



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAM IN AZERBAIJAN

Final Report Year 1 (April 26, 2007 – April 25, 2008)

Contract No. DFD-1-00-04-00129-00

(First Yearly Report for Task Order 5)

2008

This report was produced for submission to the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Petro Morgos, Chief of Party, Development Alternatives, Inc.

**Final Report Year 1
(April 26, 2007 – April 25, 2008)**

Contract No. DFD-I-00-04-00129-00

(First Yearly Report for Task Order 05)

This final report for Year 1 is submitted to the Program CTO Parviz Musayev of the Office of Democracy and Governance of USAID-Caucasus-Azerbaijan Mission under the guidelines as stated in Clause A.6 of the contract.

ACRONYMS

CoP	Chief of Party
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CTO	Cognizant Technical Officer
D&G	Democracy and Governance
DAI	Development Alternatives, Inc.
DCoP	Deputy Chief of Party
EU	European Union
IREX	International Research and Exchange Board
IT	Information technology
IR	Intermediate Result
LTTA	long-term technical assistance
MM	Milli Mejlis (the Parliament of Azerbaijan)
MP	Member of Parliament
MPA	Member of Parliament's Assistant
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
STTA	short-term technical assistance
SO	Strategic Objective
TA	technical assistance
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
II. SUMMARY OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS	12
COMPONENT 1: DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY	12
<i>SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS RESULTS THIS COMPONENT</i>	
COMPONENT 2: PROMOTING GREATER PROCEDURAL AND LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY	22
<i>SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS RESULTS THIS QUARTER</i>	
COMPONENT 3: ENHANCEMENT OF OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF PARLIAMENT	27
<i>SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS RESULTS THIS COMPONENT</i>	
CROSS-CUTTING TASKS	30
<i>SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/EVENTS RESULTS THIS COMPONENT</i>	
III. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION	32
IV. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND REMEDIAL SOLUTIONS	33
V. UNRESOLVED ISSUES OR CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROJECT	34

Final Report Year 1 (April 26, 2007 – April 25, 2008)
Contract No. DFD-I-00-04-00129-00
Final Report Year 1

Introduction

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

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

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

The emphasis of the first year of the Program was to evaluate the current status of the institution's capacity in the three overall components mentioned above and to provide training for capacity building accordingly. The Program is the first USAID funded technical assistance project concerning the Parliament in Azerbaijan and hence, the Program started at determining first the fundamentals of the institutional and administrative capacity in the Parliament and rapidly moved into capacity building mode with very comprehensive tailor-made training Programs for its staff, assistants to MPs and MPs.

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

Program also interacts regularly with heads of technical and administrative departments within the Parliament, as well as MPs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report submitted by Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) under the Parliamentary Program in Azerbaijan, encapsulates the activities of Year 1 of the Parliamentary Program.

The report's framework is based on the layout used for the quarterly reports, to facilitate its reading and it also references the three component areas outlined by the Task Order: Developing and strengthening parliamentary capacity; Promoting greater legislative and procedural transparency; and Enhancing the overall effectiveness of parliament.

At the end of each component, the report summarizes the impact of the Program upon the beneficiary in real terms. The report also includes cross-cutting activities and administrative duties.

Finally, in addition to the narrative presentation of the project activities arranged under each task area, the report also refers to the Performance Monitoring Plan, as a means of gauging its impact.

The Parliamentary Program – Year 1

The Parliamentary Program in Context

The Parliamentary Program began its work of providing technical assistance to the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan within a difficult and complex environment. Today, the Parliament of Azerbaijan is an institution which in reality cannot be deemed to be an independent branch of government under separation of power principles. It is mostly acting as a rubber stamping institution for laws proposed by the government under the tight control of the presidency. Deputies, also known as Members of Parliament (MPs), ostensibly elected every five years, theoretically represent constituencies, though legitimacy at the local level of a vast majority of MPs, is questionable and challenged by the constituents. The last Parliamentary election took place in November 2005.

Opposition Deputies, about a total of five Deputies out of 125, are often not given time to really be heard during Parliamentary debates. Constituency offices are available only whenever the Local Executive Committee chairmen (ExComm) agree to cooperate in providing a municipal space for that purpose to Mps. Today, about 70% of MPs have constituency offices that are deemed to be reliable. These are mostly located in the regions, as Baku's real estate prices are too high to make these readily available. The government has plans to build full fledged constituency offices for each circumscriptions, though this is planned to take place over a period of two years.

The staff of the Parliament numbers about 350 all together and is lead by the Chief of Staff.

The Parliament is affiliated with a number of international parliamentary associations and has a great number of bilateral relationships with other parliaments. It is active on a number of issues with the Council of Europe and commissions of the European Parliament and the US Congress.

As of January 1, 2007, the Parliament added a new position attached to deputies by providing each Deputy with an assistant to be located in constituencies. The Human Resources Department has jurisdiction over the assistants to MPs who are not considered civil servants, but have a contract for services with the Parliament, though they are chosen by Deputies and their candidacy is ratified by the Parliament apparatus.

Achievements and Lessons Learned from Year 1

Year 1 of the Parliamentary Program has been a year of trust building and relationship testing with the Parliament's leadership. It has also been a year of high success in promoting the development of constituency relations building and enhancing the capacity of assistants to MPs (MPAs) to better understand their role. There is no doubt to any observer of Azerbaijan's political landscape that the country is made up of a very complex set of cultural, political and social layers. Working with the Parliament is no exception and perhaps even more difficult. It is difficult because it is situated in an environment that while seemingly promoting the emergence of modern institutional democracy, it is constantly being drawn back to a status quo required by a national political context that is defensive and revisionist.

