

SARPN Seminar
Ghana's Implementation of the APRM: Lessons Learnt
5th September 2005, Pretoria

With the start of the South African - African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) process in late September 2005, SARPN took the opportunity of inviting Professor Asante, a member of the Ghana's National APRM Governing Council, to share Ghana's experiences, frameworks and lessons learnt in their implementation of the APRM. Respondents were drawn from South African civil society and discussions included a focus on Ghana's successes and challenges; support of the APRMs and the costs of the process.

The APRM have the objective of fostering policies, standards and practices leading to political stability, high economic growth and sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration. The APRM is seen as having established a new sentiment in the areas of governance, transparency and accountability among African governments, accelerating progress towards the adoption and implementation. Ghana, (alongside Rwanda), has been the first country to operationalise the APRM.

SARPN hosted a seminar with **Professor S.K.B Asante**, Member of Ghana's National APRM Governing Council, speaking on "**Ghana's Implementation of the APRM: Lessons Learnt**". Respondent were **Dr. Khabele Matlosa** from the Electoral Institute of Southern African and **Ms. Ayesha Kajee** of the South African Institute for International Affairs. The meeting was chaired by **Ms. Sue Mbaya**, Director of SARPN.

Professor S.K.B Asante, Member of Ghana's National APRM Governing Council

Professor Asante gave a detailed overview of the Peer Review Process undertaken in Ghana between March 2004 and March 2005 when Ghana presented its report to the NEPAD APRM Secretariat. The Ghana government established within its Foreign Affairs Ministry a division of regional integration (which focused on ECOWAS) and NEPAD in 2003.

When preparing for the APRM, the Ghanaian government, as one of the two front-runners alongside Rwanda, faced the challenge of un-chartered waters. There was extensive political support for the process as indicated by the establishment of a 7 member APRM Governing Council. The Governing Council was made up of respected non-state actors drawn from civil society, religious leaders and the public. It was set up following much public consultation with the purpose of providing leadership to the APRM process. Factors that were key to the success of the Governing Council included its independence from the government, the transparent nature of member selection and the size of the council.

A small administrative and technical team staffed the APRM Secretariat. Once the Secretariat was established there were substantial challenges to implement the Peer Review Process. These challenges included the operationalisation of the questionnaire, inclusion of stakeholders, establishment of independent institutional support and ensuring the inclusion of organisations that were representative of society. This resulted in the establishment of four Review Teams. These were independent organisations that fulfilled the criteria of technical capacity and representation. These teams were tasked with coordinating the reviews of the four focus-areas of review under the APRM. Their terms of reference included administering and analysing the results of the consultation process. The organisations and their areas included:

1. Governance: *Centre for Democracy and Development*
2. Economic Governance: *Centre for Policy Analysis*

3. Corporate Governance: *Private Enterprise Foundation*
4. Socio-economic Development: *Institute of Statistical and Economic Research*

Professor Asante gave a brief overview of the methodology which had informed the implementation of APRM in Ghana and the manner in which the Review was conducted. This was divided into four methodological approaches:

1. Pre-field methodology
2. Field methodology
3. In-house methodology, and
4. Post-field methodology.

The methodology varied according to the different stages of the review, and was considered to be critical to ensure credibility and transparency of the review and public acceptance of the results of the review.

Ghana's National Self-Assessment Report was analysed by all stakeholders including government. The final product comprised of the Consultative Report, four major appendixes on each of the areas and a Programme of Action. Following the delivery of the outcomes to the APRM Secretariat a 14 member country review mission visited Ghana and ascertained that the national Review Process was technically capable and free of political manipulation.

At the Third Summit of the APRM Forum in June 2005, the APRM panel presented the reports of Ghana and Rwanda. The Summit gave Ghana an opportunity to presents its:

1. Programme of Action
2. Priorities of implementation of the Programme of Action
3. The Programme for implementation
4. The Human Capacity and Institutional Needs for implementation and,
5. Programmes to establish a monitoring programme for the Programme of Action.

The final stage of the APRM will be making the country report public. Professor Asante asserted that it was the political commitment within Ghana that made it a success, and that the Review drew Ghana one step closer to achieving regional growth and development.

Ms. Ayesha Kajee of the South African Institute for International Affairs.

