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African Peer Review Monitoring Project: APRM Monitoring and Advocacy Template (AMAT)

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AMAT is a part of the APRM Monitoring Project (AMP), which is a joint initiative by SAIIA, CPS and AfriMAP

Contents

Introduction

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was established in 2003 with the intention of improving governance in Africa, through the 'African problems – African solutions' approach. It aims to achieve this through voluntary 'peer reviews', which examine the governance of a country across four thematic areas: Democracy and Political Governance, Economic Management, Corporate Governance and Socio-Economic Development. Once the review is finalised, the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons makes recommendations which need to be implemented in order to overcome the identified challenges. After these recommendations are made, the government draws up and undertakes to implement a National Programme of Action (NPoA), which contains commitments necessary to improve governance.

Thus far, 29 African states have signed up to the APRM and 13 of these have undergone their first review – including four in Southern Africa (South Africa, Mozambique, Lesotho and Mauritius). One of the greatest challenges for the APRM has been the monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the NPoA. There are only loose procedures and guidelines for this, and some countries have already missed deadlines for reporting on their NPoA implementation. Furthermore, the reports have lacked detail and did not provide concrete evidence and data to show the extent to which the NPoA items have been implemented. They also tended to reflect government views to the exclusion of voices of civil society.

The AMP Project

SAIIA and CPS have launched a project to empower civil society to track the implementation of the APRM in their countries, known as the APRM Monitoring Project (AMP). Through this project, CSOs will be assisted to undertake independent reviews of APRM Implementation to complement and, where possible, feed into the official reports produced by government. This will be done through the use of APRM Monitoring and Advocacy Template (AMAT) that is presented here.

The AMAT draft presented here will be the basis for a Pilot Phase of the project, which aims at two things:

- Testing and refining the Template as a tool for data collection and analysis for CSOs to conduct APRM implementation assessments; and
- Identifying appropriate strategies for national coalition building and partnerships in administering the AMAT

For the pilot stage of the project, four Southern African countries have been selected: South Africa, Mozambique, Lesotho and Mauritius.

Thus far the APRM process has not received much media coverage – particularly after the review is finished. However, implementing the NPoA is a crucial step of the APRM, and a low-key profile could compromise its Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E). A high-profile, on the other hand, would ensure that the implementation of the APRM remains a relevant topic and that the media, CSOs and businesses continue to be a part of the process. While the government is the actor responsible for the implementation of the NPoA, actors that were involved in the review process need to continue doing so. Media coverage is the key to publicising the final AMAT report. It has been argued that the APRM reports have not received the due attention in the media, since they are too lengthy and technical. Thus, the AMAT report has to be an accessible document for media, civil society, government officials, academics and citizens. The main intention of the AMP is to afford the AMAT the highest publicity in the country.

Justification

Although states have their own APRM M&E programmes, and are supposed to publish implementation reports regularly, some may not be rigorous in compiling these, since they are reviewing their own performance and progress. It would add great value to have a complementary and independent review that will examine not only the progress of APRM-related activities, but additionally the overall status of the APRM in the country. This would also allow for more specific and in-depth reviews of certain issues, and could thus provide more information than the official review on certain topics.

The rationale behind the creation of the AMAT is not to duplicate the work of the relevant national APRM Agencies, but rather to provide civil society with the necessary instruments to write an independent analysis, which could complement and expand upon the government's own M&E process. Thus, the intention is to deepen and complement the official APRM Implementation Reports by providing an additional perspective and detail. Furthermore, it would also develop an independent capacity for CSOs in areas that go beyond the APRM per se, namely monitoring and advocacy. Once the monitoring process has been completed, CSOs will identify areas of weakness and make recommendations to address these. Once these recommendations have been compiled, they could be used as a tool for advocacy, in conjunction with the government and donors, to try to find the necessary funding and start work on the identified projects.

