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The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the Search for a Democratic-Developmental State in Africa

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Introduction

In a preface to Adebayo Adedeji's book: *Africa within the World (1991),*
the late Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere had this to say:

> There is no poverty of ideas about what Africa's problems are
> or how to deal with them-either within or outside the continent.
> But …a lack of opportunity to express, debate and test these
> ideas in an open environment, in an African context, and under
> African leadership which is dedicated to thinking about Africa
> and for Africa's future.[1]

This paper argues that there is a close link between democratic governance and economic prosperity or development. It intends to contextualise the contribution of new governance initiatives to this linkage with specific reference to the African Peer Review Mechanisms (APRM). APRM represents a new quest for good governance and development in Africa. Its new approach and process to analysis of Africa's myriad problems can not be ignored. Drawing inspiration from the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the APRM is another milestone in Africa's struggle for socio-economic and political renaissance in the 21st Century. Looking critically at the governance of African states, a compound question remains on the role of APRM: does it fundamentally shape and redirect the governance of African states, to the extent that there is a link between political rhetoric and sustainable economic development? A related question: to what extent

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[1] . See Adebayo,Adedeji ,ed. (1993),*Africa within the World: Beyond Dispossession and Dependency* p.iv.

has the APRM engineered a process of social transformation toward a democratic-developmental state on the continent? Through APRM, would the African leaders gain a sense that that there is need for a link between democratic rule (sticking to the constitution, holding free and fair elections, avoiding corruption and misuse of power), and prudent management of public resources, allowing the judiciary and the legislature to operate independently and letting the media to work as a mouthpiece of popular accountability without unwarranted interference and harassment from the state?

While it may be argued that the APRM is the very first continental governance effort to use a wide participatory approach to solicit popular views of the people about how they wish to be governed, this in itself may be misleading. It is still a pertinent observation that in some African countries, politics is perceived as an exclusive concern of selected elite in state positions. Officials continue to use state positions for self-enrichment and corruption consumes a disproportionate share of the resources needed for public services. In such countries, the constitution is perceived as a "mere piece of paper" which is changed at will by the ruling elite to suit their political and economic interests (some seeking to stay in power for life), yet in others, the idea of organising free and fair elections is shrouded in some myth, while in others, popular participation is highly circumscribed to the wishes of the regime. Several African regimes have used anti-terrorism and other draconian laws to strip the people of their fundamental rights to privacy, freedom of speech, and assembly. Where the opposition is not directly outlawed, such laws make it practically difficult for the opposition to effectively organise and pose a serious challenge to the incumbent regime. The pertinent question then is: have new African governance initiatives such as the APRM acted as appropriate vehicles for ensuring that appropriate benchmarks to compel regimes not only to govern democratically, but

also to ensure transparency in public sector management and efficiency in allocation and utilisation of public resources?

Whereas the optimists of the APRM assert that the APRM provides lessons "that will enable government and civil society to make the most of the opportunity,"[2]the sceptics on their part argue that the state by state review using a non-adversarial method, with a hope that peer pressure could induce the reviewed state to govern democratically, may not produce the desired results, [3]especially political and economic change. One may further assert that for some authoritarian African leaders, the APRM may simply serve as a legitimating or mere public relations exercise. The point here is that the APRM has no score board or ranking scales. Dictators who have raped their countries economically, hoping to gain politically at home may have taken undue advantage by presenting themselves for peer review, only to return home and claim that they "passed the test". The danger in this process is that the APRM might be high-jacked by masquerades, kleptocrats and charlatans, resulting in the undesired consequence of diminishing the good intentions of the APRM process. Qualitative change will be necessary if the outcomes of the APRM process are be trusted and respected by ordinary citizens of the continent.

The Context of African Governance initiatives in the new Era
The end of the cold war in the 1980s signalled a pointer to authoritarian rulers that they could no longer access and keep power without the people. People's power has been re-ignited and re-energised in the past two decades. It may not be exactly what the French revolution was, but the 1980s and 1990s witnessed the collapse of the Berlin wall, the success of the Polish workers movement, the

