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ALBANIAN JUSTICE SECTOR STRENGTHENING PROJECT (JuST)



QUARTERLY REPORT

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On the cover: U.S. Ambassador Alexander Arvizu and USAID Mission Director Jim Barnhart chat informally with journalists following the January 29 launch of the new journalists association and their independent venue for investigative articles.

Introduction

Chemonics International is pleased to present its ninth quarterly report describing the activities of the Albanian Justice Sector Strengthening Project (JuST).

During the quarter, the JuST team maintained its momentum in the installation of digital audio recording equipment in the courts of Albania.

Challenges stemming from absences or vacancies in key positions were resolved during the quarter. The Legal Education Team Leader, Alfred Nurja, was approved and joined the team on March 11, providing new energy for the third component of the project. The Operations and Finance Manager returned after a four month absence for maternity leave. Only one team member remains on maternity leave.

Albania is now entering a critical period in advance of national elections on June 23, and the run-up to elections will affect project activities in all areas. The political stalemate continues, tensions are rising, and cynicism among voters appears to be increasing. Whatever the outcome on June 23, there will be changes in institutional counterparts. The biggest impact will be felt within the first component of the project, which deals primarily with government institutions. Even under the most optimistic scenarios, new relationships will need to be built, a process which takes time. Fortunately, whatever political changes flow from the elections, the transformation of the courts through the introduction of digital audio recording is now beyond the point of turning back. As a “good governance” initiative, it is now thoroughly embedded in the day-to-day procedures of many courts, and is seen by all as a significant step in modernizing the court system and increasing transparency.

During the quarter, a number of tasks called for in the project work plan were initiated and completed, as outlined below.

Highlights and Deliverables Completed this Quarter

- Independent Media Venue for investigative journalists launched, and their new association established.
- Additional courts added to those receiving digital audio recording equipment and training, bringing the total to 15 courts, and two appellate districts completed.
- The Electronic Calendaring System for scheduling court hearings is now operational in 11 courts. The program has been enhanced to provide management reports on the use of digital audio recording.
- JuST held the second regional Court Leadership Conference in Durrës on March 15.
- The fifth issue of *Avokatia*, the bar journal of the National Chamber of Advocates, was published and distributed, and the sixth issue is nearing publication.
- JuST, in partnership with the American Chamber of Commerce, supported the University of Tirana Law Faculty in their first “Career Day.”
- The Donor Coordination Group, initiated and hosted by JuST, continues to meet quarterly and produce a widely-circulated bulletin, *Connections*, on justice sector projects.

Technical Activities by Project Component

JuST works in three strategic areas. First, working with justice sector institutions, it aims to increase court transparency, fairness, and efficiency. Second, working with civil society organizations and the media, it seeks to promote accountability from the “grass roots” level by

bolstering their watchdog and anticorruption roles. Third, recognizing the importance of well-trained professionals, it is working to strengthen the legal profession and legal education. The project is part of ongoing U.S. support to the rule of law and good governance in Albania, with an emphasis on improving justice delivery and increasing public demand for accountability in the justice sector. The following describes the specific activities initiated or completed during the second quarter of the third year of this five year project.

Component One – Increased Court Transparency, Fairness, and Efficiency

The first component of the project is focused on court operations through a number of strategies designed to address the lack of transparency and organizational deficiencies which continue to impede the ability of the Albanian judiciary to implement meaningful reform. Intervention results include: a) more accurate trial records; b) more efficiently-run courts that are more open to the public; and c) reduced case backlogs.

JuST is advancing these objectives through direct support to the courts in establishing systems for producing and making available verbatim records of legal proceedings; technical assistance to promote greater use of public courtrooms for the public benefit; better court management practices; and assistance to selected pilot courts to introduce and expand the use of mediation for resolving commercial and family law disputes.

