

Research sheds light on how APRM can strengthen fight against HIV in Africa

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Addis Ababa, 14 July 2011 (ECA) - Results from a new study presented here today says the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) can help African countries meet various HIV/AIDS commitments made in the African Common Position on Universal Access, the Abuja Declaration and Framework for Action and the Abuja Accelerated Action towards Universal Access.

Titled "**APRM as an accountability instrument for accelerating the implementation of HIV/AIDS-related commitments**", the study was carried out by Emmanuel Nnadozie, Director, NEPAD and Economic Development Division (EDND) of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Mr. Adeyinka Adeyemi, Senior Regional Adviser at EDND.

It was the first presentation in the Seminar Series co-initiated by ECA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Introducing the study, Prof Nnadozie said the authors had set out to determine the extent to which APRM could serve as an effective accountability instrument in accelerating the implementation of HIV/AIDS commitments and enhance its effectiveness for that purpose.

He said the study was important because HIV/AIDS is still a major cause of death in Africa, killing 1.3 million people in 2009 and because in spite of almost 60 international commitments made on the pandemic, 23 of them by African countries, there still remains a huge implementation gap.

"No country has fulfilled all the commitments," he said.

He said APRM was useful because it "not only monitors and evaluates the extent to which commitments are implemented, it also provides the opportunity for policy makers and ordinary citizens to hold each other accountable."

The mechanism, he said, captures HIV/AIDS-related issues both in its design and content.

The research on HIV/AIDS governance thus puts a spotlight on an aspect of APRM that has hitherto remained unknown to the general public, often obscured by the work of the APRM on political and economic processes of member countries, according to a participant.

Co-author, Adeyemi, in presenting the results of the study based on a country study of South Africa, took the opportunity to drive home the main message of the research, which is that "the APRM deals with HIV/AIDS directly and indirectly in its key documents, declarations, conduct and implementation of the mechanism, in post-review process and the programme of Action."

He said four of the 10 Standards and Codes instruments attached to the section on socio-economic development indeed, directly speak to HIV/AIDS, including the "African Charter on Human and peoples' Rights (1981); African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990); World Summit on Social Development Plan of Action (1995) and the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, he stressed.

He said the study had found that APRM has the "features and elements" of an effective accountability instrument---periodic monitoring, assessing progress, holding policy makers accountable and providing a platform for stakeholder follow-up.

The mechanism is also an effective instrument for accelerating implementation of commitments on HIV/AIDS because it addresses the pandemic "explicitly and deeply", said Adeyemi, adding that the mechanism has a strong likelihood of leading to desirable outcomes with respect to HIV/AIDS. A review of seven APRM documents also shows that HIV/AIDS is explicitly mentioned in four documents, particularly the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance; Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators for APRM, as well in the Questionnaire for the Country Self-Assessment for the APRM, according to the authors.

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a mutually agreed instrument voluntarily acceded to by the member states of the African Union (AU) as a self-monitoring mechanism. Founded in 2003, its mandate is to encourage conformity in regard to political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards, among African countries. About 31 African countries have acceded to it.

The Joint UNDP and ECA Seminar Series is an innovative initiative by the ECA and UNDP to promote research that will inform advocacy and capacity building activities undertaken by ECA and UNDP, disseminate research results and encourage



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advocacy and capacity building activities undertaken by ECA and UNDP, disseminate research results and encourage knowledge-sharing through peer learning among various African stakeholders on key development issues.

UNDP Resident Representative, Mr Eugene Owusu, described the seminar series, which is under the theme "opportunities and challenges for development in Africa" as one of the essential "policy fora and platforms for sharing practical experiences and development lessons that can better assist African governments to identify policy options to address their common and unique problems."

Speaking on behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA, the Chief of Staff Mr. Adeyemi Dipeolu, welcomed the institution of the joint seminar series as another milestone in the long standing cooperation between UNDP and ECA to foster social and economic development in Africa.

He took the opportunity to renew the commitment of ECA's Executive Secretary, Mr. Abouldie Janneh to continuously explore innovative avenues to harness Africa's development endeavours.

The series shall be held every second Thursday of the month, according to seminar sources.

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