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[2] S.K.B. Asante, Foreword to Herbert Ross & Steven Gruzd (2008), *The African Peer Review Mechanism: Lessons from the Pioneers* ,p.ix,
[3]. Ravi Kambur (2004) www.peoplecornell.edu/pages/sk145

collapse of the Soviet Empire and demise of the African strongmen, which signified that people's power is invincible. The African Governance Report (ECA, 2009) notes that most African states have been struggling to democratise their polities, even if reluctantly. Specifically, it states "A positive shift in attitude toward democratic change of governments is now aboard in Africa" p17. For example, although elections are still largely imperfect in most African states, there is a new consensus that elections are the best means of changing political regimes. The *African Charter of Democracy, Elections and Governance* requires the member states of the African Union to recognise and ensure universal suffrage, ensure constitutional rule and transfer of power. While there are still intransigent regimes that want to acquire or stay in power unconstitutionally, the struggles for democratisation in Africa are growing strong; demanding respect for human rights, forcing re-introduction of democratic pluralism, pressing for equality of opportunity and gender equity, better public services, and accountability. There is a conscious campaign against corruption, favouritism, racism, discrimination and conflicts. The new civic consciousness seems to be driven by an understanding that there is a link between good government and prudent use of public power and resources; and that a popularly elected government is more likely than the unelected one to be more responsible and accountable to the people. African dictators have given a wrong perception of failure by the Africans to govern themselves properly (Mamdani 1996). The continuation of intermittent conflicts, deepening poverty, lack of respect for human rights, social discrimination, xenophobia, high incidence of diseases and illiteracy have combined to haunt the people of the African continent, four decades after independence. This sad state of affairs in Africa is deplorable. This is an irony in comparative terms, for it is during the same period that all other equally poor regions of the world (Eastern Asia, China and to some extent Latin America) were able to make great economic strides. The pertinent question is: what happened to Africa? We have no illusion that there is one good answer. However, most analysts of the African social condition tend to concur that

Africa's main problem is lack of good governance (The World Bank 1989, 1992, Hyden and Bratton 1992, ADB 2005).

Africa's post-colonial regimes have been characterised by authoritarianism, corruption, nepotism, cronyism, wastefulness and conflicts which explain the continent's persistent backwardness. The damage that these social ills unleashed on the African societies was underestimated by the ruling political elite. Instead, they blamed colonialism and its legacy. While many of the post-colonial African leaders were stooges of the colonial system, their rhetoric for political and economic reforms did not match their deeds. Undeniably, neo-colonialism had distorted African values and cultures but little was done to reignite a new sense of social order (Ayee 2008, Mbaya-Kankwenda 2004). The consequences of post-colonial bad governance have been chronic poverty, social deprivation, political persecution and incessant conflicts. For example, it is noted that between 1990 and 1998 the number of people living in poverty actually increased in sub-Saharan Africa from 242-million to 291-million people. It was also estimated that the number of people living in abject poverty increased from 291-milllion to 330-million people between 1998 and 2008. While life expectancy went up from age from 63 to 65 in most developing countries, it was instead declining in Africa (Wolfensen 2001). External debts and dependency reached uncontrollable levels. The total external debt stock of sub-Saharan Africa rose from US$84-billion in 1980 to US$219.4-billion in 1997 (Obadan 2004). This hopelessness went on unabated for a long time. For most African leaders, their main concern was to hold on to power and live luxurious lives, promoting patronage and surrounding themselves with corrupt cronies. On the side, as ironical as it may be, for the ordinary African, political independence was nothing but the sight of a new flag, to the extent that some ordinary Africans wished for the 'old good days' of the colonial masters.

NEPAD THE African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) came into existence as a direct response to the questions of development inertia and the quality of governance in Africa. NEPAD's four primary objectives are to eradicate poverty, promote sustainable growth and development, integrate Africa in the world economy, and accelerate the empowerment of women. It is based on the underlying principles of a commitment to good governance, democracy, human rights and conflict resolution; and the recognition that maintaining these standards is fundamental to the creation of an environment conducive to investment and long-term economic growth. African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is NEPAD's most ambitious and innovative governance program. It seeks to create opportunities for African civil society to dialogue influence and shape the outcomes of APRM processes. It is intended to provide an opportunity for civil society to participate fully in the debates and policy dialogues shaping the governance of their public concerns.

APRM is a voluntary compliance process amongst member states of African Union who wish to submit themselves to the review process. The purpose of APRM as summarised in the base document is to foster adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development, mitigation of conflicts regional integration and putting in place mechanisms of that promote good governance or best practices.

The Contribution of Civil Society to the APRM Process

The APRM is a unique African instrument that has great potential as a tool to promote and strengthen good governance in Africa. It is African in origin, African inspired and African owned. The experiences emerging out of the APRM implementation process are very encouraging. It is clear that the process has been empowering in ways that were not envisaged at the time it was conceived. The interactive and inclusiveness of the process has spawned and strengthened a culture of political dialogue in member countries. The willingness of African leaders to engage the civil society and deliberate on national challenges of governance and to seek solutions for them is profoundly significant and should

be consolidated. Likewise, the willingness to let reviewers examine national findings and express a view on how a country is governed is equally a new experience that should be encouraged.

