

# African Solutions

Best Practices from the  
African Peer Review Mechanism



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## Best Practices from the African Peer Review Mechanism

Edited by Tšoeu Petlane  
and Steven Gruzd



Kingdom of the Netherlands



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## Acknowledgements

In late 2009, the idea of undertaking research into best practices in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) originated at the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). At the time, the debate was whether to look at *how* the countries that had completed the first reviews and published their reports had conducted the process or to examine *what* had been identified as best practices. After a series of drafts of the original proposal, the Governance and APRM Programme team resolved to support the idea of examining the content of best practices as reported in the published APRM Country Review Reports (CRRs). This decision was in part based on the view that SAIIA, as a pioneering research institution in the study of the APRM, needed to move beyond focusing on process to building on the critical mass of information about best practices that was fast accumulating as more countries completed their reviews. This book is part of the quest to ‘take the APRM to the next level’, through identifying experiences and distilling lessons that could be used to improve governance in Africa – a major objective of the APRM.

There is not enough space here to mention the many and diverse people and organisations that have contributed to and supported the journey of this volume from idea to the finished product. However, the following merit special mention and a word of thanks for their patience and assistance.

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While the bulk of the research towards this publication was desk-based, the research team also undertook a series of interviews – in person and on the telephone – with various APRM actors around the continent. These ranged from officials of the APRM Continental Secretariat, national APRM officials and other stakeholders in various countries, and analysts and commentators familiar with the mechanism. The latter included academics and other researchers involved, for example, in national APRM self-assessments in countries such as Ghana, Lesotho, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. To all these resource persons, we are grateful for the insights they provided, without which this analysis would have remained abstract and dry with little relevance to those most intimately involved with the APRM.

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While the contribution of many has made this volume possible in its current form, and while their individual and joint input has unquestionably made for the positive in this book, the faults and weaknesses of the publication remain the responsibilities of the authors and editors of the book.

*Tšoen Petlane and Steven Gruzd*  
*Johannesburg 2011*



## List of Acronyms

ACP	Africa and Caribbean and Pacific
ADR	alternative dispute resolution
ANPE	Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi (The National Employment Agency)
ANSEJ	Agence Nationale de Soutien à l'Emploi de Jeunes (National Youth Employment Support Agency – Algeria)
APORDE	African Programme on Rethinking Development Economics
APR	African Peer Review
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BVG	Bureau du Vérificateur Général (The Office of the Auditor General) (Mali)
CACG	Commonwealth Association for Corporate Governance
CASCA	Cellule d'Appui aux Structures de Contrôle de l'Administration (Unit for supporting governance performance monitoring in the presidency – Mali)
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CFAF	Communauté Financière Africaine Francs
CILSS	Comité Inter-Etats pour la Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel)

## *African Solutions*

CIRTEF	Conseil International des Radios-Télévisions d'Expression Française (International French Speaking Radio-Television Council)
CRM	Country Review Mission
CRR	Country Review Report
CSAQ	Country Self-Assessment Questionnaire
CSAR	Country Self-Assessment Report
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DDR	demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (Mozambique)
DGSN	Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale (General Department of National Security – Algeria)
DZD	Algerian dinar
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EID	Espace d'Interpellation Démocratique (The Forum for Democratic Expression – Mali)
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
Eskom	Electricity Supply Company (South Africa)
EU	European Union
FDI	foreign direct investment
FiRe	financial reporting
FPE	Free Primary Education
GDP	gross domestic product
GJLOS	Governance, Justice, Law and Order Sector (Kenya)
GPA	Global Peace Agreement
GSE	Ghana Stock Exchange
HIV/Aids	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HSGIC	Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee
ICT	information and communication technology
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IoDSA	Institute of Directors of South Africa
IT	information technology
ISA	International Standards on Auditing
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
KING II	Second King Code of Corporate Governance
KING III	Third King Code of Corporate Governance

