

**GENDER AND AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM IN
GHANA:**

**A TOOL FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR PROMOTING
GENDER EQUALITY.**

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ABSTRACT

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in Ghana is a process which gives Ghanaians from all walks of life the opportunity to periodically assess, monitor and evaluate the measure of good governance in Ghana, its successes and limitations. Ghana's APRM which commenced in 2004 resulted in a Country Review Report in 2005 which was reviewed by the APRM Forum of Heads of States in Khartoum Sudan in January 2006. The Country Review Report has gender as a cross-cutting theme in all the four thematic areas of Governance namely Good Democracy and Political Governance, Economic Governance and Management, Socio-Economic Governance and Corporate Governance. Every six months, there is a monitoring, evaluation and progress report submitted by Ghana to the APRM Heads of States Forum and inputs into the progress report are facilitated mostly by engaging civil society who are also represented on District Oversight Committees (DOCs) in every District in Ghana. The purpose of this paper is to inform as well as discuss about how Ghanaians particularly Civil society were engaged in the preparation of the APRM report and their assessment of the existence or lack of gender equality in policies, legislations and institutions. The methodology used is basically desk research and the conclusion is that though a lot has been done in some areas to promote gender equality in the country, the situation of women nevertheless in most areas remain unequal to that of their male counterparts and that falls short of the measure of Good governance.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In 2005, Ghana completed a Self-Assessment Report and a National Program of Action to address achievements and gaps in the four thematic areas of Governance, namely Democracy and Good Political Governance, Economic Governance and Management, Corporate Governance, and Socio-Economic Governance. The Ghana Country self-assessment report under the African Peer Review

Mechanism (APRM) together with the plan of action is an interesting framework for studying “Institutionalized programmatic responses to gender equality commitments and concerns in good governance through citizen engagement.” (Source: GRAP Call for papers, Daily Graphic, Feb 2010) The consultations, and engagement with civil society groups all over Ghana and government captured in the National Program of Action and subsequently captured in the National Medium Term Development Framework (NMTEF) for budgetary allocations, makes for interesting critical discussion as to the effectiveness or otherwise of these structures established and merged, to bring into practical reality, good governance. It is the objective of this paper to ascertain the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the APRM process in respect of promoting gender equality, how far these have been achieved and how far we have failed to achieve it.

2. NEPAD, APRM AND GENDER EQUALITY

The APRM, as a monitoring tool of NEPAD for good governance, has been embraced and implemented by Governments of Ghana (Gog) and Ghana was the first country to embark on the national APRM process and has established a governing Council that oversees the national process. As a good governance tool, the APRM has focused on gender issues in its political and socio-economic governance component. The APRM recognizes the role of gender in shaping social participation. Hence, as a tool for good governance, it takes gender equality seriously.

Gender and Governance

Gender roles and relationships between men and women in a given culture or location are influenced by perceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, biases and expectations which arise or are a result of several factors and influences. The factors and influences are based among others on social, cultural, political, environmental, economics, religion, customary practices, legal system and laws, ethnicity, individual or institutional. Other influences are institution, same sex or co-sex

educational institution, the boarding schools a person attends, media, type of government, under which a person grows up i.e., democratic or dictatorial (WABA, 2005).

The existence or absence of good governance (i.e., openness, transparency and accountability) in the socio cultural, political and economic structures of a country, can also contribute to these prejudices or biases which result in gendered beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Policies and programs may impact positively or negatively on men and women in a given society based on the gender roles and responsibilities which socio-culturally have been assigned to and imbibed by them, through their nurturing, growth and socialization process.

NEPAD and Gender Equality

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a pledge by African Leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared Conviction, that they have a pressing duty to do the following, both individually and collectively

- a) eradicate poverty in their countries
- b) place their countries on the path of sustainable growth and development whilst at the same time;
- c) Participating actively in the world economy and body politic. (NEPAD, October 2001)

African states have a common history of colonialism including slavery in some parts, and under development. Post Colonial Africa was plagued with under-development, ill equipped public servants, shortage of skilled professionals and a weak private sector economy.

On the political, a large number of countries went through dictatorial, one-partisanship, corruption in public sector, coups, military take-overs and civil wars. There were no free, fair and democratic elections in such circumstances thereby increasing the woes of the people on the continent.

