

Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT) Africa Region

6th Professional Development Seminar

1-6 August, 2022

Venue: Windhoek Country Club

Windhoek, Namibia



Theme: Re-engineering parliamentary service delivery: An opportunity to enhance and sustain the performance of parliaments.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 has practically touched every aspect of people's lives worldwide. As such, countries, institutions and individuals had to make adjustments to their normal way of doing things in order to suppress the virus. At institutional level, both public and private, Covid-19 negatively affected normal operations, thereby compelling institutions to transform and integrate digital technology into their operations to accelerate efficiency. Parliamentary systems across the world and indeed on the African continent were no exception, as operations slowed-down due to Covid-19. To circumvent the paralyzing of parliamentary activities, legislative bodies on the continent made necessary adjustments required to continue their work in such challenging times.

As part of the transformation process, parliaments were compelled to adjust their procedures and work arrangements as a response to the pandemic in their quest to continue performing their constitutional mandates. The adjustment of operational procedures and practices by some Parliaments signified their resilience capabilities as exemplified by the ability of Members of Parliament (MPs) and staff to make changes to procedures and work processes to suit the prevailing circumstances. These adaptive approaches assisted most parliaments to sustain their operations throughout the pandemic. In the same breath, the pandemic triggered the acceleration of digital parliaments, which resulted in hybrid parliament models aimed at sustaining the representative functions of parliaments, including public participation in appropriate parliamentary activities. These transformative approaches necessitated Parliaments to capacitate staff to ensure that they possess the right skills and competencies required to meet the demands associated with a rapidly changing work environment. In addition, the disruptive impact of Covid-19 offered the opportunity to re-shape the human resource management and development practices in parliaments.

For these reasons, the Parliament of the Republic of Namibia, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's (CPA) Society of Clerks-at-the-Table (SoCATT) Africa Region hosted the 6th Professional Development Seminar from 01 to

06 August 2022, in Windhoek to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on parliamentary systems in Africa among other things. SoCATT Africa Region hosts these development seminars annually as part of its strategic plan, which places great importance on building capacity of members of the Society, in order to support Parliaments to deliver on their mandate.

This year's seminar was held under the theme: "Re-engineering parliamentary service delivery: An opportunity to enhance and sustain the performance of parliaments". As such, discussions during the seminar were guided by three thematic areas, namely: parliamentary procedure and ethics; strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation in parliamentary settings; and emerging human resource management and development in parliamentary settings. These thematic areas were considered to be critical aspects of parliamentary service delivery as they embrace all the key stakeholders involved in parliamentary work, namely: members of parliament (MPs), staff, the public, and other stakeholders. Each thematic area was accompanied by specific topics, which formed the basis for learning, knowledge sharing and exchange of practical experiences during the Seminar.

Rethinking such critical aspects of the work of parliament allows for a more thoughtful consideration of how lessons have been learned during the pandemic and how those lessons can be applied to legislatures to inform their planning for future work. The seminar was thus necessary to clerks and other support staff, considering the fact that they play a key role in the effective operation of parliamentary institutions on the continent.

The seminar took place over four days, starting on Tuesday, 02 August with the registration of delegates and ending on Friday, 05 August 2022 with the excursion for delegates. More than 80 local and foreign parliamentary officials including clerks and secretaries of legislatures representing SoCATT Africa branches and sub-branches attended the seminar. In addition, experts in the field of Public Management, Human Sciences, Information Communication and Technology, Law and Public Policy, namely: Prof. Johannes Coetzee representing the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and Dr. Rasheed Draman from the Ghana Parliamentary Institute were also invited to attend the seminar as guest speakers. These experts brought with them

valuable knowledge and shared useful tips on the digital transformation as it relates to parliamentary procedures among other things.

2. Objectives of the seminar

Staying within the thematic area of procedure and ethics; strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation; and human resource management and development, the objectives of the 2022 Professional Development Seminar were to:

- (i) create a platform for learning, knowledge sharing and exchange of practical experiences on the emerging practices in parliamentary service delivery in SoCATT Africa member legislatures,
- (ii) explore opportunities and challenges associated with re-engineering parliamentary service,
- (iii) discuss and disseminate innovative approaches and good practices for re-engineering parliamentary service delivery.