Having said this, on the positive side, the dynamism that has developed in the work with MPAs provides fertile grounds to expand further into the area of building constituency relations and the capacity of MPAs, as well as MPs, to learn to become part of the policy development process in a democratic fashion. Hence, the work carried in the constituency building area with MPAs has provided the setting for a greatly enhanced relationship between constituents and their respective MPs. This result was achieved by the extensive use of communication, training under very competent and credible experts and study tours to the US.

In retrospect, while the work on constituency building with the MPAs can be said to have been quite open, dynamic and successful, as a tool to bring the development of democracy from the ground up, rather than from the top down, the program has had by necessity to take the time to develop a relationship of trust with the leadership of the Parliament. The linkage to be made between the constituencies and the Parliament as an institution of policy and legislation will now be made easier because of that groundwork having been laid.

The initial workplan outlined for year 1 has been, by necessity, altered mostly in its strategic approach and by extension in its timeline, rather than in its substance. Much of the strategy undertaken during year 1 and which will still be used during year 2 is a counter-intuitive approach, if we are looking at a traditional approach which generally seeks to bring the leadership of the institution to buy into the process of change, or a top-down approach. The traditional approach to institutional capacity building of working with the

leadership of such institution and convincingly show that a new approach is needed could not be used. There are many reasons for this state of affairs in Azerbaijan, such as the lack of political openness, distrust of outsiders entering into the inner workings of an institution, chronic defensiveness about the institution's ability to carry out its tasks, deeply embedded powers that do not want to change and lack of information and education about other approaches, to cite a few reasons. The same issue exists at the level of MPs, for reasons similar to those cited above, with the additional variable that MPs, often held their position by virtue of their complete surrendering to the executive powers whims.

Alternatively, the Parliamentary program undertook to work with actors located at the primary level of the constituencies, using a newly establish position in the Parliamentary hierarchy: The assistants to MPs (MPAs). The Parliamentary program felt that as it worked to increase the professionalism of MPAs, through conceptual and technical training, the MPAs would identify more closely with the constituents, thereby becoming a more effective force to help develop a democratic, grassroots based environment for the legislature. Over time, it is hoped and calculated, that the MPAs would be viewed by the MPs as the main point of contacts for MPs in communities, and to support at least those MPS interested in working as true representatives and lawmakers. Additional and continuing training of MPAs in policy issue development over time would then involve MPs and parliamentary committees to a level of importance, commensurate with their appropriate role as representatives of the people

Trust Building – A sine qua non requirement

In the present context, the Program had to initiate an approach that first had to indirectly convince the leadership to work openly with the Parliamentary Program, by undertaking certain tasks, to which there was initial resistance, directly with the lower level of the institutional hierarchy. This was driven home to the Project team very early on during the first few months of year 1 of the program. For instance, the resistance of MPs generally to agree to training and the lack of support of the MM leadership apparatus, required the project to simply take the initiative to begin designing a training program for assistants to MPs. Even the substance of the training and the approach to the training was subject to initial resistance. Over time, the resistance abated and by the end of year 1, it had become very well accepted by the MM leadership. This provided the Program with the basis for further training and workshops and also an entry into the training for the MM staff and leadership, as well as MPs.

Nevertheless, the MM leadership has shown signs of resistance in certain areas, particularly with regard to the institutional structure of the Parliament and some proposed training in ethics and transparency. In addition, the leadership of the human resource department had shown a certain level of rigidity and resistance towards change and in the vision of its role in the institution. Instead of taking a confrontational approach, the program team had decided to follow a strategy of incremental persuasion by undertaking some training of middle level management of the MM staff, in parallel with other work with MPA and MPs, via the use of workshops and round tables, which are seen by the MM leadership

as less formalized and directive approaches, more likely to be positively received.

This strategic approach is expected to help get buy-in by the MM leadership of the overall institutional program and open possibilities for further substantive work to be carried out during the course of year 2.

A retreat was organized by the project with representatives of the leadership of the Parliament late into year 1. The retreat was designed to evaluate the lessons learned during year 1 and usher in the substance of year 2. It has provided major insight into our understanding of the work by the Parliament's leadership and its main approaches. While the retreat confirmed a level of trust generated by the Program team, that trust must be carefully maintained and renewed at every step of the way in the future. That trust provides the Program team with the basis for open discussions on issues over which there is some disagreement, and over which in the past, the team could not have had an open debate. The retreat confirms that new ideas and approaches towards new concepts must be approached on a step-by-step basis, or run the risk of being rejected at an early stage. Rather than using a "carrot and stick" approach, the Program team's approach must be at all times non-threatening and must always show the upside of its potential. Because of the lack of openness to a self-critique approach and a generally extremely defensive reaction to new ideas on the part of the MM leadership and its middle managers, the Program team must at all times utilize an approach which painstakingly conveys added value to the institution's image and capacity and is non-threatening to the current system in place.

The Political Context and its Limitations

From a political institution perspective, the Parliament of Azerbaijan cannot be deemed to be an independent institution within the meaning of even a basic separation of powers doctrine. All of the strategy and the Program's work towards helping the institution become a self-standing, independent and modern legislature must therefore be seen through the prism of a strong executive power over the entire political system in Azerbaijan. As a result, the leadership and middle management of the MM are completely subservient to the executive will. Complete allegiance to the executive power is a given and no deviation from this requirement is tolerated. Executive powers rely on maintaining such power through clear political correctness guidelines via subtle and not-so-subtle codes of conduct and the elevation of the strength of its power through the virtual deification of its prior leader, father of the current president. This is the ever present theme running through all institutions in Azerbaijan, including its Parliament.

