

# **FINAL REPORT**

## **ARMENIA LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING PROGRAM**

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*Submitted to:*

**USAID/Armenia**

*Under:*

**Contract No. OUT-AEP-I-00-00-00004-00**

***Task Order No. 803***

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**September 30, 2004**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The USAID Armenia Legislative Strengthening Program (ALSP) was originally designed as a two-year project (April 2002 – April 2004) to provide technical assistance to the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia in increasing transparency of and citizen participation in the legislative processes. The project was extended until August 31, 2004. The program has been implemented by a team of Armenian and international specialists under contract with Development Associates, Inc., and its subcontractor, Development Alternatives, Inc. The activities of this project were designed to address USAID/Armenia's Strategic Objective 2.1 of **More Transparent, Accountable, and Responsible Democratic Governance**. Specifically, the program addressed more effective internal management systems for the National Assembly and mechanisms for increased citizen access to — and participation in — the legislative process.

The project has focused on three broad task areas of program activity:

1. Strengthening internal capacity to support the legislative process, including legislative research and analysis — with an emphasis on the budget process;
2. Improving National Assembly systems for constituency relations and public outreach; and
3. Increasing access to information about and from the National Assembly.

Working in partnership with the National Assembly, technical assistance was provided through a variety of approaches: direct consultations, training programs, study tours, provision of equipment, and establishment of working groups and drafting of strategic plans.

It should be stressed that in each activity, the ALSP worked closely with colleagues at the National Assembly. The accomplishments of this program are therefore first and foremost the accomplishments of those within the National Assembly who have shown their dedication to the parliament's institutional development.

Each activity undertaken by the ALSP team was conducted keeping in mind the development of systems and mechanisms which could be institutionalized within the National Assembly. These are enumerated below, and in the body of this report in greater detail, but we provide here an illustrative example of the ALSP approach. The development of the National Assembly website is an excellent example of the establishment of improved systems and the introduction of mechanisms and tools for improved processes. The first step was to conduct a thorough assessment of current practices, the individuals responsible for the activities, the potential agents of change and the individuals who should be included in a working group to ensure institutional commitment. It was determined rather early in the process that the new website could decentralize information dissemination in the National Assembly by delegating the responsibility for reporting and posting information to the individual entities within the institution rather than through a central bureau. This decentralization automatically also increased the level of responsibility within each unit of the Assembly. The increased visibility of the work of each unit had the effect also of demanding a self-examination regarding each unit's current practices and identifying ways in which they might be improved.

Thus, for example, in the Legislative Analysis Department, individual staff now sign off on professional conclusions regarding pending legislation and it is immediately apparent who has authored each analysis. Another example is the Public Relations Department, which posts daily news items of events at parliament within minutes of their occurrence. Draft laws now appear on the website as soon as they are officially registered by the National Assembly Secretariat.

During the two years of the program the systematization of the work of the National Assembly has improved. Staff has a better understanding of how the work of their individual department contributes to the work of the legislature as a whole. Departments and committees see the integration of their efforts. A solid foundation has been laid for pro-active contributions to an improved legislative process and improved information dissemination to citizens. Most importantly, because National Assembly staff has been engaged in the process of design and implementation of the new website through each step of its development, the capacity for maintaining these improved systems and mechanisms is housed within the institution and is not dependent on external support.

## **OVERARCHING RESULTS**

### **RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM INCLUDE THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A VARIETY OF MECHANISMS, SYSTEMS, AND PRACTICES AND ATTITUDINAL CHANGE**

Due to modernization of the plenary session hall (computerization and installation of microphones) elected deputies are able to more actively participate in the plenary sessions of parliament (this was especially noted during the state budget discussions in the National Assembly) and presiding officers have improved ability in conducting the plenary sessions.

The newly installed Local Area Network (LAN) allows for the development and use of the NA Intranet and improved information sharing between NA departments and committees — as well as improved speed and frequency of posting information by individual departments.

Experience gained during a tour of the Polish *Sejm* was applied to the consideration of the Armenia Draft Law on State Service in the National Assembly passed in December 2002.

***Program Goal: Capacity to conduct financial and economic review of legislation and national budget within the National Assembly would be strengthened***

The Research Division within the Information Department was established and is responding to approximately 30 queries per month for NA Deputies and staff.

Thanks to an amendment in the Budget Systems Law, the Mid-term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) is made available to parliament and the public earlier (July) in the budget cycle allowing committee and departmental staff more time to analyze potential budget expenditures.

After staff were provided training on how to analyze budget data in a comparative perspective and within the framework of government policy papers (such as the PRSP), deputies were able to better participate in the discussions of the 2004 State Budget with historical budget data and information comparing the budget to the MTEF and PRSP.

The Control Chamber has been able to design its re-organization around budget implementation and program results principles and improve its reporting to the National Assembly.

***Program Goal: Systems would be in place for managing constituency relations which are appropriate to the National Assembly structure and resources***

Standing Committees of the National Assembly have improved guidelines for conducting public hearings at the committee level as part of their regular working regime. Several committees have conducted such hearings to improve their access to a variety of opinions and perspectives on draft legislation, as well as to oversee the implementation of current legislation.

NGO Advocacy groups are better prepared to participate in public forum at the National Assembly due to their access to primary documentation (Draft laws, for example) and increased knowledge of the legislative process including the budget process.

The National Assembly is better able to access the resources of the third sector in Armenia due to increased access to NGOs (NGO literature collected by the library and information department and the Citizen Letters Department has greater access to NGO directories and databases for potential referrals of citizens writing from the regions).

A Youth Parliament was established to encourage youth to participate more directly in the legislative processes.

Deputies and committee and faction staff are using a “Constituency Relations Manual” as a tool in organizing more regular interactions with constituency groups.

Rules of the Standing Committees now require deputies to participate in citizen receptions organized by the committee on a regular basis.

Dissemination of draft legislation as newspaper inserts has led to unprecedented public feedback on important legislative initiatives such as the draft Family Code and the draft Labor Code.

***Program Goal: A system would be in place for easier access to information on the National Assembly by the general public and specific target groups, including the media***

The re-designed National Assembly Website was given the award of the Best Official Website in Armenia only three weeks after the site had been launched. The site is 85% compliant with the International Parliamentary Union’s Guidelines for Parliamentary Websites.

Surveys indicate that the general public is more aware of the different roles and responsibilities of the National Assembly (legislative, oversight, and representation) — comparing surveys of autumn 2002 and 2003.

***Program Goal: The press office would be strengthened to be more responsive to inquiries it receives***

“Parliamentary Hour” has expanded its coverage to include activities of the Standing Committees of the National Assembly and provides prospective information about upcoming events and legislative sessions of the National Assembly.

Journalists accredited to the National Assembly are able to file their stories in a timely manner and coverage of the National Assembly activities reaches citizens on the same day.

News of official visits outside Yerevan is able to be transmitted immediately and posted on the National Assembly website due to laptop computers provided to the National Assembly Public Relations Department.

It should be noted that in fact, this goal as stated, is to a certain extent no longer relevant, in that the Public Relations Department has taken such a proactive stance that there is more infrequent cause for journalists to ask for information since most information is provided in advance and in anticipation of need.

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# ARMENIA LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Deliberative Bodies IQC (CLIN 007) that Development Associates currently is implementing for USAID stipulates that a Final Report be provided for the **Armenia/Legislative Strengthening Program**, Contract No. OUT-AEP-I-00-00-00004-00, Task Order No. 803. “The Contractor will submit a detailed final report which includes: a) a financial report detailing how funds were expended, by line item; b) a summary of the accomplishments and shortcomings of the contract, referenced to the results listed in this contract; c) comments and recommendations about future parliamentary programs.”<sup>1</sup>

The Financial Report is attached under separate cover. The following is a Narrative Report of Project activities, accomplishments, short-comings, and recommendations for future programs with the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia.

## II. BACKGROUND

The USAID Armenia Legislative Strengthening Program (ALSP) was originally a two-year project (extended five months) designed to provide technical assistance to the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. The program was implemented by a team of local and foreign experts under contract with the US companies Development Associates, Inc. and Development Alternatives, Inc. (DA/DAI). The activities of this project were designed to achieve the objective of **More Transparent, Accountable, and Responsible Democratic Governance**. Specifically, the program approached these goals by addressing how the National Assembly can employ more effective internal management systems for the parliament and increased citizen access to and participation in the legislative process.

The project focused on the following broad areas of program activity:

1. Strengthening internal capacity to support the legislative process, including legislative research and analysis – with specific focus on the legislature’s role in the budget process;
2. Improving National Assembly systems for constituency relations and public outreach; and
3. Increasing access to information about and from the National Assembly.

At the onset of the project, a number of assessments were conducted to guide the program activities as well as to serve as benchmarks for measuring results of the assistance efforts. A variety of assistance modalities were employed in these three areas as well as in cross-cutting activities. These included long-term and short-term consultants, workshops and seminars, training programs, study tours, support for conference participation, fellowships for mentoring

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<sup>1</sup> USAID Contract Number AEP-I-00-00-00004-00, Order No. OUT-AEP-I-803-00-00004-00, Section VIII. Reports C. Final Report

visits to other parliaments, purchase of and upgrading equipment, modernization of facilities, establishment of working groups for interdepartmental projects such as publications support, and piloting new procedures and practices.

Most importantly, ALSP has worked with counterparts at the National Assembly in a partnership through an evolutionary process. Projects were not undertaken simply to produce an output (a publication, a meeting, a revised draft charter, recommendations for revisions to legislation, a re-designed website, etc.) but the process of developing that output served as a training device and tool for building institutional sustainability. ALSP local staff and consultants have worked together with short-term consultants and long-term consultants from the United States to develop realistic targets together with the National Assembly counterparts. Project activities have built on one another to establish a foundation for improved interdepartmental communication, promoting an awareness of the role that the public can play to improve the work of the legislature through improved depth of research and analysis, increased public input to the legislative process, and appropriate feedback from the legislature on citizen's concerns.

In September 2002, a European Union-TACIS Support to the National Assembly Program, implemented by GTZ, was launched. The ALSP team worked closely to coordinate all assistance efforts with the TACIS project and whenever possible to conduct collaborative and complementary activities with the goal to build on and reinforce each other's work and avoid duplication of effort. In addition, ALSP has been very cognizant to combine the talents and resources of other international donor programs, particularly those of the United State Agency for International Development, so that the National Assembly may benefit from the range of projects and activities currently implemented in Armenia.

The May 2003 Parliamentary Elections resulted in the election of National Assembly Deputies from three parties who formed a majority coalition supportive of the policy goals of the newly re-elected President (in March 2003). This coalition put forth as the single candidate for President (Speaker) of the National Assembly a young (34), experienced (third-term) deputy who brought to the National Assembly new ideas and concepts about the institution as a whole, and how that is reflected in the work of the National Assembly and how that is conveyed to the public. This provided new challenges and opportunities for the National Assembly staff, and the Public Relations Staff in particular.

However, the elections also resulted in a boycott of National Assembly activities by the legislative minority/opposition in protest of the perceived illegitimacy of the presidential and parliamentary elections. The tensions both within the political coalition of the majority and between the majority and the opposition were realities of the legislative environment which had to be considered during the program implementation especially after the first year of activity.

### **III. EXPECTED PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES**

USAID's objective for legislative strengthening is to help develop a more responsive and effective parliament, with an improved capacity to draft, review and approve legislation and increase citizen access to the National Assembly. The activities of the program were intended to lead to the following outcomes stated by USAID to, in turn, help achieve the overall objective of a more responsive and effective parliament (IR 4 of SO 2, More Transparent, Accountable, and

Responsive Democratic Governance). At the end of the two-year period, USAID expected the contractor to have assisted in achieving the following outcomes:<sup>2</sup>

1. Capacity to conduct financial and economic review of legislation and national budget within the National Assembly would be strengthened;
2. Systems would be in place for managing constituency relations which are appropriate to the National Assembly structure and resources;
3. A system would be in place for easier access to information on the National Assembly by the general public and specific target groups, including the media; and
4. The press office would be strengthened to be more responsive to inquiries it receives.

It was presumed that the National Assembly, though having taken steps to become a more effective branch of government, nonetheless needed to refine further its operations, especially in terms of its legislative function and related internal procedures. In addition, in order for citizens to make informed decisions, they need greater access to the National Assembly, both to information about the National Assembly and to the deputies themselves. To assist with this process, deputies need to understand the importance of, and have the ability to manage constituent relations.<sup>3</sup>

#### **IV. CHALLENGES OF THE PROGRAM**

##### **THE 2003 PRESIDENTIAL AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS COINCIDED WITH THE MID-POINT OF THE PROJECT**

This meant that during the first year of the project, the team took care not to be associated with any one party or faction of parliament. This led to most of the efforts of the project being directed towards the staff of the National Assembly. As a result, the perception after the elections was that this was a project directed only toward staff. Therefore, engaging deputies in the goals of the project took greater effort.

##### **THE EU-TACIS-SNA PROJECT WITH SIMILAR OBJECTIVES STARTED UP SIX-MONTHS AFTER ALSP COMMENCED**

This provided an additional challenge for coordination of effort vis-à-vis scheduling events, targeting counterparts, purchasing equipment, and perhaps most important, ensuring that consultations and recommendations — if not always congruent — were at least complementary.

##### **THE CIVIL-SERVICE LAW FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS PASSED AT MID-PROJECT AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION WAS CARRIED ON OVER 12 MONTHS DURING THE PROJECT**

At the end of the third quarter of the project, the National Assembly adopted a Law on the Civil Service of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia. This law required the staff of the

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

National Assembly to be assessed and staff positions defined and confirmed within one year. This meant that during most of the second year of the project, the staff was engaged in the important, yet uncertain process of defining staff structures and positions while at the same time accepting technical assistance to support the development of certain sectors of the staff. The efforts to help deputies understand the role of the staff and the resources available to them to support their work was made that much more difficult by the shifts of structures and departments in accordance with the needs which emerged in the staff assessment. In May 2004 the National Assembly staff underwent significant structural changes: a number of new departments were established, new services have been introduced and existing departments have been merged. ALSP assisted these new departments with basic strategic management training, computer skills training and linkages to resources.

## **LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING ADVISORY GROUP**

The Legislative Strengthening Advisory Group (LSAG) was envisioned in the original program design as a body which would serve to guide the National Assembly through its institutional development strategies. The intention was that it should be formed as early on in the project as possible. However, as the project team initiated activities, the National Assembly Chief of Staff informed ALSP project management that a similar body was foreseen under the TACIS Support to the National Assembly Program and it would be prudent to have one body associated with both projects. The TACIS project was awarded in August 2002 to GTZ, and early in September 2002 the two project teams discussed this idea of a body which would serve a similar purpose under both projects. By December 2002, however, it became clear that the concept for the TACIS project's Steering Committee had become very different than the USAID concept for the LSAG.

With parliamentary elections slated for May 2003, attempts to form the LSAG were delayed until the new deputies were elected and the new leadership emerged (it was clear that the former Chairman of the National Assembly would not continue as he was not standing for re-election). Soon after the newly elected deputies took their seats in June 2003, the ALSP team approached the leadership explaining the concept of the LSAG.

The formation of the Legislative Strengthening Advisory Group (LSAG) moved forward in September 2003 when a group was chosen to participate in an October-November 2003 study tour to the United States, thereby facilitating the process of defining issues that the LSAG could address upon their return. Following the study tour, two of the four deputies who participated served on a panel to review staff applications for the National Assembly Fellowship. This process illustrated the merits of having a mix of opinions from staff and deputies on issues related to the services and responsibilities of the National Assembly. Emerging from the study tour, ALSP identified Legislative Rules and Communication as the topics to focus the LSAG meeting planned to convene in early February 2004. In February, ALSP staff took advantage of the presence in Yerevan of Earl Mackey, founding director of the National Conference of State Legislatures (an organization which was included in the USA Study Tour in November which greatly impressed the participants), and ALSP consultant Clay Wellborn (of the US Congressional Research Services), and invited them to a briefing and follow up meeting of the participants of the US Study Tour. The invited guests touched on two major topics, namely, institutional development and the role of various stakeholders in guiding that process, as well as the role of legislative research and analysis in integrating legislative staff operations. The

meeting was well received by the NA counterparts, and one new deputy especially expressed interest in learning more about how the elected deputies could be more involved in the strategies for institutional capacity building in parliament.

