



# *The Development and Use of Governance Indicators in Africa*

**A RESEARCH OVERVIEW**

*Produced by Idasa*



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## **A Research Overview**

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# Research Overview

This study is a snapshot of three different countries with the intention of producing clear policy recommendations to inform donor strategies. Commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme Oslo Governance Centre (UNDP OGC), the study explores both comprehensive national governance assessments, in their various forms, and the use of more discrete sets of governance indicators in sectoral or thematic assessments.

UNDP OGC contracted African democracy institute Idasa to execute the project to help develop policy recommendations for the European Commission.

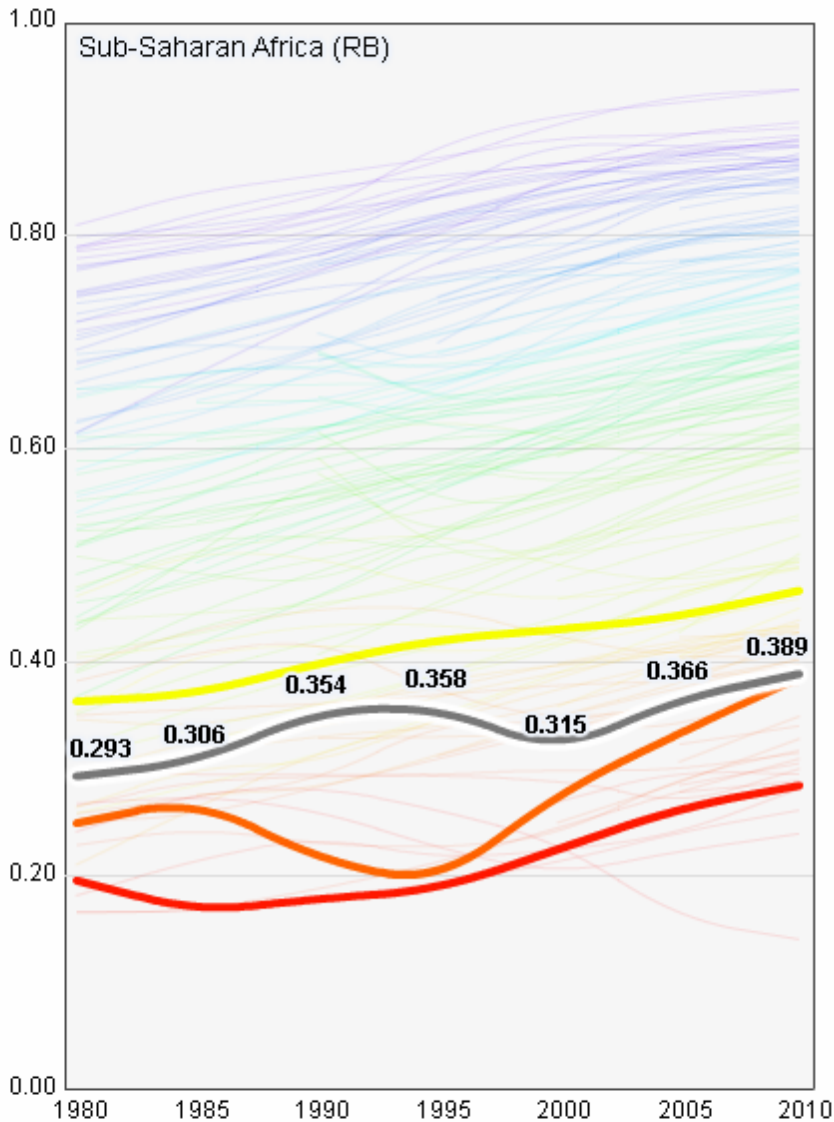
The study does not claim to be comprehensive, but it does, through its choice of cases and countries, consider its results to provide some indicative representivity. It considers three countries, each with a distinctive colonial and post-colonial history: Ghana gained independence in 1957, Mozambique in 1975 and Rwanda in 1962. These countries were selected because of the linguistic and administrative peculiarities in their colonial legacies, each having been colonised by three different powers – the English, the Portuguese and the French (Belgian).

In some respects these countries have experienced similar challenges and processes, which enable us to compare them. For example, all have conducted an African Peer Review; all have parliaments seeking to become more engaged in public policy as election followed election and party contestation became routine; all have developmental challenges which were being attended to through some form of Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP); and all are making slow but steady advances in their human development profiles.

The aim was, through country studies conducted by reputable non-state actors, to consider each country and, more importantly, to look at the questions of governance and the use of governance indicators. The study intentionally asked the researchers in each country to find some specific cases which reflected two concerns: Firstly, whether or not evidenced-based decision-making forms part of the political process, and if not, why not? Secondly, whether governance can be improved by focusing on the development of national plans driven by a number of agreed indicators, appropriately measured and monitored to establish policies and practices which could bring about positive and long-lasting change. In attempting

to take an independent and somewhat outside point of view, the study sought to learn lessons about what might work best, what aspects of the overall governance monitoring enterprise needed to be attended to, and which actors might be best placed to move the enterprise forward.

HDI value (Sub-Saharan Africa (RB))



■ Ghana    ■ Mozambique    ■ Rwanda  
■ Sub-Saharan Africa (RB)

Source: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>

There are of course limitations to this approach. While the primary actors – about which more below – were interviewed, the authors of the case studies were not privy to the complex inner workings of the state, international development partners' relationships and technical assistance programmes. The country reports had therefore both the merits of a cool gaze, unrestricted by the vested interests of those at the centre of any action and the limitations of exclusion from the knowledge, access and long-range view that those at the centre invariably hold. It should also be noted that the studies were undertaken by civil society organizations, in which there will be some inevitable inherent perceptual biases.

It was also the intention of the research to find out whether, despite the differences between the countries chosen, it might be possible to establish certain common lessons. If this were possible, these lessons might be more generally applicable, precisely because the countries chosen potentially represent the larger diversity of sub-Saharan Africa. While we think this may be so, some care must obviously be taken not to apply the lessons mechanically. Appropriate usage of the recommendations requires careful understanding by practitioners of how lessons should be adapted to the country context.

Furthermore, in delving into specific context-relevant endeavours, the study also sought to gain insights from different processes that could possibly be replicated or applied in other environments with a minimum of modification. It would be appropriate, following the completion of this initial study, to consider ways of presenting these lessons more broadly to actors on the continent for their comment so that a package of operating procedures and remedial actions may be developed.

The report is the result of three scoping missions, three country reports, three validations missions, interaction between reviewers within Idasa, the UNDP and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) with country partners and a concluding validation workshop<sup>1</sup>. This Research Overview focuses directly on the conclusions and recommendations arising from the study.

## Research Objectives

The UNDP OGC notes that there is a growing recognition of the importance of democratic governance for sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Consequently, there is an increasing interest in monitoring improvements and progress in governance at the national and sub-national levels. International efforts have largely focused on comparing countries and have suffered from a tendency to conduct external assessments based on external measuring needs. In response, there is a growing demand from both governments of developing countries and some international development partners for national monitoring systems that are geared towards informing national policy processes based on national measuring needs. Similarly, there is a need to balance the focus on supply of governance indicators with a focus on demand and usage.

