

**ASSISTANCE TO THE
PALESTINIAN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**Quarterly Report No. 6
(1 January – 31 March 2001)**

Submitted to:

USAID/West Bank and Gaza

Submitted by:

ARD, Inc.
159 Bank Street, Third Floor
Burlington, VT 05401, USA
Telephone: (802) 658-3890
Fax: (802) 654-4247

Prepared Under Contract #: 294-C-00-99-00156-00
Assistance to the Palestinian Legislative Council

May 2001

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| I. | Introduction and Summary | 1 |
| II. | Major Accomplishments During this Quarter | 3 |
| | A. Enhancing the PLC’s Legislative and Deliberative Capacity | 3 |
| | B. Developing Executive – Legislative Relations and Oversight | 5 |
| | C. Increasing the PLC’s Interaction with Constituents | 6 |
| | D. Strengthening the PLC’s General Administrative Capacity | 7 |
| III. | ARD Administrative and Planning Developments | 10 |
| IV. | Problems Encountered and Steps Taken to Address Them | 12 |
| | A. Legislative and Deliberative Capacity | 13 |
| | B. Executive – Legislative Relations | 13 |
| | C. Constituent Relations | 14 |
| | D. Internal Administration | 14 |
| V. | Summary of Status of Data Collection on Indicators or Indicator Development | 15 |
| | A. Legislative Initiative (IR3.2c) | 15 |
| | B. Oversight Influence (IR 3.2.1a) | 16 |
| | C. Response to Constituents (IR 3.2.3) | 17 |
| VI. | Achievements | 18 |
| | A. Legislative and Deliberative Capacity | 18 |
| | B. Executive-Legislative Relations | 18 |
| | C. Constituent Relations | 18 |
| | D. Internal Administration | 19 |
| VII. | Activities Expected to be Carried Out Next Quarter | 20 |
| | A. Legislative and Deliberative Capacity | 20 |
| | B. Executive - Legislative Relations | 20 |
| | C. Constituent Relations | 20 |
| | D. Internal Management | 20 |

Quarterly Report No. 6
(1 January – 31 March 2001)

I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

This sixth Quarterly Report describes the activities of the Project Technical Unit (PTU) under the USAID contract, *Assistance to the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)* for the period of 1 January to 31 March 2001.

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

During this reporting period, January through March 2001, the Palestinian *intifada* and Israel's response showed no signs of letting up. Military closures made movement between districts difficult. Travel between the West Bank and Gaza was virtually impossible for Palestinians. Denied their basic legislative need to meet, the PLC committees and the full plenary were nearly paralyzed. Other than the exceptional weekend session of March 10 and 11, when the Israeli government granted two-day permits to PLC Members to travel to Gaza, there were no meetings involving Members from both West Bank and Gaza.

Although much of the Council's legislative and oversight work ground to a virtual halt, individual PLC Members accelerated their activities in their home districts. Through town meetings, workshops, conferences, press interviews, community events, hospital visits and other activities, Council Members served as a valuable link between the people and the PA.

Six months of *intifada* and Israeli measures have led to serious economic problems in the territories and a financial crisis in the PA. Deep budget cuts have affected Council operations. Although the PLC has been able to pay staff salaries, Member salaries have been delayed, supplies are running short, and there is little money for maintenance of equipment and vehicles.

The project adjusted its strategies to correspond to the current conditions and the Council's decentralized, district-based work. PLC2 increased its assistance to the constituent offices, visited districts when possible, hired district-based technical assistance for committees, and installed IT equipment for email communication.

The quarter ended on a relatively upbeat and active note. The full plenary session held in Gaza attracted a majority of Members (a total of 67) and gave a noticeable boost to the sagging credibility – and morale – of the PLC. Not surprisingly, given the conditions, the election of a new leadership team (speaker, deputy speakers and secretary general) was devoid of competition – all four were returned to their posts; two won unchallenged.

But what the session lacked in competition, it made up for in transparency. The session was open to the public, and the proceedings were carried live on Palestine Television and radio.

The momentum of the March 10 plenary session carried over into more than two full weeks of Democracy Day activities – workshops, conferences, panel discussions, and school visits (most of which received project support) – conducted all over the West Bank and Gaza.

The project maintained a high level of activity during the reporting period, in spite of the restrictions on travel, the loss of a Senior Technical Advisor, and a ban on outside consultants. Except for national holidays, the main PLC2 offices in Ramallah and Gaza were open six days a week, every week, during this quarter. Local staff braved checkpoints, demonstrations, gun battles, tank shelling, and long traffic jams to travel to and from work.

During this quarter management produced a six-month emergency period work plan and revised the PLC performance indicators.

II. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THIS QUARTER

A. Enhancing the PLC's Legislative and Deliberative Capacity

Cairo Book Fair. ARD conducted a field trip to the Cairo International Book Fair. Participants included the ARD sector coordinator, the PLC Legal Department Director (Ramallah), the PLC Librarian (Gaza) and a Diwan lawyer. Reference books were selected and purchased, financed by ARD, for use in the PLC Library in Gaza and the Diwan Library in the West Bank and Gaza. While in Cairo, the group met with the organizer of the upcoming legislative drafting course.

