

THE AFRICAN UNION AND PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS, UNDER THE NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD)'S AFRICAN PAIR-REVIEWED MECHANISM

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***Abstract:** This paper examined the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)'s African Pair-reviewed Mechanism (APRM), which has been touted as a panacea for the continent's governance woes. The APRM, as a reform tool is one of the most innovative initiatives established under the auspices of the NEPAD. The main objective of the APRM is to foster the adoption of standard and best practices for political stability, sustainable development and economic integration through experience sharing between member states. It was designed to improve the quality of life of Africans, establish efficient and effective management systems, promote accelerated growth and ensure responsiveness and increased accountability, as well as reposition the continent in the international arena. However, despite the tremendous efforts and resources allocated, the results have remained unimpressive. The concepts of public sector reforms and APRM were examined. Data collected through secondary sources were critically analyzed, using indicators such as; level of awareness created, availability of human and material resources, etc. The findings showed that certain factors had negated the impact of the reform. The paper argues that if the APRM reform tool is to be effective, those factors must be removed. It proffered some solutions, to fill the gaps.*

Keywords; NEPAD, APRM, Reform, Development, Programs, Efficiency, Effectiveness

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INTRODUCTION

Africa entered the new millennium with optimism for a glorious future devoid of the experiences of the past decades, which were characterised by political instability, military coups, one-party government, dictatorships and the heightened influence of Cold War politics in African affairs. In addition, the continent was faced with economic crisis – huge foreign debts and decline in socio-economic development. The woes in continent were captured in the NEPAD's document that stated;-

In Africa, 340 million people, or half the population, live on less than US\$ 1 per day. The mortality rate of children under 5 years of age is 140 per 1000, and life expectancy at birth is only 54 years. Only 58% of the population have access to safe water. The rate of illiteracy for people over 15 is 41%. There are only 18 mainline telephones per 1000 people in Africa, compared with 146 for the world as a whole and 567 for high income countries' (NEPAD, 2003).

In response, according to NEPAD (2010), African governments designed a series of pan-African development approaches which were supposed to be relevant to the needs of their people. These initiatives included: the Lagos of Action (1980), the Final Act of Lagos (1980), Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (1986-1990), the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programme (1989), the African Charter for Popular Participation and Development (1990), the Abuja Treaty (1991) and the Cairo Agenda (1994) amongst others. Unfortunately, none of these projects delivered the desired result. Africa was faced with the failures of these plans, the ills of the structural adjustment programmes and the falling growth rates, when other regions such as Asia were on the rise. Consequently, African leaders began to call for a re-birth for Africa in the mid-1990s.

Herbert and Grudz (2008) stated the turn of the millennium saw African leaders themselves, beginning to acknowledge publicly that governance is intrinsically important, and not just because outside powers say so. There was the recognition that what happens internally in states and how governments rule, regulate and relate to their citizens are vital for peace, development, growth and prosperity. Moreover, Africans themselves needed to 'own' and drive this process. Grudz (2009) opined that the expansion of democracy increased public debate and demands for transparency and accountability. While autocratic leaders in the past focused resources on their pleasure and power, increased calls for democratic governance focused attention on the idea that state resources should be used wisely for the public good rather than private goals.

In that circumstance, some African leaders launched the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as a blueprint for the continent's renewal. The doctrine of non-interference gave way to the policy of non-indifference, the recognition of an obligation not to ignore the plight of one's neighbours. The moribund Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was replaced with the African Union (AU), which for the first time embraced democracy and rejected undemocratic seizures of power. NEPAD was born at a time when the debate about the 'African Renaissance' (African Rebirth) was taking the centre stage. Furthermore, the NEPAD initiative, according to its proponents, is a holistic initiative which includes a comprehensive plan of action for extricating the Continent from her problems of economic stagnation. It was a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path

of sustainable growth and development, as well as to participate actively in the world economy and body politics.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was the result of two parallel initiatives. The first was the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan (MAP), led by Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria. MAP sought to spur changes through the adaptation of economic reforms, strengthening democracy and eradicating conflict, in partnership with the international community, but with African ownership. The second initiative was the Omega Plan, crafted by the President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, and presented to the Summit of Francophone African leaders in Cameroon in January 2001. MAP and the Omega Plan were then combined to give birth to a third initiative the New African Initiative (NAI), which was later, renamed the NEPAD by African Heads of State and Government of the OAU in 2001, but was ratified by the African Union (AU) in 2002, so as to address Africa's development problems (Killander, 2008). NEPAD's main objectives are to reduce poverty, put Africa on a sustainable development path, halt the marginalization of Africa, and empower women. The NEPAD framework document identifies a vicious cycle, in which economic decline, reduced capacity and poor governance reinforce each other, thereby confirming Africa's peripheral and diminishing role in the world economy (NEPAD, 2007).

