

# PROVISION OF INFORMATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: ISSUES OF BIAS, ACCESS, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

M.G. Manamela and R. Rambuda  
University of Limpopo

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper is to theorize the provision of information on the basis of bulletins: through broadcasts (televisions and radios), newspapers, reports, billboards among others, in the relative majority of rural areas. The reality on government published documents and studies of public accountability and transparency depicts an argument in terms of the dissemination of information. The disparities of who, why and when to receive information, remains a very complex and challenging issue for government officials and different organisations. From the national government cascading down to local governments, information can be skewed to who should receive it. Not in terms of the necessity but with the fact that some places are considered eligible in accessing information. Thus, different characteristics of urban and rural settings can radiate and determine the instigations in terms of bias of information in that regard. Many people from rural areas are often sidelined and overlooked in terms of the dissemination of information. Rated as illiterate and undeserving, relative majority of rural people are often confronted with plethora of challenges in terms of accessing full and equal information. Conversely, people perceived to be deserving full information and deemed literate, perhaps in urban, semi-urban areas and townships, are often rebellious than people in rural areas. The paper posits that it is not obvious that all rural people cannot read and write, so they also need information to engage in any related issues affecting their lives. The paper argues that lack of transparency and fairness in disseminating information results in bias and impeding access to information for rural people. Notwithstanding, another main aspect that could hinder access to information is non-electrified rural communities. Theoretically, the paper explores the accountability and transparency with regard to biasness of dissemination of information in South Africa.

**Keywords:** Public Servants; Information; Accountability; Transparency; South Africa.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Provision of Information can be contextualised depending on its purpose; thus, it could mean many things to many people (Omogor, 2013). In that regard, provision of information can be regarded as a way of communication between organisations, constituencies and exchange information from person to person from one place to another (Sharman, 2012). Generally, it could mean that information can be a resource which local communities entitled to have access to; and that should be done by public servants through showing fairness in distribution of information for all. Therefore, providing information to both rural and urban areas equally has benefits for both the government and its constituencies. According to Roling (2014), disseminating information equally does not bridge the gap between the urban and rural settings but it also paves the way for relative majority of rural people to hold public officials accountable about certain matters which were done indolently, misdirection and embezzlement of public resources. The fact that communication has taken place between government and its constituencies could result to actions that produce reaction, whether positive or negative (Omogor, 2013). According to Kamba (2009) and Roling (2014), dissemination of information can be helpful for people to make rightful decisions about issues that affect them.

Arko-Cobbah (2007) stated that the right of access to information has been accepted by South Africa as a sine qua non for the democratic state pursuing the value of accountability, transparency, openness and responsiveness in the government institutional affairs. On the contrary, the reality on government published documents and studies of public accountability and transparency depict a different story in the dissemination of information.

The issues and biasness in terms of the provision of information in South Africa is portrayed through the inequality of access to information (McKinley, 2003; Roling, 2014). From apartheid to post-apartheid era, provision of information has and is still a problem in South Africa (McKinley, 2003; Roling, 2014). Hence, there is a difference in provision of information in the South African rural and urban areas that in most cases informs the decision making. Thus, different characteristics of relative urban and rural settings can radiate and determine the instigations in terms of bias of information in that regard. The disparities of who, why and when to receive information, remains a very complex and challenging issue for government officials and other different organisations (Sharman, 2012). Accordingly, one can argue that from the national government cascading down to local governments, information can be skewed to who should receive it. Not in terms of the necessity but with the fact that some places are considered eligible in accessing information. Rated as illiterate and undeserving, relative majority of rural people are often confronted with plethora of challenges in terms of accessing full and equal information.

