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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan

Year I Annual Report (2013-2014)



This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by the Assistance for Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan (ALBA), implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc.



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ACRONYMS

ALBA	Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan
APAP	Afghanistan Parliament Assistance Program
API	Afghanistan Parliamentary Institute
AO	Assistance Objectives
AUAF	American University of Afghanistan
BMP	Branding and Marking Plan
CI	Counterpart International
COP	Chief of Party
COR	Contract Officer's Representative
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
CTAP	Civilian Technical Assistance Program
DAI	Development Alternatives Incorporated
DG	Director General
DSG	Deputy Secretary General
ICLAD	International Consortium for Law and Development
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IR	Intermediate Results
MEC	Independent Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
MJ	Meshrano Jirga
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MSI	Management Systems International
NDI	National Democratic Institute
PACC	Parliamentary Anti-Corruption Caucus
PC	Provincial Council
PMEP	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
PRD	Public Relations Directorate
SG	Secretary General
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WJ	Wolesi Jirga

FORWARD

The Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan (ALBA) project is a 4-year technical assistance initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI).

USAID designed the Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan (ALBA) project to prepare both Houses of Parliament for greater self-reliance. ALBA is building on the foundation of USAID's previous programs while expanding support to the Meshrano Jirga (MJ). This approach includes capacity development aimed at immediate and long-term application for practical, on-the-job learning for MPs and staff to reduce reliance on embedded advisors and engage in legislative, oversight, and outreach activities alongside government, civil society, and private sector actors.

The staffing of ALBA is geared toward this greater self-reliance by maximizing the involvement of Afghan nationals. The project brings together people who are experienced in Afghan parliamentary affairs with only minimal international staff and use of outside experts.

ALBA is concluding its first year, having built a core team of legislative and budget specialists who can build parliamentary capacity through shared experiences and common cultural norms, but at the same time help bring modern legislative process methodologies to a still developing parliamentary culture, particularly through the reopening and revitalization of the Afghanistan Parliamentary Institute.

In Year 2, ALBA will expand its efforts with the current term of Parliament to ensure greater civic involvement in the legislative process, and the introduction of a greater number of Afghan national experts from ministries, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. Targeted assistance to parliamentary commissions will focus on Afghan government priority legislation to ensure practical, effective laws that help reinforce the post-conflict stabilization currently underway in the country. Concurrently, ALBA will also be laying the groundwork for the transition from the 16th to the 17th National Assembly through New Member Orientation programming for the Meshrano Jirga, the upper house, in expectation of a broader level of involvement after the Parliamentary elections are held in April 2015, during ALBA's Year 3.

CONTRACT AT A GLANCE

Program Title: Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan

IQC: Strengthening Legislative Bodies IQC

Contract Number: AID-OAA-I-12-00003/AID-306-TO-13-00004

Contractor: Development Alternatives, Inc.

Period of Performance: March 28, 2013 – March 27, 2018

Contracting Officer's Representative: [REDACTED]

Contracting Officer: [REDACTED]

Chief of Party: [REDACTED]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ALBA Year I: Reflection and Revitalization

Work under the Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan (ALBA) project was designed to support the development of the Afghan Parliament to enable it to operate as an independent and effective legislative, representative and oversight body. The project conducted a number of assessments and analyses aimed at honing the conceptual into the practical. The smooth operational start up, due to DAI's strong and continued presence in Afghanistan, allowed for ALBA to begin programming almost immediately. The Budget team, Legislative team and the staff supporting the Afghanistan Parliamentary Institute (API) began engaging MPs and staff in various activities within the first 3 months.

The first year of the project witnessed activities and progress in all four major objectives of ALBA:

Under **Objective I – Strengthened Legislative Processes**, ALBA began by conducting a series of capacity assessments. Bringing in the International Consortium for Law and Development (ICLAD) to help identify baseline levels of capacity, ALBA established empirical data from which the project prepared a skill sets analysis. From this analysis, ALBA developed a proposed curriculum for a comprehensive program course through the API aimed at providing the permanent staff of the Parliamentary Secretariat with the skills required to become more effective at their jobs, focusing on legislative analysis and research, and budgetary oversight skills.

ALBA worked closely with the HR Directorates of both Houses – conducting the first ever joint capacity building session – to conclude an agreement for an interim curriculum for a series of prioritized, intensive seminars on parliamentary operations and concepts. These seminars were conducted during the winter parliamentary recess. While the seminars ranged from media and camera techniques for the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) to a more broad-ranging seminar on Legislative Policy, the primary trainings were related to legislation and the legislative process. ALBA has continued discussing establishment of a comprehensive program of longer-term courses through the API aimed at providing the permanent staff of the Parliamentary Secretariat with the skills required to become more effective at their jobs, focusing on legislative analysis and research, and budgetary oversight skills.

Throughout the year, ALBA supported the legislative process by providing targeted assistance to those Commissions and MPs dealing with priority legislation, such as the Mining Law, the Provincial Councils Law, the Population Registration Law, and the Access to Information Law. The project also worked to develop effective communications between the Executive and the Parliament on policy-making and legislation, facilitating greater interaction between the two branches on key legislation.

Under **Objective 2 – Improved Oversight**, ALBA supported several parliamentary Commissions enabling them to travel to the provinces to undertake oversight visits in Mazar, Herat, and Kapisa, including the Meshrano Jirga (MJ) Commission on Disabled Persons and Refugees and the Wolesi Jirga (WJ) Commission on Women’s Affairs. The MJ Commission examined government investments in facilities for the disabled population in Northern provinces, bringing back to Kabul a series of suggestions to the relevant ministries.

The WJ Commission succeeded in bringing greater ministerial attention and action with regard to the dire situation of women detainees in Kapisa, many of whom were being illegally held. ALBA began supporting the development of the Parliamentary Anti-Corruption Caucus (PACC), establishing relations between the group and outside stakeholders, including Integrity Watch Afghanistan, Global Witness, and the Independent Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC). The PACC even conducted a formal session with the MEC Board of Directors. In addition, ALBA worked with the group to develop its internal organization, a formal charter, and other foundation documents.