Despite various efforts, in the end, the LSAG functioned only as an informal grouping, and did not have a regular membership or agenda regarding institutional capacity building within the National Assembly. The fact that parliamentary elections were scheduled at the mid-point in the project meant that the post-election political relationships were, to some extent, redefined. The political opposition's boycott of most activities in parliament, also precluded the formation of a body perceived to be representative of both majority coalition and opposition faction perspectives on institutional development. While at project's end, there was more of an understanding of the role such a body could play, it was not possible to have it functioning before the conclusion of programmatic activities.

## **RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS CONSORTIUM**

The original project design envisioned drawing upon existing Armenian research institutes to provide, on a commissioned basis, policy studies from an external, loosely based Research and Policy Analysis Consortium. It was intended that the Research and Analysis Working Group in the National Assembly would examine mechanisms to increase the research capacities of current departments, and strengthen the mechanisms for need-based research and analysis. However, after commissioning several reports from potential RPAC members, it was evident that either the reports could not be considered unbiased independent analyses or else needed considerable guidance and revision in order to comply with the necessary requirements based on international legislative practice. It was determined jointly with the project CTO that the resources of ALSP would be better spent by concentrating efforts first on developing the recognition of the importance of legislative research within the National Assembly rather than expend resources to develop the nascent research capacity outside of the National Assembly.

## **V. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO MEET GOALS IN EACH OF THE TASK AREAS**

The DA/DAI Armenia Legislative Strengthening Program team provided assistance to the National Assembly through a variety of modalities: consultations by long- and short-term technical assistance, study tours, provision of equipment, mentoring, publications, and seminars and workshops engaging working groups within the National Assembly and outside the National Assembly.

The project staff included two long-term expatriate technical advisors: Chief of Party Eleanor Valentine was primarily responsible for activities under Task One including work on legislative research and budget analysis and Deputy Chief of Party Alex Sardar contributed primarily to the activities of Tasks two and three as constituency relations and public outreach specialists. Long-term local staff included Anna Hovhannesyanyan as Public Outreach Specialist, Arsen Stepanyan as Constituency Relations Specialist and during year I, Arthur Khachatryan as Legislative Processes Specialist and during year II Karapet Beglaryan in that position. The project was supported by three local administrative staff while technical back-stopping was provided by the home office staff of both DA and DAI.

The project team subcontracted with four local organizations to provide additional technical assistance. These were Development Programs, Ltd, International Center for Human Development (ICHHD), the Center for Gender Studies of the Armenian Association of University Women, and the Center for Policy Analysis of the American University of Armenia.

The assistance was provided in three task areas and through cross-cutting activities. A Performance Monitoring Plan was developed to guide the project team towards specific achievable and measurable goals.

## **CROSS-CUTTING ACTIVITIES**

- ▶ Assessment and update of IT Systems conducted at the National Assembly
- ▶ Monitoring and Evaluation Plan Designed and Assessments Initiated
- ▶ Capacity for Gender Analysis Assessed and Gender Analysis Guidelines Created and Training Conducted — Publication on the Importance of Gender for Legislatures Commissioned and Disseminated
- ▶ IT Equipment Delivered to the National Assembly and LAN Installed
- ▶ Follow-up Training Plan for National Assembly Staff on new IT use designed with GTZ
- ▶ Printing Facility Delivered to National Assembly and staff trained
- ▶ Assistance provided for the organization of the inaugural session of the National Assembly of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Convocation
- ▶ Orientation Program for New Deputies Designed and Implemented with NA Staff
- ▶ Proceedings of New Deputy Orientation Program published and disseminated
- ▶ Microphone and Computing Equipment Provided for modernization of the NA Session Hall
- ▶ National Assembly Staff Innovations Fellowships initiated (4 Fellows to Ukraine and 2 to Russia to work with staff counterparts in those legislatures)
- ▶ Experience Exchange Visit to the United States (US Congress and Maryland General Assembly) for National Assembly Deputies and Senior Staff
- ▶ English Language Skills Training provided to NA Staff. Eight people participated in English language courses organized at AUA and 29 others participated in language courses organized at the National Assembly.
- ▶ Assistance provided to Standing Committees on Improved Public Hearings Procedures (Organizational and procedural assistance, professional consultations)
- ▶ IT Policy and E-communications Strategic Plan Drafted

## **EQUIPMENT**

The project provided more than \$180,000 of computer hardware and software, office and printing equipment to the National Assembly. This equipment purchase was closely coordinated with the TACIS-SNA program. This included 31 computers, monitors and microphones for the plenary session hall, the installation of the Local Area Network, photo-copiers for the National Assembly Library, Archives and Citizen Letters Division. A mini-print house facility was also purchased which provides the National Assembly with modest in-house printing capacity. In addition to the National Assembly staff, the project also provided equipment and installation of the Local Area Network of the Control Chamber of the National Assembly.

## **STUDY TOURS**

Two formal study tours were organized during the project lifetime: to the Polish Sejm in October 2002 for the Research and Analysis and Public Relations Working Group and in October 2003 for a group of deputies and senior staff to the United States Congress and General Assembly of Maryland. Additionally, the project provided funding for the National Assembly Librarian to attend the Parliamentary Library and Research Divisions meetings of the International Federation of Library Associations conference in Berlin and Pre-Conference in Prague in July-August 2003. In February 2004, six National Assembly Staff participated as the first recipients of the National Assembly Staff Innovations Fellowships traveling to the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada and the Russian State Duma individually to observe the work of their colleagues in these legislatures.

## **ORIENTATION FOR NEW DEPUTIES**

In anticipation of the May 2003 elections, the ALSP team worked together with the National Assembly staff and the TACIS-SNA program to organize a series of orientation programs for the newly elected deputies of the National Assembly. The first steps towards implementation of these plans were realized during the first day of the newly-elected parliament. Special packets were developed with project assistance providing deputies with the basic information resources for their work: copies of the National Assembly Rules of Procedure, the Armenian Constitution, the Deputy Oath, the calendar of the sessions of parliament and the working order of parliament. During the first weeks of the new parliament, a series of 2-hour workshops on topics related to the work of the deputy were conducted engaging experienced legislators and staff from Armenia, Ukraine, Poland and the United States. This series of workshops introduced deputies to the details of the legislative process, the work of committees of parliament, the budget process, constituency relations, legislative oversight, staff resources and the need for harmonization of Armenian legislation to meet international obligations. The proceedings of these sessions were recorded and transcribed and published for distribution to all deputies as well as to National Assembly staff as an orientation to their work.

## **GENDER**

The project introduced the concept of incorporating gender awareness and the need for considering gender equality issues and gender analysis of policy to the National Assembly staff and deputies, NGOs, and journalists. The program was assisted in these efforts by the Armenian Center for Gender Studies (CGS) of the Armenian Association of University Women, as well as short-term technical assistance by Dr. Ann Graham of Rutgers University. Gender analysis modules were developed, gender training conducted, and gender analysis of the budget was conducted and disseminated to the National Assembly in time for the 2004 State Budget consideration. Additionally CGS developed a brochure to broadly introduce the concepts of gender equality and the need for gender analysis within the legislature.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The ALSP project staff developed a Performance Monitoring Plan which was submitted to USAID setting several goals to monitor progress in the Task Areas of the program. These included comparing the Website to the criteria of the *Inter-parliamentary Union's Guidelines for Parliamentary Websites*; scorecards for legislative process and citizen access to the legislature; and attitudinal changes measured in annual surveys of staff, deputies and NGOs — as well as the general public. The project was assisted in this effort by the Center for Policy Analysis of the American University of Armenia. One focus group of National Assembly deputies and journalists accredited at the National Assembly was conducted on the issues of communication and physical space. The CPA conducted two surveys of the National Assembly Staff and two surveys of the National Assembly deputies. Additionally, the ALSP team conducted two surveys of the NGO community in Armenia.

The results of these surveys helped to inform the project team of appropriate directions for technical assistance and comparison of data helped to identify areas where the practices and attitudes of the counterparts had changed.

### ***Task 1: Strengthening the Internal Capacity to Support the Legislative Process with focus on the Budget Process***

- ▶ Procedures for Budget Oversight and Legislative/Executive Communication Assessed.
- ▶ Training Module for Program Implementation and Oversight Designed.
- ▶ Roundtable to Present, Review, and Discuss Potential for Budget Reform Conducted.
- ▶ Direct Assistance for FY 2003 and FY 2004 Budget Provided through independent policy analyses.
- ▶ Training on Budget Oversight Management Provided to the sixteen experts of Control Chamber.
- ▶ Recommendations for Changes to the Control Chamber Law provided for improved oversight.
- ▶ Assessment report with specific recommendations on improved budget procedures provided to USAID and the National Assembly.
- ▶ Procedures for Public Committee Hearings in the National drafted.
- ▶ Six experts from NA and Control Chamber were with the provided opportunity to see Ukrainian Budget Analysis approaches (AED program).
- ▶ Budget Analysis Skills Training provided to National Assembly and Control Chamber Staff.
- ▶ Assistance provided during the Budget Consideration on the Preparation of Documents and Budget Analysis.
- ▶ Conducted Program Evaluation Seminar for Control Chamber Staff.
- ▶ A Glossary of Parliamentary Procedure and Practices translated into Armenian for further development by NA staff.
- ▶ Research and Analysis Working Group (RAWG) Initiated and trainings by Art Sauer and Clay Wellborn were conducted.
- ▶ Study Tour to Poland for eleven NA Staff members on the Capacity for Legislative Research Conducted.

- ▶ Templates for standardizing Professional Conclusion Reports were introduced to the Economic Analysis and Legal Analysis Department to facilitate their placement on the NA Intranet.
- ▶ Library Cataloging equipment, software and training provided to NA Library.
- ▶ National Assembly Librarian's participation in International Conference of Parliamentary Libraries and Research Centers supported.
- ▶ Archive Cataloging Equipment, software, archive boxes and training provided to NA Archives.
- ▶ Management and Research skills training provide to Information Department.
- ▶ Standardized Formats for Legislative Research Reports adapted by Information Department-training on use conducted.
- ▶ Information Briefings for staff on pending and current policy topics initiated by NA Information and Human Resources Departments.
- ▶ Assistance provided in the development of a Legislative Tracking System.

The Research and Analysis Capacity of the National Assembly was an important focus of the ALSP team. When the ALSP commenced in April 2002, the National Assembly had just re-organized some of its departments according to a recommendation of a DFID legislative staff assessment. An Information Department — including the National Assembly Library, Archives and a newly created Electronic Analysis Department was created. The Economic Analysis Department and Legal Analysis Department had narrow and sometimes conflicting missions to provide professional conclusions to specific legislative proposals. The approval of the state budget as one of the most important functions of parliament was relegated to the two months of annual budget consideration in November-December.

The newly constituted “Information Department” was a major focus of ALSP attention. The former head of the National Assembly Library was named head of this new department and a new National Assembly Librarian was hired (a professional librarian with years of experience in library management including heading a ministerial division on library services within the Ministry of Culture).

These three units working together were considered the information resources backbone of the National Assembly — however, in April 2002 they were both poorly equipped and poorly staffed. Only the Library had a computer (a 386 PC) which didn't function properly. There was no electronic catalog and no access to the internet. The Archives focused its work primarily on receiving and storing documentation without thought to how it could be subsequently accessed. Their main focus was on indexing the transcripts of the plenary session — and subsequently, this was recognized as the main service of the archives within the National Assembly. Partly this was a result of the Archives' historical placement in the Secretariat and the past qualifications of the head of the archives as a transcript proof-reader.

The Electronic Analysis Division was established with the intention of “modernizing” information services within the National Assembly, but at the same time, there was no thought put towards strategic staffing of this new division. The staff was primarily assembled from personnel who were moved from other departments and divisions and therefore had diverse backgrounds — ranging from the physical sciences to journalism — but none had experience in legislative research. It was considered by the National Assembly Chief of Staff that donor

organizations would assist in developing that department's charter, equipping the divisions, and training the staff.

Parallel to the Information Department, two central staff legislative analysis units operated at the National Assembly: The Legal Analysis Department which had two sub-divisions — one for criminal law and one for administrative and constitutional law; and the Economic Analysis Department which housed the Division for Tax, Budget and Credit Policy Analysis and the Division of Social Reforms and Analysis of Social Policy. The latter department was staffed primarily by economists and the former primarily by lawyers — yet both departments conducted similar review of legislation often with contradictory conclusions. The Legal Department's staff was quite large, with many young and inexperienced lawyers. The more experienced colleagues in the Legal Analysis Department often worked under contract in other positions supplementing their income from the National Assembly — including teaching at the various law faculties in Yerevan and some working in international working groups to draft legislation.

In summer 2002, ALSP began providing assistance to the Information Department by attempting to foster cooperation among the three departments. A training program designed by Clay Wellborn of the Congressional Research Service and delivered by a former US Congressional Budget Committee Staffer Art Sauer and the ALSP Chief of Party Valentine introduced to the researchers and analysts the basic tenets of legislative research in modern legislatures. An inventory of current services was reviewed and goals were set for interdepartmental communication and collaboration. This first meeting also identified those staff who would become the core members of the Research and Analysis Working Group (RAWG) which would continue to identify the opportunities within the National Assembly to provide quality services to the National Assembly Deputies.

In September 2002, the members of the RAWG together with the Deputy Chief of Staff, the Head of the Secretariat and two members of the Public Relations Department participated in a study tour to the Polish Sejm. One of the most impressive services observed there was the Bureau of Expert Research which had been established in the early 1990s. Dr. Wieslaw Staskiewicz made an impressive presentation describing the evolution of the services to what is now the central resource for legislative research within the *Sejm*. The group identified a number of goals which they set to achieve after the study tour, including an examination of how to strengthen the research and analytical services within the National Assembly.

Another benefit of the Polish Study Tour was that members of that group were able to discuss the issue of professional civil service in the legislature. In November 2002, Clay Wellborn of the US Congressional Research Services provided consultations to the National Assembly on the development of their research services, with particular attention to the developing goals of the Information Department and the Electronic Analysis Division. After his visit, Wellborn's recommendations were widely circulated by the NA Chief of Staff to all staff units. One of the chief recommendations was that the "Electronic Analysis Division" be renamed more appropriately to "Research Division." This report was instrumental in guiding the process of departmental re-organization which would soon commence.

In December 2002, the National Assembly passed a law on Civil Service of the National Assembly which would ensure that qualified professional staff would have job security even should the political leadership of the National Assembly change. Furthermore, according to this

law, all staff positions would be openly competed and filled on the basis of qualifications rather than appointed on the basis of personal connections or relationships.

This law went into effect in January 2003, and immediately the National Assembly began to work on its implementation with the assistance of the TACIS/Support to the National Assembly program implemented by the German GTZ. German experts in legislative staffing (including the former Chief of Staff responsible for the move of the Bundestag from Bonn to Berlin) advised the National Assembly on the process by which each position in the National Assembly was defined and each incumbent's qualifications recorded. At the same time, a course was developed at the Academy of Public Administration for legislative staff and all current staff in positions defined as civil service positions (191 positions were so designated) were required to attend that course. The intention was that the position descriptions would be matched against current incumbents' qualifications in a process of attestation to be completed by September 2003, at which point, the Speaker of the National Assembly would approve the roster of civil service positions and confirm the appointments of those qualified to fill their current positions, and vacant positions would be announced to be filled by open competition. However, this process experienced repeated delays, and while by project closing in August 2004, the management staff had all participated in the attestation process, the mid- and junior level staff had not yet completed this process.