To address this vicious cycle and bad governance in July 2002, the Durban AU summit supplemented NEPAD with a Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. It also adopted the APRM Base Document simply called the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a document setting out the stages of peer review and the principles by which the APRM should operate (APRM, 2002). In Abuja, Nigeria, in the year 2003, the Memorandum of Understanding on the African Peer Review Mechanism was signed by Algeria, Congo-Brazzaville, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda as acceding nations. Countries not acceding to the document are not subject to review (Herbert and Grudz, 2008). The APRM is a mutually agreed instrument for self-monitoring by the participating member governments. The overarching goal of the APRM is to encourage participating states to adhere to policies, standards and practices that promote political stability and economic growth. The APRM is to foster the adoption and reinforcement of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development, accelerated integration through the sharing of experiences, identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building. By signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the APRM Panel, each participating country voluntarily accept to undergo an assessment of the state of its national governance standards and practices and then draw on the common experiences of its peers in improving upon those standards and practices.

Despite the huge benefits envisaged in the APRM document, the reality on the ground especially from the experiences of the Pioneer countries reviewed, showed a significant

gap between what has been promised and what is being realised. It was discovered that although NEPAD's APRM exists notionally in its documents and communiqués, its structures and its players, for many years now have not established its operations at the level of concrete actions and influence (Ashaye, 2013). Ashaye, (2013) noted that the APRM had been plagued by financial and logistical challenges, stalled peer reviews and an occasionally negative public perception. Africa is still ridden with many challenges in the governance of most countries. Even the countries that have undergone their first reviews, for instance, Nigeria are not comparatively better than their pre-review-status. They are struggling with issues of bad governance, endemic corruption encouraged by the culture of impunity, political instability, poverty, low mortality rate, low capacity utilisation, among others. This study was therefore aimed at assessing the impact of the NEPAD's APRM, based on the review of some of the first acceding countries, highlighting the challenges and proffering solutions to fill the gaps.

THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS

The public sector comprises a number of institutions who make and implement decisions with regard to interests of various kinds. Its basic functions is to provide goods and services to citizens based on the realization and representation of public interests and its possession of unique public qualities compared to business management (Haque, 2001). The effectiveness and efficiency of a country's public sector is vital to the success of development activities, Sound financial management, an efficient civil service and administrative policy, efficient and fair collection of taxes, and transparent operations that are relatively free of corruption, all contribute to good delivery of public services (IEG, 2013).

Schacter (2000) defined public sector reform as "strengthening the way the public sector is managed". According to Omoyefa (2011), the presupposition was that things are not properly managed in the public sector, that unnecessary wastages have crept into the ways the public sector is being run and that too many people are doing poorly what few people can do efficiently. So changes from the old way of doing things must take place. Public sector reform calls for a new public management style of achieving results in place of the old traditional procedures. To this end, there is an evolvment of a deliberate policy as well as action to change organizational structures, processes and people's behaviour as a way of improving Government administrative machinery for good performance at optimal level (Omoyefa, 2011). The overall goal is the attainment of improved excellent performance in public sector management. Public sector reform is regarded as the total overhauling of Government administrative machinery with the aim of injecting real effectiveness, efficiency, hard core competence and financial prudence in the running of the public sector (Mhone, 2003).

Historically, in the early 1980s when the structural adjustment programmes began to take hold, the public sector was consciously targeted for attack by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It was considered as over-bloated, inefficient, and

distorted, as well as being the source of the deficit-spending that fuelled inflation and underdevelopment in the continent (CODESRIA, 2007). OECD (2002) noted that in Sub-Saharan Africa, Public Service Reform (PSR) had evolved over time. However, the public sector in Africa was not able to perform effectively because of challenges bordering on the accumulation of excessive power, lack of accountability and representation, indifference towards public needs and demands, official secrecy and inaccessibility. Garnham (1990) stated that the issues of ineffectiveness, economic crises and the experiences from the success of some market-friendly economies, moved African leaders to redefine the role of the public sector. OECD (2002) stated that the first wave covered the mid-80s to mid-90s. Its distinctive feature was its focus on restructuring the public service. This has been aptly described as the structural reform wave. It emerged from the macroeconomic and fiscal reforms that were embedded in structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) sponsored by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The second wave was dominant in the late 1990s. Its trait was capacity building. Public service reform then sought to make Government affordable and lean through cost reduction, especially by way of rationalising the machinery of Government, divesting non-core operations, retrenching redundant staff, removing ghosts' workers from the payroll, freezing employment and the adaptation of measures to control the wage bill and other personnel-based expenditures. The third wave started about 2000, with the particular objective to underline improved service delivery. This phase was birthed due to the global surge in the 1990s, which provoked demands for good governance. The voices of transparency, integrity and accountability demanded from the public service improved service delivery and demonstrable value-for-money in public expenditures. It included the fight against corruption, the observance of meritocratic principles in human resources management, and greater participation from civil society (OECD, 2002). It is such pressures that hastened the introduction of Result-Oriented Management (ROM). This paradigm tended to provoke serious attempts by Public Sector Reform Programmes (PSRPs) to impact on the role of the state in promoting private sector development and foreign investments. They de-emphasised the role of the state in favour of the private sector in the socio-economic life of the countries concerned. World Bank (1997) referred to the phenomenon as 'rolling back the state', or 'withdrawal of the state'. Underpinning these reforms was a search for efficiency and effectiveness in the face of dwindling resources. They were stretched in most cases to a general crusade to reorganise and modernise the public sector, including the civil service (World Bank 1997).