The basis for the study, therefore, in the words of the UNDP OGC, was to help develop policy recommendations. The aim of the “study is to better understand the building and functioning of national governance monitoring systems and in particular the development and use of indicators in the field of democratic governance within these systems, with a view to produce clear policy recommendations to donors to inform donor strategies, as well as national counterparts, including Government and civil society.” Further, the study seeks to understand if governance indicators are used to inform decision-making and, if so, if they can be used, or are being used, as a basis to measure performance by internal and external actors.

## Case Studies

The body of the report considers a series of country case studies, analyses these within the country’s context and, where possible, across countries, and develops a set of conclusions from these.

The cases were identified during extensive scoping missions prepared by the country partners and attended by staff from Idasa and the UNDP. They were selected for the access they provided to insights from different stakeholders and sectors, for their prima facie use of indicators to attempt governance reform, oversight or evidence-based decision making, and for the diversity between the international, domestic or hybrid indicator



development and use. Where possible, they also spoke to different levels of government – national, sub-national or local – and to interactions between civil society, development partners, executives and legislatures.

The partner research institutions interrogated the central question through three cross-cutting case studies and, in addition, a specific number of country-specific case studies (see table below). The partners used a common analytical framework in their approaches but could independently determine which case studies required field research and which could be adequately dealt with through desk-based research.

GHANA	MOZAMBIQUE	RWANDA
APRM Process: implementation progress, indicator development and use in monitoring, incorporation with other monitoring instruments		
National Development Plan: ownership, institutional monitoring framework, synchronisation with other governance monitoring instruments		
Participation in Practise through the Lens of Parliament: parliamentary oversight, participation & the legislative process, indicator use		
<p>Schools Feeding Programme: interaction between the state and civil society, indicator-based advocacy</p> <p>Judicial Reform: internally driven reform, interaction between the judiciary and civil society, indicator development and use</p> <p>Media Regulation: state attempts to regulate and develop indicators for monitoring, advocacy for regulation and legislative reform, necessity for indicators</p>	<p>Decentralisation: roll out of the process, participation in the process, state and non-state monitoring of the process</p> <p>• <i>The Mozambique study was undertaken in only half the time allotted to the other countries and therefore it was agreed that they would do just one unique case study</i></p>	<p>Decentralisation: citizen participation in the process, indicators and the performance assessment tool (<i>Imihigo</i>)</p> <p>Anti-corruption Initiatives: parliamentary oversight, indicator use in monitoring, democratic institutions involved in indicator production</p> <p>Gender Representation: impact of women's representation in Parliament on legislation development, indicator production and use, engagement with other stakeholders</p>

## Study Conclusions

There are eight main lessons learned and conclusions drawn from the study. When considering these, it is important to bear in mind that the study sought only to gain a greater understanding of the issue within specific contexts. Although some generalisations can be made based on these findings, the arguments in support of these are subject to interpretation. However, the study draws upon the knowledge and experience of a broad range of actors and stakeholders.

1. High levels of commitment to development indicators and the MDGs require similar commitments to governance indicators

Stakeholders and practitioners have, progressively, become familiar with the quantitative statistics and global parlance around development indicators. It is relatively easy to grasp the concepts and implications behind figures such as the percentage of a population living below the poverty line or the number of households connected to an electricity source. Both local and international groups have collected and analysed such data. In addition, the developing world has rallied behind the call to ensure their countries try to meet the MDGs in which development is quantified and measurable.

This clarity and understanding is less prevalent in the realm of governance indicators, both because governance indicators seek to understand the “why” behind any set of numbers and because good governance, while clearly necessary for development, is not so easily quantifiable. When asking why a phenomenon occurs within a social or political system, there is also often a need to rely on a quantifiable or group of quantifiable proxies, the production of which requires the use of complex statistical models. Development indicators are mainly numbers; governance indicators, by contrast, are concepts represented by an amalgamation of numbers and, as such, are less commonly understood and referenced than their development counterparts.

A complicating factor is that international commitment to a developmental agenda comes with clear backing and more easily accessible funding streams than the international rhetoric around governance.

Nevertheless, failures to achieve the necessary development results require one to look more closely at the governance processes which can

either enhance or inhibit development. Those working with MDGs and other development indicators require support from those focusing on governance, while those focusing on governance require political and resource backing from those whose primary interest is development.

The Ghanaian case study, in which SEND-Ghana (Social Enterprise Development Foundation) monitored the implementation of school feeding programmes in several provinces, provides an illustrative example of the ease with which an initiative designed to monitor governance questions can quickly become focused on more developmental issues. Due to the difficulties encountered in assessing governance, SEND-Ghana was forced to focus on the logistical and practical issues, such as the need to consider infrastructure development and increasing enrolment figures before and after, and less attention was paid to governance issues of transparency or accountability.

Development objectives appear to have obvious practical solutions. Governance issues require a complex set of interventions at different levels, involving a multitude of actors and, most difficult of all, systemic and institutional evolution.

## A single domestically agreed set of governance indicators needs to be established

The countries in the study, and we suspect from general knowledge that the same can be said of other countries, are struggling to make sense of the variety of tools and indicator lists which are being applied or supplied by states and external actors. In Mozambique, for example, parliamentarians list 11 different programmes and instruments they are able to refer to in tracking government development plans. But these plans are all developed separately, often in collaboration with different or overlapping donor groups, and with different or overlapping civil society constituencies.

Competing spheres of influence, whether they are economic or political, exacerbate a situation that is currently inundated with well-meaning programmes and instruments. International, regional, sub-regional and national commitments and pressures result in an almost schizophrenic political profile, requiring governments to be active and re-active with little space in between. Until and unless it is possible to encourage countries to develop their own systematic and coherent development policy proc-

ess, and then to make use of it in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, transaction costs are going to remain high, confusion over means and ends will continue and the policy process will zigzag back and forth rather than move steadily forward.

One result of the competing demands is that a great deal of time is spent in co-ordinating meetings between the various processes. Indicators are generalised or re-interpreted to create coherence, even when this may not be appropriate or possible, and the results from one monitoring exercise may not comfortably be applied to others. Compounding this problem is a lack of expertise within institutions such as parliaments, both in the administration and among Members of Parliament themselves. Few MPs have the necessary knowledge, experience and skills to engage constructively with the various tools at their disposal and those with the capacity to initiate and implement oversight initiatives are placed in numerous committees and structures, limiting the extent and depth to which they can examine any one subject.

Countries attempt to streamline these multiple processes by re-using or recycling data from one process into another, or by seeing each separate exercise as a subset of a greater exercise – so an annual PRSP might form the building block for a “2020” vision. These are ingenious ways of making sense of competing processes, sometimes undertaken more out of obligation than need.

The Joint Governance Assessment in Rwanda, initiated by the government and select members of the donor community, has been somewhat successful in combining different instruments and programmes. As it remains a relatively new exercise, begun only in 2008, lessons may be learned by monitoring the medium- and long-term impact of such a streamlining exercise.

