

LESOTHO APRM POPULAR SENSITISATION (LAPS) PROJECT

Report on the Non-State Actors APRM Sensitisation Workshop

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The [South African Institute of International Affairs \(SAIIA\)](#) and the [Governance Institute of Sustainable Development \(GISD\)](#) launched the second phase of the [Lesotho APRM Popular Sensitisation \(LAPS\) Project](#). The Non-State Actors APRM Sensitisation Workshop was held to allow other African countries, who had successfully completed their civil society APRM submissions, to share their experiences. This is to encourage peer-learning and assist Lesotho in their journey towards formulating a civil society submission to the APRM, as the country prepares for its second APRM review. The event was moderated by Ms. Isabel Bosman and had 32 live attendees.

Introductory Remarks

Mzimkhulu Sithetho, Managing Director, Governance Institute for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Sithetho began by expressing his gratitude to all non-state actors who have participated in the LAPS Project thus far. This shows an intent to ensure the APRM is reignited in Lesotho and determination by various stakeholders in the country to foster good governance. Although Lesotho joined the APRM in 2004, Mr. Sithetho pointed out that the country's activity in the APRM has deteriorated. A key agenda for the APRM, insofar as non-state actors are concerned, is to push for the Second Generation Review. Lesotho's APRM National Governing Council (NGC) was predominantly headed by non-state actors before it collapsed. Therefore, the participation of non-state actors is pivotal.

It is for this reason that the GISD saw the need to resuscitate the APRM in Lesotho from the perspective of non-state actors through the LAPS Project. This is even more critical because of various issues facing the country, such as, inter-party conflicts, the absence of peace and stability, and a lack of social cohesion. These issues expose the lack of good governance in Lesotho. Hence participating in the APRM has the benefit of interaction with and learning from other continental colleagues to build an effective governance architecture for Lesotho. This is particularly beneficial as the LAPS Project is the 5th of its kind by the SAIIA (after Namibia, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe), which will allow for peer-learning. Mr. Sithetho also mentioned that participants from marginalised groups have been identified, including youth, women, the disabled and the diaspora. Furthermore, issues of socio-economic cohesion, conflict, and poor development will be explored to ensure Lesotho embraces its democracy and improve its governance towards sustainability.

Presentations

Steven Gruzd, Programme Head: African Governance and Diplomacy, SAIIA.

Mr. Gruzd provided a background to the APRM, its rules, processes, structures, member states and latest developments. The APRM is Africa's voluntary self-governance, monitoring, and promotion tool. It aims to assist member states to diagnose governance problems and to measure their adherence to African (African Union – AU) and global standards. The APRM promotes dialogue, peer pressure, diplomacy, and non-state actors' involvement towards reform. Hence the LAPS Project provides a

unique opportunity for civil society to pressurise the Lesotho government to reignite and accelerate involvement in APRM processes.

Ms. Clementine Nyinawumuntu, Country Coordinator for Lesotho in the APRM Secretariat.

Ms. Nyinawumuntu highlighted that the APRM national exercise to promote good governance and socio-economic development. The national structures of the APRM are important because this is where transformation should be initiated. National structures include the APRM Focal Point, who liaises between national and continental structures. Then there is the National Governing Council (NGC) formation, which is very key to the APRM process. Nyinawumuntu is of the view that member states without a functioning NGC tend to have limited involvement.

The NGCs were introduced to deepen citizen participation, deepen the principle of national governance ownership, ensure the transparency of the country's self-assessment and promote government accountability and manage the APRM at the national level. It is therefore important that the process is inclusive of civil society to represent the grievances of citizens and reduce political manipulation. The LAPS Project provides such an opportunity for non-state actors to get involved in the APRM. The NGC needs to also represent vulnerable groups within civil society, such as, youth, women, disabled, rural and the marginalised societies. This will allow for a multitude of issues to be depicted in the country's self-assessment and National Programme of Action.

Nyinawumuntu emphasised that the APRM places great importance on CSOs and their role in society. The success of the APRM depends on the involvement of civil society as it performs various functions for the advancement of national democracy. These include oversight of the government, linking the governors to the governed and keeping civil society informed. She then urged the CSOs in Lesotho to be active in national and continental governance structures as they are vital in fulfilling the national development agenda. However, in order for CSOs to make their voice heard, they need to work in coalitions to make a greater impact in different areas of expertise.

