



Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa

STILL STRUGGLING FOR EQUALITY

Gender and the APRM

by **Jacqueline De Matos Ala**



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This paper is part of a series commissioned by the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) exploring the content of APRM Country Review Reports (CRRs) currently available on issues including gender, land, youth, extractive industries, elections and violence, and government responses to the APRM CRRs.

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by Jacqueline De Matos Ala

The overarching goal of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative is to encourage the 'adoption of policies, standards and practices' that will result in political stability, high economic growth and sustainable development among member states (NEPAD 2003).

NEPAD established the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as an instrument with which to chart member countries' progress towards meeting the dual objectives of good governance and development. Although participation in this initiative is open to all African Union members, accession is voluntary and, as at June 2015, 35 of 52 eligible states had joined. At its inception in 2001 NEPAD set as its gender objective the 'empowerment of women'. Unfortunately, at that time NEPAD provided no indication of how member states should achieve or measure this goal and, for this reason, was severely criticised by civil society groups.

Taking heed of this criticism the APRM has endeavoured to address the issue of gender inequality among member countries by incorporating within the reporting framework provided for countries concrete criteria and standards aimed at improving the lives of African women. In addition to the ideal of 'empowerment', the APRM has added 'gender equality' as an overarching objective. The adoption of these objectives appears to demonstrate a significant commitment by the institution to correcting widespread gender imbalances among members.

The principal reporting devices of the APRM are APRM Self-assessment Master Questionnaire of 2005 (the questionnaire) and the individual member states' Country Research Reports

(CRRs). The success of the APRM hinges on two components. Firstly, the APRM mechanism needs to translate these concepts into policy objectives that will not merely make superficial changes but will fundamentally rebalance the gender equation. Vital to achieving this outcome is the prioritising of gender throughout the APRM process, together with the way the initiative chooses to define its gender objectives as well as the types of instruments selected to realise these objectives. Secondly, there needs to be firm commitment on the part of member countries to this agenda as they are the primary agents of policy implementation. At the country level APRM norms can effectively be re-prioritised and redefined and tools chosen by policymakers for implementation purposes. This is not necessarily bad, as it allows countries to tailor the initiative to their specific circumstances. However, it can allow issues deemed unimportant, too controversial or too unpopular to be ignored. As attaining gender equality within a society usually involves challenging the status quo, it is often easier for policymakers to choose to ameliorate symptoms rather than to treat their underlying social and cultural causes.

Recognising the critical roles played by both the APRM mechanism and member countries in realising the objectives of gender equality and empowerment this paper proposes to use content analysis to study their respective efforts in this regard. Firstly, it will analyse the content of the questionnaire to examine what the gender goals and objectives are in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses. Secondly, it will conduct a content analysis of the 16 CRRs submitted to date to ascertain the priority given to the issue of gender and where

progress is being made or hindered. Ultimately this should provide a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of the entire initiative in transforming gender relations among member countries.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Method

In order to facilitate the analysis of the APRM reporting framework together with country responses as set out in the CRRs this paper will employ content analysis – a technique that enables a researcher to examine large amounts of data in the form of social communication through categorisation and coding (Lamont 2015; Bryman 2012). It allows the researcher to analyse text systematically, in particular, the frequency with which identified ‘keywords’ are used. This method is often employed for the analysis of policy documents or political manifestos. In this paper I use content analysis to analyse the questionnaire as well as the member states’ CRRs to determine the frequency with which they mention women and the context within which they do so. It is important to note that although content analysis is useful in identifying patterns in the data and making observations and raising questions in this regard, it is not in itself able to provide explanations for these trends. To do so involves further investigation by the researcher of possible explanations for these occurrences.

Sample

The sample texts analysed were the questionnaire together with all 16 CRRs submitted to date. However, the analysis excludes Mali’s CRR as there are no official English translations available. Although the length and the number of chapters in each CRR differ, each report follows a generic pattern determined by the questionnaire. Thus, all reports include chapters or thematic areas on ‘Democracy and Political Governance’; ‘Economic Governance

and Management’; ‘Corporate Governance’ and ‘Socio-Economic Development’ and each has a ‘Conclusion’. Within the first four sections are issues identified as key objectives that must be attained if the overall objectives listed in the broad thematic area are to be achieved. In turn, the questionnaire sets out detailed benchmarks or indicators for each key objective, against which each reporting country must assess its performance. The uniform structure of the reports not only facilitates content analysis within each report but also allows for the comparison of word frequencies.

Coding

As this paper is intended to analyse the effectiveness of the APRM process in advancing gender equality, I have chosen to calculate the frequency with which words associated with women occur within each CRR report. To this end, the category ‘females’ was created, which included the words ‘female, females, girl, girls, woman, women and women’s’. Each CRR was analysed using R and R Studio scripts to aggregate the keywords. To facilitate analysis further the frequencies were disaggregated according to report chapters in order to evaluate the extent to which ‘women’ were mentioned in each section of each country report.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Analysis of the 2005 APRM Self-Assessment Master Questionnaire

Table 1

Thematic areas, key objectives, questions and indicators

Thematic Area	Gender-Related Key Objectives of Themes	Questions and Indicators
Democracy and political governance	7. Promote and protect the rights of women	<p>Question: What measures have been taken to promote and protect the rights of women in the country?</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Provide details of the legal provisions that articulate and guarantee the rights of women in the country and mechanisms to enforce these rights, including but not limited to resource allocation, affirmative action and mainstreaming gender equality; (ii) Assess the effectiveness of these measures and outline the challenges faced; (iii) Provide details of measures taken to sustain progress (training, evaluation and monitoring); (iv) Provide any official reports on the assessment of the status of women in the country. <p>Question: What measures have been put in place enhance the participation of women in the society?</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Provide evidence of any legal provisions, institutions, national or local programmes or policies to enhance women's role in society, including participation in politics and leadership positions; (ii) Provide evidence of the number and percentage of women appointed over the past 5 years to decision-making positions, including the number of women elected to the parliament and local authorities; (iii) Describe the challenges faced and measures taken to sustain progress.
Economic governance and management		

