



## RESEARCH REPORT 15

Governance and APRM Programme

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# **The African Peer Review Mechanism:** Development Lessons from Africa's Remarkable Governance Assessment System

Steven Gruzd

## ABOUT SAIIA

The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) has a long and proud record as South Africa's premier research institute on international issues. It is an independent, non-government think tank whose key strategic objectives are to make effective input into public policy, and to encourage wider and more informed debate on international affairs, with particular emphasis on African issues and concerns. It is both a centre for research excellence and a home for stimulating public engagement. SAIIA's research reports present in-depth, incisive analysis of critical issues in Africa and beyond. Core public policy research themes covered by SAIIA include good governance and democracy; economic policymaking; international security and peace; and new global challenges such as food security, global governance reform and the environment. Please consult our website [www.saiia.org.za](http://www.saiia.org.za) for further information about SAIIA's work.

## ABOUT THE GOVERNANCE AND APRM PROGRAMME

SAIIA's Governance and African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) programme aims to place governance and African development at the centre of local and global discussions about the continent's future. Its overall goal is to improve the ability of the APRM to contribute to governance reforms, institutions and processes. The programme focuses on: Enhancing meaningful and authentic participation of non-state actors in Country Self-Assessment Review (CSAR) and National Programme of Action (NPOA) processes; increasing knowledge amongst key decision-makers of the need for Country Level Institutions to be functional, have political support and enjoy legitimacy; increasing the capacity and functionality of official APRM institutions; and contributing to the identification of critical issues for governance reform in Africa through the APRM.

SAIIA has been working on the APRM since its inception in 2003. The programme has previously undertaken work in 22 African countries, developed an online APRM Toolkit with vital information on the APRM process, produced an extensive body of innovative research on governance and the APRM and has frequently commented on African governance issues in South African and international media. The programme is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AfriMAP	Africa Governance, Monitoring and Advocacy Project
APR	African Peer Review
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
CDSF	Capacity Development Strategic Framework
CRM	Country Review Mission
CRR	Country Review Report
CSAR	Country Self-Assessment Report
CSO	civil society organisation
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social and Cultural Council
EISA	Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MP	Member of Parliament
NC	National Commission
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGC	National Governing Council
NPoA	National Programme of Action
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
REC	Regional Economic Community
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SSC	South–South co-operation
TRI	Technical Research Institute
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This case study of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) seeks to examine the lessons it holds about South–South knowledge exchange, South–South co-operation (SSC), capacity development and development effectiveness. The report is based on desk research, personal interviews and an online survey.

Emerging from the 2001 New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the APRM, which began operating in 2003, is a voluntary instrument acceded to by African states to assess political, economic and corporate governance in their countries, identify best practices, diagnose deficiencies and propose remedies through a National Programme of Action (NPOA). The APRM is premised on the core principles of technical competence, credibility and freedom from political manipulation, and its primary purpose is to 'foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building'.<sup>2</sup> The process involves an internal review (or Country Self-Assessment) based on research and wide public consultation, a Country Review Mission by African experts, and a high-level mutual review among the participating heads of state and government in the African Peer Review Forum (APR Forum). By the end of 2013, the APRM had been in existence for a decade, 33 of the AU's 54 states had acceded, and 17 had successfully been through their first review and begun implementing their NPOAs.

This case study outlines the achievements, benefits and best practices of the APRM in its first 10 years of existence. It argues that the APRM offers many useful insights and important lessons related to intra-African SSC, knowledge exchange, capacity development and development effectiveness.

- The APRM is far more extensive and intensive in scale and ambition than the limited, sectoral peer reviews of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This African-developed, African-owned and African-driven system is the only one of its kind anywhere in the world where national leaders regularly convene to discuss governance in their countries and hold one another mutually accountable, as equals.
- The APRM has spurred governance reform, including through legislative and policy changes, the establishment and strengthening of governance institutions and enhanced scrutiny of policy implementation. In some cases, particularly where change has been strongly branded as APRM-inspired, there have been positive inflows of foreign direct investment and development assistance.
- The APRM has had to develop a credible, participatory system to report frankly, fairly and fully on national governance challenges, and its research methods and Country Review Reports (CRRs) have stood up to critical scrutiny.
- The APRM has successfully established robust institutions, which continue to advance the process despite some of its original architects no longer being involved. There are also strong, committed drivers at national level.

- With some variations across countries, the APRM has increased the democratic space and provided a platform for non-state actors to engage constructively on governance and policy issues, including those related to alleviating poverty and advancing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the role of the private sector and informal economic sector, access to information and the freedom of the media, the electoral system, human rights and the management of the economy. In some countries, the APRM considerably enhanced the opportunities for and quality of policy dialogue.
- The CRRs that emerge are robust, credible and frank assessments of governance strengths and weaknesses, and codify knowledge around governance and development. Their similar structure allows for cross-country comparisons, and deeper analysis and comparative perspectives on vital continental issues, including managing diversity, land use and ownership, elections, corruption and aid effectiveness.
- The APRM has begun to develop a range of stakeholder peer groups, and to enhance the exchange of knowledge, skills, experiences and expertise among and between them. Apart from deficiencies, the reviews also highlight commendable or best practices, a rich area for peer learning and mutual exchange, bilaterally and regionally.
- The APRM has created a common governance vocabulary on the continent, and strengthened the work of governance activists to hold their governments accountable for pledges and promises. It has also stimulated further research and analysis, and created positive competition for innovation among members.
- The APRM has also successfully profiled African best practices.

Although the APRM has attracted considerable donor support, over 60% of the funding for the continental process stems from African governments. It also shows how partner funding can enhance and supplement national funding streams.

The APRM, as a system promoting solidarity and peer exchange between equals, offers many contrasts to and lessons for North–South co-operation. It is an African-owned and African-driven system that is gaining increased traction at national level, with important roles and responsibilities for governments, parliaments, civil society organisations, the media and the private sector.

The case study suggests that integrating the APRM with national budgets and development plans requires greater attention going forward, as do mechanisms for oversight of implementation and results, at both national and international level. The APRM has gone a long way to build trust and promote both mutual accountability (among heads of state) and domestic accountability (between governments and their citizens).

Despite these achievements, this report suggests that there is much room to further prioritise, systematise and integrate the elements of SSC, knowledge exchange, capacity development and development effectiveness as the mechanism develops further. Initiatives such as learning- and experience-sharing visits, mentoring, expert exchange, civil society monitoring and cross-pollination of ideas should be expanded. The peer review discussions at Forum level have provided important and promising exchanges over ideology and values, promoting good practice, seeking and offering advice and assistance, willingness to learn and the value of the APRM. Best practices also present an important area of potential SSC.

Capacity has been developed at many levels – for governments, parliaments, research institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizens. A strong pool of African

governance experts is being built. Indeed, the APRM relates directly to and builds upon the six cornerstones of the 2009 NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework (CDSF) for Africa: leadership transformation; citizenship transformation; knowledge and evidence-based transformation; utilising African potential, skills and resources; developing the capacity of capacity developers; and integrated planning and implementation for results.<sup>3</sup>

The CRRs provide a rich resource of information and analysis on aid dependence and development effectiveness, and the APRM shows its value as a diagnostic tool.

Key lessons emerge on the value of African solutions; the important community that the APRM is binding together; the importance of capturing lessons more regularly and systematically; the way the APRM is making leaders more comfortable with open policy debates; the way the APRM facilitates more inclusive policy-making; and the importance of leading by example.

Finally, the key messages and recommendations at national level are:

- listen to citizens and heed APRM warnings;
- open political space;
- make APRM appeal to citizens;
- prioritise actions;
- produce measurable results;
- develop better synergy; and
- situate the APRM carefully.

At continental level, the key messages and recommendations are:

- be proudly African;
- restore commitment and confidence;
- table and debate reports;
- apply peer pressure;
- simplify, streamline, reform;
- bolster the Secretariat;
- inculcate a learning culture;
- prioritise knowledge development, management and exchange;
- improve communication; and
- institutionalise mentorships and profile best practices.

The APRM could well provide a model for other parts of the developing world. Although it is relatively early in the APRM process, periodic national reports on the implementation of NPoAs all discuss governance reforms and advancements to various extents. However, many required reforms will only be visible in the medium to long term. Implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluation have all been identified as areas for improvement in the future, at the national and continental levels. The sustainability and replicability of these early results will rely on continued political will and high-level support; continuous renewal and innovation; robust governance systems; resources, both human and financial; support from national budgets; and assistance from development partners where appropriate. As the APRM enters its second decade, it will need to find ways to remain relevant and demonstrate its benefits for ordinary African citizens.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This case study of the APRM seeks to examine the lessons it can teach about South–South knowledge exchange, SSC, capacity development and development effectiveness. The report is based on desk research, personal interviews and an online survey.

Emerging from the 2001 NEPAD, the APRM, which began operating in 2003, is a voluntary instrument acceded to by African states to assess political, economic and corporate governance in their countries, identify best practices, diagnose deficiencies and propose remedies through an NPoA. The process involves an internal review (or Country Self-Assessment) based on research and wide public consultation, a Country Review Mission by African experts, and high-level mutual reviews among the participating heads of state and government in the APR Forum. By the start of 2014, 33 of the AU's 54 states had acceded, and 17 had successfully been through their first review and begun implementing their NPoAs. As the APRM celebrates its first decade, this report assesses performance, progress, and future prospects at this watershed moment.

This case study outlines the achievements, benefits and best practices of the APRM, which offers many useful insights and important lessons related to intra-African SSC, knowledge exchange, capacity development and development effectiveness.

The case study is structured in three main parts. The first section describes the context and background that led to the establishment of NEPAD and the APRM, and the relationship between the two institutions. It then outlines the basic elements of the APRM system and its purpose, goals, institutions and timeframes, followed by an analysis of some of its main achievements, benefits and best practices. It also touches on how the mechanism is funded, and offers some insights on differences between North–South co-operation and SSC.

The second section explores the key challenge of capacities for ownership and mutual accountability, by examining country ownership and the participation of governments and four main stakeholder groups – parliament, CSOs, the media and the private sector. It also looks briefly at the integration of the APRM with other policies and programmes, national and continental oversight mechanisms, and the challenges of promoting trust and mutual accountability.

The third section unpacks the notion of boosting mutual learning and knowledge exchange, in four major sub-sections on promoting peer learning, strengthening SSC, capacity development and development effectiveness. It includes summaries and analysis of exchanges between 'peer' heads of state and how 'aid effectiveness' is discussed in the first 12 APRM CRRs.

The case study concludes with lessons, key messages and recommendations (at national and continental levels).

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

#### ORIGINS OF NEPAD AND THE APRM

By the mid-1990s, Africa was into its second and third post-colonial generations. Increasingly, it was becoming apparent that African states' socio-economic difficulties were neither transitory nor merely a failure of economic formulae. Other important developments set the context: the Cold War ended, the 'Washington Consensus' was in the ascendency, and the 'third democratic wave' spread liberal democracy across the globe and in much of Africa. South Africa's political transition culminated in its first democratic elections in 1994 and paved the way for its full engagement with Africa. The end of the colonial era meant that continental institutions needed a firm reorientation towards development issues to remain relevant. Rampant civil conflicts, state collapse, humanitarian crises in Africa and continued widespread poverty made it clear that *something* had to be done differently. Technological advances, particularly in communications and information management, underlined the urgency of Africa's moving onto an altogether new and more rapid development trajectory. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were promulgated, and there was increasing international debate about the effectiveness of aid with its attendant conditionalities. A new generation of African leaders arose who acknowledged that governance shortcomings in Africa were stifling development.

It was in this international and African context that NEPAD – from which the APRM directly stems – emerged. It was built on a series of previous initiatives. In mid-2000, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) mandated three leaders (presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria) to initiate discussions with the developed world on African development. This produced the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan, presented in early 2001. Meanwhile, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade had produced the Omega Plan, an initiative stressing infrastructural development. These two initiatives were merged and presented as the New African Initiative to the OAU in mid-2001, subsequently revised and renamed as NEPAD.