ALBA supported the Wolesi Jirga (WJ) Women’s Commission, helping develop a 3 month priority plan, as well as its annual report, particularly with regard to outreach and gender budget analysis. ALBA conducted an assessment of the draft Law on Provincial Councils, developing a series of recommendations and summarizing all the draft law’s articles. Additionally, ALBA closely supported the consideration and passage of the 1393 Budget, which had been initially rejected by the Parliament in December, but later passed in early January. ALBA supported both Houses in oversight of the budget processes, particularly by preparing analysis reports on the 1391 Qatia Report and the 1392 Supplementary Budget.

Under **Objective 3 – Increased Outreach**, ALBA shared its concept for revisions to the parliamentary website with the Head of the WJ Parliamentary Affairs Directorate, recommending the incorporation of features such as live audio and video web-streaming of plenary sessions, and dedicated pages for citizens’ petitions and complaints. There was additional discussion about reviving the Legislative Tracking Website and Proceedings Reporting/Recording, including plans to conduct an assessment of the existing systems and processes.

ALBA continued its outreach to civil society organizations (CSOs), focusing on efforts to monitor the development and final passage of the Criminal Procedures Code, which generated considerable controversy over the impact of provisions, including one that would have prevented family members from testifying in cases of abuse or domestic violence. Additionally, ALBA compiled and translated End of Session Reports for both Houses of Parliament for general distribution.

Under **Objective 4 – Increased Institutional Development**, ALBA re-established the API – which had closed down at the end of the previous USAID project – and began conducting basic

language and IT courses for staff and members of both Houses. The project also finalized the process of integrating the staff of the capacity-building sections into API planning and operations through development of a comprehensive interim seminar series for staff conducted during the winter parliamentary recess.

During the API seminar series noted above in Objective I, based on the priorities set by the Capacity Building Offices of both Houses, ALBA conducted workshops on UN Resolution 1325, the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Security, and an overall Gender Workshop. In addition, efforts to develop a gender strategy involving both Houses began during this period, with joint planning sessions. Additionally, ALBA began preparations for supporting the MJ Secretariat leadership for the Upper House's New Member Orientation program.



Year I Activities

INITIAL IMPACTS

Giving Parliamentary Staff the Tools They Need – ALBA

succeeded in holding the first-ever joint planning session for legislative training between the Wolesi Jirga and the Meshrano Jirga. This enabled a doubling of resource impact by avoiding duplication of effort.

Assessing Impact of Legislation

– ALBA focused its first months analyzing legislative staff capacities and skill sets to determine how best to approach development of a strong drafting and analysis support effort for the Commissions. This has led to the development of targeted Commission Advisory and Support Units within the Commissions, which will be introduced in Year 2.

Achieving Synergy with Executive Counterparts –

ALBA has successfully brought together parliamentary and ministry gender units to build the linkages necessary to ensure greater efforts in highlighting key issues facing women.

Improving Library

Management – ALBA conducted advanced training to raise understanding of parliamentary library management practices and the use of those practices to maximize current research capacity of staff.

OBJECTIVE I: STRENGTHENED LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES

While considerable success was achieved by the previous project in this area, the parliament remains hampered by comparatively lower salaries and high turnover. As such, the need remains to expand capacity to amend, draft, and/or analyze legislation. Parliament also has a contentious relationship with the Executive branch, and improved communication between the Executive and Legislative branches is a key element in strengthening the overall legislative process. Finally, the parliament needs access to better information on which to develop effective legislation. This is critical to ensuring a legislative process that produces laws that reflect the needs of the people and the realities of the political environment of Afghanistan.

ALBA's approach to strengthening legislative processes in Afghanistan is to build the systems and skills for legislative analysis and drafting, especially for staffs of the commissions and Legal Directorate. These groups will use their new skills to institutionalize and increase access to government data and external information resources that empower analysis, drafting and overall policy review in the legislative process.

Legislative Analysis and Drafting

In its first year, ALBA focused on laying the groundwork for institutionalizing legislative analysis and drafting processes. ALBA first analyzed current practices of parliamentary staff, particularly Commission staff and the Legal Directorate of both Houses. Through our partner International Center for Law and Development (ICLAD), ALBA analyzed the current approach to legislative drafting and developed a Guide to Legislative Drafting that incorporates ICLAD's proven methodology with the identified gaps in current practices in the Afghan parliament.

Based on this analysis, ALBA designed capacity building initiatives and revised guidelines and manuals to target skills needed within

parliament. For example, ALBA conducted a seminar to provide the staffs of the Directorate of Legislative Affairs of both Houses with a fundamental understanding and overview of the development and analysis of legislative policy in Parliament. Beyond the increased capacity from this seminar, it was notable as the first time that joint training was conducted involving legislative staff of both Houses. Participants cited the exchange of experiences by MJ and WJ staff as being an extremely valuable part of the training. ALBA will continue to require joint training between Houses. In Year 2, we will also work with Parliament and USAID to identify resources in the Afghan inter-agency legislative community with the capacity and interest to engage in legislative analysis to expand the resources available to secretariat and commission staff as they analyze legislation.

Effective Communication Processes

ALBA has been actively involved in increasing the frequency and quality of communications between Parliament and the Executive. ALBA reached out to the Ministry of Finance, Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG), Ministry of Women's Affairs, and other executive agencies to improve communications between the Executive and the Parliament on policy-making and legislation.

Parliamentary commissions provide an appropriate venue for this increased interaction with the Executive, but require support to develop effective methods for communication and oversight. ALBA developed a draft Oversight Manual to support Commission leadership in developing their individual oversight strategies. ALBA is finalizing the Oversight Manual and will introduce it to commissions in Year 2 as part of a workshop focused on the development of commission-level oversight strategies, beginning with the Budget Commissions of both Houses. ALBA also planned to develop a standard process for tracking complaints with the Complaints Commission. During Year 1, we conducted an initial desk review of the Complaints Commission, which will inform Year 2 activities to analyze current processes, methodologies, and procedures for sorting substantive from frivolous complaints and improving the procedures for bringing legitimate complaints to the proper authorities.

