

FINAL DRAFT 28 APRIL
QUARTERLY REPORT NO. 2
(1 January to 31 March 2000)

I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This second 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 January to 31 March 2000.

The project is designed to strengthen the ability of the PLC to draft, review, and approve legislation; effectively fulfill its mandate to provide oversight of the Executive Branch; improve constituent relations; increase public awareness of the Council; 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.

On March 7th 1999, the third anniversary of the Palestinian Legislative Council's (PLC) inaugural session, Palestinians commemorated their first Democracy Day. Originally conceived by the PLC Development Department and ARD as a modest one-day event, Democracy Day has grown into a nation-wide, two-week public awareness campaign including a variety of public education activities aimed at raising awareness of the principles of democracy and discussing the essential democratic role played by the Legislative Council.

The Council took a thoughtful low-key approach to this year's campaign, hesitant to embark on a big festive celebratory event, fearing that it would only attract the public's criticism of the government, including the Legislative Council.

The public indeed felt there was plenty to criticize -- regarding the peace process, democratization and the PLC itself. The peace negotiations with Israel seemed to have ground to a halt. The PLC approved the 1.4 billion-dollar government budget with almost no changes. A teachers' strike dragged on for months. The government crack-down on stone-throwing Birzeit University students drew wide condemnation from human rights groups, the PLC, and citizens alike; as did the PA police chief's heavy-handed attempt to curtail public gatherings. In spite of PLC Members' growing frustration with their Council, the dominant Fatah block led the way in voting for an across-the-board re-election of the PLC leadership for another year.

Despite the PLC's fear that the Democracy Day campaign could backfire, there was a remarkably high turnout at the events and surprisingly high participation from PLC Members. The 20 Town meetings organized by the PLC district offices drew more than 2,000 citizens (an average of 100 people per meeting) and two-thirds of the 87 PLC members participated in at least one public event during the campaign. In addition, there was excellent press coverage from the Palestinian media.

This quarter witnessed significant progress in all project sectors. The successful Democracy Day campaign served as an efficient vehicle for several ARD project objectives – mainly in the area of constituent outreach and public information. ARD assistance to the PLC administration, public information department, district offices, ministry of Parliamentary affairs, and our facilitation of contacts with NGOs and other civil society groups -- all under the banner of Democracy Day -- furthered several contract objectives.

II. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THIS QUARTER

A. Enhancing the PLC's Legislative & Deliberative Capacity

1. *Diwan Legal Resource Materials Procurement.* During this quarter, ARD funded the participation of the Diwan al-Fatwa wa al-Tashr'ie (the Diwan) on a tour, sponsored by the Palestinian Library and Information Association, of the Cairo International Book Fair. On this trip, ARD purchased approximately 860 books for the Diwan's Gaza and Ramallah offices, at a cost (including shipping) of approximately \$8,000. The books are currently in the Gaza airport awaiting release from customs; we have obtained the necessary papers to obtain an exemption from the customs tax and expect that customs will release the books from the airport shortly. In addition to being an excellent opportunity to procure current Arabic-language legal resource materials, the tour was very useful in building cooperation and linkages between the Diwan and the PLC Library, which also participated in the Palestinian Library and Information Association's tour.

2. *Review of Diwan Computer Equipment Needs.* As part of his consultancy, ARD's Management Information Systems Specialist, Kim Glenn, reviewed the information technology needs of the Diwan. These recommendations will be included in the Legal Resources and Equipment Needs Assessment to be completed during the third quarter of the project.

3. *Birzeit Legislative Drafting Manual.* During this quarter ARD entered into a Purchase Order Agreement with Dr. Anis Kassim's law firm to represent the PLC's interests in finalizing the legislative drafting manual being prepared by Birzeit University and the Diwan. On February 16th, Dr. Kassim participated in an all-day meeting with Camile Mansour of the Birzeit University Law Center and Ibrahim al-Dougme, the Head of the Diwan al-Fatwa wa al-Tashr'ie to review progress on the manual. He was accompanied by two staff members of the PLC Legal Department, who had worked with him in reviewing the draft manual. The decisions taken during this meeting have been incorporated into a new version of the draft, which has also been reviewed by Mr. Kassim. A few issues remain unresolved, but significant progress has been made with respect to the drafting manual during this quarter.