These changes have their political and ideological underpinnings in the rise of neoliberal economic thinking and conservatism in both the UK and US in the late 1970s and 1980s, which were reflected in the strategies of the IMF and the World Bank towards a more liberal market-oriented ideology (Collins 2000). This included demands for a smaller but more efficient and effective public service. In the process of the reforms, management techniques from the private sector were imported into the public service such as 'programme, planning and budgeting systems' (PPBS), performance-related pay, 'management by objectives' (MBO) and contract-based appointments (Batley 1994).

According to Edigheji (2008), the recent global economic meltdown reinforced the correctness of the need for a new approach to development. The paradigm shift in development thinking is evidenced by the adoption of the millennium development goals (MDGs) initiated by the United Nations and adopted by the NEPAD. Significantly, the NEPAD, APRM and AU objectives are cognizant of the fact that good governance, peace and security are necessary conditions for development. While political leaders in Africa have committed themselves to these goals and objectives, they are yet to truly translate these into concrete sustainable national policies. Therefore, their national social, economic and political policies remained largely at discordant tune with the goals of the reforms.

THE CONCEPT OF THE AFRICAN PEER-REVIEW MECHANISM

According to Assefa (2011) The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a process for assessing political, economic, and corporate governance and socio-economic development in participating countries. The aim is to prompt states to draft a national program of action to remedy identified governance deficiencies. The APRM is a mutually agreed instrument voluntarily acceded to by AU member States as an African self-monitoring mechanism. The APRM is often described as Africa's unique and innovative approach to governance with the objective of improving governance dynamics at the local, national and continental levels. Furthermore, Assefa (2011) stressed that the APRM constitutes one of the most ambitious and innovative governance exercises undertaken in Africa, which provides important opportunities for public policy dialogue. Its approach is unique in both scope and breadth. The initiative is the first of its kind in Africa, and marks a paradigm shift. The APRM is a practical instrument for advancing good governance on the continent (Killander, 2006). Mathoho (2002) views Peer review as the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states (peers), by designated institutions, or by a combination of states and designated institutions. There is an ultimate goal of helping the reviewed state to improve its policy-making capacities, adopt best practices, and comply with established standards and principles. A peer examination is typically conducted on a non-adversarial basis, and relies heavily on mutual trust among the states involved in the review, as well as their shared confidence.

For many years African states relied on wealthy nation states outside the continent to solve their governance problems. Now however, African leaders are apparently taking it upon themselves to squarely face these challenges and deal with their own problems. African leaders have begun to realise that political order and progress on the continent will not be possible without the formation of partnerships amongst themselves. Historically, accountability on the continent has been directed towards donor countries and agencies. In the early days of NEPAD and the APRM, African States were still focused on solidifying external relationships. Operating the laudable goals of the APRM was seen as a demonstration of their commitment to democratic principles and good governance. This justifiably brought on criticism that the APRM was a disguised externally-driven

agenda, and not the result of a home-grown initiative (Killander, 2006). But there is now a shift in the right direction. The effectiveness of a peer review relies on the influence and persuasion exercised by the peers over each other during the process. The heads of state who are participating in the APRM accept that peer pressure will be exercised in order to encourage improvements in countries' practices and policies in compliance with agreed international best practices. But peer pressure does not take the form of legally binding acts backed up by sanctions or other punitive measures; it also lacks enforcement mechanisms. Instead, it is a means of soft persuasion, which can become an important driving force to stimulate a state to change, achieve goals and meet standards.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was drawn up on the basis of this new thinking to drive Africa to recovery. NEPAD's architects perceive the APRM as a positive attempt to encourage states' commitment to good governance (Akinrinade, 2002). But not everybody shares this optimism around NEPAD and the APRM. Many critics still argue that these reform instruments are just positioned to advance a Western-led agenda and will, therefore, fail to meet the needs of Africans.

THE THEMATIC AREAS OF THE APRM

According to APRM, (2003) The APRM process looks at four focus areas referred to as the Thematic Areas as follows;-

- a. **Democracy and Good Political Governance:** This thematic area looks at ensuring that the respective national constitutions reflect the democratic ethos and provide for demonstrably accountable governance and that political representation is promoted, thus providing for all citizens to participate in the political process in a free and fair political environment.
- b. **Economic Governance & Management:** Good economic governance including transparency in financial management is an essential pre-requisite for promoting economic growth and reducing poverty. In view of this, there are five key objectives pursued namely:
 - i. Promote macroeconomic policies that support sustainable development
 - ii. Implement transparent, predictable and credible government economic policies
 - iii. Promote sound public finance management
 - iv. Fight against corruption and money laundering
 - v. Accelerate regional integration by participating in the harmonization of monetary, trade and investment policies amongst the participating states.
- c. **Corporate Governance:** Corporate governance is concerned with the ethical principles, values and practices that facilitate holding the balance between economic and social goals and between individual and communal goals. The aim is to align as much as possible the interests of individuals, corporations and society within a framework of sound governance and common good.

