

Delegation Visit to Kenya

REPORT SUMMARY

10-14 July 2023



CPA UK DELEGATION

Lyn Brown MP, Delegation
Leader

Pauline Latham MP

The Baroness Scott of
Needham Market

Jacob Loose, Africa
Regional Programme
Manager, CPA UK

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

A CPA UK delegation of women parliamentarians visited Nairobi from the 10th to the 14th of July 2023. Over the four days, the delegation had meetings in the parliament and with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across Nairobi. A collaboration of stakeholders organised the visit with CPA UK, including the Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA), the Parliament of Kenya and the British High Commission in Nairobi. KEWOPA is a cross-party organisation founded in 2001 with only nine members initially. The association now has 102 members from the National Assembly and the Senate.

The delegation's objectives were to strengthen the connections between the Kenyan and UK parliaments and to engage the KEWOPA membership as they developed their new strategic plan. The key themes of these discussions were the representation of women and persons with disabilities, the scrutiny women face in public office, and the work to combat gender-based violence.



The delegation meeting with KEWOPA Chair, Hon. Leah Sankaire, and KEWOPA Members

Delegation Visit to Kenya

FULL REPORT

COUNTRY PROFILE

Kenya

Population: 47.6 million

Capital: Nairobi

Head of State: President
Samoei William Ruto

Type of Legislature:
Bicameral

**Members of National
Assembly:** 400

Members of Senate: 90

**Speaker of National
Assembly:** Moses Masika
Wetangula

Speaker of Senate: Amason
Kingi Jeffah



The CPA UK delegation meeting with KEWOPA Members.

Representation of Women and Persons with Disabilities

In welcoming the CPA UK delegation to the Kenyan Parliament, the Speakers of the National Assembly and the Senate both stressed the important role of the [2010 Constitution](#) in strengthening the representation of women within parliament. Article 27 of the Constitution provides that no more than two-thirds of members of all elected and nominated positions are of the same gender. The constitution reserves 47 seats for women in the National Assembly and 16 in the Senate. There are also 12 seats for special interest groups, including persons with disabilities, in the National Assembly and 4 in the Senate.

Hon. Leah Sankaire, the women's representative for Kajiado County and the Chair of KEWOPA, opened the meeting by describing the association's work, including support of women's rights and initiatives to advance gender equality. The association has changed the perception of women in parliament and how women parliamentarians see their roles.



The delegation meeting with KEOWOPA Chair, Hon. Leah Sankaire.

KEWOPA Members nominated to their positions in parliament face particular challenges. Being a nominated member can be stigmatised and they can face barriers to joining parliamentary committees. Some nominated members represent groups not limited to one constituency but are nationwide, such as persons with disabilities (PWD), and representing these groups is difficult without access to constituency development funds.

Senator Crystal Kegehi Asige, KEWOPA PWD representative, the first visually impaired politician in the national parliament, shared the challenges that she has faced in an environment such as a political rally. She pointed out the significant role of political parties in making PWD feel included in these contexts. Senator Crystal made a powerful case that you can only be what you see, and stressed the importance of nominating PWD to leadership positions.

KEWOPA members emphasised the significant contribution nominated members make in the effective functioning of parliament. Members who had initially joined parliament through nomination and are now elected said it had been an effective springboard for them, giving them a political platform.

CPA UK & KENYA

The Parliament of Kenya regularly participates in CPA UK multi-lateral programmes. The most recent bilateral programmes were:

Parliamentary Staff Training and New Members' Induction, October 2018

The programme covered parliamentary practice and procedures, committee inquiries, drafting reports, budget scrutiny, communication skills and fostering good relationships with parliamentary colleagues.

Africa-UK Public Accounts Committee Workshop, August 2018

The Workshop in the Kenyan Parliament aimed to enable public accounts committees to fulfil their remit to scrutinise the value for money of public spending, hold their governments to account for the delivery of public services, and strengthen regional collaboration and seek opportunities for coordination.

In the UK Parliament, there are no reserved seats for women parliamentarians. Instead, the delegation shared steps being taken in the UK to increase female representation, including initiatives by different political parties. At the time of writing, there are 224 female MPs in the UK House of Commons out of 647 MPs (35%). The House of Lords has 238 female Peers out of 820 (29%).

Combating Gender-Based Violence

The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) is an independent government agency responsible for promoting and protecting human rights in Kenya. Current human rights concerns in Kenya include extrajudicial killings, the death penalty, women's rights, security and freedom of expression. KNCHR played a key role in inviting public contributions and drafting the Intersex Persons Bill (2023), which seeks to fill the gap in the law for the protection of the rights of intersex people.

The delegation visited the Centre for Rights, Education and Awareness (CREAW) in Kibera, an impoverished area of Nairobi known as the biggest slum in Africa. CREAW supports women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence with a multi-discipline team, including legal and psycho-social support. When clients first arrive, they often do not trust anyone due to the trauma they have experienced.



The CPA UK delegation meeting at CREAW in Kibera, Nairobi.

The staff, therefore, need to accompany the clients through all the steps of accessing support, including going to the hospital and representing them in court. During the COVID-19 pandemic, both the UK and Kenya saw a rise in domestic violence, and the visiting delegation shared the impact they had seen on communities in the UK.

KEWOPA members shared steps they were taking to tackle climate change, combat gender-based violence, and promote peace and security. Hon. Mohamed Umulkher Harun, KEWOPA Youth Representative, rides her motorbike to communities to discuss issues including teenage pregnancy, menstrual hygiene and female genital mutilation (FGM). Other members come from communities that are hotspots for FGM and now speak to their constituents about the importance of eradicating the practice.

Scrutiny of Women Parliamentarians

The women entering politics in Kenya face more social media abuse than their male colleagues, and the media focuses disproportionately on the behaviour of female leaders. Female leaders receive greater scrutiny for any mistakes compared to their male counterparts. These factors can discourage women from running for office. The delegation shared that in the UK the public is generally positively disposed towards electing women candidates, but party hierarchies and media can slow down this progress.

It can be difficult for women to get media exposure. There is a need to interview more women in prime-time slots on big news stories. The Africa Women and Child Feature Service, an organisation focusing on gender and the media, pointed to the absence of gender parity in the media space, the persistence of damaging stereotypes about women, and the lack of access to media for marginalised groups. They have trained 45 KEWOPA members on engaging the media, particularly during elections. KEWOPA members reported that training had boosted their confidence, but a lack of funding remained a barrier to increasing their media presence.

The Mzalendo Trust, a Kenyan non-profit organisation promoting transparency and accountability in government, promotes civic engagement and campaigns against corruption. They have worked with parliament to provide live coverage of proceedings, searchable answers to parliamentary questions and a scorecard on members' contributions to parliament, highlighting the contributions of women parliamentarians. Similar initiatives in the UK parliament have increased openness and public interest in the UK Parliament.



The CPA UK delegation meeting with KEWOPA Members.

Impact & Next Steps

KEWOPA members and the CPA UK delegation agreed to create a friendship group to connect female legislators from the two countries. CPA UK will provide opportunities for these connections and has offered to support KEWOPA as they develop their strategic plan for 2023-2027.

CPA UK is currently working with the Parliament of Kenya to organise a workshop on gender-based violence and modern slavery in November 2023. CPA UK will engage further with KEWOPA members and NGOs through this workshop.



The CPA UK delegation meeting with KEWOPA Members.



The CPA UK delegation meeting with the Speakers of the Senate and National Assembly.

Report by Jacob Loose
Africa Regional Programme Manager, CPA UK