Nepad and Civil Society Participation in the APRM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this paper is to provide civil society organisations and other interested parties with general information on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to help facilitate active and meaningful participation in its processes. Drawing on the Nepad policy documents, a range of commentaries and relevant survey data, we initially provide a summary of key aspects of the Nepad vision and the APRM since these remain insufficiently clear to many individuals, organisations and legislatures potentially affected by them or interested in engaging with them. Using survey results we then identify some potential challenges to Nepad's broad realisation which derive from domestic circumstances and ground-level perceptions. Our account of the manner in which the participatory dimension has been articulated in key Nepad and APRM documents provides a context for assessing participatory opportunities and challenges in the APRM. We conclude by urging civil society organisations to insist on the active participatory role which the Nepad and APRM policy documents articulate, rather than adopting a 'wait and see' approach.[2]

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[2] My thanks to Marritt Claassens for her valuable comments on a draft of this paper - author.

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ACRONYMS

APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
CSA	Country Self-Assessment
CSO	Civil society organisation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
MAP	Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PPoA	Preliminary Programme of Action
SADC	Southern African Development Community
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union

1. Introduction

This paper attempts to provide civil society organisations with general information on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to help facilitate active and meaningful participation in its processes. Nepad is a relatively recent initiative for the rejuvenation of development on the African continent, arguably still more familiar to Western and African leaders than civil society. Though there appear to be mixed feelings about what has been attained to date, we believe the process of further conceptualising Nepad and realising its vision in practice must be an ongoing one. This paper addresses these issues from the perspective of the needs and challenges facing civil society, with an emphasis on those aspects which relate to economic governance and socio-economic development.

The second section of the paper provides a summary of what we regard as key aspects of the Nepad vision and the APRM structures and processes, since these remain insufficiently clear to many individuals and organisations potentially affected by them or interested in engaging with them. Section 3 uses results from the 2002 Afrobarometer survey to provide some indication of challenges to Nepad's broad realisation which derive from domestic circumstances and 'ground-level' perceptions. These challenges include perceptions that economic reforms to date have primarily benefited an exclusive elite, tensions between the Nepad conception of the relative roles of the state and markets in development and the 'protectionist', even 'paternal', state many African people still seem to favour, and the mixture of successes and disappointments in government social performance and responsiveness over the last few years.

With the preceding discussions providing an underlying context, section 4 presents an account of expected civil society participation in the APRM. We examine both the manner in which the participatory dimension has been articulated in key Nepad and APRM documents, and a number of challenges that may impede the realisation of such participation in practice. Our conclusion cautions civil society against adopting a 'wait and see' approach and emphasises that civil society will have to insist on being granted an active role within the APRM if its inputs and perspectives are to substantively inform national governance debates and commitments to improved governance.

2. Nepad and the APRM

2.1 The Nepad Vision

Nepad is a vision and a socio-economic development framework for Africa, informed by the recognition that instability, underdevelopment and exclusion from the global economy continue to define the continent, that African countries and people have experienced chronic decline[3] in a wide range of social and economic indicators over the last two decades, and that vast regions of the continent are still devastated by political governance failures such as authoritarian regimes and inter- and intra-country conflict. The factors which, according to the Nepad conception, have accentuated underdevelopment on the continent are the legacies of colonialism and the Cold War, the workings of the international economic system, and the inadequacies and shortcomings of policies pursued by African countries in the post-independence era[4]. Whilst the first and second factors shift the burden of responsibility away from African states and leaders and on to the developed world and the pursuit of political and economic interests in its engagement with the continent, the third factor represents an acknowledgement that governance failures have played a part and that these will have to be addressed by national governments through regional mechanisms if a new development path is to be successfully followed.

As the development framework of the African Union (AU), adopted in July 2001 by what was then still the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), Nepad constitutes a synthesis of two proposed development frameworks, the Millennium Partnership for the African Recovery Programme (MAP) and the OMEGA plan for Africa[5]. A number of global and regional developments have, it is argued, made the current period a "historic opportunity…to end the scourge of underdevelopment that afflicts Africa"[6]. Some of the positive global factors are the increasing affordability of technology, the capital saturation of the developed countries which compels investors to look to relatively capital-deprived emerging markets for high investment returns and the recognition that poverty breeds instability which, in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, also threatens the stability and prosperity of developed countries. Positive developments on the African continent are pre-eminently the waves of democratisation since the 1990s, the establishment of bodies such as the AU which encourage African countries to adopt a more regional outlook and which strengthens the bargaining power of the continent, and the ascendancy of a new generation of African leaders.

Nepad's primary objectives are the eradication of poverty, the attainment of sustainable growth and development, the integration of Africa into the global economy, and the acceleration of the empowerment of women[7]. In order to attain these primary objectives, the Nepad framework documents articulate a set of broad principles which should inform the development process. These are :

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[3]Cf *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?*
[4] 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad): Framework Document' par. 18
[5] cf 'Development blueprint for Africa' by Mingo and Wehner for a succinct account of the integration of these plans, differing in some significant respects, into Nepad
[6] 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad): Framework Document' par.6
[7] 'What is NEPAD?' par. 4

- Good governance;
- African leadership and ownership;
- People-centeredness;
- Partnership between and amongst African people;
- Regional and continental integration;
- Building the competitiveness of countries and the continent;
- New international relationships;
- Linkages of Nepad to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other agreed development goals and targets[8].

Informed by these principles, the primary objectives are to be attained through a three-pronged strategy, which consists of establishing the necessary conditions for sustainable development (such as peace and good governance); policy reforms and increased investment in priority sectors such as agriculture and infrastructure; and increased mobilisation of resources by, amongst others, higher rates of domestic savings and investment, attracting foreign direct investment and increasing Africa's share of world trade[9]. Like the AU and existing regional groupings such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Nepad is based on the premise that solving many of the problems the continent faces requires harmonising domestic development policies and practices and exploiting the economies of scale inherent in adopting a regional rather than a national approach. Greater policy integration would further enhance the ability of the continent to assert its needs and interests on the world stage.

2.2 The Nepad Partnerships

Central to Nepad is the notion of new partnerships, in particular new partnerships between Africa and the rest of the world, and between African states and their people. The new partnership with the international community is conceived as one based on mutually beneficial exchange rather than on soliciting further handouts from the rich states of the world to the poor. The Nepad framework document makes it clear that what is envisaged is a paradigm shift away from the patterns of post-independence dependency: "Africans are appealing neither for the further entrenchment of dependency through aid, nor for marginal concessions"[10]. Wiseman Nkuhlu, Chairman of the Nepad Steering Committee, expresses this as a call for "a change in the donor/recipient relationship between the highly industrialised countries and multilateral development institutions on the one hand and African countries on the other…It calls for the relationship to be transformed into a genuine partnership based on mutual respect, responsibility and accountability"[11]. Nepad, according to this interpretation, should not be regarded *primarily* as a call for more aid and credit, though such issues are addressed, but as an attempt to establish long-term enabling conditions for increased trade and investment opportunities. Private capital flows, for example, are regarded as "an essential component of a sustainable long-term approach to filling the resource gap"[12]. In the Nepad vision, significant improvements in governance, driven by a new political will amongst the African leadership, will create the enabling conditions for a renewal of

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[8] ibid par. 5
[9] ibid par. 7
[10] 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development' par. 5
[11] 'Economic Outlook for Africa – Past, Present and Future' p. 11
[12] 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development' par. 150

entrepreneurial activity by African people and a concomitant increase in trade and investment on the continent[13]. The Nepad core documents are shaped by the recognition that there can be no development for the continent in isolation from the increasingly univocal rules of global politics and economics in the post-Cold War era, and that the required support from the developed world will only be forthcoming if governance improves. Nepad differs from previous African development initiatives, and this difference has contributed to its positive reception in the West[14], due to its adoption of the following pre-conditions for sustainable development:

- A shift from statism to markets and public-private partnerships as the drivers of growth and development;
- Competitive integration into the global economy, which would include export-orientated domestic production, diminishing tariff- and non-tariff barriers to imports, and the soliciting of foreign direct investment (FDI);
- The foregrounding of governance issues in securing positive developmental outcomes.

The call to establish and consolidate development partnerships between African states and leaders and their people acknowledges the fact that development initiatives, if they are to be successful, must be locally owned and people-centred. Domestic resources need to be mobilised and entrepreneurial activity increased as a prerequisite for international involvement. Nepad represents itself as an appeal to the African people "to regain confidence in their genius and their capacity to face obstacles and be involved in the building of the new Africa"[15]. This call to the African people takes us to the crux of the potential of Nepad as a vision of continental re-invigoration since it raises the question of the scope for civil society participation in its processes. What reasons are there to think that the Nepad appeal will cascade downwards and inform ground-level thinking and practice? To what extent will civil society participation be enabled and how significant will such interaction be in shaping policies and monitoring and evaluating implementation? These are essentially questions regarding the nature and scope of Nepad's participatory dimension, which will be addressed in section 4 with particular reference to the APRM.