Research Methods for Oversight and Legislation

ALBA supported Parliament to build more sustainable research capacity and ensure that commissions had access to needed knowledge bases. For example, ALBA and API developed an advanced course on the management of parliamentary libraries and legislative records. The course was attended by staff members of both Houses, and delivered by the head of the WJ Research Directorate. ALBA had originally planned to reinstate the Parliamentary Fellowship Program during Year 1, but deferred the activity to Year 2 to allow for additional time to gain buy-in for the program and allow for joint planning with both Houses.

OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVED OVERSIGHT

Enhancing Parliament's capacity to review the National Budget and its execution by Executive Branch institutions was core to ALBA's work in its first year. Parliament continues to be constrained by a dependence on the executive branch for budget, staff, and other resources. While this is largely a political issue, ALBA is working to highlight the critical necessity of Parliamentary oversight, and the fiscal and administrative independence required to achieve it. Thus, ALBA sought to strengthen Parliament's technical capacity to establish and oversee the National Budget.

General Oversight through Commissions

The basic mechanism of the parliamentary process is the commission. It is through the commission's discussion, negotiation, and consensus that successful legislation comes to the floor of a parliament. But bringing legislation to full consideration of a parliament is not a commission's only role; the commission's responsibility to the citizens of a country is fulfilled when it also oversees the effective implementation of laws the parliament passed.

During its first year, ALBA focused on providing support to key parliamentary commissions in both Houses in conducting field visits and field hearings in the regions. The primary focus of this support was providing the resources necessary for making the provincial visits, and building the capacity of commission staff to organize and report on their field visits and field hearings. These regional trips are an important means of enabling greater public participation in the public process, while increasing general parliamentary oversight through direct, hands-on engagement with Afghan citizens.

Opening the legislative process to citizen engagement, however, is only part of role of commissions. Equally important is translating that engagement into positive action that brings accountability to the Executive Branch by following up field and public hearings with formal parliamentary hearings that engage the ministries and officials, and carry the concerns raised by citizens to those who implement the laws that the parliament passes. Providing substantive support to the commissions in these areas is both strategic and critical if Members of Parliament are to play a continuously

INITIAL IMPACTS

Ensuring Government is Working – ALBA

successfully supported efforts by the Women's Commission to build bridges with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, engaging in initial strategic planning sessions to identify priority gender issues in Parliament.

Improving Government Oversight – ALBA

supported regional field visits and hearings in the areas of gender, rights of women detainees and disabled citizens, and provincial oversight.

Supporting Legislative Oversight – ALBA

built relations with the MJ Commission on Provincial Council Affairs and the IDLG, with primary focus on the new draft Law on Provincial Councils, helping to stem efforts that would prevent PC oversight of regional government.

Ensuring Fiscal Responsibility – ALBA

strongly supported both the WJ and MJ Budget Commissions in their efforts throughout the entire budget year in finalizing the 1391 Qatia Report, preparing the 1392 Mid-Year Review, and developing the 1393 National Budget.

constructive role on the key issues facing Afghanistan in the coming years. ALBA made significant progress in developing mechanisms and building capacity for commissions to solicit feedback and gather information from government officials, and ALBA will continue to expand these efforts in Year 2.

“Regular oversight visits to provinces will bring transparency and accountability to the relevant bodies to take responsibility and be responsive for their actions . . .”

*Fauzia Kofi
Former Chair, Wolesi Jirga
Commission on Women’s Affairs*

Oversight Visits and Field Hearings

ALBA supported provincial visits by the WJ Commission on Women’s Affairs, Civil Society and Human Rights and the MJ Commission on Widows, Gender Issues and Civil Society to Herat where representatives visited women’s shelters in the province, and visited the regional prison to witness first-hand the current conditions of these facilities.

On a field visit to Kapisa, the WJ Commission on Women’s Affairs, Civil Society and Human Rights examined the conditions of female prisoners in the Kapisa Provincial Women’s Prison, the facilities housing a safe house for abused women, and an election registration site. Provincial officials, including the Deputy Governor, were delighted to receive the delegation, stating that it was the first time such a WJ delegation had visited the province in a long time.

During its visit to the women’s prison, the Commission identified critical omissions of the local line ministry administration of the facility. The Commission also noted a lack of security for women’s polling centers for the then-pending elections. An important outcome of the ALBA-supported WJ Commission visit to Kapisa was the Commission’s decision to summon the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Interior before the Commission to discuss the problems identified during the visit to Kapisa.

The MJ Commission on the Disabled traveled to Mazar-e-Sharif to conduct the first of a series of four public field hearings planned over the next year. The focus of the delegation was to learn more about the problems faced by persons with disabilities, martyrs issues, and refugee issues in the northern provinces, as well as what steps were being taken by local line ministries to address these problems. Nearly 150 representatives of organizations representing the rights of the disabled from over five provinces – Balkh, Samangan, Jawzan, Sar-e-Pul and Faryab – attended. The Commission developed a report on the main issues and possible solutions identified during its visit, which was discussed in Commission meetings and then raised in full plenary session.

ALBA Commission Partners in Year 1

WJ Women’s Affairs
Commission

WJ Budget Commission

MJ Budget Commission

MJ Women’s Affairs
Commission

MJ Disabled Affairs Commission

MJ Defense Affairs Commission

MJ Provincial Affairs
Commission

Parliamentarians Anti-
Corruption Caucus (PACC)

Supporting Oversight of Provincial Budgets

ALBA prepared an assessment of the draft Law on Provincial Councils through a local legislative specialist, from which ALBA developed a series of recommendations along with a summarization of all the articles of the draft law. This analysis reviewed the text of the original 2004 Decree, the current law enacted in 2007, and the draft law passed in January 2014 by the Wolesi Jirga and now submitted to the Meshrano Jirga for consideration during the Spring Session. The analysis identified the weaknesses and strengths of the three documents and provided recommendations for possible amendments. ALBA continues to follow the law, supporting the MJ Commission on Provincial Council Affairs and cooperating with the IDLG in its efforts to ensure that the role of Provincial Councils remains substantive through the inclusion of oversight responsibilities in the legislation.