Improving governance in Africa is an intrinsic component of NEPAD. Its October 2001 founding document says that Africa's leaders will take joint responsibility for strengthening mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution; promoting and protecting democracy and human rights 'by developing clear standards of accountability, transparency and participatory governance'; restoring and maintaining macroeconomic stability; transparently regulating financial markets, private companies and the public sector; reforming health and education systems; promoting the role of women; building state capacity to set and enforce the legal framework and maintain law and order; and promoting the development of infrastructure, agriculture and manufacturing.<sup>4</sup>

The NEPAD document sets as its objective<sup>5</sup>

to consolidate democracy and sound economic development on the continent. Through the Programme, African leaders are making a commitment to the African people and the world to work together in rebuilding the continent. It is a pledge to promote peace and stability, democracy, sound economic management and people-centred development, and to hold each other accountable in terms of the agreement outlined in the Programme.

The document further notes that:<sup>6</sup>

[D]evelopment is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance. With the *New Partnership for Africa's Development*, Africa undertakes to respect the global standards of democracy, the core components of which include political pluralism, allowing for the existence of several political parties and workers' unions, and fair, open and democratic elections periodically organised to enable people to choose their leaders freely.

The NEPAD document discusses establishing a 'Democracy and Political Governance Initiative' to 'contribute to strengthening the political and administrative framework of participating countries, in line with the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, integrity, respect for human rights and promotion of the rule of law'. The essential elements of this Initiative would consist of 'a series of commitments by participating countries to create or consolidate basic governance processes and practices; an undertaking by participating countries to take the lead in supporting initiatives that foster good governance' and institutionalising and overseeing these commitments through NEPAD. Participating states would also commit to 'meeting basic standards of good governance and democratic behaviour while, at the same time, giving support to each other'. The system would diagnose institutional weaknesses and seek resources and expertise to address them, and build the capacity to do so. NEPAD's Heads of State Forum would serve as a mechanism to 'periodically monitor and assess the progress made by African countries in meeting their commitment towards achieving good governance and social reforms. The Forum will also provide a platform for countries to share experiences with a view to fostering good governance and democratic practices.'<sup>7</sup>

It was from these precepts that the APRM emerged in 2002–2003. In July 2002, at the inaugural AU Summit in Durban, the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance gave further expression to these ideas, and at the same meeting, a document called the 'NEPAD African Peer Review Mechanism' (commonly known as the 'APRM Base Document') was released. The APRM was formally adopted in March 2003 in Abuja, Nigeria, where the first countries acceded.

Dr Kojo Busia, former head of the APRM Support Unit at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Addis Ababa, argues cogently that NEPAD and the APRM represent an important step in Africans assuming responsibility for their own development. He says that 'the overriding logic and strategic agenda of the APRM is to transform Africa's governance systems from being accountable to its external partners, to being accountable to its primary constituents, its citizens; a situation that would ensure true ownership of its development destiny'.<sup>8</sup>

## CHAPTER 3

### APRM PURPOSE, GOALS AND INSTITUTIONS

The 2003 Memorandum of Understanding outlines the APRM's mandate and purpose. This document touches on many of the concerns of SSC, knowledge exchange, capacity development and development effectiveness:<sup>9</sup>

The mandate of the *African Peer Review Mechanism* is to encourage participating States in ensuring that the policies and practices of participating States conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards, and achieve mutually agreed objectives in socio-economic development contained in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance.

The primary purpose of the *African Peer Review Mechanism* is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies, and assessing the needs for capacity building of participating countries.

The desired outcomes of the APRM are:

- improvement of the quality of governance through the identification of deficiencies and remedial measures;
- attainment of socio-economic and other development-related goals;
- achievement of excellence or 'best practices' and acquiring peer recognition of competence or excellence;
- improvement of the quality of governance in other participating countries through peer learning and sharing of experiences;
- conformity to acceptable established international and African standards; and
- accelerated regional integration through the achievement of common practices and standards.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Box 1: The APRM in a nutshell**

The APRM is one of the programmes developed by NEPAD. Through voluntary peer review, African member states diagnose governance deficiencies, share best practices and commit to implementing solutions. While it borrowed from other peer review models – notably the limited, sectoral approach used by the OECD – the APRM is unique and unprecedented in its scale, scope and ambition.

The APRM began operations in 2003, and by December 2013 the following 33 African countries had acceded: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tome & Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia. Collectively, they represent over 80% of the continent's population.

To begin active participation in the APRM, a country's government signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the continental APRM authorities. This indicates its willingness to undergo review and its commitment to the process. The next step involves gathering information and documentation on the performance of the government and other stakeholders in key governance and development areas. All sectors of society – including CSOs, religious institutions, labour unions and business groups, as well as the executive and parliament – should contribute to answering questions on a wide range of issues that aim for a comprehensive assessment of governance systems and practice. The 105-page APRM Self-Assessment Questionnaire (recently updated and revised to include issues such as media freedom, climate change, and transparency in extractive industries) guides the review process by highlighting the country's performance in four broad thematic areas: democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development. Issues include human rights, health care provision, the state of the economy, the role of the judiciary and the behaviour of corporations. The questionnaire also interrogates the level of compliance with various African and international codes, agreements, conventions and declarations.

To help gather this data and manage the process, the country typically forms a multi-stakeholder APRM National Governing Council (NGC) charged with this responsibility and appoints independent Technical Research Institutes (TRIs) to carry out the technical aspects of the review,<sup>11</sup> resulting in a Country Self-Assessment Report (CSAR) that is validated by national stakeholders. The CSAR includes a draft NPoA to address identified governance shortcomings. Once the CSAR is completed and submitted to the continental APRM Secretariat, a Country Review Mission visits the country. This is a delegation of respected African scholars and experts that conducts an independent assessment of governance in the country. The delegation is led by a member of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons, a small body of highly respected Africans responsible for managing the APRM process across the continent.<sup>12</sup> The Panel and APRM Secretariat submit a draft CRR to the participating government for comment. Recommendations are also included in the CRR, and the country is expected to amend its NPoA accordingly. A final CRR is then produced – with the government's comments appended – and is presented to the Forum of Participating Heads of State and Government (APR Forum) for discussion and peer review. This body consists of the participating countries' leaders and generally convenes on the margins of AU summits.

Following the Forum's review, the country must agree to address the various problems identified. Other states undertake to assist the country in its efforts, and to take action

should the country not attempt to address these issues. The CRR, with the proceedings of the APR Forum's peer review, should be published six months later. It should be tabled and discussed at institutions such as the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Finally, the country must report annually on progress in implementing the NPoA and prepare itself for subsequent reviews.

The APRM is predicated on mutual support, exchange of ideas, peer learning and advice. Its voluntary character requires conscious effort, deliberate choice and commitment by leaders of the participating states. A peer review system fosters mutual accountability through mutual trust, reciprocal evaluations and non-adversarial discussion among equals who share confidence in the system. The APRM was designed as a non-punitive instrument, to encourage greater adherence and commitment, with experience having taught that mandatory sanctions seldom work. The APRM also seeks to redress the relative lack of experience-exchange between countries through constructive dialogue. Many African leaders have seen the advantage in accession.

#### **Box 2: APRM institutions**

The main bodies established at **continental level** are:

- The **APR Forum of Participating Heads of State and Government** (APR Forum). This is the APRM's highest decision-making body. It meets at least twice a year on the margins of AU Summits, where these 'peers' review one another. By December 2013 there were 33 members, and it is currently chaired by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.
- The **APR Panel of Eminent Persons** (APR Panel, currently with nine members). The APR Panel is made up of experienced and respected Africans, with a mix of expertise across the four APRM thematic areas, while taking into account gender and regional balance. The APR Panel manages the overall system, leads country missions, oversees the writing of the CRRs, presents at APR Forum meetings, and ensures the integrity and quality of the reports and the process. It reports to the APR Forum.
- The (continental) **APRM Secretariat**, based in Midrand, South Africa. It provides administrative, logistical and research support to the Forum and APR Panel. It organises APR Panel meetings, assembles country missions, runs workshops, communicates about the APRM and maintains the website, among its many functions.
- The APRM's **Strategic Partners**. The Strategic Partners are the African Development Bank, UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and UN Development Programme

(UNDP). They provide logistical, technical and financial support, and their strong involvement and commitment has added tremendous value to the process. Staff from these institutions participate in missions, strategic planning and training, and have often taken the lead in lesson learning and reform efforts.

- The **Committee of National APRM Focal Points**. These are the political and technical advisors to the APR Forum members. They play an important role in preparing APR Forum members for meetings and regularly discussing APRM developments, among others.

At **national level**, countries have established the following institutions:

- The **National APRM Focal Point**. This is a high-ranking official with direct access to the head of state or government who acts as a diplomatic liaison between the national and continental processes, and as technical and political advisor to the APR Forum member (head of state or government). He/she is responsible for establishing the national APRM management body.
- The **National APRM Management Body** – usually called the National Governing Council (NGC) in anglophone states and the National Commission (NC) in francophone states. This is a representative, multi-stakeholder board to oversee the composition of the CSAR and ensure the integrity of the national process. They vary widely in size, proportion of members, representivity and autonomy.
- The **National APRM Secretariat**. This is a technical unit providing administrative, logistical and research support for the NGC/NC. Duties include organising NGC meetings, building a stakeholder database, sending invitations, organising events, communication, sensitisation, and reporting on implementation, among others.
- Most countries have contracted **Technical Research Institutes** (TRIs). The expert researchers help assemble the CSAR and NPoA.

In terms of timeframes, many processes have taken longer than originally envisaged. The CSAR was supposed to be completed within six to nine months, but in practice this has proven unattainable, given the need for wide and comprehensive national consultations, and the need to raise resources to finance the national process. Delays have also been caused by difficulties in establishing institutions and other intervening national events like elections and leadership changes.

Official documentation envisioned that APRM reviews would take place regularly (originally every two to four years), but this has not happened in practice. After a decade of existence, a key question is why no country has yet fully undergone a second or 'periodic' review. The focus of the Secretariat has certainly been on new membership and completing first reviews, with little direction to states on how to conduct a second

review. Also, with many new accessions, the process for individual countries has been slowed down. The first review is meant to be a baseline, with subsequent reviews charting progress (or otherwise) in advancing governance. The post-election violence in Kenya in 2007–2008 raised calls for a second review. A review team did visit the country in 2011, but no report has been published to date. Countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa are reported to be preparing for a second review. These periodic reviews are important to institutionalise the APRM going forward, and they will be a test of the resilience and utility of the APRM system.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE APRM IN PRACTICE: PROCESS, OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

#### ACHIEVEMENTS, BENEFITS AND BEST PRACTICES

The process started slowly and it can take a long time between accession and peer review, although the pace has accelerated considerably in recent years. By October 2013, the following 17 states had completed their first full review: in 2006, Ghana, Rwanda and Kenya; in 2007, Algeria and South Africa; in 2008, Benin, Uganda, Nigeria and Burkina Faso; in 2009, Mali, Mozambique and Lesotho; in 2010, Mauritius; in 2011, Ethiopia; in 2012 Sierra Leone; and Tanzania and Zambia in 2013. Most of these states acceded in 2003–2005. The first 16 CRRs have been published to date. All countries up to Mauritius have reported on the implementation of their NPoAs at least once.

Like any new system, the APRM had challenges to overcome, and it took time to become established and gather momentum. The APRM has now survived its infancy. As one interviewee said, 'Every year, more countries have joined the APRM, and this expanded membership has given it legitimacy as *the* regular, institutionalised platform for debating governance issues between heads of state in Africa.'<sup>13</sup> Despite many challenges, the APRM has notched up considerable achievements, given rise to planned and unplanned benefits for a variety of stakeholders, and highlighted best practices. The way that the mechanism overcame its challenges offers many insights and lessons for those interested in SSC, capacity development and development effectiveness that could be applied in other regions.

#### Reforming governance

This is a central tenet of the APRM. The mandatory publication of the full CRRs and peer review discussions creates the potential for enhanced accountability and strengthens mutual learning. Respondents recognised the important role of the APRM in publicly shedding light on sensitive issues. The APRM has led to policy reform around governance and development in many African countries as a direct result of the recommendations in the CRRs and the peer review discussions.

NPoA implementation reports demonstrate measurable progress. In Ghana, specific APRM-inspired reforms can be cited: development of a draft land-use master plan; establishment of a ministry of chieftaincy and cultural affairs; increasing district assemblies from 138 to 166; passing laws on human trafficking, persons with disabilities, whistle-blowers and domestic violence; drafting a national policy on the aged; and establishing several institutions to counter corruption, including tender boards and internal audit agencies. Rwanda was praised in the World Bank's 2010 Doing Business survey for

implementing business reforms and ameliorating corporate governance weaknesses revealed by its APRM CRR. According to its NPoA implementation reports, Kenya has established 148 peace committees; passed laws on political parties, maternity and paternity leave, sexual offences and refugees; developed a master plan on land use; established agencies to combat drugs and tender irregularities and improve ethical conduct; increased immunisation coverage dramatically since 2003; and established a ministry of women and children's affairs. APRM recommendations helped inform its new constitution.