With an attempt to ensure the theoretical validity, the paper is guided by and highlighted the two theories amongst others. The first one is mathematical theory of communication, which highlights that all information should be quantified and administrated essentially in the unity of media (Shannon & Claude, 1948). In essence, the role of different modes of communication such as radios, pictures, billboards, newspapers *inter alia*, are of paramount importance in relation to the provision of information (Shannon & Claude, 1948). The second theory is the change theory, which is used to map outcomes of information provision (Hoare, Mcloed & Joy, 2016). Thus, the change theory posits that information provision should cater for the general populace regardless of geographic position and literacy level, among others (Hoare *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the paper explores the accountability and transparency of information in South Africa which must be harnessed by the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS). According to Murad (2010) and World Bank (2011), without full transparency and accountability there is an unfettered access to timely and reliable information on decisions and performance. Within that context, accountability and transparency becomes two major factors that can possibly hinder the achievement of development and public goals if not considered, predominantly in rural settings (Murad, 2010; Roling, 2014).

As a result, the paper theorizes the provision of information on the basis of bulletins. That is, through broadcasts (televisions and radios), newspapers, reports, billboards among others, in the relative majority of rural areas in comparison with urban areas. Accordingly, in light with the argument, the paper highlights the instigations that result in disparities of disseminating information between urban and relative rural settings. Furthermore, the paper provides the value of information for rural people; the South African policy and legislative frameworks towards information provisioning, access, accountability and transparency is enclosed to clarify the issues of access of information for constituencies. The paper contextualizes provision of information focusing on relative majority of rural areas that do not have access to information due to inadequate service delivery, predominantly non-electrified rural settings.

## **2. EXPLORING INFORMATION PROVISIONING IN SOUTH AFRICAN: ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

The Constitution of the Republic South Africa through the Bill of Rights (chapter 2) gives citizens' rights to have access to information that is held by the state and further to take action against the state if they believe their constitutional rights have been infringed (Cheadle *et al.*, 2005; Klaaren, 2005). Access to information can also be illustrated as a basic fundamental human right, which is promulgated steadily in the constitution of broader human rights clams (Cheadle, Davis & Haysom 2005; Belski, 2007). In essence, accessing information can illuminate the basic fundamental human right where people are entitled to have access to information at all times. Author such as Arko-Cobbah (2007) believes that the recognition of the right of access to information is a central pillar to South Africa's democracy, mainly due to the experience of the past. Therefore, the right of access to information drives the idea of equity in information provisioning between urban and rural settings. However, provision of information between rural and urban areas in South Africa remains at bay. Thus, it leads to public servants avoiding real or social accountability towards fairly distributing information between the rural and urban areas. In support of this, the constitution of the republic of South Africa also promulgated the issue of accountability and transparency through information provisioning. The occurrence of such disparities is mainly instigated by lack of knowledgeable public officials in terms of dissemination of information and

the kind of information to be disseminated (Klaaren, 2005; Kamba, 2009). Arguably, that radiates the fact that South African public officials could be in a conundrum in respect of disseminating information. Due to that, the South African government in response to information provisioning could be very poor and inadequate, particularly looking at the relative majority of rural areas. Additionally, a large relative majority of rural areas experience limited access, distortion and extortions information by public servants as compared to urban dwellers, even though the information might be of paramount importance (Snyman & Snyman, 2003; Kamba, 2009). Ironically, disseminating information is regarded as part of service delivery in South Africa. Although there are principles which stipulates that service delivery should be provided impartially, equitably and without bias, dissemination of information in South Africa is still at bay (Statistic South Africa (Stats SA), 2015).

## **2.1 Information, Transparency and Accountability**

Literature in the field of information studies has been written but a few have been written of what information government should provide in the context of public administration (McKinley, 2003; Arko-Cobbah, 2007; Stats SA, 2015). According to Sharman (2012), exploring what kind of information includes the problem of how information should be disseminated to the public as a whole without bias or favour. Concomitantly, Sharman (2012) made a remark that information is semantic and anything semantic is in the context of information. Moreover, much has also been written about the concepts information, transparency and accountability, while on the other hand their practices are far more problematic in reality. Due to that, there are issues of biasness, unaccountability, lack of transparency and also malpractices in relation to the provision of information to the public (Snyman & Snyman, 2003). Transparency and accountability are interrelated and mutually reinforcing concepts in any issues that concern the public that as a result are in the provision of information context (World Bank (WB), 2011). According to World Bank (2011), accountability perceived to be a prerequisite of democracy and good governance; therefore, it entails the role of civil society to hold those in public office accountable. Hence, the issue of disseminating information to the public as a whole with fairness and equality is brought into picture to conform to transparency that will lead to accountability. The World Bank,