- d. **Socio-economic Development:** Poverty can only be effectively tackled through the promotion of democracy, good governance, peace and security as well as the development of human and physical resources. Key socio-economic thrusts such as promoting gender equality as well as allocation of appropriate funds for social sector and promoting new partnerships between governments and the private sector and civil society are essential in this area. There are four types of review: A base review, which is the first country review carried out within 18 months after a country becomes a member of the APRM; A periodic review that takes place every two to four years; A Member country may for its own reasons, request a review outside the framework of the periodically mandated Reviews; Early signs of impending political and economic crisis in a member country could also be sufficient cause for commissioning a Review.

THE APRM STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

The APRM's structure and process as given by TI (2009) are spelt out in the APRM document, which also contains details of the five stages of the review process. In addition, it provides guidelines for the financing of the various structures and procedures of the APRM. The APRM is composed of a set of bodies that support and coordinate the implementation of the review process both at the continental and national levels;

- i. **Forum of Heads of State and Government of Acceded Countries (APRM Forum):** This is the highest decision-making body in the review process. The overall responsibility of the APRM is vested with a Committee of Participating Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the African Union who have voluntarily acceded to the APRM. The APRM Forum is the ultimate authority for the oversight of the APRM organization and processes. The APRM Forum considers and makes recommendations for the review reports on the member states and authorises the publication of the APRM reports. It is responsible for anchoring the constructive peer dialogue and persuasion required in order to effect changes in country practice where recommended. (Assefa, 2011). It is also responsible for the nomination and selections of members to the African Peer Review Panel of Eminent Persons (APRM Panel).
- ii. **The Panel of Eminent Persons:** The APR Panel is the executive body of the APRM, in charge of directing and managing its operations. It leads and oversees the country review processes and provides ad-hoc guidance to the country teams to ensure the integrity of these processes. The Panel is ultimately responsible for the contents of the report. The APRM Panel is composed of five to seven Africans of high morale stature who are also committed to the ideals of Africa, who have distinguished themselves in areas relevant to the work of the APRM such as political governance, macro-economic management, public financial management and corporate governance. They are nominated by participating countries, short-listed by a Committee of Ministers and appointed by the APRM Forum to reflect a regional, gender and cultural balance.

- iii. **The APRM Secretariat:** The APRM Panel is supported in its operation by a secretariat based in South Africa, which is also charged with the responsibility of providing secretarial, technical, coordinating and administrative support to the APRM process. It is headed by an executive director who is supported by a team of experts in the four review areas. Among other functions, the secretariat maintains an extensive database on political and economic development in participating countries, prepares background documents for the peer review teams, and tracks performance of individual countries. The APRM Panel is responsible for constituting APRM Country review teams to conduct the country visits, whose composition is intended to ensure a balanced, technically competent and professional assessment of the reviewed country. At the national level, each country is required to set up a national mechanism to play a communication and coordination role and serve as a liaison between national and continental structures. The form and profile of the focal point is left to the discretion of the participating countries, but it is recommended that it should be a high level official, who would report directly to the Head of State or Government and has access to all national stakeholders.
- iv. **National Coordinating Structure:** Each country is also required to set up a national coordinating structure, often in the form of a National Governing Council (NGC), in which key stakeholder groups are represented, including government, civil society and the private sector. This body is responsible for conducting the country's self assessment through a broad based and all-inclusive consultation with key stakeholders in the public and private sectors. Countries have a relative margin of discretion as to how they implement this requirement.

STAGES OF THE REVIEW

According to TI (2009), the various official documents stated that; the APRM reviews be conducted in the four major areas of the APRM. The assessment also takes some stages, which are as follows;-

Stage 1: Country Self Assessment Review and Report

The APRM Secretariat starts by preparing a background report on the reviewed country's state of governance and development, while the country prepares a self-assessment based on a detailed questionnaire and a draft National Plan of Action (NPOA) through a broad national consultation process. During this initial stage, the country sets up the required structures and prepares its roadmap to produce a Country Self-Assessment Report (CSAR) and a draft Programme of Action (NPOA). Consistent with the APRM principle of national ownership, there are no strict directives for the country to adhere to other than the requirement to engage with the broadest possible spectrum of national stakeholders in a manner that is left to the discretion of each member country. The CSAR and NPOA are submitted to the APRM Secretariat for consideration. The Secretariat will in turn begin the preparations for the official Country Review Mission visit (CRM). Here, the accuracy and quality of the country's self-assessment process is evaluated. The Secretariat can

demand that more in- depth assessment be given to specific issues before moving to the second stage of the process. The Secretariat compiles an Issue Paper based on the self-assessment questionnaire and the NPoA.

Stage 2: Country Review Mission

A team is constituted by the APRM Panel, led by a member of the Panel and made up of experts in the four thematic areas. The Review team visits the country and conducts consultations with the widest range of stakeholders, including government, political parties, parliamentarians and civil society, the media, academia, trade unions, business and professional bodies etc. The input of civil society representatives is normally encouraged at this stage of the process.

Stage 3: Compilation of a Country Report

At this stage, the review team compiles a country report based on the background materials prepared for the mission by the APRM Secretariat, the Country-Self Assessment Report & the draft NPoA as well as the findings of the review team during the country visit. Once the report has been drafted, the APRM Secretariat forwards the report to the country's national government for consideration, thus providing an opportunity for the country to react to the team's findings. The government comments are then attached to the draft.