Key Issues of the Provincial Council Chairs

- PC Leadership Terms
- PC Budget and Resources
- PC Reports to Parliament

As part of its cooperation with the IDLG, ALBA supported a Provincial Councils Conference with all 34 Provincial Council Chairs and IDLG, bringing together Senators, the PC Chairs and the Directorate to review the version passed by the WJ and bring forth recommendations and reservations to be aired in the Parliament before final passage of the bill. This activity also supported our Objective I efforts to strengthen legislative processes.

ALBA gave further support to the visiting PC Chairs by facilitating meetings with the various actors involved in the Provincial Councils legislation. These meetings included sessions with the WJ Speaker and the WJ Administrative Board, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission on Internal Affairs, the MJ Speaker and the MJ Administrative Board, and the Chairs of all MJ Commissions, where the PC Chairs presented their concerns about the draft Law and current issues facing the provinces.

Supporting Parliament's Oversight of Budget Priorities, Implementation and Performance

During this first year, ALBA has focused primarily on budgetary oversight by the Parliament, in particular the Budget Commission of the two Houses. ALBA has carried over from the predecessor project the provision of focused support on Budget Commissions and other key commissions dealing with budget and oversight issues. It is the project's goal to expand support to the permanent structures that support budget processes in parliament – the Secretariat Budget Units – and to increase their long-term sustainability. In addition to sustainable capacity, ALBA is

working to help the parliament build communication bridges with the Ministry of Finance and other government agencies involved in the budgetary process.

One of ALBA's core objectives is to move the Commission staffs beyond a level of basic scrutiny to enable commissions to examine upstream issues such as revenue generation and the identification of priorities, to downstream issues such as procurement and program impact. In support of this effort, ALBA conducted a seminar introducing the parliamentary staff to the national budget process, and in particular focused on how the Parliament can better integrate itself into the overall budget submission cycle managed by the Ministry of Finance.

Direct Commission Assistance

When the Budget Commissions of both Houses received the Qatia document, ALBA worked with the Commissions to draft the Qatia Analysis report, to summarize data in this massive document and make it accessible for members of not only the Budget Commissions but also the other relevant commissions of both Houses. ALBA briefed the WJ Complaints Commission on its analysis and received very positive feedback about ALBA's support (see text box). The Chair asked the team to re-appear before the Commission to answer further questions about the Budget from other MPs.

“... there were many things in this budget about which I was not clear, but this [ALBA] presentation made it very clear for me”

These activities also marked the beginning of the process of knowledge transfer to the Commissions' permanent staffs, particularly for the Budget Units. ALBA worked with the commission staffs, assigning them portions of the analysis and then mentoring them in the production of the report. This type of approach aims to build their skill sets and allow them to produce such analyses in future years.



Following the Qatia Analysis Report, ALBA assisted the WJ in preparing a mid-year budget review presentation, compiling a briefing paper on questions raised by Members regarding the substantive changes in the original budget projections. In addition, ALBA prepared analyses of the mid-year financial review and the burn rates of various Ministries by budget unit, and presented it to the Budget Commission. Upon

completion of the 1391 Qatia Hearings and the Mid-Year Budget Review, the ALBA Budget Team in conjunction with the Budget Commissions drafted an analysis of the 1393 Budget, and submitted it

to Parliament. This analysis served as the base document for the subsequent budget hearings that saw completion and passage of the budget.

During the year, ALBA worked with the WJ Budget Commission to develop an oversight strategy for the upcoming budget. The focus of these efforts was on encouraging the Commission to use a revenue-oriented approach to oversight to help move beyond rudimentary scrutiny of the national budget. ALBA encouraged the Commission to explore activities that would focus on the ministries and agencies that deal directly with incoming revenues, particularly the Customs and Tax Agencies. Additionally, ALBA supported efforts to revitalize the Public Accounts Sub-Committee (PASC) with the aim of coordinating a strategy to expand and formalize the PASC functions, including its establishment as a stand-alone commission.

Budget Oversight Seminars and Briefings

Along with direct assistance to the Budget Commission, ALBA reached out to a number of the parliamentary commissions to provide insights on their role in oversight of the Executive through a series of commission-specific seminars for Members and staff. As mentioned above, ALBA conducted a seminar introducing the parliamentary staff to the national budget process, and in particular focused on how the Parliament can better integrate itself into the overall budget submission cycle.

The ALBA Budget Team also provided briefings on the draft 1393 National Budget, appearing in front of the WJ Commission on Women’s Affairs, Civil Society and Human Rights; the WJ Commission on National Economy, Non-governmental Organizations, Rural Development, and Agriculture and Animal Husbandry; and, the WJ Commission on Complaints and Petitions.

As follow-up to these briefings, ALBA reviewed and compiled a series of advisory recommendations received from other MJ Commissions, preparing a consolidated statement shared with the MJ plenary session, after which the 1393 Budget was formally sent to the WJ.

ALBA also presented a comprehensive review of the national budget process and timelines for budget formulation



for the Parliamentarians Anti-Corruption Caucus (PACC), focusing on the budget in development, the national budget and its operations and development sub-budgets, the role of staff in formulating and implementing the budget process, and the overall role of Parliament in the budget approval and oversight processes.

Parliamentarians Anti-Corruption Caucus

With the closure this year of the MSI-implemented USAID Assistance to Afghanistan Anti-Corruption Authority (4-A) project, ALBA has stepped in to assume support of the Parliamentarians Anti-Corruption Caucus (PACC), providing technical and resource support to its operations as it moves towards formal establishment within the Parliament.

