

THE GAMBIA: POST-ELECTION SEMINAR

REPORT SUMMARY

13-16 JUNE 2022

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

From 13-16 June 2022, CPA UK partnered with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) to deliver a Post-Election Seminar at the National Assembly of The Gambia. The seminar was attended by 49 National Assembly Members (NAMs), as well as 19 clerks and support staff.

With 36 of 58 NAMs newly elected in the April 2022 parliamentary elections, this programme presented a valuable opportunity to support the NAMs' induction for their new roles and renew the longstanding partnership between the UK Parliament, WFD, and the National Assembly.

The new chapter in this relationship was marked by the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding between these three stakeholders, ensuring continued collaboration on capacity building programmes for the National Assembly until 2025.

IMPACT & OUTCOMES

Impact:

The National Assembly of The Gambia is effective, accountable, and inclusive in its delivery of parliamentary business, with National Assembly Members equipped and confident to undertake their responsibilities efficiently.

Outcomes:

Through a programme of meetings, briefings, plenary sessions, and interactive discussions, the programme will deliver the following:

1. Participants have deepened their understanding of parliamentary procedure and are confident in participating effectively in parliamentary business.

PARTNERS



COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION UK - CPA UK

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FULL REPORT

2. Participants have deepened their understanding of committee work and the responsibilities of committee chairs and Members.

3. The links between the UK Parliament and the National Assembly of the Gambia are further strengthened.

Outputs:

1. At least 25 newly elected NAMs participate in the four-day programme.

2. At least 25 participants report increased understanding of parliamentary procedure, including around committee work, and the responsibilities of parliamentarians.

3. A comprehensive outcome report to be produced and disseminated to participants.

LIST OF UK DELEGATES

- Craig Whittaker MP (Head of Delegation)
- Anne McLaughlin MP
- The Lord German OBE
- Medha Bhasin (Clerk)



EFFECTIVE COMMITTEE SCRUTINY

The National Assembly's committee system reflects that of Westminster, with some differences in scope and levels of resourcing. UK select committees typically have multiple clerks attached to them, alongside a specialist. In The Gambia, 11 clerks work across 26 committees. The National Assembly's committee sessions will often overlap, and so both **clerks and NAMs who serve across multiple committees have to prioritise which sessions they attend.**

This, coupled with the recent high turnover of Members within committees following the recent legislative elections, has meant that provision of informative briefing materials has been essential to delivering effective committee work. Gambian clerks noted they had produced written overviews of the key issues and priorities for each committee at the conclusion of the previous National Assembly session to strengthen the knowledge and understanding of new committee members following the election.



Participants also considered how to effectively pose questions in a committee setting. UK delegates suggested that parliamentarians avoid confrontational ‘headline grabbing’ questions, arguing that showing respect for witnesses and their expertise tends to yield the most constructive answers. In addition, they emphasised the importance of specific and direct questioning, demonstrating this by challenging NAMs to draft hypothetical questions to a minister with a length of 20 words or less, beginning with the words ‘how’ ‘why’ or ‘what’.

ENGAGING WITH CONSTITUENTS

Following the recent legislative elections, the question of how to manage constituent expectations was at the forefront of discussions. Acknowledging that it is not always within the power of an individual parliamentarian to implement a policy, Members agreed that it was better to **publicly promise to act as advocates for policies within the National Assembly**, avoiding the risk of “overpromising and underdelivering”, and enabling the building of trust with constituents. UK delegates highlighted methods that are within the power of a Member to ensure constituent voices are heard, for example by raising issues of concern in letters to government ministers.

CPA UK IN THE REGION

Uganda: Mentorship Programme for Women Parliamentarians

CPA UK has partnered with the Ugandan Women’s Parliamentary Association (UWOPA), UN Women Uganda, and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) to deliver a remote mentorship programme that will see parliamentarians from the UK act as mentors to their female counterparts in Uganda through a series of virtual meetings from September to November 2022.

Uganda: Legislative Benchmarking Visit on Legal Aid

CPA UK hosted a delegation of parliamentarians and officials from the Parliament of Uganda in Westminster for a legislation benchmarking exercise focusing on legal aid provision in July 2022. The programme was designed to support delegates’ upcoming legislative scrutiny work on the National Legal Aid Bill, using UK legislation for comparative analysis.