The APRM provides real opportunities to strengthen the institutions and systems of governance on the continent. It is making it possible for countries to benchmark good governance in Africa on shared African and international norms and standards as well as for citizens to participate in the evaluation of how they are governed. Through the APRM, African states are able to learn from each other and to deepen African solidarity. Capacity is being developed and partnerships within and with external partners are being created, facilitating greater advocacy for the APRM and showcasing Africa's innovative thinking in governance. The APRM has contributed in refocusing of world attention on Africa. Yet with this world attention comes the expectation that the mechanism should deliver and demonstrate that Africa is serious about tackling the governance challenges that stand as obstacles to its development.

The APRM is founded on the key concepts of good governance and accountable leadership. This can be ensured by competent, accountable and transparent states. Such states are capable of steering sustainable development, managing their economies efficiently, and are willing to rule democratically, to minimise conflicts and to fight corruption. ADB (2005:184) notes that the cornerstone of African development is the harnessing of good governance and domestic institutions, noting that weak institutions, civil strife lack of accountability and transparency have contributed to the pervasiveness and weak governance in several countries, undermining growth and development. ADB (2005:185) notes further that good political governance is a prerequisite for good economic and corporate governance.

Civil Society is critical for promoting good governance and increasing accountability and empowering communities. Civil society organisations have

taken lead in the fight against corruption, monitoring government actions, advocating for rights and freedoms. They empower citizens through their active participation in the governance processes such as elections, contributing to the government policy agenda, enabling their membership to be self-sustaining. Civil society involvement in policy process increases the chance of policy success. Countries where civil society operates relatively freely with limited government interference have experienced stability, democracy, development and good governance (ADB 2005:198).

Optimists of the APRM tend to insist that APRM provides lessons that will enable government and civil society to make the most of the opportunity. The sceptics on their part argue that the state by state review using a non adversarial method, hoping that peer pressure could induce the reviewed state to do better, may not produce the desired result, especially on political change. The concept of civil society has come to mean different things to different people. . Despite the differing theoretical perspectives, the idea of civil society remains attractive to political thinkers because of its dual thesis of private - public good. It is an arena where individual pursuits either harmonise or conflict with those of social good (Seligman 1992: x). It is characterised as that aspect of social existence beyond the direct control of the state. It rests on the legally free individual but also on the community of individuals. John Locke asserted that the state should in some sense be accountable to the people and therefore, should be identified with civil society. Marxists like Antonio Gramsci argued that civil society should be understood outside of the power of the state, while de Tocqueville liberal philosophy argued that civil society should be understood in at least partial, if not significant opposition to the state. Recent political thinkers, notably Larry Diamond has conceives civil society as that realm of organised social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least self supporting, autonomous from the state and bound by legal order or set of shared rules (Diamond 1997:6). This appears to be one the most elaborate definition of civil society.

The argument here is that in the APRM process, by civil society mediating between the state and market, the liberal-democratic element is cemented in the society as a whole. The real concern is how these processes help to produce collective good for society as a whole. This is the reason that APRM is concerned with corporate governance and state capacity.

Significantly, at the early stage of the peer review process, the APRM documents outline the importance of a fully inclusive consultative process. The importance of participation of civil society and civic organisations in the APRM is strongly reinforced by the core documentation of the mechanism. Section 1.3 of the 2003 APRM document titled '*Objectives Standards, Criteria and Indicators for the African Peer Review Mechanism' (OSCI)* states:

The overarching goal of the APRM is for all participating countries to accelerate their progress toward adopting and implementing the priorities and programmes of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad), achieving the mutually agreed objectives and compliance with best practice in respect to the areas of governance and development. This can only be achieved through the sustained efforts of the country itself, involving all stakeholders. It requires that each country carefully develops a Programme of Action with time bound objectives and linked to notional budgets to guide all stakeholders in the actions required by all-government, private sector, civil society – to achieve the county's vision(Quoted in Masterson 2007:212).

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Furthermore, Point 15 of the 2002 Nepad's *'Declaration on, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance*', another of the key documents of the APRM states that APRM [the Heads of State and Government of the participating states agreed to facilitate the development of vibrant civil society organizations, including strengthening human right institutions at the national, sub-national and regional levels.

The African Union requires each of its member state to promote and protect human ad people's rights, consolidate democratic institutions and culture, and

ensure good governance and the rule of law; promote peace, security and stability on the continent; and found its actions on essential principles such as respect for the sanctity of human life, promotion of equality between men and women, and condemnation of impunity and unconstitutional changes of government. The principle of non-interference in internal affairs was replaced by a principle of non-indifference to the problems facing African states and the right of the Union to intervene in a member state pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity as well as to impose sanctions on sates failing to comply with the policies and decisions of the Union. Governments coming to power through unconstitutional means are not allowed to participate in the activities of the Union, and the Union is required to promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance. For example three countries are currently suspended from AU because their leaders used unconstitutional means to get to power. The emphasis in the NEPAD's Declaration is that civil society is central to governance and that citizen participation should be at the core of the reviews.

