

# Country Focus

## ***Information Technology is having a significant impact on the operations of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of Zimbabwe***



### **Background**

#### **The Comptroller and Auditor - General of Zimbabwe**

The post of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) is established under of Section 105 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The Supreme Audit Institution in Zimbabwe is known as the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OC&AG).

The C&AG of Zimbabwe is appointed by the President and is not a civil servant. He holds office on such terms and conditions as fixed by the President. All other staff in the office, including the Deputy Auditors General, are civil servants. In doing their work, they act under the authority of the C&AG and enjoy the powers conferred on him in the exercise of their duties.

Under Section 106(6) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe "The Comptroller and Auditor General shall not be subject to the direction and control of any person or authority other than Parliament" in the exercise of his functions.

#### **Duties of the Comptroller and Auditor General**

The duties of the Comptroller and Auditor General include the following:

- to examine, enquire into, and audit the accounts of all Accounting Officers;
- to satisfy himself as to the safeguarding of all public moneys and State property;
- to audit all, or at his discretion contract out the audit of, the accounts of Designated Bodies (Parastatals) with effect from 16 July 1993;
- to carry out Value for Money Audits both in Central Government and Designated Corporate Bodies;
- to grant credit on the Exchequer Account;

- to prepare memoranda for the Committee of Public Accounts;
- to prepare and submit reports and do any other duties required of him by any statute.

#### **Types of Audits conducted by the C&AG**

The C&AG is mainly involved in three types of audits:

- Financial Audits - audits that report on the financial statements of both Government Departments and Parastatals;
- Value for Money Audits - audits that report on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the use of an organisation's resources;
- Specialised Audits - investigations initiated mainly by Parliament.

#### **The C&AG's Report**

The C&AG is required to report each year on the results of his examination of all financial statements which he audits. He always reports on any qualifications of his audit certificate.

The C&AG has to report on and, where applicable, certify the accounts he audits every financial year. In addition to his annual report, the C&AG also prepares special reports as and when necessary. Since the office started conducting Value for Money audits, results of such audits are presented to Parliament.

#### **Organisation and structure of the Audit Office**

The policy and overall operations of the Audit Office are vested in the Policy Committee made up of the C&AG, the two Deputy Auditors-General and one Deputy Manager responsible for Parastatals. The power of final decision rests with the C&AG. The main body of the office comprises nine Directors of Audit, and sixteen assistant Directors of Audit who

head the various audit sections of the office. Below them come Senior Auditors, Auditors and Audit Assistants.

Eleven of the sections carry out financial audits of Central Government and Parastatals. Three sections carry out Value for Money Audits. The 'IT' section is mainly a service section involved in the computerisation of the Audit Office. It assists the various sections in their use of computers. It also audits the various computer systems used by Government Departments.

### **Goals and objectives of computerisation**

The objectives of computerisation in the OC&AG is to ensure that the C&AG carries out his duties in a more economical, efficient and effective way. The computerisation can be broadly divided into two main areas - automation of the audit process and automation of the administration and accounting functions.

#### **Automation of the Audit Process**

The main objectives of audit automation are to:

- perform better quality audits;
- perform audits in less time thereby meeting the statutory deadline for the C&AG's report;
- increase audit coverage;
- produce performance reports, management letters, plans and other reports in less time.

#### **Automation of the Administrative/Accounts Routines**

The main objectives of computerising the administration and accounting routines are to:

- provide timely and accurate information for management, thereby facilitating decision making;
- prepare reports needed by Treasury and any other parties in time;
- be able to retrieve information on both accounts and personnel issues timeously;
- perform work using minimum required resources.

To achieve these objectives, a set of guidelines was devised to facilitate a planned and structured implementation of EDP.

## **Activity Areas**

### **Automation of the audit**

EDP is supporting work in different audit areas:

### **Word Processing**

WordPerfect is used in the Office. This allows the auditor or the audit manager to

<b>Audit Phase</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Documents</b>	<b>Tools</b>
Preparatory	Planning the audit work	Audit Plans	Wordprocessing Spreadsheets IDEA
Examination			
Current Examination	Internal Control Evaluation	Report on Current Examination	Wordprocessing Spreadsheet
	Compliance and substantive tests	Working papers	Database IDEA
Final Examination	Substantive tests Analytical Review	Report on Final Examination Working Papers Memorandum Audit Report	Word processing Spreadsheet Database IDEA

write his own reports, memos and audit programs. Documents can be retained, updated and printed for the audit with a minimum effort and cost. Every officer is now using WordPerfect 5.1. This wordprocessing package is used to produce:

- staff performance reports;
- special reports;
- audit programs;
- audit working papers;
- memos;
- management letters;
- standard forms;
- circulars.

The introduction of computers and wordprocessing to all audit sections, accounts and administration departments has greatly reduced the work load of the typing pool.

## Spreadsheets

The Microsoft Excel spreadsheet is used for a variety of functions, including:

- analytical review of client data;
- production and analysis of various schedules of data;
- preparation of financial statements which feature in the Comptroller and Auditor-General's report;
- audit project planning, budgeting and monitoring.

The introduction of Excel enabled the 1992/93 C&AG's Report to be produced within the Office, for the first time. The accounts department is also using Excel for:

- control of asset inventory;
- forecasts of expenditure;
- salaries forecasts;
- expenditure commitment control;
- reconciliations.

## Data Analysis

A software package called Interactive Data Extraction Analysis (IDEA), developed by the Auditor General of Canada is now being used for audit purposes within the Office. Using this software the auditor now carries out:

- data extraction. This enables the auditor to extract certain sets of data which meets his/her criteria;
- displaying or printing the auditors query results as standardised or as customised reports;
- data analysis;
- file management.