Mr. Motjoka Ramonono, Former Head, APRM Lesotho Secretariat.

Mr. Ramonono began by outlining the background of Lesotho's engagement in the APRM. Lesotho voluntarily acceded to the APRM in 2004 and national structures were established in 2006. In 2007-2008, a consortium of two technical research institutions engaged to produce the country's Self-Assessment Report. In 2009, a Country Review Mission to Lesotho was initiated to validate this report. In June 2009, Lesotho was Peer-Reviewed. In January 2011, an Annual Progress Report was submitted and presented at the APRM Forum in Ethiopia. An APRM Sub-Committee within Lesotho's cabinet which consisted of members of public office responsible for linking the NGC with government. Focal Points were established within the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

However, all these structures are now non-existent and have not been functioning since 2015/2016. One of the challenges has been the lack of political will that began to subside around 2012 with the advent of the mix-member proportional system resulting in a coalition government. There has also been an issue of continuously changing government regimes in a short period of time, which has made sustaining APRM engagement difficult. Another challenge was a lack of financial resources as the country relied heavily on external funding. The changing of governments made access to state resources difficult.

However, Mr. Ramonono reiterated that the APRM still presents numerous advantages for Lesotho. This includes the strategic and good networking relationships formed with the APRM Continental Secretariat over the initial years of accession. It also remains a good mechanism to deepen democracy, participation by ordinary citizens in national governance and can complement ongoing reforms in the country. Ramonono then recommended that urgent measures should be undertaken to revive the

APRM national structures in Lesotho. This includes the NGC, Focal Point and the Parliament's APRM Sub-Committee to channel political will and receive various government resources.

Experiences from other countries that have developed APRM CSO submissions

In this section, various CSOs that have completed the APS Project shared on their experiences with the audience.

Mr. Graham Hopwood, Director, [Institute for Public Policy Research \(IPPR\)](#), Namibia.

Mr. Hopwood shared the Namibian experience with the APS Project. Namibia acceded to the APRM in 2017 and the country has been active in the continental processes. In 2018, the [APRM Sensitisation Project in Namibia \(ASPIN\)](#) including approximately 20 NGOs/CSOs was developed. He emphasised that it was not easy to combine all organisations as there was no functioning umbrella body for NGOs and CSOs in Namibia. Hence all organisations had to be researched and contacted individually. The SAIIA team visited Namibia on several occasions for the various meetings with the participating organisations as this was before the COVID-19 pandemic. Towards the end of 2018, a draft report was completed and published early in 2019. It targeted 13 key governance issues by CSOs for the Namibian government to prioritise in the APRM process.

The report was handed to the government and an NGC was formed which was unfortunately dominated by government figures. This was a disappointment for CSOs and the private sector in the country, which were not adequately represented. However, Hopwood stated that the CSOs wrote to the President to protest their concern over the membership of the NGC. Although the President did not officially respond to the letter, he did reconstitute the NGC and added three more CSO members, some of which were involved in the writing of the ASPIN report. With this in mind, Hopwood advised Lesotho participants not to be too aggressive but also be firm on certain non-negotiable principles involving non-state actors. He further recommended for the NGC chairperson to be a non-state actor so that the sector is well represented and not pushed over.

Ms. Maipelo Phale, Programmes Coordinator, [Botswana Council of Non-Governmental Organisations \(BOCONGO\)](#), Botswana.

Ms. Phale presented the Botswana experience in completing the [BAPS Project](#). Unlike the Namibian experience, Botswana had the advantage of having an established umbrella body of NGOs – BOCONGO. Botswana acceded to the APRM in February 2019 and the BAPS Project began in March 2020. There were 35 organisations that were involved in the process which made it more inclusive. The BAPS programme consisted of six main activities (meetings) from the Pre-Planning Meeting to the launch of the report in April 2021. An online Working Group was formed from the organisations to identify 12 key governance issues to put forward. Phale highlighted that there were difficulties in operating online as this slowed the process and various lockdown measures constricted movement. However, despite these challenges, the programme was successfully completed with multiple CSOs participating. Participants benefitted from the technical support provided by SAIIA and the various lessons learnt from other countries.

