

SAIIA OCCASIONAL PAPERS SERIES

Analysing key policy and governance issues
in Africa and beyond



UNDERSTANDING APRM RESEARCH: PLANNING, PROCESS AND POLITICS

A Practical Handbook for Peer Review Research

George Katito

Number 4, June 2008

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This publication is also available in French. Translations by Beullens Consulting and www.alafrench.com.

Other publications

The African Peer Review Mechanism: Lessons from the Pioneers is the first in-depth study of the APRM, examining its practical, theoretical and diplomatic challenges. Case studies of Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Mauritius and South Africa illustrate difficulties faced by civil society in making their voices heard. It offers 80 recommendations to strengthen the APRM.

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Abstract: A Practical Handbook for APRM Technical Research Institutes

Entering the labyrinth of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is like entering a minefield – fraught with unforeseen obstacles, hidden dangers and political booby-traps. The brave and unsuspecting nine African countries that have so far embarked on the process can attest to its unexpected hazards. Apart from problems common to all, each has found itself dealing with its own distinctive difficulties, ranging from political sensitivities to willingness to disclose the information demanded.

Each new participant is bound to uncover new hazards, for the mechanism is searching, sometimes provocative and occasionally obscurely couched. It offers scant guidance on how to go about the process. For those about to start the journey, a roadmap based on experience is useful, perhaps essential. Missing until now has been such a blueprint.

This practical handbook - designed primarily for technical research institutes, but of value to anyone involved in any capacity – provides sensible advice in easy-to-digest form. It works its way chronologically through the process, identifying the difficulties experienced by previous participants, advising on international benchmarks and best practice and anticipating problems such as deadlines and methodology.

The first hurdle is the formidable, 88-page self-assessment questionnaire. This document almost defeated some early participants. It demands a welter of information across a range of subjects. It calls for multi-disciplinary research skills and is sometimes confusing. Divided into four broad categories, its inquiries cross boundaries, making it difficult to divide the work into neat parcels.

The handbook points to solutions, often based on how the pioneers resolved the problems (or didn't). It is likely to prove invaluable in helping participating countries to produce the fair and candid reports without which the aims of the APRM cannot be achieved.

Introduction

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a bold, novel and ambitious initiative by African governments to undertake a wide-ranging assessment of virtually every aspect of the governance of their political, economic, corporate and socio-economic development systems.¹

Yet evaluating policy, identifying gaps and proposing solutions on such an extraordinary scale has proved to be a complex and demanding undertaking. Emulating Ghana, the first country to undergo review, participating countries have turned to teams of experts, including policy think tanks, academics and researchers,² to provide the technical expertise and objectivity required to put together a coherent, robust and credible country self-assessment report (CSAR) (see box 1 for a brief description of the APRM process).

Despite the importance of the peer review process, there is no detailed blueprint given to research institutes in signatory countries on how to produce a report that is fair, robust and candid. Researchers and their managers have been given very little official guidance and are ill prepared for the political, managerial and technical challenges inherent in APRM research. With only a shallow pool of experience to draw upon, and too few chances to share ideas, Technical Research Institutes (TRIs) have tended to 'reinvent the wheel' rather than to build on best practice. Viewed positively, however, the lack of rigid rules offers each institute the flexibility to choose cost-effective and feasible research methodologies and to adopt the most appropriate strategies and tools for their environment while still fitting into the approved framework of the APRM.

This handbook brings together the collective experience, lessons and insights of those research bodies that have worked on the APRM to date. It also seeks to help their peers to navigate successfully the politics and practicalities of writing robust CSARs.³

To this end, this handbook provides:

- a brief introduction to the APRM and an overview of the steps and structures that define the process;
- an outline of the role TRIs play in the APRM's country self-assessment;
- strategies TRIs may use to equip them to negotiate the 'political' dynamics that often influence country self-assessment;
- an overview of best research practice and recommended research methodology TRIs have used to complete the self-assessment research task; and
- a set of recommendations which will enable TRIs to contribute to the peer review process beyond the country self-assessment phase.

What is the APRM?

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a voluntary process that requires African governments and their citizens to analyse systemic governance problems, assess progress towards improvement and identify suggestions for effective reform. By May 2008, 28 countries had acceded to be reviewed.

Once a government has acceded it signs a memorandum of understanding with the continental APRM authorities (the Panel of Eminent Persons and continental APR Secretariat) indicating its commitment to the process. It then establishes a variety of institutions – a government focal point, in some cases a ministerial/cabinet committee, a national governing council (NGC) or a national commission (NC) – to guide and drive the process. It may also establish a local administrative secretariat.

The first step involves gathering information and documentation about the performance of the government and other stakeholders in key areas. The government typically forms an APRM National Governing Council charged with the responsibility of managing the process. The NGC usually appoints Technical Research Institutions (TRIs) to undertake research and data collection.

All elements of society – civil society groups, religious institutions, labour unions and business groups, as well as the government – are required to respond to a questionnaire that covers a wide range of issues. The APRM Questionnaire guides the review process by highlighting four broad thematic areas: democracy and political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and socio-economic development. Specific issues include the provision of health care, human rights, the state of the economy, the role of the judiciary and the behaviour of corporations. The results of this review are incorporated into a Country Self-Assessment Report, which is drafted by the national governing council. The report includes a programme of action (PoA) recommending methods the government may use to deal with the problems identified in the review, specifically outlining national priorities for improving governance and promoting socio-economic development and suggesting strategies for addressing identified priority areas. The suggestions include key stakeholders and their roles in the implementation of the PoA and the resources required to put the PoAs into effect.⁴

Once the country self-assessment report has been completed a Country Review Mission – a delegation of respected scholars and experts – visits the country to conduct an independent study and produce its own report. The delegation is led by a member of the Panel of Eminent Persons, which is a body of seven highly respected Africans who are responsible for managing the process across the continent.

The final country report is presented to the Forum of Heads of State of all the participating countries for discussion and final review. The forum tends to convene on the margins of African Union (AU) summits (though not all AU members are participants in the APRM). Once the forum's review has been completed the country concerned must agree to deal with the problems that have been identified. Other states may undertake to assist a country in its efforts to deal with such problems.

TRIs and the Country Self-Assessment process

The Country Self-Assessment is a process of conducting desk and field research into the current state of governance, of acknowledging achievements and progress, identifying problems and proposing solutions. Two products emerge: the CSAR and a Programme of Action (PoA). The APRM Supplementary Guidelines, the most recent written rules, give very little guidance on how results should be generated or on the research task of TRIs. They merely give TRIs the task of 'collating data [and] analysing and presenting the views of the general population [through] qualitative and quantitative [research methods]'⁵ and suggest that these documents be the product of a national consultative process.

An 88-page APRM Self-Assessment Questionnaire distributed by the continental APRM Secretariat based in South Africa guides the country self-assessment process in gathering the necessary data and analyses. The questionnaire is divided into four major sections or 'thematic areas' – democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development – which outline the many areas the self-assessment must examine.

Most countries have divided the report into four sections, each principally assembled by one TRI, although it is seldom that a single research organisation has the requisite expertise to tackle all the issues within a particular thematic area. Self-assessment often takes place amid competing political visions of what the CSAR should achieve and under immense pressure to meet deadlines. No country has managed to complete the process within the recommended six- to nine- month period (see Appendix 1). In effect, self-assessment is a dynamic political process of bargaining, building consensus and, if necessary, agreeing to disagree. This calls for efficient time, staff and financial management and a willingness to engage with a complex political process.