IDEA is currently used to analyse Government expenditure. The Government Computing Service Department provides a monthly file containing details of transactions for all Government ministries and departments. The IT section distributes this data to the various audit sections.

Audit sections used IDEA on a pilot basis during their interim audits to analyse the Government expenditure transaction files for the 1992/93 financial year. The transfer and subsequent analysis of salaries and wages data is also being trialled.

## Automation of the Administrative/Accounts Routines

Before the accounts and administration functions were computerised there were many problems in creating or updating records due to the volume of transactions and the amount of paper work involved.

The following activities have been automated:

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Tools</i>
<i>Budgeting</i>	<i>Plans and budgets</i>	<i>Wordprocessing Spreadsheets</i>
<i>Maintenance of various Registers, eg Commitment Suspense Accounts</i>	<i>Updated Registers Schedules of Outstanding Amounts</i>	<i>Spreadsheets</i>
<i>Maintenance of Personnel Records; Assets, Files</i>	<i>Staff schedules, Reports and Extraction</i>	<i>Database Spreadsheet Wordperfect</i>
	<i>Asset Schedules</i>	

## Accounts

IT is now being widely used in the Accounts Department for a variety of functions including the following:

- control of asset inventories;
- forecasts of expenditure;
- salaries forecasts;
- expenditure commitment control;
- reconciliations

All the above routines are now fully automated and are being done timeously.

## Administration

IT is now being used in the Administration department mainly for controlling personnel records. A database for all personnel records has been created. It is now easy and faster to access, add or update any information relating to personnel issues.

## Hardware/Software

At present the office is equipped with 26 ICL 386 desktop computers, 20 386 AST laptops and 10 486 AST laptops. We also have nine printers - three laser printers and six dot-matrix printers.

The office uses MS-DOS as its operating system on stand alone PC's. Other application packages being used are Harvard Graphics, Word for Windows and Norton Utilities.

## Responsibilities

To spearhead and speed up the whole computerisation process in the office, a three-tier EDP structure was formed in the office:

- Computer Committee - Guidelines;
- Information Technology - Technical and User Support
- Keyperson - Local Support

## Computer Committee

The Computer Committee membership is composed of representatives from the IT section and other sections. The IT section Director is the chairperson of the committee. The duties of the committee are:

- to determine the general development and priorities regarding the use of computers for audit;
- giving feedback on the support being given by the IT section.

## IT Section

The IT section was formed in April 1991 to spearhead the computerisation of the office. Its responsibilities are as follows:

- assessment of needs and procurement of hardware and software;
- acquiring data from Central Computing Services and distributing it to sections for use with IDEA;
- provision of technical and user support;
- arranging courses for competence building in computers;
- audit of computerised systems;
- software research and development and programming;
- virus management;
- network administration and management;
- computer security;

- training;
- computer maintenance.

## Key Persons

It was envisaged that the demand for services to audit teams would continue to increase as the use of computers in the office gained momentum. This would overburden the IT section and create a backlog of work. The solution was to decentralise the activity by the development of 'keypersons' at different sections who serve as local agents for the introduction and further use of computers.

The keypersons also act as the middlemen between their sections and the IT section. They are expected to bring their section's needs and proposals for development of computerisation to the attention of the IT section. 16 keypersons representing the 16 audit sections have so far been trained in their roles as keypersons.

<b>User Group</b>	<b>Type of Training</b>
<i>Information Technology Section</i>	<i>MS-DOS Advanced MS-DOS Technical Support WordPerfect Excel DBase Basic DBase Programming IDEA Network Administration &amp; Management Virus Management Computer Auditing Security Management</i>
<i>Keypersons</i>	<i>MS-DOS Basic Technical Support WordPerfect Excel DBase IDEA</i>
<i>Financial Auditors</i>	<i>WordPerfect Excel DBase IDEA</i>
<i>VFM Auditors</i>	<i>WordPerfect Excel DBase IDEA</i>
<i>Accounts / Administration</i>	<i>WordPerfect Excel</i>
<i>Management</i>	<i>Management Information Systems WordPerfect Excel DBase IDEA</i>

## ***Training***

Training for each user group is as shown in the box on the previous page.

The above training is being conducted both in-house as well as externally and it is an on going process.

## ***The Future***

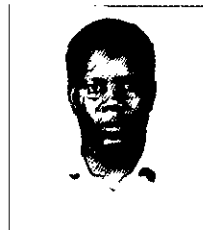
Currently an exercise is in progress to connect all the PCs in the office to a network. This will enable sharing of information between users and devices like printers. It is also envisaged that in future the ratio of PC to Auditor will be 1:1 and computer literacy in the office will be 100%.

## ***Authors of this article***



***Mr A Chanakira***

Mr A Chanakira joined the OC&AG in 1983 as an Auditor and rose through the ranks to his current position as Assistant Director - IT. He is in charge of the computer systems



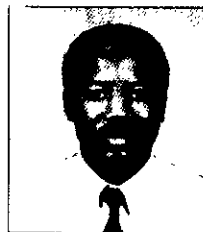
***Mr D Marimwe***

Mr D Marimwe joined the office in 1990. He is now a Senior Auditor responsible for computer support services and computer audits within the public sector.



***Mr A Gumbo***

Mr A Gumbo joined the office in 1989. He transferred to the IT section from Financial Audit in 1993, and is now responsible for computer support services within the office.



***Mr J Manyeruke***

Mr J Manyeruke transferred from the Central Statistical Office to the OC&AG in 1992. He is now responsible for computer support services within the office.