



IPPR



**African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)  
Sensitisation Project in Namibia (ASPIN)**

**Civil Society Training Workshop**

**17-18 April 2018**

**Heja Lodge, Windhoek, Namibia**

**WORKSHOP REPORT**

On Tuesday 18 and Wednesday 19 April 2018, a civil society training workshop on the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and how civil society can become meaningfully involved in the Namibian APRM process was held at the Heja Lodge outside Windhoek.

The workshop was organised and presented by the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) as part of the APRM Sensitisation Project in Namibia (ASPIN). It was supported by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA). Over 50 civil society members attended.

**Day 1**

**Heiner Naumann, Resident Representative of the FES in Namibia** welcomed the participants and in his address highlighted the following ways in which stakeholders can take part in the APRM process: help to identify national priorities; be part of the group which conducts the national self-assessment; engage with the country review team, assist the government to implement the identified action items; and, participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the country's progress. He stressed that the APRM is an excellent tool to strengthen democracy in Namibia.

**Dalmar Jama from the continental APRM Secretariat** provided a detailed background to the APRM process and explained how the reviews are conducted. He emphasised that the APRM is not a government-owned process, but a national process and civil society is an important part of it. There are a number of roles civil society can play in the APRM. Providing inputs into the process and

making sure its views are reflected in the final report are important aspects of its participation. Jama also talked about the importance of the follow-up after the review is completed. This includes publication of regular progress reports, to track progress on achieving the desired reforms in the country. He noted that Namibia was in good company, joining a mechanism with 37 members, 21 of which have been reviewed, which includes two second reviews (Kenya and Uganda).

During questions, a participant asked: if the process is nationally-owned, why is a Ministry required to be a focal point? It was stressed that political buy-in and will are needed at the highest level, including allocating budget items to the review and activities. It was also emphasised that the APRM unfolds in different ways in different political environments. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. So different Ministries are responsible for the APRM in different countries. But the process will not move unless there is strong political will behind it at a high level

**Steven Gruzd, Head of the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at SAIIA** made a presentation that focused on civil society in Namibia making a meaningful contribution into the process. He highlighted the need to become involved early. It would particularly be useful for Namibian civil society to start working on a written submission, which would identify critical issues that need to make it into the final country report. He used the example of Zambian civil society, which was able to meaningfully participate in the country's APRM review, by forming a coalition which worked on a 40-page written submission. This enabled it to have a strong position in the review process, as it prepared by thinking through the issues and providing evidence for each of them. He recommended the formation of an APRM Working Group and indicated that SAIIA will undertake three more trips to Namibia in 2018 to assist civil society in developing their submission through ASPIN.

A question was asked on whether civil society should focus on the submission or on pushing the government to get the process started. It was suggested that it would be important to first focus on the submission, as this would put civil society in a strong position vis-à-vis government, which had been slow to progress in the APRM process. Civil society would then be in an advantageous position by the time the official process commences. If the submission is ready but the government has not started the review, civil society could then start campaigning for the process to begin.

**Susan Mwape, Director of Common Cause, Zambia** highlighted a number of benefits which the APRM brought to the country. This included Zambia reviewing its constitution. It also recognised the importance of the corporate sector, by bringing it on board for the review process. Mwape made several key recommendations for her Namibian colleagues. She said that civil society does not always have to be confrontational or aggressive. It needs to engage with the process and participate in it. She also suggested developing a good relationship with the National Governing Council (NGC), and closely collaborating with it. She concluded by stressing that the APRM cannot strive without civil society input.

**Yarik Turianskyi, Deputy Head of the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at SAIIA** discussed case studies of the APRM in Lesotho and South Africa, as well as a civil society monitoring project initiated by SAIIA. While this project was carried out after the reviews in these countries, it still holds lessons for Namibian civil society at this early stage of the project, as it suggests focusing on issues that civil society also has expertise in. It is more beneficial to work on fewer issues in depth in developing a submission, rather than to overstretch and try to cover too many issues where expertise is lacking. Both Lesotho and South Africa ultimately ended up producing solid and honest country review reports, but implementation of their National Programmes of Action (NPOA) was lacking. Lesotho did not produce a single progress report. South Africa produced three, but they did not track back to its NPOA. Ultimately, the APRM had little impact in either country.

**Christine //Hoebes, Namibia's Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation** in her speech recognised the significance of APRM as an African-owned process and noted that Africa is the only region in the world that is committed to a voluntary governance self-assessment. She proceeded to update the participants on the progress Namibia has achieved, and specifically confirmed that an advanced APRM mission visit from the APR Panel of Eminent Persons is planned for 2018. She also confirmed that the country has paid its annual subscriptions to the APRM on time and in full. She concluded by stating that the government welcomes this civil society initiative to be proactive and hold this workshop to start its engagement in the APRM.