During this year, ALBA conducted several briefings and seminars for the PACC, including the draft Law on Anti-Corruption, Access to Information legislation, and budget issues, as noted above. ALBA, with the PACC, supported International Anti-Corruption Day activities in Kabul, in conjunction with the Afghan Coalition Against Corruption (AFCAC), facilitating a national conference at which a number of Presidential candidates endorsed and signed an anti-corruption pledge, for both the election campaign and throughout their mandate. ALBA also assisted the PACC in conducting outreach to external organizations, including the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC), Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), and Global Witness.



OBJECTIVE 3: INCREASED OUTREACH

ALBA's focus on increased interaction between CSOs and Members seeks to provide an opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of and responsiveness to constituents' needs by Members. The project is working to strengthen parliament visibility through the distribution of legislative information and proceedings. One key effort to improve visibility is through better use of information and communications technology (ICT) and related systems to enhance information

generated including website upgrades, expedited distribution of Parliamentary proceedings, and better public bill tracking. ALBA conducted an initial analysis of the current Public Relations Directorates' capacity and developed a training curriculum to maximize their ability to improve access and coverage of Parliament.

INITIAL IMPACTS

Connecting Parliament with the People – ALBA facilitation of human rights and women's rights CSOs played a critical role in reversing an internationally condemned provision to the Criminal Procedure Code.

Keeping the People Informed – ALBA conducted a thorough assessment of the Parliament's website based on the International Parliamentary Union Guidelines for Democratic Websites, laying the groundwork for upgrading this window on the Parliament to include video and audio streaming of plenary sessions.

Sharpening Media Skills in Parliament – API trainings set the stage for further public relations skills set capacity-building in Year 2.

Outreach Facilitation

In 2012, the Parliament signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a coalition of 35 CSOs seeking to build a stronger working relationship with Parliament and to facilitate ease of access for its member CSOs to Members of Parliament. However, despite the MOU, there were disagreements between the Parliament secretariats and the CSOs as to the interpretation of the MOU, with the result that few organizations are able to directly access Members of Parliament.

ALBA took on a facilitation role for CSOs, helping bring Members and citizen organizations together to connect while the MOU was reviewed in hopes of establishing a more institutionalized mechanism for assuring access to the Parliament. As such, the project assisted organizations like Integrity Watch Afghanistan, Global Witness, and the CSO Advocacy Coalition to obtain audiences with Members, helping provide Members with needed information to help them make informed decisions before voting on critical legislation before the Parliament.

ALBA's facilitation of the CSO Advocacy Coalition played a critical role during the final stages of the passage of the Criminal Procedures Code, helping ensure that Members had access to the facts and analysis needed to avoid exposing the Parliament to international condemnation over gender issues related to domestic violence cases in the courts.

Outreach Mechanisms

In the first year, ALBA conducted a comparative assessment of the current parliamentary website against the standards developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for such sites. It was determined that expatriate short-term technical assistance (STTA) should be brought in to do a more comprehensive assessment. Once the assessment has been completed, ALBA plans to work with a local IT company to implement the enhancements and train Secretariat staff to ensure sustainability. These enhancements may include:

- Enhanced pages for leadership of Parliament (e.g., Speaker, Secretary-General);
- Links to individual commission web pages;
- Live web-streaming of plenary sessions;
- Access to electronic versions of the plenary proceedings;
- Legislative tracking for MPs, CSOs, and academic researchers;
- Links to a public complaints system and/or a proposed anti-corruption hotline;
- Links to educational pages describing the Parliament and its functions for schoolchildren and youth; and,
- Dedicated pages for explaining the budget and budget processes.

ALBA also began investigating the possibility of developing an effective social media outreach and engagement campaign for the Parliament of Afghanistan, considering a system for sending SMS alerts on parliamentary action on legislation, key commission and plenary sessions, and other important legislative events.

Legislative Process Transparency

While Members are the primary focal point for improving media access permanent parliamentary staff are critical to the role media outreach can play in achieving improved coverage of Parliament, and that they be trained in the appropriate methods and procedures of working with the media.



Through the API, ALBA conducted a seminar on Journalism Skills in Parliament for the Directorates of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) of both Houses of the Parliament. The focus of the workshop was to provide the DIPR staff with a fundamental understanding of the use of effective journalism skills in Parliament to better fulfill the needs and further the media and public relations of its 2 Houses. ALBA is also reviewing equipment needs of the DIPRs in advance of the Parliament's move to its new building next year.



OBJECTIVE 4: INCREASED INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INITIAL IMPACTS

Keeping Parliamentary Skill Sets at the Forefront – The reopening of the Afghanistan Parliamentary Institute (API) afforded the project the opportunity to forge a strong, cooperative working relationship between the Capacity Building Units of both Houses. This working relationship set the stage for development of a strategic training plan based on both individual and institutional needs.

Ensuring Women Count in Parliament – Strengthening Gender issues in both Houses bore fruit through their respective commissions. ALBA particularly focused on Gender Budget Analysis to ensure that all aspects of the National Budget better represented both genders in its allocations and implementation.

Supporting the Upper House to fulfill its Role – Previously, parliamentary assistance in Afghanistan was focused primarily on the Lower House, the Wolesi Jirga. But the Upper House, the Meshrano Jirga, plays a critical role in the legislation process, particularly with regard to the country's 34 Provincial Councils. ALBA has fostered a strong working relationship with the MJ and will facilitate the upcoming New Member Orientation scheduled for Year 2.

As follow-up to the previous parliamentary assistance project, there were several key areas of institutional development that were determined as necessary for ALBA to pursue.