More Accurate Trial Records through Digital Audio Recording

JuST's most visible and important initiative is the implementation of digital audio recording capability for the Albanian courts. During the quarter ending in March, JuST reached the half-way point in the number of courts with fully operational recording systems. Fifteen of 30 courts now have the technology in place with the completion installations in Tirana Appellate Court and the First Instance Courts of Kavaja, Elbasan, and Kurbin. Training of all Tirana Appellate Court judges and secretaries was completed by quarter's end. Another milestone was achieved with the completion of the second appellate district (Durrës) and the convening of the second regional Court Leadership Conference in that city on March 15.

Regional court leadership conferences are planned for each appellate district at the conclusion of equipment installation and training for all courts in the district. Two have been held so far. The format of the conferences has been to invite judges as well as all secretaries, court chancellors, and IT professionals from each of the courts in the appellate district. Representatives from the High Council of Justice and the Ministry of Justice are always present to reinforce the message that this is a priority initiative. Break-out sessions by court function have proven to be a useful mechanism for identifying implementation issues and developing solution. The conferences also reinforce the idea that holding sessions in courtrooms and producing a verbatim record are all part of a well-functioning judicial system, and the new standard for Albania. Specific court-by-court data can now be discussed and analyzed with the development and deployment of new automated management reports. Facilitating discussions and hearing the issues among appellate and first instance judges has provided useful information for the JuST legal team drafting procedure code amendments to address emerging issues in the use of the court technology. Although the ongoing political stalemate has slowed enactment of important legislation, the JuST team continues to distribute the draft language as part of its ongoing education and implementation process.

During the quarter, all courts issued their annual reports during public events attended by members of the High Council of Justice and news media. The reports include detailed analyses of

cases, workloads, and statistical tables, along with noteworthy accomplishments during the previous year. Courts that moved to digital audio recording noted the importance of this change to their operations. Typical of the many accounts is the following:

Since the installation of the DAR system in November 2012, we have a very important challenge for the future, namely the faithful implementation of audio recording for all court sessions, both preliminary proceedings and trials. Along with the increase of accountability and efficiency in the work of judges have come undisputable advantages, such as:

- *Reductions in the length of the court sessions and an increase of transparency for the procedural actions that are performed during the session;*
- *An increase in solemnity of the judicial processes along with an increase in the reputation of the judicial power, which leads to improvements in public perceptions of the judiciary;*
- *Creation of the possibility for a more efficient control for judges, based in facts, with regard to the elements of due process, preservation of independence, etc.*¹

This annual report and others like it represent a broad embrace by court leaders of digital audio recording technology. One chief judge, reporting on her court during a recent Audio Recording Advisory Board meeting, said “the usage of the recording system will increase the trust of the public toward the justice system, because everything is monitored and can be controlled at any time that such a thing is required to be done,” adding that the “system has disciplined not only the parties, but also the judges.”²

Improved Court Management Leading to More Transparent and Efficient Court Operations including Court Hearings that are More Open to the Public

An important project activity is ongoing assistance to the two largest trial courts to increase the utilization of court rooms and reduce the number of cases heard in judges’ offices. Despite universal acceptance that this is a worthy objective, the fact remains that until significantly more courtrooms are built, fully achieving the goal will be impossible. Still, better courtroom management practices can produce improvements.

A major breakthrough occurred when JuST developed real-time courtroom scheduling software by using data already being entered into case management systems. Responding to demand for this functionality, as noted in previous reports, JuST has undertaken to install courtroom calendar management software in all courts, large and small. Even smaller courts must schedule courtrooms, and the “Program for the Management of the Judicial Sessions Calendar” or “PAKS” is now providing the management tools needed by chief judges and chief court secretaries.

The next step in the evolution of PAKS was “PAKS Plus,” which linked the court scheduling data with the audio recording data. This software enhancement was completed during the previous quarter, and has been thoroughly tested, refined, and installed wherever audio recording installations have been completed. The software is now able to produce tables and charts depicting the use of audio recording technology by court, by courtroom, by judge, or by case type. The program also provides an automated basis for producing the required implementation reports for the Ministry of Justice.

As anticipated, judges are keenly interested in the data coming out of their courts, especially when displayed during presentations at events such as the series of regional court leadership

¹ Annual Report for 2012, Pogradeci District Court, Page 72.