Thematic Area	Gender-Related Key Objectives of Themes	Questions and Indicators
Corporate governance	5. Providing an enabling environment and effective regulatory framework for economic activities.	<p>Question: What are the external and internal factors that impact on business activity?</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>(ii) Describe previous efforts made by the country to encourage commercial enterprise including but not limited to, investor promotion, small, micro and medium-size corporations, privatisation or commercialisation of public sector entities or parts thereof, capital market rules and over-the-counter share trading facilities, and efforts targeting special enterprise formulation e.g. holdings by women, informal enterprise structures etc.;</p>
Socio-economic development.	1. Progress towards gender equality, particularly equal access to education for girls at all levels.	<p>Question: What measures has the country taken to mainstream gender equality and with what results?</p> <p>Indicators:</p> <p>(i) Provide evidence of legal, policy and institutional steps to promote and encourage gender equality;</p> <p>(ii) Provide evidence of specific targets towards gender equality in all critical areas of concern;</p> <p>(iii) Provide details of resource mobilisation and allocation, in particular show the percentage of national budget allocated to promote gender equality;</p> <p>(iv) Provide evidence of progress made in terms of trends of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and contribution of women in key economic and social activities; • Gender ratios at all levels of education and training; • Women participation in decision-making positions; • Any other gender disparity indicators (for example disparities in wages and earnings); <p>(v) Provide details of prior reports or evaluations on the status of women in the country.</p>

‘Women’ are dealt with directly in two of the four reporting sections indicated above. These are Thematic Area 1, which focuses on ‘Democracy and Governance’, and Thematic Area 4, which covers ‘Socio-economic Development’. In Thematic Area 1, Key Objective 7 monitors the promotion and protection of women’s rights. In Thematic Area 4, Key Objective 5 deals with progress made towards gender equality, particularly, girls’ access to education at all levels. Each key objective provides a set

of indicators against which states are asked to rate their performance. Women are mentioned briefly with regard to their ownership of business in Thematic Area 3 – ‘Corporate Governance’.

KEY GENDER OBJECTIVES IDENTIFIABLE IN THE APRM SELF-ASSESSMENT MASTER QUESTIONNAIRE.

As is evident from Table 1, the concept of gender equality features prominently in the gender-

related key objectives as well as in questions and indicators. In addition, Section 1.3.1., located within the thematic area of 'Democracy and Governance', asks countries to report on their *promotion and protection of the rights of women and the mainstreaming of gender equality. The concern here is to ensure that women have a meaningful status in the country and to explore the frameworks necessary to further deepen their participation – political, economic, cultural and social. The indicators also seek to encourage governments to provide evidence of women's empowerment in the domain of access to and control of productive resources and services, as well as their role in decision-making, including conflict prevention and resolution. Issues pertaining to women's rights which are not covered under this objective are treated exhaustively in the economic governance and socio-economic development sections of the questionnaire.*

APRM 2003

This seems to suggest that 'gender equality' and 'empowerment' are the overarching gender objectives. However, the CRRs do not provide an explanation of these terms, leaving it up to the reader to infer their meaning from the context. Therefore, to facilitate further analysis of the questionnaire and the CRRs it is necessary to define these key terms. Defining them also enables us to identify the agenda of the APRM with regard to gender objectives as well as to determine the extent to which countries are achieving these objectives.

It is important to note that the CRRs analysed in this paper all used the 2005 APRM Master Questionnaire as the template for their reports, and that this analysis of terms and definitions pertains to that 2005 questionnaire. In the revised APRM Master Questionnaire (2011), the glossary of terms and definitions was expanded significantly including more specific references

to gender, equality and empowerment. For the purposes of this paper however, I focus on the 2005 questionnaire in my discussion.

Gender equality

The term 'gender equality' can have myriad meanings, usually determined by social or cultural contexts. Thus, with regard to its use by the APRM we must be mindful of the gender dynamics present on the continent. What further complicates the issue is that the status of women will vary not only among member states but also within the different cultures present in these states. Consequently, a broad definition that fits the African context would be most beneficial. Moser & Moser (2005) define gender equality in the context of the developing world as the recognition that women and men have different needs and priorities and should have equal opportunities to realise their full human rights and to contribute to and benefit from national, political, economic, social and cultural development.

Hassim (2005) breaks the definition of gender equality down further into two components, namely, formal and substantive equality. Formal equality pertains to the achievement of equal rights and opportunities which are usually embodied in human rights instruments and legislation. Substantive equality refers to the transformation of the structural and systemic underpinnings of women's subordinate status within a society. Therefore, substantive gender equality is similar to empowerment. Gender equality is identified as a priority in Thematic Area 1 on 'Democracy and Governance' and 4 on 'Social Development'.

Empowerment

Although the term 'empowerment of women' is subject to numerous interpretations (see Moser 1989; Ala 1996; Eyben & Napier-Moore 2009; Kabeer, Assaad, Darkwah, Mahmud, Sholkamy, Sakiba & Tsikata 2013; Longwe

1991; Syed 2010; Tsikata & Darkwah 2014), it is essentially a process by which women attain power in areas where they were previous powerless (Ala 2006; Syed 2010). At the root of women's disempowerment is gender inequality, which is entrenched through cultural norms and values and which manifests in the political, social and economic marginalisation of women. The process of empowerment involves women actively challenging these structures. At the heart of empowerment is expanding and increasing women's agency as well as the choices that are available to them Tsikata & Darkwah 2014). The empowerment process is context specific and thus mitigates against the implementation of a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Although the term 'empowerment' is only mentioned in Section 1.3.1 of the questionnaire the term can be seen as synonymous with the concept of substantive gender equality and, given the prominence given to the attainment of gender equality, should thus be taken as an APRM priority. The fact that section 1.3.1 links women's empowerment with increasing women's access to and control of productive resources and services, and also with increasing their role in decision-making indicates a desire to bring about substantive gender equality. Furthermore, it supports the link between gender equality and empowerment.

