



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN COMMITMENT AND CAPACITY

Corruption, transparency and accountability
in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

by **Rorisang Lekalake**



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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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Corruption is widely regarded as a leading impediment to socioeconomic development in Africa – between 1970 and 2008 an estimated \$854 billion was lost to illicit financial flows, an amount that has had a detrimental effect on the progress made towards development (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, UNECA 2015).

Among the most notorious examples of large-scale corruption were the ‘kleptocratic’ dictatorships of Mobutu Sese Seko, president of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo – DRC) from 1965 to 1997; Idi Amin in Uganda (1971-1979), Sani Abacha in Nigeria (1993-1998) and Charles Taylor in Liberia (1997-2003).¹

Transparency International (2004, p 13) estimates that Mobutu and Abacha embezzled up to \$5 billion each during their tenures, but acknowledges that ‘very little’ is known about the exact amounts. The report also cites numerous failed attempts to recover these funds from overseas accounts despite the adoption of international anti-corruption frameworks aimed at promoting greater accountability.

Some progress has since been made towards recovering the funds via initiatives such as the United States Department of Justice’s Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, which, in 2014, froze approximately \$458 million linked to Abacha and his associates and held in local accounts (UNECA 2015, p. 47). These funds represent a fraction of the estimated sum embezzled. The April 2016 leak of the ‘Panama Papers’ – records of a Panamanian

law firm documenting the offshore accounts of more than 200 000 shell companies – highlights the extent to which international institutions are implicated in facilitating illegal financial flows from Africa due to a lack of transparency in global transactions in both developing and advanced economies (Lopes 2016).

Empirical data indicate, however, that corruption levels are significantly higher in the developing world ‘due mostly to variations in institutional quality and political accountability’ in these countries (Søreide 2014, p 4). This is further substantiated by the fact that kleptocracy generally occurs in ‘weakly institutionalized polities, where formal institutions neither place significant restrictions on politicians’ actions nor make them accountable to citizens’ (Acemoglu, Robinson & Verdier 2004, p 163). The African Union (AU) has responded to this challenge by implementing various governance instruments, including: the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUPCC 2003); the African Charter of Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG 2007); the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD 2001) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM 2003).

The AUPCC outlines the organisation’s definition of corruption and provides guidelines for prevention, punishment and cooperation among state parties. Article 4 of the convention specifies nine forms of corruption and related offences including bribery, embezzlement and influence peddling (AU 2003, pp 7-8). Although the agreement is linked to earlier international and

¹ The term ‘kleptocracy’ describes political regimes in which ‘the state is controlled and run for the benefit of an individual, or a small group, who use their power to transfer a large proportion of society’s resources to themselves’ (Acemoglu, Robinson & Verdier 2004, p 162).

regional treaties, the AU's Assembly of Heads of State and Governments only explicitly addressed corruption for the first time in June 1998 (Muna 2005). To date, 37 AU member states (69% of the total) have ratified the agreement and only three – Cape Verde, Central African Republic and Egypt – have neither signed nor ratified it (African Union 2016).

The APRM, a voluntary governance assessment and promotion process, was initiated in 2002. Countering corruption and promoting both transparency and accountability are among the framework's key objectives (APRM 2004). By December 2015, 17 of the 35 AU member states that joined the APRM process had completed their first review and produced country review reports (CRRs)². This paper analyses the extent to which those reports address these issues across different dimensions of governance and individual countries.

Overall, the available APRM CRRs acknowledge both the socioeconomic and political importance of the fight against corruption, particularly given the growing public demand for greater transparency and accountability throughout the continent. Although at the time of publication most of the countries under review had relatively robust legislative frameworks designed to achieve these aims, the reports indicate that anti-corruption efforts were regularly hampered by capacity constraints within the relevant institutions and/or a lack of political will at the highest levels of government to enforce these measures.

Despite the existence of regional and national-level policy frameworks, annual losses from illicit financial flows on the continent have increased substantially, from an average of \$9

billion in 1970-1999 to over \$50 billion in 2000-2008 (UNECA 2015). Furthermore, the World Bank's Enterprise Surveys found that 38% of sub-Saharan African firms reported that corruption places a major restraint on their operations, while one-quarter (25%) had been solicited for a bribe at least once (World Bank Group 2016). The APRM reports offer additional empirical evidence of the prevalence of different forms of corruption in both the public and private sector.

The Algeria APRM report (2007), for example, reveals that the courts dealt with 8 300 cases in 2005/2006, covering corruption in public procurement, abuse of influence, and misappropriation of public funds and involving officials in all public sectors. The Burkina Faso (2008) assessment notes survey findings that 42% of citizens polled were exposed to some form of electoral corruption (namely gifts) during the 2005 election. Lastly, the South Africa report (2007) cites an international survey that found that in 2006 South African businesses were perceived to be the seventh-most corrupt of 30 leading exporting countries.

Given the widespread challenges in implementing accountability at state level, it appears that independent, non-state actors such as civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media should play a larger role in gauging and channelling citizen demands for greater accountability. However, few countries have a civil society sector strong enough to play this crucial role and most governments' plans for improvement on this front (via a national plan of action – NPOA) prioritise the state sector.

² Two initial country missions took place in early 2016 and, at the time of publication, a second review in Kenya was scheduled for later in the year.

METHODOLOGY

The APRM review process tracks progress made towards implementing various international treaties, standards and codes through the combination of multi-stakeholder self-assessment, with an independent review prepared by a panel of African experts in book-length country review reports. Consequently, the process offers an important potential avenue through which African governments can be held accountable to both national stakeholders (via self-assessment) and to other African governments (via peer review).

A total of 17 countries have completed their first review and although the reports' structure and length vary somewhat, they follow a similar general layout comprised of seven or eight chapters.³ Each report begins with a description of the APRM process, followed by an outline of the country's historical context and contemporary challenges. The bulk of the content is contained in four thematic chapters examining the state of governance in the country under review.

The themes are:

1. Democracy and political governance;
2. Economic governance and management;
3. Corporate governance; and
4. Socio-economic development.

In addition, assessment teams are required to produce chapters outlining cross-cutting issues and overall conclusions and recommendations to national governments. Access to and dissemination of information (i.e., transparency), and corruption are two of the eight cross-cutting issues identified as requiring attention across all four thematic areas of the APRM (NEPAD Secretariat 2003, p 11).

The content of these governance review chapters is largely generated from government, business and civil society responses to a standardised self-assessment questionnaire that outlines the procedure, relevant codes and standards and indicators in each thematic area. The original APRM Master Questionnaire was introduced in 2004 and a revised Master Questionnaire was issued in 2014, but all reviews to date are based on the original version.

This process is supplemented by the assessment of a panel of experts from outside the country ('Panel of Eminent Persons'), representing the various African regions. The findings are presented in a single report, along with recommendations to which national governments add their response and a National Plan of Action aimed at implementing the required changes.

Based on these reports, this analysis examines the extent to which three interrelated concepts are currently emphasised in the APRM review process: corruption, transparency, and accountability.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The term 'corruption' generally refers to 'the abuse of entrusted power for private gain' and can therefore refer to a wide range of activities across society (Transparency International 2016b). The APRM, however, specifies abuse of power in the public sector:

The use and misuse of public office, position or resources for personal gain or for purposes for which the office, position or resources were not designed. Corruption may involve the following: bribery (taking/demanding and giving/offering), influence-peddling, nepotism, embezzlement and conflict of interests.