The role of TRIs and how they are chosen

Although the architects of the APRM did not originally envisage a role for research institutes – essentially feeling it would be sufficient for the APRM National Focal Points to distribute the questionnaire and collate the responses to form the CSAR – TRIs have become a standard feature of the self-assessment process, following the precedent set by Ghana and other early participants in the process. Although their terms of reference vary from country to country

TRIs generally tend to play three broad roles.

- They conduct a desk-based assessment of the state of governance, using international benchmarks for good governance and the questionnaire.
- They incorporate public input into the self-assessment.
- They generally shoulder the responsibility for developing the text of CSARs and, in some cases, PoAs.

It is less easy to define how TRIs are selected – some selection processes are less transparent than others. Ideally, TRIs should be appointed on the basis of their research experience, familiarity with issues of governance, costing of research proposals (where selection is open to bidding) and technical capacity. However, the objectivity of the selection processes has been questioned. In Ghana TRIs did not have to tender, giving rise to questions about whether the process was adequately transparent. In countries like Rwanda and Tanzania⁶ where the TRIs chosen appeared to be a collection of institutes with ideological and other affinities with incumbent governments, observers raised (often muted) questions about the fairness of the selection process. While the successful bidders (or appointees in Ghana) undoubtedly had a proven record of competence, it is possible that informal relationships and the familiarity of the government with the levels of service and professionalism among these TRIs placed the successful candidates in a better position to secure contracts.

Consideration of both the formal criteria for selection and the informal factors at play might inform the way aspiring TRIs in countries still to undergo peer review position themselves when bidding for APRM research. Awareness of the informal dynamics, for instance, could make it necessary for institutes bidding for contracts either to approach the APRM through consortiums or, where possible, to seek to influence bidding rules by calling, for a transparent, points-based means of appointing TRIs.

Research institutes that succeed in being appointed as TRIs will then have to fulfil the tasks mentioned above, and expanded upon below.

Measuring compliance with international standards and codes of good governance

The Self-Assessment Questionnaire calls on countries to detail their compliance with international and regional standards and codes of good governance, drawn from a broad range of international commitments through the United Nations, the African Union, regional economic communities and other similar international institutions.

TRIs must provide this information in their sections of the CSAR. However, the assessment of the adoption or ratification of standards and codes alone does not fully indicate progress towards improved governance. Therefore a desk-based evaluation of other national and international governance assessments is also critical. (See Appendix 1 for a list of recommended sources to consult.) Researchers should also be aware that obtaining records of a country's compliance with or ratification of international standards and codes can prove difficult, as records may not be centrally housed, regularly updated or kept all. And even when the information is available, some officials may not be willing to provide it for research purposes. Researchers should therefore allow time to make contact with the relevant government institutions. An official letter from the NGC or even the country's APRM Focal Point or president may help open these doors. Ghana found that appointing one central person in each ministry, department or agency who understood the needs and purpose of the APRM process helped facilitate access to information.

Incorporating popular opinion in the self-assessment

TRIs are often given the task of integrating findings from self-assessment consultations on the state of governance in their technical reports and/or the final CSAR. They may also be called upon to facilitate public consultation meetings and incorporate findings gleaned from such meetings in the CSAR. In South Africa TRIs were requested to facilitate a seminar to draw experts into the self-assessment process. Similarly, in Kenya and Ghana TRIs conducted surveys to elicit the public participation of experts. TRIs have also been engaged in conducting surveys – in conjunction or consultation with a country's Bureau of Statistics. This was the case in Lesotho and Kenya, among others. While the extent of TRI involvement in organising public opinion differs they generally play a crucial role in collecting and analysing data derived from public consultations and integrating them into CSARs.

Developing the text of APRM CSARs

This poses the challenge of reconciling two apparently disparate goals. On the one hand, in order to develop the self-assessment TRIs must collate a broad range of findings, often with vastly different views on the same issues. On the other, they must ensure that the report provides a fair, broad and accurate national assessment. The need to produce an accurate and credible report may well be in conflict with demands to reporting what is perceived as being politically correct by the political establishment, or a particular political party, administration or other interest group. Balancing the demands of producing a factually accurate CSAR with attention to detail and, at the same time, providing a representative overview of the state of governance poses many managerial and technical challenges that call for elaborate planning, contracting adequate skills and a substantial investment of financial and other resources.

An overview of the role of TRIs in four countries

	Ghana ('Technical Research Teams')	Kenya ('Lead Technical Agencies' and Thematic Area Conveners)	Rwanda ('Thematic Groups' later renamed 'Technical Review Teams')	South Africa ('Technical Support Agencies')
Selection of TRIs	Selection of TRIs not opened to tender.	In addition to four 'Lead Technical Agencies' the governing council appointed four 'convenors' in each of the thematic areas to serve as an interface between civil society and TRIs.	A lack of adequate local capacity meant that Rwanda's National Commission did not appoint local think-tanks to oversee self-assessment. Instead, the commission opted to appoint a consultant to conduct desk research and several stakeholders to gather input in each of the thematic areas.	Initially, South Africa did not plan to use research institutions. Later, about 200 research and advocacy groups were invited to seek accreditation. The final selection used a tender process where institutions had to demonstrate capacity and technical expertise.
Role of TRIs	TRIs gathered data, conducted desk and field research and compiled a technical report on each of the four thematic areas. They also helped to compile the CSAR and develop the draft PoA.	Substantially the same role as Ghana's TRIs (except time pressures meant that separate technical reports were not written).	TRIs' role was largely to gather information while the South African-based Africa Institute for Policy Analysis and Economic Integration (AIPA) performed a 'quality control' function on the draft CSAR.	TRIs were not involved in the collection of field data. Technical agencies were asked to produce a technical report incorporating the findings of public written submissions, hosting an expert seminar and contributing to a draft PoA and report.
Critical concerns/challenges	As the first APRM country, researchers had no precedent or blueprint. The lack of transparency in the selection process of TRIs may have placed the credibility of the process in question.	The draft CSAR was compiled hurriedly, with researchers sequestered in a hotel for several weeks to complete the report.	The technical competence of thematic groups was widely questioned. The prominent role played by government officials in leading the four technical teams put the objectivity of the process in question.	The compilation of the self-assessment report was rushed because the deadlines set for the process were unrealistic.

Source: Adapted from Herbert & Gruzd, 2008

Managing research

The complexity of APRM research requires effective management of information, knowledge, relationships, resources and time. Methodical planning and an effective management strategy are also critical to producing CSARs that stand up to technical and political scrutiny. Listed below are some of the factors to anticipate and provide for.

Hire additional staff and plan to subcontract

The broad scope of the APRM demands a variety of expertise and extensive consultation. For example, the democracy and political governance section requires analysis of conflict prevention, human rights, separation of powers, elections and electoral systems, vulnerable groups, corruption and many other subjects. Since it is rare for one TRI to have all the necessary in-house knowledge or skills TRIs are advised to hire experts or to subcontract sections of the thematic area as soon as possible, in which case the costs of contracting and training additional staff and/or subcontracting work should be factored into research plans and budgets.

In Kenya, research institutes subcontracted portions of the research within the first few weeks of the process, as did the Ghanaian TRIs (for example, Ghana's Centre for Democratic Development subcontracted research on conflict management and human rights to external experts). It may be necessary to seek approval from the national governing council overseeing the CSAR process.

Allocate adequate staff, time and finances for quality control

The development of a detailed budget gives TRIs greater clarity about the specifics of the research task, assists in relieving the pressures of meeting deadlines and eases the overall management of the process.

In countries where TRIs have the task of collating written submissions and/or gathering public survey data quality control of responses is vital. To facilitate efficient data gathering and collation sufficient staff and other resources should be dedicated to evaluating the quality of responses. The experience of South Africa's Institute for Economic Research on Innovation (IERI) in collating public input for their research into an already onerous, broad socio-economic governance thematic area is a case in point. IERI found that many public submissions were anecdotal and localised and did not necessarily reflect national governance problems. Furthermore, some public submissions were difficult to understand or lacked evidence to support contentions, requiring further consultation or the rejection of sections of the submissions.

