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PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAM IN AZERBAIJAN

Quarterly Report (April 1 – June 30, 2008)

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(Fifth Quarterly Report for Task Order 5)

June 2008

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(Fifth Quarterly Report for Task Order 05)

This quarterly report is submitted to the Program CTO Parviz Musayev of the Office of Democracy and Governance of USAID-Caucasus-Azerbaijan Mission under the guidelines as stated in Clause A.6 of the contract.

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Fifth Quarterly Report

Introduction

The **Parliamentary Program in Azerbaijan** is a two-year technical assistance initiative of the United States Agency for International Development USAID. It is being implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), from April 2007 to April 2009. The Parliamentary Program's main partner is the Milli Mejlis (MM), the Parliament of Azerbaijan. Program subcontractors include the National Conference of State Legislatures, Indiana University and International Roll Call.

The Program's activities focus on three general technical components, with activities to be carried out as detailed in each of the two annual workplans:

- 1) **Developing and strengthening the capacity of permanent parliamentary staff**, including the establishment of central and regional constituency offices for each MP, enhanced committee capacity and sustainable training Programs.
- 2) **Promoting greater legislative and procedural transparency** through the provision of technical assistance and resources to make official and draft legislation accessible to Government and private citizens and the adoption of sunshine mechanisms, including the publication of voting records of Members of Parliament (MPs).
- 3) **Enhancing the effectiveness of Parliament** by providing technical assistance and training for newly elected and existing MPs on staff utilization, responding to constituency requests and issues, ethics Programming, legislative procedure and process development, and comparative study tours.

The emphasis of the first year of the Program is to evaluate the current status of the institution's capacity in the three overall components mentioned above and to provide training for capacity building accordingly. The second year of the Program further continues training of the staff of the Parliament and develops the MPs' ability to become a part of the policy making process, as full fledged legislators. The Program is the first USAID funded technical assistance project concerning the Parliament in Azerbaijan and hence, the Program started at determining the fundamentals of the institutional and administrative capacity in the Parliament and rapidly moved into a capacity building mode with very comprehensive tailor-made training Programs for its staff, assistants to MPs and MPs.

In order to carry out the Program activities, the Program has set-up five specific project staff teams, which correspond to one of more of the major activities within – or crosscutting – the three components. This includes the following: Constituency Building Task Force; Communication and Public Relations Task Force; Human Resources Development Task Force; the Organizational/Institutional Task Force and the Legislative/Legal Coordination Task Force. Each of the Program's Task Forces is run by a long term specialist and the entire Program is supervised by the Chief of Party. The counterparts of the Program include the Parliament's Chief of Staff and an Aide to the Chairman of the Parliament. The Program also will interact regularly with heads of technical and administrative departments within the Parliament.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This quarter continued in earnest the detailed training sessions for MPAs that the Program had begun during the prior quarter. In addition, the Program fielded two STTAs and carried a series of trainings for the MM staff and certain MPs. Though this quarter's activities continued to maintain and further the quality of the working relationship between the Program team and the leadership of the Parliament, a number of MM departments, and with individual MPs and their assistants, its training activities with the MM staff were not as productive as was expected due to a very heavy calendar of legislative activities carried by the Parliament, which also included several ceremonial events concerning national historical events. One of the highlights of the quarter included a 10-day US study tour visit of US legislatures and constituency offices for selected MPs and experts of standing legislative commissions.

Detailed Training for MPAs

During the quarter, the Program conducted additional training of MP Assistants (MPAs), following the initial training program held during the last quarter of 2007. The training involved all constituencies in the regions, save for Nakhchivan which will be held next quarter, for scheduling and logistical reasons. The detailed training sessions for MPAs provided practical tips and knowledge on running a constituency office to the current 104 hired MPAs. The detailed training Program for MPAs made great use of the best available local experts in a number of subject matters. The training sessions were based on a very interactive approach, encouraging dialogue and the use of real life case studies. In all, the training sessions comprised the following districts in the regions: Lankaran/Massali, Ganja/Shamkir, Ismaili/Guba/Sheki. The Nakhchivan region training will be carried early in the next quarter.

