

APRM Lessons Learned

Report on the SAIIA Conference For Civil Society, Practitioners and Researchers

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Approach to Identifying Best Practices and Lessons Learned

On 12-13 September 2006, the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) held a conference for participants from the first five countries to participate in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as well as several upcoming peer review countries. What follows is a summary of the proceedings, the key recommendations and points of discussion.

The conference was designed to take forward the review of APRM begun at the Africa Governance Forum (AGF) held in Kigali, Rwanda in May 2006 and come up with more specific recommendations to strengthen the process and assist new countries beginning peer review. The conference discussions were supplemented by a detailed questionnaire given out to attendees and other participants in national APRM processes in Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa, and Mauritius. The verbatim highlights from the questionnaires and the conference transcripts are attached at the end of this report grouped under discussion of APRM structures and processes, research methods, civil society engagement, the programme of action and the questionnaire. (See page 14.)

The conference materials – including country case studies, a detailed analysis of the APRM questionnaire and an overview of the lessons learned in early APRM countries – drew on a research questionnaire administered to participants in the early countries, extensive personal interviews and incorporated the discussions at the AGF, and earlier peer review conferences in Algiers (UNDP, 2004), Banjul (OSI/PAC, 2006) and Kenya (Hanns Siedel 2006; IPA/CPS 2006). While the AGF presentations were all by government officials, the SAIIA conference attempted to broaden the discussion by bringing in research agencies, governing council members and civil society representatives. Countries represented included Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Mauritius, Zambia, Tanzania, Lesotho, Mozambique and Senegal. Discussions focused on comparing experiences and making recommendations in the following key areas:

- Organisation of national processes and institutions;
- Methods of public consultation and research;
- Management of political factors affecting peer review;
- Suggested reforms to the APRM questionnaire;
- Virtues and challenges of using household surveys;
- Use of the APRM governance standards; and
- Advice for civil society in preparing for and participating in APRM.

Key Findings

- There are significant differences between the APRM rules as written in official documents and the verbal instructions offered during country support missions. Participants noted that different members of the Panel of Eminent Persons offered different guidance to different countries. Participants called for common standards, particularly on the selection and leadership of the national governing council and standard methods of research.
- Civil society, governments and researchers expressed a strong desire for the Secretariat and Eminent Persons to engage in more open and frequent communications with governments and civil society. With information dispensed through personal communication during the country support mission, there is a communication bottleneck that leaves civil society poorly informed about the APRM rules, best practices established by other countries and alternative approaches to consultation and research. Setting out the rules through mass communication approaches would help ensure the process followed a single set of rules, which would help reduce disputes and delays over contentious aspects of the process that are presently ambiguous.
- Civil society noted that governments have taken key decisions – such as budget allocations, staffing levels, and time frames – prior to formation of national governing councils or open discussion with civil society. Such formative decisions can limit the extent of civil society involvement and the quality of the resulting report.
- Participants called for more proactive and responsive leadership from APRM's continental institutions, particularly including greater responsiveness to information requests and more advanced planning and warning of intended visits.
- Participants noted that mass meetings were an ineffective means of answering many parts of the questionnaire and in order to capture the range of public views and gather answers to more technical questions, a well-organised research system is needed. Participants noted the value of public surveys in providing an organised overall picture of public opinion and thus in legitimating the process. However, experts involved in administering opinion polls noted that surveys require careful planning, resources and training. They noted the value of having actual copies of the various national survey instruments and expressed hope that advice would be forthcoming from the Secretariat and this could take the form of a guidebook to help countries deal with the challenges of selecting survey households, training surveyors, planning and analysing results and integrating surveys with other forms of evidence.
- Participants expressed strong reservations about the practice of a government minister chairing the national APRM governing council or commission, which could seriously undermine the independence of the governing council and the integrity of the APRM process in that country.
- Participants urged significant reform of the APRM questionnaire, noting that it was difficult to use, omitted key concepts like media freedom, included significant redundancies that made report writing and research difficult, requested too much detail in some sections, needed improved questions relating to gender and local governance, and would benefit if material were divided into portions appropriate for experts and civil society.
- Participants noted that the mere inclusion of civil society on a governing body does not constitute broad consultation. They noted that organised processes for gathering input were needed. Civil society, even if in a numerical majority on a governing council, had great difficulty keeping up with the demands of attending meetings and reviewing texts unless provision is made for their full-time participation in APRM activities.
- Civil society participants noted that while government could dedicate staff to APRM full time, civil society could only work part-time. That relative weakness was compounded if the local support secretariat was not independent of government and not physically located away from the offices of the focal point minister.

Organisation and Processes

Each nation participating in APRM must develop a national self-assessment and programme of action (POA) with broad civil society input following the structure set out in the self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ). Participants noted that the written guidelines and verbal advice from Eminent Persons were not clear about how this task should be accomplished. In particular, each country must establish a governing council¹ and a focal point, which should act as an official liaison with continental structures. Participants noted that Eminent Persons had urged that the governing body have a civil society majority and be led by an eminent civil society member rather than government. However, Rwanda and South Africa put leadership of the council in the hands of government.

Ghana followed the lead of the continent's panel of Eminent Persons and created a seven member panel of prominent civil society members, who had full control of the process and management of their own bank account. Kenya had a 33-member council with a civil society head and large civil society majority. Rwanda argued that civil society and government should have equal representation, while other participants noted that if government is in charge of reviewing itself, it will be unable to be objective.

Participants discussed a videotaped presentation from Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, a member of the Panel of Eminent Persons, who explained the rules in this way:

“The basic document clearly states that it should be a tri-partite arrangement of the civil society, the corporate sector and the government. I think the formula that we have been trying to encourage is one-third, one-third, one-third and that the leadership of that national commission or national committee or governing council, whatever name you want to call it, should come from the civil society or the corporate sector and not from the government because we don't want to see this as a government project. The government cannot be driving a programme for which itself is being evaluated. So this is why we want to make sure of its autonomy and independence, to make sure that there is no domination, the government is not saying we cannot do that or we cannot do this.”

In a survey of conference participants, a very strong majority argued that a government minister should not be in charge of the governing council. Participants also noted that independence of the support secretariat staff was equally important to the objectivity of the process.

Participants noted how the APRM guidelines did not discuss governing councils and suggest that the report can be compiled by simply handing out the SAQ and collating responses. This guidance was too simplistic in the view of the broad majority of participants. In practice the type and detail of information requested by the questionnaire is far too complex for any one person to provide. Therefore substantial research is required and efforts to reach rural residents and the less well educated, who would not be able to interact effectively with a complex questionnaire. Participants noted that different Eminent Persons provided different advice on how to manage the process and the continental secretariat did not provide sufficient assistance to help civil society understand the process. They noted that the Secretariat had insufficient manpower to meet the information demands of participating countries and the desire was expressed for more open and responsive communications, particularly from civil society organisations unsure of how to engage and organise.

Participants noted that the civil society participation is the central point that distinguishes APRM from other development reviews. Participants argued that the essential value of APRM is in capturing the

¹ The terms “governing council” or “national governing council” will be used for the body in charge of the process, although countries have given different names to the entity, including “national commission” and “national forum.”

diverse views of the nation and consequently the process needs to be organised to ensure that the full range of constituencies have a voice, that difficult or sensitive issues are not excluded and that the process affords opportunities for governments to hear civil society critiques of their efforts. Some participants noted that the rush to generate a report, genuine dialogue can be lost.

Although each country received a country support mission (CSM), all countries so far had largely established their national approach and structures before the CSM arrived. CSMs directed the majority of their focus on governments and provided little advanced warning of their arrival, which left civil society at an information disadvantage. Limited interaction between the CSM and civil society meant that civil society had a poor understanding of the process and thus had a hard time asserting itself or influencing the thinking on how the national process should be governed or research approaches undertaken.

As a result there was a strong call by participants for the release of guidelines that clarify questions around civil society involvement in and leadership of the governing council. Participants noted that lack of clarity on these points led to contestation and disputes that could be avoided. They noted that the lack of civic education meant best practices and other lessons were not learned and countries repeated mistakes that could be averted. They also noted concern that the APRM system could be watered down if there was not one set of rules consistently applied to all nations.

Participants discussed that it is important to have diverse constituencies represented on the governing council but that this alone did not ensure that the final report and POA reflect society's views. As a result, particular research methods were needed to reach out to various constituencies.

Ghanaian participants argued that government should be treated as only one of many constituencies that should be consulted in the process. They argued that by putting the process in the hands of local Eminent Persons who were widely seen to be independent and non-partisan, the process was seen as fair and objective. This helped insulate it from political pressures and helped prevent the results from becoming politicised. To ensure broader support, the government consulted with opposition political parties and other groups about selection of the governing council members.

Kenya permitted a 600-person conference to nominate civil society members to a short-list from which the minister in charge selected the council members. Later, as a result of civil society protests over this procedure, non-governmental organisations were allowed to elect a further eight representative to the council. The council also was allowed to elect its own leader. These mechanisms added to the credibility of the process. However, Kenya noted that problems arose when the leadership offered by some civil society members was ineffective in advancing the process. Remuneration of civil society members, including seating allowances for each meeting, tended to generate more meetings and stalled progress. Participants noted the need for selecting governing council members of integrity who also demonstrated professional competence and managerial ability.

Rwanda used a 50-person governing body chosen by government. South Africa's focal point was the minister for Public Service and Administration who also chaired the governing council. The minister named a 15 member council, including herself, four ministers and 10 members of civil society, including representatives from labour unions, youth, women's groups, religious organisations, the NGO Coalition and a civic organisation. The council was later expanded to 29 members to allow each delegate (besides the minister) to have an alternate. Participants noted that by putting a minister in charge and locating the support secretariat in her office, government dominated decision-making. They said the broad outlines of the process were set by government, including the time frames, the allocation of funds, and the approach to public consultation and surveying.

South African civil society noted that members of the governing council were unpaid and because they had responsibilities to their regular day jobs had great difficulty attending council meetings and keeping pace with the need to take decisions and review documents. One noted that “equal representation does not mean equal influence” and that civil society needed its own independent support/secretariat services to gather civil society input effectively. Kenyan civil society made similar arguments and its governing council included members who were known as “convenors”, who were supposed to hold meetings to gather input from their constituencies. However, without support staff or resources the convenors said they were unable in practice gather public input.