DELIVERY MECHANISMS FOR THE OBJECTIVE OF GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT IDENTIFIABLE IN THE APRM QUESTIONNAIRE

It is also important to determine how the APRM mechanism seeks to direct the efforts of countries towards achieving its gender objectives. In other words, what mechanisms has it identified as being the most effective way of creating gender equality? This also allows us to evaluate the efficacy of these mechanisms.

Promoting and protecting the rights of women by legislative instruments

It is evident from Table 1 that promoting and protecting the rights of women features very strongly. In this regard, the main thematic areas of the questionnaire are prefaced with a list of international and regional treaties which set out standards and codes by which countries which are part of the APRM process have undertaken to abide. The treaties pertaining to women, which are mentioned in thematic areas 1 and 4 include the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women together with the Beijing Platform of Action, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the Millennium Development Goals. In encouraging member states to ascribe to these conventions the APRM takes a positive step toward gender equality.

However, the APRM's effectiveness in achieving gender equality depends on how individual states choose to implement the conventions on women's rights and how society engages with the process. Lesotho, for example, has chosen to reject important CEDAW clauses pertaining to gender equality as its Constitution allows for discrimination against women on cultural grounds. Moreover, a review of the CRRs reveals that many countries are not up-to-date with their CEDAW reporting. Fortunately the questionnaire does not merely rely on whether member states have acceded to the relevant gender equality instruments but interrogates the extent to which states have put their commitments into practice. This cuts through political rhetoric as it asks countries to 'show and tell' the extent to which they are committed to empowering women and the progress or the lack thereof they have made to date in this regard.

From the questions and indicators it appears that the primary vehicle for the protection and promotion of women's rights is legal instruments. These are not only employed in securing and extending women's rights in the area of democracy and government but also in socio-economic situations. Thus, the APRM initiative is strong in endeavouring to secure formal gender equality, however, this may not translate into meeting substantive gender rights, as legislation is not an effective tool for altering long-held gender biased norms.

THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH THE INCREASED PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND THROUGH SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC INITIATIVES

Three of the six indicators listed in Thematic Area 1, Key Objective 7 relate to women's participation in leadership, specifically political leadership. Thus it appears that this is seen as an important mechanism through which to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Increasing the number of women decision-makers in the political sphere can indeed improve the status of women within a country. Sub-Saharan Africa has made tremendous process in increasing the political representation of women, with Rwanda now having the highest percentage of women parliamentarians in the world. However, the extent to which such increases in gender representation translate into the improvement of the status of all women in that society depends on the individual representative's desire to champion the cause of other women at this level and her willingness to challenge the systemic structures that promote women's marginalisation.

Britton (2005) found that although in 1994 the African National Congress's quota system

substantially increased the number of women in the South African Parliament, many women found assuming this role very difficult due to culturally based gender discrimination. After a long day in Parliament they were still expected to fulfil their culturally prescribed domestic roles as wives and family caregivers. This often meant reassuming a subservient role in this realm. Entrenched cultural expectations of women's domestic role also prevented many from hiring others to assist them with their domestic responsibilities. Thus, these women may have been politically empowered but this did not carry over into their domestic lives.

Britton (2005) found that many women parliamentarians, most of whom came from rural areas, did not return to Parliament after the 1999 elections because of the personal strain involved in balancing the public and the private. Although quotas have sustained South African women's presence in Parliament, the body is now less representative of women from lower classes, diminishing this class of women's agency. Bauer & Britton (2006) caution that although national women's movements, together with international norms, have promoted quotas that have increased women's political representation in some countries this has not improved the status of women in those countries, nor has it necessarily increased women's agency or empowerment in areas other than politics.

While the questionnaire also asks countries to account for initiatives designed to increase women's participation in economic and social activities, it does not give this the same prominence as the promotion of women to leadership positions. However, once again, if these programmes do not challenge the structural basis of women's marginalisation within society and the economy, they may provide formal but not structural equality.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The term ‘mainstreaming’ appears frequently throughout the questionnaire in relation to delivering gender equality. Mainstreaming refers to the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes in all areas at all levels. It implies that policy and policymakers should seek to include and promote the needs and interests of women in every area dealt with by that policy that has a possible impact on women. This should happen at the design and implementation as well as the monitoring and evaluation stages of the initiative. It requires policymakers to be gender aware, that is, consciously include women in policymaking and be mindful of the impact of their policies on women politically, socially and economically, to enable them to construct instruments that ensure that both men and women benefit and that inequality is not introduced or perpetuated. If executed correctly, this is a mechanism that can assist in bringing about various forms of gender equality.

Although the APRM claims to subscribe to the principle of gender mainstreaming legislation only three questions in the questionnaire, together with their lists of indicators, are devoted to assessing gender equality (Moser & Moser 2005). Most of the indicators involve listing legislative measures implemented to improve women’s legal and human rights status and assessing the effectiveness of these to date. Women’s political representation and education also feature prominently, the latter to a lesser extent. Unfortunately, the questionnaire does not pay sufficient attention to the issue of violence against women, which is a feature of all societies and is a strategic indicator of the extent of gender empowerment in a society. Moreover, the questionnaire deals primarily with violence against women as a legal and policing issue rather than as a socio-economic problem.

Another shortcoming of mainstreaming is that the economic marginalisation of women is classified as a socio-economic issue but is not integrated into the sections on corporate and economic governance, which play a part in economic gender equality. One would expect, given the extent of African women’s economic marginalisation, that there would be a greater focus on integrating aspects relating to the achievement of economic equality into all thematic areas, thus taking a multidimensional approach to addressing the problem. However, this issue is isolated to the thematic area on social development. Moreover, the questions and indicators which speak to women’s economic empowerment are sparse and vague. The focus in the questionnaire is often on assessing the degree of gender inequality but not on considering the reasons for this inequality and attempting to address them.