(2011) confirms that transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information. As a result, the unfairness of disseminating of information remains at bay and further discombobulating the transparency and accountability.

Accountability can also be fostered through direct answering or questioning to those in authority when providing information (World Bank, 2003; Roling, 2014). The question remains as who will be accountable in areas that are overlooked with regard to disseminating information, specifically rural areas. Without full transparency, there is an unfettered access to timely and reliable information on decisions and performance; and, it would be difficult to call public sector to account in that regard (Snyman & Snyman, 2003; Murad, 2010; World Bank, 2011). Unless there is accountability, a mechanism of transparency, report on the usage of public resources and consequences for failing to meet stated performances objectives would be of little value. Accountability is therefore driven by transparency, meaning that everyone should be eligible to access information so that they can participate in holding government officials and or the public servants accountable (World Bank, 2011; Roling, 2014). Transparency would be of little value, if the apparatus of reports and disseminating information are still for specific people, predominantly if rural areas are overlooked.

## **3. THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION IN URBAN AND RURAL SETTINGS OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Kamba (2009) opined that rural communities in Africa constitute high percentages of population whose information and development needs are inadequately met and consequently they have not been able to enjoy the benefits thereof. In the South African context, relative majority of rural populace are excluded and deprived off in their right to access and receive readily prepared and correct information (Sikhakhane, 2005). Thus, that amounts to the exacerbation of lack of accountability and transparency towards the rural populace. One can argue that relative majority of urban areas, if not all, have wall plugs, flayers, bill boards among others that can serve as a source of provision of information; but it could not be the case in relative majority of rural areas. Furthermore, the assumption is that relative majority of rural people only receive information when they visit the next townships, cities or urban

area but yet both rural and urban areas form part of the country. The bill boards, flayers and wall plugs are an exception due to the fact that there is instant information that is meant for access at a specific time. In some instances, public servants often emasculate rural people and provide them with less information or information that is beneficial to and or not giving information at all (Omogor, 2013). Information that benefits the political organisations could refer to time of elections, in a way of promising delivery of services to rural people. However, it could be argued that the instant information that can inform rural people about the current issues that affect their live is compromised due to lack of benefits thereof. The provision of information services has been dispersed and access to various information services has become more difficult, particularly in South African rural areas (Russell & Bvuma, 2001; Sikhakhane, 2005). The principal victims, in some areas if not all, of inadequate dissemination information are and have been rural people as a result leave the marginalised people vulnerable regarding issues that affect them (Mchombu, 2003; Kamba, 2009; Omogor, 2013).

There are factors that provide the distinction in the equality of information between rural and urban settings. One of the assumptions is that rural people are illiterate and they cannot read or write (Sikhakhane, 2005). In urban areas, inclusive of townships and semi-urban areas, riots, protest, barricades and strikes are assumed to be the factors that force the provision of information, transparency and accountability by public servants rather than in rural areas (Ward *et al.*, 2014). Hence, the priority of information is given to urban setting. That as result turn a blind eye on rural people in accessing information due to the fact that they are no threat initiators. Within that context, that compromises the equity in providing and accessing information for rural dwellers. As such, Ward *et al.* (2014) state that without systems to restrain and guide the exercise of power in terms of dealing with the threats such as barricades, protest and riots among others, the newly democratic regimes and public servants will remain bias, forces the direction and skewing of information to a specific setting (which is urban area) and unable to guarantee access to information for rural people.