APRM 2013, p vii

³ These countries are (in order of report publication): Ghana (2005), Rwanda (2005), Kenya (2006), South Africa (2007), Algeria (2007), Benin (2008), Nigeria (2008), Burkina Faso (2008), Uganda (2009), Mali (2009), Mozambique (2009), Lesotho (2009), Mauritius (2010), Ethiopia (2011), Sierra Leone (2012), Zambia (2013) and Tanzania (2013).

Countering corruption in both the public and private sector requires promoting transparency (institutions and procedures that allow for the identification of these crimes) and accountability (punishment mechanisms).

The APRM framework documents do not currently include a definition of ‘transparency’, but refer to ‘access to and dissemination of information’ as a cross-cutting theme. Lesotho’s review report (2009) defines the term as ‘the availability of relevant, accurate and timely information to those entitled to receive it’ (p 268).

The APRM defines ‘accountability’ as ‘[t]he ability to determine who in the government is responsible for a decision or action and the ability to ensure that officials in government are answerable for their actions’ (APRM 2013, p v). Again, this definition highlights the public sector, but accountability has numerous dimensions – political, financial and administrative (Schmitter 2004). Although definitions vary slightly, most consider the term to include three general features: information, justification and punishment or compensation (Diamond & Morlino 2004, citing Schedler 1999).

Accountability is a key component of democratic governance, ensuring that leaders and institutions adhere to the regime’s rules and procedures (Diamond & Morlino 2004).⁴ Schmitter (2004, p 48) argues that democracy differs from autocracies such as absolute monarchies or kleptocracies because of the recognition of citizens, each of whom is accorded equal rights and obligations, including: ‘to be informed (with limited exceptions) about official actions, to hear justifications for them, and to act accordingly – electorally or otherwise’ (‘vertical’ accountability). ‘Horizontal’ accountability, on the other hand, refers to the ‘checks and balances’ instituted

by independent branches of the state charged with enforcing constitutional or legal rules (e.g., judiciary, legislature, and ombudsman).

In recognition of their importance for democracy, in addition to specifying the implementation of the AU anti-corruption convention the AU’s African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) includes among its objectives the promotion of transparency and accountability (AU 2007).⁵

RESEARCH DESIGN

This paper used the ‘text mining’ method to identify where and how intensively the APRM country reports available to date engage with issues of corruption, transparency and accountability. Text-mining involves compiling and analysing statistical data derived from text documents. The first step in this process is the conversion of the APRM reports from PDF documents into text files. Secondly, the text is stripped from the reports and a word-frequency table is compiled, which displays how often each word appears in each chapter of a report. Word clusters can then be identified based on a list of all terms appearing in the reports.

The analysis in this paper is based on the 16 country reports available in English. The Mali CRR was only published in French.

Based on the conceptual framework above, three word clusters were identified to represent ‘corruption,’ ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’ (Table 1). These lists are not exhaustive, however, as they are constrained by the need to avoid registering ‘false positives’ (i.e., words that might refer to these concepts but often do not), and to exclude multi-word concepts such as ‘illicit financial flows’ or ‘asset recovery’. Despite these limitations, their distribution across the 16 CRRs gives an indication of which

⁴ This analysis uses the term ‘regime’ to refer to the rules and procedures through which leaders are chosen or exercise their power (e.g., multiparty democracy, military rule), rather than to a specific government (e.g., ‘Abacha regime’)

⁵ To date, 24 AU member states have ratified the treaty, while a further 12 have signed it. Of the 17 countries that have completed the APRM process, only Tanzania has neither signed nor ratified the convention (AU 2016).

thematic chapters and countries feature these issues and which do not. This helps to guide readers to the most relevant sections of the APRM reports for closer examination of the rich qualitative research available in these chapters.

Table 1
Word clusters

CORRUPTION	TRANSPARENCY	ACCOUNTABILITY
Anti-corruption	audit	accountable
bribe	audited	accountability
bribery	auditing	compliance
bribes	auditor	compliant
collusion	auditors	complies
corrupt	disclose	complied
corruption	disclosed	comply
embezzlement	disclosure	complying
fraud	transparency	noncompliance
fraudulent	transparent	oversight
laundering	transparently	
misappropriation		
nepotism		
patronage		

This comparison of individual report chapters is achieved via three conceptual ‘heatmaps’, which provide a visual representation of the average occurrence of a word cluster per ten thousand (10 000) words of text (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). Employing this standardised measure, rather than total frequency, provides better representation of the relative emphasis on a concept by accounting for differences in the length of various chapters and overall reports. The report lengths vary considerably, from approximately 36 000 words (Ghana and Rwanda) to 117 000 (Mozambique).

The heatmaps were subsequently employed to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do the three-word clusters feature in the APRM documents? Is there an

even distribution across concepts, or does one cluster occur more often?

- Are the word clusters concentrated in particular chapters or are these concepts truly cross-cutting themes in the reports?
- In which countries are corruption, transparency and accountability more prominent themes? Does this distribution reflect the country’s actual experiences of corruption?

Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), one of the most reputable empirical measures of corruption internationally, was cited in a large number of the APRM country reports, among them those of Sierra Leone and Benin. However, a recent change in its methodology means that its scores are not comparable over time (Transparency International 2016a). This paper will therefore employ the Ibrahim Index of African Governance’s (IIAG) ‘accountability’ indicator, which is also a well-known and reputable measure in order to evaluate whether the distribution of the three word clusters across countries has a relationship to objective measures of corruption.⁶

CORRUPTION, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE APRM REPORTS

An assessment of the CRRs published to date found widespread recognition of the importance of fighting corruption and promoting accountability in order to improve both political and economic outcomes. Recent research into illicit financial flows in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania, for example, finds that these outflows often represent sums equal to or exceeding the total amount received from international donors to promote socioeconomic and political development (Global Financial Integrity 2014).

⁶ The IIAG’s ‘accountability’ measure is a composite index of empirical data from nine sources, concerning all three concepts under review in this paper. Data are available from 2000 to 2014 and scores range from 0-100, where 100 represents the best score (Mo Ibrahim Foundation 2016).

The Uganda APRM report (2009) finds that overdependence on aid was a common theme across the four governance areas and cites estimates that corruption in public procurement alone is equivalent to 70% of the national budget and exceeds the country's foreign aid receipts.

A number of reports expressed growing public demand for greater accountability, although recent empirical data were not widely available at the time of their publication. Burkina Faso's report (2008) was one exception because of regular research conducted by a network of anti-corruption CSOs. Réseau National de Lutte Anti-corruption ('National Anti-Corruption Network', or RENLAC) was established in 1997 and comprised 30 organisations at the time of publication. Public opinion data are also cited in a number of CRRS, including those of South Africa and Mauritius.

The APRM Master Questionnaire is intended to guide the review process and countries are encouraged to supplement the instrument with country-specific areas of concern where appropriate in order to tailor the report to the national context. However, the reports published to date tend to focus primarily on the key issues and questions highlighted in this document.

The questionnaire addresses corruption in the political sphere (Democracy and Political Governance thematic area), in public administration (Economic Governance and Management) and in state-owned and private corporations (Corporate Governance) (APRM 2004). In addition, it specifies the AU anti-corruption convention under Objectives 5 and 6 of the Democracy and Political Governance section.