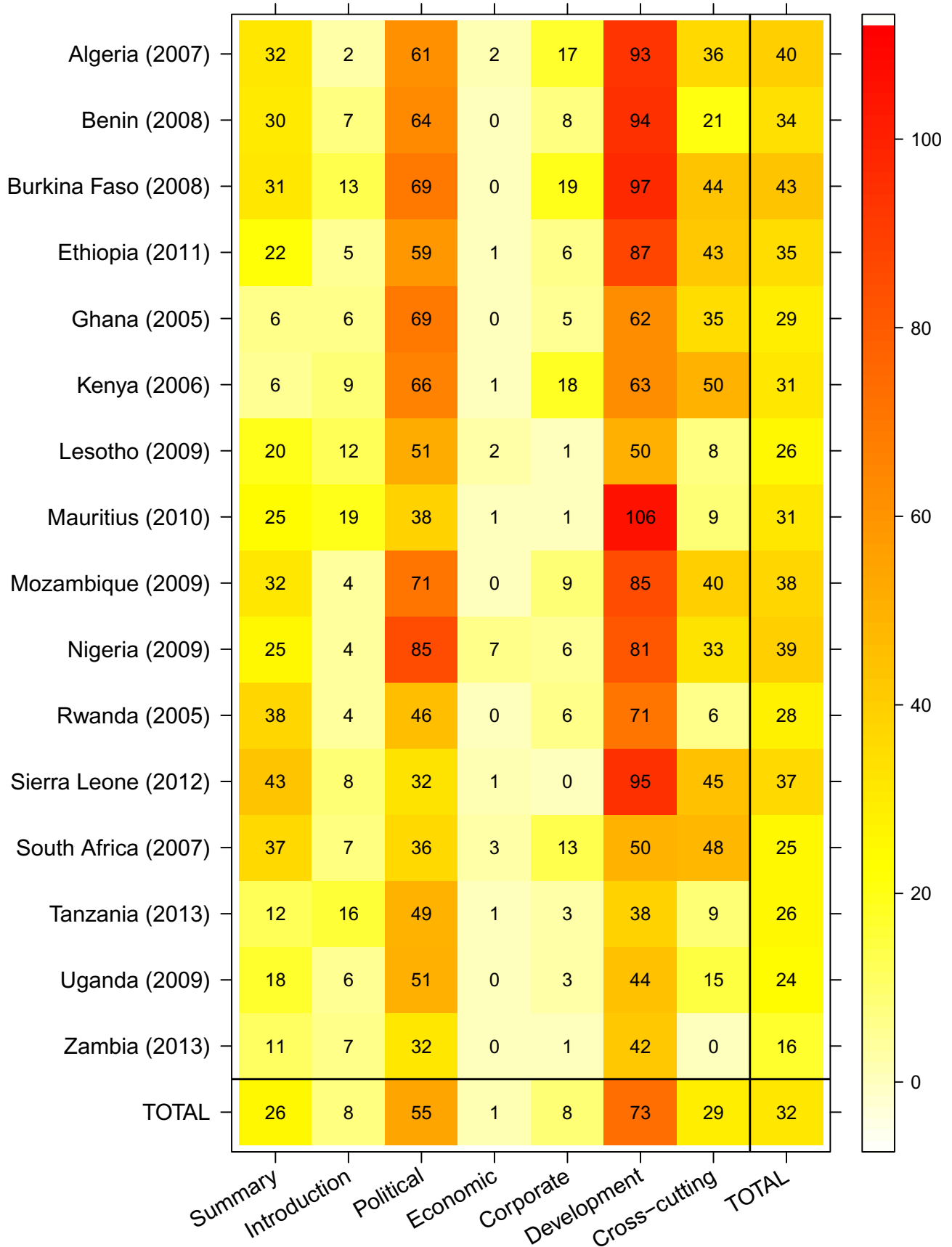
ROOM FOR TAILOR-MADE POLICIES AND SOLUTIONS

Women on the African continent are not a homogenous group with respect to their political, social and economic status, but, by standardising gender benchmarks within the questionnaire, the APRM treats them as such. This approach risks further marginalising women whose situation falls outside of or who are not adequately covered by the APRM reporting criteria (see Tsikata & Darkwah 2014; Moser 1989; Ala 1996; Syed 2010).

Nevertheless, the APRM reporting process overcomes these problems in some ways by not being overly prescriptive about the way countries should address gender inequality. Countries have carte blanche to decide on their gender priorities as long as they fall within the general ambit of what the APRM considers pivotal. Thus, countries can choose to prioritise the areas that they feel deserve more attention in their context as well as those that need less.

(Figure 1)

Word frequency analysis for 'Female' concept (Occurrences per ten thousand words)



This is reflected in the CRRs, which reveal the diverse interests and priorities of reporting states with regard to gender. For instance, South Africa's reporting on its accomplishments and challenges is rather minimalist, whereas the Nigeria CRR is exceptionally comprehensive and self-reflective. Given that South Africa seems to be making fairly good progress with respect to gender equality, especially in the areas of political representation and primary school education, one would have expected a far more extensive report, especially on successful initiatives undertaken.

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF COUNTRY REVIEW REPORTS

Word frequency analysis for 'Female' concept (Occurrences per ten thousand words)

Figure one is a heat map reflecting the frequency with which words categorised as 'female', expressed in terms of words per 1 000s, occur in each CRR. As discussed in the section on coding, the data has been disaggregated according to country and report chapters. The heat map graphically depicts the frequency with which women are referred to in the CRRs as well as the context within which these references appear.

General observations

What is most noticeable from the heat map is the overall variation in the frequency with which women are mentioned. These variations occur among both the sections of individual reports and the reporting countries. Overall, the highest gender word frequencies can be found in the reports from Algeria, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. The reports of these three countries reveal significant concerns about the extent of gender inequality. They spend time reflecting on the reasons for this as well as outlining ways of addressing the problem meaningfully. Religion, especially Islam, plays a large role in culturally entrenching gender inequality in all

three countries. Nigeria's CRR (2009) specifically highlights the challenges that militant Islamists in northern Nigeria present to the security and status of women. Since Nigeria submitted its report, the problem has become more acute, with Boko Haram kidnapping and exploiting young women in northern Nigeria.

