

COMMONWEALTH GOOD GOVERNANCE PROJECT 2023/2024

OUTCOME REPORT



About the CPA

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) connects, develops, promotes and supports parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth. The CPA collaborates with parliaments and other organisations, including the intergovernmental community, to achieve its statement of purpose. It brings parliamentarians and parliamentary staff together to exchange ideas among themselves and with experts in various fields, to identify benchmarks of good practices and new policy options they can adopt or adapt in the governance of their societies.

About the authors

This Report was authored by Matthew Salik, Head of Programmes, CPA and Fraser McIntosh, Programme Manager, Good Governance Project.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
BACKGROUND TO THE BENCHMARKS	1
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES	2
CPA GOOD GOVERNANCE PROJECT	2
SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES	3
RELATED WORK OUTSIDE OF THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT	4
KEY LEARNINGS	6
FIJI BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT	7
TONGA BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT	8
NAMIBIA BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT	9
MALDIVES BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT	10
KIRIBATI BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT	11
LESOTHO BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT	12
SAMOA BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT	13
THE GAMBIA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME	14

© Commonwealth Parliamentary Association 2024

All rights reserved. This publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photography, recording or otherwise provided it is used only for educational purposes and is not for resale, and provided full acknowledgement is given to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as the original publisher. Rights are not extended for the reproduction of any photography or design not owned by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as contained in this publication.

Views and opinions expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters Secretariat and should not be attributed to any Parliament or Member of the Association.

Cover design and illustrations by Matthew Salik with elements from the Parliament of Fiji, freepik.com and Shutterstock.

Have you used this publication?

If you have, let us know as we are always keen to hear how our products are being used. Our details are on the back.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following Outcome Report has been developed to provide a summary overview of the CPA-led and FCDO-funded **Commonwealth Good Governance Project**, and to assess the success of the Project against its planned outputs and outcomes. The Report has been developed internally by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Headquarters Secretariat. Much of the content of this Report is extracted from the FCDO Project Completion Report and data provided to the CPA International Executive Committee, as the CPA's main accountability body. As part of the development of this Outcome Report, key participants and stakeholders involved in the Project were consulted for their insight. Additional research was also undertaken to identify further outcomes which occurred outside of the Project period.

The CPA expresses its thanks to the following individuals who took the time to feed into this Report: Anne Sargeant, Deputy Clerk, Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria; Tom Duncan, Clerk, Australia Capital Territory Legislative Assembly; Niusha Fathimath, Clerk, People's Majlis, Maldives; Tania Isaac, Clerk of the National Assembly of Seychelles; Eni Tekanene, Clerk of the Parliament, Kiribati; Carly Maxwell, Deputy Clerk, Legislative Assembly of New South Wales; Natasha Visser, Research Manager, Western Cape Provincial Parliament; Yonita Tuia, (former) Deputy Clerk, Legislative Assembly, Samoa; Catherine Vickers, Clerk of the Legislative Council, Tasmania; James Pinnell, Deputy Head of Programmes - Multilateral Engagement, CPA and Jack Hardcastle, Deputy Head of Programmes - Bilateral Engagement, CPA.

BACKGROUND TO THE BENCHMARKS

Building on the [Commonwealth Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers](#), the [CPA Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures](#) provide a framework for excellence in Commonwealth parliamentary and legislative practice.

The original CPA Benchmarks published in 2006 comprised of 87 indicators and were drafted by CPA parliamentarians representing different Commonwealth regions. The CPA Benchmarks were the outcome of a Study Group in late 2006 hosted by the Legislature of Bermuda on behalf of the CPA and the World Bank Institute (World Bank Group) with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Parliament and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).



Reinforcing the belief that effective parliaments are one of the principal institutions of any functioning democracy, the Benchmarks provide a minimum standard and a guide on how a parliament should be constituted and how it should function. The CPA Benchmarks are therefore fundamental to the wider values and principles of the Commonwealth Charter, adopted by Commonwealth Heads of Government on 14 December 2012, which expresses the commitment of member states to the development of free and democratic societies.

Emphasising the position of the parliamentary system as a dynamic one, all legislatures can be sources of valuable innovations regardless of their size or age. Different experiences, approaches and attitudes foster variations in practices and policies which stimulate innovation and improved outcomes for citizens across the Commonwealth.

In 2018, as part of the Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy (CP4D) Project, which was funded by the UK Government during its tenure as Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth, the CPA updated the Benchmarks. This update was intended to include new international developments such as the implementation of the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

That Project's objective was and continues to be for Commonwealth legislatures to strengthen democratic good governance. The Benchmarks are a means by which CPA Branches can self-assess their parliamentary and wider governance institutions against approved democratic standards. Following expressions of interest by member-legislatures, CPA has enabled legislatures to either independently, or with the support of expert facilitators, conduct such Benchmark Self-Assessments. The concluding reports are a resource for legislatures to refer to in identifying reforms and strategic plans as well as priority needs in parliamentary strengthening activities. The CPA, alongside its partners is able to support such legislatures in fulfilling their developmental needs through Technical Assistance Programmes (TAPs).

Since 2018, the **33 jurisdictions** that have undertaken Benchmark Assessments are: **South Africa, Malaysia, Belize, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, St Lucia, Grenada, The Gambia, Ghana, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Anguilla, KwaZulu Natal, Western Cape, St Helena, Montserrat, Malawi, Fiji, Tonga, Namibia, Maldives, Kiribati, Lesotho, Samoa, Cayman Islands, Botswana, St Kitts and Nevis and Niue.** The following jurisdictions have also conducted partial or full self-assessments independently: **Queensland, Isle of Man, Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Jersey.**

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

Technical Assistance Programmes (TAPs) form a key extension of the CPA's Benchmarking process by offering technical support to legislatures who have not met all of the Benchmarks and who wish to actively pursue the recommendations emanating from Benchmark reports.