Participants noted that consultation and research processes were costly, and were impeded by awkward systems for obtaining approval to spend funds from government and foreign donor agencies, which slowed the process and affected research. In some cases various government officials had to approve minor expenditures, as did the UNDP, which provided support funds. Participants noted that public consultation meetings and surveys were expensive and logistically challenging. To be efficient and meet the tight deadlines required by APRM, the process requires effective administrative systems, proper planning and adequate funding. They noted that before decisions were taken on the total budget allocation for APRM, countries should conduct a thorough research planning meeting to determine what steps were needed and assess their real costs. Participants noted that this form of proper budget planning did not always occur and the APRM Secretariat should offer more assistance in setting realistic spending plans.

Participants noted there is a very significant need for a process to raise public awareness of APRM and prepare the public to participate. Without adequate public sensitisation, many citizens are unaware of peer review, how it works or how to offer their views.

Research Methods

The conference noted how the methods used for preparing the country self-assessment and for gathering public opinion are central to whether the self-assessment is considered fair and rigorous. Participants also noted that the programme of action is the most important part of APRM because it contains the commitments countries will be held to. However, in most countries it was left until the end. Because the process of conducting a self-assessment was already long, the POA tended to be put together in a rushed fashion even though participants acknowledged the risk of making public policy in a hurry.

Echoing sentiments expressed at the 2006 AGF, participants expressed a strong desire for more guidance on research approaches and called for the Secretariat and Eminent Persons to put forward a standardised guideline on how to conduct research and gather and document public views. They noted that the official guidelines and questionnaire say that the process involves a high-level government focal point passing out the questionnaire to a list of people, getting the completed questionnaires back and summarising the responses into a single document. However, participants from the early countries said that it became apparent at the onset that such an approach was unworkable because of the great length and complexity of the questionnaire. Such a process also would lead to protests over who edited the responses together and whose views were included or excluded. Participants noted that no one person could answer all of the parts and many required specialised investigation to find the answers. Each sector can require weeks or months of investigation and consultation to come up with a fair picture of governance.

The key elements of a standardised approach to research include the following:

Whether to use research bodies or academic institutions: Some countries have fewer research institutions, but where they exist participants noted that they boost the perceived credibility of the process and bring in competent staff. Without the use of dedicated full-time researchers, governing council members said they had great difficulty holding down full-time jobs and giving APRM the attention it requires for an extended period. Participants noted that it is important that such bodies are chosen on merit and are not seen to be partisan. Careful terms of reference are needed to guide their work.

Allocating sufficient time: Echoing observations made at the AGF, participants noted that the present suggested timeline of six to nine months to complete a national self-assessment is substantially unrealistic. Participants noted that pressure to show that APRM was making progress had led to poor planning and pressure to rush research, which had negative effects on the quality of the process. Participants urged that the continental authorities and upcoming APR countries consider the difficulty of the process. They noted that countries should not be pressurised to speed the process and should have flexibility to allow sufficient time to conduct research in a thorough fashion. And they noted that the process of merging many differing views is very time consuming and requires that a validation process be built in to allow participants to assess the draft report carefully.

Location, selection and size of support secretariat: Participants noted that the process requires support staff to arrange meetings, printing and other tasks. They noted that if support secretariat is not sufficiently well-resourced with qualified staff the process will face difficulties. Civil society noted that government control of the secretariat can compromise the process, and that the involvement of government staff in editing the report can be a significant problem. Civil society participants said that

to ensure that civil society representation on the governing council translated into real influence on the report, civil society needed to gather and submit its own written views and ideally have its own support staff to assist with convening meetings, writing and editing.

Whether to use household and expert surveys: Participants noted that there is a requirement to bring the views of diverse national constituencies into the APRM report and plan of action, but holding mass meetings was not an efficient or effective means of doing it, particularly for technical questions or for questions requiring detailed evidence and knowledge of regulation and law. To ensure that the views of diverse groups are captured, there is a need for a well organised system of gathering views. Opinion surveys can perform this function and remove suspicion that particular views are favoured over others in the editing process. However, a valid opinion survey requires that the country has already identified a statistically representative set of individuals. If a central statistics bureau does not already have such a sample set already identified, it can take several months to prepare one. Surveying also requires careful planning and preparation, including preparation of a questionnaire, translation of questions into local languages, hiring and training of the staff who administer the survey, compilation of the results, and analysis of the results. Ideally a survey should be followed up with other research to identify specific causes of problems identified and to evaluate unexpected results or concentrations of opinion in particular regions.

Whether to use focus groups to supplement surveys: Participants noted that while surveys are important in providing an overall picture of public opinion, the answers need to be cast in quantifiable formats rather than as open-ended questions. However, a questionnaire that allows citizens to reply to a finite set of choices can potentially leave out problems that surveyors have not thought about. To capture such unexpected issues, focus groups can be a valuable supplement to surveys. Participants noted that when problems are identified by the public the specific legal, financial or constitutional solution is not necessarily immediately apparent and requires a follow-up process to explore solutions with knowledgeable sources. Focus groups can provide such follow-up and clarification. They are typically conducted with a facilitator and a small group of participants. Using a confidential and informal approach, a focus group can allow participants to define problems in their own words and explain how diverse issues can be related or the product of a common cause. Kenya and Ghana used focus groups in different ways. Kenya tested findings with particular demographic groups, while Ghana used focus groups to explore particular issues.

Different uses for household, expert and sector-specific surveys and focus groups: While household or individual surveys can obtain a certain type of information and identify where problems exist, they are not necessarily very useful at identifying the underlying or systemic causes of problems. For example, average citizens can provide a valuable gauge of the pervasiveness of corruption, but may not have the legal expertise or knowledge of alternative strategies for fighting corruption. Thus a public opinion survey finding of widespread corruption in a particular sector needs to be followed up with inquiries with experts to identify possible causes and solutions. Similarly, certain problems of corporate governance, auditing, trade regulations, banking, health or education would require investigation of the views of relevant parties in a position to understand the existing laws/regulations and also the ways in which laws may not be enforced or wilfully violated.

Validation processes: Conference participants noted that regardless of how participative the processes that led up to the national self-assessment, there is a political and practical need to subject the draft text to thorough review or validation processes to allow the public and sectoral experts to examine the text and raise questions about its evidence, conclusions, recommendations and particular aspects of wording. Some countries discussed the report at a public conference in addition to sending

it to particular sectoral experts, who read it carefully for accuracy and potential misinterpretation of evidence. Participants from South Africa noted that the country's use of a 1,700 person validation conference was too large and was ineffective because participants were unable to see the large draft report until arrival and thus did not have time to study it. Ghana used a three-day validation workshop with about 200 people. Participants noted that such validation processes should not be rushed, must allow participants ample time to study the draft report and allow time to capture and act on problems raised by participants in the validation process.

Planning for an APRM Survey – Advice from Prof. Bob Mattes, a Professional Surveyor

Conducting credible and quality citizen surveys takes advance planning in order to avoid rushing the complex issues of designing the survey instrument, as well as the sampling strategy. Last minute planning is likely to result in simply adopting existing questionnaires that might not be maximally appropriate for the purposes, and allowing survey companies or national statistic offices to impose their own standard operating procedures, which may also be inappropriate. While some of the steps presented below can be done in parallel, rather than sequentially, based on my experience in the Afrobarometer, country teams should anticipate at least a five to six month time span from the point of deciding to pursue the research to receiving usable results.

Questionnaire Design	4 weeks
Advertising and Awarding Bids To Research Provider	3 weeks
Questionnaire Translation	1 week
In House Pilot of Questionnaire and Redesign	2 weeks
Sample Design, Sample Drawing	2 weeks
Training Fieldworkers	2 weeks
Field Pilot	1 week
Fieldwork	4 weeks
Data Entry, Cleaning, Presentation of Marginal Results	4 weeks

Based on my experience, nationally representative surveys in Africa are expensive compared to other continents, and costs may vary widely depending on the size and infrastructure of the country, and whether one selects a for-profit or not-for-profit research firm. In general, national teams should anticipate spending anywhere between US\$85,000 to US\$125,000 for a survey of 1,200 respondents, again depending on the country and the selected fieldwork provider.

Professor Bob Mattes is deputy director of the Afrobarometer surveying project and the director of the Democracy in Africa Research Unit and Centre for Social Science Research at the University of Cape Town. In a commissioned paper for the conference, he outlined the planning challenges of surveying. This is an excerpt.

The Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Because of its centrality to the peer review exercise, the questionnaire received particular attention and one of the workshop sessions developed recommendations on how it could be improved in keeping with the earlier AGF and statements by the Eminent Persons. The revision of the questionnaire should, according to participants:

- 1. Consult widely:** Participants noted that the questionnaire requires significant reform to make it easier to use, to make it more accessible and make report writing easier. But they noted that a reform should involve broad consultation with countries who have been through the process.
- 2. Cluster common issues:** Some of the same subjects occur in different ways in different sections. This makes coherent research and report writing more difficult. Participants noted that the questionnaire could be shortened and simplified by grouping related material on corruption and oversight in one section, and by consolidating multiple references to subjects such as decentralisation and gender.
- 3. Simplify for accessibility:** Many of the questions are complex, technical or require historical data, which makes them difficult for many citizens to answer. Participants said the questionnaire would be more effective if its language were more accessible and questions were easier to complete. Several participants suggested splitting the questionnaire into a version designed for popular use and another aimed at gathering technical and historical information that ordinary citizens are unlikely to be able to answer. For example, the indicators under the first corporate governance objective ask for extensive description of the corporate structures, laws and the business regulatory environment. Such a level of detail is difficult for non-specialists to provide and thus is better directed toward groups able to answer knowledgeably.
- 4. Seek solutions as problems are revealed:** The overall APRM process tends to put the construction of the programme of action only at the end. Because participants are already pressed for time by tight deadlines, the POA has tended to be assembled in a rush and can result in superficial solutions. To encourage deeper thinking and more consultation about solutions, the questionnaire should be revised so that questions seek both an assessment of each area and recommendations to solve the identified problems.
- 5. Upgrade key indicators to questions and offer guidance:** The structure of the questionnaire is awkward with objectives, questions and indicators. Some of the indicators are vital and ought to be at the same level as questions, while other indicators are more optional or suggestive. To make the questionnaire easier to answer, some of the indicators should be upgraded and included in the list of questions. Those that are more optional or suggestive should be put into a guidance paragraph that accompanies each question. Such guidance would help clarify ambiguous questions and offer advice about the kinds of factors that go into an assessment of governance in each area. This would also help non-specialists answer the questions. Structurally, it would make writing APRM reports easier because the report could be developed by working through the question list from top to bottom. Related or subordinate questions could be numbered 1a, 1b, 1c, etc.
- 6. Offer a guidance section for each question:** The meaning or aim of some questions is unclear and participants said they were at times uncertain of how to answer. To make the questionnaire more accessible, each question should include guidance describing the kinds of factors that make for good governance in a particular area. Where the standards point to particular goals or

obligations, the guidance should explain what the standards require. For example, the Beijing Declaration includes a variety of quite specific undertakings to improve the equality of women and girls. These should be cited in the guidance.