The Afghanistan Parliamentary Institute (API) was initiated in 2007, with hopes that the Parliament would be in a position to assume ownership of the API by the end of the previous project. However, the necessary structure was not in place within the parliament by the time of the previous project's closing. Thus, the API and its validation as a sustainable institution is high on the list of ALBA priorities. Gender mainstreaming is also critical to the overall evolution of the Afghan Parliament as an institution. Finally, while the Meshrano Jirga (MJ) has been a part of previous parliamentary assistance, a specific focus on the MJ has been previously missing. ALBA considers strengthening the MJ to be pivotal to overall parliamentary assistance, and has contributed considerable resources and time to making the MJ an equal partner in institutional building at the Parliament.

Afghanistan Parliamentary Institute

One of ALBA's key goals at the beginning of Year I was the restoration of the API, which had closed at the end of the previous project. One of ALBA's key successes at the end of Year I is a revitalized, forward-looking API. ALBA continues to work on the interlocking, multi-tiered challenges of institutionalizing sustainable and substantive knowledge enhancement for Afghanistan Parliamentary staff and, by extension, the Parliamentarians.

To address this challenge and determine services for staff and department heads of both Houses, ALBA conducted first a physical review of the API, resulting in refurbishing and updating the facility. Then, the project conducted an all-encompassing review of the Institute, its intended beneficiaries, and the overall skill sets needs of the parliament in general. ALBA conducted a thorough assessment of staff training needs. Combined with

external reviews and assessments previously conducted, these provided a strong foundation for going forward.

Consultation and coordination with the Capacity Building Units of both Houses enabled ALBA to pursue a comprehensive set of substantive seminars and workshops which began in Year I and continue into Year 2. More importantly, in conducting this consultation and coordination, the project's efforts achieved further progress by succeeding in bringing the 2 Houses together for the first time to develop a common approach to identifying immediate and medium term skills development needs for parliamentary staff.

Drawing on this information and reviewing historical data from the previous project, ALBA developed a comprehensive Parliamentary Skills Sets Needs Analysis, and from that developed a proposed API curriculum for review by the two Houses on 12 January 2014. Beyond the basic English and Computer Skills courses that underpin more advanced endeavors, ALBA and the Capacity Building Units established a series of core skill sets on which current trainings and seminars are focused. The first series of 18 priority workshops and seminars were conducted during the winter parliamentary recess. A similar series of workshops and seminars are planned for the summer parliamentary recess. As with all API courses, ALBA assisted the Capacity Building Sections of both Houses to administer a routine questionnaire for all course participants designed to measure how they use the skills and knowledge gained in these training sessions in their daily work in the Secretariat. ALBA and API use this feedback to adjust future courses to ensure effective delivery and relevant information.

With the foundation laid, ALBA will be reaching out to potential partners for Year 2, such as the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) Professional Development Institute, and the National Centre for Policy Research of Kabul University of Kabul University, to provide experts in several fields to conduct expanded programming to staff and Members. The API will also be available to other providers of parliamentary assistance such as the UNDP and the French Embassy, both of which have already conducted complimentary training in Year I. Although ALBA originally planned to introduce a new API governance structure in Year I, we quickly recognized the need to delay that process while we worked with the Parliament to determine who should eventually “own” the API. Rather, in Year 2, ALBA will establish an API working group, composed of MPs, Secretaries General, and HR Directorates of both Houses, and lead them through planning sessions aimed at establishing a

KEY API SEMINARS

Analysis and Development of Legislative Policy – In a first-ever joint training, legislative staff of both Houses received a fundamental overview of the development and analysis of legislative policy in Parliament.

The Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Security: UN Resolution 1325 – A total of 42 participants, including parliament security staff, dealt with the role of women in security activities and oversight.

Working with Databases – Contacted several weeks afterwards, participants cited the training's positive impact on their performance, particularly regarding record keeping, troubleshooting existing databases, and designing new databases.

permanent governing board, drafting by-laws, and proposing a staffing structure and mandate for its revamped operations.

Gender Mainstreaming

Critical to institutional development, ALBA supported Gender Mainstreaming in the Parliament during Year I by focusing both on its outputs as well as its hiring practices, relations between male and female MPs, and capacity building to ensure all members and staff have similar skill levels. In the future, much of this work on hiring practices and staff management will be taken over by the UNDP-funded project.

Working through the WJ and MJ Women's Commissions, ALBA achieved considerable progress through organizing strategic planning sessions, public hearings, and outreach to external agencies involved in gender issues, particularly the Ministry of Women's Affairs. ALBA also engaged in a Gender Budget Analysis to assist the Women's Commissions of both Houses to analyze the 1393 National Budget. The Women's Commissions examined the budgets of five key ministries – the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), the Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs (MHRA), and Ministry of Women Affairs – to determine how much input the Gender Units could provide in budget preparations to ensure gender responsiveness in terms of the allocation of resources and opportunities.

ALBA brought together for the first time the Gender Units of the MJ and WJ to facilitate a strategic planning workshop to guide the gender units of both Houses during the 1393 Budget Year. As with the Capacity Building Units of both Houses, ALBA used this effort to sustain increased levels of interaction between the two gender units in future. During the workshop, the two units created a detailed plan and focused on further supporting the MJ unit in particular.

Supporting the Meshrano Jirga

As noted above in other objectives, much of ALBA's support to the MJ is cross-cutting and focused on MJ Commissions and Field Hearings. However, the project has also supported establishment of an API annex facility in the MJ Secretariat Office Building, located 300 meters from the API. Fitting it out with equipment to maximize training experiences, ALBA has ensured that both Houses have the necessary tools to build staff capacities.

ALBA has provided considerable technical and substantive support to several MJ Commissions, particularly the Commission on Relations with Provincial Councils as it considered the new Law on Provincial Councils, as noted above. In addition to the work with the Budget Commission mentioned in Objective 2, focus also was given to the Commission on Handicapped, Disabled,

Dependents of Martyrs and Refugees. ALBA facilitated Field Hearings for all three Commissions in Badghis, Herat, and Farah.

