

**ASSISTANCE TO THE
PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**Quarterly Report No. 4
(1 July – 30 September 2000)**

Submitted to:

USAID/West Bank and Gaza

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I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This fourth Quarterly Report describes the activities of the Project Technical Unit (PTU) under the USAID contract, *Assistance to the Palestinian Legislative Council* (PLC) for the period 1 July to 30 September 2000.

The project is designed to strengthen the ability of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) to draft, review, and approve legislation; effectively fulfill its mandate to provide oversight of the Executive Branch; improve constituent relations and public outreach; and strengthen internal administration. Through strengthening the legislative capacity of the PLC, this project will contribute to the USAID Mission's broader strategic objective of supporting more responsive and accountable government.

This quarter witnessed a number of important developments in the country and within the PLC that had significant impact upon the ARD project. Perhaps most important was the fact that there was no resolution of the uncertain legal status of the PLC. While the PLC mandate formally expired in May 1999 with the end of the Oslo transition period, the PLC, nevertheless, continued an open-ended operation – without setting a date for new elections and without establishing a new date for termination. This uncertainty, combined with lagging Member motivation, led to a drop in the level of activity during the first half of the quarter – evidenced by fewer and shorter plenary sessions, a tapering off in committee work, and reduced oversight and legislative activities. During the second half of the quarter, as discussions of a declaration of statehood accelerated, this trend appeared to change. Council leadership instructed committees to speed up the processing of legislation in preparation for a new government, and Members began to position themselves for re-election. This burst of legislative activity and constituent relations energy, however, was short-lived. The quarter ended with the outbreak of violence, military closures, and the partial paralysis of the PLC.

Renewed interest in constituency relations, combined with technical assistance from ARD, prompted several districts to hold town meetings during this quarter. The Human Rights committee took advantage of the project's ongoing training in organizing public hearings to hold a public committee hearing on the subject of freedom of expression. The internal administration sector was especially active during this quarter, providing a range of training and technical assistance to several departments including Information Technology, Personnel, Stores and Supplies, Technical Support Unit, and the Hansard Unit. During this period, the project conducted a study tour for PLC Members and staff to the National Council of State Legislatures conference held in the United States.

II. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THIS PERIOD

A. Assistance in Legislative and Deliberative Process

Legal Committee Study Tour. ARD funded a study mission to Cairo, Egypt for the Chair and Rapporteur of the PLC's Legal Committee to discuss the Court Formation Law with a number of prominent Egyptian judges, including Yehia Al-Refaie, the Chair of the Egyptian Judges' Association. In addition to the Court Formation Law, the meetings also touched on the Civil Procedure Law, the Penal Procedure Law, and the Judiciary Law.

NCSL Annual Meeting. ARD organized a study tour for Senior PLC staff from July 11 – July 22 to attend the Annual Meeting of the National Conference on State Legislatures (NCSL) in July. The delegation included the following participants: Dr. Azmi Shauibi, Member of the Legal and Economic Committees; Dr. Abdul Al-Kareem Abu Salah, Chairman of the Legal Committee; Farouk El-Deek, Senior Committee Coordinator; Nasha't Qalabi, Media and Public Information Office Director; Munera Mabrok, Director of the Training Unit in Gaza; and Assad Jodeh, Director of the Financial Unit in Gaza. The participants visited the Wisconsin State Legislature for two days. They then attended the annual meeting of the NSCL where they participated in sessions on topics including legislative ombudsman, legislatures and the press, performance budgeting, civic education, and library and information services. The conference allowed the participants to network with other delegations from around the world.

Egyptian State Council Internships. The internships to develop the legal drafting skills of the Diwan and PLC Legal Department staff were completed during this quarter. The internships for four staff in the Egyptian Council of State lasted for four weeks from early June until mid July. During the internships, an ARD staff member traveled to Cairo to assess the utility of the program. Upon their return, an evaluation of the program was conducted with the interns. This assessment indicated that the internships were useful, although the participants would have liked more time to meet with staff in the Legal Department of the People's Assembly.

