

# BOTSWANA APRM POPULAR SENSITISATION (BAPS) INFORMATION WORKSHOP REPORT

By Nhlakanipho Macmillan Zikalala  
13 March 2020



## CIVIL SOCIETY INFORMATION WORKSHOP, 10 MARCH 2020

On 10 March 2020, the [South African Institute of International Affairs \(SAIIA\)](#) in partnership with the [Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations \(BOCONGO\)](#) held an African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) information workshop for civil society organisations (CSOs) in Gaborone, Botswana. This was the first public event under the SAIIA-BOCONGO Botswana APRM Popular Sensitisation (BAPS) project. On 10-11 March, meetings were held with potential development partners, and the Botswana government.

The workshop on 10 March, attended by 20 Botswana CSOs, was kicked off by Mr Steven Gruzd from SAIIA. After a round of brief introductions from the participants, Mr Robert Letsatsi, the BOCONGO board member, gave a welcoming address which included a brief description of the APRM and why it is an important tool for African countries, and Botswana in particular. He urged everyone to take the APRM seriously because it deals with one of the most crippling factors within African countries, namely poor governance.

Mr Gruzd then gave a thorough background of what the APRM entails. This included a descriptive APRM rules, processes, structures, member states and latest developments. He also went on to discuss the relationship SAIIA has had over the years with the APRM processes across the continent since 2003. He also shared the experiences SAIIA had in [Namibia](#) for a similar project in 2018. He mentioned the virtual collapse of the Namibian NGO Forum, which

made collaboration among CSOs a daunting task. On this point he complimented BOCONGO for being a well-suited and established partner in the project.

During discussions, Ms Pusetso Morapedi from the [Botswana Center for Public Integrity](#) commented that she understands the APRM to be a mechanism that reminds people that governance solutions can have a bottom-up approach, in that it is not only the task of the government to deal with issues of governance. CSOs can have a positive impact when deciding on appropriate measures to tackle governance issues. Dorothy Okatch from [Younglove](#) applauded the APRM as a necessary tool for depoliticising social and economic issues. This point was based on the notion that criticising existing government programmes has over the years resulted in being labelled as unpatriotic or speaking against the government. Therefore, the APRM is an opportunity for civil society to voice its own concerns as a collective body, which makes it hard to label one person or NGO as being unpatriotic. Mr Tefo Phatshwane from the [Media Institute of Southern Africa](#) (MISA) stressed that he is concerned about the lack of established enforcement mechanisms for countries that have failed to deliver on their commitments enshrined in the National Programme of Action (NPoA). He pointed out that in many African countries, including Botswana, there is an implementation deficit. In as much as the CSOs are given a role in expressing their concerns and coming up with solutions that may require government intervention, there is no certainty that the government will practically uphold its end of the bargain. Mr Gruzd pointed out that there is a clause stipulating that member states can take some form of action for countries that fail to implement their NPoA but the clause has never been invoked and this is of concern, especially for countries that have acceded to the APRM but have not yet initiated the process.

Mr Nhlakanipho Zikalala from SAIIA gave a presentation on [lessons that can be learned from Namibia's APRM process](#), particularly during the sensitisation phase of CSOs towards drafting their written submission. One of the points that stood out in the presentation was the lack of national coverage in terms of representation. CSOs outside Windhoek were unable to attend workshops or be part of the process due to lack of funds. Ms Maipelo Phale from BOCONGO commented that this might also be a similar problem with civil society outside Gaborone if only the ones in the capital are represented. On this point it was agreed that SAIIA and BOCONGO would put this issue forward the following day when meeting with potential donors. Additional funding would allow to bring along CSOs outside the capital for workshops during the process of developing a written submission. Another key point was in relation to the CSOs in Namibia relying on SAIIA to keep the momentum going, in that they did not hold meetings unless SAIIA was present and this was also sometimes due to a lack of funding. Botswana civil society was urged to own the process and take it forward.

The workshop ended with everyone acknowledging that they had learnt something in terms of the role of the CSOs as well as the media in disseminating information to the public during the APRM process. Mr Gruzd encouraged everyone to continue taking part in upcoming workshops and form social media groups where they can engage with one another.

Ms Pusetso Morapedi closed the session with complimentary remarks to SAIIA and BOCONGO as well as to everyone who attended the workshop. She reminded everyone to continue the momentum as this is one of a few opportunities to hold the government accountable at a domestic level and also at the continental level.

A Civil Society APRM Working Group was formed to sustain interest in the APRM in Botswana. CSOs were urged to participate actively when the APRM Secretariat sends its mission to Gaborone on 8-9 April 2020. The next workshop for BAPS is scheduled to be held on 12-13 May 2020.

