

# Regional Workshop for African Public Accounts Committees



## Summary Report

February 2024



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# About CPA UK

## CPA UK supports and strengthens parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth

CPA UK focuses on priority themes which support and strengthen parliamentary democracy throughout the Commonwealth. These priority themes are: women in parliament; tackling modern slavery; security; public accounts committees; and international trade.

CPA UK brings together UK and Commonwealth parliamentarians and officials to share knowledge and experience through peer to peer learning. It aims to improve parliamentary oversight, scrutiny and representation and is located in, and funded by, the UK Parliament.



## Building stronger parliaments and advancing democracy

CPA UK's core work is to build relationships with parliaments across the Commonwealth. This is achieved through a programme of parliamentary strengthening and capacity-building activities.

CPA UK undertakes work at the request of other parliaments around the Commonwealth, and our tailored programmes include both individual country activities, and large-scale projects and activities that bring together Commonwealth parliamentarians and parliamentary officials.



# Programme Overview

The Regional Workshop for African Public Accounts Committees (PAC) was co-hosted by CPA UK and the National Assembly of Zambia, in Lusaka from 30 October - 1 November 2023. The Workshop was attended by 23 parliamentarians and parliamentary officials from eight legislatures across Africa and the UK, who shared knowledge and good practice on key topics such as cross-party collaboration in a PAC context, effective use of parliamentary resources to inform PAC work, preparing for a committee inquiry, effective questioning techniques, handling sensitive information, and producing a strong PAC report. Participants also took the opportunity to network with colleagues from other legislatures and build long-lasting relationships. The format of the sessions included panel discussions and group exercises, to enhance problem solving skills and encourage in-depth discussions and peer-to-peer learning.

In this report, the photos featured capture delegates' engagement throughout the Regional Workshop for African PACs and do not always correspond to the text with which they are placed.



# Outcomes and Outputs



## Outcome

Delegates are more effective in their remit to oversee and scrutinise government spending of public money and better able to hold their governments to account for the delivery of public services.

The outputs for the Workshop were as follows:



## Output One

PAC Chairs, members and officials will have enhanced their skills to scrutinise and hold government to account during the inquiry process.



## Output Two

PAC Chairs, members and officials will have identified practical solutions to the common challenges faced by PACs or equivalent committees in their legislatures, through peer-to-peer learning.



## Output Three

Participants will have strengthened their networks and contacts with the UK PAC as well as PACs and equivalent committees across the Africa region.

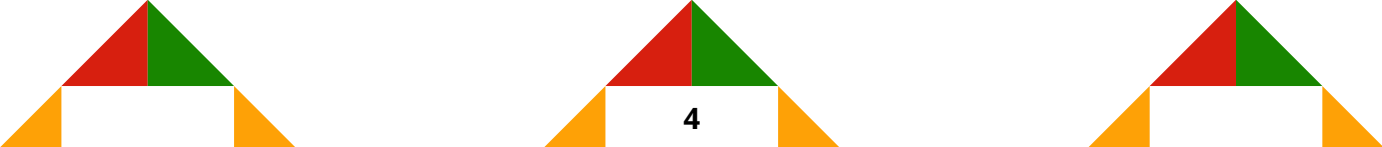
## Key Workshop Deliverables

- ✓ An in-person Regional Workshop will be delivered in Lusaka, Zambia, where delegates will share knowledge and good practice.
- ✓ Delegates will share key lessons learned in addressing both unique and common challenges pertaining to parliamentary oversight and scrutiny of public finances during and after the pandemic era.
- ✓ A summary report will be produced by CPA UK and will be distributed to all relevant stakeholders.