Therefore, in its daily activities and relationship with the leadership of the Parliament of Azerbaijan, middle level managers and also with the great majority of MPs, the Program team must at all times be highly cognizant of this context. It defines its strategy and content and all its communication and messages whether in personal relationships with members of the MM staff and leadership, or substance of its training, workshops and round tables. This is particularly true on certain subject matters considered taboo, such as ethics issues; transparency and access to information; communication with the press; individual voting records of MPs; roles of MPAs in relationship with constituents;

oversight role of the Parliament; separation of powers, and the existence and role of opposition MPs, to name a few main issues.

In addition to being subject to the general political impediments and self-serving myths attached to the allocation and maintenance of power in Azerbaijan, the Parliament has structural liabilities that contribute to the difficulties in dealing with capacity building of the institution. The MM is grossly understaffed in its institutional support system of MPs, research and information systems capacity, and generally, human resource allocation and management.

Nevertheless, during separate conversations with independent MPs' and MPs' from the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Partiyasi (YAP) (as well as with MM staff members) many of them expressed their discontent with the passive role of the Parliament in the political life of the country and wished MM to be much active and efficient in implementing its legislative and oversight functions, envisaged by the Constitution and other laws. Such opinion demonstrates big potential for transforming of MM into mature institution to be able to address main political issues in the country.

II. SUMMARY OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

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

COMPONENT 1: DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY

Year one was a year of planning, preparation and trust building with the leadership of the institution, and provided in earnest much training for assistants to MPs (MPAs) in their respective constituencies. The substance of the training of the MPAs was preceded by the conduct of surveys and, interviews of a number of departments' personnel, as well as discussions with the leadership of the Parliament, MPAs, and the project's own observations. A major survey of the MM staff was undertaken during the first few months of year 1, as well, as part of its early activities requirements and as a means of evaluating the needs and desires of the MM staff, prior to initiating a training plan. Following the survey, the Program submitted a comprehensive report based on an analysis of the survey's results. A detailed discussion of the survey and its results is contained in the Year 1-Third quarterly report.

While year 1 has enabled the program to provide some elements of training to the staff of the MM and its leadership, it has been a trial year and has not been as intensive in practical training as is expected in Year 2. The focus of the first year workplan onto constituency related work with the training of MPAs has permitted the program to foster a new culture of openness from the ground up, rather than the traditional top-down approach of technical assistance programs.

Furthermore, year 1 greatly emphasized coordination between the Parliamentary Program and a number of USAID funded civil society projects, which included local NGOs and civil associations. In that respect, the Parliamentary Program provided to a degree a missing link between developing civil society capacity and policy development via a nascent interaction with the legislature, by being a catalyst for increased interaction and trust between the two.

A retreat organized by the project with representatives of the leadership of the Parliament late into year 1 to evaluate the lessons learned during year 1 and usher in the substance of year 2, has provided major insight into our understanding of the work by the Parliament's leadership and its main approaches. While the retreat confirmed a level of trust generated by the Program team, that trust must be carefully maintained and renewed at every step of the way in the future. That trust provides the Program team with the basis for open discussions on issues over which there is some disagreement, and over which in the past, the team could not have had an open debate. The retreat confirmed that new ideas and approaches towards new concepts must be approached on a step-by-step basis, or run the risk of being rejected at an early stage. Rather than using a "carrot and stick" approach, the Program team's approach must be at all times non-threatening and must always show the upside of its potential. Because of the lack of openness to a self-critique approach and a generally extremely defensive reaction to new ideas on the part of the MM leadership and its

middle managers, the Program team must at all times utilize an approach which painstakingly conveys added value to the institution's image and capacity and is non-threatening to the current system in place.

Activity 1: Assess Training and Technical Assistance needs of Milli Mejlis

Staff Survey

During the prior quarter, the Program team had drafted and submitted for the Milli Mejlis' input a comprehensive Staff Survey designed to evaluate the capacity of the Milli Mejlis staff. The Staff Survey, comprised of 77 questions, sought to elicit information about the working conditions and process and procedures involved in the work of the Milli Mejlis staff. The survey addressed the following points for review and evaluation: main functions of the Milli Mejlis; member and staff responsibilities; internal meetings; internal training and skills-building activities; language skills; computer skills and use of the internet; use of the Milli Mejlis website; use of the parliamentary internal network; access to office resources; access to information resources; faction work within the Milli Mejlis; work/communication with the executive; legislative processes; committee organization/processes; research and analysis; (staff's perception of) public access to Milli Mejlis; general work processes; and job security (staff).

The Program received the Staff Survey back from the Parliament in mid-October 2007. The Survey was then translated, its data analyzed and a comprehensive report has been drafted for submission to the Parliament's leadership and Human Resources Department of the Milli Mejlis.

Response Rate.

An overall response rate of 57.5 % was achieved. The sample of staff members was broadly representative, as 16 departments responded by returning the survey questionnaires.

Understanding of Parliament's Functions.

In essence, the report indicates that the Parliament's staff has little understanding of the role of the institution other than as a general legislative body. It does not have an understanding of the institution as being, under the Constitution, an independent branch of the government under a separation of powers doctrine. Management structures are weak.

Specifically, three quarters of the Milli Mejlis staff said that one of the main functions of the Parliament is the legislative process. Only one quarter named representation as a main function, and one in five of respondents did not know or disagreed that staff is knowledgeable about the representative function of the Parliament. Less than a quarter of respondents said that oversight is a main function of the Milli Mejlis and only one in six strongly agreed that the Milli Mejlis staff is knowledgeable about the oversight role of the Parliament. This implies that a module on the role of the Parliament needs to be included in the training program.