7. **Improve questions relating to gender:** Gender is identified as a cross-cutting issue but the questions and indicators are not as specific or helpful in diagnosis as those offered for other topics.
8. **Standardise the approach of questions:** Some questions focus only on the intention of laws without getting at the *de facto* situation of how laws are implemented or whether the laws are effective. Other questions merely ask participants to list the steps taken to improve a given area. It would be more neutral and easier to answer if the form of question was standardised to ask for an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses in a given area. The guidance should then note that answers should examine the effectiveness of laws; the adequacy of funding, management and personnel in institutions; and issues surrounding the implementation or enforcement of laws.
9. **Omit unnecessary questions:** Certain questions, such as trade policy and aspects of corporate governance, seem to require certain policy choices, such as monetary union, free trade or certain aspects of corporate governance. Discussion suggested that some of these areas should not be prescribed but are in the realm of policies that countries should be free to choose or decline.
10. **Group the discussion of decentralisation:** Decentralisation is discussed in multiple sections. To make investigation and report writing, these references should be merged in one place.
11. **Consolidate sustainable development in one place:** Questions in the economic and the socio-economic sections ask about sustainable development. These would be better to group in one place. They also would benefit from a definition of sustainable development and questions that ask explicitly what measures the country is taking to promote growth and assist existing industry.
12. **Consolidate discussion of corruption in one place:** Corruption is a significant subject in the political/democratic section and the economic section. It is also closely related to questions about managing the civil service and oversight, which occur in both sections. This material should be consolidated. In practice, separate teams are frequently assigned to research and write each section of the questionnaire, which means that the same material is investigated and written about twice. Consolidation would save time and make the report easier to produce. Because the economic and fiscal management section deals with systems for budgetary accountability and proper management of resources and oversight, the economic section seems the best place to group all questions pertaining to corruption and oversight. The questionnaire makes a distinction between corruption in the political and economic realms but in reality they are part of the same problem and the same institutions and laws are involved in fighting corruption in both areas. Thus consolidation would improve the questionnaire.
13. **Include questions on media freedom and access to information:** The questionnaire does not include media freedoms or rights to access information in the political and democratic section, even though these are widely seen as crucial to stable, effective democracy and to the fight against corruption. The AGF noted the lack of these questions, and participants noted their absence was a significant oversight in the questionnaire.
14. **Modify the self-reliance questions:** The socio-economic section includes an objective on self-reliance but the questions under this objective ask whether the country “owns” its development plans. It seems improbable that any nation would answer in the negative. This idea would be better explored by breaking down aspects of self-reliance and asking what is happening in each area. For

example, it would be more practical to inquire about the country's efforts to raise domestic resources and cut aid dependence, systems to ensure that borrowing is limited and manageable, efforts to encourage entrepreneurship, or efforts to continuously improve government service delivery or promote industry.

15. Focus socio-economic section on key sectors: The socio-economic objectives three and four ask about the management, policy and affordability of services. Other questions ask about basic services. The section would be easier to complete and to delegate to knowledgeable/interested groups if it were organised by sector so that respondents were asked to assess health, education, infrastructure, telecommunications, water, and other sectors. Respondents should be asked to assess the cost, quality, accessibility, geographic availability, management and policy making in each area. This also would make it easier to convene sector expert's workshops, which would be better able to assess all of the issues in one sector. The present structure makes conducting seminars difficult because the questions focus on themes and thus discussions must jump back and forth across diverse sectors and it is difficult to advance the conversation to a conclusion in any one sector.

The Politics and Purpose of APRM

The conference focused substantial time on the political concerns that surround APRM. Officially its purpose is to improve stability and development by identifying problems and sharing best practices. Unofficially, many countries have seen APRM as some kind of scorecard that will give them potentially good or bad marks. As a result, many countries express concern over how APRM will affect the national reputation, levels of aid or investment. Others worry about how the media and political opposition will use the information. These concerns can affect how governments set up national peer review institutions even though continental officials stress that APRM is not a ranking exercise.

Participants noted significant differences in how government and civil society interpreted APRM. Civil society sees it as a process aimed at identifying problems and finding solutions. Governments want APRM reports to put greater stress on their positive accomplishments. Better efforts are needed to bridge these two rather different perspectives because each points toward a quite different organisation of APRM processes.

Participants noted that it is a natural tendency for governments to want to control the process and for civil society to be sceptical about how government will manage APRM. Contestation over the direction of APRM is normal and improves the process. Participants noted that rushing the process or domination by government can quickly politicise the process and breed distrust and protest. There was broad agreement that the only way to get away from such fears is for the process to be managed with utmost transparency and for it to be entrusted to a broadly representative panel.

Need for clearer guidance, more public communication from Secretariat and Eminent Persons:

Participants noted that there were wide discrepancies between the written guidance and what different Eminent Persons were advising countries to do. In particular, the lack of clarity over leadership of the governing body was a significant source of concern. Although official documents speak only of a focal point as a senior government minister or official with access to the head of state, the language implies that this minister should be in charge of the governing body. However, some Eminent Persons have advised against this while others have accepted the arrangement of a minister in charge, as occurred in South Africa and Rwanda. Some South African participants noted that the placement of the process under a minister and the support staff in her office resulted in unrealistic planning, a rushed process and major flaws in the citizen survey because it appeared staff were reluctant or unable to provide advice on the limitations on the intended approach. They noted that the major elements of the South African plan were determined by government before the governing body was created. In particular the discussion of the timing of the process was determined by the minister's schedule rather than the time needed to complete tasks properly or any thoroughly discussed research plan.

Ghana and Kenya took a variety of measures that helped mitigate civil society concerns. Ghana followed the lead of the continental process and created a seven-member panel of Eminent Persons, all from civil society. Although the panel that was finally named was broadly accepted, civil society did protest that there was not consultation over the choice of council members. The issue of government selection of council members created various forms of complaint and protest in all early countries, particularly in Kenya and South Africa. Ghana responded openly to the protests, consulted with opposition political parties and used clear criteria to select council members based on distinguished managerial competence, professional accomplishment and reputations for integrity and non-partisanship.

Kenya created a 25 member council, later expanded to 33 members with a civil society majority, civil society chairperson and government officials as non-voting members. The Kenya minister of planning selected panel members from a list of nominations put forward by a 600-person conference of civil society and government participants. When civil society protested over this approach, non-governmental organisations were allowed to conduct their own elections of eight additional members.

Rwanda created a 50-member governing council split between civil society and government. Rwandan officials said they believed that the council needed equal representation from both government and civil society. One analyst said the majority of the council was either government or strongly pro-government. Both Rwanda and South Africa assigned council members to particular committees, but participants said that key committees did not reflect the overall composition of the council and were in practice dominated by government. Rwandan officials said they did not anticipate the precedent setting effect of their approach and would have followed other rules if clear guidance had been given to use a different approach.

Advice for Civil Society

The conference noted that the APRM offers a valuable opportunity to change the tone of national politics, to constructively influence national plans, to elevate neglected issues and thus improve governance. But the experiences in the early APRM countries show that the process is particularly challenging for civil society.

There is a tendency for governments to take their own counsel on APRM and set their peer review plans before the country support visit occurs.² The written guidelines do not discuss national councils and civil society input adequately. This information so far has been conveyed personally by Eminent Persons. This issue of timing and the lack of clear written rules on civil society participation has resulted in countries being reluctant to change their plans. Civil society representatives noted that governments typically sign up for APRM but then say nothing about their plans for an extended time. The lack of public education by the continental Secretariat leaves civil society at an information disadvantage. Civil society tends to wait for government to announce plans before mobilising. However, because civil society is poorly funded and staffed, it can have difficulty influencing the national processes once it has begun. The time that it takes civil society to raise funds after the start of APRM also leaves it at a disadvantage that requires it to rely on government for opportunities to give input.

Participants noted that the process of selecting civil society representatives to a governing body can be the subject of much contestation and rivalry. Not all countries have NGO councils and many have multiple rival NGO councils. South Africa based its choice of council members on membership in the national chapter of ECOSOCC (the AU's Economic, Social and Cultural Council), but this was contested in part because government itself had decided the organisations on ECOSOCC. Kenya explained how the civil society representatives did not always show effective leadership.

However, there is a very positive story of civil society participation in APRM. In all countries so far civil society pressure has influenced APRM constructively, particularly in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. However, participants noted APRM was very taxing on civil society. It requires that civil society members on governing councils must hold down regular jobs but also attend frequent meetings, scrutinise research plans, attend public consultation meetings and participate in writing and editing the self-assessment report. Civil society noted that who gets invited to consultation meetings often falls to the support staff or local secretariat. Civil society participants noted that government control of the secretariat can translate into government control of who is invited to meetings, how many consultations are held, whether and how surveys are used and other crucial questions that affect the rigor of the overall process and report.

The conference heard from several sources that for civil society to effectively put its ideas forward, it needs to organise early, ideally conduct its own consultations and produce a written input to the process. While mass meetings are important to allow ordinary citizens to have a say, they are difficult and expensive to organise and are not an effective means of gathering evidence, particularly for the more technical aspects of law and balance of powers. Thus other processes are needed to ensure that various constituencies have an effective voice. Focus groups with particular regions and

² This is the key visit in which the rules of APRM are set out and a memorandum of understanding is signed between government and the continental APRM authorities.

constituencies can be much more effective at gathering meaningful critiques of governance but require funding, careful recording of views and thoughtful facilitation.

The participants emphasised that for civil society to realise the potential benefits of APRM, it must plan ahead and build a working coalition of organisations. It is important in trying to influence government on APRM that civil society goes into consultations with a clear vision of how the process should unfold and positions to put forward on several key points including:

- the proportion of civil society representation on the governing council and the whether they are appointed by government or selected by civil society itself;
- whether the governing body follows an Eminent Person concept or is a form of constituency assembly;
- the placement of the governing council under non-government or Eminent Person leadership;
- the use and design of national surveys;
- the use and selection of research agencies;
- the use of expert and regional focus groups;
- the staffing, physical location of offices and control of the support services used by the governing council;
- the processes to be used to write and edit the report;
- the processes to be used to test or validate the report once drafted; and
- the process to be used to create the programme of action and subject it to public discussion.