The sheer volume of material that had to be collated very swiftly also placed a substantial strain on the resources of the organisation. As a result, time and staff had to be diverted from other ongoing projects to conducting APRM research.⁷ In view of the fact that quality control and management may consume more time and resources than is initially apparent planning, dedicated resources and close monitoring of the process are critical.

Manage public meetings professionally

Although large public gatherings are seldom the best way of eliciting meaningful information TRIs may be required to organise such events in order to include popular opinion in their research. Effective management of meeting and public dialogue is critical to soliciting high-quality responses and convening public discussions, expert workshops, focus groups and other forms of consultation that will yield useable material for the CSAR requires a substantial investment of resources to secure venues and catering, sound equipment, provide transportation and, in some instances, incentives for attendance.

Adequate publicity for these events, logistics, the preparation and training of facilitators and other financial costs should be factored into budgets and plans. In Rwanda stakeholder workshops convened by that country's TRIs were dominated by government representatives and often 'emphasised the form of the APRM – basically filling in a questionnaire – rather than the substance of a dialogue', according to a former South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) researcher who participated in one of these workshops. It is important that the purpose of any meeting be well publicised and that the meeting be skilfully facilitated to gain high quality public input. While the organisation of meetings may fall to governing councils it is in the interests of TRIs actively to ensure that the meetings are well publicised and professionally conducted.

Manage time efficiently

APRM self-assessment has often had to be rushed because the six- to nine-month deadline has turned out to be unrealistic. This has compromised the quality of the CSAR.

In Uganda the self-assessment process was reportedly accelerated to incorporate the findings of the peer review process into that year's budget cycle.⁸ The Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) in Ghana cited time pressure as the single most restrictive factor of the self-assessment research.⁹ TRIs in all countries that have participated in the process have expressed similar concerns about constrained deadlines and intense pressure to deliver. However, while the demand for speedy self-assessment may affect the quality of findings¹⁰ effective time management may mitigate the impact. It is not always the shortage of time *per se*, but poor management of the allocated time that causes problems.

Involve national APRM governing structures in management planning

To maintain open lines of communication and to meet the requirements of self-assessment it is useful to include a representative of the APRM's governing structures in planning research.¹¹ This eliminates misinterpretation of terms of reference, builds trust with APRM structures and enables TRIs to remain engaged with the process and be apprised of any changes in timelines or other important factors. Engaging with governing structures also provides TRIs with a platform to make a strong case for more time if required. In Kenya the TRIs were non-voting members of the national governing council.

Manage media relations prudently

The peer review process offers an opportunity to foster public debate and raise awareness about governance issues through the media. TRIs can play an important role in this regard by adding their preliminary findings to the public debate by means of opinion pieces, television and radio interviews, internet blogs and websites. However, meaningful contribution to media-generated discussion of the APRM requires a well-managed media strategy that outlines priority areas for comment and gives guidance on how to comment through the media whilst maintaining professional integrity.

Understand contractual obligations and set boundaries where necessary

To date the period between the head of state signing the memorandum of understanding formally committing his or her country to the APRM and the conclusion of contracts with researchers has typically been a long one – anything from several months to two years (in the case of Lesotho). However, research institutes in Lesotho used this waiting period to consolidate their expertise, familiarise themselves with other research institutes across the continent and maintain and manage relations with local APRM structures.

Given the volume of research that must be completed within a short time TRIs are advised to begin some preparations before contracts are finalised, although they should have at least an indication of commitment from the NGC. Otherwise committing time and resources prematurely could prove costly.

However, prior to beginning the work, it is equally important to familiarise managers and researchers with the TRIs' contractual obligations and to seek clarity on any terms of reference and conditions of service that are inadequately defined. This could be important if TRIs are to take greater responsibility for the research task, define the extent of their involvement with the process and set boundaries in relation to which aspects of the APRM they will engage with. The Institute for Development Studies in Kenya comments that its research staff members were often required to provide support for APRM governing council activities over and above those that they understood to be part of their contractual obligations. Therefore it is important for research institutions to know and understand the exact terms of their contracts and to be in a position to decline to participate in activities that fall outside of the terms of reference. They should also be able to renegotiate terms if required.

Research methodology

The APRM calls for a rigorous, technically competent research process including an appropriate mix of both desk and field approaches. However, in practice, the extent, rigour and diversity of methodologies has varied. At one end

of the spectrum are countries, Ghana and Kenya among them, where research was extensive and wide-ranging, incorporating desk research, expert and popular surveys, focus group discussions, internal peer review systems and civil society conventions (see Appendix 2). The Rwandan process, on the other hand, was less stringent, partly as a result of a lack of technical expertise. Below are some considerations TRIs should bear in mind in developing appropriate methods of research.

APRM research entails using existing written resources and expert and popular methods of research (see boxes on research methods used to date). However, sources of desk research should be rigorously tested. In addition, experts and the public should have a complete understanding of the APRM and its objectives before conducting field research.

Gathering expert opinion: APRM research methods

Expert surveys: These surveys are conducted among professionals and practitioners with specialised knowledge and expertise in the four thematic areas. In Ghana 250 experts were used; in Kenya the total was 100.

Focus groups: These are in-depth discussions within a small group focused on a specific subject. Ghana used focus groups to explore key issues (such as land use), while Kenya followed a different approach, and convened separate groups of younger men, younger women, older men and older women throughout the country, to examine several of the critical issues that emerged from the desk research and other research processes, including corruption and conflict management.

Expert workshops: These were a South African innovation – four one-day workshops were held during which experts discussed each thematic area. More in-depth workshops covering fewer issues each could also be considered.

Rigorously test desk research sources

In at least two APRM countries the use of evidence from international organisations and contested statistics has sparked political debate. In Rwanda TRIs whose desk research relied on international sources critical of government – such as the US State Department, Human Rights Watch and Reporters without Borders – to highlight persistent ethnic tensions and curtailed civil liberties, among other things, were strongly criticised by government representatives who considered these sources biased and lacking credibility.¹²

In South Africa, where unemployment and poverty figures are often contested, the choice of statistics was a sticking point between the TRIs and government.¹³ It is therefore important either to include alternative data sources and opinions where contested issues arise, or to provide a well-substantiated justification for the choice of sources as well as full references.

While it may not be possible to examine in detail the integrity and credibility of every source the following criteria may be used to evaluate potential sources¹⁴ (also see Appendix 3 for a list of sources).

A checklist for evaluating desk research sources

- Evaluate the *credibility* of potential documentation by determining the affiliate organisation, the names, titles, credentials and qualifications of authors and attempting to ascertain whether there might be bias/conflict of interest based on information about the author's source of funding, previous associations, etc.¹⁵
- The *context* in which the information was obtained may also affect the credibility of a source, for instance, statistics provided in an organisation's annual report may be biased to accentuate positives whilst understating critical negative information.¹⁶
- The *currency* (i.e., date of the original document) should be taken into consideration in evaluating a given source.¹⁷
- Where possible determine whether a given source has been subjected to an editorial review process and assess external reviews of potential sources.
- Cross-check the potential source's references, related links and other material that may support the author's ideas.

Ensure that participants understand the purpose of the APRM

The credibility of the self-assessment depends on broad, meaningful public participation through surveys, public meetings and written submissions. Effective communication, widespread publicity and national sensitisation about what the APRM is and what it seeks to do are vital. For example, in South Africa survey respondents who viewed the APRM as political canvassing often declined to participate or gave less than satisfactory responses. This problem was exacerbated as the survey was conducted in the run-up to the local government elections in March 2006.