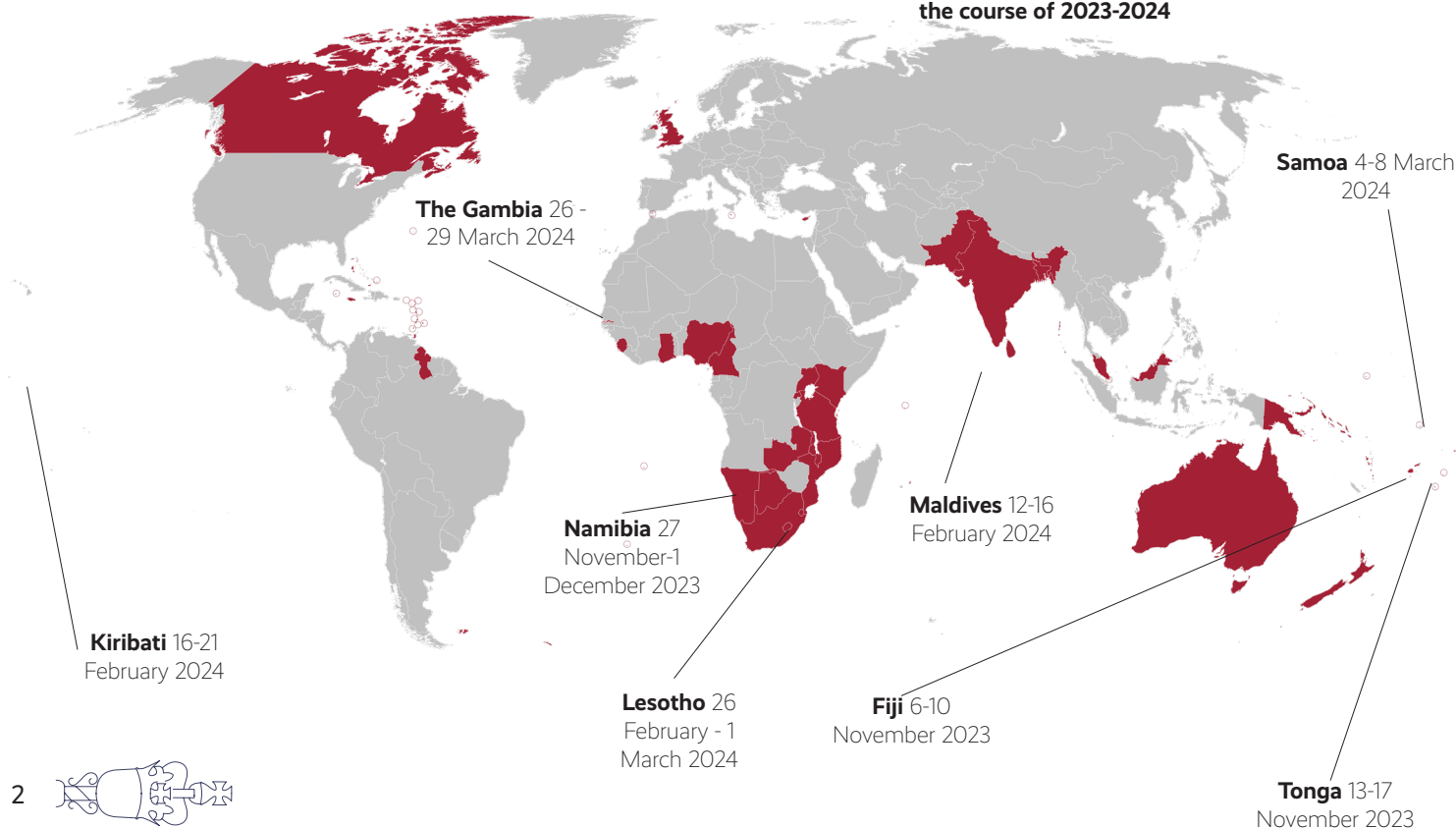
TAPs typically comprise of a multi-year programme of work focusing on institutional strengthening and parliamentary capacity building. Individual activities could be updating parliamentary standing orders/rules or procedures, drafting codes of conduct, developing strategic plans or providing specialist training on committee work.

The combination of Benchmark Self-Assessments which are then followed-up with TAPs are by far the most impactful methodologies in legislative strengthening work. This is best explained by the Good Governance Project's Theory of Change, below:

By supporting parliaments to undertake Benchmark Self-Assessments (activities) and producing reports and accompanying recommendations (outputs), such institutions and their leadership are able to identify clear roadmaps for effective and targeted reforms (outcomes). This Project can support parliaments to fulfil recommendations through Technical Assistance Programmes (outputs), for example updating rules of procedures, training, developing corporate policies and plans (activities). Which collectively seeks to bring about the Project objective (purpose) to strengthen parliamentary institutions for improved good governance and democracy across the Commonwealth.