Several other examples exist where countries have redefined aspects of their development and governance trajectories in response to APRM recommendations. Many APRM objectives – high economic growth, sustainable development, regional integration – may only be discernible over time. It is also sometimes difficult to ascribe particular policy changes to the APRM. Often, many factors propel reform, and countries have not always been systematic in branding changes as APRM-inspired. For example, in South Africa, when 'floor crossing' in parliament, flagged in the CRR as undermining voter choice in a proportional representation system, was eventually abolished, the APRM was not given credit.

The APRM has also helped to raise awareness of codes and standards developed in Africa, and the degree to which these are implemented. It has caused Ghana, Lesotho and Rwanda to improve record-keeping systems, and in several countries more of these standards and codes have been signed.

### **Developing credible African governance research**

The APRM had to develop a credible, participatory system that would report frankly, fairly and fully on national governance challenges. It also had to be applicable to African states at all levels of development, and not create a ranking to compare countries. The methodology therefore required both uniformity and flexibility, to take into account the different contexts and peculiarities of the countries. The APRM Questionnaire was developed to guide the self-assessment process. Early countries employed independent TRIs, which in turn used a four-pronged research process – desk research, expert interviews, household surveys and focus group discussions – as well as a variety of consultative events, and encouraged written submissions. This approach has become widespread and standardised, and has produced high-quality analyses of governance in APRM countries. It is also an example of where official APRM guidelines were somewhat vague, so member states developed their own procedures, which have then been replicated by other states as a best practice. This is both a strength – because the APRM process can be adapted to local circumstances – and a weakness – because the lack of detail on how to conduct the research gave some governments the opportunity to manipulate the CSAR process. The CRRs themselves collate and codify knowledge on governance and development, and highlight several best practices that can be shared (discussed in more detail later in this case study).

### **Enhancing participation**

The APRM has been able to widen the democratic space and encourage state and non-state actors to engage meaningfully on a broad range of issues across the thematic areas,

including poverty and the MDGs; the role of the private and informal sectors; access to information; and macro-economic policies, often in cases where the capacity for and extent of engagement were not previously substantial.

Involving citizens meaningfully has been a challenge faced by all states. There are a variety of ways of involving people, from allocating seats on the NGC to conducting interviews, holding public meetings, organising focus group discussions and arranging sensitisation events. In some countries, there have been accusations of window-dressing, ignoring or sidelining CSOs, and picking those well-disposed to the sitting government. Others point out that the process can amplify rather than ameliorate tensions between governments, civil society and the private sector.<sup>14</sup> Unless there is a formal engagement of research institutes, scarce resources may also make it difficult for them and CSOs to engage effectively with the process. Indicating the importance that citizens attach to a fair and representative process, the degree and quality of popular participation have often been contested and the authorities challenged. In South Africa, a coalition of CSOs mobilised to assert their right to participate in the process. In other countries (such as Uganda and Zambia) – drawing to some extent on the lessons of the earlier participants – CSOs have used the APRM to press particular concerns. This engagement, although heated at times, is healthy and improves confidence in the process, and the APRM has been able to generate a remarkable degree of participation by citizens in the policy-making process.

### **Fostering dialogue**

The APRM has helped to make Africa's leaders more comfortable about sharing problems, opened up dialogue between state and society about important national policy issues (or provided another platform to do so), and sometimes permitted opposition parties and marginalised groups to make significant policy input. The intervention of an 'outside process by other Africans' has created this space, and the potential to move beyond mutual antagonism. As one interviewee said, 'Many governments are beginning to realise that issues of transparency, consultation with their nationals on national issues, and participatory democracy are critical for development. North Africa and the Middle East are today victims of a lack of these elements.'<sup>15</sup> In the longer term, the effectiveness of the APRM risks being undermined if dialogue does not change policy dynamics.

### **Highlighting critical issues**

CRRs paint an honest, accurate picture of governance. They commend countries for 'best practices'; constructively point out governance weaknesses; and emphasise fundamental fault lines (dubbed 'cross-cutting' or 'overarching' issues). Importantly, they are made public, albeit usually well after the stipulated six-month period. Reports diagnosed both election-related ethnic violence in Kenya and bubbling xenophobic tensions in South Africa, even if recommendations went unheeded by the respective governments. Common challenges identified include a dominant executive, insufficient separation of powers, challenges in managing diversity, curbing corruption and strengthening accountability institutions.

### **Creating common language**

One interviewee said: ‘The APRM has succeeded in leading the continent closer to a common articulation of what is expected in terms of good governance ... it’s an important step to have a common governance language, given that it was not there ten years ago.’<sup>16</sup> It has also contributed to standardisation in conducting governance assessments. Citizens are beginning to use standards and codes – and the practices of neighbours – to hold leaders to account. Kenya’s new constitution promoted debate about Tanzania’s constitution. If it works well, the APRM holds promise that Africans will discuss and compare development models for themselves. The APRM is also helping to explain and demystify issues such as corporate governance, about which there has been relatively little knowledge in Africa, and several NPoAs allocate significant funds to improving the business environment. Reviews have audited national systems, showing what is needed to improve the business climate.

### **Focusing advocacy**

The APRM has created a channel for discussing policy alternatives, raising awareness or disseminating information that might otherwise be ignored or silenced. In South Africa, the Open Democracy Advice Centre used the APRM process to press for better application of information disclosure legislation and protection of whistle-blowers.<sup>17</sup> In Uganda, the Minority Rights Group International used the APRM process to draw attention to the status of ethnic minority groups in the country.<sup>18</sup> A survey respondent noted how, in Uganda, CSOs increasingly rallied around the APRM’s standards and codes, as well as the NPoA. During the 2011 elections, CSOs used the multi-stakeholder Uganda Governance Monitoring Platform, which tracks the APRM, to popularise a Citizens’ Manifesto calling for free and fair elections. Two presidential candidates were successfully lobbied to publicly endorse its principles.<sup>19</sup> Based on the CRR, the Ugandan CSO Task Force on the Maputo Protocol succeeded in getting its government to ratify the Protocol just before the July 2010 AU Summit in Kampala focusing on maternal health. Ugandan gender activists successfully convinced the president to assent to the Domestic Violence Act prior to an APRM meeting. An activist said, ‘The APRM was yet another opportunity for civil society to organise ourselves to ensure effective participation and hold our government to account.’<sup>20</sup>

### **Stimulating scholarship**

After publication, CRRs and their findings stimulate further research and advocacy for academics, activists and CSOs. Research institutions such as the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Africa Governance, Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP) and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) have all published research based on analysis of the CRRs and various other aspects of the APR process. The Kenyan CRR was directly referred to in the National Reconciliation Accord and the commissions into the post-election violence of 2007–2008. Dr Graça Machel, then the lead Panellist on the Kenyan review, was made part of Dr Kofi Annan’s mediation team.

### **Spurring innovation**

Some degree of healthy competition between countries has been stimulated to build on lessons and improve on the implementation of the APRM process. One respondent said that the process to reform the Questionnaire 'indicates regional political will to institutionalise the process and ensure its sustainability in the longer term'.<sup>21</sup> The APRM has attracted international attention and interest.

### **Branding reforms, attracting support**

Some countries, such as Ghana, have successfully used the APRM to brand themselves as champions of governance reform. APRM participation can be seen as a means to enhance national reputations, and to build on positive foundations. Four countries reviewed so far were listed by development economist Robert Calderisi as serious reformers: Ghana, Uganda, Mozambique and Mali.<sup>22</sup> Some see Rwanda as a reforming post-conflict state with its developmental priorities in order. South Africa's national brand is intimately associated with the concept of democracy. Reviewing countries with less entrenched democratic traditions might pose challenges, and hinges on the credibility and candidness of those reviews. There are indications of positive results in terms of foreign direct investment and development assistance flows. The APRM has sometimes been used as a standard by donors for selecting recipients. For example, it was reported that implementing elements of the recommendations in the Ghanaian CRR were used by the US Millennium Challenge Corporation as criteria to award access to the funds.<sup>23</sup> However, these linkages are not always overt.

The three benefits briefly mentioned below are discussed in greater detail later in this case study.

### **Promoting peer learning**

The APRM is grounded on experience sharing, peer learning, knowledge management and exchange, and dissemination of best practices. This has encouraged technical co-operation and peer learning among countries, bilaterally and also regionally, and begun to act as a system to deliberately capture and catalogue good practice and policy alternatives for Africa to steer its own development through SSC for development and development effectiveness. It remains a challenge to systematise peer learning and make the results more broadly available and accessible, particularly within the AU system.

### **Developing capacity**

The APRM assessments are undertaken by TRIs at national level and African experts at continental level. As was the original intention, this has led to building both the capacity of African institutions and a pool of African experts who can assist in matters of governance and development.

### Profiling best practices

'Best practices' identified in the CRRs highlight a body of commendable initiatives. Some, like South Africa's low-cost *mzansi* accounts for previously un-banked clients, offer home-grown solutions to common problems. Others highlight global leadership. Since 1987, Nigeria's Technical Aid Corps has offered practical skills and technical expertise to developing countries, belying the perception that African states are only aid recipients. Countries offer inspiration by example: Kenya mobilised domestic resources to reduce dependency on foreign aid. Identified best practices also acknowledge important policy steps taken, such as Nigeria's enactment of national legislation to promote transparency in its oil and gas sectors.

It is difficult to be definitive on the issue of the sustainability of these benefits. While many short-term outcomes have been documented, it may be too early to tell whether the APRM can achieve its medium- and longer-term goals. Reversals have occurred. Ghana reduced its large cabinet on APRM advice, but allowed it to increase again. Post-review fatigue and loss of momentum can set in, especially with a change of leader or ruling party. The APRM's future hinges on committed, brave and visionary leadership; improved management; sustained funding; and a culture of innovation and demonstrating results. Risks include waning interest; credibility gaps; funding; politics; and competing priorities. However, if a country has been astute, it will have developed its CSAR and CRR to reflect its own priorities for capacity development for national development, and will use the APRM to achieve the core elements of its national vision.

## INVESTMENT AND FUNDING

NEPAD was premised on asserting African ownership of its growth and development agenda while attracting increased assistance and investment from abroad. Africa would exercise its sovereignty with prudence, responsibility and accountability, and gain external support for upholding good governance. The peer review mechanism too is designed and owned by Africans, to advance agendas determined by Africans themselves for their own benefit. Although some states appear to have acceded with the expectation of increased overall donor support to the country, such direct links from funders are difficult to discern. Nevertheless, there are important *intrinsic* reasons for undergoing review – creating conditions of stability, peace and accountability and identifying and improving governance deficiencies – with additional aid as an added bonus, if it comes through.

The APRM process is costly, complex and time-consuming, and requires countries to budget carefully for the self-assessment. The 2002 Base Document noted that 'funding for the Mechanism will come from assessed contributions from participating member states'.<sup>24</sup> The APRM did not actively seek external aid. According to President Obasanjo:<sup>25</sup>

Adequate funding is fundamental to the sustainability, independence and ownership of the process. By fulfilling their financial obligations to the APRM, participating countries are consolidating and taking full ownership of the process. It is also vital to maintain the political will to sustain the process.

Three important areas of the APRM require funding: (1) the operations of the continental institutions; (2) the national self-assessment processes; and (3) the implementation of the NPoAs.

In 2004, it was determined that participating countries should pay a minimum annual subscription of \$100,000 to cover the operations of the continental institutions.<sup>26</sup> By December 2011 (the latest figures publically available in the APRM Secretariat's Annual Reports),<sup>27</sup> the APRM had raised a total of \$41.6 million. This *excludes* both funding for national processes – estimated to cost between \$1 million and \$3 million each, depending on the size of the country and the extensiveness of public consultations – and the considerable costs of implementing NPoAs, which run into billions of dollars each.

Some 64% of funding for the APRM's central operations comes from African sources, compared to 36% from foreign governments and development organisations. By 2011, member states had cumulatively contributed more than \$26.4 million, of which more than 60% (\$16.2 million) consisted of 'special contributions' by four members: Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa (which contributed almost \$8.1 million on its own). The willingness of some countries to make extra contributions underlines the potential of the APRM for SSC and capacity development, and the importance attached to the process by Africa's larger and richer states. The profile of contributions should also sound a warning that instability in North Africa or waning interest from South Africa and Nigeria might pose risks for longer-term sustainability. It is also important that states in arrears are encouraged to make their full contributions on time.

