the National Assembly. Information for the Democratic Alliance, Economic Freedom Fighters and Inkatha Freedom Party was outdated, while the African National Congress did not provide any information (Letshele, 2020). Fin24 (2019) reports that despite the funding for constituency offices, it is “impossible to confirm whether the offices exist as indicated”. The lack of functioning constituency offices is a missed opportunity in South Africa, widening the gap between those who govern and the governed (Fin24, 2019).

PMG (2018) mentions another challenge that negatively impacts accountability. Technology remains a barrier, not only for those trying to connect with their representatives, but also when MPs lack skills to use their emails properly. When PMG reached out to MPs in the form of a questionnaire about communication to constituents through social media, they had just under 20

DIAGRAM NINE: Screengrab of PA website, example of a committee submission, 2019
responses (Fullard, 2018). The first round of emails was largely ignored; the only option was to physically go to their offices to get a response.

This is just another illustration of MPs using technology, or rather NOT using technology, even when it comes to filling in a simple survey questionnaire. (Fullard, 2018)

PMG also argued that MPs are severely under-capacitated. Many of them are inundated by requests, but they simply do not have the staff to adequately deal with constituency work (PMG, 2018). This could potentially have more impact on individual MPs from smaller parties that theoretically have fewer resources. The impact of this limited feedback loop is that citizens become disillusioned. Real buy-in and responsiveness would help build public participation.

5.5 REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERVIEW: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MONITORING?

The interview highlighted some of the constraints that keep the broader public from actively participating in parliamentary processes. Beyond the challenges of accessing information, having time for participation and knowing when and how to participate, other challenges remain. The interview highlighted the lack of adequate feedback loops, widening the gap between representatives and their constituents. The capacity of constituents needs to be strengthened, but representatives are also curtailed in their ability to respond due to their lack of capacity. Broadening participation without strengthening the capacity of representatives would further overwhelm their ability to respond to the civic voice. Public participation can lead to a landslide of information and people tend to filter out the information that they do not deem critical, or that affects decisions that they have already made. When it comes to social accountability monitoring, it is important to think not only about increasing the voice of those on the ground or giving them more access to platforms where they can express themselves. It is critical to ensure that once their voices are articulated, those who govern have the capacity to respond adequately.

It is interesting that PMG and DearSA have overlapping mandates, but there does not seem to be any working relationship between them. PMG contains decades of parliamentary information on representatives and processes. This could be social accountability monitoring tools and approaches being replicated rather than working collaboratively.
6. THE PUBLIC SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY MONITOR (PSAM)

PSAM\textsuperscript{12} forms part of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University, based in Makhanda, South Africa (PSAM, 2020). PSAM argues that government, public officials and the private sector all have a duty to justify decisions and the implementation of programs in which any public resources have been utilised. From a social accountability monitoring perspective, this means monitoring how the expenditure of public resources have affected the “progressive realization of socio-economic rights” (PSAM, 2020).

6.1 FROM SHAME AND BLAME APPROACHES TOWARDS SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MONITORING

Kruuse describes PSAM as a research institute that seeks to draw the public’s attention to relevant issues. It is also an early warning system that can flag areas where lack of accountability is growing or entrenched (PSAM, 2020). Kruuse notes that the work of PSAM has been moving away from its earlier shame and blame approach, and since 2007 has been focusing more on working directly with strategic partners and public officials in trying to address systemic problems with public resource utilization (Fölscher & Kruger, 2013). This strategic decision was taken to ensure that all stakeholders are capacitated to effect change, especially when the public sector had been unresponsive to the shame and blame approach (Fölscher & Kruger, 2013). Merely highlighting corruption, wasteful spending and bad planning has not been enough to improve accountability processes (Fölscher & Kruger, 2013). PSAM’s main activities currently include research, monitoring, advocacy and capacity-building (PSAM, 2020). It has a footprint throughout southern Africa, aiming to generate and share knowledge about “social accountability and the monitoring and advocacy tools that can build more open, participatory and accountable governments” (PSAM, 2020).

6.2 BUILDING COLLECTIVE CAPACITY AND NETWORKS

PSAM has been working actively to connect organizations and to draw on a collective pool of resources and skills in their various programs, identifying avenues for more constructive work with public services when it comes to service delivery monitoring (Kruuse, 2018). PSAM does not view grassroot activism as its organizational strength, and its focus lies in data analytics and research support for civil society partners and social movements that are better placed to build activism.

\textsuperscript{12}www.psam.org.za
(Kruuse, 2018). Kruuse refers to how PSAM was instrumental in the establishment of Imali Yethu, a civil society coalition promoting more open budgets, and through that coalition was involved in the development of the Vulekamali platform. Kruuse notes that the creation of Vulekamali was a demanding process but extremely rewarding, giving PSAM the opportunity to develop relations with key state officials and witness the opening up of space, data and more detailed budget information. Kruuse also notes that while National Treasury funded the development of the Vulekamali platform, the Imali Yethu coalition played an important role in building implementation capacity.

Kruuse explains how PSAM acts as an interlocutor, located in a more technical space that is not always directly linked to community-based monitoring at a local level. However, he points to PSAM’s role in ensuring that information is released at a local level, and its inputs are tracked and actioned where needed (Kruuse, 2018).

Even though it does not have a specific focus at grassroots level, its concern with monitoring public expenditure and results, its advocacy work and its capacity-building initiatives continue to actively link it to grassroots social movements, especially in the Eastern Cape province (Kruuse, 2018). Kruuse describes PSAM’s strategic vision to build multi-stakeholder and multi-dimensional relationships when it comes to working with grassroots social movements. He argues this assists social movements with additional research, data analysis or by providing litigation support. For example, PSAM, through the Imali Yethu coalition, supported the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) and Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU) in a court case about access to sanitation (IBP, 2013). PSAM analyzed national sanitation budgets and responded to the state’s defense in two affidavits submitted to court (IBP, 2013). SJC and NU were at the same time conducting a full audit of all sanitation facilities in the area, counting all the toilets in four settlements in Khayelitsha, City of Cape Town (IBP, 2013). Their numbers were compared with the information gathered by PSAM, which included the City of Cape Town’s records, and measured against national and provincial budgets and expected expenditure (IBP, 2013). In this way PSAM’s work supported the social audits, giving community members and civil society organizations a stronger platform through combining community realities with relevant government budgets, information and records (Kruuse, 2018). These social audits allowed PSAM not only to account for money that was spent, but to see if public expenditure was proper and made a difference to people’s lives (IBP, 2013).

PSAM’s role as an interlocutor (between the invited and the invented spaces) can be seen in the health domain, where it helped set up a coalition of health activists in 2013 called the Eastern Cape Health Crisis Action Coalition (ECHCAC).15 The ECHCAC is made up of 19 members, including the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Section27, the Black Sash and the South African Medical Association. Coalitions can be powerful vehicles in facilitating change, but PSAM noted that there needs to be more commitment to learning, knowledge and skills transfer between partners (Nxele, 2017).

It has also been at the forefront of budget allocation and expenditure monitoring and looks at the South African budget and how budget implementation can be strengthened, with the Budget Justice Coalition16 (BJC) which actively engages National Treasury and Parliament throughout the

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13 https://imaliyethu.org.za/
14 https://sjc.org.za/
15 https://www.facebook.com/pg/EChealthcrisis/about/?ref=page_internal
16 https://budgetjusticesa.org/
budget cycle (Kruuse, 2020). The BJC has nine founding members, creating a voluntary network of organizations that seeks to "collaboratively build people's participation in and understanding of South Africa's budget and planning processes" (BJC, 2019).

Kruuse (2018) also shares how PSAM has been working with community journalists in the Eastern Cape, supporting the Eastern Cape Communications Forum (ECCF). The ECCF aimed to strengthen local independent media, enabling effective communication with communities on developmental issues (Kruuse, 2018). The ECCF was disbanded in 2019 due to lack of funding. Strategically, PSAM opts to work with other organizations or through coalitions, as it understands the limitations of its own reach (Kruuse, 2018). PSAM also seeks to connect its work with more meaningful involvement and co-creation when it comes to government and citizens (PSAM, 2020). Kruuse is critical of government-initiated community meetings, stating that these are often heralded as dialogue sessions and spaces of deeper engagement, but when it comes to service delivery issues, meetings remain forums to gather complaints.

PSAM participated in the public hearings on the proposed policy changes to the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill. During these meetings, Kruuse noted that the public had little to say about the proposed bill, with most people being more concerned about the current state of healthcare in the province and the collapse of health services. Government was more interested in explaining the reasoning behind the decision to have an NHI. This meant that the environment was not collaborative and there was little to no reportbacks and accountability on decisions after these meetings (PSAM interview). For Kruuse, PSAM will continue to work through coalitions, aiming to strengthen public resource management processes so that they are more open and accountable to the public.

6.3 LACK OF FEEDBACK: A SHARED PROBLEM

During the interview, a key challenge in the work of PSAM that emerged was that both parliamentary and provincial legislatures often ignore findings and recommendations (Kruuse, 2018). Or, where there was a response, it was unable to deal with the public expenditure challenge. This suggests that within the public service space, political party allegiances and elite groupings trump attempts to connect with the public through social accountability and transparency (Kruuse, 2018).

While Kruuse agrees that information is critically important, he also stresses the distribution and consumption of information. As an example, Kruuse asks how ordinary people access information. Do they watch TV or listen to the radio? Is their preferred newspaper readily available if they are in a rural location? Do they have access to online sources? These questions on preferred and accessible information sources impact how citizens access and engage with information on governance issues (Kruuse, 2018). Practitioners like PSAM should be aware of citizens’ need to access necessary information, packaged in an accessible manner (PSAM interview). In a province like the Eastern Cape, Kruuse argues that many rural residents have limited access to a wide selection of information sources, compared to their counterparts in the cities. Due to this, Kruuse notes that many communities depend on radio and community journalists, while less formal sources of 'news' and 'information' flourish on platforms like WhatsApp. Kruuse argues that PSAM’s role in the ECCF allowed it to contribute to governance and service delivery discussions with research and data via state and private or community radio. Kruuse argues that this broadened civic engagement on particular service delivery gaps and accountability issues in the province.
6.4 THE BLIND-SPOT OF INVITED SPACES

Kruuse agrees with others interviewed that public participation in South Africa is often viewed as mere consultation. Furthermore, when people do take the time and make an effort to understand the process and make an input, they are often disappointed when there is no real feedback from government. Unless people see a return on the investment of their time in participation in a municipal, provincial or national process, practitioners and donors will have little success in deepening real participation and true social accountability monitoring (Kruuse, 2018). The broken feedback loop indicates one of the weakest points in the social accountability monitoring cycle. Kruuse also thinks that people resort to protests because these are more successful on some levels in getting some kind of response. For Kruuse, the proliferation of protests is a clear indication that the formal and invited mechanisms of civic engagement are just not working the way that they should.

What is the point? We have all these hollow promises … Promises are made pre-elections and then not delivered upon so the sentiment amongst many members of communities is that we want to see commitment, we want to restore trust in the mechanism of engagement otherwise protests will be the vehicles of choice.

(Kruuse, 2018)

6.5 DEALING WITH MISINFORMATION

Kruuse highlights another concern that is exacerbated by the weak feedback loops. Limited or inappropriate communication by public officials to residents can lead to misinformation and rumors. Kruuse argues that there needs to be communication mechanisms that respond meaningfully to miscommunication or misinformation, countering these with accurate contextual information. Kruuse further highlights how very uncivil actions, like xenophobic attacks, are often conducted under the guise of service delivery protests. The lack of contextual information can allow unsubstantiated rumors to spread. Kruuse warns that this can undermine social accountability monitoring, as it directs energy away from systemic issues towards spaces where action, even violent action, becomes more popular.
7. NAMOLA

Namola’s focus is to promote personal safety through a mobile application (Matthaei, 2018). The Namola mobile application was launched in the City of Tshwane (Gauteng) in 2015, building on the StellieSafe application that was piloted in Stellenbosch (Western Cape) (Letsebe, 2017). Namola is a free crime and emergency response mobile application that allows users to share GPS coordinates and the name and nature of the emergency that they are facing (Letsebe, 2017). The Namola mobile application, designed by non-profit organization Happimo,\(^\text{17}\) aims to be free, inclusive and accessible to any GPS-enabled smartphone (Letsebe, 2017). In 2017, the mobile application branched out to all nine provinces, thanks to a partnership with Dial Direct Insurance (Adcomm, 2017).

7.1 A ONE-BUTTON RESPONSE FOR THOSE IN NEED

Matthaei explains that the idea was to keep it as simple as pressing a button to request emergency assistance. The users’ details are sent to the Namola control room and from there to the nearest, most relevant first responders (law enforcement, emergency, fire or citizen responders). Matthaei describes three main infrastructure pieces of the mobile application. First, there is what users see in the emergency app. A second component is the Namola 24/7 control room. The final component is the link to the appropriate emergency response team. The flow of information goes from signaling an emergency (by the user) through the control room, to a monitoring team who can confirm the emergency and dispatch the appropriate response. Finally, the closest appropriate responder will receive details regarding the emergency and navigation to reach the user (Namola, 2020).