NEPAD therefore seeks to build on past experiences of Africa and to challenge the peoples and governments of Africa to understand that development is a process whereby people are empowered to be responsible for their own advancement and progress. Accordingly Africans must initiate, create, maintain and sustain their own development.

NEPAD also centers on African ownership and management. Through this program, African leaders are setting an agenda for the renewal of the continent (NEPAD, 2001). The Agenda is based on national and regional priorities and development plans that must be prepared through participatory processes involving the people i.e. Governments in Partnership with Civil society as well as the Private Sector.

To achieve the objectives of NEPAD (NEPAD, 2001) African leaders have pledged their commitment to both individually and collectively promote the following:

- Peace, Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution
- Promote Democracy and Human Rights through Good Governance
- Promote macro-economic stability
- Promote culture, Tourism, Exports and domestic markets.
- Promote Good Corporate Governance in both the Public and Private Sector Companies.
- Promote Education and Technical Training
- Promote health services with high priority given to tackling HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other communicable diseases.

- Promote the development of infrastructure, ICT, Energy, Transport, Water and Sanitation.
- Promote Agriculture and its diversification into agro and manufacturing industries to serve both domestic and export markets.
- In line with U.N. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women(CEDAW), the Beijing platform for Action (BPoA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); promote the role of women in all activities including socio-economic development through capacity-building in the areas of - Education and training; development of income or revenue generating activities through access to credit.
- Promote equal and effective participation of women in the political and economy of African countries. (NEPAD, 2001)

Good governance was thus an important part of the NEPAD process. The objectives above show that NEPAD is not only interested in Africa's progress but to promote equity with gender equality as an important part. Its gender equality initiatives are informed by important global documents cited in the objective above: CEDAW, BPoA and MDGs. Apart from seeking to mainstream gender in all programmes, there is a special emphasis on education and training, income generation activities and political participation.

The APRM and Gender Equality

Ghana was among the first twelve countries to officially sign on to voluntarily undertake the APRM in March 2003. This was barely four months after Ghana declared her intention to do so at the 5th Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) held in Abuja Nigeria on Nov. 3rd, 2002. Invariably, Ghana was the first African country to present her citizens APRM report to the 3rd APRM Heads of State forum in Abuja, Nigeria on June 19th, 2005, thereby becoming the first African country to be reviewed by the APRM Heads of State Forum in Khartoum, Sudan in January 2006. As a follow up

to Ghana's pioneering effort, thirty (30) countries have so far acceded to the APRM Memorandum of Understanding.

Ghana has also adhered to the requirement of submitting periodic monitoring and evaluation progress reports on the implementation of her Program of Action to the APRM Heads of State Forum. Ghana's monitoring and evaluation report was reviewed in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, in January, 2009.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) arose out of the need to monitor and evaluate the adherence of an African country in her observance and implementation of the principles of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Under the APRM, any African country can voluntarily accede to the Memorandum of Understanding of the APRM as formulated by the African Union. By doing so, the Head of State of the African country agrees to allow the citizens of the country to carry out and engage in a country self-assessment and subsequent monitoring and evaluation of the country's state of governance under four (4) thematic areas, namely:

1. Democracy and Good Political Governance.
4. Economic Governance and Management.
5. Corporate Governance and
6. Socio-economic Governance

A Country Self-assessment Report is verified by various support and country review missions of APRM Panel members and experts drawn from various institutions and countries in Africa.

The assessment of the country's state of governance, best practices and limitations are captured in a report together with a Program of Action (POA) which captures and budgets the proposed measures for addressing any identifiable challenges or limitations regarding the status of the African country. The assessment report is impartially vetted and verified by an independent panel of eminent persons

appointed by the African Union from various sub-regions in Africa. The panel submits the finalized report of the country to a Forum of Heads of States made up of other African countries that have voluntarily acceded to the APRM Memorandum of Understanding.

The Forum of Heads of States of the APRM reviews the report of the country of their peer or compatriot and encourages him or her to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed Program of Action.

PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE APRM PROCESS.

It is the ultimate goal that the tenets and practices of good governance as eschewed under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) will positively affirm or change gender to impact positively on countries, institutions, communities and persons on the African continent.

New Evidence demonstrates that when women and men are relatively equal, economies tend to grow faster, the poor move more quickly out of poverty, and the well-being of men, women and children is enhanced.¹

In this regard, Gender Equality is an issue of development effectiveness, not just a matter of political correctness or kindness to women.