In April 2003, new computer equipment provided under the USAID ALSP program was installed in the Library, the Archives and the Information Services — as well as in the Economic and Legal Analysis Departments — and other departments within the National Assembly. The NA Librarian immediately had a library cataloging software installed and began putting the collection into the database which would make those resources more accessible to the National Assembly staff and deputies. In addition to entering the physical collection into the database, the librarian also started to index current periodicals according to deputy profiles and to index articles about the National Assembly and NA Deputies. With assistance from USAID ALSP, an Armenian commercial electronic database of legislation was installed at the library. These tools dramatically increased the ability of the library to service their clientele with greater efficiency and direction.

Immediately after the installation of the computer equipment at the National Assembly, ALSP engaged librarian and management specialist, Donna Usher to work with the Information Department to develop management tools, research strategies, and client services plans. Additionally, Ms. Usher provided hands-on training to the research staff in internet search technologies, team approaches to research problems, resource management and communication. Together with ALSP staff and local consultants, a series of trainings and consultations on developing research reports were conducted. In September 2003, Ms. Usher returned for follow-on consultations and management training.

The process of Civil Service Review proceeded through 2003, but the demands of servicing the new National Assembly in the period immediately after the May 2003 elections proved far more demanding of attention than originally envisioned, and the civil service review and attestation process slowed considerably. Throughout 2003 under the TACIS/SNA program, a working group on legislative processes also discussed the goals of legislative services including the merits of the establishment of "Scientific Services" which would meet the needs of the National Assembly. In a series of study tours to Germany, Estonia and Finland, National Assembly Staff

were introduced to the practices of the legislative services in those countries. Under USAID sponsorship, the National Assembly Librarian attended the IFLA conference Parliamentary and Research Division sessions in Berlin and pre-conference for parliamentary research in Prague — where she was exposed to the practices and challenges faced by similar departments in parliaments world-wide. They were able to exchange views and experiences in a number of collective forums organized by both the TACIS/SNA program and ALSP throughout the summer and fall 2003. In June 2003, together with the National Assembly, ALSP organized the first Orientation Seminar for New Deputies of the National Assembly. This seminar was intended to introduce new deputies to the resources available to support their work and with an understanding of their work from a comparative perspective of colleagues from other legislatures (Ukraine, Poland, Germany, United States Congress and the California State Assembly). At this time, Mr. Staskiewicz from the Polish Sejm visited Yerevan to participate in those seminar sessions, and also to meet with the principals of the Research and Analysis Departments regarding the further development of their services.

In the fall 2003, a group of National Assembly deputies and senior staff visited the United States Congress and the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) where, among other visits, they learned about the resources of the Congressional Research Service, the Congressional Budget Office and the Legislative Services of the MGA. The legislative services at the state level were particularly relevant to the National Assembly's needs and the group returned to Armenia with a set of recommendations relative to the future potential re-organization of legislative services.

In November 2003, ALSP's budget process consultant worked with the National Assembly committee staff and Economic Analysis staff on the potential for budget analysis that was presented by the introduction of a Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and the Government's program as outlined, for example, in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The consultations in November 2003 helped to focus staff's attention on looking at the budget through the perspective of these declared programs in order for deputies to be able to ask specific and targeted questions of the government during the budget consideration period.

In October-November 2003, the head of the Information Services and the National Assembly Librarian participated in a US State Department International Visitors Program for Armenian Librarians in the United States visiting state libraries, municipal public libraries, academic libraries and library schools, cataloging services, a presidential library, and the US Library of Congress and Congressional Research Services. Both participants were able, upon their return to Armenia, to make specific recommendations to the National Assembly leadership on practices which can be adopted and implemented.

The Information Department also reached out to the community outside the National Assembly as a potential resource for research and information. The National Assembly Librarian made regular visits to Armenian NGOs to gather publications and studies. The Research Department initiated a file of NGOs that could provide the National Assembly with research or other services in specific policy areas. This was a recognition of the need to increase their capacity for research and analysis within the National Assembly while availing themselves of the linkages for potentially accessing external expertise (from academic and research centers, NGOs, international experts, etc.).

Throughout 2003, ALSP provided assistance to the National Assembly in developing a new website which was based on decentralization of data entry so that each department within the National Assembly would be responsible for maintaining the information on the website for their department or division. This included also the development of an improved intranet site which would increase the communication between the National Assembly staff. Special templates for research reports were introduced to all departments to encourage the introduction of structure to their research and analysis reports. Posting on the intranet the reports which each division produces will increase the circulation of these reports and raise the profile of these divisions within the National Assembly.

By the end of 2003, National Assembly research and analysis services staff had participated in study tours to other countries, international conferences and seminars and training workshops at the National Assembly. They had benefited from consultations with expert short-term consultants and regular consultations with ALSP field staff. Some of the research and analysis staff also participated in the TACIS/SNA working groups on legislative processes and on human resource development. Through these consultations, recommendations for improved legislative analysis products have been developed, skills have improved, and minds opened to the possibility of new practices and services.

However, during this period the issue of consolidated or coordinated research services remained unsettled as long as the civil service attestation process was unfinished. The heads of the legal and economic analysis departments remained unsure of their positions and of whether there would be a restructuring of the departments. The Information Department staff was concerned whether they would be deemed qualified to stay in their jobs and indeed, whether the division itself would pass the scrutiny of the review board. The uncertainty of this process within the context of the demands of serving under new National Assembly leadership sometimes took focus away from implementing the new ideas that emerged from the opportunities afforded to the NA staff in these departments.

In January 2004, the Civil Service Attestation process started and one of the first results was the decision that the current heads of the legal and economic analysis departments did not have the qualifications to serve in those positions. The decision was therefore made to consolidate those two departments into the Legislative Analysis and Development Department and an announcement for filling the position of Head of the Department was issued. The new head of that department had been appointed at the beginning of March 2004 and by August 2004 had instituted new policies and procedures requiring personal commitment and a higher degree of professionalism from the staff in reviewing pending legislation and issuing expert conclusions/recommendations to the elected deputies.

There remain some questions regarding the capacity of legislative researchers in the Research Division of the Information Department, though the current incumbents in that division have shown marked progress in their ability to create research reports. With the decision to consolidate the analysis departments, it also offers an opportunity for the Research Department to define their role vis-à-vis that new structure in terms of the kind of support they might be able to provide. Indeed, one analyst of Economic Analysis Department remarked, “it had never occurred to me before that I might be able to go to the Information Department and ask them to do the time-consuming search for comparative information that could help me in my work.” This is the kind of collaborative effort which should be mutually supportive.

In March and April 2004, the National Assembly established two new services: The Social Policy Research Department (SPRD) and the Department for the Regional Policy Analysis (DRPA). The SPRD management staff was hired in late April and began to identify the broad areas of concentration: Science, Education and Culture; Health; and Social Policy. Two research staff were hired for each of the three subdivisions. Similarly in June the DRPA had only just been established with management staff in place. The main concern of the DRPA was to establish a mechanism for the National Assembly for providing feedback from the regions throughout Armenia on the effectiveness of implementation of laws and what specific policy changes might be required in different regions. Additionally, the department is charged with looking at the legislative framework to support decentralized local governance. The ALSP team worked with both departments in defining their strategies and setting goals for the immediate term.

However, if the NA leadership is serious about the Research and Analysis capacity, then in the future they must also seriously consider future hiring into these departments to ensure that the departments have research specialists who can meet the needs of the legislature.

The budget process in the National Assembly was severely constrained by the time limitations given to the National Assembly for budget consideration. During the June 2002 Budget Execution Report and presentation of the Report of the Control Chamber of the National Assembly, there was not one question posed by the deputies despite the fact that it was the last chance before the parliamentary elections that the deputies would have to publicly question the government about past budget performance. The situation was not much improved when the National Assembly was called upon to consider the 2003 State Budget in the fall 2002. It was apparent to the ALSP team that very few deputies and very few staff understood the responsibilities of the National Assembly for approval and oversight of the state budget.

In June 2002, ALSP engaged former staffer of the US House of Representatives Budget Committee Art Sauer to assess the potential of the National Assembly for budget analysis. Early on the recommendations of the ALSP team were focused on expanding the time allowed the National Assembly for budget consideration and the National Assembly's recognition of the cyclical nature of the budget process and the ability to use budget oversight also to inform deputies during the budget consideration process. In September 2002, ALSP convened a roundtable of National Assembly deputies and staff including the newly appointed head of the Control Chamber and government officials (and assistance program colleagues from DFID and the US Treasury) to identify the areas within the Armenian budget process that could be the focus of reform. The issues of program budgeting were discussed as a goal to which Armenia might aspire.

In December 2002, ALSP provided on-site consultations with the Control Chamber of the National Assembly and reviewed suggested legislative amendments regarding the Control Chamber's authority and ability to oversee the government's implementation of the budget. Additionally, ALSP provided guidance on management approaches to the Head of the Control Chamber according to the re-organization of the units of the Chamber to meet programmatic oversight.

In April 2003, the Ministry of Finance submitted changes to the Budget Systems Law of Armenia to facilitate the incorporation of the Mid-Term Expenditure Framework into the budget

process. At ALSP's and DFID's urging the proposed amendments including submitting the MTEF to the National Assembly in July of the calendar year, thus increasing the time that the National Assembly has to consider relative budget policies by three months. In June and September 2003, ALSP provided overview orientation sessions to the budget process for new deputies — including the distribution of comparative budget analysis and budget process materials to all deputies. Additionally, in September 2003, ALSP conducted a two-day training workshop for the Control Chamber on program evaluation and in October 2003 facilitated the participation of Control Chamber staff in audit training conducted by the US Treasury and the Armenian Ministry of Finance and Economy.

Indeed, the fall 2003 consideration of the 2004 State Budget was much improved, both in the level of participation in the debates and discussions as well as the depth of the deputies' questions. Deputies and staff showed increased interest in some of the tools for budget analysis and the Standing Committee on Social, Health and Environmental Policy conducted a "pre-budget" hearing in the committee on unemployment policy.

In an effort to address the capacity of the Economic Analysis Department for fiscal and budget analysis as well as that of the Budget Committee and the Control Chamber (and one other standing committee), ALSP helped to facilitate a participant training program on budget and fiscal analysis in Ukraine under the aegis of AED. Upon their return, the group was trained in advanced use of MS EXCEL to analyze budget data. This training program proved to illustrate to the staff how different policy documents could be linked to the budget documents in order to track that policy over time and to compare levels of funding with the declared policy objectives.

One result of the ALSP assistance to the Control Chamber is that the Chamber adopted a new approach to their work which now looks at whether policy and program objectives are being met and not just whether or not the allocated monies were spent. The 2003 Annual Report of the Control Chamber was discussed and adopted in the National Assembly in May 2004 with more participation than in previous years and some of the reports (for example the conclusions regarding a loan program to renovate courthouses) pointed to serious concerns about how the funds had been spent with considerable diversion from original program goals.

The 2003 Budget Execution Report was heard in June 2004 in the standing committees of the National Assembly according to the procedures set in the National Assembly Rules of Procedure and the Budget Systems Law. During a series of open meetings held by each committee some issues of budget management and prioritization were raised. This was in stark contrast to the hearings on the 2002 Budget Execution Report. However, the process is still treated as a rather pro forma hurdle rather than an opportunity for serious budget oversight which could inform future budget consideration.

***Task2: Improve the National Assembly's Systems for Constituency Relations***

- ▶ Training Seminars to Increase Access to Constituent Groups to the Legislature Conducted for NGOs.
- ▶ Training Materials (How a Bill Becomes Law) Developed.
- ▶ Existing National Assembly Constituency Outreach Tools Reviewed.
- ▶ Training for NGOs on how to read the State Budget and the National Assembly's Role in the Budget Process Conducted.

- ▶ Constituency Relations Manual was published and disseminated to deputies, faction and committee staff in both a desk reference edition and a pocket edition.
- ▶ National Assembly increases communication with NGO resources due to assistance from ALSP (an NGO resource directory and directory of international organizations working in Armenia is available in the Information Department).
- ▶ ALSP provided assistance to the National Assembly in developing a Youth Parliament in Armenia.
- ▶ A training module was developed and training was conducted for advocacy NGOs on “NGO Involvement in Public Hearings in Parliamentary Committees,” “Advocacy Beyond Working for the Passage of a Draft Law”.
- ▶ Coordinating Council of Constituency Groups Formed and Meets Regularly
- ▶ ALSP provides expertise on the code of MP conduct to the MP working group on Code of Conduct under the auspices of OSCE.

ALSP efforts in this area included both working within the National Assembly with the units (staff departments and committee staff) responsible for supporting deputies’ efforts for constituency relations, as well as working with civil society organizations to determine their attitudes and understanding of the National Assembly and how it could be more responsive to their needs.

In April 2002 — the National Assembly was one year out from expected parliamentary elections. There were individual civil society organizations that had experience in advocacy within the National Assembly — some more successfully than others. Still, it was more common for the civil society organizations (CSOs) to approach government ministries to work on policy change than the National Assembly deputies.

The Citizen and Letters Division of the Secretariat was primarily charged as the unit within the National Assembly to meet with citizens turning to the National Assembly for assistance. Besides screening the reception of citizens and letters from citizens, the Division also organized receptions of citizens by Standing Commissions of the National Assembly.

As one of the three primary components of ALSP, strengthening the constituency relations capacities of the National Assembly is directly connected with all other program areas of the project. In order for the National Assembly to fulfill its representative, legislative and oversight roles, it is necessary for it to have public feedback from Armenian citizens. In order for that feedback to be effective, deputies of the National Assembly and the institution as a whole must be able to promptly and easily solicit constituency feedback, and facilitate constituency involvement in the legislative process.

Deputies of the National Assembly, Standing Committees, and various staff structures, including the Citizens’ and Letters Division as some of the primary interlocutors of the National Assembly with the citizenry should have the necessary institutional support to be able to systematically conduct day-to-day work with constituents both in response to the citizens’ needs, but also in solicitation of input in the legislative process.

During the two years of its activities, ALSP convened regular meetings of the Coordinating Council of Constituency Groups (CCCCG), to facilitate open communication between interest groups/NGO’s and staff representatives and departments of the National Assembly. Through this partnership, having identified many of the obstacles faced by civil society organizations and

individual constituents in dealing with the National Assembly, it is imperative that the National Assembly be able to proactively provide information and tools for constituents to interact with their National Assembly. Some of these tools were developed with ALSP support, including a new and revamped website (see below). At the same time, however, for those constituents (in fact, a majority of the Armenian citizenry) without internet access, the National Assembly's Citizens' and Letters Division serves as a point for information and consultation including consultations on how best to approach a specific elected deputy or standing committee chairman..

The Citizens' and Letters Division is operating under serious constraints: staffing, physical space and technological capacity. The problem of physical space stems from the fact that the division is located in a separate building where the entrance to the NA and security check is located. While this is convenient for citizen access, it effectively cuts off the activity of this division from the rest of the activities in the National Assembly, including the division's parent department, the Secretariat. The only connection the division had with the main building is a phone line. With the joint assistance of ALSP and TACIS-SNA in late July 2004, the division was connected to the NA intranet and will have internet access via a high-speed modem. This will increase the information available to the division staff and eventually to the public. The actual lay-out of the building has also been a hindrance to effective work with the public. For example there is no separate space for the reception of constituents neither by individual deputies, committees nor by division staff. Until summer 2004, there were also no public lavatories in the building. ALSP presented the recommendations to the NA leadership focusing on three major issues: modification of the building (which can only be done by the NA and therefore it needs to be factored into its future budget proposals); creation of a formal information center for constituents and training of staff to be able to do appropriate analysis of the constituent requests, demands, etc; and the third direction is the modification of the division's role in the system of constituency relations of the National Assembly. All of the recommendations were welcomed by the head of NA secretariat under whose auspices the division works and in summer 2004 the National Assembly Chief of Staff began to act upon them. Deputies have now recognized that reception of constituents is one of their primary responsibilities. One illustration of this change of mindset is the process of scheduling citizen reception sessions for committees. Formerly the staff of the Citizen and Letters Division drafted a schedule of meetings and sent it to committees to inform them of when the citizen reception was reserved for that committee. During the last meeting of Social Policy Standing Committee held prior to the summer recess, the schedule of reception of constituents was an item on the formal agenda for the committee meeting.