This report serves to outline the context which was presented to delegates, as well as document the outcomes and ways forward, borne from the two-day engagement.

3. Day 1

3.1 Setting the scene

The official programme started on Wednesday, 03 August with the official opening event officiated by the Chairperson of the National Council of the Parliament of the Republic of Namibia, Honourable Lukas Sinimbo Muha. During his speech, Hon. Muha, urged the staff members of member states to familiarise themselves with the evolving technology to become relevant in the new normal. He further emphasised the importance of the capacity building workshop to equip staff members with relevant skills to be able to work effectively with the changing environment.

The same sentiments were echoed by Ambassador Jennine Kambanda, Clerk of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Rwanda and Chairperson of the SoCATT Africa Region who stressed need for SoCATT to implement the recommendations from previous

seminars aimed at improving the service delivery of parliaments for member states. Kambanda further stressed the need for parliaments to adapt to the changing environment of work exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic by integrating technology and ICT into their operation.

As with every institution and organization globally, the Covid-19 pandemic has been disastrous to parliaments everywhere. In many countries on the continent, lockdowns and strict regulations imposed by governments to limit the further spread of the deadly virus disrupted the traditional ways of working and communicating. The business of parliaments across the continent were no exception. As such, parliaments were faced with a dilemma in ensuring that the routine travel by members of parliament between their district and the capital, the constant engagement of the public in their work, the need for data and information and the need to fulfill a constitutional mandate, among other factors in the essential business of governing does not grind to a halt. Although parliaments across the continent were already grappling with challenges associated with the digital transformation, the Covid-19 pandemic should be a wake-up call for parliamentary re-engineering.

In this regard, the seminar was addressed by Professor Johan Coetzee from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) who outlined various developments and trends that have taken place in the sectors of information and communications technology as well as human capital development. His presentation was vital for delegates to understand the pros and cons associated with integrating technology into the operation of parliamentary systems. Prof. Coetzee emphasised the urgent need to transform parliaments by embracing new technologies and adapting to new ways of doing things. This would enable parliaments to purposefully invest in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment to enable staff to execute their work effectively and adapt to new models of collecting, processing and sharing information. When crafting strategic plans, Prof. Coetzee said various factors which could have unintended negative impact on the operations of parliaments such as changes in government policies, laws, global pandemics and uncertainties, economic situation, technological changes, etc..., should be central to the planning of such strategic plans.

In times of uncertainties such as global health emergencies or any disaster that could prevent parliaments to convene physical sessions, Prof. Coetzee said a shift system which will allow staff and MPs to work from home can be explored to ensure the smooth operation of parliament. However, this would require parliaments to invest in advanced security tools to ensure that the security of the institution is not compromised. He further cited tools such as virtual private networks which can be used to avert security risks involved in working from home. The use of security declaration and non-disclosure forms to prevent the leaking of official confidential information could also enhance the security of parliamentary systems when operating under abnormal conditions.

3.2 Presentations and discussions

To fully understand the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the greater digitalisation shift, delegates were offered an opportunity to share experiences on how they dealt with the pandemic and adapted to the new reality of work to ensure that parliamentary service delivery did not grind to a halt during lockdowns. Five topics, anchored on the objectives of the seminar and aligned to each thematic area, formed part of the panel discussions during which presentations were made by representatives from various countries on the specific situations and lessons learned in their respective countries.

Presentations were based on the following topics:

- (i) Exploring the implications of digital parliaments on parliamentary procedures and constitutional mandates (Namibia, Uganda and Sierra Leone).
- (ii) Examining legal frameworks for promotion of ethical conduct among Members of Parliament (Malawi, South Africa and Kenya).
- (iii) Leveraging on the lessons drawn from COVID-19 to build resilient and adaptive Parliaments (Nigeria, Botswana and Sierra Leone).
- (iv) Unpacking the role of monitoring and evaluation in strategic planning and management in parliamentary settings (South Africa, Zambia and Ghana).
- (v) Re-modeling human resource management and development in the post COVID-19 era (Group Work).