Training for MM Staff and Leadership

The Program also carried out a number of short training sessions for the Milli Mejlis staff working in the Parliament apparatus. The training sessions were designed based upon the results of the MM staff survey, as well as discussions with the MM leadership and heads of departments at the MM. The Program fielded two STTAs, David Ogle and Tony Worthington, who had contributed to training during the last quarter of 2007 and first quarter of 2008 respectively. During this quarter, their tasks emphasized both training and analysis of the Parliament's organization and activities.

Overall, the Program designed and participated in 5 workshops and round tables for MM members and staff in May 2008. The participants from the MM included: 9 MPs (1 woman), 56 staff members (12 women) and 19 MP assistants (2 women) – 84 people in total.

Coordination with Other USAID Projects

The Program team continued to substantially develop the work of the Coordination Meeting Group with other USAID partners, particularly in the area of training for MPAs. Coordination with civil society projects resulted in having local NGOs and civil society associations meet with MPAs in a number of regional based constituencies.

The Program also utilized a number of local experts from USAID partner projects as trainers on such topics as media specialists, communication with NGOs and web site development and use of Internet Technology.

Relations with MM Deputies and Building Capacity

The Program continued to develop a very good working relationship with a number of MPs, particularly with members of the Legal Policy and Institutional Building Standing Committee of the MM. In that regard, the Program undertook a 10day study tour to US legislatures, including a 2 day training session at the headquarters of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) in Denver and 5 days in Washington DC, Capitol Hill and surrounding constituency offices in the Maryland state legislature.

The Program is expected to capitalize greatly on the study tour to further develop a series of round tables and workshops addressing the capacity building of MPs in regards to policy making and legislative drafting, as well as the work of commissions.

Assistance to MM Departments

The Program continued to work with the library, IT and web site departments in providing additional information and expertise. The IT study tour to Poland's parliament has been deferred to the next quarter and will be held starting July 8, 2008.

Joint Steering Committee

The Program's design of a Joint Steering Committee with the leadership of the MM during the prior quarter did not bear fruit, as the Chief of Staff essentially requested that it be put on the back burner. The lack of motivation on the part of the MM's apparatus leadership, though apparently backed by one the Chairman's deputies, is unclear. It appears that this is solely based on the desire to maintain monolithic control over the apparatus, rather than share authority with MPs. The Program will continue pushing for the implementation of the Joint Steering Committee during the following quarter.

II. SUMMARY OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

The activities indicated in the summary are references to the activities indicated in the first year's workplan submitted to the USAID/Azerbaijan mission.

COMPONENT 1: DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Activity 4. Additional Detailed Training Sessions for Constituency Building carried (April-May 2008)

Activity 5. Parliamentary Journalists Round Table and Training held (May-June 2008)

SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS

Activity 4: Support establishment of effective constituent relations

Additional Detailed Training Sessions for Constituency Building Conducted (April-May 2008)

During this quarter, the project continued its series of detailed training sessions for MPAs, which began during the prior quarter. The training sessions took place in constituencies' regional districts and covered all districts of Azerbaijan, except for the Nakhtchivan district to be held in mid-July 2008, next quarter. The training included together over 85 MPAs. Feedback from the sessions shows a large level of appreciation for the training and a good response to the substance of the training. The training sessions were attended by the Milli Mejlis HR Department's leadership.

The detailed training seeks to improve the professionalism of MPAs in providing better services in the Constituencies and bringing people closer for participation in decision-making of the Milli Mejlis by grasping knowledge in:

- Constituency role of MPs and their Parliamentary Assistants;
- How can parliamentary assistants help the MPs perform their constituency role;
- Who can help the MP and the assistant to do this task; and
- How to build links between constituency and parliament.

The training made great use of local experts, who have ample experience in providing such training to institutions and civil society. The majority of experts have also worked with other USAID and internationally-financed projects.