## 2. Institutionalisation of governance assessments and development of local expertise promotes credibility and sustainability

In the past, issues such as capacity and opportunity-cost inhibitors have been understood to be solvable through the injection of external support or technical assistance. While such input can be useful to kick-start governance monitoring, policy reform in the service of governance evaluation or aid in the establishment of governance indicators, there are two issues that were brought to the fore during the current study. The first, already acknowledged by many international donors but nonetheless worth

repeating, is the question of ownership. This is particularly pertinent in the realm of governance assessments given that an evaluation has a direct bearing on the power wielded by national stakeholders. Whether in relation to votes in a future election or access to international funds, a governance review is not perceived to be a neutral process.

In addition, and with other implications, there is a sustainability issue that needs to be considered in the use of external expertise as a solution for local capacity gaps. Africa is a continent in which asymmetry of information, particularly due to poor access to information by the average citizen, is a means to power. Information is both powerful and sensitive. A time-series collection of data on accountability can therefore be a significant tool in the hands of an NGO and government control of statistics on delivery and corruption can be manipulated to suggest favourable governance progress.

There needs to be a strong commitment to the ongoing production of information and it must be regularly, reliably and impartially produced in the service of monitoring. The time-bound introduction of external consultants or academics, while it may be useful in the service of skills transfer, will always run the risk of being unsustainable given a lack of commitment in a nation, statistics board or civil society organization to the time, cost and potential confrontation involved in tracking governance indicators.

In numerous instances throughout the report there is clear evidence that recruitment of external experts is required. The example of media monitoring by the National Media Commission (NMC) in Ghana is illustrative. The NMC developed a set of indicators for assessing the content of news stories but produced only a single analysis. While not an example of the unsustainable injection of external technical support, the case highlights the challenges of sustainability when it comes to research and monitoring, even in the face of NMC commitment to using indicators to support the development of a regulatory framework for the media.

Similarly, in the development of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in Mozambique and Rwanda, both countries relied to some extent on international experts to develop indicators. The absence of local or “in-house” capacity, whether that be in parliaments, institutions, the executive or civil society, is a critical concern as this increases the cost of such exercises and does little to promote institutional knowledge.

## Externally designed and implemented governance assessments less likely to engender local ownership

There are many national governance assessment tools used across Africa. Amongst these are the Mo Ibrahim Governance Index, the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Governance study and the APRM. There are other more specific studies – the Harvard African Governance Index, Afrobarometer and Freedom House studies come to mind. All of them use sets of indicators which have been developed in collaboration with expert groups based on the continent. That said, with the involvement, and often leadership, of external institutions it is possible to question whether such studies are adequately contextualised.

All of the above studies also have differing methodological approaches. The most favoured is to use both qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental sources. In some cases these are themselves aggregated to make them more useful. In addition, more in-depth analysis of data can be done using expert focus groups or interviews, panel reviews or surveys. The results are sometimes, but not always, validated domestically before being published. Some of the studies then provide comparative rankings and scores. Some are done annually or bi-annually and then suggest, with caution, the possibility of tracking progress over time. However, due to the broad nature of these surveys and assessments, it is difficult to pinpoint specific governmental initiatives that may require support in which improvement is necessary.

While all of the studies are applicable in different ways and some have received considerable media attention, it is less clear to what extent they are actually changing governance behaviour. It may be that they are building a consensus for a particular type of behaviour; and it is true, though only to a limited extent, that governance reformers are making use of these results and the indicators in their advocacy. What is certain, however, is that the field of governance indicators, and the use of them in advocacy, analysis or other ways, remains limited to a few well-informed groups benefiting from increased exposure to both theoretical and practical fields of knowledge.

Two of the studies mentioned above attempt to avoid the pitfalls of being discounted by local actors. The UNECA study seeks to gain local ownership of the reports before they are published, with mixed results.

The APRM sought to obtain government support at the design level and then through its voluntary accession mechanism, thereby ensuring that it is a country-based study with external validation rather than the other way around. Both studies suffered from strict time requirements and have not been able to reproduce themselves within a sufficient time period to make an impact. The UNECA study is into a third round in some countries, the APRM is not yet through its first round. Indeed, in Ghana, the APRM process appeared to be getting progressively less attention (and funding) and in Rwanda it has been amalgamated with another new programme, with former APRM secretariat staff now disbanded and re-distributed to various governmental departments.

In-depth studies, such as UNECA and the APRM, have themselves faced considerable capacity constraints in the move from diagnosis to practical plans of action for ensuring sustainable governance reform. Initial financial outlay for these studies has not been matched in the process of applying the plans of action or recommendations. In these and a number of other case studies, therefore, the impact should be considered as yet untested. Some institutions, such as the Gender Monitoring Office in Rwanda, have yet to develop a set of indicators by which a diagnosis can be made, and points of reference remain external (such as the Beijing Platform for Action aimed at equality for women). Although “gender profiling” has been carried out, this too suffers from how it can be used as a practical application for change.

Extractive industry governance assessment tools continue to lack governmental buy-in, despite mounting evidence and research by internal actors (usually with the support of international examples). However, there appears to be a uniform tendency to dismiss studies or concepts when these appear to be unfavourable to the government, who are then quick to remonstrate with interlocutors and deride studies as lacking an appreciation of the context or a proper understanding of locally owned initiatives.

Compounding the problems of ownership and credibility are the plethora of studies produced. Each study then competes for public space and the attention of policy-makers, which enables the subjects of study to discount their results except where it is in their interests. Opposing political parties, furthermore, have been known to use the same report to make contradictory conclusions, drawing attention to the often ambiguous and malleable nature of statistics and indicators. Thus rankings are either ignored as irrelevant or advertised as examples of good performance for purposes of obtaining support.

3. The capacity to understand, formulate and apply governance indicators requires further development

Financial questions and issues surrounding time constraints are recurring concerns and are applicable in varying degrees to all governance assessments, addressed further below. Additionally, there remain two principle concerns with regard to capacity. Firstly, the pre-monitoring phase necessitates the conceptualisation and creation of indicators. Secondly, the capacity and ability of stakeholders to implement a system of monitoring requires an understanding of the nature and potential outcome of the process. Understanding governance indicators is the key underlying foundation upon which this system of oversight rests. Without this fundamental knowledge the process is rendered problematic and the results questionable. Although the concept of governance may have a foothold in the work of civil society organizations (CSOs) and government, its relatively broad definition invites a lack of clarity in terms of what, in fact, needs to be measured, and how. The need to focus questions to enable the actors involved to draw out relevant and accurate information is of paramount importance. Sector-specific assessments and oversight initiatives are rare, usually have skeleton budgets, are implemented on an ad hoc basis and rely primarily on national actors and institutions. Although examples of indicators abound, particularly on the international level, contextualising indicators to address country-specific demands depends on local capacity to understand the objectives and process in a way that enables flexibility and nuanced adaptations.