Expressing these points through editorials and in electronic **media** discussion programmes can be a useful strategy for civil society. Such a media strategy can help build civil society support for APRM and help sensitise civil society about the need to coordinate and make demands about the process. Expressing coherent views through the media also can send an important signal to government that civil society is aware, monitoring the process and expecting to be fully consulted not only about the self-assessment report but also about how the national process is to be organised and led.

The APRM guidelines encourage broad **civil society participation** in the process. However, the continental Secretariat and Eminent Persons have not set prescriptive rules on how nations implement APRM or the nature or degree of civil society participation that is required. Thus civil society must recognise that it must assert itself in the process rather than wait to be asked.

Parliaments have so far been a neglected constituency in APRM. In general, parliaments have expressed significant interest in the process but have not actively seized the opportunity offered by APRM. South Africa's parliament was the most active, holding its own APRM hearings and writing its own report. For civil society, parliament represents an opportunity to extend the public conversation about governance and ensure that legislators are aware of neglected issues or unintended consequences of laws and regulations.

Speakers noted that improving governance is about building coalitions in support of reform and that process is about **building relationships** and bridges between various participants. In influencing national processes, participants noted that it is vital that civil society reach out to all players, including government ministers, other government support staff, governing council members, the media, governance experts and research bodies, trade unions, the continental APRM Secretariat, the country review team members, and the Panel of Eminent Persons. In the earliest stages of the process, youth in Kenya proactively engaged with the process, offered advice and were brought into the Kenyan APRM governance structures. Civil society in South Africa established links among groups and worked together to influence the process and managed to get government to extend the timeframes, change the

composition of the governing body and involve research agencies, which were initially left out of the government plan.

In the process, each country first prepares its national self-assessment report, which is submitted to the Eminent Persons. However, the final APRM assessment is written by the country review team. Its conclusions are influenced by what the country writes about itself, but the review team is free to question and write what it likes. Thus the country review team is a vital point of influence for civil society.

The continental APRM Secretariat is supposed to prepare a background analysis paper and an issues paper that should guide the country review. Participants noted that the Secretariat remains chronically understaffed and has had difficulty keeping pace with the number of reviews planned. In particular, participants noted that country review teams have so far only received the background research and issues papers on arrival in the country under review. As a result the team members are not well informed about the local situation and not always well equipped to understand whether the country self-assessment is candid or not. Participants said that the extent of the workload on the Secretariat also represented an opportunity for civil society in the sense that a coherent written civil society report could help in framing the issues for the secretariat and help alleviate its research burden.

Participants noted that there has been little advanced publicity about **country review visits**. If civil society wants to influence the country review visit, it must plan ahead and assert itself in the process. Participants noted that the **country review teams** have been composed of knowledgeable experts who have been eager for information from civil society. However, the itinerary of the country review visit has largely been set by the host government and participants noted that the review has been dominated by large group meetings that have not always been effective at exploring particular points. Participants noted that civil society can have impact by submitting written reports directly to the review team.

The length and difficulty of the APRM questionnaire has had the effect of focusing civil society's attention on defining problems and what the country self-assessment report says. However, comparatively much less attention has gone toward solutions and the national **programme of action**, which contains the actual commitments to change that government pledges to fulfil. Participants recommended that civil society focus equal attention to problems and particularly prioritise the items that civil society would most like to see incorporated into the final programme of action.

Participants noted that if civil society were unable to write its own submission, it would constructively influence the process simply by **gathering together existing reports** on governance and sending copies to the Secretariat and country review teams with highlights noting important points. Because of its limited research staff and time constraints, the Secretariat or country review team may not be aware of local research and reports. These can include national development plans, reports of auditors-general, parliamentary reports, human rights reports and sectoral reviews in health, education, infrastructure and other areas. Footnoting or attaching post-it notes to the key sections would assist the process and thus the quality of the report.

Preparing a Fast, Thorough Submission: The SAIIA Methodology

Based on its work in Malawi, Mauritius and Ghana, SAIIA presented a methodology for assisting civil society in **rapidly preparing a written submission to APRM**. It noted that at the heart of the questionnaire is about identifying issues that are of concern to civil society. The official questionnaire requires a great deal of historical detail on economic data, treaty ratification and documenting what government has done. Those things can be provided by government. For civil society the essence of the APRM opportunity is to identify the most neglected issues and ensure that they are elevated and acted on in the programme of action. Instead of dedicating time to questions that require specialised research, civil society should concentrate on developing a list of issues and solutions that are of greatest interest to civil society. The following steps can result in a strong outline of national problems after a few weeks of work by a team of CSOs:

1. Gather available print and online studies in one place, including national development plans, auditor-general's reports, parliamentary reports, the country's own self-assessment contained in IMF letters of intent and consultations, human rights and election reports and sectoral reports on aspects of development and governance. Check with the UNDP, government, government printing office, development think tanks, google searches, IMF, World Bank, Global Competitiveness Report, World Bank Cost of Doing Business, and other sources.
2. Develop an issues list by reading each document, typing in key points, facts, and quotations into a summary with a footnote attached to each piece of evidence. Merge all footnoted summaries into one issues list. Give each point a thematic heading: i.e. corruption, balance of powers, elections. Sort issues list by heading.
3. Prioritise what is most important to you.
4. Write key recommendations for each problem.
5. Hold a workshop of concerned civil society, allowing participants to comment on each issue raised in the list:
 - Ask participants if they know of better evidence or studies that support arguments.
 - Identify gaps and experts who could fill them through further interviews.
 - Agree on acceptable wording that fairly characterises the problem.
6. Conduct interviews to fill in gaps: ask for other experts, quotations on key points, other experts. Add information from reports identified in the seminars.
7. Confirm conclusions and debate the text in final workshop.
8. Submit the report to NGC, Eminent Persons, APRM Secretariat, Parliament, Public workshops and the media.

Appendix A: Comments from Early APRM Countries

The SAIIA conference was intended to build on earlier review conferences in such a way that would produce concrete suggestions to improve the process. To better capture thoughtful opinion, a questionnaire was administered to conference participants and others actively involved in the APRM in the first five countries. What follows are the verbatim responses from the questionnaire and the transcript of selected comments from within the conference. Early APRM country participants were from Ghana, Rwanda, Mauritius, South Africa and Kenya. Comments also are included from participants involved in the processes in Tanzania, Zambia, Lesotho and Mozambique. In keeping with the Chatham House rule, participants have not been identified by name or institution. To aid in understanding their perspective, comments are labelled with a general description of their institutional affiliation.

APRM Structures and Organisation

Realistic planning and time allocations are critical: “As much as possible, give a considerable time to the whole process to think it through fully. Don’t be in a hurry to reach any conclusion or to meet any unrealistic deadlines. Don’t try to impress anybody because if you admit that you are sick that is when you get the right medication. But if you say you have a headache instead of a heart attack you will get the wrong medicine. Do it is such a way that you get what you need.”

Structure to engage civil society: “The Governing Council appointed a CSOs liaison officer who arranged meetings and or workshops that were conducted for such groups. The council also worked through the coalition of CSOs - Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organisations in Development (GAPVOD). There were no apparent problems experienced by the CSOs in contributing effectively to the APRM exercise. There was a lot of enthusiasm. There were very few written contributions and most of the contributions were made at workshops.” – Governing council member

Support from Secretariat, Nepal: “We want to see commitment on the part of members of the Forum themselves, because they came up with this idea. They came up with the idea of Nepad, and they’ve told us that APRM is the best baby of Nepad. So be it. If they think that APRM is the best baby, then they should give it all the commitment ... I must say that we are not very happy with the way the baby is being treated, at the top. The baby is doing very well, even started walking, but the mother, who is Nepad, I’m not sure it’s keeping a good eye on the baby. The father is beginning to be a little aloof, but as the baby we will have to cry. My advice to this forum is that we should cry and cry and cry very loudly, so that not only our mother will hear us, but our father, up there, will hear too and come down to ask us, “Hey! What is happening to you?” Because since we were born, well, they’ve seen us doing things, but they really haven’t come down to see what our problems are. Fortunately, we’re doing very well, discussing, but we don’t want APRM to go off the screen. The initial momentum should be maintained. And this is where we need convergence. It’s extremely important. Take the Secretariat, which is supposed to take care of the whole process. Well, they are not here today. They were not here yesterday. And I would have thought that, fine, it’s good to go to the Dutch government and get the support, but this kind of forum, should have been organised by the APR Secretariat itself. As to where they get the money is immaterial. But their face should be here. But which faces are we looking at? This process is in danger of becoming motherless and fatherless.” – Governing council member

Minister as chair of NGC: “The APRM Focal Point is of critical importance in facilitating the initiation of the process. The FP must therefore have a clear understanding and appreciation for the APRM. In Tanzania for instance, the FP lacked these qualities and nearly undermined the integrity of the NGC by recommending a minister to be the chair. In Ghana, however, the FP was most helpful for proposing a nongovernmental person to chair. From that point the NGC asserted its independence and autonomy, recruited the Technical Teams and managed the whole process. It is utterly important for all structures and organisations to have a clear understanding of the process and its objectives. There must be a regular interaction among them to review progress of work, resolve problems and ensure compliance to timelines and etc. In the case of Ghana there was no government interference or oversight whatsoever.” – Research body member

Continental bodies: “Currently, the APRM Continental Secretariat seems to be a weak position to move the mechanisms effectively as required. The National Governing Council requires should remain more permanent and active even after the review of the Heads of States. The institutionalisation of these said institutions is of paramount importance.” – Government official

Need for more APRM dialogue across countries: “There is huge interest in civil society in the APRM in all of Africa. Those organisations and civil society leaders that have already a lot of experience I suggest that you reach out to civil society in other countries and share some of your experience because it will be very valuable for them and they are looking for that support.” – Anonymous