Forms and Checklists System Analysis. ARD contracted Mr. Mohamed Al-Bitawi to carry out a system analysis on administrative forms and legislative drafting checklists for the Legal Department. At the end of the quarter, following three months of work with ARD and the Legal Department lawyers, Mr. Al-Bitawi submitted the final draft of his study. In the next quarter, a programmer will develop a computer program for the forms and checklists based on Mr. Al-Bitawi's analysis.

PLC Library. Based on a request from the Legal Department Director in Gaza, ARD provided the PLC Library and the Legal Department in Gaza with English translations of several Israeli laws, both in photocopy form and original. In addition, ARD purchased the Congress Classification Schedules catalog system for the Library in Ramallah.

Legislative Drafting Training in Egypt. ARD finalized the extensive preparations necessary for a Cairo-based training program and study tour in legislative drafting. Participants include 13 bill drafters from the Diwan and the PLC and five lawyers from civil society organizations. ARD, the Diwan, and the PLC developed a practical curriculum for the course, concentrating on the amendment of high-priority draft laws currently under PLC review. Due to the Israeli closure, the start of the course was delayed for nearly a month and will now begin on April 7.

Legal Department Assistance Assessment. ARD, the PLC Director General, and members of the Ramallah Legal Department met to discuss the joint assessment of the project's four years of assistance to the Legal Department. At the meeting in Ramallah, it was agreed that the Legal Department should take a more active role in its development by proposing new activities, designing training courses, and working more closely with Council committees. ARD will provide assistance targeted to specific and timely needs that are most likely to show results.

Training for Committee Clerks and other PLC Staff. ARD organized different training courses for the Committee Clerks and other PLC staff. Courses included:

- training staff from the Legal Department and the Library in the use of the Palestinian Laws Database (*Al-Muqtafi*), and
- training the Committee Clerks and other PLC staff in the use of Excel.

Consumer Protection Law. Based on the request from the Gaza Legal Department and the Consumer Protection Association, ARD translated the European Union Consumer Protection Law and provided copies to the Legal Department in Gaza and Ramallah.

Technical Assistance to the Budget Committee. ARD contracted an economic researcher, Mr. Issa Kando, to assist the Budget Committee in estimating physical damage to public and private property during the *intifada*. Mr. Kando worked from the Bethlehem District Office, gathering data from other districts.

Technical Assistance to the Economic Committee. ARD signed an agreement with the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) to provide technical assistance to the PLC Economic Committee, including researching the current economic conditions, developing policy recommendations, and facilitating a dialogue on economic issues between the PLC and the relevant officials and ministries of the Executive Branch. The Legal Department, the Committee Clerks, and the PRU completed a review of pending economic draft laws, which they submitted to MAS. MAS submitted a first draft of their research report to the Economic Committee for review.

Diwan. Having suspended activities for the past two months due to the *intifada*, the Head of the Diwan agreed to restart assistance activities in late January. As mentioned above, Diwan lawyers will join the PLC lawyers in the Legislative Drafting Course in Egypt.

Assistance to Review the PA Budget. Following a request from the chair of the PLC Budget Committee, ARD – in cooperation with the PRU – hired a short-term consultant, Dr. Nedal Sabri, to review and analyze the 2001 PA Budget. The Parliamentary Research Unit (PRU) and Dr. Sabri completed two separate reviews and analyses of the Budget and submitted them to the Budget Committee.

Parliamentary Research Unit. With USAID approval, ARD signed a six-month subcontract agreement to provide technical and financial support with the PRU. This agreement is linked to specific studies to be carried out by the PRU and covers costs previously carried by IRI. The PRU provided ARD with regular updates on their activities, which included:

- providing PLC Members with research on laws relating to international human rights, local government, protection of authors' rights, and dual nationality;
- conducting studies on recently discussed laws and draft laws (the PRU plans further studies);
- responding to Members' inquiries on a variety of topics pertaining to legislation, parliamentary mechanisms, and the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations;
- writing reports on a range of laws relating to economic, social, and political issues; and
- preparing information packages for the PLC delegations visiting parliaments in Europe.

B. Executive – Legislative Relations, Oversight, and Cross-Cutting Activities

Assistance to the Women’s Unit. Over the last quarter, ARD worked closely with the Women’s Unit in the following areas:

- *Unit Brochure:* In coordination with the Public Information Department, ARD and the Unit produced a brochure about its activities; 3,000 copies were distributed during Democracy Day activities in the West Bank and Gaza.
- *Workshops:* The Unit organized a series of workshops that took place concurrently in Ramallah and Gaza between mid-January and the end of February. The workshops dealt with human rights violations with a special focus on children and women, discussing relevant international conventions, the effects of the current situation on children, and different ways to deal with these problems. Target groups included NGOs, social workers, kindergarten workers, and primary school teachers. ARD drafted a booklet about the proceedings of the workshops, which is currently being reviewed by the PLC and USAID.
- *Democracy Day:* In commemoration of Democracy Day, the Women’s Unit organized workshops (separate from those described above) on women and democracy in Ramallah, Gaza, and Jenin. Unit staff also participated in panel discussions and TV programs on women and legislation.
- *Book request from Cairo Book Fair:* The Unit submitted a list of books, references, and publications to ARD for purchase at the International Book Fair in Cairo (see II.A). These were procured by ARD and delivered to the Unit.

