Post-Election Seminars
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) is an Association of Commonwealth Parliamentarians who, irrespective of gender, race, religion or culture, are united by a community of interest, respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms, and by pursuit of the positive ideals of parliamentary democracy.

CPA Statement of Purpose
The CPA connects, develops, promotes and supports Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance...

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governance and the implementation of the enduring values of the Commonwealth - its objective being to build an informed parliamentary community.

The CPA Secretary-General, Dr William F. Shija (left) speaking with the Speaker of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Hon. Abel Stronge, MP (right), after the country’s PES in 2013.
This is achieved through a Strategic Plan which ensures CPA activities continue to meet the changing needs of today’s Parliaments, Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff. The Association’s programmes provide the means of regular consultation among Commonwealth Members. It helps to foster co-operation and understanding and the promotion of good parliamentary practice.

Post-Election Seminars

The Post Election Seminar is one of the core programmes of the CPA. For over 20 years the Association has conducted numerous Post Election Seminars for Parliaments that have a high intake of new Parliamentarians, are entering a new political system or era, or are emerging from a period of conflict.

Post-Election Seminars are aimed at building the capacity of newly elected Members of Parliament so that they function efficiently and effectively in the performance of their democratic duties and serves a refresher course for returning MPs.

This longstanding programme introduces Members to different parliamentary systems and methods of working. They usually take place a few months after a general election and are delivered by senior, highly experienced Parliamentarians and parliamentary...
officials from throughout the Commonwealth. The objectives are two-fold: to disseminate information on diverse good practices in Commonwealth Parliaments as a way of providing options to Parliamentarians, and to promote an understanding of the way parliamentary procedures and practices can embed good governance into a system.

A number of topics are discussed during Post-Election Seminars and Branches are encouraged to also identify other topics which may be of particular interest to their Parliament.

Topics include:

The evolution of parliamentary democracy and the constitution of the country

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Principles of the Westminster Model of Parliamentary Democracy; other democratic models of governance; and the legal basis of Parliament in the country.

Institutional aspects of the parliamentary system including the relationship between the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary
How Parliaments work; the branches of government; the Legislature and the Judiciary; the Legislature and the Executive.

Parliament, democracy and civil society
The meaning of being an elected representative; representing constituents; the relationship between Parliament and the people; the office of the ombudsman; local government; bringing young people into the parliamentary process; and other interested groups.
The role of Members of Parliament including the role of the backbencher

The roles and responsibilities of an MP; the role of representative of constituents; the role of legislator; the role of scrutineer; and supporting or criticizing government proposals.

Practice and procedure in the House

The role of the Speaker, Leader of the House, Whips and parliamentary staff; Bills and passage of legislation; government business; Private Members’ Business; motions; questions; statements; adjournment; and conventions and practices.

Parliamentary committees

Scrutiny of the Executive; working by consensus; procedures to receive public inputs and advice of experts; selection of Chairpersons and Members; committee structure in bicameral Parliaments; financial scrutiny, the financial supervision of the Executive; the budget cycle; and the Public Accounts Committee and the Auditor General.
Women in Parliament
Challenges on the road to Parliament; obstacles to equal participation: cultural and economic obstacles, institutional obstacles, psychological barriers; and looking ahead.

(a) Parliament and Human Rights, (b) Parliament and the Media

Party organization within Parliament
The role of the government party, the role of the Opposition; how parties organize their own Members; the role of Members within their parties; co-operation between parties to create an effective and functional parliamentary environment; Whips; services for Parliamentarians; and backbench influence on the Executive.
Privilege and Members’ interests
Parliament’s rights to control its internal procedures; safeguards to conduct business without interference; collective and individual protection; and breaches of privilege.

Ethics and accountability of Members of Parliament
Codes of ethics; and concept of accountability as applied to Parliamentarians.

Administration and financing of Parliament
Concept of financial autonomy for Legislatures and use its influence to create a better understanding amongst members of the Executive as to the proper relationship with the Parliament; and the importance of parliamentary independence.

The Association has in recent years responded to numerous requests for setting up such events. A two to three day seminar on parliamentary practice and procedure, where experts can describe how things are done in other Commonwealth Parliaments and relate these experiences in discussion to the local scene, has proved to
be most helpful and popular with all Members, irrespective of their experience and political affiliation.

Post-Election Seminars also provides an opportunity for Members to ask questions about parliamentary practice and procedure which they might not otherwise ask or not have the opportunity to ask in other settings. Most importantly, it provides them with a better understanding of the parliamentary system and democratic processes.

Logistical arrangements
The CPA Secretariat would assemble a team of three or four Parliamentarians and parliamentary officials and provide them international transport to and from the seminar venue. A Branch can also utilize their own eminent citizens as part of the resource group. While at the venue, members of the seminar team would be guests of the Host Parliament, which pays the costs of accommodation and food. All physical arrangements on the ground are made by the Host Parliament.
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