Stronger commitment from heads of state needed: “We want to see commitment on the part of members of the Forum themselves, because they came up with this idea. They came up with the idea of Nepad, and they’ve told us that APRM is the best baby of Nepad. So be it. If they think that APRM is the best baby, then they should give it all the commitment ... I must say that we are not very happy with the way the baby is being treated, at the top. The baby is doing very well, even started walking, but the mother, who is Nepad, I’m not sure it’s keeping a good eye on the baby. The father is beginning to be a little aloof, but as the baby we will have to cry. My advice to this forum is that we should cry and cry and cry very loudly, so that not only our mother will hear us, but our father, up there, will hear too and come down to ask us, ‘Hey! What is happening to you?’ Because since we were born, well, they’ve seen us doing things, but they really haven’t come down to see what our problems are.” – Governing council member

Stronger support from Eminent Persons and Secretariat: “What is emerging is that the road travelled so far has not been an easy one. It has not been smooth. We need to move the debate. I know some have said let’s look at ourselves. It seems to me there is a perception out there that the APRM Secretariat and Panel of Eminent Persons are not quite doing what the people of the continent expect. And if they are not doing that and they are in such eminent positions and they do not lead by example I am afraid somewhere we will miss this opportunity. The price of that perception growing out there may be a very high price. It seems to me from stories that we hear people are beginning to fear that there is a very great waste of resources. Professor Adedeji said after a meeting in Cape Town that this is a first time initiative owned by Africans, but there have been many other initiatives owned by Africans but which have unfortunately died natural deaths for reasons we know well. This is a country still struggling from the legacy of slavery and colonialism and structural adjustment. If we don’t lead by example when it comes to resources we have a big problem.” – Civil society, South Africa

Lessons learned in Kenya: “There are many lessons to be learned from the process. First, the secretariat had a lot of teething problems without clear structures to conducting the process. More experts, based at the secretariat should have been recruited to deal with the LTAs [Lead Technical

Agencies]. In the absence of these, there was opportunistic behaviour among the Nepad secretariat staff. Many people were contracted without adding value or improving efficiency of the process. Many of the persons who were invited for the consultations were those who could be reached within a short time, compromising methodological processes. There was very poor communication of administrative arrangements and the secretariat was largely overwhelmed. There was duplication of roles with some actors playing as convenors, researchers and LTA members. The role of the secretariat should be limited to that of facilitation. Experts should be contracted to run the process and provide a link between Nepad secretariat and other players.” – Governing council member

Need to learn lessons from national APRM processes: “Civil society organisations should also document the process followed and send information in to the country review team about the process.” – Civil society

Weaknesses in Mauritius institutions: “The main institutions involved were the NESC [National Economic and Social Council], the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and MACOSS [a coalition of social-services NGOs]. The NESC was supposed to be the driver but they did not have either the technical or the human or the financial capacity to be the driver of this process. There was very little interaction between the institutions. Moreover, the change of government as a result of the 2005 elections impacted on the continuity of the exercise. No research institutions were actually invited to participate. A few academics were called upon in a rather haphazard manner as a part of the civil society. The problem however is not the NESC only, there is a general feeling in certain quarters that despite the fact that the government signed up for it, the project did not get the necessary attention/nor the political leverage required to make it work within the country’s borders. – Researcher

Kenyan institutional arrangements: “Some members [of the NGC] had other motives and lacked commitment, the role of the NGC was not clear, there was no clear understanding of the MOU/budget issues and implementations, Leadership of the NGC was problematic, Three members were de-gazetted by the Minister of Planning, Good leadership from new crew of NGC (after the de-gazetting). Ministry of Planning – Focal point of Nepad’s issues including the APRM, successfully coordinated the process and gave guidance on utilisation of existing structures to get to district levels, played mainly a facilitating role but never led the process. Some members of the NGC felt that the Focal Point was very strong. However, the Focal Point played a key role in addressing problems faced by the NGC.” – Government

Lessons from Kenya NGC approach: “One of the lessons learnt from the operations of the NGC is that, it is important to appoint individuals with sound understanding of and commitment to the APRM initiative to the council. This is achievable if emphasis is placed on merit and past engagements alongside other accompanying criteria. Secondly, the NGC needed to be reasonably small but satisfactorily representative of the society. This was to ensure flexibility in decision making besides reducing the money committed to sustaining a large council. A smaller NGC would also help in minimising conflicting group interests and by extension, avert the politicisation of the activities of the NGC.” – Research support agency

Civil Society Challenges

Need to strengthen civil society representation: “In Rwanda, the civil society were underrepresented. For the next Self-Assessment, I recommend including a bigger proportion of civil society members and to put at list one of its representatives in one of the leading positions, and some others in the reaction team. In a regular manner, CSOs should get support from the donors to analyse and monitor the political and economic governance so that they would be able to provide consistent inputs to the next peer review based not only on empirical experience, but also on the research findings and on the grassroots work results.” – Governing council member

Civil society needs courage, tenacity in APRM: “There are times when we had to be brave to move the process. There are times when you have to be brave to take critical decisions. One needs to have commitment at all levels whether you are being paid for it or not. And one must have drivers at all levels, in the secretariat, in the research bodies.” – Civil society, South Africa

Civil society needs to remain active in monitoring pledges: “A critical element is that we as civil society have to take ownership and be able to say that governance begins with me. If programmes of action are not clear and measurable and we cannot see concrete recommendations or actionable steps that our government departments are going to be taking or corporations are going to be taking it is going to be very difficult for civil society to be able to come in three years time and say what has been done in relation to our socio-economic rights that our state has committed to realising. As much as we get tired of the process, we have to stick with it and one of the ways to do that is to monitor and watch that the programme of action is open, transparent and that we can hold them accountable.” – Government Official

Civil society must commit to APRM for the long-term: “The APRM process is not a one shot injection. The process is going to be with us for a very long time, as long as its presence is necessary. It should be our responsibility, a vow to ensure that the process is entrenched in our respective countries to the extent that the people will own the process. Governments will come and they will go but APRM will be there. I think this should be the commitment that we have. Let us not look at what the Secretariat is doing and the panel. We are in it because we believe in it. We should go the full way to ensure we leave a legacy for the youth of our country so they will hold onto this process irrespective of which government is in power.” – Ghana

Difficulties facing civil society participants in South Africa: “When some of us got involved in the process initially we had no idea that we were committing ourselves to a longer process than even the APRM stipulated. But more importantly we had no idea that we would have to really struggle to get our voices heard and make some points. So I think it is one of the things that I would want to advise civil society organisations, particularly because they are the weaker partner. Business comes with money and quite often we are not even funded to be on the process and at times, depending on how your government sees it for them they wouldn’t even encourage your participation. So being prepared to go the extra mile even when there is no money is the advice that I have to give to civil society organisations. That is very important. At the end of the day the APRM process is for us. We see the advantage in terms of holding our government accountable. It is not there for our personal benefit. It is for making sure that governance is accountable in the country as a whole for further generations. I would really like to ask that we make that absolutely clear to civil society organisations. It is so easy to give up. Even those who are funded can say why should I even bother.” – Civil society South Africa

Mechanisms for gathering civil society input: “The CSOs were identified from the Civil Society Registry of the GAPVOD, an umbrella organisation for CSOs in Ghana. Those identified were invited

for initial discussions on the APRM. There were mostly CSOs across the board-grassroots, research, advocacy, faith-based etc. Their involvement and contributions were assumed through the following: Respondents to SAQ, Participation in focus-group discussions, Leadership of CSOs were included in Elite Surveys, Participation in the series of sensitisation workshops/seminars at the national, regional and district levels.

The main problems encountered by CSOs included: Limited personnel to be able to participate fully in all scheduled programs, financial constraints on extensive participation, initial suspicion over ownership and objectives of the APRM, Very few CSOs submitted written comments; most preferred face-to face interviews and participation at discussion forums.” – Government official

Weakness in civil society involvement in Mauritius: “MACOSS - The umbrella organisation of NGOs in Mauritius, was involved to the extent that it tried to bring in representatives from some NGOs but it did not succeed. There were only a couple of NGOs that responded to the questionnaire. But interestingly, the two workshops organised by SAIIA and SAINET in Mauritius helped to get some broad inputs by different representatives of civil society. Many CSOs who are not affiliated to MACOSS were not even contacted and did not even know about the APRM, reflecting the very poor communication and popularisation of the APRM in Mauritius.” – Civil society

Umbrella bodies, time limited civil input in Rwanda: “The groups that were most involved in the APRM on behalf of the civil society were mainly the umbrella organisations which were supposed to be able to collect many ideas from and to the member organisations. Otherwise, some big consultations targeted also quickly other organisations. We noticed that the questionnaire had a tendency to be general and did not permit enough time to highlight the problems encountered specifically by the civil society. The next questionnaire should have a section on the problems faced by the civil society on accomplishing its missions. I am not aware of any written submissions from a civil society organisation.” – Governing council member

Written civil submissions lacking, Kenya: “Many CSOs participated in the process either in public forums, in sectoral/interest group forums or special all CSO meetings with NGC and Review mission. Unfortunately, to the best of my recollection, there were no written submissions. However, CSOs in all the forms and manifestations participated very actively in the entire process.” – Government official

Civil society needs to be proactive: “Don’t wait for government to call a process for you to join. Just start your own processes. If you indicate motivation and good ideas for moving forward, money comes. Be proactive and take action even before government takes action itself.” – Civil society Mozambique

Changing policy needs civil society to present well-supported arguments: “From the Kenyan process one of the things civil society must learn is that social justice, human rights and democracy work are no longer about moral campaigns and so on. They are technical work so therefore one of the things you should do from stage one is to change your focus from moral campaigns to technical education and research, which I think was one of the limitations of civil society in Kenya. The second thing relates to what do you put your eyes on as the prize for participating in the process? The prizes that you should put your eyes on as civil society organisations are two. First is the dialogue issue, which has two components. It is expected that the rules that are used for collecting data would enhance dialogue but experience has shown that when you are using scientific tools it is difficult to have activist dialogue, participatory dialogue that is empowering and so the civil society organisations have the challenge of taking care of that activist component and participatory component of the dialogue. So the technocrats can deal with the technical and scientific component and civil society can

deal with the component that is activist and participatory empowerment. The second element in terms of what you should put your eyes on as the prize is that finally what we want to see is a framework for redesigning the country. Personally one must consider is to give Nepal and APRM and the plan of action the potential of transforming the country. If you do that early enough when it comes to designing the plan of action you (as civil society) can be the ones who define the axioms to be used in defining the plan of action. If you do that then also you will be talking of the post review period and the ...another limitation is that most civil society organisations are focused only on the review period, mainly because of the potential money that may come along, and they don't look at the post review period. I think that focusing on the plan of action enables you to do that." – Government official

