



ZIMBABWE APRM POPULAR SENSITISATION (ZAPS) PROJECT

Report of the Civil Society Pre-Planning Meeting

Friday 29 January 2021, via Zoom

By Nkanyiso Simelane

Introduction

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an African self-monitoring instrument that aims to improve governance in Africa at local, national, and continental levels.¹ At the core of the issues present on the continent is a lack of good governance practices. Therefore, the APRM is of great significance to the continent as it promotes the African Union's (AU) shared values of democratic governance. One of the many countries on the continent plagued by issues stemming from a lack of good governance is Zimbabwe, including corruption, poverty, and unemployment. President Emmerson Mnangagwa's accession to the APRM in February 2020 is a promising step towards rehabilitating Zimbabwe's governance.

The ZAPS Project

[The Zimbabwe APRM Popular Sensitisation Project \(ZAPS\)](#) is spearheaded by the [South African Institute of International Affairs \(SAIIA\)](#) in collaboration with the [SIVIO Institute](#), a civil society organisation based in Zimbabwe. The aim of the ZAPS project is to enhance civil society participation in the country's APRM process as this is a requirement under the rules of the APRM.² The project seeks to inform and sensitise Zimbabwean stakeholders about APRM processes, and

¹ <https://www.aprm-au.org/page-about/>.

² <https://saiia.org.za/project/zimbabwe-aprm-popular-sensitisation-project/>

work with them to jointly develop a well-researched written submission to feed into the national APRM process. SAIIA and SIVIO will provide the necessary support to Zimbabwean civil society organisations (CSOs) to form an APRM CSO Working Group. This Working Group will jointly select 10-12 key governance issues in Zimbabwe and compile an evidence-based written submission (a spotlight report) that will be disseminated to the Zimbabwean government, the APRM Secretariat and to the public. SAIIA has had previous experience with similar initiatives in [Namibia](#), [Botswana](#) and [South Africa](#) which proved to be a great success and provide valuable lessons that can be applied to the Zimbabwe context. One of these lessons is ensuring that CSOs “*become familiar with the APRM process as soon as possible*”³ so that civil society can be well informed about the journey ahead and keep government accountable to its commitment to the APRM processes.

On 29 January 2021, a [ZAPS Project Pre-Planning Meeting](#) was held via Zoom, which was attended by representatives of SAIIA, SIVIO Institute, and other prominent CSOs from Zimbabwe. The [agenda of this meeting](#) was mainly to introduce the ZAPS project, explain how it will work to various stakeholders and provide a background of the rules and processes of the APRM.

The meeting discussed the many opportunities and benefits that the ZAPS Project promises to bring for the country. It provides a unique opportunity to influence the Zimbabwean government’s strategies and priorities during the APRM process as they are newly acceded. The production of an evidence-based submission can potentially accelerate the APRM process and get the Zimbabwean government to kickstart the processes around the mechanism beyond just acceding to it. It also allows multiple CSOs to form a common voice rather than speaking in silos, and an operational Civil Society APRM Working Group is also a resource and reference point to the continental APRM Secretariat. Most importantly, this project creates an opportunity for civic education with regards to the APRM through the awareness that the CSOs will promote via dissemination and explanation of the spotlight report.⁴

The next stage of the ZAPS project is the Sensitisation Workshop (provisionally scheduled for 26 February 2021), followed by a Working Group Meeting in which the key governance issues will

³ Gruzd, S., and Hopwood, G., 2019. “Spotlighting Governance Challenges: Lessons from Namibia”, SAIIA, <https://saiia.org.za/research/spotlighting-governance-challenges-lessons-from-namibia/>.

⁴ Luanda Mpungose speaking during the ZAPS Project Pre-Planning Meeting on the 29th of January 2021.

be selected (provisionally 29 March 2021). The Working Group will continue to have meetings during the course of the planned 6-month project, which is scheduled to be completed towards the middle of this year.

In the Q&A session, issues ranging from government accountability and the strained relations between government and civil society at large were raised. The ZAPS Project provides an opportunity for trust-building between the two stakeholders. This will be absolutely crucial for the success of the APRM in Zimbabwe because the best solutions for tackling the multiple crises in the country will only materialise if both civil society and the government work together towards a common goal to “lift high the banner, the flag of Zimbabwe”.⁵

A recording of the full Zoom meeting is available [here](#) and SAIIA’s presentation is [here](#)

⁵ Zimbabwean National Anthem English lyrics, <https://www.zimembassyottawa.com/national-anthem>.