



Zimbabwe APRM Popular Sensitisation (ZAPS)

Online Civil Society APRM Sensitisation Workshop

FRIDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2021

Concept Note

Background

The [African Peer Review Mechanism](#) (APRM), established in 2003, is Africa's premier governance self-assessment and promotion tool. The purpose of the APRM is *"to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through reinforcement of best practices, including identifying deficiencies and accessing the needs for capacity building,"* according to its founding documents.

In February 2020, Zimbabwe became the 39th African Union member state to voluntarily accede to the APRM. At the time, this appeared to signal President Emmerson Mnangagwa's commitment of the Zimbabwean government to open governance, reducing corruption and promoting the rule of law. The APRM's rules require that civil society is meaningfully involved in each country's review process. Together with government and the private sector, the country's civil society will diagnose governance strengths and weaknesses, and develop appropriate and applicable remedies.

In the SADC region, there are six states that have been reviewed: South Africa (2007), Lesotho and Mozambique (2009, 2019), Mauritius (2010), Zambia and Tanzania (2013). There is thus much learning to be gleaned from their APRM experiences. Two – Zimbabwe and the Seychelles – acceded in February 2020, and another two – Angola and Malawi – joined in 2004, but have made no visible progress. The DRC is expected to join soon. The other two SADC states – Eswatini and Madagascar – have not yet acceded, and could possibly be persuaded to join by following Zimbabwe's example.

The APRM Country Review Reports (CRRs) in Southern Africa predicted xenophobia in South Africa, the unravelling of political party relations in Mozambique, and the constitutional crisis in Zambia. Common cross-cutting issues in the CRRs include managing diversity, electoral systems, separation of powers, corruption, public finance management, land, poverty, unemployment,

education, healthcare, natural resources and the environment. Some of these issues will be relevant to Zimbabwe's governance context as well.

In March 2017, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published "[Namibia and the African Peer Review Mechanism: Committing to Improved Governance](#)" written by [Steven Gruz](#), head of the [African Governance and Diplomacy Programme](#) at the [South African Institute of International Affairs \(SAIIA\)](#). Although aimed at Namibian civil society, parliament and policymakers, to explain how the APRM arose and was conceptualised, what it is and what it entails for the country, it is equally applicable to Zimbabwe. It outlines what a country can expect from the APRM process, and what is required to undertake a successful, inclusive and meaningful review. It also suggests further reading material to learn more about the APRM.

ZAPS

Zimbabwe's accession to the APRM provides civil society organisations (CSOs) with an important opportunity. Government's plans for the process have not yet solidified, so there is an opening to influence them. The APRM also provides a platform to promote a wide range of governance issues that CSOs feel passionately about, through evidence-based submissions. It is a requirement that civil society be involved in a country's APRM process. But the extent of their involvement is up to the CSOs, depending on how informed, interested and mobilised they are. This will prove particularly challenging due to COVID-19 and social distancing requirements.

SAIIA and the [SIVIO Institute](#) have worked together to develop the Zimbabwe APRM Popular Sensitisation (ZAPS) Project. ZAPS was launched in December 2020, when SAIIA and the SIVIO Institute met online to map out the project. A [pre-planning meeting](#) was held on 29 January 2021 with a view to forming a multi-stakeholder civil society working group on the APRM.

ZAPS's aim is to enhance the participation of CSOs in Zimbabwe's APRM process, through capacity building, fostering better knowledge of the APRM and its rules and opportunities, and developing a written submission on the key governance issues in Zimbabwe. The project has been adapted to take into account COVID-19 restrictions.

There are several potential benefits stemming from Zimbabwe's accession to the APRM. This African-owned process will produce a comprehensive governance assessment of Zimbabwe's strengths and weaknesses, and develop recommendations to remedy shortcomings. The APRM can catalyse and bolster reform efforts, and open civic space for CSOs and citizens through the dialogue it promotes. It is also an opportunity for Zimbabwe to explain and showcase its best practices to its peers, and to build capacity in Zimbabwe's CSOs. A well-run, inclusive and transparent process can promote accountability in the country, and potentially attract investors and development assistance. And the more SADC countries that are encouraged to accede, the easier it is to deal with cross-boundary issues, including climate, health and migration.