Participatory research methods

Citizen surveys: Opinion surveys provide a structured means of collecting the views of a diverse sample of citizens from various regions and demographic groups. They also offer an opportunity to collect the data necessary to identify trends in popular opinion and what most people consider the burning issues. However, attention must be paid to developing an adequately representative sample, designing and structuring a questionnaire and allocating enough time, money and human resources to the conduct of surveys. These surveys were not mentioned in the early APR documentation, but have become standard practice.

Public conferences: These give citizens an important opportunity to speak about key issues and are often the visible face of the APRM process. Kenya, for example, called these Provincial Forums, and they provided many useful insights. However, the quality of information gained from these events depends on how well discussions are managed, the amount of time allocated to public conferences and the number of issues moderators cover within the allocated time. Frequently people come unprepared and tell anecdotes about their own experience, which are seldom linked to hard evidence. Many leave frustrated at not having had sufficient time to speak, particularly in large forums. One-day conferences covering all the thematic areas of the questionnaire have proved to be unsatisfactory in addressing all the key issues, while long conferences which are not focused and well moderated suffer from absenteeism. It is also vital to record proceedings, by means of written notes and/or electronic voice/visual recorders. However, research institutes in Ghana found that it was necessary to tell participants that recordings were for research purposes only as many were hesitant to speak frankly, concerned that their views might be publicised.

Inviting written submissions: South Africa opened up the process to public input by inviting written submissions from civil society and more than 80 institutions provided invaluable data and analysis. However, some research institutes given the responsibility of controlling the quality of submissions, collating information and trying to interpret data found the process a strain on already limited financial and human resources (see section above on Managing Research).

Approaching the questionnaire

One of the primary challenges TRIs will confront in undertaking research is the Country Self-Assessment Questionnaire, which is divided into the four thematic areas, contains 25 objectives, 58 questions and 183 indicators and covers the entire national governance spectrum. While the APRM considers the questionnaire to be the key instrument for developing a participatory, broad-based self-assessment¹⁸ the document is lengthy, complex and not very user-friendly. For these reasons the questionnaire should be viewed as a framework for conducting the self-assessment process – to the extent that it outlines key issue areas – and be adapted to local circumstances, although it must cover all the necessary themes and objectives.

While APRM secretariats and governing councils have overseen the process of making the questionnaire more accessible, one of the first tasks TRIs could undertake would be to reformulate the questionnaire, customising it and making it more user-friendly. Care should be taken to ensure that the spirit and meanings of the questions are not distorted in this process, or when translating the questionnaire into other languages. It is always vital to ensure that the enumerators that administer the instruments are adequately trained to understand the questions in a way that they can translate them without losing the meaning.

Below are some strategies that could be helpful in tackling the questionnaire.

Identify cross-cutting issues and co-ordinate research

Some issues – gender, corruption and poverty eradication, for example – appear in several categories. An important starting point is to identify these cross-cutting themes and devise a co-ordinated approach to research among the different research institutions to avoid duplication. In Ghana fortnightly research meetings facilitated the co-ordination of research as well as the general administration of the self-assessment process.¹⁹ Kenyan TRIs followed a similar approach, convening joint meetings to harmonise their choices of research methodology and management practices and facilitate co-operation, particularly in relation to fieldwork.²⁰

Convert the questionnaire for survey use

In its original form the questionnaire is not an appropriate instrument for eliciting input either from ordinary citizens or from experts as it asks for historical data and technical information which are beyond the knowledge of most citizens. Questions are open-ended, calling for a narrative answer rather than requiring respondents to rank or rate options. Another problem is that the questionnaire is generic, designed to cover all APRM signatories, and countries are encouraged to adapt it to cover important national issues that may have been omitted or under-emphasised. Most countries have converted the generic questionnaire into two opinion survey questionnaires – one for experts and one for the general public.²¹ TRIs should become familiar with questionnaires that have been designed and used in other countries and seek to improve on them. Special attention should be paid to adapting the questionnaire for broad public input by phrasing questions in accessible non-technical language.²²

Involve potential respondents in the redesign

Before launching a national survey process a sample of potential respondents should be consulted to test the simplified questionnaire for clarity of terminology and grammar, possible ambiguities and the optimal phrasing of questions. The test will also indicate how long a questionnaire takes to administer.

Translate the questionnaire into local languages

The questionnaire should be translated into the main local languages to increase its accessibility. In societies with low levels of literacy the use of visual images and simplified language (without losing the original intention of the question) might enable more people to be involved in the process. Special attention should also be paid to accurate translations that capture the nuances and undertones of words and terminology.

The experience of Tanzania's Women in Social Enterprise (WISE) is instructive. WISE created an APRM questionnaire tailored to women and the youth – groups with high levels of illiteracy and who are often alienated from the political process and – by extracting all the gender- and youth-related questions, rephrasing them in Kiswahili and publishing the adapted questionnaire as an illustrated booklet.²³ A simplified, visually appealing questionnaire can help elicit input where there is no culture of reading. Potential respondents are unlikely to take time to read through a long, technical document.²⁴ Enumerators should also be thoroughly proficient in local languages to in order to communicate the meaning and underlying intention of questions and capture responses accurately.²⁵

Conduct a pilot survey

Before disseminating the adapted questionnaire nationally a pilot survey should be conducted. Technical terms may need to be further clarified, questions redefined and the design of the survey re-conceptualised.²⁶

For example, in South Africa's Free State province, despite the use of a simplified, translated questionnaire, respondents found the survey difficult to understand and complete – often giving inconsistent responses to questions. For instance, many offered 'yes' and 'no' answers to open-ended questions, and there was not enough space on the survey forms for extended answers where required.²⁷ The Lesotho Institute of Public Administration and Management discovered after testing a simplified questionnaire that it was still too technical and needed to be refined further. Conducting a pilot survey may not only save time and money but may also increase the quality of public participation.²⁸

Develop an expert survey²⁹

Expert input also plays a critical role in providing material for a comprehensive self-assessment. The many technical questions in the questionnaire that require specialised knowledge should be consolidated into a survey for professionals and practitioners in given policy areas. This would add credibility to the self-assessment and demonstrate that a rigorous, technically credible approach has been taken. TRIs in Ghana and Kenya, for example, trained enumerators, who interviewed more than 100 experts in each thematic area using structured interviews.

Adapt the questions to cover neglected issues

The questionnaire overlooks or only addresses marginally many governance issues, including media freedom and environmental protection and governance as it relates to science and technological innovation.³⁰ However, these and other pertinent issues may be included in the self-assessment. ISSER in Ghana, for instance, developed questions relating to environmental protection and affordable housing, which were inadequately addressed in the original questionnaire.³¹

Add solution-oriented questions

Both expert and popular surveys should also seek solutions to problems that have been identified. The National University of Lesotho's Institute for Southern African Studies, for instance, has adapted the questionnaire to require respondents to suggest solutions to governance problems they identify as pressing. According to ISAS's head of research 'this helps determine priority areas' and 'contributes to developing APRM Programmes of Action'.³²

Tackling the questionnaire

Because the APRM Questionnaire is divided into four sections countries often manage research by handing each section to a different research institution. However, the range of subjects and the degree of specialisation means that research institutions rarely have the breadth of expertise required. To speed up the research effort and help assign the desk research to experts in the relevant fields it can be helpful to divide the questionnaire into clusters of related issues that would be suitable to assign to particular experts. For example, it can be more effective to hand all gender related questions to an expert who knows the legal and cultural issues and is familiar with the main assessments in the area. If the desk research is handed to a social scientist who is unfamiliar with the field he or she would have to take time to catch up and find sources. Similarly, issues such as trade, economic management, parliamentary powers and human rights, among others, benefit from having specialists in those fields prepare the desk research. Dividing the desk research into smaller, more manageable parts not only brings more expertise to bear it enables the work to be completed more quickly than merely dividing it into the four thematic areas of the questionnaire. In analysing the questionnaire with the Lesotho Governing Council in November 2006 participants broke it down into 26 issue clusters (see below). The Lesotho process has not yet been completed and, in the end some issues may be grouped for simplicity and economy, but the exercise is a valuable aid to identifying the forms of expertise and desk research that are needed.

