

THE GAMBIA: COMMITTEE STUDY VISIT TO WESTMINSTER

REPORT SUMMARY

16-19 JANUARY 2023

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

From 16-19 January 2023, CPA UK welcomed a delegation of five members and one clerk from the National Assembly of the Gambia to Westminster for a four-day study visit focused on committee scrutiny, as well as empowering female voices in parliament.

The National Assembly saw a notable turnover of members following its April 2022 Elections, as well as the establishment of several new committees, including the Gender, Children, and Social Welfare Committee. The programme was attended by the Chair of this committee, as well as the Chair of the Health, Refugees, Disaster, and Humanitarian Relief Committee.

Participants had the opportunity to learn more about how their counterparts in the UK Parliament approach committee work and consider how the successes and challenges of this could be applied in a Gambian context. The programme was the latest activity delivered through CPA UK's Memorandum of Understanding with the National Assembly, which is aimed at strengthening parliamentary processes, with committee oversight serving as a particular area of focus.

PARTNER:



OUTCOMES & OUTPUTS


Outcomes:

Through discussions and workshops with UK parliamentary counterparts, participants will become:

1. More effective at selecting witnesses for committee inquiries
2. Better able to analyse evidence and use this to formulate effective questioning in a committee context
3. Better able to conduct gender-sensitive scrutiny in their role as parliamentarians.

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION UK - CPA UK

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THE GAMBIA: COMMITTEE STUDY VISIT TO WESTMINSTER FULL REPORT

Outputs:

1. A four-day study visit will be attended by a delegation of at least 5 National Assembly members
2. Delegates will report an increased understanding of committee scrutiny, women's representation, and gender-sensitive scrutiny.
3. A report summarising the programme will be produced and disseminated to all participants.



STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

The 2022 election saw a decline in the number of women represented in the National Assembly, from six to five. Three female National Assembly members (NAMs) are directly elected, with a further two nominated by the President. The National Assembly has a target of 30% female representation, but at present it is only 8.6%.

Attempts have been made by the National Assembly to address this. In 2022, a bill was put forward that would have created additional seats within the Assembly and reserved these for female NAMs.

This legislation was subsequently abandoned due to a lack of parliamentary time but may be brought back during the current parliamentary term.

Positive steps have been made in increasing women's representation in the UK Parliament, but there remain significant barriers to further progress.

Political parties were highlighted as having a key role to play in attaining greater gender balance by nominating more female candidates for winnable seats. The UK Labour's Party's introduction of all women shortlists for candidate selections was mentioned as a major factor in increasing its proportion of female MPs to over 50% in the current parliament. Measures such as these are enabled by Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002, which allows parties to take special measures to 'positively discriminate' in favour of female candidates where they are underrepresented.

Fostering welcoming parliamentary environments was underlined as essential to encouraging more women to initially stand for office, and to continue in their roles once elected. The **introduction of child friendly sitting hours and stricter rules prohibiting harassment** were mentioned as two examples of what parliaments can do to achieve this.

BUILDING EFFICIENCY IN COMMITTEES

With 11 clerks and 58 members staffing 26 committees, workload management is a key challenge for the National Assembly, with NAMs frequently having to choose how to divide their time between the competing priorities of their committees.

The development of SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound) to guide committee activity is one tool used in planning processes within the UK Parliament to efficiently manage workloads whilst also delivering on an activity's stated objectives. Discussions also highlighted the need to remain focused on recommendations that make a positive difference to the lives of the public, rather than simply producing more data for little purpose.

The delegation also expressed a willingness for further interaction with the Welsh devolved legislature, the Senedd, to explore the common challenges of time management experienced by a parliament of a similar size to the National Assembly.



LIST OF DELEGATES

- Hon. Fatoumata Njai, Chair of the Gender, Children, and Social Welfare Committee (Head of Delegation)
- Hon. Fatou K. Jawara, Member of the Gender, Children, and Social Welfare Committee
- Hon. Amadou Camara, Chair of the Health, Refugees, Disaster and Humanitarian Relief Committee
- Hon. Gibbi Mballow, Member of the Health, Refugees, Disaster and Humanitarian Relief Committee
- Hon. Kebba Lang Fofana, Member of the Finance and Public Accounts Committee
- Mr Kalipha MM Mbye, Deputy Clerk, Legal & Procedural Matters

COUNTRY PROFILE

- Population: 2,639,916
- 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

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS AND RESOURCES

With Members and clerks stretched across multiple committees in the National Assembly, participants were keen to find out more about the external resources available to UK Select Committees, and how these are utilised. Organisations such as the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, the National Audit Office, and the House of Commons Library are all examples of key sources that UK Committees will draw up on in their activity.