Activity 5. Build MM Staff and Member Capacity

Parliamentary Journalists Round Table and Training Held

On May 15, 2008 a Round Table with participation of representatives of the Parliamentary Journalists Association took place at the Parliamentary Project office. David Ogle made a presentation for the journalists about the principles of a functioning free media.

In general, journalists expressed their dissatisfaction on how MPs, the Commissions, and the Press Service of MM work with the media. The journalists attribute this to the fact that most MPs are not legitimate because none of the parliamentary elections that took place before were free or fair. Only about 20 to 25 MPs out of 125 work with media and are relatively free to contact, while the rest of MPs either avoid contact with journalists or even express hostile attitudes. Some of journalists said that there was no freedom of media in Azerbaijan, and it was very difficult to work as journalist because of threats and hostile attitude from the authorities.

Journalists stated that very few commission chairmen (for example, Hadi Rajabli, Chairman of the Social Legislation Commission) invite journalists to the Commission meetings. The rest of the Commission chairmen either invite only a limited number of journalists from the pro-governmental media, or they do not invite journalists at all.

The Round Table uncovered a number of issues for journalists that need to be addressed by the Parliament apparatus. These include:

- Entry into the building takes a long time due to a security check
- Poor conditions in the Journalists Room (only one PC and phone, no copier for about 50 journalists)
 - MM General Sessions agenda available for journalists only on the eve of the sessions day
 - MM Press Service replies to journalist inquires only if it has information.
 - The Press Service does not work proactively.
 - Minutes and Protocols for the Sessions are published very late

These problems were discussed by the Parliamentary Project staff during training on May 20, 2008 for MM staff related to press/information services.

RESULTS THIS QUARTER

There were two main events related to this component during this quarter. The events which involved Assistants to MPs and MPs and experts, strengthened their capacity in that it established concrete and practical approaches to their work in constituencies and understanding of the dynamics of policy development and use of staff. Furthermore, these events provided fertile ground for intense exchanges and comments between trainers, Assistants to MPs, institutional leadership, MPs and experts supporting MPs. The progress made in the capacity building of Assistants to MPs resulted in:

- Substantially improved understanding of the MPAs' role in constituencies and in relation to the institution in a practical sense.
- Increased networking capacity among MPAs and with NGOs.

- Practical aspects of developing Constituency offices and relationships with constituents improved.
- Continued development of the relationship between the Program and the MM allows for a more open approach to training and a stronger and more potent exchange of ideas and concepts.

SUMMARY OF PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER

- Carry out the last Detailed Trainings for assistants to MPs in Nakhtchivan.
- Begin implementation of constituency case study work with a number of MPs.
- Additional round tables for journalists and communication workshops between journalists and MPs.

COMPONENT 2: PROMOTING GREATER PROCEDURAL AND LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Activity 1. Review of new Milli Mejlis website (April-June 2008)

SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS

Activity 1: Support Website Improvements

This quarter, the Program continued to work with the IT and web site departments in developing the departments' need for training. Among the activities listed below, the Program developed the substance of a proposed study tour to the Polish parliament in order to have a hands-on and tailored training based on the Polish experience.

A number of activities related to the web site and information took place as follows:

MM Legislative Database

With the assistance of the Parliamentary Project, files of Azerbaijani laws from USAID's Legislative Database, which is currently located at a server in the Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan, were downloaded into the MM server for further incorporation into MM Legislative Database. According to a statement made in April 2008 by Shahin Hasanov, Head of MM IT Department, the MM was working on new version of the legislative database which will provide public access to all bills adopted by the MM from 1991 until the present.

Annual Reports of Chamber of Accounts

The MM has placed on its website the Annual Report of Chamber of Accounts for 2007, which contains a thorough analysis of state budget expenses. Curiously, the Report has not been placed at the Chamber's own website yet. The recommendation to place all reports made by relevant authorities in the MM was expressed previously by the Parliamentary Project team.

IT Polish Study Tour

The dates for the study tour to Poland for IT, web site and the library leadership personnel have been fixed (7-16 July 2008) and all logistics issues related to the tour are ongoing. The tour will cover all essential aspects of functioning of IT, website and Library services in the Polish Seim with potential extrapolation to MM.