2.3 The APRM

The APRM is the voluntary compliance and mutual learning mechanism of Nepad, available to all member states of the AU who wish to submit themselves to the review process. According to the formulation of the APRM base document its primary purpose is to "foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building"[16]. Peer reviews have four core focus areas: democracy and

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[13] cf de Gama and Links 'NEPAD: Objectives and Implications for Investment and Trade' for a useful discussion of the issues and challenges

[14] Amongst some commentators a positive reception in the West is grounds for suspicion given the typical Western lack of enthusiasm for previous African-owned initiatives; cf Adebayo Adedeji 'From Lagos to Nepad', P Anyang' Nyong'o, 'The Dilemmas of Progress in Independent Africa' and Anthony Baah "History of African Development Initiatives' for overviews of the issues from different perspectives

[15] 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development' par. 53

[16] 'The African Peer Review Mechanism' par. 3

political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and socio-economic development[17].

The concept of peer review and associated peer learning assumes that a non-coercive, gradual convergence of policy and practice in participating countries is preferable to attempts to impose 'desirable' policies on countries. However, the fact that the APRM is a voluntary mechanism has led observers to ask whether it can ever possess sufficient clout to enforce the governance improvements Nepad offers in exchange for greater integration into the global economy. For those arguing from such a perspective, the case of Zimbabwe is regularly used to demonstrate that, when push comes to shove, African elites prefer to cover up for each other rather than subject one of their members to substantive public criticism. It is argued that the peer review mechanism will never be stringent and penetrating enough to elicit governance improvements where they run counter to elite interests and, therefore, the APRM, and by implication Nepad itself, is doomed from its inception. According to Ian Taylor in his paper 'Zimbabwe and the death of Nepad', "The self-interest of African elites under threat from democracy (linked surreptitiously in their eyes to notions of good governance) should not be played down. Nor should notions of solidarity and resentment at perceived 'neo-imperialist' interference in the affairs of fellow African countries"[18]. While we would agree that Zimbabwe has been and seems likely to remain a test case for the ability of African leaders to enforce mutually agreed standards of governance, it is worth emphasising that Nepad has not been conceived, and cannot be regarded, as the principal Africa-owned mechanism for dealing with wayward states. Nor is the APRM as a voluntary peer review system with an emphasis on socio-economic considerations suited for such a role. Presumably one of the reasons political governance failures are left on Nepad's doorstep is the high profile it enjoys in the West, which should, however, not be taken as a reflection of its legal and institutional primacy over the AU. In an open letter to Jean Chrétien, the Prime Minister of Canada, South African president Thabo Mbeki, one of the Nepad architects, stresses the fact that Nepad is a programme within the AU, and that the AU is the primary organisation that unites the people of Africa[19]. He further makes the point that the AU has established, or is in the process of establishing, a range of institutions, such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and the African Court of Justice, which constitute justiciable obligations approved by member countries' parliaments and are therefore binding, enforceable claims on member countries. The peer review system "is not the only process available to the continent to ensure the implementation of its decisions"[20]. He further argues that subordinating AU institutions to Nepad would render such institutions inoperative and would rest on a misunderstanding of Nepad's purpose and mandate.

To date, 23 of the AU's 53 member states have signed the APRM memorandum of understanding which signifies their willingness to accede to the peer review process. Table 1 lists these countries. In addition, Zambia has recently expressed its intention to join. One might ask: what about those countries who haven't signed up? Ayesha Kajee of the South African Institute of International Affairs cites a number of reasons why they may be holding back. There are countries where governance failures are pervasive, if not institutionalised, and where the increased transparency and accountability that peer

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[17] 'Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)' par. 1.12

[18] 'Zimbabwe and the death of Nepad' p. 3

[19] 'Open Letter to Prime Minster Chrétien by President Thabo Mbeki'

[20] ibid.

review generates would be detrimental to those who benefit from the current state of affairs[21]. Further, some countries prefer to get their own house in order before acceding to the process. Others, such as Somalia, have been destabilised by war, and yet others have been in election periods and have preferred to shelve their reviews until after this. According to Kajee, many African leaders also still view the APRM with suspicion and fear that it will lead to an erosion of national sovereignty. Such perceptions point to a need for continued, widespread sensitisation of the APRM's aims and methods, particularly the fact that it has been conceptualised as a cooperative, mutual learning mechanism rather than a means of coercion. Lastly, the possibility exists that some African leaders are unhappy with the manner in which Nepad was conceptualised and drafted by a select few.

TABLE 1: Countries that have acceded to the APRM

Algeria	Cameroon	Rwanda	Malawi
Burkina Faso	Gabon	Senegal	Lesotho
Republic of Congo	Mali	South Africa	Tanzania
Ethiopia	Mauritius	Uganda	Angola
Ghana	Mozambique	Egypt	Sierra Leone
Kenya	Nigeria	Benin	

In addition to asking why countries would prefer not to accede to the APRM, we may ask what incentives there are for joining up. Clearly, in the most general terms, a country will join a voluntary mechanism if it believes it is in its best interests to do so. Two broad incentives can be distinguished. Firstly, where reviewed countries demonstrate a will to address their governance and developmental shortcomings, it will be "incumbent upon participating governments to provide what assistance they can, as well as to urge donor governments and agencies to also come to the assistance of the country reviewed"[22]. Participation in the APRM, in other words, may be tied to technical and financial developmental assistance. The second incentive for acceding to the APRM is its potential use as an evaluative device to determine preferred investment and aid destinations for investors, particularly foreign investors who may not have sufficient information when distinguishing between African countries and who consequently lump them all into the 'high-risk' category. If initial reviews are credible and technically competent, the APRM may provide investors with information on which countries are seriously committing themselves to improving their governance environment. Both incentives assume, however, that the APRM consolidates its legitimacy over the next few years in the perceptions of African and international leaders and governments. In this regard the base document indicates the importance of reviews being "technically competent, credible and free of political manipulation"[23].

The APRM consists of a series of country reviews, directed and integrity-assured by a seven-person *Panel of Eminent Persons*, coordinated by a secretariat, and conducted by a *Country Review Team* consisting of at least one member from the *Panel of Eminent Persons* and one technical specialist for each of the four governance areas under review. The four governance areas are democracy and good political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and socio-economic

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[21] Kajee quoted in 'A Challenging Road Ahead for the Peer Review Mechanism'
[22] 'Guidelines to prepare for and to participate in the APRM' par.26
[23] 'The African Peer Review Mechanism' par. 4

development[24]. In addition to the base review, which should take place within 18 months of a country's accession to the APRM[25], provision is made for:

- A periodic review which takes place every two to four years;
- A review specially requested by a member country for its own reasons;
- A review instituted by participating heads of state in response to early signs of impending political or economic crisis, in a spirit of helpfulness to the government concerned.

Allowance has also been made for a preliminary phase known as a country support mission, prior to the actual peer review, to help countries understand the process and principles involved.

Preparation for the initial base review country visit entails the completion of a desk-based background paper on the country by the APR secretariat and the completion of a Country Self-Assessment (CSA) and Preliminary Programme of Action (PPoA) by the country concerned. The CSA document requires of each country that it "carefully assess its own situation through a broad participatory process led by the government that results in a *programme of action* with time-bound objectives to guide all stakeholders in the actions required by government, the private sector and civil society to achieve the country's vision"[26]. On the basis of the CSA, the PPoA and the secretariat's background paper, the secretariat will draw up an *Issues Paper,* which will guide the actual country review process. The visits by the Country Review Team are intended to secure the "widest possible range of consultations with the government, officials, political parties, parliamentarians and representatives of civil society organisations including the media, academia, trade unions, business and professional bodies"[27]. In other words, the 'Guidelines' on the country visit explicitly indicate the importance of a substantive participatory dimension. Based on these consultations and the attainment of broad stakeholder consensus on how issues are to be addressed, the Country Review Team will compile a draft country report, which should:

- Take into account the applicable political, economic and corporate governance and socio-economic development commitments made in the PPoA;
- Identify any remaining weaknesses;
- Recommend further actions that should be included in the final Programme of Action[28].

The draft report is first to be discussed with the government concerned to verify the accuracy of the information and to give the government an opportunity to respond formally to the report. This response is to be appended to the team's report. From there the report will be sent to the APR secretariat, panel and forum of participating heads of state and government for "consideration and formulation of actions deemed necessary in accordance with the mandate of the APR forum"[29]. The final stage of the APRM process is the formal public tabling of the country report in "key regional and sub-regional

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[24] 'Country Self-Assessment for the African Peer Review Mechanism'
[25] Base reviews are being conducted or will shortly be conducted for the first round of APRM countries, namely Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda and Mauritius
[26] 'Country Self-Assessment for the African Peer Review Mechanism' par. 1.1.4
[27] 'Guidelines for countries to prepare for and to participate in the APRM' par. 22
[28] ibid. par. 23
[29] ibid. par. 25

structures such as the Regional Economic Commission to which the country belongs, the Pan-African Parliament, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the envisaged Peace and Security Council and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union"[30]. The timeframe between consideration of the report by the heads of state and government and its formal tabling should not exceed six months.

The APRM base documents emphasise that the country report must be clear about the:

- Requisite will on the part of the government to take necessary decisions and measures as conceived in the PPoA;
- Resources required to take corrective measures;
- Percentage of resources the government in question can mobilise domestically;
- Duration of the process of rectification, given the availability of current resources and mobilisation of additional resources[31].