Zambia, Uganda and South Africa occupy the lower end of the word frequency spectrum. In the case of Zambia this is not very surprising. Although the country's Constitution guarantees gender equality it still allows for culturally entrenched gender discrimination in the legal system, suggesting Zambia has not yet made a firm commitment to the norm (Zambia 2013, p120). With a high percentage of women in Parliament and a vibrant women's movement, the low overall frequency of gender-related terms in Uganda's report is interesting. Uganda's CRR (2009) cites patriarchal cultural practices and limited resources as the main reasons for the lack of progress in the area of gender equality. It may also be that economics and peace and security issues take precedence over gender in Uganda.

South Africa's presence in the low word frequency spectrum is the most interesting. Gender equality is entrenched in the South African Constitution, the country has moved to ensure gender equality in all legislation and a significant number of women occupy positions in all tiers of government. The primary school enrolment rate for girls is high. In its CRR (South Africa 2007) it states proudly that it has 'robust gender machinery to promote equality in all spheres of life'.

In spite of this, South Africa's CRR makes less mention of women than those of other countries, which could call South Africa's commitment into question. A superficial commitment to gender equality is one explanation for the low overall frequency of gender-related terms, which is

unlikely, but the result could also reflect that in the hierarchy of the government's APRM priorities gender is further down the scale than issues which are deemed to be important, such as economic growth. Another explanation could be that South Africa is satisfied with its progress towards gender equality and empowerment and therefore does not feel that it needs to highlight the issue.

Finally, it must be noted that the overall frequencies of all the countries reviewed are relatively low, with no country scoring over 43, indicating that gender did not feature very significantly in any of the CRRs. This may reflect that, in terms of APRM objectives, gender is less of a priority in all 16 reporting countries than political stability, good governance and economic growth. It also indicates a lack of gender mainstreaming throughout the APRM questionnaire.

OBSERVATIONS BY CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The next interesting trend evident from the heat map analysis is the chapters that have the highest frequencies of 'female' terms. In each CRR the chapters with the highest frequencies are those on 'Democracy and Governance' and 'Socio-economic Development'. The obvious reason for this is that these chapters contain specific reporting indicators pertaining to women. Of the two chapters, Section 4 on 'Socio-economic Development' generally contains the most references to 'females', suggesting that women are strongly perceived as a socio-economic development issue.

It is also necessary to look at those chapters where women are mentioned the least, namely, 'Economic Governance' and 'Corporate Governance'. The primary reason for this appears to be the lack of specific reporting criteria on the status of women in these two areas.

Women are most consistently absent in all CRRs from the chapters on 'Economic Governance' (the section that deals with macroeconomic indicators and government fiscal management). At first this might appear logical as the chapter deals mainly with issues that do not lend themselves to gender considerations. However, what structural adjustment policies in the 1980s have shown is that policies conceived at macroeconomic levels have an impact on people and will thus have an impact on women (De Matos-Ala 1995). As women in African societies are generally the most economically vulnerable, special care should be taken to ensure that macroeconomic policies will benefit them and will not have the effect of making their situation more precarious. Thus, I argue that if gender mainstreaming is a serious APRM objective, women must be considered comprehensively in the 'Economic Governance' chapter.

Similarly, countries are not asked to account for the participation of women in the corporate sector in meaningful detail. (The only question relating to women in the 'Corporate Governance' chapter is an obscure one asking whether there are 'holdings by women'.) This accounts, therefore, for the low frequency of 'females' in this chapter and once again calls into question the APRM's understanding of and commitment to gender mainstreaming. It also speaks to this being an area where women are significantly under-represented in all reporting countries. The majority of countries reported that very few women were represented in the upper echelons of corporate management. This under-representation indicates a failure to achieve the objective of providing women with access to and control of productive resources and services and key decision-making structures, which is a criterion used in the questionnaire to indicate women's empowerment.

The highest use of gender-related words tends to appear the chapter on 'Socio-economic

Development'. However, the APRM reporting criteria are flawed because they focus primarily on progress towards women's economic equality and empowerment and ignore issues pertaining to women's position within society. This is problematic, as the structural causes of gender inequality stem primarily from social and cultural norms and values. Consequently, it is important that these norms and values are addressed in the 'Socio-economic Development' thematic area. Achieving economic equality and empowerment is no doubt important, but without addressing the social and cultural origins of women's marginalisation no lasting progress can be made in sustaining and expanding gender equality.

In addition, none of indicators asks specifically for a report on progress made in achieving substantive social gender equality, nor do they inquire about the attainment of substantive gender equality in the area of economics. There are two possible reasons for the omission of reports on measures to improve women's social status. First, since the questionnaire does not require reporting on this issue there is no incentive for member countries to do so. Second, governments might not want to risk alienating large patriarchal support bases.

It is especially worrying that issues surrounding national budgetary priorities for women are only raised in the 'Socio-economic Development' chapter and not in the 'Economic Governance' chapter as well, as this would elevate women's status and importance. This again seems to indicate little preference for tackling social inequality. Moreover, the focus on increasing women's economic productivity may be interpreted as countries being more interested in exploiting women's productivity as a means of increasing national economic growth than in altering fundamentally the subordinate position of women in society. Tripp (2003) cautions that the desire in many African countries to increase

women's inclusion has been used to secure support for political parties and is therefore not primarily motivated by the goal of politically empowering women.

Education is often a key focus for many countries, as are economic initiatives to address poverty. On a positive note, most countries reported making significant progress in this area. Almost all countries reported close to gender parity in primary school enrolment and an increase in the number of girls present at secondary school level.

Many countries used this chapter to reflect on the lack of substantial progress in the area of socio-economic development as well as the reasons for this. Thus, the high gender-related word frequencies in this thematic area cannot necessarily be construed as indicating progress in gender-related socio-economic development in general. High word frequencies may also indicate that gender equality, while important, is of a lower order of priority than other APRM objectives.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

To further interrogate countries' commitment to the empowerment of women this study undertook a regression analysis. Two gender-related indicators were chosen, namely, the percentage of women who experience either physical or psychological intimate partner abuse during their lifetimes (figure 3) and the average years of schooling for girls as of 2013 (figure 2).