Democracy Day 2001. In coordination with the Ministry of NGOs and ARD, the PLC successfully held Democracy Day celebrations in the West Bank and Gaza on March 17-18. Activities included:

- town hall meetings geared towards the theme of democracy (also see II.C);
- workshops relevant to women and democracy, highlighting PLC achievements in this sector organized by the Women’s Unit;
- publications on democracy-related issues, including books on PLC laws and resolutions and a series of “user friendly” booklets on relevant laws (see II.C); and
- TV spots on the importance of relevant laws to complement the booklets (see II.C).

The PLC placed a comprehensive list of all Democracy Day activities on the PLC Web site in the run-up to the celebrations, including the rich program of events organized by Palestinian NGOs. Despite the military closure and the general political situation, all activities went smoothly.

To overcome Israeli restrictions on travel, some NGOs produced lively phone-in TV programs, with PLC Members, Ministers, and NGO activists talking about different subjects related to democracy. Democracy Day activities received extensive media coverage and opened the door for popular and spirited discussions about the role and performance of the PLC. ARD is coordinating with the PLC to conduct follow-on activities, including an evaluation of the Democracy Day campaign by all participants.

C. Increasing the PLC's Interaction with Constituents

Town Meeting Support. ARD continued to provide technical and financial assistance to a number of town meetings organized by district offices in the West Bank and Gaza. The events were well attended, with a high turnout by PLC Members and local constituents. The town meetings received extensive coverage in the local press and on local television and radio.

Constituent Office Democracy Day Activities. District offices worked closely with various NGOs on preparing for Democracy Day activities. Many district offices also organized their own PLC-initiated Democracy Day town meetings, 20 of which were supported by the project. In addition to formal town meetings, several district offices devised innovative methods to create events more relevant to the current political situation and accessible to the younger generation. These included a special meeting in Gaza for families of those killed in the *intifada*, visits by PLC Members to local schools to discuss issues of democracy and the PLC, and meetings for high school and university students. Due, in part, to previous efforts of the Public Information Department (PID) and the PLC2 to improve press coverage of the PLC, Democracy Day activities received extensive coverage by the media.

Constituent Office Public Service Brochures. Based on district demand, ARD reprinted 6,000 more copies of the public service brochures for distribution in six districts. These brochures include updated information on the PLC and the constituency offices, general emergency and first aid instructions, contact information for PLC Members in each district, and emergency telephone numbers.

Constituency Relations Member Manual. The Manual was officially approved by the PLC. ARD will begin copying and distributing to all PLC Members and district offices. The manual discusses how to interact with constituents, address casework, and deal with the media, among other issues.

Constituency Office Visits to District Offices. ARD's Constituency Relations Team visited numerous district offices, meeting with district office directors and PLC Members. At each office, they discussed needs for training for staff, equipment, and support for town meetings. The IT Team also visited the district offices, providing staff with hardware support, training staff, and installing and maintaining equipment and software. Training was also held on the constituent inquiries software in several other offices.

IT Assistance to Constituency Offices. The IT Team continued to provide support and technical assistance to the district offices, both in person and over the telephone.

Computer and Internet Training for PLC Members. In light of PLC Members' increasing interest in training in email usage, ARD offered to provide training in using computers and the Internet. ARD staff began this training at the end of the quarter and will continue it through next quarter as needed.

Equipment and Other District Office Needs. The Nablus District Office received all requested furniture, procured by the project according to USAID procedures, for the new, shared constituent office in Nablus. The Nablus District Office also received modems and scanners. In

addition, the five Gaza district offices received UPSs and scanners, with Gaza City and Rafah offices receiving additional computers.

Training Courses for PLC Staff. ARD covered the costs for two external training courses, on editorial writing and English language, taken by PLC staff from the PID and district offices.

PLC Media Coverage. ARD worked with the PLC on developing media outreach activities to raise the Council's profile among the public. These activities included:

- *TV Public Service Spots:* In coordination with ARD and district offices, the PID produced and distributed four TV public service ads on selected laws to 31 TV stations across the West Bank and Gaza, including Palestine TV (terrestrial and satellite). The spots were launched during Democracy Day.
- *Radio Programs:* The PID also prepared a series of four one-hour radio programs on democracy and the PLC, which was aired by Amwaj Radio in Ramallah.
- *Distribution of PLC session tapes:* ARD regularly facilitated the distribution of PLC session tapes to local stations in Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarem, and Bethlehem.
- *Democracy Day publications:* In coordination with the PID and ARD, the district offices distributed publications developed for Democracy Day during the celebrations, including three user-friendly laws, a brochure on the PLC, the Book of PLC Resolutions, and the Book of Laws.