CPA GOOD GOVERNANCE PROJECT

Geographic spread of Project activities over the course of 2023-2024



In July 2023, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat was awarded funding of approx. £160,000 from the Commonwealth Team within the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The funding formed the Good Governance Project 2023-24. The Project covered the period of 5 July 2023 to 31 March 2024 and successfully delivered a total of seven supported Benchmark Self-Assessments across the Pacific, Africa and Asia Regions. Namely **Fiji** (6-10 November 2023), **Tonga** (13-17 November 2023), **Namibia** (27 November-1 December 2023), **Maldives** (12-16 February 2024), **Kiribati** (16-21 February 2024), **Lesotho** (26 February-1 March 2024) and **Samoa** (4-8 March 2024). The Project also supported a Technical Assistance Programme in **The Gambia**. It also provided funding support to facilitate the attendance of parliamentarians at the CPA Parliamentary Academy Residency Course and the CPA Canadian Parliamentary Seminar (see below for further information).

The Project was truly Commonwealth in scope beyond the beneficiary jurisdictions. This is because the Project would not have been a success without the support of clerks and officials from ACT, Victoria, Seychelles, Western Cape, NSW, Tasmania and Uganda who joined CPA staff in facilitating the Assessments (see section on Working with Partners).

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Good Governance Project seeks to strengthen institutional parliamentary democracy and good governance across the Commonwealth.

Overview

Over the course of the Project, seven Benchmark Self-Assessments were undertaken, and seven Self-Assessment Reports were produced and submitted to their respective parliaments. Roadmaps to implement Report recommendations have been agreed by the Parliament of **Tonga**. Technical Assistance Programmes have been provided via training for two Parliaments (**Fiji** and **Malawi**) and a further programme has been undertaken in **The Gambia** to develop a set of Codes of Conduct for Members of the National Assembly. Collectively this work has contributed to strengthening parliamentary institutions and enhancing good governance.

In the case of **Fiji**, the Self-Assessment process and the sharing of useful information about the Parliament of Fiji's situation ensured that the UNDP Pacific Office and Parliament of Victoria-led Committee training programme (held in January 2024) for the Parliament of Fiji produced a more bespoke and valuable programme for Committee members.

The decision of the Parliament of **Canada** to deliver a Canadian Parliamentary Seminar in Ottawa in March 2024, provided an opportunity for post-assessment training for two newly elected Members of Parliament from **Fiji**. Their attendance was able to be supported by this Project.

The National Assembly of **The Gambia's** long-awaited decision to take forward recommendations from the 2019 Benchmark Self-Assessment (conducted as part of the previous iteration of the FCDO CP4D Project) to develop a set of Codes of Conduct enabled an additional activity to take place which could contribute to the project purpose. In March 2024, The National Assembly of The Gambia voted to approve these new Codes of Conduct. This is an important development in good governance for the jurisdiction.

The organising of the CPA's Annual Conference in Ghana in October 2023 provided a valuable opportunity to engage with jurisdictions and to encourage them to take up Benchmark Self-Assessments. This is especially so for **Samoa**, who agreed to do the Self-Assessment as a consequence of attending a related workshop. This has highlighted the value of using in-person multilateral conferences and workshops to promote the activities of the Project.

In 2023, the CPA undertook an **evaluation of the CPA Benchmarks Programme** (as it applied to 2018-2022). An [Evaluation Report](#) was published which provided a number of useful lessons. These recommendations have been onboarded to improve the CPA's benchmarking methodology, specifically through strengthening its communications approaches. In particular, in an attempt to improve awareness of the Benchmarks, and thus increase take-up, the CPA has created a publicly accessible micro-site on the CPA website, which can be viewed [here](#).

In November 2023, the CPA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Parliament of **Malawi** to support the institution on meeting key outcomes from the Benchmarking Self-Assessment (which took place prior to the start of this Project). The training elements of the MOU were part of the Residency training programme that two Malawian Members attended in Edinburgh, Scotland in October 2023.

In addition to those outcomes listed above, there have been a number of positive results which were not anticipated. For example, a number of those clerks and officials who aided in the facilitation of the Self-Assessments have indicated a desire to undertake Benchmark Self-Assessments in their own jurisdictions, in particular **Seychelles** and **Tasmania**. Whilst undertaking the Self-Assessments, the facilitators took the opportunity to highlight some of the wider CPA offerings available to Branches, including the CPA Parliamentary Academy. Consequently, 13 new registrants have signed up for online courses from these jurisdictions, including the **Maldives, Fiji** and **Namibia**.

RELATED WORK OUTSIDE OF THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

British High Commission Gaborone Funded Benchmark Programme

Outside of the above Project, the CPA also secured funding (approx. £30,000) from the British High Commission in Gaborone to support a Benchmark Self-Assessment for the Parliament of **Botswana**. The Project also included a Gender Sensitive Parliament Assessment and support in the development of their Strategic Plan. A team were deployed to support the Benchmarking and GSP Assessments between 20-24 November 2023. The Clerk of the National Assembly, Ms Barbara Dithapo said:

“Engaging with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Secretariat on the CPA Benchmarks and Gender Sensitive Parliament Self-Assessments has provided a multifaceted view of our institution’s operations. This approach has not only allowed us to thoroughly evaluate our parliamentary procedures and practices but has also shone a light on the importance of gender mainstreaming within our structures. The outcomes of these assessments offer us clear indicators of our successes and areas for reform, ensuring that we forge a path towards enhanced parliamentary governance, inclusiveness and development.”

CPA-led Benchmarking Assessments

Beyond the Benchmark Self-Assessments mentioned above, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat also supported an Assessment in the **Cayman Islands**. The Assessment took place between 23-27 October 2023 and was aided by the Clerk of the Alberta Legislative Assembly who co-facilitated the programme. The Report has been issued and approved by the Parliament. The (then) Speaker of the Parliament, Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks MP said:

“This is a great opportunity to see for ourselves where Cayman’s Legislature is performing well, and where we need to improve our parliamentary practices. I welcome this opportunity to gain a better viewpoint of our accomplishments, and to find solutions on strengthening our parliamentary governance.”