The system is built to be interoperable, meaning that the software can run in the Namola control room while being flexible enough to tie into other control rooms (Matthaei, 2018). For example, even a neighborhood watch can also utilize the control room interface if it has a central control room (Matthaei, 2018). This also means that smaller incidents can be geofenced to go directly to a neighborhood watch instead of coming to the Namola (or an emergency response’s) control room, cutting down the resources deployed for smaller neighborhood incidents, such as lost pets or stolen bicycles (Matthaei, 2018). The application has a further benefit of capturing all incidents, enabling data extrapolation and the geolocation of unsafe areas, or developing crime trends (Matthaei, 2018).

7.2 NAMOLA USERS AND PROVINCIAL SPREAD

The bulk of users are based in Gauteng (60%), 17% live in the Western Cape and just under 10% are in KwaZulu-Natal (Caboz, 2018). Namola had just over 235,000 downloads in 2018 (Matthaei, 2018). Uptake has been growing steadily with between 200 and 500 downloads a day (Matthaei, \(^\text{17}\)http://www.happimo.org/).
2018). By June 2019, when the Namola Watch Network was launched, the application recorded 300,000 downloads (IOL, 2019) and when it launched its COVID-19 response component in April 2020 it had more than 400,000 downloads (Highwaymail, 2020). A total of 50% of alerts are related to crime and law enforcement, 20% to accidents, 19.5% to medical emergencies and 5% to fires (Caboz, 2018). More than 500 community safety initiatives have joined and more than 3,000 first responders (who are predominantly community patrollers) have been added to the network (Dlodlo, 2019, Matthaei, 2018). In South Africa, community patrollers play an essential role, giving ordinary community members the ability to get actively involved in ensuring that their neighborhoods are safe. Community patrollers are not part of the police service and have the same powers and rights as an ordinary South African citizen. They are coordinated through neighborhood watches.

Namola is currently mostly a suburban network, but it has been thinking of ways to expand into the township space. Suburbs under Apartheid were exclusively designated for the white population, while townships were located on the outer edges of cities and designated for the non-white population. Even after apartheid, suburbs still have more wealth, explaining the interest from these neighborhoods to download the application. Matthaei (2018) considers the impact that data costs might have on township users, as people need access to mobile data to run the application. Another challenge is getting people to see the value of installing an app, even one that they think is a good idea (Matthaei, 2018). However, the steady uptake in downloads since 2017 indicates that users are seeing utility in the platform.

7.3 FUNDING AND SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure sustainability, Namola has also developed Namola Plus, where current users can get added benefits, such as dedicated armed response and private emergency medical services, at R49 for an individual per month or R89 for a family (Namola, 2020). The Namola Panic Tracker represents another paid-for option. The device does not need a mobile device to function and can be carried like a panic button. This device will link you to the control room and functions like a mobile phone in the event of an emergency. It retails at R2,249 for the device, including a 12-month subscription (Namola, 2020).

To expand Namola from being an emergency button only, it has had to become a mobile application that has daily utility (Matthaei, 2018). Components like family location sharing have increased daily usage, although Android and Apple already offer this option (Matthaei, 2018). Using the application to report less serious or suspicious incidents to relevant responders can also add value, such as low-level disturbances that a neighborhood watch would be able to attend to (Matthaei, 2018). Matthaei argues that this would position Namola strategically, allowing it to be a platform for community members to raise minor issues, limiting the noisy and often undirected WhatsApp community safety forums. Namola’s platform also allows for shared incidents to be verified, cutting down on misinformation that is a side-product of the broader-input, less regulated WhatsApp forums (Matthaei, 2018).

Another strategic space for Namola is the information it gives users regarding the support and care that non-governmental organizations provide in their locality (Matthaei, 2018). For example, the TEARS Foundation formally partnered with Namola in reporting rape and domestic violence (Matthaei, 2018). The database is expanding in terms of those giving trauma counselling and suicide support (Matthaei, 2018).
7.4 RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

Matthaei says the current relationships with the public service have increased roll-out, although there is still some skepticism. According to Matthaei, there is a concern from the public service that the business focus and community involvement can negate the actions of formal safety structures. Matthaei says this is particularly true when it comes to safety initiatives, as community policing and private security can easily enter a legal grey zone, in terms of the limits to its responsibilities and powers. The Namola Watch program was launched in 2018, and since then more than 750 community organizations have signed up (Heidelberg Nigel Heraut, 2019).

Matthaei talks about a gap in data since there is no unified space where all national 10111 calls can be logged. The different data repositories are also not talking to each other, making data even less actionable (Matthaei, 2018). A lot of police stations still capture data by hand, which negatively impacts the quality of the statistics at hand for the South African Police Service (SAPS) (Matthaei, 2018). Namola’s database, in comparison, is small but it is functioning and growing.

There could be a perception from the public sector that Namola could crowd them out and become the de facto standard (Matthaei, 2018). This is politically problematic as Namola mostly represents the suburban, mostly white and more well-off South Africans (Matthaei, 2018).

Matthaei notes that consistent collaboration between police stations, community policing forums, neighborhood watches and the users are not yet a reality. While some areas have a functioning working relationship between stakeholders, it is absent in others (Matthaei, 2018). Matthaei argues that this could be an indication of the level of organization that exists within each community.

7.5 REFLECTIONS

There are challenges regarding the relationship between the SAPS and the communities that they serve. Poor neighborhoods often distrust the police based on their experience of poor service delivery, while neighborhoods with more financial resources rely on private security. It would be interesting to see whether Namola can partner with other organizations in utilizing the data generated through their reported cases to inform safety audits per locality. The Namola platform generates a lot of data in terms of number of incidents, types of incidents and response times, which could be used to assess policing across different districts. There are potential lessons to be learned about which areas have the fastest response times or experience a drop in particular incidents. Currently Namola does not seem to collaborate with other data partners, or civil society and community organizing platforms.

The Namola Watch add-on can potentially exacerbate the strain between the SAPS and residents, especially where community groups do not follow the rules when it comes to neighborhood watches. There are no guidelines on their website to guide those who create Namola Watch teams about contacting their local community police station, community liaison officers or their local community policing forum. This can create tension between formal structures and community responses, especially where community members are not aware of their role in the safety chain.

An important component of social accountability monitoring is the capacity for feedback to the users and authorities. Namola does not have a feedback loop in place, even though it has available data. This would give communities that are part of the network access to statistics and
trends and would strengthen their ability to advocate for more visible policing, a police station and more resources. A feedback loop could strengthen rapport between communities, their ward councilors, community policing forums, the police and the larger public sector.

As a safety application, Namola is competing with other similar applications such as Aura\textsuperscript{18} and Integrated Emergency Response (IER)\textsuperscript{19}. Both offer a basic free version with added subscription features.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \url{https://aura.services/}
\item The iER.co.za website no longer seems to be active.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
8. VULEKAMALI AND MUNICIPAL MONEY

8.1 THE EARLY DAYS: NATIONAL TREASURY AND CIVIL SOCIETY

During the interview with PSAM, its role in the formation of the Imali Yethu coalition was mentioned. Imali Yethu is a coalition between various organizations that are all interested in promoting “budget transparency and public participation” (SALGA, 2020), and striving to make budget information more accessible, user-friendly and empowering (Imali Yethu, 2020). National Treasury, interested in looking at engagement platforms and tools that could involve ordinary citizens, reached out to the Imali Yethu coalition. In 2015, the South African National Treasury started the development of an open budget platform, building on an earlier platform that will be discussed below (Vulekamali, 2020; Imali Yethu, 2020). In 2017, OpenUp was contracted to assist in the development of an online portal that would be easy to navigate, guide users through the budget cycle and provide them with space to make inputs on the budget (Imali Yethu, 2020). The platform was to be a collaboration between government and civil society, an initiative to “open up data … putting citizens at the centre of public programmes and services, giving them meaningful influence on the decisions that affect their daily lives” (SALGA, 2020).

8.2 VULEKAMALI IS LAUNCHED

The Vulekamali online platform was launched by National Treasury on 20 February 2018 (Best, 2018). The portal currently has approximately 1,500 subscribers, but access fluctuates depending on the timing in the South African budget cycle (email correspondence, 2020). In the interview the development of the portal was described as on-going and iterative, with the members of Imali Yethu actively providing support, oversight and adjustments to the portal where needed.

a. Challenge #1: Limited public participation in the budget process

The need for this portal became more evident as National Treasury found that even with South Africa ranking first (shared with New Zealand) in the 2017 Open Budget Index (OBI), South Africa can improve on public participation throughout the budget process (IBP, 2018). At a September 2017 meeting in Pretoria the learning platform, Dataquest, noted that despite the high rating, immediate obstacles in the budget process include lack of consultation from the Auditor-General and the fact that the “needs and wants of communities are not properly communicated and a working process for feedback is not in place” (National Treasury, 2017).

20 https://vulekamali.gov.za/
21 https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/open-budget-index-rankings/
b. Challenge #2: Information is available, but not used

The Vulekamali team (2018) explained that despite data and information published on the National Treasury website, it is not being used widely. A report on the SALGA (2020) website confirms this. As a team member reflected during the interview, the data is presented in a way that makes it difficult for ordinary people to use or understand.

For somebody that has never been exposed to any of this data in this particular format, it is hard to understand.

(Vulekamali team member, 2018)

c. Challenge #3: Data is not relevant or actionable

The National Treasury is also aware of how budget information and data is not used in a strategic way that could deepen engagement around issues.

Budget data is typically inaccessible to most South Africans. They also do not know how it is relevant to them or how it could be actionable. There are also few opportunities for meaningful engagement with government.

(National Treasury, 2017)

d. Challenge #4: There is a gap between citizens and government

Vulekamali is looking to actively bridge the gap between citizens and government around the budget by encouraging public participation processes that take the needs of citizens into account, while holding government to account for budget decisions (Vulekamali, 2020). The idea behind the platform is to make data interesting, accessible and easy to understand (Imali Yethu, 2020). In this way, people can respond to what they relate to, issues that directly affect them.

Communities know what they need, but don’t know how to be heard.

(National Treasury, 2017)
8.3 A BROAD COLLABORATION TO RETHINK PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The core values that drove the Vulekamali portal were to make it a broad collaboration (in terms of stakeholders) that would be built around the needs of the user and that would ensure that the information, data and documents it contained would inspire ordinary people to participate in the budget process (SALGA, 2020). The Vulekamali team (2018) also speaks about how a user-friendly and data-conscious portal would enable more individuals to access information that they need, as community meetings are not always held at a convenient time or place. During the interview, team members mentioned that individuals at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum are most marginal to the process, even though the decisions could have a greater impact on them. The Vulekamali team believes that the lack of people accessing the budget information is not an indication of lack of interest. Despite challenges, during the interview the team members spoke about their surprise about the high levels of interest from the public in the budget process.

According to those interviewed, the portal aims to package information in a way that ordinary people can understand and use. While the information on the National Treasury website is dense and complicated, Vulekamali aims to present it visually, allowing users to compare various datasets. The graph below indicates how users view the national budget allocations to each province (2020). Users can also compare how much is allocated to each department in each province.

**Diagram Ten:** Provincial budgets for 2020, Vulekamali website (2020)
8.4 MUNICIPAL MONEY: THE PREDECESSOR

While Vulekamali focuses on the national budget, another platform looks at encouraging broader engagement with the budget at local level. The Municipal Money portal was created in 2016. In line with Vulekamali’s aims at national and provincial levels, it looks at engaging users with municipal budgets, regardless of their experience or education (SALGA, 2020).

The design phase was led by the National Treasury and the development was left to CodeforSouthAfrica (OpenUp). It did not involve civil society actors. At the time of writing Municipal Money published financial information about municipalities from 2015 to June 2018, limiting its utility. Users can gain insights into their specific municipality, including the names and contact numbers of their representatives. They can also compare their municipal spending year-on-year (currently 2015 to 2018), revenue streams and capital projects. Another feature allows users to compare their municipality with others. The portal is also seeded with instructional videos and terminology explanations for users.

![Diagram Eleven: Municipal Money: A screenshot of revenue for Knysna Municipality]

8.5 PUTTING USERS AT THE CENTRE

Vulekamali was designed after the Municipal Money portal was uploaded and incorporates many of the lessons learned from the first phase (Kruuse, 2020). The team (2018) notes that a decision was taken not to spend too much time and money on extensive design upfront, but rather to design a portal that is more flexible and adaptable (Vulekamali, 2020). The team describes the process as iterative, building on active user involvement throughout each developmental phase. Stakeholder Imali Yethu played an important role throughout in providing inputs that have been incorporated into the IT development, including planning and implementing provincial road shows (Kruuse, 2020; Vulekamali, 2020).

https://municipalmoney.gov.za/about
8.6 **ONE DATA REPOSITORY**

OpenUp led the development for the Vulekamali and Municipal Money platforms, as mentioned above. An application program interface ensures that raw data can be accessed in a format that ordinary people can use, while those who are more well-versed in data can compare and analyse different raw datasets (SALGA, 2020). The platforms are designed to be interactive and educational, bringing all budget-related information together in one space.