The ALSP staff working with the members of the Armenian NGO community participating in the CCCG and with STTA assistance, over the course of the two years has developed recommendations, along with supporting documents and tools for the Citizens' and Letters Division for expanded services as a Constituency Information Center. This was done in close consultation with the division's staff. ALSP provided recommendations for improved meetings with citizens for standing committees at the National Assembly which were incorporated into the rules of procedure of standing committees. Now, the reception of constituents is one of the working tools of committees and they are obliged to organize receptions of constituents at least twice a month. Furthermore, whereas during the second convocation of the National Assembly, only committee chairs would attend such reception of constituents — or sometimes send their experts — now deputies should participate in these receptions on a rotating basis as is now written in the rules of procedures of all committees. The Citizens and Letters Division and

Standing Committee Staff and faction/deputy group staff developed with ALSP assistance guidelines and additional tools for meetings with constituents outside of NA for the deputies. Those tools are incorporated in the constituency relations manual developed by ALSP (discussed below). The Citizen Letters Division was provided software and training for entering citizen letters information into a database, an electronic “Public Inquiry Tracking System” (PITS) which will provide more precise reporting to deputies of issues which citizens are raising in their general correspondence with the National Assembly.

The implementation of the PITS was seriously delayed due to late delivery of equipment by the TACIS-SNA project. However, by August 2004 the equipment had been delivered and installed and the staff was eager to commence work using the new system. Another ALSP recommendation was that additional staff be employed in the division and in August 2004 new staff lines were added to the division and staff transferred to this division who still need some training.

## **CONSTITUENCY RELATIONS MANUAL**

In June 2003, the ALSP team provided to all newly elected deputies, committee staff and faction staff a Constituency Relations Manual (CRM). The CRM is intended as a guideline for deputies both from majoritarian districts and party lists to conduct effective work with constituents in order to better represent citizen’s needs and interests in parliament. It incorporates experience of second convocation parliament and international experience on constituency relations. It incorporates experience of the second convocation of parliament and international experience on constituency relations.

At the beginning of 2004, the ALSP team solicited feedback from deputies on the utility of this tool and additional information or other tools which would be helpful for them to be able to effectively manage their constituency relations. About ten deputies and their assistants participated in face-to-face interviews to discuss the manual, 24 others provided their feedback in response to questionnaires.

There were two major requests coming from deputies:

- a. to prepare a short pocket version of the CRM, one that deputies can carry back and forth with them when going out to the field or district; and
- b. to provide updated contact information on different governmental and non governmental agencies.

Since both requests could not be accommodated in one book, a short guide to constituency relations was prepared (basically the summary of CRM) and this will be supplemented with excerpts from an Armenian commercial contact directory.

The ALSP team also helped to produce recommendations for Standing Committee Staff (experts) to systematize their constituent case work, provide timely and appropriate information to constituents, with or without solicitation.

In spring 2004, the OSCE office initiated the drafting and adoption of a code of conduct for deputies of the National Assembly. Deputies from all factions were invited to participate in the

Code of Conduct working group chaired by the NA Vice Chairman Vahan Hovhannisyan. In addition to the deputies, one expert each from ALSP, ABA/ CEELI and the NA state legal committee worked on the concepts for a draft code of conduct to be presented for deputies' approval. In August 2004 a draft was in circulation at the National Assembly.

***Task 3: Increase Access to Information about and from and within the National Assembly***

- ▶ New Mechanisms for Improved Public Outreach Developed (NA Brochure, NA Informational Calendar, NA Parliament for the People Concert, NA Guide, NA Informational Film).
- ▶ A Publications Plan was developed for the National Assembly and implementation started.
- ▶ Assistance provided in the design, compilation, preparation and publication of the *Guide to the National Assembly of the Third Convocation* (Armenian, English, and Russian versions).
- ▶ Assistance provided in the design, compilation, preparation and publication of newspaper inserts of draft laws pending in the National Assembly.
- ▶ 2 PSAs on function of Parliament produced and broadcast on "Parliamentary Hour" prior to May 25 elections. PSAs were also distributed to regional TV stations.
- ▶ Film on National Assembly Functions produced by Public Relations Department.
- ▶ Training for journalists on the National Assembly's Role in the Budget Process Conducted.
- ▶ National Assembly Website Reviewed
- ▶ National Assembly Website Re-design Commissioned [www.parliament.am](http://www.parliament.am) .
- ▶ Training Modules Conducted for Key Staff in the Secretariat (Web Division).
- ▶ New Mechanisms for Improved Internal Information Flow Developed (Intranet enhanced).
- ▶ Intranet information for each NA staff department was posted.
- ▶ Recommendations for enhancing "Parliamentary Hour" proposed to NA Public Relations Department.
- ▶ Consultative Training provided to NA Public Relations Staff, Committee Staff and Faction Staff.
- ▶ National Assembly Strategic Communications Plan drafted with the Public Relations Department.
- ▶ Training for Journalists on Covering the Budget Story in Parliament conducted.
- ▶ Orientation Program for newly Accredited Journalists Designed — informational materials produced.
- ▶ Workstations established for accredited journalists to facilitate their timely filing of stories on the National Assembly activities.

Work with the National Assembly on improved Public Outreach included joint projects with staff from a number of departments. In the fall of 2002, ALSP convened interdepartmental working groups for publications on the National Assembly which raised the awareness of the staff itself to the multiple functions of parliament and the need to keep the public informed of the work of the National Assembly. Additionally, ALSP recognized the importance to ensure that journalists working in the National Assembly have the understanding and ability to cover its comprehensive work (not just the work of the plenary).

ALSP staff worked with NA Public Relations Department staff and staff from the Information Department and the Research and Analysis Working Group to produce an informational brochure about the National Assembly (in three languages) as well as an informational calendar which described the place of the National Assembly in general state structures and described in detail the main responsibilities of the National Assembly. This calendar was distributed to NA staff and deputies and outside the National Assembly to government offices, journalists, NGOs, academic centers and libraries as well as to international organizations. This increased information about the National Assembly both within the institution and within society as a whole.

The ALSP team provided assistance to the National Assembly staff in preparing and printing the Guide to the National Assembly Third Convocation. The primary responsibility for the preparation of the guide was with the NA Publications Division which, at the mid-point in the preparation of the publication was moved as part of the National Assembly Staff re-organization from within the Public Relations Department to the separate Publishing Division under the General Administration. In fact, while this delayed somewhat the preparation of the publication, it also offers an opportunity for the process of preparation of that publication to be documented for future use. The process of obtaining the deputies photos and biographies could be streamlined and made a mandatory part of the initial registration process just as the newly elected deputies are taking their seats. The Armenian version printed in April 2004 was distributed to the National Assembly deputies and staff, government offices and local government offices, NGOs, IGOs, libraries, schools and journalists. The publication was appreciated for the candor with which the biographical profiles of the deputies were presented and the utility of the information about the National Assembly committees, factions and deputy groups, staff units and samples of addressing correspondence to deputies or committees. The guide helps to inform the public about the National Assembly and facilitate targeted contact with the appropriate deputies, committees or departments. The tri-lingual version of Armenian version was printed in June 2004 and distributed to the members of the Interparliamentary Friendship groups, and international organizations and diplomatic representations. The information from the publications was also posted on the National Assembly website.

The ALSP team also assisted the National Assembly in drafting a publications strategy. This strategy looked at the information gaps that the National Assembly sought to fill and the different kinds of publications which would meet the public's informational needs regarding the work of the National Assembly. It also outlines the organizational steps necessary for a smooth publication process.

Other projects intended to increase the public's knowledge of the National Assembly's activities were focused on the Public Relations Department and the National Assembly Website Division (a subdivision of the Secretariat).

## **WORK WITH THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT**

From the very beginning of the project, in June 2002, ALSP began working with the Public Relations Department of the National Assembly (the department within the National Assembly primarily responsible for media relations) to assess the systems in place for ensuring the optimal coverage of parliament's activities by the media in Armenia. In July 2002, a series of focus groups separately with journalists and elected deputies were conducted to assess the degree to

which the work of the National Assembly was accessible to journalists and how that access might be improved. Subsequent assessment of media effectiveness in covering the National Assembly activities was included in a general survey of sitting deputies of the National Assembly of the 2<sup>nd</sup> convocation conducted in November 2002 and again in June-September 2003.

The focus group assessments were conducted primarily to assist the project in determining issues regarding physical space and technical support. The leadership of the National Assembly was particularly interested in finding a way to limit the physical access of journalists to deputies in the session hall. Their suggestion had been to eliminate journalist access (and thus interference) in the plenary session hall by installing remote cameras and limiting journalists' coverage of plenary activities to those which they could witness via closed-circuit TV. The focus groups confirmed that such a decision would be received negatively by journalists and elected deputies alike, and the request for such assistance (installation of cameras) was refused by USAID. The National Assembly, in fact, had been ranked by journalists participating in the focus groups as the branch of government in Armenia that is the MOST open to journalists. The problem, however, was that the coverage of the activities in the National Assembly was not considered effective. On the other hand, the journalists did not respect the boundaries of propriety — often, for example, entering the floor of the plenary session and disturbing the proceedings.

The Survey of Deputies of the Second Convocation (1999-2003) revealed that only about 29 percent of the respondents believe that the mass media are doing a good job in their coverage of the activities of the National Assembly. However, nearly two in three respondents believe that most journalists have a good understanding of the work of the Assembly. Regarding the staff leadership's concern about the interference of journalists in the work of the deputies in plenary sessions, nearly 85 percent of the Deputies agreed that a code of conduct is needed for journalists accredited to the Assembly.

From the journalists' perspective, the focus groups revealed a number of issues identified by journalists, many of which have been addressed by the National Assembly in the first year of activity of ALSP.

- ▶ Need for early distribution of draft legislation — it is now posted to the internet when it is received by the Secretariat.
- ▶ Need for speedy/same day information on NA activities when it is not in session — the Public Relations Department issues daily press updates on the website.
- ▶ Need for professional staff in the Press Office with clearly stated responsibilities — the passage of the Law on Civil Service of National Assembly Staff in December 2002 began a process of describing professional positions in all departments (including the Public Relations Department) and the qualifications which must be met to ensure professional performance.
- ▶ Need for advance notice of press meetings and briefings — notices of activities at the National Assembly are sent out by e-mail to accredited journalists and media outlets usually 12- 24 hours in advance.
- ▶ Need for more holdings in the Library, especially related to foreign relations and diplomacy — Library collection development policy includes special emphasis on collecting materials on foreign parliaments.

ALSP has provided the National Assembly Public Relations Department with a number of consultations and tools which have increased the potential of the staff to serve the public relations needs of the elected deputies. This included an enhanced LAN which makes information sharing between departments of the National Assembly easier, and thus the ability to get background and prospective information out to journalists is enhanced. The enhanced internet website of the National Assembly (for details see below) also allows more information to be available directly to the public as well as to journalists.

Additionally, USAID's provision of new computers in the Public Relations Department enabled the department to make available to journalists old PCs which are connected to the internet and provide journalists accredited to the National Assembly the ability to file their stories directly from the National Assembly building (previously handwritten notes were taken to editorial offices where typists were engaged to type up notes and then journalists would work with editors on the stories).

In May 2003, ALSP engaged a specialist in television journalism who worked with the Public Relations Department in identifying ways to improve the television products of the National Assembly (the weekly TV show "Parliamentary Hour," the production of several Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about the National Assembly which were aired prior to the May 25 parliamentary elections, and an informational film about the functions of the National Assembly) as well as weekly press briefings of the factions. The informational film was produced by the PR Department with the assistance of ALSP and the local film company "Triax". Completed in March, it is available for deputies for their use when meeting with constituents, for the Citizen Letters Department Reception Area, as a briefing for excursions to the National Assembly and to schools and community groups and NGOs as a brief introduction to the National Assembly. Additionally, ALSP has cooperated with INTERNEWS to identify how facilities at the National Assembly could be modestly improved in order to enhance the coverage of National Assembly activities. In February 2004, a group of INTERNEWS trainees participated in a Faction Press briefing at the National Assembly. As a result, ALSP was able to recommend some simple improvements in the technical set-up of the room to create an atmosphere of greater professionalism and quality broadcast.

The May 2003 Parliamentary Elections resulted in the election of National Assembly Deputies of three parties who formed a majority coalition supportive of the policy goals of the newly re-elected President (in March 2003). This coalition put forth as the single candidate for President (Speaker) of the National Assembly a young (34), experienced (third-term) deputy who brings to the National Assembly new ideas and concepts about the institution as a whole, and how that is reflected in the work of the National Assembly and how that is conveyed to the public.

This provided new challenges and opportunities for the National Assembly staff, and the Public Relations Staff in particular. The Speaker was especially keen on how to improve the public relations of Parliament. He installed a special press conference room, and initiated a video-conferencing facility. However, his enthusiasm for new approaches has not always been substantively supported. Advice provided to the speaker from ALSP consultants was to limit press conferences to news-worthy events stressing positive developments in the National Assembly. The Speaker's high profile for relations with other parliaments has also provided a public relations opportunity. The Speaker initiated a publication devoted to the activities of the National Assembly. With support of the ALSP team, the Speaker initiated a practice of

publishing draft laws with broad public interest as newspaper inserts inviting public comment. As an indirect result of the dissemination of a draft law on Higher Education as a newspaper insert, the Standing Committee on Science, Education and Culture received nearly 600 suggestions on the draft which has significantly informed the committee of the perspectives of different segments of the public on the issues affected by this law. The publication of the draft coincided with a number of hearings and public meetings to discuss the draft. It became the first draft considered by the newly created Youth Parliament. By contrast, the Draft Labor Code was also circulated as a newspaper insert, but the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs did not engage in organizing public events to discuss the draft and this is reflected in significantly fewer responses from the public. It is therefore suggested to the National Assembly that this modality can best be used as a catalyst for public discussion, not in lieu of public discussions altogether.

The work of the Public Relations Department under the previous chairman of the National Assembly had been focused on ensuring coverage of official meetings of the leadership. The new leadership has tried to grasp the important dynamic of ensuring full coverage of the multifaceted nature of the work of the legislature: not just plenary sittings and official meetings, but the day-to-day work of the deputies, in committees, the factions, the work of individual deputies who reach out to the public via the media — not just in Yerevan but also in their districts (56 single-mandate deputies representing specific geographic areas and 75 deputies elected by national mandate from 6 party or election bloc lists).

The overall knowledge of the Public Relations Department Staff is high and the openness to new ideas and introduction of new mechanisms is great, some skills building was provided in order to ensure this new level of professionalism. For example, some staff were provided training in advanced computer program skills (e.g., Photo Shop and PageMaker). Public Relations Staff gained much from an opportunity to observe the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada's press and information services, as well as the Polish Sejm's arrangements for media access to the legislature's proceedings.

Not only does the Public Relations Staff have new challenges, but journalists accredited to the National Assembly have new challenges as well in covering more activities of the National Assembly. Accredited journalists at the National Assembly serve an important function by being one of the most consistent communication nodes between the public and the National Assembly. Their understanding and proper reporting of the activities of the National Assembly will allow Armenian citizens to be informed and participating members of the legislative process.

