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# ALBANIAN JUSTICE SECTOR STRENGTHENING PROJECT (JuST)

## YEAR 2 ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT



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*On the cover: JuST training on audio recording software for judges in Korçë District Court, May 30, 2012.*

## ACRONYMS

AFCR	Albanian Federation for Conflict Resolution
AKEP	Agency for Electronic Communications
AKSHI	Agency for Information Society
APS	Annual Program Statement
CLE	Continuing Legal Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAR	Digital Audio Recording
FTR	For the Record (company providing audio recording solution)
H CJ	High Council of Justice
ICMIS	Integrated Court Management Information System
IREX	International Research and Exchange Board
JRF	Just Reporting Fellows
JuST	Albanian Justice Sector Strengthening Project
LSFJ	Law School for Journalists
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MS	Magistrates' School of Albania
NCA	National Chambers of Advocate
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NJC	National Judicial Conference
OSCE	Organization for the Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSFA	Open Society Foundation of Albania
PAKS	Program for the Management of the Judicial Sessions Calendar
PIO	Public Information Officer
PDC	Partners for Democratic Change
UAJ	Union of Albanian Judges
UTLF	University of Tiranë Law Faculty
ZABGJ	Office of the Administration of the Judicial Budget

## Executive Summary

### Country Context

The political stalemate that has characterized Albania's governing structure since 2009 continues unabated. Albania appears to be stalled in its quest to transform itself into a modern and prosperous European democracy, with strong institutions based on the rule of law. Having achieved admission to NATO and visa liberalization, key reform legislation has not been enacted, and Albania may be risking the possibility of Limited EU Candidate Status. The most recent Progress Report issued in October of 2011 painted a generally bleak picture of a "climate of mistrust not only between political forces but also vis-à-vis State institutions" as well as continued "polarization between ruling majority and opposition." On the judiciary, the report noted that "no progress has been made in combating corruption within the judiciary," and "no further progress has been made as regards the independence of the judiciary."

Of particular relevance to the JuST project, the report stated that:

"No further progress was made regarding the *efficiency* of the judiciary. Reforms of the High Court planned by the MoJ aimed at improving the efficiency of the Court and reforming its internal organization have been delayed.

Working conditions in courts are still poor in general and hearings often take place in judges' offices, which hampers transparency and efficiency. There is still no sound and adequate system of training for court administrators."

Albania's Parliament recently failed to vote on legislation curbing immunity for law makers and government officials – one of the specific priorities identified by Brussels as a prerequisite for EU Accession. With the next EU Progress Report set for release in October 2012, it is difficult to imagine that the result will be optimal.

It is within this context that USAID, through the JuST project, implemented by Chemonics International, is working to strengthen Albania's justice sector institutions, civil society, and legal education. Justice sector development has been slow, bogged down by old habits, lack of leadership, and insidious corruption throughout the institutions. This has not gone unnoticed by the citizens of Albania, who recently named the courts as one of the least helpful factions in addressing corruption. The 2010 Corruption in Albania survey paints a dismal picture with nearly 80% of Albanians reporting difficulty getting information from the courts, an increase from the previous year. Corruption in Albania is a serious problem. Albania ranked 95<sup>th</sup> out of 182 countries in the 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International.<sup>1</sup> It is axiomatic that economic prosperity depends on public trust in a country's institutions, especially in the justice sector. Yet more than one-third of those dealing with the courts believe they have been treated poorly or very poorly, while those reporting that they were treated well or very well have decreased. Attorneys become licensed with little or no practical skills training, and rely on corrupt practices to win their cases rather than legal reasoning. The separation of powers remains fragile, with extreme politicization in public sector institutions which limits the delivery of professional justice services. Civil society still struggles with an inability to self-support and limited financial

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<sup>1</sup> 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index, Transparency International <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2011/results/>

resources hamper their ability to freely speak out and fulfill their role and mandates. In spite of the numerous media outlets, citizens lack sources for objective news, as outlets reflect the views and ambitions of their owners.

The vestiges of a multi-decade, tightly controlled, isolationist, and corrupt government are not easily cast aside, but changes can be made by modifying behavior until a new mindset catches up. Laws now in place and pending in Parliament reflect democratic principles, and must be given full effect. Institutions are modernizing, accepting automated systems into which are built measures of transparency and efficiency. Judges and prosecutors' skills have shown remarkable improvement. Civil society has provided input on important public policy issues, and has shown the ability to effect change independent of donor funding.

JuST represents an opportunity to increase institutional transparency and efficiency, improve the effectiveness of key players in the justice system and media, and boost civil society efforts to reveal corrupt acts and demand better for the citizens of Albania. The project reflects a carefully crafted blend of activities to enhance the supply and demand for justice, both within the components and by integrating the components to form a holistic support plan to improve justice delivery. Measures to reduce courts' caseloads through mediation and improve their transparency and efficiency through systematic changes will make the supply side stronger, as will heightening the skill level of lawyers so that legal arguments win cases, rather than cronyism or bribery. Demand is increased when the public knows of these changes, understands their value, and insists on these services, as well as when the media and NGOs are able to monitor, discover, and publicize corruption.

## **Project Background**

JuST works in three components: 1) Court Transparency, Fairness and Efficiency; 2) Civic Engagement; and 3) Education of the Legal Profession. Additionally, it addresses four cross-cutting filters: youth, gender, minority, and environmental issues.

## **Key Results in Year 2**

This report covers Year 2 of the JuST project, October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012.

### **Component 1 – Court Transparency, Fairness, and Efficiency**

Year 2 key results for this component included:

- The introduction of digital recording equipment is transforming the way courts do business. During the second year, the project completed installation in 26 courtrooms in seven courts.<sup>2</sup>
- A significant expansion in the number of hearings held in public courtrooms rather than private offices. Focusing on the two largest courts in Albania (where the bulk of the problems reside) an embedded expatriate court manager worked with the leadership of the Tiranë and Durrës District Courts to set goals and provide tools to permit the scheduling of trials in available courtrooms.

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<sup>2</sup> Numbers reflect installations to be completed by the end of Year 2, September 30, 2012.

- Mediation as an alternative to adjudication continued to demonstrate its value as a backlog reduction strategy, while growing in public awareness. The project continued to support court-connected mediation programs in two courts, while taking a much more active role in promoting the establishment of mediation as a profession.

### **Key Results, Component 2 – Civic Engagement**

Year 2 key results for this component included:

- The Union of Albanian Judges adopted a Strategy and Action Plan for 2012-2015, opened an office with one staff member, has proper financial management systems in place, registered with the tax office, increased by 33% its membership, and tripled its budget.
- 70 CSOs throughout Albania attended regional information meetings explaining the JuST Small Grants Program and APS, and 58 CSOs participated in capacity building workshops on Anti-Corruption, Introduction to the Justice System, and Project Proposal Writing.
- 21 journalists received a ten-session training through the project's Law School for Journalists program which, using the grant mechanism, was implemented by an Albanian CSO; in September 2012 the project will launch a more in-depth training program under the Justice Reporting Fellows activity developed with the assistance of international STTA.

### **Key Results, Component 3 – Education of the Legal Profession**

Year 2 key results for this component included:

- A Continuing Legal Education (CLE) program for lawyers was successfully piloted in two regional chambers, offering 160 training sessions reaching 320 participants.
- A bar journal was launched by the National Chamber of Advocates, producing three quarterly issues in the first year.
- A computerized, searchable database of unified Supreme Court decisions was developed and implemented within the Magistrates School.

### **Donor Coordination Activities**

During Year 2 JuST continued to proactively coordinate its work with that of other donors and organizations, in an effort to reduce duplication of efforts and capture synergies across projects. It continued to host the quarterly Connections Coordination Group meetings, which include representatives from donor projects active in the justice sector. The group expanded its membership and by the end of Year 2 in addition to USAID's JuST project, included the following:

- DOJ-OPDAT
- EURALIUS

- EU Twinning Project, "Support to Anti-Money Laundering Structures and Financial Crimes Investigations Structures in Albania"
- EU twinning Project, "Support to Albanian Penitentiary Reform"
- IPA 2010 project, "Fight against organized crime and corruption: Strengthening the Prosecutors' Network"
- EU Delegation in Albania
- OSCE Presence in Albania
- GIZ's Open Regional Fund for South Eastern Europe
- Open Society Foundation for Albania, Soros (OSFA)
- Pameca III project (which was a member until its closing in May 2012)

Synergies generated through this coordination mechanism have helped support the following initiatives: assistance to the Albanian Probation Service offered by the EU Twinning project and OSCE; support for Albanian prosecutors provided by OPDAT, EU and GIZ; support to the Magistrates School by USAID JuST and EURALIUS; court management assistance with OSCE and USAID JuST working in partnership to promote best practices; and plans to continue future mediation support initiated by JuST, by the EU delegation in Albania.

During the year JuST also published four additional issues of its newsletter "Connections," which informs stakeholders on a quarterly basis about the work of projects in Albania's justice sector. These issues included editorials respectively by the Chairman of the Union of Albanian Judges, the Prosecutor General, the Minister of Justice, and the Chairman of the National Chamber of Advocates. They were issued in English and Albanian in electronic format, and were widely distributed to an e-mail database created, maintained and updated by JuST. The number of newsletter e-mail distribution recipients increased from 611 for issue 3, to 1058 for issue 6. Recipients include all partners in the justice sector, Government of Albania counterparts, members of the Albanian Parliament, justice sector professional chambers and associations, law schools, civil society actors, media, other donors, international actors, etc. Online versions of the newsletter were made available for reading and download on a dedicated webpage at: <http://www.justforumalbania.org/site/>, while donors posted them on their websites as well. Print newsletter copies were also distributed during project events.

Finally, in the spirit of constructive cooperation with other donors and with Albanian institutional counterparts, during Year 2 JuST staff participated in numerous working group meetings related to reforming the Albanian Criminal Procedure Code. Where relevant to project objectives, the staff drafted language and participated in roundtable discussions. Although there has been little tangible progress due to the ongoing political paralysis, if and when legislation is taken up by Parliament, it will hopefully be strengthened by input from JuST.

## **COMPONENT 1 – COURT TRANSPARENCY, FAIRNESS, AND EFFICIENCY**

### **A. Results Achieved During Year 2 Compared to Annual Work Plan Targets**

#### **Court Leadership Conference**

JuST convened its first Court Leadership Conference in late 2010 to formally launch the five-year program of assistance. The conference proved to be useful to participants and JuST team

members alike. It provided a unique opportunity for court leaders to convene and address issues facing the justice system. It helped shape the assistance of the JuST project. A decision was made to hold regular get-togethers as one means of ensuring that JuST assistance is aligned with justice sector needs.

As foreseen in the Year 2 Work Plan, on April 20, 2012 JuST, in partnership with the High Council of Justice and the Ministry of Justice, organized the second Court Leadership Conference focusing on initiatives to improve court operations in Albania. The conference brought together chief judges of Albania's district and appellate courts; justices of the Supreme Court; members of the High Council of Justice; high representatives from the Ministry of Justice, General Prosecution Office, National Chamber of Advocates, Constitutional Court, School of Magistrates, and Office of Administration of the Judicial Budget; directors of civil society and media organizations active in the justice sector; as well as international partners.

U.S. Ambassador to Albania, Mr. Alexander A. Arvizu; Minister of Justice, Mr. Eduard Halimi; Chief Inspector of the High Council of Justice, Ms. Valbona Vata; Chair of the Civil College of the Supreme Court, Mr. Besnik Imeraj; Head of the EU Delegation to Albania, Ambassador Ettore F. Sequi; and Head of the OSCE Presence in Albania, Ambassador Eugen Wollfarth, delivered keynote speeches at the opening.

The Conference was organized in three sessions: Court Audio Recording, Case Flow Management, and the Courts' Relationship with the Public.

The panel on **Court Audio Recording** focused primarily on the early experience of implementation by the Lezhë District Court. A panel, consisting of Ms. Fjoralba Prifti, Chief Judge of Lezhë District Court; Ms. Valbona Vata, HCJ Chief Inspector; and Mr. John Carver, JuST Chief of Party, reviewed the benefits of having a verbatim record of court hearings, the legal framework in which the technology is being implemented, the need for specific guidance (in the form of an "Instruction" or sub legal act), and how digital audio recording has been integrated with the case management system, ICMIS. For the chief judges in attendance, this was an important preview of the changes coming to their courts.

The second session, on **Case Flow Management**, consisted of two parts, and was moderated by JuST embedded advisor Susanne DiPietro, a court administrator from Alaska. The first part covered a key element of JuST's work with the courts, namely the importance of holding **court hearings in courtrooms** rather than private offices. It provided an opportunity to present to a larger audience the work of the chief judges in the Durrës and Tiranë District Courts to maximize the use of their courtrooms through goal-setting, monitoring, and using new scheduling tools. (See Annex 6 for details on "PAKS," the new courtroom scheduling software developed for this purpose.) The second part of the session covered the theory and practice of **Active Case Management**, a practice well developed in many European countries, but in its infancy in Albania. Findings from an OSCE study revealed that the average ratio of non-productive hearings is 47.7 %, meaning that no argument was made, no written document or written pleading circulated, no evidence taken and no request made.