3.2.1 Topic 1: Exploring the implications of digital parliaments on parliamentary procedures and constitutional mandates (Namibia, Uganda and Sierra Leone).

The rules of internal regulation for parliament, also known as standing rules or rules of procedure (ROP) are the cornerstone of parliamentary operations as they prescribe not only the manner in which core parliamentary functions are managed and implemented, but also stipulates the rights and obligations of parliamentarians. In addition, the rules of procedure have to bring clarity to legislative, oversight and other parliamentary processes and enable the public to follow parliamentary work in a structured and accessible way. It is through rules of procedures and other constitutional provisions that parliaments are able to fulfill their mandate to make laws, monitor government activities and spending, and to represent citizen issues and concerns in government decision-making. However, these legal instruments pose a challenge to parliaments across the world as they try to digitalise and adapt to new ways of doing things. One of the challenges is that in many jurisdictions, parliaments are constitutionally required to sit in the capital, meaning MPs who stay in remote areas are required to travel to attend in person at the parliament precinct. In addition, rules used to determine quorum and procedures for voting on the floor are also rigid, which limits the flexibility of parliaments to convene virtual sessions.

To fully understand the implication the digital paradigm has on parliaments, representatives from Namibia and Uganda therefore shared their experiences, at the seminar, on how parliaments responded to the challenges associated to working under the public health regulations imposed by the government since the Covid-19 pandemic was declared in 2020.

The need for parliaments to embrace technology to enhance their resiliency and become more open, transparent and to maintain their core functions is more urgent than ever, with lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, the pandemic exposed a myriad of issues as technology became more prevalent in the work of parliaments. In Namibia, for example, parliamentary sessions were completely suspended during the initial stages of the lockdown before arrangements could be made to allow for a hybrid operation. Poor network coverage and inadequate electricity connections in some of the

areas where MPs lived prevented parliamentary meetings from proceeding smoothly, in contravention of the rules and constitutional provisions which guarantees the equal participation of MPs during proceedings. The pandemic also exposed a technology deficit amongst MPs, especially those of mature age who faced challenges in the use of digital tools and platforms.

In addition, the migration to digital platforms also meant that rural communities without adequate network connections, who would normally be represented at public hearings, were left out of the virtual arrangements. The participation and inclusion of rural communities proved to be difficult even though sessions were live-streamed on social media platforms. Apart from these challenges, it became clear that addressing security issues, including the authentication of MPs prior to voting and preventing cyber-attacks were critical to the successful transition to a more digital legislative process.

Similar challenges were recorded in Uganda as the parliament in that country introduced digital tools to ensure the continuation of proceedings during national lockdowns. Like in Namibia and many countries on the continent, Uganda also has a deficit in ICT infrastructures which makes it difficult to fully migrate the entire operation of parliament onto digital platforms. Uganda also faced a challenge with regards to the rules and procedures for determining quorum and voting on the floor. It also became clear that there was a technology skill deficit among MPs and some staff members, therefore training and technical support was required to ensure that all MPs could access and use technology equally.

To address the identified challenges, the presenters noted that parliaments in their respective countries adopted a hybrid system of operation to ensure that sessions and committee engagements continue during the lockdowns. As a result, MPs were trained and adapted quickly to the new way of attending sessions. To ensure the inclusion participation of the public in parliamentary affairs, all sessions of the National Assembly and the National Council in Namibia were streamed live on Facebook and YouTube. Documents submitted to the floor of parliament during proceedings were also shared with the media in soft copy, thereby eliminating the need for media personnel to visit

parliament physically. The official website for parliament in Namibia was also revamped to introduce features which enabled members of the public to track the progress of the Bills tabled in the National Assembly and get involved in the legislation process.

In Uganda, the parliament also adopted a hybrid system of operation with a few MPs attending physically and the rest connected through digital tools. This was made possible after the rules of procedures were amended to facilitate online attendance, ascertaining quorum and remote voting. In addition, committee functions were conducted through digital tools such as Zoom. Documents such as bills and reports were also transformed into digital files and were delivered to MPs electronically. Just like in Namibia, parliamentary proceedings in Uganda were also streamed live on Facebook and YouTube during the lockdown periods to ensure public participation.