Assessments of democratic practice can choose two different, but equally important, aspects: the process and the outcome. Governance assessments tend to, or should, target the process through which results are or are not achieved. Measuring the quality of governance solely on outputs makes it difficult to identify and address root causes. Ideally, governance indicators can measure and assess both of these dimensions, but in focusing on and promoting the process of good governance practice the emphasis is placed on the sustainability of the overall system.

One example of a moderately successful sector-specific national oversight and assessment process is the SEND-Ghana and the School Feeding Programme (SFP). In this particular instance, the NGO in question was able to develop its own set of indicators while also incorporating the CIVICUS Civil Society Index. SEND-Ghana was attempting to measure the process through which the SFP realised its objectives by identifying the bottlenecks and capacity gaps. This focus on the process, while remaining



aware of the ultimate objective, is an approach that places emphasis on the means and not merely the ends.

Although a coherent and well-adapted approach was adopted by SEND-Ghana, this understanding was not necessarily shared by their government counterparts. For instance, much of the information generated by governmental agencies came in the form of numerical analysis in relation to the objectives, i.e. the number of children beneficiaries, the increase in school attendance, etc. In so doing, the SFP and government relegated the role of governance monitoring to civil society, which then was placed in a position of having to unilaterally advocate for changes to the process. Whether or not the issues raised by SEND-Ghana were incorporated remained the purview and prerogative of the government, which, as was stated above, seemed more concerned with development outcomes. Nevertheless, as an official partner in the process, SEND-Ghana was able to adopt a collaborative rather than confrontational approach, which increases the likelihood of government accepting and incorporating their findings. That said, the extent to which decision-making was influenced by the information provided by SEND-Ghana is difficult to measure and therefore unclear.

The majority of the remaining case studies abound with examples where the formulation, application and general understanding of governance indicators remain a significant challenge. With a reasonable amount of resources available to it, the Gender Monitoring Office in Rwanda, despite being in existence for two years, has yet to develop a set of governance indicators by which to monitor and assess the impact government policies and practice have had on the status of women. A variety of reasons may explain this, but it is nevertheless clear that the development of governance indicators for this particular governmental institution can be supported and improved.

Lastly, there remains an absence of understanding in most cases regarding the aggregation of indicators to form an overall assessment of the governance process. The complexity of formulating a systematic and in-depth approach to measuring the governance process necessitates a detailed understanding of the issues and relationships between process and outcome. In the case of decentralisation in Mozambique, for instance, the inability of the local governments to formulate and implement governance assessments was indeed acknowledged.

For such an exercise to be effective, a multitude of actors needs to have a common understanding of the objectives and monitoring process. This absence in capacity within local government resulted in a reliance upon

figures relating to revenues generated and spent, with little or no qualitative information on the how and why, which could, if generated, have an impact on the sustainability of the success surrounding the fiscal process.

## Governance measurements need to move beyond quantitative analysis

In the synthesis and analysis of the country reports, one of the issues highlighted was the continuing reliance on quantitative data. Indeed, in many instances, achieving what is perceived to be good governance practice is simplified to the realisation of a numerical quantity. Although many aggregate indicators coming from international institutions and organizations sometimes also use numerical data, this is largely incorporated into an indicator based on aggregated information. That said, within the APRM set of indicators, the number of international legal texts is taken as an objective to satisfy a particular indicator, without any consideration of whether or not this has had any measurable impact.

The most obvious example, and chosen for this very reason, is the examination of the potential benefits of a high representation of women in the Rwandan parliament. In this instance, the challenge was to ascertain whether or not this had a measurable impact on governance practice and formulation of priorities. Further study along these lines is critical if those favoring the increased participation of women can answer and rebut arguments that assert the futility of greater involvement of women in politics if they are not capacitated or willing to effectively promote the interests of their unique constituency. In other words, numbers may count for nothing if there is no discernible qualitative impact.

### 4. Information gaps and supply side inefficiencies

The key to undertaking any research study is the availability of the requisite information. A further consideration, which is equally important, is the comprehensive nature of the information made available. An incomplete database or gaps in data availability mean that any study will only be able to form a partial picture. Put another way, it is a puzzle with pieces missing. Of course, realistically, 100% accuracy is an ideal recognised as unattainable, with margins of error commonplace in statistical, quantitative or qualitative studies. Narrowing down the pertinent questions and

identifying that which is measurable is therefore an essential preliminary task in any such undertaking. Governance assessments, due to their often sensitive nature, face several constraints in their ability to provide accurate and relevant products. Subjectivity and inherent bias, emanating from both ends of the information-gathering process, also render governance assessments susceptible to misleading or contextually inaccurate outcomes.

In most cases, as is clearly illustrated in the case studies, it is the availability of information that is the main constraint. Those governments examined within this study do not have a very systematic and reliable method of generating and disseminating information, and we believe this to be true of most governments in the region. In all three countries there seemed to be no one organization focused on measuring governance as an exclusive, stand-alone project. Although this may be due to funding issues, it would also suggest that the development of projects and programmes that could undertake governance assessments relies on the existence of expertise, understanding or even interest.

Further complicating the production of assessments are the difficulties encountered in gathering information. In the absence of clearly defined and functioning institutions, structures, systems and processes, a problem compounded by the general absence of basic numerical data, assessing political contexts and dynamics is rendered highly problematic. To some extent, governance assessments should therefore attempt not only to measure but also define that which they are measuring. Certainly, if any assessment has as its aim to map and influence decision-making, it is necessary to analyse both the *de jure* and the *de facto* operating contexts of institutions. In short, the crux of the dilemma is to be able to find and define the locus of political will, understand upon what evidence or logic it functions, and thereby draw out relevant information.

In some cases data does exist, and it can simply be a case of knowing how to locate it. In Mozambique, the assessment of the decentralisation process was problematic due to the contradictory budget information presented by the government. Whether this was the result of a lack of capacity in terms of information management, or a deliberate attempt to mislead the assessment process, is difficult to gauge. However, even the generation of information that would have enabled stakeholders to verify the data was hampered by a lack of transparency.

Common to all three cases was the inability of parliaments to generate information that would enhance their capacity to engage in evidence-based

decision-making. The inadequately trained and few researchers available are unable to provide committees with comprehensive and timely supporting documentation. Aggravating this scenario is an apparent reluctance on the part of parliaments to use information generated by external experts, particularly if these come from non-state or civil society bodies.

Certainly there is no commonly available and trusted source of comprehensive data. Everyone is doing the best they can, shining their light on that corner of the room in which they believe the black cat to be hiding. It is therefore not surprising that policy is made without reference to evidence that is mistrusted either because of its origin or its quality.

In Ghana, the formulation of the Mining Law within the committee process did include submissions by civil society, but the impact of this information was negligible. Ultimately, the outcome of the legislative process did not address the key concerns expressed by civil society. One can only speculate as to what information the law was finally based upon, and this again shows a lack of transparency within the political process.