*List of Acronyms*

Kippra	Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis
LASDAP	Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan
LATF	Local Authority Transfer Fund
LGBF	Local Government Budgetary Framework
LHWP	Lesotho Highlands Water Project
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MP	Member of Parliament
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NPoA	National Programme of Action
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCI	Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators
RCPB	Networks of Popular Banks of Burkina Faso
ROSC	Report on the Observance of Standards and Codes
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SARS	South African Revenue Service
SEC	Securities and Exchange Commission (Nigeria)
SEVE	Savoir Et Vouloir Entreprendre (Wanting and Knowing How to Do Business – Algeria)
SIAO	Salon International de l'Artisanat de Ouagadougou (International Art and Craft Fair, Ouagadougou)
SME	small and medium enterprise
SOE	state-owned enterprise
SONELGAZ	Société Nationale de l'Electricité et du Gaz (National Society for Electricity and Gas)
STRATE	Share Transactions Totally Electronic
TBL	triple bottom line
UAP	Craft Production Unit
UIA	Uganda Investment Authority
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States





## APRM Best Practices: Concept, Place and Significance

*Tšoen Petlane*

An instrument of the African Union (AU), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an integral part of the vision of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to 'eradicate poverty and to place countries, individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development, and at the same time to participate actively in the world economy and body politic'.<sup>1</sup>

Under the APRM, member states voluntarily sign up to a process of national review that aims to identify weaknesses and to develop strategies and programmes that address them. The purpose of the mechanism is to ensure that the policies and practices of participating states conform to agreed values, codes and standards.

The APRM is the latest of many fundamental shifts in the socio-economic and political dynamic of the African continent. The first shift was the wave of liberation struggles that saw former colonies attain political independence in the 1960s. This was followed by the 're-democratisation' wave that gave birth to multiparty politics in many countries in the 1980s and 1990s. Then, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the 'African renaissance' led to the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the rebirth of the continental body as the

AU. All these waves of change were accompanied by great hopes for transformation and improvement in the lives of Africans and for the emergence of an Africa where the relationship between citizen and state would be one of mutual respect, support and benefit; an Africa where Africans, individually and collectively, take control of their destinies in all spheres of their lives and participate in the international system as equal members of the world community.

Among the top objectives of the APRM is the promotion of peer learning through identifying, collecting, disseminating and adopting best practices among African countries. Simply put, the APRM seeks to:<sup>2</sup>

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 the sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practices [among participating states], including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building.

The concept of best practices is one of the APRM's main anchors and is crucial for translating this initiative into a practical tool for transformation and governance reform in participating countries. However, the APRM reports appear to downplay the importance of identifying and documenting best practices, which are summarised in boxes, with no explanation of how these practices will contribute to the APRM objectives. Best practices have the potential to anchor peer learning and the sharing of ideas, which the APRM promotes. Yet, the identification and documentation of best practices are not built into the procedures that guide the country self-assessment research<sup>3</sup> and, unlike the National Programme of Action (NPoA), the APRM does not give details of best practice procedures. This book aims to close the gap, by defining best practices and why they are important for the APRM, identifying best practices from the Country Review Reports (CRRs) published to date, and considering how such best practices can be used to strengthen the APRM.

## **What are best practices?**

The concept of best practice has been used in a wide range of fields, such as medicine, science, business management and local government. A best practice can be defined as a technique, process or activity that is

more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other when applied to a particular condition or circumstance. Another definition is the most efficient (least amount of effort or resources) and effective (best results) way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time. At its simplest, best practice refers to techniques, methods, processes or activities that have the four basic characteristics:

1. Reliable delivery of desired results (and therefore possessing coherent steps that lead to a planned or desirable outcome).
2. Greater effectiveness and efficiency (than other approaches, strategies or processes) in delivering what they are designed (or required) for.
3. Potential or demonstrated ability to be replicated beyond a single occurrence.
4. Ability to be used as a benchmark or template for achieving success in similar circumstances.

In short, a best practice is demonstrably better than any other practice and is therefore something that others seek to emulate.

