



### RECOMMENDATIONS

- M&E is a major challenge for the APRM in most member countries, including at the continental secretariat. However, this is a key factor in any accurate assessment of the APRM's success or failure and therefore must be addressed.
- In order to justify all the resources expended on the APRM process so far, it is necessary to rekindle interest in the NPoA and its implementation in Nigeria. Success will only be guaranteed by committed collaboration between state and non-state actors. Government and civil society must overcome their apparent mistrust and work together.
- For it to be implemented at minimal cost, the NPoA must be incorporated into the country's national development strategy/agenda. The base documents and continental secretariat should provide clear and detailed guidelines on how funding should be made available for NPoA implementation, and advise on how the NPoA's objectives can be mainstreamed into the national agenda and existing development plans.

# Lessons from Implementing the APRM National Programme of Action in Nigeria

Mouzayian Khalil-Babatunde<sup>1</sup>

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The way in which the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has unfolded in Nigeria – a key regional player with Africa's largest population – offers lessons and guidance to other participating APRM countries. The peer review process must be followed by the effective implementation of the National Programme of Action (NPoA) – the document that seeks to remedy any governance weaknesses unearthed in the review. The most significant challenges are poor monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the NPoA's implementation, limited capacity and funding constraints.

### INTRODUCTION

The APRM is a voluntary assessment tool instituted by African heads of state in 2003, within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to promote good governance and sustainable development on the continent. It focuses on four thematic areas: democracy and political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and socio-economic development. It seeks to entrench good governance practices in participating states by deepening the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, integrity, respect for human rights, and promotion of the rule of law, in order to create an enabling environment for sustainable development.<sup>2</sup> The unique feature of the APRM is that it was developed and is being implemented by Africans, distinguishing it from externally imposed assessments.

As of October 2014, 34 countries have acceded to the mechanism and 17 of them have been through their first review cycle. Eleven years on, the

APRM has demonstrated its value as a diagnostic tool. It is also shaping policy and institutional development in ways that enhance good governance towards sustainable development, through peer review and sharing of best practices. It acts as a ‘moral contract’ that ensures that African leaders adhere to their commitments in line with the NEPAD agenda.<sup>3</sup>

A major challenge, however, is finding ways to ensure that countries that have undergone peer review can properly implement the NPoA emanating from the exercise. This is where the real value addition of the APRM lies and an area where the APRM could make a meaningful contribution to Africa’s evolving governance architecture. This policy briefing examines the case of Nigeria, which is currently preparing for its second review. Apart from their relevance to other countries, it is hoped that the lessons distilled will also shape Nigeria’s second review.

### THE APRM IN NIGERIA

Nigeria was among the first countries to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, acceding to review under the APRM in March 2003. Following its accession, Nigeria’s Secretary to the Government of the Federation was designated as the National Focal Point. The country also put in place a 22-member National Steering Committee and a 31-member Working Group to oversee the implementation of the national processes. After a drawn-out review process that took place under two presidents (Olusegun Obasanjo and Umaru Yar’Adua), Nigeria was finally peer reviewed by fellow heads of state in 2008, thus becoming the eighth country to undergo the process.<sup>4</sup>

A major component of the review exercise is that each country puts forward an NPoA, which must be implemented and reported upon annually to the APR Forum. The Nigerian NPoA has been the most ambitious in the APRM process so far (even with its sizable population, estimated at 177 million people in 2014), at \$20 billion for the period 2009–2012. Its NPoA is also one of the most complex in terms of responsibilities and implementation timelines.

NEPAD Nigeria is the administrative and

co-ordinating agency for the APRM and its NPoA in Nigeria; its Governance Department is primarily responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring, collating and validating data on NPoA implementation, and prepares the progress reports. While the country has so far presented two progress reports, Nigeria, like many other APRM-implementing countries, has not kept faith with its NPoA promises. This raises concerns not only about sustaining commitment to NPoA implementation but also about how implementation is monitored and evaluated. There is more to gain from focusing on effective reporting through a well-designed monitoring and evaluation framework, rather than NEPAD Nigeria stretching its limited manpower and resources in an attempt at co-implementing the NPoA.

The roles of the national ministries, departments and agencies tasked with NPoA implementation are not clear, especially in relation to reporting on and monitoring the implementation process. Initially, NEPAD Nigeria wanted to be responsible for implementing the NPoA, but this met with resistance from the former, so NEPAD Nigeria maintained only an oversight role in most objectives. It is also unclear whether the budget of the NPoA is based on the overall estimated cost of the activities listed, including those that already exist in the national agenda. This could lead to duplication, as these activities already have their own budget allocation. Apparently it was not meant to be a bulk sum of money to be released by the government and made available to implementing agencies.

Specific obstacles to the implementation of Nigeria’s NPoA fall into two broad categories: structural/technical challenges; and individual, social and political issues. In the first category, the APRM has had to deal with limited technical capacity, the poor organisation of national structures and unclear reporting lines. As it is being run by NEPAD Nigeria, the APRM suffers from limited manpower and technical capacity, especially given the scale of implementation in Nigeria across all 36 states of the federation. NEPAD Nigeria lacks the necessary communication tools to identify and

monitor the activities of implementing agencies. The former Director of the APRM in an interview acknowledged that the department's abilities were 'limited by resources'.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, a significant hindrance to the APRM's implementation lies in the status of NEPAD Nigeria, which needs an enabling law to make it a commission. In March 2013, a second bill went to Parliament for approval, but has not been passed to date.<sup>6</sup> NEPAD therefore has no legal standing, which also affects how the federal government assigns and disburses funding to it.<sup>7</sup>

The second category of problems relates to underlying (and in certain cases less obvious) influences, some peculiar to the Nigerian case. These include the lack of buy-in from political leaders or reform champions, the mistrust between the government and civil society, and other internal political crises, which shift the focus of political will away from national development. For instance, the death of President Yar'Adua in May 2010 led to internal strife within the ruling party regarding his successor. The APRM process had begun during the tenure of Obasanjo, who was a key player in the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), NEPAD and the APRM. Since he left power in 2007, his successors have not had the same level of interest and influence in regional and continental affairs.

