

# **STRENGTHENED OVERSIGHT OF PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

SADCOPAC CONFERENCE DISCUSSION PAPER



**A U D I T O R - G E N E R A L  
S O U T H A F R I C A**

*By the African Organisation of English-Speaking Supreme Audit Institutions  
(AFROSAI-E) and the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA)*

## KEY ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AGSA</b>	Auditor-General of South Africa
<b>EI</b>	Extractive Industry
<b>MDA</b>	Ministries, Departments And Agencies
<b>MoF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>PAC</b>	Public Accounts Committee
<b>PFM</b>	public financial management
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SADCOPAC</b>	Southern Africa Development Community Organisation of Public Accounts Committees
<b>SAI</b>	Supreme Audit Institutions
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Reviews of the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for sustainable development

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## Executive summary

Undertaking financial scrutiny is challenging, as public finance documents are often technical and contain a high volume of information. It is also a challenge for members of Parliament to balance the demands of financial scrutiny alongside their other roles and responsibilities in the legislature. A closer look into the structure of public financial management (PFM) systems of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region indicates several areas of homogeneity. At the same time, there are differences, for example, in the different structures of supreme audit institutions (SAIs). While most are adaptive to the “Westminster system”<sup>1</sup>, some conform to the “Court system”<sup>2</sup> in the SADC region.

Referencing several published research papers concerning sub-Saharan and SADC countries, this paper:

- Raises discussion areas for public accounts committees (PACs) and other stakeholders on how PACs can effectively undertake their oversight role in terms of the evolution of the PFM system in the SADC region and the five phases of the PFM cycle;
- Explores areas of legislative influence for PACs and identifies support for PACs from other institutions such as the Southern Africa Development Community Organisation of Public Accounts Committees (SADCOPAC) and the African Organisation of English-Speaking Supreme Audit Institutions (AFROSAI-E); and

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<sup>1</sup> “The model is linked to the system of parliamentary accountability. The SAI has one head, the auditor general, whose role may be combined with that of the comptroller general that has a control role. The SAI is an independent body that audits parliament authorizations of expenditure to the government, annual accounts of government and public bodies.” World Bank. Features and functions of supreme audit institutions. PREMnotes Public Sector, October 2001. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/213671468124188306/pdf/24845-BRI-REPLACEMENTpremnote59-PUBLIC.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> “The SAI can have both judicial and administrative authority and operates independently of the legislative and executive branches. The SAI is generally an integral part of the judiciary, as such it can make judgements on government compliance with laws and regulations and ensures that public funds are adequately allocated.” World Bank. Features and functions of supreme audit institutions. PREMnotes Public Sector, October 2001. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/213671468124188306/pdf/24845-BRI-REPLACEMENTpremnote59-PUBLIC.pdf>

- Notes challenges within the PFM systems of SADC countries. It also opens several areas for further deliberation, discussion and even research towards improving the oversight role of PACs in SADC.

## **1. Introduction**

Managing public finances and ensuring effective financial governance systems is the responsibility of the executive authority and the senior officials in the administration. Public accounts committees (PACs) have oversight responsibility over the executive and the administration of public financial management (PFM) and governance. Efficient management of public finances and service delivery is critical in achieving public policy objectives and building a level of trust between the state and citizens.

An analysis and discussion at PAC level of the issues affecting the efficient management of public finances and the delivery of services in Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries may improve public finance management and the citizens' trust. The following five areas are seen to be paramount to the efficient management of public finances and the delivery of services in SADC countries:

- i. The evolution of public financial management and governance in the SADC region;
- ii. The role played by PACs in the budget process, including overseeing financial governance matters;
- iii. The role of PACs in PFM and governance;
- iv. The implication of current PFM legislative process and prescripts, and possible legislative interventions required; and
- v. The role of the Southern Africa Development Community Organisation of Public Accounts Committees (SADCOPAC) in coordinating and building the capacity of PACs in SADC to strengthen ex-ante oversight on financial management and governance.

The paper will also advance the notion that, in their current state, PACs in the SADC region need to review and revisit their approaches to how they can contribute effectively to improved PFM oversight in line with changes in their operating environments since the Covid-19 pandemic. This concerns the need for oversight activities to be more sensitive to preventative controls and other timely interventions, such as real-time audits and midterm reviews.