Kenya civil society disputes: "National Governing Council with a good mix of representatives from the government, civil society and private sector with more representation from civil society. This was a good aspect of the NGC. Moreover the NGC members of the civil society were mostly elected by themselves in a democratic and transparent manner. Even the extra-slots (members) from the NGO sector were actually proposed by their umbrella body (NGO-Council). However, the fact of that the representatives were elected could sometimes pose some problems as experience because many times, those who get elected are not necessarily elected because of their credibility, integrity and capacity/competence because they are usually outspoken and quite visible and hence present their candidature much more aggressively. This is probably why we had three NGC members who stalled the process ... elected in the first place. In fact one of them was also elected chair of the NGC and used the position to intimidate others including fellow SCO members. The local APR Secretariat and Focal Point provided technical and logistical backstopping to the process and did not attempt to lead the process as this was largely the role of the NGC. This role was executed by the NGC well once the three rogue members were out of the way. However, it was rather unfortunate that some members of the NGC including the chair took the process hostage for such a long while without this being dealt with internally until the Minister for Planning stepped in to de-gazette these members. This points to a lapse in the governance structure of the NGC and is quite useful lesson and a challenge that can be learned from Kenya experience." – Government official

Civil society leadership and disputes in Kenya: "When Kenya commenced the APR process in earnest the multi-stakeholder taskforce organised two 'national' stakeholders' forums where part of the agenda was for stakeholders to nominate representatives. Full page open invitations to the public were put out in the major newspapers and numerous letters of invitation were sent out to stakeholders. The taskforce had developed a matrix showing about 12 major stakeholder groups and identified some well known organisations within each of these stakeholder groups. The plan was to have 12 civil society representatives in the NGC – four conveners and two representatives for each thematic group. At the second stakeholders forums each of the thematic groups was asked to nominate five people for possible inclusion in the NGC as well as nominate a convener for the thematic group. It was feared that if each thematic group was asked to nominate directly the two people there was the risk of having eight people who were not representative of the different shades of Kenyan society. As such the taskforce felt that from the list of 20 people nominated by the forum it was possible to narrow it down to a list of eight on the basis of gender, religion, regional balance, sector and other factors. For instance a candidate who was Muslim, female and from the marginalised North Eastern part of the country was easily retained. Let me highlight that the selection was not done by the Minister or the PS but by a sub-committee of the taskforce. Despite the efforts described above to ensure that Civil Society was involved and as is normally the case with such processes there were those who complained they were not involved. What is interesting is that Mrs Grace Akumu who championed this cause attended all the forums and only complained after she failed to get nominated to convene

the socio-economic thematic group. The resultant effect was that this group petitioned Dr Grace Machel who in turn asked the government to hold consultations with them with a view to including them in the NGC. Eventually eight members of this group were included in the NGC. With this numerical advantage Mrs Akumu was elected to chair the NGC and that was where all the problems started. For nine months she and three other members of the NGC held the government hostage frustrating efforts to move the process forward in a bid to get funding for their organisations at one point submitting a proposal that cost more than the total budget of the process. This was also linked to the problems at the NGO council where the Chair was accused of embezzlement and as such most donors had pulled out their funding. The role of the NGC was an oversight role but the Chair tried was micro-managing going as far as demanding that she approves leave applications by NEPAD Kenya staff. The situation was made worse due to the fact that NGC members received seating allowances, at one point the Chair was calling a meeting every week at the slightest excuse and this was untenable.

It became clear to most people that the process would not advance with her as Chair and members of the NGC requested the Minister to intervene. It is instructive that even four of the members who came in with her supported the Minister's intervention and one was even appointed chair when the Minister sacked her and two other members of the NGC. I believe that the results of this move speak for themselves and the honesty of the Kenya report negates any assertion that the government tried to influence the process. Though this solution worked for Kenya a fundamental question has been about the relation of the NGC and government if the Minister could at will fire the NGC chair. One argument made is that at the end of the day the APRM is a Government commitment and that the government has to do all in its power to ensure the success of the process. It is true that this discretion can be open to abuse but often we forget that civil society itself is not above such abuse as evidenced in Kenya where the Chair and a minority of members abused the powers they held in trust for Kenyans." – Researcher.

Strength of NGC: "In my opinion members of the NGC were a bit cowardly and the best option would have been for them to democratically remove the chair in a normal NGC meeting. I think the NGC in Kenya had a relatively high degree of independence to make decisions. However in the first days the quality of those decisions was very poor. Most decisions were preceded by the words "the Chair has ruled...." Reverend Gathaka (the chairman who replaced Grace Akumu) introduced democracy within the NGC. A lot is said about government influence in such processes but then again no single group should also be seen to have more say than other stakeholders. In Kenya's case four people from a particularly vocal section of civil society really intimidated the rest. The NGC seemed to represent Kenyan society apart for the fact that all members were drawn from Nairobi. There is a very deep rift in civil society in Kenya right now with a good number of NGOs feeling the NGO council does not represent them. These groups wrote to complain that they felt marginalised. Though I may personally agree with them, I would be the first to agree that that is a subjective opinion ... The one other thing I would add is that our NGC was too big [with 33 members]." – Researcher

Voluntary vs paid membership: "The major problem of the NGC was attributable to the desire of some members to have full control of its affairs in disregard of the decisions of the National Steering Committee that preceded and established it. This was of course, tied to the insatiable desire for enhanced personal emoluments to influence funding to their organisations. This problem is partly explained by the lack of proper understanding of the APRM process and its methodologies among some of the NGC members alongside sheer greed. The problems were somewhat resolved by the de-gazettement of some of the NGC members and the appointment of a new chairman. Nonetheless, minor frictions marked the affairs of the NGC as most members tended to represent their sectors (the Youth, Women groups, pastoralists, faiths based organisations, among others)." – Kenya

Consultation in Rwanda: “The process was conducted in the least possible time. Therefore it was easier to reach the organisations gathered in umbrella organisations passing throughout those umbrellas which collected ideas of the member organisations swiftly. This means that the best organised structures had more chances to express their opinions, which is normal when you have a short time. For a neater Self-Assessment, it would be better to have more time to reach enough spectrum, even the small and not well organised structures. I noticed that people responded with more generalities than they did with specific problems and concerns. For the next Self-Assessment it is recommendable to ask questions requiring more detailed responses. The next sensitisation was more intensive during the Self-Assessment because time was too short. For the next Self-Assessment, it is recommendable to intensify the sensitisation before the process commence.” – Civil society

Need for stronger awareness building in Rwanda: “The sensitisation phase is the most critical part of the whole peer review process. It generally takes too much of resources and time to first bring stakeholders on board to make them understand what is APRM and what is expected of them. We had three approaches to consultation: High technical consultants with experts; Focus Groups consultations; and Stakeholders forum consultations. Each of the above consultation groups/categories had specific input to the process in terms of quality and ownership creation.” – Government official

Weak civil consultation in Mauritius: “Civil society consultations were very poor in Mauritius. The main problem however is that the concept ‘civil society’ is treated like a homogenous and united block. Civil society is in fact a very fractured, differentiated and rather disorganised. The umbrella organisation (MACOSS) also has a number of limitations-important internal governance problems, lack of capacity, funded by the state therefore lack autonomy. The two opportunities for some ‘limited interaction’ with civil society were the two workshops organised by SAIIA/Straconsult and SAINET but then again the representatives of civil society who participated do not necessarily represent the views and ideas of large segments of people who have been left out of the process. Many of them responded with generalities since questionnaires were sent to various ministries asking them to fill in parts which were relevant to them. Respondents often did not have the necessary information on the questions asked. There was hardly any sensitisation. There was one workshop when the APRM mission came Mauritius. To start the process rolling-that was the time that the quest was discussed but sensitisation did not take place which meant that vast sections of Mauritian society did not know anything about what was going on. According to me, it would be in the best interests of the country about to embark, to inform and discuss the APRM with the citizens and try to get some broad ‘consensus’ so that a huge sense of ownership can emerge.” – Civil society

Urban bias of consultations: “The country engaged on a broadly consultative process. What is needed now is a sufficient sensitisation of the population over a period of at least three months and should be taken to the grassroots levels. Urban bias was an issue in Kenya.” – Government official

Few written submissions in Kenya: “Quite a number of CSOs did respond to the Expert Panel Questionnaire, however as opposed to the process in some other countries the Kenyan process did not very actively seek CSO submissions. I think that more emphasis was placed on sectoral and regional stakeholder forums which did indeed produce very rich information. In all honesty the NGC did organise numerous stakeholder forums in partnership with different stakeholder groups such as the disabled, women, youth, minorities, private sector, media etc. That said not many groups, apart from youth, independently organised themselves to make submissions. I would not blame this of funding or time as both were in abundance. Several donor organisations had expressed a desire to fund civil society participation in the APRM but were simply never approached. The argument could be made that either the NEPAD Kenya Secretariat or the NGC could have played a greater role in helping

CSOs access such information and funding. This could however greatly increase the administrative and reporting workload. In future other countries may wish to consider this route and maybe earmark a certain percentage of funds to fund civil society participation. (there was a wider argument around civil society participation – if the NGC facilitates CSO meetings as was the case in Kenya is that significantly different from the NGC giving funds to CSO to independently organise forums. This was a problem in Kenya, one CSO member of the NGC once told me that participation means a transfer of funds and that the cake has to be shared) – Government official

Dialogue vs data collection: “What came out quite strongly in Kenya is that the APRM provided a platform for dialogue. If the APRM is to lead to any meaningful improvement in governance then more must be done to make this a platform for genuine dialogue and not just a process of data collection tool. Part of the problem with the application of the consultative approach that is now a la mode in Africa is that the dialogue is ad hoc and not continuous and there is need to find mechanisms of sustaining dialogue in between reviews. We are currently working on such a programme to link the APRM process with our national system wide M&E framework. We might set up an infrastructure at the provincial level to facilitate constant dialogue between state and non state actors. During the forums we also felt it was important for the NGC and the LTAs not too play too visible a role but instead let local people facilitate the sessions and let them dialogue with each other. This made them more comfortable and eventually we were able to get more from them.” – Government official

Civil participation depends on time and funding: “Representatives of civil society organisations and key informants in selected rural and urban communities were consulted at different points in time. First, nation-wide consultations were done by the National APRM Governing council and its secretariat. The technical review teams also consulted civil society organisations in two forms – stakeholder workshops and through survey instruments. Finally, CSOs were consulted in the final validation of the APRM report. Not all CSOs members were involved in the consultation due to financial and technical feasibility and this became a bone of contention of members who made verbal complaints to the APRM team – Research agency