² Comments of Rexhina Merlika, Chief Judge of Kruja District Court, March 13, 2013.

conferences, described above. Judges reaching the 100% level of audio recording take pride in their accomplishment, and more importantly, monitor the performance of their courts to ensure that they remain as models. Other courts simply have too many judges for too few courtrooms, and their courts will continue to lag behind the courts of their colleagues until resources become available to strengthen the infrastructure. Hopefully the continued spotlight on a major problem will spur future investment.

Reduced Case Backlogs through Implementation of Mediation

JuST continues to support the two court-connected mediation programs in Korçë and Durrës. In addition, with the award of a grant to the “Community Center of Gjirokastra,” a local NGO, mediation services have been expanded to the southern communities of Gjirokastra, Permeti, and Saranada. During the quarter, the newest grant-funded mediation program handled 90 cases. While most of these disputes were not court cases, this new program presents another option whereby parties can resolve conflicts without the need to resort to the courts, and thus supports the overarching strategy of reducing court case backlogs. JuST encourages the development of different models of dispute resolution.

In addition to supporting specific, local mediation programs, the project also supported establishment of a National Chamber of Mediators as authorized in the mediation law. JuST considers the establishment of the chamber to be important, since the chamber will be the appropriate body for addressing issues on the legal framework and the fee structure measures that hopefully will make mediation less donor-dependent and more self-sustaining.

As noted in the last quarter’s report, in December a meeting of mediators was convened to discuss and hopefully approve a draft statute and by-laws for the chamber. A long-simmering dispute over voting rights of individuals versus legal entities erupted during the meeting. Although a statute was eventually approved, the vote took place only after one faction of mediators walked out in protest, calling into question the legitimacy of the entire process. The remaining group of participants who passed the statute took no subsequent steps to launch the chamber, such as registering the organization with the Court, applying for a tax number, or nominating two members to the licensing commission as the law contemplates.

Given the apparent intractability of the dispute, and not seeing a path forward, the JuST COP posted on the electronic forum an open letter to all mediators challenging them to apply their mediation skills, resolve their internal dispute, and get on with the business of setting up their professional chamber. The open letter pointed out that there is no disagreement among mediators regarding the role or desirability of the Chamber, concluding with a simple statement that failure to resolve the dispute would mean a loss of USAID support, as the Chamber was viewed as the natural beneficiary and project counterpart for JuST. As the quarter closed and the deadline passed, there was no apparent movement toward resolution.

Improving Public Information Offices of the Courts

A small but important JuST objective JuST is to increase access to justice by improving public information areas of courts. During the final quarter of last year, JuST completed renovations of the public information area of the Pogradec District Court, and participated in its inauguration. JuST continues to work on a similar project in the Kavaja District Court, in collaboration with the Office of Judicial Budget and Administration. Construction plans have been finalized, and the renovation project will be opened for bids in April.

Challenges Ahead for Component One

The biggest challenge facing Component One is the political instability that is intensifying, and the inevitable change in governmental partners that is likely to result from the national elections. In the area of digital audio recording, the implementation process has benefitted from high level support that comes from a thorough understanding of and support for the technological changes that are being introduced with USAID assistance. Our current partners fully appreciate how the modernization process will strengthen confidence in the judiciary, a pre-requisite for Albania's long term aspirations and stability. New partners may have different priorities, or may lack familiarity with the progress to date and the need for continued leadership.

JuST support for mediation continues to present challenges. At the local level, there is reason for optimism. The two court-connected mediation programs supported by JuST continue to produce results. The newly established mediation program in the south is also handling an impressive number of cases. However, JuST support at the national level to establish a National Chamber of Mediators has not produced the anticipated outcome. Mediators remain locked in conflict over a single issue, and the impasse appears no closer to resolution.

Component Two – Strengthened Civic Engagement to Help Stem Governmental and Justice Sector Corruption

The second component of JuST is designed to increase the organizational capacity of CSOs, promote stronger and more effective civic participation, increase public awareness of corruption, and bolster the role of media in investigating and reporting corruption cases.

