

Report on the use of EpiSurvey mobile data collection software
by the APRM Ghana Secretariat in its 2012 Governance Assessment

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an innovative instrument voluntarily acceded to by Member States of the African Union (AU) as an African self-monitoring mechanism. The APRM helps a country to know its prevailing situation in respect of the four APRM focal areas i.e. Democracy and Good Political Governance, Economic Governance and Management, Corporate Governance and Socio-economic Development; identify its strengths and weaknesses and develop a Programme of Action (PoA) to facilitate accelerated growth and improved standard of living for the populace.

In 2005 the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) conducted a Ghana Country Self-Assessment; which identified inadequate consultations between local authorities and civil society in addressing governance and service delivery challenges. This development had resulted in a situation where civil societies were unable to hold both local government actors and service providers accountable for the services they provided. One key challenge identified related to the fact that most local actors, especially at the community level lacked the requisite capacity (skills and knowledge) to monitor, manage and use local level data to demand improvement in governance and service delivery.

The Governing Council of the APRM as a result of the identified challenge mooted the concept of District APRM Oversight Committees to afford local actors the opportunity to jointly monitor progress in governance and service delivery and seek ways of addressing challenges. The District Governance Assessment Project therefore started in 2009 in 20 then 40 districts across the country with a participation as at 2011, of an average 11,000 citizens. The project could not expand into more districts in subsequent assessments due to the high cost of printing, transporting and administering the governance and service delivery assessment instrument, the difficulty of the District Oversight Committee (DOC) members in analyzing the data collected on the citizens report cards as well as time constraints which was mainly associated with the cumbersome nature of using the citizen's report cards.

APRM's 2012 Governance assessment is being supported by UNDP regional office in Dakar and the Ghana Country office. Due to the difficulties associated with the use of the citizen's report card as numerated above, UNDP's regional office in Dakar supported a pilot initiative using mobile technology for data collection aspect of the assessment. The specific results the EpiSurvey mobile data collection software sought to achieve includes (1) a reduction in the cost of printing, transporting and administering the governance and service delivery assessment instrument, (2) an improvement in the quality of data collection, and (3) the completion and presentation of governance assessment reports within set time frames. The mobile data collection software was developed by Mobile Web Ghana with the requisite features for efficient data collection.

The mobile technology was piloted in 20 out of the 50 districts covered by the assessment after a training of trainer's workshop and a subsequent training of DOCs in the old and newly selected districts. As anticipated, it has assisted in eliminating most of the problems associated with the use of the citizen's report cards. It has indeed reduced the overall cost resulting in the freeing up resources which enabled APRM to include 10 additional districts in the 2012 assessment. Additionally, the mobile

technology in the districts in which it was piloted significantly cut down the time used for data collection, coding and analyzing the results. Using the Citizen's report cards, the DOCs would have to go through the 300 respondent cards per districts and code similar answers for analyzing the results; this delays the time of processing the outcome since quality assurance has to be done as there is a possibility of double counting. Sometimes DOCs are beaten by the rains while returning from the communities after the collection of data resulting in the record cards being destroyed; this problem was also prevented with the use of the mobile technology. The mobile technology enabled a quick collection and analysis of the data collection this year, with districts that will otherwise have been followed several times to submit their data being among the first to have completed the assessment and collated their reports. There was a general cut down of time on the assessment as a resulting in the organization of Validation workshops before the end of the year; this has also made it possible to develop district reports on the assessment, which was not done previously due to lack of time. The cut down on time also enabled an increase in the sample size from 300 to 400 for communities using the mobile technology, giving more citizens the chance to participate in the process.

There were only two main challenges encountered with the use of the mobile technology; first, the initial difficulty of some of the DOCs in using androids phones as they were used to phones with key pads, it therefore took them sometime to be used to the new technology; this affected their speed initially. Secondly, the transmission of data to the central point through the internet was affected in some areas as the network selected was not available in some of the communities; the DOCs had to come to a place where network is available to transmit the data to the central.

In all the assessment was carried out in 50 districts in the country compared to 40 last year. Validation workshops are being organized in 30 districts in which the citizen's report card was used to collect the data. Currently, draft reports of 20 districts have been validated, remaining that of 10 districts which will be done by the end of October, 2012.



Participants during the validation workshop



A public official answering a question during the workshop

The workshops which have been highly successful; presented an opportunity for the right holders and duty bearers to engage on the several issues raised by the report; while validating the results of the assessment as a true reflection of what is on the ground. The workshops were used by the duty bearers

to educate stakeholders present on a wide range of issues that relates to the report. Those present at these workshops were the district assembly official, assembly men and women, market women, business owners and operators, public service officers, the media, civil society organizations and the general public

In general, the mobile technology has resulted in an improvement in the efficiency and accuracy of data and will be replicated to cover more districts in subsequent assessments. It is expected that this year's governance assessments using mobile technology will involve the participation of about 15,000 citizens representing a 36% increase in the level of participation.