Few written submissions by civil society: “Perhaps this was a result of the wrangling and disorganisation that characterised the NGO Council, which is the coordinating agency of most Non State Actors during the exercise. However, certain strands of CSOs, more so. the Faith Based Organisations, the Private Sector and Professional Associations, among many others, were properly organised, and made effective representation and substantial submissions. A significant number of the CSOs were nonetheless, affected by the crisis at the NGO Council. Lastly, most NGOs were interested in the financial gains and where this was not likely they quickly developed cold feet and hesitated to engage as expected. Most CSOs struggled to mobilise their constituencies to make submissions for two definite reasons. One, most CSOs had issues surrounding their agenda captured in the expected report and therefore were interested in providing information that could reflect the real situation. Secondly, the struggle was a manifestation of the effective role of most conveners under different pillars in mobilising CSOs to engage in the process. Due to the many groups that wanted to make their submissions, the time allocated for the exercise was not adequate and there is need to reconsider it in the next process.” – Research agency

Challenges facing civil society: “The main problem experienced by a number of CSOs and NGOs is probably their slowness in providing the right information to the appropriate teams at the right time. A few of their representatives withheld vital information until the last minute forcing the teams to create extra time to incorporate such late information. Another problem seemed to be CSOs’ and NGOs’ poor understanding of their entry points into the process. Questions of human capacity as well as

material resources need to be carefully planned to facilitate their effective participation. A major lesson is that there is need for revisiting the strategies for participation. It is a fact that most CSOs and NGOs have grassroots networks and should be encouraged to play a more active role in Information, Education and Communication using their own resources and networks, while bearing in mind that they have a critical role to play in the Monitoring and Evaluation phase. Another lesson is that the funding and convening functions [convenors were to gather civil society views in particular sectors but were unable to convene meetings for lack of dedicated funding] should have been strengthened to allow CSOs and NGOs make their submissions. This is possible by reasonably increasing the time for submissions and by implication the resources required to facilitate the process.” – Research agency

Programme of Action

Programme of Action in South Africa: “One of the things that we have all admitted is that our Programme of Action is by no means adequate. And that the time that was given to the self-assessment report should have been the same amount of time that was given to the Programme of Action. I’m also hoping that the review team will pick up on that as a weakness which we will have to take forward, how we do it in a systematic, methodological way, to come up with a POA like what we would want it to be. I must admit though that the document we ended up with, I’m sensing and starting to get an idea that most probably it was also informed by some of the things that were coming out of the Rwanda and Ghana experience, much later on, but that we might have missed some steps in between. Because, all of a sudden, we were told it doesn’t have to be a thick document, it has to be a matrix, and the kind of things that we are seeing. But when that kind of information comes through, when you’ve missed out a whole lot of steps, in terms of consulting, around issues of costing, around issues looking at what the government programmes were dealing with already in poverty reduction strategies and all what you’ve really said. If it comes up in a very packaged form, and its brought about by people where you don’t know where it’s emanated from, it can be communicated in a very unclear way.” – Civil society

Civil society involvement in POA: “How then is civil society going to be involved in all these processes [of implementing the POA]? The way and the time we took developing the Programme of Action ensured that even the activities that civil society is involved in, is really within the national Programme of Action. Our challenge is to ensure that we engage with civil society I think in a very professional manner. Not antagonistic, so that they organise themselves and are then ready and able to try and also monitor what government is doing from that side. But on the other side, we did also realise that in as much as it is really going to be implemented by government, we do not want to lose the voices of the people. So in sustaining that dialogue, I think that civil society has a key role to play as government is going on with its own watchdog, whether it is a committee of permanent secretaries or whatever body the state will come up with, the civil society also has a very very key role in ensuring that the dialogue is sustained.” – Government official

Restructure the POA: “There is need really to reflect of the format of the Programme of Action. It’s really tedious, it’s long, it’s really long. I think that if we were to reflect on coming up with a clearer, sharper ... because [while trying] to make it sharp, we had to be in the [matrix] boxes, in the cells, so making it sharper within the cells requires a lot of time. And I think it’s not a one week exercise.’ – Government official

Weak POA in South Africa: “One of the things that we have all admitted is that our Programme of Action [in South Africa] is by no means adequate. And that the time that was given to the self-assessment report should have been the same amount of time that was given to the Programme of Action. I’m also hoping that the review team will pick up on that as a weakness which we will have to take forward, how we do it in a systematic, methodological way, to come up with a POA like what we would want it to be. I must admit though that the document we ended up with, I’m sensing and starting to get an idea that most probably it was also informed by some of the things that were coming out of the Rwanda and Ghana experience, much later on, but that we might have missed some steps in between. Because, all of a sudden, we were told it doesn’t have to be a thick document, it has to be a matrix, and the kind of things that we are seeing. But when that kind of information comes through,

when you've missed out a whole lot of steps, in terms of consulting, around issues of costing, around issues looking at what the government programmes were dealing with already in poverty reduction strategies and all what you've really said. If it comes up in a very packaged form, and its brought about by people where you don't know where it's emanated from, it can be communicated in a very unclear way. ... So our Programme of Action still needs a lot of work to be done.' – Civil society, South Africa

Monitoring and involvement of civil society in POA evaluation: “How then is civil society going to be involved in all these processes [of implementing the POA]? The way and the time we took developing the Programme of Action ensured that even the activities that civil society is involved in, is really within the national Programme of Action. Our challenge is to ensure that we engage with civil society I think in a very professional manner. Not antagonistic, so that they organise themselves and are then ready and able to try and also monitor what government is doing from that side. But on the other side, we did also realise that in as much as it is really going to be implemented by government, we do not want to lose the voices of the people. So in sustaining that dialogue, I think that civil society has a key role to play as government is going on with its own watchdog, whether it is a committee of permanent secretaries or whatever body the state will come up with, the civil society also has a very very key role in ensuring that the dialogue is sustained. ... Civil society has a key role to ensure that this programme is implemented and entrenched ... into the existing programmes.” – Kenya

Link between aid and APRM: “The truth is that a large number of countries got into Nepad and APRM because there was a promise of support and resources, and the APRM stood as a very good process to improve governance, and at the end of that process, there was a promise of resources. So ... on the one hand, even if we forget Nepad, even if we forget the promise about resources, as a citizen I think the APRM process is a good one, we should support it for the democratisation of our societies, and for the opening up of spheres within the society for proper interaction within the state, the private sector and civil society organisations.

Notwithstanding that, I think we are really being taken for a fantastic ride. We are now in the following situation. One, there was a big, really big presentation of what would be forthcoming under Nepad. ... Have we not seen a situation where that same money, the same kitty, is being shifted around under a different appellation, and some countries are seriously in the belief that they would receive resources or even FDI... it is clearly proven now that FDI is totally unrelated with governance, otherwise nobody is going to prove to me that Equatorial Guinea gets the highest level of FDI in Africa. It is clear now that the decision to move resources is politically guided, and not guided by the level of governance in countries. I think we should stick to the APRM process for our own sake, as democrats, as people who want our own development. But we should be clear that there is nothing at the end of the tunnel forthcoming in terms of resources under the Nepad programme as such. What the implication might be, that those countries that have not yet gone into the APRM, now realising that those that have gone into it and might not be benefiting, might, in fact, decide for their own sake, but prompted by this reality, to shy away from the APRM.” – Civil society

The Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Technical vs non-technical stakeholders: “The questionnaire is more technical in nature and therefore it was difficult to administer it across the whole spectrum of stakeholders. It was appropriate for the APR Secretariat to allow countries to simplify and explain some of the questions as well as add country-specific questions. I think the questionnaire should be redesigned such that purely technical questions are made optional and placed on different sections.” – Governing council member

Remove/consolidate overlapping sections: “The issues of corruption, decentralisation, gender and economic strategy appear in multiple sections, which creates extra work and redundancies in the resulting reports. Corruption should not be judged narrowly in terms of one anti-corruption law but is part of a web of laws on fiscal transparency, auditing, civil service discipline, tendering, parliamentary oversight, auditor-general oversight, media freedom, freedom of information and other laws. All of these are needed and should be examined to determine strengths and weaknesses. Thus the corruption and civil service management aspects of the political section should be merged with the fiscal management section of the questionnaire. – Researcher

Rationalise economic and socio-economic questions: “The economic and socio-economic sections both touch on growth and sustainable development strategy. These should go together. Socio-economic questions ask about thematic things that must be answered in terms of various sectors. Rather the material should be separated so that there is a section asking about how the country intends to promote growth and development and then a section on infrastructure and basic services. The questionnaire should then ask for a review of each key sector, taking into account management, policy setting, equal affordable access to services, quality of services adequacy of recurrent and capital budget allocations and measures that could improve services without requiring major new resources.” – Researcher

Separate technical and background information: “There are clearly two types of information required in an assessment: things of a technical or historical nature – such as the structure of corporate ownership and regulation, economic data, details of balance of powers provisions, measures taken by government. Ordinary citizens will not possess this information and become dispirited when confronted with such complex questions. The second type of information relates to opinion and impression of fairness, effectiveness, quality of services, sources of conflict, responsiveness of systems to the public. The whole process would be much more efficient if the questionnaire were separated into items to be tested with the general public and those that government or researchers would have to find answers to. Both should be public and anyone free to answer the whole thing. But the layman’s questionnaire need only ask what are the problem areas and recommendations in the various sectors. It can ask people to rank issues and performance. The material on which treaties have been ratified and which laws passed etc should be completed by government and verified by experts. – Researcher

Too long, technical and frustrating: “Based on the APRM objectives, the SAQ was quite lengthy and technical in some cases. There were instances of repetitiveness and ambiguity. These sometimes made respondents a bit disinterested and ‘frustrated’. A lot of harmonisation is needed and questions clarified to cut down on the time involved in answering it. Assessment by sectoral perspectives would be a better option and help with putting the precise responses solicited and getting the respondent’s actual response; less ambiguity and repetition.” – Research agency