The APRM presents a strong case for the benefits of blending both African and international funding, in the spirit of triangular co-operation. Foreign funds are meant to be 'managed in a way that will clearly respect the principle of the African ownership of the APRM and its processes'.<sup>28</sup> They are mostly deposited in the UNDP-managed Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), so as to minimise direct donor influence and interference in APRM operations, and allow them to support the APRM at a distance. The funding model for the APRM at continental level is one where a central fund is held by a reputable international body, which receives and then disburses money that supports the APRM process, but that money is not earmarked for specific activities by development partners or member states. This model of a centralised fund that is operated transparently could be adapted to better manage aid contributions to African countries more broadly, thereby potentially increasing African ownership and management of its development resources.

The considerable contributions by development partners of over \$15 million by 2011 reflect their support for the APRM. To maintain this support, existing unspent funds would need to be used prudently and the APRM would need to continue to demonstrate tangible results and benefits. There does seem to be declining international development partner support for the APRM, and large-scale development partner funding for NPoA implementation at national level has not been forthcoming. Future development partner support might be affected by the global recession and uneven recovery process, and, in the case of some development partners, a perception of waning high-level *African* political support for the APRM.

To date, all countries that have produced CSARs and NPoAs have been able to do so, and have managed to raise funds internally, externally or in combination. With the exception of the reviews in Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa, development partners have made substantial financial contributions to support every self-assessment process



to date, requiring governments and NGOs to put considerable efforts into fund-raising. In some cases, they have also funded CSO participation through small grants to CSOs and research or advocacy bodies. At times, this has led some governments to question donor motives and the legitimacy of civil society involvement. While funding may give donors some leverage, on balance their contributions have strengthened CSO participation that otherwise might not have been possible, and supported reviews that some governments would have struggled to pay for alone.

## NORTH–SOUTH CO-OPERATION AND SOUTH–SOUTH CO-OPERATION

North–South relationships have traditionally been critiqued as inherently unequal asymmetric arrangements. The North has advantages in terms of wealth, economic sophistication and technological development, and the global market is often seen as unfairly slanted towards Northern interests (a prime example being agricultural subsidies). The South has to compete on an uneven playing field, new trade rules circumscribe development options, and uneven partnerships often reflect (or do not threaten) Northern interests rather than foster real Southern advantage.

The APRM was conceived as an inter-African South–South initiative to treat all member states as equals, with a frame of reference fundamentally different from traditional North–South donor-recipient relations. In the APRM, Northern (mainly European) governments have offered some financial support to continental and to a lesser extent national APRM institutions, and have been careful not to be seen to be interfering in or influencing the APRM, with the partial exception, at its inception in 2002, of making clear that it would lose credibility if it jettisoned its political governance component. As pointed out above, the system is mainly funded by African governments, although it had the potential to favour the big payers and players such as Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa.

The APRM also presents an example of successful triangular co-operation, where the UNDP MDTF uses Northern funding streams, in a non-prescriptive manner, to support Southern priorities and brings in additional resources to allow the system to scale up, accelerate and enhance its operations. For example, UNDP funding has enabled APRM bodies from one African country to visit another in order to learn how that second state implemented aspects of the APRM. External funding attempts to avoid the pitfalls and pressures of a donor-recipient dynamic by supporting African-defined and owned interactions and purposes. This funding supports *process*, without attempting to influence *content*.

As this case study demonstrates, the SSC processes of the APRM have much to inform North–South co-operation in terms of accountability, capacity development, policy coherence, integration, setting common standards, citizen empowerment, advocacy, leadership, mutual respect and trust. The APRM appears to have been more successful at actively involving stakeholders from various sectors than most North–South relationships have been. The solidarity, community of spirit and *ubuntu* that the APRM emphasises offer lessons for North–South endeavours.



## CHAPTER 5

### CAPACITIES FOR OWNERSHIP AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

#### COUNTRY OWNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

The APRM is unique worldwide and remarkable for the level of personal commitment and political will of the African heads of state and government. No other region provides a regular high-level forum for leaders to regularly convene to discuss governance and offer advice and support to their peers. In most member countries there has been enthusiasm to drive and advance the process, to diagnose problems and derive solutions at national level, going beyond the efforts of the continental institutions. In some countries, national bodies and stakeholders have become strong and have continued their work in popularising and implementing the APRM, often years after the CSAR.

Even with the departure of some of the original architects of the APRM among heads of state and all the original APRM Panel members, the system has proven sufficiently robust and institutionalised to continue and grow. In countries where leaders have changed – such as Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa – commitment to the process has remained. These features present strong evidence of national African ownership and leadership.

Acceding, launching and driving the APRM at national level are largely the prerogatives of the state and sitting government. While the continental Secretariat provides some logistical and research support to national processes, the country itself bears the main responsibility. National ownership has given rise to a number of variations across countries. For example, Ghana attempted to ensure a depoliticised, high-profile process by appointing a national governing council of seven eminent and respected citizens (mirroring the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons).<sup>29</sup> Nigeria, by contrast, tried to ensure representation of all interest groups on its National Working Group, appointing 216 people.<sup>30</sup> National ownership is respected in the process, and it remains a challenge to strengthen the sense of joint – peer – ownership between national and continental levels.

A central concern of the APRM is the extent to which it is open, accessible and participatory. Guidelines clearly envisage an inclusive process:<sup>31</sup>

The APRM process is designed to be open and participatory. Through a participatory process, the APRM will engage key stakeholders to facilitate exchange of information and national dialogue on good governance and socio-economic development programmes, thereby increase the transparency of the decision-making processes, and build trust in the pursuit of national development goals.

Governments play key roles; heads of state and government are the members of the APR Forum, most Focal Points are ministers or high-ranking government officials, and governments usually set the pace and determine the design of the national process.

The large role of the executive makes an examination of the roles of four other role-players – parliament, civil society, the media and the private sector – and their interests important when assessing national ownership.

## Parliament

Although parliaments have functions of representation and accountability, and ought to play a seminal role in the APRM, in practice their involvement has been limited. Most African parliaments are poorly resourced, lack clear institutional identity, and exist in political systems and cultures that tend to privilege the executive. Spearheaded by UNECA and the PAP, training seminars for Members of Parliament (MPs) were held in Bagamoyo, Tanzania in November 2008 for anglophone MPs, and in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2010 for lusophone and francophone MPs, in an effort to inform and involve parliaments in the APRM to a greater extent. Declarations from both events underlined parliamentarians' eagerness to participate and recognised their limited current involvement. The Bagamoyo seminar noted that, with a few exceptions, 'the missing link or weak chain in the APRM country processes has been the feeble or "scant" engagement of parliaments in acceding member states'.<sup>32</sup>

Some parliaments have received briefings from visiting missions, supplied members of the NGC or have been invited to (often ceremonial) national APRM events. For example, Rwanda included a few parliamentarians on its NC, drawn from different chambers.<sup>33</sup> Algeria appointed a number of parliamentarians, their political affiliations roughly matching legislative representation.<sup>34</sup> Burkina Faso included an equal number from the ruling coalition and the opposition.<sup>35</sup> Benin did likewise, but also included a parliamentary official and required that its NC vice chair be an MP.<sup>36</sup>

South Africa and Uganda provide examples of good practice in parliamentary involvement. The South African parliament was proactive, holding hearings and conducting research, originally intended as a stand-alone report but eventually incorporated into the CSAR,<sup>37</sup> although ad hoc committees on the APRM formed during 2005–2006 are largely inactive today. In Uganda, parliamentarians appear to have been involved in a wide range of activities, including both undergoing and contributing to sensitisation, providing oversight, receiving the CSAR and NPoA, and monitoring efforts to implement recommendations on an on-going basis.

Recommendations speak to the need to formalise the roles and influence of parliaments, including raising awareness, encouraging initiatives by MPs to get non-signatory countries to accede, and establishing parliamentary APRM committees.<sup>38</sup> Parliaments are ideal forums to debate CSARs, CRRs, NPoAs and implementation reports. These measures could enhance transnational peer learning, especially if driven by the PAP and regional parliaments.<sup>39</sup> Parliaments could learn from Uganda and assert considerable influence in the post-review stage, through exercising powers over financial allocations, and conducting monitoring and evaluation of APRM-linked projects.

### Civil society organisations

APRM documentation stresses the involvement and satisfaction of CSOs in the APRM as a key marker of its credibility. Ghana defused initial civil society criticism of its APRM plans by increasing consultation and appointing a seven-person NGC of eminent, respected, non-partisan citizens, including clergymen, a gender activist, and a former head of the Bar Association, after consultation with opposition parties.<sup>40</sup> Kenya enhanced ownership when it allowed CSOs to select their own NGC representatives (although this led to protracted CSO infighting and jockeying for influence that delayed implementation of the CSAR process).<sup>41</sup> South Africa's NGC drew two-thirds of its members from civil society, although they were not selected transparently and most were ideologically close to the ruling party.<sup>42</sup> In Rwanda, government officials were numerically dominant, with critical organisations notably excluded.<sup>43</sup>

CSOs can make their mark in the consultation process, especially through written or oral submissions that can inform and influence. Some CSOs in South Africa and Uganda managed to engage strategically with the APRM, lobbying tenaciously to ensure that their key issues appeared in the CRRs and NPoAs.<sup>44</sup> In South Africa and Congo-Brazzaville,<sup>45</sup> CSOs mobilised to assert the terms of their participation. Zambia's APRM Civil Society Secretariat, a CSO structure with some 35 members, directed broader CSO involvement in the process.

Civil society involvement is not without problems. Given government's large role, CSOs face the risk that their participation could legitimate a flawed exercise.<sup>46</sup> Alternatively, civil society can seek to exploit the APRM as a funding avenue or for emoluments, as in Kenya.<sup>47</sup> While the review stages include government, CSOs, business and citizens, NPoA implementation and reporting fall almost exclusively to government.

### Media

The media operates both as participant and as chronicler. In some cases, media organisations have occupied NGC seats, and most countries have tried to sensitise the media and encourage coverage, with varying degrees of success. Several African journalists have indicated an interest in reporting on the APRM (although for many it remains too complex and parochial), and the Panel has indicated appreciation of their role.<sup>48</sup>

Measuring media engagement is difficult and anecdotal. Media interest was relatively high in Ghana years after the country was reviewed, but Ghanaian journalists express conflicting views on how informed they were kept on the process, and whether the APRM managed to capture the popular imagination.<sup>49</sup> Kenya serialised its CRR in newspapers.<sup>50</sup> In South Africa, only the influential *Sunday Times* devoted sustained attention to the APRM, and coverage became dominated by apparent attempts to manipulate the process.<sup>51</sup> An opinion piece by a South African-based researcher, critical of the APRM in Nigeria, reportedly played a significant role in re-energising that process.<sup>52</sup>

The APRM's length and complexity – with long time lags – make it a difficult story to cover in depth. In addition, limited media freedom can circumscribe the media's ability to discuss the APRM and its findings openly and frankly.<sup>53</sup> The original APRM Questionnaire contained no direct references to media freedom – suggesting perhaps ambiguous commitment to this principle – although this has been somewhat corrected in

the new version of the questionnaire. A more involved and enabled media could assist in popularising the APRM and its findings, encouraging learning and knowledge exchange. Better communication by APRM bodies could stimulate better coverage, as could the proactive use of the media in APRM-linked advocacy, through op-eds, talk shows and press conferences, used well by Tanzanian and Zambian activists.

### **Private sector**

This process seeks to spur economic growth and development, yet of all key stakeholders, the private sector – organised business – has been the least engaged in the APRM. Business representatives have been appointed to all NGCs and business organisations have made some inputs, but evidence of enduring interest beyond the self-assessment is lacking.

Potentially, business has a considerable contribution to make. NEPAD and the APRM aimed to create an environment conducive to economic growth, which requires the insights and active commitment of business. The corporate governance thematic area of the Questionnaire refers directly to business operations. Low engagement suggests that business is not fully convinced or aware of the benefits of participation, seeing mainly immediate costs in time and resources, whereas CSOs and parliaments may see future opportunities.