## **2. Evolution of PFM and governance in the SADC region**

The economic growth of any country is linked to the efficiency and effectiveness of its PFM systems. As PFM systems evolve, they are expected to have a positive impact on countries' economic growth. During the last few years there has been noticeable progress in improving economic growth in sub-Saharan

countries, including SADC countries (see Table 1<sup>3</sup>, below). However, sub-Saharan countries still lag significantly behind other regions in economic development and socioeconomic indicators.<sup>4</sup> PFM is a critical instrument in implementing economic policy and works by influencing the allocation and use of public resources through the budget and through fiscal policy in general. A well-functioning PFM system is thus fundamental for economic growth.

**Table 1: Economic growth of selected economies**

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*	2022*	2023*
World	4.3	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.8	3.6	2.9	-3.3	6.1	3.6	3.6
Advanced economies	1.7	1.2	1.4	2.1	2.3	1.7	2.4	2.2	1.7	-4.7	5.2	3.3	2.4
USA	1.6	2.2	1.8	2.5	2.9	1.6	2.2	2.9	2.3	-3.5	5.7	3.7	2.3
Euro Area	1.6	-0.9	-0.2	1.4	2.1	2.0	2.4	1.9	1.3	-6.6	5.3	2.8	2.3
EM & DE	6.4	5.4	5.1	4.7	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.5	3.7	-2.2	6.8	3.8	4.4
China	9.5	7.9	7.8	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.8	6.6	6.1	2.3	8.1	4.4	5.6
India	6.6	5.5	6.4	7.4	8.0	8.2	7.2	6.8	4.2	-8.0	8.9	8.2	6.9
Brazil	4.0	1.9	3.0	0.5	-3.5	-3.3	1.1	1.3	1.1	-4.1	4.6	0.8	1.4
SSA	5.3	4.7	5.2	5.1	3.2	1.4	2.9	3.2	3.1	-1.9	4.5	3.8	4.0

EM & DE – emerging markets and developing economies

SSA – sub-Saharan Africa

\* April 2022 projections

Source: International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook, April 2022

Transversal themes on the strength and weaknesses of PFM systems arise from analysing recent quantitative and qualitative data on PFM system characteristics, as per SAI-based audits performed by 10 SAIs in the AFROSAI-E region. Through their audits, SAIs consistently identify serious deficiencies in PFM systems. While there is consensus that governments are doing a lot to improve PFM systems in their countries<sup>5</sup>, more must be done to get these systems to function on par with PFM systems in other regions such as Europe, the Middle East and Asia.<sup>6</sup> The efficiency and effectiveness of the PFM system in the SADC region through its evolution are assessed at three levels, as outlined below.

<sup>3</sup> The table indicates economic growth of SSA to have been growing by an average of 3.4% between 2011 and 2023. With a notable decline of -1.9% in the year 2020. Other advanced economic regions have been growing at a less rate of 1,8% on average over the same period as compared to SSA.

<sup>4</sup> SADC annual report 2021/22

<sup>5</sup> AFROSAI-E, 2020. *Public financial management transversal risk report*. p.10.

<sup>6</sup> These maturity levels are as per the World Bank economic monitoring statistics found on <https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/economic-monitoring> <accessed June 2023>

Firstly, the evolution of the PFM systems is assessed according to five PFM processes, namely:

- a. Accounting, reporting and oversight;
- b. Financial management and service delivery;
- c. Budget approval;
- d. Budget preparation; and
- e. Macroeconomic policy, fiscal policy, and strategic budgeting.

Figure 1 indicates that ‘budget approvals’ and ‘accounting, reporting and oversight’ are the two best-functioning PFM processes, while the two worst-functioning processes are ‘financial management and service delivery’ and ‘budget preparation’. There are also specific sub-processes under financial management and service delivery that need further enhancement, including monitoring service provision, tax management and policy, internal controls, and auditing.<sup>7</sup> We can see that governments have mostly improved in areas with the least strategic importance to the efficiency and effectiveness of PFM systems, and are lagging behind in the most wanting and critical aspects of the PFM systems, which touch on strategic planning and execution of budgets.