Ms. Phale provided the following advice for Lesotho to learn from. Firstly, it is important to involve as many non-state actors as possible so that nobody is excluded. Secondly, having an umbrella body assists in coordinating the process more efficiently. Thirdly, it is paramount to be specific in identifying the key governance issues as governance is a very broad sphere. These issues must be supported by comprehensive literature and verifiable evidence. Fourthly, government must be consulted/involved to some degree in the process in order to build healthy relations with CSOs which will assist in advancing civil society agendas. Fifth, CSOs in Lesotho need to gain an understanding of the APRM processes as they are complex so that participation is meaningful. Sixth, it is important to adopt a non-partisan

approach so the politics do not dominate the process. Issues presented must be those of the ordinary citizens in order to maintain an apolitical stance. Lastly, the experiences shared by other countries need to be taken and applied so that mistakes are not repeated.

Mr. Toby Fayoyin, Director, [Jasoro Consulting South Africa](#).

Mr. Fayoyin presented on the South African experience on the [SAPS Project](#). What made the SAPS Project unique was that it was a youth submission developed by young people in the country. He explained that the process was participation-driven, research-driven, technology-driven (given the COVID-19 context), and solution-oriented. To make the process participation-driven, Jasoro Consulting and SALLA approached young people from across the country to participate through the use of social media and other informal youth platforms. The participants were also fully catered for through the provision of a stipend and mobile data. Research support was provided to ensure that the research output was sound through the use of common templates and brief education on the core features of research writing.

In terms of technology, online platforms, such as Google Drive Documents were used to allow all participants to contribute their inputs. WhatsApp groups were created as the main medium of communication between the groups and coordinators. In making the programme solution-oriented, participants were encouraged to formulate the recommendations as opposed to simply identifying the issues. Templates were provided on how to link the problems and possible interventions. Overall, the process was successful in allowing young people share their own views rather than putting words in their mouths.

Ms. Eddah Jowah, Programmes Manager, [SIVIO Institute](#), Zimbabwe.

Ms. Jowah shared experiences from the ongoing [ZAPS Project](#) in Zimbabwe. The ZAPS Project recently began in January 2021 after Zimbabwe's accession into the APRM in February 2020. Jowah asserted that since the country's accession, the Zimbabwean government has pushed aside APRM work due to other priorities relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ZAPS Project has taken place solely online via Zoom meetings as a result. This has affected the number of participants in the process due to technological limitations. Be that as it may, there still exists an opportunity to give CSOs a head-start in the APRM process before the government begins its processes. The Working Group has identified 11 key governance issues that are currently being developed into a written submission.

Ms. Jowah shared the following lessons based on the experience thus far. The ZAPS Project has opened dialogue between the CSOs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus allowing for inclusion in the national APRM process. For example, the Ministry attended the ZAPS Pre-Planning Meeting, and has been kept abreast of the project. Jowah is confident that this can be the beginning of a long-lasting working relationship between the two stakeholders. Moreover, the completed submission can be used to engage further issues with the government.

12 Key Governance Issues for LAPS' Submission and Next Steps

Mr. Steven Gruzd explained that the next stages of the LAPS Project will be the formation of a Working Group that will identify the 12 key governance issues. The aim is to produce a document that can be used for Lesotho's Second Generation Country Review. Mr. Gruzd recommended that the starting place be assessing the First Country Review, looking at the key problems identified previously and see the extent to which they have been addressed. An expert will be commissioned to produce a background paper based on the selection of the Lesotho CSOs. Finally, the preliminary date for the completion of the Project is June 2022.

Discussion and Q&A

Discussion: A concern was raised about the dominance of the executive branch in the national APRM structures and how this can be mitigated. The respondent reiterated that CSOs need to be robust and organised so that their voice is heard but without confrontation.

Question: How have CSOs integrated the APRM into their local advocacy programmes and how can we influence them to do so?

Answer: The APS report, particularly in Namibia, has opened various doors for CSO participation in local advocacy programmes. For example, BOCONGO is involved in Botswana's current Constitutional Review Process in September and the BAPS written report is being used as a basis for this process.

Question: How does the APRM assist CSOs coordinate across the African region?

Answer: The AU has an Economic, Social and Cultural Council. However, it is not highly functional and seems to be highly politicised.

The LAPS Project website is accessible [here](#).