Two common patterns emerge from this analysis. First, the degree to which each sector can operate in the APRM is contingent on the overall political, social and economic environment. Meaningful engagement may be difficult in countries with restrictive political cultures. Second, stakeholder involvement tends to peak in the self-assessment phase and then tails off dramatically in the implementation phases and monitoring thereof. The momentum and enthusiasm of CSOs quickly dissipate.

Although the government still plays the major role in the APRM, civil society is claiming its space, while the private sector is largely absent. Country ownership is well established, even if its terms can be hotly contested. More work needs to be done to demonstrate the ‘mutual accountability’ component of the APRM; sovereignty still weighs heavily, and leaders appear somewhat reluctant to truly hold their peers to account (at least in public).

## **INTEGRATING THE APRM**

The APRM occurs in tandem with many other initiatives to promote governance, stimulate development, and build capacity. It might consider the efficacy of other ongoing policy initiatives, such as the MDGs, national development plans and poverty reduction strategies. NPoAs recommend new interventions (intended to add value) with budgetary implications, but they can be rather sparse on detail. Overlap with existing programmes poses the questions of whether reforms would have happened in any event.

In terms of the relation of the APRM to national development plans, empirically, there is a mixed picture. In March 2010, a summary report by analyst Adotey Bing-Pappoe, based on the experiences of implementing the NPoA in early APRM countries, outlined many key challenges. He noted that an April 2007 study of the NPoAs of Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda suggested that there were differences between the costs of the NPoAs and the information held by government ministries and agencies; poor co-ordination between

those responsible for costing NPoAs and those financing the action items; and difficulty in identifying the programmes and projects generated by the APRM and NPoA in national budgets.<sup>54</sup> A subsequent study of Ghana, Rwanda, Uganda and Benin between 2007 and 2009 revealed several other important findings, listed below.<sup>55</sup>

- **Costing:** NPoAs often underestimated maintenance and salary costs and tended to systematically under-cost. They also appeared to have been hastily assembled and were therefore error-prone, and tended to double-count pre-existing programmes (between 30% and 70% of NPoAs) without making this explicit.
- **Harmonisation:** The distinction between governance projects and capital projects tended to become blurred. Countries had an array of institutional arrangements to join the APRM to the national planning process. NPoAs were insufficiently synchronised with pre-existing national plans, which could lead to costly and wasteful planning, budgeting and administrative overlaps. Assessing funding shortfalls accurately proved difficult, as research revealed several gaps at the levels of resource mobilisation, project funding, budget allocation, disbursement and budget performance. Sometimes, allocations tended to exceed the original NPoA estimates, disbursement levels varied widely according to thematic areas, and NPoAs and NDPs tended to run in parallel without much harmonisation.
- **Funding sources:** Countries tended to be overly reliant on external sources (donor funding) for NPoAs (with some exceptions).
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Several countries faced delays in implementing their NPoAs in toto or on certain programmes. Countries' implementation reports contained insufficient data and detail to ascertain to what degree NPoAs were being implemented 'either on a project basis or on the basis of financial accounting'. The ability to monitor and track implementation had been 'uneven', with some using existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and other establishing new structures to capture public opinion.

The record of integration is also mixed. Several countries have attributed an APRM influence to governance reforms. In Ghana's case, the executive pre-committed to accepting and implementing recommendations arising from the process and has used the APRM as a powerful branding tool.<sup>56</sup> In Uganda, the National Planning Authority 'worked hard to ensure harmony of the APRM and the National Development Plan'.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, Kenya seemed not to have included APRM measures in its new development plan, Vision 2030, while South Africa's NPoA seemed to avoid contentious issues and then reported on measures sometimes predating the APRM itself as measures taken to fulfil them.<sup>58</sup>

Sometimes APRM officials struggle to secure sufficient buy-in and support from ministries of finance or treasuries. The NPoA can suffer from neglect, bureaucratic resistance, lack of funding, poor budgeting and leadership changes. One survey respondent said, 'In most countries, there has been a superposition of planning documents and strategies, with little integration of the different initiatives which has proven ineffective and counter-productive'.<sup>59</sup>

In some larger, relatively developed APRM countries like Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa, the APRM appears only partially integrated into national development planning. In other countries, varied levels of integration are evident. Some, like Lesotho, explicitly

noted their donor dependence to finance their NPoAs. At the other extreme, Algeria and Uganda claim that the APRM subsumes and seamlessly integrates all national planning; this can make it difficult to see the special value that the APRM has added.

Overall, the picture is – with some exceptions – one of the APRM being overshadowed by other initiatives, and not being well integrated with them. For example, at a workshop held in Zambia in May 2013, a participant from Tanzania mentioned about 12 other governance and development initiatives in the country with which the APRM was competing. It emphasised his point that the APRM was not well known in the country and had not had much impact. Indeed, this aspect should be a key focus of the next phase of the APRM – how to make it part of the very fabric of national governance plans.

## OVERSIGHT OF IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

With the state and sitting government the primary agents for implementing NPoA commitments, what national and international oversight mechanisms exist?

### National oversight

While the APRM process does not formally make provision for in-country oversight of implementation, this seems necessary. As noted above, the potential for parliaments to play this role remains largely unfulfilled. CSOs have attempted to play an oversight role in some instances – such as in Uganda, Lesotho and South Africa, where consortia of CSOs have critiqued APRM reports and submitted their own views – but these endeavours are embryonic in scope. Ghana's use of citizen report card methods and gathering opinions at district level holds some promise for enhanced CSO M&E.

### International oversight

In theory, the sovereignty of individual member countries is somewhat surrendered through the choice to undergo a review before the Forum, and thereafter to be accountable by reporting on progress. Potentially, this implies significant oversight of an individual country's efforts by other states.

While APRM Forum meetings are routinely held and implementation reports are produced and submitted, the quality of this oversight is limited at best. New reviews take precedence over implementation reports due to Forum meeting time constraints, and there is no public evidence of criticism or even deep probing by any states of another in terms of NPoA implementation. No public statements have been made by the Panel about late, sub-standard or non-existent NPoA implementation reports. States appear reluctant to cast stones when they are similarly recalcitrant. Other factors limiting international oversight include the relatively low level of attendance of Forum meetings by heads of state, with lower-level representatives (non-peers) being considered observers and not allowed to speak; and the lack of independent capacity to verify the veracity of country claims. Likewise, the APRM Panel and Secretariat have not been able thus far to render independent assessments of countries' implementation processes.

A reporting, monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed (but not yet

implemented) at both continental and national level that should help to improve these important aspects of the APRM.

It is also important to re-emphasise the traction that the APRM has gained at national level, quite apart from what happens centrally at continental level. Many actors – the NGC, government, MPs, CSOs – demonstrate leadership in taking responsibility to implement this instrument. They may not always agree, but the fact that varied players continue to find value in the APRM and debate its future suggests that the APRM has indeed been able to create a degree of institutionalised sustainability and continuity.

## PROMOTING TRUST AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The peer review system is predicated on mutual trust, transparency, accountability and information sharing in a non-punitive environment that helps all members to learn, listen and grow. The APRM is attempting to reverse the historical trend of accountability to foreign donors, emphasising that leaders should be mutually accountable to one another as well as to their citizens. In theory, it will allow leaders to call their fellow leaders to order.

An important initial challenge was building trust and confidence (among civil society, governments and donors) that this untested system and its institutions would live up to its core guiding principles that 'every review exercise carried out under the authority of the mechanism must be technically competent, credible and free of political manipulation'.<sup>60</sup> The mechanism therefore had to take measures to ensure integrity. These included the appointment of credible, independent-minded Panellists; the proviso that governments may append comments to the CRR but not amend it; the strong involvement of civil society and public participation; publication of the CRRs; and Panel members being prepared to confront non-conforming governments. The APRM has been able to build a reputation for integrity and fairness. One interviewee said:<sup>61</sup>

It has shown governments that a process plagued with exclusionary and manipulative practices will only backfire: citizens will resent it, and governments will only lose ... the importance of frank, evidence-based state-citizen dialogue has thus been clearly underlined by APRM pioneers.

In a different way, the APRM has helped to empower African *citizens* to hold *leaders* accountable. It has given non-state actors a platform to raise their concerns and comment on governance in a respectful, constructive manner. In the spirit of the Accra Agenda for Action, the APRM seeks mutual accountability, which sets standards to hold all actors to account – the state, non-state actors and donors, particularly at the domestic level. Professor Ahmed Mohiddin, who has been involved in the APRM since its inception and has been on several Country Review Missions (CRMs), said, '[The APRM] has let the genie out of the bottle. People no longer fear their governments, they have greater access to information, and they are able to demystify governance. The APRM at its best creates a neutral space to speak and interact with others. It's very rare that ordinary citizens get the opportunity to question a minister, demand and receive answers.'<sup>62</sup> He noted that during CRMs, ordinary citizens felt that the APRM emboldened them to raise vital issues. 'This is the essence of NEPAD: autonomy, self-belief in agency, empowerment. Africans can determine their destiny.'<sup>63</sup>



## CHAPTER 6

### BOOSTING MUTUAL LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

This section discusses how the APRM relates to four inter-related issues in turn: promoting peer learning and South–South knowledge exchange; SSC; capacity development; and development effectiveness.

#### PROMOTING PEER LEARNING AND SOUTH–SOUTH KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

The notion of ‘knowledge’ is built into the fabric of the APRM: the process revolves around understanding a country’s dynamics and getting to grips with important governance issues. ‘Exchange’ can arise at various points – both within and between countries. The APRM is focused on individual countries that volunteer for review, although many of the issues are transnational and will require regional co-operation to resolve. While there has been a great deal of experience sharing and knowledge exchange over the APRM *process*, learning from and publishing on the *content* of the CRRs has tended to be neglected.<sup>64</sup>

The 2002 APRM Base Document notes the importance of learning from experience to keep the APRM current: ‘To enhance its dynamism, the Conference of the participating countries will review the APRM once every five years.’<sup>65</sup> The APRM encourages stakeholders to think beyond traditional patterns and methods. Its participatory nature allows for a wide-ranging national governance stocktaking or audit. Ideally, good governance should become an inculcated habit.

Apart from the ‘peers’ in the APRM Forum, who meet at least twice a year on the margins of AU Summits to exchange experiences, groups performing similar tasks across countries on the APRM *process* – including Focal Points, TRIs, NGCs, National APRM Secretariats, and CSOs – have been able to come together to learn from their own peers. This exchange has occurred both formally (especially for Focal Points who also meet at Summits) and informally, albeit in a nascent, weakly co-ordinated manner at present, and often outside the efforts of continental APRM bodies.

There have been some important formal occasions for peer learning organised by the central APRM bodies:

- the Sixth African Governance Forum, ‘Implementing the African Peer Review Mechanism: Challenges and Opportunities’, Kigali, Rwanda, 9–11 May 2006;<sup>66</sup>
- the Algiers Workshop on the APRM Questionnaire, Algiers, Algeria, 8–9 November 2007;
- the First Extraordinary Summit of the APRM Forum, Cotonou, Benin, 25–26 October 2008;<sup>67</sup>



- the validation workshop on the APRM Questionnaire, Sandton, South Africa, 16–17 March 2011; and
- the APRM Tenth Anniversary Colloquium, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 21–22 May 2013.<sup>68</sup>

The 2008 Cotonou Extraordinary Forum was the first to discuss the cross-cutting issues of managing diversity and xenophobia, elections in Africa, resource control and management, land and corruption arising from the CRRs, and how peers could learn from one another's best practices. However, these large conferences and workshops are held infrequently, and with a large number of member states at such different stages of the APRM it can be difficult to gather all views and facilitate meaningful discussions in the time allotted.

Most survey respondents agreed that the APRM had started to develop a community of learning. Later countries learned from earlier 'pioneers', such as in the use of independent think tanks or quasi-public research bodies as TRIs. In this way, common standards and approaches were set. There were also instances of borrowing good techniques from one another, such as radio campaigns to popularise the APRM.

### Box 3: Active learning by APRM actors

The continental organisations have often been slower than civil society players to realise the synergies between the various country processes. Many actors have actively and independently sought out their peers. This should not be seen negatively, but as a platform for better peer learning going forward. APRM institutions must guard against atrophy and countries losing faith in their competence and ability to service their needs. The Panel and Secretariat should find a way to better harness CSO experience and capacity.

Apart from the Forum meetings, a great deal of formal and informal exchange has occurred, including through visits and study trips to other countries, interaction at workshops and conferences, using APRM actors as resource persons for training in other countries, and comparative analyses of both process and content published by think tanks, researchers and CSOs. Some countries are active knowledge providers or brokers: Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda are frequently mentioned in this regard.