Poland, which has successfully managed its transition from Soviet era approaches to a modern European based institutional setting, is a good model for the MM from which to learn about communication and information techniques and approaches. The study tour will have a number of relevant impacts on the activities of the Program and the MM on many issues.

Web Design Training Course

Ismayil Mammadov, the Parliamentary Project's communications officer attended web-design training courses organized by IATP /IREX in June for a group of MP assistants.

After completion of the courses Ismayil will assist the Commissions of MM to create their own web pages.

In order to create effective tool for MPs for communication with constituencies, thus make MPs activity more transparent and interactive, the project launched in June 2008 a series of web-design courses for MP Assistants. First training module was held at Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) / IREX premises – another USAID funded program. The module was consists of eight lessons, 2 hour each and covered all essential aspects of personal web-design, including creating of the MP website design, embedding various tools and management of web-site (removing and downloading of materials). The basis template of MPs web-site consists of the following content elements:

Static – address, biodata, contact details, including constituency map

Dynamic – current activity in the constituency and the Parliament, including constituency campaigns, speeches at the Standing Commissions and Plenary Sessions meetings; voting records, media reports.

As an outcome of the first module, two MPAs were able to create web-sites for their respective MPs: www.mammedxanov-a.ucoz.org; www.agacanabiyev.ucoz.org. The Parliamentary Program will monitor these sites and if necessary will provide additional support to respective MPAs for increasing of their knowledge in web-site management.

The first cycle of trainings revealed some basic pre-conditions necessary for successful completion of the web-design courses. Knowledge of MS Office software at least at mid-level, as well as continuing self-work on improvement of web-site management is critically important for MPAs.

The Parliamentary Program in cooperation with IATP/IREX will continue provision of trainings for MPAs groups familiar with PC operations on web-design and will simultaneously enlarge the trainings to MM Standing Commissions in order to assist them to create their separate web-sites.

RESULTS THIS QUARTER

- This quarter resulted in a better understanding of the needs of the IT and web site departments and helped develop a clearer vision for the heads of the departments. The Program provided an in-depth analysis of the state of development of the departments and provided suggestions for future capacity building. These will be further developed during the IT Poland study tour.
- In addition, the leadership of the MM became more involved in ensuring that the training is focused on real needs of the MM and has provided feedback on the substance of the work between the Program and the heads of departments.

SUMMARY OF PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER

- Carry out the IT study tour to Poland by MM IT and Library staff.

- Carry out a debriefing of the IT Study Tour and draft a concept for improvement of the IT, library and information departments' organization and short term and medium term goals.
- Carry out a round table on IT, information and research at the MM, including MPs and heads of departments of the MM.
- Ensure usage of the database with the MM
- Provide MPAs with substantive training for web site design and implementation

(COMPONENT 3: ENHANCEMENT OF OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF PARLIAMENT)

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

Activity 1: Carried out training for MM staff, departments and Commission leadership (April-June 2008)

Activity 2: Prepared a comprehensive Round Table event on library, information and research services for Parliament (May-June 2008)

Activity 3: Study tour to US Congress and training at NCSL headquarters held. (June - 2008)

SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS

Activity 1: Build Staff (Offices/Departments) Capacity to Contribute to Parliamentary Process

The Program carried out a number of short training/workshops sessions for the Milli Mejlis staff. The training sessions were designed on the basis of an analysis of the results of the MM staff survey, as well as discussions with the MM leadership and heads of departments at the MM. The workshops were held under the technical guidance of David Ogle and Tony Worthington, STTAs (Short Term Technical Assistance) and members of the Program.