Stage 4: Report made available to the Public

The report is released to the public for scrutiny after a period of six months, so as to enable the national stakeholders who participated in the country to digest well as to monitor the implementation of strategies addressed, the issues raised in the report and the detailed NPoA. The review is repeated every three to five years to monitor progress towards the objectives outlined in the NPoA, and develop a new report and strategy for the next five years.

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORMS, UNDER THE NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD)'S AFRICAN PAIR-REVIEWED MECHANISM

Achievements of the APRM

In terms of the achievements recorded by the APRM, Assefa (2011) gave a break-down as follows;

- a. The APRM had made considerable progress in terms of the number of countries acceding, the structures, institutions and the deepening of the review process, as well as in the level of active participation and engagement of stakeholders, both nationally and continentally.
- b. The membership of the Mechanism had also grown steadily since 2003. Accession was marked by the signing of an MOU which entailed a commitment to submit to; peer-review, operation of agreed parameters for good governance and the implementation of national programmes of actions(NPoA) emanating from the reviews.

- c. Since inception, thirty countries had voluntarily acceded to the APRM, as at 2011. These countries included Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. Others, including Cape Verde, were considering joining. Cape Verde has been formally accepted by the Forum, however, it is yet to sign the accession Memoranda of Understanding (MOU).
- d. The APRM membership represents 76% of the African population. The pace of the implementation of the mechanism has gradually advanced as a result of the awareness created in more countries and stakeholders, in understanding the value of the APRM.
- e. The APRM has initiated reviews in eighteen (18) countries. Reviews had been finalised for fifteen (15) countries. The Country Review Reports of fourteen (14) Countries had been peer reviewed by member Heads of State and Government. Kenya and Ghana were poised for a second periodic review pending on the confirmation of dates.

As at January 2013, however, Ashaye (2013) stated that the APRM had a membership of 35 States, with Tunisia and Chad as the newest members. There were moves in the direction of concrete deliverables of some of the NPOAs. For example, Kenya established the Micro-Finance Act, and implemented a 14% increase in credit available to the private sector between 2005/6 and 2006/7. In Ghana, the progress reports on the implementation of the NPOA document recorded an increase in primary and secondary school enrolment. Ghana has identified low enrolment as a stumbling block to Ghana's development. The APRM process in Algeria in 2007 was considered as a technical success in a country where traditionally dialogue between government and the civil society was rare (Ashaye (2013)).

A major achievement of the APRM is that the process has diagnosed and highlighted systemic and structural issues that affect most African states in their governance systems and pose barriers to sustainable economic growth and development (Ashaye (2013)). The aforementioned achievements notwithstanding, the reality on ground is that relatively greater percentage of African countries are still bedevilled by the same pre-APRM challenges that brought about the conception of the mechanism, such as bad governance, poverty etc. In order to establish the real impact of the APRM on acceded countries, this study utilised the following indicators to arrive at its conclusions:-

1. Level of Awareness/Information
2. Availability of Human and Material Resources
3. Credibility of the Review Process
4. Timeliness of the Review
5. The Level of Inclusiveness
6. The Level of Independence of the Review Machinery

7. The level of political will.

Level of Awareness/Information

The country self-assessment was supposed to be preceded by consultative and awareness creation activities. AfriMap, 2010 stated that the constraints of timeframes within which these activities were undertaken as well as institutional arrangements did not ensure broad participation most of the times. Consequently, it was difficult to know the extent to which broader segments of the population were sufficiently informed of the process. The general impression created was that more outreaches were required to carry along a greater number of the populace, so they can participate in an informed manner. The Burkina Faso APRM secretariat had a department of communications and public relations that organised numerous awareness-creation activities. However, the review report was presented to the APRM Forum without a Burkina Faso website that would have allowed members of the public an easy access to information. The first newsletter of the APRM was only drafted six months after the completion of the CSAR in the same country. The Rwanda NEPAD secretariat was also weak on public outreach, organising only two national conferences attended by 200 people each, in a country of ten million people.

AfriMap (2010) further asserted that in Ghana, the work on the self-assessment report was preceded by public education activities that included a national stakeholders' workshop, yet, some civil society groups felt inadequately informed. South Africa appeared to have had the most extensive outreach programme that covered both rural and urban areas. Nigeria admitted facing challenges in ensuring that the APRM was popularised and participatory, mainly because of its population size. The Algeria National Governing Council had a fairly active communications unit that set up and maintained a website that existed for two years before being closed down a month after presentation of Algeria's country review report (Herbert and Grudz, 2008).

A critical approach to development is that citizens should have access to information about decisions that are being taken on their behalf. APRM is formally committed to ensuring such access to information, yet in practice it is extremely difficult to find out what is being done in that regards. According to Afrimap (2010), the APRM website is rarely updated and extremely uninformative. Even the communiqués of the meetings of the HSGIC are not readily available. The NEPAD Dialogue newsletter does provide updates on public events, but it's not available online in an easily accessible archive and it's difficult to subscribe to. The APRM website is also out of date and fails to include many relevant documents, including APRM Forum communiqués (Afrimap, 2010). The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and non-governmental organisations should provide useful background information on how the NEPAD initiatives are progressing. Even then, these organisations do not have access to all relevant documents. Furthermore, Afrimap, (2007) asserted that the self-assessment reports are only published at the discretion of the governments of the countries concerned. Only select few were able to access these documents. There is no way for civil society to see how their

in-puts were reflected in the report submitted to the APRM Secretariat. If the APRM is to reflect the interests of Africans, then they must be carried along in the scheme of its operations.