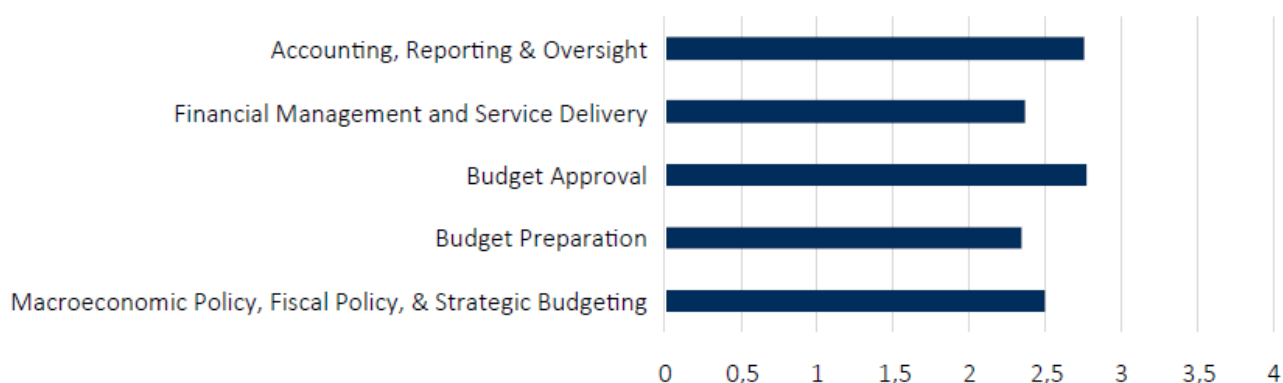


Figure 1: Government performance by PFM process, extracted from AFROSAI-E Public financial management transversal risk report 2022. A rating scale from 0 (poor) to 4 (good) is being applied.

Secondly, the evolution of the PFM system through the performance of PFM processes can also be analysed according to specific ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) from a cross-cutting analysis of the SADC region. In terms of ranking (Figure 2), the revenue authorities are first in relation to the other two policy-making PFM institutions, which are the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Parliament

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<sup>7</sup> AFROSAI-E, 2020. *Public financial management transversal risk report*. p.11.



(these are deemed core<sup>8</sup>). The revenue authorities had an encouraging rating of 2.7, indicating improvements in revenue management systems in the region.

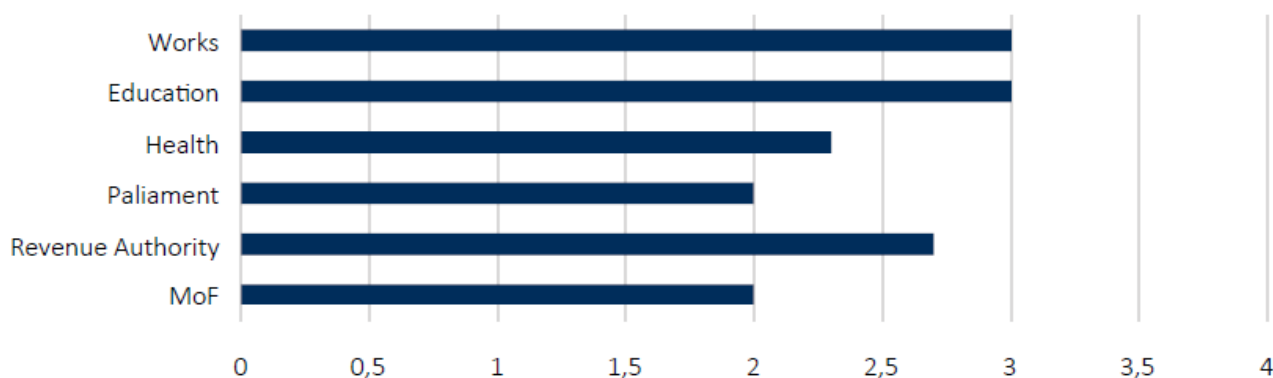


Figure 2: Performance by key PFM institutions, extracted [sic] from AFROSAI-E Public financial management transversal risk report 2022. A rating scale from 0 (poor) to 4 (good) is being applied.

However, a deep dive into the other two policy-making PFM institutions, Parliament and the MoF, show significant challenges – partly related to capacity constraints at those institutions.<sup>9</sup> Levels of adherence to the PFM processes across the core institutions and the MDAs are consistent with the skills levels across the PFM institutions, with a noticeable decrease from the core PFM institutions to the MDAs.<sup>10</sup> There seemingly is a localised brain drain in the public sector, which has seen a concentration of skills and competencies at SAI and, in some cases, finance ministry level. Having joined the SAI or the MoF from other public sector institutions, individuals are being poached by the private sector, thus also leaving the SAI and the MoF vulnerable. This suggests an urgent need to consider further capacitation and talent retention at SAI, MoF, Parliament and MDA levels.