Birzeit Legislative Drafting Manual. The Legislative Drafting Manual, a project of Birzeit University and the Diwan, was completed during this quarter. ARD hired Dr. Anis Kassim's law firm to represent the interests of the PLC in this manual. Comments were incorporated from the Birzeit Law Center; Head of the Diwan, Ibrahim al-Dougmeah; staff members of the Diwan; Dr. Anis Kassim; and members of the PLC Legal Department. The final printed copy of the manual was delivered to the PLC Speaker in August.

British Council Parliamentary and Legal English Language Training. The training in Parliamentary and Legal English for lawyers from the PLC Legal Department and Legal Advisors from the Diwan commenced during this quarter. ARD is contracting the British Council to provide the majority of this training. ARD staff helped develop relevant on-the-job exercises, and additional legal and parliamentary terminology. There are two courses – one in Ramallah and one in Gaza, each for 100 hours, with approximately 10 participants in each course. These courses began in July and continued throughout the remainder of this quarter.

Procedures for Receipt and Review of Legislation. ARD continued to develop the forms and checklists related to Legal Department procedures (instruction form, form of reference, Legal Department to PLC Member/concerned committee and the conflict form). The Legal Department committees continued reviewing these materials – one committee reviewed the forms and one reviewed the checklists. To finalize these procedures, ARD conducted a two-day workshop on 30-31 August. The members of the forms and checklists committees (in Gaza and Ramallah) met on the first day and finalized the draft forms and checklists. On the second day, the rest of the Legal Department discussed the work of the committees, as well as a number of other issues relating to the Legal Department. Changes were incorporated and the forms were then submitted to the directors of the Legal Department to be adopted.

Administrative and IT Assistance to the Diwan. During this period, ARD delivered five computers to the Diwan. These will be used for legislative drafting and research.

B. Developing Executive – Legislative Relations and Oversight

B1: Strengthening the PLC capacity to review the government budget

Budget Brochure. During the previous contract, ARD supported the development of a budget brochure explaining the impact that the PLC's budgetary and financial decisions have on citizens and explaining how citizens can participate in the budget process. The PLC Speaker did not approve the publication due to concerns regarding the easy-to-read style of the brochure. During this quarter, ARD worked with the new Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee and with PLC staff member Jamal Karyouti to revise the document, updating it to reflect the FY 2000 budget, and to take into consideration the concerns of the Speaker. It was finalized and printed during this quarter.

B2: General Executive – Legislative Relations

Ongoing Support of Public Hearing Process. As a continuation of its efforts to develop the capacity of the PLC committees to conduct proper investigations and public hearings as a mechanism for oversight of the Executive Authority, ARD continued its technical assistance for public hearings.

During this quarter, technical assistance for public hearings focused on three committees – the Security and Interior Committee, the Refugee Committee, and the Oversight and Human Rights Committee. Coordination with the Security and Interior Committee for the hearings on the Misuse of Firearms continued, although during this quarter the committee postponed these hearings until after completing their work on the Civil Aviation Law. ARD supported the Refugee Committee's preparations for a hearing on Development Projects in the Refugee Camps, held in Gaza in mid-August. ARD also supported the Oversight and Human Rights Committee to conduct a public hearing on freedom of expression, held in Ramallah in August.

Public Hearing Manual. ARD continued work on a Public Hearing Manual for Committee staff, in Arabic, to guide committee staff through the process of organizing a public hearing. A draft of the manual was completed during this quarter and submitted to the Chief Clerk and the Committee Coordinator, as well as the committee clerks for their comments. An expert in the U.S. reviewed the manual and provided his comments.

Support to the Women's Unit. During this quarter, ARD coordinated with the Women's Unit of the PLC to offer technical assistance. The work plan for assistance to this unit was finalized, and assistance began through a series of public workshops on gender issues. ARD also purchased equipment for the Unit Office in Gaza, and provided technical assistance in the writing and production of a brochure for the unit.

Government Control Office. ARD worked in coordination with the Security and Interior Affairs Committee to provide comparative information about the role of a Government Control Office in other countries. ARD translated laws about similar governmental auditing offices in the United Kingdom and Wisconsin, USA, and provided a report commenting on these offices, their structure, and their mandate.

C. Increasing the PLC's Interaction with Constituents

Palestinian Democracy Day Evaluation. **The Democracy Day Impact Assessment was completed by Dr. Khawla Al-shakhsheer during this period.**

Support for Town Meetings. ARD continued to provide technical and financial support for constituent offices to conduct town meetings. According to guidelines established by ARD, these town meetings were organized by the constituent offices and included all or most Members in the district – even those that do not work out of the shared District Offices.