In general, the APRM process in Nigeria elicits a mixture of optimism and cynicism from civil society members and government officials who have participated in the review. A diverse selection of non-state actors, including religious organisations, professionals, women and youth groups, traditional leaders and other issue-focused non-governmental organisations had been invited to participate in the review process. The main problem with their involvement was that 'some CSOs [civil society organisations] were sceptical about the sincerity of government in carrying out the review. Such suspicion dissipated only after they saw that no punches were pulled in producing the report.'<sup>8</sup> Civil society involvement in the initial review stages was free from interference and CSOs' voices were adequately represented in the Country Review Report

and NPoA recommendations.<sup>9</sup> However, their participation subsequently degenerated to such an extent that it is now practically non-existent in terms of NPoA implementation. This steady diminishing of civil society's engagement has deepened doubts over the government's sincerity and increased cynicism about the potential impact of the APRM in general. Civil society representatives admit to steadily waning interest and a lack of confidence in the entire process.

However, CSOs add that a lack of funding from donor organisations for monitoring the APRM has contributed to their loss of interest. One leading research organisation representative said: 'CSOs are like enterprises, which succumb to the trend of funding and will go where there is funding. Since international organisations don't support the APRM [in Nigeria], CSOs are not interested.'<sup>10</sup> This implies that there are currently no CSOs seeking to hold the Nigerian government accountable to its APRM commitments (or for its lack thereof). This defeats the primary purpose of including civil society – ie, to stimulate internally generated and sustained accountability from government on the implementation of its NPoA.<sup>11</sup>

There have also been signs of poor communication between the government/administrative structures of the APRM and civil society. With relations between the government and civil society already strained, despite his recognising the APRM as 'an instrument for good governance [that] could be used effectively [and the] initial enthusiasm for the process', the Director for Research and Chief Economist at the Nigeria Labour Congress remarked that: '[L]ike many other things set up for improving governance which has [strong] state presence in the framework, the state has dominated and captured *the space*. [The APRM] is weakened in its capacity to meet the objectives.'<sup>12</sup>

## LESSONS

Several lessons can be learnt from the Nigerian case.

### **Political will**

There must be adequate political buy-in at all

levels of government (elected, appointed and career levels). This will help ensure the vital political will to drive and sustain the process, and that it receives the required funds.

### Communication

It is crucial that information about the APRM – its purpose, process and impact – be made available and accessible at all stages, from review to implementation. This requires effective communication with the public and between government departments, ministries and parastatals.

### Capacity

It is counter-productive for any government to expect the APRM process to succeed without ensuring that the individuals and departments responsible for all the stages of the process have the necessary human resources and the intellectual, technical, administrative and financial capacity.

### M&E

Without rigorous and systematic M&E of NPOA implementation, it will be impossible to establish its impact in any country.

Forum (ADF IV), Addis Ababa, 1115 October 2004, p. 2.

- 4 The country was peer reviewed twice, first at the ninth Summit of the Forum on 29 June 2008 in Sharm El Sheik, Egypt and it was concluded at the First Extraordinary Summit of the APR Forum on 29 October 2008 in Cotonou, Benin.
- 5 Interview with Omotoso A, former Director of the APRM in NEPAD Nigeria, 10 November 2011.
- 6 *Daily Times Nigeria*, 'Senate decries existence of NEPAD without enabling law', 27 March 2013, <http://www.dailytimes.com.ng/article/senate-decries-existence-nepad-without-enabling-law>, accessed 11 September 2014.
- 7 The issue of NEPAD's not having the enabling law to strengthen and legitimise its activities was also identified by the Secretary of the Government Federation and APRM National Focal Point (Mahmud Yayale Ahmed), *Progress Report on Implementation of the National Programme of Action (NPOA) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Analysis of Implementation by FMDAs, 2009 to 2010)*, December 2010 p. x.
- 8 Email interview with Gboyega A, Professor of Political Science, University of Ibadan, 9 April 2010.
- 9 Alu C, Representative to the APRM National Working Group from the Christian Association of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria; 9 March 2010. Also based on interviews with various civil society actors and members of the initial National Working Group during the review process from 2005–2008 in Abuja, March 2010.
- 10 Interview with Olaide O, acting Country Co-ordinator, OSIWA, Abuja, Nigeria, 9 March 2010.
- 11 Khalil MV, 'An Assessment of the African Peer Review Mechanism: The Case of Nigeria', unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick, 2013.
- 12 Interview with I Ozo-Eson PI, Director of Research & Chief Economist, Nigeria Labour Congress, Labour House, Abuja, Nigeria, 11 March 2010.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Dr Mouzayian Khalil-Babatunde is an independent researcher on the APRM, governance and development issues in Africa, with particular interest in the role of its regional institutions. She is also a lecturer at the Nigerian Turkish Nile University in Abuja.
- 2 Amoako KY, Executive Secretary, UNECA (UN Economic Commission for Africa), presentation statement at Harvard International Development Conference, 2003.
- 3 Assan K, 'The Implementation of African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in Ghana', speech delivered at the Fourth African Development

The Governance and APRM Programme is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. SAIIA gratefully acknowledges this support.

© SAIIA 2014 All rights reserved. Opinions expressed are the responsibility of the individual authors and not of SAIIA.