Recognition of the role that journalists play in getting news of the National Assembly out to the public is of vital importance. Currently, when the press wants to meet with or interview a deputy, it happens mostly in the lobby and corridors of the National Assembly. While the new leadership has responded to journalists' requests for a space which they could use consistently by providing a desk and fax outside the briefing room for journalists' use, it is small step. A modest facility for journalists to meet which would also serve as a space for interviews is under discussion. This would greatly enhance the professional attitude of both the deputies of the National Assembly and the staff.

Elected deputies, too, must know the resources available within the National Assembly to facilitate their public relations with their constituencies. Almost all of the respondents of the November 2002 Deputy Survey (88.2 percent) believe that live broadcasts of Plenary Sessions

on state radio are an effective way to inform the public about Assembly activities. However, when asked about the National Assembly's weekly Parliamentary Hour, 56.9 percent of the respondents agreed that the broadcast does a good job of informing the public about the work of the Assembly. By contrast, only 24 percent of the respondents agree that the official newspaper (partially owned by the National Assembly) does a good job of informing the public about the Assembly's work. Furthermore, deputies considered work with the media an important part of their responsibilities, but only 30% believed that the mass media did a good job of covering the work of the National Assembly (this was true of the deputies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Convocation and the third). The Public Relations Department of the National Assembly has definitely become more pro-active in the past two years as is manifested in its TV coverage of the National Assembly and also in the postings to the National Assembly Website. This also reflects better cooperation between the Public Relations Department and the committee and faction staff.

### **WORK WITH THE WEB DIVISION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

Early on, the ALSP project team identified the Web Division of the Secretariat as key to improving the information systems of the National Assembly — both for internal communication and communication of the National Assembly activities to the public.

The Acting Head of the Division participated in the ALSP organized study tour to Poland in October 2002. Shortly upon her return to Yerevan, she turned to ALSP to request specific training on Web-based data base design and management which would prove to be the backbone of the National Assembly's new information system. ALSP was able through cooperation with IESC's Geek Corps program to engage an Armenian-American web designer to work with her team as well as an Armenian specialist in Java Script and MySQL to identify what the technical elements of the new Website would be. ALSP provided the National Assembly with the *Interparliamentary Union Guidelines to Parliamentary Websites* and identified the features of the National Assembly's new site. From February 2003 – March 2004, the National Assembly team worked with a local Armenian Web-design firm "Webstudio" to design and build the site. The first features went on line in June 2003 — with a full public launch in October 2003. The intranet design followed which provides National Assembly deputies and staff with greater access to internal information systems, including a functioning Legislative Tracking System (LTS). The LTS provides deputies and staff with immediate information regarding the status of a draft law, links to supportive documents and provides immediate posting of new drafts. The transcripts of plenary sessions are also now posted on the intranet, including the voting results of the plenary (though roll call votes are not yet posted). With increased technical capacity the Web Division has provided the National Assembly as a whole with the necessary information to conduct its business more transparently and with greater accountability.

As a result of the assistance provided by ALSP in the redesign of the National Assembly website, the institutional web site's compliance with the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parliamentary Website Guidelines has increased dramatically. This is a result of direct assistance provided by ALSP staff in analyzing the previous National Assembly website and in guiding the redesign and restructuring of the new site. The Armenian National Assembly's website is now in compliance with 85% of IPU's "Recommended Features." In addition, the new [www.parliament.am](http://www.parliament.am) now adheres to 43% of the IPU's "Optional Features."

Some of the new additions to the National Assembly website are of great import, as indicated in the IPU Guidelines. These changes include: session agenda, searchable database of enacted legislation by the current and the preceding parliament, information on the activities of the presiding officer of the legislature including speeches and addresses, information on non-plenary bodies (e.g.: committees), feedback mechanism on the site, access to the holdings of the National Assembly Library, ability of the visually-impaired to use the site without frames and with tags.

In addition to these recommended and optional features, the new website of the National Assembly also features a new section, which allows citizens to identify their representatives based on their registered address. This feature is made simple by employing both a text-based format, as well as a graphic format using the map of the Republic with regional level administrative divisions.

At the same time, one of the most important features of the website not visible to end users, is the administrative interface of the site, which serves as the control mechanism for the database of the site. The administrative interface allows site administrator(s) to update information with ease, and an automated program allows the information to be disbursed throughout the site, in appropriate locations, after a single entry of the information. More importantly, however, is that the design of the administrative interface facilitates the updating of the site in a decentralized fashion. In effect, authorized staff members can easily update information about their respective units, from anywhere in the National Assembly, even with limited computing skills, because the publishing tool employs basic word processing features.

The 85% compliance rate to the IPU Guidelines' "Recommended Features" represents 22 (54%) new features. This is an increase of the 23% of features now compliant with the IPU Guidelines.

The head of the National Assembly Web Division and ALSP DCOP Alex Sardar developed a powerpoint presentation for the official launch and also presented the National Assembly website at a regional e-governance conference sponsored by 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leaders NGO, sponsored by the European Union on December 1, 2003. The conference was attended by representatives from Republic of Georgia, and all attendees were very positive and praised the exceptional features of the website.

ALSP worked with Webstudio to design an explanatory brochure and pocket calendars to serve as promotional pieces for the website. Each deputy of the National Assembly was provided with 50 copies each of these promotional materials to pass out to their constituents as a way of promoting citizen access to information about the National Assembly's activities. ALSP Public Outreach Specialist also assisted in the drafting of a press release —the result of which was very good coverage in the media about the new site

The number of unique users of the site as well as the amount of information accessed and downloaded has nearly doubled since the newly re-designed site was launched in October 2003.

The most accessed page on the National Assembly website is the page with current laws in force, followed by information about deputies of the National Assembly and then news and draft legislation databases.

The site has recorded as many as 38,000 visits per month, or about 1000 visits per day on average — with more frequent visits during the months that the National Assembly is in session. More than 83% of all accessed IP addresses to the website are Armenia-based, indicating that the usage of the website is highest from within Armenia, while the rest of the IP addresses represent a general spread across the Russian Federation, North America, and Europe, with the latter two with the highest percentages of user IP addresses accessing the website.

In December 2003, the site was named the “Best Official Website in Armenia.” A May 2004 Yerevan State University poll of journalists in Armenia indicated that the National Assembly website is the most used government site with more than 48% of the journalists using the resources there.

## **VI. ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PROGRAM**

### **TASK 1: STRENGTHENING THE INTERNAL CAPACITY TO SUPPORT THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS WITH FOCUS ON THE BUDGET PROCESS**

***Program Goal: Capacity to conduct financial and economic review of legislation and national budget within the National Assembly would be strengthened***

One of the main problems identified as a barrier to the National Assembly’s ability to seriously deliberate the Draft State Budget was the very short time line for budget consideration provided to the National Assembly in the Constitution, Budget Systems Law, and Rules of the National Assembly. A major accomplishment of the program was to work with other donors working on budget reform in Armenia to advocate including the National Assembly in the budget process earlier in the cycle. Towards this end, with the assistance of the DFID-MTEF project, the Ministry of Finance and Economy when it drafted changes to the Budget Systems Law to accommodate the MTEF included a clause requiring the government to submit the MTEF to the National Assembly in July. This effectively extends the National Assembly’s ability to consider the government’s medium-term budget needs and requests by four months. This was observed in the 2003 budget consideration process when the National Assembly deputies often referred to the consistency or lack of consistency of the government’s submitted budget with that of the MTEF. In effect, this also contributes to the government taking more care in drafting and submitting the consolidated state budget.

After being provided with spreadsheet tools to analyze comparative budget data, in the June 2004 discussions of the 2003 Budget Execution Report, several deputies and the Chair of the Science, Education, Culture, Sports and Tourism Affairs Standing Committee referred to reports prepared by staff which indicated a deeper level of budget analysis than has been manifested in the past.

The ALSP work with the Control Chamber on organizational management, program evaluation, fiscal/budget analysis and installation of new technology and a LAN has enabled more efficient work within the Control Chamber as well as improved products of the Control Chamber for deputies. Whereas in the past, the work of the Control Chamber was limited to checking figures, now the Control Chamber staff is aware of the need to look at the budget expenditures in the context of efficiency and effective spending, and not just a the percentage of expended allocations. This new approach was manifested in May 2004 when the Control Chamber’s

Annual Report for 2003 was approved. Included in the report was an audit which revealed some questions arising from the employment of World Bank funds for judicial reform projects.

The National Assembly's research capacity when the USAID-ALSP began was limited to the professional conclusions of the Legal Analysis Department and the Economic Analysis Department which primarily were reactive to specific pieces of legislation. After April 2003, when technical equipment was provided by USAID-ALSP to the National Assembly, the Research Division of the National Assembly's Information Department as well as the National Assembly Library began providing background comparative research to deputies and committee staff. By August 31, 2004, the Research Division had responded to 241 requests for information; had prepared 3 issue briefs, 12 fact sheets, 9 reference papers and 3 comparative study papers. The Library had cataloged and indexed 7500 items into the electronic catalog database, and had provided several hundred references from the Armenian legal database "Irtex" previously largely unavailable to staff of the National Assembly.

Some National Assembly standing committee staff experts by April 2004 had realized the merits of seeking external expertise to provide deputies with a variety of opinions on legislation, including the economic impact and gender impact of legislation. The necessity to look for information linked to National Action Plans associated with legislative proposals was recognized, for example by the deputies and staff of the Science and Education Committee. The impact of legislation on the disabled was the focus of efforts of the Standing Committee on Social, Health and Environmental Policy as well as the Speaker's Council on the Disabled.

The organization of the National Assembly Archives, just beginning at the end of the ALSP, will ensure that the legislative histories will be available to inform current and future deputies and staff of the steps, information and conditions which contributed to the decision-making process related to the passage of legislation. It will also preserve the expert analysis associated with past legislation.

The proceedings of June 2003 New Deputy Orientation sessions served as an orientation resource for National Assembly staff hired under the newly instituted Civil Service Law. The new head of the Legislative Analysis Department remarked after reading this volume that it "was the best primer I could have for starting my work at the National Assembly. I refer to it regularly to understand the complexities of my work." The publication of this volume not only provides an insight into the work of parliament now, but serves as a guideline for future orientation programs for deputies and staff.

## **TASK 2: IMPROVE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S SYSTEMS FOR CONSTITUENCY RELATIONS**

***Program Goal: Systems would be in place for managing constituency relations which are appropriate to the National Assembly structure and resources***

**Constituency Relations Manual used by Deputies** — The ALSP team produced during the project period a Constituency Relations Manual (CRM) and after consultations with deputies, a pocket edition of the manual which deputies could use when they are in their districts, attesting to the fact that the information in the CRM is practical information and introduces mechanisms for deputies to do effective constituency work. Six months after the distribution of the CRM to

deputies, the ALSP team interviewed deputies and their assistants to ascertain how the manual could be improved upon. During these interviews, it became clear that a number of deputies were indeed using the manual for their constituency work. One assistant to a deputy impressed the ALSP team by showing a highlighted copy of CRM on the deputy's desk. He requested a second copy of the manual for their district office. He then showed the team his notebook where he had manually collected a number of government contacts and said that now he does not need to do that since he is using the CRM contact list which was more comprehensive. Thirdly he said that several of the constituency work techniques described in the manual had been used during the election campaign by the deputy when he was a candidate and this is why he read through all the text several times. He also added that there were other ideas in the manual of which he had not been aware. He mentioned that the manual will be particularly good for their new staff person in their regional office (in a location far from Yerevan). He showed the team how he had been registering phone calls and letters from constituents and noted that the CRM version of tracking constituency caseload makes it easier (though they didn't have a computer to keep those records electronically).

**Citizen Letters Division offers improved response to citizens' appeals and more information to deputies on citizens' concerns** — The workload of the Citizen and Letters Division has increased since the National Assembly elections in May 2003. Citizens feeling that new National Assembly leadership might respond differently to their expressed needs inundated the National Assembly with correspondence immediately after the new legislature was seated. The increased public relations efforts of the Speaker of the National Assembly also generated more correspondence from the public. Furthermore, the National Assembly speaker is now asking the division to follow up on every single letter addressed to the National Assembly to ensure that responses reach the final recipient and to confirm that the issues raised in the letters are addressed and problems solved. This requires increased oversight and follow up to the letters that come to the division and then are either responded to directly or referred to another office. This has required additional staff (hired only in August 2004) into the division and now that a second computer has been installed the additional work to tag and track correspondence will be more feasible. The database installed by ALSP to track citizen letters, once it is employed, will provide deputies with detailed reports on the issues which citizens address to the National Assembly. Of course, in addition to those letters addressed generally to the National Assembly, individual deputies, committees and factions also receive correspondence from the general public. The responses to these letters are more difficult to track.

**Standing Committees Recognize their Responsibility to be Responsive to Citizen Input** — As a result of ALSP's fall 2003 consultations with the Standing Committee on State and Legal Affairs drafting Committee Rules of Procedure for this committee (which also serve as a model Rule for other committees) several ALSP suggestions were incorporated into the rules, regarding responsibilities for interaction with citizens and rules for parliamentary hearings.

Other procedures relating to the hearings were also clarified. However, because of perceived limitations of the National Assembly Rules of Procedure regarding the powers of committees to organize committee hearings, the organization of committee hearings was not specifically included in the committee rules of procedure. The second major innovation concerned committee meetings with constituents. The practice in committees had historically been to organize meetings with constituents on an ad hoc basis. Following ALSP recommendations, periodical (minimum twice monthly) meetings with constituents were included to the functions

of standing committees. It was also included that deputies who are members of the committees should personally attend those meetings (on a rotating basis) and not rely solely on the committee staff to meet with citizens.

The rotation principle proposed for inclusion in the committee rules and procedures comes from the experience of Standing Committee on Financial-Credit, Budgetary and Economic Affairs. However, even after all committees approved these rules of procedure, ALSP staff observed that it is still rare that deputies actually participate in the committee's reception of citizens. New deputies are more prone to comply with the new rules.

### **TASK 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT AND FROM AND WITHIN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

*Program Goal: A system would be in place for easier access to information on the National Assembly by the general public and specific target groups, including the media*

#### **National Assembly Website and Intranet Re-designed**

After months of intensive work and collaborative activities, the National Assembly, with assistance provided by ALSP, and technical expertise provided by WebStudio Ltd. launched its newly designed website on October 22, 2003 in the presence of national media, deputies and staff of the National Assembly, as well as international observers. The website launch was the culmination of an 11-month process, during which formal training of National Assembly staff in technical maintenance and design elements was combined with collaborative work among various departments of the National Assembly. The new site boasts an unparalleled Armenian language search engine — one of the first of its kind in Armenia. In addition, the new design of the site is one based on the principle of decentralized information publication, where all departments in the National Assembly will have the opportunity to publish their departmental materials on the website directly. The launch of the site and its new features, including deputy search based on address, general search engine, legislative and draft legislation databases were all received very well and highlighted in news reports on the site launch. The Armenian National Assembly's website is now in compliance with 85% of the Interparliamentary Union's (IPU) "Recommended Features." In addition, the new site now adheres to 43% of the IPU's "Optional Features."

The National Assembly website was recognized as the "Best Official Website" in Armenia, just 6 weeks after its launch by a group of Armenian NGO's on the occasion of the approval of Freedom of Information law by the National Assembly. The CSO's supported by the United Nations mission presented the National Assembly with a certificate of recognition. A May 2004 Yerevan State University poll of journalists in Armenia indicated that the National Assembly website is the most used government site with more than 48% of the journalists using the resources there.