Job Responsibilities.

One in ten respondents did not answer the question about the primary responsibilities of their department. Almost half of the respondents, who are mostly comprised of staff dealing with legislation drafting, prefer to use their own ability to make decisions and develop ideas and less than a quarter like and need team work or interaction. 20% of the respondent indicated that they want a supervisor to tell them what to do. Their number is particularly significant in departments such as Press Service Department and the Department for Organizing Work of the Standing Commissions. This may represent an area for future training.

Human Resources and General Management.

Four in ten respondents suggested their position has no job description. This is also an area which will require clarification prior to drafting the training plan. Two thirds of respondents say they were not provided an office manual, which suggests that the project could help prepare and distribute one. .

A great majority of the respondents say that they do receive evaluation or feedback on their job performance.

One quarter of the respondents said that they have department meetings once a week and one third said they meet once a month. There is significant diversion of answers within the departments, which indicates that either the meetings are not held regularly, or respondents were not very careful selecting correct answer.

Only one in five respondents have at least one informal or formal contact with staff of other departments and committees per week and two thirds do this as needed.

Staff Training Opportunities

A wide variety of contradicting answers was received to the question whether the staff training is available inside or outside of the Milli Mejlis, which probably indicates that not all of the respondents are aware about the training available, which implies that there is a need to improve the internal information exchange processes.

Asked about the training areas most needed for work in the Milli Mejlis, more than a half of the respondents marked the legislative process, though this needs to be defined via further interviews, one third - language skills and public administration and about one quarter - computer use, while management related issues were last in the list. This probably reflects the overall lack of understanding of the value of the management skills in the country and needs to be addressed in our future work with the Milli Mejlis.

Two in five respondents consider that to improve their work they should learn legal skills, one third believes they should learn the experience of other countries and obtain computer skills.

Parliamentary Information and Communication Technology.

Although the need for computer training is mentioned by a considerable number of the respondents, most of them rate their computer skills as high or normal. Most respondents use the internet -- three quarters of those who use it at work do it mostly for news, two thirds for legislation and e-mail and half for research.

A great majority of the respondents reported that they use the Milli Mejlis website. Two thirds of them use it for legislation or draft legislation and one in seven for news and the Milli Mejlis information.

More than a third of respondents believe that the most important information to be included on the Milli Mejlis website is information about Milli Mejlis, another third thinks it is the analytical and legal information, and a quarter considers it is representation in international organizations.

Basically all of the respondents said there is intranet in the Milli Mejlis and four in five respondents are satisfied with it. A great majority of respondents use the intranet for legislation, information about the Milli Mejlis and file exchange.

Computers, Internet and telephones are considered the most important resources by most of the staff, while scanners and the photo and film production are considered the least important in their job.

Library Services and Archives.

Almost all of the respondents use the Milli Mejlis library. Milli Mejlis legislation, bulletins, minutes, the GOA Official Bulletin, legal materials of other countries, and books are the most used library materials.

Slightly more than half of the respondents have access to the Milli Mejlis archives to some degree, but only 3.5 percent use it frequently. Minutes, law drafts and laws, as well as the old legislation are considered the most important resources stored in the Milli Mejlis archives.

Institutional Cooperation.

Absolutely all of the respondents agreed that there is cooperation between the Milli Mejlis and other public institutions in the drafting of laws. Although according to the survey results, two thirds of them believe that the cooperation is initiated by the Milli Mejlis and Government together, almost one third thinks it is initiated by the Milli Mejlis, and only 6.4 percent assume it is initiated by the Government, private conversations with the deputies demonstrate that most of the bills come from the Government.

Almost half of the respondents consider the legislative floor debates to be the most important contribution of the Milli Mejlis to different stages of development of legislation, followed by over a third naming the draft legislation writing, while the consultations with constituencies, NGOs and experts were considered the least important contributions (6.1 percent). This is consistent with the lack of understanding of importance of the representative role of the Parliament shown above and requires more work in this direction.

Only one in ten respondents works directly in assisting Deputies in actual writing of draft laws frequently and another one does this less frequently. Half of the respondents never do this kind of work.

One third of the respondents said the conduct of legislative research or analysis at their current job is initiated jointly by their superior and themselves and another third said it is initiated by their superior. Only one in eight respondents frequently uses outside research groups or experts in their current work.

Parliamentary Public Relations.

More than half of the respondents use the Milli Mejlis public relations related departments frequently. The most important resources are considered information about meetings and foreign delegations, public outreach department and Internet service sector.

The Milli Mejlis Information/ analytical departments are used by most of the respondents. The most frequently used is the Internet service center – only 4 respondents have not used it. The most important resources in the Milli Mejlis' information/analytical departments are considered to be the legal and analytical materials and the legislative materials and other information of other countries.

Staff knowledge of the Institution.

One of the most confusing outcomes of the survey is that the questions which the respondents had most difficulties to answer happen to be those related to their own professional skills and knowledge. Thus, one in four of them did not

know or could not say if the number of staff in the Milli Mejlis is large enough for assisting legislators in their responsibilities. Great majority of the rest believe that their number is sufficient.

One in twelve respondents do not know if the Milli Mejlis staff has enough knowledge and professional expertise to carry out assigned duties, while one in eleven of the rest believe the staff does not have the skills needed.

Almost a third of the respondents did not know if having volunteers working in the Milli Mejlis is helpful to the staff work. Still, two thirds of the remaining believe this is helpful.