Being safe from abuse and violence, especially when it is perpetrated by an intimate partner, is seen as vital for securing substantive gender equality. The reason is that this kind of violence against women has its roots deeply entrenched in social beliefs about men's rights both to exercise power over women physically and to own women's bodies. To eliminate violence

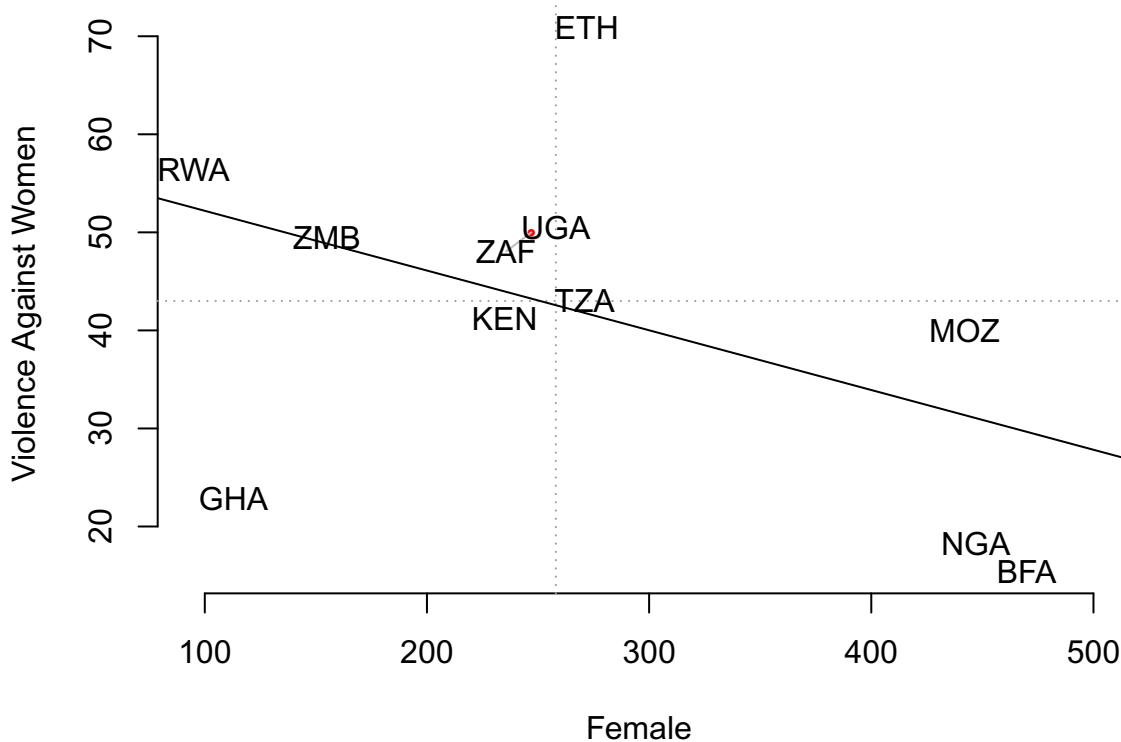
against women means challenging and eradicating these beliefs, which are held by both men and women, and asking men to cede their perceived power over women in this regard.

Education is a key tool for the empowerment of women. It builds confidence, knowledge and independence, allows women access to the economy and ultimately exponentially expands their ability to make choices for themselves. Both UNESCO (2000) and the World Bank (2014) confirm that girls with higher levels of education have access to higher incomes, are less likely to live in poverty and have lower fertility rates. Increasing women's and girls' access to education ensures both formal and substantive gender equality. The education of women challenges socially based stereotypes

about girls only requiring limited education to prepare themselves for their domestic roles as wives and mothers. It further empowers women by giving them the opportunity to break free from these culturally prescribed and restrictive domestic roles, where the power balance is tipped in favour of men.

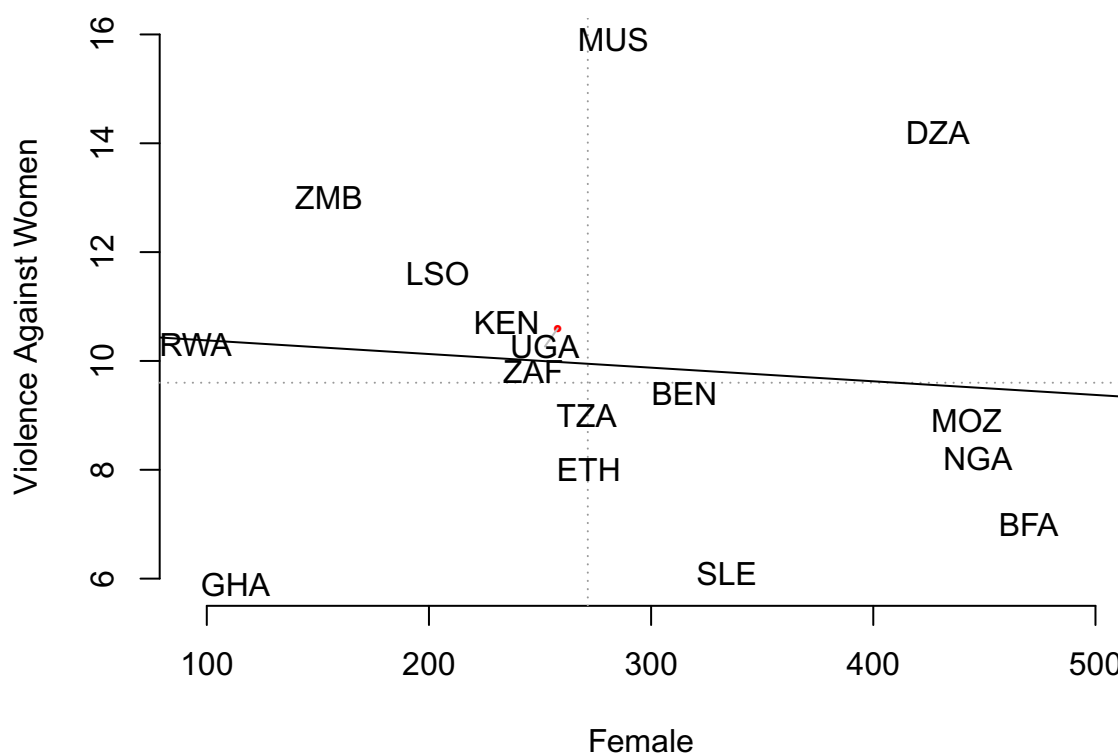
The performance of each country with respect to these two variables was compared to the overall frequency of the word 'female' in their CRRs. All 16 countries were included in the regression analysis for 'average years of female schooling'. With regard to intimate partner violence against women, data for only 11 of the 16 countries is presented – statistics for Algeria, Benin, Lesotho, Mauritius and Sierra Leone were unavailable.