Following the presentation on the challenges and lessons learned with regards to the integration of technology into operations of parliament, the consensus in the house was that:

- parliaments should amend rules of procedures to enable the continuation of the hybrid operational model adopted during the pandemic to enhance the resilience of parliaments,
- parliaments should fully integrate technology into their operations, especially social media to ensure visibility and encourage public participation,
- parliaments should prioritise investment into ICT tools to enhance efficiency,
- live-streaming of parliament sessions and committee meetings should continue post-pandemic and it should include social media tracking to record the comments from the public, and that;
- training and skills development is required for staff and MPs to enable them to adapt and work effectively within the new way of work.

3.2.2 Topic 2: Examining legal frameworks for promotion of ethical conduct among Members of Parliament (Malawi, South Africa and Kenya)

Parliamentarians have a unique role in the governance systems as the representatives of citizens in the decision-making processes. As such, MPs enjoy specific parliamentary privileges to enable them to execute their mandate without fear of prosecution or civil lawsuit. This right ensures that MPs can speak in debates in plenary sessions and committees is critical to ensuring an effective system of checks and balances and only parliament itself can limit that right of expression, for example through set rules. Despite enjoying these privileges, MPs are expected to conduct themselves in the public's interests at all times. As public servants MPs must also adhere to an agreed Code of Conduct and Members Interest Code of Conduct to ensure that they conduct themselves in a manner that embeds trust in them by the electorate. This means MPs are expected to uphold the highest moral standards or conduct and to avoid real or apparent conflicts of interest. Delegates at the seminar also discussed this aspect, crucial to the effective performance of parliament to understand if the legal frameworks in place are still relevant; whether parliaments have been implementing it correctly and if amendments need to be made to align it to the new normal way of doing things.

Generally, the codes of conduct for parliamentarians establish broad standards of acceptable behavior in all aspects. These are:

- Upholding propriety;
- Selflessness;
- Objectivity;
- Integrity;
- Openness;
- Honesty, and
- Ethical values.

This means MPs are expected to uphold the highest moral standards or conduct and to avoid real or apparent conflict of interest. However, during emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic, many parliaments encountered challenges regarding the enforcement of the code of conduct due to various reasons. For example, following the declaration of the pandemic, parliaments moved their operations to digital platforms

including sessions of parliament. This means MPs were not physically present at the parliament offices or committee rooms and yet were expected to perform their constitutional duty as elected representatives who are officially recognized and recorded in the parliamentary record. Evidently, this posed a challenge to parliaments as the enforcement of the Code of Conduct and other rules is generally limited to when MPs are at the parliament precinct. In South Africa for example, parliament recorded numerous breaches of the Code attributed to the physical absence of MPs. The most common breach was the failure by MPs to file their disclosures within the time prescribed by the Code and the common penalty that has been imposed, at least in South Africa, has been a reprimand.

Delegates at the seminar also shared their experiences and lessons as it relates to the promotion of ethical conduct among MPs. Representatives from South Africa and Kenya made detailed presentations on this subject. In South Africa, much like in Namibia, MPs are compelled to swear or affirm their faithfulness to their Republics and obedience to the Constitution. The behavior of MPs is therefore regulated through the Code of Conduct. The Code is strengthened by the Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures (the Act) as well Financial Management of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act (FMPPLA).

These regulations are similar to those set for the parliament in Kenya. In these jurisdictions, as it is the case in many parliaments, the Committee of Powers and Privileges, which acts as a watchdog and investigates any alleged breach of privilege or misconduct by MPs, is responsible for the enforcement of the Code of Conduct. The South African Constitution also prescribes Members of the Cabinet and Deputy Ministers from:

- taking any other work;
- act in any way that is inconsistent with their office, or expose themselves to any situation involving the risk of a conflict between their official responsibilities and private interests; or

- use their position or any information entrusted to them, to enrich themselves or improperly benefit any other person.