This general description of best practice is used with caution, as best practices imply comparison or ranking and may therefore be difficult to apply strictly to countries that face diverse challenges and national socio-economic and socio-political dynamics. The core features of each successful best practice are analysed within the context in which they are identified, focusing on principles rather than details. While some successful practices may be replicable in different contexts, other practices may be so widespread that they constitute ‘common best practices’ or the successful attainment of commonly aspired goals. Therefore, rather than develop monolithic or global models, care has been taken to understand the dynamics and factors that make these successes possible and to question whether it is possible and feasible to expand and reinforce the practices in similar contexts.

## **Why study best practices?**

It is important to study and interrogate best practices in the APRM for the following reasons:

- If they are really pioneering and exemplary, such practices need to

be celebrated as being intrinsically superior to all other attempts at achieving the same result.

- Best practices, by their nature, inspire others to believe that better is achievable, to aspire to new heights and to set new standards of behaviour and success.
- Best practices contribute to improved self-respect, self-assertion and confidence of Africans in their ability to generate quality and set new standards, strengthening the vision of an African renaissance based on 'African solutions to African problems'.
- Best practices provide evidence that the APRM can produce tangible results in the form of valuable lessons that all Africans can learn from, as they struggle to solve common problems.

In short, by uncovering what Africa does well (best practices) the APRM has the potential to demonstrate to the continent and the world that Africa works. The APRM can show that Africa is able to reach and set good governance standards, which promote participatory democracy, competitiveness and efficiency of institutions, self-reliance, intra-African or South-South technical co-operation, which are key to African-owned transformation and development. Best practices have the potential to take the APRM and its aspirations from rhetoric to reality.

## **The methodology**

Between March and June 2010, a group of researchers, from Ghana, Lesotho, Uganda and South Africa, co-ordinated by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), began analysing the first 12 published CRRs (Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali,<sup>4</sup> Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda). Since the inception of the APRM, all the researchers have been involved in various aspects of APRM research, including compiling Country Self-Assessment Reports (CSARs), mostly as members of technical research institutes. Their task was to compile and analyse the best practices reported in each of the 12 CRRs using a common working definition. Specifically, they were to:

- Assess whether the AU's agreed standards under the APRM constitute best practices as defined above.
- Examine the extent to which the identified best practices are in line

with the policies, standards and practices agreed on by the AU under NEPAD and the APRM, both as best practices in themselves and as contributors to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration. The purpose was to understand the relevance of the APRM review standards and codes to the problems and needs of African countries.

- Identify how the reported best practices could be reinforced and replicated in other countries through sharing of experiences. The objective was to contribute to peer learning by identifying common problems and outlining indigenous African solutions, thus reinforcing the role of APRM as a home-grown initiative that directly addresses African concerns.

Researchers were further encouraged to identify from the CRRs other practices that merit mention as best practices, but are not labelled as such in the reports. This was the result of recognising early on that maybe not all qualifying practices (according to the working definition) were recorded because of the absence of systematic guidelines.

A common reporting template guided the structure of the chapters, with variations allowed to accommodate the complexity of the material for the four thematic areas of the APRM: democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development. The researchers also had some flexibility in terms of the themes, as the CRRs to be examined were published over a long span of time and reflected a wide range of perspectives. The review process was as follows:

1. A blind peer review of the chapters by a team of senior academics, the project co-ordinator and two other people involved in the APRM.
2. A review workshop halfway through the project (October 2010), at which the researchers came together with a team of reviewers to discuss their individual chapters.
3. Using input from the review workshop, the researchers then revised their drafts.
4. The final round of reviews was followed by the submission of final chapter drafts at the end of November 2010.

The focus was on the reported practices in the published CRRs, whether labelled good, best practices or not designated, that related to governance: the subject matter of the APRM assessment. Thus, practices relating to the assessment process or APRM implementation in any country are not the subject of this book. Although these procedural best practices (or examples of ‘how to do APRM better’) are important for peer learning, they form a distinct and separate realm of enquiry and are therefore excluded from this research.