Within that context, high percentages of population should not be an excuse in terms of disseminating information to rural population. That as a result explicitly portray biasness pertaining the dissemination of information between rural and

urban settings that can possibly causes mute function in rural areas. Hence, according to Fourie (2008) and Dick (2005), the problem of mute refusals must be dealt with through the inclusion of a provision for access to information body such as government department responsible for supplying information and nongovernmental organizations in educating the public on the right to access information that can possibly deal with mute refusals. However, the public servants should work closely with people who cannot access information together with the aforementioned bodies among others. In essence, organizational bodies are capable of overseeing the implementation, train and guide the provision of access to information for all (Ward, Molefe, Stone, Mzila, Henenstra & Adeleke, 2014).

#### **4. SOUTH AFRICAN POLICIES AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS TOWARDS INFORMATION PROVISIONING, ACCESS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

Provision of information in South Africa is shaped by legislative frameworks that are extracted from and framed based on the constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996. In that context, South African public servants are guided by numeral laws, act and most enormously the constitution in providing information. Legislatives frameworks such as Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA), Batho-pele White Paper among others, encapsulate the issues and emphasize on efficient access to and provision of information. Additionally, the Human Rights Commission support the notion of provision of information for all. Yet, after the implementation of these laws, regulations and legislative frameworks, public servants still and often emasculate rural people or deem them as unimportant through the nuisance of inequality towards the provision information (Mofolo & Smith, 2009; Kaisara & Pather, 2011). There are aspects that are highlighted and emphasized within the laws, regulations and legislative frameworks regarding openness in respect of information that be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without being bias.

##### **4.1 Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA)**

According to Roling (2014) and Ward *et al.* (2014), promotion of access to information act 2 of 2000 (PAIA) is one of the far-reaching piece of legislation that can be viable for both rural and urban areas to access information fairly. The act provides the



importance and availability of information for both rural and urban areas. The main agenda of PAIA is to give effect to the constitutional right of access to any information held by the state and information that is held by another person that is required for the protection of any rights (Roling, 2014; Ward *et al.*, 2014). Accordingly, the PAIA promotes the notion of democracy that grows in the light of access to service, this is emphasized in the context of accessing information. Hence, PAIA recognises that pre 1994 the government systems in South Africa operated in a secretive and unresponsive culture in public and private bodies which often led to an abuse of power and human rights violation (Dick, 2005; Roling, 2014). In recognition of the connection between the right of access to information and democratic accountability and transparency, PAIA makes a direct link between the secretive and unresponsive culture in public and private bodies during the apartheid-era and the abuse of power and human rights violations (Dick, 2005; Roling, 2014; Ward *et al.*, 2014). But the practicality of this act has always been not level-headed. For point in case, the influence of PIA that has overlapped in the democratic era as a captive in imagination resulted in compromising access to information for rural people. Aligned with the promulgation of the constitution in chapter 2 section 9, there is an accentuation of equity as a subject matter which includes the fact that information should be provided equally so.

The dilemma towards equal information provisioning is very broad; hence government officials are unable to align to some act by the same token (Mchombu, 2003; Omogor, 2013). South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRCA) as a legislative framework advocates for the promotion of access to information. The SAHRCA promotes the compliance with the PAIA and produces an annual report in this regard, in line with Sections 83 and 84 of the Act (Roling, 2014; Ward *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, Roling (2014) states that the key prescripts of the PAIA is the development of transparency frameworks and increasing institutional responsiveness to information requests, with a view to promote access to information. In light of the proposed establishment of the information regulations as an intermediary enforcement of the PAIA has implications on rural people to gain access to information (Ward *et al.*, 2014). Although, there is a promotion of access to information, the problem is that there is a need for not conceptualising dissemination of information at the expense of practice. It is evident that being well informed about the legislations frameworks

with regard to the provision of information rather than considering practice become in vain. That is because practicing what is embedded in the policies and legislations in terms of provision of information is the key to marginalized population, particularly those who are unable to access information.