ARD visited a number of constituent offices to help organize and conduct town meetings. ARD provided financial and limited technical assistance to the following town hall meetings this quarter.

- The Central Gaza District Office held a town meeting on 4 July on the subject of “Electricity and Constituent Concerns.” The Director General of the Energy Authority also attended the meeting.
- The Salfit District Office conducted a meeting that focused on the Camp David talks on 12 August with Salfit Member Ahmad Al-Deek and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Nabil Amr. About 100 constituents attended this meeting.
- The Hebron District Office also conducted a meeting on 20 August on the Camp David talks with invited guest Azmi Bishara, Member of the Israeli Knesset. This office also organized a town meeting on educational concerns. About 300 constituents attended each of these meetings.
- The Ramallah Constituent Office conducted a meeting on the Local Council Election Law on 16 September with five of the seven Ramallah District Members.

These town meetings received extensive coverage in the local newspapers and independent local television.

Constituency Relations Manual and Best Practices. During this quarter, a draft of the PLC Member Manual and Best Practices Guide was completed, and a draft copy was submitted to the PLC for comments and review. The legislative development program of SUNY was contracted by ARD to produce this manual in close cooperation with ARD.

Constituent Casework Management Software. ARD continued its work on the Constituent Casework Management Software (CCMS), designed to facilitate the processing of constituent inquiries that come through the District Offices. ARD continued to update this software in all District Offices. ARD’s Information Technology (IT) Field Manager visited constituent offices to train staff on this software and to help install the updated version. ARD also conducted two 20-hour training sessions for 10 Constituent Office secretarial staffers on the use of the Constituent Inquiries Software program. One session was held in Gaza and one in Ramallah during July and August.

Staff Training Programs. ARD covered registration fees for PLC staff to participate in three training programs: a public relations course for four District Office staff (other PLC staff participated in this program); a 60-hour news-editing course offered by the Birzeit Media Resource Center for three Public Information staff; and a computer hardware training program held in Hebron.

Training for Facilitation of Town Hall Meetings. A 30-hour training course was conducted in the West Bank for constituent office directors in how to facilitate and organize town meetings. Training focused on facilitation and leadership skills, as well as organizing media and outreach

for these public events. The course was conducted by the Civic Forum organization. The same training was scheduled for Gaza in early October.

Establishing Linkages to Local Media. In ongoing efforts to improve coverage of the PLC, ARD held several meetings with journalists who cover the Council. Partly as a result of these discussions, the Voice of Palestine correspondent agreed to re-establish its half-hour weekly program on the PLC. The *Al-Hayat al-Jadida* newspaper will also establish a permanent column dedicated to news about the PLC.

Graphic Design and Layout Training. Training was conducted for the Public Information staff focusing on publication graphic design and layout skills during August. The 30-hour on-the-job training was conducted by Husni Radwan, targeting the five staff members responsible for publication layout. Training focused on graphic design programs, particularly Page Maker. As a final training assignment, each trainee designed their own publication.

D. Strengthening the PLC's General Administrative Capacity

Wide Area Network. The first training for WAN utilization was conducted. Committee clerks, given their constant need to exchange files and documents between Ramallah and Gaza, received training on the new network and file sharing; during August and September, two groups in Ramallah and one group in Gaza received training. The WAN system was explained to the Legal Department staff at their workshop on August 30-31, and training is scheduled.

Timely Information to Members. A second area of communications enhancement is to improve the capability of timely communications to Council Members and others via a fax broadcast system. ARD's staff programmer completed development of a specialized program that allows personalized notices of plenary sessions and committee hearings to be sent via fax to Members or other interested parties. This has been tested successfully several times, including one test that sent 120 separate faxes throughout the West Bank and Gaza. A dedicated fax line was installed at the Administration Building and a new, more powerful workstation was procured by ARD to assist in smoother data transmission. This computer was configured specifically for this task, and the customized Fax Broadcast Software was downloaded. A mechanism for the notices process is being developed in coordination with the Council. Training on the use of the specialized software (developed by ARD) for the Chief Clerk's office staff was completed.