4. *Legislative Process Guide.* ARD provided assistance in the production of a brochure on the legislative process. PLC Staff member Jamal Karyouti wrote the guide, which contained an introduction written by the Secretary General, Rawhi Fatouh. We reviewed the draft for substance and suggested a number of additions to emphasize methods that the public can use to access the legislative process. The PLC incorporated ARD's comments and distributed the brochure, both internally and externally, as part of the Democracy Day campaign. The Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO) assisted in distributing the guide to the NGO community; the newly established Women's Unit at the PLC handled the distribution of the guide to women's groups and women's organizations; and the PLC library handled distribution of the guide to research centers, libraries and institutes.

5. *Legislative Process Review and Review of Reporting of Committee Decisions.* As part of her consulting assignment, ARD Legislative Development Specialist Ramona Kenady conducted a review of the process that the PLC currently uses to report committee decisions. Although the vast majority of committees are regularly documenting committee decisions and chief clerk's office routinely distributes these committee reports to members, this review did disclose areas for additional improvements in the PLC's committee reporting procedures. Future activities with the records clerk and the committee clerks will seek to address these areas. In addition, Ms. Kenady prepared a draft report on the legislative process generally. Her recommendations formed the basis of ARD's Legislative Process Report, which ARD will submit to USAID during the third quarter.

6. *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.

7. *Planning for Social Affairs and Education Committee Study Tour.* During the second quarter, the Social Affairs and Education Committee requested ARD's assistance on the Copyright and Social Insurance Law. In response to this request, ARD contracted with the Arab Research and Training Center in Cairo to put together a workshop for the committee to discuss the laws with Egyptian experts. The tour had to be postponed for logistical reasons from mid-March to mid-April, but much of the planning for the tour was done during the third quarter.

8. *Three-Year Work Plan for Achieving Results on Legislative Drafting and Review.* ARD completed the development of its 3-year work plan for achieving results on legislative drafting and review during the second quarter. ARD submitted the work plan to USAID on March 31, 2000, and is in the process of translating the work plan into Arabic to provide it to the PLC.

9. *Legal Department Participation in Law Commissions.* During the second quarter, ARD helped facilitate a dialogue between Ibrahim al-Dougme and the PLC Legal

Department regarding PLC Legal Department's participation in the law commissions sponsored by the World Bank's Legal Development Project. This dialogue was successfully concluded in the first several weeks of the third quarter with the signing of an informal memorandum of understanding allowing PLC Legal Department attorneys to participate in the law commissions.

10. NCSL Annual Meeting. ARD began planning a study mission this summer for PLC senior staff to attend the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). ARD held meetings with International Republican Institute (IRI) staff members Owen Kirby and Nicole Dannenberg to discuss, among other things, cooperation on this study mission. IRI has proposed funding the participation of PRU Director, Adnan Odeh, and PLC Librarian, Liana Quidar. ARD also met with the Director of NCSL's International Programs, Kathy Brennan Wiggins, in Washington after the Meridian Budget Committee Study Tour, to discuss the participation of a delegation from the PLC at the Annual Meeting.

11. Hiring. During this second quarter, ARD advertised for additional staff in this sector. The hiring process identified not only a candidate for a Technical Adviser for Legislation, Mohammed Abed Rabboh, but also a candidate for a long-term consultant on legal research and legislative drafting, Mu'taz Qafisheh, who started his consulting assignment during the first several weeks of the third quarter.

B. Developing Executive – Legislative Relations and Oversight

B1: Strengthening the PLC capacity to review the government budget

1. Meridian Study Tour. During the second quarter, ARD worked closely with Meridian International on their study tour for the PLC's Budget and Finance Committee. ARD provided Meridian with a range of background material and information about the FY 2000 budget. ARD staff member Scott Hubli participated as an observer on the study mission. Upon returning from the study tour, Mr. Hubli prepared a brief evaluation of the study tour, together with suggestions for follow-up. ARD translated this document into Arabic for the Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee.

2. Three -Year Work Plan for Achieving Results on Budget Review. Following the study tour, ARD finalized its 3-year work plan for achieving results on the improving the PLC's budget review process. ARD submitted this work plan to USAID on March 31, 2000, and is currently translating the work plan for delivery to the PLC.

3. Negotiations Regarding MAS Subcontract. A key element of ARD's strategy for supporting the budget review process is involving local resources to provide economic analytic support. ARD hopes to enter into a subcontract with the Palestinian Economic Policies Research Institute (MAS) to provide a range of training on economic analysis. The draft terms of reference include assistance in monitoring executive branch compliance with enacted budget legislation; estimating government revenues and

expenditures; analyzing economic and revenue trends; analyzing the structure of, and trends relating to, short- and long-term government debt and deficit spending; analyzing capital investment and infrastructure development; and ensuring policy consistency among various economic and financial laws. The PLC, MAS and ARD have reached tentative agreement on the terms of reference; ARD and MAS are currently negotiating the financial aspects of the proposed subcontract.