Democracy and political governance

1. Managing conflict
2. Constitution/rule of law
3. Electoral systems and practices
4. Parliament
5. Judiciary and criminal justice (including crime, police, prosecution and detention services)
6. Human and political rights (including rights of children and vulnerable groups)
7. Gender (rights, fairness, socio-economic dimensions)
8. Media freedoms
9. Decentralisation (including questions from the economic and socio-economic sections. May also include issues of traditional rule, service delivery, land and environmental issues)

Corporate governance

10. Business environment
11. Corporate behaviour
12. Corporate accountability

Economic governance and management

13. Economic and development strategy (to include questions on sustainable development from socio-economic section)
14. Sound administration, oversight, corruption and money laundering (including corruption questions from political section)
15. Regional integration and trade

Socio-economic development

16. Self-reliance
17. Environment
18. Education
19. Health (including HIV/Aids)
20. Water and sanitation
21. Housing/shelter
22. Land
23. Agriculture (including access to markets, inputs, support, food security)
24. Finance (including micro-finance)
25. Transport
26. Energy

In order to begin building the national report and give participants in workshops something to which to respond it would be helpful to commission an expert writer for each of those issue clusters. Each writer would have six tasks.

1. Identify the relevant existing reports.
2. Prepare a bibliography of key reports and sources.
3. Prepare a list of key issues mentioned in those existing reports.
4. Under each issue provide a list of supporting evidence from the reports, using footnotes to make it easy to find the relevant portions in future.
5. Extract from the existing reports a list of their recommendations and propose others that are suggested by the evidence.
6. Each specialist researcher would also be responsible for translating his or her sections into local languages. Once these commissioned desk research papers are complete, Technical Research Institutes can flesh them out through public meetings, survey findings and discussions with government experts.

Source: Corrigan, T and Herbert, R, 2007, Ideas to Assist in Improving the Questionnaire, unpublished

Negotiating APRM politics

The APR self-assessment is meant to be a frank and thorough process of introspection involving the entire range of national governance. Institutions, especially governments, are unaccustomed to the probing honesty inherent in this process. Because the APRM deals with potentially sensitive issues it is not an apolitical research exercise but a highly politicised process, with competing interests jostling to include or exclude certain elements of the report, to influence the way issues are presented and the topics to be addressed in the PoA. TRIs must understand the political context in which their research is being conducted and be aware of potential challenges to their objectivity, independence and integrity.

Be aware of timing

Particular attention should be paid to the timing of the self-assessment (for example, proximity to an election) and to the effect of certain events on public participation and the expectations of incumbent governments and opposition members as to what the process should achieve. When the self-assessment process takes place at the time of an election campaign an incumbent government may see it as an opportunity to highlight its successes, while opposition parties may use the same opportunity to criticise government performance.

Ghana suspended all APRM fieldwork for three months during the height of the 2004 election campaign to avoid clouding the issue while elections affected the timing and quality of APRM research in South Africa, Lesotho, Nigeria and Mauritius, among others.³³ As far as possible avoid data collection during election periods.

Other major political and national events as well as public holidays may also affect the extent and quality of public participation in the self-assessment process.³⁴ For instance, the initial call for public submissions in South Africa coincided with the December-January summer vacation period and the Ugandan process took place concurrently with preparations for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting being held in Uganda in November 2007,³⁵ which meant that both public and government attention was largely directed towards the demands and opportunities of hosting a major international event.³⁶ One means of mitigating distractions might be to conduct field research among rural populations at times when planned events are likely to be of greater interest to urban dwellers. Another is to ensure that very little or no public input is required at the time of national events or public holidays. Avoid situations that could distort the results.

Develop a strategy to manage political sensitivities

The self-assessment process addresses politically sensitive issues and requires a well-planned strategy to tackle potential tensions over controversial political issues. One strategy is to assume a 'transactional approach' that opts to disengage completely from comment on such issues,³⁷ attempting to be a neutral service provider. In practice, researchers should be ready to justify their research findings and the credibility of their sources, and may face clashes with the political establishment.³⁸ While ideally research should be objective and free from political manipulation it must be recognised that the APRM is a political process and those conducting it must be prepared to tackle politically sensitive issues.

Assert independence and maintain professional integrity³⁹

Government-funded research institutes or TRIs that are frequently contracted to do government research may find it difficult to articulate strong criticism of an incumbent government. In countries currently completing their APRM processes⁴⁰ some research institutes closely linked to government have made a particular effort to conduct rigorous, professional research and produce self-assessments that reflect both government and opposition opinion.⁴¹ Such objectivity is critical both to safeguarding the integrity of the peer review process and to maintaining trust between governments and their traditional clients. TRIs are an important component in assessing the quality and rigour of the self-assessment process. Their professionalism will add credibility to the process; their complicity in a whitewash will have the opposite effect.

Be sensitive to political culture and historical context

Consideration should be given to the historical and political environment in which self-assessment takes place. Recent political events may influence the quality of participation and the results of research. In Tanzania, for example,

increasing public distrust of government as a result of recent reports of high-level corruption might contribute to a critical assessment of governance. By the same token, public ‘hype’ about topical issues may result in emotive responses that do not necessarily contribute to constructive public participation.

Recent political history may also affect the quality of responses. In Rwanda, where ethnic relations remain volatile and the political culture was relatively closed to vigorous debate at the time of self-assessment,⁴² TRIs had to pay particular attention to the design of public meetings and to outlining clearly the purpose of the self-assessment discussions to allay fears about openly criticising government and discomfort about discussing politically sensitive issues in Rwanda’s recent history.

Beyond the Country Self-Assessment process

The practical and political challenges of self-assessment could reduce the role of TRIs to a narrowly defined transaction between governments and contracted research providers. However, the APRM presents an opportunity to make a qualitative contribution to policy reform, to stimulate a constructive national conversation about governance and to enhance civic engagement and public participation in policy-making (see box below).

Propose measurable, achievable reforms

The APRM programme of action represents an opportunity to recommend innovations in existing policy and governance approaches. However, because the demands of conducting extensive desk and field research often supersede attention to developing the PoA a conscious effort should be made early in the process to develop recommendations for PoAs. The brief period dedicated to the peer review has often resulted in hastily assembled PoAs developed late in the process –resulting in the PoA appearing to be underdeveloped and inadequately formulated. The box below suggests a strategy for developing a PoA early in the process.

Developing the Programme of Action – A strategy

- **Establish PoA working groups as early as possible.** Create working groups consisting of a small, manageable number of experts and officials in a given policy area whose primary focus is to develop policy solutions to integrate into a draft PoA.
- **Review existing policy and reports on implementation.** The starting point for a PoA working group would be to review existing policy, identify gaps, track implementation and identify bottlenecks.
- **Integrate policy suggestions made as a result of APRM consultations and expert workshops.**
- **Map out options and test feasibility.** Develop alternative approaches to addressing problems that have been identified and subject the feasibility of these policy suggestions to a rigorous assessment. Anticipate the physical, financial and managerial requirements necessary to implement each one. These include: human resources (skills, managerial capacity and new staff required), implementing agencies (responsible for projects and programmes), infrastructure (computer equipment, software, telephones, vehicles), capital investment (acquisition of capital goods and building of physical infrastructure), operational costs, implementation schedule (a realistic timeline) and performance indicators (to monitor and evaluate implementation in the short, medium and long term).
- **Identify implementing agencies and develop a roll-out schedule.** Each PoA recommendation should incorporate short-term, medium-term and long-term indicators of progress.