Procurement Procedures. Some of the equipment provided by ARD was procured in collaboration with the PLC according to the new Procurement Manual developed in the previous quarter. A Tender Committee was formed to receive and analyze bids. In addition, all procured items are being delivered directly to the Supplies Unit to allow for immediate inclusion in the supplies database, which tracks receipt of goods. These activities provided an opportunity for on-the-job training for the procurement departments in the West Bank and Gaza.

Assistance to the Hansard Unit. Technical assistance provided this period included trouble-shooting for a transmission problem and customization of the software. On-the-job training to the Hansard transcribers and intermittent hardware/software maintenance was also provided. ARD's IT solved a computer problem for the Hansard Editor by replacing the network point, and a hub was installed for the unit to regulate information flow through the network. (The Hansard system incorporates all of the technology that records the plenary session on special DAT tapes for archiving and also transmits the audio via microwave three miles to the administration building. There, transcribers take 15-minute segments and transcribe the audio into verbatim transcripts that are distributed to Members at the next session.)

Technical Department. Technical assistance was provided to the Gaza Office of the Technical Department in organizing procedures for the Transportation Unit. In Ramallah, files for record-keeping were set up for each Member's car as well as for the cars generally assigned to the Gaza PLC offices. Forms covered Daily Maintenance Check, Mileage Car Log, Request for Car, Monthly Car Report (Individual), Monthly Report on All Vehicle Usage, Maintenance Register for Repairs, and Repair Authorization Form (for Finance Department to approve the maintenance expenditure). Discussions, review, and training of procedures and use of the forms were also conducted.

Personnel Unit. ARD met with the directors (Gaza and Ramallah) of the Personnel Unit individually and together to develop and review a policy manual for the PLC. This manual covers information specifically about personnel policies as well as other general administrative policies that every staff member should know about the organization. It covers everything from work hours to per diem policies to work place ethics.

Stores and Supplies Division. ARD provided technical assistance to the Ramallah Office of Stores and Supplies in organizing the stores setup. An inventory was taken at the same time. Provision of technical assistance, such as coding items, tags and numbers on shelves, and stickers on procured and stored items, is ongoing.

A final draft of the database of suppliers was developed by ARD by incorporating the comments of PLC staff in the Procurement and Supplies Departments in both Gaza and Ramallah. The database includes information on suppliers in the West Bank and Gaza covering full contact information, location, and all materials that are sold. It allows for a complete search for desired items and the identification of the closest location. The database also provides reports on procurement activities such as total purchase orders issued, and total amount spent with and without VAT. Total VAT paid for every purchase order is also recorded. The above-mentioned reports are useful for both the Procurement and Finance Departments. It is accessible in both Ramallah and Gaza via the Wide Area Network.

A workshop on stores, supplies, and inventory was held in Ramallah on July 12-13. This workshop brought counterparts from Gaza together with Ramallah staff. The workshop addressed how to manage and organize stores; methods of storing, monitoring, and auditing stores; cooperation with branch offices regarding requests, inventory, and reports required; and discussing daily routine of stores and new forms. The joint workshop allowed for a rare dialogue with all concerned parties at one time. A final draft manual for supplies and stores was finalized, in coordination with the Supplies Department, and submitted to the PLC for approval.

IT Assistance and Assistance to the IT Department. In the previous quarter, ARD completed an assessment of all the computer equipment in Ramallah. During this quarter, ARD began to develop a database on computer equipment, to enter the relevant information from this assessment in this database, and to assess it. As a result, ARD's IT team worked with the Council's network manager on the complete restructuring of the main network system in Ramallah. Two new switches were installed. At the same time, the IT area was completely rewired for improved safety and efficiency.

ARD worked with the Council IT Unit in configuring the two new servers. Microsoft Exchange was installed on the communications server. A form was developed to identify "users" within the PLC. The information gathered will be used to establish e-mail in-boxes for individuals.

ARD arranged for additional training for the Hardware Technician of the Ramallah Office. A 100+ hour course on advanced hardware maintenance, which began at the end of the previous quarter, continued throughout this quarter. ARD's programmer also submitted the program source code and documentation manual on the fax broadcast system to the PLC programmer; training was provided. ARD provided some software to the PLC IT Unit, after working with the unit to compile a software needs list for the PLC-ITU. ARD also purchased tools for the PLC IT Units in Ramallah and Gaza.

