DO PEOPLE LISTEN? SHOULD THEY LISTEN?

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A range of democracy and governance indicators are presently in use in Africa. While some of these have been developed by the international community, some have local currency. Amongst these are the UNECA governance study and the African Peer Review Mechanism. This paper will describe and comment on some of the more established and high profile studies, and the methodology adopted to do the measurement and communicate the results. Drawing on preliminary results from a UNDP sponsored three country comparative study on the use of indicators, I will explore some of the dilemmas facing those for whom the measures should be important. Who are these people, and are they listening?

The paper will then ask some general questions about methods, about ownership of studies and their results, and the reliability and timeliness of the studies for public policy. It will comment on power relations, the capability of states to provide accurate information and on the role that can be played by perception surveys such as the Afrobarometer and domestic institutional views in understanding whether measuring democracy and governance makes a difference or whether other factors are more important. Should the people listen to what the indicators appear to be saying?