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

CPA Australia and CPA Pacific Regional Support - Twinning Programme

Australian and Pacific Parliaments that belong to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) participate in a twinning programme that provides the opportunity to enhance relations, exchange information and learn from each other. The concept of twinning is similar to the ‘sister city’ relationships that exist between cities of different countries. Every Australian state and territory parliament is twinned with one or more parliaments in the Pacific region.

The national parliaments of Australia and New Zealand provide an overall coordination role for the twinning programme, which was established in June 2007. The Pacific Parliamentary Partnerships (PPP) Fund represents a commitment from Australia’s federal, state and territory parliaments to support parliamentary strengthening in the Pacific region.

The current twinning arrangements are:

- Australian Capital Territory with Kiribati
- New South Wales with Bougainville (Papua New Guinea) and Solomon Islands
- Northern Territory with Niue
- Queensland with Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu
- South Australia with Tonga
- Victoria with Nauru, Tuvalu and Fiji
- Tasmania with Samoa
- Western Australia with Cook Islands

As part of the Good Governance Project, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat sought the support of many Australian based clerks and officials to assist in the delivery of all Pacific Benchmark Self-Assessments that occurred as part of the programme.





Images: Lydia Buchanan, Deputy Head of Programmes - Bilateral Engagement, CPA and Tom Duncan, Clerk of the Australia Capital Territory Legislative Assembly addressing SOCATT delegates at the 66th CPC in Ghana, 2023.

Benchmarks at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

During the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Ghana, a great deal of work was undertaken to promote the Benchmarks and to encourage member-legislatures in attendance to undertake Self-Assessments. During the Society of Clerks at the Table (SOCATT) Conference, there was a presentation on the Benchmarks. Also during the plenary workshop on *20 Years of the Latimer House Principles on the Separation of Powers: Is it working?* the Benchmarks were highlighted. Finally, during the Small Branches Conference a session was held on *Building Independent Parliaments: Ensuring Financial and Administrative Autonomy* which also covered the Benchmarks. As a consequence of this work, **Eastern Cape** and **Samoa** (which has subsequently undertaken an Assessment) expressed a desire to review themselves against the Benchmarks.

Indicators for Democratic Parliaments based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7: A Tool for Learning and Development

Since 2021, the CPA has supported the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in the development of a set of parliamentary indicators. The indicators comprise a set of benchmarks for democratic parliaments that align with the commitments expressed under the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Targets 16.6: *Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels* and 16.7: *Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels*, adjusted to the institution of parliament. The CPA is part of a consortium of global members of parliament and partner organisations involved in its development, including, the **National Democratic Institute (NDI)**, **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)**, **Inter Pares**, **Directorio Legislativo**, **UN Development Program (UNDP)**, **UN Women**, and **EU Commission**. The Indicators were formally launched in November 2023 and the CPA's Deputy Head of Programmes - Bilateral Engagement presented on the work of the CPA Benchmarks and how they align to the IPU Indicators.

KEY LEARNINGS

Overall the 2023-2024 Project was successful. The majority of indicators and milestones were met. All planned outputs were achieved. Where there were areas for improvement, these centred on getting all recipient countries to commit to the Assessment Report and agree clear roadmaps for reforms.

A lot of the challenges which arose in delivering the Project within key milestones stemmed from the reduced time which was available to complete the Project. Rather than starting in April 2023, the July 2023 start date meant that most of the activities had to be delivered within a shorter time period. Working with Commonwealth parliaments and their challenges to be certain around availability added to the pressures of project delivery. A longer project period would be valuable – 12 months or better still, three years.

What is very positive to note is that there was a generally positive and receptive approach by stakeholders to the Benchmarking and Technical Assistance Programme methodology. It would be reasonable for the leadership within parliaments to be hesitant and sceptical about being under such close and indepth scrutiny. However, there was a consistent degree of welcome and encouraging feedback. This was demonstrated through qualitative and quantitative feedback from all legislatures.

Many of those Clerks and officials from across the Commonwealth who were involved in the Project suggested a some areas for improvement, especially where it relates to the delivery of Benchmark Self-Assessments. These are listed below:

- Better balance in the range of skills and experiences of those being deployed and assigned to deliver the Self-Assessments.
- More frequent and more comprehensive briefings for parliaments and legislatures undertaking Self-Assessments, so that they have a clearer understanding of what is required of them.
- Produce a summary briefing note to be shared with stakeholders prior to interviews taking place so that interviewees are better prepared to share their insights.

Most, if not all of these suggestions have been incorporated into the 2024-2025 Project.

NEXT STEPS

In April 2024, a second round of funding (approx. £190,000) was approved by the FCDO to build on the work and successes of the 2023-2024 Commonwealth Good Governance Project. This next iteration seeks to engage with additional national and subnational legislatures across the Commonwealth in strengthening their parliamentary democracies, not to mention continuing the successful work of the previous iteration, by working with the parliaments that have already completed a Benchmarks Self-Assessment.

It has been identified that Self-Assessments will take place in **Eswatini, Sri Lanka, Niue, Solomon Islands**, and it is hoped, **St Vincent and the Grenadines** and **Eastern Cape**. Technical Assistance Programmes will take place in the following jurisdictions: **Tonga, Samoa, Maldives, Fiji**, and **Namibia**. At the time of writing, the Benchmark Self-Assessment in **Niue** was undertaken from 29 July to 2 August 2024.