Availability of Human and Material Resources

Participating countries are required to contribute \$100,000 a year to the APRM's coffers. In addition, they are supposed to finance the cost of their own national secretariats. Some countries were able to support the operations of their National Governing Councils and that of the Secretariat. A number of countries also received support from external sources. On the whole, United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) created a trust fund into which supporters of the process might place their contributions. Canada stands out as one of the countries ready to make a contribution to this common fund, with other countries relying more on bilateral approaches (Afrimap, 2010). While external funding partners are not prohibited, APRM documents stated that the APRM will be implemented with resources coming predominantly from Africa. External partnerships are described as those that clearly respect African ownership of the APRM and all its processes. However, Ayesha (2004) asserted that the bad past record of Organisation of African Unity (OAU) nations on non-payment of dues is a cause of fear. A real problem here bordered on the nations' ability to offset the cost of their NPoAs, which is the actual intension/goal of the mechanism. The analysis is given in table 1 (Bing Pappoe, 2010).

Table 1: The Cost of the NPoAs (US\$m)

Countries	Democracy and Political Governance	Economic Governance and management	Corporate Governance Development	Socio Economic Issues	Cross Cutting	Total
Ghana	118	179	2,236	1,120		3,653
Kenya	9	46	4,946	387		5,388
South Africa	143	219	29	1,594		1,986
Benin	586	7	1,004		33	2,389
Nigeria	5,000	4,000	3,000	8,000		20,000
Burkina Faso	414	160	2,750	1,583		4,907
Ethiopia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Sources: APRM Country Review Reports. Figures rounded up to the nearest \$ million

The cost of the NPoAs differed from country to country. Nigeria's was the largest at \$20bn, with Benin, Ghana, and Kenya coming in at \$2.4bn, \$3.6bn³, and \$5.4bn respectively. South Africa's was by far the smallest at \$1.9bn. Taking their share of GDP into account, the differences are clearer. In Benin, Ghana and Kenya the NPoA represents about 13%, 5.6% and 5.9% respectively, while in Nigeria and South Africa the programmes are 3.4% and 0.2% respectively. While it would prove relatively easy for South Africa and Nigeria to finance their NPoAs, it would be pretty difficult for Kenya, Ghana, and especially Benin. This fact raises questions about the dependency of African countries on project support sought to implement it. The NPoAs tended to focus on one or other thematic area. For instance, the corporate governance section of Ghana, Kenya and Benin represented 61.2%, 91.8% and 42% respectively of the total cost of their respective proposed NPoAs, while socio-economic development (Bing Pappoe, 2010).

In addition, Herbert and Gudz (2010) asserted that the Sixth African Heads of State and Government Forum (AGF) complained that The APRM Panel and Secretariat lacked the requisite capacities to effectively provide leadership and technically manage the APRM processes. The conduct of the peer review exercise itself needs clarification. At a workshop held in February 2007 for Focal Points in Ethiopia, the Ghana, Kenya and Rwanda representatives all complained to the Secretariat that it did not provide adequate support to countries embarking on the process. Asante (2007) stated;

"We need a Secretariat that gives technical assistance.....But do we even have regular communication from you? We don't hear from you.' The lack of training is significant because it forces countries to try to educate themselves from written guidelines that are contradictory and lack practical operational details that would help to set realistic budgets, decide on research methods or manage public and media communications. So what exactly do the official documents say?" (Asante, 2007). If the APRM is to be effective, the issues of financial and human resources must be logically settled.

The Credibility of the Self-Assessment Process

The manner in which countries conducted the self-assessment component of the APRM differed both in terms of methodology and process. The self assessment was based on the APRM questionnaire that covered the four areas of governance. The country self-assessment process is to produce a country self assessment report (CSAR) and a draft national programme of action (NPoA). The self-assessment process involved taking the views of a number of different groups of people. The questionnaire provided by the APRM Secretariat is lengthy and complex, comprising 58 questions and 183 indicators. It's made up of a series of structured questions some of which required expert knowledge and opinion, and others which needed to be answered through a survey of public opinion (Afrimap, 2010). Thus the views of the general public, expert commentators, and technicians, as well as law makers, and law enforcers such as the police and army were collected and collated. However, the questionnaire had to undergo some domestication

to make it more relevant to the specific circumstances of the countries concerned (Herbert and Gudz, 2008).

According to Bing-Pappoe (2008), the civil society was critical of these events, arguing that the Country Self-Assessment Report (CSAR) and the NPoA to be discussed were not made available beforehand. Sometimes they were made available to participants on arrival at the consultation event. Most importantly, they were summaries of the original reports. The time allocated was one or two days at most, not long enough to have serious deliberation on the contents. There was also little indication of how the comments received were treated (Afrimap2010).