### **Background: situating the APRM within the African reform agenda**

The APRM can be traced back to the AU’s inaugural summit in 2002, when African leaders adopted the *NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance* (AU/NEPAD AHG/235 XXXVIII, Annex I). The Declaration commits African countries to the promotion of four broad objectives: democracy and political governance, economic and corporate governance, socio-economic development, and the APRM.<sup>5</sup> These objectives recognise the continent’s history of economic underperformance, weaknesses in governance and socio-economic development, and a ‘shared commitment ... to eradicate poverty and place our countries, individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development ... [and] to participate actively in the world economy and body politic on an equal footing.’<sup>6</sup> At the summit, the AU’s Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) and NEPAD Steering Committee were mandated to develop proposals for institutionalising and putting into operation this declaration. This was achieved a year later, in March 2003, with the adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding and several other documents relating to the principles, processes and institutional arrangements, as well as objectives of the APRM.<sup>7</sup>

The APRM (and best practices within it) cannot be understood in isolation from the broader questions of Africa’s governance reform agenda. The question, of the place and future prospects of the African continent and individual countries, is not new and came to occupy a prominent place in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Many factors were responsible for this, such as the realignment of global geopolitics and economic dynamics after the end of the Cold War. Perhaps even more directly relevant was the end of the continent’s decolonisation process,

marked by the collapse of apartheid, the emergence of a democratic dispensation in South Africa in the early 1990s and the reconstitution of the OAU as the AU. These developments came amid new social and political dynamics in many African countries that saw undemocratic governments swept away and replaced by elected regimes. At the same time, initiatives were developed that sought to claim and revive Africa's position and to chart new and positive paths of development and political life that would give hope, dignity and meaning to the lives of the continent's peoples. These included NEPAD, which was adopted as the continent's strategic blueprint to rescue Africa from the deprivation, poverty, marginalisation and oppression endured despite almost four decades of formal independence. As Newell Stultz notes:<sup>8</sup>

A possible answer to [Africa's] seeming dilemma [of poverty, economic stagnation, exploitation, political instability and global marginalisation] emerged in 2002 when African leaders, seizing upon ideas that ... had been percolating for some years among multi-national organisations and high-level meetings on the continent, joined and recast several related notions to establish a full-blown, voluntary, non-adversarial and 'Africa-owned' peer review process ... (the African Peer Review Mechanism) ... [which] was immediately linked organisationally with NEPAD.

Thus the APRM was born. This was, among other considerations, because:<sup>9</sup>

From NEPAD's inception the organisation's stipulated 'principles' have highlighted the need for 'good governance' in Africa and the fostering of 'international partnerships' that, being linked to the continent's agreed-upon development 'targets', [would] help change the 'unequal relationship between Africa and the developed world'.

One of the APRM's main pillars has been its African ownership, as the continent and its leaders finally acknowledged that domestic dynamics both create the deplorable conditions from which they sought to 'liberate' their countries and their peoples and generate possible solutions to the problems faced. The APRM was born out of the recognition by African leaders that NEPAD's developmental vision would be difficult to achieve without conversations between state and citizen, at national

and continental levels. The peoples of Africa and their leaders have to find their own solutions to problems and, as Africans together, to share experiences and ideas about these problems and ways in which to address them. As the first systematic and detailed effort by African leaders to show their commitment to NEPAD's governance objective, the APRM:<sup>10</sup>

represents a sea of change in the thinking of African leaders as they seek to reverse the trend of lack of accountability, political authoritarianism, state failure, and corruption to embrace and consolidate democracy as well as effect sound and transparent economic management.