Great majority of the respondents agree that a staff manual describing the functions of various departments in the Milli Mejlis would be helpful at their work.

Almost one third of the respondents did not know whether the rate of staff turnover in the Milli Mejlis is high. Two thirds of the remaining agreed with the statement.

Miscellaneous Comments on Job Satisfaction, Skills and Suggestions.

Two thirds of the respondents stated that the most important is to increase salaries, one half mentioned promotions and over one third – better facilities.

More than a half of the respondents consider their immediate supervisor the most important contact for answers to issues, while only one in fifteen consider that the most important contacts are staff in their department, one in twenty name the deputies, one in forty – staff in other departments and less than one in a hundred – experts working outside of the Milli Mejlis. This definitely implies that there is a strong need to improve the team working skills among the Milli Mejlis staff.

Over three quarters of respondents think the knowledge of the Constitution of the Azerbaijan Republic is most important for Milli Mejlis staff to do his or her job. Almost as many marked understanding of Parliamentary Rules of Procedure as well as the Law on Civil Service. The number of those who mentioned the Code of Ethical Conduct of civil servant is less than a half.

More than half of the respondents believe that the most useful parliamentary skills to improve their work in the Milli Mejlis as regard to legislation process are skills in legislative process in general, two in five named legal drafting, one third – research on draft legislation and policy issues, while budget and fiscal analysis skills turned to be the least important skills.

Roundtable discussions were considered the most preferred format for training, followed by the workshop/seminar and taught courses with certification/testing. Only one in eight named presentations with participatory exercises as the most preferred format, which, again, indicates the lack of will to work in teams.

The great majority of the respondents would like to have European or US International Experts as their trainers. Not surprisingly, the least preferred

choice was the peer trainers – those who have served as members or staff in the Milli Mejlis before.

The most frequently contacted government entities were the Ministry of justice, Ministry of foreign affairs and the Ministry of education and the least frequently contacted was the National Bank of Azerbaijan. Among the other government entities not listed in the questionnaire the most frequently contacted was the State Social Protection Fund and the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The two departments receiving most of the votes as the most effective Milli Mejlis department were Administrative & Military legislation department and the IT department, while the Civil service department received only one vote.

Curiously enough that up to 10 per cent of the interviewed staff members expressed negative opinions about general working environment in MM, negatively answering to such questions as: “My job is well defined”, “I understand what it is expected of me in my job”, “I feel that I am part of the decision making process in issues affecting my work”. This is especially crucial because of the assumption, that all interviews were filtered by MM HR Department before submission to the project.

MPs Survey

During this quarter, the Program team designed a separate survey for Members of the Parliament, which was distributed to them prior to the round table organized by the Program at the Parliament, on December 19, 2007.

The Program had decided to create two surveys as the needs and opinions of the respective MP and Parliamentary staff audiences were clearly different, though interrelated in the efforts to work on reforming the institution.

The results of the MP Survey have been analyzed and a comprehensive report is being drafted and will be submitted to the Parliament and the Mission at the beginning of the next quarter. In short, the MPs survey shows the following conclusions:

12 of 13 MPs indicated that they mostly work in the commissions.

Interestingly, 2 MPs didn't mention plenary sessions as the mode of their parliamentary activity.

5 MPs wrote that they allocate some time for the work in the apparatus (no indication about what they do there).

All MPs wrote that they allocate some time for the work in their constituency. The average number of days is 4-6 per month. All MPs indicated that most of the work in the constituency relates to the problem with ExComs. That quite clearly shows that MPs are not happy with what and how ExComs do in their constituencies. That also shows the weakness of the communication system within local government and poorness of its performance.

8 MPs wrote that they don't have an office. That's strange because they all have one, although they have to share it with 1 more MP (rooms in the present venues are designed for 2 people). New bigger building for MPs is being constructed and it is expected that when the construction is finished each MP will get a separate room. The fact that 8 MPs answered to the said question negatively seems to reveal misunderstanding of the point. Perhaps, most of MPs thought about the office for their assistants. True, vast majority of the assistants don't have their own offices, but the question in the survey clearly was about MPs offices, not the assistants'.

Those 5 MPs who wrote that they got offices, indicated that their premises are poorly equipped. All of them wrote that they had only telephones and newspapers. That is strange too, because in every MP room there is at least one computer and centralized internet access. It might yet again be a result of misunderstanding. These MPs might be thinking about their assistants' offices while answering the question.

All MPs wrote that they got an assistant. Most of them found the performance of the assistants satisfactory. 1 MP wrote that the performance of the assistant was not satisfactory and 1 MP wrote that it was partially satisfactory.

Only 5 MPs wrote that they had fixed regular time for meetings with voters. The rest either left the question unanswered or wrote that they meet voters when they ask for a meeting. 1 MP wrote "24 hours" in reply to the said question.

12 MPs wrote there was a need for further trainings for their assistants. 4 out of those 12 didn't indicate any area of possible trainings. The rest 8 mentioned international experience, legislative practice, procedures for complaints, computer skills, research methodology, and election campaign cooperation with municipalities.

Ironically, 1 MP wrote that there was no need for further training of his assistant.

Most of MPs mentioned the following departments in the apparatus which they mostly interact with: International relations; constitutional legislation; economic legislation;

Only 1 MP wrote that he uses the services of the department of social legislation. Some MPs also mentioned media department and department of standing commissions, letters department, library, HR department.

It is clearly seen from the answers that MPs are not happy about the performance of the apparatus. They indicated that all departments need to be improved.

Most of MPs consider that website should be improved too. Minutes of the meetings and voting records need to be developed.