Connecting Democratisation and Development in Africa

There has been an unending debate as to whether development needs democracy and vice versa. But that is a tired debate. It empirically established that where good governance has taken root, sound development has gradually ensued. In this connection, Adedeji (2007) notes that there should be no guess work. To him democracy means the right of the people to choose their own government through an institutionalised multiparty system and periodic secret ballots. Adedeji adds that democracy is so important that it remains the only coherent political aspiration of mankind. Moreover man is born with his inherent rights. Any political system or regime worth its name must promote human rights, protect freedom and ensure justice. These are at the centre of people's struggles and changes in courses of history. There is a link between economic aspects of social construction with democracy, for example, the argument that

poor societies may not sustain democracy is only partially true. Evidence is abundant that democracy can be a facilitator of social development, including economic development. Adedeji[4] stresses that the fundamental starting point in human development involves elements such as – human security, freedom from fear, hunger, slavery and ability to achieve full human dignity. Adedeji[5] concludes thus: just as a "command economy" is unsustainable, so too is a "command democracy nothing but a sham, a pretence and a deceit".

Much of the debate about democracy in Africa has centred on procedural and substantive democracy. Constitutionalism and procedural democracy are necessary but not sufficient conditions for people to realise the benefits of democracy itself. It may be argued that there is a strong link between democracy and economic development.[6] According to this perspective, if democracy fails to translate into economic benefits for the greater masses, it will be perceived that "just as a game aimed at elite circulation around who controls state power"[7] Democratic practices must have tangible material benefits to the individual citizens. This blends well with the maximalist conception of democracy which advocates for extension of the concept to socio-economic sphere of people's lives, well beyond regular elections. Altogether *UNDP Human Development Report (2002)* sets out six conditions necessary for democracy to be consolidated: (a) a clear system of representation to take place: (a) clear system of representation with well functioning political parties and interest associations (b) an electoral system that guarantees free and fair elections based on universal suffrage; (c) system of checks and balances based on the separation of powers with independent judicial and legislative branches, (d) a vibrant civil society to

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[4] Adebayo Adedeji (2007) "Democracy and Development: A complex relationship" in Khabele Matlosa, J. Elklit & Sertha Chiroro, Challenges of Conflict, Democracy and Development.

[5] ibid p.25

[6] Khabele Matlosa (2007) Democracy and Development in Southern Africa: Strange bedfellows: in Khabele Matlosa, J. Elklit and Bertha Chiroso Challenges of Conflict, Democracy and Development in Africa.

[7] (Matlosa p.57

monitor government and private sectors; (e) free and independent media; and (f) effective civilian control over the military and other security forces. These key elements of a liberal democracy are however, not sufficient for citizens of the poor African states to realise the benefits of democracy. There is need for deepening democracy and furthering the idea of a developmental state.[8] This means that apart from regular elections, there is need for social stability, sustainable development and human security. These may be realised by the state fighting against corruption, fostering citizen participation in public affairs, ensuring gender balance in governance, and promoting best practices in the management of elections for purposes of political stability and predictability.[9] Many African states still fall far short of these conditions necessary for meaningful development. Although several African states have committed themselves to the provisions of the charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance by holding regular elections, most of them have continued to violate human rights, to harass the opposition leaders and to impose their rule on the people. To this extent even the so called `new breed of leaders'[10] have in our opinion, either become similar or worse than the 'old' leaders they sought to replace. This does not auger well for democratisation, development and good governance- the key pillars of APRM. An overview of some states that have undertaken the APRM should give us a rough picture.

Case Studies of the APRM Process Its Impact on Governance

1.Uganda:

The Uganda APRM process was guided by clear terms of reference and a code of conduct developed by the APRM Commission. This followed the appointment by the President of 21-members from various backgrounds to constitute the National APRM Commission. In order to maximise working efficiency and participation, eight working sub-committees were established. These consisted of four thematic area sub-committees: programmes and contracts, media and

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[8] Matlosa: 2007: 61.
[9] African Union Commission *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance* Addis Ababa.
[10] See Oloka-Onyango (2004)

publicity, report writing committee and finance and logistics. All the sub-committees were headed by a chairperson and vice chairperson, and participated in the report writing.

The country self-assessment process was a national exercise steered by the Uganda APRM National Commission by engaging the public sector, civil society, private sector entities and the public at large as stipulated in the APRM Guidelines. The Uganda National APRM Commission carried out the self-assessment with support of the consultants. The commission had three processes; Pre-Assessment, the Assessment and Post-Assessment. Pre-assessment phase involved creating awareness of the APRM country self-assessment to enhance participation by all, identification of stakeholders, mobilisation of consultants and domestication of the questionnaires.