By the end of June 2011, of the 53 AU member states, 31 had signed up to the APRM.<sup>11</sup> Of these, 14 had completed the first review,<sup>12</sup> which culminates in the presentation and discussion of a CRR (and accompanying NPoA) at the Forum of Participating Heads of State and Government (APRM Forum) that meets during the AU summit. The 12 published CRRs provide sufficient information in the various thematic areas to justify an examination of best practices and their significance for the APRM in the future.<sup>13</sup>

## **The importance of best practices in the APRM**

Best practices in the APRM are important because they provide material for sharing experiences and lessons, which will help African countries learn from each other and develop indigenous solutions to common governance and developmental problems. By implication, these practices also provide examples or models of how to attain the agreed governance norms and standards. Furthermore, best practices provide the template for the harmonised or common strategies necessary to meet the APRM's objective of promoting regional and continental integration. They also provide models of 'what works in Africa' (African solutions to African problems), which eliminates the need for reinventing the wheel and for experimenting with models developed elsewhere (a common complaint of Africans about previous practice), and demonstrate that Africans are capable of developing innovative and successful initiatives to address their problems. In short, best practices are a source of valuable material that can help ensure the success of the APRM, provided they are harnessed properly.

In the absence of formal mechanisms, best practices offer a way of ensuring compliance with the APRM. The aim of the APRM is for



countries to assist one another to formulate, adopt and implement policies, programmes and practices that support the envisaged reforms. However, participation is voluntary, both the in simple sense that no-one is compelled to join and in the more nuanced sense that:<sup>14</sup>

membership in the body ... entails no obligation to do anything at all other than to be periodically peer-reviewed. As a legal matter, the results of the APRM [including recommendations embodied in the National Programme of Action as well as of best practices identified] are entirely non-binding and advisory.

Yet, the APRM Base Document provides what can be characterised as clear and escalated or graduated forms of ‘pressure’:<sup>15</sup>

Where a country shows unwillingness to rectify the identified shortcomings based on the findings of these reviews ... [or] ... wilfully fails to take appropriate measures to implement the recommendations of the review, such a deviant or recalcitrant state may be subjected to collective adverse action. Whatever this ‘collective action’ is, it is to be resorted to only after all attempts at constructive dialogue have failed, and again only as a measure of last resort.

In less than a decade of its existence, the APRM has not had to act against a member in the manner suggested above. Like all peer reviews, the APRM is premised on mutual trust (reciprocity), non-confrontation and the principle of non-coercive persuasion. The aim is for other states to assist the reviewed country in improving its policy-making processes and capacity and complying with agreed standards and norms. Thus, the APRM truly conforms to the concept of peer review: a non-confrontational and frank discussion by equals (as contrasted, for instance, with academic peer review, which often emphasises the expertise – and thus a level of superiority – of reviewers).

The success of peer review in general, and of the APRM in particular, will depend on the ‘peer pressure’ that African states are able to exert on one other to adopt and implement reform, and the degree to which assistance is available to achieve this. The mechanism currently relies heavily on ‘soft’ persuasion and (as Kebonang<sup>16</sup> and others have pointed out) makes vague or no provisions to enforce compliance. Indeed,

coercive enforcement of compliance would run counter to the whole principle upon which the APRM is founded.

However, to encourage conformity or compliance with APRM recommendations, sufficient persuasion and pressure must be applied. Effective peer pressure can be provided by incentives (as opposed to sanctions). Countries are persuaded to fashion their reform programmes based on practices and policies already shown to be successful among peers. Therefore, best practices offer templates and models for reform, which can be used to give guidance in a non-threatening and non-adversarial manner.

At the same time, the possibility is created for positive reinforcement of reform, as best practices are the starting point of tangible potential assistance that the APRM may offer to countries. Best practices balance the tendency (already apparent in many of the CRRs) to concentrate on what is wrong or not working in Africa. They also avoid the established pattern of outsider reviews, which include the provision or withdrawal of aid in return for compliance. For example, traditional aid conditionalities and the structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Together with the NPoA developed from the APRM CRRs, best practices reinforce the AU's search for 'African solutions to African problems' by identifying indigenous strategies and approaches that deal with common problems.<sup>17</sup> They eliminate the need to import models developed elsewhere or to 'reinvent the wheel' by seeking to develop strategies from scratch. They provide a strategy that can move the APRM forward, and '[w]hilst promoting good leadership at national level may be a task fraught with difficulties ... at continental level, good leadership can be enhanced with the successful implementation ... of [the] African Peer Review Mechanism.'<sup>18</sup>

## **Best practices in APRM documentation**

The best practices in the APRM are analysed on two levels: the initial understanding as outlined in the APRM documents; and the practices, policies and activities reported as best practices in the 12 published APRM CRRs.