8.7 **INCREMENTAL DESIGN**

A Dataquest meeting held in Pretoria on 26 September 2017 (Vulekamali, 2020) laid the basis for the development of the portal. The development of the platform is divided into four distinct stages, preceded by an initial planning phase, started in August 2017 (Vulekamali, 2020).

Development of the platform

During the planning stage a Project Steering Committee and an Operational Working Group was instructed to provide strategic and operational guidance to the project, made up of National Treasury officials and representatives from the Imali Yethu coalition (Vulekamali, 2020). The Government Technical Advisory Centre was brought on board to support the planning and management of the project (Vulekamali, 2020). During this phase, the scope of the project was decided upon, followed by an open tender process, overseen by Imali Yethu (Vulekamali, 2020). The project officially started on 4 November 2017.

Each of the four active stages in the project roll-out built on lessons learned from the previous stage. At the time of writing the project was at stage four (follow-up email, 2020). During this final phase, user feedback will be used to guide additional dataset uploads, including visual improvements to all department pages (Vulekamali, 2020). Provincial infrastructure project pages will also be updated to ensure maximum transparency in government spending (Vulekamali, 2020). Feedback is collected during each stage from active users, ensuring continued learning and adaption, which is in line with the idea behind the platform (Vulekamali, 2020). The Vulekamali team mentioned that a communication strategy was designed in partnership with Imali Yethu and implemented nationwide to promote public participation. This strategy includes a stakeholder engagement plan, implemented by Imali Yethu (2018). An example of a Civic Information Drive (CID) can be seen below, on the Vulekamali Create link to the larger platform. This allows users to post information and get updates about CIDs or hackathons close to them (Vulekamali Create, 2020).

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23 https://create.vulekamali.gov.za/
24 At a hackathon, computer programmers and software developers collaborate on specific software products.
In a follow-up discussion with Vulekamali, the CIDCs were described in more detail. These were conducted in all nine provinces, with content developed in collaboration between OpenUp, Imali Yethu and the National Treasury (Cele, 2020). Each initiative aimed to introduce various identified groups to Vulekamali and, importantly, gain valuable feedback for further development of the portal (follow-up email, 2020; Kruuse, 2020). The CIDCs consisted of civil society organization budget literacy training, provincial government awareness sessions, Dataquest sessions and hackathons (SALGA, 2020). The main goal of the drives was to inform the public about the portal and learn what they might need from the platform. During the early stages it became evident
that awareness about the portal is not enough as citizens did not have the basic budget literacy to fully exploit the benefits that the portal could offer. The target audience for the CIDs ranged from government officials to civil society representatives in communities.

8.8 CHALLENGES REMAIN

a. Accessibility: The cost of data

Accessibility and utility are two of the main goals of the portal, but the team acknowledges that the cost of internet access remains a barrier to broad participation. A big breakthrough could be ensuring a zero data cost option for the portal so that more people could have access to the information and make use of it (Vulekamali, 2018).

b. National budgets and local issues

Another component to consider is where ordinary people see themselves participating in the budget process. Community sessions are more focused on the local budget, compared to the portal that focuses on the provincial and national budgets (Vulekamali, 2018). There are no plans to integrate or merge Municipal Money with Vulekamali (follow-up email, 2020). A gap persists in making sure people understand how local budgets are negatively impacted when they fail to spend money allocated to them (2018).

c. Local budget champions

During the interview, the Vulekamali team (2018) noted that the active participation of municipal councilors is something that they need to be more aware of. Councilors can play the role of interlocuters, involving more people in participatory budgeting processes. One team member (2018) spoke about how the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is difficult to navigate, even though this happens at a local level. In theory the IDP presents a great opportunity for community participation.

“I attempted, I will use that word, attempted to participate in the IDP process … almost three times. I realized it was not for me … it was not what I was expecting it to be … the municipality comes to us as a people and then, allowing us to give inputs so that they can make decisions. Even more of an issue with them was that they presented what they had already included on our behalf. It was clear that we could not even change what they had come to present. I found it very skewed in terms of public participation. This was not what I was expecting public participation to be, but ja.”

(Vulekamali, 2018)
d. Civic education

Vulekamali seeks to educate users about the entire budget process, including where it originates, who is involved and at what stage people should provide input (Vulekamali, 2020). Other education components involve a glossary of terms, educational videos (in various languages), budget information and resources (Vulekamali, 2020). The team also mentioned a social media strategy to generate more interest in the general public about the portal.

[Diagram Fourteen: Example of educational videos on the Vulekamali website, translated into five languages]

e. Handover and sustainability

To ensure sustainability and longevity, the portal with all its current information will remain open to all users, including manuals on how to sustain it even if the main developer steps aside (SALGA, 2020). The Vulekamali portal will continue to evolve as it accesses what users need and how they will use it. The Vulekamali team acknowledges that understanding information is often taken for granted. Information needs to be improved so that those who access it can use it. The portal does not require users to register or to sign in for each session. While this facilitates access, the team notes that no data can be collected on individual user profiles. It is impossible to identify a user as an individual or an organization. A new feature will allow civil society to contribute data and other pieces of information.

25 https://vulekamali.gov.za/learning-resources/glossary
8.9 REFLECTIONS

A SALGA report notes that one of the trickier components of the Vulekamali process was its focus on engaging and partnering with civil society networks throughout the implementation and design of the portal. However, one of the strengths of this more complicated approach was that it has enriched the portal design and enabled it to speak directly to the needs of ordinary people (SALGA, 2020).

The platform is currently accessible on mobile phones, but there has been no movement to include WhatsApp to facilitate further access. This could greatly increase engagement with material in a format with which people are familiar. WhatsApp is being used more regularly to feed information to users, including issues related to COVID-19, to access social services or rate public health facilities.  

Making the platform zero-rated (free) is seen as a strategy to make it more accessible, but during the DataQuest meeting in Pretoria (2017), attendees were skeptical about this approach alone. Even if data is zero-rated, this does not mean people will engage with it.

A mother does not care about the national budget. She cares about whether she can feed the kids in her household.

(Dataquest, 2017)

Another opportunity that can facilitate uptake is to look at ways to make community members contributors to local data. Infusing the site with a citizen-based monitoring or social audit component will ensure that issues relevant to communities are raised, in a way that can generate real engagement and more buy-in regarding the platform. These approaches and tools invite users to create their own data, demystifying the data process and getting people involved while training them on specific budgetary terms.

Vulekamali (and Municipal Money) will need to find ways to meet people where they are, in a way that is comfortable to them. An initial idea shared during the 2017 Dataquest was to train youth in communities to drive citizen-based monitoring and citizen journalism, introducing them as interlocuters in the budget process (Dataquest, 2017). Cultural channels like choirs, musicals and dance can also add to inclusion (National Treasury, 2017).

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26 The National Department of Health has a designated COVID-19 WhatsApp line that feeds up-to-date information to South Africans, accessible at +27600123456.

27 These WhatsApp tools will be described below.
9. OPENUP

9.1 ODADI: FIRST STEPS TO RE-THINK HOW CODING CAN SHAPE DEMOCRACY

OpenUp (formerly Code for South Africa) was formed out of the Open Data and Democracy Initiative (ODADI) coalition (Ferreira, 2017). ODADI was a broad-based volunteer movement, formed in 2011, “to build on South Africa’s early support for the Open Government Partnership (OGP)” to look at ways to inspire “a grassroots data-driven movement in South Africa, giving ordinary citizens the tools and information, they need to make better informed choices about public issues” (Sangonet, 2012). ODADI’s goal was to bring together an array of civic stakeholders, from technologists, civil society activists, journalists, data analysts and computer programmers around one central challenge, which was how to strategically open more important data to the general public (Russel, 2012).

On 4-5 August 2012, ODADI hosted the first Code4Democracy Hackathon in Cape Town, with a total prize of R25,000 for “ideas that have the potential to empower ordinary citizens, make government more transparent, or make public services more efficient and open” (Sangonet, 2012). Hacks/Hackers Cape Town was a founding member of ODADI. Other members included the Open Democracy Advice Centre (ODAC), the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG), the Right2Know campaign and the Silicon Cape Initiative (Sangonet, 2012). The first hackathon was made possible by funding from the African Media Initiative’s prototype fund for civic engagement, the Open Society Foundation’s Money & Politics Project (MaPP) provided logistics support and Ndifuna Ukwazi providing a venue and material support (Sangonet, 2012). The first event created excitement about the future of open data in South Africa, in particular how it could inspire citizens to take action (Ferreira, 2017).

It became evident that ODADI as a coalition would not have the impetus to keep driving the mandate as members were working on other projects in their own organizations. This realization led to the creation of Code for South Africa (Code4SA) in 2013, with Adi Eyal as one of the founding members (Techcentral, 2015). Code4SA delivered many initiatives between 2013 and 2017, focusing on building tools that would contextualize data for government, citizens and civil society (Code4SA website, 2020). The Cape Town Budget Project (2014), the Medicine Price Registry (still active since its launch in 2013) and Wazimap (2014) are some of the well-known tools from the early days of Code4SA. Eyal (2018) states that they wanted to explore the intersection between technology, social justice, democracy and accountability. Open data underpinned their approach, not merely data as a technical block, to enable lay users to analyze data more effectively for different purposes, such as social accountability (Eyal, 2018). The goal was to democratize data, driving up demand for it, and making it more accessible and understandable to audiences that do not have a technical data background (Eyal, 2018).

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28 https://openup.org.za/
29 https://mpr.code4sa.org/
9.2 OPENUP IS BORN

In 2017 Code4SA was rebranded as OpenUp. This reflected a strategic decision by Eyal and his team to move away from a focus on code, realizing that coding did not capture what the organization had grown into (Eyal, 2017).

Open is a powerful word. It refers to the Open Movement and its related sub-movements: open data, open source, open access, open government and others. OpenUp is not so much about kicking down doors than it is about a vision for a new way of doing things.

(Eyal, 2017)

a. Information should intrigue and inspire

Eyal (2018) describes OpenUp’s mission as ensuring that people have access to information related to their situation, recognizing that for them to act and improve their lives they also need to know how change can be achieved and find the means to bring about change. Data and information are only parts of a larger strategy. Information has to be opened up in a way that can empower people, making them active agents who are able to improve their own lives and the life of their communities (Eyal, 2018).

Stories speak to the heart, data to the mind. Stories in isolation can be dismissed as individual anecdotes, data provides evidence but de-humanises people and converts them into numbers. The combination together provides a well-rounded, more compelling story that has the potential to change minds and drive action.

(OpenUp, 2019)

b. Continuing the experiment

Eyal acknowledges that they are still learning, and that for many of them ODADI, Code4Democracy and Code4SA were first steps into the non-governmental organization (NGO) space. The developed tools are not presented as stand-alone solutions, but rather as building blocks that need to be re-arranged continually and reworked to maximise impact (Eyal, 2018). The foundational beliefs of OpenUp are: Open Data, Co-Governance (reconnecting those who are governed to those who govern), Active Citizenry and Community (OpenUp, 2019).
c. Data is a path to attaining civic rights

Eyal\(^{30}\) describes how open data can realize the rights of citizens. Data can help citizens make more informed decisions, or understand how decisions are made (Eyal, 2018). OpenUp also sees a need to build the capacity of civil society to use data and appropriate technologies. Data sharing and civic collaboration can help break down silos between implementers, making data more contextual and meaningful to citizens (OpenUp, 2019). As previous interviews alluded to, there can be overlaps in approaches, where similar tools are utilized, but without information being shared across tools. This means that citizens need to go to multiple different silos for information, making it even more complicated as different data sources and formats do not automatically speak to each other (OpenUp, 2019). Data, when shared, strengthens opportunities for new partnerships and networks, which is critical in ensuring that feedback loops are re-established (OpenUp, 2019). OpenUp’s current funding partners include The Indigo Group, The Omidyar Network and the Open Society for South Africa (OpenUp, 2019).

9.3 OVERVIEW OF OPENUP’S TOOLKIT

a. Vulekamali and Municipal Money

Code4SA partnered with the National Treasury to develop the portal, Municipal Money, in 2016. Vulekamali was developed in 2017 and launched in 2018.

b. Parliamentary Monitoring Group and People’s Assembly websites

Code4SA also developed the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG) and People’s Assembly (PA) websites. Eyal stated that the PMG and PA websites are not mere websites but should rather be seen as an information retrieval system.

c. Being part of the ‘Making all Voices Count’ campaign

Code4SA also developed a URL tool for the Black Sash,\(^{31}\) with the support of the Making All Voices Count project. This enabled community-based organizations (CBOs) and community advice offices to monitor the delivery of government social grants and the experiences of the recipients receiving social grants (OpenUp, 2019). The tool allowed for the assessment of services rendered

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\(^{30}\) Interview transcriptions were cross-referenced with the [www.openup.org.za](http://www.openup.org.za) website to clearly outline founding principles.