Once the Provincial Council election results are finalized and the PCs organize for their new terms, one of their first acts will be to elect new Senators to the MJ. ALBA began working with the MJ Secretariat to provide support for the New Member Orientation, which is expected to take place in July. Although ALBA had originally planned to support the MJ in finalizing its Strategic Plan, the project focused on other priorities for Year I. This activity will shift to lie within the mandate of the upcoming UNDP project rather than being pursued by ALBA.



ALBA YEAR I RESULTS FRAMEWORK

ALBA's results framework seeks to address the development challenge through a series of project level results and outcomes. Support for democratic governance in a still-evolving post-conflict political environment involves a number of issues; the results framework seeks to identify the critical assumptions made in the program design as well as the causal linkages between the project components and expected results.

ALBA Results Framework			
USAID AO 1: Improved Performance and Accountability of Governance IR 1.3: Strengthened Governance and Service Delivery at National and Sub-national Levels SUB-IR 1.3.5: Institutional Capacity and Oversight Capacity of Elected Bodies at all Levels Strengthened			
ALBA Objective: Improved performance of Afghan Parliament to operate as an independent and effective legislative, representative and oversight body			
Indicator 0.1: Percentage of MPs and staff who believe Parliament is more efficient and effective		Indicator 0.2: Increase in public confidence and trust in Parliament as an institution	
ALBA IR 1: Strengthened Legislative Processes	ALBA IR2: Improved Oversight	ALBA IR3: Increased Outreach	ALBA IR4: Increased Institutional Development
Indicator 1.1: Number of draft laws debated and subject to final vote *	Indicator 2.1: Number of Executive oversight actions taken by legislature *	Indicator 3.1: Number of interactions between CSOs and legislative bodies *	Indicator 4.1: Strategic plan for Meshrano Jirga developed and adopted
Indicator 1.2: Percentage of legislation produced with input from outside experts and CSOs	Indicator 2.2: Increase in use of standard procedure for questioning Ministers and officials	Indicator 3.2: Number of public forums in which legislators and members of the public interact *	Indicator 4.2: Number of API products used by Parliament, CSOs, and the general public
Indicator 1.3: Usage of standard format for legislative analysis and drafting	Indicator 2.3: Increase in use of budget unit support by commissions	Indicator 3.3: Implementation of improved dissemination system of parliamentary proceedings	Indicator 4.3: Development and Implementation of revised API governance structure
Indicator 1.4: Percentage of legislation subjected to gender audits	Indicator 2.4: Public Accounts Sub-Committee mandate developed and implemented	Indicator 3.4: Increase in access of website by general public, CSOs and academia	Indicator 4.4: Percentage of API activities and operations funded by GIRA
* Denotes USAID F-indicator			
Cross-cutting Indicator: Number of staff trained on: analysis / drafting / oversight / outreach with USG funding			

Progress against PMEP Indicators

During the first year the project witnessed the following progress against the indicators within the ALBA PMEP:

Indicator	Q4	Actual (YTD)	Target Year	Progress	Comments
I.1 – Number of laws debated and subject to final vote	5	33	22	150%	The flow of legislation over the past year has noticeably increased, as key pieces of legislation are pushed through the system to meet certain international commitments (Money Laundering, Financing of Terrorism, Mining, etc) and ALBA has been able to ensure that the Commissions are able to respond to this increase.
I.2 – Percentage of legislation produced with input from outside experts and CSOs	4	21%	25%	84%	The results have not been fully met due to the weakness of the relationship between Parliament and many CSOs. Where possible ALBA has brought in CSOs on individual bills to provide input, however this must be expanded for Year 2.
I.3 – Usage of standard format for legislative analysis and drafting	4	11	25%	33%	The results are above the Year I target, as 33% of legislation employed a standard format. These targets will be revised upwards for Year 2.
I.4 – Percentage of legislation subjected to gender audits	2	4	20%	12%	The target has not been met, as only 4 out of 33 bills were passed with any form of gender audit / analysis. Outside of the Women's Commissions, there is a lack of knowledge of how to use a gender approach to legislation, however ALBA will expand this practice by mentoring commission staff in this approach in Year 2.

2.1 – Number of Executive oversight taken by legislature	21	185	35	529%	The dramatic increase in this area - related to indicator 2.2, is due to the expansion of budget hearings being held by the Budget Commissions of both Houses, supported by ALBA. During this past year, ALBA supported hearings that also focused on the low execution rates of major development projects, and encouraged sectoral Commissions to hold similar hearings.
2.2 – The number of times a standard procedure for questioning Ministers and officials developed by ALBA is used	6	39	12	325%	ALBA's budget team designed the format used to question Ministers and Ministerial staff on the following: 1) Qatia Report; 2) Mid-Year Budget Review; 3) Supplementary Budget; and, 4) the National Budget.
2.3 – The number of times the service of the budget unit are accessed by commissions	0	6	30	20%	The ALBA budget team encountered a substantial amount of resistance from the head of the budget unit in this area, regarding ALBA's budget team as a threat, not as a potential partner. ALBA will continue to mentor members of the unit to increase their capacity in analyzing and research.
2.4 – The degree to which Public Accounts Sub Committee mandate is implemented	25%	25%	25%	100%	An initial concept paper has been developed to address the establishment of this committee, and a working group formed within the Budget Commission of the Wolesi Jirga.
3.1 – Number of interactions between CSOs and legislative bodies	5	34	30	114%	Although the Year 1 target has been exceeded, this indicator is expected to rise dramatically during Year 2 as the MOU between Parliament and CSOs is implemented in a more comprehensive fashion. The target will be revised in the Year 2 PMP.