Indicator Data Collection. ARD worked with the District Office Unit in Ramallah and the Gaza Director General on collecting data for the indicator report on constituent office inquiries and the percentage of response to these inquiries.

D. Strengthening the PLC's General Administrative Capacity

Technical Assistance -Video Conferencing System (VCS). Early in this quarter, ARD completed initial studies on options, both short-term (see II.C) and long-term, for establishing a video and audio link between Gaza and Ramallah for plenary sessions and committee meetings. The project received approval mid-January to hire a local consultant to do a needs assessment and feasibility study, with options and pricing, for a permanent video conferencing system. A briefing of initial findings was presented to the PLC and USAID. The final report and recommendations are due early in Quarter Seven. As this is a priority for all parties concerned—PLC, USAID, and ARD—implementation of the VCS will proceed as expeditiously as possible given the degree of labor and financial resources to be committed.

Management Training Program. In coordination with the Technical Development Unit (TDU), ARD resumed the Management Training program for PLC directors. The training began again with a course in Leadership Skills in Gaza and Ramallah. The military closures have interfered with classes and rescheduling for individual classes was necessary at times. The Palestinian Network for Institutional Development (PNID), one of the local training organizations implementing this program, provided a schedule for three additional courses under this training program. This schedule will carry planning through the summer.

Policy Manual. The final draft of the Policy Manual was completed, submitted to, and approved by the Secretary General, the directors general, and Personnel Unit directors. The Policy Manual covers personnel requirements stipulated by the Civil Service Law (including hiring, performance evaluation, compensation, promotion, and disciplinary procedures) and other PLC policies, such as holidays and leave; grievance procedures; work hours, visitors' policy; use of office equipment; and non-harassment. After a competitive bid, the Manual was sent for printing and will be distributed to all Members and staff.

Assistance to the Administrative Affairs Department. With technical assistance from ARD, the Administrative Affairs Department in Ramallah strengthened their capacity by developing forms and lists for monitoring work by their general staff. ARD held one-on-one training with department supervisors and with the messengers.

Assistance to District Office Staff. ARD continued to provide internal administration support to district offices this quarter. Field visits were made to a number of district offices, despite problems with road closures. The project explained inventory and procurement procedures and accounting processes to staff and began the introduction of district office operation forms. In addition, ARD facilitated improved coordination and communication between the home administrative offices (Ramallah and Gaza) and the district offices.

IT Training. In close cooperation with the TDU, ARD organized a number of IT training classes for staff from various departments of the PLC. These courses included:

- *Excel:* Staff from various departments within the PLC attended two courses held at ARD's computer lab.
- *Financial Excel:* Six PLC staff members participated at a Financial Excel course at the World Trade Center.
- *Java script:* Staff from the PLC IT Unit, PID and the Library were given a specialized training course in Java Script at ARD's computer lab. This training is to strengthen development of the Council's Web pages.
- *A+ applications:* The newest IT Unit staff member participated in this course.

IT Technical Assistance. ARD continues to provide technical support to the IT Unit staff as needed. Assistance this quarter included work on:

- *Web site:* ARD provided technical assistance to the PLC in re-launching the Council Web site and made suggestions as to design enhancement of the pages. In addition, ARD staff supported PLC IT staff in foiling a major hacking attempt into the Council's Web site.
- *Customized workbench:* ARD completed work on the customized workbench for the IT Unit, providing the proper environment for hardware maintenance.
- *Supplies database:* An ARD programmer installed the supplies database, which is currently being used by Procurement and Supplies Unit staff.
- *Workshops:* The project successfully held three workshops for the IT Unit and IT support staff from the PID and the Library. A final report and implementation plan was written to incorporate ideas from the workshops and distributed to all participants.

- *Software and hardware:* ARD reviewed a demo financial software package that could be of interest to the Council's Finance Department. The package warrants further investigation.

Equipment Procurement. To facilitate ongoing cooperation between ARD and the PLC during the complex procurement process, ARD provided the PLC (in Arabic and English) written explanation of ARD procedures and USAID regulations required under this project. ARD also provided technical assistance to conduct a needs assessment and to develop equipment specifications for procurement to occur next quarter. This included developing a Request for Approval (RFA) to purchase equipment for the PID, totaling over \$43,000, and a RFA to buy equipment urgently needed by the PLC, estimated at \$83,500. ARD submitted both requests to USAID in late February.

During the last quarter, the following procurement occurred:

- *Master UPS:* Bids were analyzed, and ARD/Vermont approved the vendor selected by the PLC and ARD field office. The UPS was ordered and will be delivered for installation early next quarter.
- *Generator:* After considerable research and discussion with the PLC, ARD submitted to USAID a request for a source/origin waiver to purchase a Caterpillar generator. (Expenditure of funds for the generator was previously approved.)
- *PLC Director General's office:* Four computers were procured and installed.
- *District Offices:* Modems for the district offices were procured and installed. Computers for the Gaza district offices were installed and are operational.

III. ARD ADMINISTRATIVE AND PLANNING DEVELOPMENTS

While the emergency situation led to a slowdown in the work of the PLC and interfered with a number of project activities, the crisis also created additional work. The fluid situation brought numerous management and administrative challenges (described below in Section IV) and created the need for ongoing emergency planning.