AMAT Stages

The AMP consists of three parts: monitoring, planning and advocacy:

1) Monitoring focuses on describing, analysing and evaluating the progress of the commitments made by the country in the APRM NPoA, as well as the overall status and prominence of the APRM in that country.
2) Planning utilises this information to identify shortcomings and areas of weakness, and makes recommendations to improve these.
3) Advocacy relates to the use of the findings of assessment to campaign for voice, to develop implementation strategies and amass the resources and relationships (cooperation) needed to implement recommendations that would address the weaknesses identified.

AMAT Methodology

The methodology for undertaking APRM implementation review/assessment using the AMAT consists of a five-stage process as follows:

> 1) Desktop research
> 2) Interviews
> 3) Assessment of the APRM process and APRM NPoA
> 4) Identification of key priority areas
> 5) Recommendations

Stage One: Desktop Research

Objective

To document the overall status of the APRM process in the country, as well as defining the progress of the implementation of the APRM NPoA.

Sources

The country's NPoA, Implementation Reports (if available) and the CRR will be the primary sources of information. These will be supplemented by academic papers, media reports and analysis concerned with the implementation of the NPoA.

Approach

The approach will be as follows:

- To draw a broad sweep of the state of APRM in the country, with an emphasis of progress made in implementing the NPoA
- To identify key national priority issues from the NPoA. These would be on the basis of their national significance and specific interests and expertise of the CSOs concerned. Therefore the investigation would not be comprehensive, but would seek depth, focus and detail.

Apart from the NPoA, research should also examine Cross-Cutting Issues (CCIs), as identified in the APRM CRR. APRM Reports typically use CCIs to highlight the most important and endemic issues in the country. These issues often cut across more than one thematic areas (sometimes all four) and thus have a holistic impact on governance issues in that country. Solutions for CCIs thus need to be wide-reaching, to ensure that they are eliminated in all spheres of governance, through the implementation of the APRM NPoA.

Questions to guide Desk Research:

1) **APRM profile**
   a) *In the media:* How often does it get mentioned in main newspapers?
   b) *In policy and planning:* To what extent and how does the APRM inform policy in your country; do policy statements make reference to the APRM and its recommendations? Do Head of state/government, ministers and top officials mention the APRM in their speeches? How does the APRM relate to other national plans? Is it subjected to them or are they subjected to it? What is the budget of the APRM in your country? To what extent is it being utilised?
   c) *In Parliament:* are APRM-related issues raised (and labeled as such); by whom, how often and with what purpose?
2) **APRM implementation**
   a) Does the country have a champion who is responsible for promoting the APRM and ensuring that NPoA commitments are being met?

b) What organisations are responsible for the implementation of the APRM in the country?
c) How and to what extent are the action items in the APRM NPoA being implemented?
d) How thorough is the official monitoring and reporting of the APRM NPoA in the country?
e) Has the APRM brought about any real and measurable change in the country? ("soft" and "hard" results)

At the completion of the Desk Research, a brief "Issues Report" would be prepared, that highlights the overall state of the APRM in the country, progress in the implementation of the NPoA, and identification of key priorities that need attention and further/deeper investigation. This deeper investigation would be continued in Stage Two: Interviews.

Stage Two: Interviews

Objective
To complement desktop research from primary and secondary sources by speaking to people who are either directly or indirectly involved with the process. This will aim at:

i) providing the details of progress, processes employed, and other systems involved in the implementation of the NPoA;

ii) giving voice to those involved in the process; and

iii) assessing reasons for successes and failure

Sources
Government officials, members of civil society organisations, academics and donors, who are directly involved with, or have sufficient knowledge of the APRM.

Approach
The list of interviewees should include a wide spectrum of stakeholders. These actors should be aware of the APRM and its processes, but for the purposes of this research, it is not a prerequisite. Specific interviewees, who might not know much about the APRM, but have knowledge of the issues mentioned in the NPoA should also be targeted. This needs to be done in order to find out whether there are APRM or APRM-related programmes and activities, information about which is not available to the general public and thus was not found throughout the desktop research process.