The third session addressed the **Courts' Relationship with the Public**, including the media. Topics included the benefit of maintaining good relations with the public and the media and best practices in managing court public relations. In the final analysis, public confidence, along with independence and effectiveness, are the three pillars supporting a strong judiciary.

## **Quarterly Meetings of Advisory Board on Audio Recording**

Introducing state-of-the-art digital audio recording technology into Albanian courts represents a significant change in the way proceedings are conducted and reviewed and a major advance in transparency and due process of law. During Year 2, the procurement process was completed, and the introduction of the digital technology commenced. Throughout the year, JuST convened the Advisory Board every quarter. The meetings served several purposes. First, they kept the most important stakeholders up to date on progress and challenges. Second, the meetings provided a forum whereby the “early adopters” could share experiences with courts scheduled for upcoming installations. Third, the meetings ensured a high-level focus on implementation challenges, providing useful feedback and resulting in important steps forward. Specifically, it was through the meetings of the Advisory Board that JuST was able to present a draft Instruction which was subsequently signed by the Minister of Justice, ensuring a smoother process of implementation.

The JuST team views continued meetings of this group essential to ensure long-term sustainability of the technology being introduced. Digital Audio Recording relies on a network infrastructure which must be updated periodically. Maintaining this infrastructure carries budget implications which must be foreseen several years in advance. These are the kinds of points that should be reinforced at every opportunity.

So far, the Advisory Board has been an effective mechanism resulting in quick issuance of guidance (in the form of an Instruction) by the Minister of Justice. The legal and regulatory framework for audio recording will be improved as deemed necessary. Policy issues arising from implementation experience will be addressed. JuST Project installation timetables will be aligned with GOA budget priorities.

### **KRA 1.1: More Accurate Trial Records**

The signature initiative of JuST is the implementation of digital audio recording capability for the courts of Albania. Early in the project, JuST conducted a careful assessment of all the courts and examined the previous experience with audio recording technology. Several conclusions emerged. Court practices need to change so that making a verbatim record of proceedings becomes a routine practice, rather than an exception to the rule. Digital audio recording technology needs to exist in *every* courtroom, and it needs to be easy to use by existing courtroom personnel. Audio recordings also need to be easily accessible and available to all stakeholders. Finally, a single technological solution that can be integrated with the existing court case management system offers the best hope for long-term sustainability. These conclusions formed the basis for the functional requirements for a major procurement of digital audio recording equipment. Having assessed the technical infrastructure of every courtroom in Albania, it was also clear to the JuST team that full systems would have to be procured, rather than using existing (often antiquated) computer servers and workstations.

All of these technical specifications formed the requirements for an open solicitation that was issued in August of 2011. Proposals were subsequently reviewed and evaluated, and “best and final” negotiations were conducted resulting in the selection of an equipment provider. A procurement of this size, involving IT equipment and components from various sources, required a full review with various USAID approvals or waivers at all levels. This review was completed during the first quarter of Year 2, approvals were granted, and the first order for equipment was placed.

Another lesson emerging from USAID’s earlier ROL project to introduce audio recording to court proceedings was the need to select a technology and develop a workflow that adds value to work currently being performed by court personnel. If technology is perceived to be adding burdens to staff, it will be resisted. Thus, a high priority was given to the objective of providing some level of integration of audio recording technology with the existing case management system – ICMIS in most courts. To further this objective, the JuST team held a series of technical meetings early in the year with officials from the Ministry of Justice, including with the Minister himself. At the conclusion of these discussions, full assurances were received from the Ministry regarding support of JuST’s plans to integrate audio recording with the existing case management system, and to provide JuST technical staff with access to computer source code and software maintenance experts.

As important as the selection of the technology is the selection of the early implementers. Leadership is crucial. Without it, the best plans can fail. With strong, interested and committed leadership, the process of implementation is much easier. Success breeds success. Enthusiastic “early adopters” can generate enthusiasm (or allay fears) for their less-committed colleagues.

While the JuST team was conducting a systematic technical assessment of each court and its IT infrastructure, an “informal assessment” of leadership was also underway. The first courts to receive the audio recording equipment (the District Courts of Lezhë, followed by Korçë) were determined based on the leadership characteristics of their chief judges. This proved to be a critically important decision, yielding positive benefits later in the year when JuST convened the Court Leadership Conference.

The first shipment of audio recording components was delivered in January and implementation began immediately. Technology consultant Timothy Bates played a key role in coordinating the implementation process among multiple players, including Ministry of Justice technical staff; the Ministry’s IT subcontractor; FTR, the audio recording solution provider; the Lezhë District Court; and the JuST project.

During this early implementation phase, work was begun to develop a computerized interface between the audio recording software and ICMIS. After exploring several options to accomplish this objective, it was decided that the only feasible approach was to enter into a subcontract with the firm responsible for ICMIS development. Following the development of detailed specifications on the software interface between ICMIS and FTR, JuST executed a subcontract with a local software development firm, iKubInfosoft, in March and the software coding was completed just in time for the formal launching ceremony on March 30 in the Lezhë District Court.

On a parallel track, JuST received from FTR a significant collection of material requiring translation into Albanian prior to implementation of audio recording. The material consisted of technical terms which will be incorporated into the software build process for an Albania user interface, Quick Reference Cards, user manuals, and technical documentation. Translation of this specialized material proceeded throughout the month of January and February. Coordination of Albanian translations for the software user interface proved to be a difficult task, but by the end of the quarter success had been achieved – a significant accomplishment.

On yet another track, anticipating implementation challenges for routine audio recording, even resistance, JuST staff drafted a set of procedures in the form of an “Instruction” which could be issued by the Minister of Justice and which was intended to ensure consistent practices regarding the use of recording technology nationwide. The draft was presented for comment and discussed at a meeting of the project’s Audio Recording Advisory Group on March 19. The Minister of Justice signed the Instruction in June, based in large part on the draft prepared and circulated by JuST. The regulation requires the use of the technology and obligates court chancellors to report regularly on implementation. This reporting requirement presented an opportunity to JuST to propose automated management reports that will measure the extent to which court proceedings are recorded. By measuring implementation and reporting the results publicly, possibly through the recently-inaugurated court information portal, we hope to increase pressure for full implementation while adding a new level of court transparency. These ideas have been presented to IT officials at the Ministry of Justice and will be implemented in the near future.

In keeping with the Year 2 work plan, the JuST team provided basic typing training to court secretaries where needed. The Court Needs Assessment conducted earlier in the project identified four courts where session secretaries continue to prepare case summaries by hand. As part of the larger strategy leading to the production of verbatim records of court proceedings, basic typing skills among session secretaries are necessary for recording summaries of court proceedings which will soon be the method for accessing specific portions of the digital audio record. At the end of December, the team had identified a certified computer training company that could offer fast typing training to personnel in the Serious Crimes Court in Tiranë. Courses commenced in January on a daily schedule worked out with the court leadership. As a result, training participants improved their typing skills significantly by mastering ten-finger typing. Following the completion of this training, the JuST team entered into another subcontract to expand the training to cover the remaining three courts identified as needing basic fast typing training. By the end of June, training was completed for court personnel in the remaining three courts of Pukë, Përmeti, and Kukës.

By the end of Year 2 in September 2012, a total of seven courts with 26 courtrooms will have been equipped with recording equipment, with court personnel and judges fully trained and familiar with the technology.

### **Public Outreach on Audio Recording**

The JuST project has an ongoing program of public outreach on audio recording. This includes disseminating basic information, such as a “frequently asked questions” document. It also involves demonstrations of the technology and discussions of practical and legal implications. Since the beginning of 2012, the team has conducted numerous demonstrations of the technology for various audiences such as Supreme Court Justices. Moreover, the Court Leadership Conference in April provided a forum to reach virtually all of the chief judges whose courts are scheduled to receive the equipment over the next two years.

Public outreach efforts for audio recording have been positioned to inform system users of its benefits and encourage usage. As such, the communications plans for the digital audio recording (DAR) installation stage included a) a refining of a court-centric target audience; b) the formulation of a consistent message about the existence of the DAR system in every courtroom and the availability of the court session audio files as part of the official case record; c) the design of impact tools; and d) their distribution. The public outreach tools comprised DAR live presentations to stakeholders; a DAR system key features multimedia

presentation shown or distributed on CD; a public event to inaugurate the first DAR installation at the Lezhë District Court (with the participation of the U.S. Ambassador and the Minister of Justice); posters at the court entrances; signage and nameplates in every courtroom; an updated DAR “Frequently Asked Questions” brochure to include comments and inquiries from users; DAR informative seminars with prosecutors and lawyers conducted in courts contemporaneous with installation and training; DAR installation updates in the “Connections” newsletter, as well as an online section at [www.justforumalbania.org](http://www.justforumalbania.org) dedicated to the DAR system.

### **KRA 1.2 Improved court management leading to more transparent and efficient court operations including court hearings that are more open to the public**

An important activity of the project is technical assistance to the Tiranë and Durrës District Courts to increase the utilization of court rooms and reduce the number of cases heard in judges’ chambers that are not accessible to the public. The first step was to conduct a courtroom usage study. The study found that the total amount of time spent in sessions held in the seven courtrooms in the Tiranë civil courthouse was 2.1 hours per day, on average, or 18 minutes per day per courtroom. Furthermore, only 2% of scheduled Tiranë civil sessions are held in courtrooms. For Tiranë criminal cases, almost 93% are tried in offices. In Durrës, 76% of all cases are tried in judges’ offices, with only 24% in courtrooms.

The second step in the strategy was to field an experienced court administrator to work directly with court leaders and practitioners in finding practical ways to increase transparency by moving court proceedings out of private offices and into public courtrooms. In November, Susanne DiPietro, a court manager from Alaska, began her six month assignment as embedded advisor to the District Courts of Tiranë and Durrës.

At the beginning of her assignment, the embedded advisor achieved only limited progress toward greater use of courtrooms. In the Tiranë District Court, the chief judge initially showed interest by establishing an important and measurable goal regarding courtroom usage. However, progress slowed after the chief judge was nominated for a vacancy on the Supreme Court, possibly because his attention was focused more on his nomination than the administration of the trial court. Nevertheless, the advisor and the Component 1 team pushed ahead to develop the tools to facilitate courtroom scheduling. A courtroom scheduling enhancement to Ark-IT for use in the Tiranë District Court was designed and implemented. The new enhancement permits court personnel to know when specific courtrooms are available, and requires them to designate a location for the session, be it a courtroom or an office. While this, by itself, does not solve the problem, the ability to check the availability of courtrooms, and schedule them for sessions, is a significant step forward. It removes one of the often-heard excuses for not holding trials in a courtroom. It contributes to the stated goals of both chief judges to ensure that all courtrooms are in continuous use during court hours.

Comparable functionality was sought for the Durrës District Court, which is running on a different case management system, ICMIS. With the active involvement of the court’s chief judge and IT specialist, an expert engaged by JuST designed, built, tested, and deployed an online calendar for courtroom management that automatically pulls scheduling data from ICMIS, thereby facilitating its use. During this timeframe, the chief judge of the Korçë District Court requested the same calendar module. Following discussions with the IT staff of the Ministry of Justice, it was decided to develop a version of the online calendar that can be configured for any court in Albania. This result goes far beyond the initial, more modest

objectives, and promises to be a significant step toward more transparency and more efficient managing of cases and courtrooms.

## **Court Management and HR Capacity Development**

The JuST project has been working in a number of related areas to develop the capacity of court administrators (chancellors) and to encourage application of modern techniques of court management. These efforts fall into two categories: the development of automated management reports; and the training of court personnel, including secretaries and IT specialists. An online courtroom scheduling application developed by the project permits court personnel to maximize the use of available courtrooms while enhancing their own productivity. A planned enhancement to this application will permit court chancellors to monitor the usage of audio recording equipment and report implementation progress to the Ministry of Justice. All of these new tools are designed not only to enhance productivity, but also to demonstrate how court management practices can be improved through the ability to measure outcomes and track progress toward institutional priorities.

*Using the court calendar to improve court efficiency and reduce backlogs.* Although the calendar management software was initially intended to be used only in the Durrës and Tiranë courts, chief judges in other courts have requested the project's assistance in installing and integrating the court calendaring function with the existing case management software. The project expects the functionality of the court calendaring software to be implemented in all courts that use ICMIS software. Benefits include better use of court staff time in booking hearings, and maximizing the use of the courtrooms by avoiding scheduling conflicts. In the future, the software may even be used to evaluate the performance of individual judges, providing empirical data to the Ministry of Justice, and other government agencies. A planned enhancement will provide data on the usage of recording equipment. Such data can be used to inform national policies and distribute resources to courts based on tangible data.