This, therefore means the duty of MPs to conduct themselves ethically is derived from the oath of office as prescribed by the Constitution. MPs, therefore, have a constitutional obligation to conduct themselves ethically. Unethical behaviour includes bribery, nepotism, conflict of interest, fraud, extortion, misappropriation of funds, theft, etc. Failure to adhere to the provisions constitutes breach of the Code. The general consensus was that the Code occupies a particular position in the constitutional hierarchy. Failure by Members to act ethically inevitably amounts to failure to uphold and protect the Constitution.

Given the current situation, the consensus in the house was that the enforcement of the code of conduct and other rules regulating the conduct of MPs shall rest with the speaker of parliament and the committee on privileges. However, the action of the speaker must be consistent with the constitution as the supreme law of the country. The duty of Clerks and other administrators shall be to advise members on the code but not take steps to enforce. The seminar further agreed that in order to preserve the integrity of Parliament, enforcement of ethical codes of conduct system must be regarded as independent, legitimate and proportionate.

3.2.3 Topic 3: Leveraging on the lessons drawn from COVID-19 to build resilient and adaptive Parliaments (Nigeria, Botswana and Sierra Leone)

The entry of the virtual paradigm into parliamentary work is part of a scenario already marked by a crisis of the traditional political representation model, also as a consequence of the disintermediation phenomena induced by the digital revolution. However, the dangers of going digital are easy to anticipate. For example, the majority of the participants at the seminar agreed that not all parliaments can provide the ICT solutions they need to fully adapt to the new normal. The notion of executing parliamentary functions from digital platforms could also create new dynamics to the representative system, not least on issues of personal and institutional data security. Parliaments have

also experienced challenges ensuring equal participation for all MPs even in countries with access to high-speed data transmission networks.

Despite the noted shortcomings experienced during the transformation from traditional way of doing things to the new normal, the consensus at the seminar was that the advantages of adapting and integrating technology into the operation of parliaments far outweigh the disadvantages for the following reasons:

- (i) the streaming of parliamentary activities promotes transparency, and citizens' engagement as well as parliamentary visibility on social media, which promotes people-centered planning,
- (ii) hansards and committees' reports can be easily made available on public platforms,
- (iii) technology contributes to operational efficiency,
- (iv) MPs and staff as well as the general public can easily access and track documents and decisions,
- (v) improved data management and promote the use of evidence in parliamentary decision making,
- (vi) digital platforms save time, e.g., documents uploaded and downloaded in real time,
- (vii) virtual meetings can also save parliaments money which could have been spent on traveling expenses for MPs and staff to meet communities,
- (viii) digital parliament will also reduce the use of papers in the chamber, saving on printing costs.

The need for parliaments to embrace technology and become more resilient, open and transparent is more urgent especially in the face of global uncertainties and disasters such as the Covid-19 pandemic. To help parliaments plan ahead and prepare for uncertainties, representatives from Sierra Leone, Botswana and Nigeria were also invited to share their experiences regarding the approaches taken by their respective parliaments to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. Taking into consideration the challenges

experienced following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, delegates at the seminar centered their deliberations on the following questions;

- a) Are there any rules in place allowing for remote plenary sessions and committee meetings in an emergency situation, including in a prolonged emergency?
- b) Is there a need to adopt special rules to facilitate safe organization of plenary sessions and committee meetings during a major crisis like a pandemic?
- c) Is there any official legal interpretation of the constitution and/or laws stipulating the presence of MPs in the parliament (e.g., by the Constitutional Court)? If not, is there a need to amend the constitution or is there already flexibility to allow virtual or other sessions?
- d) What are the privileges of MPs in the parliament and how can they be protected even during an emergency?
- e) What role does IT currently play and what role could it play in allowing flexibility in how MPs' privileges are respected?
- f) Are legislative libraries and research services well prepared to continue their operations and ensure that Members receive authoritative and impartial information in a timely manner?
- g) How can legislatures ensure the technological security of MPs and staff to participate remotely?
- h) Is there a need to amend the constitution or rules of procedure to protect the right of expression by MPs who are not attending in person before a committee or plenary meeting?