# Participating Legislatures

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# Delegate List

## Africa



### National Assembly of Zambia

Hon Warren Mwambazi, Chair  
Hon Jacqueline Sabao, Vice Chair and Member  
Mr Alvin Himululi, PAC Clerk  
Ms Prisca Shimalungwe, Parliamentary Official



### National Assembly of The Gambia

Hon Kebba Lang Fofana, Member of PAC  
Mrs Halimatou Tamba, Clerk



### Parliament of Ghana

Hon James Klutse Avedzi, Chair of PAC  
Hon Kofi Okyere-Agyekum, Ranking Member  
Mr Louis Boakye, Senior Clerk



### National Assembly of Malawi

Hon Mark Botomani, Chair of PAC  
Mr Fredrick Chigawaneni Kamwani, Clerk



### National Assembly of Namibia

Hon. (Mr) Sebastiaan !Gobs, Member of PAC



### National Assembly of Seychelles

Hon Sandy Arissol, Finance and Public Account Committee  
Hon Richard Labrosse, Finance and Public Account Committee  
Ms Alexandria Faure, Deputy Clerk to the Parliament and Clerk to the Finance and Public Accounts Committee



### Parliament of Sierra Leone

Hon Jibrila Sur Moijueh, Member of PAC  
Hon Hawa Saifa, Member of PAC



# Delegate List

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## UK Overseas Territories



### Legislative Council of St Helena

Mr Mark Yon, Chair of PAC  
Hon Gillian Brooks, Member of PAC  
Miss Anita Legg, Clerk

## Europe



### UK Parliament

Dame Meg Hillier, Chair of PAC  
Hon Sarah Olney, Member of PAC  
Mr Ben Rayner, Senior Clerk



# Introduction to the Workshop

To open the Workshop, the Hon. Malungo A. Chisangano MP, First Deputy speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia (NAZ) encouraged participants to work actively during the sessions and share their own countries' experiences, as this would make the Workshop "more enriching and impactful".

This was followed by Dame Meg Hillier MP, Leader of the CPA UK delegation and Chair of UK PAC, who observed that

***"Each time we meet, we come away revitalised. We often have more in common with each other across nations and across the Commonwealth, than we do with parliamentarians in our own jurisdictions".***

Throughout the workshop, participants noted challenges and opportunities related to their roles as PAC Chairs, members and clerks, and shared good practice amongst peers.





# Summary of Discussions

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## 1. Budget Constraints and Low Capacity as Challenges

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PACs have a significant role to play in enhancing oversight and accountability for the use of public funds. Participants identified budget constraints and capacity as main challenges for some PACs or equivalent committees to perform their roles effectively.

They reported that some PACs are not allocated sufficient funds to assist with their responsibilities, resulting in the inability to travel in-country to gather useful evidence from witnesses in remote areas of their legislatures. Not having enough support staff was also highlighted as a hindrance for some PACs, affecting their ability to produce reports in timely manners while they are confronted with heavy workloads.

As a report must be published shortly after an inquiry, with an overview of the evidence gathered and recommendations made by the committee, participants acknowledged the value of being organised as PAC members and clerks, to mitigate the challenges posed by low capacity.

## 2. Maintaining a Good Relationship with the PAC Clerk

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Where resources are limited, there is a significant reliance on the PAC Clerk, whose responsibilities range from preparing briefing materials and notes for hearings, to organising the inquiry and researching the relevant witnesses to give evidence. Participants observed that a good working relationship between the PAC Clerk and Chairperson often results in productive exchanges of ideas and effective communication.

Informing the Chair of any major updates related to the inquiry puts them in a better position to make effective decisions. For example, when witnesses are proposed, the Chair may take the opportunity to provide feedback to the Clerk on the witnesses suggested, to ensure the objectives of the inquiry are met.

In due course, the Clerk will then be able to inform PAC members and witnesses of the time and location of the inquiry. They can also organise a briefing call with the selected witnesses to lay out the process and the expectations of the PAC hearing, which may be based on sensitive evidence.

### 3. Handling Sensitive Information in a PAC Context

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Parliamentarians and parliamentary officials discussed their responsibilities as users and managers of sensitive information throughout the inquiry process, in a group exercise based on a UK case study.

They made three main observations:

- PACs must discuss concerns and take precautions if the taxpayer's money is being mismanaged.
- If there is any concern, the PAC Clerks must share the information with the PAC in a timely manner.
- Evidence must be sufficient for PACs to make effective recommendations.

### 4. Considering the use of a Forward Planner

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Clerks use different tools to prepare and manage inquiries, including a forward planner where upcoming inquiries and tasks are organised and prioritised. This allows the PAC to hold successful hearings once the evidence has been gathered and witnesses selected.