*Fast-typing training for more accurate case summaries.* The introduction of audio recording technology has required a combination of specialized training in the use of the new technology, and in some cases, training in basic office productivity. Along with the installation of the audio recording equipment, JuST has focused its efforts in providing fast-typing trainings to court secretaries in Pukë, Kukës, Përmeti District Courts and Serious Crimes Appellate Court. The completion of the trainings brought an immediate improvement in the accuracy of the case summaries.

*IT training to ensure sustainability after the life of the project.* JuST has continues to support IT personnel in all courts where the project has installed audio recording software. Better, more efficient court personnel, oriented towards troubleshooting, allows for better and more effective use of court and human resources. The project will continue to provide support to individual IT personnel in courts in addition to closely working with the MoJ to establish a solid relationship with the IT department through resource-sharing and trainings.

*DAR training to ensure proper use of equipment and increase accuracy of case summaries.* JuST has trained and will continue to train court secretaries on the usage of the audio recording system by using shorthand when summarizing hearings which are considered as an annex to the case file. With the introduction of technology, court secretaries should be able to work more productively and efficiently, as they are no longer expected to produce detailed case summaries, but only annotations useful for accessing the verbatim record. This represents a change, and change does not always come easily. In order to realize the real

benefits of the technology, JuST actively participates in the Advisory Working Group established by the MoJ to amend the Criminal Procedure Code to encourage the best, most efficient use of the technology.

Based on the new instruction given by the MoJ during the last quarter of year 2 regarding the usage of the audio recording, the court chancellors are now required to prepare reports on the usage of audio recording technology. To assist them in meeting this new requirement, and to enhance productivity generally, JuST is developing software to be integrated within the court calendaring system that will create reports on the usage of the audio recording. This is intended not only to assist court chancellors in meeting their obligations, but encourage modern court management techniques using management reports and data.

The project, through its Court Embedded Advisor has also provided suggestions to the Tiranë Civil and Criminal Section of the District Court and Durrësi District Court Chief Judges aiming to improve the use of time and resources through active case management that generally requires, at a minimum, a written preparatory session; a pre-trial meeting and a court staff actively ensuring that all parties are summoned. Such proposals have not been accepted up to now from the chief judges of these courts as in their opinion such changes require amendments to the Criminal and Civil Procedure Code (currently being revised). Nevertheless, JuST will continue to encourage better, more efficient trial management practices.

### **KRA 1.3: Reduced Case Backlogs**

At the beginning of Year 2, JuST through a local partner, the Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes (AFCR), had two court connected mediation programs in operation in the District Courts of Korçë and Durrës. Once both programs were operating smoothly, the project intensified its focus on training and public outreach. Working through AFCR, JuST organized a series of activities in support of mediation. In October, a four day program of advanced training on family mediation was conducted first in Durrës and then in Korçë. Among the topics covered were international and national standards and rules regarding mediation; psychological and communications aspects; and specific court-related procedures. Local media was invited to the training and graduation ceremonies in both locations. Project partner Rasim Gjoka of the AFCR participated in a televised talk show as part of the general public outreach campaign.

In addition to the advanced training for mediators, a series of one-day introductory seminars was held in Korçë in late October. The seminars were designed to introduce participants to basic concepts of mediation, including the new mediation law, and were tailored to three different groups: NGOs; businesses; and attorneys and notaries.

Finally, in collaboration with AFCR, JuST supported the preparation of a set of operating procedures for the two mediation centers. The document includes the legal basis for mediation, the code of conduct of mediators, as well as case management issues for tracking outcomes.

In January the Minister of Justice established the licensing commission mandated in the 2011 mediation law, and appointed five members. During the early part of 2012, the licensing process for prospective mediators proceeded slowly, as the commission required time to organize itself and previously-trained mediators had to go through an application process. No progress was made toward establishing a Chamber of Mediators (called for in the law) since

such a chamber can only be formed once there is a core group of licensed mediators available to actually establish such a body.

In order to emphasize the urgency of carrying out the steps set forth in the 2011 mediation law, JuST and USAID met with the Minister of Justice on March 12 to convey concerns covering a variety of topics, including the status of the licensing commission; the need to “incentivize” mediation by addressing the question of possible “double taxation” through the imposition of mediation fees on top of court filing fees; possible steps to use a portion of licensing fees to strengthen the future Chamber of Mediators; the value of tracking the number of cases referred for mediation (an effort that the project and its implementing partner AFCR currently undertake for the pilot mediation centers); and the need for more public outreach and the posting of licensed mediators in each courthouse. Since October 2011 when it was created the Licensing Commission at the Ministry of Justice has licensed 64 physical persons and 2 legal entities: AFCR with 21 mediators, and Durrës Chamber of Commerce with 6 mediators. The project through its training activities in Durrës and Korçë has trained 25 of the licensed mediators from both the physical persons and the legal entities members.

Additionally, midway through Year 2, the JuST team conducted an internal assessment of progress to date and developed a strategy for refocusing efforts to promote sustainability of the mediation profession. With the slowly expanding pool of licensed mediators, the team decided to “jump start” the establishment of a Chamber of Mediators. The existence of such a body is key to setting standards for the profession, establishing a fee structure, conducting public awareness campaigns and creating incentives to place mediation on a path to sustainability.

Working closely with the Ministry of Justice and the licensing commission, JuST convened the first meeting of licensed mediators on June 19. With most of the licensed mediators from all over Albania (51), and following welcoming remarks by the Minister of Justice, small groups were organized and facilitated by JuST team members for the purpose of establishing a steering committee or working group to lay the legal foundation for the Chamber of Mediators. Throughout the summer, JuST continued to host meetings and facilitate the working group as they worked to draft organizing documents and bylaws for the new Chamber. JuST also set up a special page on the JuSTForumAlbania to permit the mediators to share drafts, post comments, or continue discussions on issues related to the establishment of their governing body.

### **Public Outreach on Mediation**

During year 2 the project continued with public outreach activities on mediation, based on the specific communications strategy designed in the previous year. These included the placement of informative posters at the Korça and Durrës district courts, as well as branded directional signs for the court-connected mediation centers. (Examples can be found in Annex 4.) The project oversaw the publication by AFCR of the handbook of mediation procedures in these centers. Following the three Durrësi mediation informative workshops with civil society, business representatives and members of the regional chamber of advocates which took place in September 27, 29 and 30, 2011, JuST project in collaboration with AFCR organized similar workshops in Korçë respectively on October 26, 27, and 28, 2011. For all licensed mediators, the project also prepared and distributed a mediation presentation CD which comprised all training materials offered by AFCR on commercial and family mediation, both basic and advanced, as well as a collection of the Albanian legislation and key international documents on mediation.

In order to increase awareness about mediation, the project worked with AFCR to place news stories in media outlets including both national and local newspapers and TV stations such as Ekonomia Newspaper, Korçë Local TV station, ABC news, etc.

## **B. Year 2 Implementation Challenges**

The most ambitious activity of Year 2 was the beginning of the process for producing real transparency and true accountability through the introduction of digital audio recording technology. Numerous implementation challenges were foreseen and addressed, including the type of training and support needed, the selection of the specific technology, the public awareness effort that is ongoing, and the investment in software tools, such as integration with ICMIS, that are designed to ease the adoption of something new. So far, implementation is going well and according to plan. However, challenges remain regarding the capabilities of the Albanian government to maintain the IT infrastructure that will be needed for long-term success.

The full potential of the technology will not be realized until courts of first instance have network connectivity with their respective appellate courts in each district. This is already a high priority for the Ministry of Justice. Plans to establish a centralized database in Tiranë are in place, and there are no significant technical challenges to overcome. However, the Ministry of Justice must rely on outside firms to advance their IT objectives, and their maintenance and ICMIS enhancement contracts have been so far only short-term agreements.

Also, while progress has been made, challenges remain in the area of active case management and greater use of courtrooms. Beginning with the work of the embedded court manager, the JuST team has been pushing for improved practices, and providing software tools to facilitate reform. These initiatives, coupled with the introduction of digital audio recording and the new regulation requiring regular reporting to the Ministry of Justice on implementation, should serve as pressure on the status quo. However, success is not guaranteed, and the situation will require constant monitoring, hopefully with assistance from civil society through the small grants program.

Finally, on the mediation front, challenges identified throughout the year remain – specifically the pressing need to find a sustainability formula. An important step has been taken by bringing together newly-licensed mediators to form the Chamber of Mediators, the foundation for a new profession. Moreover, the need for greater public awareness on the existence and benefits of mediation remains a priority – a need that JuST hopes to address through a grant award in the coming year.

## **C. Observations and Actions Taken to Improve Future Implementation**

The introduction of new technology – especially in courts – is not easy. People tend to be most comfortable doing things the way they have always done them. Audio recording technology has the potential to transform the judiciary. To facilitate the implementation process, the JuST team has invested resources to develop integration between ICMIS and the FTR software. All of the relevant training materials from FTR were translated into Albanian. Even the software interface was translated. Language-specific materials, coupled with intensive training efforts, have yielded good results.

JuST has also developed PAKS, the Courtroom Calendar Management Application (see Success Story, Annex 6) which addresses a long-standing problem in the two largest courts – the practice of holding court sessions in private judges’ offices. The software application enables court personnel to check online whether courtrooms are available. Furthermore, it produces management reports permitting regular monitoring regarding the location of hearings. It is through these kinds of software tools that behaviors can be changed over time, producing a judiciary that is more transparent and more service-oriented. This particular application will be modified to monitor the use of audio recording technology with plans by the Ministry of Justice to implement it nationwide.

Finally, when little progress was being made to implement the provisions of the 2011 mediation law, JuST first raised concerns with the Ministry of Justice, and then took on the task of convening newly-licensed mediators so that they could organize themselves and establish their professional chamber. While this is only a first step, it is a necessary first step in building some kind of self-sustaining mechanism to expand the benefits of mediation.

## **COMPONENT 2 – CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

### **A. Results Achieved During Year 2 Compared to Annual Work Plan Targets**

#### **KRA 2.1: Increased Organizational Capacity of Civil Society Organizations and Stronger, More Effective Civic Participation**

##### **Developing the Capacity of the Judges' Association**

Following JuST's assessment of the organizational capacity of Albania's professional judges' associations in Year 1, the project has worked with the Union of Albanian Judges (UAJ) to strengthen it as a voice for justice reform. At the beginning of Year 2, with the assistance of JuST and an international short-term expert, UAJ drafted a Strategy and Action Plan for 2012-2015. The Strategy was adopted after consultation with the general membership. In January 2012, the UAJ hired a part-time legal assistant and opened a small office with JuST assistance. The project continued to support capacity development activities and trainings for the UAJ, focusing on topics identified as weaknesses in the needs assessment: project and financial management, project proposal writing, public relations and working with the media, advocacy, and fundraising.

Two short-term local experts were engaged during Year 2: (i) Jetmira Hysenaj – financial development expert; and (ii) Juliana Hoxha – NGO organizational development expert. The financial development expert organized a six-day technical assistance program in financial management and legal obligations for Albanian NGOs. Key elements included “on-the-job training” on bookkeeping and accounting for the UAJ legal assistant, and a workshop on key NGO financial management issues with Board members. The workshop covered the basic accounting and financial topics necessary for transparent operation of an NGO in line with Albanian law and international accounting standards.

The organizational development training program for UAJ staff and Board members was designed to develop the group's organizational sustainability and enable its leadership to carry out its mission with excellence. The program included training on roles and responsibilities of the board. As a follow up to this training, the consultant prepared:

- A manual of Organizational Procedures that reflects the UAJ's current organization and complies with legal requirements;
- A Communication Strategy;
- The design for a UAJ webpage;
- The first issue of UAJ's newsletter and a flyer.

With sponsorship from JuST, the webpage is now active and the newsletter and flyer have been published and distributed. In addition, the UAJ, in cooperation with the Law Faculty of the “Luarasi” University and the “European Center,” and with JuST and Soros support, convened a conference on May 4, 2012. This program, “Justice: one of the 12 priorities for Albania's integration in the European Union”, included notable international guests, such as the Vice President of the European Court of Human Rights, Josep Casadevall, and the well-known British lawyer, Cherie Blair, Queen's Council. For the first time in Albania, a conference was held which brought together Albanian judges, prosecutors, lawyers and academics as well as European judges and lawyers to discuss judicial reform in Albania. The conference was a significant contribution to justice sector reform, as a key step towards

Albania's integration into the European Union. It was attended by 120 participants, of which 20 were media representatives, 25 were representatives from the international community in Albania that deal with the justice sector and 75 were members of the UAJ and representatives of the main state judiciary institutions. It was a good opportunity for sharing opinions among Albanian and European judges, and provided a platform to educate the public about the importance of judicial reform as regards Albania's integration to the European Union. A compendium of speeches held at the conference and the main findings were later published with JuST support.