Ms. Kajee commended the work of Ghana and gave an overview of the work in which SAIIA has been involved in providing support and evaluations of the in-country Peer Reviews. She touched on the difficulties faced in Kenya, in spite of a fairly independent process in place, which followed much of the Ghana model. Delays in the process came as a result of focus being placed on the Constitutional Review Process and controversy regarding utilisation of funds by some civil society actors in the Process. In her view, the important lesson to draw from Kenya is that the process was perhaps too independent which allows for dissent from within which derailed the process.

In Mauritius, SAIIA had met with stakeholders to gauge the sentiment regarding the Review Process. Criticisms that arose included the lack of donor support of the process towards civil society. Ms. Kajee felt that there was a need for civil society to see their existing work as feeding into the Process. The first report submitted by Mauritius was send back by the Secretariat.

The observation of SAIIA was that Peer Review in Rwanda has been largely government controlled. There was therefore a need for increased civil society participation, although it was also important to recognise the developing nature of the civil society in Rwanda in which an environment of fear was evident. Government's presence, in her opinion, inhibited the free flow of information.

Ms. Kajee felt it was important that all actors ensured that the country reports were made public (the 5th stage of the process) and that the governments were held accountable for both the report and their Programme of Action. Ms Kajee ended her presentation with a question to Professor Asante on the cost of implementing the Programme of Action within the APRM.

Dr. Khabele Matlosa from the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa

Dr. Matlosa supported Professor Asante's statement that the APRM was one of the most innovative aspects of NEPAD and key to the future of the continent. The four reasons for this being that the APRM process was likely to drive the African Renaissance process; the APRM would institutionalise democratic governance; bring about economic renewal and would likely help our leaders realise the objectives of NEPAD concretely.

Within the 14 countries of SADC only 9 had acceded to the APRMs. Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Madagascar and Namibia had not signed which raises the question of political commitment to the APRMs. Dr. Matlosa felt that the lesson to be drawn from Ghana's experience have been the extensive participatory process that ensured national dialogue and awareness; the process was nationally owned and stakeholders were able to consult each other at every stage.

Ghana was also a good example of various levels of methodology which impacted the quality and legitimacy of the report. Regarding the Programme of Action, the challenge was how to implement it. Ghana's local and national institutions have been mandated with the Programme of Action that they will implement and develop. It was crucial to ensure that countries owned their own Programmes of Action, which would inform on their development programmes and implementation. The final lesson to draw from Ghana was its commitment to regional integration, which was not the case in SADC.

Discussions

Dr. Kouassi, director of the APRM Secretariat, made a few points of clarification: Firstly, that the Mauritius Peer Review had been sent back because it lacked the Programme of Action; Secondly, he challenged the impression of the APRM as a scorecard as apposed to the idea of a peer review. The Peer review mechanism was not intended to reprimand a government, it was to review the good and bad practices and to identify the best practices so that Africa as a whole could have better governance and development.

The discussion looked at the costs of the implementation of the Peer Review and the subsequent costs of implementing the Programme of Action. Professor Asante clarified that they were still awaiting the final outcome of costs for the Peer Review but made very clear the point that the cost of implementing the Programme of Action was a short, medium and long-term plan which would be absorbed within all national development plans and ministries. He identified difficulties in creating awareness and the role of the media as key challenges to the process.

The participants highlighted gaps in the APRM, which included the measurement of distributive economic gain and national ownership of natural resources. Comments from the participants included the need to acknowledge external forces and influences that drive government's actions or policies such as the conditionality of the World Bank and IMF. Professor Asante maintained that resources were required to implement the process and the Programme of Action. Internal resources should be prioritised at the same time the door should not be closed to outside contributions.

Dr. Stals, a member of the panel of eminent persons and chair of the Ghana country-visit Peer Review Team, gave a brief remark on the role of the panel and the political will of the

Ghanaians towards the process. Dr. Stals warned against creating a template on the basis of the experience of Ghana recognising that each country had different capacities and situations to take account of.

There was a strong sentiment that the regional commitment of ECOWAS was a key dynamic and that there were many APRM signatory countries that were looking to Ghana for lessons learnt and best practices within the sphere of public participation and the overall Review Mechanism process.

Ms. Sue Mbaya concluded the seminar by highlighting some key challenges that had been identified in the course of the discussions:

1. The positioning of the focal point for the ARPM and the need to balance independence with the reality of delivery
2. The importance of careful selection of specific individuals to run with the National APRM process
3. The challenge of gaining government support for NEPAD as a whole and specifically a commitment to the APRM which is still outstanding from some member states in the SADC region
4. The challenge of diversity and the danger of the template approach to the APRM.