Like corruption, transparency is specified as a cross-cutting theme in the NEPAD framework

and the term is explicitly used under the economic section's second objective. Although accountability is not explicitly mentioned as a cross-cutting issue, its principles underpin the goals of good governance across all four thematic areas, particularly in the Democracy and Political Governance dimension.

Given the high level of interrelation among the three concepts under review one might expect to find a fairly even overall distribution of the word clusters in the country reports. However, comparison of the three heatmaps shows that, on average, the corruption word cluster appears significantly more often in the 16 CRRS than references to transparency and accountability (Figures 1-3).

THE APRM ON CORRUPTION

The AU's Convention on Preventing and Combatting Corruption (CPCC) was adopted in Maputo, Mozambique, on 11 July 2003 and entered into force on 5 August 2006. All countries with APRM reports, except Mauritius, have ratified the convention and most of them had done so by the time their APRM report was published, but the latest CPI results indicate that corruption is below critical level in only two of them, Rwanda and Mauritius (see Appendix Table A.1).

All the CRRs, except Rwanda's, include an analysis of the state of corruption in the cross-cutting issues chapter in addition to addressing the related questions in the governance chapters.⁷ Similarly, all of them acknowledge the detrimental effects of corruption on political and socioeconomic development, not only in general, but in the national context. Moreover, as mentioned above, most of them employ empirical measures such as the CPI or financial data, in addition to findings from stakeholder interviews, to gauge corruption

⁷ Rwanda was the second country to undergo the APRM process, therefore this apparent omission may be due to the lack of precedent on how to address cross-cutting issues. However, Ghana's report (2005) was the first to be published and its emphasis on this word cluster is equal to the average and there were 25 occurrences of these terms per 10 000 words in its cross-cutting chapter.

levels. Lastly, most reports concluded that the anti-corruption framework in their respective countries was adequate at the time of the national review process, but highlighted serious challenges in implementing these laws due to financial restraints and/or a lack of political will to support these institutions.

As Figure 1 shows, the results of the text-mining technique indicate that corruption is indeed a cross-cutting theme across both the CRRs' thematic chapters and individual country reports. On average, the 'corruption' word cluster occurs 32 times per 10 000 words and appears most frequently in the economic chapters (58 times per 10 000 words), followed by the evaluations of political and cross-cutting chapters (both 40). These findings suggest that corruption-related issues are part of the national discourse on governance in most countries. Interestingly, however, the cluster occurs least often in the socio-economic development chapters despite most reports acknowledging the detrimental effect of corruption on development.

Representation of the 'corruption' word cluster was highest in Kenya and Zambia (both 43 times per 10 000 words), followed by Nigeria and Sierra Leone. All these countries have had longstanding problems with corruption, as was reflected in their Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) accountability scores at the time. Nigeria, in fact, was ranked least accountable among the countries under review (see Appendix Table A.1).

The heatmap also indicates that terms associated with corruption occurred considerably more frequently in Zambia's economic and Mauritius's cross-cutting chapters than in any other chapters of the APRM reports.

According to Zambia's report (2013, p 169), 'corruption is systemic in Zambia and ... has become one of the major governance and development concerns in both the public and private sectors,' as was evidenced by indicators from a number of national and international sources. Although the word cluster occurs most

frequently in the economic chapter the report highlights political and institutional drivers of corruption in the country.

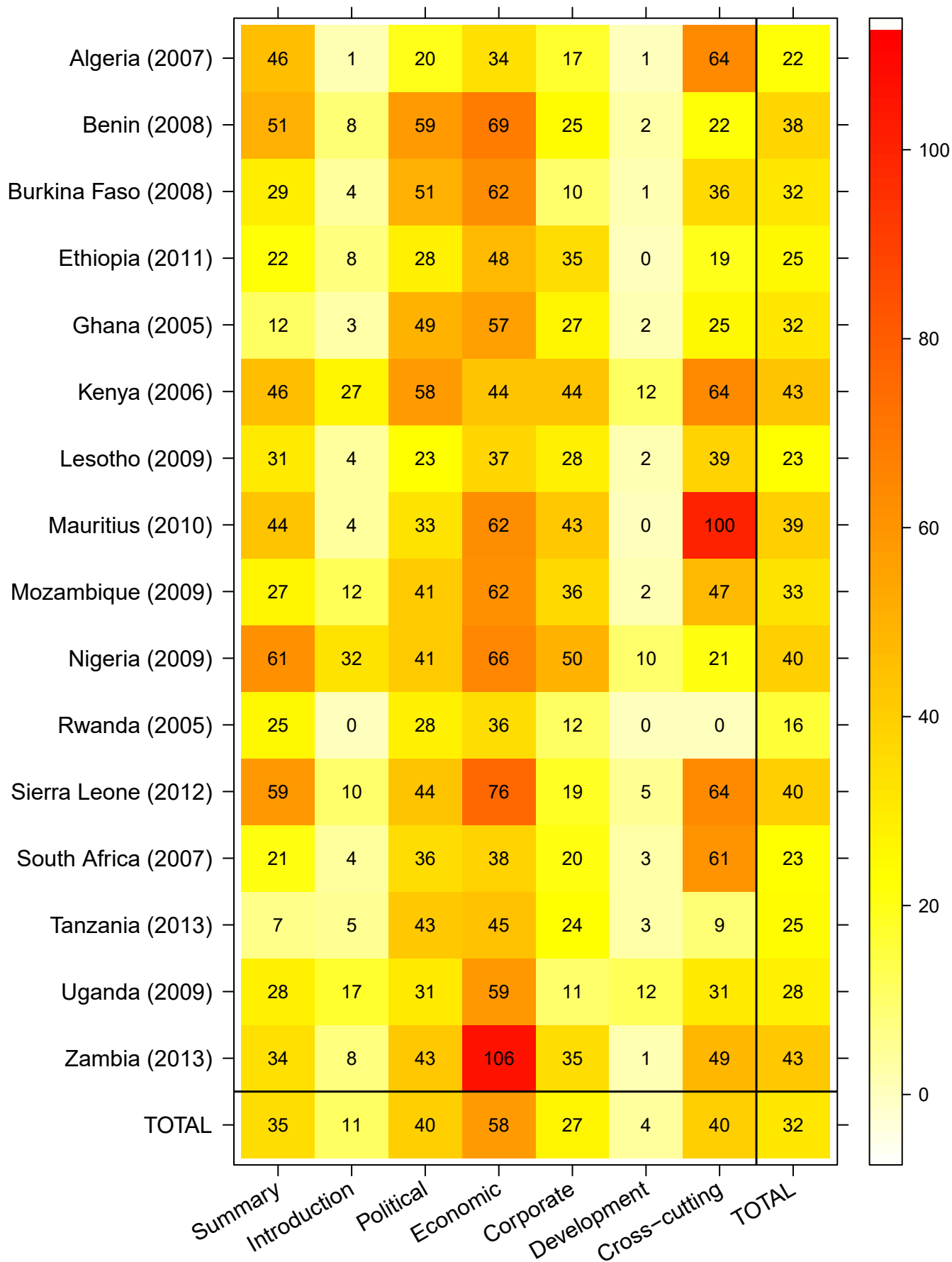
The assessment team concluded that high levels of centralisation in the Zambian state had created conditions conducive to patronage and clientelism. Furthermore, although the country is a signatory to a number of regional and international anti-corruption treaties, the institutions mandated to fight these crimes were largely ineffective at the time.