Questions to consider during interviews: All of the possible questions used for desktop research should also be used for interviews. The purpose of this is to ensure the validity and complement the desktop research.

Questions to guide Interviews:

1) **APRM institutionalisation**
   a) How active have the APRM National Governing Council, Secretariat, Focal Point etc, been following the completion of the review: retained or changed in what format (numbers, representation), what is its new TORs? What staff and resources are allocated to the APRM following the completion of the review?
2) **CSOs and APRM**
   a) How active are CSOs in terms of APRM advocacy? Will also need elaboration
   b) Do CSOs/NGOs have an opportunity to participate in the implementation of the APRM NPoA activities, or is the process strictly government-controlled?
3) **Popular participation**
   a) How active is the government in promoting the APRM to the citizens and legitimising it in general?

b) What role does the APRM have at the local/provincial levels? Do people at these levels get the opportunity to participate in the implementation of the NPoA?

Some of the questions from the Stage One could also be utilised in this Stage.

Stage Three: Analysis

Objective
An assessment on both the overall status of the APRM in the country, as well as progress on the NPoA/CCIs.

This is the most difficult part of AMAT, due to the following reasons: often there is no measurable progress; progress on the NPoA may be achieved through programmes that have nothing to do with the APRM; and, progress may be achieved indirectly as a result of the APRM, with no clear link to the process.

Approach
Due to the difficulties with the assessment of the APRM process listed above, rather than giving the country a specific percentage rating for its APRM implementation, an attempt should be made to provide a broader evaluative description, combined with a simple rating.

The assessment would take into account both the progress achieved on the NPoA items, as well as the overall APRM process in the country. Each NPoA item will be assessed individually on two criteria: progress achieved and link to the APRM process. With regard to the latter, a red, yellow or green light will be given. With regard to the former, a "+" or a "-" would be awarded. Please see the box below for an explanation of these ratings. Following the assessment of all the NPoA items, the ratings would need to be counted and tallied. The ratings that were awarded most frequently will form the final assessment. For example, if out of 40 NPoA items, 20 have received a green light, 10 yellow, 10 red, while 5 of those received a "+" and 35 a "-", the country would be awarded a green light "-" overall rating, which would mean that although very good progress has been achieved on most of the NPoA items, most of these were not linked to the APRM process.

Ratings key:

Assessment on NPoA item progress:

Green light: Much progress has been achieved on addressing the issue/The issue has been addressed and completed

Yellow light: Some progress has been achieved on the issue/Work on the issue has started, but the government seems to be on track to finalise it within a reasonable deadline

Red light: No progress has been achieved on the issue/Very little progress has been achieved and the government does not seem to be on track to complete it in the near future

Assessment on linkage to the APRM:

"+": The issue has been branded as an APRM initiative/ The issue been linked to the government department responsible for APRM NPoA implementation

"-": No link can be established between the issue and the APRM processes in the country / The issue is being worked on under the auspices of an organisation which has no clear link to the APRM process

Stage Four: Identification of Priorities
Objective:

Identification of priority areas that need to be focused on in order to improve the implementation of the NPoA objectives as well as the overall APRM process in the country. This would fall into three broad areas:

- Important issues that need to be addressed
- Areas where there are identified bottlenecks impeding progress
- Areas where there has been some success, and which therefore need to be strengthened further