## **4.2 Batho-Pele Principles**

The Batho-Pele principles have been developed with the notion of putting people first in all the issues that affect them. The principles emphasise on granting an opportunity to access services that they deserve (Stats SA, 2015). Conversely, the public officials are perceived to be giving a paucity of attention to the principles. But one could argue that public servants are doing their best to cater the needs of the society, including providing information to all. Then, if so, how is it that there are still disparities on government execution towards service provision such as information, particularly in rural areas. Nonetheless, there are 8 recommended and adopted Batho-Pele principles, but for the purpose of this paper the main focus is on the following in respect of provision of information, accountability and transparency:

### **4.2.1 Information**

Citizens should be given full, accurate information about public services, which they are entitled to receive. Overpoweringly, many government officials are found to have transgressed promulgated laws, to botch in upholding their word of honour of their office (Murad, 2010). Generally, public servants do not act duly and provide relevant current updated information to the general public, predominantly to relative majority of rural people (Sikhakhane, 2005). In this regard public servants are stumbling in the provision of information to relative majority in rural areas. Whereas, in rural areas that is where there should be equitable access and provision of information to alert rural people about issues that could possibly affect their life. In reality policies and legislative frameworks that are stated must be adhered to. Conversely, the policies and legislative frameworks in respect of the dissemination of information are somehow defied. As a result, that compromises adequacy of access to services such as information for people in rural areas.

### **4.2.2 Openness and Transparency**

Citizens are eligible to be informed with regard to any issue that affect their lives at national and different provincial departments as well as local departments. Thus, that can be done through openness and

transparency. Openness and transparency highlight the importance of accessing information as a prerequisite towards information provisioning (Kamba, 2009). Transparency requires that government officials to execute their duties openly without secrecy (Murad, 2010; World Bank, 2011). On the contrary, is not what is practiced in South Africa and that has negative impacts on the lives of people, particularly rural people. For instance, if one were to go to a relative deep rural area and ask which ward number they reside in, it would be a shocking surprise. Therefore, one can argue that for public servants to withhold information from the public serves as a path of denying people their rights of access to information.

Although there are legislative frameworks, rural people are still disregarded and given little attention towards information provision. Additionally, availability and accessibility of information has not been proceeded accordingly in relative majority of the South African rural areas. This could hinder rural development and participation of rural people can be passive and of paucity. That as a result can minimize the rural people gaining ownership of the governments' conducted programmes as they seemed to be overlooked in provision of services. Providing information fairly, equitably, impartially and without being bias as a service is then regarded as initiatives towards information dispensation and access (Russell & Bvuma, 2001; Sharman, 2012). Therefore, these initiatives will of course need to be ensured and equally enjoyed by all members of society, irrespective of the location. This is where the confusion is with regard to whether regard information as a service or not. But the reality of the matter is that information is regarded as services with point of reference to South African policies and legislative frameworks such as the Constitution, PAIA, Batho-principles *inter alia* (Cheadle *et al.*, 2005; Mafolo & Smith, 2009; Kaisara & Pather, 2011). If information is to be taken as a service, it has and must be provided in an impartial manner, which on the other hand public official's action and scope of work are kept at bay in respect of dissemination of information. Service provision in South Africa as part of information provisioning should be blatantly provided fairly and equally (Stats SA, 2015). Conversely, more and more services are provided in urban area and less in rural areas, which include the provision of information. This view can be supported by a notion that portray the fact that in urban area there's more accessibility of quality service (including information) than in rural areas. This allows the public

servants to hide and not play their active duty leaving the rural people out in delivering information and that lead to not being held accountable due to their un-transparent actions in most rural areas. In reality, how can rural dwellers hold the public servants accountable if they are neglected and side-lined as well as the discrepancies of providing information is still unabated. Transparency must be fostered by providing people in both urban and rural areas with timely accessible and accurate information.