Proposed explanations for this ineffectiveness include a lack of adequate financial resources and human capacity within individual agencies and a lack of adequate cooperation among various institutions. Stakeholders also informed the assessment team that the political will to pursue corruption cases diminished after President Levy Mwanawasa's death in 2008. This represented a significant obstacle given the strength of the presidential office in Zambia.

Similar concerns are echoed by a number of other countries. In Burkina Faso (2008), for example, the legislative framework has created nine institutional bodies involved to varying degrees in anti-corruption efforts, but 'these institutions do not have enough resources and their lack of independence does not allow them to act effectively in combating corruption' (p 371). The report's NPoA cites a national policy on combatting corruption as an 'ongoing process' at the time of publication (p 435).

Sierra Leone's report (2012) records that the country's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is similarly underfunded and relies heavily on contributions from international donors, which makes it vulnerable to any shifts in policy priorities in the international community. The country's NPoA acknowledges the need to increase the ACC's resources (at a cost of approximately \$3 million) and specifies the involvement of donors as being critical in this task.

Figure 1
Corruption (word frequency per 10000 words)



The prevalence of the ‘corruption’ word cluster in Mauritius (39 times per 10 000 words) is interesting, because, although the country is not a signatory to the AU anti-corruption convention, it has a longstanding reputation as one of the least corrupt countries on the continent. The country’s 2010 APRM report acknowledges this status, but shows consensus among key Mauritian stakeholders that corruption significantly affects key political and economic institutions – particularly in relation to public procurement, the police service, and the national revenue authority. Furthermore, stakeholders identified electoral corruption as a major area of concern due to the clientelistic nature of politics in the country.

The CRR states that the creation of the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) in 2002 was a turning point in the fight against corruption, particularly after it became ‘fully operational’ in 2006, following a drive to increase its internal capacity. Despite some notable successes between that point and the review period, the institution remained constrained by the fact that its mandate was restricted to cases in which the Director of Public Prosecutions approved prosecution. Furthermore, ICAC officials said that the nation’s political leadership generally failed to implement its recommendations. The country assessment team recommended that anti-corruption legislation be extended to private individuals, election candidates and advisors in order to close gaps in accountability measures.

The Mauritian APRM report’s detailed analysis of corruption in the country appears to have been somewhat prescient, judging by events since its publication. Since 2011 a series of high-level corruption scandals has exposed the lack of adequate regulatory measures in the country’s financial sector, particularly in offshore banking and insurance, which are characterised by a high level of secrecy (Transparency International 2014).

In 2015 a number of prominent public officials, including former Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, were arrested on allegations of

conspiracy, money laundering and holding funds in illicit bank accounts overseas (Al Jazeera 2015). The CRR identified the lack of political financing regulations as a serious problem, as was money laundering among companies based outside the country.

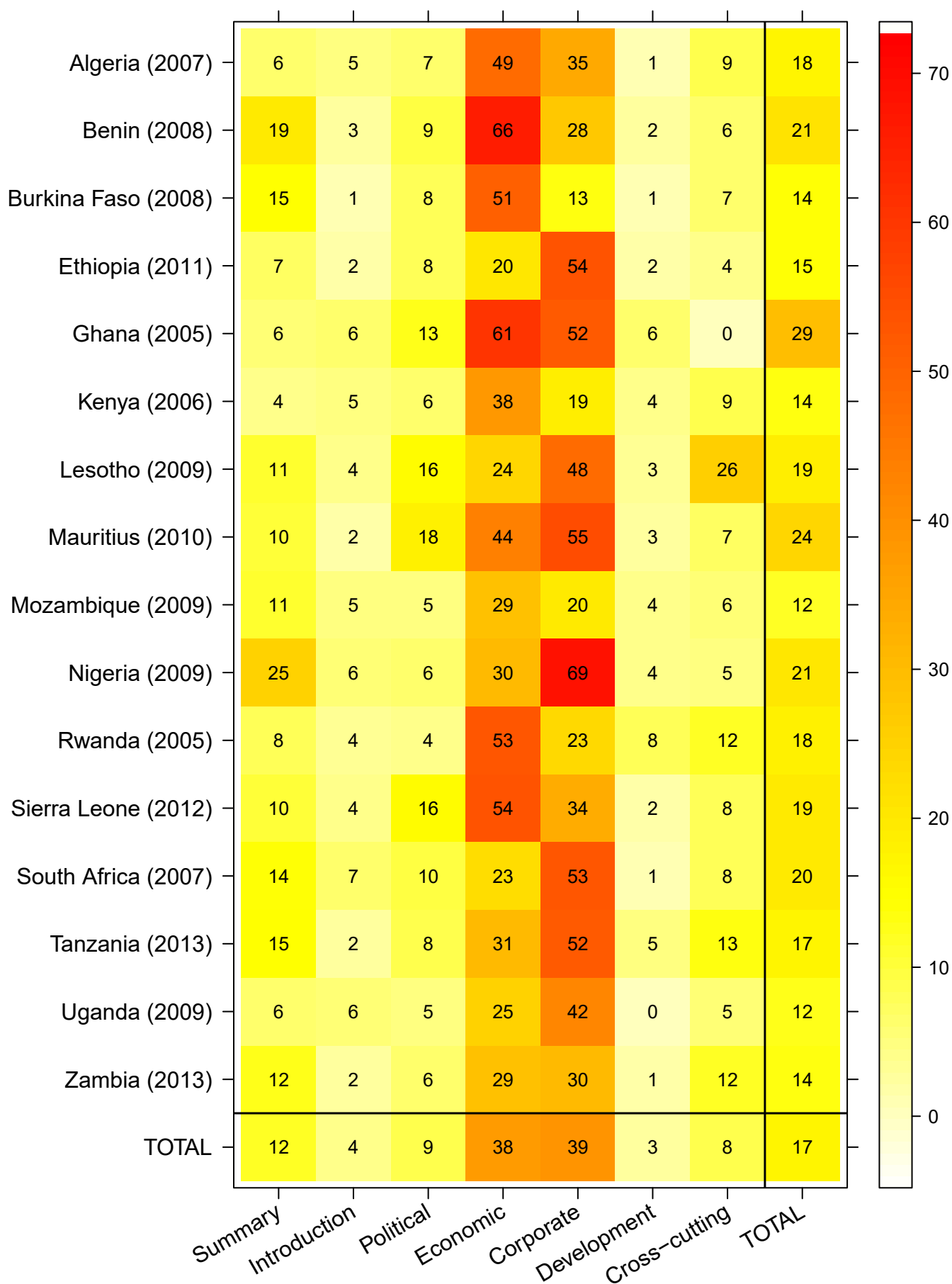
THE APRM ON TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

As noted above, transparency is a crucial mechanism in the fight against corruption because it allows countries to identify these crimes and their perpetrators. Accountability, then, provides the institutions and procedures by which perpetrators can be appropriately punished. Although these measures should, ideally, eliminate corruption entirely, Søreide (2014) argues that ‘occasional’ corruption cases can be an indication that the measures are working, rather than of an institution’s untrustworthiness. The Mauritius APRM report, for example, notes several high-profile corruption cases in 2006, the same year that the national anti-corruption body significantly increased its capacity.