Capacity Development for the Union of Albanian Judges

JuST is working to strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of the Union of Albanian Judges (UAJ) as part of a strategy to support a greater independence of the judiciary. Over the past year and a half, JuST facilitated a strategic planning process for the UAJ, oversaw the development of professional staff, assisted the UAJ as it acquired office space and registered with the tax authorities, and supported an important UAJ-convened conference of judges to address challenges facing the justice sector. As a result of these activities, the stature of the organization has steadily grown and more judges have decided to affiliate with the organization. By the end of the quarter, membership had climbed to 175 from approximately 45 at the beginning of JuST support.

During the quarter, JuST expanded its assistance to the UAJ through a small grant to a local NGO – Partners Albania, Center for Change and Conflict Management. Through facilitation and logistical support provided through Partners Albania, the UAJ is planning a series of regional cluster groups in Tirana, Gjirokastra, Korca, and Shkodra. The regional meetings, composed of its own judicial members, along with journalists, CSO representatives, citizens, lawyers, mediators, and law school students, will take up justice sector issues. The first series of cluster groups will run throughout the month of April with follow-up sessions later in the year. These activities are designed to increase community involvement in the justice sector, promote mutual understanding, and eventually increase understanding, accountability, and trust between citizens and their judicial institutions.

The UAJ has remained active in addressing issues affecting the judiciary. They have provided comments and proposals on a number of draft laws, including one on the functioning of the Institute of Scientific Expertise, another on the organization of judicial power, and finally on

proposed changes to the Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, and Civil Code. They have also provided internship opportunities for law students from two universities.

Justice and Good Governance CSO Grants Program

An important element of USAID assistance to Albania is strengthening civil society as a means of increasing citizen participation and achieving greater transparency and accountability from governmental institutions.

Grants Status

During this reporting period, the third Annual Program Statement (APS) was issued. The JuST team has learned from prior experience that better concept papers and more fully-developed grant proposals are likely to be received following a two-step set of activities. The first step is a series of regional informational sessions where application procedures can be described and questions answered. The second step is capacity building trainings designed to strengthen skills required for good project management.

Following the release of the APS, information sessions were organized on a regional basis in Vlora, Korca, and Tirana. In total, 65 individuals representing 41 CSOs participated. Their interests and capacity-building needs were surveyed, and based on these assessments, JuST will organize capacity building activities designed to address the CSOs' organizational weaknesses. Additionally, the following three grants were awarded during the quarter:

The **Albanian Legal and Territorial Research Institute (ALTRI)** was awarded a grant for a six month project designed to promote cooperation between courts and law faculty students. The project will provide training to law students who will then offer free legal assistance directed at making court information available and accessible to citizens who have business in the courts. In keeping with the general developmental approach of JuST, this project reinforces multiple project objectives, included practical legal training for law students (Component 3) and citizen access to courts (Component 1).

Partners Albania, Center for Change and Conflict Management (PA) was awarded a ten month grant to provide logistical support to the Union of Albanian Judges, described in the previous section.

Eye of New Media (SMR) is a Gjirokastra-based organization and was awarded an eight month grant. The objective of the project is to stem corruption in governmental institutions that oversee the delivery of social services such as pensions and scholarships. Activities intended to further the grant objective include increasing civic participation in local government decision making processes; increasing public awareness of corruption; and strengthening the role of the media in reporting corruption cases. The project will operate in nine communes in Gjirokastra and Tepelene.

In addition to these three grants, JuST continues to work with several ongoing grant projects.

On January 18, the **Community Center of Gjirokastra**, with the participation of the USAID Mission Director, the Deputy Minister of Justice, and chief judges of three courts, officially launched a project entitled *Mediation and Restorative Justice Project in Gjirokastra, Saranda and Permeti*. As noted in the Component 1 section of this report, the new mediation project represents a slightly different approach from the two earlier court-connected mediation programs. As with the two existing programs in Korca and Durrës, the new grant project has been provided

with office space in both the Gjirokastra, and soon in Saranda and Permeti District Courts. Some cases are referred for mediation by judges. However, after nine public awareness meetings were organized, and six more meetings were held with representatives from law enforcement agencies, some police agencies are referring cases directly to the program. While the referral mechanism differs, the ultimate result is the same – satisfied parties, quick resolution of disputes, and fewer demands on court resources.