ZAPS will run from December 2020 to June 2021, and will sensitise Zimbabwe's CSOs on what the APRM is, how it operates, its potential benefits for the country, how it relates to their existing research and advocacy campaigns, and how they can best mobilise and plan to ensure that the national APRM process is open, transparent, fair and leads to greater accountability and better governance in the country. Specifically, ZAPS seeks to:

- Ensure that participating civil society representatives understand the APRM, its goals and processes, and opportunities to use the mechanism to highlight governance issues in public fora and ultimately influence governmental policies.
- Learn lessons from other APRM countries (such as Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia) in the region that have undergone similar processes, which would result in increased peer-learning; a crucial part of the APRM process.
- Create awareness among Zimbabwean CSOs on what needs to be done to make the Zimbabwean APRM process more effective and more inclusive.
- Assist Zimbabwean civil society to meaningfully participate in the national APRM process by making a written submission. This will be sent to the government and the APRM Continental Secretariat as a constructive input for the reports they will compile.
- Facilitate involvement in APRM activities in the context of COVID-19.

ZAPS consists of five key activities to support Zimbabwean civil society in its APRM journey. Note that COVID-19 has meant that original plans have had to be tailored for online delivery.

1. Pre-Planning Meeting (29 January 2021) – ALREADY OCCURED

A Zoom meeting was held to kick off the process, between the partners and a few other key CSOs, to discuss the APRM and governance situation in Zimbabwe, how the APRM process is likely to unfold, and the platforms and opportunities for effective civil society engagement with the process. This meeting proposed a roadmap and timelines for CSO participation in Zimbabwe's APRM process. See here for the [workshop report](#), [presentation](#), and a [recording of that meeting](#).

2. Online Civil Society APRM Sensitisation Workshop (26 February 2021)

A three-hour online Zoom training workshop on the APRM, with components aimed specifically at CSOs. Resource persons from other Southern African countries that have completed APRM processes and reviews will be invited to share their experiences and expertise at the workshop, promoting peer learning, as will members of the APRM Secretariat. The workshop will cover APRM basics, experiences of other SADC countries in the APRM, and focus on how civil society can make a significant and practical difference in Zimbabwe's APRM process. Issues for inclusion in the submission will be discussed. SAIIA will also commission a substantial background paper on governance in Zimbabwe, and make funding available for the chapters of the submission. SAIIA's technical experts will also distribute their APRM manuals, research and analysis.

3. Activity 3: Online Working Group Meetings (March-April 2021)

As needed, Zoom meetings will be convened by the SIVIO Institute and SAIIA for CSOs most interested in the APRM process and willing to be a part of a coalition and working group that will create a written submission. These meetings will further discuss key Zimbabwean governance issues, the proposed methodology to garner inputs for the submission and a plan of action for documenting it in submission format to ensure active participation by civil society in the Zimbabwean APRM process.

4. Activity 4: Submission development (March-May 2021)

A SAIIA consultant will conduct desktop research on governance in Zimbabwe, which will be used as a zero draft for the submission along with the chapters contributed by Zimbabwean CSOs. A SAIIA consultant will then undertake an intense writing exercise to pull together the various submissions, working with civil society coalition partners, to coordinate the written submission and supplement research with interviews. SAIIA will then put the draft submission together. Another online Zoom call will be held.

5. Activity 5: Online validation workshop (May 2021)

A final online validation workshop via Zoom will take place during which the draft written submission will be presented to gather input from members of the Working Group and wider CSO community. A dedicated strategy session will help the coalition determine how to best approach the government of Zimbabwe and the APRM review team and how to utilise traditional and social media to ensure maximum impact of the submission. Following this workshop, SAIIA staff will assist their Zimbabwean counterparts with the editing process and finalisation of the submission.

6. Activity 6: Launch of the report (end June 2021)

The working group will develop a launch and dissemination plan for the report. There are funds for infographics, video development, social media advertising, radio airtime and so on.

ZAPS is grateful to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for their generous support.