Overall, the ‘transparency’ word cluster appeared less often than that for corruption and has significantly higher representation in the economic and corporate chapters, despite the fact that access to and dissemination of information is a cross-cutting theme in the APRM (Figure 2). This finding may be due to the fact that the terms employed in this analysis are generally associated with financial accounting. This further reinforces the need for closer examination of individual reports in order to gain a nuanced assessment of the treatment of this concept in the CRRs.

The ‘transparency’ word cluster occurred most frequently in Ghana’s report (29 times per 10 000 words of text), followed by Mauritius (24), Benin and Nigeria (both 21). Three distinct ‘hotspots’ are clearly visible in Nigeria’s corporate governance chapter and Benin and Ghana’s economic chapters.

Figure 2
Transparency (word frequency per 10000 words)



Nigeria's APRM report (2009, p 20) identifies corruption as 'the greatest and most troubling challenge to realising Nigeria's huge development potential' and specifies revenues from oil companies and procurement of government contracts as leading sources of these losses. As in Mauritius, a lack of transparency in a private sector dominated by foreign companies is a leading source of corruption. Furthermore, the CRR's assessment supports findings from empirical data that dependence on natural resources in Africa increases the likelihood of illicit financial flows (UNECA 2015). Nigeria, one of the world's leading oil exporters, accounted for 30.5% of the total flows out of Africa between 1970 and 2008 (for an analysis of the APRM's treatment of extractive industries, see Alence 2015).⁸

The corporate governance chapter in the Nigerian report highlights some progress towards improving transparency in both public expenditure and the budgeting process at federal level. International initiatives like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and national civil service reforms led to some movement in recovering these sums via audits, but weaknesses remain in data collection and sharing at sub-national level. This finding shows the complexity of promoting transparency in countries with multiple systems of government (e.g., civil and traditional authorities) or federal systems, such as that in Nigeria. Information should ideally be shared among all levels of government in order to promote accountability throughout the political system and across geographic space.

Nigeria's CRR recommends greater coordination among the anti-corruption units of individual ministries, departments and agencies with national anti-corruption operations and more support for the auditor-general's office from both national and state assemblies in order to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of government accounts at these levels.

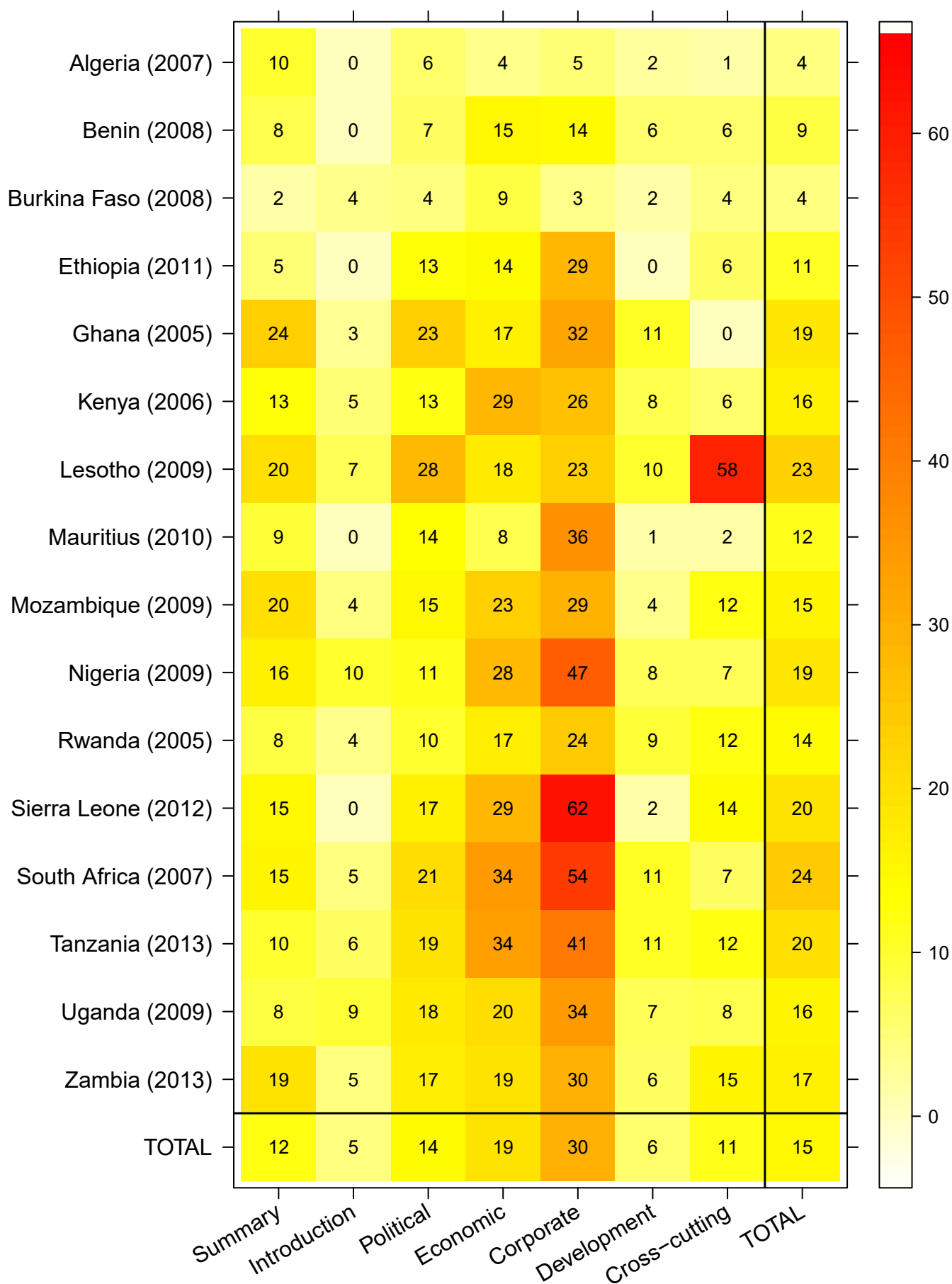
South Africa's report (2007) also highlights the challenges of managing anti-corruption efforts across a large number of institutions: the assessment team noted that the country's legislative framework specified 12 institutions involved in this area at both national and provincial levels. The CRR highlights the lack of coordination among these institutions at the time of publication as an impediment to achieving these goals, particularly at sub-national level. The report refers to 'growing concern about the increasing levels of corruption and the debilitating effects on service delivery and poverty, especially in the provinces and municipalities' (p 283). Furthermore, it notes that many of the institutions faced capacity constraints and recommends stronger legislation governing transparency, including protection for whistle-blowers and access to information.

The 'accountability' word cluster occurs significantly more frequently in the 16 corporate governance chapters (30 times per 10 000 words of text) than in any other section (Figure 3). Moreover, there are three 'hotspots' for these terms: Sierra Leone and South Africa's corporate chapters and Lesotho's cross-cutting issues chapter. As with the 'transparency' cluster, this higher representation of these terms in the corporate governance section may reflect their association with financial accounting, rather than the APRM's conceptualisation.