## **5. THE INSTIGATIONS OF BIASNESS IN TERMS OF DISSEMINATING INFORMATION**

One of the instigations of bias of information giving could be driven by the protection of information, with point of reference to the Protection of Information Act 82 of 1982. Although, the act has been applied during apartheid era, it can be another factor that portrays the bias of the dissemination of information in the democratic era in South Africa. It could be with the fact that the government encourages or take into cognisance the secrecy of information in government operations to avoid accountability. Furthermore, PIA remains the apartheid piece of legislation in the statute books and continuously plays a part in the protection and dissemination of information that is contained in Protection of Information Act (PIA) (Mafolo & Smith, 2009). The PIA is informed by the demands of an authoritarian and secretive apartheid state in that regard (Dick, 2005; Arko-Cobbah, 2007). As a result, the protection of information act might have overlapped into the democratic era in order to protect certain government information with the fear that if such kind of information is disclosed then the government can be brought to its disrepute. Therefore, South African information provisioning and transparency, through public servants, has and is still bias in that regard. Concomitantly, there are pieces of legislation which leaves the discourses, abetments and troubles in the South African public administration side of information provisioning (Cheadle *et al.*, 2005). Due to that, rural people are left out because of been regarded as illiterate among others.

Consequently, there could be some other laws and legislative among the aforementioned that could result as instigators to hinder the provision of information to rural people. According to Omogor (2013), such laws could cause amassed-confusions on whether the public servants should actually promote the acc to information or protect information.

Therefore, it is lucidly that the promotion of PIA in this era negates cogently with the Promotion of Access and Information Act (PAIA) and also Batho Pele principles which exclaim the promotion of openness and transparency. Accordingly, so long as PIA remains a legally binding law in South Africa, the provision, accessibility and disclosure of information will remain bias. Ward *et al.* (2014) poses that so long as PIA remains a legally binding law in South Africa there will be a continuous and rigid conflict between its regimes of dissemination of information. As such, conflicts will make more difficult to deal with secrecy and weakens accountability as well as leading to poor governance. Considering PIA, the dissemination of information to South African constituencies will remain in classification/declassification that will rest on highly contested grounds as a national information security that is contained in PAIA (Ward *et al.*, 2014).

## **6. THE VALUE OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL PEOPLE**

Information is very important towards development in both rural and urban areas. Predominantly, the value of information could be perceived in relative majority of rural areas, where information can be a panacea to address social and economic ills. Belski (2007) opinionated that information is the list expensive input for rural development in knowledge; thus, knowledge and information are basic ingredients on making one to be self-reliant. In another reviews, it is highlighted that communities in rural areas require information on supply of inputs, new technologies and early warning of unforeseen circumstances such as drought, shocks, diseases among others; furthermore, credits, market prices and their competitors *inter alia* (Tanser, Gijbsbertsen & Herbst, 2006; Sikhakhane, 2005; Fourie, 2008). That could be with the fact that rural people are vulnerable to such shocks and they can end up being victims due to lack of information or rather because they are not informed regarding such. If such information is not disseminated to rural people, chances are that the government action will be of no value in terms of rural development where there will be a need of recovery measures to deal with such shocks instead of considering rural safety-nets which could be provision of information prior to occurrence of activities. If the government does not provide information to rural people that will result as pointless and lead to pilot of the deepening, thickening and exacerbation of rural poverty (Mchombu, 2003; Kamba, 2009). Having

said that, it is worth noting to avow that information is useful for rural people and ensuring self-reliant that can aid in alleviation of poverty in most rural communities. Therefore, without the increasing access to and provision of information will result as a conundrum and paving a way for the continual underdevelopment of rural communities where relative majority of rural populace are affected by inability to access information.