Staffing

The Senior Technical Advisor for Legislative Process position, vacant since late October 2000, remained unfilled. A Senior Project Coordinator and the Report Writer left the project during this quarter, and their positions were not filled, due to USAID preference to delay hiring.

Development of an Emergency Six-Month (March through August) Work Plan

The project produced two six-month work plans – one in January and a revision in March – that described project operations under current *intifada* conditions. The following strategies, described in detail in the six-month plan, also served as strategies for project work during this quarter.

Program Shift and Strategies

ARD reviewed the tasks listed in the original contract under components A (Legislative Process) and B (Executive-Legislative Relations/Oversight) to develop a temporary scale-down plan and identify crisis-relevant activities that should continue during this period. In general, in areas where the PLC has shown reduced political will and sagging institutional activity (legislative process and oversight of the Executive), the project will reduce its assistance. The following policies describe the de-emphasis strategy, while clarifying the criteria for ongoing activity in the affected sectors.

- Reduce staff through attrition, limit use of consultants, and maximize use of remaining local staff.
- Focus on PLC staff and sustainable institution building.
- Support only “high impact” initiatives in crisis-relevant areas.
- Concentrate on specific critical legislation.
- Enhance linkages with other democracy and governance projects.
- Support activities that carry crossover benefits in the emphasized sectors of constituency relations / public outreach and internal administration.
- Work with the PRU.
- Provide ongoing administrative support to outreach activities of the Women’s Unit.

Management and Administrative Strategies

- Decentralize points of management and implementation.
- Concentrate on “common denominators” of institutional development.
- Emphasize staff training - using small groups and individualized, on-the-job mentoring methods.
- Maximize use of remaining Legislative Specialist - Donna Merrill - across all sectors.
- Rely more heavily on local institutions.
- Continue to develop linkages with civil society and the private sector.

- Conduct study missions outside the area.
- Provide flexible and timely responses to new and emergency needs.

In early March, Dr. Rhys Payne, ARD's Headquarters-based Senior Technical Advisor, visited the project for consultations and mid-contract review with the field office and USAID. During his visit, the PLC2 developed lists of activities to accompany the six-month work plan. These detailed plans were shared with USAID and received tentative approval.

IV. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

In general, the problems encountered in Quarter Six were related to the *intifada* and the Israeli government reaction. The most serious problems – both for the PLC and the project – were caused by Israel’s restrictions on Palestinian travel. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank were almost completely separated from each other. Military closures of Palestinian towns and villages meant that Members were unable to gather for meetings, and many staff were unable to reach their workplaces or perform outreach activities. Some staff overcame this problem by temporarily working from their district offices. Parliamentary activities and staff performance were impeded by the difficulty in obtaining permits for travel between the West Bank and Gaza. The ongoing political crisis and violence were major distractions for the PLC Members and staff – diverting attention from day-to-day legislative work and institutional development activities. The violence and political insecurity also affected the morale of PLC Members and staff, further undermining their ability to carry out their duties.

Emergency Arrangements, Safety, and Logistics

Security considerations and travel restrictions required the project to take unusual steps to maintain operations. ARD maintained a temporary office in the Dhahyia Al-Bareed area, where the expatriate staff – when prevented from traveling to Ramallah – were allowed to work. This central and accessible location allowed West Bank staff to meet with the expatriate staff at least once a week, as well as provided a venue to meet with the PLC and USAID.

In light of USAID’s prohibition of expatriate contractor travel to Gaza and Israel’s ban on West Bank Palestinians entering Gaza, the Gaza Strip remained largely off limits. Toward the end of the quarter, the USAID travel ban was lifted, allowing expatriate staff to enter the Gaza strip. However, the Israeli restrictions are still in place, making Palestinian travel to Gaza nearly impossible.

PLC2 continued to adhere to its safety procedures during this period, even after USAID lifted its ban on expatriate travel to PA areas. Staff traveled to and from work in office cars, in groups of two or more, with mobile phones, and avoiding areas and times of predictable clashes. No one worked in the offices alone or at night. On days of unusual problems, staff who live very far from the office worked from home.

Liaison Committee

Meetings with the full Liaison Committee (LC) were nearly impossible during this period. Nevertheless, the project maintained day-to-day contact with the LC Coordinator Mahmoud Labadi and spoke regularly with LC Member Ziad Abu Amr. In order to keep LC members informed, ARD continued to send weekly updates, in Arabic, to every member of the Liaison Committee. ARD and USAID held one meeting with Ziad Abu Amr in Gaza. At the meeting, it was agreed that the project would help to organize a strategic planning workshop, attended by ARD, USAID and the PLC LC, to discuss ways of modifying the project to better meet the emergency needs of the PLC. Repeated attempts to follow-up with Abu Amr failed to bring about a meeting, let alone a workshop. Nevertheless, with USAID’s approval, ARD gave the LC members copies of the draft six-month work plan for their review.

