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APRM
African Peer Review
Mechanism

UN DESA –APRM

4th Continental Capacity Building Workshop on CEPA Principles

Strengthening Institutions capacities in Africa for effective implementation of the 2030 and 2063 agendas: Follow-up to the 2023 SDG summit

26th – 28th October 2023

Cape town, South Africa

Response to the Guiding Questions

1. How are African governments improving intergovernmental collaboration to better address the SDGs and break down siloes?

One way of doing this is through regular reporting on SDGs both at the national and international level. Through the compilation of such reports countries are able to identify areas that require more investment and efforts. The international reporting mechanism also helps identify countries doing well in selected SDGs. Through the reporting process countries are able share best practices in SDG implementation.

Since the adoption of SDGs in 2015, efforts are being made for intergovernmental collaboration between the central government and the Local Councils in the Gambia to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

- The decentralised structures has been strengthen and improved. It has been manifested in the 2018 local governments elections of Area Councils' Chairpersons are now elected through the universal adult suffrage which was over the years limited to the urban councils/municipalities.
- The new Public Financial Management strategy 2021-2025 by the Ministry of Economic Affairs has also catered for LGAs under Pillar five-called Local Government Authority Reform. Under this pillar the following reform agendas are as follows:

- **Budgetary Reform:** This seeks to achieve effective participatory approach to planning, aligning resource allocation to priorities, and instill fiscal discipline.
 - **Procurement Reform:** This reform aims to achieve transparency, accountability in the procurement of public goods and services by LGAs and value for money.
 - **Internal Audit Reform:** This seeks to provide an independent objective assurance in the use of resources, consulting services to management with the principal aim of evaluating and improving the effectiveness of risk management control and governance processes.
 - **Financial Management, Accounting and Reporting Reform:** This seeks to achieve effective financial management, accounting and reporting system with the aim of enhancing accessibility to reliable financial data for reporting and informed decision making. This reform will support the Establishment of Integrated Financial management System (IFMIS) linking BAC LGA financial management system to central government for the first time. Thus, giving government a more comprehensive financial statement at different levels.
 - **Revenue Generation:** This reform seeks to increase revenue collection and helps broaden revenue base.
- The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA) through the Directorate of Development Planning, UNDP supported councils financially and technically to develop strategic development plans for all the eight local government councils in 2020 that are anchored on the National Development Blueprint and the SDGs.
 - The Covid 19 response and recovery strategy was across all regions, leaving no one and place behind.
 - The Gambia Association of Local Government Authorities (GALGA) serves as a body that strengthens collaboration among the Local Government Councils within the Country and other stakeholders/partners has also been energised over the past five years. The Association is vibrant, having all the relevant structures in place, and an active member of the UCLG- Africa. Currently the GALGA is advocating for councils to include VLRs in their annual budgets to ensure timely SDGs reporting
 - However, breaking the siloes or promoting horizontal policy coherence across local, regional and countries to manage trade-offs across policy domains, in the implementation of SDGs and national plans remain a challenge.
 - Coordination of development interventions .Most African countries especially the Gambia has not done enough to incorporate local plans into national plans,

private and NGOs interventions less coordinated at regional and wards level that have resulted in duplications of efforts.

- Slow pace of decentralisation process is also affecting localisation of SDGs in the Gambia. This has affected the political will of Local councils to align local plans and necessary resources SDGs implementation where the central Government fail yearly to subvent 25% of the development Budgets of local councils.
- Some of our legal frameworks and policy documents need to be reviewed to reflect current realities of development needs and aspirations and also align them with current international agendas. This has resulted in policy incoherence within and outside the Gambia.

2. How can the principle of subsidiarity and the available UN DESA guidance notes, be used in the process of localisation?

Since the principle of subsidiarity calls for governments especially the national authorities that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of their people, to perform only those tasks which cannot be executed effectively at the local level.

The central government has the capacity to deliver policy measures, but oftentimes local governments are closer to its citizens, therefore have to capacity and experience to evaluate local needs and find solutions thus, the need to work closely towards the actualisation of the SDGs.