Various appropriate media were used to reach out to stakeholders through strategic interest group meetings, workshops, TV, radio, publicity materials, newspapers and public presentations. These stakeholder groups included government, civil society, the private sector, academia, religious institutions and various interest groups, among others. The Commission held various consultative meetings to domesticate and tailor the APRM questionnaire to the Ugandan context. Care was duly taken to adhere to the original questionnaire and not alter content but to add Uganda-specific issues. The next phase was assessment. Based on the APRM questionnaire, four APRM research instruments were used, namely: desk research, expert panel interviews, focus group discussions and a national sample survey. In addition, the commission carried out public hearings and received memoranda from various interest groups. Secondary information was collected by consulting firms from various documents including government reports, research reports, previous assessments and journal articles. The data collected was content-analysed according to themes as provided in the APRM questionnaire. The qualitative method was used to gather information using three instruments: expert interviews, focus group discussions and citizens' presentation of views.

The Uganda Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey comprising 1588 households in 69 districts. Data obtained was quantitatively analysed using tables and graphs. The results were used to collaborate information from desk research, expert interviews, public hearings and memoranda from interest groups. Perceptions of the general population on issues of governance were quantified in this sample survey and informed the preparation of the country assessment report and the programme of action. The APRM sample size was determined based on the number of households as per the 2002 population and housing census. The standard statistical formula for calculating optimum sample size was used. It was proved statistically that a sample of 1 600 households would be adequate to provide estimates at National and regional levels.

As per the APRM guidelines, the *CSAR* and programme of action were validated by national stakeholders. A summary of the issues arising in the report for validation was produced and advertised in the both print and electronic media and also sent to participants to enhance participation. The Commission held five one-day workshops, one at the national level and four in the regions, each with four thematic area breakaway sessions to ensure adequate feedback. In these workshops a cross section of stakeholders including CSOs, government and private sector were involved to ensure ownership.

The main challenge experienced by the Uganda Peer Review Process:

There was limited interest in the APRM process in the beginning; it was a new concept and people felt it was complex, but as the assessment progressed, people realised it was an important exercise. Some of the public constituencies did not have any of their governance issues reflected directly in the questionnaire, such as the media, the NGOs and the private sector. Nonetheless, memoranda were sought from these groups. The National Sample Survey process took   longer than was expected; hence delays in the completion of the CSAR. The APRM Commission did a good job, producing a 591 page CSA report. However, the contribution of civil society has to be understood within the

historical context of the state functions during the colonial and post-colonial periods. The colonial state did not perceive civil society as a partner in development but as a competitor. The country has also been turbulent for the most part. Elected governments have been rare since independence in 1962. While the current government has allowed civil society to operate freely in various civic roles such as election monitoring, fighting against corruption, suggesting alternative policies, advocating for good governance in areas of public accountability, research, advocacy, pro-poor actions, human rights and service delivery, mutual mistrust still exists between CSOs and government. The most recent legislation, the NGO Registration (Amendment) Act 2006, is considered to have rolled back and restricted the space for NGO operations.

Civil society in Uganda was deeply involved both as members on the APRM Commission and free participants. Several memoranda were received by the Commission from CSOs. At the request of the APRM Commission, the umbrella civil society body, the NGO Forum produced a very informative report on all issues of governance. Many of the views expressed in their report are reflected in the CSAR. The reviewers of Uganda's APRM process pointed out that the country needed to do more on transparency of elections, the fight against pervasive corruption, and the need to restore term limits on the tenure of the president that were removed in 2005 for Museveni to stand as many times as he wished. The country was lauded for its economic policies and implementation of the decentralisation program.

2. The APRM Process in Rwanda

In Rwanda, the participation of civil society in the APRM process was significantly limited. It is observed the APRM National Commission composed largely of civil servants and other state officials representing government departments and civil society was represented as minority on the APRM National Commission. Civil society was also consulted in the public meetings. The final country review report prepared by the APRM panel includes some civil society

viewpoints that do not necessarily coincide with those of the government, particularly in relation to the assessment of democracy and political governance.