Source: Herbert & Grudz, 2008

Increase public awareness

The APRM gives TRIs an important opportunity to contribute to public awareness and stimulate public discussion on governance by participating in APRM ‘sensitisation’ events and public debates. Their credibility, knowledge and experience will enhance public trust in the process.

Undertake a critical analysis of the process

TRIs have been at the ‘coalface’ of a novel, innovative and complex process. The practical experiences of those who have gone through the process will prove invaluable to their colleagues from other countries who have still to undertake it. They can make an important contribution to the ‘institutional memory’ of the peer review process and should document their experiences thoroughly.

TRIs can also contribute to academic discussion about the APRM by means of conference papers, policy briefings and journal articles. While respecting any confidentiality agreements TRIs can draw on their experience and involvement with the peer review process to contribute to discussions of governance and the APRM and to academic research into African politics, international relations and related fields. The role of APRM Secretariat in the technical review process also needs to be addressed. This can at times affect the efficiency with which the whole exercise is conducted.

Make suggestions for improvement

Peer review is an imperfect, evolving process that member countries have refined through experience. Its future effectiveness depends on stakeholders highlighting critical flaws and making constructive recommendations to strengthen the process. TRI input is, therefore, vital to reform of the APRM and its future implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation

Although some TRIs in ‘pioneer’ APRM countries have tended to decrease their engagement with the APRM after completing their report they could play a critical role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of APRM PoAs. Through policy briefings that track the implementation of APRM commitments and other publications TRIs could assume a ‘watchdog’ role over the implementation of the process and measure its long-term impact.

Summary and conclusion

APRM research demands the investment of time and of financial and human resources and thrusts TRIs into a unique political process requiring austere planning and management coupled with flexibility and ingenuity. It is critical to grasp the challenges of research, which include:

Challenges specifically involve:

- **understanding the object of the exercise.** The APRM seeks to foster policy reform and provide a governance framework that creates optimal conditions for heightened socio-economic development. The task cannot be viewed as a one-off contract but should be seen as a ‘living exercise that deserves precise planning, the input of a broad range of stakeholders and a robust technical assessment of the state of governance.
- **appreciating the nexus between the ‘political’ and other aspects of the assignment.** Because political concerns inform and influence the APRM process it is essential that research institutions be acutely attuned to the political timing and context, the participants and the current state of affairs both internally and at continental level.
- **the need to consistently build consensus/understanding and a common vision among all the stakeholders.** Research institutes fit into a broader context of structures that are specifically directed to making the APRM process work. Therefore the process calls for heightened vigilance and agility on the part of TRIs in order to provide relevant, contextualised, qualitative input.
- **planning for and adapting the various elements of the research tasks (both the management of research and its execution).** The APRM offers a vital opportunity but one that is often conducted with finite resources and limited time, so effective planning and efficient execution of the research task are of the essence.
- **acknowledging that the process is imperfect and uses imperfect tools.** Creativity and attention to detail are vital to making a qualitative input into the APRM. The overarching ‘tool’ of the process, the questionnaire, calls for TRIs to have a certain amount of liberty to include missing issues and to develop data-gathering strategies and analytical frameworks.

Far from being an uncomplicated 'contract' APRM research is a dynamic process in which the role of TRIs can evolve beyond being merely 'technical' into one that calls for foresight and a readiness to navigate the politics inherent to the APRM process and assume roles that border on activism. Involvement requires a full understanding of the demands and opportunities of peer review self-assessment.

Endnotes

- 1 See box 1 for a concise description of the process.
- 2 These research organisations have had different titles in different countries, for example, they are called lead technical agencies (in Kenya), technical research teams (in Ghana), technical support agencies (in South Africa) and technical research agencies (in Mozambique). The term 'technical research institutes' (TRIs) will be used throughout this handbook.
- 3 The experiences of researchers and research managers involved in the APRM processes in Algeria, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa have been invaluable in assembling this handbook, as have those of TRIs currently undertaking research in Lesotho, Nigeria, Mozambique and Tanzania.
- 4 However, little attention is given to outlining mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of APRM PoAs. This is a critical oversight to which future APRM TRIs could and should pay attention.
- 5 APRM Secretariat, *Supplementary Document to APRM Guidelines for Country Review*.
- 6 Information based on interviews and email correspondence with researchers and managers in Tanzania and email correspondence with researchers involved in the Rwandan and Ghanaian APRM processes.
- 7 After initial resistance to using TRIs the South African APRM NGC hired four research institutions five months after the launch of the process. Their primary task was to collate public submissions into a technical report on each thematic area. They were initially given three weeks (later extended to five weeks) to compile this report, based on thousands of pages of public input of variable quality, and there was little time to fill in gaps in the data, verify contentions or perform adequate quality control.
- 8 Meeting notes, APRM stakeholder workshop hosted by SAIIA, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 22 April 2008.
- 9 Interview with Cynthia Addoquaye Tagoe (ISSER representative), 23 November 2007.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Interview with Tsoeu Petlane, Institute of Southern African Studies, 14 April 2008.
- 12 Email correspondence with Dr Eduard Jordaan, University of Singapore, 14 April 2008. Jordaan was part of a South African team from the Africa Institute for Policy Analysis and Economic Integration (AIPA) contracted by Rwandan authorities to check the draft CSAR before it was submitted to the continental APRM Secretariat.
- 13 Interview with Thomas Pogue, 15 November 2007. Pogue led the team from the Institute for Economic Research on Innovation (IERI) which compiled the socio-economic development thematic area in the South African APRM process.
- 14 Cole, F, *Information Vetting Criteria*. Intelligence Community Intranet [don't we need an address?] (accessed 6 June 2008)
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Nepad/African Union, *Country Self-Assessment for the African Peer Review Mechanism*.
- 19 Jama M, R Atieno & I Onjala, 'Does APRM work benefit think tanks: when to say no and managing the risks'. Paper presented at SAIIA workshop, 'APR and reform: A Workshop for experts and Civil Society', 20-22 November 2007.
- 20 Quartey P & C A Tagoe, 'Organising and Managing APRM research: practical guidance to Prepare and execute research' SAIIA workshop *op cit*, November 2007.
- 21 See SAIIA, 'APRM toolkit', to view a list of APRM standards, <http://www.saiia.org.za>
- 22 Herbert R & S Gruzd, *The African Peer Review Mechanism – Lessons from the Pioneers*, Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2008, p 43.
- 23 Interview with Astronaut Bagile, Executive Director, Women in Social Enterprise, Tanzania, 25 April 2008.