4. 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 can have on citizens and explaining how citizens can participate in the budget process. The PLC Speaker did not approve the publication and distribution of the guide, ostensibly because of concerns regarding the lack of sophistication of the language in the brochure. The change in the chairmanship of the Budget and Finance Committee altered the dynamics slightly so that the publication of such a brochure is no longer as threatening. During the second quarter, ARD worked with the new Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee and with PLC staff member Jamal Karyouti to revise the document to update it to reflect the FY 2000 budget and to put it in a form that we believe will be acceptable to the Speaker.

B2: General Executive –Legislative Relations

1. Ongoing Support of Public Hearing Process

Technical Assistance to the public hearing process continued as an integral part of the development plan for PLC committees. Currently the focus is mainly on two committees, the Security and Interior Affairs Committee, which has scheduled its first public hearing on the misuse of firearms for early May. The Refugee Affairs Committee is in the preparation phase for its public hearing on the impact of development assistance in refugee camps. ARD plans to develop the skills of all PLC committee staff by conducting a refresher course on the preparation and conduct of oversight public hearings.

The production of an oversight public hearing manual: ARD is working to produce a public hearing manual for Committee staff. This manual will be produced in Arabic and guide committee staff through the process of organizing a public hearing. The first draft of the public hearing manual will be finished by April 30th.

2. Investigation of the Ombudsman's Role

In an effort to assess the current status of the government Ombudsman's function, ARD met with the director general of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights (PICCR). ARD's conclusion after consulting with other parties is that this function needs to be implemented more vigorously. In addition to strengthening the PLC's committees' capacity to handle complaints, ARD will propose additional options such as a centralized office within the PLC to deal with citizen complaints. ARD will also investigate the possibility of bolstering the committees' monitoring capability by establishing linkages with NGOs that specialize in the relevant subjects.

3. Coordination with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

ARD met a number of times with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in order to explore the possibility of strengthening their cooperation with PLC committees and departments. PCBS is an excellent source of information and statistics that could be used in the course of committee investigations. The first joint activity involving the PCBS and the PLC could materialize (with the assistance of ARD) through the organization of a PLC public hearing on gender discrimination using statistics from the PCBS study.

4. Coordination with Ministries

As part of the Democracy Day activities, ARD and the PLC worked closely with several ministries including the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, which the project expects could play a significant role in strengthening the relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches, organized two seminars with the support of ARD. The seminars dealt with the relationship between NGOs, the Legislative Council and the Executive branch.

C. Increasing the PLC's Interaction with Constituents

1. Palestinian Democracy Day Campaign

ARD worked closely with the PLC central administration – in Ramallah and Gaza – and with the PLC district offices to assist in the planning and organizing of the second annual Democracy Day campaign.

The 2000 campaign was aimed at the general Palestinian population. However, special attention was paid to students, women (in part due to the fact that International Women's Day is March 8th), citizens with special needs, and residents of rural areas and refugee camps (consistent with the strategy developed in the ARD/PLC strategic planning session held November 1999).

Town Meetings:

Through ARD assistance, the PLC's 16 constituent offices played a key role in the Democracy Day 2000 campaign. With an intensive and varied program that included school visits, town meetings, and other constituency outreach activities, this year's

Democracy Day campaign took place over a two-week period. As a departure from last year's campaign, many of the activities -- particularly the ARD-supported town meetings -- took place in outlying Palestinian villages and refugee camps, reaching constituencies that are often overlooked.

ARD's Constituency Relations team worked closely with constituent office staff to plan and implement these town meetings. ARD staff, accompanied by the PLC's District Office Director, visited all 16 constituent offices in the West Bank and Gaza prior to these meetings to help in the planning and organization including working with them on the budget, invitations, newspaper advertisements and a wide array of logistical issues.

While staff and PLC Members have participated in many town meetings over the years, for some offices this was the first meeting organized under the banner of the PLC district offices. These 20 town meetings drew an average of 100 constituents per meeting. The participation of women in these meetings was generally acknowledged to be high, an average of about 20 percent. ARD project staff assisted in the planning and implementation of each town meeting.

Constituents raised a wide range of issues including need for new elections, the Teacher's strike, infrastructure needs, health Care needs, land confiscation, freedom of expression, Islam and democracy, complaints about the slow pace of the peace process, and corruption. Principles of democratic governance and separation of powers were discussed. "We understand that the role of the PLC is to hold the Ministries accountable," a constituent in Bethlehem said, "but who holds the PLC accountable?"