As a result of the above activities, the UAJ is better organized, its membership has expanded by 33%, internal management capacities are enhanced, and its leaders' advocacy skills have improved. The union has tripled its budget and has an office and dedicated staff. It operates based on an agreed-upon strategy and work plan. The UAJ has become active in several lobbying activities on issues important to the judiciary, such as judicial immunity, judicial inspection procedures and the Supreme Court law. It has increased visibility in the media and the public, and even has its own website: [www.unionigjyqtareve.org.al](http://www.unionigjyqtareve.org.al). It also has been successful in initiating and designing projects funded by donors active in Albania, such as the Soros Foundation.

"The tailored assistance from USAID to consolidate and enhance the organizational capacity of the Union - a member of the International Association of Judges from September 8, 2011 - has been very beneficial in enhancing UAJ's reach and impact," notes its Chairman, Ervin Metalla."

### **CSO Capacity Building**

In Year 2, JuST expanded its activities with the CSO sector beyond the group of 51 CSOs that had expressed interest in collaborating with JuST in Year 1. Also, JuST reviewed the outcomes of the first APS and conducted several meetings with CSOs that had been rejected or decided not to apply. This feedback was used to improve the second APS. To assist CSOs in understanding the APS and procedures for applying, JuST organized regional informational sessions in Vlorë, Korçë, Shkodër and Tiranë. The 70 CSOs that attended were surveyed regarding their capacity-building needs and interests, to help inform the design of the Year 2 capacity-building program. Based on the needs identified in this and previous assessments, JuST organized capacity building training programs on anti-corruption; legal concepts and systems; and proposal writing. These topics were chosen to address specific weaknesses in CSOs' capacity to implement justice sector work, and also to help improve the quality of grant proposals. Three short term local experts were identified and approved by USAID to provide these trainings. Sessions on all three topics were held in Tiranë, as well as in Vlorë and Korçë, enabling smaller regional CSOs to attend. There was a high level of participation: 92 participants, representing 58 CSOs from across the country. (See at Annex 2 the list of CSOs that participated in the training programs.)

As a result of these training programs, the capacity of civil society to contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the justice system in particular and functional democracy in Albania in general, has increased. In addition to the broad geographical coverage, the trainings involved CSO's of extremely diverse profiles and backgrounds, ranging from membership to non membership organizations, from old and well established organizations to new ones and from grass roots to think tanks. Participants were fully and actively engaged in the trainings. Additionally, following the trainings JuST developed recommendations for

future activities to further enhance CSO capacities to initiate and implement smart and successful anti-corruption projects.

## **KRA 2.2: Increased Public Awareness of Corruption**

### **Grant Status**

Year 2 ended with two winning grants issued in the framework of the RFA for Law School for Journalists implemented by AIIS (Albanian Institute for International Studies) and an RFA, focused on “Mediation Advocacy and Awareness Raising Campaign” in the districts of Durrës and Korçë currently being implemented by ANTTARC (Albanian National Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center).

To improve the quality of reports generated by current and future JuST grantees, the JuST staff designed a quarterly report template and provided “on the job training” for each grantee on how to report using such template. The template aims to capture not only the activities implemented during the reporting period, but also on results achieved and difficulties encountered, providing for a more wholesome approach. In February 2012 JuST issued its second Annual Program Statement. Before issuing it, the project staff conducted several meetings with CSOs to solicit their feedback and identify problems or difficulties affecting their ability to submit high quality proposals. CSOs identified several issues, including the fact that the first APS promoted the use of coalitions; the fact that it was not entirely clear whether applicants could propose anti-corruption initiatives in sectors other than justice; and a lack of specificity about the types of activities contemplated by the project. JuST then adjusted the second APS based upon this input.

To encourage participation in the APS, JuST staff organized a series of meetings with CSOs throughout the country. At these meetings, JuST staff explained the APS and answered CSOs’ questions or concerns. JuST also encouraged the CSOs to use the JUST Forum Albania ([www.justforumalbania.org](http://www.justforumalbania.org)) as a platform for communication, exchanging information, and identifying opportunities for cooperation. Many questions were raised and were answered by JuST staff during these meetings. JuST publically posted the most important questions and answers on the JuST Forum site to ensure that all interested CSOs could benefit from them.

The above-described APS remains open until December 2012. The project has received several responsive proposals and will award funding for activities that have a good chance for producing measurable and tangible results.

To supplement the APS, JuST also has issued specific Requests for Applications (RFAs). The RFA mechanism was used to develop the Law School for Journalists training program (see KRA 2.3 below). Additionally, following consultations with the MoJ, in May 2012 the project issued a new RFA for a “Mediation Advocacy and Awareness Raising Campaign” in the districts of Durrës and Korçë. In response to this request for applications two CSOs based in Tiranë submitted project proposals. After the evaluation process for both project proposals the one submitted by ANTTARC was approved by September 7, 2012. This is a six-month project aiming to increase the level of awareness in the Judicial District courts of Durrës and Korçë about how to use the mediation service in civil, trade, family, penal, and labor cases. Project target groups include: judges, lawyers, public notaries, other legal professionals, business people, CSOs, and the general public. The newly awarded grant implementer is ANTTARC, a Tiranë based CSO.

The project aims to promote awareness in Durrës and Korçë focusing on resolving disputes using the court-connected mediation centers. It will also serve to increase the demand for mediation services. The increased awareness and demand are key to ensuring the sustainability of the mediation effort in these cities as direct JuST assistance for the mediation centers, progressively phases out. Having a local CSO conduct the public outreach amplifies the message by leveraging their local connections and relationships. Also, the activity will provide opportunities to identify and develop other local partners to conduct future similar activities. The project also aims to generate a model for further outreach in other areas in the country as the mediation profession takes shape, also thanks to the establishment and strengthening of the Chamber of Mediators envisioned in the near future. This project will contribute to JuST's goal of greater transparency, efficiency, and accountability in the Albanian justice sector.

### **KRA 2.3: Strengthened Role of Media in Reporting Corruption Cases**

#### **Journalist Training**

Early in Year 2, JuST convened a focus group meeting with journalists to obtain feedback to help shape the project's activities related to media. Following internal discussions, JuST decided to use the grant mechanism to implement the Law School for Journalists (LSFJ) training program. On March 1, 2012, a grant was signed with the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS) to implement the program. To attract a wide array of participants, AIIS published a call for applications on its website ([www.aiis-albania.org](http://www.aiis-albania.org)) and in three local Albanian newspapers: "Tiranë Times," "Albanian Newspaper" and "Panorama." In addition, a call for applications was sent to the 38 journalists who had expressed interest in collaborating with JuST in Year 1. After choosing 21 journalists from various media and regions, and developing the curriculum, AIIS conducted the training program. One-third of the participants came from outside Tiranë and more than one-third were women. The group included full-time junior and experienced journalists working in local and national media, whether television, print or radio, all active in covering the justice sector in Albania.

The training program experienced high level of attendance in all sessions. Participants were actively engaged and all expressed satisfaction with the quality of lecturers as well as with the rigorousness of the organizers. On July 9, 2012, JuST marked the completion of the training with a ceremony during which participants received certificates. (See Annex 3 for a list of the journalists certified through the LSFJ program.)

A positive and unexpected outcome of the LSFJ activity was that the participating journalists decided to establish an association titled "the Albanian Journalists for Justice Association" and developed interesting ideas in terms of its scope and activities.

While the LSFJ training program was in progress, the project continued to the next step: the Investigative Reporting Training Program. Initially, this activity was envisioned in the Year II work Plan as a Justice Reporting Fellows (JRF) training program. However, keeping in mind that the main purpose was to improve the investigative skills of the reporters, beyond dealing with the justice sector only, the project made a slight change and deemed that Investigative Reporting Training Program (IRTP) was a better name for it. The program was designed to help strengthen investigative skills of the LSFJ training beneficiaries as well as to strengthen independent media in Albania, improve transparency, and support the creation of

an informative resource for citizens and decision makers. Initially foreseen as a training program focused only on investigative journalism for the justice system, the training encompassed many other areas as interest which rose from participating journalists.

Based on previous assessments and research on existing online media, JuST concluded that in order to conduct such training, it was necessary to contract a short-term expert with relevant experience in other Balkan countries to help develop and implement the IRT program.

Based on the SOW for JuST's IRT program and recommendations provided by a consultant whom the project retained to provide technical support regarding the design of the IRT program (Rosemary Armao), in July, JuST selected an outstanding candidate, Mr. John Holland, to help shape and lead the program. He completed the first milestone of his assignment, a series of focus group meetings with journalists which were selected based on their interests, performance, and attendance in the LSFJ program. Mr. Holland concluded that the reporters as a group were quite strong, and there was a high level of participation during discussions. There was also a genuine camaraderie that is important for reporters who will need to work together in the future, often without support from outside organizations.

The next step for Mr. Holland was to develop and deliver the training program for the journalists, and consult with them to establish an independent media venue. As part of this assignment, Mr. Holland had been working on selecting at least one Albanian journalist to serve as assistant trainer (ToT), to ensure the program's longer term sustainability. The two-week ITR program was conducted in September 2012 with the participation of 19 Albanian journalists. Topics in the training program included: building an investigative reporting site, investigative reporting techniques using the internet, the art of interviewing, ethics - a guide to getting the story without crossing lines, writing leads and long investigative stories, and other topics based on interest from the group. Participants expressed interest on many occasions to establish their own association as well as a new online independent media venue.

Over the course of two weeks, the reporters were shown how to conduct investigative research, how to uncover and understand complex court documents, how to organize their work, and how to conduct interviews based on that research. Embracing the training, each morning several of the reporters arrived with new information on relevant issues and local partners they found using techniques, skills, and information taught the day before. Their findings were strong and many stories will likely be shaped into articles to be posted on the Independent Media Site.

The journalism training program has evolved greatly over several months, a testament to the enthusiasm of the individual reporters and the glaring need for an Independent Investigative Media Venue in Albania. In addition, during the training program were discussed issues related to the maintenance of a constant stream of important and impactful stories on a variety of subjects. This was addressed in part by creating a list of specialized topics, and covering them with a team-oriented approach. Under this plan, agreed upon by the reporters, the Independent Investigative site will write weekly and monthly blogs on topics including Health, Environment, Justice, Politics, Corruption and Transportation, as a starting point. The topics are sufficiently important to the Albanians, and broad enough that contributors will have great leeway when writing. Reporters from the newly established Association will volunteer for each update. Discussions amongst reporters revolved working and collaborating with journalism faculty students and establish an internship program. These interns would update the website daily, write small stories, or provide coverage for breaking news.

A draft version of the Association's statute has been prepared by the journalists, and JuST staff offered its assistance in reviewing and finalizing it in accordance with the Albanian legislation.

### **Independent Media Venue**

JuST has done research on alternative online media outlets to publish the work of the Justice Reporting Fellows and other investigative journalists. Through this work, the project identified "Gazeta Idea" which had been developed by the Free Opinion Forum, a local CSO. JuST staff also explored other existing online media venues. In response to the project's second APS, "Free Opinion Forum" submitted a concept note seeking to maintain Gazeta Idea for the upcoming year. JuST invited the organization to submit a full proposal and provided detailed questions, comments and guidance on issues that needed to be addressed in the full proposal. Ultimately, however, JuST decided not to give a grant to the applicant as the proposal did not adequately address these basic issues. JuST then began looking at other options, narrowing the options on supporting the contemplated Association to produce its own site. JuST will continue to support the soon-to-be-established Albanian Association of Journalists for Justice in Year 3 to establish an independent media venue site. For this purpose, JuST has contracted an IT programmer with experience in website development which will work closely with the journalists. The website is expected to be established and launched during Year 3.