The seminar also discussed means of communications between Members and their constituents. Whilst NAMs use social media and other online tools, poor internet coverage in rural areas means these tools have a more limited reach than in the UK. Instead, local committees at a town and village level are used as a key means of disseminating information to constituents.

UK Members discussed their own strategies for constituency communication, drawing particular attention to activities that do not require significant resources or technology, such as holding constituency surgeries, setting up stalls in areas of high footfall, and using a parliamentary letterhead to lend gravitas to their communications when resolving constituency casework.

EMERGENCY SCRUTINY

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting state of emergency that was implemented in The Gambia, the role of the National Assembly in preventing abuse of executive power during times of crisis became a key topic of conversation.

The power to declare a state of emergency rests with the President. However, this cannot be implemented unless an act of the National Assembly is passed to enforce it. A panellist suggested this **power to legislate to enforce a state of emergency can be used as crucial leverage to curb executive power** when negotiating with the government.

Increased training for committees was also identified as a means for the National Assembly to achieve more effective and in-depth scrutiny of emergency powers and their application.

DIVERSE REPRESENTATION

Women are underrepresented in the National Assembly. Of the 246 candidates in the 2022 elections, only 19 were women. There are only five female NAMs serving in the National Assembly, three of whom are elected Members, an additional two having been nominated by President Barrow.

Discussing how to improve female representation in the Assembly, **participants raised the example of the successful 'Not Too Young To Run' campaign.** Inspired by a similar initiative to lower the minimum age for elected office in Nigeria, this campaign brought together young people, political parties, NGOs, and civil society to successfully increase youth participation and representation in Gambian politics. NAMs suggested that this initiative could provide an effective blueprint for the promotion of greater gender diversity within the National Assembly.

COUNTRY PROFILE

- Population: 2,286,000
- Area: 10,689 sq km
- Capital: Banjul
- Official language: English
- Major religion: Islam
- Joined Commonwealth: 1965, withdrew in 2013, re-joined in 2018
- Head of State: President Adama Barrow



MANAGING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Participants actively discussed how to best uphold high levels of ethics and standards within the National Assembly. Members accepted their responsibility to declare personal gifts donated to them by outside interests. However, they also expressed a desire for clearer guidance on how to differentiate these gifts from items and services that enable them to perform their duties as parliamentarians.

A recent controversy over a Gambian Member using their parliamentary allowance to purchase clothes was cited as an example of where this distinction can become unclear. In these cases, it was suggested that Members should use their public platforms to justify their spending choices to constituents, and explain why a donation will enable them to be a more effective parliamentarian.

When discussing their own experiences of this subject, UK Members raised the UK Parliament's **register of interests as a vital tool for parliamentarians to declare any potential conflicts** that may be considered to influence their actions as a parliamentarian. UK Members noted that this register serves as a valuable means of protecting parliamentarians from controversy by ensuring a high degree of transparency with the public, and subsequently shared this document with delegates to demonstrate how declarations are listed.

CPA UK IN THE REGION

Webinar on Regional Trade and Parliamentary Scrutiny in Africa

Building on the success of the Africa Regional Workshop on Trade, Security & Gender in January 2022, CPA UK organised a Webinar for Members and Clerks in the Africa region to examine the role of parliamentary scrutiny in the construction and workings of trade agreements, with a particular focus given to the recently created African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Africa Regional Workshop on Trade, Security & Gender

CPA UK delivered a regional workshop with African Commonwealth parliaments in January 2022. The workshop was hosted by the Parliament of Ghana in Accra, and explored how parliaments address trade, gender, and security issues when pandemics and other unexpected external events occur.