When visiting the House of Commons Library, delegates heard presentations from Library staff about its work to support UK Select Committees, as well as viewing examples of published committee reports that the it keeps on file.

Following their [inquiry](#) into the recent outbreak of Acute Kidney Injury (AKI) in the Gambia, which tragically claimed the lives of more than 70 children, participants from **the Health, Refugees, Disaster, and Humanitarian Relief Committee wished to learn more about the role of UK's Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory products Agency (MHRA), and requested to be put in contact with this organisation** to discuss how to effectively regulate supply of medicines within the Gambia.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The delegation reflected that the National Assembly presently conducts pre-legislative scrutiny more often than post-legislative scrutiny, and that this imbalance should be addressed through more follow-up on committee recommendations to see whether these have been implemented by government.

Participants were interested in **developing effective indicators to track recommendations** as part of this process. Logging specific recommendations by government is important, as well as following up on them.

Fostering support for committee recommendations within government is essential and can be achieved by generating media interest. **Press conferences, report launch events, and the publication of shareable graphics on social media are examples of useful avenues that may be used for driving public engagement and building pressure on ministers** to implement recommendations.





EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

The differing approaches taken by committee members representing government and opposition parties when questioning ministers emerged as a major talking point for participants.

Opposition members of a committee are able to adopt a more confrontational approach when questioning government representatives, for instance by asking **unexpected questions to Ministers to draw media attention to an issue**. One example of this that was shared with the delegation was when an opposition MP asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to name the price of a Pasty to highlight the government's plans to begin taxing hot takeaway food.

Conversely, committee members representing the government may look to deliver more constructive questions to preserve the working relationships with ministers that serve as a valuable tool to securing subsequent changes in government policy.

CPA UK IN THE REGION

Uganda Workshop on Parliamentary Scrutiny and Communications, Entebbe, 24-25 July 2022

Women members of the Parliament of Uganda participated in a Parliamentary Scrutiny and Communications Workshop. Building on past engagement, the programme explored effective committee work and impactful external communications.

Uganda Legal Aid Legislative Benchmarking Programme, Virtual, 11-15 July 2022

CPA UK facilitated a benchmarking exercise to inform the drafting of a National Legal Aid Bill due to be considered in the Parliament of Uganda, attended by two bill sponsors and two legislative drafters.

Malawi National Assembly Members Briefing on Capital Punishment, Virtual, Tuesday 12 July 2022

UK Parliamentarians were briefed by members of the National Assembly of Malawi's Legal Affairs Committee on current perspectives on capital punishment in the country. An extensive consultation process uncovered broad support for abolition across a wide cross-section of society, including civil society organisations, young people, local chiefs, and religious leaders.