- 24 Clive Bagelele, APRM Submissions Workshop, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. SAIIA/Legal and Human Rights Centre, 21-25 April 2008.
- 25 Remaoun H, 'APRM investigations: The case of Algeria'. Paper presented at SAIIA workshop *op cit*, November 2007.
- 26 Telephone interview with Tseou Petlane, Institute of Southern African Studies, 14 April 2008.
- 27 Van Rooyen, D, 2008, *Managing APRM Research: Challenges for Think Tanks*. Paper presented at SAIIA's 'APR and Reform: Workshop for experts and civil society', 20-22 November.
- 28 Telephone interview with Tseou Petlane, Institute of Southern African Studies, 14 April 2008.
- 29 Herbert, R and Gruzd, S, 2008, *op.cit*.
- 30 Quartey & Tagoe, *op.cit*.
- 31 *Ibid*.
- 32 Telephone interview with Tseou Petlane, Institute of Southern African Studies, 14 April 2008.
- 33 Van Rooyen D, *op. cit*.
- 34 Petlane T, 'Lessons and Challenges for APRM Research'. Paper presented at SAIIA Workshop *op cit*, November 2007.
- 35 Interview with Juliet Nakato Odoi, APRM CSO participant/Care International Uganda 22 April 2008.
- 36 Interview with Economic Policy Research Centre, Uganda, 16 April 2008.
- 37 Telephone interview with Jonathan Faull, 14 April 2008.
- 38 *Ibid*.
- 39 Ibeanu O. 2008 'Payment and independence: Does being a client of government curtail think tank criticism?', paper presented to 'APR Review and Reform: A Workshop for experts and civil society', 20-22 November,
- 40 Interviews with researchers quoted on condition of anonymity.
- 41 *Ibid*.
- 42 Jordaan E, 'Grist for the Sceptic's Mill: Rwanda and the African Peer Review Mechanism', *Journal for Contemporary Studies*, 25.3, 2007, pp 331-353.
- 43 This section is extracted from Herbert & Gruzd, *op. cit.*, pp 347-353.

Appendix 1: Country Self-Assessment Chronology

Event	Ghana	Rwanda	Kenya	Mauritius	Algeria	South Africa
Accession to APRM	9 March 2003	9 March 2003	9 March 2003	9 March 2004	9 March 2004	9 March 2004
Public Launch of the Process		March 2006	1 July 2004	May 2004	August 2005	September 2005
Country Support Mission	24-29 May 2004	21-24 June 2004	26-27 July 2005	28-30 June 2004	23-25 July 2005	9-11 November 2005
Country Self-assessment Report (CSAR) submitted to the Secretariat	March 2005	March 2005	August 2005	Not complete	February 2007	30 June 2006
Total time from public launch to completion	12 months	12 months	14 months	Not complete	18 months	9 months

Appendix 2: Summary of Ghana's Research Methodology

The *2005 African Governance Report* by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) that informed Ghana's choice of research methodology was the product of 27 research institutes in 27 countries, 50,000 household survey responses and 2,000 national and international expert responses collected over five years.

Below are the main aspects of that research methodology based on the UNECA model and adapted for Ghana's Country Self-assessment Report. Other countries, among them Tanzania, Benin and Kenya, have slightly adapted a similar methodology.

1. Pre-field methodology

- An education and sensitisation drive to raise awareness and encourage broad involvement and national ownership.
- Coordinating and harmonising the approaches of the four teams.
- Identifying stakeholders.
- Changing the self-assessment questionnaire into a scientific survey instrument.
- Gathering information and data for use by the APR Secretariat and panel member who would eventually conduct the external review of Ghana.

2. Field methodology

- Distributing elite surveys among 250 experts from government, academia, the private sector and civil society
- Surveying 1,200 randomly selected households in all regions to gather representative views. Sampling techniques gave each Ghanaian of voting age an equal chance of being included in the sample.
- Holding focus group discussions with targeted groups on particular issues or themes.

3. In-house methodology

- In-house methodology involved desk research, literature reviews and regular meetings to present and exchange ideas. On completion of the research, a combined task group formed by all four TRIs was established to compile a draft CSAR and condense the joint findings of the four Ghanaian technical reports in each thematic area. (The original 1 200-page text was reduced to 270 pages).

4. Post-field methodology

- **Independent Expert Review:** Independent experts in each thematic area tested the findings generated in the first three stages through a post-field research assessment over a period of about a month.
- **Four-Day validation workshop:** Technical teams presented their findings to about 200 stakeholders from civil society, government and the private sector. Expert reviewers also presented their analyses. Breakaway groups then discussed each section of the report.

Appendix 3: Useful Sources for Desk Research on Governance⁴³

This list suggests useful sources for desk research on governance. It is arranged alphabetically by major topics covered in the APRM Questionnaire for ease of use. Some sources have been repeated when they pertain to multiple topics.

All issues and sections

National development plans. Each country usually produces comprehensive plans that set out national development priorities. These are useful to identify government programmes and initiatives, especially in infrastructure, social services, health, education, housing poverty reduction, and industrial development. Source: Ministry of Planning or equivalent, government website or government printing office.

UNECA governance studies. The 2005 UNECA African Governance Report is the result of extensive research covering governance practices in 27 African countries. UNECA does a lot of research on governance issues in general. See also Synopsis of the African Governance Report 2005.

Source: <http://www.uneca.org/publications1.htm>

Google. An ordinary Google search can find myriad studies, papers and websites pertaining to particular countries. Enter key phrases for areas where evidence is lacking and it can find sources to support arguments.

Source: <http://www.google.com>

Google scholar. This is a sub-section of the Google search site that can help find academic studies on particular countries. Source: <http://scholar.google.com/>

Corporate governance

World Bank Investment Climate Surveys. These surveys are designed to monitor the business environment, not governance *per se*. ICS collects data from firms on both objective and subjective indicators covering a wide range of investment climate dimensions. Its database contains information on about 75 countries; it aims to cover 20–30 countries each year and resurvey each country every three years or so.

Source: <http://iresearch.worldbank.org/ics/jsp/index.jsp>

World Bank/IFC Doing Business surveys. These are useful to corporate governance assessments. The database covers 155 countries and all country scores are updated annually. The surveys show the cost of doing business in terms of time and money in dealing with a variety of government agencies in each country. The surveys addresses 10 areas of regulation: starting a business, dealing with licenses, hiring and firing workers, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, enforcing contracts, trading across borders, and closing a business. Experts answer questions in their area of expertise. Source: <http://www.doingbusiness.org/>

World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Index. This index ranks the competitiveness of global economies and is relevant to the economic governance, Corporate Governance and Socio-Economic Development sections of the APRM. See also the Africa Competitiveness Index.

Sources: <http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Global%20Competitiveness%20Report/index.htm> and <http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/gcp/Africa%20Competitiveness%20Report/index.htm>

Corruption

Anti-corruption reports. Most countries have local Anti-Corruption Commissions or similarly named bodies that produce annual reports. This should be supplemented with independent assessments produced by local anti-corruption groups or lobbies, investigative newspaper reports, local chapter of Transparency International or similar bodies. Sources: Anti-Corruption Commission, Transparency International Chapter, other local anti-corruption organisations, investigative newspaper articles.

Auditor-General's reports. These documents are useful as they outline systemic problems in fiscal and economic management, which departments and regions are performing well or poorly, and often identify specific cases of economic mismanagement and potential or actual corruption. Source: Office or website of the auditor-general or government printing office.

Center for Public Integrity. This non-profit, non-partisan research organisation in Washington, DC concentrates on ethics and public service issues. It produces the Global Integrity Index (GII) that evaluates aspects of governance and anti-corruption systems in many countries. The index focuses on measurement of ‘the existence and effectiveness of mechanisms that prevent abuse of power and promote public integrity, and on the access that citizens have to their government.’ The GII is based on answers to more than 290 detailed questions that identify specific elements that make up a sound public integrity system. Although the index does not cover all countries, its list of questions provides a valuable checklist for examining governance.

Sources: www.publicintegrity.org/ and www.globalintegrity.org

IMF Fiscal Reports on Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSCs). Participation in an ROSC is voluntary and the authorities retain the right not to publish the final report, although most have agreed to publish fiscal ROSCs. As of the end of 2005, fiscal ROSCs have been completed for 80 countries, and 76 of these have been published.