Unlike the previous campaign, most PLC Members participated in the Democracy Day activities, despite the fact that the PA and individual Members were openly criticized during these meetings-- particularly those PLC Members who also serve in the Executive Branch. The town meetings appeared to indicate that constituents are becoming more familiar with the PLC and key legislative issues.

These meetings received favorable coverage in the Palestinian press. As a result of the success of these meetings, PLC Members and staff have expressed interest in organizing more town meetings, especially those outside of the municipality borders.

Democracy Education: The Ministry of Education instructed all schools in West Bank and Gaza to devote the first class of the school day on March 7th to a lesson on the principles of democracy and the role of PLC. In cooperation with the PLC district offices, the Ministry organized visits by students to the PLC offices in Ramallah and Gaza, as well as visits by PLC Members to schools. With funding from USAID, the PLC Information Department produced a school-level brochure on democracy and the PLC. (The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights also produced materials for students, including a poster about democracy, information sheets, timetables and stickers.) Initial reports from schools and teachers indicate that this was a successful lesson.

Sports and Democracy: The Ministry of Youth and Sports organized numerous athletic events as part of the activities of Democracy Day. Matches in the name of democracy continued for more than three weeks.

Seminars: With project assistance, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs organized two seminars, one each in Gaza and Ramallah. The Ramallah seminar -- attended by Ministers, PLC Members and NGO representatives -- focused on the relationship between the PLC and civil society institutions, and the relationship between the PLC and the Executive Authority. All three major newspapers, as well as local TV and radio, covered this seminar. Not to be left out, the Ministry of Culture organized a seminar in Ramallah for academics and intellectuals to discuss democracy in the Palestinian context.

NGO participation: The increased participation of the NGO community in this year's campaign could be an indication of an improving relationship between the PLC and the NGOs, although most organizations made it clear that they participated in order to promote democratic principles, and not necessarily to celebrate or endorse the work of the PLC. The group of participating NGOs included the Medical Relief Committees, Agricultural Relief Committees, Women's Affairs Technical Committee, Peace and Democracy Center, Arab Thought Forum, The Union of Palestinian Disabled, the Palestinian Women's Working Society, and PICCR. Most of the involved NGOs planned and conducted their own Democracy Day activities, which complemented their ongoing programs and dovetailed nicely with the local observance of International Women's Day. The Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO) organized a seminar in which NGO activists met with several PLC Members to discuss and evaluate legislation passed by the PLC and explore ways to improve cooperation. The Union of Disabled Palestinians conducted a similar event with a focus on the "Law of the Disabled". Into the final week of March, local groups were conducting seminars on the topic of democracy. "Democracy and the Role of the News Media" was the topic of discussion at a Ramallah workshop held March 27th.

Public Information Publications: One of the main components of the Democracy Day campaign was the publication and distribution of documents and posters about the PLC, its role, laws and resolutions, democracy, and other related issues. The PLC Public Information Department, with assistance from USAID/ARD, produced several publications and posters. The publications are being distributed through the network of PLC district offices and PA Ministries to reach all areas of the West Bank and Gaza. Public information publications included:

- *Collection of PLC Resolutions*
- *Three Educational Posters*
- *PLC Brochure (English and Arabic)*
- *Rights of the Handicapped Stickers*
- *Collection of Laws passed by the PLC*
- *Booklet on the Legislative Process*
- *Student Brochure on the PLC*
- *PLC information sheet for students*

2. *Constituent Casework Management Software (CCMS)*

In addition to intensive assistance on the democracy day campaign, ARD continued to work with the constituency offices on the processing constituency inquiries software.

ARD also laid the groundwork for a basic computer-training course that will be held in the next quarter for the directors of constituency offices.

3. Constituent Office Equipment

Based on a request from the Secretary General and Chair of the Liaison Committee, Rawhi Fatouh, for equipment to some constituency offices, ARD began to work on an equipment needs assessment for all constituency offices—private and district.

4. Coordination with Civil Society organizations:

ARD had several contacts with Palestinian NGOs. These contacts intensified during the preparation and implementation of Democracy Day Campaign. ARD is preparing to meet with NGO leaders to explore possibilities of coordination and strengthening the relationship between the NGOs and PLC committees.

D. Strengthening the PLC's General Administrative Capacity

Approval from the Liaison Committee allowed this sector work to begin in earnest. As this is a new project sector and did not include carry-over activities from the initial PLC assistance project, activities in the first quarter were limited to laying the groundwork for implementation once the work plan was approved.

