In 2007, the National Economic Council agreed that the Nigeria Governors’ Forum (NGF) should develop a State Peer Review Mechanism (SPRM). Modelled on the African Peer Review Mechanism developed by the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, the SPRM innovates by applying peer review at the sub-national level in order to boost state governments’ development. In May 2011, NGF launched the official base document containing the fully developed SPRM guidelines.

The SPRM is in essence a performance self-assessment of the state, followed by examination and critique by other states, with the goal of strengthening governance and sharing the knowledge gained. In 2011 and 2012, Anambra State piloted the process, which yielded valuable recommendations for the State to further its development goals. This trial paves the way for the NGF to roll out the SPRM, aspiring to have all Nigerian states involved in helping each other improve policymaking.

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How does SPRM work?
Firstly, following an SPRM initiation workshop, the state assesses itself and produces a report highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the state’s development. This is an inclusive process involving various stakeholders from both inside and outside the state government.

Next, a Technical Review Panel (TRP) is assembled, comprising expert representatives from other Nigerian states alongside seasoned academics, to review and validate the report’s findings. This final report will show achievements, shortcomings and recommended remedial actions.

The last stage is for the best practices and recommendations found to be shared among participating states so that all state governments can move towards their development goals through collaboration.

Uptake in Anambra State
Anambra State faced a period of severe political instability following its return to democratic governance in 1999. During that period of turbulence, events such as the impeachment and reinstatement of Governor Peter Obi were witnessed. Since his reinstatement in 2007, Anambra State has become far more stable and has shown a commitment to development.

Given that the SPRM process allows for the voluntary participation of states, Anambra State put itself forward to pilot the process. As a result, Anambra State pioneered the initiative over 2011 and 2012, and the initial self-assessment report was submitted to the NGF’s steering committee in March 2012. Professor Oladipupo Adamolekun and Donald Duke, both members of the SPRM Steering Committee, led the TRP which met with stakeholders and inspected key projects across the State in May 2012.
SPRM results in Anambra State

The TRP commended the State on various areas including the new found peace and tranquillity, the efforts made to bring governance to the grassroots level through hometown associations and the fact that virtually no contracted projects have been abandoned. However, much can be done to improve governance in Anambra State. Based on the findings of the TRP, the Steering Committee made the following key recommendations:

- **Conduct local government elections:** The Anambra State Government needs to urgently set the machinery in motion and conduct credible local government elections.

- **Reform the budget:** Anambra State needs to reform its budget by making it the overarching tool for its development. This will require making the budget comprehensive to capture all revenue from development partners.

- **Address data weakness:** Weakness of data needs to be addressed comprehensively. The State needs to enhance the capacity of the State Bureau of Statistics which is underfunded and poorly staffed.

- **Fund the Road Maintenance Agency:** While the State Government should mount sustained pressure on the Federal Government to refurbish and breathe new life into all Federal roads which are currently in a deplorable condition, the State's Roads Maintenance Agency should be properly funded, as poor funding of the Agency can undermine the State's success in constructing a good network of roads, particularly if funds for maintenance are not provided.

- **Strengthen internal revenue collection mechanisms:** The Government needs to reorganise and strengthen its revenue collection machinery, especially the State Board of Internal Revenue which is not professionalised and poorly funded.

The DFID-funded State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) has since been working closely with the State Government to build on the foundation of good governance and act on the TRP's recommendations. One of the major signs of uptake is that Anambra State, in response to the SPRM, is partnering with SPARC to properly document and develop its Anambra Integrated Development Strategy (ANIDS). SPARC has also worked with the State to strengthen the budget processes by developing a Budget Process and Management Manual, which was completed in January 2013.

Moving forward

The SPRM process is still at a very early stage, but the progress of Anambra State's pilot is very promising. Governors are keen to engage with the initiative, and the process has been carried out successfully once, showing that it is reproducible.

The next steps are to share the pilot's lessons with other governors, and to roll out the initiative so that more states can benefit.

The NGF is also working hard to have the process built into national planning mechanisms, with the aim of making this an entrenched cornerstone of good governance practice in Nigeria.

Results

- The SPRM initiative has been kick-started with Anambra State successfully carrying out the peer review process.
- Key recommendations to Anambra State were made and well received – this is an important step towards furthering their development goals.
- Anambra State's participation, and work with SPARC in response to SPRM recommendations, shows that the State has a will to change practices to strengthen governance.
- Governors are engaging with the process – a promising result for rolling out the initiative across Nigeria.

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