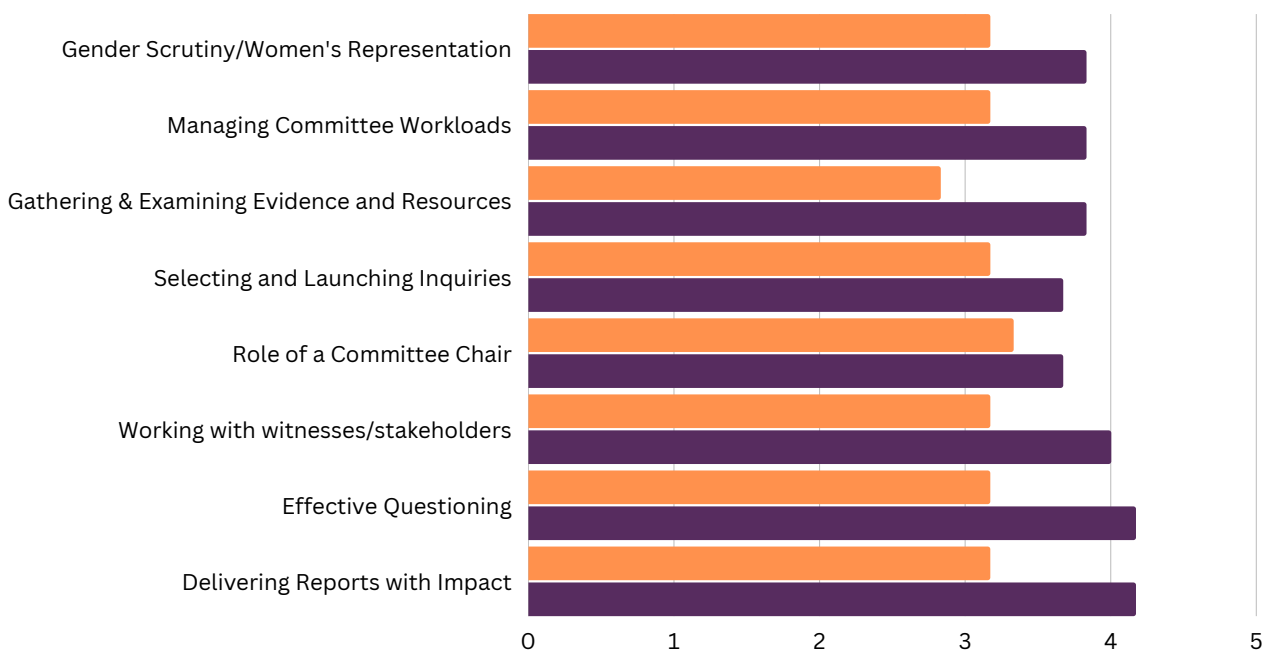
FEEDBACK AND NEXT STEPS

FEEDBACK

Participants completed assessment forms at the start and end of their visit to rate their understanding of the topics covered in the seminar, selecting from five options, ranging from 'none' to 'in-depth'. Participants also answered questions about how they will apply learnings from the visit, and in which areas they wish to deepen their knowledge in future.

- Participants recorded an **increase in knowledge across all topics featured in the programme**. The largest percentage increase came in Gathering and Examining Evidence. This was also the subject that participants possessed the least knowledge of at the start of the programme.
- The next two highest increases were recorded in the areas of Effective Questioning and Delivering Reports with Impact. These were also the areas in which participants had highest levels of overall knowledge at the conclusion of the programme.
- Several participants mentioned that they had found discussions around selecting and launching inquiries to be especially insightful, and looked forward to exploring this topic in greater depth in future programmes. The National Assembly has historically not conducted formal committee inquiries, with the exception of the inquiry held into the AKI outbreak.
- In addition, Members sitting on the National Assembly's Public Petitions Committee expressed a wish to connect with their equivalent committee in the House of Commons to gain an understanding of how they approach their remit.

PARTICIPANT UNDERSTANDING PRE- AND POST-PROGRAMME



Participants also expressed a willingness to share lessons learned with their colleagues upon their return to the National Assembly and pledged to explore ways of doing this. There was further positive feedback from UK Members and clerks, who were pleased to make contact with the National Assembly for the first time, or reconnect following their interactions in past CPA UK programmes.

NEXT STEPS

The programme was complimented by a two-day training workshop with the Gender, Children, and Social Welfare Committee run by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), which aimed to strengthen members capacity to identify and address barriers to women’s participation in politics and decision making.

CPA UK looks forward to continuing its productive relationship with the National Assembly of the Gambia and WFD through the Memorandum of Understanding with these two partners, and will liaise with them to confirm future programmes.

There are plans for further bilateral engagement within the coming 12 months, which will be tailored to meet the current challenges experienced by the National Assembly, and will complement WFD’s work in The Gambia. CPA UK will also aim to connect officials and clerks from the National Assembly and the Senedd so that they may explore the common challenges of operating within similarly sized legislatures.

The National Assembly will continue to be involved in the regular multilateral programmes that CPA UK organises with legislatures from across the Commonwealth, including through the attendance of two Gambian delegates at the Westminster Seminar in the UK Parliament from 13-17 March 2023.



The delegations from the National Assembly of the Gambia and the Parliament of Canada together in Westminster Hall following their joint lunch

PROGRAMME
16-19 JANUARY
Day One - Monday 16 January

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1000-1115	Tour of the Palace of Westminster
1130-1200	<p>Welcome and Introductions The delegation will be formally welcomed to the UK Parliament, and introduced to the programme and the work of CPA UK. Delegates will share their learning objectives for the week. Tea and coffee will be available.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Jon Davies, Chief Executive, CPA UK</i> <i>Matthew Hamilton, Monitoring and Evaluations Manager, CPA UK</i></p>
1200-1300	<p>Session 1: An Introduction to UK Select Committees This session will provide an overview of UK parliamentary select committees. It will explain how the role of committees has developed over time, their composition, and the resources available to them.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>The Rt Hon. Lord Haselhurst, House of Lords</i> <i>Lilian Greenwood MP, House of Commons</i> <i>Sasha Erskine, Committee Specialist, Select Committee Team, House of Commons</i></p>
1445-1545	<p>Session 2: Conducting Gender Sensitive Scrutiny This session will examine how committees may apply a gender-sensitive approach to the scrutiny of legislation and policy, drawing on case studies from the UK Parliament.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Anum Qaisar MP, Member of the Women and Equalities Select Committee, House of Commons</i> <i>Janet Veitch, Chair of the Women's Budget Group</i></p>