Additionally, it can keep PAC members up to date, making it easier to plan their schedule. Participants suggested that some clerks and PAC supporting staff may consider it good practice to leave gaps in the forward planner (e.g., between every 5 or 6 evidence sessions) to allow the committee time to react to events related to the hearings.

There could also be practical reasons for maintaining flexibility and not use forward planners rigidly as things change rapidly.



## 5. Questioning Clearly, Precisely, and Factually

To help organise questions, clerks and support staff usually provide the committee with the themes to be enquired on, ahead of the hearing. PAC members can then plan their questions accordingly and agree with each other on the order of questions to follow. This will ensure the hearing flows smoothly. The PAC Chair should also ensure that an equal amount of time is given to every member to ask their question.

Clarity matters also when formulating questions. Participants highlighted that a good question must be precise and factual. New PAC members can improve their questioning skills by watching how experienced members ask questions. Through regular communication, including on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, the PAC members and Clerk can keep contact and exchange thoughts and ideas effectively. Clerks noted that they must ensure they have done their research, which will inform the committee's line of questioning, to mitigate the risk of the PAC being criticised on social media for being underprepared.

## 6. Good Practice for Producing and Publishing PAC Reports

PAC reports are usually written by clerks and support staff, based on the evidence taken during hearings. They are published with the Chair's final approval and normally made accessible to the public via the government's website or through other online platforms and popular local channels, to enhance transparency.

To ensure the PAC report is further accessible to the public, participants underlined that it should be concise and written simply and clearly (e.g., avoiding academic language), so it is easily understood. Recommendations should be clearly identified, and the report should be based on facts to ensure objectivity.



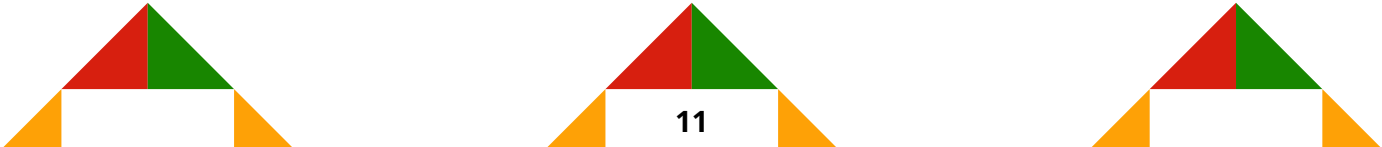




## 7. Tracking Recommendations and Addressing Low Capacity

Clerks and parliamentary support staff observed that they would benefit from implementing a report-tracking system, to manage the vast amount of evidence they gather. This would also allow them to track the amount of time taken for reports to be published, which should preferably be 16 days after the inquiry, and how long the responsible person or authority takes to respond to the recommendations within the report. As this is a mandatory duty, they noted, the PAC can reasonably expect a response within 60 days of publishing the report.

For some PACs, however, tracking recommendations has proved difficult, because they are overwhelmed with a backlog of reports. Participants noted the example of the Maldives' PAC, which addressed this challenge by erasing the backlog and deciding to focus solely on tracking recommendations from present and future reports. They also noted the support the UK PAC receives from the National Audit Office (NAO) to ensure the recommendations have been responded to.





## 8. The PAC and the Public

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### 8.1 Promoting Democracy Through Visibility and Transparency

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Participants suggested that scrutiny of public finances must be conducted visibly and transparently, to promote democratic values by granting the public access to key information on the work of the PAC. This may include the evidence gathered, stakeholders engaged with during the inquiry process, and decisions that resulted from deliberations.

To achieve such visibility and increase transparency, participants listed two main outlets used in the legislatures to keep the public informed and engaged with the work of the PAC - broadcast of public PAC hearings on the radio and on parliamentary TV stations. The relevant media outlets are informed in advance of the topic the PAC will investigate, the witnesses who will give evidence, and the date, time, and location of the hearing.

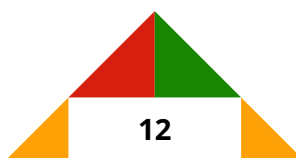
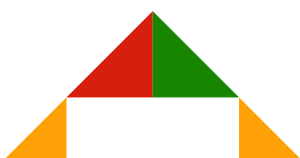
Budget constraints remain the key challenge to increasing transparency and achieving greater visibility as a PAC in certain legislatures as it can be expensive to have a parliamentary channel.