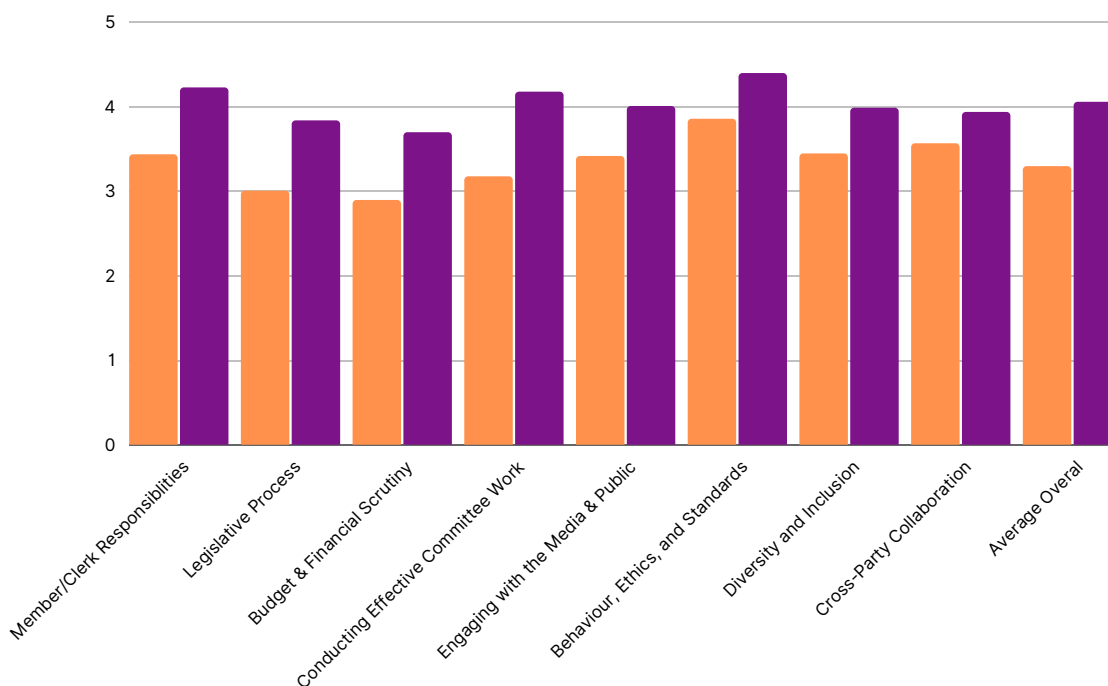
FEEDBACK AND NEXT STEPS

FEEDBACK

Participants completed pre- and post-seminar assessment forms to rate their understanding of the topics covered in the seminar, selecting from four options, ranging from 'none' to 'in-depth'. Participants also answered questions about how they will apply learnings from the seminar, and in which areas they would like to deepen their knowledge in future.

- Delegates recorded increases in knowledge across all topics. The largest increase was recorded for conducting effective committee work. This reflected the in-person feedback that delegates provided at the close of the seminar.
- Budget and financial was the most frequently mentioned area when delegates were asked to identify where they wished to deepen their knowledge in future, indicating the expansive nature of this topic.
- Engaging with the media and the public was frequently mentioned as a topic where delegates would apply learning from the seminar, suggesting that sessions focused on this topic produced the most practical lessons for implementation.

PARTICIPANT UNDERSTANDING PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR



The following statements are examples of participants' responses to questions posed in the post-assessment form completed at the end of the seminar:

Why was the programme relevant to your role?

"I am a principal clerk for up to five committees. I used to be overwhelmed, and have learnt new ways of strategising and balancing my activities."

How will you apply the learning gained from this programme?

"By having constant consultation with my constituency and Gambia at large, knowing their problems and bringing them to the parliament in order to get them connected to solutions."

What areas do you wish to deepen your knowledge of following this programme?

"I became more enlightened on budget scrutiny - a key area of importance to me as a legislator. I hope more training will be organised to deepen my knowledge in this area."

NEXT STEPS

CPA UK and WFD look forward to continued collaboration with the National Assembly of The Gambia under the new Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed by representatives of these three organisations during the seminar. Participants' feedback on the Post-Election Seminar will inform the design and planning of future activities and ensure to include most-requested topics such as financial scrutiny and media engagement.

Other salient issues that that will be explored in future programmes include strategies to enhance women's representation, and approaches to curbing human trafficking. CPA UK will also continue to engage with the National Assembly through the multilateral programmes it regularly runs with legislatures throughout the Commonwealth.