The first grant awarded by JuST to a coalition of three NGOs (**Women to Women** of Shkodra, **Women Forum** from Elbasani, and **Center for Legal Civic Initiatives** of Tirana) continues to operate successfully and according to plan. During the quarter, free legal aid was provided to women and girls in 30 cases from the three target areas – all victims of domestic violence. In addition, the “pro bono” team continues to collect data through monitoring case files in four courts.

The **Albanian National Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center** (ANTTARC) completed all planned activities by the end of February. This project was structured to raise awareness of mediation services in the two cities (Durrës and Korca) with JuST-sponsored court connected mediation programs. The awareness raising campaign consisted of a variety of activities, including ten roundtables, special outreach to businesses, collaboration with Citizens Advocacy Panels, promotional TV spots broadcast over a period of three months, participation in television talk shows, distribution of leaflets and posters, and even door-to-door visits where the mediation process could be presented and explained to people. By the conclusion of this vigorous awareness-raising campaign, six articles had been published in local newspapers (four in Durrës and two in Korca) and four television programs had been aired on the local TV channel. The final wrap-up activity consisted of regional meetings covering the benefits of mediation and where to access mediation services. These gatherings were held in two target cities with participation of 180 persons including local dignitaries, civil society organizations, lawyers, and mediators, and reinforced the idea of further collaboration between CSOs and the District Courts.

All of these grant-funded activities are part of a long-term strategy, first to strengthen citizen voices and increase participation in anti-corruption and good governance initiatives, and second, to bring community involvement and pressure directly on governmental institutions to achieve greater effectiveness, transparency, and accountability to the citizens they are supposed to serve.

Justice Reporting Fellows: Training and Independent Venue for Investigative Journalists

The only security of all is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary, to keep the waters pure.³

JuST continues to promote a vigorous and independent press as another anti-corruption strategy, most recently through support for a new association of journalists that formed during a JuST-sponsored training program known as Justice Reporting Fellows. This group of young, idealistic, and passionate journalists has taken steps to establish and register their association, select officers, and, with JuST support, design a website and hire an editor. The new association was introduced to the public in January by U.S. Ambassador Arvizu (see cover photograph) and the website was unveiled the same day. This new independent online media venue for investigating reporting, www.investigim.al, provides a venue for stories that are well-documented, fair, and

³ Thomas Jefferson to Lafayette, 1823.

accurate. JuST has continued to work closely with an experienced U.S.-based reporter to continue to mentor these journalists.

The new forum offers a place where members of the public can interact with the site, providing leads for new stories and comments on published stories. The membership in the association continues to grow, and fresh content is uploaded regularly. Several renowned journalists have reviewed the product and have offered to assist in promotion of the website and growth of the association. The Assist Impact Project is working in partnership with JuST to further strengthen the endeavor and contribute to long term sustainability.

JuST Forum Albania

Established early in the project as a discussion forum for selected CSOs, the online forum continues to expand to serve new audiences. During the previous quarter, JuST set up a separate discussion forum for licensed mediators as a means of facilitating communication regarding the establishment of the Chamber of Mediators. During this quarter, JuST set up another forum for IT personnel of the courts. This new page is designed to facilitate IT support for digital audio recording by permitting the exchange of information on various technical topics. The forum continues as the primary vehicle for communicating information on the grants program. The total number of viewers on JustForumAlbania for the quarter was 1051, almost double the number from the previous quarter.

Challenges Ahead for Component Two

The establishment of the journalists association and the sustainability of their new, independent venue are challenges, simply because the organization is still in its infancy. On the positive side, there has been a great deal of enthusiasm for the idea among the journalists themselves. The reception of the website has been overwhelmingly positive. Following the public launching in January, more than two dozen reporters volunteered to contribute to the venue by writing blogs, covering certain beats, and using outtakes and rejected stories from their daily jobs as possible starting points for contributions to the new outlet. New associations generally face growing pains, and the journalists' association is no exception as disagreements have surfaced over leadership roles, as well as differences in contributions and perspectives among Tirana-based journalists versus those from outlying areas.

