Management Response & Recommendations Action Plan

Evaluation Report Title: Mid-term evaluation of the Africa Regional Empowerment and Accountability Programme (AREAP)

Response to Evaluation Report (overarching narrative)

The AREAP programme is designed to support citizens to have a stronger voice, and thereby improve, decision making processes at the continental or regional level in Africa. In this way it is designed to complement wider empowerment and accountability interventions undertaken by DFID and others at the national level.

The theory of change focusses on three areas (i) improved comparative data generation on governance and wider performance across Africa, including steps to implement continental commitments through the African Union, (ii) stronger non-state actor capacity to use regional data in developing their policy positions and advocacy, and (iii) improved enabling environment for non-state actors to engage with regional policy making processes. The programme is implemented through three partners whose activities roughly correspond to one of each of the elements of the theory of change. At the end of 2014, a separately-contracted Learning Impact and Communications Hub Was added to the programme to explore results in a range of priority areas: synergy, value for money, tracking and articulating partner performance and contributing to programme monitoring.

Evaluation findings and recommendations for relevance, effectiveness and efficiency are meaningful. They largely consider the performance of individual implementing partners, with limited relevance beyond this programme (other than the three partners and prospective funders). The report questions the added value of bringing together three relatively unconnected initiatives in one programme beyond management efficiencies for DFID and makes relevant recommendations for how greater integration could be achieved for similar programmes (these have less relevance for AREAP because most activities will cease by March 2016). The evaluation does offer useful recommendations for the design and implementation of a regional approach towards empowerment and accountability which should be of wider relevance for funders and implementers in that space.

The evaluation process also created a useful opportunity for methodological learning. As part of their investigations the consultants utilised Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), a relatively new evaluation technique that bridges qualitative and quantitative approaches for the analysis of causal complexity. DFID's evaluation experts did not agree entirely with how QCA had been applied and queried the robustness of the analysis and some of the initial conclusions. This has stimulated a debate about QCA with the consultants who have put together a methodological note on QCA and a seminar will be held for interested DFID evaluation professionals. The QCA discussion led to a significant delay to the finalisation of the mid-term evaluation report which means that some of the recommendations are no longer relevant given that most activities have less than one year to run. However, the methodological lessons from the mid-term evaluation will be reflected in the design of the final evaluation which is due to commence shortly.

Evaluation Report Title: **Mid-term evaluation of the Africa Regional Empowerment and Accountability Programme (AREAP)**

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
Afrobarometer may consider strengthening its relationships with key stakeholders through continuous engagement ('targeted dissemination') in addition to having a limited number of events around dissemination of each survey round's data release, as the experience of some partners suggests that this would significantly increase uptake and usage of **Afrobarometer** data at the national level.	**Accepted** (while noting financial and human resource constraints	Afrobarometer has always done some targeted disseminations – e.g., with journalists, parliamentarians, or students in selected countries. The Network began more systematically engaging with stakeholders during Round 5, when we piloted 'stakeholder workshops' in a number of countries, and in Round 6, when we extended this approach to most countries in the network. Stakeholders now contribute to development of country-specific questions, and often play a role in dissemination events – e.g., as event hosts, commentators or panellists, and to help identify invitees and rally interest. The network shares the goal of identifying opportunities to both expand and deepen our engagement with stakeholders, both through: 1) **targeted dissemination** for specialized audiences, wherein we identify a specific audience for a given set of AB findings (e.g., with findings that are of particular relevance to parliamentarians, or anti-corruption activists, or women's rights campaigners, or some other audience) and engage with them directly to share and discuss the findings and identify ways in which the stakeholder may be able to make use of them; and 2) fostering **continuous engagement** with selected stakeholders who understand and support the AB mission to increase public voice in policy and political processes, and can engage with the network and the data in an ongoing way, and become champions for Afrobarometer, e.g., by helping us to introduce the data to new audiences, or regularly using the findings in their work as journalists, advocates or policy makers. There are, however, some constraints on Afrobarometer's ability to pursue these goals, especially: 1) **Incentivizing national partners** – Due to resource limitations, Afrobarometer can only engage its national partners on a contract basis to conduct a survey and the standard set of four dissemination events that follows; the network has not had the resources to engage NPs on a more permanent basis or to provide for them to engage permanent communications staff. So normally NPs understandably move on to other work once they have fulfilled their contractual