A question was posed on the inclusivity of the NGC, with specific reference to members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex (LGBTI) community. It was noted that the key to a successful NGC is inclusivity, rather than having to represent every constituency and interest group. It is possible to

have a small council with regular validations and inputs from others. Examples of Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone were highlighted. Ghana had only a seven-member NGC, but it was consistently held as a shining example of a successful council. In contrast, Nigeria had over 80 council members, which was too large, and they struggled to advance the process ball forward. Sierra Leone initially started with a 35-member council, but soon decided to reduce its size, to allow for quicker and more efficient discussions and decision-making.

## **Day 2**

**Luanda Mpungose, Programme Officer on the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at SAIIA** began her presentation by saying that there were virtually no young people involved in the APRM when she started her work at SAIIA in 2016. But now, in 2018, there are positive changes in this regard. There are now more young people involved, including those working at the APRM Secretariat. She emphasised that Africa is a young continent, with 70% of population below the age of 30. African youth thus needs to be involved in governance initiatives like the APRM. She used the example of the Kenya APRM youth working group as a case study. It was established in 2015 and members mobilised themselves to become part of the APRM process. It operates with minimal resources but successfully uses social media to engage on governance resources. Mpungose concluded by saying that governments should not be dismissive of youth and that the youth have a responsibility to engage government constructively. She suggested including more young people in the APRM country review missions.

**Boniface Habana, Clerk responsible for the Justice and Human Rights Committee and APRM at the Pan-African Parliament** spoke about the importance of parliaments in the APRM process. Parliaments have committees which can help with follow-through and accountability on APRM activities. He suggested establishing a committee that works on the APRM in the Namibian legislature. Habana also spoke of the APRM as a process that requires significant budgeting and resources, and parliament ultimately approves national budgets. He described spoke about the PAP APRM Network (PAN), a body that has successfully seen the tabling of the backlog of APRM Country Review Reports at the PAP and become the focal point for APRM interactions. He concluded by emphasising that parliament is a crucial organ in national politics and is a vital stakeholder in the APRM.

**Honourable Alice Mtlhomi Motsamai, former Speaker of the Lesotho National Assembly and member of the Pan-African Parliament** spoke about the APRM process in Lesotho and suggested that a change of government and unstable political coalitions were the reasons for slow implementation. She said that the country was supposed to produce its first progress report in 2011 but did not manage to do so due to national elections. Nonetheless, she said that the APRM was successful in helping the country to promote the rights of women. The country was coming from a situation where there were few women in parliament. This has now changed. She noted several new laws passed after the APRM process.

It was noted that in Namibia, legislation passes through the parliament rather than is passed by parliament. Parliament does not allocate resources and funding to projects. Another participant asked how the PAP reacted to APRM reports. It was said that until recently the PAP did not engage on the APRM but has started working on it in 2015. Since then all existing APRM reports were tabled and discussed at the plenary (despite some being over ten years old). However, the high turnover of MPs at the PAP often makes it difficult for them to engage consistently. It was also noted that there is a youth caucus at PAP, a platform where young MPs meet and discuss issues from a youth perspective.

The participants then broke into groups to discuss issues which could potentially be included in the civil society APRM submission.

**Group 1** identified the issue of **land** as a contentious one and noted that there is a conference coming up on it in October. Currently there is insufficient information available on land ownership. There are also questions about the use of communal land. Existing information needs to be released and where it is not available it needs to be researched properly.

This group also identified **urban housing** as an issue. Mass housing schemes run by government have become corrupt. 85% of population earns less than 5,000 Namibian dollars a month and cannot afford government housing. People need access to serviced land and self-build options. Use of alternative building materials and new technologies also need to be investigated.

This group also spoke about public health issues, sanitation and the recent outbreak of hepatitis E.

**Group 2** also identified **land** as an issue, specifically the lack of land. Service delivery is a problem in Namibia. Many come to Windhoek in search of greener

pastures, so informal settlements are growing. It was asked how best civil society could interact with municipalities on these issues.

The second issue identified was the **informal economy**. The southern part of the country had received more attention from the colonial power, Germany and also from South Africa. Many informal traders come from the northern part. The culture of selling was not as prominent in the south. Most of the regulations, such as municipal by-laws, restricted people selling their products. Until today the informal sector in Namibia is not recognised. There are policies around Small to Medium Enterprises, but not around the informal sector.

**Group 3** identified **education** as its first issue. There is a need to provide facilities for learners with disabilities. The number of school dropouts is high. Many learners do not have food and/or transport to schools. Government should subsidise transport and food for these learners. There is also an issue of language proficiency. According to tests recently conducted, 98% of teachers are not proficient in English. While there are vocational training centres, there is a need to increase technical education from a young age. Many young people are unemployable. They learn theory, but not how to apply it in practice. There are also not enough classrooms.

The second closely-related issue was **unemployment**. The youth lacks skills. Corruption also exists because of nepotism and tribalism. Training in vocational skills is one way to address this problem.

**Graham Hopwood, director of the IPPR** collected names of institutions and individuals interested in being part of the APRM Civil Society Working Group, which will be convened in the coming weeks by IPPR. He also noted that SAIIA plans to return to Namibia in June 2018 for a ACSWG meeting, in August to assist on developing the submission and in October for a validation workshop.

All the participants and organisers were thanked and the workshop was closed.