### **B. Year 2 Implementation Challenges**

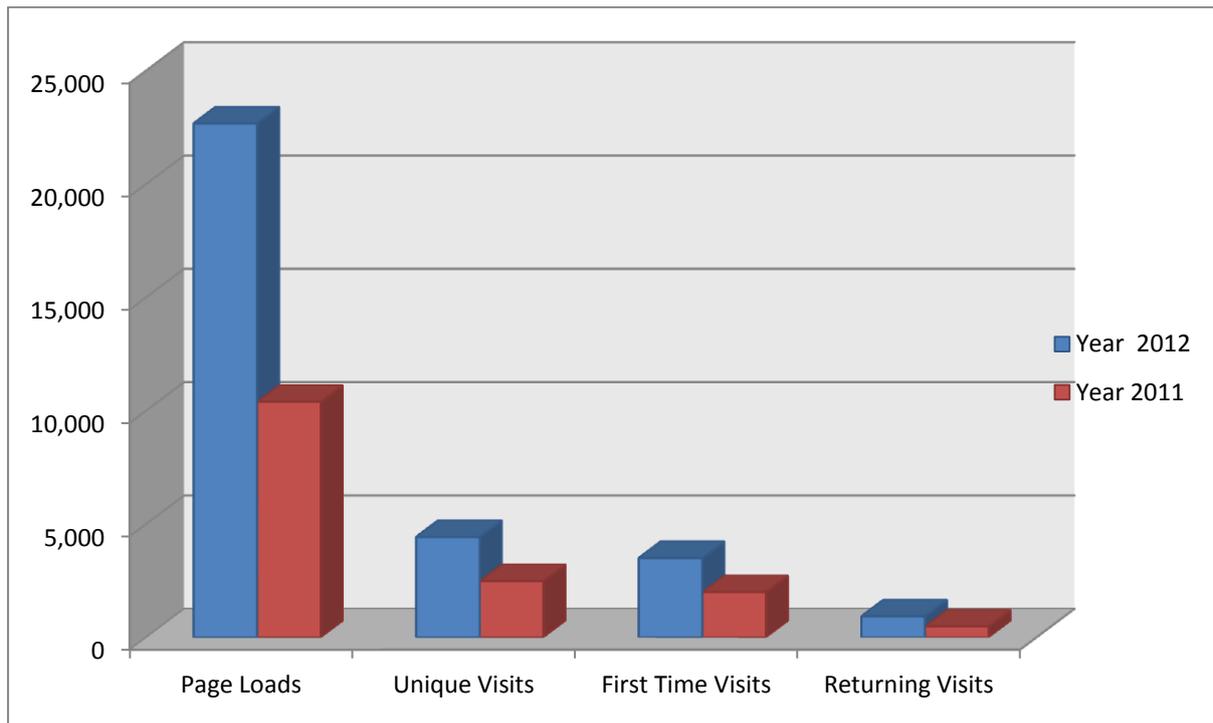
The biggest implementation challenge in Year 2 was the absence of a component leader in the beginning of the year. Following a thorough recruiting campaign, Elvana Gadeshi joined the team at the end of November, and quickly became familiar with project expectations and work previously done. By the middle of the second quarter, the JuST team was once again functioning well, with no further delays in activities.

### **JuST Forum Albania**

The JuST team continued to manage and coordinate the JuST Forum throughout Year 2. This mechanism has been further developed during year 2 to respond the needs of the JuST project in terms of communication, collaboration and coordination amongst the project beneficiaries. Following the first meeting of Albanian licensed mediators on June 19, 2012, at which they expressed the will to create the National Chamber of Mediators, JuST created a dedicated online page linked found as: [www.justforumalbania.org](http://www.justforumalbania.org). This is a subscription-based discussion page, where all licensed mediators are registered as members. They will use this page to coordinate the work necessary to establish the Chamber of Mediators. By the end of quarter four in year two of the project, the number of licensed mediators registered in the forum was 52 in total; mediation topics posted were 11 in total; and mediation topics' viewers/hits were 48 in total. In addition, the overall number of viewers for all rubrics of the JuST forum was 412 in total. Meeting reports, including those of the working/technical group were posted in the forum.

During year 2 there the project experienced an increase in the number of visitors, users of the JuST Forum.

**Graph:** Usage of the JuST Forum in year one and two of the project



### C. Observations and Actions Taken to Improve Future Implementation

**Grants:** The project’s CSO trainings are expected to yield results in the form of more and better quality CSO grant proposals, throughout the next three years of the project, and beyond. However, there is a risk that there will not be a sufficient number of policy-relevant proposals submitted to achieve the project’s goals. To address this risk, JuST will continue to use both RFA and APS mechanisms, to cast a wide net for applicants and high quality project proposals.

**Independent Media Venue:** Another challenge for Component 2 has been the establishment of the independent media venue. From the research conducted by JuST on existing tools, and judging from the media spectrum in Albania in general, some of the main challenges related to this type of activity and specifically to online media are: perceived bias, lack of sustainability, and lack of journalists trained in investigative work. It appeared that we were close to finding an appropriate venue with the identification of the Free Opinion Forum’s Gazeta Idea. However, its grant proposal was not of sufficiently high quality to receive funding.

JuST has now revised its strategy, and initially, it will seek to support the cadre of journalists created in the framework of the LSFJ, who are planning to establish the Albanian Journalists for Justice Association, in their anticipated efforts to create a website highlighting their investigative work. If the journalists decide not to form an association, or show lack of will and capacity to undertake such an initiative, a SoW to establish an independent media venue has already been developed, and JuST will proceed with such initiative.

## **COMPONENT 3 – EDUCATION OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION**

### **A. Results Achieved During Year 2 Compared to Annual Work Plan Targets**

#### **KRA 3.1: More Professional Lawyers**

##### **CLE Program**

An important goal of Component 3 is to develop and implement a Continuing Legal Education program (CLE) for lawyers. A survey of CLE practices in Europe within the last decade, conducted early in the project, revealed that CLE programs have become mandatory in almost all EU member states. Based on a MoU signed on May 12, 2011 between USAID and the Albanian National Chamber of Advocates (NCA), JuST and the NCA agreed to establish and jointly-funded CLE pilot program in Durrës and Vlorë.

As a first step in the program, JuST helped the NCA draft a regulation “On the Continuing Legal Education Program for Lawyers and Assistants in the Regional Chambers of Vlorë and Durrësi,” which was then adopted by the President of the NCA. The regulation requires lawyers and assistant lawyers in these chambers to attend 12 credits on different subjects of law ( such as penal and civil right law; ethics; penal procedure; European law; legal reasoning and writing, etc.) with each credit the equivalent of 90 minutes of classroom time. Classes were launched in fall 2011, with the program being divided into three semesters (September-November; December-February; and March-June).

The program included over 160 training sessions for a total of 12 credits on 12 legal subjects (see CLE report dated June 2012). The professors distributed written materials and all presentations included relevant case studies. Lawyers and assistants showed increased interest from one semester to the next and by the end of the program, the trainings were attended by 322 participants, just over 70% of all the lawyers and assistants registered in Vlorë and Durrës chambers. Out of 322 participants, 46 attended all the courses and were publicly recognized in a ceremony held in July.

This CLE program represents an important step in training legal professionals in order to strengthen the rule of law in Albania, and it brings Albania in line with the practice in virtually all other European countries in the field of legal education. The program has been regarded as successful, and it provided the NCA with practical experience and confidence as a first step to establishing a nation-wide and mandatory program consistent with European norms. Nonetheless, the NCA has not yet taken any steps to staff a training department to assume responsibility for CLE. Most preparations for the program described above were handled by the JuST team, local chambers’ secretaries and the staff of the Albanian Center for Legal Trainings and Studies (ACLTS). JuST prepared and shared reports on the CLE with the NCA, emphasizing that it must take more ownership of the program. (Interestingly, the NCA has a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Italian Chamber of Advocates and a roundtable on CLE was organized in April 2012. It was announced in this meeting that the Albanian NCA and the Italian Chamber of Advocates signed on the 14 of December 2011, in Rome, a Memorandum of Cooperation on the exchange of best practices as well as the organization of activities in the field of the Continuous Training for lawyers and assistant lawyers. In the framework of this cooperation a series of activities will be promoted regarding the training of professors, and the preparation of training curricula for different areas. Moreover the parties will deal with other issues as determined by the Coordination Committee, noted in the Memorandum.

At the roundtable, the Italian Chamber underlined the importance of a well-funded and staffed training department, thus reiterating what JuST has emphasized).

In any case, the NCA continues to consider the possibility of establishing a national training entity as proposed by the JuST team. Meanwhile, the COP and Component 3 Leader have discussed with the NCA's head the option of expanding the CLE to one or two additional chambers, so as to prepare the NCA for the difficult task of offering CLE to all 13 local chambers with over 1,300 active members. At this point, the NCA has agreed to continue the program in Vlorë and Durrës, and expand it to the Fieri Chamber during Year 3 of JuST.

### **Public Outreach on CLE**

To promote the CLE program, the project designed an informative poster which included the calendar of courses. Copies were placed in the main entrances of the Durrës and Vlorë district and appellate courts, as well as prosecution offices and the regional chambers of advocates.

### **Amendments to the Legal Profession Law**

During the implementation of the CLE, JuST seized the opportunity presented by the initiative of the MoJ to amend the Legal Profession Law and worked with the NCA to draft legal provisions to make CLE mandatory for all Albanian lawyers and assistants. The legal amendments collaboratively drafted by JuST and the NCA were submitted to the MoJ in November 2011. Although the provisions relating to mandatory CLE were generally accepted without changes, passage of the proposed amendments was delayed due to long standing disagreements between MoJ and NCA on the legislation's provisions regarding disciplinary matters. In July, JuST attended a high level roundtable on finalizing the language of the amendments. The MoJ and NCA reached an agreement on all outstanding issues. The Minister of Justice stated that the amendments are expected to be passed by the Parliament in September 2012. If enacted, this will be a major step toward institutionalizing CLE on a permanent, sustainable basis. The draft amendments provide for a one year transitional phase which can be used by the NCA as a window of opportunity to develop its training department and prepare to expand the CLE program.

### **Bar Journal Publication - *Avokatia***

A major Component 3 achievement in Year 2 for was the establishment of the first ever bar journal of the Albanian legal profession, *Avokatia*. This legal periodical is aimed at fostering professional debate amongst the Albanian legal community on newly-approved laws and the latest Albanian and foreign judicial decisions. In May 2011, JuST provided the NCA with a concept paper, "How to Establish a Bar Journal" calling for the appointment of an Editorial Board and an Editor-in-Chief and devising a step by step plan for the production of the first issue of *Avokatia*. As per the contract with USAID, JuST initially planned to provide technical and financial assistance for the publication twice a year starting in Year 2 but after receiving the concept paper, the NCA opted to establish *Avokatia* as a quarterly publication.

In October 2011, the NCA appointed the editor –in-chief and a seven member editorial board chaired by the NCA's president. The first issue of *Avokatia* came out in January 2012, the second one in April 2012, and the third in July 2012.<sup>3</sup> The establishment, production, and distribution were made possible with the technical and financial support of JuST.

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<sup>3</sup> The second issue was sent to the printing company on April 30 and was released in May.

Following the launching of the second issue, JuST prepared a document entitled, “Discussion Paper on Bar Journal’s Sustainability” and shared it with the editor-in-chief and board members. The paper summarized the process of developing and launching *Avokatia* and identified areas where further assistance is required for the long-term sustainability of the journal. Drawing on lessons learned during the first two issues, the paper recommended some key actions to make the journal sustainable and identified areas for future JuST assistance. JuST recommended to increase lawyers’ input through targeted articles from local chambers and law firms and called for a more stringent review, selection and editorial process by the editorial board and the editor so as to enable *Avokatia* to acquire the status of an academic publication.

Outreach for *Avokatia* was done through a launch event, press releases, and the distribution of *Avokatia* copies. In July 2012, the editor also acquired the ISSN from the International Center of ISSN in Paris prior to the publication of the third issue. The editor also informed JuST of the launching of a demo version of the *Avokatia*’s website at [www.avokatia.al](http://www.avokatia.al).

JuST has advised the NCA to continue to offer *Avokatia* for free to its membership since it is currently the only service provided by the NCA, considering its cost is insignificant and given the large income NCA collects from membership and licensing fees. JuST’s CoP and Component 3 Team Leader have informed the NCA leadership that JuST will significantly reduce its financial support for future issues. Once JuST is convinced that NCA is on the right track regarding its sustainability, JuST will inform the NCA of its decision to terminate the remaining elements of the assistance.

### **National Lawyers’ Conference**

There was no movement forward on this activity during Year 2. JuST continues to raise the idea of holding a national gathering of all Albanian lawyers, but the NCA has not agreed to undertake such an activity. As part of work planning for Year 3, JuST will again raise the idea, but if the NCA declines to take tangible steps forward, JuST will in consultation with USAID determine whether it should simply drop the idea altogether.

## **KRA 3.2: Better Qualified Law School Graduates**

### **Clinical Legal Education Program**

As has been previously reported, progress toward developing a clinical legal education program at the University of Tirana Law Faculty (UTLF) has been slow. In Year 1, pursuant to JuST support and encouragement, UTLF adopted an Assistance Plan provided by JuST and established a board that was supposed to supervise the program.

In Year 2, JuST sought to engage the board and to begin work on critical issues such as needed curriculum changes and credit allocation for the legal clinic program, criteria for selecting students, the need to engage an international expert on clinical education, space and infrastructure needs for the operation of the clinic, the possibility of cooperating with existing legal clinics, and ways to secure initial case supply. However, JuST’s efforts were delayed, ostensibly due to other pending curricular changes at UTLF.

However, a new dean assumed leadership of the Law Faculty in February 2012, and he expressed a commitment to working with JuST to develop a clinical program. In an effort to

jump start this initiative, in Spring 2012 JuST, after consultation with the new dean, engaged Martin Geer, a professor from the University of Nevada Law School with clinical expertise, to come to Tiranë to assess the efforts to date and provide recommendations for moving forward.