- **Learning and experience-sharing visits:** There is much evidence of later countries learning actively from the pioneers. Uganda's APRM bodies took trips to Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa to learn from their counterparts. Tanzanians visited Ghana, Kenya and Uganda. Lesotho's Secretariat visited South Africa and Mozambique. Malians visited Algeria. In January 2010, the UNDP organised a workshop in Djibouti where SAIIA shared experiences of pioneer countries.
- **Mentoring:** The energy and drive of particular individuals have influenced their peers. The most notable example is the late Dr Francis Appiah, Executive Secretary of the Ghanaian National APRM Governing Council, who won the prestigious German Africa Award in 2007 for his tireless efforts to promote the APRM. As a committed pan-African,

Appiah took the initiative to mentor fellow West African APRM states, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Sierra Leone, to promote the APRM at regional level in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and through the proposed West African Centre for the Advancement of the APRM. Uganda is also becoming an APRM hub, hosting workshops and advising others, such as Lesotho, on integrating the NPoA and national development plan.

- **Expert exchange:** Nigeria and Kenya exchanged experts during the self-assessment phase. In 2007, Mozambique requested assistance from SAIIA and EISA to train its TRIs to undertake research for the CSAR. There is also a growing cadre of Africans who have been on multiple CRMs, a vital repository of expertise, experience and professional integrity. Participation in a CRM – by African experts from across the continent – expands collective governance knowledge.
- **CSO monitoring:** The work by the Uganda Governance Monitoring Platform to annually track APRM implementation informed the APRM Monitoring Project, an initiative to empower CSOs in South Africa and Lesotho to monitor APRM implementation in their respective countries.<sup>69</sup>
- **Convening cohorts and cross-pollination:** The APRM has brought people across Africa into contact who otherwise may have not done so. CSOs have also successfully spread ideas in their workshops, for example by using practitioners from other APRM countries as resource persons. For instance, SAIIA has brought researchers from Lesotho and Kenya to Zambia, activists from Uganda to Tanzania, and researchers from Uganda and Zambia to Lesotho for APRM events. The Private Enterprise Foundation, one of Ghana's TRIs, notes that over the years it has received delegates from other countries and many electronic queries, an experience SAIIA shares. UNECA has targeted MPs for training workshops on the APRM, thereby exposing parliaments to the APRM and their roles in the process, fostering networking and peer learning. CSOs and think tanks have assisted NGCs and National Secretariats. The APRM process has also helped build the Panel of Eminent Persons as a team.

However, a common concern from those surveyed and interviewed is that this learning is ad hoc, not systematic or prioritised, with missed opportunities. One said that peer learning was<sup>70</sup>

more as a 'sideline' or by-product: the co-operation and co-ordination has been more among organisations studying APRM – research organisations and development NGOs – as opposed to those driving it. It has increased somewhat in recent years, but seemingly reluctantly, without a formal mandate and lacking in vision and direction.

Overall, the system lacks a champion for enhanced and sustained peer learning, with CSOs and think tanks taking the lead in organising experience-sharing workshops and

filling this gap. Tasks related to country reviews have taken up the bulk of the time of the staff of the APRM Secretariat, which has meant less attention has been paid to monitoring and evaluation, engagement with civil society, and arranging lesson-learning workshops.

There appears to be far less systematic APRM sharing and learning in francophone Africa than in anglophone Africa. One interviewee said, 'Greater initiative from the APRM Secretariat in South Africa and the use of available funds from the UNDP Trust Fund for such activities would facilitate, and therefore bear the potential to enhance regional co-operation.'<sup>71</sup>

The APRM Secretariat's website,<sup>72</sup> despite a recent overhaul, is infrequently updated, has too few documents in Portuguese and French, lacks basic information for civil society, seems geared towards governments, and is poorly organised. Several respondents said that CSOs and research institutions in fact provided the most up-to-date information on the APRM.

The APRM is connected to other regional and global mechanisms and processes, enhancing opportunities for learning. It is part of current discussions on the evolving Africa Governance Architecture. Along with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the APRM forms an important component of the Joint Africa–EU Strategy. For CSO activists, it is increasingly becoming a vehicle through which to raise governance and social justice issues, including around global campaigns such as the MDGs.

## STRENGTHENING SOUTH–SOUTH CO-OPERATION (SSC)

SSC is a term with a long history that pre-dates the current aid effectiveness debate – typified by the 2005 Paris Declaration and 2008 Accra Agenda for Action – by decades. The authors of the UN Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) *Economic Development in Africa Report 2010, South–South-Cooperation: Africa and the New Forms of Development Partnership* define SSC as 'the processes, institutions and arrangements designed to promote political, economic and technical co-operation among developing countries in pursuit of common development goals' and note that SSC is a much broader concept than mere technical or economic co-operation among developing countries, 'where the former focuses on the co-operative exchange of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how and the latter refers mainly to co-operation in trade, investment and finance'.<sup>73</sup>

SSC dates back to the early post-colonial era. One of its first uses was at the 1955 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, convened to marshal solidarity among developing countries. Two important South–South political alliances emerged after Bandung – the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, and the Group of 77 in 1964. The 1978 Buenos Aires Action Plan following the UN Conference on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries gave SSC concrete form in identifying areas of co-operation, with its three strategic aims of strengthening economic, social and political interdependence between developing countries; accelerating development; and addressing distortions in the international system caused by the asymmetrical power relations of the colonial era.<sup>74</sup>

SSC encompasses important elements such as solidarity, fraternity, a sense of shared destiny, political co-operation, political lobbying and bloc formation. The current interest in SSC by development practitioners is a welcome initiative to learn systematically from these actions and programmes.

The APRM is a quintessential SSC initiative, and key elements of SSC appear in the APRM's 2002 Base Document.

- Paragraph 3 states that the APRM's primary purpose is 'to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration *through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building*'.<sup>75</sup>
- Paragraph 16 says: 'The peer review process will spur countries to consider seriously the impact of domestic policies, not only on internal political stability and economic growth, but also on neighbouring countries. It will promote mutual accountability, as well as compliance with best practice.'<sup>76</sup>
- Paragraph 24 demonstrates the intention to use positive encouragement, assistance and appeals for donor support and constructive dialogue – as well as (unspecified) sanctions as a last resort – to assist governments to rectify their governance shortcomings.<sup>77</sup>

Several interviewees and survey respondents pointed to the joint African standards-setting element of the APRM. One noted that, '[F]or the first time, development and governance objectives were set up by the African countries themselves, and not donor driven. Even if it was only a symbol, this was, in principle, a South–South evaluation process.'<sup>78</sup>

The APR Forum meetings offer a constructive environment for heads of states to regularly consult and advise each other. It brings ideologically different governments together to pursue the common goal of good governance, through sharing experiences and pursuing best practices. Through their participation, leaders are kept informed about trends in governance and socio-economic development. Discussions of the CRRs presume that they have been studied by Forum members, so that they can engage meaningfully and, in theory, exert their influence to ensure that governance deficiencies are addressed. They might also have ideas and experiences to share.

Research suggests this engagement is limited. Frequently, heads of state are not present, but are represented by deputies or ministers (who sometimes are not permitted to speak), which tends to diminish the gravitas of the Forum. There has been an improvement in the level of preparation by states for these discussions, compared to when Ghana was reviewed in 2005, when many Forum members did not seem familiar with either Ghana's report or the objectives of the APRM.<sup>79</sup> The Forum has also been criticised for its approach; one observer suggested that Uganda was allowed to steer discussion of its governance record towards technical, less politically volatile matters, such as educational quality.<sup>80</sup> Box 4 offers insights from Forum discussions for SSC.

**Box 4: Insights from peer review discussions: South–South co-operation**

From the fourth and fifth countries to be peer reviewed (Algeria and South Africa, both in mid-2007), the APRM Secretariat began publishing summaries of the discussions at the APR Forum at the back of the respective CRRs. These summaries give a unique insight into the issues taken up by the Forum, the interventions of particular leaders and, most importantly for this case study, evidence of peer learning and knowledge exchange in action. They touch upon a variety of issues, including development models and ideology, best practices, willingness to learn, offers of assistance, seeking advice and the value of the process. Forum members have also at times questioned statements, opinions and judgements in the CRRs, sought to 'set the record straight', updated information and defended their policies. These should be seen as signs of a healthy system where debate is encouraged and stimulated.

**Ideology and values:** For example, the South African CRR prompted an important discussion on development models and the notion of a developmental state. The then Chairman of the Forum, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, contended that South Africa was the first African country to have 'rejected neo-liberal ideology and proposed an alternative'. He is reported to have noted that 'it would enrich the mechanism if we all learn from this'.<sup>81</sup> He discussed issues such as growth, autonomy of the state from the private sector, and ownership of development policy, as well as some of the challenges of a developmental state, including implementation capacity, expectations of equity and social justice, land reform and balancing short- and long-term needs and aspirations. He also urged the peer reviews to remain ideologically neutral in their recommendations. He repeated this call in the Ugandan peer review discussions, where 'he observed that the mandate of the APR Panel is not to pass judgement on policies and orientations decided by a country, but rather on the outcomes, and to advise accordingly'.<sup>82</sup> The nature of the state was again debated in discussions on the Burkina Faso CRR.<sup>83</sup>

**Promoting good practice:** Uganda has been complimented for progress in several governance areas that the lead Panellist noted 'could be emulated by other states', including prompt handling of electoral disputes (the former Prime Minister of Lesotho, Pakalitha Mosisili, asked for more details on this point), sound macroeconomic management, and the country's success in tackling HIV/Aids.<sup>84</sup> This pattern of highlighting systemic governance issues and good practices is followed in discussions of the CRRs of Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mozambique and Lesotho, clear examples of South–South knowledge exchange.

In some instances, leaders have promoted their own best practices, such as the late Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua who 'commend[ed] ... to brother African nations' to consider emulating the Nigerian Council of State, an advisory body that includes all former heads of state, former chief justices, and incumbent leaders.<sup>85</sup> In others, heads of state have urged that peers emulate others, such as when Prime Minister Bernard Makuza of Rwanda commended the public declaration of personal assets by President Yar'Adua to his colleagues 'and to all Africans who have a responsibility for financial management'.<sup>86</sup>

In another case, Prime Minister Mosisili challenged his peers to undertake a public HIV test, as he had done.<sup>87</sup>

**Seeking and offering advice and assistance:** Uganda (having recently discovered oil) asked Nigeria about 'the challenges regarding the refinement of oil and increasing domestic capacities for adding value to the exported product'.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Lesotho asked Uganda for more detail about its ability to promptly handle electoral disputes.<sup>89</sup> President Blaise Compaoré said that the experience of South Africa in 'the transparent extractive industry (sic) will be an example for Burkina Faso'.<sup>90</sup> Lesotho's Prime Minister made it plain that the financial crisis 'will have a bearing on our ability to implement our NPoA ... I cannot overemphasise the urgent need for the APRM not to be a roadside or armchair critic but to stand up and fight along with us by supporting our national efforts with additional resources ... we hope and expect that the APRM will meet us halfway by providing a channel through which we can support one another in implementing the NPoA'.<sup>91</sup> The APR Forum 'noted the need for mobilisation of resources for the implementation of the country's NPoA',<sup>92</sup> although there is no evidence that any such assistance was actually provided.

Interestingly, the then South African President Kgalema Motlanthe said that the Ugandan government 'should inform its peers about priority interventions it is contemplating to meet the key challenges, so that the Forum can render the desired assistance to Uganda as mooted in the peer review process'.<sup>93</sup> Later in the discussions, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni urged his peers 'to assist Uganda in mobilising the private sector in Africa to join Uganda in implementing the identified sectoral priorities'. Calls for and offers of material support and expertise from one to another show the potential of peer review to develop innovative solutions, mutual support and cross-pollination of ideas. However, it is not clear whether this was ever acted upon.