Following the discussion, the general consensus among delegates was that parliaments across the continent were not fully prepared to work virtually. This lack of readiness was attributed to many factors including poor network coverage and access to technologies by the general public; the lack of willingness among staff and MPs to adopt new methods of technology, and their preference for traditional approaches, among many other factors. Delegates made reference to the failure of parliaments to fully adapt to a “paperless parliament” concept in which staff and MPs all work and communicate through digital

platforms using tablets, laptops/desktops and other digital technologies. Although many parliaments have now acquired the required technologies in the form of tablets and other systems, there is still resistance from MPs who prefer to have documents printed for them. MPs in some countries have also neglected using the tablets and have either given them to their children or relatives to use.

To address these shortcomings, delegates noted that early and proactive responses are critical to mitigate challenges during uncertain situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, parliaments need to continuously channel resources towards developing a disaster risk management plan to ensure that necessary equipment are in place to enable parliament to continue during any disaster. Furthermore, delegates noted that it is critical for parliaments to develop strategies and guidelines to promote efficiency and flexible working arrangements such as the working from home concept adopted during the pandemic. This task should be assigned to an emergency task force to be created within staff who will be responsible for planning to ensure that the institution is ready to respond to any emergency and mitigate the impact of such emergencies. For all these efforts to work, parliaments should get the buy-in of political leaders who will then facilitate adaptive and futuristic parliaments by making the right decisions and laws. It is also important for parliaments on the continent to collaborate and cooperate with one another in order to share best practices. Parliamentary research services should provide briefings on various solutions applied in other parliaments to facilitate fact-based decisions.

Taking a leaf from the experiences of Covid-19, delegates noted that the proposed efforts meant to realign the operations of parliament to fit into the future can only work if the following are taken into consideration. First, parliaments should consider adopting long-term solutions that might be applicable in any critical situation rather than stand-alone temporary decisions. Secondly, the rules of procedures should be amended to ensure flexibility and accommodate a hybrid system of operation. Where a parliament needs to amend its legal framework to build more flexibility into how it functions, it is crucial that such provisions are time-bound and limited in scope to ensure the institution does not shirk its constitutional responsibilities but allows the capacity to continue to function. It is also critical to strengthen effective committee operations by using advanced IT tools to

conduct at least the oversight activities remotely. Furthermore, parliaments need to build the systems and enhance the resilience of parliamentary library and research services by investing in the digitisation of information and access to such information online by MPs, staff and the general public.

3.2.4 Topic 4: Unpacking the role of monitoring and evaluation in strategic planning and management in parliamentary settings (South Africa, Zambia and Ghana)

As parliaments develop and adopt strategies to align their operations to the new way of doing things, the need to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies is becoming more crucial in evaluating their own institutional performance from time to time in order to achieve their strategic goals. Delegates at the seminar share experiences and initiatives introduced by various parliaments to monitor and evaluate their performances. First, delegates discussed the importance on monitoring and evaluation in strategic planning and management of parliament. With a functional monitoring and evaluation system in place, delegates noted that parliaments can make informed decisions regarding programme operations and service delivery based on objective evidence. This will also help parliaments to have internal and external accountability of the resources used and the results obtained. Moreover, M&E will help parliaments objectively assess whether or not the goals of initiatives and programmes introduced are going to be achieved in the way that was planned. Monitoring and evaluation therefore involve establishing performance indicators, setting up systems to collect information relating to these indicators, collecting and recording the information, analysing the information and using the information to inform day-to-day management and later evaluation as need arise.

To understand how monitoring and evaluation can impact the operation of parliament in practice, representatives from Zambia and Ghana were tasked to make presentations on how their respective parliaments conduct M&E and the lessons they have learned thereof. In Zambia, the culture of M&E started as early as the 2000s whereby parliament used strategic plans, as basis of setting the strategic directions and road maps of the institution through systematic and predictable programming. Since then, the parliament of Zambia

has established an M&E department which reports on the implementation of the Strategic Plan by various departments on a quarterly basis. Zambia also has a Strategic Plan Implementation Committee (SPIC) consisting of representatives from all departments in parliament. In addition, the Parliament of Zambia has established a Steering Committee which takes management decisions on issues in the performance of the strategic plan and areas that need improvement.