Day Two - Tuesday 17 January

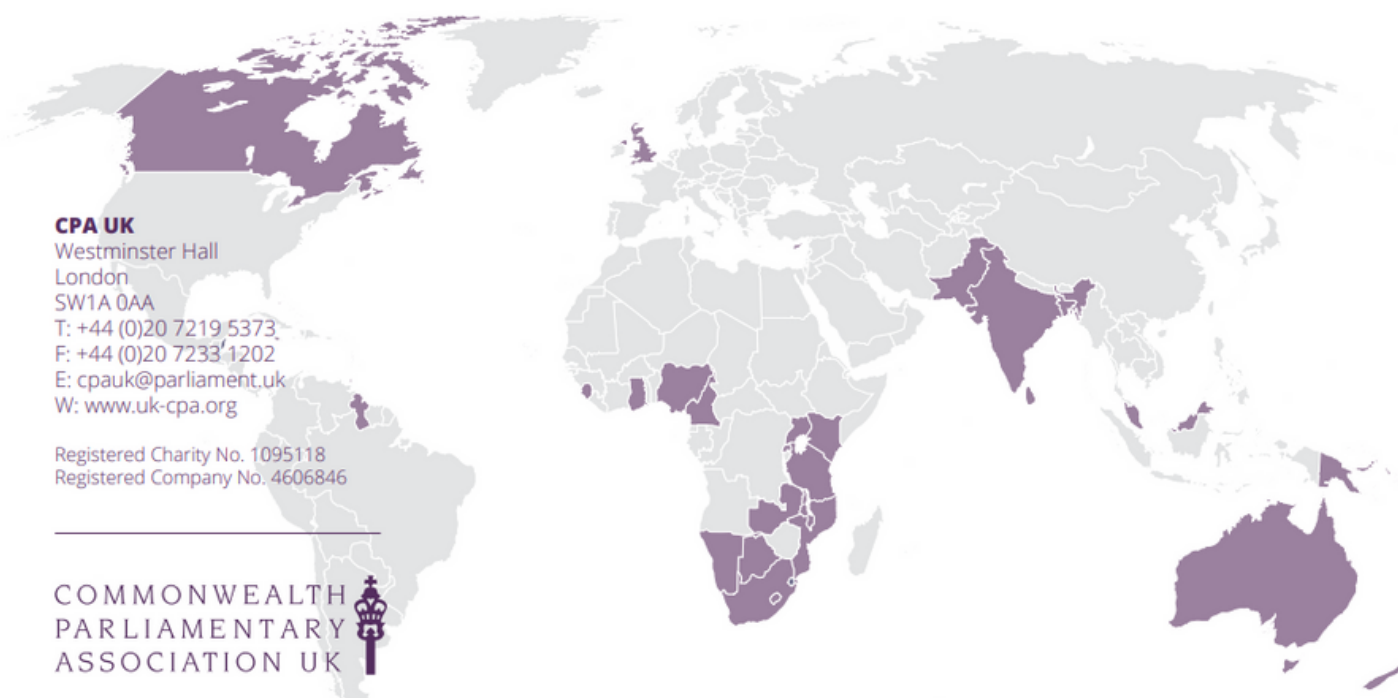
TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1000-1100	<p>Session 3: Promoting Women’s Representation-Case Studies from the UK Parliament</p> <p>Delegates will meet with Members of the UK Parliament to discuss their experience of promoting women’s representation, and the effects of gender balance on committee scrutiny and other parliamentary activity, and how lessons from this may be applied in the National Assembly.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Anne McLaughlin MP, House of Commons</i> <i>Ian Murray MP, House of Commons</i> <i>Eleanor Davis, ParliGender Chair</i> <i>Rebecca Kilby-Smith, ParliGender Deputy Chair</i></p>
1115-1215	<p>Session 4: Managing Committee Workloads</p> <p>This session will share strategies for delivering effective committee scrutiny whilst also efficiently managing time and resources.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Nigel Mills MP, Member of the Work and Pensions Select Committee and International Development Select Committee, House of Commons</i> <i>Lord Purvis of Tweed, Foreign Affairs, House of Lords</i> <i>Hannah Johnson, Knowledge Exchange Lead, Welsh Parliament</i> <i>Llinos Madeley, Parliamentary Clerk, Welsh Parliament</i></p>
1230-1300	<p>Visit to the House of Commons Library</p> <p>The delegation will visit the House of Commons Library, where parliamentary staff will be on hand to provide presentations on the resources and services the library offers to members, particularly in reference to committee work.</p>
1315-1430	<p>Lunch with Delegation from the Parliament of Canada</p> <p>Delegates will attend lunch with a visiting delegation from the Parliament of Canada to discuss the work of CPA UK in collaboration with the National Assembly of The Gambia, along with other issues of mutual interest.</p>
1445-1545	<p>Session 5: Selecting and Launching Inquiries</p> <p>Delegates will explore how committees identify and plan inquiries, and the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Steve Brine MP, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, House of Commons</i> <i>Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town, Chair of International Agreements Committee, House of Lords</i> <i>Medha Bhasin, Second Clerk, Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons</i></p>