Neither the CRRs nor the core APRM documents examined<sup>19</sup> present a comprehensive and clear definition of best practices. The APRM documents contain 31 mentions of the words 'best practice' or 'best

practices’, but do not state categorically what the concept means, or explain how best practices are to be systematically identified, integrated into the APRM programmes (particularly the CSARs and NPoAs), or disseminated, shared and adopted in participating countries. Many of the occurrences of these words appear to be in passing, references to specific standards of operation (such as the ‘Best Practices for Budget Transparency’), or general statements in which the concept is implied rather than explicitly articulated.

The APRM Questionnaire mentions best practice six times: three times in the Foreword,<sup>20</sup> where the purpose and aim of the mechanism is quoted and explained (adapted from the APRM Base Document). The ‘Best Practice for Budget Transparency’ standard is mentioned twice,<sup>21</sup> and the ‘development of codes of best practice in the private and public sectors’ is used as an indicator for assessment under the theme of economic governance and management.<sup>22</sup> Thus, this document fails to provide guidance regarding the concept in the APRM.

The words are mentioned seven times in the Guidelines document. In addition to the general purpose statement<sup>23</sup> that mentions best practices, the document also refers (again in generalities) to the dissemination of best practices through workshops and networks. For example, Paragraph 47 states that:<sup>24</sup>

[p]eer learning, through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice is considered a major component of the APRM for which the support of the participating countries and development partners will be solicited. The APR Secretariat will develop and facilitate networks of focal points in participating countries in the four areas of the APRM. In close collaboration with existing initiatives, it will organise workshops, peer learning groups and other appropriate means of accelerating learning, implementation and progress.

This mention is made in the context of outlining activities that various actors within the APRM shall be expected to undertake.<sup>25</sup> In identifying the weaknesses or areas of concern, the Guidelines document recognises the need for capacity building and support.<sup>26</sup>

It is anticipated that countries will need support ... in ... the peer learning process through exchanges and networking to share and learn from

experience and identify best practices to accelerate the rate of progress in all participating countries.

Again, the conceptual definition of best practices does not emerge clearly from reading this document.

The APRM Organisation and Process document appears to give more detail on how best practices, once identified, are to be shared, mainly through describing the roles of various actors in the process. The partner institutions<sup>27</sup> and the Secretariat<sup>28</sup> are to facilitate the sharing of best practices through the organisation of workshops and regional networks, while the country review teams are to ‘focus on how the [National] Programme of Action of the country can be improved to accelerate the achievement of best practices and standards and address effectively the weaknesses identified’.<sup>29</sup> However, little guidance is provided on how to identify these best practices, those responsible for identifying them, and types of strategies to encourage adoption. All this does not add to an understanding of the concept.

The APRM Base Document and the Questionnaire Guidance each mention best practices just twice, as part of the purpose and aim of the APRM. A number of documents examined also refer to the expected effect of the use of best practices in the APRM: the sharing of experiences (contained in the identified best practices) is expected to lead to increased adoption of these practices.<sup>30</sup>

In summary, the examined APRM documents show weak conceptual clarity regarding best practices, with the following patterns.

- The emphasis is on the aspirational. Statements refer to the envisaged effect of the sharing of best practices, their adoption and subsequent improvement in various aspects of governance.
- The general encouragement is to organise facilities, facilitation and forums that will disseminate the best practices uncovered through the assessments. Key actors are also identified.
- No clear distinction is made between best practices as existing standards and best practices as innovations to be uncovered (in a few cases ‘standards’ and ‘best practices’ are used interchangeably).