## Access to information

In other instances, information may be withheld due to its unflattering nature. Governments are often sensitive to external criticism and can be reluctant to share information that paints a less than positive picture. An example of this is the delay by the government of Mozambique to make public the ARPM report. With looming elections, the government made the decision to withhold the report until after the poll. Although this is an issue concerning the output of the assessment process, rather than the process itself, it is nevertheless indicative of the government approaches to sharing knowledge and information.

In all three countries studied, the relationship between governments and civil society is a defining characteristic that impacts on the level of transparency and information-sharing. Although less so in Ghana, the governments of Mozambique and Rwanda remain reluctant to engage with civil society in collaborative assessments or decision-making processes. Both the APRM and National Development Plan (NDP), combined into the Joint Governance Assessment (JGA) and NDP in Rwanda, are characterised by an absence of real engagement between civil society and government. Without access to information pertaining to the performance of the government, any attempt by civil society to support the implemen-

tation of national poverty reduction strategies, for instance, is necessarily done unilaterally.

In addressing corruption, whether in Rwanda or elsewhere on the African continent, information pertaining to the procurement process is notoriously difficult to come by. In the role of parliament in anti-corruption initiatives in Rwanda, this key area was not raised. Initiatives to explore and regulate this sector of government expenditure are mainly limited to the reports of the Auditor General, which do not normally provide sufficient detail to allow proper and detailed oversight. That said, the case of Rwanda also illustrates government's sensitivity to global perceptions, as considerable efforts to act against corruption came from the executive's awareness of its international ranking. Despite this, however, Rwanda continued to go down in Transparency International's Corruption Index. Hence, even with the creation of numerous bodies that are tasked, in one form or another, to prevent corrupt practices, it has continued to plague the country. Again, civil society participation in Rwanda's efforts to stem corruption remains minimal.

## Dialogue and the sharing of information

In Mozambique the participatory processes around the National Development Plan (or PARPA) is a good example of how participation and engagement between stakeholders can be formalised and institutionalised. What is perhaps most significant is the regularity with which this engagement took place. Such mechanisms can foster trust and positive, non-confrontational dialogue.

Ad hoc engagements such as submissions to or advocacy directed towards parliamentary committees, as is discussed in both the Mining Law in Ghana and the Labour Law in Rwanda, tend to have limited success. In most cases, such engagement between government and civil society is characterised by the absence of transparency and a tendency by governments to dictate the terms of the dialogue and the extent to which their information is shared.

Although donors and other international actors demonstrate a greater willingness to engender an inclusive dialogue process, bi-lateral negotiations, particularly around budget support, are often undertaken behind closed doors. The Paris Declaration attempts to address this issue with regards to budget reporting, but the onus of disclosing this information

also rests with the donor community. Monitoring of budgets, following both the executive's presentation of the budget and the Auditor General's report, is an area that has received significant attention recently. This form of oversight can have a significant impact on a range of issues, such as service delivery and corruption, amongst others. Unfortunately, this area remains a top-down chain of information sharing, and stakeholder engagement in the formulation of budgets and monitoring of its implementation is subject to the extent to which governments allow this to happen.

Dialogue processes that involved civil society in the monitoring of the decentralisation process in Mozambique, particularly with regards to revenue generation and implementation, have been plagued by inaccurate or incomplete information. However, this may also have been due to a lack of capacity in both central and local government branches.

#### 5. Scarce human and financial resources undermine the long-term sustainability of governance assessments

Firstly, it should be clearly stated that the potential and ability to formulate and implement governance assessments in the three countries studied here does exist. However, due to constraints based principally on time and funding, these types of exercises can and will only be done on an ad hoc basis. Currently, there is no institution or other body that is capable of sustaining a continuing assessment and monitoring exercise. Budgetary support from the government of these countries is often limited and, as stated above, once the initial exercise is completed, implementation and follow-up processes tend to receive less attention and financial support. The Ghana study suggests that this can change over time as political actors see the benefit of recovering a report or programme of action arising out of a study such as the APRM. There seems to be a new impetus based on recognition that the study did appropriately identify constitutional weaknesses that require remedy.

Even in these instances, one could make the argument that funding can and is only made available as external aid. Perhaps what is most significant is that as donor interest dwindles so does national interest. This is an enduring legacy of the aid dependency syndrome, where government priorities are by and large dictated by the financial resources, which are generally allocated according to a set of objectives generated externally and unilaterally. Only rarely are these priorities and objectives influenced by external, non-state or international actors if additional financial resources are not part of the process. With a broad range of interests vying for state

time and resources, monitoring and evaluation exercises compete with pressing, often short-term, needs and solutions.

Sustaining the process of governance assessments over time is also a problem identified in these studies. Advocacy, by its very nature, tends to be ad hoc and opportunistic, and evidence is generated as needs arise. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) suffer a chronic inability to sustain any one activity due to their reliance on external funding, a source that is also contingent upon the shifting sets of priorities. The most sustainable and viable relationship in the long term is therefore that between governments and donors. Budget and electoral cycles, for both donors and governments, can also endanger sustained engagement and commitment. A Rwandan stakeholder interviewed during the study referenced a perception that while international partners and the state collaborated closely on the development of governance indicators for joint monitoring, this collaboration did not so easily extend to the financing of an implementation phase involving research and roll-out. Donors, as much as the governments they deal with, are often under pressure to produce results, which can have the affect of limiting the attention span of the principle actors.

In the same vein, a Mozambican stakeholder pointed out that in a developmental state with a range of urgent priorities, finding or justifying the diversion of funds to the costly and time-consuming work of national statistic collection and survey work can be a difficult task. An effective monitoring or evaluation mechanism relies on the establishment of baseline data from which to measure progress. While the human resources and financial capacity to establish base line measures are one set of issues, the time involved in national roll out of a base line study should not be underestimated and is simply the first in what should be an annual or regular series of undertakings. It took the Rwandan Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion three years to conduct its first gender profiling study and a further two years to present the results in a report. Once the time cost is coupled with the financial cost of national survey roll-out or statistic gathering – often a reason African nations have outdated or non-existent census data – any developing nation government or local civil society organization needs to have a strong commitment to such an exercise otherwise it will either not take place or it will be carried out once and never again or too infrequently to have comparative value. The opportunity cost of governance monitoring can mean programmes and systems do not get past the conceptualisation stage.

National censuses may take place once a decade. The present rate of progress of the APRM suggests a similar cycle – but this is equivalent to two

electoral cycles and beyond the life span of many civil society organizations and most donor funding cycles. In order to continue, such detailed and comprehensive assessments will need to be sufficiently institutionalized and embedded within state businesses. Something will have to change – either the scope and periodicity of the studies or financing and capacity models.

#### 6. Objectives and targets shift with national and international political cycles

Democracies and the policies they formulate and implement are in all instances subject to the electoral cycle. This fact can cause negative consequences in countries battling with the need for development. On the other hand, political parties that stay in government over successive elections have the benefit and ability to think and act in the long term. In the cross-cutting case studies in this report, the APRM and the NDP are particularly subject to the changes of and within governments, or, conversely may benefit from a lack of change. Another factor that often plays a role in the internal decision-making process is international circumstances and pressures. Continuity and some measure of systemic stability are critical if governance assessments are to be effective tools to assess change. If priorities, objectives and targets change, due to a variety of circumstantial reasons for both national and international stakeholders, governance assessments can only offer a snapshot of a situation that is largely time-specific.