Several MDAs also underperformed in terms of the effectiveness of the PFM processes.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the robustness of PFM processes is commendable in general (since none of the institutions scored below 2, which is the minimum requirement of an efficient PFM system as per Figure 2). The apparent weaknesses at MDA levels limit the efficacy and efficiency of the overall PFM cycle. This suggests that a

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<sup>8</sup> As per the AFROSAI-E PFM reporting framework (PFM-RF), the PFM system has three core institutions: the ministry of finance, Parliament, and the revenue authority.

<sup>9</sup> Research establishes and concludes the causatives through a root cause analysis using the “5 Whys” model, as per the AFROSAI-E PFM transversal risk report, p.11.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

bottom-up approach focused on enhancing capacity and the PFM processes at the MDA level may yield improved value for money.

The lack of professionalisation in the public sector is one of the key root causes of the current need for improvement in PFM systems in the SADC region. Integrity is a key pillar of professionalism, which entails adhering to national and international accounting standards to manage the collection and expenditure of public finances throughout an economy<sup>12</sup>, to curb corruption and mismanagement of funds (key root causes of unprofessional behaviour), and to improve the lives of citizens through better management of public funds. Even when the PFM acts and systems are in place, the right people need to occupy the right positions and roles to ensure PFM systems are efficiently and effectively implemented.

Thirdly, the extent to which countries have domesticated the sustainable development goals (SDGs) into their PFM systems is another perspective from which the evolution of PFM can be discussed. As indicated in Figure 3, as of 2022, with eight years to go under the United Nations' (UN) 2030 agenda for sustainable development, most MDAs have not effectively domesticated SDGs into their PFM systems. The Ministry of Health is seen to be topping the charts on domestication, which could potentially be attributed to the various government and donor initiatives that caught abnormal attention given to the countries' health systems due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All the key ministries (Parliament, MoF and revenue authorities) are lagging behind when it comes to effectively domesticating the SDGs. However, this starkly contrasts the narratives being reported to the UN in the country VNR reports. While these reports are not necessarily in the ambit of PACs to comment upon, SDGs are fundamental indicators for service delivery driven by sound PFM systems. This is an area on which PACs may need to place more focus.

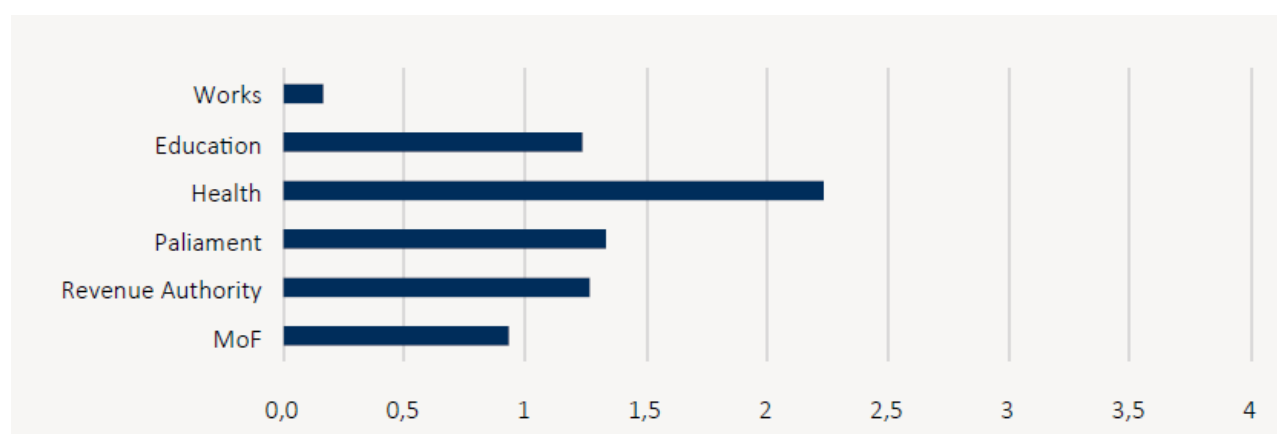


Figure 3: Effective domestication of SDGs by key PFM institutions extracted from AFROSAI-E Public financial management transversal risk report 2022. A rating scale from 0 (poor) to 4 (good) is being applied.