They also complained that the questionnaire tried to cover too many issues, had a confusing structure, with overlapping questions, which was unmanageable both for governments and for the civil society organisations seeking to respond to it (Bing-Pappoe, 2008). It can be concluded therefore that the responses given were from a few elitist respondents, who could understand what the questions demanded Ashaye (2013). In addition, Afrimap (2010) argued that in a number of instances, the NPoA bore more than passing resemblance to pre-existing government plans, a fact which further reinforced the idea that the process was not wholly free. There were some evidences that up to 50% or more of the NPoAs comprised projects that were already part of existing national plans, thereby making it difficult for researchers to differentiate between an APRM induced projects and national programmes. That is to say that the APRM projects could not be easily defined for performance appraisal.

Timeliness of the Review

In the official documents, the process looked straightforward. However, Herbert and Grudz (2008) noted that the experiences of the pioneer countries had shown the process to be far more complex and time consuming than imagined when they first demanded that each review should take six to nine months. For Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya and South Africa the process took 33 to 39 months, from the signing of the accession Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) until presentation of the final report before Heads of State. For smaller countries the burden was greater. The magnitude of APRM undertaking was unprecedented. The system was complex and the rules were unclear. The demands imposed by the Self-Assessment Questionnaire guiding the reviews are equally onerous for all countries. It is 88 pages in length, with 25 objectives, 58 questions and 183 indicators arranged in four thematic areas (APRM, 2003).

According to Herbert and Grudz, many of the questions required in-depth research and are not easy to answer. The early countries to undergo peer review underestimated the difficulty of the task. The Self assessment could not be rushed without generating protest and undermining efforts to build trust and consensus around the process. Kenya, for example, took eight months just to reach agreement with civil society over who would sit on the governing body. And more time was consumed resolving differences over how the

country would conduct its public consultation. Since only three countries completed their reviews in the first three years of the process, pressure is growing to accelerate the pace. Unless the pace quickens, the credibility of the entire exercise is likely to suffer. Investors and development partners who eagerly hoped to consider the APRM reviews in their decisions have begun to look elsewhere for governance assessments, because too few countries have managed to get through the process (Bing-Pappoe, 2008).

The Level of Inclusiveness

One of the strengths of the APRM process has been its emphasis on national level participation in the completion of the self-assessment reports. The APRM (2003) stated;

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

In addition Assefa (2011) stated that the APRM-tool is supposed to engage key stakeholders to facilitate exchange of information and national dialogue on good governance and socio-economic development programmes, thereby increasing the transparency of the decision making processes, as well as building trust in the pursuit of national development goals. The APRM requires the involvement of thousands of people in assessments that cover almost all aspects of national governance. The official APRM Country Guidelines stated: *"The organisation of public participation in the APRM process is in itself a central aspect of enhancing the state of governance and socio-economic development in the participating country. Such interactions can build trust, establish and clarify mechanisms for ongoing engagement and empowerment of stakeholders"* (APRM, 2003).

However, the experiences of the first-countries to undergo peer review showed that the process of inclusions was challenging for governments and civil society alike. Although the emphasis on participation is repeated in APRM documents, instructions on how to achieve it are absent. Appiah (2004) stated; *The APRM system does not provide a practical guide on how to actualise the expectation set out in the country's guidelines. The institutional development, organisational processes, technical expertise, capacity and skills as well as funding are not provided beyond the requirement to set up a Focal Point.* Each one of the review processes so far has had weaknesses in this regard, but, overall, they have generally provided new space for national dialogue that did not previously exist, especially for civil society groups. The involvement of national parliaments had been mixed. At a seminar in Ghana in November 2003, community-based organisations in that country were concerned that their rural membership would not be heard. The Ghanaian civil society players in general were outraged at the lack of consultation and what they perceived as a non-democratic process of representation. Similar criticisms have

been raised in Kenya and South Africa. In these countries there was a perception that the governments have the 'high moral ground' and should therefore be exempt from criticism (Bing-Pappoe, 2010). In Rwanda, the virtual absence of a civil society voice was a cause for concern regarding the independence of the review. Government players in all these countries have given assurances that the criticisms will be considered and steps taken to ensure the APRM's integrity. These countries may indeed be sincere in their assurances, but 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 be a disaster not only for the development and growth prospects of the countries concerned, but 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. (Ayesha, 2004).

The Level of Independence of the Review Machinery

Having the first-countries in view, Afrimap (2010) stated that the level of independence in which the review machinery operated and processed a broad-based participation differed from one country to another. Variations ranged from national commissions that are clearly dominated and controlled by state institutions to those where non-state actors play a dominant role. Rwanda and South Africa had the most government-controlled national commissions. In Rwanda the appointment of the national commission was preceded by a government dominated steering committee. The lack of transparency in the manner in which members of the NGC were selected coupled with a government chairperson raised concerns about government interference in the process. Probably the most independent was the Benin-APRM-National Commission. The Commission was established by decree that provided that the chair and one vice-chair shall be civil society representatives, while the other vice-chair will be a member of parliament. The majority of the ninety seven members were civil society organisations. Mali also had a strong and independent national commission, with a highly respected chair. Ghana's seven member governing council was established as an autonomous body that would operate outside the orbit of its parent ministry. In Kenya, the eminent person assigned to the country intervened to shape the composition and ensure the greater representativeness of the council. The composition of the Algerian NGC was also driven by a need to ensure broad representation. The Nigerian option of 250 members seemed too large to be effective, unless coupled with a very effective and smaller steering committee that handles the day-to-day affairs and reports back to a larger group. The civil society in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius and Rwanda had protested in varying ways and degrees, when they perceived that government tried to control /dominate the process. The body implementing the APRM Programme should, as much as possible be independent of the government and devoid of political interference to ensure its credibility. The decision to have the APRM National Governing Councils (NGC) or Commissions chaired by government ministers may seriously undermine the independence of the governing council and the integrity of the APRM process.