1. Wide Area Network. In February ARD formed an information technology (IT) team consisting of ARD's IT department, the PLC's Computer Department, and Mr. Kim Glenn, ARD's Vermont Management Information Systems (MIS) Specialist to assess options for establishment of a wide area network to link the Council's administrative buildings in Ramallah and Gaza. This network will establish a valuable communications link for the Council between these two discontinuous areas. Several strategies were considered and documented in a report to USAID and PLC.

Of the options explored, the team felt the digital leased line strategy is the most advantageous to the PLC. Performance can be guaranteed, a supplemental/backup dial-up link plan is included, and the private network remains confidential. After discussions of the options with the Council and USAID, ARD drafted a letter of understanding to the PLC regarding Council responsibility for monthly operating costs and submitted an RFA to USAID for approval to cover installation charges. After approvals are received, equipment will be procured and staff training will proceed.

2. 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 method. 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.

Two problems were encountered concerning equipment/hardware matters. The first, and more easily solved, is that the computer used to merge the notices with the addresses and then transmit the faxes is too slow. A replacement computer will be included in an upcoming RFA to USAID for equipment needed by the PLC. The second issue is the inaccessibility of telephone lines. The Council does not have a dedicated fax line, which causes problems in finding a free general telephone line to use. ARD experimented in delaying the fax transmissions until after work hours. However, this did not succeed as many of the fax numbers at the receiving end are combination phone/faxes that require someone to answer the phone and switch the incoming transmission to the fax machine. This struggle for line access will continue until the PLC moves to their new administration building in the Fall of 2000. Even with this problem, however, the broadcast fax system improves staff efficiency in getting notices out and will only improve after the move.

3. Procurement procedures. ARD's Technical Coordinator for Public Administration (TCPA) began an assessment of actual Council procurement procedures in Ramallah and Gaza. This assessment incorporates the procurement, stores, technical, and finance departments. The TCPA interviewed staff to discover current practices and reviewed the Procurement Law with both Ramallah and Gaza staff. Following this assessment phase and in conjunction with Council staff, ARD began developing forms and procedures to facilitate an efficient and transparent procurement process.

4. Assistance to the Hansard Unit. Assistance to this unit within the Council will be ongoing throughout the PLC2 project. The Hansard system incorporates the technology system 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 assistance provided this quarter included rapid response to a file transfer problem that was prohibiting the transmission of the audio files from the Chamber to the Administration Building. ARD purchased new File Transfer Protocol software and hired the initial Hansard programmer to customize the software for the Council's purposes. Other technical assistance was provided in the form of on-the-job training to the Hansard transcribers and intermittent hardware/software maintenance.

5. Equipment Assessment. Although equipment procurement for the Council will proceed on an ongoing, as needed basis, there are two comprehensive assessments scheduled during the first year of the project. This initial assessment and equipment review has been completed. Documentation is being finalized and a Request for Approval will be submitted to USAID early next quarter. This equipment request list includes equipment needed by various departments of the PLC in Ramallah and Gaza as well as for the Diwan. All items listed will tie directly to sector (component) results as outlined in ARD's contract with USAID.

6. Voting System. The electronic voting system, included at almost no extra cost as part of the Hansard microphone system, was purchased under the PLC1 project. Members can use the microphone consoles located on their Chamber desks to register a vote. Project and PLC staff have attempted to add a security feature by which Members can register their presence using electronic ID cards. The computer team faced difficulty in developing a computer program that would automatically pass the security information from the card readers to the microphone console. This interface has just been successfully completed. Initial tests have proven successful; further testing is continuing. Once fully operational, other issues of voting policies and procedures must again be addressed with the Council.

7. Staff Orientation Program. ARD developed a Power Point presentation in Arabic that explains the legislative process of the Palestinian Legislative Council. This was developed specifically for use by the Training and Development Unit (TDU) as part of the Council's staff orientation program. ARD will continue to work with the TDU to further customize this program as necessary and to facilitate its presentation to existing staff and to new staff. The timing of this activity is a direct response to a request by the TDU Director. The TDU was planning new staff orientation and asked that legislative process information be provided. ARD quickly responded to comply with the request by moving the timing of this activity, scheduled as a Quarter 3 activity, up for completion in this second quarter.

8. Three-Year Work Plan on Sector. ARD completed the Three-Year Work Plan for Strengthening Internal Administration and submitted this report to USAID on 31 March 2000. This report will now be translated into Arabic and will be provided to the Liaison Committee of the PLC.