Access and use of information can be a plateful factor towards addressing illiteracy, low productivity uniformity within rural areas (Omogor, 2013). As such access to information can serve as the interest in the leading commodity of the present stage of development in developing countries (Kamba, 2009). If rural people are aware of what is happening around them, then that can assist in creating a favourable condition that is necessary for development and improvement of rural people's livelihoods. Rural people can use information to build and also improve the stature of their development projects. Although, rural areas experience the problem of illiteracy which also affects their accessibility, receiving and also utilization information, that should not be placed as an excuse to exclude rural dwellers in provision of timely and necessary information. As supported by Omogor (2013), provision of information is paramount to rural dwellers' needs for which is based on their activities that include the help to access health facilities, agriculture, social, political, trading, food processing, textile, pottery and other crafts, entertainment as well as other public affairs, aesthetic and cultural matters among others. Information provision is a gateway towards having a well-informed citizen who will make well informed decision and activities that involves the way in which they can manage their development (Dick, 2005; Belski, 2007). A well informed citizen will always engage in activities and can hold government accountable in their failures. Information accessibility for rural areas is a crucial factor towards sustaining and maintaining their standard of living.

As such, inaccessibility of information by rural people put their health condition, livelihoods among others to vulnerability (Tanser *et al.*, 2006). For case in point, there are chickens which are alleged to be dumped in South Africa by United State of America (USA). In that regard, different views through public participation were presented on radios, televisions, newspapers among others; and, that information might not have reached some rural people due to lack



of access to information in their vicinity. With those allegations, the consumption of such products could put rural people's health conditions at risk. One could therefore highlight that relative majority of people in rural areas are not aware other issues and products that can put their livelihoods and health conditions at risk due to lack of access to information. As result, rural people are vulnerable to negative impacts in that regard. So if rural people were to be informed, they will make better and informed decision. As a result, given the mode in which the public officials conduct themselves towards the matter of provision of information is very alarming because as part of the general citizenry, people from rural areas have to actively participate in activities that could be more beneficial to their health and standard of living, livelihoods and lifestyles (Tanser *et al.*, 2006). In the context of public administration, it would mean that the government is obliged to involve citizens in decision making and providing information to every citizen equally and fairly without bias (McKinley, 2003). Therefore, government should aim at allowing the availability and free flow of information fairly and equality through distribution systems to both urban and rural areas fairly in order to facilitate development.

## 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The contradiction of the dissemination of information is portrayed on two factors which are regulations in protecting the information (particularly state information) and the promotion of access to information, transparency and accountability. Therefore, the regulations in terms of protecting information lead to government officials not being transparent and often not held accountable. Then how is the nation going to benefit and hold the government accountable if the information is protected from disclosure in order to safeguard the national interest? Ironically, the only time where information is disseminated accordingly without bias is during the elections, that is when rural people are visited in the name of campaigns whereas all along they were overlooked. This clearly states that information is brought to rural people for the purpose of government serving own interests. While there is a renowned democracy in South Africa that portray equality of access to services; conversely the behaviour of democratic government clearly portray the concept of neopatrimonialism in relative majority of rural areas. This paper is adamant to the notion that there is a disparity in provisioning of

information between relative rural and urban areas. The necessity to address the problem of access to information, transparency and accountability should be dealt with in both urban and rural areas fairly and equally.

As supported by literature, the paper recommends that rural people should be considered in promoting the provisioning, access and receiving information that must be unremittingly without bias and impartiality. The optimum measure of a country's success in the field of access to information without bias is to adhere to the piece of legislations in order to guarantee and accommodate all citizens. Public servants must not only be accountable to their reporting structure but also and mostly above all they should be held accountable by the community at large. Therefore, all-encompassing shape of provision of information by South African public servants calls for intervention. There are impediments in accessing information for rural people such as relative non-electrified rural areas, where rural people cannot watch or listen to news. In that regard, services such as electricity should be a priority in the remaining rural areas that are not electrified. Providing electricity will be a solution for timely inaccessibility of information by rural populace. Therefore, in the meant time, the government should ensure that they go down to local people through organised meetings to deliver information for rural people through information dissemination team (GCIS).

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