### 8.2 Involving the Youth in the Work of the PAC and Parliament

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Participants discussed how their legislatures engage young people, which enhances youth activism, creates a space for young people to express their views and increases their interest in the work of PACs and equivalent committees. Examples of good practice included:

- **Being visible in the media** and using that to attract the interest of young people who are encouraged to get involved in politics.
- **Forming Youth Parliaments** where young people can debate about important issues that affect them.
- **Organising roundtable discussions** where parliamentarians are invited to share their ideas and listen to those of the electorate.
- **Setting up parliamentary clubs** that organise young people's visits to parliament and MPs' constituency offices.



## 9. Measuring the PAC's Impact and Monitoring its Performance

Participants discussed the principles by which the impact of PACs could be measured, drawn from the Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures recommended by CPA and the principles of the Commonwealth Association for Public Accounts Committees (CAPAC). To evaluate the role, function, and effectiveness of their PACs, they rated the performance of their PACs based on these principles, listed in the table above. Participants strongly agreed on the following points:

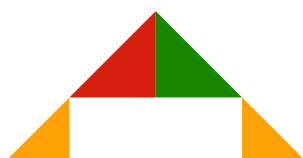
- PACs should work entirely independently from the government and have the power to select issues without government direction.
- The media have an important role to play in informing the public of the work of the PAC. Therefore, committee hearings should be streamed live, via the government's website for example, or other media outlets such as YouTube.
- Clerks are important to the work of the PAC, conducting administrative tasks, organising inquiries, and reaching out to witnesses. There is therefore a strong need for additional training to make them more effective in their role, as well as additional staff to support them and the PAC.





## PAC Principles and Benchmarks

	No plans to be compliant	Rarely compliant	Plans to be compliant	Mostly compliant	Fully compliant
<b>1</b> PACs should operate independently of government. PACs should have the power to select issues without government direction. The PAC's independence should be outlined clearly through the provisions of the Standing Orders.					
<b>2</b> PACs should have an adequate budget to cover their personnel and other operational costs, training and capacity building costs, as well as costs associated with hearings, publication of reports and sourcing external advice.					
<b>3</b> PACs need non-partisan and skilled support staff. At a minimum, a PAC should have a Clerk and research staff.					
<b>4</b> PACs should encourage public involvement and media coverage. Committee hearings should be open to the media and the interested public, and any exceptions from this rule need to be reasonably justified.					
<b>5</b> PAC members should have a common understanding and articulation of the PAC's mandate, roles, and powers. Members should have a good understanding of how PAC powers should be applied.					
<b>6</b> PACs shall have access to all records, in whatever form, to be able to scrutinise the Executive and perform the necessary oversight of public spending.					
<b>7</b> PACs should have the power to summon persons, papers and records, and this power shall extend to witnesses and evidence from the executive branch, including officials.					
<b>8</b> PACs should produce a summary report of overall findings and the extent to which its recommendations have been implemented that should lead to a debate in parliament.					
<b>9</b> PACs need to ensure that there are robust arrangements in place to follow up on their recommendations, including timelines. Such follow-up may be carried out by the Supreme Audit Institution and/or the Ministry of Finance or entities concerned. However, where the PAC finds that government bodies have been slow in implementing recommendations, then the senior officials of these bodies should be summoned to appear before the Committee to explain themselves.					
<b>10</b> The Supreme Audit Institution's independence should be firmly rooted in the Constitution or equivalent legislation, which should spell out clearly the extent of its independence and powers. PACs should work to safeguard the independence of SAIs and ensure that they have the resources they need to carry out their statutory mandate.					