One of the lessons coming from Ghana is that national priorities can shift with successive governments. Indeed, there often seems to be a deliberate attempt to discard what the previous government undertook as policy and practice. The last two elections in Ghana have seen an alternation between the two dominant political parties. Although this may be indicative of a healthy democratic system, in some regard it has resulted in disruptions and changes in the approach to and conceptualisation of the NDP and APRM. In terms of assessing government practice in relation to these, it means that the goal posts, so to speak, are continually shifting. The comprehensive studies deal with processes with very different time lines – from the more volatile political arrangements to the extremely long-run developmental trajectories. They are therefore particularly sensitive to short cycles and likely to be challenged for their temporal conclusions and recommendations.

Rwanda demonstrates the benefits of having a leadership with a singular vision which is set and dominated by the president. Despite criticisms of



the centralised nature of political power in Rwanda, the continuity provided by the leadership has resulted in enhanced coherence of policy and implementation. Indeed, the transition from the APRM structure to the JGA can be acknowledged as a potentially positive approach to rationalising government policy. Rather than facing the challenges of attending to and implementing a host of different instruments with differing – though similar – agendas, the JGA has harmonized these within a single plan of action. This coherence offers the benefits of setting a baseline by which progress can be assessed holistically, rather than in a disjointed manner. Combining the various instruments into one overarching programme can maximise the human and financial resources.

#### 7. The executive branch and international actors are the principle developers and users of indicators

One of the principle conclusions of this study is that the main actors in the process of development and use of indicators are international partners and the executive branch of government. Furthermore, it is apparent that indicators developed by these two stakeholders are more likely to be of a national character, whereas local or sub-national indicator development and use has a higher chance of involving non-state or civil society actors. The causal factors behind this are evident in the contrast between the crosscutting case studies and the country-specific studies. In the APRM and NDP indicator development process, as in other comprehensive governance assessments, the point of contact will by necessity be the executive due to their inherent links to actors and institutions within the international arena. These instruments will therefore depend on the government, and in some part international actors and process, in the modalities of their formulation, contextualization and implementation.

The NDP process in Mozambique is, on the surface, intentionally participatory. Efforts have been made by both the executive and international partners to ensure that parliament, civil society and other stakeholders are part of the consultative as well as monitoring process. Though commendable, there are some obvious power dynamics that are critical in defining the positions of each actor within the decision-making process. Budget support by the donor community is a powerful tool within this process and accords them considerable leverage. Mozambique's substantial reliance on foreign aid places it in a tenuous bargaining position, and has an impact on the perceptual focus and internal priorities. Within this tripartite alliance of partners (donors, executive and civil society), civil society will only be able to exert limited influence and impact. The case study

addressing this issue would seem to indicate that within the Joint Review process, despite attempts to be inclusive, civil society only plays a nominal role. Thus, in both the formulation and application of governance indicators, civil society relies on the ability or willingness of the two principle actors to include them.

The APRM process is inherently an internationally guided process. As the bulk of the indicators are pre-determined, the contextualisation is often a matter of translation or insertion of country-specific institutions, processes and, to a limited extent, priorities. That said, the outcome in the form of recommendations does rely on national stakeholders, but the implementation of these often falls within the domain of the executive. Although the report itself, as was the case in Ghana, was mainly produced by civil society, the task of realising the objectives of the Plan of Action is relegated to the APRM secretariat, which relies on the executive for its budget. Mozambique also provides an interesting perspective on the ownership dimension of the APRM as the government unilaterally determined how and when the report would be released. In all instances, the final report must pass through and be approved by the executive, which places the balance of power on its side.

The prominent status of the donor community in designing and monitoring governance indicators is not, however, inherently negative. As the international community often appears more willing to engage with civil society, and draw from their knowledge and expertise, this provides a critical avenue of influence for this partner with minority status. That the international community plays such a prominent role in developing and implementing these instruments is a contentious issue, and its members are often criticised for being unaware of particulars of the national context. Approaches to ensure local “ownership” of indicator development and associated processes have met with moderate success, and will no doubt continue to do so if the power dynamics of the various relationships are not altered.

## Government performance assessments are an area of positive potential

Performance assessments, as elaborated in Rwanda’s *Imihigo* process, are gaining currency within African governments. Although this has as yet to

be applied in a comprehensive manner, it is a potentially useful mechanism by which to oversee governments' efforts to realise their mandates. What is particularly remarkable in the case of Rwanda is the adaptation of a traditional concept into democratic practice, specifically around the concept of accountability. However, as is elaborated in the study, the *Imihigo* is principally a system of accountability upwards rather than to citizens, and participation of citizens in the formulation of the goals within the process is limited. This presents a problematic situation where the state is already highly centralised. Efforts to de-centralise and devolve political power are thus undermined, despite what are no doubt good intentions on the part of the government.

While there are some instances of indicators being used as part of a general oversight and accountability mechanism – for example by parliaments and civil society actors – there seems to be an increasing imperative on the part of national governments to use an indicator-based approach to increase accountability within the government and state system. This movement is certainly influenced by both regional bodies, through the APRM, and the international donor community, which often set criteria upon which aid is based. Again, however, these criteria are currently predominantly drawn from developmental indicators, and the need to draw and rely upon governance indicators, while increasing, is an area that needs further attention, clarity and acceptance by national governments.

In Rwanda, for example, very specific measures of performance are being established. In the main the language is that of performance management rather than indicators, but the results statements can be tied to more generally developed and monitored indicators. We discuss elsewhere the questions of whether these indicators measure governance behaviour as opposed to development progress and whether they sufficiently deal with qualitative issues.

One potential problem of this approach is that it creates a single government, reducing decentralisation merely to localised service delivery rather than to an independent autonomous level of government capable of mediating regional or local interests and dispersing power across the state. An advantage for those promoting governance indicators is that performance management connects with the very real interests of an incumbent government to demonstrate impact while in office and prior to any election contest.

8. Internationally recognised standards and indicators are used to support advocacy for reform

The study specifically identified a case of law reform in Ghana to test the extent to which indicators were involved in the reform process. From this case and others it is clear that the development of indicators has served one useful purpose. For whatever reason, pressures for reform arise – which are unrelated to the indicators, except peripherally – and reformers require external validation to promote their agenda. In interviews with the Department of Justice, reference was made to the efforts by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to reduce corruption. It was clear that, in this case, sub-regional standards and indicators could be an effective tool for advocacy. Indeed, national perceptions, particularly within governments, may be more susceptible to events and structures within their sphere of influence. States establish these sub-regional institutions and formulate their mandates and directives. Thus they are participatory mechanisms, on an international level, that can enhance a sense of ownership and obligation.