Professor Geer suggested that UTLF needs to address numerous faculty development, institutional, infrastructure, and additional administrative needs in order to create a successful live client clinic, as this is the most complex method of providing clinical education. To address such issues, Professor Geer laid out a set of recommendations and actions that need to take place before the clinic can start functioning and additional long term activities that require the continued attention and dedication to ensure the sustainability of this initiative. Professor Geer noted, for example, that the faculty members assigned to work on this program have not been exposed to clinical teaching methods, and he recommended that they be trained in these methods.

In the third quarter of Year 2, JuST submitted an action plan to the law faculty, laying out the most critical actions (as identified by Professor Geer) that need to take place in the next few months to move this activity forward. The dean has agreed to take the recommended steps, and has engaged the new board and faculty member to work on the following:

- a) The establishment of a new and compact Board composed of no more than five members, representing each of the departments and the leadership of the Law School, having also two students as observers;
- b) The drafting and adoption of the Board's Regulation;
- c) The determination of criteria and the selection of competent professors willing to teach at the clinic;
- d) Contacting the Polish Foundation of Legal Clinics in order to register the selected faculty members for the training courses of Krakow and Warsaw;
- e) Ensuring immediate funding for enabling the abovementioned trainings;
- f) Professors training in Poland;
- g) The preparation of curricula by each of the departments;
- h) The determination of the co-directors of the Clinic for each of the departments and their respective administrative responsibilities;
- i) The determination of the student selection criteria based on academic results;
- j) The determination of the Clinic's needs in terms of space and allocation of sufficient space compliant to the classes' size.

### **Creating Internship Opportunities**

Following projection inception, the UTLF dean informed JuST that due to the shift to the Bologna system, the one-month internship requirement for fourth year students no longer applies. JuST then explored the possibility of organizing of substitute events that could benefit law students including the organization of a job fair or career day for senior law students. After the new dean took office in early 2012, JuST revisited the idea of organizing the first-ever career day for law students graduating at the end of this academic year and prepared a "Concept Note on Law Students Career Day."

UTLF has agreed to support this event. It will be geared not simply toward senior students' job placement by linking students with headhunting companies, but also will expose students to potential avenues for postgraduate studies, and to work and travel programs in foreign countries. The project's concept note was informed by ideas obtained from organizations

experienced at conducting this type of event. JuST intended to organize the event in May 2012 but due to time constraints and the exam period starting in June 2012, it was postponed until December 2012.

### **Magistrate School Database**

In Year 2 JuST continued its work with the Magistrates School (MS) to launch a searchable database of all unified decisions of the Supreme Court. The availability of this information in a searchable, user-friendly resource is important to ensure that judges, lawyers, and scholars have access to and base decisions and interpretation of laws on the most current and relevant sources and authority.

During Year 2, JuST engaged Arta Mandro, an experienced professor, to develop a cataloguing methodology and work with MS students on summarizing cases and identifying key words. This activity was an opportunity for the students to conduct research under the supervision of their professor and gain in-depth familiarity with unifying decisions. JuST then engaged an IT programmer to develop a Document Management System database to assist the MS in searching and making the information accessible to the public.

Further work on the database is underway, and JuST expects the database to be launched in October 2012. See Annex five for a computer screenshot of the user interface with the database.

### **Publication of Magjistrati IV and V**

In October 2011, the head of the MS called a meeting of the Friends of Magistrates' School to discuss the financial constraints of the school and request assistance from international donor projects. After consultation with USAID, JuST agreed to support the publication of the fourth and fifth editions of student theses. Magjistrati IV has been already published with JuST support and Magjistrati V is under preparation.

## **B. Year 2 Implementation Challenges**

### **Lack of NCA Commitments**

The NCA continues to be a challenging partner. Its failure to establish a functioning training department poses a serious threat to the sustainability of the CLE program and will make the implementation of the CLE at national level a difficult task. JuST will in the interim continue to maintain and expand the momentum generated by the successful pilots in Vlorë and Durrës by initiating a third pilot in Fieri in Year 3. Additionally, if the amendments to the law on the legal profession described above are enacted, the NCA will essentially be forced to develop its capacity to provide CLE to its members.

The NCA's refusal to organize a national lawyers' conference also is frustrating. However, as noted above, at some point, JuST, in consultation with USAID, will decide to drop the activity if the NCA continues to delay it.

### **UTLF Inactivity on Clinical Program**

Component 3 has confronted significant challenges in its efforts to establish a law clinic at UTLF. The previous leadership consistently affirmed its interest in the legal clinic assistance

but its weak commitment led to delays in any concrete actions. The selection of a new dean in January 2012 has given us new optimism but tangible results have yet to materialize.

In fact, the new dean appears to be dedicating a lot of time to more immediate infrastructure and organizational needs of the institution rather than long term academic advancement of the school. JuST remains concerned that the concept of clinical legal education is neither understood nor championed. Nonetheless, as has been discussed with USAID, JuST will continue to press forward with this activity on a step by step basis in Year 3.

### **C. Observations and Actions Taken to Improve Future Implementation**

#### **NCA Activities**

Establishing a training department within the NCA is financially affordable and staffing it adequately over time (with support in the meantime from third parties such as JuST and ACLTS) is not cost prohibitive. JuST will continue to offer ideas on how to organize the department and the duties that each unit should play, based on lessons learned during the first year of the CLE.

#### **UTLF Clinical Program**

During the third year of the project, JuST will expose UTLF professors to clinical teaching methodologies in an effort to create a cadre of interested professors who can become champions of clinical legal education. Even so, it remains possible that JuST may not ultimately be able to establish a live client clinic at UTLF, and this may require adjustment of the relevant PMP indicators 3.2.1 through 3.2.3 which focus on the number of students involved in arguing cases before courts and cases resolved by the legal clinic.

## **Annex 1 – Performance Monitoring Plan Update**

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
<b>Component 1: Court Transparency, Fairness and Efficiency</b>								
1.1.1. Number of justice sector personnel in the courts that received USG training	0	100	169	169%	250	360	130%	<p>Year 2 targets were exceeded for two reasons: 1) there was faster-than-planned deployment of audio recording technology (and associated training) in the courts; and 2) we decided to include attorneys and prosecutors in our DAR training programs once the need became apparent.</p> <p>The introduction of digital recording equipment is transforming the way courts do business. As of September 30, 2012 the project has successfully installed equipment and completed training in audio recording in seven courts. The training is directed to judges, judicial administration staff, and also prosecutors and attorneys.</p> <p><i>Gender breakdown:</i> Female (216); Male (144)</p> <p><i>Additional disaggregation of training participants available upon request.</i></p>
1.1.2. Number of legal institutions and associations supported by USG	0	20	49	245%	30	47	156%	<p>Year 2 targets were exceeded for this indicator. This is because of faster deployment of the audio recording technology in the courts and the unforeseen inclusion of attorneys and prosecutors' offices in our training programs.</p> <p>During year 2, there was an increase in the number of non-governmental and governmental institutions that received institutional support from project activities. Seven non-governmental institutions received support from JuST through grants and a capacity building program. In addition, JuST is assisting the Magistrates School, National Chamber of Advocates (NCA) and two Regional Chambers (Vlorë and Durrës) through the CLE,</p>

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
								<p>program as well as 31 courts, the High Council of Justice, MoJ, and the Office for the Administration of the Judicial Budget.</p> <p><i>Breakdown by type of institution:</i>                      Professional associations: 3; Governmental agencies: 38; Non-governmental organizations: 7: ANTTARC, Albanian Institute for International Studies, Center for Legal Initiatives, Women to Women Shkoder, Forum Gruas Elbasan, Union of Albanian Judges. Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution</p>
1.1.3. Number of hearings that are recorded verbatim	0	0	N/A	N/A	TBD	3974	N/A	<p>As of September 30, 2012 the project has successfully installed audio recording technology in seven courts. Six courts are using it, with the 7th (Serious Crimes Appellate Court) scheduled to begin in October.</p> <p>Establishing a target for this indicator has proven impossible since we are continually adding new courts with widely varying caseloads. Our expectation is that every session that is held in a courtroom will be audio recorded. Therefore we are considering for Year 3 revising this indicator to measure the audio recorded court sessions as a percentage of all court sessions heard by a court.</p> <p><i>Further breakdown by court with date of implementation is available.</i></p>
1.2.1. Number of hearings that are heard in court rooms	485	TBD	N/A	N/A	TBD	10,870	N/A	<p>Establishing a target for this indicator has been impossible for the reasons noted above. Nor would targets be particularly useful, given the wide disparity in court infrastructure in each district. Since an important goal of the project is to increase the utilization of court rooms, the project is considering revising this indicator for year 3 to focus exclusively on the two largest courts, Tirana and Durres, where the problems are greatest and the baseline</p>

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
								has been established. The figures reflected here were generated from the two court calendar management systems installed in Tirana and Durres.  <i>Breakdown by court location:</i> Tirana District Court (9802); Durres District Court (1068)
1.3.1. Number of days from initiation to resolution of mediated cases	21	TBD	12	N/A	12	10	117%	It has been difficult to predict with precision the time required to mediate cases, especially as mediation is a new service in Albania. The baseline for this indicator was established based on previous experience from another donor-supported mediation program. Based on data gathered by the project team, the Year 2 target has been exceeded, and the time from initiation to resolution is less than predicted. The actual result has been calculated based on cases mediated from both court connected centers in Durres and Korçë District Courts.  <i>Breakdown by Court:</i> Korçë: 12 days Durres: 9 days
1.3.2. Number of mediated cases	14	TBD	23	N/A	200	216	108%	The Year 2 target for this indicator was exceeded. The results represent the number of mediated cases processed from both court-connected mediation centers in Durres and Korçë District Courts.  <i>Breakdown by court location:</i> Durres (147); Korçë (69) <i>Breakdown by case type:</i> Commercial (25); Family (145); Civil (46) <i>Breakdown by referral source:</i> Judge (158); Attorney Office (18); Parties (40)
1.3.3. Number of mediated cases resolved	13	TBD	13	N/A	140	147	105%	The Year 2 target for this indicator was exceeded. The results represent the number of mediated cases resolved from both court-connected mediation centers in Durres

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
								and Korçë District Courts.  <i>Breakdown by court location:</i> Durrës (109); Korçë (38) <i>Breakdown by case type:</i> Commercial (22); Family (98); Civil (27) <i>Breakdown by referral source:</i> Judge (94); Attorney Office (18); Parties (35)
1.3.4. Number of mediators trained	0	5	10	200%	20	29	145%	As a result of the training program implemented by AFCR more people were trained in mediation techniques than was originally foreseen. As a result, the Year 2 target was exceeded.  There was an increase in demand to be trained in mediation techniques mostly due to the increase in information available to the public on mediation services.  22 certified mediators were licensed as independent physical persons and seven more work under the authority of a legal entity.  The largest number of certified mediators is from Durrës and few of them are from Korçë area. <i>Breakdown by Gender:</i> Female (19); Male (10) <i>Breakdown by location:</i> Korçë (7); Durrës (22)
1.3.5. Reduction of time to resolution: mediated cases versus non-mediated cases	TBD	TBD	N/A	N/A	900%	950% reduction	106%	The Year 2 target was met for this indicator. A random sample of 147 litigated cases was compiled in Durrës and Korçë District Courts where court-connected mediation centers are operating. The time to disposition was compared to the time to resolve 147 comparable mediated cases.

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
								Six is the median number of days to resolution for mediated cases. 57 is the median number of days to resolution for a comparable sample of litigated cases.
<b>Component 2: Civic Engagement</b>								
2.1.1. Number of civil society organizations using USG assistance to improve organizational capacity	0	15	17	113%	20	77	385%	<p>JuST exceeded its target for Year 2, primarily due to steps taken in response to the unexpectedly low quality of project proposals received in the first round of grant applications. During Year 2, JuST decided to expand its activities beyond the initial group of 51 CSOs that had expressed interest in Year 1. This decision meant that more organizations outside of Tirana could participate in capacity building activities, which in turn increased the number of potential grant awardees.</p> <p>Capacity building activities were conducted throughout Albania, in four regions. Topics were chosen to address identified weaknesses in CSO capacity and to encourage better quality grant proposals.</p> <p><i>Breakdown by location of CSO:</i> Kruje (1); Shkoder (5); Puke (1); Kucove (3); Tirane (31); Durrës (1); Elbasan (4); Vlore (9); Lushnje (2); Fier (3); Sarande (1); Berat ((2); Gjirokaster (1); Pogradec (5); Korce (5); Permet (1);</p> <p><i>Training topics:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law school for CSOs including watchdog and advocacy activities</li> <li>• Anticorruption initiatives</li> <li>• Writing project proposals</li> <li>• Financial Management (UAJ)</li> <li>• Organizational Development (UAJ)</li> </ul>
2.1.2. Number of	0	3	0		5	3	60%	During year 2, JuST reached 60% of its target with 3

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
USG assisted CSOs that engage in watchdog functions				0%				grantee CSOs engaged in watchdog functions. These organizations are: i) Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives, Tirane; ii) Forum of Women, Elbasan; and iii) Woman to Woman Association, Shkodër.  The organizations monitored hearings in the District Courts of Tiranë, Shkodër, Elbasan, and Vlorë on family court issues, as well as issues concerning domestic violence, employment conflicts, and protection from discrimination.
2.1.3. Number of advocacy campaigns	0	3	0	0%	5	3	60%	Three (3) advocacy efforts were conducted by the Union of Albanian Judges (UAJ) during Year 2, proposing changes in the Criminal Procedure Code; suggesting ideas for strengthening the independence and accountability of the judiciary; and formulating policy positions for the draft law on administrative courts.  It is anticipated that the capacity building programs conducted in Year 2 will lead to better grant proposals in Year 3 and an increase in the number and effectiveness of advocacy campaigns.
2.3.1. Number of corruption cases exposed by the media involved in our project	0	1	0	0%	4	0	0%	There has been a delay in all our media-focused activities and particularly in delivering training to journalists. The Law School for Journalists took place in the third quarter, and the specialized investigative reporting training occurred in September. We expect to see the results in the next implementation year.
2.3.2. Number of non-state news outlets that report on corruption assisted by USG	0	0	0	N/A	1	0	0%	From the research conducted by JuST on existing news outlets, and judging from the media spectrum in Albania in general, some of the main challenges related to this type of activity and specifically to online media are: perceived bias; lack of sustainability; and lack of specific investigative profile.