		obligations to AB. However, for the remainder of Round 6 AB has set aside a small amount of funds to support additional pilot stakeholder engagement activities, which can include incentives for NPs to work with AB in new ways. As we identify successful approaches, we will, as with the stakeholders workshops, aim to scale up activities over time if the necessary resources can be secured.
		2) **AB's human resource capacity** -- AB also has recently hired its own communications staff based at each of the core partners. But these staff are not all full time, and some of them are covering as many as 10 or 11 countries, so they have often been stretched to provide all of the support needed even for the basic dissemination activities. However, as they gain experience, get to know countries and partners, and establish networks of contacts, they will increasingly be well positioned to identify and foster opportunities for ongoing engagement and/or targeted disseminations. Communications team members have already launched a pilot initiative to map key stakeholders in their own countries to identify engagement opportunities, and they will be pilot testing engagement activities. However, significantly expanding our ongoing engagement with stakeholders in multiple countries may require further investment in our staff capacity as well, a possibility the network is already exploring.
Afrobarometer may consider also building the capacity of key stakeholders to use data by targeting its presentations and tailoring assistance to their needs, developing the capacity of key 'champions' who can use the data and help capacitate others.	**Accepted** (with qualifications)	It is worth exploring the possibility of out-sourcing some "targeted dissemination" to selected key stakeholders or "champions". One of the challenges will be ensuring that these champions have sufficient understanding of survey research methods that they can both present this information to others, and defend the methods if they come under attack, as they sometimes do among those who are challenged by the findings. Another is ensuring that these stakeholders have the analysis capabilities not only to understand and use the numbers themselves, but also to convey this understanding to others. We therefore need to be realistic about our goals: many stakeholders and champions are just learning how to integrate public opinion data into their own work, and they will often need to gain experience at this level first, before they can play a direct role in passing this capacity on to others. We believe that one of the areas where stakeholders and champions can be most effective, though, is in promoting awareness of public opinion data generally, and promoting the goal that public voice be taken into account in decision making processes. We also believe that the 'stakeholders as capacitators' approach suggested here may be especially feasible among champions in the academic community (e.g., professors) as they may already have the requisite skills and understanding.

		Afrobarometer has already begun testing this approach with the other AREAP partners. In 2014, training was provided to a number of SOTU's country partners on how to utilize Afrobarometer data for their own work. But their use of the data likely still remains internal. Another training is planned for staff at the Trust, with the goal of building their capacity both to use AB data directly for their own work, but also to share these skills with partners. We will continue to look for opportunities to provide similar trainings to others, provided resources are available for training and for rewarding implementers.
Afrobarometer may also consider exploring relationships with other stakeholders such as the private sector who could be a new audience for their data.	**Accepted** (with qualifications)	We expect that the private sector already makes use of Afrobarometer data, although it is quite difficult to identify and track such usage. But private sector users can and are already included in stakeholder mapping exercises and engagement efforts when possible. We expect it to be particularly fruitful to look for opportunities where private sector priorities intersect with a good governance agenda, e.g., the interest of communications companies in freedom of communication and information sharing, or the interest of businesses engaged in service provision in the availability and quality of existing services. Private sector companies may also have a special interest in data on attitudes about economic conditions and economic change, as well as individual's economic status, especially as they try to track, and respond to, economic growth and the perceived emergence of a middle class. Afrobarometer has in the past considered greater financial engagement with the private sector, e.g., for sponsored sets of questions. However, there is a fundamental challenge to engaging more deeply with the private sector in this way, because private sector entities are often only willing to pay for proprietary information that confers market advantage, a limitation that runs counter to Afrobarometer's principle of public accessibility of all data. There may, however, be opportunity to engage with the private sector on analysis, especially the development of tools such as the emerging Afrobarometer Risk Analysis Tool (ARAT), which may be of particular interest to the business community. We can thus consider exploring whether private companies are willing to pay for customized analysis of AB data, although the data itself must always remain a public good. We also note that an increasing number of African companies are establishing philanthropic divisions, with goals and agendas that may correspond well with those of the Afrobarometer. They are a particular target for our Round 7 and 8 fundraising efforts.

Recommendations for Implementing Partners

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
The **SOTU Secretariat** has a clear role to play in providing technical support to national platforms and facilitating engagement between platforms, but this role could be strengthened. The **SOTU secretariat** may be most useful as a capacity-building and technical support provider to the national platforms, to increase the platform's level of sophistication and technical skills around policy advocacy and media engagement. **National platforms** may want to consider increasing horizontal learning within the SOTU coalition, as these exchanges appear to hold promise in terms of building capacity and sharing relevant learning.	**Accepted**	The SOTU secretariat carried out organisational capacity assessments and supports members in developing their capacity building plans. One way to strengthen cross learning will be to facilitate forums where two or more members can collaborate. During the annual general meetings (AGM) SOTU can also facilitates learning opportunities. In the upcoming November 2015 AGM, SOTU will approach Afrobarometer to facilitate a session on policy and data analysis that can strengthen policy advocacy. Media skills and engagement can be designed as one of the thematic brown bag sessions SOTU plans in the course of the year.
The **SOTU Secretariat** may also have a role to play to help institutionalise these horizontal learning exchanges. **SOTU national platforms** should also continue strengthening their capacity around engaging policymakers, to continue to push for policy change. In cases where policy change is achieved, platforms should expand activities to include monitoring the implementation of these new policies.	**Accepted**	The SOTU secretariat has already begun convening thematic brown bag sessions with the aim of facilitating knowledge and learning exchanges. The first took place online on 29 April 2015 focused on AU's Agenda 2063 while the second was held on 1 July 2015 on implementing their Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Learning (MERL) frameworks. An advocacy plan will be developed by the SOTU secretariat to highlight entry points for engagement at the continental and national level using SOTU tools and research products.