Average daily usage of the site indicates about 1000 unique users 83% of which are using the site from within Armenia. That the site is used by the public was confirmed in February 2004 when the government submitted a draft law on the amendments to the Military Conscription Law. On February 12, 2004, the draft was delivered to the National Assembly and on February 26, 2004 the government withdrew the draft. In examining the data for the month of February, a

time when usage was comparatively lower than in other months, one can note an increase in the number of hits, the number of unique visits and the number of files downloaded during this specific period of the month. The most unique visits on any given day in February were registered on February 12 (with 5.38% of all daily unique visits for the month registered for that day), and on February 25 (with 6.18% of all daily unique visits for the month registered for that day). These two figures are significant, given that on February 12, when the draft law on military conscription was submitted to the National Assembly, the Web Division was inundated with phone calls from the public inquiring about the timing of the draft's appearance on the website, and one can see a surge in visits on that day. At the same time, when the news of the government's decision to pull the draft from the National Assembly, (after days of student protests and advocacy efforts), was announced on the morning of February 25, the highest number of unique daily visits for the month are recorded on that day.

***Program Goal: The press office would be strengthened to be more responsive to inquiries it receives***

The National Assembly Public Relations Department has embraced new approaches to improve its output. It has made available dedicated workstations for journalists to file their stories from the National Assembly electronically. It has improved its accreditation procedures and now provides orientation materials and training to newly accredited journalists. The Public Relations Department posts news events about the National Assembly immediately on the website (including nearly simultaneous translation into Russian and English), including official events, work of the plenary and work of the Committees of the National Assembly in addition to the summaries of press conferences and briefings.

### **Parliamentary Hour Improved**

After ALSP's work with the Public Relations Department, the production team of the National Assembly's weekly Television show "Parliamentary Hour" began in September 2003 to include prospective information on the plans of the National Assembly for the subsequent week — including the schedule of plenary meetings, committee meetings, citizen receptions in the regions, and special events (such as trips planned by the National Assembly Leadership). Additionally, ALSP's recommendation to use the technique of reinforcing the message with audio and visual images which was illustrated in the PSAs produced by the PR Department in May 2003, have now been incorporated into "Parliamentary Hour." Further improvements were made in early 2004 incorporating more thematic focus to the weekly program.

### **Parliament's Outreach to the Public Improved**

The National Assembly since April 2002 has employed a great number of new mechanisms for public outreach. These include: Annual Parliament to the People Concerts during the September Independence Day Celebrations; the production of a National Assembly informational Calendar; issuing a session calendar informing the public of the plenary, committee and government question periods of parliament; an informational film about the National Assembly which describes the major functions and responsibilities of elected deputies and the staff that supports those activities; Newspaper Inserts of Draft Laws for public discussion were initiated in the spring 2004 session of the National Assembly.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING EFFORTS**

Future activities addressing the institutional capacity of the National Assembly should address all three areas of the legislature's responsibilities. Some of the suggestions below are more specific to one of the three areas (Legislative Process, Oversight, and Representation). Others apply to several or all of the legislature's functions.

### **A. LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

#### ***1. Public Input***

The majority of legislative proposals are, in fact, prepared outside the National Assembly. It is only a small percentage of deputies who engage in actual legislative drafting. The majority of legislation is submitted by the government. These proposals often originate in working groups which are driven by international technical assistance groups — and sometimes even by civil society organizations that bring proposals to the government ministries. Sometimes, such organizations approach National Assembly deputies, but this has been, until now not the preferred approach since there is a perception (warranted until now) that the chance of a bill passing into law is greater if it is a government-sponsored draft.

The quality of legislation depends not only on the quality of the drafting, but also in the degree of public vetting before the draft makes it to second reading. Once a bill passes second reading in the National Assembly, it will undergo only minimal technical revisions. Therefore, according to the current Rules of Legislative Procedure, the timing of public input to legislative proposals must come either before the first reading — essentially during the drafting process, or between first and second reading — which at a minimum is two weeks and under “normal” circumstances should be considered within two months (14 days for comments to the author of the draft, 30 days for the author to consider comments, 14 days for the committee to prepare for the second reading).

This means that there really has to be a very concerted effort for committees in the National Assembly to solicit public input — and the system of “committee hearings” has really only just been introduced to the National Assembly. ALSP has been working with selected committees on adopting a practice of more regular hearings being conducted in committees, and a few committees have piloted such hearings on targeted legislative proposals. Established deputies who chair committees are familiar with the practice of “Parliamentary Hearings” and are comfortable organizing grand meetings of many individuals and organizations which might be affected by a change in policy. While we have not observed such hearings to be particularly effective at providing the National Assembly with additional information, the practice continues it would appear more from the momentum of tradition as a “public relations tool” than as a way of soliciting additional perspectives on pending legislation or whether current legislation is really effectively implemented.

New committee chairs seem currently to be hesitant to embrace the concept of committee hearings in favor of “open discussions” in the committee that might bring together individuals with different perspectives — or simply having the government report on their proposals and current implementation of policy.

The concept of committee “Field Hearings” in the districts where the potential for legislative impact is greatest and specific has not really been explored by any committee in the National Assembly, except the State and Legal Committee under the leadership of the chair from the previous convocation. This is definitely an area that could be addressed more fully in future legislative strengthening programs.

## **2. *Rules of Procedure***

It has become clearly apparent during the past year that the National Assembly Rules of Procedure could use considerable amendment. It has been observed that the National Assembly deputies and staff have a tendency to use the Rules of Procedure as an anchor and a shield. Not surprisingly, there is an attitude common among post-soviet societies that “that which is not specified is prohibited” rather than “that which is not prohibited is possible.” This attitude can be a major hindrance to legislative reform efforts. It has been our observation that a thorough examination of the present Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly could result in much improved legislation.

This is especially apparent as far as the Budget Process is concerned which currently is constrained by the extremely short period of time which the National Assembly has to consider the budget proposals of the government.

Another area of rules amendment has to do with the public relations and public outreach activities of the National Assembly — particularly regarding established practices such as the weekly “Parliamentary Hour” TV program. Amendments to the rules could allow for a more dynamic and interactive presentation of the positions of the political factions’ positions on various legislative activities.

Furthermore, the National Assembly would be wise to consider the ramifications of changing the rules from the current limitation of each deputy to two volunteer staff to providing deputies with allowances to pay for their staff. This will increase deputies’ abilities to conduct their constituency case work, review and analyze legislative proposals — or prepare their own initiatives, and oversee executive implementation of laws in force.

Rules of Procedure for the Committees of Parliament is an area which ALSP addressed, but continued review and improvement of the Committee Rules of procedure would surely serve the National Assembly well.

The adoption and implementation of an MP Code of Ethics or the Law on the Status of Deputies which addresses the ethical norms for deputies are issues which should also be addressed in the context of the Rules of Procedure or as a compliment to them. A draft Law on the Status of Deputies has been circulated during the past year, but it addresses more the social status and civil protection of deputies rather than their responsibilities. A working group of NA deputies and staff under the leadership of Vice Chairman Hovhannesian and supported by OSCE has drafted the concept for an MP Code of Conduct. Further work not only on the passage of the Code of Conduct, but its publication and implementation would be an important contribution to the legislature’s perceived legitimacy and integrity.

### **3. *Research and Analysis Capacity***

The National Assembly currently has limited in-house research and analysis capacity. On the one hand, the Civil Service Law should provide an opportunity to define the necessary qualifications for a professional research and analysis staff. The recent restructuring of existing research and analysis units (Legal Analysis, Economic Analysis, and Research and Analysis) as well as the establishment of new social policy and regional policy analysis units will serve to promote more cooperation and collaboration in providing research and analysis support to the elected deputies. However, overcoming years of competitive attitude and duplication of effort will require serious attention.

The Research and Analysis Division is currently doing some pro-active research, but is limited since the skills level of the current staff-- who were assigned to this department before it was understood what staffing requirements in a modern legislative research unit demand --are still in need of development.

The National Assembly Research and Analysis units will require substantial assistance to bring them up to the level of modern legislative research services. One way to do this is to require a demand for services from the deputy corps — to expose them to the level of legislative research which other parliaments receive from their staff. Another is to expose staff to the same practices through exchanges, conferences of legislative research services (such as IFLA and ECPRD), and training in skills development. Specialist training in fiscal analysis, gender analysis, legal analysis, comprehensive research and analysis should be ongoing and a system of evaluating the utility of the analyses should be developed.

### **4. *The Budget Process***

ALSP has addressed the budget process in parliament as one of the most important for direct technical assistance. The National Assembly's ability to be effective in its role in the budget process is severely hampered by the legislative basis which is quite limiting both in time and information resources available to parliament. Continued assistance to parliament in reforms that would increase the accountability of the government towards the parliament regarding the state budget will be important also in future assistance efforts.

The ability of committees to review as well as oversee the budget is also an area where assistance will be important. This includes the capacity of staff specialists to conduct budget analysis and committee staff to solicit information both from the government and from local government, civil society and specialists (economists, think tanks, etc.).

## **B. OVERSIGHT**

### **1. *Question Period in Parliament***

The National Assembly has adopted the practice of regular Question Period in Parliament. Every Wednesday afternoon during session weeks the Government stands ready to take questions from deputies. The questions can be written or oral and government ministers are required to respond to the queries of the deputies. The session is broadcast live on public radio and is tape-delayed broadcast on National TV later that evening.

The practice of Question Period in Parliament has been used by some MPs to promote their political agendas. In fact, it was deemed to be so effective a political forum that during the Presidential elections in May 2003, the majority parties boycotted the sessions of parliament in order to deprive the opposition of that microphone time.

However, the use of Question Period as an oversight tool has not always proven to be as effective. This has been a result both of the quality of the questions posed during the QP as well as the relationship between the deputies and the government. The behavior both of MPs and the government ministers during the question period has sometimes left much room for improvement. In autumn 2002, it was observed that the Prime Minister would often not even stand to respond to deputies but rather make a comment from his seat with his back to the deputies in the hall, or even respond to the Chairman of the National Assembly rather than to the deputy posing the question. It was often observed that a government minister would respond to a deputy's question with disdain or even mockery. Sometimes, this had to do with the nature of the question which the deputy posed. By its nature, the questions during this process often have a "populist" nature — deputies proving to their constituents that they are addressing issues which have been brought to their attention.

The ability for deputies to prepare for question period can be greatly enhanced by the committee staff, the faction staff, the general staff and deputy personal assistants. The more information the deputy has to support the question, the stronger the position of the deputy vis-à-vis the government minister.

In most parliaments, the Question Period is more an opportunity for MP's to showcase their concerns about government policy more than an expectation of specific action. However, it can be used as an oversight tool as well — to encourage public feedback to their elected deputies when they see that a deputy does, in fact, raise those concerns with the government. In the current political environment in Armenia with the political coalition in parliament and the government, the Question Period in parliament can serve to raise the level of accountability as each faction/political party keeps the others in check, in part, simply by raising issues and increasing awareness about certain issues in this public forum.

## ***2. Citizen Appeals as an Oversight Tool***

The ability for citizen appeals to be used by parliament as an oversight mechanism depends on good organization of that process and the ability to analyze and report on the citizen appeals in the aggregate to parliament. ALSP has been working with the Citizen Letters Division to increase their ability to do such analysis to the letters and inquiries which are addressed in general to the National Assembly. Once this system is functioning in the Citizen Letters Division, it may be possible to expand that capacity to Committees of Parliament as well (since they receive their citizen inquiries directly). The Speaker has established a "Letters Council" in August 2004 to track the action on letters of citizens addressed to the Speaker — and this unit can also benefit from the letters tracking system. Individual deputies can also be made aware of mechanisms and procedures which might help them to manage their constituency correspondence better to be able to glean from citizen feedback information which can inform the deputy in conducting oversight responsibilities.

### **3. *Committee Hearings as an Oversight Mechanism***

Most deputies of the National Assembly have indicated that they believe that the National Assembly conducts oversight “through the Control Chamber.” Most do not go further to acknowledge that there may be other ways of exercising oversight of the executive’s implementation of laws beyond the strict budget oversight which the Control Chamber provides. In other parliaments, the work of the members of parliament in committees is instrumental to their oversight responsibilities. In addition to considering new legislation, the committees also review the implementation of current laws by soliciting feedback from citizens as well as from ministry officials and local government officials. In many legislatures, committees also investigate allegations of poor management of government programs.

The oversight work of committees can often best be conducted “in-situ,” for example in Field Hearings in the regions. Visiting a site where government programs can be seen “in action” is an important way to understand whether a program is really working as it was intended in the legislation, or whether budgetary resources are being used most prudently.

Providing assistance to the National Assembly in the methods and procedures of committee work to enhance their oversight capabilities could contribute greatly to the National Assembly’s role in checks and balance of power in Armenia.

### **4. *Control Chamber***

In both surveys of deputies of the National Assembly (the exit survey of deputies of the 2<sup>nd</sup> convocation and the entry survey of deputies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> convocation) the Control Chamber was identified as the mechanism by which oversight is exercised. However, in both surveys the deputies also universally evaluated the work of the Control Chamber at a very low level.

The Control Chamber is now working to define its role in the system of state power in Armenia. Proposed revisions to the Control Chamber Law reflect on the current “system” of multiple audit systems while at the same time missing the point of how the Control Chamber audits and reviews need to be linked to a system of internal audit which is currently lacking in the executive. Changes in the Budget Systems Law which promote more results-oriented program budgeting will allow the Control Chamber to provide deputies with more information about the actual effectiveness of government expenditures rather than a straight cost-accounting report. Additionally, the Control Chamber staff need to gain a fuller understanding that their role is not necessarily only to uncover fraud or mismanagement, but to conduct audits of results is something and that will take effort, time and a mind-set change. Additionally, the Control Chamber auditors will need further training — and perhaps software and connectivity — once the State Budget System is linked to software being developed for the Ministry of Economy and the Treasury. At this stage, the Control Chamber staff is growing — but a concern is whether it is growing with the appropriate staff and appropriate direction.

Providing assistance to the deputies and staff of the National Assembly on effective use of Reports of the Control Chamber is one way that the oversight power of the National Assembly can be enhanced. The process by which the deputies request audits to be conducted by the Control Chamber (development of the Annual Plan of Audits) is also an area which could be greatly improved upon. Additionally, the transparency of the work of the Control Chamber can

be improved, for example, by making their reports available to the public on a Control Chamber website.

## **C. REPRESENTATION**

### ***1. Citizen Information Center and Citizen Appeals Systems***

ALSP has been working with the Secretariat of the National Assembly on the idea of instituting a Citizen Information Center at the National Assembly. Currently, this function is performed by the Citizen Letters Division where citizens come to meet with deputies and submit letters and requests (there are still a lot of requests for monetary support — since this used to be a place where citizens could turn to for living subsidies). The TACIS/SNA project has also proposed another approach to constituency relations, namely, a Citizen Appeals System which is functional in Germany. The Citizen Appeals system seems also to be quite close to the concept of the Ombudsman. The National Assembly passed the Law on the Ombudsman and the first Ombudsman took office in February 2004. It would be natural for an assistance program to provide assistance to this new institution which, while at this stage though appointed by the President of the Republic, has the responsibility to report also to the National Assembly.

*Each year, during the first quarter of the year, the Defender shall deliver a report on his/her activities and on the human rights situation in the previous year to the President of the Republic of Armenia and the representatives of executive, legislative and judicial authorities. The reports shall be presented to the National Assembly during the first sitting of the National Assembly's spring session. The Defender also presents his/her report to the mass media and relevant NGOs.<sup>4</sup>*

### ***2. District Offices Capacity Building***

An important way of connecting with citizens is to meet with the electorate in the district. Currently deputies are hampered in their ability to meet regularly with constituents in the district because of lack of appropriate transportation, meeting facilities and staff in the district. Since the personal staff of the deputies work on a part-time voluntary basis — and customarily in Yerevan, there is often little incentive (other than personal loyalty) for individuals to work on behalf of the deputy in the district. This hampers greatly both the public's ability to gain more information about their elected representative as well as the ability of the deputy to gain more direct information about the needs of the people s/he is representing. Building a capacity for district offices for deputies can be an important target for technical assistance. Other countries in the NIS have a system of using local council facilities for district offices of national legislators. Others have a system of compensating assistants to deputies which allows the deputy to hire individuals capable of handling constituency case work. Addressing the barriers to conducting effective work in electoral districts and proposing solutions could contribute greatly as well to a more informed electorate and a more accountable representative.

