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Public Participation and Accountability in Local Government with Particular Reference to Jozini Municipality

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ABSTRACT This paper examines whether public participation and accountability in local government assist in improving service delivery and whether community members consider their involvement in the participation process to be meaningful. In examining public participation and accountability, the objectives of the paper were to determine (i) whether the municipality has mechanisms in place to ensure public participation and accountability, (ii) the existence or otherwise of mechanisms for public participation, mechanisms for holding councillors accountable for the delivery of services and determining how effective they are, (iii) whether, if mechanisms for public participation and accountability exist, the municipality has measures that determine their effectiveness for service delivery, and (iv) whether the community has knowledge in terms of how the municipality works in assisting the participation processes. This paper sheds new light on the neglected issue of public accountability and the need to establish sound relationships between local government and the communities they service. Furthermore, the paper shows that without public participation, it is often difficult to hold local government officials and politicians accountable for their actions. It also shows that effective processes of public participation and more accountable local government gain trust from the public.