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
2.3.3. Number of articles/investigative reports placed on the non-state news outlets reporting on corruption, assisted by USG	0	0	0	N/A	10	0	0%	This indicator is closely related with indicator 2.3.2 above. The same explanation applies.
2.3.4. Number of journalists trained with USG assistance	0	10	0	0%	15	20	133%	<p>The Year 2 target for this indicator was exceeded. More journalists than originally foreseen expressed an interest in our training programs. This also reflects a change in the selection criteria which opened the training to journalists from all regions as well as electronic media journalists. 20 journalists were recognized as the first graduates of the “Law School for Journalists” supported by JuST. With more than one-third being women, these full-time journalists active in covering the justice sector in Albania were selected from a pool of interested candidates with an eye to geographical representation as well as age, experience, and media type balance. They come from Tiranë, Korça, Gjirokastër, Saranda, Elbasan, and Shkodër and work in local and national media, print, and broadcast.</p> <p><i>Breakdown by gender :</i> Female (5) ; Male (15);</p> <p><i>Breakdown by type of media:</i> <b>Television:</b> Top-Channel, Vizion Plus, ABC News, News24, TVSH, +2Radio Radio Saranda, ATSH in Korçë, AlbScreen, TVOra Gjirokastra, ATSH Shkodër</p> <p><b>Print:</b> Shqip, Standard, Shekulli, Mapo, Tiranë Times; Shqiptare and Panorama.</p>

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
<b>Component 3: Legal Profession Education</b>								
3.1.1. Number of Bar Journal Issues	0	0	0	N/A	2	3	150%	<p>The Year 2 target for this indicator was exceeded due to the decision by NCA to publish more issues than originally foreseen. After successfully laying the groundwork for the Bar Journal's creation in Year 1, the first, second, and third issues were printed in Year 2 with 2000 copies distributed to local chambers, courts, and prosecution offices throughout Albania.</p> <p><i>Breakdown by gender of author:</i>36 is the total <b>number of authors</b> who have contributed in the three issues of the Bar Journal (<i>a few of them have contributed in more than one issue, but have been counted only once</i>).Female (13); Male (23)</p>
3.1.2. Number of lawyers that received USG training	0	150	196	131%	250	324	130%	<p>Performance against target for this indicator is 130%. The reason is that original idea was that CLE would be just for licensed attorneys. However, at the NCA's request JuST team decided to extend the program to assistant attorneys, as well. The actual results include both lawyers and assistants.</p> <p>These courses reached 324 participants, which constitutes over 70% of all lawyers and assistants registered in the two targeted chambers. 46 lawyers attended all courses and were recognized with a certificate in a public event.</p> <p><i>Breakdown between lawyers or assistant lawyers:</i> Of the 324 people that were trained 152 were lawyers and 172 were assistants.</p> <p><i>Breakdown by gender:</i> Female (164) Male (160)</p> <p><i>Breakdown by location::</i></p>

**CUMULATIVE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT**

Indicator	Year 1				Year 2			Comments
	Baseline	Target (Y1)	Achieved (Y1)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y1)	Target (Y2)	Achieved (Y2)	Performance against Targets (%) (Y2)	
								164 participants from Vlora chamber (77 lawyers and 87 assistants); 160 participants from Durrësi chamber (75 lawyers and 85 assistants).
3.1.3. Number of chambers offering training	0	2	2	100%	2	2	100%	Two regional chambers (Durrësi and Vlora) (see above indicator) currently offer trainings, which increases the professional capabilities of the lawyers. The first year of the CLE program started in July 2011 which corresponds to first year of the project and was rolled through 2011-2012 (second year of the project). Based on the memorandum of understanding between NCA and USAID, the CLE is to expand to a third chamber in its second year (2012-2013). However, the second year of the CLE corresponds to the third year of the project.
3.2.1. Number of law school students that take part in trial preparation and/or participate in actual cases	0	0	0	N/A	60	0	0%	There are no law students who took part in trial preparation and/or participated in actual cases during Year 2. The establishment of the law clinic has been delayed for many months due to the lack of a clear vision of UTLF leadership. However, new law school leadership has indicated its support for this activity and JuST remains guardedly hopeful of making concrete progress in Year 3. We also want to change this indicator. While the students can help in trial preparations with legal advice and the drafting of different court documents, our recent assessment, coupled with similar experience in Poland's clinics, demonstrate that there are numerous legal impediments to having students represent clients before courts.
3.2.2. Number of cases resolved by the Legal Clinic	0	0	0	N/A	3	0	0%	See above indicator.
3.2.3. Number of people receiving legal assistance at the Legal Clinic	0	0	0	N/A	20	0	0%	See above indicator.

## Annex 4 – Public Outreach Materials

**NË ÇDO SALLË GJYQI  
FUNKSIONON  
SISTEMI DIXHITAL  
I REGJISTRIMIT AUDIO**



**Regjistrimi audio i seancave  
është tashmë në dispozicionin tuaj  
si pjesë e dosjes së çështjes gjyqësore**



Mundësuar me mbështetjen e Programit të USAID-it për Forcimin e Sistemit të Drejtësisë në Shqipëri (JuST)

**Në këtë sallë gjyqi funksionon Sistemi i Regjistrimit Audio. Ky sistem regjistron çdo gjë që thuhet gjatë seancës.**



**Regjistrimi audio i seancave përfshihet në dosjen e çështjes gjyqësore. Ju mund të merrni një kopje të tij duke paraqitur kërkesën pranë sekretarisë gjyqësore.**



Partneri kryesor në mbështetje të Programit të USAID-it për Reformën e Sistemit të Drejtësisë në Shqipëri (JuST)







# PROGRAMI I ARSIMIMIT VAZHDUES LIGJOR KA FILLUAR NË DHOMAT E AVOKATISË VLORË DHE DURRËS

**Programi: 12 kredite, korrik 2011 - qershor 2012**

**Përfshin: 350 avokatë dhe asistentavokatë në Vlorë e Durrës**

**Zhvillohet: Ditët e premte, në 17:00-20:00 dhe të shtuna, në 09:00-12:00**

**Përmban: Tema me interes në fushat e të drejtës civile, penale, tregtare, evropiane, ato të procedurave civile e penale, të shkrimit e arsyetimit ligjor, si dhe të etikës, të cilat jepen nga juristë ndër më me zë në vend**

**Kalendari i përgjithshëm i seminareve të AVL-së pranë Dhomës Rajonale të Avokatisë Vlorë**

Tema	E drejta civile Sipërlinim i dimit pasur dhe jpasuror	E drejta familjare	Procedura civile Legjitimiteti i palëve në procesin civil	Procedura civile Koprimi i pakutit	Shkrimi dhe arsyetimi ligjor	E drejta dhe juridiksioni europian	E drejta civile Mbetet e mikroqipjes së të drejtës së procedurës	Procedura penale Marrëdhëniet juridiksionale me autoritetet e huaja	E drejta penale	E drejta tregtare	Etika & Deontologjia	Procedura penale Gjykimet e pasqes
Grupi 1	9 korrik 2011 09:00-10:30	9 korrik 2011 10:30-12:00	16 shtator 2011 17:00-18:30	16 shtator 2011 18:30-20:00	16 dhjetor 2011 18:30-20:00	16 dhjetor 2011 17:00-18:30	17 shkurt 2012 17:00-18:30	18 shkurt 2012 18:30-20:00	6 prill 2012 17:00-18:30	6 prill 2012 18:30-20:00	18 maj 2012 17:00-18:30	18 maj 2012 18:30-20:00
Grupi 2	9 korrik 2011 10:30-12:00	9 korrik 2011 09:00-10:30	16 shtator 2011 18:30-20:00	16 shtator 2011 17:00-18:30	16 dhjetor 2011 17:00-18:30	16 dhjetor 2011 18:30-20:00	17 shkurt 2012 18:30-20:00	17 shkurt 2012 17:00-18:30	6 prill 2012 18:30-20:00	6 prill 2012 17:00-18:30	18 maj 2012 18:30-20:00	18 maj 2012 17:00-18:30
Grupi 3	18 nëntor 2011 17:00-18:30	18 nëntor 2011 18:30-20:00	17 shtator 2011 09:00-10:30	17 shtator 2011 10:30-12:00	17 dhjetor 2011 10:30-12:00	17 dhjetor 2011 09:00-10:30	18 shkurt 2012 09:00-10:30	18 shkurt 2012 10:30-12:00	7 prill 2012 09:00-10:30	7 prill 2012 10:30-12:00	19 maj 2012 09:00-10:30	19 maj 2012 10:30-12:00
Grupi 4	18 nëntor 2011 18:30-20:00	18 nëntor 2011 17:00-18:30	17 shtator 2011 10:30-12:00	17 shtator 2011 09:00-10:30	17 dhjetor 2011 09:00-10:30	17 dhjetor 2011 10:30-12:00	18 shkurt 2012 10:30-12:00	18 shkurt 2012 09:00-10:30	7 prill 2012 10:30-12:00	7 prill 2012 09:00-10:30	19 maj 2012 10:30-12:00	19 maj 2012 09:00-10:30
Grupi 5	19 nëntor 2011 09:00-10:30	19 nëntor 2011 10:30-12:00	7 tetor 2011 17:00-18:30	7 tetor 2011 18:30-20:00	27 janar 2012 18:30-20:00	27 janar 2012 17:00-18:30	16 mars 2012 17:00-18:30	16 mars 2012 18:30-20:00	4 maj 2012 17:00-18:30	4 maj 2012 18:30-20:00	15 qershor 2012 17:00-18:30	15 qershor 2012 18:30-20:00
Grupi 6	19 nëntor 2011 10:30-12:00	19 nëntor 2011 09:00-10:30	7 tetor 2011 18:30-20:00	7 tetor 2011 17:00-18:30	27 janar 2012 17:00-18:30	27 janar 2012 18:30-20:00	16 mars 2012 18:30-20:00	16 mars 2012 17:00-18:30	4 maj 2012 18:30-20:00	4 maj 2012 17:00-18:30	15 qershor 2012 18:30-20:00	15 qershor 2012 17:00-18:30
Grupi 7	26 nëntor 2011 09:00-10:30	26 nëntor 2011 10:30-12:00	8 tetor 2011 09:00-10:30	8 tetor 2011 10:30-12:00	28 janar 2012 09:00-10:30	28 janar 2012 10:30-12:00	17 mars 2012 09:00-10:30	17 mars 2012 10:30-12:00	5 maj 2012 09:00-10:30	5 maj 2012 10:30-12:00	16 qershor 2012 09:00-10:30	16 qershor 2012 10:30-12:00
Grupi 8	26 nëntor 2011 10:30-12:00	26 nëntor 2011 09:00-10:30	8 tetor 2011 10:30-12:00	8 tetor 2011 09:00-10:30	28 janar 2012 10:30-12:00	28 janar 2012 09:00-10:30	17 mars 2012 10:30-12:00	17 mars 2012 09:00-10:30	5 maj 2012 10:30-12:00	5 maj 2012 09:00-10:30	16 qershor 2012 10:30-12:00	16 qershor 2012 09:00-10:30