PROGRAMME

13-16 JUNE

Day 1- Monday 13 June

The Role of Parliaments

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1000-1100	<p>Welcome and Opening of Programme Rt Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, Speaker of the National Assembly, and Craig Whittaker MP, CPA UK Delegation Leader will welcome participants and formally open the programme. CPA UK Staff will provide housekeeping notes for the seminar.</p> <p>Speakers: Rt Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Gambia Craig Whittaker MP, Former Government Whip, UK Parliament</p>
1100-1200	<p>Session 1: The Role of Parliament and Parliamentarians The opening session will introduce roles and responsibilities for parliamentarians across all legislatures, including representation, legislation, and scrutiny, and will set the scene for subsequent sessions.</p> <p>Speakers: Momodou Sise, Clerk of the National Assembly of the Gambia Anne McLaughlin MP, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Immigration, Asylum and Border Control, UK Parliament The Lord German OBE, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Rehabilitation and Probation, UK Parliament</p>
1215-1300	<p>Session 2: The Legislative Process This session will examine one of the three key roles of parliaments – scrutinising and passing legislation. Participants will consider the various stages of the legislative process, different types of bills, and the importance of pre- and post-legislative scrutiny, while drawing comparisons between the National Assembly and the UK Parliament in this area.</p> <p>Speakers: Craig Whittaker MP, Former Government Whip, UK Parliament The Lord German OBE, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Rehabilitation and Probation, UK Parliament Kalipha MM Mbye, Deputy Clerk Legal and Procedural, National Assembly of the Gambia</p>

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1430-1530	<p>Session 3: The Committee System in the Westminster Model</p> <p>Participants will explore the scrutiny function of committees, consider what makes committees effective even when working under budget constraints, and compare how committees operate in the National Assembly and in the UK Parliament.</p> <p>Speakers: Anne McLaughlin MP, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Immigration, Asylum and Border Control, UK Parliament Marabi S. Hydara, Director of Committees, National Assembly of the Gambia Medha Bhasin, Second Clerk, Environmental Audit Committee, UK Parliament</p>
1545-1630	<p>Session 4: Behaviour, Standards, and Ethics</p> <p>This session will consider how parliamentarians can uphold the high levels of integrity and transparency expected by the electorate and the media, including by implementing rules around conduct and registering financial interests.</p> <p>Speakers: Anne McLaughlin MP, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Immigration, Asylum and Border Control, UK Parliament Craig Whittaker MP, Former Government Whip, UK Parliament Madi Jorbarteh, Country Representative for the Gambia, Westminster Foundation for Democracy</p>
1630-1700	<p>Reflections and Close of Day</p>

Day 2 - Tuesday 14 June

Committee Work in Practice

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1000-1100	<p>Session 5: Effective Questioning</p> <p>Participants will explore strategies for researching, formulating, and delivering effective questions in a committee context, before the subsequent committee exercise offers an opportunity to put this learning into practice.</p> <p>Speakers: Anne McLaughlin MP, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Immigration, Asylum and Border Control, UK Parliament The Lord German OBE, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Rehabilitation and Probation, UK Parliament Daniel Cardos, Deputy Clerk, Legislative Business & Programme, National Assembly of the Gambia</p>
1100-1130	<p>Session 6: Briefing on the Committee Exercise</p> <p>Delegates will receive a briefing on the committee hearing exercise that will include instructions on the topic, the role of the Members and witnesses, and an overview of the structure of the evidence session.</p> <p>Facilitator: Medha Bhasin, Second Clerk, Environmental Audit Committee, UK Parliament</p>
1200-1330	<p>Session 7: Committee Exercise</p> <p>This practical exercise will see participants simulating a committee hearing session: Participants will act as committee Members and ask questions of witnesses using the knowledge and skills gained from previous sessions. The exercise will be 'freeze-frame' facilitated, giving participants the chance to consider the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches.</p> <p>Facilitator: Medha Bhasin, Second Clerk, Environmental Audit Committee, UK Parliament</p>

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1500-1600	<p>Session 8: Budget and Financial Scrutiny</p> <p>Holding government to account for finance and expenditure is a key responsibility for parliamentarians. This session will discuss the skills and expertise required for financial scrutiny in committees and in the chamber, including during the presentation of an annual budget.</p> <p>Speakers: Craig Whittaker MP, Former Government Whip, UK Parliament The Lord German OBE, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Rehabilitation and Probation, UK Parliament Buba ME Jatta, Deputy Clerk, Admin & Finance, National Assembly of the Gambia</p>
1600-1630	Reflections and Close of Day