For many reasons, governments may find it useful to shift their stance on particular issues of governance. It might be that within the government there are differences of opinion, or that despite the apparent lack of aid conditionality, governments get the message that change is required. Internationally recognised indicators, especially if they have regional support, enable governments to comply with new standards without having to debate these standards domestically or within their own constituencies or work from first principles to establish them. Of course this can lead to pretence, but in some instances it appears that the very existence of an indicator such as a target for women's participation in parliament, can encourage compliance and have outcomes beyond those anticipated. They can be system changers.

The pressures for reform seem to arise from dissatisfaction with the status quo, the opening of public space for whatever reason, professional pride and contact with a larger, international community. With judicial reform in Ghana, it was clear that the institutions concerned were sensitive to popular perceptions regarding levels of inadequacy and corruption. Media outlets in Ghana, which have considerable freedom in what they can say and report, no doubt have an influence in channeling the opinions and concerns of civil society, experts and normal citizens. This form of public oversight should be nurtured and expanded into other areas of government. In extreme cases, there might be other triggers to action on

the part of individuals and organizations within the particular sector. This seems to create an impetus for governance reform.

That said, there remain sectors and issues that are of great public concern where governments seem impervious to outside influence or advocacy. Specifically, the issues surrounding the extractive industry are often shrouded in secrecy. As was illustrated in the Ghanaian study on the evolution of the Mining Law, local considerations and concerns highlighted by activists, who resorted to evidence drawn from national and international sources, seem not to have been taken on board by the decision-makers.

What indicators or norms – such as the Harare principles of the Commonwealth, the APRM indicators and lists of international standards, and in the Ghana case of judicial reform, the Latimer Principles – do is provide an independent, specific and measurable target towards which the reformers can aim. It seems that these are selected from a menu for their legitimacy within the sector, and for the extent to which they match the aspirations of the reformers. Perhaps they shape those aspirations. Relatively innovative efforts were also made by reformers in Ghana to address local needs, such as the training of “lay magistrates” who could expand the judicial system to areas that do not have immediate access or recourse to courts. In this case, internationally inspired objectives were, in part, addressed and accommodated in a manner that suited the local context.

By contrast, while locally based aspirations seem to address immediate needs, international standards, perhaps because they are viewed as reputable and reflective of an internationally accepted norm, enable reformers to establish a sense of purpose and “common sense” which they might otherwise not be able to achieve. The indicators act as framers of the reform process rather than the individual actors themselves, allowing all parts of the system to adjust even if there are conflicts between the various actors which would not otherwise be resolvable. The promotion of women’s participation in governance structures, such as parliament in Rwanda, is also largely based on movements emanating from the international sphere. Traditional cultures are often at odds with these types of initiatives and an externally reputable set of indicators, objectives and standards play a pivotal role in reforming perceptions and practice.

## The Way Forward

Bearing in mind the conclusions outlined above, there is an obvious need for further work in the field of governance indicators and assessments. It remains an area that is elusive for the majority of stakeholders who could benefit from the information that it generates. As a form of “evidence”, governance assessments and the inclusion of governance indicators in sectoral assessments do not yet measure up to the perceptually more concrete archive of development indicators.

Three principles underlie the recommendations that conclude this Research Overview:

- The first is the need for reliable data, in order to secure both evidence-based policy development and dialogue between the various stakeholders committed to improved governance. Where it is “owned” by one or other party it feeds into any pre-existing suspicions even if it is shared. In many cases it is not shared, for various reasons described earlier. Where it does not exist, it creates lacuna filled by opinion. Where it exists only in dated and analytically impervious forms it can even lead to incorrect decisions. This is a critical task which countries must address with assistance from the donor community and reliable regional data sources such as the Afrobarometer.
- The second is the complementarity of the assessments being done variously by governments, civil society bodies and the donor community. There will always be a range of assessments because they are conducted for different purposes and different audiences. Indeed one of the present hazards seems to be a belief that one assessment can carry the weight of multiple and sometimes conflicting purposes. But in the spirit of dialogue and collaboration for democratic governance, attempts have to be made to establish complementarity and an appropriate division of labor. For this to happen there has to be increased transparency on all sides.
- Finally, governance assessment has to be domestically owned. That said, merely accepting ownership while conducting assessments as parallel processes will result in them remaining unsustainable. They have to become an integral part of government business, with processes, institutions, time lines and budgets integrated into the national machinery of government. This poses challenges for states, who must make commitments and space, but also for the donor community who should insist

on conducting their business in coherence with the Paris Principle of use of country systems – which may take time to consolidate. Amongst non-state actors, there must be a collaborative rather than an adversarial spirit based on improved expertise and experience.

The following points propose a way forward that could enhance the efficacy of these tools if they are to be incorporated within the political decision-making process and serve as an effective method to support and increase the impact of civil society work:

1. The credibility and legitimacy of governance assessments must be enhanced

As was noted above, there remain serious concerns about local ownership of indicator development and assessments based on these. Even the APRM mechanism, though emanating from a collaborative national and international partnership, is viewed as a parallel process rather than one that is integrated into government business. Assessments developed primarily through bilateral donor and executive engagement will remain removed from civil society and ordinary citizens.

Extensive engagement between all stakeholders should be fostered with consistency and continuity. The present ad hoc efforts relying on external sources of funding need to ensure sustainability of both objectives and process.

2. National governments should ensure transparency, access to information and effective broad-based collaboration

Embedded in many African countries is a culture of mistrust and suspicion between government and civil society. The case studies in this report provide ample evidence of civil society being excluded, ignored or side-lined in the process of decision-making. Sensitivity to any form of criticism permeates ruling political parties, exacerbating most attempts to form constructive partnerships.

Focal points within government structures must be set up to facilitate information exchange. Formalised partnerships with agreed-upon terms of reference need to be finalized prior to any undertaking, detailing roles and responsibilities, time lines and human and financial resource commitments. Sustainable and periodic participatory mechanisms, for purposes of research and information validation, must be formed within a decentralized framework.

Institutions need to be developed that have the capacity to generate reliable and comprehensive data and information. These are largely absent in the three countries studied, which do have some resource support. Where they do exist they must be capacitated with both human and material resources. Fundamentally, these institutions must be publicly perceived as being credible and unbiased.

### 3. National stakeholders should promote governance assessments as a tool for oversight

There are two main dimensions to this concept. First, internal pressure to ensure effective oversight by institutions and organizations. Parliaments are a natural choice to conduct oversight, as it is traditionally within their mandate to do so. However, as we have seen, parliaments do not generally engage in governance assessments beyond playing a consultative role. That regular assessments of government performance should be integrated within all governmental institutions is or should be self-evident, as it is part and parcel of a democratic state. Thus, the principle responsibility for ensuring that such practices are ingrained within the democratic process rests with national stakeholders.

Governments including legislatures, civil society and other stakeholders (such as unions, academia, faith-based organizations, NGOs, etc.) should initiate and participate in mechanisms to measure performance of government. Provision of adequate resources should be incorporated into the national budget.