The training/workshops sessions included the following: 5 workshops and round tables for MM members and staff in May 2008. The participants from MM totaled 84, of which there were 9 MPs (1 woman), 56 staff members (12 women) and 19 MP assistants (2 women) – 84 people in total. The topics covered were:

1. **“Separation of powers and checks and balances system of governing”** workshop (David Ogle, May 7)
On a 1-10 scale the overall workshop evaluation was 8.8.
On a 1-10 scale the average rating of the facilitator in terms of knowledge and presentation style was 9.3.
2. **“Parliamentary oversight”** workshop (David Ogle, 2 sessions – May 7 and May 8)
On a 1-10 scale the overall workshop evaluation was 8.
On a 1-10 scale the average rating of the facilitator in terms of knowledge and presentation style was 8.8.
3. **“Linking MPs with the Parliamentary staff”** round table (David Ogle, May 14)
17 representatives of MM (8 MPs, 1 woman, and 9 staff members, 5 women) participated in a round table discussion.
4. **“Establishing a good working relationship between the parliament and the mass media”** workshop (David Ogle and Tony Worthington, May 20)
14 staff members (6 women), 1 MP and 1 MPA attended the workshop.
On a 1-10 scale the overall workshop evaluation was 6.6.
On a 1-10 scale the average rating of the facilitators in terms of knowledge and presentation style was 6.8.

Activity 2: Professionalize the MM Library and research Services

The Program designed and prepared a comprehensive Round Table event on information, library and research facilities for Parliament. The Round Table is to be held next quarter in early July. A report of the Round Table shall be provided shortly after it is carried, along with the materials provided. During the Round Table, the Program shall introduce and use its paper elaborated during the prior quarter, entitled *Library, Information and Research Services for Parliament: Options and Model Organizational Solutions*, including a specific plan for a parliamentary information, library and research center for the MM.

Activity 3: Build Deputy Capacity to Contribute To the Parliamentary Process

US Congress Study Tour

The study tour, held from June 4 to June 15, 2008, was organized with the cooperation and guidance of the Chairman of the Legal Policy and State Building Standing Committee of the Parliament, and included a select, multi-party group of reform-minded Deputies who are also well respected by the Parliamentary Leadership. It was supported by DAI's international IQC partner the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). NCSL is the largest association of legislatures, and has led dozens of international study tours, exchange and visitor Programs for parliamentarians on behalf of USAID and the U.S. Department of State.

Over the span of eight days (7) days of work, the group attended (2) two days training at the headquarters of the National Conference of State Legislatures in Denver, Colorado, and (5) five days in Washington DC. The delegation visited the U.S. Congress meeting with committee members and staff. The delegation also visited congressional and US Senate constituency offices in Colorado and Maryland to understand better how functioning constituency services operate.

In addition to the constituency relations, the study tour focused on the role and organization of congressional committees, as well as its coordination and oversight approach. These include the following:

Role and Organization of Committees: During visits to the US Congress, the study tour focused on public input, staff support and organization of oversight as one of the main role of Congress. The study tour also examined the importance of expert information in committee deliberations. The linkage between research services and committee meetings was examined. The study tour visited the research and library operations of Congress to view the range of research and information services offerings provided to Members and staff.

Coordination of Committees: On the issue of public input, the participants briefly observed public committee meetings. They also met directly with committee staff to discuss their specific job requirements.

A debriefing meeting took place one week upon return, which provided positive feedback for the Program. A succinct report will be issued to the USAID/Baku office concerning the Study Tour.

RESULTS THIS QUARTER

Much of this quarter implemented the last quarter's preparations for the US study tour, including the study mission to Poland.

In addition, the program carried out a broad variety of training of the MM staff on a number of topics, which are important parts of the MM staff's capacity building component of the Program. The training focused on a better understanding of the interaction between departments and also between the staff and MPs' committees, as well as between the media and the parliament as an institution.

It is expected that the US study tour will carry much capacity into the future work of the Program, especially in bringing other MPs into "buying in" new approaches of Committees' work and interaction with MM staff.

SUMMARY OF PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER

- Carry out at least one deputy round table in one of the regions.
- Carry out one study tour to Poland for the IT and library and research departments of the MM.
- Given that the next quarter is mainly during the summer months, much of the work will be focused on preparing training programs for the last month of the quarter and the following quarter.

