

Key Talking Points

Measuring Goal 16 with the African Peer Review Mechanism

- I would like to speak about the merits of qualitative approaches to tracking governance targets under SDG Goal 16. In particular, I will be speaking a bit about
 - Why qualitative assessments are important
 - What the APRM is
 - Why the APRM is important for measuring changes in governance in Africa

Why are regional qualitative governance assessments important?

- The international community often marshals grand arguments about the essential nature of **good** governance for development.
- However, there is neither universal agreement on what constitutes good governance nor on what aspects of governance are fundamental for development.
 - Nigeria and Kenya: participatory and representative systems of governance have heightened group polarization and failed to significantly improve socio-economic conditions.
 - China and Rwanda: poverty reduction has been possible despite non-participatory governance systems.
- SDGs offers the international community an unprecedented chance to better understand what makes governments effective in achieving inclusive development in a variety of context
- To fully realize the potential of the SDGs in the area of governance, however, country-owned qualitative assessment tools are important, for two reasons:
 1. While good indicators and data can inform our policy approaches to targets under Goal 16, indicators cannot capture the nuance of informal and formal power and norms that underlie governance.
 2. Governance issues are fundamentally political and will require an approach to measurement that is capable of providing rigorous country specific analysis.
- In Africa, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) offers a promising approach to unpacking the nature of governance on the continent and sharing best practices among states

What is the African Peer Review Mechanism?

- The African Peer Review Mechanism or APRM was instituted by African heads of State in 2003.
- It is a voluntary assessment tool, designed to promote good governance and sustainable development across Africa through peer learning
 - 34 countries have acceded to the mechanism and 17 of them have been through their first review cycle.

- Currently, Kenya is planning its second APRM review and Liberia is planning for a review as well.
- In 2014, the African Union General Assembly decided to make the APRM an autonomous institution within the African Union and have it take a leading role in measuring governance in Africa.

How does the review process work?

- There are five stages in the review, including a country self-assessment, an external review, a validation meeting, and a heads of state review.
- **Stage 1:** country self-assessment, including the completion of a questionnaire and the formulation of a preliminary plan of action. All relevant stakeholders involved
- **Stage 2:** external review by a team comprised of members of the APRM Secretariat, UNECA, and the AfDB. Task: conduct consultations and clarify any issues.
- **Stage 3:** draft a report on the country
- **Stage 4:** present country report and the plan of action to the APRM Forum and the country's Head of State
- **Stage 5:** table report at the AU Summit and subsequently made public.

How does the APRM promote positive evolutions in governance for development?

- The most important aspect of the APRM is that it offers countries an opportunity to discuss and determine governance issues that often go “unseen” by statistical indicators and expert assessments.
- **First**, the APRM is an important predictive and early warning tool. Its ability to identify informal as well as formal sources of power and simmering social problems has made it instrumental for scenario development.
 - Example, Kenya electoral violence 2007, South Africa attacks 2008
- **Second**, the APRM offers an inclusive assessment process that has created a space for non-state actors to engage with governments beyond elections to identify pressing challenges and develop solutions.
 - Eg. Uganda-Minority Rights
- **Third**, peer learning is a key dimension of the APRM. African countries can identify specific policy approaches, rather than whole systems of governance, that are suited to addressing their particular challenges.
- **Finally**, and perhaps most importantly, the APRM has developed a built-in process for ensuring that its findings are incorporated into national policies and development plans.
 - Eg. Cases of Kenya and Ghana

To conclude:

- APRM in its present form is not an optimal tool for assessing Goal 16 - it requires some vital administrative and technical improvements to strengthen its analytical capacity.
 - Recommendations are not ideologically neutral and overlook more salient points in country reports
 - Despite government buy-in, the admin needs institutional and technical support
- Nevertheless, the APRM and similar qualitative governance assessment programs require more international attention in discussions about measuring Sustainable Development Goal 16.
- Although assessments like the APRM might not facilitate easy comparisons between countries, they do offer an even more important advantage - a rich source of information on what particular aspects of governance and approaches to peace and security are effective for development across a diverse set of countries.
- Having this information is important for the success of Goal 16 and the SDGs more broadly.