Level of Political Will

The APRM had stated; *The APRM is not a punitive measure, but an instrument for advancing good governance and people centred Socio Economic Development*" (APRM, 2011). This clause alone has presented the APRM as a process that lacks "teeth" (Killander, 2006). Thus, much effort for positive changes has not been seen in the reviewed countries. Ashaye (2013) opined that the Lack of political-will had been the stumbling block, obstructing the Mechanism in fulfilling its mandate. The potential benefits of the Africa Peer Review (APR) process would unavoidably vary depending on the level of commitment of the participating country, and the effectiveness with which the process is managed, including the degree of coordination with existing activities at the country level. The National Programme of Action (NPOA) that results out of the exercise is a social contract that seeks to address governance and policy challenges identified by stakeholders.

CHALLENGES OF THE APRM

Despite the relatively few achievements recorded, the mechanism is bedevilled with challenges pertaining to the slow pace of implementation both at the national and continental levels. The implementation of the APRM National Program of Action, (NPOA) is very central to APRM. The primary purpose of the NPOA is to guide and mobilise a country's efforts towards the implementation of necessary changes that would improve Africa's state of development. It presents countries priorities, activities and the responsibilities of various stakeholders in government. Every reviewed country is statutorily obligated to submit bi-annual and annual progress report on the implementation of the NPOA to the Panel and Forum respectively (Assefa, 2011). However, the reality on ground is that it is actually the Review Reports containing the NPOA that forms the basis of the Peer Review by the APRM Forum during AU summits, thereby relegating implementation of the NPOA to a subordinate position. The true measure of the success of the APRM lies in the full implementation of the National Programs of Action which is intended to correct the governance challenges identified during the exercise.

Other challenges lie with the voluntary nature of the APRM, its inability to enforce policy, the absence of adequate funding, poor and limited human resources for implementation. That said, it is also clear that one of the real challenges to the APRM's success is an insufficient focus on on-going monitoring; although progress reports are required, the structure is lacking at the continental level for proper monitoring and evaluation (Ashaye, 2013). In addition, the weak civil society in most African states curtails meaningful participation in the peer review process.

CONCLUSION

First of all, it is important to shift the focus away from a mechanical implementation of the APRM stages. The peer review should be considered the beginning – a precursor to the important step of implementation and monitoring. The primary purpose of the

NPOA is to guide and mobilize the country's efforts in implementing its national priorities. Above all, as an agent of change and not an end in itself, the biggest challenge for the APRM has been for countries to be able to muster the resources and capacity required to implement the NPoA. If the APRM must retain its African ownership, the implementation must of necessity be with resources coming predominantly from Africa. In this regard, participating member countries should demonstrate the determination to fund a substantial part (about 60%) of its budget, thereby jealously guarding the ownership of Mechanism.

Given the prevailing implementation challenges, there is a need for a collective endeavour to deepen the review process and assist countries in implementing their NPoA through support in capacity building initiatives and funding. None is more urgent than ensuring that the APRM implementation process at the country level is conducted in a transparent, inclusive and democratic manner for it to remain credible and inspire the confidence of the people it is intended to serve. This is why countries need to take the requisite time and care to prepare adequately as well as consult broadly on the process. It is clear that in most countries that have conducted the APRM review, the process had been dominated and driven by government. This has been evident in the national institutional framework that has been put in place, in spite of clear guidelines that encourage processes that are impartial and objective. If the APRM is to be seen as a credible initiative, governments will have to allow more space for other actors to participate. The citizens must be convinced that they own the process. The effectiveness of peer review processes is also dependent on self-discipline to maintain the standards set.

As the country review reports and programmes of action are adopted, the role of national parliaments and civil society groups in monitoring their implementation should be critical: it should be a requirement that the final reports and the NPoA be presented to the national legislature by the executive and their conclusions debated. The APRM Secretariat should also insist on the extension of the participatory ideal to the implementation phase, with regular involvement of civil society and parliamentarians in monitoring and evaluating the progress in achieving the NPoA (Herbert and Grudz, 2008). The NPoAs should contain concrete recommendations and strategies rather than vague aspiration statements which are difficult to measure. The political will at both continental and national level is crucial for the APRM to achieve its goal as a process for development. It is through political will that the financial and logistical challenges which impair the process at various levels can be overcome. The road to a successful and effective APRM, and thus to a peaceful and prosperous Africa may lie in the future, but the foundation for Africa's political and economic renaissance must be laid now.

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