CROSS-CUTTING TASKS

SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

C. Continued to carry out task planning and held training sessions for MPAs with the help of local experts in USAID projects. (April-June 2008)

SUMMARY OF THIS QUARTER'S MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS

C. Donor Coordination

The Program continued to meet with a number of USAID funded projects, specifically those addressing issues close to the work of the Program with civil society media and journalists by using experts from some of the projects in the detailed training of MPAs, such as IREX. The USAID projects included IREX, CHF, Eurasia and the Trade and Investment program.

Continued meetings with other donors and other USAID projects have proved valuable and constructive. As a result, the Program has created relationships with a number of NGOs that have already contributed to the Initial Training and are now contributing to the Detailed Training Program.

The relationship with other USAID projects relevant to the work of the Parliamentary Program continues to show an extremely high level of synergies and support. This is due in great part to the individual leadership of each project and especially due to the culture of support and cooperation created by the D&G Office at the USAID/Baku Mission.

The Program was particularly active in working with IREX in the design and implementation of training for MPAs and also for Parliamentary journalists.

RESULTS THIS QUARTER

The program continues its emphasis for insuring a strong interaction with other USAID partners and coordinate as many topics as possible, so as to make use of USAID civil society and media based programs for the benefit of the Parliamentary Program and to insure coordination and efficient use of expertise.

SUMMARY OF PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER

- Carry out additional training seminars in collaboration with IREX
- Hold workshops and round tables in which NGOs and other donor's organizations that will participate with MPs and assistants to MPs.
- Carry out a number of constituency based meetings with other USAID partners and donors in the context of the case study work planned with constituencies.

III. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The Program fielded David Ogle and Tony Worthington, both Parliamentary specialists, to provide technical assistance services, following travel approval by the USAID/Azerbaijan and USAID/Caucasus missions.

The Program received and took title to a motor vehicle transferred to the Program from the Counterpart program, following all procedures with USAID and the relevant Azerbaijani authorities.

During this quarter, the Program made a request for a change of position for Aybeniz Mammadova, from long term constituency specialist of the Program to Deputy Chief of Party.

During the quarter, the Program also made a request for a change of the status of Ewa Nawrocka, from DCoP to STTA as a Parliamentary expert, due to personal reasons.

The Program is awaiting approval from the RCO on both requests.

Erkin Gadirli, the Program's LTTA constitutional specialist submitted his resignation, and the project has been actively seeking a replacement for his position.

The Program's request for a TCN waiver approval for a study tour to Poland for the leadership of the IT, web site and library departments of the MM, was granted.

IV. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND REMEDIAL SOLUTIONS

This quarter, no challenges of extraordinary scale were encountered, though the Parliament's leadership and MPs respective schedules made the implementation of a number of round tables and training sessions difficult.

The Program's regular working luncheon within the MM continued to take place and helped to maintain the schedule of round tables and training on track, notwithstanding the logistical difficulties in maintaining such schedule.

The Program was able to achieve nevertheless a number of milestones contained in the workplan on training of MM staff, by a sheer continued push to hold such training with the MM leadership.

One of the main reasons for the difficulties in implementing training sessions has been the lack of clear organizational system within the MM leadership to work with the program, when the Program's main contact is away on MM business. This occurs quite frequently and leaves the Program often to fend for itself to activate events and training sessions.

V. UNRESOLVED ISSUES OR CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROJECT

There is still a chronic relative inertia in working with the MM, affecting the planning and implementation of activities. While a great number of activities under the control of the program were carried to their conclusion, a number of other activities that require hands-on involvement and follow-up on the part of the beneficiaries or even requested by the beneficiaries themselves often require a long time to come to fruition. This is in great part due to a very rigid approach to institutional management requiring approval of the Chief of Staff, or due to the unavailability of people to carry out activities, according to planned schedules. As a result, this quarter could have incorporated more training sessions during the period of STTAs presence in Baku, than it held.

The Joint Steering Committee proposed by the Program last quarter has not yet been implemented. The Program has been asked to hold it for the future, though no commitment to include it in the Program's activities has been made by the MM leadership.