Day 3- Wednesday 15 June

Diversity & Inclusion

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1000-1100	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>Session 9A: Cross-Party Collaboration (for NAMs)</p> <p>In this session, participants will discuss how to forge strong working relationships across party lines to achieve desired outcomes, from effective legislation to effective scrutiny of government policy.</p> <p>Speakers: Craig Whittaker MP, Former Government Whip, UK Parliament The Lord German OBE, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Rehabilitation and Probation, UK Parliament Hon. Halifa Sallah, Former Member of the National Assembly of the Gambia</p> </div> <div style="width: 48%;"> <p>Session 9B: Effective Committee and Inquiry Management (for Clerks and staff)</p> <p>This session will consider strategies for effectively managing committee work, and for following up recommendations.</p> <p>Speakers: Medha Bhasin, Second Clerk, Environmental Audit Committee, UK Parliament Lamin Manneh, Principal Committee Clerk, National Assembly of the Gambia</p> </div> </div>

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1115-1200	<p>Session 10A: Working with Clerks (for NAMs) This session will explore the working relationships between clerks and Members and how these may be strengthened through clearly defined responsibilities and open communication.</p> <p>Speakers: Anne McLaughlin MP, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Immigration, Asylum and Border Control, UK Parliament Craig Whittaker MP, Former Government Whip, UK Parliament Hon. Alhagie Mbow, Member of the National Assembly of the Gambia</p> <p>Session 10B: Working with Members (for Clerks and staff) This session will explore the working relationships between clerks and Members and how these may be strengthened through clearly defined responsibilities and open communication.</p> <p>Speakers: Medha Bhasin, Second Clerk, Environmental Audit Committee, UK Parliament Momodou A. Sise, Clerk of the National Assembly of the Gambia</p>
1200-1300	<p>Session 11: Understanding and addressing Diversity and Inclusion - The UK Experience This discussion will focus on sharing and learning from the UK Parliament's experience in promoting diversity and inclusion, and how to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.increase political participation and representation of marginalised groups, 2.legislate and scrutinise with a diversity and inclusion lens. <p>Speakers: Anne McLaughlin MP, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Immigration, Asylum and Border Control, UK Parliament Craig Whittaker MP, Former Government Whip, UK Parliament The Lord German OBE, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Rehabilitation and Probation, UK Parliament</p>
1430-1530	<p>Session 12: Diversity and Inclusion - Disability Perspective In this session, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the concepts, legal frameworks, tools, processes, and best practices in promoting the political inclusion, participation, and representation of persons with disabilities (PWDs).</p> <p>Speaker: Madi Jorbarteh, Country Representative for the Gambia, Westminster Foundation for Democracy</p>

1530-1630	<p>Session 13: Diversity and Inclusion - Gender Perspective</p> <p>In this session, participants will gain a deeper understanding of the concepts, legal frameworks, tools, processes, and best practices in promoting the political inclusion, participation, and representation of women.</p> <p>Speaker: Haddy Dandeh Jabbie, Senior Board Member, Female Lawyers Association of the Gambia</p>
1630-1700	<p>Reflections and Close of Day</p>

Day 4 - Thursday 16 June

Public Outreach and Engagement

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1000-1100	<p>Session 14: National Assembly Communications Strategy</p> <p>This session will introduce NAMs to the National Assembly Communications Strategy.</p> <p>Speaker: Gibairu Janneh, Director of Communications, National Assembly of the Gambia</p>
1130-1230	<p>Session 15: UK MPs' Experience in Engaging Constituents – UK Delegation</p> <p>A discussion to exchange good practice with UK Members on methods, tools and experiences for Members to engage, respond, and be accountable to their constituents.</p> <p>Speakers: Anne McLaughlin MP, Shadow SNP Spokesperson for Immigration, Asylum and Border Control, UK Parliament Craig Whittaker MP, Former Government Whip, UK Parliament The Lord German OBE, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Rehabilitation and Probation, UK Parliament</p>