**Willingness to learn:** President Museveni disputed that high population growth – an overarching issue flagged by the Panel – was a problem, stating that Uganda was endowed with resources, but welcomed further discussions 'to educate him on the ills of high population growth',<sup>94</sup> having 'conceded that he personally encouraged Ugandans to multiply'.<sup>95</sup> This same issue emerged in Burkina Faso's report, where President Compaoré similarly 'indicated that he needed to be educated further on the issue of high population growth in his country'.<sup>96</sup>

**Value of peer review:** President Yar'Adua made the point that 'There is nothing to be lost but everything to be gained by the forensic audit of governance in Nigeria by such eminent Africans. The report has strengthened our collective resolve to permeate the African space with good governance values, and we are encouraged to work harder at making Nigeria a good example on the continent'.<sup>97</sup> Prime Minister Mosisili said, 'There is no doubt whatsoever that the APRM exercise has sharpened our perceptions and understanding of our development challenges, shortcomings and opportunities, and for that we are immensely grateful. We are now, more than ever before, convinced that our decision to accede to the APRM process was a good decision'.<sup>98</sup>

Some respondents felt that much potential remained untapped. One said, 'SSC has been very limited in practice, because the conceptual phase is not yet completed. The experience remains still largely individual country-focused so far.'<sup>99</sup> Another said, 'I have yet to see evidence that lessons learnt in one reviewed country have been learnt by another and integrated into the policy formulation process.'<sup>100</sup> Respondents also generally felt that SSC efforts were ad hoc and scattered rather than systematic, with 'little evidence of African countries actually supporting development – in cash or in kind – in other countries',<sup>101</sup> although, of course, a broad interpretation of SSC allows for other types of collaboration. These views all point to areas where the APRM can improve.

Another important area of SSC is around best practices. The APRM is premised on identifying best practices, both in terms of how to conduct the APRM (building national institutions, conducting research, implementing recommendations, etc.) and how to achieve its objective of improved governance. Countries are encouraged to identify what it is they do well, for sharing. At least 150 of these have so far been identified in the first 12 published CRRs. While some answer country-specific problems that may not be replicable, and others merely note countries' achievements, many suggest that the country could teach others something useful – the essence of peer learning. Some practices provide templates which, if adopted, could promote development effectiveness (such as South Africa's King Codes on corporate governance).

Again, more work is required in this area. There has not yet been a concerted effort to disseminate knowledge of these practices; document them in detail to demonstrate how they actually worked; or learn from them sufficiently. For example, the personal involvement of the president in Uganda's anti-Aids efforts could easily be emulated elsewhere.<sup>102</sup> Using the identified best practices in each report could be a basis for SSC discussions and action.<sup>103</sup>

## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Box 5 describes the six cornerstones of the 2009 NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework (CDSF). This case study has attempted to show how the APRM seeks to address all of these elements and dimensions.

### **Box 5: The NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework**

The 2009 NEPAD Capacity Development Strategic Framework defines capacity development as 'a process of enabling individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and societies to sustainably define, articulate, engage and actualise their vision or developmental goals, building on their own resources'. The CDSF is built upon the core NEPAD principles of African leadership, ownership, resourcefulness and innovation.<sup>104</sup> The six cornerstones of the CDSF are:<sup>105</sup>

- 1 Leadership transformation** – developing dynamic, strategic and inspirational leaders at all levels of society to drive and transform Africa through results.



- 2 Citizenship transformation** – developing better engaged and empowered citizens with the capacity to own the development agenda and demand greater accountability and transparency from state and non-state institutions.
- 3 Knowledge and evidence-based innovation** – developing and using knowledge-based and innovation-driven policy and decision-making processes for effective development and learning.
- 4 Utilising African potential, skills and resources** – mobilising, nurturing and retaining African human, institutional and financial resources for development transformation locally, continentally and globally.
- 5 Developing capacity of capacity developers** – reorienting, retraining and repositioning capacity developers to adapt to Africa’s progressive agenda through performance-enhancing institutions.
- 6 Integrated planning and implementation for results** – fostering the development of planning and implementation capacities to achieve better integrated and co-ordinated systems for enhanced results.

Capacity has, to some extent and to differing degrees, been developed among citizens, CSOs, TRIs, national APRM Secretariats, NGCs, CRMs, governments and other stakeholders. The networking, ‘learning by doing’ and experience-swapping aspects of the APRM have developed capacity for a variety of stakeholders at several levels. The way that interest in and support for the APRM have grown beyond the efforts of centralised, continental institutions has meant that, at national level, the APRM has become an important capacity development instrument, promoting mutual learning. This section examines how capacity has been built for citizens and CSOs; TRIs and researchers; and governments.

**Citizens and CSOs** have been empowered and encouraged to raise their voices. Their rights and opportunities to partake in policy discussions and to demand domestic accountability have been strengthened. They have also learned about monitoring and evaluation, and working together. In many instances, it has been civil society groups that have been at the forefront of extracting lessons through comparing and contrasting experiences across countries.

A Ugandan activist noted that ‘the whole idea of mobilising NGOs and CBOs to monitor APRM progress is a means of capacity development in both the short and long term. Increasingly, NGOs have come to realise that most of their work feeds directly into the implementation of the APRM.’<sup>106</sup> Some have successfully been able to raise funds and launch projects around the good governance agenda. Another Uganda respondent argued that the APRM had helped CSOs to improve their ability to communicate with government, and to co-operate with fellow CSOs on a unified platform. This activity is also a vital element of SSC.



Local CSOs have played a key role in providing information on and context and insight to CRMs. Despite attempts by some governments to act as gatekeepers to restrict access to national experts or groups, the CRM has usually found a way to meet diverse stakeholders, formally or informally, despite full schedules and set-piece events. The terms of reference for CRMs may need to be strengthened to *require* interaction with non-governmental stakeholders, especially as the APRM comes to review states with less assiduous commitments to democracy, human rights and civil liberties. Missions may need powers to gain access to some stakeholders unpopular with their governments. A list of those consulted by CRMs could add credibility to CRRs.

**TRIs and researchers** have been able to enhance their skills of collation, analysis, research and surveying, involving the public through high-quality, domestically based governance assessments. Capacity has undoubtedly been developed in universities, think tanks, research institutions and consultancies, as well as among researchers at the continental Secretariat and those participating in CRMs. African researchers have been commended for the high quality of the CSARs and CRRs. Researchers have also learned about understanding, customising and utilising a standard assessment tool. Where national statistical bodies have been involved, they have been able to both learn and teach. Many CSOs and think tanks are instrumental in international networks, analysing APRM outputs and remaining vigilant watchdogs on African reform.

**Governments** have, through this exercise, learned about costing, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and the policy cycle, developing a greater awareness of what counterparts do elsewhere. Within and between departments there has been collaboration and teamwork, in the national interest. Governments have learned more about different ways to consult citizens. There is also an emphasis on record keeping, especially with regard to standards and codes. They have also learned it is not easy to hide the truth from the APRM institutions.

Nevertheless, some interviewees suggested that not enough capacity had been built or sustained, especially in the post-review phase, or that it was too early or too difficult to tell. It seems that more effort is required by the APRM to successfully promote capacity development, requiring better integration with national planning and more effective and regular M&E.

## DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

In addition to providing insights on knowledge exchange, SSC and capacity development, the APRM has also advanced debates around development effectiveness.

Importantly, the APRM was not designed as an aid delivery mechanism, but as a system of equal, sovereign states that voluntarily interact to discuss governance questions and aspire to be accountable to one another. Therefore, examining the APRM through an 'aid effectiveness' lens can be problematic. For instance, it is difficult to clearly discern 'providing' and 'receiving' partners in the classical donor-recipient sense, let alone assess how relations between these groups change. Some countries initially drove the process, most notably South Africa and Nigeria, providing the intellectual impetus, political support and financial backing, so in this sense they could be seen as 'providers' to the other countries that volunteered for peer review as 'receivers', but the nature and design

of the process defies this simplistic conceptualisation. Using a broader ‘development effectiveness’ lens, which seeks to ensure that *all* resources are effectively utilised, is more helpful and useful in this context.

To date, there is no evidence of the APRM facilitating *direct* financial development assistance (in the classic North–South, donor-recipient model) between member countries, although, as noted in analysis of the peer review discussions, some like Lesotho explicitly requested financial assistance and others like South Africa asked countries (such as Uganda) where they could assist.

Nevertheless, development effectiveness (and particularly aid effectiveness) questions *are* tackled extensively in the CRRs. The APRM Questionnaire requires reporting on the receipt and use of aid, and the extent to which countries own their development processes. In the original Questionnaire (on which all CRRs to date are based) in the Socio-Economic Development thematic area, under Objective One (‘Promote self-reliance in development and build capacity for self-sustaining development’), the first question asks: ‘To what extent does the country have effective ownership of the orientation and design of national development programmes?’ The second question is ‘How is the national development programme funded?’<sup>107</sup> Box 6 examines how the various CRRs describe the situation.

#### **Box 6: Insights from peer review discussions: aid effectiveness**

From their CRRs, it is immediately apparent that in some relatively developed APRM countries – such as Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa – there is low aid dependency of around 1% of GDP. Most others – with the exception of Kenya – are highly dependent on donors.

Rwanda’s CRR reports that, despite efforts to reduce aid dependence and achieve debt relief, externally financed capital expenditure from the total development budget was 100% in 1995, 96.6% in 2000, and 83.1% in 2003, attributed to the aftermath of the 1994 genocide and a narrow tax base.<sup>108</sup> Official Development Assistance accounts for more than 60% of financing for development programmes in Benin<sup>109</sup> and 70% in Burkina Faso, with more than 50 development partners active in the country.<sup>110</sup> The International Monetary Fund estimated that Mozambique’s level of dependency was 54.3% in 2008, and the country ‘remains dependent on huge injections of foreign grants and soft loans ... the capital budget is almost entirely funded by foreign aid’.<sup>111</sup> It said that 20 years after the end of the civil war, ‘aid dependency has penetrated every pore of the social, economic and political spheres. More than two-thirds of public expenditure, including off-budget, is financed through aid.’<sup>112</sup> Uganda’s CRR notes that macro-economic stability ‘is based almost entirely on concessional and conditional transfers of development aid ... not ... on any fundamental improvement in the basic structure of the economy’.<sup>113</sup> It also mentioned ‘huge fiscal deficits’ created by increased government expenditure not matched by increased domestic funds, and the risk of sudden reductions in donor funding, noting that donors funded about half of the 2007/08 budget<sup>114</sup> and about 40% of development programmes.<sup>115</sup> The CRRs of Mozambique and Lesotho mention the need to co-ordinate

donor activities and improve the predictability and effectiveness of aid and the ownership of national development.

By contrast, Kenya has weaned itself off extreme aid dependence, becoming reliant on domestic revenue and improved debt management. This was partly because of aid reductions due to perceptions of widespread misuse, maladministration and corruption since the 1990s.<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, not enough information is included in the CRR on how Kenya achieved this.

An interviewee noted that the APRM helped identify priority areas for intervention and, in theory, where donor support should be channelled, but noted that harmonisation with the national development plan and the budget was crucial.<sup>117</sup>

Common development effectiveness issues identified in the CRRs include:

- over-reliance on exporting raw materials, minerals and agricultural produce;
- large informal sectors that pay little income tax;
- low foreign direct investment;
- corruption, especially arising from aid flows;
- high aid dependence, particularly for direct budget support, development programmes and capital expenditure. This can lead to perceptions that donors drive economic policy in heavily aid-dependent states, indicating lack of country ownership of development;
- distortions, shocks, deficits and unpredictable aid flows leading to implementation delays;
- a high proportion of project aid, resulting in onerous reporting and diversion of administrative and managerial resources from achieving results;
- lack of co-ordination of donor efforts, overlapping and competing programmes, policy rigidities and limited policy space, all contributing to diminished capacity for governments to undertake effective economic management; and
- lack of opportunity for public input into economic policy-making, and such inputs being routinely ignored by government.

The CRRs also made several recommendations:

- institute effective industrial policies;
- develop viable, sustainable and competitive productive and trade capacities;
- strengthen the environment for small and medium enterprise development;
- encourage more investment and prioritise growth;
- mobilise domestic resources, including through more fair, efficient and transparent taxation that broadens the tax base;
- modernise public financial management laws and frameworks;
- harmonise donor support (e.g. Ghana's multi-donor budget support mechanism);<sup>118</sup>
- make aid more predictable, flexible and better co-ordinated;

- focus on building local capacity and reduce reliance on seconded technical staff;
- designate a dedicated government aid co-ordination focal point; and
- develop aid dependency exit strategies.