The 'Guidelines' also address situations where the necessary political will is not forthcoming from the government, indicating that the first attempt to address this shortcoming should take the form of constructive dialogue as well as technical and other appropriate assistance. Where dialogue of this sort does not succeed in a change in the political determination to rectify government shortcomings, a last resort may be a move on the part of participating heads of state and government to "put the government on notice of their collective intention to proceed with appropriate measures within a given timeframe"[32]. The 'Guidelines' refer the reader further to the APRM base document, which expresses the hope that the interval after such notice will "concentrate the mind of the government and provide a further opportunity for addressing the identified shortcomings under a process of constructive dialogue"[33]. It may be assumed that in this interval various forms of 'quiet diplomacy' may also be utilised outside the more public processes of the peer review itself, but clearly no specific mechanisms for enforcing convergence exist within the APRM. This, however, is consistent with our understanding of the APRM as a *voluntary* peer review and learning mechanism, and refers us back to the manner in which President Thabo Mbeki distinguishes between Nepad structures and institutions and those of the AU. As will be discussed in more detail later, it also points to the importance of civil society engagement to prevent the reviews from being no more than a window-dressing exercise between governments.

3. What the People Think: Nepad and African Perceptions

3.1. Introduction

The Nepad vision is not the product of broad national consultation and regional deliberations, but was conceived and articulated by a few African leaders, unveiled initially in the West, and subsequently brought back and 'marketed' to the African people. We therefore cannot summarily assume that broad-based assent to and ownership of the vision currently prevails or will necessarily prevail in the future. The

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[30] 'The African Peer Review Mechanism' par. 25
[31] 'The African Peer Review Mechanism' par. 22
[32] 'Guidelines' par. 26
[33] 'The African Peer Review Mechanism'. We located the appropriate text in par. 24 rather than par 23. as indicated in the 'Guidelines'.

exclusionary manner of its conception has led Nepad to be accused of being an elite initiative, in some quarters, which is more likely to benefit governments and big business than ordinary citizens. It has even been accused of being little more than a 'home-grown' variation of the stabilisation and conditionality policies advanced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in their relations with African governments[34]. This section uses recent results from the 2002 Afrobarometer survey of 15 African countries[35] and the Centre for International and Comparative Politics' 2002 'African Elite Perspectives: AU and Nepad'[36], which provide an indication of how Africans currently perceive the impact of economic reforms and the responsiveness and social performance of African governments. The aim is to identify, based on selected current trends, some of the challenges which stand in the way of Nepad becoming a broadly-owned initiative whose benefits are shared. Though the 2002 round of the Afrobarometer survey does *not* explicitly ask respondents about Nepad or the AU, many of the results are relevant to our discussion. The African Elite survey, whilst addressing Nepad and the AU directly, is a survey of elites in government, civil society and business.

3.2 Survey Results

In section 1 we indicated that the Nepad vision encourages the adoption and further consolidation of market-orientated economic reforms. How do people perceive the general trend towards a reduction of government involvement in the economy under the banner of economic reform? The mean result for all 15 countries indicates 43% of respondents being either very satisfied or fairly satisfied with recent economic reforms, and 48% either not very satisfied or not at all satisfied. The remaining respondents either feel that government involvement in the economy has in fact not been reduced or don't know how they feel about this question. Kenyans (67%), Namibians (58%) and Tanzanians (57%) are significantly more satisfied than the mean with market-friendly economic reforms. The Kenya result must be viewed, as the authors point out, in the context of the then widespread political and economic optimism following the country's recent peaceful democratic transition. Dissatisfaction with economic reform is particularly marked (above 55%) in Cape Verde (69%), Malawi (59%), Nigeria (59%) and Senegal (61%).

The above results beg the question whether economic reforms have to date had a broad-based positive impact or whether the benefits thereof have tended to accrue to elites. The question is particularly significant for consideration of the degree of support

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[34] cf 'The African Civil Society Declaration on Nepad', July 2002, Port Shepstone, South Africa. Although it is problematic to conclude that the declaration represents the opinion of all or even most of civil society (as indeed it cannot be concluded that Nepad does), the declaration does articulate some of the central concerns of those civil society organisations who have typically been vocal in their criticism of the international financial institutions and their role in Africa. 'Nepad and FDI's: Symmetries and Contradictions' by Yash Tandon is a useful theoretical overview of some of these arguments with reference to Nepad

[35] The Afrobarometer survey for the 2002/2003 survey follows the first round of surveys conducted in 2001. Interviews were conducted with 23 197 randomly selected respondents in their first language by trained interviewees, with the number of people interviewed in any given country ranging from 1 200 to 2 400. Countries included were: Botswana, Cape Verde, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia

[36] The African Elite Perspective survey was carried out across seven African countries (South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria, Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe) and tests the opinions of 'opinion leaders' in the private sector, NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs), the public sector, academics, professionals and analysts, trade unions, politicians, the media and churches

Nepad can expect amongst the broad populace for two related reasons. Firstly, patterns of access to power and income change slowly and it is unlikely that Nepad would be able to achieve major improvements in the distributive patterns of a domestic economy in the short-term. Thus perceptions of these dynamics in the recent past provide a clue to the dynamics of the short- and probably also medium-term under Nepad. Secondly, even at low levels of income and opportunity, inequality (i.e. relative poverty) is often a more significant driver of social and political instability and exclusion than absolute poverty. Therefore, the extent to which recent reforms have increased or decreased perceived inequality are significant in determining the environment within which Nepad is to be realised.

Respondents were asked in this regard to choose between the views that their governments' economic policies have helped most people and hurt only a few or their governments' economic policies have hurt most people and benefited only a few. As figure 1 indicates, Mozambique is the only country where more people perceived government economic policies positively than negatively. Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia and Malawi demonstrate a particularly acute perception of the negative impact of government economic policies on most people: in all four countries, more than 70% of respondents concurred with this view.

Figure 1

Impact of government economic policies
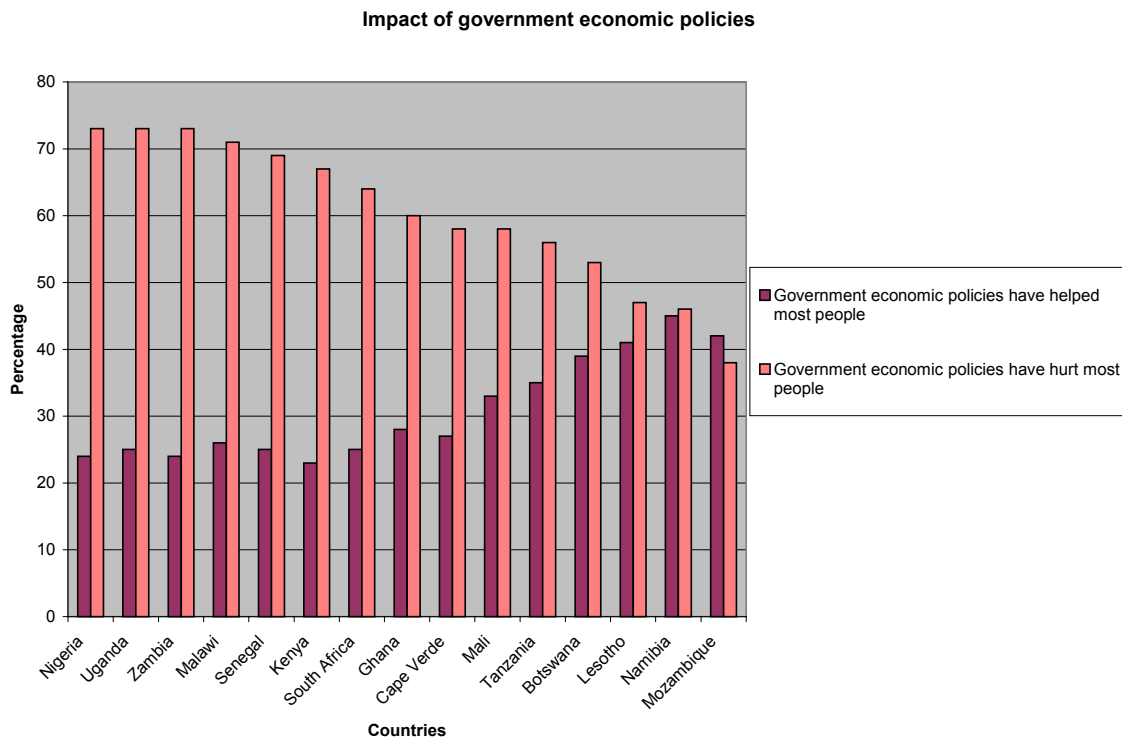
Within this context, what confidence is there that Nepad will improve the economic prospects of a particular country and the continent? The Elite Perspective survey found that, for all seven countries included in the study, there was above-average confidence among opinion leaders both in the ability of Nepad to "improve the economic prospects of Africa" and to "improve the economic prospects of a country", with confidence levels

seeming to vary positively with the extent to which respondents were from countries which had played a significant role in the drafting and design of Nepad[37]. Thus, for example, confidence in the initiative was highest in South Africa and lowest in Zimbabwe and Uganda. When the results are disaggregated into responses from civil society, politicians and civil servants, there appears to be a tendency for confidence in Nepad to be greater among politicians and civil servants than civil society, as can be seen from figure 2.