**Kalendari i përgjithshëm i seminareve të AVL-së pranë Dhomës Rajonale të Avokatisë Durrës**

Grupi 1	16 korrik 2011 9:00-10:30	16 korrik 2011 10:30-12:00	18 nëntor 2011 17:00-18:30	18 nëntor 2011 18:30-20:00	18 shkurt 2012 10:30-12:00	18 shkurt 2012 9:00-10:30	17 dhjetor 2011 9:00-10:30	17 dhjetor 2011 10:30-12:00	19 maj 2012 9:00-10:30	19 maj 2012 10:30-12:00	6 prill 2012 17:00-18:30	6 prill 2012 18:30-20:00
Grupi 2	16 korrik 2011 10:30-12:00	16 korrik 2011 9:00-10:30	18 nëntor 2011 18:30-20:00	18 nëntor 2011 17:00-18:30	18 shkurt 2012 9:00-10:30	18 shkurt 2012 10:30-12:00	17 dhjetor 2011 10:30-12:00	17 dhjetor 2011 9:00-10:30	19 maj 2012 10:30-12:00	19 maj 2012 9:00-10:30	6 prill 2012 18:30-20:00	6 prill 2012 17:00-18:30
Grupi 3	7 tetor 2011 17:00-18:30	7 tetor 2011 18:30-20:00	19 nëntor 2011 9:00-10:30	19 nëntor 2011 10:30-12:00	16 mars 2012 18:30-20:00	16 mars 2012 17:00-18:30	27 janar 2012 17:00-18:30	27 janar 2012 18:30-20:00	15 qershor 2012 17:00-18:30	15 qershor 2012 18:30-20:00	7 prill 2012 09:00-10:30	7 prill 2012 10:30-12:00
Grupi 4	7 tetor 2011 18:30-20:00	7 tetor 2011 17:00-18:30	19 nëntor 2011 10:30-12:00	19 nëntor 2011 9:00-10:30	16 mars 2012 17:00-18:30	16 mars 2012 18:30-20:00	27 janar 2012 18:30-20:00	27 janar 2012 17:00-18:30	15 qershor 2012 18:30-20:00	15 qershor 2012 17:00-18:30	7 prill 2012 10:30-12:00	7 prill 2012 9:00-10:30
Grupi 5	8 tetor 2011 9:00-10:30	8 tetor 2011 10:30-12:00	26 nëntor 2011 9:00-10:30	26 nëntor 2011 10:30-12:00	17 mars 2012 10:30-12:00	17 mars 2012 9:00-10:30	28 janar 2012 10:30-12:00	28 janar 2012 9:00-10:30	16 qershor 2012 9:00-10:30	16 qershor 2012 10:30-12:00	5 maj 2012 9:00-10:30	5 maj 2012 10:30-12:00
Grupi 6	8 tetor 2011 10:30-12:00	8 tetor 2011 9:00-10:30	26 nëntor 2011 10:30-12:00	26 nëntor 2011 9:00-10:30	17 mars 2012 9:00-10:30	17 mars 2012 10:30-12:00	28 janar 2012 10:30-12:00	28 janar 2012 9:00-10:30	16 qershor 2012 10:30-12:00	16 qershor 2012 9:00-10:30	5 maj 2012 10:30-12:00	5 maj 2012 9:00-10:30
Lektor	Mariana Semini	Arta Mandro	Dashanir Kore / Vangjel Kosta	Sokol Çomo	Sokol Berberi	Aurela Anastasi / Kristaq Traja / Xhezair Zaganjori	Artan Hajdari	Artan Hoxha / Arben Rakipi	Skënder Kaçupi	Flutura Tafaj / Alitina Xhoxhaj	Evis Alimhmeti / Fatmir Braka	Artan Hoxha / Arben Rakipi

Kalendari gjendet në internet tek: [www.justforalbania.org](http://www.justforalbania.org) dhe [www.dhka.org.al](http://www.dhka.org.al).

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Programi AVL realizohet falë bashkëpunimit ndërmjet Dhomës Kombëtare të Avokatisë, Dhomave Rajonale të Avokatisë në Vlorë dhe Durrës dhe Programit të USAID-it për Forcimin e Sistemit të Drejtësisë në Shqipëri (JuST) - <http://albania.usaid.gov/JuST> - nën zbatimin e Qendrës Shqiptare për Trajnimin e Studime Juridike (ACLTS).

## Annex 5 – Searchable Database Screenshot

SHKOLLA E MAGJISTRATURËS E REPUBLIKËS SË SHQIPËRISË	
Kerkim i Përgjithshëm	<input type="text"/>
Lloji i Vendimit	<input type="text"/>
Data Vendimit	Nga <input type="text"/> Deri <input type="text"/> dd/mm/vvvv
Numri	Vendimi <input type="text"/>
	Regjistri <input type="text"/>
	Fletore Zyrtare <input type="text"/>
Gjykata	Shkalles I <input type="text"/> Apeli <input type="text"/> Te Huaja <input type="text"/>
Institucionet / Profesionistet	<input type="text"/>
Fusha	e Gjere <input type="text"/> e Ngushte <input type="text"/>
Fjalet Kyce te Vendimit	<input type="text"/>
Fjalet Kyce te Fushes	<input type="text"/>
Palet	<input type="text"/>
Baza Ligjore	<input type="text"/>
Rekursi	<input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Mendimi Pakices	

**Kerko**    **Kerkim i Ri**

Lidhje Ndhimese

[Shkolla Magjistratures](#)

[Lista Vendimeve](#)

## Annex 6 – Success Stories



**USAID** | **ALBANIA**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

### SUCCESS STORY

## Courtroom Calendar Management Carries the Day in Albanian Court

**USAID is introducing courtroom management tools which are making the work of Albanian court personnel work easier and enhancing the courts' public standing.**

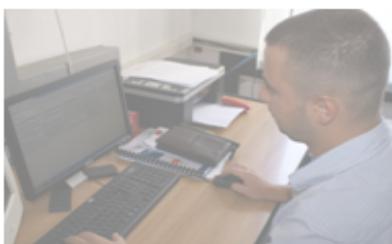


Photo: USAID JuST

*For Henry Hatillari and his coworkers, the electronic courtroom calendar management system is helping them do their work better and only with a few mouse clicks.*

*Promoting courtroom calendar management is one of the initiatives funded by USAID under the five-year Albanian Justice Sector Strengthening project (JuST), begun in October 2010, which is increasing court transparency, fairness and efficiency; bolstering watchdog and anticorruption roles of civil society organizations and media; and strengthening the legal profession and legal education in Albania.*

U.S. Agency for International Development  
[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

If a courtroom is not scheduled for use, chances are it will not be used. A study undertaken by the USAID JuST project in April 2011 investigated the extent to which courtrooms in Albania's two largest courts are being used. It confirmed that courtrooms were not being scheduled for use, and thus were not being used. In the Durrës District Court, over 16% of the four available courtroom time slots had no sessions scheduled, and the resulting actual use was no more than 22% of the time available. Tirana fared even worse. Instead of holding sessions in court, judges are convening them in their offices. This undercuts the solemnity, dignity and authority of the proceedings, and restricts public access due to space constraints in offices. This in turn fuels the already pervasive public perception of a corrupt judiciary that operates behind closed doors.

While the lack of sufficient courtrooms is certainly an impediment, judges interviewed as part of the JuST study revealed that the most significant factor underlying the practice of holding sessions in offices is judges' inability to access to information about when courtrooms are available for use. To respond to this problem, JuST has worked with Albanian court leaders to develop PAKS, a centralized online courtroom calendar management system. "In Durrës, all 24 judges would like to have their sessions in courtrooms, but before PAKS, the session secretary had to physically visit them before the scheduled session in order to find out if any one was available," says Judge Joana Qeleshi. With PAKS, judges and court staff can see in real time which courtrooms are free and when. The new software also enables users to view and monitor the courtroom calendar for each judge.

"To schedule a session, we used to have to fill out a form for each court manually," explains session secretary Henri Hatillari. "Now we have the PAKS online session calendar installed on all computers, so no more double bookings or empty timeslots. It's very easy, so in less than one week from installation, everyone was using PAKS. If you need the session schedule for any given period, you just click and print." he says.

The success of PAKS has resulted in demand for its installation in all courts in Albania, and the Albanian Ministry of Justice is now looking to add PAKS functionalities to the court's electronic case management system. The ease in scheduling coupled with the flexibility in reporting and monitoring have made it a valuable instrument in efforts to promote effective and transparent courtroom management. The seed has taken root.



## SUCCESS STORY

# The Union of Albanian Judges Finds Its Voice

**USAID is supporting Albanian judges' collective contribution to the country's justice sector reforms.**



Photo: UAJ

*The UAJ's highly acclaimed May 4, 2012 conference on "Judicial reform as one of the twelve priorities of Albania's EU integration" brought together over 150 Albanian judges, prosecutors, lawyers, academics, and international experts, who discussed key reforms and approaches.*

*Capacity building for judges' professional associations is one of the initiatives funded by USAID under the five-year Albanian Justice Sector Strengthening project (JuST), begun in October 2010. The project is increasing court transparency, fairness and efficiency; bolstering watchdog and anticorruption roles of civil society organizations and media; and strengthening the legal profession and legal education in Albania.*

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[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

"Registered in February 2008; 44 founding members; no operating rules and procedures beyond the general statute; lacking even minimal organizational and infrastructural means; membership fees collected at an insignificant level; limited and ineffective communication with the public and the media; spontaneous and reactive activities." These were the key findings of an organizational needs assessment of the Union of Albanian Judges (UAJ) conducted by USAID's JuST project in March 2011.

Fast forward 16 months. Following the election of a new board in July 2011, and with JuST support for strategic planning and implementation, the UAJ is turning things around. Today, the organization has 121 members. It has tripled its budget. It has an office and dedicated staff. It operates based upon an agreed-upon strategy and work plan. It is actively advocating on issues important to the Albanian judiciary, such as judicial immunity, judicial inspection procedures and the Supreme Court law. It has increased its visibility in the media and the public, and even has its own website: [www.unionigjyqtareve.org.al](http://www.unionigjyqtareve.org.al).

UAJ has also been successful in initiating and designing projects funded by foreign donors. The Open Society Foundation for Albania/Soros has funded two activities, including a national conference on judicial reform with notable international guests, such as the Vice President of the European Court of Human Rights, Josep Casadevall, and well-known British lawyer Cherie Blair, Queen's Council.

"The tailored assistance from USAID to consolidate and enhance the organizational capacity of the Union - a member of the International Association of Judges [since] September 8, 2011 - has been very beneficial in enhancing UAJ's reach and impact," notes its Chairman, Ervin Metalla. The Union is already planning for its first nationwide membership drive and outreach activities which will culminate on Albanian Justice Day, May 10, 2013. Today, judges in Albania have an association that is increasingly capable of delivering upon the promises enshrined in its statute: a) to strengthen the independence of the judiciary; b) to support the protection of judges' professional, social, intellectual, ethical and material interests; c) to increase judicial ethical and professional standards; and d) to contribute to strengthening public trust in the courts, and the rule of law in Albania.



## SUCCESS STORY

# A Winning Proposition for Lawyers

**Avokatia, the first-ever journal of the National Chamber of Advocates, for and by lawyers, is helping elevate professional discourse within and about the Albanian justice sector.**



PHOTO: USAID JUSET

*Mimoza Kondo, member of the Tirana Regional Chamber of Advocates, at the January 20, 2012 ceremony celebrating the publication of the first issue of the Albanian bar journal Avokatia.*

*The publication of the Albanian Bar Journal is one of the initiatives funded by USAID under the five-year Albanian Justice Sector Strengthening Project (JuST), begun in October 2010, which is increasing court transparency, fairness and efficiency; bolstering watchdog and anticorruption roles of civil society organizations and media; and strengthening the legal profession and legal education in Albania.*

U.S. Agency for International Development  
[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

Until recently, the Albanian legal community had no centralized, ongoing forum to exchange information on new laws, procedures, court rulings from local and international courts, or other issues of interest in the legal world.

To address this void, USAID's JuST project has collaborated with Albania's national bar, the National Chamber of Advocates (NCA), to produce the country's first-ever bar journal, Avokatia. The publication is just one element of the project's efforts to strengthen Albania's legal profession. It is providing members of the profession with a forum for professional exchange around different legal issues and legal, judicial and doctrinal developments, at both national and international levels.

Now with three issues published quarterly since its launch in January 2012, Avokatia has established its presence and already boasts a following in regional chambers of advocates and the Tirana University Law Faculty, among other venues. In a largely uninhabited academic legal publications landscape, this is indeed noteworthy.

"This journal is a necessity for the legal community," remarks Denisa Daka, a lawyer and Albanian Bar member of 15 years. "We deserve to have such a publication that is issued periodically because the profession needs a voice that resonates in the community," she adds.

For Ilir Dhima, Avokatia's editor-in-chief, its success is ensured by the patronage of high-quality collaborators and the scope and relevance of its articles. Academics are already relying on the journal as a relevant bibliographic reference in their work.

Mimoza Kondo, a new Bar member whose article appeared in the first issue, provides an additional perspective. "This is a very good and positive undertaking, especially from my point of view as a young lawyer. I believe it offers a great opportunity for all those lawyers who work hard but may have not been previously published. This has given me a greater confidence in myself."