\(^{31}\) [https://cbm.blacksash.org.za/](https://cbm.blacksash.org.za/)
at social grant pay-points between 2014 and 2016, using site information for advocacy purposes and to frame community discussions (Ferreira, 2017). This project looked at how high-tech and low-tech approaches could be merged in the same project. This was to ensure that those who do not have access to data are not excluded when it comes to making their voices count.

You don’t need apps or high-tech phones. We can still use data to promote advocacy and discussions and empower communities. It was a cool example of thinking laterally around technology, and that is effective even in places where you might think technology doesn’t necessarily make sense.

(Eyal, 2017)

d. Wazimap

Working with Media Monitoring Africa, Code4SA launched the Wazimap\textsuperscript{32} interface prior to the May 2014 national election. This tool is still active, giving journalists and other stakeholders the ability to see election data at ward level (Wazimap, 2019). Population figures are enriched with 2011 Census and 2016 Community Survey Data, allowing for categories showing elections (2016 municipal elections), demographics, service delivery, economics and education (Wazimap, 2019). The site is open source and can be used to build similar maps for other countries. This has been done in Kenya and Nigeria (Wazimap, 2019).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{wazimap.png}
\caption{Example of Wazimap interface (OpenUp website, 2020)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{32} https://wazimap.co.za/
e. Data training

OpenUp runs data training initiatives that empower participants in the public and private sector to be able to communicate data insights in an effective and easy-to-understand manner (OpenUp, 2019). For Eyal and his team, the main concern should always be what information does the ordinary citizen need, by when do they need it and, finally, how can the information be activated to improve public services. This means that social accountability monitoring is understood as a political and a public process. Practitioners need to be able to map it out and identify all the relational gaps that cause the process to break down.

f. Partnership with Ndifuna Ukwazi

Another space where small interventions can fill process gaps is its long-standing partnership with Ndifuna Ukwazi. The Informal Settlements Matrix\(^\text{33}\) was a partnership between Ndifuna Ukwazi, the Social Justice Coalition (SJC), the International Budgetary Program (IBP) and OpenUp. It captured demographics and infrastructure information on 146,000 households spread across 437 informal settlements in Cape Town. This information was used to drive conversations with the City Council and advocacy initiatives around responsive, effective and efficient budgeting to address unequal service delivery.

More recently, OpenUp has worked with Ndifuna Ukwazi and Reclaim the City (RTC) in Cape Town to protect tenants against unlawful evictions and empower them to take a more active role in their defense. OpenUp works with its partners to provide tenants with information concerning lawful evictions, tenant rights and where a tenant can get help. With the Eviction Support Guide,\(^\text{34}\) tenants are provided with easy-to-action information that supports their realization of access to justice. In addition to the [www.evictions.org.za](http://www.evictions.org.za) website, OpenUp also created a booklet which shows the housing eviction process step-by-step (Eyal, 2018). For Eyal, the goal of this connection between low-tech approaches (booklet) and the more tech-focused website is to engage with residents where they are, giving them an overview of the information that they need, a list of potential actions they can take and a clear understanding of their rights. As a part of the support to tenants, OpenUp designed an Affidavit Assistant,\(^\text{35}\) an easy-to-follow online tool that helps tenants complete an affidavit in case of an eviction (Eyal, 2018). This tool aims to speed up securing legal representation and reduce the pressure on an overburdened pro bono legal system (Eyal, 2018).

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34 [https://evictions.org.za/](https://evictions.org.za/)
35 [https://affidavit.evictions.org.za/edit?id=2a3bd16d-5c0c-4609-8ef4-efcc9240af34](https://affidavit.evictions.org.za/edit?id=2a3bd16d-5c0c-4609-8ef4-efcc9240af34)
They might go to an expensive lawyer and tell them their entire life story and essentially a lot of that time the lawyer is just listening for certain key words to identify the main angle that could possibly be used in the legal process. The Affidavit Assistant is essentially a survey. It is a digital survey which gets the evictee to answer all the questions and collect all the relevant information that the lawyer would need. This means, when they do see a lawyer, the lawyer already has all the necessary information. Now all the time can be spent dealing with the tactical issues of how to deal with the case as opposed to the data collection component ... it turns out that it’s more interesting for the lawyers and the law clinics. They can’t handle the number of people who are coming through their door ... and giving people this tool before they arrive means that they spend less time on each case and are more effective.

(Eyal, 2018)
g. Youth Explorer

Another focus of its work is to develop strategies to get young people to participate in local government processes. The initial project ran in 2018 in Cape Agulhas and the project was expanded to KwaZulu-Natal and other municipalities in the Western Cape throughout 2019 (Eyal, 2018). Eyal describes the model as a large, face-to-face event in a selected municipality for youth using open-space technology. It lasts two days, involving up to 400 young people and local businesses, policing forums, ratepayers’ associations, the municipality and the Departments of Health and Education (Eyal, 2018).

All these stakeholders are brought together in a room for an entire day and through facilitation methods they brainstorm and extract all the issues that affect youth of that area. These are broad issues, and they usually find fifty to sixty topics ranging from drugs to the lack of sport coaches or insufficient access to cultural activities. On the second day, the group prioritizes, and identifies the top eight issues that affect them. Those topics are then drawn up in a more detailed fashion, not just identifying the main problems around them, but rather what the potential actions could be to improve the situation. These discussions inform a youth policy for the municipality, but it also is strategic in that it is representative. It is not a copy-and-paste report developed by an external person. It gives the youth in the room the opportunity to talk about their issues and the potential solutions in their language and they have an opportunity to nominate eight peers to the youth council to represent their issues.

(Eyal, 2018)

Eyal (2018) sees this as an important strategy to bring the youth and their public representatives (and other stakeholders) together in a space to find ways to close the gaps between them. For Eyal (2018) these youth councils are the start; they can be further supported through code-bridge events, a combination of education around public participation and democracy. Other topics can include understanding the different spheres of government, the budget cycle and the inner workings of the budget (Eyal, 2018). For Eyal, the idea is to expose the youth to increasingly complex data sets, using OpenUp tools to help them understand the local context. “This strategy can bring new utility to tools like Municipal Money, for example” (researcher comment).

The Youth Explorer tool looks at youth issues, but at a hyperlocal level, ensuring that there is data engagement (collection and dissemination) at a ward level around issues such as crime, health, education, poverty and access to opportunities (Eyal, 2018). All of this data can ensure that the youth are very informed around issues in their area. Eyal sees it as critical that the youth have valuable and actionable information at their fingertips, so that they can inform discussions in a productive way.

The Youth Explorer events are to be co-sponsored by the municipality involved, with the mayor, municipal manager and others being visible (Eyal, 2018). This means that the political leadership can show interest in the voice of the youth (Eyal, 2018). Eyal hopes that this more positive
relationship will lead to the youth council attending all meetings and that they are representative of the youth agenda, as set out in all these exercises.

Eyal (2018) argues that it is not only important that some of the issues are reflected in the new budgets, but also that the tools enable residents to track implementation of the budget decisions that are made. Eyal (2018) sees this ability to track implementation as a cornerstone of social accountability monitoring, not just in giving people a voice but also enabling them to act when their voice is not heard or is ignored.

Eyal states that the Youth Explorer tool is experimental and in its infancy stages. Strategically, Eyal believes that the youth are one of the best levers for accountability and monitoring.

We have the municipal elections in 2021, which are going to be incredibly competitive. I think there is a big incentive for parties and incumbents to woo the youth vote. There is a great opportunity to use this as leverage to get the youth a lot more involved in the government’s processes. This is definitely an area that needs to be invested in.

(Eyal, 2018)

h. Grassroot platform

The cost of data is one of the largest barriers to uptake that OpenUp identifies at present (Eyal, 2018). Eyal explains how OpenUp has supported Grassroot in using a USSD, SMS-based platform that they can utilize during community mobilization. This tool allows for communities to register and send messages to each other for free. Through the platform, community members can be informed of upcoming events or meetings that affect them. According to Eyal, Grassroot has seen good uptake because it is free and accessible.

i. WhatsApp

Data is expensive, yet existing tools like WhatsApp are less data-heavy.

WhatsApp has been an incredibly good tool ... many people don’t even know what the internet is, but they know what Facebook and WhatsApp are. I think the fact that with WhatsApp you have free or cheap packages has been quite useful. OpenUp is also interested in the fact that WhatsApp made an API available that will allow for integration where tools can be built into WhatsApp. That will enable a wider reach. You don’t have to worry about building an App or even a website, you can just have some sort of conversational interface that is part of WhatsApp and can be delivered using very little data.

(Eyal, 2018)
10. OPEN CITIES LAB (FORMERLY OPENDATA DURBAN)

Open Cities Lab36 (OCL) describes itself as a “non-profit, open and non-partisan organization that combines the use of action research, co-design, data science and technology with civic engagement” (OCL, 2020). It aims to do this through “empowering citizens, building trust and accountability in civic space,” on the one hand, while also focusing on building the capacity of government (OCL, 2020). OCL is based in Durban, with a smaller team in Johannesburg. Richard Gevers (one of the founders) sums up its work as being “an open data lab, focused on engaging citizens at the city level through employing various civic technologies” (2019).

10.1 THE HUMAN COMPONENT BEHIND CIVIC DATA SCIENCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

For Gevers (2019), civic data science is more than just learning how to leverage different tools and technologies. During the interview, Gevers reflected on some of the key insights it provides. He argued that the problems of democracy are related to the fact that people cannot get the information they need at the time that they need it and in a way that enables them to act on this information. He sees the challenges of data and civic engagement not merely as a technical challenge, adding that it is important to always see the human component behind issues. Knowledge is out there. However, it is too often not being accessed or leveraged by ordinary citizens, civic leaders, urban planners or activists. OCL’s various projects aim to build more inclusive cities where ordinary citizens can drive processes and are able to access knowledge and tools to inform evidence-based planning. He argued that this makes citizens smarter and more connected, despite structural and social barriers. The OCL approach acknowledges that those who govern need to be able to respond to an increase in civic inputs, and as such Gevers (2019) also looks at expanding the responsive capacity of those in government.

10.2 ACTIVATING THE LOCAL

OCL has a focus on the local level, seeing cities as strategic entry points to involve citizens in participatory democracy, while educating local government officials on the need for open governance (OCL, 2020). OCL’s approach intertwines informed decision-making and evidence-based decision-making towards deepening participatory democracy (OCL, 2020). Public participation should be driven by what people are saying, how they express their needs and how it is their needs that are speaking to policy drafting and implementation (OCL, 2020). At the same time, data can broaden people’s understanding of their needs, grounding them in evidence of necessary actions (OCL, 2020). For OCL, data science has the potential to drive meaningful public participation, ensuring transparency, accountability and innovations that are rooted in local knowledge (Gevers, 2019).

36 https://opencitieslab.org/odd/home
10.3 TOOLS AND EXPERIMENTS

a. OpenData South Africa

OpenData South Africa was launched in 2018 as a joint initiative to connect people with open data sources to create more awareness about social issues and to drive better decision-making. It was created under the Open Government Partnership, a partnership between OCL and the Department of Public Service and Administration, OpenUp, the Centre for Public Service Innovation, The Innovation Hub, Geekulcha and the Human Sciences Research Council (OCL, 2020). The OpenData South Africa portal acts as a “working catalogue of public data sources” (OpenDataza, 2020), assisting users to find the data resources that they need.

The platform creates a space for those inside and outside government to “explore new applications of (mainly) government data” (OpenDataza, 2020). The toolkit enables students, researchers, activists and entrepreneurs to better understand what is happening around them to plan strategic action while offering advice and links to resources (OpenDataza, 2020).

b. Citizen Science Journalism

The Citizen Science Journalism project is focused on empowering communities across Durban with real-time air quality data in a way that is more accessible (OCL, 2020). This focuses especially on journalists who are tasked with uncovering issues and sharing them with the community. A big component of this project focuses on teaching learners how to build weather stations, including how they can interpret data in a way that can engage others (OCL, 2020).

c. Check-IT

Check-IT is a platform that “gives the community a voice by enabling field reporting on the functional status of critical infrastructure, facilities and events.”

37 http://odza.opendata.durban/opendataza/about
38 http://checkit.org.za/views/map
d. DurbanAnswers

DurbanAnswers\(^39\) proposes a new approach to a city website. It is designed to make relevant information and services quicker and easier for ordinary citizens to find. The website is citizen-focused, clean and easy to navigate (DurbanAnswers, 2019). Questions can be asked, and searches can be done using plain language. This is a partnership with eThekwini Municipality, and is supported by the Indigo Trust, the Open Data Institute and OpenUp.