Figure 2

Confidence in Nepad to improve economic prospects of country / continent
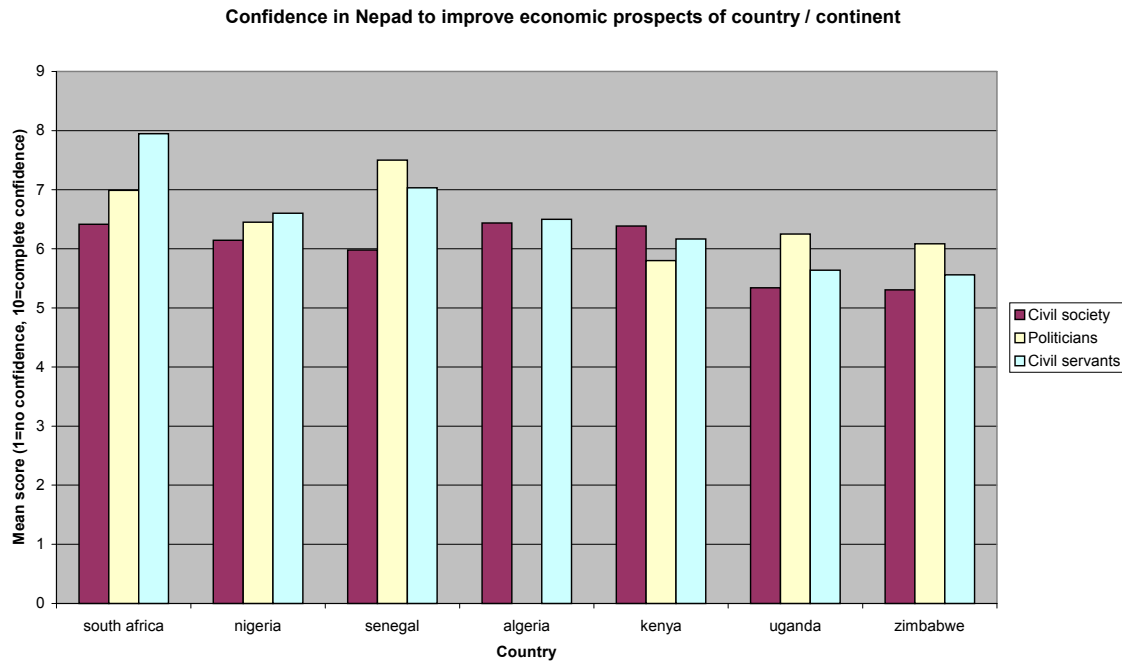
Given the often quite heated debates which have occurred around the political economic bias of Nepad, we may ask after the *kind* of government involvement in the economy preferred by African people. According to the Afrobarometer results, governments must firstly respect the rule of law in pursuing their goals: 82% of respondents agreed that governments must act lawfully in acquiring agricultural property, including paying the owner of the property, as opposed to the idea that governments should have the power to seize property without compensation. What also emerges out of a series of questions on economic policy preferences is the desire for a protectionist government that intervenes actively in the economy to safeguard domestic production and create further employment opportunities. There is moderate to strong support in the region as a whole for government buying and selling of crops (58%), for imposing tariffs to make imported goods more expensive and protect local producers (64%) and for promoting civil service employment opportunities even where economic efficiency may suffer as a result (70%). The tension between what appears to be a significant favouring of a large, protectionist government and the current theoretical 'consensus' in favour of smaller government and more open economies, a consensus which, we believe, also largely informs Nepad, prompts the question of the extent to which Nepad measures will receive broad-based endorsement.

[37] 'African Elite Perspectives: AU and Nepad' p. 47, 48

Although a narrow majority of respondents (52%) believe their current governments are managing the macro-economy fairly or very well, approval ratings decline when questions require respondents to reflect more specifically on aspects of the economy. Respondents were asked to evaluate their government's handling of the traditional internal macro-economic objectives of keeping prices stable, creating jobs and narrowing the gap between rich and poor. For each of the objectives, the majority of respondents indicated that their governments were handling these matters fairly or very badly, with a mean of 62% feeling this way for keeping prices stable, 65% for creating jobs and 66% for narrowing the gap between rich and poor. Only in Kenya and Mali do we find a majority of respondents believing their governments' performance in creating jobs has been accomplished fairly or very well. Only in Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda do a majority of respondents feel their governments are doing fairly or very well at keeping prices stable. In *none* of the 15 countries surveyed do a majority of respondents think that their government is doing fairly or very well at narrowing the gap between rich and poor.

How do the above results translate into Africans' perceptions of their economic circumstances under the current economic system, compared to the economic system of 'a few years ago'? Again, the identification of recent trends provides one useful context for the environment in which Nepad is intended to be realised. Respondents were asked to make this comparison with reference to the availability of goods, their standard of living, the availability of job opportunities and the gap between rich and poor. We find a mean majority (55%) indicating that the availability of goods is better or much better, with Ugandans (82%), Tanzanians (74%) and Namibians (74%) agreed on this. Readers may recall that Tanzanians and Namibians were also two of the three respondent groups (Kenyans being the other) who indicated a higher than mean degree of satisfaction with market-orientated reforms. However, when we compare standard of living, availability of job opportunities and the gap between rich and poor under the current system compared with a few years ago, we find the perception that all of these have deteriorated: a mean of 42% of respondents believe their standard of living is worse or much worse, as opposed to 40% who believe it is better or much better. Similarly, 60% of respondents believe job opportunities are worse or much worse as opposed to 23% who believe they are better. Lastly, 58% believe the gap between rich and poor is worse or much worse, as opposed to 19% who believe it has improved.

Figure 3 shows, for each country surveyed, both the percentage of respondents satisfied with recent economic reforms and the percentage of respondents who feel that economic circumstances are better under the new system than a few years ago. To measure the latter we have calculated the mean of the results for improvement in availability of goods, standard of living, availability of job opportunities and the gap between the rich and poor. One would expect these results to correlate quite closely, since the percentage of respondents satisfied with economic reforms should approximate the percentage of respondents who perceive improvements in what the economic system has done for them compared to the previous system. However, the graph significantly shows a consistent tendency for satisfaction with economic reforms to *exceed* perceptions of improvement in economic circumstances. This divergence is particularly apparent in Kenya, but is the case for all countries except Cape Verde and Mali.

Figure 3

Satisfaction with Economic Reform and Perceptions of Improvement in Economic
Performance
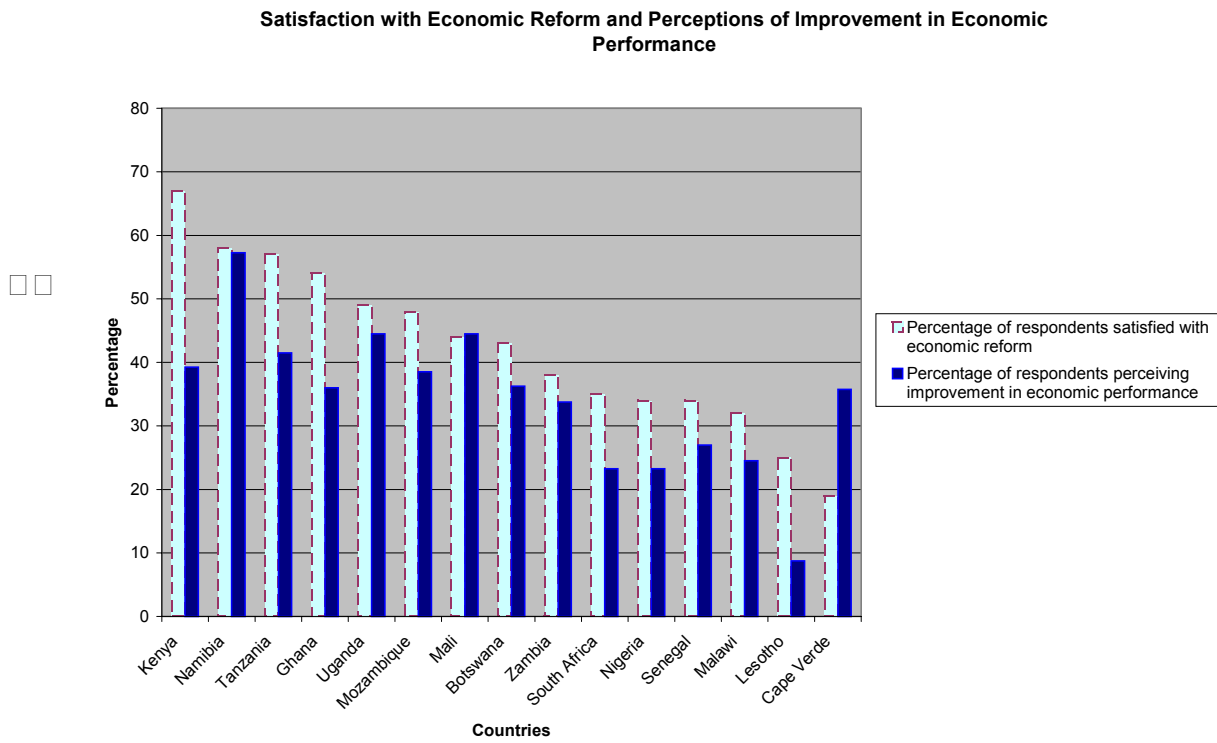
The conclusion we draw from this is that respondents, indicating their satisfaction with economic reforms, are responding as much, if not more, to what they believe such reforms can do for them in the medium- and long-term than to what they believe has already been achieved. This would really be another way of saying that economically a mood of careful optimism prevails, a statement borne out by the encouraging, fairly pervasive belief amongst respondents that personal and national economic conditions will improve in the 12 months following the survey. A mean of 54% of respondents demonstrate this optimism in personal economic conditions, whilst 53% believe the same for national economic conditions. Emanating from this restrained hopefulness is the willingness among many people to endure present hardships for the sake of greater future well-being: 57% of respondents agree that for the economy to get better in the future, it is necessary to accept some hardships now, as opposed to 31% who feel the costs of reform are too high and current economic policies should be abandoned. Figure 3 shows the extent to which the willingness to accept current hardships for the sake of economic improvement correlates with the ranking for a national economic mood index derived from selected responses to the survey questions. The mean economic mood index result has been assigned the index value 100. An index value greater than 100 therefore indicates that a country's national economic mood is better than the regional average, whilst a value less than 100 represents a national economic mood which is gloomier than the regional average. Countries with a high index value for national economic mood are, more often than not, also countries whose people are willing to take a more stoic, medium-term approach to development. There are, however, significant exceptions, such as Mozambique, where respondents are less willing to trade the