Source: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/rosc/rosc.asp>

Ombudsman’s reports. Most countries have an ombudsman charged with following up claims of mal-administration and corruption. The ombudsman should produce annual reports. Source: Office of the Ombudsman (sometimes called the Public Protector).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development–Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Baseline Indicator Set (BIS) for Procurement tool. This tool provides an approach to assessing procurement systems but rankings are not available for many countries. Specific ‘actionable’ indicators measuring key aspects of public administration have been piloted in three countries.

Source: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/12/14/34336126.pdf>

Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index and Bribe Payers Index. These indices show perceptions of corruption in particular countries, as well as which countries pay the most bribes, and to whom.

Source: www.transparency.org

World Bank Institute. The WBI produces rankings of national governance along six attributes. Data are available for more than 160 countries and each country is ranked according to its performance relative to other nations or regional averages. The data can be obtained easily from the World Bank Institute web site. The rankings amalgamate a variety of indicators of governance into six broad measures.

- Voice and accountability
- Political stability and absence of violence
- Government effectiveness
- Regulatory quality
- Rule of law
- Control of corruption

Source: www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/govdata/

Democracy and political governance

Afrobarometer. This project surveys opinions on democracy, elections, and governance across many (but not all) African countries. The information can be a valuable form of evidence in preparing an APRM submission.

Source: www.afrobarometer.org

Election observer reports. African countries host a number of local, African and international observers for local, parliamentary and presidential elections. Comparisons of the issues raised in these reports are good pointers to weaknesses in electoral laws and practice in a country. Note that they often differ in what is reported and how it is interpreted. Sources: useful reports are available from National Electoral Commissions, local election monitoring groups, SADC (or other relevant regional body), SADC Parliamentary Forum, the African Union, the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, Commonwealth, European Union, UN and US government observer missions.

Human rights reports. Most countries have local Human Rights Commissions that produce annual reports. Depending on the country, reports from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the US State Department

highlight key human rights and governance issues. Sources: Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or US Department of State Human Rights Reports.

International Freedom of Information Exchange. This global association keeps track of media freedom issues and has alerts on countries where violation of media freedoms occurs. It also has a list of related websites dedicated to human rights, democracy and other pertinent issues related to political freedoms.

Source: <http://www.ifex.org/en/content/view/full/264>

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. This Swedish institute known as IDEA does research and produces a variety of publications useful in assessing aspects of democracy, elections, parliament and other aspects related to the APRM. Source: <http://www.idea.int/>

Judicial services commission reports. Most countries have a judicial services commission that reports on the operation of the judiciary. Similar reports may be produced by the law society or similar legal bodies.

Sources: Judicial Services Commission and Law Society.

Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). One of several organisations that keeps track of and comments on instances of infringement on the freedoms of speech and the media, which are important but not explicitly part of the APRM Questionnaire. There are 11 national chapters in Southern Africa. The group also prepares a report on the status of media freedom in the region. Source: <http://www.misa.org/sothisisdemocracy.html>

Parliamentary oversight committee reports. These are crucial reports that should monitor and track government expenditure, and hold departments and officials to account for spending. Others such as ethics committees hold MPs accountable for their conduct and actions. Sources: Public Accounts Committee, Ethics Committee.

World Bank Institute. The WBI produces rankings of national governance along six attributes. Data are available for more than 160 countries and each country is ranked according to its performance relative to other nations or regional averages. The data can be obtained easily from the World Bank Institute web site. The rankings amalgamate a variety of indicators of governance into six broad measures.

- Voice and accountability
- Political stability and absence of violence
- Government effectiveness
- Regulatory quality
- Rule of law
- Control of corruption

Source: www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/govdata/

Economic governance and management

Auditor-General's reports. These documents are useful as they outline systemic problems in fiscal and economic management, which departments and regions are performing well or poorly, and often identify specific cases of economic mismanagement and potential/actual corruption. Source: Office or website of the auditor-general or government printing office.

Budget speech. The Minister of Finance's Annual Budget Speech usually provides details of government priorities and spending patterns, as well as key programmes and initiatives. Source: Ministry of Finance/Treasury, government website.

IMF Fiscal Reports on Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSCs). Participation in an ROSC is voluntary and the authorities retain the right not to publish the final report, although most have agreed to publish fiscal ROSCs. As of the end of 2005, fiscal ROSCs have been completed for 80 countries, and 76 of these have been published.

Source: <http://www.imf.org/external/np/rosc/rosc.asp>.

International Budget Project. This organisation provides a useful newsletter and a variety of guides to assist NGOs in monitoring government budget expenditure and how to assess parliaments and other institutions.

Source: <http://www.internationalbudget.org/index.htm>

Parliamentary oversight committee reports. These are crucial reports that should monitor and track government expenditure, and hold departments and officials to account for spending. Others such as ethics committees hold MPs accountable for their conduct and actions. Sources: Public Accounts Committee, Ethics Committee.

World Bank Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (CPIA). CPIA quintile rankings (all countries are divided into five groups based on their rank relative to other nations) have been disclosed by the World Bank but not the actual scores for each element of governance measured. Country performance assessment ratings, largely determine the allocation of development banks' concessional funds. CPIAs examine policies and institutions, not development outcomes, which can depend on forces outside a country's control. The CPIA looks at 16 distinct areas grouped into four clusters (see below). Bank staff score individual countries along an absolute 1–6 scale based on highly specific criteria.

Source: www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/data and <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/kkz2002/notes.html>

A. Economic management

1. Macroeconomic management
2. Fiscal policy
3. Debt policy

B. Structural policies

4. Trade
5. Financial sector
6. Business regulatory environment

C. Policies for social inclusion/equity

7. Gender equality
8. Equity of public resource use
9. Building human resources
10. Social protection and labour
11. Policies and institutions for environmental sustainability

D. Public sector management and institutions

12. Property rights and rule-based governance
13. Quality of budgetary and financial management
14. Efficiency of revenue mobilisation
15. Quality of public administration
16. Transparency, accountability, and corruption in the public sector

Socio-economic development

Budget speech. The Minister of Finance's Annual Budget Speech usually provides details of government priorities and spending patterns, as well as key programmes and initiatives. Source: Ministry of Finance/Treasury, government website.

Public Affairs Foundation. *Citizen Report Cards: A Resource Kit* provides an introduction to the concept and an overview of the process of evaluating government activities through citizen surveys or report cards. *Citizen Report Cards – A Brief Introduction* provides a short introduction to the concept of conducting citizen report cards on government activities, which can be a useful form of evidence in the APRM.

Sources: <http://www.citizenreportcard.com/index.html> and http://paf.mahiti.info/pdfs/CRC_Profile_eamonedit_.pdf

Public Affairs Centre, Asian Development Bank and Asian Development Bank Institute. *Improving Local Governance and Service Delivery: Citizen report Card Learning Tool Kit*. Link to a widely used online course, also available in a 251-page PDF course manual. Source: <http://www.citizenreportcard.com/index.html>.

Sectoral reviews. There will be reviews of particular sectors of the economy, including health, education, water, housing, sanitation and so on. Sources: These may have been done by local university departments or think tanks, donors or regional or international research institutions.

Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN). This website posts a wide variety of studies and news on economic development, poverty and governance. Searching on a given country can find authoritative sources that can be used as evidence, particularly on socio-economic matters. Source: www.sarpn.org.za.

UN agencies reviews. Both the UNDP and UNECA have done considerable work on governance issues, and may have produced reports on particular countries. Sources: www.undp.org and local UNDP office, and www.uneca.org and local UNECA office.

UNAIDS. This UN site has up-to-date country profiles on the state of HIV/AIDS across the globe.

Source: www.unaids.org.



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