OCL reflects on the main learnings gathered from the DurbanAnswers site. It explains the strategy as one that will "meet people where they are," making the site relatable to the challenges that ordinary citizens face daily.

e. InTAcT

Users of the InTAcT\(^40\) platform have access to various frameworks and tools that can improve integrity, social accountability and transparency. The knowledge repository contains national and international case studies, good practice briefs, guidelines, innovation briefs, toolkits and practice notes for those working in the urban governance space (OCL, 2020). Social accountability is one of the key themes, with a focus on the "city’s relationships with external stakeholders and citizens, and how these external stakeholders should be engaged to strengthen accountability, integrity and transparency" (OCL, 2020). It approaches accountability with an emphasis on citizen engagement and public participation (OCL, 2020).

\(^39\) http://beta.answers.durban/
\(^40\) https://intact.org.za/
f. South African Cities Open Data Almanac (SCODA)

SCODA⁴¹, a partnership between the South African Cities Network (SACN) and OCL, funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Indigo Trust, is a “city-centric data portal that aims to support the planning, management, monitoring, and reporting needs of cities” (OCL, 2020).

g. DEXTER

Dexter⁴² is a partnership with Media Monitoring Africa, Assemble and Bloomberg. It is a media analytics system that automatically processes 1,500 articles a day from digital news sources, storing them in a database along with associated extracted data (OCL, 2020). This database can analyse the overall freedom of the media, the presence of agenda or bias, the degree of equal representation in terms of sources and the identification of key players (OCL, 2020).

h. Planning for Informality project

The Planning for Informality⁴³ project runs in partnership with the Isandla Institute. It is a “policy tracker,” measuring and assessing eight South African cities and their response to the national targets set to upgrade informal households (Planning4Informality, 2020).

10.4 OCL REFLECTIONS

OCL recognises that there are more moving parts to the social accountability puzzle than citizens (2020). Many of its initiatives are targeted at public officials who are interested in promoting open data approaches for their cities. Working with National Treasury, InTaCT aims to “help cities improve their governance performance, with a particular focus on land development and infrastructure development” (OCL, 2020). It knows despite all the data being out there and available, government interest remains a threat. As Gevers (2019) noted during the interview, civic input can easily be resisted or ignored. Gevers also believes that the seeming disinterest can also be rooted in limited capacity.

Does government have the capacity to process hundreds of thousands of submissions, especially when many of them are lacking in quality?

(Gevers, 2019)

Gevers argues that there is a lot of information available to tell city planners and local governments how to plan a city, such as the research available to bureaucrats that can help them in making

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⁴¹ Scoda.org.za
⁴² https://opencitieslab.org/odd/home
⁴³ https://app.planning4informality.org.za/home/about
urban spaces inclusive and safe. However, when it comes down to how decisions are made, one finds the research is not packaged in a way that allows it to be incorporated into the decision-making process (Gevers, 2019). For Gevers and his team, the goal is to move past the informing stage (where citizens are told what decisions have been made), towards a co-creation space where city planners and empowered residents interact with each other through data science. This lays the foundation for the critical cog in the social accountability machine, which is overseeing monitoring actions that were taken.

Beyond this, they should be supported in HOW they can act. The last part is to see whether they are actually acting.

(Gevers, 2019)

As Gevers mentioned, OCL does not see IC technology and online platforms as the only options for building bridges between ordinary people. Despite their many projects and approaches, OCL found that its work needed to explore on the ground narratives more, linking Eyal’s talks about the power of storytelling. Gevers said that means going deeper than just online data sets with added technological tools and innovations.

We need to create data that really allows for the communities’ voices to be heard and collected. It also gives the community a seat at the table when decision-makers start talking around what they actually need.

(Gevers, 2019)

To do this, OCL thinks about how it can start learning about the needs of a community in a way that truly represents what the needs are, being careful to acknowledge how the outsider context, framing or understanding can muddle the actual voices on the ground (Gevers, 2019).

a. The limits of applications that focus only on fault reporting (pot-hole applications)

Gevers argued that the biggest challenge OCL faces remains how information is presented and which channels it uses for people to access this data. Gevers uses the example of service delivery fault-reporting mobile applications (pot-hole apps) to illustrate his point. Pot-hole apps have proliferated with the increase in municipal service delivery gaps in South Africa. They allow users to take photos of infrastructure problems (damaged roads, water leaks) or highlight electricity outages, with CheckIT being one example.

The problem with these tools is that there are many of them, and Gevers confirmed that they are often located outside formal bureaucratic process within cities. This means they are located outside official workflows, municipal processes and decision-making spaces. Despite having hundreds or thousands of uploads from users, many of these are never integrated into the city’s map system (Gevers, 2019).
That’s great, we have a lot of pictures of potholes and citizens who are becoming irate. This in itself is good data as it shows a whole lot of problems, but in reality, it cannot resolve the problem(s).

(Gevers, 2019)

These attempts at involving the community in social accountability monitoring through fault-reporting alone can also exacerbate the gap between government and citizens, as government puts up walls to prevent engagement and participation because it is afraid of negative feedback (Gevers, 2019).

b. Re-thinking community relationships and social accountability monitoring

OCL’s Narratives of Home project was commissioned by the Urban Futures Center located in the Durban University of Technology (DUT). This project looks at state housing in the Durban Metro, how people express what home means and how the built environment impacts them (NarrativesofHome, 2020). The research project has provided an opportunity to “explore and better understand the underlying complexity of these home spaces” (Buckland, Lees & Silverman, 2019). The research team acknowledged that to gain a deep understanding of people’s experience of “home”, ICT approaches would be limited (Gevers, 2019). Gevers spoke about how the research team had to be flexible, considering the best research methodologies that would suit each context. The decision was made to use face-to-face engagement, building rapport with participants through “real conversations” (Buckland, Lees & Silverman, 2019). Gevers explains how the original approaches had to be adapted, including their thinking about using mobile phone photo narratives. The research team found that people did not have mobile phones, or they did not have the ability to charge mobile phones due to frequent electricity cuts or limited electricity supply (Gevers, 2019). The team also felt that its initial questions around feelings of belonging or place of identity did not resonate with the residents (Gevers, 2019). At first, research engagement was based on strict research terms, using imported concepts to try to relate with residents in the locality (Gevers, 2019). This initial inability to ground research in local realities had an impact on the first iteration of the research.

We weren’t connecting with people. So, we had to take a lot of time thinking about how we arrive in a space and connect. How can we build relationships with people in a way that we are not just extracting information and doing research, but that we are actually creating a sustainable relationship?

(Gevers, 2019)

This frames a key insight for OCL in its work across programs. Social accountability processes
and community-based monitoring entails careful thinking around how to build and sustain relationships. Gevers said its work is underpinned by a community-engagement component, meaning that using only online or mobile platforms will not suffice. Gevers warns of the dangers of creating knowledge through research without sharing this with those who were part of the original research in a way that they can engage with. Too often the findings of a study are never presented back to participants in a way that makes sense to them, or in a way that can help them solve a problem that they face (Gevers, 2019).

For Gevers this means that there are multiple relational feedback loops that need to be strengthened, including platforms that can make data from research projects easier to share with the very participants who participated in the data-gathering activity.

For Gevers and his team, civic-tech, open data or ICT tools for social accountability on their own are not able to create the relational connections that can deepen public participation and social cohesion. As stand-alone initiatives, Gevers argued that they will be unable to reconnect citizens with each other and government. Gevers used the analogy of pipes carrying water. Tools “have to be seen as a potential part of the civic infrastructure, like pipes carrying water. Talking about user-centered or citizen-centered design is great, but we often miss the human challenges behind the problem to take-up” (Gevers, 2019).

For Gevers, OCL is challenging implementers to reconsider the relational aspect in social accountability monitoring, including how a lack of focus can negatively impact broader public participation. For him, it is more than just developing short-term, expensive and glitzy online or mobile applications. Social accountability monitoring, argues Gevers, must address the systemic issues and the chains of authority. He warns that pushing for a technological solution could create more animosity at the local level, especially if the context is not fully understood. In his view, practitioners need to work on multiple levels with multiple stakeholders.
11. NDIFUNA UKWAZI

Ndifuna Ukwazi was established as a not-for-profit trust in 2011. Russell (2019) described NU as an activist organization and a law center which aims to help ordinary South Africans realize their constitutional rights to promote social justice. It is based in the City of Cape Town (Western Cape), which is the site of most of its current activities. NU’s work is described by Russell as supporting working-class people, communities and social justice movements by giving them legal and research support, while supporting emerging social justice organizations in organizing.

11.1  EDUCATED CAMPAIGNING

Russell described the NU approach as educated campaigning, where ordinary members of the public are able to access and understand research and available information, using it to build campaigns that are grounded in data. Educated campaigning, as Russell elaborated, firstly looks at understanding the data, research and information that is available. Next, existing data and information must be translated, making complicated and very technical components available in a format that ordinary people can relate to and act upon (Russell, 2019).

Russell stated that this model was inspired by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) model. The TAC counts the 2002 Constitutional Court ruling that ordered the South African government to provide anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs as one of its most important victories to prevent transmission of HIV from mothers to their babies during birth (TAC, 2019). Ongoing advocacy and awareness by the TAC increased pressure on the government and in 2007 the National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and Tuberculosis (2007-2011) was adopted by the South African Parliament (TAC, 2019).

TAC won because every member of the TAC understood the science behind how HIV causes AIDS. They knew a lot more than most politicians and a lot more than other people. People initially thought: ‘Oh, no! Poor and informally educated people can’t learn this kind of stuff!’ The TAC turned this thought on its head and taught people about how the virus works. Even at the very scientific level. How the medicines worked, all those kinds of things.

(Russell, 2019)

Lessons learned from the TAC informs NU’s strategic thinking. Information alone is not enough. For NU, it is important to make sure that often abstract and complicated legal and government policy inputs are translated into something that the public can understand and build an active campaign upon.
11.2 URBAN LAND JUSTICE AND TENANT RIGHTS

Russell spoke about the biggest challenge for working-class Capetonians, which is access to affordable and well-located housing. This is especially true for those working-class residents who reside in neighborhoods that are rapidly gentrifying. NU works actively with various other social justice organizations such as Reclaim the City (RTC) to promote and protect housing rights for the city’s vulnerable populations. Working with RTC, NU advocated for urban land justice, promoting the building of inclusive and sustainable mixed use and mixed income communities. Various activities aimed to strengthen the organizing capacity of at-risk tenants, protecting their tenant rights and their security of tenure, whether they reside in public or private housing (Lessons for Change, 2018).

The NU Law Centre supports the above activities by strategic litigation and taking on selected cases related to land and tenant rights (Russell, 2019). An example is the legal objections lodged against the City of Cape Town and the Amdec Property Group in response to a proposed R8bn property development in Cape Town’s Foreshore area with no regard to social inclusion (Zama, 2019). According to Russell this is a highly political space, meaning that there is an ongoing need to strengthen the ability of ordinary people to stand up against socially unjust and economically divisive urban planning decisions.

11.3 COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL AUDITING

NU also has a track record in community-based social auditing of service delivery. In 2013, NU partnered with the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) on the Clean and Safe Toilets campaign (Verryn, 2015). One of the challenges for NU at the time in working on sanitation issues was the lack of evidence about the nature and scale of the problem (Verryn, 2015). The social audit “mobilized a team of 90 residents, independent observers and civil society partners,” who interviewed residents while also counting and physically inspecting toilets (Verryn, 2015). A total of 800 questionnaires were completed, along with photo evidence, which led to important findings (Verryn, 2015). The social audit challenged the City of Cape Town’s claim that 346 toilets had been installed by the contractor; the audit found that only 73% of toilets were installed (Verryn, 2015). Furthermore, while the city posited that five families would share a toilet, the audit found that 26 families shared a toilet (Verryn, 2015). The report culminated in a public hearing that was attended by 400 residents, the local government, the presidency and the media (Verryn, 2015).

While the above social audit managed to galvanize community activists into action, the city council argued that it was flawed and politicized (Verryn, 2015). As a result, the report was largely ignored by the city. For NU and SJC, the strengths of the project were that residents were part of the information gathering, equipping them to do procurement monitoring, service delivery analysis and budget analysis (Verryn, 2015). Despite the lack of response, the information gathered strengthened advocacy efforts within the community, giving activists a stronger foundation to respond to service delivery gaps (Verryn, 2015).

NU sees the social audit as a strategic way to address the lack of capacity within many emerging social justice organizations (IBP, 2019). Through working with NU, organizations can engage with government budgets and realities on the ground in a strategic way, strengthening their advocacy and community organization efforts so that they can effectively promote social justice and government accountability (IBP, 2019).
11.4 STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

NU is very aware of how economic and social divides can limit the impact and effectiveness of social accountability tools (Russell, 2019). As such, Russell talks about how the NU approach goes beyond educating those who are marginal to the mainstream economy. A secondary component is to find ways to build solidarity with those who are more privileged, educating them to better understand the issues of those who are often marginal to the dominant discourse (Russell, 2019).