present for the future, and Ghana, where the willingness to look towards the future has a notably higher index value than the present economic mood.

Figure 4

National Economic Mood and Willingness to Endure Present Hardships
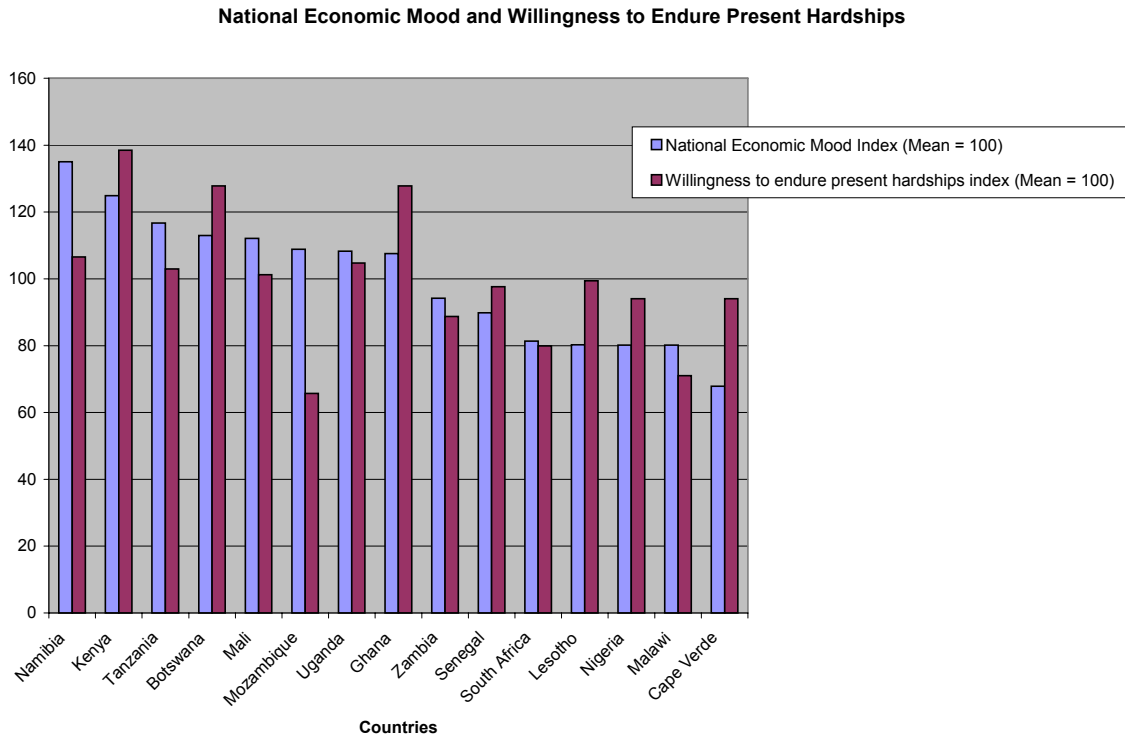

State responsiveness was measured by asking respondents to indicate how easy it currently is for them to obtain services such as a voter registration card, a place in primary school for a child, help from the police, household services (e.g. piped water, electricity, telephone) and a monetary transfer such as a loan or welfare grant. In most countries, obtaining a voter card and a place in a primary school for a child seem encouragingly easy. However, a mean of 43% of respondents find it difficult or very difficult to get help from the police when they need it, 48% find it difficult or very difficult to obtain household services and 45% find it difficult or very difficult to obtain a loan or other form of government transfer. These results need to be further contextualised by considering the significant numbers of respondents who indicated that they 'never try' to obtain the relevant services. On the assumption that respondents would 'never try' to obtain these services primarily because of the perceived futility of such an exercise, we find some disconcerting trends. Across the region, 66% of people either never try or find it difficult/very difficult to obtain help from the police when they need it, 73% either never try or find it difficult/very difficult to obtain household services and 84% either never try or find it difficult/very difficult to obtain a loan or payment from the government. Employing this assumption, help from the police would seem particularly hard to come by in Ghana (78%), Kenya (75%), Nigeria (80%) and Senegal (79%). Household services are difficult to obtain, again using the above assumption, in most countries surveyed: only in South Africa, Cape Verde, Botswana and Mozambique did *fewer* than 70% of respondents indicate they never tried or found it difficult/very difficult to obtain such services. Lastly,

South Africa is the only country surveyed where fewer than 70% of respondents (namely 65%) find it difficult/very difficult or never try to obtain a loan or other form of government payment.

The above results are, however, mitigated by an encouraging degree of satisfaction with government social performance in a broader sense, which would include the acceptability of policy measures and considerations beyond the personal experiences of respondents. Respondents were asked to indicate how well they felt their governments were handling educational needs, combating malaria, combating HIV/AIDS, improving basic health services, resolving conflicts between communities, delivering household water, reducing crime and ensuring everyone has enough to eat. Ensuring everyone has enough to eat is the only aspect of social performance for which a majority of respondents did not believe their governments were doing fairly or very well. If we calculate the mean scores per country for the aspects of social performance listed above, we can gauge the broad satisfaction within each country with social performance, which we present in figure 5. For the three countries which score lowest in terms of satisfaction with social performance, namely Cape Verde, Nigeria and South Africa, it is especially reducing crime and ensuring everyone has enough to eat that governments are perceived to be handling badly.

Figure 5

Mean Satisfaction with Social Performance
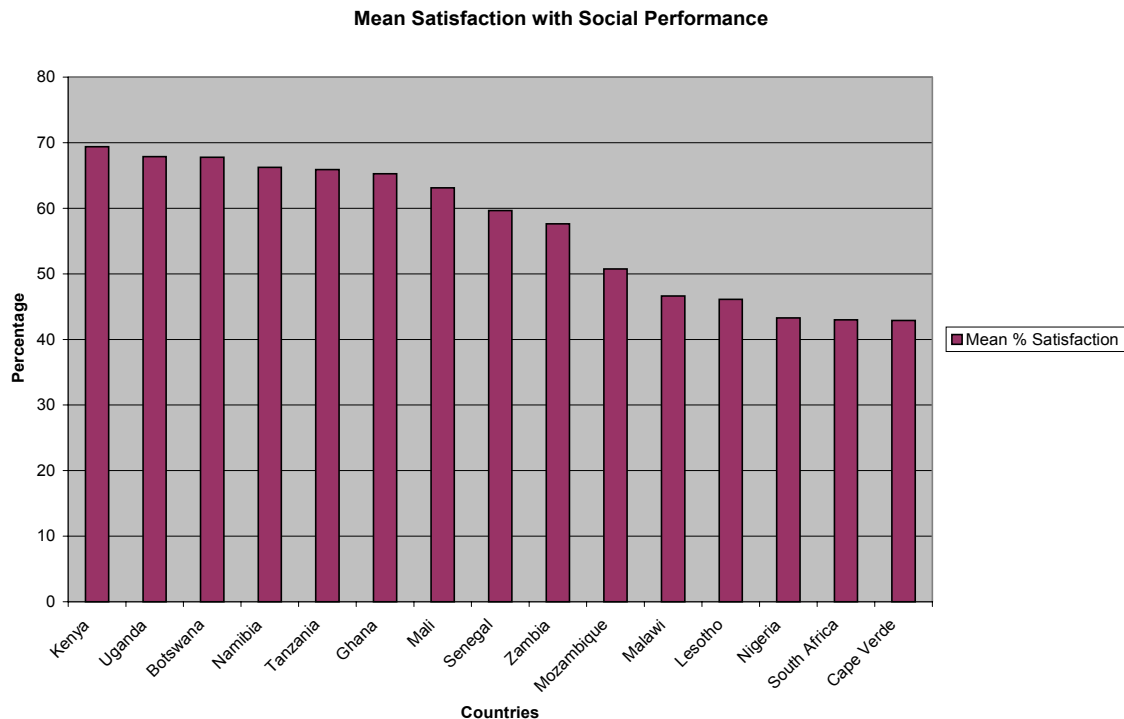
3. 3. Key Challenges arising from the Survey Results