ARD's IT team also solved a number of other computer problems. They diagnosed and solved a major problem with the bios chip of the Internet server at the Council. They also replaced the major hub located within the Legal Department's offices at the Council in Ramallah. ARD found that a UPS purchased for the PLC Chamber was not being utilized properly. ARD arranged the necessary rewiring. ARD also provided the necessary equipment and technical assistance to connect the Technical Department and Women's Unit to the LAN within the Administration Building.

Finally, at a meeting with the Director General, it was agreed that ARD would coordinate all IT assistance with the newly appointed head of the PLC IT Unit, Ahmed Miqdadi. It was also agreed that all IT inquiries from PLC staff would be referred to the PLC IT Unit. ARD would then provide assistance as necessary in coordination with the Unit.

Staff Training in Computer Skills. ARD provided training to the Procurement Department personnel on how to share files and printers within their own workgroup.

English Language Course. ARD covered the cost for two PLC staff, Mr. Amjad Darwish, Director of the Procurement and Supplies Department, and Mr. Ahmad Abu Hashish, Director of the Technical Department, to participate in English language training. They first attended an intensive English language course provided by the British Council in Ramallah in July and then, at the end of August, they attended

courses provided by ARD through the British Council and Amideast. They also both participated in the customized English language course provided for the Legal Department.

Equipment Procured – see “Equipment Procured and Operational” report submitted to USAID 30 September 2000 for information.

Management Training. Extensive management training for department directors began in September in Ramallah. At the same time, a communications course started in Gaza. Training in strategic planning followed. ARD organized 233 hours of various management courses with the Training and Development Unit (TDU). Implementation by local training institutes will continue through the end of the year and through next summer.

III. ARD ADMINISTRATIVE AND PLANNING DEVELOPMENTS

Planning: The project was asked to prepare a work plan for a “transition period” from September 2000 to March 2001, during which time the PLC was expected to transition into a new parliamentary institution. During August and early September, ARD prepared the document “PLC2 Transition Plan,” which was submitted to USAID in mid-September. According to this plan, ARD would alter its program and strategies to minimize risks and maximize impact by freezing most activities in areas of low political will (Executive-Legislative Relations), increasing public outreach, concentrating on areas that are most likely to be transferred to a new institution, and providing assistance on issues associated with a future state.

The document outlined how the project would be temporarily restructured. It also noted that, if at any time during this period an independent Palestinian state were declared, or if parliamentary elections were firmly set, or if the PLC were to dissolve, this transition plan would necessarily be amended.

Assumptions: The plan was based on the following assumptions:

- The PLC continues to exist in its current form, during turbulent political conditions, for most of the next six months.
- Transition conditions bring new opportunities, new needs, and risks.
- There will be moderate political will for legislative strengthening.
- Ongoing investment in legislative development will be put to good use and institutionalized – even in a new legislature.
- The PLC will have a role in shaping the successor legislature.

Strategies: The following strategies were developed for this period:

- Focus on sustainability and building foundations.
- Adjust to changes in political will; freeze some activities in Executive – Legislative Relations.
- Prepare for elections; place emphasis on civil society outreach and civic education.
- Develop new initiatives to prepare for changes related to statehood.
- Reduce activities that focus on individual members.
- Concentrate on key Council staff.
- Delay major equipment purchasing.
- Remain poised to respond to new opportunities and identify key decision makers.

Recruitment: During this period, ARD hired a Technical Coordinator for Media and Public Relations, Mr. Walid Batrawi.

IV. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND STEPS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THEM

ARD continued to coordinate with the PLC Secretary General and Chair of the Liaison Committee, Mr. Rowhi Fatouh, and the PLC Director General and Liaison Committee Coordinator, Mr. Mahmoud Labadi, both of whom remained engaged in the day-to-day operations of the project. While the Liaison Committee did not meet during this period, the project maintained contact with individual members.

A. Legislative and Deliberative Capacity

An accumulation of mainly minor disagreements and misunderstandings between ARD and the lawyers of the Legal Department led to a decision to freeze assistance to the Legal Department for a period of two months. During this hiatus, ARD and the PLC agreed to study the working relationship between the two parties, assess the impact of the previous four years of assistance, and determine the best ways to proceed in the future.