It is reported that the discussions held in the framework of the APRM meetings were relatively free and participatory. However, civil society representatives were not given enough time to sufficiently prepare their contributions through prior discussions and research within their organizations during the self-assessment phase. Following the comments of the APRM technical support mission in June 2004, the Rwandan NEPAD Secretariat became aware of the need for more significant civil society involvement in the process. Until that time, self-assessment had consisted of answering the questionnaire essentially according to the viewpoints of the government. That is why civil society training/awareness only began six months after the process was launched. Although the APRM process was launched in March 2004, except for a few members of the National Commission, civil society was not really involved in the process until late September, when the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), invited by the National NEPAD Secretariat, facilitated a civil society training/information workshop on the APRM. This was just two months prior to the validation on the final self-assessment report. The training helped to attract civil society interest in participating in the process. While the initiative was positive, the civil society organizations outside the capital Kigali expected the government to extend awareness activities to the provinces and districts in order to reach the grass-roots organizations.

Civil society participation in APRM bodies and meetings were not broadly representative. The process was dominated by the technical committees. Dialogue which is supposed to be the gist of APRM was secondary in the case of Rwanda. Perhaps because of the history of genocide and the scars it left on society, Rwandan civil society did not participate effectively in the process. Most meetings that took place in the provinces were largely dominated by local officials (Masterson 2007:217).Because of the limited civil society consultations, the self-assessment report relies mostly on positions and statistics drawn from official documents, suggesting that the public archives were the main source of

answers to the questionnaire. Most answers to the questions required references to legislative texts, administrative decisions, statistics and research work, and the government databases as the principal sources of information. It is even noted that during the processing of the questionnaire, the cart seems to have been put before the horse. For example, when the APRM questionnaire was distributed with the involvement of the National Commission in June 2004, it had already undergone initial processing by the technical teams(OSIEA/AfriMap 2007:14).Thus the information about the APRM process was not necessarily passed on to grass-roots organizations and opinions on the answers to the questions were not obtained from ordinary people.

The APRM being a government-driven process in Rwanda, the recommendations produced by the APRM process has already been taken into consideration and policies adapted or adopted. This may be good for government but it would have been better with serious input of the civil society. Rwanda has been peer reviewed and has scored well on issues of managing the post-conflict situation, rebuilding social infrastructure, and fighting graft. Nonetheless, the regime has been intolerant of the opposition.

3. The APRM Process in Kenya

In Kenya, the APRM process seems to have suffered from a lack of internal transparency that reinforced its state-centric nature. The process was highly controlled by a group of state representatives. Though there is a vibrant civil society network and a strong human rights and social justice movement in Kenya, the APRM process did not mobilize them effectively.

 Some of the reasons for this lie in the government's reluctance to relinquish control of the process to all stakeholders. The15-member NEPAD National Steering Committee, comprised representatives of government agencies including nine permanent secretaries of ministries and only two represented NGOs. Until the continental secretariat of APRM intervened in the Kenyan process, the APRM had been exclusively taken over by the government officials. It took the lobbying of the CSOs to get them directly involved. However, civil

society was widely consulted through open forums, focus group discussions and national survey questionnaire. The self-assessment pointed out the key issues that affect the ordinary Kenyan such as high levels of poverty, ethnicity, persistent corruption and neglect of some regions in national development.

It has been observed (Akoth 2007:17) that there seems to be a fundamentally erroneous assumption that the African states that acceded to the APRM process, support the paradigm and philosophy of open government, which assumes that government is the agent and that members of the citizenry are the principals. It is assumed in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance that the government and the state in question are well organized, well designed and intent upon realising human and political rights and improving the welfare of the citizenry. From the experience of the Kenya and most other countries, this has not been always the case. It is observed (Akoth 2007:18) that the approach used by the APRM assessment tends to be "developmentalist" in orientation. This could he the reason that the self-assessment report submitted by Kenya to the APRM country review team presented poverty rather than rights and freedoms as the problem for Kenyans. By so doing, the impoverished people for example, the slum dwellers, squatters and street vendors are presented as the problems. Furthermore, neither the self-assessment nor the country review report present information on the various struggles that Kenyans have undertaken both privately and publicly to demand greater freedom. The popular democratic movements that have shaped the political landscape in Kenya are given little attention. The NEPAD economic programme in practice has also lacked a human rights agenda. Issues of systematic exclusion and violation of human rights such as land grabbing are not thoroughly examined

The Program of Action notes the strong state-centric tendencies in implementation. It is advised that there is a need to deal with the current pattern of exclusion of critical stakeholders. The report advised that the media as well as the political parties need to be carried along as stakeholders in examining the

policy implementation level. Ignoring them or treating them as foes, was likely to be counterproductive.

4.The APRM Process in Ghana

Ghana presented a solid example of how civil society could effectively participate in the APRM process. This is attributed to its civil society having a complex relationship with various governments since independence. The key factors are cited as the pluralistic character of the Ghanaian society, high levels of civil society activism, and a constitutional culture that allows freedom of association.