From the survey results discussed above we extract the following key challenges and considerations which will play a significant role in the extent to which Nepad secures broad-based support and endorsement:

- Economic reforms, where they have occurred, have not necessarily had broad-based benefits and there is a marked, worrying perception that only elites have benefited. The fact that reforms have not had broad-based positive benefits is one explanation for the lack of significant support for market-based economic reforms. This has implications for the degree of assent Nepad will receive: if convincing trends do not make it clear that Nepad and national leaders are genuinely committed to people-based and people-driven development, then the perception of 'elite-bias' is likely to become further entrenched;
- A significant tension exists in many countries between the Nepad conception of the state and the large, active, even 'paternal' state many African citizens still seem to favour;
- Government performance in attaining internal macro-economic objectives has been disappointing; it is of particular concern that in *no* country surveyed does a majority believed its government had done very or even fairly well in decreasing the gap between rich and poor;
- With the exception of the availability of goods, respondents felt that their economic circumstances had not improved compared with the economic system of 'a few years ago';
- African states do not currently score well enough as far as responsiveness to their citizens are concerned: this will have to change if true partnerships are to be enabled between states and citizens and if improvements in social indicators are to accompany economic growth and macro-economic reforms;
- On the positive side, a mood of cautious hope currently prevails in many countries. This includes a willingness to endure present hardships for the sake of greater future wellbeing. However, such a mood won't last indefinitely. If Nepad does not help empower national governments to capitalise meaningfully on the current mood there may well be a disproportionate backlash of frustration, disappointment and disillusionment with those who govern, as well as with Nepad;
- There is moderate satisfaction with government social performance which reflects greater commitment of more democratic governance systems to the needs of citizens. This trend will have to be maintained and consolidated.

These selected survey results contain both worrying and encouraging trends. The danger exists that the institutional environment in many African countries currently benefits elites and that Nepad will merely enforce this tendency. The non-participatory drafting of Nepad in this context also leads to the question of whether it is too top-heavy to be truly responsive to ground-level needs or to receive ground-level assent and active endorsement. On the other hand, respondents' satisfaction with social performance is one indicator that many governments are doing well in the eyes of their citizens when it comes to meeting their basic social needs. We believe civil society participation in policy-formulation, monitoring and evaluation represents one crucial ingredient in any attempt to successfully resolve the outstanding challenges. In the next section we focus on the APRM and its approach to civil society participation and the challenges civil society is likely to face.

4. Civil Society Participation in the APRM

4.1. Why Civil Society Participation Matters

Firstly, civil society participation in development matters because it should be regarded as a democratic end in itself and participatory channels should not be seen as restricted to elections and parliamentary involvement. Secondly, there are strong grounds for believing that such participation is a means to, if not an indispensable requirement for, securing positive developmental outcomes.

On the assumption that even a decentralised governance system suffers from informational constraints which hamper effective policy formulation and the adaptation of policy to local circumstance, we can argue that civil society organisations are often well-placed to ameliorate these effects through their closer proximity to the intended beneficiaries of development policies. This argument is heightened by the fact that many civil society organisations represent marginalised individuals and groups who are consequently less able to influence policy. Civil society organisations can therefore make public spending on development more efficient, effective and equitable through influencing policy formulation as well as monitoring policy implementation and evaluating outcomes.

As a countervailing force to the public sector, civil society can also act as a necessary constraint on the power of government and facilitate governance improvements through its calls for, amongst other things, greater transparency and accountability. Without civil society participation and scrutiny it is unlikely that decision-makers and officials will consistently place the public good before their private good when confronted with opportunities for self-enrichment. Most broadly, developmental policies will not secure positive outcomes in the absence of wide-spread assent and support from civil society. Development on a large scale requires a shared sense of purpose and ownership amongst all stakeholders. Ownership and participation are two sides of the same coin and government attempts to implement policies without broad-based support and mobilisation of resources are likely to fizzle out into apathy or generate confrontational dynamics that undermine the achievement of development objectives.

From these general considerations we derive a number of reasons why civil society participation in the APRM process matters. Firstly, civil society participation is crucial to the *credibility* of the review process as it will help ensure that the review report represents a consensus of views on a country's quality of governance, rather than being limited to what the government in question would like to make public. In section 1 we mentioned that reviews could potentially act as screening devices for investment and aid: clearly strong incentives may exist for governments to 'sanitise' critical, negative stakeholder input if they are in a position to do so and to attempt to present a self-assessment which glosses over governance failures. Ayesha Kajee indicates that a "concern remains that a largely government-controlled process in the first countries to be assessed will culminate in a review that is neither credible nor independent… [this] would set a dangerous precedent for reviews in countries where corrupt governments could attempt to manipulate the APRM to 'whitewash' their governance problems by controlling non-government participation in the review"[38]. A number of the countries that currently acceded to the peer review are distinguished by poor governance, including corruption and over-centralisation of political and economic power. Ross Herbert makes

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[38] 'Nepad's APRM: A Progress Report, Practical Limitations and Challenges' p. 254

the useful point in this regard that "Peer review assumes that participants will act in good faith and that their development problems have risen from lack of resources and capacity. But that assumption is clearly false for several of the countries who have signed up…A rigorous peer review will, therefore, have to confront states that deny what is patently obvious: that the leadership knowingly violates the rules for self-enrichment"[39]. Civil society is potentially uniquely placed to act as a watchdog over political manipulation of the process. But, given how much could potentially be at stake, its meaningful inclusion cannot be taken for granted.

A related point which Herbert makes in the same article is that time, staff and resource pressures on the secretariat and the Country Review Team, resulting from the discrepancy between Nepad and APRM operating budgets and the intended *comprehensiveness* of the reviews[40], may create the temptation to rely on background papers and similar desk-based information, rather than an exhaustive process of actual consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. There may be a temptation to minimise probing and rely on official versions of 'the way things are'. Though depth will necessarily have to be sacrificed for scope and scope for depth at times, civil society needs to "remain watchful that monetary pressures do not force the APR Secretariat to cut corners"[41].

Civil society needs to use the informational advantages it may have in local circumstances and/or specific issues to add to the depth and range of the peer review. For example, completion of the CSA questionnaire for the core focus area of socio-economic development requires responses to questions such as:

- To what extent does the country have effective ownership of the orientation and design of national development programmes?
- What is the country doing to accelerate socio-economic development and achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication?
- What are the outcomes of the policies and mechanisms to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication?

Clearly responses to such questions would involve an interpretive dimension even in countries characterised by robust governance systems and sophisticated information gathering and processing systems. The fact that many countries who will be involved in the review process lack such systems underscores the importance of acquiring responses from a broad range of stakeholders.

Civil society has an important role to play, in other words, in contributing both to the credibility and informational quality of the peer review process. But more than this: peer review, understood as setting in motion a process of public discussion at country level, represents a window of opportunity for civil society to influence policy and translate policy into credible commitment. Though it would be naïve to think that the peer review process will induce massive governance improvements in no time at all, this does not mean that the process cannot lead to real changes within a meaningful time span. Given this potential, civil society needs to take up the challenge and ensure that the needs and

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[39] 'Becoming my brother's keeper' p.9

[40] By comparison, the OECD peer review mechanism, often cited as an example of a successful mechanism, limits itself to sector-specific reviews

[41] 'Becoming my brother's keeper' p. 10

interests of its constituents are adequately represented in the space for discussion opened up by the APRM.

4.2. How and Where to Participate

The 'Guidelines for Countries to prepare for and to participate in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)' articulates four responsibilities for a participating country's government. These are:

- To sign the APRM memorandum of understanding;
- To contribute fully to the funding of the APRM;
- To develop a national programme of action;
- To ensure the participation of all stakeholders in the process.

Our focus is on the third and fourth responsibilities. The 'Guidelines' link the establishment of a participatory and transparent national process with the establishment of a Focal Point for the APR process within government, and it has more recently been recommended that, at the domestic level, a National Co-ordinating Mechanism should also be established which would be responsible for undertaking broad-based consultation with all the relevant stakeholder groups. This process of consultation aims at securing civil society input and participation in the CSA, the PPoA and during the country team visit which will generate the final country report.