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The **Trust** has clear strengths and a focused strategic approach; however this approach could be extended and made more inclusive to increase the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the Trust's work. The **Trust** could strengthen and extend its 'bridging' approach to facilitating government and NSA engagement on regional issues, continuing technocratic engagement at the SADC Secretariat level, but increasing support to partners at the national level, to strengthen demand-side political pressure on SADC for policy change and pressure domestically for implementation of new, pro-poor SADC policies.	**Partially Accepted**	The Trust's 'bridging' approach to facilitating government and NSA engagement on regional issues aligns with its mandate as a regional organisation, focusing on making regional integration work for the poor and having the region as its entry point. However, being acutely aware that real change happens at the national level the Trust is engaged in supporting processes and undertaking activities at regional level that by their very nature and design seek to replicate the 'bridging' approach at a national level through support to national level partners connected to regional level partners. Examples of these activities are as follows: 1. Development of a mechanism of engagement between non-state actors and SADC on the regional integration agenda in response to a request from the SADC Secretariat towards operationalising Article 5(2) (b) and Article 23 of the SADC 2. Continuing work in operationalisation of the Regional Poverty Observatory (RPO) with its national 'spokes' in the form of National Poverty Observatories (NPOs). 3. Continuing support of the establishment of a SADC youth mechanism currently proposed to be a youth union established amongst other things to forge integration, unity and cooperation amongst national youth coordinating bodies and civic society youth in the SADC region. This development emerged from the youth forum that the Trust supported at the request of the SADC Secretariat in support of the 2014 SADC Chairperson's agenda. 4. In February 2015, the Trust joined the African Development Bank and the South African Government is supporting an inaugural meeting of the Informal Community of Practice of National Planning Entities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC iCOP) whose aim was to encourage members to integrate the SADC RISDC into national planning processes to ensure convergence, interface and synergies with national development plan and to also create a formal structure to support the Secretariat in addressing the asymmetries and ensure linkages between national and regional, continental and global development policy. The Trust remains committed to supporting the formalisation of the proposed mechanism. Support to the Community of Practice of National Planning Entities (iCOP) could potentially include strengthening of SADC National Committees (SNCs).

The **Trust** may also want to consider strategies for making the space for dialogue it facilitates more durable and open for NSAs to engage SADC, to allow opportunities for a wider selection of NSAs to engage and increasing the long-term capacity of accountability mechanisms like the Regional Poverty Observatory to hold SADC governments to account.	**Accepted**	This is something that to a large extent would be addressed by the above response and in particular the NSA-SADC mechanism for engagement. A proposal on this mechanism has been finalised by the Trust and is due to be taken through the SADC official approval processes.
To make their approach more transparent and participatory, and to increase their influence in the sector more broadly, the **Trust** may want to consider including a wider group of grantees and partners in their internal strategic thinking, research and learning.	**Accepted**	The Trust is currently in the process of developing its new strategy for the period 2016-2021 that involves extensive consultations with stakeholders in the sector and beyond. It has also commissioned research that will as has been done before involve validation workshops involving various stakeholders. In the initial strategy development activities, the Trust from 3 to 17 February 2015, conducted a survey aimed at soliciting feedback on the Trust's relations with partners as part of the start of the development of it new strategy for the period 2016 to 2021. The results of this survey will directly feed into the strategy development process.
The **Trust** may also want to consider strengthening their M&E systems to more comprehensively reflect its' activities as a 'bridge' between NSAs and government, and to gather evidence on the impact of SADC policy change on the lives of women and the poor at the national level.	**Accepted**	The Trust is currently in the process of reviewing its M&E systems to develop a more comprehensive one. This is following an internal review it undertook as well as an independent review by an M&E expert. The issue of gathering evidence on the impact of SADC policy change on the lives of women and the poor at national level regarding M&E will be considered considering both the mandate and approach as responded to in the first recommendation.