Figure 2
Scatter-plot depicting frequency of use of 'female' and the association between lifetime incidences of intimate partner violence against women by country



Source: UN Women 2013 and UN Population Fund 2014

Figure 3
Scatter-plot depicting frequency of use of 'female' and the association between average years of schooling for women by country



Source: UNESCO 2013

Scatter-plot depicting frequency of use of 'female' and the association between lifetime incidences of intimate partner violence against women by country

Scatter-plot depicting frequency of use of 'female' and the association between average years of schooling for women by country

As can be seen in both scatterplots, the countries are clustered mostly along a line running diagonally from top left to bottom right, indicating a negative correlation between the variables. Thus, in general, the word 'female' was used less frequently in the reports of the countries with higher levels of schooling. In other words, those countries where girls have less schooling mention women more in their CRRs.

Education seems to be a pressing issue for most of the countries located in the bottom right quadrant. Nigeria, in particular, reflected on its need to improve the amount of time girls spent in school, relating the problem of low enrolment to the opposition of Islamic extremists operating in the country's northern regions who view education as a Western enforced ideal that is un-Islamic. One could hypothesise that countries with high female participation rates in education may have felt more satisfied with their gender equality performance and therefore had less reason to focus on the needs of women.

Figure 3, by contrast, indicates that countries with high rates of intimate partner violence against women focused less on women in their CRRs. On the whole, most CRRs acknowledged

the presence of gender-based violence and the need to pay attention to it. Some CRRs reflected on the causes of this phenomenon within their countries. However, CRRs were short on suggestions about what could be done to address and reverse this trend permanently, apart from offering to increase legislation and policing. Problems with addressing this issue could reflect the fact that although progress has been made in attaining gender equality in areas such as education and government, there is significant work left to be done towards substantially empowering women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide clarity on the type of gender equality sought

The APRM needs an accurate and explicit definition of terms such as 'gender equality' and 'empowerment'. It must be more specific about what it understands gender equality and empowerment to encompass. Does it envisage gender equality exclusively as formal equality, or does it include substantive equality as well? The inclusion of the term empowerment in Section 1.3.1 of the questionnaire seems to imply a much wider interpretation, but to ensure that member countries deploy their efforts in this direction, the interpretation should be more specific.

Although the Self -Assessment Questionnaire of 2013 includes more questions about the status on women in all sections it still does not offer any more enlightenment about what factors constitute gender equality. If substantive equality and empowerment are the ultimate objective far more focus must be placed on facilitating an increase in women's agency and control in all spheres. If such a move does occur, the alignment between gender objectives and APRM questions and indicators needs to be reviewed to guarantee that they will hold members accountable to the APRM's interpretation of 'gender equality'.

I also recommend that if such an evaluation of the APRM's definition of gender equality were to take place, emphasis should be placed on interpreting this idea and objective within an African context, allowing countries some leeway in tailoring the interpretation and objective to local realities. This is preferable to trying to set generic Western ideals and solutions, which are unlikely to be successful in an African political, social and economic context.

Commit to evaluating gender mainstreaming accurately

Unfortunately, the 2005 Self-Assessment Questionnaire does not assess the real extent to which gender mainstreaming is taking place among member countries. Confining the issue of gender primarily to two thematic areas does not reflect a commitment to the ideal of gender mainstreaming. It excludes the areas of economic and corporate governance, which have important parts to play in the delivery of gender equality. The absence of gender questions and indicators in the areas of economic and corporate governance means that the CRRs do not offer a holistic reflection of the state of gender equality in member countries. The 2013 Self-Assessment Questionnaire does introduce gender questions and indicators into thematic areas 2 and 3, which should enrich our picture of the status of women in member countries.

Give greater priority to the development of initiatives to address gender-based violence

Gender-based violence was, to some degree, a concern raised in almost all of the 16 reports studied. However, these discussions centred on describing the extent of the problem and listing legal and policing responses to combat it. The prevalence of this issue undermines progress in the area of formal gender equality. It also reflects a lack of meaningful advancement in bringing about substantive gender equality. A multifaceted approach needs to be adopted that not only provides legal protection to women

but ultimately targets the social, cultural and economic issues that make them vulnerable.

Give greater priority to addressing social and cultural sources of gender discrimination

The lack of attention paid to the social and cultural equality of women both in the questionnaire and in the CRRs is problematic. In this regard, the 2013 Self-Assessment Questionnaire perpetuates the inadequacies of the 2005 version. Unless the social and cultural equality of women is given greater priority it is unlikely that significant and enduring strides will be made in securing substantive gender equality.

CONCLUSION

The use of content analysis as an analytical tool was an effective way of evaluating the endeavours of the APRM mechanism to bring about gender equality among its members. This paper identified interesting trends from the data in this regard. The content analysis showed that countries did not speak about women as extensively as might have been expected of an issue the APRM designates as a priority. Gender considerations were largely confined to chapters 1 ('Democracy & Governance') and 4 ('Socio-economic Development') of the CRRs because the structure of the questionnaire mandates governments to report on gender issues in these chapters.

Reviews of progress made with regard to women revolved around legislative measures imposed to improve their status, with the focus on political and economic status. This seems to suggest that the emphasis is on achieving formal gender equality, with substantive gender equality being less important. The analysis also indicates clearly that gender mainstreaming is not encouraged by the reporting process. Reporting on women is absent in areas that

are vital for increasing and maintaining gender equality, namely, the chapters on 'Economic Management' (chapter 2) and 'Corporate Governance' (chapter 3). Thus, the state of play regarding gender transformation in these areas is occluded. Moreover, emphasis is placed on increasing women's economic and political access and participation, which seems to indicate a desire to address formal gender equality, but issues of control and agency in these areas should be included if substantive gender equality and empowerment is the desired outcome.