Day Three - Wednesday 18 January

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
0930-1030	<p>Session 6: The Role of a Committee Chair</p> <p>This session will examine the role and responsibilities of committee chairs and the relationship between Committee Chairs and officials.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Housing and Local Government Committee, House of Commons</i> <i>Eloise Evans, Committee Specialist, International Affairs Unit, House of Commons</i></p>
1045-1130	<p>Session 7: Understanding Prime Minister's Questions</p> <p>This session will consider the evolution of PMQs, its purposes and structure, and potential points of discussion at that week's session before delegates observe from the Commonwealth Gallery.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Craig Whittaker MP, Former Deputy Chief Whip, House of Commons</i> <i>Naz Shah, Shadow Minister for Crime Reduction, House of Commons</i></p>
1145-1245	<p>Observe Prime Minister's Questions</p> <p>Delegates will observe Prime Minister's Questions from the House of Commons Commonwealth Gallery.</p>
1300-1430	<p>Lunch with Rt Hon. Craig Whittaker MP</p>
1430-1500	<p>Observe Women and Equalities Select Committee Hearing</p> <p>Delegates will have the opportunity to see a UK Select Committee in action as they observe their inquiry hearing into Misogyny in Music.</p>
1515-1615	<p>Session 8: Working with Witnesses and External Stakeholders</p> <p>This session will consider how to identify and engage witnesses for inquiries, and how to set up productive working relationships with other external stakeholders who can provide effective support committees.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>The Lord German OBE, House of Lords</i> <i>Sir James Duddridge KCMG MP, Member of the International Development Committee, Former Minister of State for International Trade, House of Commons</i> <i>Jonathan Hingston, Committee Specialist, Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons</i></p>

Day Four - Thursday 19 January

TIME (GMT)	SESSION
1000-1100	<p>Session 9: Gathering and Examining Evidence</p> <p>This session will explore best practice for identifying and analysing evidence to support committee inquiries.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Kate Osamor MP, Member of International Development Select Committee & Committee on Arms Export Controls, House of Commons</i> <i>Harriet Baldwin MP, Chair of the Treasury Select Committee, House of Commons</i> <i>Lucy Arora, Committee Specialist, International Affairs Unit, House of Commons</i></p>
1115-1300	<p>Session 10: Effective Questioning Skills</p> <p>Delegates will explore techniques for drafting and delivering committee questions, and how these can be employed with different types of witnesses to extract valuable information, before putting these techniques into practice through an interactive exercise.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Lord Mann, Former Member of the Treasury Select Committee, House of Lords</i> <i>Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top, Chair of House of Lords Public Services Committee</i> <i>Nick Beech, Clerk, International Development Committee, House of Commons</i></p>
1445-1545	<p>Session 11: Delivering Impactful Reports</p> <p>This session will consider how to deliver reports with realistic and specific recommendations and highlight techniques to ensure that these are effectively publicised and tracked.</p> <p>Speakers: <i>Ruth Cadbury MP, Shadow Minister for International Trade, House of Commons</i> <i>Baroness Barker, Deputy Chairman of Committees, House of Lords</i> <i>Sean Kinsey, Senior Clerk, Table Office, House of Commons</i></p>
1600-1630	<p>Reflections and Feedback</p> <p>In this final session, delegates will share their learnings from the programme, and explore opportunities for support and cooperation.</p> <p>Facilitator: Matthew Hamilton, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, CPA UK</p>



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