B. Executive/Legislative Relations and Oversight

In light of the dwindling political will for assertive legislative oversight of the Executive Branch, the project has significantly reduced activities in the oversight sector and shifted its resources toward assisting the PLC in community outreach activities.

C. Increasing the PLC's Interaction with Constituents

The growing expectation that new elections could take place in the coming months has stimulated PLC Members' interest in constituency relations. While this is seen as a positive development for the PLC, the project must be careful to steer clear of assistance that could be reasonably viewed as supporting an incumbent's campaign for re-election. In order to assist Members in their important constituency work, while avoiding the appearance of partisan support, the project has placed conditions on its constituent activities, such as the insistence that town meetings supported by ARD must include the participation of all Members from the district.

D. More Effective Internal Management

Political Hirings. The PLC staff continues to grow on the basis of "wasta" (personal connections) rather than need. Recruitment and selection of new staff is neither merit-based nor transparent. ARD, through its gradual and cautious work with the Personnel Unit, is trying to initiate changes in this practice, which is so widespread that it affects all departments by reducing productivity and lowering morale. ARD is exploring a strategy of applying incentives for appropriate hiring practices.

Internal Communications. The management of the PLC continues to suffer from poor internal communications, especially in Ramallah. Poor information sharing contributes to inefficient operations and causes jealousy between departments and among individuals. Also, the Council's poor communication habits affect the implementation of ARD's assistance by requiring our staff to spend an inordinate amount of time informing a large number of PLC counterparts to ensure coordination. While changes need to be pushed from the top in order to bring about major improvements in the situation, ARD is trying to encourage change among the PLC staff through management training and training on the Wide Area Network.

V. SUMMARY OF STATUS OF DATA COLLECTION ON INDICATORS OR INDICATOR DEVELOPMENT

ARD produces bi-annual performance indicator reports in order to provide ARD, the PLC, and USAID with objective data on the legislative performance of the PLC. A scientific assessment of the performance of the PLC can help the PLC assess its progress, while it assists ARD in designing and reassessing its assistance program by suggesting the impact of assistance provided by ARD.

ARD met with the USAID Indicator officer Mohammed Al-Mbaid to discuss the mid-year Performance Indicator Report submitted in June. We discussed the findings, and agreed on changes that will be reflected in the annual report, which is due in October.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACTIVITIES/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS

Accomplishments of the Women's Unit: A workshop series that began in August enjoyed wide participation from all sectors of society including PLC Members, Executive Authority officials, and civil society activists. Discussions about legislation and its impact on women helped to positively establish the new unit and demonstrate the PLC's concern about women's issues. These workshops have improved the PLC's ties with civil society NGOs.

Positive Democracy Day Evaluation: Evaluation of the Democracy Day Campaign showed that PLC Members strengthened their contact with their constituents and played a significant role in promoting the principles of democracy in the community.

Improved Town Meetings: There has been greater PLC Member participation at town meetings organized by the PLC's District Offices; in addition, constituent participation has also increased. These meetings continue to serve as unique opportunities for constituents to meet face-to-face with their elected representatives. Through group training, individualized feedback, and technical assistance, ARD has helped PLC District office staff improve their skills in organizing and conducting town meetings.

Constituent Casework: PLC Members have gradually become more acquainted with the benefits of the Constituent Inquiries Software program designed by ARD for District Offices. During a recent town meeting, a PLC Member used the data generated by this program to brief his constituents on the types and number of cases received by the District Office and the percentages of solved cases.

Improved Media Coverage: ARD's extensive contact with the local media has improved coverage of the PLC. One newspaper decided to dedicate a regular column to news of the PLC, and Palestine Radio decided to re-start its regular program on the PLC.

Improved Functioning of the Procurement and Supplies Department: The work of the Procurement and Supplies Department shows the impact of ARD assistance. The department followed procedures, written in coordination with ARD, for the procurement of equipment that the British Council was purchasing for the PLC. In addition, the suppliers database, developed by ARD, was used to locate computer equipment suppliers in Gaza. These suppliers were then contacted and invited to bid on a scheduled procurement.