This lack of conceptual clarity may lead to serious weaknesses in terms of:

- What is the phenomenon to be explored (and therefore how to know when it has been found).
- How to uncover best practices (and how to integrate this task into the various phases and stages of the APRM).
- The overall potential of best practices to stimulate and sustain reforms as envisioned by the APRM (how to package, disseminate and entrench them in practice).

The CRRs reveal a further complication, as some of these reports label practices as ‘good’, ‘best’ or both, with little explanation or distinction among the terms. Indeed, the APRM fraternity, including some officials of the continental Secretariat and national structures, have expressed uncertainty about the use of ‘best practices’ in the mechanism, with reference being made to ‘commendable practices’ in some instances.<sup>31</sup>

The analyses presented in this book try to deconstruct these patterns and to indicate how to address the weaknesses identified.

## **Outline of the chapters**

The chapters cover the four main APRM themes: democracy and political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and socio-economic development. Each chapter begins with a brief conceptual framework that places the theme under discussion within the APRM. This is followed by a presentation of the findings, which includes both the best practices identified as such in the CRRs (and sometimes as ‘good practices’ as in the case with the Algeria CRR)<sup>32</sup> and author-identified practices that merit mention despite not being highlighted in the reports. The findings are then discussed and analysed based on the broad framework of the standards and codes of the APRM and its objectives under each theme. The chapters end with a conclusion and policy and research recommendations.

From the 12 CRRs examined, 146 best and good practices were identified across the four thematic areas of the APRM. The biggest collection of both CRR-identified and author-identified best practices are in democracy and political governance (50), followed by economic governance and management and socio-economic development (35 each) and then corporate governance (26).

In Chapter 2, Tšoeu Petlane analyses best practices under the democracy and political governance theme and observes a great discrepancy in the way in which best practices are identified: similar developments or policies in different countries are not signified or emphasised equally as best practices. Petlane finds that the best practices identified under the theme of democracy and political governance can be classified into three distinct categories: best practices that genuinely contribute to improving governance, best practices that conform to standardised and agreed codes, and best practices that are bragging pieces.

In Chapter 3, Adotey Bing-Pappoe argues that the macroeconomic policy options of the APRM objectives under the theme of economic governance and management are consistent with the tenets of what has come to be known as the Washington Consensus, although they have been ‘domesticated’ into the African context. Bing-Pappoe suggests a number of approaches to help spread the best practices to other APRM participating countries and concludes that the extent to which these practices genuinely reflect the ‘African solutions’ approach will be an important factor in their success.

Chapter 4 on corporate governance by Alison Dillon Kibirige and Winfred Tarinyeba-Kiryabwire begins by placing corporate governance in Africa within the broader international picture, as well as in relation to the common characteristics of African economies. They recognise that corporate governance awareness is low and the identified best practices are largely business-enabling/development initiatives, which reflect the state of the corporate sector in Africa. The recommendations include reforming the regulatory framework to take into account the specifics of the African corporate sector and encouraging companies in Africa to integrate their corporate social responsibility activities into their operational activities.

In Chapter 5, Terence Corrigan looks at whether the best practices can improve the socio-economic problems of Africa. Of the 35 best practices identified, only nine were considered full, legitimate best practices. The majority of identified practices were viewed as ‘partial’, ‘possible’, or ‘potential’ best practices because they did not meet all the requirements of a best practice. Despite the need to have a clearer definition of the concept, best practices have the potential to contribute significantly to the socio-economic development in Africa.

The APRM is designed to strengthen governance in Africa and lead to

sustainable development and regional integration. Therefore, the APRM must be anchored in more than simply calls to share experiences among participating states, as its greatest value is to ‘return governance to the people of Africa’.<sup>33</sup>

If it works, peer review will give African reformers the credibility they desperately need at a time of growing donor fatigue and deep cynicism abroad. More crucially, it will legitimise the process of reform and ward off the external pressure that is usually associated with imposed conditionalities, often deemed insensitive to countries’ specific needs and circumstances. At home, peer review will be critical in building credibility. It will reorient leaders to think beyond partnership with aid donors and restore the long-neglected partnership between governments and citizens. The review process also provides a major opportunity for civil society to hold leaders accountable for their public promises. The final reports will provide a useful tool for civil society groups to use to demand governments fulfil their commitments to reform.