NU’s main projects are currently focused on access to urban land justice and tenants’ rights within the City of Cape Town (Russell, 2019). Russell states that tenants are especially vulnerable when it comes to understanding what their rights are, including what avenues they can use in the event of an eviction. Working with RTC, NU supports tenants to organize more strategically, building support structures for those who are more vulnerable on their own (Russell, 2019). An important component of its strategic support in this space is to build the organizational capacity of a social movement, making sure that it uses available information and helps movements to ensure that members are continually updated and educated. The strategy is to support social movements in a way that will help them to be sustainable and more independent.

For long-term, sustainable change, for holding government to account, you have to be organized … You don’t necessarily have to be an organization or an NGO, but you have to be organized. You must have a group of people working together who have built structure … You can’t just throw (monitoring tools) into a crowd and expect people to run with them … You must keep people involved, you need to keep them updated and educated. You need … the people to lead the movement themselves.

(Russell, 2019)

11.5 TAFELBERG SITE: THE BEGINNING OF AN ORGANIZED RESPONSE TO HOUSING INEQUALITY IN CAPE TOWN

Russell uses NU’s relationship with RTC as an example. RTC was founded in 2016 as a response to continued unjust evictions as gentrification continued to push working-class people out of neighborhoods that were close to economic activity (Lessons for Change, 2018). In 2012, the City of Cape Town declared that a building (previously a school) in an upmarket area of the city could be developed to include at least 270 low-income housing units, as part of a mixed-income development (Reclaim the City, 2020). There is a need for affordable housing in the Sea Point neighborhood (where the site is located), as no affordable housing has been developed in the community since the end of apartheid, meaning that working-class Capetonians spend the bulk of their income on commuting to work in the area’s hotels, restaurants and shops (Reclaim the City, 2020). Despite this initial commitment, the Department of Public Works decided to sell
this valuable land to a private school in 2017 (Reclaim the City, 2020), which meant scrapping the plan for affordable housing. The City first claimed that income from the R135 million sale would go towards funding other social projects, but it became clear that the money would be used to purchase land to construct new offices for the Western Cape Department of Education (Payne, 2019). NU and RTC partnered to build a multi-faceted campaign to oppose the sale and proposed development. Their campaign had various facets:

a. NU provides research

NU and RTC brought in social housing experts and architects to complete a feasibility study, indicating that social housing was possible at the Tafelberg site (Lessons for Change, 2018). Their research also indicated that although the City Bowl in Cape Town did not have designated affordable housing for working class residents, 30% of the city’s workforce was based in this small area (Yauger, 2019).

b. Building social solidarity

Residents around the area were mobilized to support the campaign which reached out to ordinary Capetonians, including those affluent people who lived in the upmarket beachfront suburb of Sea Point (Reclaim the City, 2020). A targeted information campaign through social media and traditional media challenged the dominant narrative put forward by the Department of Public Works, which argued that the site was not feasible as a low-income development (Lessons for Change, 2018). This information campaign resulted in more than 5,000 submissions from Capetonians from all walks of life, placing more pressure on the Department of Public Works to reconsider the sale (Reclaim the City, 2020).

c. Legal opposition

NU launched a legal case against the City of Cape Town in May 2016, challenging the legality of the proposed sale, including how the city and the province were failing in their constitutional obligations to address spatial inequality (Reclaim the City, 20). The case was concluded on 29 November 2019, and in 2020 the judge set aside the decision to sell the land and sought to ensure that the authorities provide social housing and address spatial apartheid.

Through their opposition, the campaign also managed to get the National Department of Human Settlements involved to support their argument and brought together a community of activists, while making more affluent Capetonians aware of how the housing issue impacts those who work in their offices, restaurants, shops, homes and hotels.

Confronting on-going evictions and emboldened by the Tafelberg experiences, RTC occupied two abandoned sites that belonged to the South African state (GroundUp, 2018). This strategy was built on lessons learned in the Tafelberg process to highlight the plight of the working-class and poor residents of Cape Town (GroundUp, 2018). The two occupations were at the former Helen Bowden Nurses Home (located in the most expensive property location in Africa) and the Woodstock Hospital (located within a rapidly gentrifying formerly working-class neighborhood) (GroundUp, 2018). The formerly abandoned buildings now house hundreds of residents and have been renamed by their occupiers Ahmed Kathrada House and Cissie Gool House (GroundUp, 2018).
The occupations have been bold and disputed, but they have managed to intensify conversations about lack of adequate housing and social justice. NU uses a strategy of capturing the stories of ordinary people in such a way that they can highlight how land use should meet the need of all South Africans, not only the wealthy (Russell, 2019).

People feel safe. They can participate in a social movement that restores their hope in a better life for all. The authorities can no longer be dismissive about the dire need for low-cost social public housing in the inner city and the surrounding areas. People participate in the management of the occupations of these buildings in order to show that it can be possible to create a better future use of these sites for housing. (GroundUp, 2018)

NU continues to partner with RTC, activists and residents, looking at ways that the movement and their activities could be strengthened. Russell describes the broad range of support offered, including supplies, development and training in the affected communities, or legal support. All support is aimed at making sure that these communities are better able to organize and engage members. Russell sees this as a massive success for NU, highlighting how strategic support can transform ordinary people into actors. The people who are most affected by the issue should lead the process, with the support of others. This means that those with more technical skills are not necessarily the experts, but merely the support. Training and education approaches are also tailored to this situation, where it is not merely about giving a lecture to bring people up to speed, but rather a continued learning cycle between the technocrat and the community member with the lived experience (Russell, 2019).

d. Sustained and sustainable community organizing

Russell argues that information should not merely be seen as an output on its own. Information needs to be relevant to those accessing it, based in their own context and clarifying the main issues that need to be addressed. It is also not aiming for mass mobilization, but rather long-term organizing, focusing on that space between big public events. These organizing events are less visible, such as teaching people about housing issues and rights.

One march, one campaign ... will not resolve an issue ... You have to create an organization structure that doesn’t burn people out, keeps them interested and keeps them learning and growing ... keeps them pushing all these different buttons with government or whoever is in power to make change. (Russell, 2019)

For Russell, NU’s work with the RTC community chapters is an example of this organizing work. NU went on to support RTC with two more active chapters, both located within the abandoned
buildings that were occupied in 2017. Anyone who lives in one of these areas could join a chapter. Chapters ensure that residents are continually supported and informed. For example, at Advice Assemblies members and the public can learn and talk about evictions and tenant-landlord relationships and rights. This takes the form of a structured lesson, formal hand-outs and access to legal support. Russell highlighted the relational aspect that is critical to supporting this. You must “start to understand the stories and begin to ask the right questions in order to start giving the right advice (Russell, 2019).” Chapter meetings give people the opportunity to discuss the campaign and raise the issues that affect them, to build solidarity and a more cohesive plan of action. Within this space, NU was able to introduce technological advances to support residents. These innovations, such as the affidavit application (to support those facing evictions) are described in more detail in the OpenUp interview, as the latter assisted NU in developing the interface.

This is a space to bring in information, distill it and make it less complicated. For Russell, the main goal for NU is to make sure that they remain a strategic partner for those they support, but that they are wary of driving the process as that would weaken the very movements that they are looking to activate.

We are quite conscious about (power) because it is easy for those with power to default back into giving themselves more power, even if you are not doing it on purpose. We found that when we started, we had to be very conscious. We don’t always do it right. We find ourselves in this trap where we are inadvertently end up giving ourselves more power. You have to be conscious and deliberate about spreading that power out.

(Russell, 2019)

11.6 REFLECTIONS

NU highlights the need for building the organizing capacity of civic movements through giving them the information and tools that they need to do so. Engagement happens when people believe that they are listened to, but also when they can act. This “activates” information, locating action not just in the government space, but also giving ordinary people a role to play in bringing about change.
12. GRASSROOT

Grassroot was established in 2015 with a vision of using appropriate technologies and tools to assist ordinary South Africans in self-organizing, from the bottom up (Moyo, 2019). Its core focus is on creating “solutions that enable communities to act together with more endurance, skill and independence,” in line with the Freedom Charter’s call that the “people shall govern” (Grassroot, 2019).

12.1 A MORE SENSIBLE WAY FOR PEOPLE TO ORGANIZE

Jordan (2019) talks about the increased costs that social movements incur when it comes to organizing meetings. People often need to find vehicles, rent loud-hailers and spend time to drive through communities to call people to specific meetings. Grassroot’s strategy is to enable community organizers to use mobile tools, making it easier for them to recruit members, “send out meeting notes, record decisions and take votes” (Ferreira, 2017). Their constituency is the people who are often on the margins, either field-based or community-based organizations (Ferreira, 2017). The tools are designed to facilitate easier organizing for these groups (Ferreira, 2017). This mobile application was one of the main connection points between Grassroot and those community groups that were looking at different ways to organize (Jordan, 2019). The platform, built in partnership with OpenUp, can operate in low-bandwidth and low-data settings, allowing for smart messaging through text message (USSD and SMS) (Mohlabane & Zomer, 2020).
12.2 LIVEWIRE: A LINK BETWEEN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE MEDIA

Grassroot started building the LiveWire application in April 2017, as an additional tool (Jordan, 2017). The LiveWire platform is funded through Code for Africa’s InnovateAFRICA program, giving emergent community groups networking capabilities, connecting community leaders to the media, and the media to those communities that are often neglected in reporting (Simpson, 2018). The LiveWire mobile application can be used by communities to send news alerts to the media through the “press alert” generator and by allowing journalists to use the “find contact” function to connect with individuals in under-reported communities (CTIN, 2018). Jordan reported that the media, however, has been slow in terms of uptake. The idea behind issuing alerts to the media was meant to get the media to pick up on community challenges more readily and connect to the organizers of a particular event. Theoretically, this was a way to get the media more actively involved in community organization (Jordan, 2019).

The LiveWire platform has two sides to it. The groups issuing alerts and the media picking up on them. These two things depend on each other. The media claims to be interested in the community stories (they claim they are not aware of them) … we think this is complete non-sense. We often see that they get
talked about, but they don’t care. For a while we had quite a good pick-up with GroundUp in Gauteng – with good stories and momentum coming out of it. It has morphed a little bit. We still feed the media to an extent, but we see it much more as an opportunity for social media awareness raising. We take LiveWire stories and cross-post them … giving them more tracking with uptake and sharing on social media.”

(Jordan, 2019)

Since the Grassroot platform was rolled out in South Africa, it has reached more than 500,000 individual users, be it to organize a meeting or a sporting event (Mohlabane & Zomer, 2019). While the platform has seen the formation of about 200 new groups and 600 monthly community events, this platform has had a drop in activity since the early interest (Mohlabane & Zomer, 2019). Often people are not aware of Grassroot, because they do not find it while looking for engagement tools online (Mohlabane & Zomer, 2019; Ferreira, 2017). They engage with the mobile applications because they are told about them by community leaders, neighbors and friends (Ferreira, 2017). This realization has led Grassroot to reconsider the use of the platform and move in a new strategic direction.

12.3 GRASSROOT USERS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

A 2018 survey indicated that 50% of South Africans do not have access to the internet because of the high cost of data (Mafolo, 2019). Amandla.mobi initiated the #datamustfall campaign in 2016 in response to the high costs, in particular seeking to highlight how it disproportionally impacts the poor (Gilbert, 2018). Grassroot (2018) partnered with Amandla.mobi during the campaign, allowing for paper-based responses gathered by volunteers to be uploaded through the Grassroot platform to a master list. Thousands of voices were added to the campaign, specifically those who would have been unable to sign up to the online campaign (Grassroot, 2018). At the end of 2019, the Competition Commission released its report, recommending that two main mobile networks have to drop their data prices by 30-50% by 1 February 2020 (Amandla.mobi, 2020).

Jordan argues that ICT and mobile applications must speak to the needs of the community. As an example, the mobile application can capture what a community thinks about an issue, gathered by volunteers on paper. Capturing these on an online platform is a strategic way to broaden insight, instead of limiting input due to a strict online approach.

a. Remembering ‘Mzondi’

The Mzondi informal settlement based in Ivory Park (Ekurheleni, Gauteng) is made up of just over 400 housing units (Manda, 2018). The South African Census uses the following descriptions for an informal settlement: “An unplanned settlement on land which has not been surveyed or proclaimed as residential, consisting mainly of informal dwellings (shacks),” where an informal dwelling is described as: “A makeshift structure not erected according to approved architectural plans” (DHA, 2012). In 2017, a Mozambican resident, Samuel “Mzondi” Mabunda, was assaulted in his hair salon by the feared Red Ants. Mzondi passed away a few days after the attack (Cabe,
The Red Ants is a controversial private security company that clears ‘illegal invaders’ from open land or vacant buildings (Burke, 2018). Their evictions are often violent, as in the case of Mzondi. After the attack by the Red Ants the settlement was renamed by residents as Mzondi in his honor (Cabe, 2019).

The residents of Mzondi have been able to use the Grassroot platform to connect with each other, sending out reminders for the weekly meetings (Grassroot, 2018). The use the platform to record meetings and build consensus around one of the most critical development needs within their settlement, lack of adequate sanitation (Grassroot, 2018). Grassroot linked the residents of Mzondi to the Thundafund crowdfunding website, and the residents successfully raised R70,000 to build toilets (Postman, 2018).