<sup>12</sup> Gildenhuis, J. S. H. 2004. *Ethics and professionalism: The battle against public corruption*. Stellenbosch: SUN Press, p.17 [2].

### 3. Assessment of the role of PACs in the PFM budget process

The PAC is the arm of Parliament that helps it hold the government accountable for its use of public funds and resources by examining the public accounts. Strong parliamentary scrutiny regimes are essential for combating corruption and promoting good governance.<sup>13</sup> To function, PACs require information that will enable them to assess the effectiveness of governance and service delivery performance issues. Table 2 lists the responsibilities of PACs in the budget process of government and MDAs to ensure their effective examination of public accounts. The AFROSAI-E research has identified these specific roles in which the PACs must be actively involved as “watchdogs”.

**Table 2: Areas for PAC intervention throughout the PFM budget process and cycle**

PFM budget phase	Roles and activities identified for PACs
Budget planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Request and review written submissions from government and independent experts; rely on reports produced by the SAI on the efficiency and effectiveness of the budget planning process; and influence SAIs that are not auditing this phase to do so.</li> </ul>
Budget adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Upscale their knowledge so that they can properly use SAI audit reports on very technical areas, such as the extractive industries (EIs), to enhance their comments on adopted budgets in such areas.</li> <li>- Engage with the media in a balanced manner to increase public awareness of the role of PACs and their work on adopted state budgets.</li> </ul>
Budget execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase the average number of PAC-published reports and recommendations that are easy for the public and the general reader to understand and require a written response from the government on budget execution by the executive.</li> <li>- Focus on the management of public finances, not policy, endeavouring to gain consensus on behalf of the taxpayer and citizen rather than on purely party-political considerations.</li> <li>- Diversify the respondents to their hearings on ongoing matters to include suppliers, contractors, academics and advisers, as appropriate, rather than government officials only, for constructive questioning relating to public expenditure.</li> <li>- Build relationships with civil society as a source of information to further identify citizens’ concerns about current government service delivery through budget execution.</li> </ul>
Budget oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Request SAIs to perform audits and report consistently on emerging issues in public sector audit areas, such as large infrastructure audits, complex state-owned</li> </ul>

<sup>13</sup> McGee, D. G. 2002. *The overseers: Public accounts committees and public spending*. London: Pluto Press.

PFM budget phase	Roles and activities identified for PACs
	enterprise audits, and audits of EIs, disaster situations and SDGs. - Deliberately consider and advocate for more SAI independence, especially during times of disaster where the SAI is usually not designated as an essential service.

To function effectively, PACs require information that will enable them to assess governance and performance issues. In most cases, this information is provided by the SAI. Although the relationship between the SAI, and specifically the auditor-general, and PACs has evolved differently in different jurisdictions, SAI audit reports are generally the main source of information for PACs.<sup>14</sup> PACs should ensure that they have the information they need to evaluate changing and emerging risks in the PFM environment. Research by AFROSAI-E has indicated that PACs in the SADC region are not making sufficient requests to SAIs for information on emerging issues in public sector auditing and accounting. Three such scenarios arise as given below:

- The research on the role of SAIs in auditing the EI in Africa found that there is a communication disconnect between the SAIs and key stakeholders in the EI sector, such as PACs, and that the audits lack relevance when it comes to addressing emerging issues in the public sector. Although this can also be linked to a lack of SAI expertise in specialised industries, PACs have not been asking SAIs to perform special audits in these specialised industry sectors. As such, the number of annual audits (on emerging issues such as EIs, PFM, large infrastructure, state-owned enterprises, donor funds, etc.) SAIs performance has not been sufficient to significantly improve transparency and accountability, especially in the EI sector<sup>15</sup>.
- The research on SAI resilience in addressing the audit expectation gap<sup>16</sup> shows that, despite a clear expectation from stakeholders for SAIs to perform audits during the COVID-19 disaster, at the date of this report, most SAIs had not performed any such audits. This was mainly due to the absence of external pressure from PACs for SAIs to perform special audits and submit them to Parliament.<sup>17</sup> SAIs should be supported and encouraged to perform real-time audits since they enable the PAC to give timely recommendations and ensure that corrective action is taken even in the middle of the fiscal year.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> OXFAM 2021. *Auditing the auditor: Examining the role of supreme audit institutions in auditing the extractive industry in Africa*. p.28.