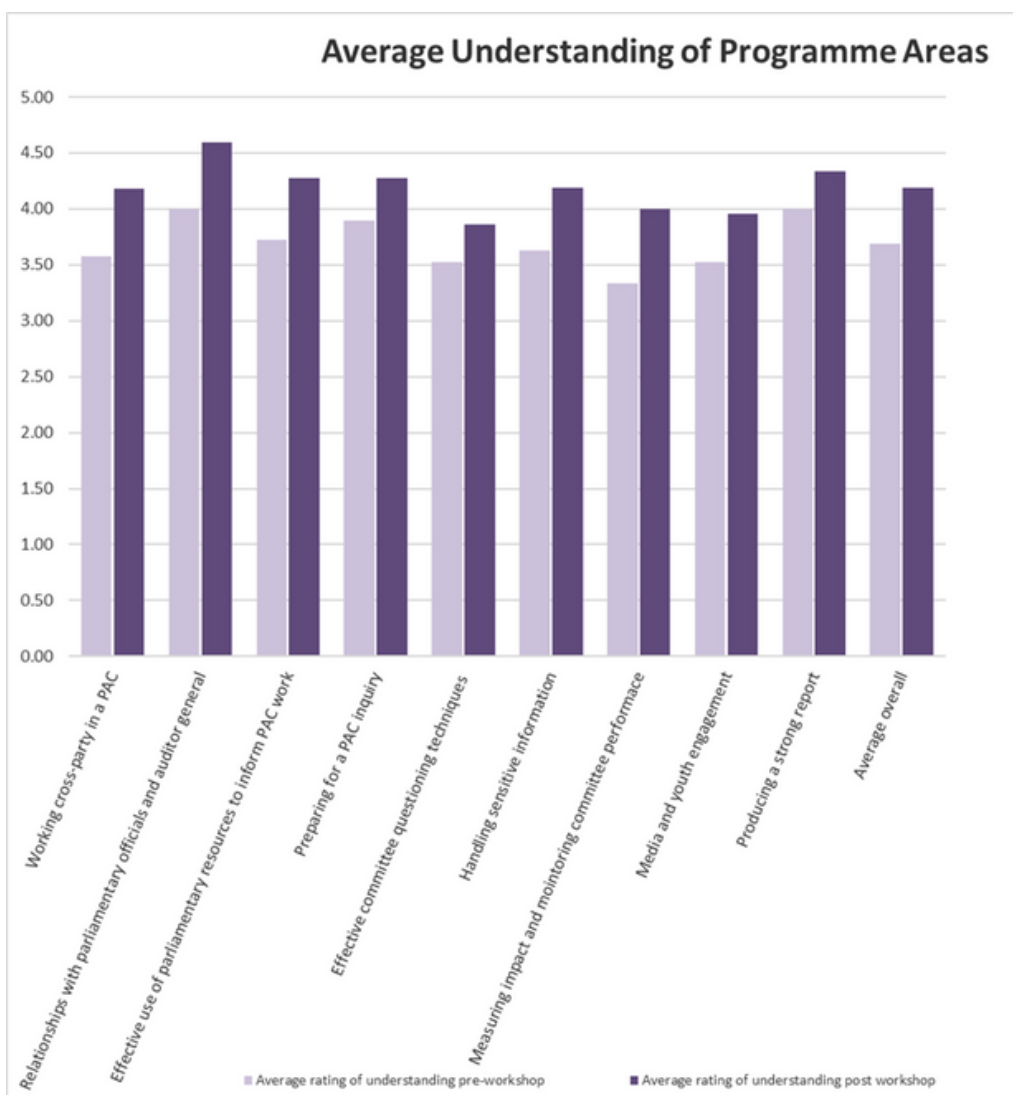


# Monitoring and Evaluation

At the beginning of the Workshop, each participant completed a pre-assessment form to evaluate their own level of understanding in the nine areas the programme explored and a post-assessment form at the end. The scale of understanding ranged from (1) "None" to (5) "In-depth".

The results, as illustrated in the chart below, indicate an increase in participants' knowledge by 14% on average across all nine areas of the programme. The lowest increase recorded related to the session on *Producing a Strong Report* (8% increase), while the highest related to the session on *Measuring Impact and Monitoring Committee Performance* (20% increase).

All participants found the Workshop "fully relevant" to their role, while 45% of them found that it "exceeded" their expectations and 55% found that the Workshop "met" their expectations.



# Programme

Please find the workshop programme schedule [here](#).





**CPA UK**

Westminster Hall | Houses of Parliament | London | SW1A 0AA

T: +44 (0)207 219 5373

W: [www.uk-cpa.org](http://www.uk-cpa.org)

E: [cpauk@parliament.uk](mailto:cpauk@parliament.uk)