As the next four chapters will show, best practices have the potential to contribute significantly to the practical translation of the APRM into real templates for peer learning and to find workable and durable ‘African solutions to African problems’.

## Endnotes

- 1 See African Union, *New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)*, 2005, para. 1. (Hereafter NEPAD Framework document.); NEPAD/APRM Secretariat, ‘Country Self-Assessment Questionnaire for the African Peer Review Mechanism’, 2003, p. 3. (Hereafter APRM Questionnaire.)
- 2 NEPAD Secretariat, ‘The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)’, 2003. paragraph 2 (emphasis added). (Hereafter APRM Base Document.)
- 3 Indeed, in the Lesotho CSAR, the Technical Research Institutions proposed ‘best practices research’ as a major component, but it was excluded from the exercise for financial reasons and because it was not considered part of the main task of the review.
- 4 At the time of writing, the Mali CRR was not available in English. Translation of certain passages from the French version was done by SAIIA to facilitate this research, and should not be construed as an official translation.
- 5 African Union/NEPAD, *NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance* (AU/NEPAD AHG/235 XXXVIII, Annex I), 2002, para. 6. (Hereafter the Declaration.)

- 6 *Ibid.*, para. 2.
- 7 APRM Questionnaire, *op. cit.*
- 8 Stultz NM, 'African states experiment with peer-reviewing: the APRM, 2002-2007', *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 13:2 (Summer/Fall 2007), p. 6.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 10 Hope KR, 'Towards governance and sustainable development: the African Peer Review Mechanism', *Governance*, 18:2, 2005, pp. 283-311.
- 11 In alphabetical order they are Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo (Brazzaville), Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, São Tomé & Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.
- 12 The 14 that have completed the first review are (in alphabetical order): Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Lesotho, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda.
- 13 At the time of writing, the CRRs of Mauritius (reviewed in Kampala in July 2010) and Ethiopia (reviewed in Addis Ababa in January 2011) were yet to be published.
- 14 Stultz, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- 15 Hansungule M, 'Overview paper on the role of the APRM in strengthening governance in Africa: opportunities & constraints in implementation', paper prepared for the Eighth Gathering of the African Partnership Forum, Berlin, Germany, 22 to 23 May 2007, p. 24.
- 16 Kebonang Z, 'The New Partnership for Africa's Development: making the African Peer Review Mechanism work', *Critique*, 2005.
- 17 As the analysis will show, some best practices address unique country-specific problems. The importance of such practices lies more in their contribution to the promotion of good governance and sustainable development.
- 18 Kebonang Z, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-57.
- 19 Eight core documents were examined: the APRM Questionnaire; the 'Guidelines for Countries to Prepare for and Participate in the APRM'; the APRM Organisation and Process document; the NEPAD Framework document; the APRM Base Document; the APRM Questionnaire General Guidance; the 'Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators' (OSCI) document; and the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance document.
- 20 APRM Questionnaire, p. 1.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 43 and 45.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 23 APRM Guidelines, p. 1.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 25 For other occurrences, see also *ibid.*, pp. 17 and 18.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 4.



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- 27 APRM Organisation and Process, p. 10.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 6 and 16.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 30 OSCI document, pp. 3 and 29–30.
- 31 This shift became apparent during interviews with members of the APRM Secretariat's staff and the series of workshop on the revision of the APRM Questionnaire in 2010, which were part of the Secretariat's project on 'Streamlining and Fast-Tracking the APRM' (Johannesburg, February and August 2010; and Addis Ababa, April 2010). However, at the time of writing no formal decision had yet been made to abandon 'best practice' as a label.
- 32 The distinction between 'best' and 'good' practices is not explained in the Algerian CRR. This is in large part attributed to the lack of guidance and definition of the concepts. However, the research has treated these two categories as one.