The CSA is the aspect of the peer review process which requires a formal assessment by a country of the quality of its political, economic, corporate and socio-economic governance. The CSA is intended to strengthen country ownership of the peer review as it requires domestic stakeholders to reflect on the current quality of governance, on measures taken to improve governance and on the success of those measures. The CSA is one of the internally generated documents which, in conjunction with the secretariat's background paper, determines the parameters of the governance issues to be discussed in the actual country review visit. Procedurally, the CSA document indicates the expectation that the APR focal point will "draw up a list of the stakeholders (government, private sector, civil society) that would participate in responding to the questionnaire" and then "distribute the entire questionnaire to all stakeholders through their representatives in the focal point"[42]. It also indicates that stakeholders would be invited to concentrate on sections of the questionnaire corresponding to their expertise or mission, but to "feel free to respond to any question in the other sections in which they desire to input"[43]. Responses need to be accompanied by supporting documentation and need to be submitted to the APR Focal Point within an agreed time frame. Once the APR Focal Point has received the stakeholder responses, it will "collate the responses, and consult with stakeholders to build a consensus response"[44].

The APR process allows for both a PPoA, which forms part of the preparatory phase to the actual country review visit, and a final Programme of Action. Clearly the CSA should inform the PPoA and should identify the governance shortcomings that inform the PPoA. The final Programme of Action is submitted after the country visit on the basis of the country report and the process of deliberation and discussion with the team on the basis of which it was formulated; it is regarded in the Nepad documents as the key input

[42] 'Country Self-Assessment for the African Peer Review Mechanism' par 2.1.2
[43] ibid par 2.1.3
[44] ibid par 2.1.5

delivered by the country into the peer review. In Table 2 we list the elements which, according to the 'Guidelines', the PPoA should include, and also offer some suggestions in the second column on what kind of participatory role civil society would be able to play regarding each of these elements.

<div align="center">TABLE 2: Programme of Action Content and Civil Society Role</div>

Programme of Action Content	Civil Society Role
Assessment of compliance with APRM Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators Discussion of major development and governance challenges facing the country	• Ensure that identification of challenges is credible and comprehensive and includes politically awkward ones, such as public sector corruption
Outline of priorities over short- medium- and long-term for the challenges discussed above	• Ensure priorities link clearly to challenges and the process of prioritisation is based on an attempt to maximise likely socio-economic development returns
Description of current ongoing efforts in this regard	• Contest interpretation of ongoing efforts if official versions do not acknowledge current governance failures in public sector performance
Clear, time-bound commitments on key governance and socio-economic development priorities for the next three years, including identification of key implementation stakeholders and estimated budgetary implications and allocations	• Ensure commitments are sufficiently clear and time-bound to generate accountability • Ensure commitments are informed by budgetary considerations (i.e. that they are more than a wish list) • Ensure identification of stakeholders is informed by an awareness of efficiency and effectiveness considerations and is conducted in a spirit of inclusivity
Description of national consultations that have taken place in compiling the CSA and the PPoA	• Ensure consultation report is accurate and reflects actual consultations • Comment, where appropriate, on the extent to which consultations were a genuine attempt to acquire information and input or merely to meet the procedural requirements of the peer review
Outline of feedback mechanisms and dissemination mechanisms	• Ensure these are substantive, clear and informed by a realistic awareness of current capacity
Description of capacity building and resource mobilisation requirements for the PPoA	• Ensure these are clear, quantitative and allow monitoring and accountability
Outline of implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the PPoA	• Ensure these are clear, informed by capacity-constraints and rigorous enough to enable accountability

It is crucial that the Programme of Action be informed by budgetary considerations if it is to be more than a wish list with little bearing on the real economic circumstances of the country and the real intentions and priorities of the government. Moreover, the discipline of having to align a PPoA with realistic estimates of domestic and external revenue will hopefully contribute to drafting a more realistic, and therefore more achievable, set of targets.

The purpose of the country visit itself is to carry out a wide range of consultations with stakeholders to "learn about the perspectives of the different stakeholders on governance in the country and to clarify the issues identified in the Issues Paper that are not taken into account in the preliminary Programme of Action of the country, and to build consensus on how these could be addressed"[45]. This articulation of the purpose of the country visit does explicitly take into account the possibility of divergences in interpretations of governance in the country (though in this case these are divergences between the synthesised PPoA and the Issues Paper compiled by the secretariat). But it offers little indication of how consensus is to be built and whether a superficial consensus is to be insisted on even where differences may be fundamental. In conjunction with the extreme time and resource pressure the Country Review Team is likely to be under, this makes it unlikely that in-depth discussions and negotiations between stakeholders will generate a true consensus where none existed before.

4.3 Challenges to Participation

Taken together, the CSA, PPoA and actual visit comprise various opportunities for civil society participation. However, significant challenges are likely to impede the realisation of these opportunities in practice in at least some of the peer review countries. We consider two broad challenges in this section:

- Awareness and ownership of Nepad;
- Civil society organisation participation limited to 'window dressing'.

The first challenge relates to the pre-conditions for meaningful participation in the self-assessment and the second to the internal process of finalising the self-assessment and PPoA. Implicit in our discussion, especially of the second challenge, is the notion of significant asymmetries of power between state and civil society in most if not all of the countries that have acceded to the peer review. We further assume, for at least some of the countries concerned, the existence of powerful domestic interest groups who are well-positioned to influence the process. They would have little reason for welcoming the additional scrutiny which active civil society participation would bring and would seek to limit its effects. Both challenges relate to the external institutional and informational environment. We do not look at one of the primary internal challenges civil society organisations face, namely their lack of capacity. The extent to which these challenges feature in particular countries can be assumed to correlate quite closely with the level of democracy in the country: therefore, these challenges will not be equally prevalent in all the countries which have acceded to the APRM.

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[45] 'Guidelines' par 22

1)   Awareness and ownership of Nepad

The first challenge to meaningful participation is the still fairly pervasive lack of awareness of Nepad among both government and civil society in many, if not most, African countries. It may not be an exaggeration to say that Nepad remains better known in the West than on the African continent. Lack of awareness of a vision constrains potential ownership of the vision. Two opinion surveys which provide more detailed information regarding awareness of Nepad are the Markinor survey conducted in 2002 which examines perceptions of Nepad amongst the broad South African population, and the 2002 survey on Nepad and the AU by the Centre for International and Comparative Politics of the University of Stellenbosch which drew its samples from opinion leaders in seven African countries and which we referred to briefly in section 3. A drawback to using 2002 survey results is of course that they will not reflect the effects of subsequent dissemination and outreach campaigns. On the other hand, the publicity which accompanied Nepad's inception has died down somewhat and it may be argued that those who were not made aware of Nepad during this period are not likely to be substantially more so now. Additionally, responses to the Elite Perspectives survey are disaggregated into social sectors and reveal informative trends which are unlikely to change over the short-term.

Kathryn Sturman points out that "the Markinor survey…found that knowledge of Nepad is very low among the general South African public"[46]. In fact, 80% of the 3 500 rural and urban adults surveyed "knew nothing at all about Nepad" and the majority of people polled were "unsure of whether Nepad could or would benefit them"[47]. These results gain added significance if we consider that South Africa is one of the originating countries of the Nepad vision as well as being its main funder. Where the Markinor survey polled ordinary South Africans, the Elite Perspectives survey focused on the perceptions of opinion leaders. For our purposes the most pertinent questions put to these leaders fall under the topic of 'Democratising Nepad' and the extent to which Nepad can be regarded as a 'genuine African programme'. With the exception of Zimbabwe, the majority of respondents in the other six countries agreed with the statement that 'It is only the ruling elite that is actively involved in promoting Nepad', with Uganda and Nigeria leading the way with over 70% of respondents agreeing in each case with the statement. When responses are broken down to facilitate a comparison between perceptions in civil society, the public sector and amongst politicians, we find that within civil society the perception that it is an elite initiative is significantly more likely than amongst politicians and the public sector[48].

In terms of the extent to which it is felt that Nepad embodies the economic aspirations of all Africans, a relevant question especially given the fairly exclusive manner in which Nepad documents were drafted by a few leaders, it is difficult to draw broad conclusions from the results. In South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Kenya significant majorities disagreed with the statement that 'Nepad is not a genuine African program'. Algeria was largely neutral, while in Uganda and Zimbabwe significant majorities agreed with this view. [49] These results, however, need to be contextualised by referring to the basis on which countries were selected for the study in the first place. South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal and Algeria were selected as countries whose presidents have been the main

[46] 'Nepad and civil society in South Africa' p. 36
[47] ibid p.36
[48] 'African Elite Perspectives: AU and Nepad' p. 53-57
[49] ibid p.57

drivers of Nepad and which have had a fair amount of exposure to the plan thus far. Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe were selected as 'outside' countries to allow for more accurate and detailed comparisons. In other words, there does seem to be a suggestion of a divergence in perceptions between countries whose leaders participated in the drafting of Nepad and those whose leaders didn't: the elites of three of the four 'participating' countries disagree with the statement that Nepad is not perceived as a genuine African programme, whereas the elites of two of the three 'non-participating' countries agree with this statement. The authors argue that "elites in Uganda and Zimbabwe feel largely alienated from the Nepad policy process, due to the fact that they were not included in the drafting of the policy"[50]. Such alienation, as mentioned in section 2, would also presumably constrain the willingness of countries to participate in mechanisms such as the peer review, both on the grounds of suspicion and the assertion of national pride and sovereignty.