External actors can promote governance assessments as a tool for accountability and transparency. Recently the effectiveness of development aid is a topic that has gained considerable attention, for good reason. Bi-lateral aid agreements have been criticized as supporting states and governments that do not exhibit many of the principle tenets of a healthy democratic state. Furthermore, evolving approaches and theoretical foundations defining aid structures and disbursement go through periodic review and changes, and priorities shift as governments change and political discourse takes on new directions. Nevertheless, the donor community's position vis-à-vis recipient countries provides an opportunity for ensuring broad-based engagement that can promote the fundamental principles and practices of good governance at all levels of the political spectrum. It should also be noted that the bi-lateral oversight mechanisms negotiated between donor agencies and the executive may not be suitable for accountability between government and citizens.



The donor community could use its position as a partner in assessment processes to ensure transparency, accountability and collaboration between governments and other national stakeholders. Equal attention must be paid to state and non-state actors. Accountability mechanisms intended to promote productive engagement at the national and sub-national level need to be contextually relevant.

#### 4. Local ownership is key to sustainability and credibility

External partners in the development and use of governance indicators can have negative implications on internal perceptions with regard to ownership and credibility. Initiatives and activities that receive external funding, whether undertaken by government or civil society, run the risk of being undermined by perceptual biases. These types of processes are often viewed as undertakings implemented to mollify or meet/address concerns by those funding the activity. Fundamentally, the process whereby general objectives are defined is perhaps the most sensitive area of work, and the involvement of external actors in this process, although not inherently negative, can have a profound impact on the internalization and ownership of all subsequent projects or programmes. Governance assessments, if they are to act as effective tools for change, rely on legitimacy and credibility of the process as a whole. These criteria can only be realized through local ownership, which can also ensure that questions surrounding context, circumstances and the socio-political environment are addressed and evaded.

Clear entry and exit strategies, in terms of roles and responsibilities, must be elaborated and adhered to, while ensuring the sustainability of the work. Promoting the capacity within civil society, while not undermining civil society credibility and legitimacy, requires intensive consultative processes with all stakeholders prior to any official engagement with governments.

#### 5. Capacity and effective advocacy are linked to incentives and political will

Political will guides and shapes any internal process. The case studies reveal implicit influences that originate from within the political or economic elite. In some cases, as in Rwanda, political will has driven the process surrounding the role of women, the APRM and the JGA. Up to a point, the Rwandan government clearly also was the driving force behind efforts to

combat corruption. On the other hand, legislative development in Ghana around the extractive industry hints at the existence of a politically generated momentum that had pre-determined objectives with regard to the outcome. In such instances, information housed by, or capacity within, civil society and government is rendered irrelevant. Political will and incentives are amongst the variables that define whether a democracy will be healthy or not. In some instances, political will is shaped by incentives that detract from the democratic process, such as self-interest, corruption or internal political party dynamics. Capacity building and incentives should therefore be geared towards addressing and resolving these issues.

Political will must be understood as both positive and negative, where the former must be encouraged and the latter influenced. Capacity building should be undertaken in sectors where engagement between stakeholders is likely to meet with success. Building capacity within government should be limited to areas in which political will (or incentive) to apply it is apparent. Within civil society, capacity building and promotion of effective advocacy needs to take into account project, resource and staffing limitations. High turn-over in personnel can be addressed through institutional capacity building.

#### 6. Institutional mapping to understand the political economy of decision-making is necessary

Decision-making within governments and the way in which various institutions, commissions, processes, etc., engage with each other is often dependent on dynamics that include policy, legislation and individual and party interests, amongst others. A structured and clear picture of how decisions are taken and carried out is challenging within a context that is highly fluid, dynamic and often influenced by specific actors and institutions. Hence, a straightforward mapping of institutions and associated processes can only yield a limited insight into internal political dynamics that, ultimately, shape political will. Further limiting the effectiveness of mapping institutions and political dynamics is the ever-changing context, where key stakeholders change over time, rendering mapping exercises highly time-specific. Understanding the political economy of decision-making needs to focus on power, institutions and agency. Key drivers, whether they are individuals, institutions or processes, should be mapped and understood within a broader political context. Socio-political cultures should figure prominently in mapping institutions and associated proc-

esses, as these provide the perceptual framework in which the political economy of decision-making takes place.

#### 7. Dialogue should form the central component of governance assessments

Engendering local ownership, buy-in and holistic approaches to governance assessments require the participation of all stakeholders. However, specific sector assessments can be limited to those stakeholders that are directly implicated. For instance, the APRM process necessitated broad-based participation of all levels of society. Consequently, such exercises become time-consuming and require extensive financial resources. They therefore run the risk of being “once off” exercises with little chance of being reproduced on a regular basis. In this context, an APRM serves principally as a sort of “baseline study”. Dialogue around sector- or issue-specific monitoring and assessment processes can be more sustainable as they are more clearly defined.

With assessments that are either initiated by or involve international actors, the need for sustained national dialogue increases exponentially. The extent to which dialogue is successful in this regard is directly proportional to the inclusiveness and credibility of these processes.

Participatory mechanisms ought to be based on the pre-condition of a level playing field. In other words, effective dialogue that can ensure stakeholder “buy-in” should be predicated on participatory decision-making and shared information rather than a consultative process. Development-related instruments, such as NDPs, should be guided by “bottom-up” dialogue, as stakeholders on the ground are – or should be – the principle beneficiaries of these initiatives.

#### 8. The role of consultant institutions can enhance professionalism and self-sufficiency

Sustainability and self-sufficiency are inextricably linked. A concern highlighted in the case studies is the necessity to take on external consultants, whether they are international or external to the institution in question. Lack of capacity is apparent across the various institutions and organizations that were examined through the research process. All sectors, such as government, academia, civil society and the media, can benefit from greater access to expertise in the field of governance indicators.

Academic institutions need to facilitate the development of courses that can prepare future generations to undertake governance assessments. Research institutes can act as focal points and independent sources for the credible production of monitoring mechanisms by way of evaluation. Governments need to be encouraged to allocate the necessary resources to enable these to be realized and sustained.

## Endnote

- 1 Validation workshops took place in Ghana on 17 June 2010, in Mozambique on 13 July 2010 and in Rwanda on 3 June 2010. In each country, the workshops sought to incorporate the opinions of representatives from government, political parties, the academy, civil society and international agencies. A final validation workshop was held in Brussels in which the relevant country partners presented their findings to representatives from the UNDP and EC.

This study is a snapshot of three different countries with the intention of producing clear policy recommendations to inform donor strategies.

Commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme Oslo Governance Centre (UNDP OGC), it is a comparative study on the development and use of governance indicators in Africa. It explores both comprehensive national governance assessments, in their various forms, and the use of more discrete sets of governance indicators in sectoral or thematic assessments.

UNDP OGC contracted African democracy institute Idasa to execute the project to help develop policy recommendations for the European Commission. The country studies were done by the Institute for Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP), Rwanda; the Centre for Democracy and Development Studies (CEDE), Mozambique; and the Institute for Democracy and Governance (IDEG), Ghana.