As part of the wider remit of the 2024-2025 Project, the CPA is actively pursuing an outreach and engagement agenda to increase awareness of the Benchmarks. With this in mind, the CPA will use the CPA Canada, Africa, Caribbean, Americas, and Atlantic and India Regional Conferences to deliver Benchmark-related workshop presentations. Plans are also underway to deliver a presentation at the 67th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, scheduled for November 2024.

Beyond the scope of the Project, the CPA has continued to pursue a proactive approach to supporting jurisdictions with undertaking Benchmark Self-Assessments. Especially those jurisdictions which are not eligible for Overseas Development Assistance funding by the FCDO . For example, in May 2024, the CPA worked with the National Assembly of **St Kitts and Nevis** in undertaking a Self-Assessment.





FIJI BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT 6-10 November 2023, Suva, Fiji

In November 2023, Fiji became the 25th Commonwealth legislature to use the framework to conduct a Self-Assessment against the 2018 Benchmarks and the first one to do so in the Pacific.

The 2023 Benchmark Self-Assessment was approved by the Speaker, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu and organised by the Secretary-General of Parliament, Jeanette Emberson and parliamentary staff. An initial technical assessment was undertaken by the Parliament against the Benchmarks. The CPA Headquarters Secretariat appointed Matthew Salik, Head of Programmes, CPA Headquarters Secretariat and Anne Sargent, Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria, Australia to undertake a review from 6 November to 10 November 2023. During their time in Fiji, they met with a range of stakeholders, including the Speaker of Parliament, the Secretary-General of Parliament, Assistant Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition, Members of Parliament, the Solicitor-General, representatives from Ministries and Departments of Government, parliamentary staff and international stakeholders such as UNDP and the diplomatic corps. Overall, the Assessment team met with 51 stakeholders whilst in Suva, of which 49% were women.



Speaking about the self-assessment, the Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu said:

“The Fijian Parliament is committed to the benchmarks assessment exercise as the outcome will enable us to embrace and build upon the good practices currently being executed but more importantly to address and improve on the gaps that will be identified as this is critically essential. As the Speaker, I am cognisant of the underlying principles under SDG 16, my aim is to strengthen this august institution to ensure that it is accountable, transparent and effective.”

Following the Self-Assessment, a Report was produced and published. The Report included 13 recommendations focusing on a range of key areas of reform. [The Report can be accessed here.](#)

The Report has been endorsed by the Parliament and copies were circulated to Members. Since December 2023, the Parliament has undertaken training on parliamentary standing committees in partnership with UNDP and the Parliament of Victoria which aligns with recommendations from the Benchmark Report, namely:

“The oversight work of committees should go beyond its current approach of mainly examining dated ex post annual reports and accounts of Government departments and agencies and broaden its approach to look at policy and administrative matters.”



Images: (Left to right). Assessment team meeting with Members of the Opposition. Assessment team meeting with the Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua MP, Deputy Speaker and Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs (Middle).



TONGA BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT 13-17 November 2023, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

In November 2023, the Legislative Assembly of Tonga (Fale Alea 'o Tonga) became the 26th Commonwealth legislature to use the CPA Recommended Benchmarks to conduct a Self-Assessment. The Self-Assessment was approved by the Lord Speaker, Hon. Lord Fakafanua, and organised by parliamentary staff. CPA Headquarters appointed Fraser McIntosh (Good Governance Project Manager, CPA HQ) and Tom Duncan (Clerk, The Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory) to undertake the Assessment from 13-17 November 2023.

As part of their visit, the CPA delegation met with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Gloria Pole'o, the Clerk of the House, and Members of Parliament, as well as parliamentary staff, the Attorney-General, Auditor-General, Electoral Commissioner, Public Service Commissioner, Civil Society Forum and representatives of the media. In total, 15 meetings took place over the course of the week. 47% of those stakeholders met were women.



Speaking about the self-assessment, the Lord Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Lord Fakafanua, said:

"The Legislative Assembly of Tonga is delighted to undertake the CPA Benchmarks self-assessment exercise and feels that doing so now is the right time for our Parliament, its Members and staff. Completing this important piece of work will enable us to celebrate the considerable progress that has been made since our 2010 constitutional reforms, while also identifying and addressing key areas for democratic improvement. As Lord Speaker, I look forward to working further alongside the CPA with a shared ambition of building a Parliament here in Tonga that is fit for purpose, resilient and inclusive for all."

Following the Self-Assessment, a report was produced and published. The Report included 19 recommendations focusing on a range of key areas of reform. [The Report can be accessed here.](#)

The Report has been endorsed by the Parliament and it has committed to take forward a number of recommendations in the new year. An MOU has been agreed with the CPA Headquarters Secretariat and the first area of reform will be to update their Standing Orders, this will commence in 2024.



Images: (Left to right). Assessment team meeting with Lord Speaker, Hon. Lord Fakafanua (Middle). Assessment team meeting with the Hon. Dr. Uhilamoelangi Fasi MP (Middle).