Analyst Adotey Bing-Pappoe cautions against portraying the APRM as an instrument for achieving African-centred development on the one hand, and as a way to harness aid flows and development strategies conceived outside the continent on the other. He contends that the APRM cannot be simultaneously extolled for its independence and praised for its ability to get Africa to take on externally devised development strategies. He further argues that the international standards and codes which the APRM promotes are not unproblematic, and ‘may turn out to be vehicles for the introduction of processes, standards and strategies that Africa takes on without having given full consideration to their impact on its future choices of development strategy’.<sup>119</sup>

Also, it is too early to tell definitively to what extent the APRM has influenced development effectiveness. One respondent noted, ‘Certain lessons from the APRM, if adopted and practised effectively and diligently, can support development effectiveness. For example, lessons from South Africa in corporate governance, from Kenya in limited budget reliance on foreign funds, lessons in recovering offshore funds from former corrupt regimes in Africa from Nigeria.’<sup>120</sup> It is possible that donor confidence will increase in countries where APRM is effectively implemented.

Once again, the APRM shows its value as a diagnostic tool, openly discussing potentially sensitive issues such as aid dependence, although perhaps the CRRs offer too few specifics on how to reduce aid dependence. This issue could benefit from a greater degree of research, sharing and knowledge exchange. Nevertheless, the APRM is not narrowly about aid effectiveness only. At its core, the APRM is about improved governance, which incorporates more transparent and effective state institutions, a more predictable and conducive investment climate and so forth, that all make for an environment where economic growth and effective development can flourish.

## CHAPTER 7

### LESSONS

#### AFRICAN SOLUTIONS

Mutual learning from one African country to another is a useful departure from the conventional North–South transfer of ‘blueprints’, often out of touch with African reality. Africa can develop systems, standards and codes that are robust and relevant, rather than try to impose international models that do not always fit and at worst can have a detrimental effect on development. While the substance of the APRM standards and indicators draws from globally agreed governance benchmarks, this process is remarkably African. Africans have accepted that governance discourse – no longer the sole domain of the North – is critical for development. And the APRM has much from which both the North and others in the South can learn.

#### COMMONALITY CONGEALING

A certain degree of solidarity is developing among APRM actors, who believe in and defend the mechanism. At heart, the APRM is a political and diplomatic process, therefore its shortcomings need to be addressed in this context.

#### CAPTURING LESSONS

A recurring theme has been the need for lessons from the APRM process to be better documented, understood, discussed and acted upon. Where this has happened, it has often been ad hoc, unsystematic and anecdotal. Pockets of knowledge, expertise and experience remain largely unconnected. The documentation of the research process has not been thorough, and too little can be learned from reading the CRRs in this regard. TRIs have generally not shared their domesticated research instruments, meaning that newer participants often ‘reinvent the wheel’. There is no central repository of such material on the APRM’s official website, and independent research institutes have taken the lead here.<sup>121</sup>

#### NORMALISING DEBATE

The APRM has shown that a government can recognise its difficulties and open up its governance processes when public opinion and international pressure is mobilised in a positive, constructive manner. Robust, frank debate and criticism of governance matters

have been made less threatening to leaders, but some still invoke sovereignty and non-interference to deflect critiques. This mechanism serves as an additional check and balance tool, to remind leaders and countries that they are open to scrutiny.

### INCLUSIVE POLICY-MAKING

The APRM is arguably the most people-driven process in the AU, and could herald a new beginning for Africa to address governance challenges. The clamour by citizens for a better life is evident, and when given the opportunity, most engage robustly. The APRM has promoted the norm of inclusiveness and transparency in planning and decision-making. Governments are realising the benefits of listening to the voice of citizens. But opening up without following through on citizen demands can lead to a dramatic drop in politicians' legitimacy and an increase in resentment and alienation. Equally, the APRM can reinforce existing power structures rather than alter them. Citizens can become disillusioned when results fail to materialise. If ignored, challenges will eventually be addressed through violent conflict and civil unrest, as is currently being witnessed in the Middle East and North Africa.

### LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The values of transparency and openness that the APRM promotes have not always been universally practised. Strong and transparent management of continental and national APRM bodies is imperative. This has at times led to non-state actors being shut out of the process, and a culture of non-accountability by governments to NPoA commitments, with CRR recommendations neglected. The APRM could be futile and farcical with poorly governed states peer reviewing one another. There is a need to institutionalise the process further, to delink it from the heavy dependence on political will.

## CHAPTER 8

### KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### NATIONAL LEVEL

##### **Listen to citizens, heed APRM warnings**

Governments should appreciate that the APRM gives them an unprecedented opportunity to learn about their societies and their concerns. Some CRRs also flagged key concerns (xenophobia in South Africa<sup>122</sup> and ethnically-charged electoral disputes in Kenya)<sup>123</sup> that the respective governments ignored. The South African government responded that the CRR's interpretation of xenophobia was 'simply not true'.<sup>124</sup> In late 2007–2008, Kenya was plunged into violence over a disputed election, and in May 2008, over 60 people died in xenophobic riots in South Africa. Observers noted the lost opportunities in not having responded adequately to the reports.<sup>125</sup> They also underlined the utility of the reports as diagnostic tools and as instruments for informing national dialogue.

##### **Open political space**

The APRM has proven an effective vehicle to amplify citizen voices, enhance public participation and transform accountability systems. In some states, especially those with former military or civil dictatorships, the APRM has created a window of opportunity for both state and non-state actors to reflect on governance and development. Often this was an entirely new experience, while in other countries it broadened participation. In general, it has enabled a potential for greater engagement and accountability.

##### **Make APRM appeal to citizens**

The APRM issues and principles need to be made relevant and interesting to ordinary people, especially through translation into local languages and relating the APRM to local customs and practices, to have resonance with people's daily lives and the problems they face.

##### **Prioritise actions**

The APRM provides an up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive analysis of the development needs of participating African states. NPoAs should attempt to prioritise the most important and achievable action items, and develop realistic timelines, deadlines and budgets.

**Produce measurable results**

While ultimately citizens do not care which programme, plan or acronym has brought change, it is important for the APRM to demonstrate its utility and success. The APRM system needs to be more user-friendly and results-oriented. The over-reliance on external financing for NPoAs has made it almost impossible to collect reliable data on implementation.

**Improve M&E**

Deficient monitoring and reporting make it extremely difficult to analyse the impact of the APRM. In some countries, APRM structures run parallel to existing institutions, duplicating efforts or gaining little traction or resources. This makes it difficult to identify which policy outcomes are attributable to the APRM. In many countries, NPoA implementation reports have been disappointing and poorly written, suggesting that the respective countries did not take implementation seriously. There is little evidence of corrective action to adapt policies and processes on the evidence gleaned from monitoring and evaluation.

**Develop better synergy**

The APRM should be streamlined in all development work. Effort needs to be made to sensitise citizens, CSOs, governments and development partners to appreciate that the APRM is not entirely new, but is work that most actors are already engaged in.

**Situate APRM carefully**

The case study offers insights on both the vital importance of champions to drive a process like the APRM and the importance of institutionalising and embedding these processes to allow them to thrive once the original champions move on. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the APRM is more effectively integrated with the national development plan, poverty reduction strategy and budget when it is situated within the national planning system, rather than, say, in the public administration, foreign affairs or justice departments.

**CONTINENTAL LEVEL****Be proudly African**

The APRM should be celebrated as a world-class, truly intra-African system of innovation, ownership and collaboration that has much to teach others.

**Restore commitment and confidence**

Political leadership is crucial. Newly elected heads of state and government in the APRM



Forum need to promote and publicly recommit to the APRM. It has outlived the terms of office of its former champions, but some still relate to it strongly as their 'pet project'. A change in the head of state can result in serious delays in a national APRM process, as happened in Zambia. The APRM needs a strong, credible champion at the highest level, and committed buy-in from all members. There is renewed hope that President Johnson Sirleaf will provide this strong leadership. The Eminent Persons need to be impartial and be seen as impartial. To remain credible, a system dedicated to better governance needs to set and exhibit the highest standards of corporate governance, transparency and accountability at all levels. Political leadership and political will remain critical to the initiative's credibility and survival. Leaders must restore flagging faith in the APRM from citizens, governments and development partners. Action must match rhetoric.

### **Table and debate reports**

The CRRs and NPoA implementation reports are rich sources of information and analysis to shape and reshape debates on what is working in SSC, capacity development and development effectiveness. CRRs should be made public at the same time as they are discussed by the Forum; the six-month waiting period (which is usually much longer in practice) dissipates momentum and interest. The CRRs are meant to be tabled and discussed in a variety of African political forums after publication, including the PAP, the AU's Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), RECs and national parliaments, yet this happens infrequently or not at all. NPoA implementation reports could be similarly tabled and scrutinised. Such events would create more opportunities for peer learning.

### **Apply peer pressure**

Despite the emphasis on peer review, there has been limited peer pressure on participating countries when these countries fail to deliver on their agreements and obligations. As the vaguely worded sanctions provisions have not yet been invoked, there appears to be no consequence for deviating from implementing the NPoA.

### **Simplify, streamline, reform**

The APRM strives for continuous improvement and innovation. The process to revise and reform the APRM Questionnaire and develop an effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation system is commended. There are other areas of the system that should be reviewed, including procedures for selecting and removing the chair of the APR Forum and Panel members, the size of the Panel and the future role of Focal Points.

### **Bolster the Secretariat**

The institutional capacity of the APRM Secretariat has to be improved, with stable long-term contracts for professional staff. The APRM must develop a stronger internal research base, at least a nucleus with professionals, and rely less on short-term consultants.

**Inculcate a learning culture**

There is a need for a more systematic learning culture at all levels, to facilitate more efficient exchanges, including a greater openness to civil society inputs and interests. The Panel is encouraged to mobilise or earmark funding specifically for the exchange of ideas and mutual learning, within a holistic knowledge exchange framework. Adopting a ‘matching funds’ approach – where African funds would be paired with donor funds – to support such initiatives could be considered.

**Prioritise knowledge development, management and exchange**

The APRM has tremendous potential as a platform for mutual learning. A more deliberate, systematic and collaborative approach to developing, managing and exchanging knowledge should be developed and implemented to fully reap the potential of this unique African exercise. Capacity will need to be developed, and a strategy for doing so is essential. Unspent funds in the UNDP MDTF could be used for this purpose, and for hiring professionals to execute the strategy. It may be possible to establish regional thematic peer-learning groups involving stakeholders from government, intergovernmental organisations and civil society.

**Improve communication**

Poor communication and a lack of systematic, effective reporting and feedback frameworks for knowledge exchange were identified as key weaknesses in this case study. APRM literature could be an important breeding ground for more in-depth work on issues such as aid usage, management and dependence, and capacity development. The APRM website needs to be prioritised and constantly updated. A dramatic increase in an awareness of the process, its objectives and its successes is needed.

**Institutionalise mentorships**

The APRM provides an excellent example of the development and use of indigenous intellectual resources and capacities, and these should be made available to other African countries. More systematic mentoring schemes between a pioneer and a newly acceded country could go a long way in speeding up national processes and improving the quality of research. The Secretariat should facilitate this type of peer learning more actively, and should capture and make available all these useful experiences.

**Profile best practices**

Highlighting successes is a unique aspect of the reports and an innovative way of sharing experiences to improve governance in Africa. More must be done to test and document *why* and *how* these policies work, so they can be adapted and replicated by others.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Steven Gruzd is the Head of the Governance and APRM Programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) in Johannesburg. This paper is an updated version of a study undertaken for the NEPAD Policy Co-ordination Agency (NPCA) in 2011. The NPCA represented Africa on the International Task Team on South–South Co-operation (ITT-SSC), and this case study on the APRM was selected for showcasing at the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea in November and December 2011. The paper is based on desk research, personal interviews and an online electronic survey questionnaire. The author gratefully acknowledges research assistance from Terence Corrigan and Nicole Beardsworth.
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- 11 Similar APRM institutions in different countries have different names. For instance, in most francophone states, the management body is usually called a National Commission, the equivalent of the National Governing Council in anglophone states. Technical Research Institutions were called Lead Technical Agencies in Kenya, and Technical Support Agencies in South Africa. In Mozambique, the national Secretariat was known as a Technical Unit. This chapter uses the most commonly used terms, unless otherwise indicated.
- 12 In October 2013, its members were: Barrister Akere Tabeng Muna (Cameroon, chairman), Ms Baleka Mbete (South Africa), Barrister Julienne Ondziel Gnelenga (Republic of Congo), Ambassador Ashraf Rashed (Egypt), Professor Amos Sawyer (Liberia), Ambassador Fatouma Ndangiza Nyirakobwa (Rwanda), Dr Mustapha Mekideche (Algeria), Ambassador Professor Okon Edet (Nigeria) and Mr Joseph Tsang Mang Kin (Mauritius).
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