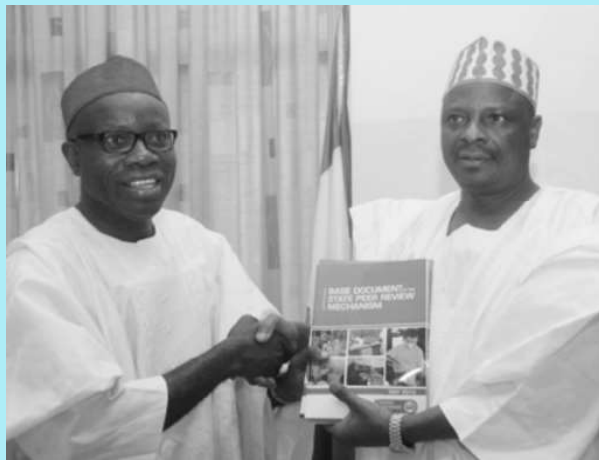


The State Peer Review Mechanism

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“With the SPRM, Nigeria has set the record to be the first country to undertake peer review at the subnational level in the world. And the credit has to go to Dr Saraki, who ‘midwifed’ the initiative.”

Dr. Afekhena Jerome, SPRM National Coordinator

In 2007, after the raging debate about the various ways of using the funds that had been stockpiled in the Excess Crude Account, the National Economic Council directed the 36 states to peer-review themselves. There had been some early work done through the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies programme in 2005 and 2006 but it had soon been discontinued. The NGF took on the task of driving state peer reviews forward and it mandated the Secretariat to carry out a preparatory exercise in all 36 states of the federation. The Forum also directed the Secretariat to bring together a pool of policy consultants and advisers across key sectors to execute it.

In 2009, after completing the restructuring of the Secretariat, Dr Saraki charged it to develop a framework for the formal State Peer Review Mechanism (SPRM) that was to build on his earlier peer-review tour of states.

This peer-review initiative was a clear departure from the politics of the past. The NGF became known for its focus on development issues, governance issues and areas of best practice. The SPRM became a way of encouraging healthy competition and stimulating states to focus on key issues. It became apparent to all outsiders that the Forum no longer focused on politics but on policy issues, development issues and better governance for the benefit of the people.

Some states have gone so far as to set up state offices dedicated to SPRM. This is an encouraging step for the continuity and sustainability of the programme. As the governor of a state will change, it is important that the team in a state dedicated to the SPRM retains continuity regardless of the administration in charge.

The NGF partnered with the SPARC programme of the UK's Department for International Development to articulate and develop a systematic and robust peer-review process. This was launched in May 2011 as part of the induction programme for new and returning governors. Important milestones that followed included the finalisation

of the SPRM Base Document in July 2011, the inauguration of an 11-member steering committee in November 2011 (with the former chief justice of Nigeria, Justice Mohammed Lawal Uwais, as Chairman) and the training of 107 consultants, drawn from across the country, to assist the Steering Committee during the Technical Review Mission in May 2012. These 107 consultants were selected through a national competition in which about 4,000 experts applied.

Two training sessions were held to induct the consultants. The first was led by Justice Uwais and the second was presided over by Dr Saraki, who had become Vice Chairman of the Steering Committee. The SPARC programme was a close and helpful partner throughout the peer-review process, particularly in carrying out day-to-day work. Before the process was completed, two states (Anambra and Ekiti) had volunteered as pilot states for the project.

Anambra State

Anambra State successfully blazed the trail in pioneering this unique initiative. The Initiation/Sensitisation Workshop was held in Awka in September 2011, to formally start the process in the state. The state subsequently submitted its self-assessment report to the Secretariat in March 2012, paving way for the visit of the Technical Review Mission to Anambra State from 14 to 18 May 2012.

The state was peer-reviewed by the NGF in March 2013. The process identified ten (10) commendable practices worthy of emulation by other states. These included instituting peace and security in collaboration with security agencies and communities that led to the abatement of the turbulent crisis that beset Anambra politics between 1999 and 2006. The state government has systematically brought governance down to the grassroots and to the community level through hometown associations. There are virtually no abandoned projects and the accumulated contract debt is minimal. Other practices included support for small and medium-sized enterprise sand job-creation through the Anambra State Government/Bank of Industry N2billion Intervention Fund and the new set of budget classification codes and charts of accounts, which allow spending to be tracked more scientifically and promote accountability. Anambra State is leading other states in information and communications technology (ICT) by



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way of establishing the Microsoft Academy, the return of several secondary and primary schools to their former owners and the good network of roads linking the state capital to all LGAs.

The review process also brought to the fore some overarching issues important enough to deserve a holistic approach because of their wider impact on the quality of governance in the state. These included the non-conduct of local government elections since 1988, several challenges in the area of budgeting, the insignificant role played by the state's illustrious sons and daughters in its affairs and weak internally generated revenue, hovering around N500 million monthly or 20 per cent of actual revenue receipts since 2007 despite a great revenue potential.

A programme of action has since been put in place to correct these underlying deficiencies and Anambra State is already implementing some of the recommendations, such as holding local government elections in January 2014. It is required to report on progress in implementing this programme every year. Its development partners, including DFID's SPARC programme, are already assisting it in tackling some of these challenges.



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Ekiti State

Following the launch of the State Peer Review Mechanism in May 2011, Ekiti State embraced the process in line with the commitment of Governor Fayemi's administration to continually strengthen the participatory democratic process. It hosted a two-day sensitisation workshop to formally commence the process in November 2011. About 1,000 participants attended the event, which was presided over by Justice Uwais and attended by His Excellency the Rt Hon. Rotimi Amaechi, Governor of Rivers State and Chairman of the NGF; His Excellency Donald Duke, recently the governor of Cross River State; and representatives of the United Nations Office in Nigeria and DFID, among others.

Ekiti State submitted its self-assessment report to the Secretariat in September 2012, which prepared the way for the visit of the State Technical Review Mission.

Ekiti was peer-reviewed together with Anambra State by the NGF in March 2013. The Ekiti State Peer Review Report, presented by Senator Saraki to the governors on behalf of the Steering Committee, identified 10 commendable practices. Among them were transparency and accountability in governance, social protection and inclusion including the payment of welfare grants to the aged (65 years old and above) and efforts to curtail gender-based violence through the promulgation of enabling legislation. Others were revamping education at all levels in the state, a commitment to rapid enhancement of ICT competence and development of a world-class 'tourism corridor' around the Ikogosi Warm Spring. Ekiti State's main documents, including budgets, are fully uploaded on its website, which was ranked as the best state website by the NGF Secretariat.

“...the governors on behalf of the Steering Committee, identified 10 commendable practices.”



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The Report also indicated areas of concern: no local government elections in the state since 1999; low internal revenue-generation; challenges in reforming the civil service; and chronic violent party and electoral politics in Ekiti State. A programme of action has since been put in place to correct these underlying deficiencies.

Meeting with Development Partners

With the assistance of DFID, the Secretariat met with all heads of agency of development partners in May 2013. The meeting was convened in order to acquaint them with its work, especially on the State Peer Review Mechanism. The Anambra and Ekiti state peer review reports generated much interest. Representatives of Anambra and Ekiti states also made presentations on how they could be supported in implementing the State Programme of Action emanating from the peer review process. The effort is already yielding fruit, as development partners, especially DHD, have accelerated their engagement with both states.