It is further noted that unlike many African countries, Ghana has not had a serious ethnic or religious divides. Besides, the country enjoys relatively high levels of literacy. It has been pointed out for example that the Ghanaian APRM model stood out because flexibility, absence of political manipulation, involvement of civil society groups and ordinary citizens (Bing-Pappoe 2007). Despite the strong involvement of civil society, there were some sentiments that the consultations had not been sufficient.

However the concerns of civil society were taken care of the fact that of the four institutions commissioned to conduct surveys, three of them were civil society organizations. Though the composition of the seven- person National APRM Governing Council raised criticism from civil society groups, it was noted that their appointment was based on their individual social standing than political or other considerations(Bing-Pappoe 2007 ibid). Moreover, most the work was done by the technical research institutes. These adopted methodologies that collected data and sensitized the population from all strata of the population. The findings were validated by meetings of key stakeholders who critically examined and discussed the reports.

The appointments of the four research institutes, though competent, were hand-picked by the Governing Council. Since there were a number of possible alternatives, many wondered about the basis on which the choice was made. The Governing Council had conceived it that since these were national

institutions, they were part of civil society. Civil society however did not see it that way and did not feel that it was engaging in the process as a partner.

Civil society was engaged in public awareness-raising activities and consultations. It was in this area that civil society seemed to have had the greatest number of issues with the process adopted by the NAPRM-GC. It was noted that the public awareness-raising exercise had not reached out to as much of the country as should have been the case, meaning that many people still did not know very much about the APRM when the self-assessment was under way. Sensitization did not take place in advance of the evaluation process but in parallel with it. This led to some situations where people first heard of the APRM from the interviewers sent by various consulting groups rather than having first heard about the country self- assessment process from the NAPRM-GC. In some instances the fields researchers reached the citizenry before the NAPRM-GC did and in one instance a decision was taken to withdraw the field staff until the sensitization and awareness-raising had been conducted.   Secondly, the consultation on the country self-assessment report and the programme of action were thought by some to be very cursory, and left people not really fully briefed about the documents they were evaluating. They also had no way of knowing how their suggestions were used, if at all.

More fundamental than the sequencing of the sensitization and evaluation process, was the nature of the sensitization and consultation exercise itself. Although the APRM guidelines are silent on the penetration level that would constitute a satisfactory level, it was noted that in the case of Ghana only about 0.5 percent of the adult population was consulted or sensitized, leaving the majority of the people unaware of the APRM process and its benefits. All said however, the Ghana APRM process stands out as a clearly well done exercise, especially because of the hands-off stance taken by government. This probably explains the country's ability to hold free and fair elections and peacefully change leadership.

5. The APRM Process in Nigeria

Perhaps because of its diversity, the Nigerian APRM innovatively focused on local government units. To ensure a participatory and transparent national process, it was agreed that the self administered questionnaires, elite interviews, mass household surveys and focus group discussions take place at local government levels. In each state, one local government from two of the three senatorial districts was chosen (Jinadu2008). One of the local governments would be in the senatorial district where the state capital is located. The local government would be one furthest from the capital or considered on other demographic factors. In each of the selected local governments, two communities would be selected for sampling. The sampling itself would consider cultural, rural-urban and other demographic factors. The APRM country guidelines emphasised the need for collaboration with the stake holders in drawing a road map on participation in the APRM, which should was widely publicized.

In organizing the APRM process in the country, the NFP had to ensure the integration and active participation of non-state-actors. This was a critical dimension of ensuring the ownership of the process by Nigerians.

From the outset, the selection of non-state actors to participate in the APRM structures- and in particular the National working group –was problematic. Although a fairly wide range of organizations were eventually included the NGW in late 2007, most of the APRM self-assessments process took place under the guidance of a group of organizations selected by the executive.

For more consultative and confidence- building measures by government at all levels to dismiss the impact of perception that the APR process is state-driven and, for that reason, unless the consultations and participation elements of the process are broadened and meaningfully inclusive, its expected results may not materialize.

In facing this challenges , the NFP, in close collaboration with the APRM-NWG and a number of non-state stakeholders and international development partners and donor agencies, embarked on a series of intersecting dissemination activities, including establishing a website and media task force, and conducting sensitization seminars and training workshops.

The NFP set up a media advocacy task force to devise advocacy and dissemination strategies to popularize the APR process and to sensitize the general Nigerian public about the significance of the APR process to good governance and development in the country. To this end, the NFP also developed materials such as an APRM information digest, an APRM handbook, flyers, stickers, handbills, posters and billboards for distribution and display throughout the country, and also jingles to be aired in the broadcast media (radio and televisions) on various aspects of the APR process.