Thus the APRM contributes to good governance as follows:

1. The openness and all inclusiveness of the consultation process.

¹ Integrating Gender into the World Bank's work, a strategy for action.

2. Consultations amongst multiple stakeholders.
3. A country's self assessment process, sharing of information and exchange of ideas amongst Peer Heads of States.
4. Factual and Research based documentation of a country's successful and best practices vis-a-vis challenges and gaps.
5. African Governments preparedness to engage and involve civil society groups in the process.
6. Institutional strengthening and capacity-building.
7. Merger with a country's Development Planning Agency, National Development Plans and Budget, to effect the implementation of the respective programs of Action.

The APRM Gender Strategy:

Gender Mainstreaming has been adopted as a strategy for addressing gender equality through:

- Accepting and valuing equally, the differences between men and women and the diverse roles they play in society and providing an equality perspective into every day policy making (Integrating Gender into the World Bank's work, a strategy for action.)

The above further makes reference to the Council of Europe's definition of gender mainstreaming as "the (re) organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality approach or perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages, by the actors involved in policy-making.

In other words, the gender mainstreaming approach is not to see Gender as a sector which will necessitate the inclusion of a Gender chapter in to the APRM document but to integrate these concerns into all sections of the document. In line with the above stated position, every objective

under the four thematic areas of the APRM will be assessed as to how it values equally the differences between men and women, their diverse and socially constructed roles and responsibilities, and provide a gender equality perspective towards good governance in Ghana.

3. ASSESSMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY IN APRM COMPONENTS

Democratic and Good Political Governance:

Through engagement with civil society and other stakeholders, the APRM Country -Self Assessment Report (CSAR) of 2005 noted among others that a number of successful post-transition competitive multi party elections and orderly transfer of power has occurred in Ghana. There is nevertheless low representation of women in politics due to the lack of political will or commitment to gender equality by the political class and also due to socio-cultural factors. The CSAR recommended the need for clear affirmative action policies by a constitutionally created structure that will deliberately and systemically mainstream gender equality in their operation. The CSAR also recommended affirmative action for women and youth in District assemblies. In this regard, it said MOWAC should “ initiate a policy framework to be implemented over an agreed reasonable time-frame designed to bind the government and all political parties to adopt a 40% quota for women in all spheres of public society (Parliament, Cabinet, public service, etc. as indicated by Ghana to the UN Secretary-General (Country Review (APRM) Report 2006: 41) .

The APRM report of Ghana found that though Article 17 Article 35(6) (b) and Article 22 provided for the protection of the human rights irrespective of gender, consideration by the state of regional and gender balance in relation to public appointments and provision for gender equality in respect of the ownership and distribution in terms of the property rights of spouses, women continue to be disadvantaged in that regard. They also noted that violence against women continued to persist in the country’s social fabric. The CSAR recommended the improvement and strengthening of the

Human rights of marginal and vulnerable groups including women and children and increased budgetary allocation given to MOWAC and also to other institutions which deal with the protection of women rights.

In the third Annual Progress Report of the APRM in Dec. 2008, which assessed the progress made in addressing some of the good governance gaps in the APRM Report, it was indicated that despite the passage of the Human Trafficking Act 2005 (Act 694) and the Domestic Violence Act 2007, a number of human rights violations continue to occur and the lack of education and ineffective prosecution of the perpetrators and inadequate access to justice by some victims, continues to exist. The property rights of spouses remain largely unprotected pending the passage of the Property rights of Spouses Bill.

Economic Governance and Management:

The APRM through engagement with civil society and other stakeholders found that the Ghanaian economy remains relatively weak with a weak productive sector of the economy and weak internal capacity in economic management. There remained heavy dependency on external resources for financing government development expenditure and policy advice.

It is interesting to note that initially, the APRM questionnaire provided for only five objectives which served as a basis for consultations under the above thematic pillar namely:

Objective 1: Promote sound macroeconomic policies that support sustainable development.

Objective 2: Implement Sound, Transparent and Predictable government economic policies.

Objective 3: Promote Sound Public Finance Management

Objective 4: Fight Corruption and Money Laundering

Objective 5: Accelerate Regional Integration by Participating in the Harmonization of Monetary Trade and Investment policy.

The five objectives did not specify overtly a gender dimension. Hence the assessors took immediate action to resolve that issue. Thus the Program of action drawn up to implement the findings of and recommendations of the CSAR and to address the governance gaps included an additional objective.