A. Legislative and Deliberative Capacity

The Israeli restrictions on travel severely restricted the PLC's legislative activities. With Members often unable to leave their districts, the PLC's standing committees were unable to hold regular meetings. To overcome this problem, ARD coordinated with the committee chairs and clerks to find alternative means of carrying out their work.

ARD took advantage of the decrease in legislative activity to build the capabilities of staff in the Legal Department and the Diwan. The project organized a study tour for the PLC lawyers and Diwan staff to Egypt, focusing on legislative drafting and current bills before the Council. ARD shifted its assistance toward specific draft legislation under committee review and sought the active engagement of committee chairs. Finally, the project began preparations for a computerized system of legislative forms and checklists to help the Legal Department improve its systematic procedures.

To ensure that the 2001 Budget was properly reviewed and analyzed, ARD coordinated with the Budget Committee to commission a study by the PRU and an external consultant. (In early April, in spite of these efforts, the PLC adopted the 2001 Budget for the Palestinian Authority in a hasty manner, without the appropriate consideration of the studies, ignoring the Budget Committee recommendations, and without any initiatives to involve the public.)

B. Cross-Cutting Activities and Executive – Legislative Relations

Over the last quarter, ARD and the PLC planned several activities with the Institute of Democracy in South Africa (IDASA). However, the current Israeli closures and restrictions on Palestinian travel prevented PLC Members and staff from participating in an IDASA seminar on parliamentary reform, an international women's forum, and a study visit to the South African Parliament.

In response to the ongoing conflict, the Women's Unit decided to shift its focus to address the effects of the Intifada on women and children. The Unit was able to develop new and relevant outreach activities by organizing a series of workshops and seminars, addressing Israeli violations of the rights of women and children.

As in other sectors, travel restrictions interfered with the sector's activities. The Women's Unit Director General in Gaza was unable to visit her staff in Ramallah, widening the gap between the West Bank and Gaza staff. In addition, the Director General's absence resulted in two recently hired staff in Ramallah receiving minimal supervision and guidance. To ameliorate the situation, ARD helped to mediate between the two offices and urged the Director General to provide more support for the Ramallah staff.

In some cases, the PLC and the project worked together to effectively adapt a number of program activities to the new situation. During the Democracy Day Campaign, NGOs used live TV programs on local stations to reach audience members unable to travel to Democracy Day events. In addition, a WU staff member from Jenin began working at the Jenin District Office when she was no longer able to travel to Ramallah. Since then, she has succeeded in organizing workshops in coordination with the district office.

C. Constituent Relations

The travel restrictions and unsafe conditions delayed and reduced the number of ARD visits to district offices. During the Democracy Day Campaign, for instance, the Constituency Relations Team attended only selected events in the West Bank. However, the Team maintained direct phone contact with the offices and continued to receive updates on all the activities.

Initially some of the district offices expressed reluctance about participating in the campaign, fearing that the public would consider discussions about democracy irrelevant and inappropriate during this period of unrest. However, as the planning process gathered momentum, the majority of offices decided to participate.

The PID Director and ARD's Media Coordinator planned to participate in the International Executive Media and TV Workshop in Beirut in April. However, their trip was cancelled when neither of them received Israeli permits to travel.

D. Internal Administration

Travel restrictions required a readjustment of staff training courses in the areas of participants, timing, or venue. ARD monitored the training courses and made adjustments as needed.

In another area, ARD has long struggled in helping the ITU of the PLC. The ITU has been plagued by the lack of a unit director, unclear job responsibilities, and heavy workload on existing staff. These problems have been addressed, but low morale continues to be a problem. Even after a director was named and additional employees were transferred into the ITU, staff still suffer from a lack of motivation.

ARD held a series of workshops to address staffing and information technology issues and equipment concerns with the ITU and other IT support staff of the Council. A work plan was developed specifying the actions to be taken by the Council and the support to be provided by ARD. The project hopes that Unit staff will be motivated in their work by pride in their accomplishments and external acknowledgement of the ITU's contribution to PLC.

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

The performance indicators underwent extensive changes during this quarter. The annual Performance Indicator Report, originally due October 2000, was delayed further, with USAID approval, due to difficulties in collecting data. However, the project collected data on three indicators: legislative initiative, oversight influence, and response to constituents. Below is a brief summary of the data and analysis submitted to USAID.

A. Legislative Initiative (IR 3.2c)

Percentage of legislation passed by the PLC that is initiated by the PLC

Between the establishment of the PLC in March 1996 and September 1999, 30 laws were passed by the PLC. Nine of these were initiated by the PLC, for a total indicator percentage of 36 percent, (9/30). The remaining 21 laws were initiated by the Executive Authority (EA). At the start of the PLC2 period, USAID selected 30 percent as a constant cumulative target for the three annual reporting periods.

In the first six-month period of PLC2 (October 1999 to March 2000) the PLC passed five laws. Of these, one was initiated by the PLC; four were initiated by the EA.

1. *Labor Law (PLC-initiated)*
2. Budget Law
3. Bar Association Law
4. Arbitration Law
5. Judicial Amendment Law

This brought the cumulative ratio to 10/35, thus lowering the cumulative percentage to 28 percent, just below the target of 30 percent. The second six-month period (April 2000 through September 2000) saw the PLC pass 10 laws, of which two were initiated by the PLC.