Although it did not feature in the country self-assessment report, one issue that intrigued researchers was their zeal to track oil revenues and expenditure. Despite a lot of efforts, it proved difficult to gain access to budget and other financial information. A freedom of Information bill has been debated for several years in the National Assembly, and it was adopted before the 2007 elections, but not signed into law by the president Obasanjo. A new version of the Bill was voted down in the House of Representatives in April 2008. For the APR process and other reforms to be credible, it will be important for the government to improve both access to, and the reliability of, information and data on public affairs for the general public.

6. The APRM Process in Mauritius

There has been slow progress of APRM in Mauritius (Bunwaree 2008).Several reasons for the slow progress of the APRM process in Mauritius have been pointed out. Among them is lack of interest on the part of the political leadership in the peer review process, the failure to mobilize resources, weaknesses of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) as a focal point, poor participation

of civil society, difficulties in accessing information, failure to popularize the questionnaire (including by translating it into Creole), and a weak communications strategy.

At the outset of the process, the government failed to provide the necessary political leadership, including a clear vision of the objectives of the self-assessment exercise and the implementation process that should be followed. As a consequence, stakeholders did not have a unified vision of the APRM, and were left with different views and perspectives.

Most of those involved took a functional approach rather than perceiving the self-assessment as a tool for the consolidation of democratic governance. As on government official said, "When we went into the exercise, we were attracted by the idea that we may be able to use it to highlight our democratic state of affairs and perhaps attract donors, but we did not realize the extent to resources required to make the exercise meaningful"(see Bunwaree 2008:13).

Another factor which hampered the process was its timing, commencing in the year prior to general elections, when the attention of the key political players was focused on campaigning. Given the client relations between the state and some segments of society, individual were hesitant to express their views.

The most visible indication of lack of sufficient political interest in the APR process was the failure of the government to mobilise funds for the exercise. The NESC failed to conduct a technically sound assessment of the costs, reflecting a serious lack of planning. The united Nation Development programme (UNDP) provided a grant of US$20000 to the NESC for the APRM process in the first quarter of 2004. That was the only financial backing given to the NESC for implementation of the initial stages of the review. The Mauritian government did not make available the financial commitment required. It was expected that the

government would provide additional funds to close the shortfall, but this did not happen.

The self-assessment process was further weakened by the lack of quality participation from civil society organizations, in part due to their own internal weaknesses, and in part due to poor mobilization by the NSC and NCS. While there is a vibrant civil society in Mauritius, the reality is that the country's civil society organizations are fairly apathetic with little popular debate(Bunwaree 2008 ibid).Although the NCS was eventually enlarged to include civil society organizations willing to participate in the exercise, most of the responses submitted to the APRM were from government ministries and departments. Only a few civil society groups responded, including the Mauritius labour congress, the senior citizen council and the union Mauricienne party.

None of the seventy-two political parties made a submission to the APRM self-assessment. The poor representation and general weakness of civil society has been underscored by a number of observations and participants to the process. The MACOSS (the umbrella SO) is largely dependent on the state for its funding, a factor which affects its independence. It is reported not to have a culture of debate and barely engages in advocacy work, and its leaders do not necessarily connect with the people at the grassroots.

Observers of the Mauritius governance landscape conclude that the country might be a victim of its own economic success. Its Prime Minister is quoted to have noted thus;"…We have good governance, we have institutions…we have used the advantages that we have, to be 'punished'…but punished for our success"(see Bunwaree 2008:18).Indeed the case Mauritius is interesting. This is a country that is relatively well governed and with a sound economy. The irony is that such a country is not eager to be peer reviewed when those that are known for their authoritarian styles of leadership are rushing for the review.

Conclusion

Despite the strong emphasis on popular participation and civil society involvement in the APRM process, the case studies we have reviewed suggest a weak linkage between their effective participation and the outcomes of the APRM process. To a great extent, as the case studies show, civil society either forced its way in or it was marginalized altogether. Unflatteringly, the most visible element of the APRM is that the states which agreed to the peer view lack adequate democratic credentials. There is a temptation to believe that some of the governments under review wanted the APRM to legitimatize their rule rather than advance an agenda for greater democratization of their societies. This is however, not to say that the process did not leave a mark on the governance situation in those countries. It can be hoped that the commitments that the states made in their Plan of Action will come to fruition.

A critical point to note is whether or not the African states under APRM process have the will, vision and the resources to translate plans of action into tangible benefits for their societies. Most of them are donor-dependent; raising a possibility of entrenching more borrowing to implement the plans. Moreover, what is more important is whether or not the momentum of popular engagement that has been spurred by the APRM consultations could be maintained in the process of implementation. Although there is really no guarantee that this is likely to happen, considering the nature and character of most the African states, nevertheless; the process of engagement could be a starting point for a renewed effort to build a democratic and developmental state in Africa.

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