Lesotho's (2009) analysis of cross-cutting issues in its APRM report provides the most detailed explanation of the three concepts under review in this paper and the relationship among them: corruption ('the abuse of public office and the power it brings'); transparency ('the availability of relevant, accurate and timely information to those entitled to receive it'); and public accountability ('entails public officials, who have been given responsibilities, being answerable for their decisions and actions to citizens') (pp 268-269).

⁸ The Top 10 African countries by these outflows are: Nigeria (\$217.7 billion), Egypt (\$105.2 billion), South Africa (\$81.8 billion), Morocco (\$33.9 billion), Angola (\$29.5 billion), Algeria (\$26.1 billion), Côte d'Ivoire (\$16.6 billion), Sudan (\$16.5 billion), Ethiopia (\$16.5 billion), Republic of Congo (\$16.2 billion) (UNECA 2015, p. 93).

Figure 3
Accountability (word frequency per 10000 words)



The Lesotho APRM assessment team found major challenges in the realm of financial accountability due to dysfunction within the institutions charged with auditing public accounts. Furthermore, the report notes that the existence of a parallel authority (i.e., a traditional government system) creates further opportunities for inefficiency and corruption. As in many other countries, public procurement appears to present the greatest opportunities for corruption to take place.

Overall, greater civil society participation in anti-corruption efforts is a common theme throughout the APRM reports, but most national contexts do not provide conducive environments for this to occur due to a lack of legislation relating to freedom of information (e.g., Kenya and Tanzania). Although most NPoAs refer to CSO involvement in this area, particularly with regard to raising public awareness and conducting research, few suggest concrete ways of encouraging greater state/CSO collaboration. Algeria's APRM report (2007) is one exception. It states that greater CSO involvement in the fight against corruption would require revising the legislation on associations and introducing new procedures to promote greater consultation with government.

South Africa's APRM report (2007, p 160) shows that such organisations and the media can indeed have a significant impact on uncovering corruption throughout the continent, if given the opportunity: of the reported corruption cases in state structures, more than one-quarter were exposed by either CSOs (18%) or the media (9%). The CRR goes on to recommend that the government work with CSOs to build the capacity of personnel within state anti-corruption structures.

CROSS-COUNTRY DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS ON CORRUPTION

Comparison of empirical data on corruption (as measured by the IIAG's index) and each APRM report's relative emphasis on corruption (as measured by its word cluster) shows a

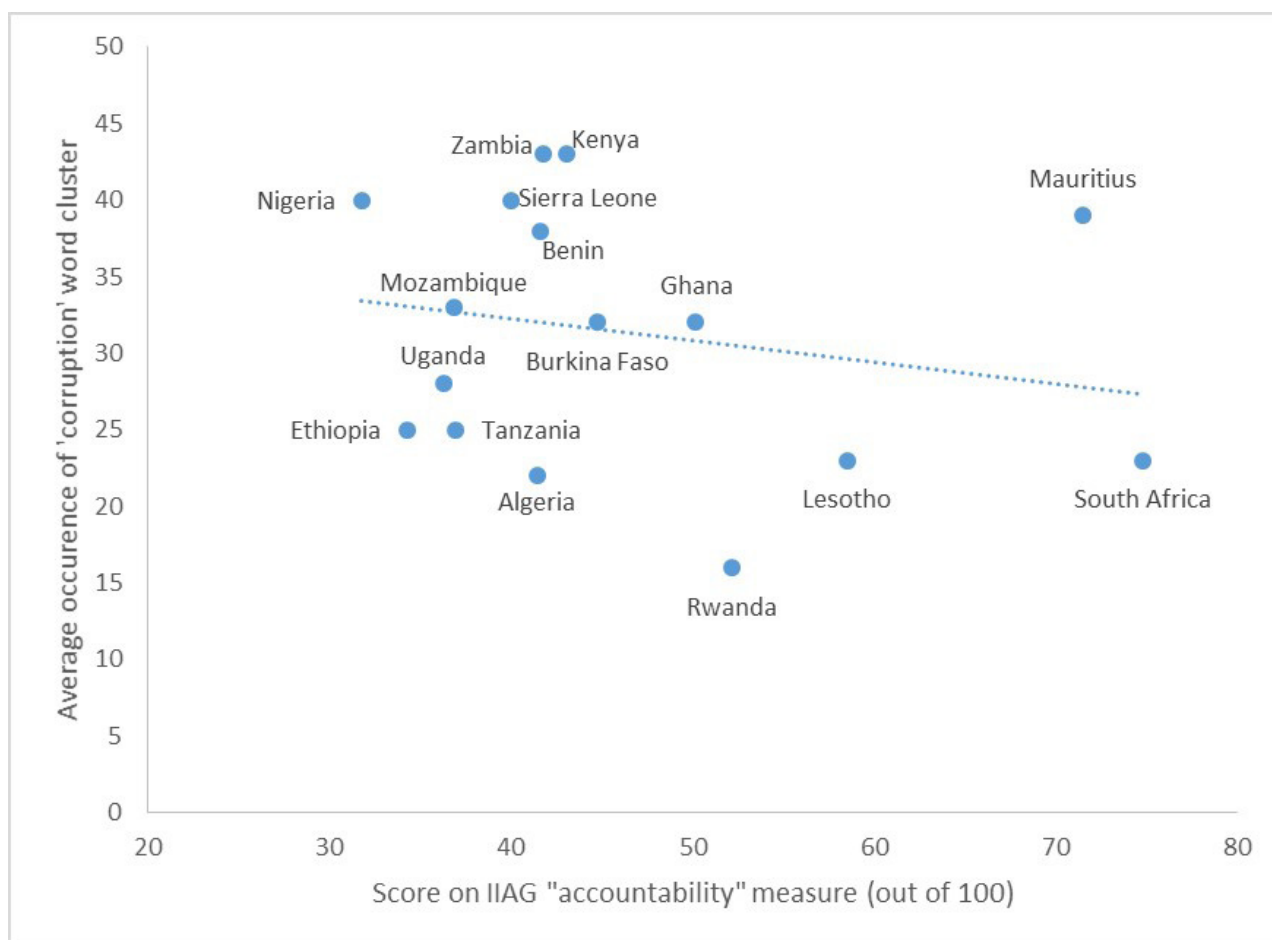
modest negative relationship between the two indicators. In other words, on average, the 'corruption' word cluster tends to occur a little less frequently in the reports of countries with higher levels of accountability. However, there are many exceptions to this general pattern: Mauritius, for example, is well above the trend line, while Rwanda is well below it. (see Figure 4).

The results of this analysis indicate that emphasis on corruption in the Rwanda APRM report (2005) was the lowest of the 16 countries, but the country experienced the largest increase in its IIAG score between 2000 and 2014 after Ethiopia. Corruption was seen as very low at the time of publication, but the report highlighted restricted access to information, a need for more anti-corruption legislation and increased capacity in the Office of the Ombudsman and suggested creating an anti-corruption body. The country may, therefore, be one of the best examples of the importance of political will in fighting corruption, as President Paul Kagame's intolerance of corruption is well known internationally.

Both Mauritius and South Africa's CRRs noted that the two countries were known to be among the continental leaders in fighting corruption, but the word cluster appears almost twice as often in the former than in the latter. South Africa's APRM report states that perceptions of corruption exceeded the reality on the ground in 2007, but, like Mauritius, there has been a series of high profile corruption scandals since the year of publication that suggest that the extent of the country's problems were not well known or recognised at the time.