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ANNEXURE A

Method of deriving ‘heatmap’ graphics from APRM Country Research Reports using word stemming and clustering

Grant Masterson and Rod Alence

Each APRM country review culminates in a book-length report. Given the way these reports are compiled, and their proven accuracy and reliability in identifying critical governance issues in APRM member states, they warrant further examination. However, the length and technical language of the reports is often cited as a major obstacle to broader levels of engagement with their content. To address this, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) piloted a text-mining methodology to simplify and disaggregate specific issues from the reports in a manner which, hopefully, enhances their utility.

Text mining reduces the reports to ‘bags of words’, whose frequencies can be analysed statistically. The first step was to capture the text

from the 16 reports electronically and to ‘clean’ it – by, for example, removing all punctuation and numbers and deleting page headers and footers. Next the text was summarised in a word-frequency matrix showing how often each word occurs in each chapter of each report. Using this full list of words, paper authors compiled a list of words usually associated with their specific paper topic. For example, in the paper on ‘Extractives and Mining’, words pertaining to mining, oil, and resource extraction were conceptually grouped together under these three umbrella terms.

This allowed the paper authors to calculate the frequencies of these specific concepts within each chapter of each report. The frequencies, as raw word counts or as counts normalised per ten thousand words of text, provide rough indicators of the degree of emphasis on the paper’s key concepts. Note: Each time any of the grouped words is flagged in the text a result is returned as an instance of the main concept word (see Table 1).

Table 1
Paper topics and key concept terms by paper

Subject of paper	Author	‘Concept’ words (example)	Grouped words linked to ‘concept’ word
Land and the APRM	Lisa Van Dongen	Land	land landless
Gender and the APRM	Jacqui de Matos Ala	Female	female females girl girls woman women womens*

Subject of paper	Author	'Concept' words (example)	Grouped words linked to 'concept' word
Extractives, Mining and the APRM	Rod Alence	Minerals	mineral minerals miners mines mining diamond diamonds gold tin coal aluminium copper iron quarrying
Elections, Conflict and the APRM	Michelle Small	Election	elect elected election elections elective electoral electorate vote voted voter voters votes vote voted voter voters votes voting
Youth and the APRM	Melanie Roberts	Youth	youth
Government Responses to the APRM	Grant Masterson	Executive	Cabinet executive minister ministerial ministers ministry president Primeminister*

*punctuation is removed from the text to avoid data confusion prior to running the analysis.

The analysis is aided by the fact that all the APRM country reports have similar structures. All contain four core thematic chapters on key themes of the APRM: ‘democracy and political governance’, ‘economic governance and management’, ‘corporate governance’ and ‘socio-economic development’. These core chapters are preceded by an introductory discussion of the APRM process and country background. In early reports the introductory material occupied a single chapter, but in later reports it spans two chapters. For ease of comparison, where it occupies two chapters the text is combined into a single document, called ‘introduction’ and treated as a single chapter. The core thematic chapters are followed by a concluding discussion of ‘cross-cutting issues’, findings, and recommendations. In early reports this concluding material occupied a single chapter, but in later reports it spans two chapters. Again, where it occupies two chapters these were combined into a single document, called ‘cross-cutting issues’ and treated as a single chapter. Each report also starts with an executive summary, which is treated as a chapter in its own right. All other front matter and appendices are excluded from the analysis.

Except for the first few reports published the word counts are reasonably consistent. The first two reports, on Ghana and Rwanda, are quite short, averaging only 36 000 words. The third, on Kenya, is 75 000 words. The average length of the other 13 reports is 99 000 words, with nine falling between 90 000 and 110 000 words, and the longest two being Mozambique (117 000 words) and Nigeria (114 000 words). The four thematic chapters account for nearly two-thirds of each report, averaging 65 000 words. Among these, ‘democracy and political governance’ is longest, averaging 21 000 words; the average in the other three – ‘economic governance’, ‘corporate governance’, and ‘socio-economic development’ – is slightly more than 14 000 words. The average number

of words in the remaining chapters – ‘executive summary’, ‘introduction’, and ‘cross-cutting issues’ – is about 8 000 words.

The combined word count of all 16 reports (excluding front matter and appendices) is about 1 400 000 words. Three pages of typed, double-spaced text in a standard font equals about a thousand words. Using this as a rough approximation, the text analysed is roughly equivalent to 4 200 typed, double-spaced pages.

The final heatmaps illustrate the intensity of word occurrences by country and by chapter. The higher the frequency with which a word appears in a chapter, the darker that block will appear. Country chapters with dark red blocks are therefore those with the highest frequency of a word, while those with very pale yellow blocks have no or almost no references to that word. The use of the heatmaps themselves allows for a unique and otherwise unattainable perspective on the contents of the 16 APRM Country Reports analysed. It is possible to identify trends in the occurrences of key concept words in the reports and, due to the thematically arranged structure of the reports, this provides the reader with additional perspectives on the context in which these words are being referenced.

However, caution should be exercised in reading too much into the heatmaps themselves. The brief given to all the authors in this series of papers was to view the heatmaps as an indication of which APRM Country Reports, and specifically, which chapters, warranted further examination with respect to the theme of the paper. The heatmaps are useful insofar as they point a researcher in the direction of interesting trends as well as unexpected (or expected) anomalies and outliers in terms of the referencing of a word within the reports. It is not possible to deduce the content of the reports from the heatmaps, simply which

sections of which reports warrant specific referencing when examining specific issues such as those in this Occasional Paper series.

About the Author

Jacqueline De Matos Ala is currently a senior lecturer in International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand. Her research interests are education, gender, and health. She is a recipient of the university's Vice Chancellors Teaching Award.

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Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa

T: +27 11 381 60 00 • F: +27 11 482 61 63

14 Park Rd • Richmond • Johannesburg

PO Box 740 • Auckland Park 2006 • South Africa



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