Objective 6: Gender and Economic Governance and Management was included in the report to address gender mainstreaming of gender desk officers in policy design and implementation, to improve published gender disaggregated data by the Statistical service and strengthen co-ordination between MOWAC and other MDAs to conduct gender analysis for design of policies and programs.

It is relevant to note that there exists in Ghana, a large informal sector of the economy which provides 80.4% of employment and which is dominated by women farmers in rural communities and women as small retailers in urban centers (Ghana Statistical Service, 2000) . Their businesses however continue to remain very small and are vulnerable to external shocks and at times hostile local government policies such as demolition exercises and seizure of goods. The report however provided broadly for access to finance, credit and training for small and medium scale enterprises and was not gender specific in the above context.

Corporate Governance:

“Good corporate governance provides a level of disclosure and transparency regarding the conduct of corporations and their boards of directors that enables the supervision of their accountability while ensuring that they comply with their legal obligations and remissions, are accountable to shareholders and

responsible to stakeholders including employers, suppliers, creditors, customers and communities. And act responsibly regarding the environment.”

(APRM Questionnaire, Section 3)

The CSAR noted as positive, the existence of liberalization of imports, foreign remittances and foreign exchange. However, difficulties in access to credit and domestic resource mobilization, and inadequate support to small and medium enterprises to facilitate their growth and contribution to the economy, constituted a challenge.

There was thus also broad recommendation to provide training and access to financing for small and medium enterprises who are organized and traceable for follow up. Easy access to Business registration was also recommended.

Socio-economic Governance:

“Africa faces grave challenges and the most urgent of these are the eradication of poverty and the fostering of socio-economic development in particular through democracy and good governance. It is the attainment of these twin objectives that the NEPAD process is principally directed.”

NEPAD/HSGIC/03-2003/APRM/MOU Annex 1.

The APRM through nationwide consultations with civil society and stakeholders found that Ghana is committed to attaining the U.N. Millennium goals which have been integrated into the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS).

However, there exists and persists a lack of progress in gender mainstreaming due to socio-cultural, educational and other disparities.

There exist wide urban/rural disparities, weak human, financial and physical resource capacity, high youth unemployment and high brain-drain including that of skilled labor.

Based on the HIV Sentinel Survey of 2002, in Ghana, it has been estimated that 64% of HIV/AIDS cases are in the 20-39 age group with women constituting 58% of the cases ((Country Review (APRM) Report 2006: 118)

Average life expectancy remains low with women at 59 years and men at 56 years.

In respect of the literacy rate, 64.5% of the population in Ghana is literate. 70% of men are literate compared to 51% of women. 49% of women cannot read and write.

Additionally, during the monitoring and evaluation stages, district oversight committees were set up by civil society groups with their representatives in all the Districts of Ghana, to monitor evaluate and report on the APRM in their respective districts. Out of the nine- member committee at least four must be female. This is mandatory and has compelled the DOCs to place premium on gender equality in the process as qualified, experienced and competent women have always been found in the Districts. Districts which did not initially comply with this requirement were obliged to do so before they could have their DOCs inaugurated.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In sum, the APRM Self- assessment report has found and reports that “Despite policies put in place by the government and NGOs to make gender mainstreaming a reality, implementation has been very disappointing.” ...as the CSAR report makes clear (page 140, paragraph. 361) “in many respects, Ghanaian women have made important strides in the public service... But in other ways, the position of women has not changed much.”

To encourage women to offer themselves for elected offices, women should learn to support other women in terms of cash and in –kind support.

‘Elitist’- educated and professional women should also find opportunities to relate to less educated women in order to bridge the gap and attendant mistrust and suspicion which tends to push less literate women who due to their erroneous socialization that men are the leaders and bread-winners, may tend to support men instead of women in politics.

Women who are elected or appointed into public office must work even harder than their male counterparts and cultivate excellent inter-personal skills in order to excel in an area perceived to be a male domain.

Women-groups and organizations irrespective of our political leanings, must identify different ways to support the few women in politics and in public life. There still persists the perception that men can do better than women in political and senior-level offices. Women Ministers particularly those appointed to perceived male-reserved portfolio, tend to be treated with hostility and fierce agitations by some of their party-members, media and individuals. These agitations have one major objective and that is to get the women out and rather return a man to occupy the job thereby returning to the status-quo and maintaining the network of ‘strong-boys’, undisturbed.

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