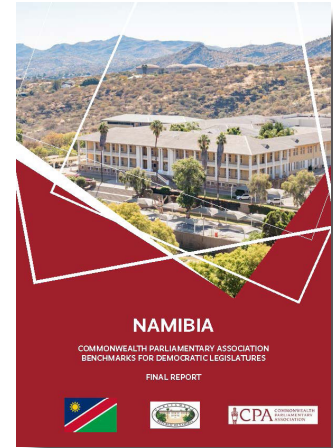




NAMIBIA BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT 27 November - 1 December 2023, Windhoek, Namibia

In November 2023, the Parliament of Namibia became the 27th Commonwealth Legislature to use this framework to conduct a Self-Assessment against the Benchmarks. The Assessment was approved by the Presiding Officers of both Houses of Parliament: Hon. Prof. Peter Katjavivi (Speaker, Namibian National Assembly) and Hon. Lukas Sinimbo Muha (Chairperson, Namibian National Council) and organised by parliamentary staff. CPA Headquarters appointed Fraser McIntosh (Good Governance Project Manager, CPA HQ) and Josephine Watera (Assistant Director, Department of Research Services, Parliament of Uganda) to undertake this Assessment from 27 November-1 December 2023.

During their time in Windhoek, Fraser and Josephine met the Presiding Officers and other MPs from both Houses. They also had discussions with Ms. Lydia Kandetu (Secretary to the National Assembly) and Mr. Tousy Namiseb (Secretary to the National Council) alongside various other senior parliamentary staff. The CPA delegation held further meetings with a wide range of external stakeholders including officials from the Auditor General, Attorney General, and Electoral Commissioner offices, as well as representatives of Namibian Civil Society. Overall, the Assessment team met with 23 stakeholders, of which 52% were women.

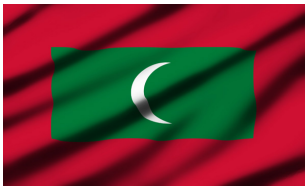


Speaking about the programme, the Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia, Hon. Lukas Sinimbo Muha, said: *“The Parliament of Namibia welcomes the Benchmarks Self-Assessment as a tool for us to compare our practices to standards developed by the CPA and adopted by fellow member Parliaments. This important exercise will help the Parliament of Namibia reflect on its strengths and create objectives and strategies to improve on its weaknesses. I am sure the outcomes of this CPA visit will motivate both Members and staff to redouble their efforts to make the Parliament of Namibia more effective.”*

Following the Self-Assessment, a report was produced and published. The Report included 20 recommendations focusing on a range of key areas of reform. [The Report can be accessed here.](#)



Images: (Top to bottom). Assessment team meeting with Hon. Loide Kasingo MP and Hon. Lukas Sinimbo Muha MP.



MALDIVES BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT 12-16 February 2024, Malé, Maldives

In February 2024, the Parliament of Maldives (The People's Majlis) became the 29th Commonwealth legislature to conduct a Self-Assessment against the Benchmarks. The Self-Assessment exercise was approved by the (then) Speaker, Hon. Mohamed Aslam, and organised by parliamentary staff. CPA Headquarters appointed Fraser McIntosh (Good Governance Project Manager, CPA HQ) and Tania Isaac (Clerk, The National Assembly of Seychelles) to undertake the Self-Assessment from 12-16 February 2024.

During their time in Malé, Fraser and Tania met with the Speaker and other MPs from the People's Majlis. They also had discussions with Ms. Niusha Fathimath (Secretary General of the Parliament) and various senior parliamentary staff, as well as holding meetings with a wide range of external stakeholders including Maldives' Government, Elections Commission, and Auditor General offices, as well as representatives of both Maldivian Civil Society and the Media. In total, the team undertaking the assessment programme met with 25 stakeholders and 44% of those stakeholders met were women.



Speaking about the Self-Assessment, the former Speaker of the People's Majlis, Hon. Mohamed Aslam, said,

“My aspiration for The Maldives Parliament is to facilitate the alignment of its powers and practices in a manner that effectively serves the nation's needs, while upholding the Constitution without external interference. We must ensure that it delivers for the people in accordance with international rules and standards. Furthermore, I endeavour to foster an environment where Members of Parliament actively contribute to the ongoing development and evolution of the parliamentary system. Assessing ourselves against the CPA Benchmarks will provide a valuable opportunity for us to evaluate our progress and to identify areas for improvement. As the CPA has been a longstanding source of support to the People's Majlis, we are eager to renew our engagement, especially since recently rejoining the organisation. With elections on the horizon, the timing of the self-assessment is ideal for us to reflect on our performance and to strategise for the future.”

Following the Self-Assessment, a Report was produced and published. The Report included 20 recommendations focusing on a range of key areas of reform. [The Report can be accessed here.](#)

Speaking about the self-assessment and concluding report, the Secretary-General of the People's Majlis, said:

“As for the whole exercise, I am very impressed with it. The entire process has been professional and efficient, with meticulous planning and logistics ensuring smooth visits and engagements. The coordination and support from the CPA team were seamless and productive. Communications around deployments were highly effective, keeping everyone well-informed and supported. The meetings and interviews were well-arranged, leading to productive discussions and outcomes. The report was outstanding – comprehensive, clear, and actionable. Most of the recommendations were relevant and practical, addressing key issues effectively. Additionally, the methodology was well-communicated and easy to understand. Thank you for the excellent work and for making these exercises a success.”

Since the publishing of the Report, Maldives has had a General Election. Consequently, the new administration and membership need additional time to consider outcomes from the Report. That being said, in August 2024, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) supported the People's Majlis in undertaking an induction programme for new MPs. The training programme looked at the importance of strategic committee planning. This thematic priority area aligns with recommendations from the Benchmark Report, namely:

“The People's Majlis should strengthen the set-up of its Committees by producing Work Plans, standardising the size/composition of their membership, and ensuring that several of its Committees (in particular PAC) are chaired by opposition Members.”