Recommendations for DFID

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
AREAP has funded three strong civil society organisations working at the national and regional level in Africa, but it hasn't functioned as a cohesive, integrated programme. DFID may want to consider whether it wants AREAP to proceed as	**Partially Accepted**	The report makes relevant recommendations to achieve greater coherence from diverse implementing partners working to deliver a regional approach to empowerment and accountability. While these will be important for future programme design, they somewhat are less relevant and realistic for the remaining nine months of AREAP.

a programme and if so, work with the implementing partners to develop a coordinated approach and add clear incentives for collaboration, or if it wants AREAP to proceed as a funding window for three implementing organisations whose work is complementary, but separate.		Having said this, the Learning Hub is actively promoting lesson sharing and complementarity between the three partners which should lead to improved collaboration during the final period of the programme and potential future work.
The AREAP logframe may also need to be revisited to ensure that it fully captures all IPs work under AREAP. The current AREAP Theory of Change may also want to be revisited, in light of DFID's decision on shape of AREAP as a programme and evolving implementing partner insights into how they believe their individual and joint activities will effect change.	**Rejected**	See above. Since most AREAP activities will finish by March 2016 there is limited value in revisiting programme logframe and theory of change. The logframe was adjusted earlier this year to reflect the latest thinking on the role of the Learning Hub (see below).

Recommendations for the Learning Hub

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
The Learning Hub, which is set to be established in late 2014 – early 2015, should emphasise shared learning across IPs at the senior and country levels. While the implementing partners appear to have complementary skill sets and capacities, these synergies have not been explored to-date. The Learning Hub could help the implementing partners assess the relative value and prioritise the opportunities available in terms of collaboration, and establish learning objectives for joint collaboration.	**Accepted**	The Learning Hub is now operational. It prioritises shared learning across AREAP partners at senior and country levels as well as exploring opportunities for joint working. This is being done primarily through a facilitated process to develop nine case studies through a methodology that includes, group dialogue and reflection, in-depth interviews (face to face and web-based) and reviews of secondary data and evidence. The first six case studies focus on shared areas of work and the last three case studies explore approaches each partner has used to assess value for money. The process of developing the case studies has already resulted in greater understanding amongst the partners for each other's work as well space to learn lessons and identify areas of potential collaboration.
The Learning Hub may consider facilitating IPs to share resources on capacity building for downstream partners. All of		This is already happening to an extent. For example, the Learning Hub has witnessed SOTU and the Trust securing Afrobarometer's support and time in widening the

the implementing partners work with downstream partners at the national and regional level, which often involves capacity building activities. The Learning Hub may be an opportunity to share resources among implementing partners for building the capacity of their partners in for example policy advocacy activities.	**Accepted**	understanding of their staff on using Afrobarometer's work together with their own research for more effective and targeted policy advocacy. Case study 4 on capacity strengthening of national CSOs has shared different approaches and the case study on collecting anecdotes has resulted in cross fertilization between implementation partners of approaches available to them.
The Learning Hub may also consider focusing on supporting the IPs around learning and improving M&E of empowerment and accountability programs. Findings on the effectiveness of the AREAP implementing partners indicate that results are not being appropriately captured in the current AREAP logframe. The Learning Hub could work with the IPs to develop guidance on M&E that can both inform AREAP's M&E systems, better evidence the impacts of IP activities, and the empowerment and accountability sector M&E frameworks.	**Accepted**	The Hub has been established in part to support the AREAP partners in learning and improving M & E of their empowerment and accountability programmes. For example, case study 5 considers the power of anecdotal evidence and provides examples from all three partners of anecdotes that have been swapped orally during implementation and that capture examples of real change on the ground.
The Learning Hub could provide valuable findings by conducting a case study to explore in what contexts does a strengthened evidence base on national and regional policy issues lead to increased legitimacy of civil society voice and space for civil society policy engagement. The evaluation team has conducted one case study at the midterm evaluation and will conduct another two case studies at the midterm evaluation. Undertaking a fourth case study is not within the scope of this evaluation, so the evaluation team would like to recommend the Learning Hub to undertake the fourth case study listed in the evaluation framework as an area of study.	**Accepted**	The third case study produced by the Learning Hub looks precisely at the role of strong evidence in informing the policy making processes of the African Union and the Southern African Development Union (SADC) at continental, regional and national levels with insights from each of the AREAP partners.

Recommendation for the end of programme evaluation

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
Allow for a more iterative approach to data collection and analysis. The mid-term evaluation has been conducted on a slightly compressed time scale to accommodate donor timelines and requirements, which has limited the amount of iterative learning and data collection possible. It has also limited the number of interviews that the evaluation team was able to collect. The end-programme evaluation will work to increase the timescale for the evaluation data collection and analysis, so that primary and secondary data can be collected across a longer period, allowing for data collection and analysis to be more iterative and explorative.	**Accepted**	Early discussions with programme partners to plan the end of programme evaluation will start in September. Data collection should commence in December which leaves sufficient time for analysis and discussion of findings prior to formal programme end in July 2016.