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1230-1330	<p>Session 16: Building Constituency Communications Plan</p> <p>To support NAMs' outreach to their constituents, this session will guide NAMs to develop their own individual communications strategies.</p> <p>Speaker: Gibairu Janneh, Director of Communications, National Assembly of the Gambia</p>
1430-1500	<p>Session 16: Building Constituency Communications Plan (Continued)</p> <p>To support NAMs' outreach to their constituents, this session will guide NAMs to develop their own individual communications strategies.</p> <p>Speaker: Gibairu Janneh, Director of Communications, National Assembly of the Gambia</p>
1500-1530	<p>Reflections and Close of Programme</p> <p>Before the official close of the Post-Election Seminar, participants will have an opportunity to share their thoughts and feedback on the programme with organisers.</p>

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

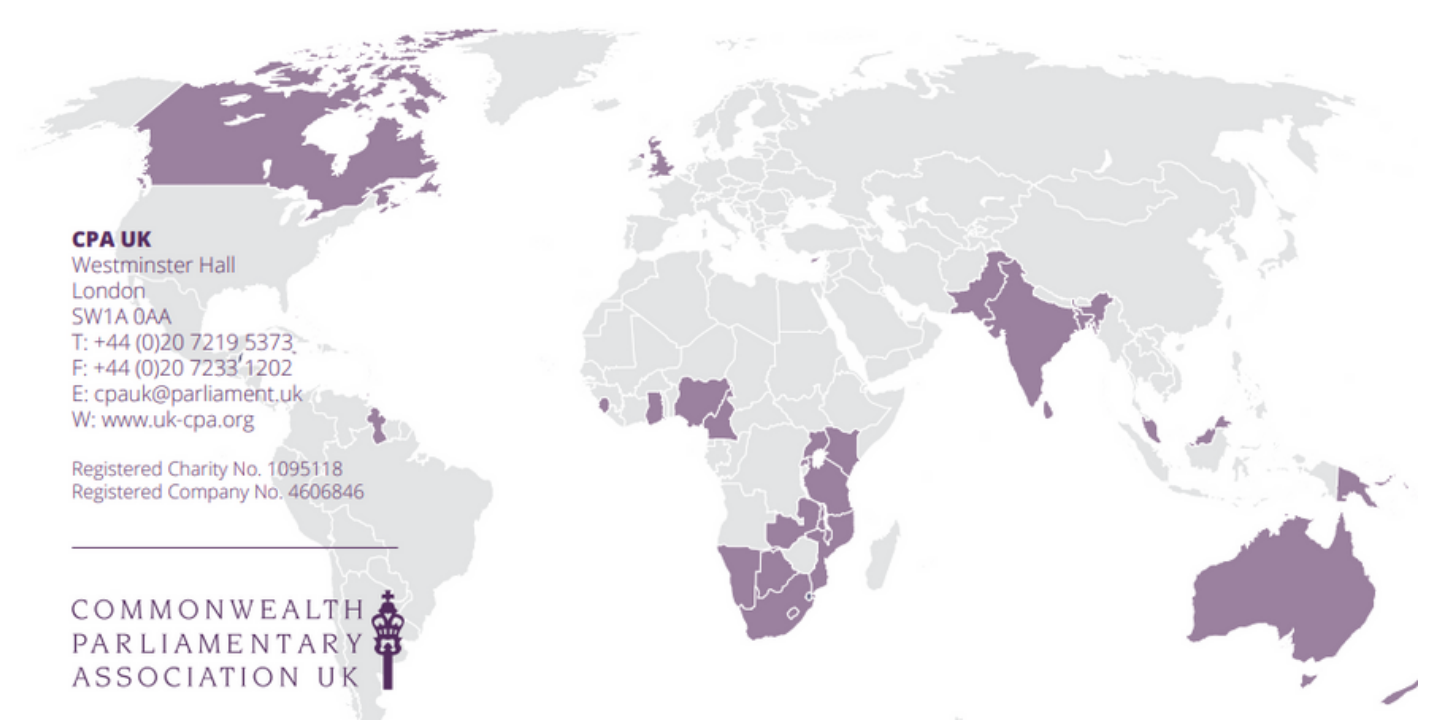
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