Initial plans were for the residents to use the funds to build 30 ventilated pit latrines, but after ongoing meetings, a decision was made instead to build nine flushing toilets (Postman, 2018; Grassroot, 2018). One of the challenges identified by Jordan was that despite the successful crowdfunding, the municipality objected to connecting the new toilets to mainline sewer infrastructure. This indicates that the Municipality of Ekurheleni does not view the community as legitimate, and their struggle for recognition and services continues.

b. Not a tool for everyone

While there have been examples of community groups using the platform to organize, Jordan noted that other, better-established groups have not been as active. He uses the example of Abahlali baseMjondolo.

Abahlali baseMjondolo don’t really use us because they are really capable, with people doing their writing and managing media lists. Their contacts are diverse – but they do their own media releases. They don’t have problems, so for them our platform is not really speaking to it.

(Jordan, 2019)

Jordan notes that it is important for online tools to assist communities in the work that they are trying to do. For Mzondi, for example, a mobile application to highlight their service delivery gaps to their councilor or the municipality would not be utilized, nor would it make an impact (Jordan, 2019).

Communities will engage with things that help them solve their problems … If you place ICT links between communities and ward councilors, for example, and it doesn’t solve any of their problems, the community just won’t engage with it … The problem is not lack of information about the problem in communities on the side of ward councilors and government. They know; they don’t care.

(Jordan, 2019)
c. Service delivery monitoring is not enough

Jordan is critical of any solution that simply aims at highlighting service delivery gaps. He states that it is important to highlight issues, but they also need to be resolved. For this reason, Grassroot seeks to capacitate communities through their various tools to highlight what they need, while also supporting them in measuring whether their highlighted need or issue have been addressed by authorities.

Putting a new reporting line or communication line in place without any concrete enforcement will not have any impact. You can send your councilor an update about toilets that are not humane – but they don’t need ICT technology to see that people would prefer not to use buckets as toilets.

(Jordan, 2019)

d. What should an effective social accountability monitoring tool do?

The successful uptake of the different tools, according to Jordan, lies in how easy it is for groups to inform constituents about what is happening in their localities. Furthermore, people can discuss the issue as it affected them, in a space and at a time that is comfortable to them, using a familiar language.

Trust is variable, in most cases, the reality is that there are incipient or potential organizations that find it difficult to organize due the high transaction cost. Strategic technology-use can bring down the transaction cost, making it easier for people to organize at a greater pace and this in turn will lead to more consistent pressure and a greater demand being placed on power holders. In our view this will lead to better outcomes.

(Jordan, 2019)

e. The need for more strategic community organizing

However, Jordan is also aware of the fact that the communities that need the tools the most are not utilizing them.

We hope that our tools will lead to greater density of community organizing, creating more networks. However, this is not really the case. The communities that we are talking about face enormous structural constraints. The effect of high unemployment, for example, has disastrous effects when it comes to overall
cohesion due to rent-seeking behavior and suspicion. There is a relatively low penetration of ideas when it comes to what makes for effective organizing.

(Jordan, 2019)

12.4 A NEW APPROACH IS NEEDED

The struggle of communities to sustainably organize against systemic issues caused Grassroot to move away from focusing on a broader platform towards one that can be used to guide people in developing the skills needed for community organizing.

Putting these realities together; having people take collective action and persist in a coherent fashion is extraordinarily difficult. The structural realities make movements a lot less coherent and victim to infighting and disconnection. We need to be aware of the structural challenges. We can’t just expect citizens to be more active and more engaged or give them more information – it is much harder, there is more going on that we often talk about.

(Jordan, 2019)

For example, Jordan reflects on the LiveWire platform and its overall contribution to strengthen networks as originally envisioned.

LiveWire’s experiment is to see how we can connect dispersed localities and create a flow of ideas and approaches between them. We have found that we are not that good at that at the moment. Our structure now speaks to broadcast and response tasks. Something as simple as communicating ideas is actually a bit beyond what our system can do now.

(Jordan, 2019)

According to Jordan, Grassroot has been acknowledging the limitations and shortfalls of LiveWire in terms of networking and connecting the media with social movements. Similarly, the Grassroot platform as a whole, while being utilized, has been hamstrung due to the lack of organizational capacity and clear leadership from emerging movements. As noted above, another limitation for social movements is the fact that office holders are slow to respond, or they respond with intimidation tactics, when communities list their needs and demands. While the numbers of engagements look good, the identified shortfall was that active users on the Grassroot platform and the various tools do not necessarily translate into improved mobilization or being able to organize more effectively towards improved outcomes while ensuring government responsiveness (Mothlabane & Zomer, 2020).
For this reason, Grassroot changed its approach to include a platform that is known, accessible, easy to use and low on data usage.

One idea is to use WhatsApp groups, not just as a standard WhatsApp group, but as a managed group ‘seeded’ with particular information and ideas. This is the next thing that we are trying to do, experimenting already with how we can put users into more direct contact with each other using an existing platform like WhatsApp. These groups will be guided, curated and seeded with material. This, we hope, will create more space for sharing ideas, including building informal networks. We hear [there is] quite a lot of appetite for this. However, we have been doing this for long enough to know that even though people say they would like to do something like that, it does not mean that they will do it. Part of what we will look at is to see how much engagement this strategy actually generates.

(Jordan, 2019)

12.5 BUILDING ON WHAT EXISTS: THE PLAN FOR 2020

Grassroot’s move away from its original platform allowed it to consider how applications such as WhatsApp can be utilized. Jordan states that WhatsApp is a potential game-changer as people trust the platform, they use it daily, it uses relatively little data and it operates in spaces with low band-width.

We are convinced that WhatsApp is the most important technology in this sector and if we find ways to build on top of this platform more easily, we would [do so]. With this project, we are trying to do more automated stuff over WhatsApp – but we realized that we weren’t understanding how people are using it. So now, we are following a more manual approach to see how people are using WhatsApp. Hopefully in the future we will be able to automate this process more.

(Jordan, 2019)

47 This interview, which was conducted in 2019, took place prior to the implementation of the Leadership through Storytelling pilot, assessing how WhatsApp training was received by participants.
The lack of effective organizing is a major constraint, but as the Mzondi case study shows, the lack of response from the government further impacts effective and sustained civic engagement. Jordan challenges the notion that ordinary people do not have the ability to articulate their problems.

Should we build ways to pipe information about regulation and government services to communities? We found that most of them already knew how to write petitions and who to send it to or how to log a complaint through a call center. The actual issue is that they did not get a response. If we found that there was a need to pipe information to communities, then we would have built the infrastructure together. But the fieldwork showed that other problems were at play.

(Jordan, 2019)

In the absence of response, there is a real challenge to maintain momentum, according to Jordan. Organizations and communities cannot get a real grasp of avenues or connections to government due to the lack of feedback, or violent responses, and it leaves emergent social movement very fragile. For this reason, Grassroot is piloting their WhatsApp engagements to build stronger, more organized communities, Jordan said.

Persistence is key. We often see communities where there are moments of cohesion and action, but it is difficult to maintain this when you get no response. Even when people act themselves, there is always a limit. For example, the community that managed to do a crowd-fund for toilets still need to engage with local government to hook up to a sewer line. Their efforts worked so well that they could even get a plumber to connect to the main line for them. However, in the absence of a response, they could not do anything … Even just from government to tell them to go ahead and do it!

(Jordan, 2019)

This lack of feedback presents the main obstacle within the social accountability cycle.

Accountability is not just about telling government what they should do, but it is also relational – restoring the relationship between the ordinary public and office holders, closing this accountability loop.

(Jordan, 2019)
12.6 **LEADERSHIP THROUGH STORYTELLING: TRAINING ON WHATSAPP**

Could a leadership curriculum delivered online create more capacity for emergent social movements as they navigate all the structural constraints they face? While the Grassroot platform did increase “levels of activism,” an initial spike in community engagement (through meetings, petitions and planned actions) was noticeably not sustained (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020). In line with their strategy to utilize accessible technologies, Grassroot decided to supplement “existing methods of leadership development” that had been delivered through in-person workshops with new material, using WhatsApp as a primary delivery method (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020). Multi-day, in-person leadership programs are not feasible in terms of cost and time and for this reason the team decided to experiment with a course that could be delivered entirely using WhatsApp (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020).

![Diagram Nineteen: Example of WhatsApp ‘Leadership through Storytelling’ interface (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020)](image)

**Leadership through Storytelling** is focused on developing the capacity of community organizers to sustain their activism through being able to negotiate the challenges they face (organizing, holding government to account) (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020). The course is structured to enhance the leadership skills of participants for “long-term organizing and mobilization,” while assisting participants to effectively “confront entrenched, systemic issues” (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020).

The coursework adapts the ‘Public Narrative: Leadership, Storytelling and Action’ course developed by Harvard Professor Marshall Ganz and it is delivered online via Zoom (Zomer & Mothlabane, 2019). Using WhatsApp is less data-intensive than using Zoom, and WhatsApp is very popular in Sub-Saharan Africa.
DIAGRAM TWENTY: Example of WhatsApp ‘Leadership through Storytelling’ curriculum outline (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020)

The course consists of eight interactive sessions that are delivered live via a facilitator twice a week over a month and is designed for adult learning drawing on participants’ experience. (Mothlabane & Zomer, 2020).


The three main components of the course include:

- Using storytelling for leadership development
  - This component identifies those experiences that inspire hope and build motivation, while building shared visions of future change.
• Raising awareness of rights and legislation
  - This session focuses on rights and legislative provisions, as emerging movements are not always familiar with the specifics. Advocacy grounded in rights and legislation will also enable more “traction with government officials”.

• Building capacity for strategic problem solving
  - The goal is to move community activists past reactive responses towards more deliberate plans of action that are required for long-term campaigns (Mothlabane & Zomer, 2020).

The course has one hour of large group sessions (with 10-15 participants) each week, led by a facilitator. In addition, participants meet for one-hour smaller group sessions (3-5 participants) every week, led by a coach.

DIAGRAM TWENTY TWO: Screenshot of the large and small group chats ‘Welcome Screen.’ (Mothlabane & Zomer, 2020. p6)

The course was piloted in 2019 and Grassroot (in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Governance Lab) conducted “mixed-methods research on the effectiveness of the course content and its potential to advance long-term community organizing goals” (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020). The pilot allowed Grassroot to reimagine the use of WhatsApp as a “new avenue for advancing civic pedagogy and networking for long-term social movement building” (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020). Grassroot will continue fine-tuning the curriculum, building on lessons learned to expand connections with grassroots social movements and organizers, continually encouraging not only learning, but also the exchange of information (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020).
a. Lessons from the pilot phase

Making it affordable and accessible is not enough

The pilot phase consisted of five groups, with 10 to 15 participants in each group (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020). The pilot found that participation rates varied widely (from 16 out of 100 to 58 out of 100). This was measured by the percentage of questions answered by participants in group sessions and whether homework assignments were completed (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020). In the final session, the number of participants who completed at least a third of the questions in this session, ranged from a low of 12% to almost 70% (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020). One of the key insights for the team was that even though WhatsApp is well-known, commonly used and less data-intensive, on its own it is not enough to encourage sustained participant engagement (Zomer, Jordan & Zhang, 2020).

How do you sustain personal connections?

A challenge identified during the pilot phase was the difficulty of building personal connections via WhatsApp (Mothlabane & Zomer, 2020). The report (2020) also found that because the sessions were free many participants did not have a sense of commitment, nor did they see value in attending sessions. Providing sessions free of charge had an interesting impact in terms of participants’ buy-in to the process.

Making sure the course duration is realistic

The duration/timing of the course was also problematic in some cases. The report notes that sessions need to be held at a time when participants can attend, and the facilitators need to consider other responsibilities that can clash with their sessions. In addition, sessions that are too long have a higher drop-out rate. For this reason, an additional coaching component was added to limit the duration of instructional sessions (Mothlabane & Zomer, 2020).

b. Corrective measures based on pilot findings

Based on the decision made early on to keep adapting the coursework to the context a series of adjustments were taken into account (Mothlabane & Zomer, 2020):

• Clarification on recruitment and selection of participants.

Grassroot: Public Narrative for Community Leadership WhatsApp course will begin its third cohort on 14 October 2019. To enrol, send your name, surname, location and tell us what issue you are concerned with (e.g. access to housing, water, electricity, unemployment, etc). Send via WhatsApp to 079 364 4718. Entries close 4 October 2019. Please note that the course runs entirely on WhatsApp for a period of 4 weeks so access to it is a requirement.

• Tasks set up during the recruitment phase to gauge whether participants are truly interested in the course.
• Financial incentives (those who complete every assignment on time received R50 airtime and those that did not finish everything on time only received R15 airtime). The incentive was enough to ensure that participants could complete online coursework and have a little left over for personal use.

• Coaches are important and their role is different from the main facilitator.