<sup>16</sup> AFROSAI-E. 2020. *SAI resilience in addressing the auditor expectation gap during disaster periods: The case of sub-Saharan SAIs during the covid-19 pandemic*. Research paper,

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

- The research on SAI resilience in addressing the auditor expectation gap<sup>18</sup> also highlighted that although sub-Saharan Africa is prone to natural and other disasters, most SAIs have not done disaster preparedness audits on their governments in the last seven years. PACs have not requested such information from the SAIs either.

The 2022 AFROSAI-E Regional stocktaking report on COVID-19 audits identified challenges relating to independence. Resource constraints and financial and administrative autonomy remain an impediment to SAIs' performance in providing PACs with information on emerging issues in public sector audit and accounting. The global crisis caused by COVID-19 has escalated this, and calls for stronger oversight institutions, including PACs, to ensure accountability in emerging issues in public sector accounting<sup>19</sup>.

#### **4. Proposals on the role PACs should play in PFM and governance**

The PAC plays a key role in overseeing government ministries and departments. This oversight is part of the parliamentary system of governance, and similar systems are found in each SADC country. Over the years, AFROSAI-E has done research that scrutinizes the value and benefits of SAIs to their citizens. These research works have indicated that, in more ways than not, the value and benefits of SAIs (to make a difference in the lives of citizens) are key to the role of PACs in supporting SAIs in meeting their mandates. Two central themes continue to arise where PACs are required: (1) the frequency and mode of tabling SAI reports (value-adding and quality reports) to Parliament, and (2) the implementation of SAI recommendations by the auditees.

The research on the role of SAIs in auditing the EI in Africa shows that most of the few audits performed have a high probability of not being tabled before Parliament, making them unavailable to the public. There needs to be improved coordination between SAIs and key stakeholders through knowledge sharing and lobbying of state institutions to implement SAI audit recommendations and safeguard SAI independence<sup>20</sup>. Approximately one in four audits performed on emerging issues in the public sector are tabled to Parliament. While there are still cases of legislative requirements for SAIs to table their reports to Parliament through the MoF, some of these audits are not even finding their way out of the SAI offices in the first place.

The AFROSAI-E Institutional Capacity Building Framework report (2022) points out that some PACs neither hold hearings nor hold the government accountable through executives for implementing audit

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> AFROSAI-E. 2022. *Regional stocktaking report on covid-19 audits*.

<sup>20</sup> AFROSAI-E. 2021. *Auditing the auditor: Examining the role of supreme audit institutions in auditing the extractive industry in Africa*. p.8.

recommendations.<sup>21</sup> The report further highlights that both SAI auditors and public sector stakeholders are often of the view that SAI audit reports have not been effective in improving transparency and accountability<sup>22</sup>. This is mainly because the auditees are not implementing corrective actions to address audit findings and recommendations. PACs need to ensure that SAI audit recommendations are implementable and are followed up. PACs can assist in addressing these key issues and play a noticeable role in PFM and governance by designing a mechanism that follows up on SAI audit tabling and implementation of SAI audit recommendations by the executive.

## **5. Implications for the current legislative process and possible legislative interventions required**

The PAC is a parliamentary committee operating on behalf of Parliament, even when non-parliamentary members sit on the PAC.<sup>23</sup> While their core business as a committee is not necessarily to legislate, the PAC can influence legislators by contributing to the decision-making process of legislation. Research analysis of legislative proposals indicates that oversight committees can influence legislation on non-ideological issues but are more likely to influence participation on ideological issues.<sup>24</sup> It can be concluded that PACs can influence legislation across different contexts. Based on AFROSAI-E research, two legislative issues call for PACs' attention in the SADC region, as discussed below.

First, the adequacy of the legislative regime controlling or guiding the use of information and communication technology (ICT) should also be reviewed<sup>25</sup>. The AFROSAI-E Regional stocktaking report on COVID-19 audits emphasised that governments are increasingly realising the importance of ICT and implementing plans for utilising it. SAIs and governments need to look at how the country prioritises digitalisation projects. The following recommendations are made in the research paper on big data:

- PACs must review the adequacy of the legislative regime controlling or guiding ICT usage in their country's PFM system.

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<sup>21</sup> AFROSAI-E state of the region reports ( 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.28.