E. Other Assistance to the PLC

1. Support to the Women's Affairs Unit

ARD with USAID COTR met several times with the director of the newly established Women's Affairs Unit Ms. Basha'er Rishq in order to investigate the possibilities for providing technical assistance to the unit. This assistance could include hiring a local specialist on women's issues and legislation to help the unit further define and develop its mission, roles and responsibilities. The consultant would assist in identifying priorities of the work and the Unit's relationship to other departments and committees of the PLC, to women's organizations and to the Ministries. Discussions are underway concerning the organization of a public hearing on gender discrimination whereby the unit will work under the direction of the Women's subcommittee of the Education and Social Affairs Committee and in coordination with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS).

III. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND STEPS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THEM.

As reported last quarter, one of the greatest problems facing the project is the lack of engagement of the PLC's Liaison Committee (LC). Having received the project annual

work-plan in November 1999, the LC never convened to discuss the work-plan and waited until January 2000 before it finally, and officially, provided USAID and the project with a general “go-ahead”. This “green light”, albeit qualified and based on very little substantive understanding of project details, nevertheless has allowed ARD to officially begin implementation of activities.

In the absence of an engaged Liaison Committee, the project has developed a close and positive working relationship with the PLC Director General, who also serves as the coordinator for the Liaison Committee. By working with the Director General, and at times, submitting specific written requests to the LC Chair and Secretary General Rawhi Fatouh, the project has been able to initiate new activities in all sectors.

A. Legislative and Deliberative Capacity

Diwan/PLC Legal Department Relations. During the previous contract, ARD experienced a number of difficulties in trying to get the Diwan and the PLC Legal Department to work together cooperatively. We seem to be making some limited progress on this front, primarily through non-threatening cooperation on a technical level. Two other factors have also helped. First, the current project design calls for a single contractor to provide legislative drafting assistance to both the Diwan and the PLC Legal Department. This has ensured greater coordination in the assistance that is provided to the Diwan and the PLC Legal Department. Second, ARD has hired staff that have pre-established positive relationships with the head of the Diwan.

Continuing Managerial and Administrative Problems in the PLC Legal Department. Because the PLC did not use a competitive hiring process to fill many of the positions in the PLC Legal Department and because of continuing administrative and managerial problems, the training provided to the PLC Legal Department during the first contract has not been consistently been effectively absorbed. Our strategy in addressing this issue is twofold. First, during this quarter we located a long-term legal research and legislative drafting consultant to work on a daily basis with the PLC Legal Department staff. We hope to use this regular contact with the PLC Legal Department as a means of suggesting and initiating managerial and administrative reforms (“bottom-up” approach). Second, during the third quarter, we hope to encourage leadership to focus on these issues by sponsoring a facilitated discussion on the management and direction of the PLC Legal Department with the primary decision-makers regarding the Legal Department.

Insufficient, Regular Contact with the Legal Department and PLC Fiscal Unit. Report writing, administrative and supervisory responsibilities have made it difficult for the Program Manager for Legislative and Budget to have sufficient regular contact with the Diwan, the PLC Legal Department, the PLC Fiscal Unit

and the members of the Budget and Legal Committees. We are attempting to address this issue through additional hiring.

B. Executive – Legislative Relations

In spite of a general awareness in both branches of the need to improve the relationship between the PLC and the executive, there is a reluctance to confront the problem and an unwillingness to acknowledge that other government experiences could offer useful models or mechanisms. Through the Democracy Day campaign the project developed good contacts with the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, an institution that could provide critical support for programming in this sector, but the Minister is unwilling to agree to most forms of assistance.

For now, the project is concentrating on developing its assistance to the PLC committees and exploring the needs and opportunities in the area of a government ombudsman's role.

C. Constituent Relations

The PLC has yet to make a decision regarding the future structure and approach to constituent offices. Instead, this quartered witnessed the continuing trend toward a hybrid system of maintaining the shared PLC district offices while allowing – one by one – some Members to open PLC financed private offices. Although this indecision seemed to have little effect on the District Offices' active participation in the Democracy Day events; with the campaign over, ARD anticipates that the PLC could be reluctant to approve training for district office staff.

D. Internal Administration

Communications problems within the Council have created some problems. Conflicting messages from key Council staff concerning ARD written communications to the PLC has resulted in some confusion. The Planning and Development Unit (PDU), the Council department responsible for donor coordination, has requested copies of all communications transmitted to Mr. Rawhi Fatouh, Chair of the Liaison Committee. However, Mahmoud Labadi, Director General of the PLC, has stated that only he should receive copies and that Mr. Fatouh will decide who else needs a copy. This is one example of what appears to be an internal management conflict between the Director General and the Director of the PDU that affects ARD. Communications between these two has been encouraged.