1. *Standards and Specifications Law (PLC-initiated)*
2. *Jerusalem the Capital Law (PLC-initiated)*
3. Statistics Law
4. Administrative Structures Law
5. Traffic Law
6. Penal Procedures Law
7. Consular Fees Law
8. Formation of Regular Courts Law
9. Civil Aviation Law
10. Evidence in Civil and Commercial Courts

B. Oversight Influence (IR 3.2.1a)
Percentage of formal PLC requests for information or action to which the Executive formally responded.

This indicator tracks Council requests of the Executive branch that relate to non-legislative domestic issues. All of these requests are formal PLC resolutions, which arise from recommendations contained in Committee reports that are presented at plenary sessions. These requests/resolutions are recorded in the plenary journal, Hansard, or other official PLC documents. Similarly, a formal response is a response that is recorded in official PLC documents.

The baseline percentage for this indicator is 28 percent, derived from the cumulative ratio (71 responses to 256 requests) of the PLC’s first three and a half years (March 1996 to September 1999). The target for all three years of PLC2 is an ambitious 40 percent.

The first six months of PLC2 (October 1999 through March 2000) produced 35 new requests. Of these, the EA responded to only seven, for a 20 percent response rate.

The second six-month period (April 2000 through September 2000) produced 40 new requests. Of these 40 requests, the EA responded to only four, according to official PLC records. This lowered the cumulative – or total – percentage for the first year of PLC2 (October 1999 through September 2000) to 15 percent (11/75).

Totals for the year (October 1999 through September 2000):

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Number of formal requests: | 75 |
| Number of formal responses: | 11 |
| Annual percentage: | 15% |

This is well below the baseline value of 28 percent, which was the final cumulative rate for the PLC from March 1996 to September 1999, and far below the target of 40 percent.

Looking only at the number of requests (the PLC's oversight efforts), this year's performance compares favorably to the previous three years.

| Year | Number of Requests | Year | Number of Requests |
|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1997 | 80 | 1999 | 42 |
| 1998 | 46 | 2000 | 75 |

This suggests that even though the Executive branch is less responsive to the PLC's requests, the Council continues, nevertheless, to make the oversight efforts: investigating the government's performance, responding to the public’s needs, and presenting requests for information and action. The Education, Health, and Social Affairs Committee accounts for the largest number of these requests: 33 during this 12-month reporting period.

| <u>Initiating Committee</u> | <u>Number Of Requests</u> | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| | <u>Oct 99 - Mar 00</u> | <u>Apr 00 - Sept 00</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
| Education, Health, and Social Affairs | 11 | 22 | 33 |
| Oversight and Human Rights | 16 | 2 | 18 |
| Economic | 1 | 9 | 10 |
| Budget | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Security and Interior | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Other | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| ----- | | | |
| TOTALS | 35 | 40 | 75 |

There may be several reasons for this. Since this committee covers a broad area of public concern and government activities, it stands to reason that the branches of the government (Ministries of Health and Education) that tangibly touch a large number of citizens would attract proportionately greater oversight interest from the legislature. Also, this committee has been the recipient of considerable project assistance, in the form of training in oversight investigative techniques and public hearings.

This indicator is problematic in a number of ways. While the concept and purpose – to measure the oversight influence or “clout” of the PLC – is valid, the methodology and definitions skew the results. In particular, by restricting the count of EA responses to only those responses formally recorded in the plenary sessions or other official PLC documents, the collection process inevitably misses actual responses that are not recorded. Instead of measuring the actual rate of response, the indicator is increasingly measuring the rate of recording responses. The project needs to examine this issue of oversight influence and develop a more accurate method of determining *actual* EA responsiveness. In addition, the project needs to work with the Council to introduce a system of tracking PLC resolutions to accurately determine whether – and how – the EA responds to them, and to record that response in the Council’s official records.

C. Response to Constituents (IR 3.2.3)

Percentage of recorded constituent inquiries that receive a formal response from a PLC Member or staff

Given the universal district office practice of recording inquiries only after a PLC Member or staffer has made an official response, each office showed a 100 percent response rate. Thus, the indicator lost its value as a sample measure of performance. In an attempt to develop a more meaningful measurement of PLC responsiveness to constituents, the project looked at the next stage in the process of constituent inquiries; the percentage of these recorded inquiries/cases that are resolved by the PLC. This raises the question of what is meant by “resolved,” for the constituent offices were clearly not applying the same definition. It also became evident that, in some cases, district offices will not accept/record a case that is unlikely to be resolved. It is also common practice for the PLC to work on the most sensitive cases – those involving complaints against the PA security services – without recording them.

VI. ACHIEVEMENTS

During this period, the Council's most remarkable achievements were convening of the two-day plenary session in Gaza on March 10 and 11 and conducting the wide range of Democracy Day activities across West Bank and Gaza.