The vast majority of MPs indicated that technical equipment of the parliament is not satisfactory. However, very few of them wrote that they frequently use internet.

Library as a service is underdeveloped and MPs don't normally use it. Very few of them mentioned that they use library and mainly to read newspapers. Only 1 MP mentioned the use of parliaments' archive.

Activity 4: Support establishment of effective constituent relations

During this year, the project undertook a massive training program for all MPAs. It designed a training program that provided for a two-steps approach. The first step included a two days conceptual approach to the role of MPAs, during which the entire Project team contributed a series of presentations on specific themes. At the end of the first series of training, the team drafted a constituency manual encapsulating all that was learned during the series. The second step was designed to dig much deeper into all practical and specific aspects of running a constituency office. The emphasis was put on relationship with constituents, the role of MPAs as the main focus for policy development, relations with media and working closely with local NGOs and associations. The Program hired a large number of local experts to carry out the training sessions, picking those among the best available in Azerbaijan.

The detailed training sessions for MPAs, took place in constituencies' regional districts and covered all districts of Azerbaijan, including the Nakhtchivan district in addition to all Baku districts. The training included together all 104 MPAs currently hired by the MM. Feedback from the sessions showed a large level of appreciation for the training and a good response to the substance of the training. The training sessions were attended by the Milli Mejlis HR Department's leadership.

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

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

The success of the training program for MPAs was a turning point in the level of credibility and trust for the Parliamentary Program's relationship with the leadership of the MM

Activity 5. Build MM Staff and Member Capacity

One of the other main focus of the Program was to work in areas of the MM in which there was a pent-up need for opening capacity building. This was especially true for journalists working with the MM, in light of the fact that the second half of the Program was held during the early part of the presidential election period.

Parliamentary Journalists Round Table and Training Held

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

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

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

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

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

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

Training for MM staff and leadership

The Program also carried a number of short training sessions for the Milli Mejlis staff working in the Parliament apparatus. The training sessions were designed on the basis of an analysis of the results of the MM staff survey, a well as discussions with the MM leadership and heads of departments at the MM.

The Program completed the design of a three-part training for the MM leadership staff, including the heads of commissions, heads of MM departments and MPs. The three part training was designed as a result of a request by the Chief of Staff for leadership related training during one of the Program's

meetings with him, a few weeks ago. David Ogle, an STTA fielded by the Program provided much of the materials for this training. The themes carried for the training included: Parliaments Around the World; Effective Parliamentary Commission Operations and Effective Leadership. The training carried a total of six two-hour training seminar sessions. All together, 40 MM staff members participated to the training sessions.

Relations with MM deputies

The Program continued to develop a very good working relationship with the chairman of the Legal Policy and Institutional Building Standing Committee of the MM. In that regard, the Program helped establish contact between him and the representative of the US Department of Justice (DoJ) in Baku. The purpose of the contact was to initiate a professional relationship between the representative of the DoJ and the Chairman of the MM's Legal Policy and Institutional Building Commission to provide legal expertise on a number of proposed legislation, including anticorruption and money laundering legislation. The meeting was very well received on all sides and will allow for a continued relationship to provide expertise on a number of legislation.

MM departments' assistance

The Program continued to work with the library, IT and web site departments in providing additional information and expertise. It also planned a study tour to Poland's parliament for the next quarter, as well as a round table on information management upon return from the study tour to be held in the MM.

RESULTS THIS COMPONENT

The above mentioned activities provided much opportunities for training in capacity building. The events which involved Assistants to MPs and MPs and experts, strengthened their capacity in that it established concrete and practical approaches to their work in constituencies and understanding of the dynamics of policy development and use of staff. Furthermore, these events provided fertile ground for intense exchanges and comments between trainers, Assistants to MPs, institutional leadership, MPs and experts supporting MPs. The progress made in the capacity building of Assistants to MPs resulted in:

- Substantially improved understanding of the MPAs' role in constituencies and in relation to the institution in a practical sense.
- Increased networking capacity among MPAs and with NGOs.
- Practical aspects of developing Constituency offices and relationships with constituents improved.

- Continued development of the relationship between the Program and the MM allows for a more open approach to training and a stronger and more potent exchange of ideas and concepts.

Component 2: Promote Greater Legislative and Procedural Transparency

During year 1 of the program, the Program team has tested how the MM leadership views the issues related to legislative and procedural transparency. Improvements to the web site portal are only part and parcel of the overall approach to transparency. During year 1 the Program has made some substantial contribution, along with the Links Project, to a considerable improvement to the MM web site and a better understanding by the MM staff and leadership of international standards for parliamentary web sites. Nevertheless, legislative and procedural transparency requires that a concerted effort be made by the MM leadership and MPs, respectively and together, as regards to public reporting, ethics and public access of meaningful information. This is still a work in progress.

A new version of MM web site was launched at the end of October 2007 at web address: www.meclis.gov.az.

Addition/provision of new sections have significantly increased transparency of MM and created more possibilities for citizens' direct and interactive communication with MM.

Despite including of a significant number of new elements into the web site and improvements, made to sections existed in the old version, by end of April 2008 it was not fit Inter-Parliamentary Union "Guidelines on National Parliaments' Web Sites", and in some aspects, even with the previous version.