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<sup>4</sup> Article 17. The Defender's Report: LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DRAFT AS IT PASSED THE SECOND READING OSCE/UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

In conjunction with the political party capacity building programs in Armenia (e.g., NDI), the legislative strengthening program could also work more with the factions in the NA as a starting point for district representative functions, so that individual deputies have a pool of resources from which to draw. Cooperation and collaboration with other programs working with factions would be an important consideration.

### **3. *Effective Public Input at the Committee Level***

Just as committees of the National Assembly might be strengthened to address the informational and oversight needs of parliament, so too can they serve to facilitate more public input through hearings of committees, communication with civil society organizations and public outreach by the committees — via the website, publications, and media relations.

### **4. *Publications and Public Outreach***

The National Assembly, especially under the new leadership, is keenly aware of the need to inform the public more about the work of the parliament. One of the areas that has been addressed by the new chairman of parliament is intensified work with the journalists accredited to the National Assembly. The work that ALSP has done with the Public Relations Department and the accredited journalists has laid a good framework for improved legislative relations with the media. The Public Relations Department with ALSP assistance has developed an overall Public Communications Strategy for Parliament. Work can continue in a number of ways, including, but not limited to working with the Press Club of Parliament (to promote information briefings, trainings, collective suggestions for improvements to the leadership, etc.), work with committees and factions on their role in the public relations process.

Other ideas developed with the National Assembly for increasing the public's knowledge of the National Assembly include a broadsheet "insert" published on a regular basis by the National Assembly promoting the public discussion of draft legislation and distributed among other means through high-circulation dailies. This method has proven to be effective for areas of legislation which will affect the population at large, such as education, labor policy, family policy, communications, etc. Use of this mechanism can be refined and institutionalized.

An idea that has been discussed with the National Assembly for the past year is the initiation of a series called "Laws for Laymen" which would make legislation which has passed the National Assembly more accessible to the general public. The concept is to provide not simply the published text of the laws, but rather accompany it with expert commentary which would make the laws more understandable to the general population.

"Promotional" materials such as brochures and calendars are important tools which can be used by deputies with their constituents but which also can be made available in English and Russian for delegations of deputies and staff outside the country as well as by the National Assembly when they receive foreign delegations.

The development of programs for youth in parliament is an important step to promoting the knowledge of the National Assembly among the future voters of Armenia. Other countries have employed various methods from special school liaison offices, to youth parliaments, to development of special literature for youth on parliament's activities. The Youth Parliament

initiated at the National Assembly in April 2004 is just one step towards engaging more fully the youth of Armenia in legislative activities. There has been a great interest expressed in the National Assembly in developing specific and institutionalized programs for youth.

The ALSP has worked intensively with the National Assembly on the development of the new website. It is not only technically improved, but it also promotes more decentralized responsibility for the content of the website as well as increased transparency of the activities and processes in parliament. The continued development of the website should surely be the focus of any Armenian legislative strengthening program as the percentage of the civically active population of Armenia gaining access to the internet as a tool will only increase.

The new leadership of the National Assembly has instituted the “Citizen’s Hotline” — a telephone number where citizens interested in providing feedback to the National Assembly on legislative proposals could call and discuss their ideas. The implementation of this idea failed, partly due to the staffing of the hotline and partly due to the expectations of the citizens who called the hotline. If the “Legislative Hotline” is to continue, the concept needs re-working and the staff needs to be fully trained to deal with the public at this level.

## **D. CROSS-CUTTING**

### ***1. Equipment and New Technologies***

The technical capacity of the National Assembly was quite limited when USAID began its assistance to parliament. Now the National Assembly has an enhanced LAN and 31 computers for legislative departments provided by USAID and in late spring 2004 received more powerful servers and more computers for committee staff and other departments from TACIS/SNA program. USAID and GTZ have also provided the Control Chamber with additional computing and office equipment. However, the computer equipment that is provided also needs to be put on a replacement schedule. Additional computers (some have mentioned providing each deputy with a computer) will certainly enhance the ability of the National Assembly to communicate both internally and outside the National Assembly.

However, computing equipment alone is not enough to increase capacity. A comprehensive training program needs to be developed. A major step forward in this area was begun with both the TACIS/SNA and USAID/ALSP efforts — yet efforts must be maintained. Continuing education programs for staff and deputies should be incorporated in the Human Resources training profile. Maintenance schedules and troubleshooting should be a regular part of the telecommunications division. IT policies should be written, implemented, and monitored at all levels of users. Training in use of central resources (Databases, the intranet, etc.) will also be an important ongoing activity.

It may be that a central computer resource center (for example, in the library) could be made available for all staff. This will alleviate the need for more computers in all departments, and with strict regulation it can serve as a much needed tool for NA staff. It will also be important to take a serious look at the capacity of committee and faction staff to make use of information technology resources (hard and soft).

The National Assembly Leadership has already approached USAID about providing still more powerful printing equipment in order to facilitate the National Assembly's public outreach initiatives. These requests deserve consideration, but should also include a commitment to staff training and longer term strategies for maintenance and exploitation (i.e., supplies, cost-recovery plans, etc.).

A major equipment need which was not met either by USAID or TACIS/SNA in this phase of assistance is the support of the sessions' work of parliament. It would not be inappropriate to consider an upgrade of the equipment which serves the duplication necessary to ensure that deputies receive copies of draft laws to be considered at the National Assembly sessions.

An elevation of status and functions of the IT Division would also greatly enhance the IT services (maintenance, technical services and strategic policy implementation).

Storage facilities of the National Assembly Library and Archives are another issue that might be considered. Modern movable shelving for books, periodicals and archival materials would greatly enhance the physical accessibility to these resources, especially as the library services continue to become more professional.

## **2. *Monitoring and Evaluation for Strategic Management***

Recommended under ALSP, but not brought to fruition was the establishment of a Legislative Strengthening Advisory Group. The establishment of a body composed of multi-factional elected deputies and multi-departmental senior staff to advise the speaker and the chief of staff on long- and short-term strategies for modernization and professionalization of legislative work would be an important part of any future legislative assistance project.

## **E. OTHER POSSIBLE AREAS FOR LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING**

- ▶ Effective Committees of Parliament
- ▶ Effective Public Relations of Committees, Speakers and Departments
- ▶ Improved Budget Process in the National Assembly
- ▶ Improved Legislative Process in the National Assembly
- ▶ Improved capacity within the National Assembly for effective legislative-executive relations
- ▶ Improved Analysis Capacity — including legal analysis and fiscal analysis
- ▶ Building the capacity for District Offices — Citizen Relations of deputies in electoral districts
- ▶ Increased Knowledge of the National Assembly by the public
- ▶ Increased Capacity of Civil Society Organizations to effectively address the National Assembly
- ▶ More Effective Youth programs in Parliament
- ▶ Institutionalizing Gender Analysis — as an institutional commitment
- ▶ Improved Record keeping in Parliament — Archive processes
- ▶ Effective internal communication and document processing — use of the LAN
- ▶ Institutionalizing In-service training programs for National Assembly staff — building an in-house training capacity

- ▶ Constitutional reforms — addressing the weaknesses within the constitution regarding the authority of the legislative branch
- ▶ Rights of the Opposition of Parliament — Effective Working Relationship of the Majority and the Opposition
- ▶ Arbiter of the Rules — either a “Parliamentarian” or a “Rules Committee”
- ▶ Sanctions system for deputies who do not abide by the rules (proxy voting)
- ▶ Training of Journalists on Legislative Processes (support to NA Press Club)
- ▶ Improved NA Journalist Accreditation Process including Orientation of Journalists
- ▶ Effective mechanisms for soliciting Citizen Feedback (Circulation of Draft Laws, hotline for legislative feedback)
- ▶ Increased effectiveness of use of Assistants to Deputies

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## APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A. TRAINING REPORT

USAID SO	USAID IR	Contractor or Grantee	Program Title	Field of Study	City or Region in Armenia	Start Date M/D/Y	End Date M/D/Y	Total Number of Participants	Number of Female Participants
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	CCCG/NA Constituency relations	Yerevan ALSP office	7/31/02	7/31/02	24	15
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	CCCG/NA Constituency relations	Yerevan	8/28/02	8/28/02	21	8
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Budget Process Reform Options for Armenia	Yerevan "Hrazdan" hotel	9/18/02	9/18/02	32	4
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Legislative Research and Analysis	Yerevan NA	9/19/02	9/19/02	40	24
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Gender analysis	Yerevan ALSP office	9/24/02	9/24/02	20	15
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Gender policy analysis/NA	Yerevan ALSP office	9/25/02	9/25/02	10	6
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	Poland Study Tour	Polish Sejm	Warsaw Poland	9/13/02	9/20/02	11	5
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Budget issues NA Staff Information briefing	Yerevan "Ani Plaza"	11/17/02	11/17/02	12	4
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Energy Efficiency	Yerevan NA	12/16/02	12/16/02	20	9
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Trafficking NA staff Information Briefing	Yerevan NA	12/19/02	12/19/02	35	10
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	NA website discussions CCCG	Yerevan ALSP office	2/6/03	2/6/03	13	8
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	NA Staff Information Briefing WTO Accession	Yerevan NA	2/26/03	2/26/03	30	15
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI		CCCG meeting	Yerevan ALSP office	3/26/03	3/26/03		

USAID SO	USAID IR	Contractor or Grantee	Program Title	Field of Study	City or Region in Armenia	Start Date M/D/Y	End Date M/D/Y	Total Number of Participants	Number of Female Participants
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Research training for NA staff	Yerevan NA	3/18/03	3/26/03	16	14
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	English classes for NA staff (examination fee)	Yerevan AUA	4/2/03	7/9/03	39	27
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	English classes for elementary level for NA staff	Yerevan NA	4/21/03	7/18/03	17	17
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Workshop on Gender Analysis of Public Policy for NA staff and NGOs	Yerevan ALSP office	4/28/03	4/28/03	6	6
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Training on Team Building (by BSC) for Control Chamber staff	Yerevan NA	4/30/03	4/30/03	11	7
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	English classes at AUA for NA staff	Yerevan AUA	5/5/03	7/5/03	8	4
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Writing skills workshop for NA staff	Yerevan ALSP office	5/12/03	5/12/03	4	3
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Training on Management & Supervision (by BSC) for Control Chamber Management	Yerevan BSC	6/20/2003	06/20/2003	5	1
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	NMO seminar for Deputies and NA staff	Yerevan NA	6/25/2003	07/03/2003	45	11
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	IFLA conference	Prague Berlin	7/28/03	8/8/03	1	1
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Armenia Parliament: Role, Significance, Challenges (ALSP costshare of TACIS-SNA Training for Deputies, NA staff, NGOs and journalists)	Tsakhkadzor Writer's house	9/15/03	9/16/03	69	27
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Performance measurement and evaluation workshop for Control Chamber	Yerevan ALSP office	9/16/03	9/17/03	13	5
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Budget process and the role of parliament for Deputies and NA staff	Yerevan NA	9/18/03	9/19/03	26	3
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Parliament and Mass media for NA staff and journalists	Tsakhkadzor Writer's house	9/26/03	9/28/03	35	23
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Pre-Intermediate level of English classes for NA staff	Yerevan NA	10/2/03	11/18/03	12	12

USAID SO	USAID IR	Contractor or Grantee	Program Title	Field of Study	City or Region in Armenia	Start Date M/D/Y	End Date M/D/Y	Total Number of Participants	Number of Female Participants
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Training on Adobe Page Maker for the NA staff	Yerevan IAB Centre	10/6/03	10/31/03	3	3
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Gender Responsive Budget Workshop for NGOs, NA staff and journalists	Yerevan Ani Plaza	10/13/03	10/14/03	22	16
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Comparative Legislative Practices	United States	10/23/03	11/3/03	6	0
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	PRSP - Info briefing for the NA staff	Yerevan NA	10/30/03	10/30/03	48	17
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Pre-Intermediate level of English classes for NA staff	Yerevan NA	1/12/04	1/20/04	4	4
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Adobe Photoshop training for NA staff	Yerevan IAB Center	1/20/04	1/30/04	2	1
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Staff Innovation fellowship	Kiev, Ukraine	1/20/04	3/2/04	4	4
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Staff Innovation fellowship	Moscow, Russia	1/31/04	2/15/04	2	0
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Training for newly accredited journalists	Yerevan NA	2/5/04	2/5/04	24	17
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Advocacy Issues Presentation of Survey Results	Yerevan Tekeyan Center	2/18/04	2/18/04	35	26
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Workshop on Approaches to research for legislators (for NA staff)	Yerevan NA	2/20/04	2/20/04	5	5
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Pre-Intermediate level of English classes for NA staff	Yerevan NA	2/23/04	2/27/04	6	6
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Pre-Intermediate level of English classes for NA staff	Yerevan NA	3/1/04	3/30/04	7	7
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Introductory session for NA staff (Inf. Dpt.)	Yerevan NA	3/1/04	3/1/04	10	9

USAID SO	USAID IR	Contractor or Grantee	Program Title	Field of Study	City or Region in Armenia	Start Date M/D/Y	End Date M/D/Y	Total Number of Participants	Number of Female Participants
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Presentation on Managing Change in an Era of Transition and The New Challenges Posed by Integrating into European Structures for the NA heads of Departments	Yerevan NA	3/2/2004	3/2/04	7	4
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Using Excel for Budget Analysis training for NA staff	Yerevan IAB Center	3/2/04	3/9/04	6	3
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Info briefing on Labor Code for NA staff	Yerevan NA	3/19/04	3/19/04	35	20
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Using Excel for Budget Analysis training for NA staff	Yerevan IAB Center	3/29/04	4/2/04	7	3
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Pre-Intermediate level of English classes for NA staff	Yerevan NA	4/8/04	4/30/04	5	5
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Advocacy Seminar on Implementations for NGOs	Yerevan ABA/CEELI	4/8/04	4/8/04	12	7
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Using Excel for Budget Analysis training for NA staff	Yerevan IAB Center	4/19/2004	4/23/04	4	2
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Adobe Photoshop training for NA staff	Yerevan IAB Center	4/26/04	5/5/04	1	1
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Pre-Intermediate level of English classes for NA staff	Yerevan NA	5/1/04	5/12/04	5	5
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Using Excel for Budget Analysis training for NA staff	Yerevan IAB Center	5/3/2004	5/8/04	4	3
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Info-briefing on Freedom of Information Act for NA staff	Yerevan NA	5/20/04	5/20/04	18	11
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Training on Basic Computer Skills for NA staff	Yerevan IAB Center	6/10/04	6/25/04	8	7
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	LAN Training for NA staff	Yerevan NA	6/24/2004	6/25/04	61	36
2.1	2.1.4	DA/DAI	ALSP	Excels for use in enhancing research report for NA staff (inf. Dep.)	Yerevan NA	8/9/04	8/13/04	5	5

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## APPENDIX B

### CONSULTATIONS (STTA) ROSTER

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#### SPRING 2002

Paul Mansfield            8 days IT Assessment  
Art Sauer                 15 days Budget Processes Assessment  
Ann Graham               5 days Public Policy and Gender Analysis Training Module

#### FALL 2002

Ron Crisman              13 days on Budget Process and Analysis  
Art Sauer                 40 days on Budget Process and Budget Analysis Training  
Clay Wellborn            10 days Research and Analysis Group  
Joel Jutkowitz            3 days Monitoring and Evaluation  
Ann Graham               8 days Public Policy and Gender Analysis  
Bob Brown                10 days IT Assessment and Equipment Procurement Plan  
Steve Leeds               18 days Budget Oversight