A. Legislative and Deliberative Capacity

After a lull at the beginning of the *intifada*, the PRU stepped up its activities. In this last quarter, the PRU conducted a number of studies on draft laws, answered PLC Members' queries, and organized workshops on legislative and oversight issues. As a result, the Unit developed a good reputation as a useful resource upon which the PLC can rely.

Although the Public Hearings Manual is not yet finalized, the PLC committee staff, having participated closely in the development of the manual, are now familiar with the process of organizing and conducting public hearings.

In spite of the emergency conditions, the PLC Legal Department in Gaza continued to work with the Consumer Protection Association on the development of consumer rights legislation.

B. Executive – Legislative Relations

Women's Unit: The Women's Unit (WU) continued to clarify its role and raise its profile within the PLC and with the general public. By adapting its work plan to address new issues raised by the *intifada*, the Unit, and by extension the PLC, demonstrated its responsiveness to the public need.

The Unit recently published, or prepared for publication, a range of printed material on the rights of women and the role of female Members in the local legislative process. These publications and newly purchased books form the foundation of a new PLC resource center on women's issues.

Democracy Day Campaign: The successful implementation of the Democracy Day Campaign was a major accomplishment, despite the volatile political situation. The continuing involvement of the PLC, the Executive Authority, and Palestinian civil society organizations demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the Democracy Day concept. This year, the PLC was able to take charge of the campaign, relying less on ARD assistance than in previous years. In general, the campaign appears to have strengthened cooperative links between the Executive and Legislative branches and created closer ties with civil society institutions.

C. Constituent Relations

In general, the bond between individual Members and constituents was strengthened by the current conflict, even though the PLC's credibility has been weakened. The high turnout of both Members and constituents for the Democracy Day activities indicates at least a degree of mutual respect.

There was extensive media coverage of all Democracy Day events. Local newspapers and television stations covered all town meetings, and a number of PLC Members were interviewed on local TV and radio stations.

D. Internal Administration

Inventory. Responding to a request from the Ministry of Finance for an inventory of all PLC offices in the West Bank and Gaza, the PLC appointed an Inventory Committee. Inventory was completed in the main administrative offices; however, production of the final inventory report is still pending as not all district offices have been visited due to travel difficulties. The Inventory Committee used the tags, forms, and procedures developed and produced by ARD. By providing the inventory tools, ARD enabled the Committee to immediately respond to the Ministry's inventory requests.

Approval of Policy Manual. Leadership approval of the PLC Policy Manual demonstrates Council support of standardized, open, and transparent internal administrative policies. Mr. Rowhi Fatouh, Secretary General, read the draft manual in its entirety and provided feedback to the PLC Personnel Unit. ARD provided direct technical assistance in production of the Policy Manual.

Stores Unit. The PLC Stores Unit is utilizing the Bin Cards developed with the assistance of ARD and can now track the total quantity of items available in stores and determine the remaining balance for each item, making their purchases cost-effective and accurate.

VII. ACTIVITIES EXPECTED TO BE CARRIED OUT NEXT QUARTER

A. Enhancing the PLC's Legislative and Deliberative Capacity

- *Conduct public hearings.*
- *Finalize the Public Hearings Manual.*
- *Develop a computer program for the forms and checklists.*
- *Finalize the Economic Committee study.*
- *Finalize the Diwan administrative computer program.*
- *Continue the training of the PLC committee's staff.*
- *Conduct the Official Gazette study tour to Tunisia and/or United Arab Emirates.*

B. Development of Executive/Legislative Relations

- *Organize Women's Unit training sessions and workshops in Gaza and Ramallah.*
- *Train Unit staff in coordination with the Training and Development Unit.*
- *Produce Unit publications.*
- *Implement the Unit Study Visit to Tunisia.*
- *Involve NGOs in the remaining Democracy Day activities and conduct an evaluation of the campaign by all participants.*
- *Organize Strategic Planning Session for the PRU.*
- *Release new PRU Brochure and develop PRU Web site.*
- *Initiate general training and capacity-building activities for PRU.*
- *Provide a consultant for three months to help the Land and Settlements Committee in conducting research and other activities.*
- *Provide technical assistance to the Oversight and Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Refugees.*

C. Constituent Relations

- *Conduct computer training for PID and district office staff.*
- *Continue providing Members with computer training.*
- *Conduct town meeting training for Gaza district office directors.*
- *Provide support for further town meetings and other district office constituent activities.*
- *Provide support for the Parliamentary Education Program activities through district offices.*
- *Continue providing IT support to constituent offices, with an emphasis on the Processing Constituent Inquiries Software.*
- *Provide support for the PID in its production of media outreach materials.*
- *Distribute Member's Manual and Best Practices Guide to all Members through the PLC and the district offices.*
- *Continue connecting district offices to the Internet.*

D. Internal Management

- *Initiate procurement and installation of video conferencing system.*
- *Develop outline of New Member Orientation.*
- *Procure and install equipment from the Public Information Department and Urgent Equipment RFAs.*

- *Develop plans for study tour to the National Society of State Legislatures' Annual Meeting.*
- *Hold email- and Internet-training for staff.*
- *Develop administrative forms for the Finance Department and district offices.*
- *Distribute Policy Manual to Members and staff.*