• The younger participants are more likely to respond positively to stories of change. Older participants tend to be more sceptical, potentially due to the fact that they have seen many other approaches fail in the past, or they know how deep the systemic challenges are embedded. The same applies to participants with higher levels of education who tend to be more disillusioned with the potential of leadership and community organizing.
13. OTHER IDENTIFIED APPROACHES

The research team has also identified other potential tools and approaches that were not included in the original interview schedule.

13.1 GOVCHAT

GovChat\(^{48}\) launched its WhatsApp interface in early 2020, aiming to create an interface that would be “connecting government to people and people to government” (GovChat, 2020). The platform seeks to connect people with their public representatives, give public representatives real-time analysis and predictive modeling to act as an early warning system and finally create a platform that connects citizens to all the services that they need to access (GovChat, 2020). In this way they hope to build an active citizenry, escalate service delivery issues and give citizens the ability to rate and report government services (GovChat, 2020). GovChat was also selected as the official platform for government to inform citizens on screening, health facilities and status reports on the COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with the National Department of Health (GovChat, 2020). The WhatsApp platform\(^{49}\) and chatbot facilitates broader access and makes the platform more cost-effective. While it is a large civic engagement platform, the challenge for the creators was not only connecting people to public representatives, but also ensuring that public representatives respond to the issues that are raised. Without building the capacity of public representatives to adequately respond, usage will remain limited.

13.2 WHATSAPP INTERFACES

There are also other approaches using WhatsApp as a main platform, through chatbot interfaces. These give users the ability to access information and potentially link to relevant organizations or institutions for further action. Some of these include:

- Accountability Lab\(^{50}\) (+2760 080 6146);
- AfricaCheck\(^{51}\) (+2782 809 3527);
- CovidLegit\(^{52}\) (+2787 240 5122).

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48 https://www.govchat.org/
49 Users save GovChat as a contact on their phones (+2782 046 8553) and through the WhatsApp interface, guided by a chatbot, they can access more information, highlight service delivery gaps, connect with a public representative or rate services delivered.
50 A WhatsApp interface to make citizens aware of their Integrity Icon campaign, where citizens can nominate public officials who are making a difference in their communities.
51 Focusing more on one-way updates regarding fake news, or a channel where ordinary people can query the authenticity of information being shared.
52 An initiative by Harambee, creating a narrative information platform through WhatsApp to engage young people, keeping them “smart, safe and kind during the COVID19 lockdown.”
These WhatsApp channels are mostly focused on sharing information in a more accessible format, rather than addressing the feedback loop between citizens and government. It also seems that there is a lot of duplication, with multiple platforms doing the same thing.
14. DISCUSSION

Drawing on the conceptual framework above, we can now consider all the different factors that practitioners need to consider when developing and implementing social accountability monitoring tools. Social accountability monitoring approaches should re-establish relationships between those who govern and ordinary citizens (Baez Camargo, 2018; Tembo, 2013). It is not only about sharing information, advocating for better services or highlighting gaps in service delivery. Social accountability monitoring should give citizens a voice, make their voice actionable and, finally, hold government to account in responding to this voice (Baez Camargo, 2018; MGinn et al., 2015). We can assess the current approaches and tools that are being implemented throughout South Africa using a few key questions.

14.1 THE RIGHT OF THE SPECTRUM: WHY IS SERVICE DELIVERY MONITORING NOT ENOUGH?

As the contextual framework argued early on, those applications that focus exclusively on providing avenues for citizens to highlight service delivery gaps to government largely fail to get adequate traction. MobiSAM, for example, sought to create an application to give residents of the Makana Local Municipality (Eastern Cape) an online space to raise concerns with government.
This application, which was part of the Making All Voices Count campaign, is no longer active.

The much-celebrated Johannesburg Road Agency (JRA) Find & Fix Mobile Application is also no longer active. Thetha Nathi (Buffalo City, Eastern Cape) is still active, but few of the councilors that the research team reached out to via the online platform were aware of it, and details were outdated or incorrect. The same applies to the eThekweni Municipality (KwaZulu-Natal) application.

Of course, these applications have their uses, but for the purposes of service delivery monitoring they do not cover relational components. As the Open Cities Lab (OCL) noted in their interview, those issues that are raised as pure service delivery tools often stand outside of the formal bureaucratic lines of city governance processes, meaning that they give a voice but they fail to monitor an adequate response. In fact, these applications can even create more tension between government and citizens, as an inadequate response or broken feedback loops ultimately increases frustration.

14.2 THE LEFT SIDE OF THE SPECTRUM: WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF INFORMATION?

Namola and Vulekamali are both applications that focus on sharing information with end-users to address malaise when it comes to social challenges. GovChat and DearSA also fall into this category, where citizens are informed about institutional processes, including some avenues for them to participate in these processes. For GovChat, PSAM, PMG and DearSA, this means that they can, through providing information and education, guide people towards strategic conversations. The idea is that this will give ordinary people a stronger voice, and an avenue to express that voice. One of the critical challenges with these approaches that could act as a barrier to greater impact remains the fact that this is a highly political space. Knowing one has a voice, or even being aware that one can express this voice via a specific channel, are both critical components of social accountability monitoring. However, expecting an appropriate response to what one has articulated gets more difficult. GovChat is focusing a lot of energy on giving ordinary people access to their elected officials or to relevant public service platforms. Is this enough to restore the relational component that is lacking in social accountability monitoring? What pressure is there on the governance actors to respond to inputs? As with PMG and DearSA’s examples, additional civic voice can overwhelm those who receive it. Often this voice is not well articulated, or not directed at the right actor or agency. In addition, even when it is directed at the right person and well-articulated, the receiver often does not have the capacity to respond accordingly. In this way, we can see that research, information and civic education are important components in social accountability monitoring, but they are in this space alone, and without links to a broader set of actors their impact will remain constrained. What routes are open to those who want to become stronger actors? How can civil society deepen the relational component within social accountability monitoring through providing channels for action for all users? How can we trigger an institutional response? What will motivate people to keep on acting if the response is limited (or absent)?
14.3 ONLINE OR OFFLINE: WHAT WORKS BEST?

While ICT has massive potential to deepen civic participation towards more social accountability, an important insight emerged from the interviews. ICT approaches must be rolled out in a way that speaks to the specific context. The existence of an elaborate and innovative ICT platform is not the silver bullet to enhance and deepen social accountability monitoring. Vulekamali’s predecessor, Municipal Money, highlights this insight. Where Municipal Money had an elaborate architecture, Vulekamali as a platform was designed incrementally, harnessing what was learnt during the Municipal Money phase. Updates and new components were continually tested with the Imali Yethu consortium partners, in addition to information campaigns to communities. This allowed for the platform to change its architectural features based on what it learned from users, whereas Municipal Money was developed as more of a once-off solution.

GovChat also falls within this space, where the lure of a comprehensive solution to social accountability monitoring can negate a more systematic design. Some social accountability approaches utilize offline and online approaches to suit the context. OpenUp’s Youth Explorer tool is an example of this, where much of the work takes place in more traditional face-to-face community meetings. The Black Sash’s social audits, in partnership with OpenUp, are another example of online platforms being enabled to capture paper-based responses onto an online platform for better data visualization. The same approach was evident in Ndifuna Ukwazi and the Social Justice Coalition’s social audit of sanitation in the City of Cape Town. Online platforms are a great way to enable comprehensive and cross-sectional views of multiple data sources. Offline approaches still play a critical part in making sure that the data speaks with the voice of those who can use it in a way that makes sense given the issues that they have identified. Ndifuna Ukwazi, through their chapter meetings, highlights that in the social accountability space simply accepting a tool on its own will not solve a particular issue. Through their bi-weekly chapter meetings, users access information, but they are also supported in acting on new information. This can potentially change the way that they see themselves, giving them more confidence and motivation to work with others on different issues (Baez Camargo, 2018).

During the interviews it also became evident that it often makes more strategic sense to use platforms that already exist. Grassroot’s online platform and their LiveWire tool have managed to engage various social movements since they were launched. However, they have moved away from these stand-alone online solutions towards architecture that is much better known to the people they partner with. Their WhatsApp training sessions utilize a user-friendly platform that is known, connecting it with their specific social accountability monitoring approaches. GovChat also left a stand-alone mobile application, moving towards a WhatsApp-based interface that is much easier to use.
14.4 RELATIONSHIPS: HOW CAN WE REDISCOVER THE CENTER?

How do we build stronger social networks of trust that are able to sustain collective and coordinated action?

The work of OCL, OpenUp and Grassroot all speak about the need for contextual approaches to tackle the challenge of vulnerability, doubt and apathy (Camargo, 2018). The approach is to identify horizontal networks, social norms and even community narratives that can build and expand trust. OpenUp’s Youth Explorer tool is a potential example of how an approach can build on what works within a locality, connecting users to those in power in a way that enables them to speak differently to each other. The goal is not to confuse social accountability with advocacy. Advocacy has a space, alongside public participation and, most importantly, community organizing. It is grounded in research, information and civic education, but importantly it articulates voice towards action.

Civic actors do not need to build every single part of the infrastructure on their own. This can simply exaggerate existing silos, where everyone is separately doing the same thing. For example, it is interesting that DearSA does not have a stronger relationship with PMG, even though their work overlaps to such a large extent.

The research also shows that social accountability tools with a broader reach due to research, information and civic education in community organizing have a stronger chance of resonating with the people they aim to work with. Grassroot and Ndifuna Ukwazi are both focusing on strengthening the ability of emergent social movements to organize strategically when faced with an unresponsive or restrictive governance space. This is an important insight, as without an avenue for ordinary people to organize in response to the lack of feedback, frustrations will boil over as pressure builds. These organizations have also connected with research and information partners like PSAM and PMG to underpin their strategic approaches. In this way, social accountability monitoring is not just about knowing about the issue or ways to address the issue, but it also enables ordinary people to effectively organize to confront a lack in response to the issues raised.

Existing partners with stronger ICT and data knowledge provide important support to those working in the community-organizing sphere, as is evident from the relationship between OpenUp, Ndifuna Ukwazi and the Black Sash. PSAM spoke a lot about its role as a research institution, and how it is aware of the limitations it encounters in community mobilizing. Being aware of limitations could enable organizations to strategically access networks, identifying potential partners that can collaborate with them on an issue. For example, some (like PSAM) can lead in terms of being an information resource, while others are able to disseminate information to their members at the grassroots level. Social accountability monitoring does not mean that all actors are engaged in the same issue or using the same online tool or approach. However, through a careful connection of key stakeholders, we can generate and better articulate the voice of citizens, while finding innovative strategies to trigger an institutional response.
15. CONCLUSION

This section started with a broad landscape analysis of the social accountability monitoring space in South Africa. A broader literature review clarified concepts around social accountability monitoring and practices at a global and a national level in South Africa. This allowed for the development of a conceptual framework. In-depth, qualitative interviews and analysis provided some key findings that were specific to the South African context.

The most important insight is that social accountability monitoring should be seen as deeply political, but also relational. It is more than giving citizens a space to voice their issues or concerns, but it is also about the appropriate government response to issues that are being raised. Social accountability monitoring also entails building the capacity of ordinary people to hold their government to account if the response to the civic voice or actions is unjust, oppressive or dismissive. This is a highly political process and implementers will encounter distrust, ignorance and high levels of apathy, technocratic and costly ICT interfaces or glossy process outlays and will struggle to motivate users to participate. This means that active participation will be limited, further impacting the transmission of user information back to the public sphere.

Mixed approaches have the potential to generate contextual avenues to deepen participation and build the capacity of users. Offline and informal spaces are important forums for building trust and horizontal networks. There are examples where these offline approaches to social accountability monitoring can be further activated through online support and forums (such as the work of Ndifuna Ukwazi, Open Cities Lab, OpenUp, the Black Sash and Grassroot). This does not discount the role that ICT will play in the future. ICT holds promise, but on its own it will not address marginalization or the lack of meaningful relationships. In fact, where citizens use ICT to raise issues without restoring feedback loops to the public sphere, it is expected that apathy will deepen with more disengagement.

Social accountability monitoring tools and approaches should also be strategic in identifying how ordinary people talk about a problem and how they approach the challenge. There are ways to tap into those user-generated spaces and to find ways to activate them strategically, instead of continuing to use broad social accountability monitoring tools and approaches that do not speak to what users need (or encounter) daily.

This necessitates a careful and strategic rethink of social accountability monitoring tools amongst partners. Instead of simply re-inventing similar applications (like municipal service delivery applications), those working in this field should rather see how their social accountability monitoring issues overlap and are interconnected. In this way, we can start to build a civil society network for collective and coordinated action that is tied to the nature of the social accountability challenges that we are trying to address. This model allows for more elaborate understanding of community problem-solving and social norms, meaning that our approaches will be incorporating historical, socio-political and cultural realities that we, as practitioners, may encounter.
16. REFERENCES


17. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND DATES

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Luke Jordan, Grassroot. 21 August 2019
Gail Fullard, Parliamentary Monitoring Group. 22 November 2018
Richard Gevers, OpenData Durban. 29 January 2019
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