Improved Efficiency within the Hansard Unit: Enhancement of the customized Hansard transcription program allowed transcribers to retrieve and enter data sent from the Chamber more quickly. These changes, as well as the additional computer and other equipment installed for the unit, has increased efficiency to the extent that the transcriptions are produced in a more timely manner.

Ongoing Use of Public Hearings: Following the guidelines established by ARD, the Human Rights Committee organized and conducted a public hearing on the subject of freedom of expression.

Accelerated Legislative Processing: Although it is difficult to draw direct relationships between development assistance and the PLC's legislative performance, it is likely that the quality of some draft laws and the overall efficiency of the legislative process are, in part, a result of project assistance.

Anticipating the establishment of a new parliament, the Council accelerated its work on a number of draft laws this period. The following draft laws were passed by the PLC and signed into law.

- ***The General Statistics Law: Endorsed and Issued on 8 July 2000***
- ***Standards and Specifications Law: Endorsed and Issued on 17 September 2000***
- ***Traffic Law: Endorsed and Issued on 17 September 2000***
- ***Monitoring and Hall-marking of Jewelry Amended 27 September 2000***

The PLC processed a large number of laws during this period.

- ***Evidence in Civil and Commercial Articles: Second Reading August, Referred to the Council of Ministers on 4 September 2000, and referred to the President for endorsement on 18 September 2000***
- ***Civil Aviation Law: Second Reading 16 August 2000, Referred to the Council of Ministers in September 2000, and referred to the President for endorsement on 23 September 2000***
- ***Jerusalem – The Capital Law: Third Reading: 28 September and Referred to the President for endorsement on 29 September 2000***
- ***Civil and Commercial Code: First Reading 19 September, Second Reading 28 September 2000, Referred to the Council of Ministers on 7 October 2000, and Referred to the President for endorsement on 23 October 2000***
- ***Income Tax Law: First Reading on 17 August 2000***
- ***Water Law: First Reading 28 September 2000***
- ***Palestinian Council for Nursing and Midwifery: General Discussion on 1 August 2000***
- ***Illegal Gains Law: General Discussion on 28 September 2000***
- ***Industry Law: General Discussion on 28 September 2000***
- ***Social Insurance Law: General Discussion 28 September 2000***
- ***Amendment to the Election of Local Council Law: Referred to Committees on 19 September 2000***
- ***Anti-Smoking Law: Referred to Committees on 19 September 2000***
- ***Regulating the Engineering Profession Law: Referred to Committees on 19 September 2000***
- ***Regulating the Government Teachers Profession Law: Referred to Committees on 19 September 2000***

VII. ACTIVITIES EXPECTED TO BE CARRIED OUT NEXT QUARTER

A. Legislative and Deliberative Capacity

- ***Ongoing assistance to the Diwan: drafting training***
- ***Ongoing assistance to the Legal Department: assistance with the consumer protection law***
- ***Assistance to the Budget Committee: research assistance on the government budget***
- ***Assistance to the Economic Committee: research assistance on economic impact of current crisis***
- ***Assistance to the PLC Library: procurement of reference materials***
- ***English Language training for lawyers***
- ***Ongoing support for public hearings***

B. Executive/Legislative Relations and Oversight

- ***Technical Support to the Women's Unit: organization of workshops in Gaza and Ramallah, final draft of Unit's Brochure, preparation for study tour to Tunisia***
- ***Democracy Day Campaign: Evaluation of Democracy Day Campaign 2000 and begin planning for next year***
- ***Government Control Office: Provision and translation of comparative laws from UK and USA to the Committee on Security and Internal Affairs***
- ***Organization of study visits/exchanges between PA Ministries and PLC***

- *Organization of IDASA visit and IDASA work plan*

C. Increasing the PLC's Interaction with Constituents

- *Support for development of a community service brochure for District Offices*
- *Ongoing support and technical assistance to town meetings*
- *Finalize Constituent Relations Manual*
- *Establish system for distribution of tapes of PLC sessions*
- *Purchase equipment for Public Information Department and District Offices*

- *Web site support (content)*
- *Revise TV program and newspaper supplement activities*

D. More Effective Internal Management

- *Complete draft of PLC Policy Manual*
- *Continue procurement of equipment for PLC*
- *Develop and document inventory procedures*
- *Training for managers and selected staff*
- *Develop implementation plan for video conferencing*
- *Web site support (technical)*