Application of the subsidiarity principle can be better employed using UNDESA guidelines which clearly provide guidance on the necessary steps to be taken to ensure effective localisation of SDGs and reporting for better outcomes.

However in the Gambia only two VNRs are completed and three VLRs out of eight LGAs are also in draft form. All these reports have highlighted challenges in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of SGDs. Therefore the Central/national government has to consider the following to avoid the concept "The Whole of Government Approach." As local government authorises, we believe that

- The central government should empower subnational and local councils and ensure fiscal, political and administrative decentralisation.
- Coordination of resources both human and financial

- Integration of local and national plans and policies.
- Ensuring holistic approach to issues, challenges and solutions to multi-sectoral crisis such as rapid urbanisation, climate change, gender inequalities, etc.
- Build Capacities gaps of local government as indicated in the PFM Reforms.

3. How can VLRs and APRM national governance reviews be used as an entry point for strengthening sub-national governments?

VLRs and African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) national governance reviews can enrich or be used as entry point for strengthening sub-national and national governments. The VLRs does not only localize SDGs implementation and measure progress but helps in the identification of priority development challenges at the local level for the reasons that:

- The municipalities and local councils are providers of basic services. The engagement of local governments/Councils and local communities in relation to SDG implementation is important to all SDGs, including the reduction of inequalities; access to clean water and sanitation and to clean and affordable energy; as well as for sustainable urban planning , affordable housing etc.
- The VLRs provides a broad picture of SGDs implementation and highlights challenges at grassroots levels. It also helps amplify the voices of vulnerable and marginalised people.
- The process of VLRs also strengthens multilevel governance; and fosters integration of the SDGs into local planning that can also be captured by National plans to bridge existing gaps.
- The practice of preparing VLRs is being taken up not only by urban councils, but also by rural councils. In the Gambia only three councils have conducted VLRs but plans are underway for all the remaining five local Government councils to review their SDG implementation levels.
- VLRs have the capacity to foster policy coherence and coordination among national and local efforts which are currently a challenge in most developing countries including the Gambia
- The APRM national governance review and VNRs can rely on VLRs because VLRs are a reliable source of feedback, available information and data for the VNR processes.
- Finally VLRs can help in assessing and addressing vertical and horizontal inequalities within communities, wards, districts and regions within the country.

4. How have key recommendations of APRM African Governance Report been applied to strengthen citizen-government trust for a resilient social contract been applied in practice?

Looking at the recommendations of the African Governance Reports (AGR) 2019 and 2021, most of them are anchored on the 2030 and 2063 agendas. In the Gambia, promotion of the rule of law, long-term thinking and planning, ratification of shared values instruments, treaties, protocols HR protection and prioritizing of the citizen Inclusion of youth, women and people with disabilities equity and representation are all promoted in our national blueprints, regional strategic plans and policies.

Some recommendations of the APRM have over the years been shaping a number policies and programmes in The Gambia. For example, recommendations related to skills development and employability of young people is translating to increased investments in technical and vocational education training targeting young people.

Such programmes have been designed to provide young people with skills required by the local job market which guaranties employability. In the area of empowerment of women a number of policies have been put in place to ensure increased number of women in leadership and decision-making positions with women representation target set at 30%. Political parties are being encouraged to ensure that 30% of their nominees into political office are women.

However, acceptance of women leadership in reality within the citizenry is still a challenge. From the recent election results 2022and 2023, the country has three (3) elected women National Assembly Members out of fifty-three constituencies and two (2) nominated in the National Assembly. And in the Executive, currently the Gambia has only two female ministers.

In addition we have only one female mayor out of eight (8) local government areas and seventeen (17) elected women councilors throughout the country out of one hundred and twenty (120) wards. moreover, the Brikama Area Council have five elected female ward councilors out of twenty-eight wards and two (2) nominated female councilors out nine nominated councilors.

Youth employment is also a challenge. The country is witnessing youth migration to Europe and western countries for greener pastures and even within country from rural to urban looking for better jobs. Poverty is also in the increase affecting other SDGs negatively.