In 2009, 783 corruption charges against the current president, Jacob Zuma, were controversially dropped shortly before the national elections. In April 2016, however, the Gauteng High Court ruled that these charges should be reinstated. Its ruling came just one month after the Constitutional Court ruled against President Zuma in the matter of the alleged misuse of state funds in the upgrade of his private residence (The Guardian 2016).

Figure 4
IIAG Accountability score and APRM emphasis on corruption



As a reflection of growing international recognition of corruption levels in the country and of actions such as the disbanding of the Directorate of Special Operations (known as the 'Scorpions'), one of the leading anti-corruption agencies that received special mention in the CRR, South Africa experienced the largest decline in its IIAG accountability score between 2000 and 2014 of the 16 countries under analysis.

Comparison of nationally representative public opinion about corruption over time indicates that citizens' perceptions reflect the reality on the ground. In 2006 a slim majority of citizens (51%) said that the government was doing badly in fighting corruption. This figure increased to 80% in 2015 amidst numerous scandals. These

levels of negative evaluations are well above the average for 14 of the countries with available APRM reports (see Appendix, Figure A.1).⁹

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper set out to evaluate the extent to which the APRM has emphasised corruption, transparency and accountability to date by analysing the relative frequency of word clusters related to these concepts in the 16 Country Review Reports that are currently available in English.

⁹ These data are based on interviews conducted in 2014/2015 by Afrobarometer, a pan-African, non-partisan research network. Surveys were not conducted in Ethiopia or Rwanda.

Although corruption, transparency and accountability are undoubtedly interrelated, the ‘corruption’ word cluster occurred approximately twice as often as the ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’ clusters. Furthermore, the ‘corruption’ cluster occurred more frequently in the cross-cutting chapters than the other two clusters. On average, these concepts were most prominent in the Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone reports, all of which acknowledged that corruption is a significant challenge to good governance.

Closer examination of individual country reports based on this analysis of thematic ‘hotspots’ shows that all the APRM reports acknowledged the significant governance challenges faced in each country due to corruption. Moreover, most cited empirical research from international or national institutions on various indicators of corruption, including data from national accounts, expert surveys and public opinion analysis, to try to gauge the levels in the public and private sectors.

The most prominent theme that emerged from this analysis is that although all the countries have signed treaties and agreements aimed at combatting corruption and increasing accountability, most were struggling to meet these commitments because of a lack of adequate and timely information (i.e., transparency) and weak anti-corruption institutions. Financial and capacity constraints present significant international obstacles for these institutions, while a lack of political will to address corruption in the highest levels of government presented a common external challenge.

International anti-corruption advocacy organisations (e.g., Transparency International 2015) regularly call for African governments to deliver on their regional and international commitments, among them the AUPCC, to counter corruption. Based on the existing APRM reports, however, it appears that full implementation of these commitments is far off for most African countries.

Anti-corruption institutions in even the best-resourced and respected countries, such as South Africa and Mauritius, often face significant challenges in implementing their mandate due to financial, structural or political obstacles. Furthermore, recent events in both countries show the importance of state institutions and government demonstrating the political will to hold top leadership to account.

CSOs were often cited as a possible complement to horizontal accountability measures, but they play a relatively modest role in most countries due to difficulties in securing sufficient resources and political leverage to make a significant impact. Furthermore, the lack of legislation promoting freedom of information limits the role of independent actors such as CSOs and the media in exposing corruption and ensuring greater accountability.

The APRM process gives countries an opportunity to go beyond traditional vertical and horizontal accountability measures via peer review, (i.e., holding each other accountable). As there is an existing body of literature available on the shortcomings of the present form of the process and presenting suggestions of ways to improve this accountability function in future reviews, the recommendations below focus on areas of improvement in the approach to reporting content on corruption, transparency and accountability.

1. Use empirical benchmarks for each objective

The country reports present a large amount of valuable qualitative analysis, but the lack of fixed benchmarks in both the APRM objectives and the National Plans of Action make it difficult to compare results across countries and measure progress over time as countries move forward from these baseline reviews. A standardised set of concrete goals and empirical tools would help to make it easier for governments, non-state actors and ordinary citizens to set goals and measure progress, thereby holding leaders to account in terms of implementing their NPOAs.

A notable example of this kind of evaluation is the Millennium Development Goals, which set clear targets and the sources of data with which to measure them. The IIAG's accountability index is an example of an empirical measure that can help to approximate levels of corruption, transparency and accountability across all APRM countries. Moreover, it has had longitudinal data available since 2000. Another possible avenue for this measurement is via public opinion research (see Recommendation 4).

2. Greater focus on the impact of corruption on socioeconomic development

Despite its known impact on socioeconomic outcomes, there was little emphasis on corruption in the development chapters of the reports. Future reviews of corruption might therefore require assessment teams to use benchmarks from leading regional and international institutions such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to standardise how reports address the impact of corruption on socioeconomic development. This type of analysis is often available via desktop research on the websites of international institutions. UNECA (2015), for example, presents the estimated impact of illicit financial flows on progress made towards reducing child mortality (Millennium Development Goal 4).

3. Greater emphasis on vertical accountability

The AU's anti-corruption convention focuses largely on the horizontal dimension of accountability (i.e., at the state level), but the results of this evaluation of 16 APRM reports indicate that because of various legal, financial and political restraints most state institutions charged with fighting corruption are not fully independent. More progress is therefore required both to strengthen these institutions and to promote a vibrant civil society sector (an existing APRM objective) to advance vertical accountability throughout the continent.

Although APRM country evaluations incorporate independent opinions as a result of consultations with stakeholders, including civil society organisations and independent research institutions, the self-assessment questionnaire largely deals with horizontal rather than vertical accountability. The revised questionnaire includes a question on the civil society sector which could help to address this gap, but more is needed to improve the focus on this dimension.

4. Incorporate public opinion research

The Mozambique report references a World Bank survey that found growing public concern about the state of corruption, but most countries were unable to cite national survey data due to a lack of research. One exception is Mauritius: ICAC conducted a survey in 2004, but no follow up data were available at the time of the report's preparation to track changes over time. The Burkina Faso report highlights the role played by the CSO RENLAC in the fight against corruption by publishing annual reports. However, it is unclear whether all the public opinion research presented in these reports is from nationally representative surveys. In South Africa, for example, the findings only come from one of the country's nine provinces, Gauteng.

Large national surveys are costly to conduct and issues like corruption are very sensitive, which could lead to unreliable results. Both these factors might deter countries from pursuing this type of research. Data from existing non-profit organisations like Afrobarometer or the World Values Survey, which conduct cross-national surveys are generally available to the public and can therefore be incorporated into country review reports. Public opinion data should be used cautiously, however, as there can be significant differences in public perceptions of the state of corruption in a country and respondents' reported experiences. Transparency International (2015) provides examples of both approaches.

Public opinion research can provide a good measure of vertical accountability. Comparison of Afrobarometer's 2014/2015 results in 14 APRM countries, for example, shows that a little over half (51%) of citizens say they believe that 'ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption' (see Appendix Figure 2). Burkina Faso and Botswana felt the most empowered (60% agreement), while citizens of Sierra Leone reported the lowest levels of agreement (33%). This type of data can help stakeholders evaluate the results of national awareness and sensitisation campaigns around these issues.