<sup>23</sup> The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. 2022. *Handbook on parliamentary financial oversight: Adapting PAC best practices for small legislatures*. p.20: "The appointment of non-elected members on parliamentary committees is not traditional to the Westminster model." Lay members have been appointed to PACs in both small and big legislatures such as Falkland Islands, local Canadian governments, Denmark, and Papua New Guinea.

<sup>24</sup> Witko, C. 2006. PACs, issue context, and congressional decision making. *Political Research Quarterly*, 59(2): 283–295.

<sup>25</sup> AFROSAI-E. 2022. *Regional stocktaking report on covid-19 audits*. pp.9–10.

- SAIs should put data on their audit plans and in their strategies. It is important for SAIs to identify stakeholders and repositories of data, and form partnerships that will enable access to this data.<sup>26</sup>
- It is important for PACs to understand stakeholders with repositories of data and how access to data can be used to build stronger PFM systems. The ability to access relevant data at any one time will assist PACs to get information on an ongoing basis where this is needed.

Secondly, the AFROSAI-E Regional stocktaking report on COVID-19 audits shows that there is a risk that governments may continue to introduce laws and measures under the pretext of an emergency, which undermines the very systems of accountability, as was the case in the wake of COVID-19<sup>27</sup>. PACs’ mandate should be broadened to scrutinise and contribute to the government legislation process, especially in areas relating to service delivery, disaster situations and performance audits.

The stocktaking report highlighted that SAIs should be able to deliver on their mandate without interference and fear of repercussions<sup>28</sup>. In this regard, PACs must be seen as true champions of SAI independence, especially during times of disaster where SAIs are usually not designated as essential services, a phenomenon that threatens or undermines the independence of SAIs.

## **6. Recommendations on strengthening oversight of PACs in the SADC region on PFM and governance**

SADCOPAC was established to coordinate the work of PACs in the southern African region by empowering the members of each member state to effectively carry out their function as oversight committees over public sector finance and promote good governance. Table 3 provides proposed recommendations for SADCOPAC and other partners in coordinating and building the capacity of PACs in SADC to strengthen ex-ante oversight on financial management and governance. The approach is sensitive to the fact that PACs are, in some countries, overwhelmed by the number of reports they need to deal with.

**Table 3: Proposed recommendations/initiatives for SADCOPAC in strengthening oversight of PACs in the SADC region on PFM and governance**

Thematic area	Initiative
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<sup>26</sup> AFROSAI-E. 2020. *Integrating big data in public sector audit*. pp.9, 23–24.

<sup>27</sup> AFROSAI-E. 2022. *Regional stocktaking report on covid-19 audits*.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p.11.

Thematic area	Initiative
PAC training and relationship with the SAI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) SADCOPAC provides members with annual training. SADCOPAC should arrange for new PAC members to undergo an orientation session, such as with the heads of the SAIs, to improve their understanding of their unique oversight roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>2) PAC has a good working relationship with the auditors-general and SAIs. SADCOPAC should design a programme encouraging PACs to regularly meet with the auditors-general and SAIs before each PAC meeting to help identify significant issues and outstanding audit recommendations.</li> <li>3) SADCOPAC should put at the top of its agenda how it can assist and support PACs to extract value from SAI audit reports, especially on audit findings and recommendations that talk to the effectiveness and efficiency of government policies, e.g. debt management.</li> </ol>
Setting regional standards for PAC meeting structures and follow-ups	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) SADCOPAC should design and develop regional standards of practice to be implemented by PACs. Standards should cover how PACs can plan, execute, document and report on their oversight activities annually.</li> <li>2) SADCOPAC should design and implement a stronger accountability framework to follow up on annual general meeting resolutions made at SADCOPAC meetings.</li> </ol>
Promoting non-partisan PACs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) SADCOPAC should design and implement training programmes for PACs on identifying and decreasing non-partisan activity within the PAC.</li> <li>2) As a non-partisan researcher capable of supporting PACs' work throughout SADC, SADCOPAC should re-structure itself to support cross-party collaboration within PACs.</li> </ol>

## 7. Conclusion

Undertaking financial scrutiny is challenging, as public finance documents are often technical and contain a high volume of information. It is also a challenge for members of Parliament to balance the demands of financial scrutiny alongside their other roles and responsibilities in the legislature. The discussion paper, following an “issues” topic approach instead of a “generalised” topic approach



leveraging on several research documents, has advanced arguments for further deliberation by PACs on how they can improve their oversight activities concerning specific emerging issues in public sector audit and accounting.

End