A review of other international projects which the program team interviewed shows that on substance, there is still much to be done in creating an efficient system of reporting of sessions debates, parliamentary committees debates, and ethical standards for the legislative process. The Links project undertook a study tour to the parliament of Scotland to learn about reporting approaches in December 2007. To date, the MM still takes about one year to make records of debates public. Some progress has been made for upgrading of the legislative database of the MM and the use of the USAID financed of a legal database. While the European Union is working on the Terms of Reference of a twinning project to enable the MM to work with European counterparts on a number of issues, including transparency of the legislative process, it is yet unclear how much of the transparency issue will be stressed, as the emphasis will likely be on the technical aspects of the legislative drafting process. While delegations of the MM have officially paid visits to a number of states and closely participated in the activities of international organizations and though not all are related to transparency issues exclusively, it is still unclear how much of these interactions have yet to impact the process of change and acceptance of new approaches in the MM.

The Parliamentary Program's contribution, during Year 2 will continue its focus on improving the MM Website as a functional tool for improving both internal and external transparency and develop other areas pertinent to building and improving a transparent legislative process. These aspects include, in addition to the web site improvement, recording of proceedings and dissemination of information, review of rules and procedures related to voting and parliamentary

records and conduct an assessment of the voting process in the MM. The Parliamentary Program has subtly tested the potential response of the MM leadership to those issues and it is clear that these are areas of utmost sensitivity. As an alternative to immediate change to the process, the Parliamentary Program will be undertaking work with MPAs and some MPs to create individual MPs web sites in which some of the information maybe posted.

Activity 1: Support Website Improvements

This year, a sustained effort had been made to work with several departments of the MM in improving the quality of the MM website design and substance. The Program was given an open door with the department in charge of the Web site and the IT department to maintain a constant communication with te project. As a result of this open relationship, which was acquired over a period of several months, at the end of Year 1, substantial progress had been obtained in the approach to eth web site from a transparency and substance perspective.

A planned study tour to Poland for the IT, web site and library departments of the MM, to be held in July 2008, is expected to bring new fresh energy and creativity to the work with these departments. The Program developed the substance of a proposed study tour to the Polish parliament in order to have a hands-on and tailored training based on the Polish experience.

In practical terms, the activities related to the web site and information dissemination included:

MM Legislative Database

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

Annual Reports of Chamber of Accounts

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

IT Polish Study Tour

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

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

Web Design Training Course

The Parliamentary Project's communications expert organized a web-design training courses carried by IATP /IREX in June for a group of MP assistants. After completion of the courses, the Program will assist the Commissions of MM to create their own web pages.

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

RESULTS THIS COMPONENT

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

Component 3: Enhancement of Overall Effectiveness of Parliament

In addition to the administrative, managerial and internal parliamentary procedures training of the MM staff and deputies, training in the substantive aspects of the law making work of the MM Departments, Committees and research capacity was the other main component of the program. This aspect of the program did not evolve as earnestly as other components, mainly because the MM did not organize the requested environment for this component to begin in earnest. Nevertheless, the Program carried a number of events which are seen as precursor to further detailed capacity building capacity into year 2.

This work took the form of training via seminars and round tables with a practical bent to insure the sustainability of the knowledge and capacity building, as well as targeted study tours to supplement training and provide a very practical linkage and understanding of the law making process generally.

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

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

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

1. **“Separation of powers and checks and balances system of governing”** workshop (David Ogle, May 7)

On a 1-10 scale the overall workshop evaluation was 8.8.

On a 1-10 scale the average rating of the facilitator in terms of knowledge and presentation style was 9.3.

2. **“Parliamentary oversight”** workshop (David Ogle, 2 sessions – May 7 and May 8)

On a 1-10 scale the overall workshop evaluation was 8.

On a 1-10 scale the average rating of the facilitator in terms of knowledge and presentation style was 8.8.

3. **“Linking MPs with the Parliamentary staff”** round table (David Ogle, May 14)

17 representatives of MM (8 MPs, 1 woman, and 9 staff members, 5 women) participated in a round table discussion.

4. **“Establishing a good working relationship between the parliament and the mass media”** workshop (David Ogle and Tony Worthington, May 20)

14 staff members (6 women), 1 MP and 1 MPA attended the workshop.

On a 1-10 scale the overall workshop evaluation was 6.6.

On a 1-10 scale the average rating of the facilitators in terms of knowledge and presentation style was 6.8.

In general, the trainings were perceived by most staff members with palpable interest, caused by topics covered, which probably have never been discussed openly at MM before.

Activity 2: Professionalize the MM Library and research Services

The Program interacted with the librarian of the Milli Mejlis and evaluated the library and archive system of the institution. The Program issued a report on its findings and provided proposals for a program of improvement and requirements for investment in library technology and collection.

The report provided the following main conclusions:

The Library should be equipped as soon as possible with a copy machine and a fax.

The library area should be tidied up due to the renovation leftovers on the floor and the work on the windows has to be completed.

A detailed plan should be developed for the new library together with its new functions, including the size of the collection; reading rooms; equipment and furniture; stacks arrangement; possible opening to a larger number of users; number of staff required when services are enhanced; staff and training required for the new IT system and development of research services.

The Program designed and prepared a comprehensive Round Table event on information, library and research facilities for Parliament. The Round Table is to be held next quarter in early July. A report of the Round Table shall be provided shortly after it is carried, along with the materials provided. During the Round Table, the Program shall introduce and use its paper elaborated during Year 1, entitled *Library, Information and Research Services for Parliament: Options and Model Organizational Solutions*, including a specific plan for a parliamentary information, library and research center for the MM.

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

MP Round Table

The Program held a number of meetings with MPs, notably with Ali Huseynov , Chairman of the State Building and Legal Commission, and a few others.

As planned last quarter, the Program carried out a round table, which was held on December 19, 2007 on the theme of the culture of Parliament in Azerbaijan. The Program had invited 25 MPs and their assistants and include prominent members of the Parliament's leadership, including its Chief of staff and Vice-Chairman, and had the full support of the Milli Mejlis leadership. The round table was open to the media.