KIRIBATI BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT 16-21 February 2024, Tarawa, Kiribati

In February 2024, the Legislative Assembly of Kiribati (Mauneaba ni Maungatabu) became the 30th Commonwealth legislature to use this framework to conduct an assessment against the Benchmarks. The Self-Assessment was approved by the (then) Speaker, Hon. Tangariki Reete, and organised by parliamentary staff. CPA Headquarters appointed Tom Duncan (Clerk, Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory) and Carly Maxwell (Deputy Clerk, New South Wales Legislative Assembly) to undertake the Self-Assessment from 16-21 February 2024.

During their time in Tarawa, the Assessment team met the Speaker and other MPs from the Kiribati Legislative Assembly and various senior parliamentary staff, as well as holding meetings with a wide range of external stakeholders including: the Auditor General; the Electoral Commissioner; the Chairman of the Leadership Commission; CEO of the Broadcasting Publication Authority; and representatives of both civil society and the media. Overall, the Assessment team met with 19 stakeholders, of which 26% were women.



Speaking about the Self-Assessment, the Speaker of the Parliament of Kiribati, Hon. Tangariki Reete said:

“The Parliament of Kiribati welcomes the CPA Democratic Benchmarks Self-Assessment as a tool for us to compare our practices to standards developed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and adopted by member Parliaments. This important exercise will help us to reflect on the Parliament’s strengths and create objectives and strategies to improve on its weaknesses. I am sure the outcomes of this CPA visit will motivate both Members and parliamentary staff to redouble their efforts to make the Parliament of Kiribati more effective for our citizens.”

Following the Self-Assessment, a Report was produced and published. The Report included 18 recommendations focusing on a range of key areas of reform. [The Report can be accessed here.](#)

Speaking about the process, the Clerk of the Parliament, Eni Tekanene said:

“First of all, I would like to thank you for your full support and guidance throughout this process. Now that the Benchmark Self-Assessment has been completed, it can be used as a guide for achieving what our Parliament needs to accomplish in the near future.

The Benchmark Self-Assessment has been conducted and coordinated efficiently. Our team from our twinned parliament (NSW) did an excellent job conducting the interviews that were part of the exercise. They covered everything that needed to be addressed. The final product is of great importance, as it encompasses all the necessary information and recommendations regarding where we are and where we need to go from here.

The assistance provided by CPA to the Kiribati Parliament has showcased the strong relationship and commitment that exists between our institutions. It has not only allowed us to achieve the objective of the exercise but also laid the foundations and guidelines to support and meet our goals.”

Since the publishing of the Report, Kiribati has had a General Election and as such the new administration need time to consider outcomes from the Report. The CPA team will liaise with the new Speaker once they are appointed.



Images: (Left to right). Assessment team meeting with with Hon. Reete, Speaker of the House and Eni Tekanene, Clerk. Assessment team member, Carly Maxwell with George MacKenzie, Parliamentary Counsel.





LESOTHO BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT 26 February - 1 March 2024, Maseru, Lesotho

In February 2024, the Parliament of Lesotho became the 31st Commonwealth legislature to conduct a Self-Assessment against the Benchmarks. The Self-Assessment exercise was approved by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Rt Hon. Tlohang Sekhamane MP and the President of the Senate, Hon. Mamonaheng Mokitimi, and organised by parliamentary staff. CPA Headquarters appointed Clive Barker, Programmes Manager, CPA, and Natascha Visser, Research Manager at the Western Cape Provincial Parliament in South Africa to undertake the Self-Assessment from 26 February - 1 March 2024.

As part of their visit, the Assessment team met with the Speaker of the National Assembly, the President of the Senate, the Clerks of both Houses, Adv. Lebohlang Fine Maema, KC, the Clerk of the National Assembly and Advocate Tšeliso Molise, the Clerk of the Senate; as well as other Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff, the judiciary, the media and civil society groups. In total, the team undertaking the assessment programme met with 47 stakeholders and 45% of those stakeholders met were women.



Speaking about the Self-Assessment, the Clerk of the Senate of Lesotho, Advocate Tšeliso Molise, said:

“The Parliament of Lesotho wishes to express our sincere gratitude to the CPA Headquarters for sending two consultants to Lesotho as part of our CPA Democratic Benchmarks self-assessment exercise. It has been a pleasure to welcome them to Lesotho and we hope that they had fruitful meetings with all of the stakeholders in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the Lesotho Parliament and make recommendations accordingly. We look forward to the CPA’s report and recommendations that will guide us on how our Parliament can be strengthened in serving the people of Lesotho.”

Following the Assessment, a Report was produced and published. The Report included 22 recommendations focusing on a range of key areas of reform. [The Report can be accessed here.](#)



Images: From left to right: Hon. Richard Ramoetsi, Minister of Law and Justice, Natascha Visser, Researcher at the Western Cape Provincial Parliament (CPA Consultant for this Self-Assessment), Hon. Dr. Ntoi Rapapa, Minister of Education and Training, Hon. Justice Nthomeng Majara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Clive Barker, CPA Programmes Manager, Hon. Limpho Tau, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office.

