



Nigeria's State Peer Review Mechanism: impacting governance systems and accelerating development in states

In 2007, the National Economic Council (NEC) requested the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) to develop a peer review process to track the use of resources from the Excess Crude Account. Following the NEC request, the NGF commissioned its Secretariat to develop the process. In collaboration with the DFID-funded State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC), the NGF started to develop the State Peer Review Mechanism (SPRM) tools and methodology in 2009. The SPRM was officially launched in Abuja in May 2011 as part of the Forum's induction programme for new and returning governors.

The overarching objective of the SPRM is to assist states in improving their development performance by periodically reviewing progress in the implementation of their development policies, plans and programmes. The SPRM is in essence a tool for peer learning and accountability.

Shortly after the launch of the SPRM, Anambra and Ekiti States, followed by Jigawa and Niger States, embraced and piloted the peer review process. This culminated in the NGF conducting the first set of reviews in March 2013 for Anambra and Ekiti, which yielded valuable recommendations for both states to further their development plans and a number of good practices beneficial to several other states.



Members of the SPRM National Steering Committee and the NGF team at inauguration

How does SPRM work?

The SPRM operates in stages. The first stage of the peer review process is an initiation and sensitisation workshop involving various stakeholders from the public and private sectors as well as civil society. Following this, the state prepares a self-assessment report based on the framework of indicators, highlighting its development status, its strengths and challenges, as well as a remedial programme of action.

The third stage involves a process of validation by a Technical Review Panel (TRP) led by the National Steering Committee and made up of state delegates, experts selected from the SPRM Roster of Consultants and representatives of development partners working with the NGF.

Based on the findings of the TRP, a State Peer Review Report (SPRR) is produced highlighting achievements, challenges, commendable practices and remedial actions for mitigating the observed challenges.

Following this, the report is validated by the entire National SPRM Steering Committee and submitted to the State undergoing review for comments. It is then tabled before the governors where it is discussed in a non-adversarial manner such that peer learning and experience sharing is enhanced among governors.

Uptake in Anambra State

Anambra State put itself forward to pilot the process in 2011, and submitted its self-assessment report to the NGF's Steering Committee in March 2012.

This was followed by the validation of the self-assessment report by the TRP who, from their findings, identified commendable practices and also submitted recommendations to further enhance the State's Programme of Action (SPoA).

Eleven commendable practices were unveiled in the process. A few examples are:

- Restoration and maintenance of peace and tranquility in the State leading to a stable business environment
- Promotion of grass-roots governance through community involvement in the identification, execution and monitoring of development projects across communities. This has proven to enhance accountability as projects are supervised directly by the citizenry
- Maintenance of a good contract execution record with no abandoned projects and a minimal accumulated contract debt.

To enhance governance in the state, the Steering Committee made five main recommendations based on their findings. These included the need to:

- Conduct local government elections (which were last conducted during the military era)
- Reform budgetary processes and make them the overarching tool for development
- Address data weaknesses comprehensively
- Adequately fund and institutionalise the Road Maintenance Agency
- Strengthen internal revenue generation mechanisms.

Out of these five recommendations, Anambra State has successfully executed four:

- For the first time in over 12 years, the State in 2013 under Governor Peter Obi conducted its local government elections
- Under the new leadership of Governor Willy Obiano, the State developed its very first State Development Plan and also utilised the report of the SPRM in the development of



A cross-section of the members of the traditional ruling council participating during the initiation and sensitisation workshop in Anambra State

its Medium-Term Sector Strategy for the agriculture sector. This was developed with SPARC's support

- To address its weakness in data availability, the new administration recently requested the training of all Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) staff across its Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the use of the SPRM M&E framework, developed specifically to guide the implementation of its Programme of Action. This is the first step in the adoption of a statewide M&E framework
- As a means of strengthening its internal revenue generation and collection, the state, with SPARC's support, developed a robust internally generated revenue (IGR) improvement strategy which it has started to implement with the establishment of an IGR Committee that meets weekly to review plans and monitor results. This has resulted in an increase in its monthly IGR collection from N500 million to N1 billion between April 2014 and January 2015, a huge 100% leap in less than one year. The State, with support from UNDP, has also commissioned a study on its revenue structure, for proper monitoring and collection.

