



SOUTH AFRICAN APRM POPULAR SENSITISATION (SAPS) PROJECT

Report on the Launch of the South African APRM Youth Submission

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“It always seems impossible until it’s done.” This quote, by Nelson Mandela, expresses the momentous task that South African youth have achieved in compiling the SAPS Youth Submission. This is evidenced by their resilience in cooperating across all the provinces and weathering the storms of online collaboration during a pandemic. On 26 May 2021, the [South African Institute of International Affairs \(SAIIA\)](#), in collaboration with [Jasoro Consulting](#), officially launched [South Africa’s Youth Submission to the APRM](#) as the final stage of the [South African APRM Popular Sensitisation \(SAPS\) Project](#). The event was moderated by media personality Cathy Mohlahlana, with close to 60 attendees.

Opening Remarks

Ms Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, CEO of SAIIA, made the opening remarks. She expressed that the Institute has been engaged in the APRM since its inception in 2003. This is because of the APRM’s importance in achieving Agenda 2063 and because it is a home-grown African initiative. Further, it has created a tool that allows societies to critically assess their own governance records, looking at the issues and finding ways to address them. The SAPS Project has taken SAIIA to a different level of engagement with the APRM process. This is because this work has highlighted the importance of including the youth in the APRM. SAIIA and Jasoro Consulting brought youth together to compile a submission on issues that they (the youth) identified as important. The youth submission, therefore, creates an opportunity to hear the voices of the youth substantively, opening space for dialogue and building social trust.

Ms Helena Bådagård spoke on behalf of the [Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency \(SIDA\)](#), one of SAIIA’s longstanding partners who made this project possible. She explained that collaboration with SAIIA and the APRM is part of long-term work for democracy that requires patience and commitment. How a democratic country is governed must be the business of every single person in the country – especially young people in the African context. This is why the work of the Swedish government is strongly focused on democracy and human rights. Bådagård further emphasised that a wide range of voices need to be heard, different topics reviewed and analysed, so that the push for

justice is achieved in different ways. Hence, the youth submission reflects that the perspectives of young people are crucial and need to be the basis of decision-making, the allocation of resources, and policy agendas in South Africa.

Mr Steven Gruzd, Head of SAIIA's African Governance and Diplomacy Programme, gave an overview of the SAPS process. The process began in August 2020 with a call for young people to become actively engaged in the project and over 100 participants from all over the country volunteered. [A Pre-Planning Workshop](#) was held in which the APRM was explained and the meeting explored how youth could get involved. In September 2020, a [Sensitisation Workshop](#) was held where representatives of the APRM Secretariat, the and the South African APRM National Governing Council (NGC) shared their insights on the process. Nine Working Groups were then formed whereby young people organised themselves according to the different governance issues to be tackled. Once the nine issues were identified, youth participants described the issues, why they mattered and provided evidence from reliable sources. A background paper was commissioned on those issues and it was combined with the youth submission - the draft was placed online and circulated. In February 2021, everything was checked, with everyone providing commentary on where the draft could be improved during a [Validation Workshop](#). After final editing and layout, the final youth submission was ready to be launched.

Remarks from the APRM

Mr Thulani Tshefuta, spoke on behalf of South Africa's APRM National Governing Council (NGC). Like the rest of Africa, South Africa has a youthful population but this does not automatically translate into productive development in society. The only time the country can withdraw a demographic dividend is when productive investment is made into the lives of young people. This investment includes providing platforms, opportunities and support to young people. Mr Tshefuta remarked that the APRM processes have the potential to mitigate the recent decline in youth engagement and activism. Young people have the potential to devise solutions for the many challenges they face – if provided with platforms and support to do so. Through the SAPS Project, young people have proven that they can be considered the solution to issues of governance in the country. He further motivated young people to provide proposals to form part of the South African APRM National Programme of Action. The NGC's Country Self-Assessment Report will not only cover all thematic areas of the APRM but will also have a dedicated section of the report focussing on the youth. Mr Tshefuta suggested that the inputs of the SAPS Youth Submission will form the basis of this section. He further confirmed that the NGC will allow the youth participants to present their findings in the next NGC meeting scheduled for 11 June 2021.

Professor. Eddy Maloka, the CEO of the Continental APRM Secretariat, made the following remarks. He commended SAIIA for being a loyal partner to the APRM and expressed that the SAPS Project is indicative of the importance of think-tanks and civil society in the architecture of the APRM. Maloka

emphasised the continued need for all APRM member states to allow for sustained youth participation at national levels. This must go beyond mere representation and become more substantive. This is even more desirable because over 600 million young Africans are unemployed and inadequately educated. He congratulated the youth participants on compiling a solid submission and depicting the resilience of young people in South Africa. He also encouraged South African youth participants to take initiative in disseminating their work with other youth in the country. This will allow the SAPS Launch to serve as an inspiration for youth to find innovative ways to contribute to the APRM process.

Presentation of the APRM Youth Submission

Ms Dimpho Lekgeu from Youth Lab and Mr Brian Mhlongo from the Democracy Development Programme made a presentation on experiences and key learnings from the SAPS project. They expressed that the process accessed youth in spaces they find comfortable which allowed for meaningful participation. Moreover, the youth participants were well capacitated, engaged and incentivised through the various workshops held. The process also exposed youth participants to the importance of collaboration in the youth development space. The presenters provided a summation of the report looking at the nine key governance issues identified and recommendations provided. These are youth political participation, social cohesion and inclusion, peace and security, health and social services, economic empowerment, institutional planning, land and housing, access to quality basic and higher education, and climate change.

Closing the event, Ms Tessa Dooms from Jasoro Consulting, commended the collaborative efforts that involved youth participants from all provinces of the country. She also noted that there was a good balance of gender, with many project leaders of the thematic areas being women. Dooms praised the potential of the youth insights to enrich the APRM submissions that South Africa makes and youth development in the country. Mr. Steven Gruzd then officially launched the SAPS Youth Submission.

A recording of the full Zoom meeting is available on YouTube [here](#), and a PDF document of the final youth submission can be accessed [here](#). A short video of the process is [here](#).