Other less quantifiable indicators of Nepad awareness seem to support the general conclusion that awareness is still too low to set in motion the process of 'taking ownership' on the part of civil society. Thus, for example, reports coming back from Nepad civil society workshops indicate that general awareness of Nepad, even amongst organised civil society, remains low. According to the report of the October 2004 Nepad Civil Society Engagement Workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, it became clear during the discussion session that "there is still a lot of work required especially in the area of awareness creation on Nepad since many people still do not understand what Nepad really is. This was even evident when some CSOs requested a brief overview of Nepad so that they could be brought to the same level…The participants stressed the need for awareness creation up to the grassroots level in order to make all citizens informed about Nepad"[51]. The workshop took place in October 2004, suggesting that in the period since the 2002 surveys discussed above the awareness level has not changed significantly. The fact that many parts of organised civil society in Kenya are still uninformed about the content of the Nepad vision and the manner in which its processes are intended to work is revealing as Kenya has arguably made more progress than most countries as far as Nepad sensitisation is concerned. Thus, for example, along with Ghana, Mauritius and Rwanda, it is part of the first round of countries undergoing review. The communiqué by the APRM support mission to Kenya in July 2004 further commends Kenya for being a pioneer in setting up an APRM Focal Point, establishing an APRM task force, organising various consultative sessions on the APRM process and tools, and proposing to the APR secretariat a road map for the implementation of the APRM at national level[52].

In determining the reasons for what still appears to be a low level of Nepad awareness and ownership, care needs to be taken to distinguish between reasons emanating from inadequate dissemination and sensitisation efforts, and those emanating from distrust of or apathy towards the vision. The non-participatory nature of Nepad's drafting and initial unveiling has generated differences between countries and between societal sectors in countries in terms of their awareness and sense of ownership of the Nepad vision. Even if they have heard of it, many people may feel that a "grand, continental blueprint for Africa is of little relevance or interest to ordinary citizens"[53]: these are factors which will change slowly, if at all, and primarily in response to new opportunities for political, social

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[50] ibid p.56
[51] 'Nepad Civil Society Engagement Workshop: Workshop Report' p. 23
[52] 'Communiqué Country Support Mission to Kenya'
[53] 'Nepad and civil society in South Africa' p.40

and economic participation which Nepad opens up. There are costs to acquiring information, and individuals and organisations will only continue to do so when the perceived benefits outweigh the costs. Put bluntly: if Nepad starts helping, people will start owning. Further, inadequate dissemination of information about Nepad in many countries can and has been attributed to inherent factors such as the shortage of information and communications technology across much of the continent, the lack of dissemination focal points within both government and civil society in some countries, and the relatively small budget Nepad currently has at its disposal [54] for coordinating a continental blueprint and country governments have for communicating the content of a vision. But again we would regard the fundamental problem here not as one of resources, but one of incentives. The last decade and a half has seen a flowering of independent, sophisticated media in many countries: this could be a major channel for Nepad dissemination and discussion, but because people struggle to see how it will benefit them, country governments remain the primary groups involved in advocating Nepad[55].

The lack of awareness of Nepad seems to confirm the sense that Nepad is currently an elite initiative which will struggle to move out of its closed circuit of conferences, summits, consultants and communiqués. This raises the question of whether adequate pressure will be brought to bear on governments involved in peer review to ensure the likelihood of credible CSAs and programme commitments. In the absence of such awareness it is unlikely that civil society organisations will take up the 'window of opportunity'. Underlying this discussion is the broader question of the extent to which a continental initiative can ever be meaningful to ordinary people and civil society organisations focused primarily on domestic issues. We would emphasise here, though, that the peer review process is one meaningful instance of Nepad coming to inform and influence *domestic* issues. The benefits ordinary people are likely to derive from Nepad in the next decade will, in our opinion, be the result of governance improvements in especially the socio-economic development core focus area as a result of a peer review process which is credible and has real clout. And it is up to civil society organisations to raise awareness of the potential significance of peer review and coordinate their activities so as to engage effectively with it.

2)   Civil society as window dressing

Ravil Kanbur compares the APRM to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) peer review mechanism (on which the APRM is modelled in a number of significant respects) and asks why the OECD peer review has generally been perceived to be a success[56]. He indicates firstly that in the first phases, when information is gathered for the background paper and the CSA and draft PPoA, the "basic facts and analysis have to be gotten right"[57], but that a great deal will depend on the subsequent phase when the report is prepared and discussed with the government in question. We quote his comments in this regard at length: "The third phase is seen to be explicitly political, the final report involves negotiations and consensus building, but for this to work there has to be confidence that such negotiation has not already gone on in the

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[54] The 2003 / 2004 Nepad Annual Reports indicates, for the financial year ending 31 March 2004, total receipts to the value of US$7 575 417 and total payments to the value of US$9 722 354.
[55] 'African Elite Perspectives: AU and Nepad' p51 ranks, for each of the seven countries, groups according to the extent to which they are perceived to be advocating Nepad
[56] 'The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): An Assessment of Concept and Design' p. 6
[57] ibid p. 7

earlier phases, compromising competence and independence there. But a crucial aspect of the success is that OECD peer reviews enter an already rich domain of policy dialogue in a country. The peer review is not 'the only game in town' on which everything depends. If this was to be the case, then it is easy to see that there would be enormous incentives for political interference in the technical phases, and even the political discussion in the third phase would be poisoned by the amount at stake"[58]. The majority of African countries lack the richness of policy dialogue and available contestational space of OECD member countries. Most policy dialogue occurs behind closed doors within the executive or between the executive and multilateral institutions such as the IMF. Under such circumstances the APRM certainly may become, if not the only game in town, then one of the big games. If this were to happen then the APRM may face a potentially perverse, self-destructive logic where the more its credibility is established and its significance enhanced (i.e. the bigger the game becomes) the greater the likelihood that attempts will be made to manipulate it where possible by those who are in a position to gain from such manipulation. One of the checks against such manipulation is civil society. But equally, part of such manipulation would be the attempt to use civil society participation *not* as a countervailing force to government and business views within the peer review, *not* as an attempt to achieve real consensus, but to 'window dress' and legitimate after the fact decisions and assessments - in other words merely to meet the procedural requirements of the APRM. Though it would be counter-productive for governments, with the lens of the peer review focused on them, to explicitly banish or sideline civil society from the process, the real action may be elsewhere.

Even where there is no explicit intention to minimise civil society involvement, asymmetries of power are likely to influence the outcome of the peer review process under circumstances where consensus is not attainable between government and civil society over aspects of the CSA, the PPoA and other internally generated aspects of the peer review. Under such circumstances a great deal will depend firstly on whether and to what extent dissenting viewpoints are incorporated into the CSA and PPoA and on the nature of the interaction between the APR Focal Point, the Coordinating Mechanism and the Country Review Team. The 'Big Seven' Panel of Eminent Persons, one of whom must be part of each country review, exists largely to maintain credibility through their facilitation of this process, but informational disadvantages may constrain the scope of their involvement. Clearly a line has to be drawn somewhere regarding how much consultation takes place, and what exactly 'inclusivity' means and should mean will be worked out in the practice of the peer reviews, but civil society should be on guard against systematic exclusion of certain credible views and perspectives.

5. Conclusion

In their inception phases, large-scale development initiatives are characterised by a significant gap between what has been promised and what is being realised. Though notionally Nepad exists in its documents and communiqués, its structures and its players, and has existed now for some three years, its establishment at the level of concrete action and influence has barely begun. It is at this level that the true defining of Nepad, as well as the APRM, will unfold over the next few years. The fact that civil society has not played an active role in the drafting of the new partnership, the fact that certain aspects of Nepad have been contested from a political and economic perspective, and the fact that the last three years have primarily been taken up with

[58] ibid p.7

planning, strategising and conceptualisation does not, in our opinion, mean that civil society can either turn its back on its further unfolding or adopt a 'wait and see' approach. We hope that the preceding discussions have made it clear that civil society will have to *insist* on an active role in the CSA, PPoA, country visit and subsequent monitoring and evaluation. Though the Nepad documents articulate a strong participatory dimension, it will not be automatically bestowed on civil society in all the peer review countries.

Civil society organisations need to firstly ensure that they are informed regarding the broad Nepad framework and its unfolding and secondly that they know where their own country currently stands: has their government acceded to the APRM? If not, why not? If yes, for when is the country review visit scheduled? Will there be a preceding support visit? Who has been invited to take part? Who hasn't? These questions and many others like them require a determination to influence the process. Governments would be the first to assent to the notion that Nepad can, in the final instance, only be realised from the ground upwards, but giving flesh to that idea requires active civil society involvement which may be more difficult to secure.

For Nepad's 2005 and 2006 fiscal years, two country reviews are planned per quarter. In other words, the intention is that 16 countries will be reviewed in the next two years. Though this is, we believe, overly ambitious given Nepad and APR capacity, and the need to grant the process sufficient time for it to be regarded as credible, it does point out that the APRM process is likely to gather momentum and attract increased attention over the next few years. We suspect that the APRM may become the most publicised aspect of Nepad over this period. Civil society organisations in countries due for peer review need to ensure they have a strategic, coordinated approach to involvement and need to help ensure the credibility of the process. Civil society organisations across the continent need to scrutinise these processes to learn from them and help ensure that the reviews are, to repeat the words of the 'Guidelines', "technically competent, credible and free of political manipulation".

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