Over a five (5) hours period, the round table provided for live and substantive debates on the role of MPs and their assistants and the importance of the development of constituency offices. The substance of the discussions followed in great part the theme of the training of the assistants to MPs throughout the quarter, though it included publicly stated critiques of the environment in which both MPs and assistants are currently working.

MPs present at the round table represented a wide spectrum of political affiliations and provided for a rich debate.

US Study Tour Preparation

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

RESULTS THIS COMPONENT

Much of this year consisted of creating relationships with several MPs, and particularly those MPs who are chairs of important and powerful committees.

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

Cross-cutting Tasks

A. Institute Regular meetings of an MM Counterpart Committee

Activity description and rationale

During the Year 1, the Program proposed that a Steering Committee be created, so as to achieve better coordination of policy development and activities of all staff of the MM with the Program. The aim of the Steering Committee was also to initiate a better coordination between the MM staff and leadership and MPs. The idea and proposal was first proposed to the Deputy Chairwoman of the MM, who wholeheartedly endorsed it. Upon further presentation of the Steering Committee, the Chief of Staff determined that it may be created, though at a later time. It appears that there is internal competition within the apparatus and between the apparatus and MPs. Consequently, the Steering Committee has not yet been implemented. The Program will continue to support this initiative until it is put into place.

Joint Steering Committee

The Program spearheaded the creation of a Joint Steering Committee with the leadership of the MM. The goal of the Joint Steering Committee is to provide a structured internal institutional platform from which to design and coordinate the training and institutional reform on which the MM and the Parliamentary Program have been working. The Joint Steering Committee will be composed of the MM leadership, heads of departments, MPs and MPAs, as well as the Parliamentary Program, as co-chair of the Steering Committee.

B. Advisory Services

Throughout the project the CoP and Deputy CoP, as well as other Program team members who collectively have deep expertise in legal drafting, EU accession issues and parliamentary management will be “on-call” – to the extent practical – to the MM staff and MP leadership. Services may include comparative research, linkage to regional networks, identification of national and international area experts, commentary on proposed processes, etc.

When requested, the project will help facilitate negotiations between the MM and other actors – for example, providing information to support securing of office space for constituencies.

This activity will be regular but ad hoc throughout year 2.

C. Donor Coordination

The Program met with a number of USAID funded projects, specifically those addressing issues close to the work of the Program with civil society media and journalists by using experts from some of the projects in the detailed training of

MPAs, such as IREX. The USAID projects included IREX, CHF, Eurasia and the Trade and Investment program.

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

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

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

The Program held a round table which included a number of MPAs from the Baku regions and a group of international and local NGOs. The goal was to introduce MPAs to those NGOs, as a means of strengthening the MPAs knowledge and understanding of how such organizations can help MPAs better serve the constituencies and MPs.

The Program has begun developing a training seminar series with the USAID financed Trade and Investment Reform Support Program in Azerbaijan, focusing on trade, WTO and business environment legislation. This series of seminars was initiated by the Economic Growth Department with the Democracy and Governance Department of the USAID mission in Baku, to increase the capacity of the MM legislative departments to develop better quality legislation in these areas. The series of seminars will include two two-day sessions on trade and business environment legislation respectively. The Program is also planning to carry out several seminars in the regions for promoting trade and WTO legislation to the constituencies and increase the population's understanding of WTO accession for Azerbaijan.

RESULTS THIS COMPONENT

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

III. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The Program fielded two STTAs, including David Ogle, a Parliamentary specialist, to provide technical assistance services, and Tony Worthington, a former UK Parliament MP.

The Program made requests for changes for two staff members, which were granted.

IV. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED AND REMEDIAL SOLUTIONS

At the onset of the program, a significant discord between the MM leadership and the USAID mission occurred which required the project to hold still during much of the months of June and July, 2007. Subsequent to this incident, the project was able to move forward and begin organizing the training of MPAs and carry out the training over the several following months in earnest,.

The round table between the MPAs and the NGOs held in early January 2008 did provoke some tension that was rapidly eliminated, as the Program intended to test its level of independence by organizing the round table directly with MPAs, through the respective MPs, who are not under the jurisdiction of the MM, though the MPAs are within the MM staff, without having the status of civil servants. This highlighted a paradox in the organization of the MM and the status of MPAs within the institution. This provided an opportunity for the Program to open discussions on the ability of the project to move forward without being bogged down by the chronic institutional inertia, or lack of organization and vision of the MM.

Overall, as a general rule, the Program is subject to the vagaries of many of the events held by the MM, or the government. During such times, the Program must bear with a slower level of activities in the Program itself, as interlocutors are not as readily available, though often find ways to maintain some momentum..

V. UNRESOLVED ISSUES OR CONSTRAINTS ON THE PROJECT

There is a chronic relative inertia in working with the MM, affecting the planning and implementation of activities. A number of activities that were either brought forth by the Program requiring hands-on involvement and follow-up on the part of the beneficiaries or even requested by the beneficiaries themselves often require a long time to come to fruition. This is in great part due to a very rigid approach to institutional management requiring approval of the chief of staff, or due to the unavailability of people to carry out activities, according to planned schedules. As a result, a number of activities that were anticipated to be carried out during certain quarters were pushed further into the next quarter.

This issue of the commitment of the MM to purchase computers for use by MPAs has been raised several times. To date, no such computers have been procured. From time to time, the beneficiary makes reference to the procurement of computers, though no firm commitment is ever made.