#### *PRO BONO*

Elizabeth Chouldjian — Constituency Relations, PR and Website Design  
Aramazd Der Metrosian — Website Design

#### SPRING 2003

Donna Usher              20 days Research and Analysis  
Bart Childs               10 days Public Relations  
Ann Frey                  20 days Constituency Relations  
Art Sauer                 15 days on Budget and New Member Orientation  
Ann Graham               6 days Public Policy and Gender Analysis Training

#### *PRO BONO*

Aramazd Der Metrosian — Website Design  
Volodymyr Stretovych — New Member Orientation — Legislative Committees, Rules, Ethics  
Wieslaw Staskiewicz — New Member Orientation — Research and Analysis  
Scott Wildman — New Member Orientation — Constituency Relations and Oversight  
Maria Amouradian — New Member Orientation — Staff Resources and Public Relations

#### FALL 2003

Ron Crisman              15 days Control Chamber and Budget Process Training  
Carmen Lane              11 days Constituency Relations, Hearings  
Christopher Simpson     10 days PR Strategy and Journalist Budget Training  
Art Sauer                 15 days on Washington Study Tour Facilitation and Training  
                                     15 days on Budget November  
Usher                      20 days Research and Analysis and Management Training  
Ann Frey                  25 days Constituency Relations  
Ann Graham               10 days Gender Budgeting and Gender Initiative Group

**SPRING 2004**

Clay Wellborn	10 days	Research and Analysis	Evaluation and Training
Ann Graham	10 days	Gender Analysis	10 days
David Ogle	10 days (no in-country)	Citizen Access and Security	
Jeremy Kanthor	3 days	Monitoring and Evaluation	

## APPENDIX C

### PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT/EXPLANATORY NOTES

ARMENIA LEGISLATIVE STRENGTHENING PROGRAM --- PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN									
#	Impact Indicator	Indicator Definition and Unit	Data Source	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis and Reporting Frequency	Person Responsible	Target / Achieved		
							Baseline 10/02	Year 1 10/03	Year 2 3/04
<b>More Responsive: Effective Parliament</b>									
1	Website Efficacy Direct indicator	Meeting Requirements suggested in IPU Guidelines	NA Website	Monitoring website	Semi-annually	Alex Sardar Deputy COP	10%	25%/85	50%/85%
2	Public knowledge of the work of the NA	The degree to which the general public is informed about the work of the NA	Survey communities throughout Armenia	9 2 questions on household survey	Annually	COP	10%	20%/63%; q2-40%	q1 25%/q1-71%; q2-67%
3	Citizen concerns addressed	The letters of citizens are used to spur NA analysis or legislative action	NA Secretariat	NA Secretariat Statistics	Semi-annually	Deputy COP	0	20/ NA	50/ NA
<b>More Effective Parliament</b>				<b>Increased Diversity of sources contributing to legislators for their law making</b>					
4	National Assembly Staff access external resources for their work	% of Staff who list use external resources for their work on staff survey	NA Staff	Survey	Annually	COP	17.40%	25%/40%	50%/ NA

<p><b>5</b> % of NGO activists aware National Assembly Activities</p>	<p>% of representative sample of NGO activists answering 5 out of 7 questions correctly/ % of NGO Activists who can name recent news events or legislation from the media (Print or TV)</p>	<p>NGO Activist Survey 300 NGOs at November 2002 conference</p>	<p>Questionnaire</p>	<p>Annually (First year at conference - subsequently by mail)</p>	<p>Deputy COP</p>	<p>35%</p>	<p>40/ p 17%; TV 33%</p>	<p>45/ p 26%; TV -63%</p>
<p>% of NGO activists satisfied with the Responsiveness of the National Assembly to their concerns</p>	<p>% of representative sample of Active NGO's satisfied with the responsiveness of NA to other concerns and needs</p>	<p>Questionnaire</p>	<p>1%</p>	<p>10/ 25.8%</p>	<p>15/ 28.3%</p>			
<p><b>6</b> Ranking of Scorecard of public Access</p>	<p>Criteria of the frequency of meetings, availability of information, and physical access</p>	<p><u>Panel of Experts</u> NA Scorecard Staff NA Departments, NGO's International Experts Business interests</p>	<p>Semi-annual at the end of the each NA session (July - Nov. 2002), January 2003, July 2003 January 2004</p>	<p>COP</p>	<p>35%/ 11.3</p>	<p>40%/13.3</p>	<p>45%/14.4</p>	

7	Percentage of Staff which communicates with and coordinates work with other staff units	Staff working on specific projects with other staff units in the NA (Appendix C)	NA Staff	Staff survey	Annually	COP	30% 32% F. 29%	45%/ 35%; F 75%	55%/ NA
8	Improved legislative process	Ranking of NA on Scorecard of quality of legislative process	<u>Panel of Experts</u> NA Scorecard Staff, NA Departments, NGO's, International Experts, academic Experts		Semi-annual at the end of the each NA session (July - Nov. 2002), January 2003, July 2003 January 2004	COP	40%/27.8	45%/26.3	50%/28.5
indicates a projection until baseline measurements are made									

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

Shaded highlights indicate those indicators for which a projection was made at the beginning of the project, and the red number next to it indicates the baseline used after the baseline was determined (by survey, first scorecard returns, etc.)

### **INDICATOR 1 = WEBSITE EFFICACY INDICATOR**

The redesign of the website was in accordance to criteria set by the Inter-Parliamentary Union's *Guidelines for Parliamentary Websites*. At the time of the launch of the website, the site was 85% compliant with the IPU guidelines. While significant progress was made from October 2003 to March 2004 (and indeed August 2004) — the work was primarily on the National Assembly's INTRANET. Therefore, no new features were added to the public website, and therefore the ranking did not increase. That said, the level of detail of the deputy biographies, for example, increased when the biographies collected for the printed volume of the *National Assembly Guide to the Third Convocation* were uploaded over the summer 2004 onto the public website. The main areas which are still deficient are the public posting of roll-call votes of deputies and transcripts of plenary sessions, and protocols or transcripts of committee sittings (though digests of the protocols are printed in the news section of the site).

### **INDICATOR 2 = PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORK OF THE NA**

The baseline of 10% was a “guesstimate” made at the time of the PMP design — there was no survey information available at the time. Subsequently, the USAID Local Government Project included two questions on its household survey of 2500 respondents from 9-12 communities throughout Armenia. The data recorded for October 2003 is taken from the fall 2002 survey and the data for March 2004 is taken from the winter 2004 household survey. There were two questions asked probing general knowledge/awareness of the National Assembly: 1 – whether the respondent could name the sitting chairperson (speaker) of the National Assembly and 2 – Whether the respondent could name the deputy representing his/her own community. These are indicated separately on the PMP as q1 and q2. While the data is not reflective with what was originally foreseen when the PMP was designed, the data collected does show a significant increase in the general population as reflected in this household survey of the general knowledge and awareness of the National Assembly over the period of the project. In a balanced consideration of the possible causes of these results, however, it should be noted that between the two surveys, both presidential and parliamentary elections were held and therefore the public's attention may have been drawn more to the National Assembly and the chairman as a result. However, we feel that it is also reflective of the increased effort of the National Assembly in its public outreach.

### **INDICATOR 3 = CITIZENS CONCERNS ADDRESSED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

At the time of the design of the PMP, it was assumed that the Citizen Letters Division could track the correspondence of the National Assembly in order to produce reports which would be reflective of the degree to which citizen letters to the National Assembly could spur action by elected officials including the leadership. This was to be measured in terms of the legislative action taken (whether the introduction of new legislation, conduct of an oversight hearing in

committees or posing a question to the government during the government question period. While a tracking system was designed for the department to conduct this tracking, the repeated delays in delivery of equipment for this department from the EU-TACIS project severely limited their ability to include the tracking as part of their routine. This was due in part because the change in leadership in the National Assembly also resulted in a tremendous increase in the amount of correspondence directed to the National Assembly which was processed by the Citizen Letters Division. It should be noted that the Citizen Letters Division does not process correspondence that is addressed specifically to an individual deputy, to a committee or to one of the chairmen of the National Assembly — but rather, only deals with general citizen appeals and correspondence which is not specifically addressed.

While quantitative data is not available, there is anecdotal evidence that the appeals of citizens are meeting with action at the National Assembly and that this is increasing under the current leadership of Mr. Artur [Baghdasaryan](#). For example, Mr. Baghdasaryan has initiated an interdepartmental LETTERS COUNCIL of senior staff to review correspondence which is addressed to the National Assembly to identify policy areas which need special attention. The Chairman of the National Assembly has made reference regularly to the appeals of citizens spurring action by the National Assembly on such issues as refugee affairs, housing, health and pensions.

#### **INDICATOR 4 = NATIONAL ASSEMBLY STAFF ACCESS EXTERNAL RESOURCES FOR THEIR WORK**

The PMP proposed to use Staff surveys and an indication of the percentage of National Assembly Staff who list use external resources for their work to reflect progress on this indicator. At the time the PMP was designed, the first survey of National Assembly Staff had just been completed. Therefore the October 2002 data served as a baseline. The second survey of National Assembly Staff was conducted in September 2003 therefore the data for October 2003 reflects that data indicator. A third survey has not yet been conducted and therefore there is no new data for the March 2004 reporting period.

It should be mentioned, that the staff still included “government or ministry officials” as external resources — which is not what was specifically intended for this indicator — in future surveys, it would be helpful to have the question specifically state “other than ministry or other government officials.”

#### **INDICATOR 5A = % OF NGO ACTIVISTS AWARE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ACTIVITIES**

Originally, the PMP intended to calculate an index of awareness based on a short, five-question survey administered to NGO activists. However, examining the results of the answers to those questions, the ALSP team determined that the indicator question could be answered more specifically based on the respondents’ direct responses regarding their awareness of the NA Activities as reflected in the media — both print and TV. Further analysis of the response was checked by asking the respondent to actually name a piece of legislation or the news item that they remembered from the recent months or weeks. This indicator is much higher for TV than for print resources, however, in other surveys, it is indicated that most of the population receive their information first from television, so this finding is not remarkable.

### **INDICATOR 5B = % OF NGO ACTIVISTS SATISFIED WITH THE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO THEIR CONCERNS**

It is interesting to look at the raw data and cross-tabs regarding this question of the level of satisfaction of NGOs regarding the responsiveness of the National Assembly to their concerns. This is especially interesting in light of the fact that between the time that the two surveys of NGOs were conducted, the elections to the National Assembly took place. The first survey was initiated in November 2002 at the NGO fair organized under USAID auspices with follow-up surveys sent to regional NGO coordinators. The second was in November 2003 (sent by mail and distributed through NGO capacity building programs). Looking at the data comparison, the number of NGOs responding that they had relevant experience to answer this question increased by 9.4% from 2002 to 2003 which indicates that more NGOs are stating their concerns to their MPs, to the standing committees or to the National Assembly in general. However, the higher % of NGOs who have had interaction with the National Assembly may not be SATISFIED with that interaction — yet the general level of satisfaction with the National Assembly as reflected in the NGO community has increased from 2002 to 2003.

### **INDICATOR 6 = RANKING OF SCORECARD OF PUBLIC ACCESS**

USAID requested that ALSP include a scorecard of public access as an indicator for the National Assembly's physical access but also regarding the access to information. A scorecard of Access to Public Meetings and Records of the National Assembly including 7 questions was distributed after the end of each plenary session to 13-15 individuals, including sitting members of parliament, staff of parliament, NGO activists from Yerevan and outside of Yerevan and local government officials. The scorecard scores collected after the December 2002 session ended serve as a revised baseline. Subsequently the Session Ending in July 2003 serves for the data reported October 2003 and the session ending in December 2003 serves to supply data for the March 2004 reporting period. The aggregate score was determined by taking the total sum of the scores for each question and dividing that by the number of respondents and then totalling all scores for the 7 questions. Thus the total highest possible score would have been 35 (had all respondents given a score of "5") and the lowest possible score would have been 0. It should be noted that the original targets submitted with the PMP when it was designed in October 2002 did not reflect the proper possible indicator numbers — therefore the targets expressed as percentages are really irrelevant. The increase in aggregate scores from the baseline in December 2002 to July 2003 and then December 2003 show a steady gradual increase in the ranking of public access in the National Assembly.

### **INDICATOR 7 = PERCENTAGE OF STAFF WHICH COMMUNICATES WITH AND COORDINATES WORK WITH OTHER STAFF UNITS**

The concept behind this indicator was that by asking staff the degree to which they work with other staff in the National Assembly, it would indicate a higher level of communication and cooperation and ultimately indicate improved management systems. It should be mentioned that between the two staff surveys — one conducted in September 2002 and one in September 2003, a major staff reorganization was initiated including the introduction of the civil service law and attestation of incumbent National Assembly staff. Coincidentally with the September 2003 survey, staff were awaiting this attestation process. The ALSP team, therefore felt that the data

would be more informative if two indicators were reported. The first is the percentage of staff who responded that they do work on specific projects or in working groups with other staff units at the National. Supplemental to that is how frequent such collaboration is among those who do collaborate.

At the time the PMP was designed, the first survey of National Assembly Staff had just been completed. Therefore the October 2002 data serves as a baseline and was indicated when the PMP design was submitted to USAID. The second survey of National Assembly Staff was conducted in September 2003 therefore the data for October 2003 reflects that data indicator. A third survey has not yet been conducted and therefore there is no new data for the March 2004 reporting period.

The results of the survey indicate that while the number of staff who communicate with other staff units has not increased remarkably, among those who do communicate and collaborate, they do it considerably more frequently.

### **INDICATOR 8 = SCORECARD TO MEASURE IMPROVED LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

USAID requested that ALSP include a scorecard of the quality of legislative process as an indicator for the National Assembly's improved legislative process. A scorecard of The Quality of Legislative Process of the National Assembly including 11 questions was distributed after the end of each plenary session to 13-15 individuals, including sitting members of parliament, staff of parliament, NGO activists from Yerevan and outside of Yerevan and local government officials. The scorecard scores collected after the December 2002 session ended serve as a revised baseline. Subsequently the Session Ending in July 2003 serves for the data reported October 2003 and the session ending in December 2003 serves to supply data for the March 2004 reporting period. The aggregate score was determined by taking the total sum of the scores for each question and dividing that by the number of respondents and then totalling all scores for the 11 questions. Thus the total highest possible score would have been 55 (had all respondents given a score of "5") and the lowest possible score would have been 0. It should be noted that the original targets submitted with the PMP when it was designed in October 2002 did not reflect the proper possible indicator numbers — therefore the targets expressed as percentages are really irrelevant. The increase in aggregate scores from the baseline in December 2002 to July 2003 and then December 2003 show a steady gradual increase in the ranking of public access in the National Assembly.

The examination of the data from the baseline of December 2002 to July 2003 reflects a decrease in the quality of the legislative process. However, when put into context, this is easier to understand. The parliamentary elections were conducted in May 2003. Therefore the legislative session which was evaluated in July 2003 could have been interpreted differently by different respondents — for example, some could have considered only the several days of sessions held after the elections from June 12 - June 20<sup>th</sup>. Others may have considered the entire session which began under NA 2 (in February 2003) and ended under NA 3 in late June 2003. Others may have only considered the actual "legislative" session of the NA 2 from February through May 2003. Under any circumstances, the quality of legislation during the period immediately prior to elections and immediately after elections was understandably of lower quality than that during "less dynamic" sessions of parliament. Comparing the data of the baseline in December 2002 (which could be considered the last "normal" session of the NA 2, with that of December

2003, one can see an increase in the quality of legislation as evaluated by the panel or respondents.