Uptake in Ekiti State

Ekiti State also undertook the process, submitting its self-assessment report in September 2012. This was followed by the Technical Review Mission which took place in October of the same year.

Ten key strengths and commendable practices were unveiled in the process. A few examples are:

- Commitment to transparency and accountability demonstrated by the enactment of the first State version of the Freedom of Information Law in Nigeria
 - The implementation of a social security scheme for the elderly
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- An outstanding record of participation and inclusiveness in State policy making processes
- The transformation of the Ikogosi Warm Spring into a world-class tourism destination.

The Steering Committee made three recommendations to improve governance in the state, including the need to:

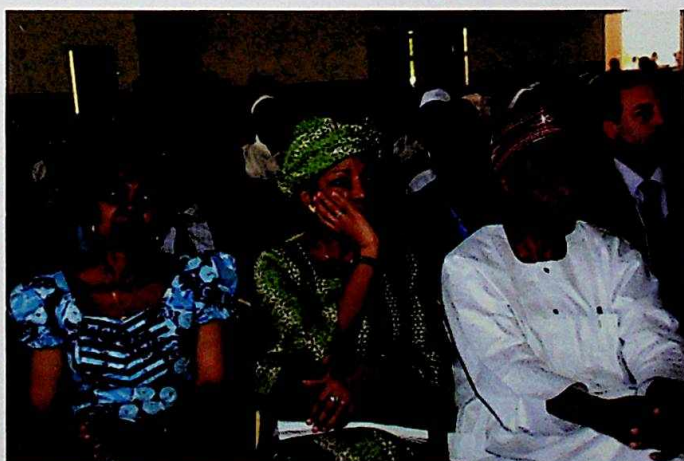
- Adopt and implement strategies and measures that will encourage employment generation in the state
- Conduct local government elections
- Strengthen the state's revenue collection machinery, especially the State Board of Internal Revenue, while widening the tax base.

Out of these three, Ekiti State has executed two:

- In a bid to reduce unemployment in the state and boost IGR, Ekiti State has launched an innovative initiative, the Youth Commercial Agriculture Development Programme (YCAD), designed to generate 1500 direct and about 10,000 indirect jobs
- The programme is also expected to boost the State's IGR by 50%.

Commendably the state has also taken definite steps towards ensuring the sustainability of SPRM gains made by mainstreaming the SPoA into existing governance processes.

- As a first step, the state in 2013 adopted its SPoA as the basis for developing its 2013–2015 Medium Term Expenditure Framework. This automatically fed into the development of its 2013 and 2014 budgets
- To better coordinate the state's M&E process which had previously been disjointed (as identified in the state's self-assessment report), SPARC



A cross-section of stakeholders, including representatives of civil society actors, the private sector, women, youth and vulnerable groups, donors and the National steering committee during the initiation and sensitisation workshop

supported the training of key MDA M&E staff on the use of the SPRM SPoA M&E framework. This has now been adopted by the state as the statewide M&E framework and was used to monitor the implementation of its 2013 budget.

Taking the SPRM beyond the pilot states

The NGF witnessed firsthand the usefulness of the SPRM as a diagnostic tool during the peer review of Anambra and Ekiti States. It instituted a sub-committee to coordinate the SPRM at the Forum level and also unanimously agreed to make specific contributions solely for the implementation of the SPRM.