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ANNEXURE A

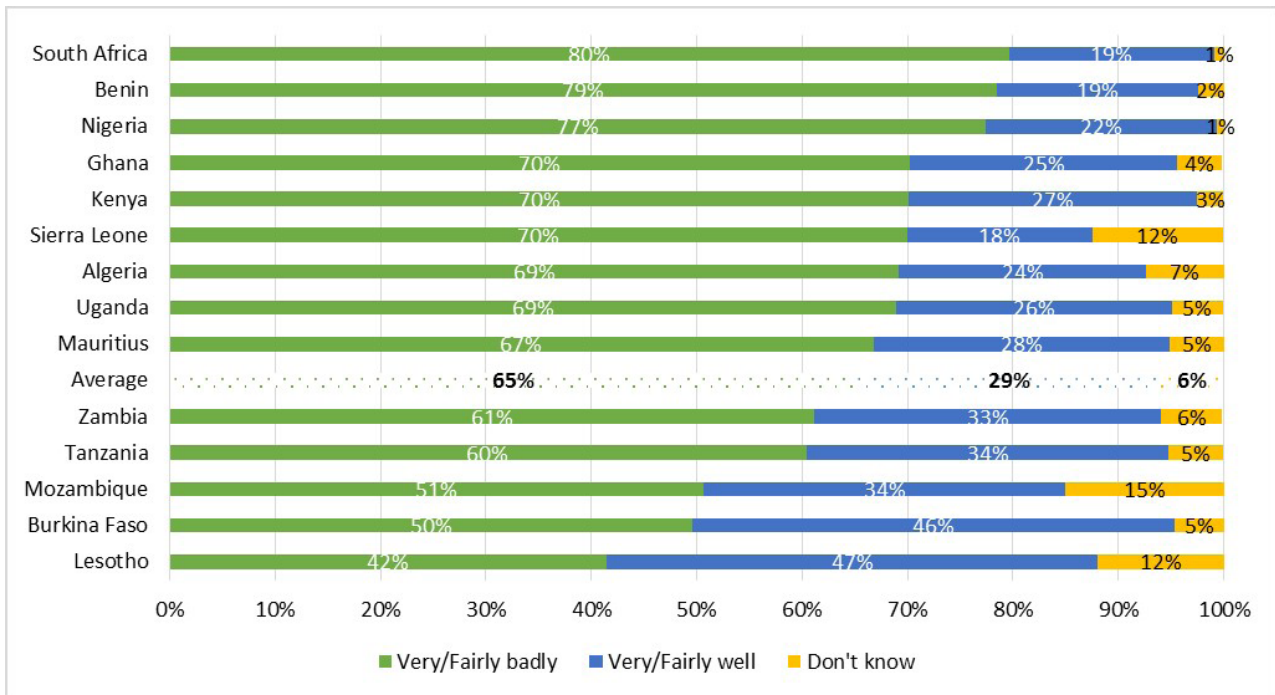
Table A.1
Summary of APRM Country Information

Country	APRM Report	AU Convention on Corruption Status		CPI 2015	IIAG Accountability Score		
		Signature	Ratification		Report Year	2014	Trend, 2000-2014
Algeria	2007	2003	2006	36	41,5	32,9	-6,1
Benin	2008	2004	2007	37	41,6	37,8	-3,2
Burkina Faso	2008	2004	2005	38	44,8	45,5	-3,2
Ethiopia	2011	2004	2007	33	34,3	43,8	+16,1
Ghana	2005	2003	2007	47	50,2	56,3	+3,9
Kenya	2006	2003	2007	25	43,1	44,8	+2,4
Lesotho	2009	2004	2004	44	58,5	59,5	+6,5
Mauritius	2010	-	-	53	71,5	69,8	-2,7
Mozambique	2009	2003	2006	31	36,9	31,6	-5,2
Nigeria	2009	2003	2006	26	31,8	32,2	+7,8
Rwanda	2005	2003	2004	54	52,2	65,1	+13,0
Sierra Leone	2012	2003	2008	29	40,0	35,8	+7,6
South Africa	2007	2004	2005	44	74,8	66,8	-8,6
Tanzania	2013	2003	2005	30	37,0	35,1	-0,9
Uganda	2009	2003	2004	25	36,3	34,5	-4,5
Zambia	2013	2003	2007	38	41,8	44,7	+8,4

NB: Excludes Mali because it is not in this analysis.

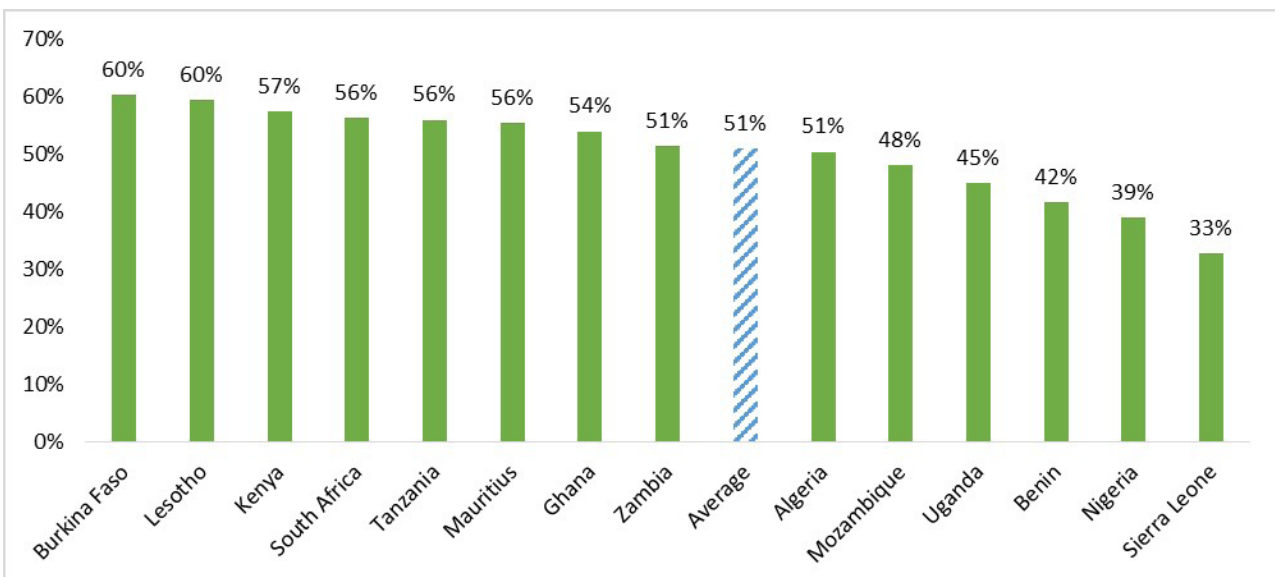
Sources: AU (2016), Transparency International (2016a) and Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2015).

Figure A.1
Government performance on fighting corruption
 15 countries 2014/2015¹⁰



Source: Afrobarometer 2016

Figure A.2
Agreement that ordinary people can make a difference in the fight against corruption
 15 countries, 2014/2015



Source: Afrobarometer 2016

¹⁰ No Afrobarometer survey was conducted in Ethiopia or Rwanda in 2014/2015.

ANNEXURE B

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 disaggregated 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 10 000 words of text, provide rough indicators of the degree of emphasis on the paper's key concepts.

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 (17 000 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.

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