

## Cutting Africa's governance cake: Insights from two key assessment tools

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Does being an active member of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) help a country improve its rankings in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG)?

The just-released 2014 IIAG indicates a slow but steady governance improvement for the majority of the continent. The IIAG measures governance progress or lack thereof across four areas: Safety and Rule of Law, Participation and Human Rights, Sustainable Economic Opportunity, and Human Development. Thus the IIAG's view of governance is holistic, looking not only at democratic aspects, but also socio-economic factors. This approach is shared by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the continent's premier tool for improving governance across four thematic areas: Democracy and Political Governance, Economic Governance and Management, Corporate Governance and Socio-Economic Development. The voluntary APRM, established in 2003, now sports 34 member states, 17 of which have already undergone their first reviews. So what insights does the latest IIAG provide into how effective the APRM has been in improving governance in its member states?

The table below shows the IIAG score in the year that these 17 APRM states completed and published their reviews, and indicates whether their IIAG governance score has improved or regressed since:

Country	Year of publication of APRM Country Review Report (CRR)	IIAG score in year of APRM CRR publication	2014 IIAG score	Years since APRM review	Progress /regression Since APRM review
Ghana	2005	64.1	68.2	9	+4.1
Rwanda	2005	51.8	60.4	9	+8.6
Kenya	2006	55.3	57.4	8	+2.1
South Africa	2007	73.4	73.3	7	-0.1
Algeria	2007	53.1	54.4	7	+1.3
Benin	2008	59.8	56.7	6	-3.1
Burkina Faso	2008	53.4	53.3	6	-0.1
Nigeria	2009	45.0	45.8	5	+0.8
Uganda	2009	55.3	56.1	5	+0.8
Mali	2009	55.8	49.5	5	-6.3

Mozambique	2009	53.1	52.2	5	-0.9
Lesotho	2010	58.4	62.3	4	+3.9
Mauritius	2010	80.4	81.7	4	+1.3
Ethiopia	2011	46.7	48.5	3	+1.8
Sierra Leone	2012	50.6	51.1	2	+0.5
Tanzania	2013	59.1	58.2	1	-0.9
Zambia	2013	59.4	59.4	1	0

The data shows mixed results. For a small majority of countries (10 out of 17 or 58%), there is some progress. Out of these, Rwanda is most improved (+8.4). Given the criticism of Paul Kagame's increasingly autocratic rule, it is of little surprise that Rwanda's progress was achieved mostly due to improved Human Development. The second highest achiever, Ghana with an improvement of +4.1, shows a more balanced progress across the different areas, even though it has actually regressed on Security and the Rule of Law since its review in 2005. The third top country on the list is Lesotho, which improved its score by +3.9 in a relatively short period (four years). However, according to [research](#) previously conducted by the South African Institute of International Affairs and the Centre for Policy Studies the APRM would not be able to take any significant credit for this, given the extremely low profile of the mechanism in the country. Furthermore, given the attempted coup in September 2014, the country's score may decrease significantly in next year's index.

At the other end of the spectrum, Mali has shown the most regression in the five years since its review, with its IIAG score declining by -6.3. Although the country's governance was given a good assessment by the APRM, the 2012 coup and the resulting instability are to blame for the decline. Safety and the Rule of Law is the biggest area of concern, falling from 62.8 (2008 - year of the APRM review) to 48.6 this year. Benin's worsening governance score, while not as drastic, is still notable at -3.1 in the past six years. Although Human Development is on the rise, once again Safety and the Rule of Law is the culprit for the country's overall score falling from 67.9 to 55.6 in the past six years. Mozambique and Tanzania are joint third amongst APRM member states whose governance has regressed since their reviews. However, while it took five years for Mozambique's overall score to decrease by -0.9, Tanzania's score worsened in just one. Safety and the Rule of Law was the area which both countries scored lower in, although Mozambique also registered a decline in Sustainable Economic Opportunity, while Tanzania saw a rapid drop in Participation and Human Rights.

Consolidation or reversal of governance for the other 11 APRM members, as measured by the IIAG, varied between -0.1 and +2.1 since the time of their reviews. This indicates relative stability and incremental improvements for most. Yet, unfortunately there is not an obvious and direct positive correlation between

the IIAG scores and the countries that have undergone APRM review. Nonetheless, there is value in posing the counterfactual 'What if?' question. What might the outcome have been if these countries had not started the intensive and inclusive societal dialogues on governance that the APRM review demands of countries that sign up to the process?

Even so, theoretical speculation is not sufficient. Given the fact that the mechanism has entered its 11<sup>th</sup> year, it needs to do more to justify its existence and show the value add to sceptics, members and non-members alike. Generally, the reviews themselves have been very thorough and successful in pinpointing governance challenges. However, systematic eradication of these challenges through implementing a National Programme of Action has been lacking in most APRM member states.

At least three things have to happen to enable the APRM to finally start living up to its potential. First, the continental leadership of the APRM should be empowered to convince their peers to prioritise NPoA implementation. This implies using the full range of peer pressure mechanisms and tools, such as monitoring and evaluation, regular and robust reports to the APRM Panel and Heads of State, discussion of the findings in the public domain, peer exchanges on best practice and the like.

Second, the mechanism's Secretariat should be providing increased support to individual states to live up to their commitments, for example providing sound advice on how best to integrate NPoAs into national planning priorities, mobilise resources and setting up monitoring mechanisms.

Lastly, for the APRM to enable a transformative shift on governance concerns and challenges in the region, there is a great need to support societal dialogue and participation at the country-level. It is not enough for member states to be accountable to their peers at a continental level. Accountability starts at home. Support to civil society to engage on an ongoing basis with government and other stakeholders on the outcomes of the APRM reviews is critical. Innovative financing mechanisms to support ongoing civil society engagement with the APRM are a challenge, not only to African governments and the mechanism itself, but also for external partners that are interested in good governance outcomes in the region. It is worth exploring with all the stakeholders involved – particularly in the region – how best to facilitate and enable this last objective, especially in view of the continent and its citizens' quest for improved governance, peace and stability and socio-economic development.

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