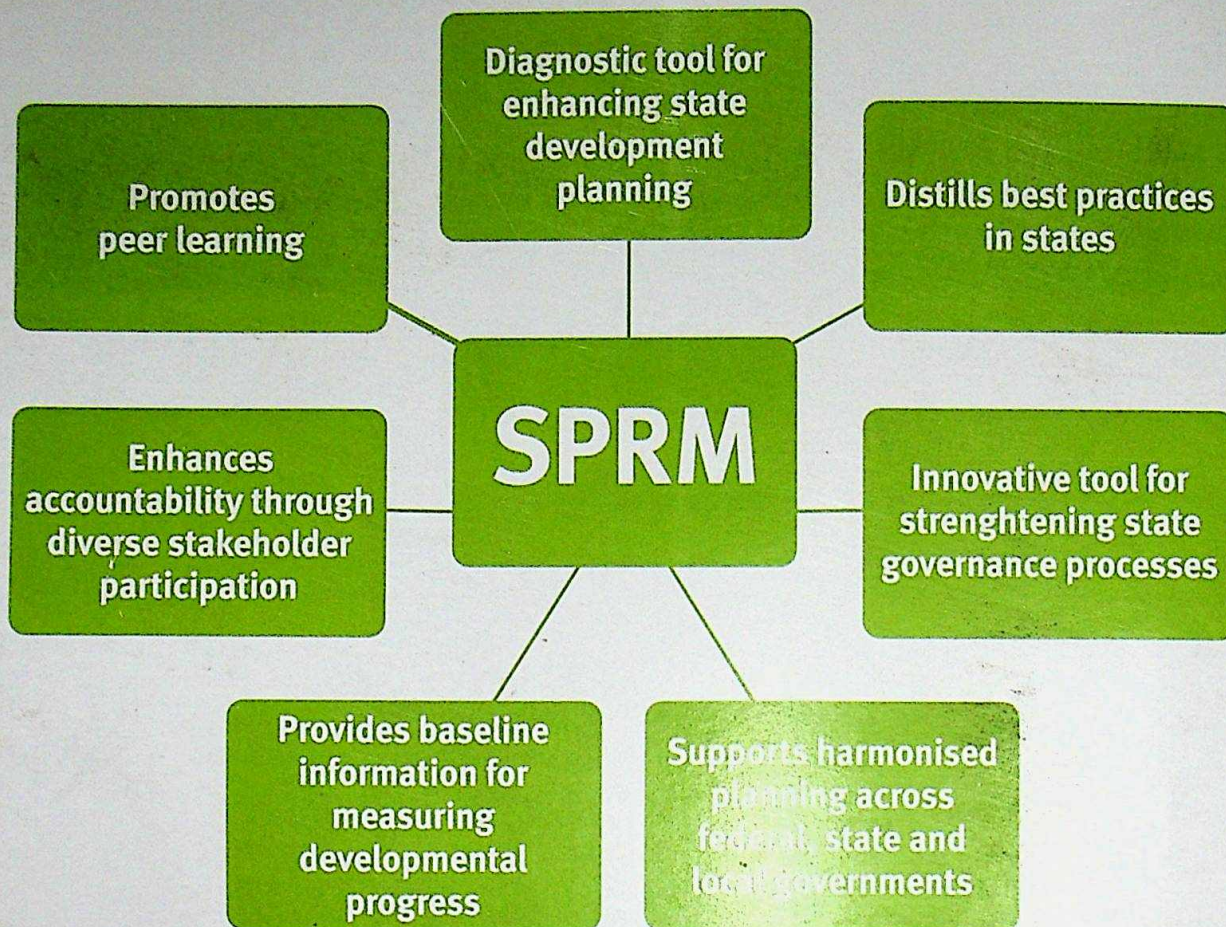
Non-pilot states currently undertaking the process include Rivers, Lagos, Delta, Sokoto and Kano which are at various stages of the process.

Moving forward

With the 2015 elections over and given the level of enthusiasm of the new and returning governors towards the process, it is anticipated that the SPRM will regain full momentum.

Why every Nigerian state should implement the SPRM

- The SPRM is a diagnostic tool designed to help states accelerate development by clearly identifying and mapping out areas of priority for immediate attention
- It provides useful input for evidence based planning in states
- The process helps to distill commendable practices and examples of what works in some states, in a manner that can be replicated in other states
- It is useful in resolving regional issues, as states within a particular region that have identified common issues can work jointly to solve them
- It has proven to be a powerful tool for strengthening statewide systems given the examples from Anambra and Ekiti
- It is an inclusive process that allows for the full participation of citizens and all stakeholders in the governance of the states, thereby promoting accountability
- The self-assessment report provides a baseline from which a state can measure concrete progress as it moves along the development ladder
- The SPRM supports harmonized planning across all tiers of government and the attainment of national benchmarks.



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