In Ghana, the parliament started implementing M&E since the 1990's. As such, the Parliament of Ghana have developed departmental strategies for monitoring activities. The parliament has various monitoring committees tasked with monitoring the effectiveness of the strategic plan. The representative from Ghana reported that in the recent M&E exercise, the Parliament of Ghana noted that there were challenges relating to legislative deficit and administrative incapacities as it relates to the integration of ICT into the operation of parliament. For example, they noted that ordinary members of parliament were not capacitated to draft and introduce bills in parliament. To address the problem, the parliament established a drafting department to help ordinary members of parliament to initiate bills and reduce the bills coming from the executive on the floor of parliament. The result of this has been positive, the representative reported. In addition, the Parliament of Ghana has also established a post-legislative scrutiny committee meant to evaluate the effectiveness of the bills passed by parliament and implemented by the executive.

Finally, delegates noted that, in order to strengthen the role of M&E in strategic planning and management in general, Parliaments should consider:

- Establishing stand-alone M&E departments with dedicated staff and budget;
- Taking advantage of opportunities and networking communities of practice that enhance the evaluation capacities of Members of Parliaments (e.g. APNODE, Global Parliamentarian's Forum for Evaluation)
- Sensitizing Members of Parliament to embracing the culture of initiating evaluation on their work such as regarding follow up mechanisms on their recommendations
- Building capacity of both Members of Parliament and staff managements;

- Identifying among the leadership of parliament (both Political and administration) as champions to promote strategic planning and M&E.
- Working with capacity strengthening institutions to develop tailor-made training programmes in strategic planning and M&E (targeting as many Members of Parliament and staff as possible).

3.2.5 Re-modelling Human Resource management and development in a post-Covid-19 era (Group Work).

Noting the lessons learned from the disruptive Covid-19 pandemic, delegates at the seminar discussed ways on how to retool parliaments for a post Covid-19 era. It is now evident that parliaments that had invested in technology to enable remote access and cloud-based solutions before the pandemic were better prepared to respond to the challenges associated with the Covid-19 emergency. However, these institutions still faced a challenge to keep parliaments functioning during the pandemic as they try to adhere to regulations meant to stop the spread of the virus, such as the social distancing requirements which resulted in the reduction of staff and MPs availability. This new change also brought other challenges related to the procurement and maintenance of the ICT systems to allow remote working. Eventually, parliaments adapted to the new working methods and tools and embedded them into their practice. However, these new tools and responsibilities were completely different from what staff and MPs are used to, posing another challenge of skills gap.

Dr. Rasheed Draman who was invited as a guest speaker at the seminar emphasized that for the new methods of working to be effective, parliamentary staff and MPs should align their education and experience with the world of post Covid-19 by acquiring relevant technical skills to be able to work effectively with new ICT tools. This is crucial because Draman said, the central theme that will dominate work and in parliaments going forward is “virtual” approach to work. He stressed that the Human Resource management component of parliament must also be retooled to adjust to the new methods of working. In addition, managers should also ensure continuous communication about business and office developments as well as monitor the team dynamics through group conversations

and perform frequent checks. Draman also stressed that parliaments should also invest in tools aimed at supporting workers' mental health, including online meditation sessions and fitness because teleworking, at times, can have varying impact on staff's mental health. HR rules must also be amended to ensure flexibility at the workplace. Finally, the proposed operational arrangements can only work if managers including Human Resource management are equipped with new skills for managing people in a hybrid working setting.

4. Way forward and recommendations

At the start of the seminar, the following desired outcomes were identified:

- (i) create a platform for learning, knowledge sharing and exchange of practical experiences on the emerging practices in parliamentary service delivery in SoCATT Africa member legislatures,
- (ii) explore opportunities and challenges associated with re-engineering parliamentary service,
- (iii) discuss and disseminate innovative approaches and good practices for re-engineering parliamentary service delivery.