In an effort to develop and maintain good relationships with key Council partners, ARD staff confer and coordinate with the Director General and the PDU on all activities and then with individual offices/individuals in relation to particular issues. This proves to be

time-consuming but is the safest approach until internal communications improve within the Council.

IV. ARD / PTU START- UP AND MOBILIZATION

Conference and Training Rooms. During this second quarter of the project, a conference room and a 9-station computer training room in ARD's Ramallah office were completed and are fully operational. These will be used both by the project and by the PLC for meetings, workshops, and computer training.

Staff retreat. ARD held a 1-1/2 day staff retreat in Gaza in February. This facilitated retreat served to fully indoctrinate new and old staff with the PLC2 project goals. The ARD team left the retreat with project and office priorities for the next quarter.

Hiring of IT Technician. In February, ARD was able to fill the last information technology position listed in our contract. An IT technician was hired to maintain ARD's network, file server, and communications server. It is anticipated that after full migration of data to the new servers, the ARD technician will be able to provide specific training to the PLC's computer department hardware technicians (Ramallah and Gaza).

Procurement. Procurement of office furniture and equipment was essentially completed for the Ramallah and Gaza offices of ARD.

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

After a series of meetings, USAID and ARD agreed upon the following eleven PLC Performance Indicators for the PLC2 project. For ease of reference ARD assigned an unofficial descriptive title for each of the indicators. ARD and USAID also settled on a baseline figure and three annual targets for each indicator.

Regarding baseline determination, for the five indicators carried over from the PLC 1 project (numbers 2,3,5,6 & 7 below) the 1999 figures, that were collected and reported last year, will serve as the baseline for the start of the PLC2 indicator process. For the remaining six indicators, it was agreed that estimates, averages, or 1999 data would serve as the baselines. In the case of the *Legislative Enactment* indicator, this data was readily available, as it had been collected in the process of gathering information during PLC-1. For the other new indicators we either gathered the necessary information from existing sources, or based our Baseline values on estimates. Depending on the nature of the data, some indicators will be calculated in a cumulative way, in which the percentage values will be drawn from data that accumulates from one reporting period to the next.

Targets were selected partly on the basis of the 1996 to 1999 trends and partly on the basis of reasonable and informed expectations.

1) Legislative Enactment IR 3.2 b: *Percentage of laws completing the legislative review process that are enacted.*

This is a new indicator. It is intended to provide insight into the relationship between the executive branch and the legislative branch, recognizing that a legislature needs to generally work in concert with the executive branch by passing legislation that stands a fairly good chance of enactment.

2) Oversight influence IR 3.2.1 a: *Percentage of specific and formal PLC requests for information or action of the Executive Authority at the committee and plenary levels that are formally or actually responded to by the Executive Authority.*

This is a slightly revised version of the PLC-1 indicator entitled “Oversight Clout”.

3) Oversight Initiative R 3.2.1b *Number of PLC initiated proceedings on non-legislative EA Actions.*

This PLC1 indicator will be carried into the new contract, essentially unchanged. We will slightly revise the definition of “proceeding” to exclude formal hearings on the government budget, finances, and expenditures, as these will be recorded under a separate indicator, *Finance Hearings*. Since there have never been such hearings, none has ever been recorded, so there will not be a problem in terms of data comparison consistency across project periods.

4) Finance Hearings IR 3.2.1 c: *Number of PLC-initiated formal public hearings held to discuss the annual government budget or government revenues and expenditures.*

Given that the PLC has never held a formal public hearing on a finance-related issue, these targets -- though low -- are reasonable and, if met, would demonstrate significant gains in the area of financial transparency.

5) Legislative outreach IR 3.2.2 a: *Percentage of draft legislation on which the PLC invites public comment (through hearings, workshops, press publication.)*

This indicator looks at the ratio of draft legislation exposed to public comment over all legislation under PLC review. In the narrative section of the semi-annual reports ARD will discuss the relative importance each draft law under review and the number of times in a single reporting period that a draft law has been subjected to public comment.

6) Legislative initiative IR 3.2.2 b: *Percentage of total bills passed by the PLC that are initiated by the PLC.*

The PLC1 indicator, “Legislative Effectiveness” (IR 3.2c) is identical in terms of data collection and measurement to this new indicator, which we are naming Legislative Initiative. The new wording is clearer and the new name is more descriptive.