Approach

Research questions listed in Section One, as well as the evaluative questions from Section Three should be guiding in identifying priorities. Questions that received negative answers need to be examined to determine exactly what the shortcoming is. It would also be useful to compare both the organisation of the process and the implementation of the NPoA to experiences in other countries. With regard to organisation of the process, institutional arrangements should be looked at elsewhere: number of full time staff; importance of the institution responsible for the APRM; budget of the institution; and existence of awareness campaigns. While there are no benchmarks, Ghana and Uganda have typically been hailed for their handling of the process. Examining their institutional arrangements and comparing them with those of your country could be a useful exercise. With regard to the implementation, it could be helpful to compare the initial recommendations made by the APR Panel (which were either rejected or accepted by the government) with those that the government has committed to in the NPoA. An assessment could be made on which recommendations were rejected and the impact of the government doing so. This could indicate whether there are any outstanding issues that were initially pointed out by the Panel, but did not subsequently make it into the NPoA. After this, an assessment of the actual implementation of the NPoA should be made, taking into account factors such as: number of institutions responsible for the implementation; quality of reporting; branding of initiatives completed as a result of the APRM; number of initiatives completed; and, quality of initiatives completed.

Stage Five: Recommendations
Objective:
Making recommendations that would help to improve both the overall APRM process as well as the implementation of the NPoA in the country.

Approach:
Based on the three broad categories of priorities (no action/unsatisfactory progress/success stories) a list of recommendations needs to be made. The recommendations need to be realistic, setting targets that are achievable, instead of becoming a long "wish list." Critics of the APRM point out that at times it fails because it spreads itself too thin. The researcher making the recommendations should not fall into the same trap, and instead try to focus on strengthening and improving existing initiatives instead of trying to add a myriad of new ones. The second part of making recommendations entails coming up with a strategy, by the CSO or a coalition of CSOs responsible for the review, on how to best utilise these recommendations. As mentioned earlier, dissemination of findings in the media would be crucial for the success of the project. Thus, once the AMAT is complete, the researchers need to decide, based on the political environment of their country, on how to proceed best. At the very least, apart from making the AMAT report publicly available, a strategy is needed on how to get media attention around it. Media attention is needed to bring attention to the APRM, the commitments made in the NPoA, their current status, and how these

could help the country improve its governance. The findings of AMAT should also help CSOs to establish a dialogue with government with regard to the status of the APRM and the NPoA. The institutions responsible for the APRM should be approached, in order to discuss the findings of AMAT, and present suggestions and recommendations made. Finally, the CSOs can attempt to bring their recommendations into life by approaching the government, fundraising and involving donors and the community in order to address the identified shortcomings.

The recommendations need to focus on two separate aspects of the APRM. Firstly they need to focus, based on the research in Stage Four, on how to improve both the overall APRM process and the implementation of the NPoA in the country. These recommendations would entail both strengthening current areas of the NPoA, as well as seeking to establish new projects. Secondly, they need to suggest how the overall status of the APRM could be strengthened in the country, if it needs to be.

Appendix 1: Suggested Format of the Final Report

The idea is to create a product easily digestible by a wide variety of stakeholders – government, donors, academia, civil society, media and citizenry. The end result of the AMAT thus has to be accessible, without compromising its integrity or thoroughness. The final report has to be concise – describing the main issues, without going into too much detail or case studies. It is recommended that the final product would be a relatively short report that would be structured as below

1) Executive Summary (1 page)

2) Introduction (2-3 pages)
3) Findings (5-7 pages)
   a. APRM profile
   b. APRM institutionalisation
   c. CSOs, Policy and the APRM
   d. Popular participation in policy and in the APRM
   e. APRM implementation progress
4) Recommendations (2 pages)

5) Appendix 1: Summary Plan of Action (2 pages)
6) Appendix 2: Summary Advocacy and Partnership Strategy (2 pages)

Appendix 2: AMAT Packaging

The AMAT should consist of a package that will guide the researcher through the monitoring and advocacy processes

The AMAT package should include the following:

- Instructions describing the 5 stages of AMAT in detail
- Workbook-type examples of the AMAT categories
- List of possible questions to ask during interviews and consultations. The list should be divided into questions for government/donors/civil society/academia
- Pointers on writing an assessment of the APRM
- Advice on creating realistic and achievable recommendations
- Practical guides on media strategy and advocacy for civil society. This should include manuals on media strategy, approaching the government, fundraising and involving the donors, and involving the local government and communities