Guidelines, remove irrelevant, poorly worded items: “The SAQ is generally good and useful. However, some items are usually irrelevant/or not too crisp in capturing the sentiments realistically. Some terminologies are also culturally unappreciated or inappropriate. The NAPRM Secretariat should therefore engage local language experts as well as researchers to review the SAQ, making it adaptable to particular countries. Conducting “pre-tests” for the SAQ also helps to refine the instrument before formal assessment begins. Recommendation: The APR Secretariat should give guidelines (indicating the major elements for assessment) and require individual countries to design the SAQ.” – Research agency

Press freedom issues neglected in questionnaire: “There has been a serious unintended consequence of the APRM’s deficiency (regarding lack of mention of press freedoms). The other day the west African journalist association wanted to hold a meeting in Banjul to coincide with the meeting of the heads of government of the African Union states. They were prevented from holding it. The government of the Gambia would not allow them to come in and hold that meeting. Instead they met in Dakar and noted that there had been an increase in the number of cases of journalists being imprisoned on charges under the insult laws and for criminal defamation and for reporting inaccurately. [In the three months after Banjul] there had been 24 instances of journalists being arrested, detained, questioned, attacked or their offices attacked in 14 countries involving more than 68 journalists. To my way of thinking there is a general increase not only in West Africa but throughout Africa of persecution against journalists. The reason for that I believe is that authoritarian governments in particular, having interpreted what the African Union has done with the [APRM] questionnaire as an indication that they do not have to uphold any idea of media freedom and they can treat the media as they please. And I believe that has been a serious consequence. In South Africa two bodyguards of the president tackled a journalist from *Beeld* and stripped pictures out of his camera for taking pictures of President Mbeki entering a clinic for a check-up.” – Civil society South Africa

Improved human rights section needed: “The SAQ should contain a section reserved to the civil society, especially how human rights organisations have freedom of expression and criticism and what is their level of access to information in the public services and additionally how are they allowed to work on the ground and how are they allowed to advocate for the citizen’s rights. The SAQ should contain a section on ratification of international conventions on Human Rights, their implementation and the reporting on them. Those conventions are often not respected and it is against human rights.” – Governing council member

Too long, detailed, unclear meanings: “The SAQ is too long, too detailed and sometimes difficult to feature out the meaning. If the SAQ is made simple to the point and the language is adapted, this could improve the entire document. Too lengthy documents are tiresome for the respondents before they even attempt to answer the questions.” – Governing council member

Assumptions, confusion: “It is too long or too many assumptions built into some of the questions. There should be some local expert counterparts in each country sitting with some of the key people who devised the questionnaire to adapt it to the local reality of the country. Also, the questionnaire should be piloted in the countries which are about to embark in the exercise so that they can actually review the questionnaire- as a result of the difficulties and limitations that arise out of the pilot survey. Too many issues are repetitive in different parts. It gives the impression of being confusing and ambiguous.” – Researcher

Closed-ended questions: The SAQ [self assessment questionnaire] should be adapted into simple and closed ended questionnaires for easy administering. Countries should also be allowed to make modifications to suit their individual countries.” – Research agency

Overlong, too detailed: “The SAQ was rather long and with too many details which would have been otherwise captured through fewer and much more straightforward questions. Too many objectives which could easily have been clustered. The complexity and heavy load of the SAQ made the analysis a lot cumbersome and its administration was time consuming. A normal interview and discussion(s) around a questionnaire should not take more than hour to avoid fatigue of the respondents which can result in loss of interest and hence “answers” for the sake of it.” – Government official

Dialogue needed: “The SAQ does not take into account the largest most important sources of information; the people at the local levels, including different interest groups. Instead of standard survey questions I could strongly recommend ‘guidelines for dialogue’ which has a potential to gather more useful information at local level while enhancing the culture of dialogue itself.” – Civil society

Problems: “Questions in the SAQ are not clear in terms of ‘where is it taking us to’. Questions are not simple and clear to understand the way forward; There are so many cross-cutting issues.” – Civil society

Problems: “That the questions were too technical or too elitist; They are too open ended and leading; The questions are too detailed and assume that problems or issues are uniform in all countries. **Suggestions:** “Simplify the questions and make them user-friendly that should be understood by different stakeholders; Combine quantitative and qualitative information (questions); Consider the socio-economic indicator and adapt them to the local situation.” – Civil society, upcoming country

Improvements: “Group issues in the sectors (ex Education, health, agriculture) and do away with the thematic approach; Make simple questions and allow the flowing of the questions to show you the way forward. – Civil society, upcoming country

Time: “To me it is an important area of checking progress but its needs to be done in a manner that it is not rushed.” – Civil society, upcoming country

Time, funding limit input: “I think those who formed the team of commissioners took care of the task of appointing various academics. But the issue is that even those academics, most of the time, could not conduct adequate research, often due to financial constraints. So very often they are not able to bring a consistent added value to the programme.” – Governing council member

Evaluating governance of civil society: “When we talk about civil society, there should be enhanced dialogue and trust and with the private sector. The report in Kenya brought out that there are serious governance issues within civil society and also the private sector. We tend to forget that.” – Civil society

Monitoring and evaluation: “The SAQ allows people to notice that the information on what had been done in the country was scattered in different ministries and institutions. It should be an occasion of rethinking a best report system at the national level. Considering the situation, one can guess that many things have been omitted because the facts were reconstituted only by the commissioners memory.” – Governing council member

Lack of research plan, guidance in Mauritius: “There was no specific methodology used. Some confusion in people’s minds-they saw the SAQ itself as an instrument to be used and regarded it as the methodology. In other words, the poor conceptualisation and reflection about the exercise and the process. Apart from a few meetings organised by the NESC and MACOSS, there was no attempt to use other methods such as desk research, focus groups, surveys etc-to collect data which used for the exercise. No research institutions were used but after received submissions from different respondents. The NESC hired a researcher/consultant from the University of Mauritius. But his task

was limited to simply clearing up the submissions or compiling them in a correct manner. Analysis was poor-one can argue that was no analysis. But it is argued that the report put by SAIIA provided much more comprehensive coverage and was more analytical.” – Civil society

Research tools developed in Kenya: “Briefly the pre-field methodology comprised: education, sensitisation, awareness creation and creation of ownership among the mass of Kenyans; realigning, harmonising and coordinating methodological approaches among technical review teams; identification of stakeholders; recasting the questionnaire into a survey instrument; and gathering information and data. Four principal research instruments were developed and used, namely: a Desk Research Instrument, an Expert Panel Instrument, a National Sample Survey Instrument, and Focus Group Discussions. This methodology borrowed heavily from the methodology used in the preparation of UNECA’s African Governance Report. The only modification was the use of Focus Groups Discussions. There were also reports from provincial rollout meetings and from syndicate groups.

This methodology was chosen as Kenya sought to have a methodology that would produce scientifically sound data without making the process any less consultative. In addition it was felt that weaknesses of one instrument could be mitigated by the other three. Data gathered through any of these different instruments could be validated against the rest. For instance the household survey which in many instances focused on perceptions could be validated against data gathered through desk research and the expert group panel to see if indeed perceptions were consistent with reality.

Kenya utilised established research institutions to assist in developing their Country Self-Assessment Report (CSAR). All the four research institutions selected had vast experience in this kind of survey. The African Centre for Economic Growth had at that time just executed for UNECA a survey very similar to the APRM, KIPPRA has vast experience on economic surveys in Kenya, the Institute for Development Studies has in the past been commissioned by UNDP to prepare the Kenya Human Development report and finally the Centre for Corporate Governance had done a lot of work on corporate governance and was even involved in the development of the indicative APRM questionnaire. In addition the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) played a key role in data collection. The NASSEP IV sampling framework made it very easy to identify households. CBS also already has a network of enumerators across the country and this helped save a lot of time.

The major weakness I would identify is that some of the LTAs seemed to be understaffed and the staff that they had seemed to have their plates full and as such did not dedicate as much time to the APRM as the rest. Desk Research started almost as soon as the LTAs were contracted. The household survey, focus group discussions and the expert panel did not take too long to administer. By using the CBS infrastructure we were able to conduct the household survey fairly fast and it was always possible to reduce the number of days by increasing the number of enumerators. The government machinery on the ground especially District Development Officers were of great help in the execution of the focus group discussion.

One key factor and probably one that made quite a difference is that as soon as CBS had submitted its data the LTAs were sequestered in a hotel to jointly write the report. This really saved time and ensured that the LTAs only focus was the APRM and that they could also consult each other for any crosscutting areas. In the last two days of the report writing the NGC and other experts were brought in to work on and validate the final report. This again was key as time wasn’t lost between writing the report and validating it.” – Civil society

About SAIIA's Governance and APRM Programme

The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) is an independent, non-governmental organisation based in Johannesburg that seeks to promote a wider and more informed understanding of international issues among South Africans and the continent. It seeks also to educate, inform and facilitate contact between people concerned with South Africa and Africa's place in the world, and to contribute to the public debate on foreign policy. Since 1994, SAIIA has supported democratic South Africa in dealing with its rapidly expanding international engagements by promoting public debate and independent policy analysis on the most pressing issues of the day. The Institute has an established record in research and conference organisation, and in producing high-quality, pertinent publications. Since 1994, research has increasingly been Africa-focused.

SAIIA's Governance and APRM Programme (GAP) was launched in October 2006, and is a continuation of the Institute's Nepad and Governance Programme that ran from 2002 to September 2006. This programme has worked extensively since 2002 to mobilise and inform civil society to actively participate and drive the APRM process in their countries. SAIIA assists organisations and governments to understand the APRM processes, how to prepare submissions and how best to influence the process.

To date, the programme has worked with parliamentarians, governments, civil society and journalists across the continent, including in Angola, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia, as well as the international community to understand APRM and highlight the continent's governance and development challenges.

A snapshot of some of our work:

- Conducting public information and mobilisation workshops on the peer review;
- Giving seminars on submission making;
- Assisting the compilation of country reports;
- Briefing government and parliamentary officials on APRM;
- Conducting a feasibility study for Malawi's APRM focal point on the implications of acceding to review. The country subsequently signed up for review;
- Offering ongoing technical support to the media to promote understanding of the APRM process; and
- SAIIA was one of the four research institutions appointed to assist in the compilation of South Africa's APRM Country Self-Assessment Report, in the area of Economic Governance and Management.

Please visit our **APRM Resource and Training Centre** by clicking on this icon on SAIIA's home page: www.saiia.org.za, or access the information directly at <http://www.saiia.org.za/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=846>



If you need advice or assistance with understanding and participating in the APRM process in your country, then look no further. Please contact Steven Gruzds gruzds@saiia.wits.ac.za or call us at:

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