Over the course of two days, delegates discussed various topics and agreed to the following recommendations that can be adapted to a specific national/regional context, but can equally address challenges across the continent. Delegates recommended that:

1. Parliaments should embrace the lessons drawn from the Covid-19 pandemic experience and integrate them in order to improve their new mode of operation.
2. Parliaments should prioritize investment in modern ICT infrastructure and equipment, as well as facilitate capacity development, re-skilling and repositioning for staff and MPs to work effectively and efficiently.
3. Parliaments should ensure that monitoring and evaluation is an integral part of their operations which can be utilised to facilitate post legislative evaluation and systematically assess their performance in relation to their constitutional mandate.

4. Parliaments should develop a tool that could be utilised to assess the effectiveness of parliaments in executing their constitutional mandates and public perspectives.
5. Parliaments are encouraged to review and improve their Rules of Procedures to respond to the new realities of work arising from the COVID-19 pandemic experiences and other emergencies and emerging issues related to the fast-changing technology.
6. Determining the right mechanisms of enforcing ethical conduct for parliamentarians must take cognizance of the political context of a given country, and must have both parliamentary and public support.
7. HR practices in Parliaments should embrace flexible working cultures that focus on performance-based management and matters of staff wellness.

5. Conclusion

Finally, delegates agreed that the traditional operational approach of parliament is outdated and needs to be reengineered so as to remain relevant in a fast environment of work. As such, delegates agreed that a hybrid model of operation which embraces technology and flexible to changes and new developments in the world of work. However, delegates cautioned that as parliaments move onto the digital bandwagon, administrators should not lose sight of the core function of the legislature – that is the critical roles of making laws, representation and oversight. All processes should be geared towards enabling this core function efficiently and effectively.

ANNEXURE A

**SOCIETY OF CLERKS-AT-THE TABLE (SoCATT)
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR (PDS)
01 to 06 AUGUST 2022, WINDHOEK – NAMIBIA**

Venue: Windhoek Country Club Resort

Theme: Re-engineering parliamentary service delivery: An opportunity to enhance and sustain the performance of Parliaments.

Time	Activity	Facilitator
Day 1: Monday, 01 August 2022		
	Arrival of SoCATT Africa Region Steering Committee and Technical Team	Local Organising Committee
Day 2: Tuesday, 02 August 2022		
10:00	SoCATT Africa Region Steering Committee Meeting	Steering Committee / Technical Team

14:30	Arrival and Registration of Delegates	Local Organising Committee
Day 3: Wednesday, 03 August 2022		
08:30 – 10:00	Official Opening Ceremony <i>(See separate programme)</i>	Local Organising Committee
10:00-10:30	Tea break	
10:30 – 11:30	Sub-regions Reports on the implementation of the recommendations/resolutions of the 5 th Professional Development Seminar held from 21st-25th October, 2021, Nairobi, Kenya	Sub-Region Representatives
11:30 – 12:00	Setting the Scene: A Case for Re-engineering Parliamentary Service Delivery	Prof Johannes Coetzee Associate Professor: Public Management, Human Sciences (NUST)
12:00 – 13:00	Topic 1: Exploring the implications of digital parliaments on parliamentary procedures and constitutional mandates	Namibia and Uganda Session Chair: Malawi
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch break	

14:30 – 15:30	Topic 2: Examine legal frameworks for promotion of ethical conduct among Members of Parliament	South Africa and Kenya Session Chair: Nigeria
15:30 – 16:30	Topic 3: Leveraging on the lessons drawn from COVID-19 to build resilient and adaptive Parliaments	Botswana and Sierra Leone Session Chair: Tanzania
Day 4: Thursday, 04 August 2022		
08:30 – 09:30	Topic 4: Unpacking the role of monitoring and evaluation in strategic planning and management in parliamentary settings	Zambia, Ghana and South Africa Session Chair: Rwanda
09:30-10:30	Topic 5: Presentation on Re-modelling human resource management and development in the post COVID-19 era	Dr. Rasheed Draman, Ghana Parliamentary Institute Session Chair: Namibia
10:00 – 10:30	Tea break	

	Excursion	Local Organising Committee
Day 6: 06 August 2022		
	Departure of all participants	Local Organising Committee