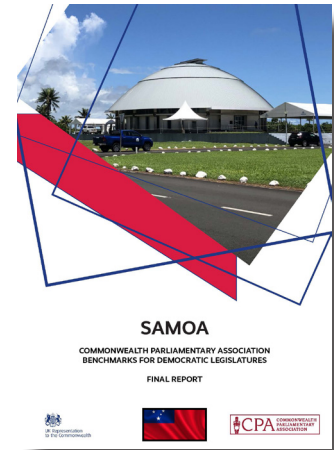




SAMOA BENCHMARK SELF-ASSESSMENT 4-8 March 2024, Apia, Samoa

In March 2024, the Parliament of Samoa became the 32nd Commonwealth Legislature to conduct a Self-Assessment against the Benchmarks. The Assessment exercise was approved by the Speaker, Hon. Papali'i Li'o Oloipola Ta'eu Masipa'u, and organised by parliamentary staff. CPA Headquarters appointed Fraser McIntosh (Good Governance Project Manager, CPA HQ) and Catherine Vickers (Clerk, The Legislative Council of the Parliament of Tasmania) to undertake the Assessment from 4-8 March 2024.

During their time in Apia, the Assessment team met Speaker Masipa'u, Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa and other MPs (Government and Opposition) from the Legislative Assembly. They also had discussions with Ms. Lesa Yonita Tuia (Deputy Clerk of the Parliament) and various senior parliamentary staff alongside holding meetings with a wide range of external stakeholders including Samoa's Government, Attorney General, and Auditor General offices, as well as representatives of both Samoan Civil Society and the Media. Overall, the Assessment team met with 23 stakeholders, of which 43% were women.



Speaking about the process, Hon. Papalii Lio Oloipola Taeu Masipau, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Samoa said:

“The number of challenges experienced by Samoa since our last General Election in April 2021 has been immense to the point that Parliament’s independence was widely questioned by the public. The CPA Benchmark’s assessment is an important exercise undertaking a review of our Parliament’s current practices and procedures. I anticipate that the CPA assessment will shed light on long-held parliamentary practices and procedures that need to be abolished, reviewed or strengthened so as to reinforce the independence of Parliament, ensure its supremacy, and importantly restore the trust of our citizens on Parliament being the voice of the people.”

Following the Self-Assessment, a Report was produced and published. The Report included 20 recommendations focusing on a range of key areas of reform. [The Report can be accessed here.](#)

Speaking about the Self-Assessment and concluding Report, the former Deputy Clerk, Yonita Tuia said:

“I can speak on behalf of the Clerk and Speaker, that we were satisfied with how the visit was implemented. Fraser and I were always in touch in regards to arrangements for the visit and appointments to be made for the visit. By the time CPA team arrived, all were on the same page. I have nothing more to say but to be grateful for the team and the immense work that was done in the one-week period.”

As the Parliament of Samoa’s focus moves towards the delivery of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in October 2024, discussions on taking forward outcomes on the report will be agreed on the sidelines.



Images: (Left to right), Assessment team meeting with with the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. The Assessment team meeting with staff of the Audit Office. The Assessment team meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament.



THE GAMBIA TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME 26-29 March 2024, Banjul, The Gambia

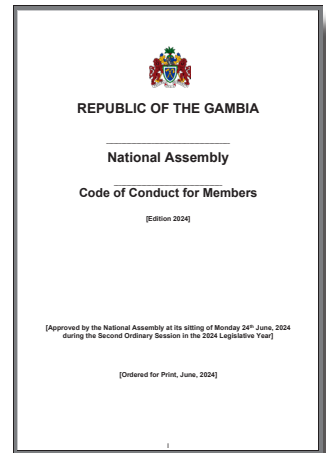
In 2019, the National Assembly of The Gambia undertook a Benchmark Self-Assessment. The Self-Assessment concluding Report highlighted that although there were some provisions around ethical governance for Members of the National Assembly, there were gaps which needed to be filled through the establishment of Codes of Conduct. Whereas there had been a number of reforms taken forward following the Assessment in 2019, including the establishment of the National Assembly Service Act, progress on Codes of Conduct had not moved forward. However in 2023, the CPA were approached by the Assembly to provide assistance. As part of the Good Governance Project a TAP activity was agreed. From 26 - 29 March 2024 a team were deployed to The Gambia to draft a set of Code of Conduct for Members.

Rt Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta MP, Speaker of the National Assembly welcomed the delegation of Eve Samson, Clerk at the UK House of Commons, Michael Torrance, Clerk at the UK House of Lords and Avni Kondhia, Programmes Officer at CPA Headquarters. The programme included meetings with the Speaker, Members of the Committee of Privileges and Ethics, Members of the National Assembly and Clerks of the Assembly.

Speaking about the project, the Speaker of the National Assembly of The Gambia said:

“Enhancing public trust in our Parliament and its Members is of vital importance and so we are delighted to be working with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in the development of our first Code of Conduct for Members. The CPA has led the way in parliamentary strengthening through the development of the ‘Benchmarks for Codes of Conduct’ and the updated ‘Standards for Codes of Conduct for MPs and the Parliamentary Workplace’ and in the implementation the good governance values of the Commonwealth. We look forward to developing these Codes of Conduct for the National Assembly of The Gambia.”

Following the fruitful programme in Banjul, the team designed a draft set of Codes of Conduct for the Assembly to consider and consult on. Following internal review, a Code was finalised, and in June 2024, the National Assembly approved the Code of Conduct for Members.



Images: (Left to right). The drafting team meeting with Members of the Assembly. The team meeting with the Speaker of the Assembly, Rt Hon. Fabakary Tombong Jatta MP.





Published by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA).
Registered Charity Number 263147.

CPA Headquarters Secretariat
Richmond House, Houses of Parliament
London SW1A 0AA
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7799 1460
Email: hq.sec@cpahq.org
Website: www.cpahq.org

Published 2024