7) Legislative review IR 3.2.2 c: *Percentage of passed bills drafted by the executive that are substantively amended by the PLC.*

The moment an EA-drafted bill is passed by the PLC it is recorded, and if our assessment determines that it was substantively amended, this too is recorded.

8) Response to Constituents IR 3.2.3 b: Percentage of recorded constituent cases / inquiries that receive a formal response from a PLC member or staff.

This is a new indicator.

9) PLC Employment IR 3.2.4 a: Percentage of new staff hired by a documented competitive process.

There is no evidence that any of the positions currently held at the PLC have been filled through a documented competitive process. Therefore, the targets are low, but nevertheless relatively ambitious.

10) PLC procurement IR 3.2.4 b: Percentage of PLC official procurement following transparent procedures.

Some PLC procurement has shown a degree of transparency, but virtually none of the procurement actions has followed completely transparent procedures.

11) Executive Legislative process IR 3.3.a Percentage of draft laws submitted to the PLC (by the EA) that have completed the EA review and drafting process as required by law.

The moment a draft law is submitted by the EA to the PLC it will be recorded and, at the same time, we will determine whether it has completed the required process.

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

A review of the PLC's performance and developments during this reporting period indicate signs of encouraging progress in areas in which the project has focused. Although it would be presumptuous to draw direct links between PLC performance and ARD project activities, there are clearly cases in which ARD assistance appears to have contributed toward a strengthened legislative capacity.

Although the 2000 Budget was approved by the PLC after the briefest of debates, the Budget Committee's report on the budget was relatively critical and analytical – clearly indicating that the project's work with staff and Members can have an impact on the Council's capability, if not political will. A more cooperative relationship between the PLC Budget committee and the Ministry of Finance has led to improved information sharing.

Although the PLC can claim only limited impact from its oversight efforts, a spirit of monitoring the executive branch still finds expression in plenary sessions. For example, the PA's heavy-handed response to the stoning of the French Prime minister was roundly criticized by the PLC.

Virtually all of the PLC's Democracy Day accomplishments and activities described above – from town meetings, to production of public information documents, to

participation in seminars – relate directly or indirectly to the contract component C result, “Increasing interaction with constituents.”

Committees continue to invite members of the public to comment on and discuss legislation. The Education and Social Affairs Committee held a workshop on the social insurance draft law this quarter.

In February, the PLC demonstrated its concern about women’s rights by establishing a Women’s Affairs Unit. Described by the Speaker as one of its most important achievements of the previous period, the creation of this unit could play an effective role in raising women’s issues in the PLC’s work in oversight and legislative review.

In a positive administrative development, the PLC has begun referring to the PA procurement law for guidance on Council purchasing procedures. In addition, the Democracy Day campaigns allowed the opportunity to work with additional PLC staff in the area of purchasing. The 2000 campaign did begin to follow proper, accepted procurement procedures including transparent bidding and analysis. The computer department staff are beginning to manage their time more effectively and respond to technical problems more efficiently, even though understaffed and still without a unit director. This could be a result of special, direct assistance provided by ARD IT staff.

VIII. ACTIVITIES EXPECTED TO BE CARRIED-OUT NEXT QUARTER.

A. Enhancing the PLC’s Legislative and Deliberative Capacity/Budget Support

- Provision of a specialist on committee development
- MAS Subcontract finalized, and initial activities under subcontract commenced
- Internships with the Egyptian State Council
- Continuing training on Birzeit Legal Database
- Administrative and Managerial Assistance to PLC Legal Department
- Facilitated workshop on Direction of PLC Legal Department (Gary Forbes)

B. Development of Executive/Legislative Relations

- Ongoing assistance in oversight hearings to standing committees
- Planning of study tour to Morocco and Tunisia
- Assistance to the Ministry of Parliamentary affairs

C. Increasing interaction with constituents

- Ongoing installation and modification of the Constituent Inquiries Processing System Software
- Conduct basic computer training for constituent office directors, including Windows, MS Word, and how to use the network.

Outreach and Public Relations training for constituent office staff
Begin press and public information training for Public Information
Department staff to improve quality of publications

- Training for district office directors on how to facilitate town meetings
- Submit an equipment needs assessment to the PLC on needs of the official district offices as well as the private constituent offices
- Begin working on a constituency relations manual that would also include PLC best practices in constituency relations

D. More Effective Internal Management

Procurement of equipment for the communications link (WAN) between Ramallah and Gaza and initial staff training
Continued training and implementation on providing timely information to Members
Procurement of approved equipment for the PLC
Development of procedures for personnel department
Assessment of financial management procedures