3.2 – Number of public forums in which legislators and members of the public interact	5	16	15	107%	Commissions were eager to conduct provincial oversight visits, and during these public forums and town-hall meetings were conducted to allow for this interaction.
3.3 Implementation of Improved dissemination of parliamentary proceedings	N/A	25%	50%	50%	A concept paper has been developed to identify the approach to this issue; initial meetings have taken place with officials from the DIPRs to obtain institutional commitment.
3.4 – Increase in access of website by general public, CSOs and academia	0	0	15%	0%	The website enhancements and improvements are scheduled to start during the first half of Year 2.
4.1: Strategic plan for Meshrano Jirga developed and adopted	10%	20%	50%	40%	The work on the strategic plan included reviews of the draft framework, and initial discussions with MJ leadership. With the arrival of the UNDP program, this area of work would be shifted to fall under their mandate.
4.2: Number of API products used by Parliament, CSOs, and the general public	3	10	10	100%	Guidebooks, manuals and reports were produced according to the Year 1 schedule.
4.3: Development and Implementation of revised API governance structure	25%	25%	25%	100%	In accordance with the planned timelines, a concept paper was developed detailing the various options for the API, including a comparative study of similar Institutes in the region.
4.4: Percentage of API activities and operations funded by GIRoA	10%	15%	10%	150%	GIRoA has begun to assume a portion of the costs of the API, including equipment, and the salaries / costs of the Capacity Building Sections who have been assigned to support the API.

Additional Notes on Indicators – As ALBA completes its first year, it is apparent that some adjustment of the indicators will be required, in light of the significant progress encountered in some objectives, and challenges in others. We will review the indicators as part of Year 2 Work Planning and work with USAID to adjust ALBA indicators in line with our work plan for Year 2. Highlights of progress and challenges to ALBA objectives during Year I include:

Passage of Legislation: It is clear that the passage of legislation has been, despite the recurring issues with achieving quorum in both Houses, at a pace greater than initially expected. Legislation passed with the input of CSOs and outside actors has essentially met Year I targets but could be improved with a focus on reaching out to relevant CSOs during the Spring / Summer 2014 parliamentary session, as there are a number of expected bills that are of interest to various CSOs active in parliament. Lastly, we should see the first of several pieces of legislation initiated within the Parliament (members' bills) in the next session.

Oversight Actions: The indicators relating to oversight by the commissions and plenary sessions of both Houses is significantly beyond the Year I targets, for several reasons. ALBA has engaged Commissions to undertake provincial field visits, and this is expected to increase into Year 2 of the program. In addition, ALBA supported numerous commissions of both Houses to scrutinize the major Budget documents in a more profound fashion than in previous Budget cycles, calling Ministers to the Parliament to provide testimony on the 1391 Qatia Report, the 1392 Mid-year Budget Review, the 1392 Supplemental Budget and the 1393 National Budget.

Public Hearings: Although the number of field visits by Commissions has dramatically increased through the support of ALBA, these visits have not significantly engaged the public at this point, focusing instead on government operations and provincial line departments. ALBA, in the course of its support to the initial planning of these visits, will encourage the inclusion of more public forums in which the MPs and public interact.

ALBA YEAR 2: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As part of ALBA's long-term strategic focus, Year I focused primarily on conducting assessments, building relationships, and laying the foundation for effective programming during Years 2-4. During Year 2, ALBA will build upon the successes of Year I, expanding our efforts in building capacity and increasing parliamentary outreach and oversight. Key themes of ALBA's programming in Year 2 include building on successes from Year I, expanding the technical scope of our programming, and coordinating with other ongoing programs. These key themes are described below.

Building on Successes

Through the assessments and initial activities conducted during Year I, ALBA has identified activities that effectively engage parliamentarians, build capacity in critical areas, and increase oversight and outreach opportunities. ALBA will build on the successes from Year I to continue and increase the scope of activities in Year 2.

For example, the provincial oversight visits conducted in Year I provided opportunities for Members of Parliament and commission staffs to engage citizens, conduct outreach activities, and provide oversight of provincial governance and expenditures. The fact-finding visit and public hearing at Kapisa by the WJ Women's Commission, and the follow-on meetings with Ministry officials in Kabul, (see Objective 2) highlights the effectiveness of such efforts in bringing provincial issues to national attention. ALBA will expand opportunities for Members of Parliament and commission staffs to visit the provinces, conduct outreach with citizens, and improve oversight of provincial governance and expenditures in Year 2.

ALBA will also build upon its Year I activities in support of the Afghanistan Parliamentary Institute (API). Year I focused on reinstating the API and responding to the demand for classes focused on English and IT skills. Moving beyond those basics courses, ALBA designed and delivered an ambitious training curriculum of advanced courses for Secretariat staff. During Year 2, ALBA will build upon these successes by conducting a second capacity needs assessment of staff and unit heads of both Houses, and designing training courses to meet these needs. Additionally, during Year 2 ALBA will build upon the preliminary relationships the program built between the API and other training institutions, to develop official affiliations and linkages with other institutions. All of ALBA's activities with the API are focused on building and reinforcing a governance structure and initiating plans to transition the API into a more robust, sustainable training and research institution.

Expanding the Technical Scope of Programming

Over the course of Year I, ALBA identified opportunities for expanding the scope of our activities in support of parliamentary strengthening. During Year 2, ALBA will seize opportunities to expand programming in support of increased parliamentary oversight and outreach. For example, the conclusion of the USAID 4A program left gaps in anti-corruption efforts, which is a natural fit for ALBA. Parliament has a critical role to play at the national level in the fight against corruption, in the

areas of both legislation and oversight, and there is an increasing interest among MPs and parliamentary staff to increase their work in this area. ALBA will increase support to the PACC, AFCAC, and other anti-corruption groups, and will support expanding anti-corruption activities within Provincial Councils.

Coordinating with other Programs

For the majority of Year 1, ALBA was the sole program providing focused support to the Parliament. During Year 2, ALBA will work closely with upcoming USAID and donor programming to provide coordinated support to Parliament. ALBA will coordinate with the upcoming UNDP Institutional and Capacity Support to the Parliament of Afghanistan (ICSPA) program and upcoming USAID governance programs including Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience (SHAHAR), Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA), and Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (PROMOTE). Additionally, ALBA will coordinate closely with existing USAID partners such as Counterpart International in our expanded work to connect parliament with civil society organizations and ne2rks.

