

Speak out, speak up

Improve your government

By Justice Mohale

Openness is the key to democracy. Openness in the activities of government means giving ordinary people the chance to highlight the weak and strong points of government and how the government can improve the delivery of services.

It is against this background that ordinary South Africans have a chance to look into the progress the country has made in the first 10 years of democracy,

and into the challenges of speeding up progress.

■ Assessing government

The idea of giving ordinary people a chance to help report on their governments was adopted by the African Union, which represents all African countries.

Through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), African countries help one another to improve the way they are governed. It also helps them get the best policies for development in line with New Economic Partnerships for Africa's Development (Nepad).

The process to create the country report on South Africa will involve participation by ordinary South Africans in trying to check the progress made by the government.

■ Become real

The nine months process for the South Africa country report started in October 2005 and will end in June this year.

To provide participation the government gave the Community Development Workers (CDWs) a duty to interview ordinary South Africans about the government's performance.

■ Improve delivery

Those who take part are asked to comment about progress in service delivery, democracy and how the country is being run.

They are also asked to point out where government needed to improve service delivery as well as areas where it performed well.

The same questions asked by the CDWs are being used by trade unions, business and other community-based organisations to make their own assessment.

All these views are being brought together, along with

other information from government and researchers to produce a Draft Country Report. The Draft Report will be discussed at a national conference in March 2006.

Where do you find the questionnaires?

- Multi - purpose Community Centres (MPCC);
- Ward Committees;
- Local municipal offices;
- Community Development Workers; and government offices.
- Batho Pele Call Centre - 1020

After that:

- the review panel will release an issues paper in April 2006;
- the Country Review Team will visit South Africa in May;
- the Country Review Team will release their report in June;
- the Country Review Report will be submitted for comment;
- the report will be submitted too the African Peer Review Forum of Heads of States and Government in August 2006.