## **MEETING WITH DR KAELO MOLEFHE, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

The meeting took place on 10 March 2020, 15h00 at the Office of the President. It was attended by Dr Kaelo Molefhe (Director of Governance), Mr Gruzd (SAIIA), Mr Botho Seboko (BOCONGO) and Mr Nhlakanipho Zikalala (SAIIA). The purpose of the meeting was to enquire about the direction and the progress that has been made by the government in kick-starting the APRM process at the national level. It also outlined Botswana CSOs' plans for the APRM and the BAPS project. Dr Molefhe acknowledged that he is familiar with the APRM process at the theoretical level and there is a likelihood that it will fall under his newly appointed position. Mr Gruzd responded by expressing his gratitude in Dr Molefhe agreeing to meet with SAIIA and BOCONGO. He then proceeded to explain to Dr Molefhe his experiences across different countries regarding the APRM and stressed that Botswana can learn from other countries. Mr Seboko followed up in the discussion by mentioning how happy he was when he got a call from SAIIA to partner on this work. He went on to say that the APRM process is an opportunity that cannot be missed and that he wants to ensure that BOCONGO builds a strong relationship with Dr Molefhe's office in implementing the project. The meeting ended with concluding remarks from Dr Molefhe where he said that Botswana is still far behind when it comes to implementing the APRM and it is going to be a challenging process for the government to gather all necessary resources. Nonetheless, he is confident in the aptitude of the government to come up with a clear direction.

## **MEETING WITH DR GLADYS MOKHAWA UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA**

This was an informal interview with Dr Gladys Mokhawa on 10 March at Avani Hotel. Dr Mokhawa is the Head of Department of Political Science faculty and a senior lecturer at the University of Botswana and has recently been appointed by the president to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a deputy permanent secretary. She pointed out that she was very excited about the government deciding to accede to the APRM process and that she would contribute enormously in ensuring that it a success, instead of being a lost opportunity. She went on to suggest that there should be a collaboration between civil society and academia in developing a civil society written submission. Throughout the meeting she remained enthusiastic about the APRM and committed to inform everyone she knows from the government and academia to take part in the project.

## **MEETING WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The meeting took place on 11 March 2020 at 09h00 am at the European Union (EU) offices. Mr Gruzd proceeded to give a background on the APRM and how it is different from other governance assessment tools such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The EU delegates responded with comments of appreciation for the information given by Mr. Gruzd and asked what some of the reasons why Botswana has taken so long to accede to the APRM. Mr Gruzd responded with three potential reasons:

- (i) The Botswana government reasoned that they are already ranked high in terms of good governance practices in surveys like the Ibrahim Index of African Governance and Transparency International and therefore the APRM would be a duplication of what everyone already knows.

- (ii) The government of Botswana did not want to be used as an agent of comparison and or as a yardstick model to other African countries.
- (iii) Former President Ian Khama seemily was not seen as adopting a Pan-African approach in his foreign policy unlike the incumbent president who is determined to build a strong relationship with African countries and take part in the process of integrating African countries.

The information was welcomed by the EU delegates who went on to comment that the APRM is linked to some of their objectives and projects in Botswana. The meeting discussed the possible additional support that the EU could provide to enable broader national coverage for BAPS and during the drafting of the civil society submission. The EU delegates said they would be in contact with BOCONGO in this regard.

### **MEETING WITH THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION**

The meeting took place on 11 March 2020, at 10h00am at the British High Commission offices in Gaborone. Ms Maipelo Phale from BOCONGO explained the relationship her organisation has with SAIIA and how important it is for the APRM project. Mr Gruzd asked the British High Commission to take part in strengthening the voice of the civil society throughout the project. He said that this could be done by sponsoring logistics that are needed for securing national coverage and to ensure that the civil society has all the tools to hold regular workshops during the drafting of a written submission. The British High Commission delegates welcomed the initiative but stressed that it would be easier to fund the project if it is aligned with their objectives, which includes environmental and biodiversity issues in Botswana. Ms Phale stated that she will contact some of the CSOs working on such issues, especially in the countryside to see if they are willing to take part in the process. The SAIIA delegates also welcomed this approach.

### **MEETING WITH FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG**

This meeting took place on 11 March 2020 at 11h00am at the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung offices. It began with Mr Gruzd introducing APRM and explaining the importance of ensuring that the voice of the civil society is heard throughout. Miss Phale took up the conversation to request support and Mr Lawrence Kefitilwe responded positively that his organisation would be more than happy to fund the project for the civil society through BOCONGO as they already have a strong relationship. BOCONGO was requested to send a concept note.

### **MEETING WITH THE DIRECTORATE ON CORRUPTION AND ECONOMIC CRIME (DCEC)**

This meeting took place on 11 March at 12:00 pm in Gaborone at the office of the Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime (DCEC). Mr Gruzd commenced the meeting by explaining the APRM process, and the work SAIIA has done across the African continent. Mr Zikalala explained to DCEC that the purpose of the meeting was to make them aware of what civil society has been doing and stressed that the APRM process would work better where government departments take a keen interest in participating in some of the workshops organised by CSOs. Mr Gruzd commented that throughout his experience on APRM, corruption is one of the key issues that is included in the in the civil society submission and

recommended a need for a strong relationship between DCEC and CSOs that focus on tackling corruption issues. Miss Phale concluded the meeting by inviting DCEC delegates to one of the civil society workshops that will be taking place on 12-13 May 2020.

### **RADIO INTERVIEWS BY MR GRUZD**

Mr. Steve Gruzd had the opportunity to speak to two radio stations about the APRM process in an attempt to build momentum across the country and to encourage everyone to be a part of the process. The first interview was with Costy Moloji from Duma FM on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. The second interview was with Tebogo Mokoto from Gabs FM on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020.