There is an urgent need for a full time editorial director for the investigative website as an experienced editor who can make difficult editorial decisions on a daily basis is essential. This need will become more urgent as more reporters join the organization and produce stories. For the moment, the new electronic venue is relying on the involvement of JuST's short-term consultant in investigative reporting, along with a part-time editor, but ultimately, the website will only survive if local editors and reporters can do the job on their own.

Component Three – Strengthened Legal Profession

The third component of JuST is designed to enhance the legal competence and professionalism among practicing attorneys as an element of a larger strategy to address corruption. To achieve this, the component works closely with the Chamber of Advocates and the University of Tirana Law School, engaging them in a number of project and activities aimed at introducing changes to the curricula of training and oversight of the legal profession.

LEGAL PROFESSION

Develop and implement Continuing Legal Education (CLE) program

JuST continues to support a better-prepared and more capable legal profession. During the first two years of the project, considerable effort was devoted to assisting the National Chamber of Advocates (NCA) to establish a program of Continuing Legal Education in two regional chambers in Durrës and Vlora, with plans to expand to a third chamber. On a parallel track, JuST worked with the NCA leadership to introduce legal amendments to the law on the Legal Profession making CLE mandatory for all lawyers. The amendments, which are now in force, provide for the establishment of a National School of Advocates (NSA) with continuing legal education to be phased in over a one-year transition period. At the time of writing of this report, the NCA has taken some steps to set up the NSA registering it as a NCA-established not-for-profit legal entity and appointing a founding steering committee made up of seven lawyers.

Since the delays with launching the CLE noted in the final quarter of 2012, there have been some important positive developments. CLE has now been successfully expanded to the third Chamber of Advocates of Fier with up to 90 lawyers and assistant lawyers attending the first inaugural class that took place in March. Second-year CLE classes also regularly commenced in Vlora and Durrës Chamber with over 150 lawyers and assistant lawyers attending the two-day classes. Sustained local support for the program in both chambers bodes well for efforts to expand the CLE across the NCA as now mandated by law. A second-year agreement between the NCA and ACLTS, the subcontractor, has now been finalized and a schedule of CLE classes for all three chambers has been developed and approved. Working with our training subcontractor, ACLTS, it is projected that CLE training will reach 500 lawyers and assistants during the current phase.

JuST will continue to assist the NCA focusing closely on ensuring that effort to set up the National School of Advocates are in line with the commitments undertaken by the NCA to mainstream Continuing Legal Education classes across the profession within one year.

Establish a Bar Journal with the National Chamber of Advocates and publish it regularly

USAID support to the National Chamber of Advocates for establishing a bar journal is part of a larger strategy for strengthening the legal profession by raising the professional standards and instilling a sense of pride among practicing attorneys. The journal aims to foster professional debate amongst the Albanian legal profession focusing especially on engaging practicing attorneys in legal research and writing.

Set up as a quarterly publication of the NCA, *Avokatia* is now well on its way to becoming a respected legal periodical. During this quarter the fifth issue of the journal was published and distributed and all articles for the sixth issue have already been solicited making it possible to keep to the agreed schedule of periodical publications. With four contributors in the last two issues coming from regional chambers, there are encouraging signs that interest in legal research and writing is spreading beyond Tirana. The editor-in-chief remains effective in soliciting articles and working with the editorial board to ensure sustained quality of the publication. Efforts underway to increase the contributions from practicing lawyers and introduce more stringent editorial review need to be followed through.

JuST will continue to assist the NCA closely to meet the standards and facilitate the process for issuing the academic status to *Avokatia*. Such a status would open the publication to a larger

number of interested contributors including law graduates pursuing doctoral studies requiring publication in accredited journals.

LEGAL EDUCATION

Clinical Legal Education Program

To address the overly theoretical focus and rote learning legacy that the Albanian legal education has inherited, JuST is assisting the University of Tirana Law Faculty (UTLF) to set up a clinical legal education program (CLEP). The goal of the CLEP is to assist students in developing critical legal thinking and practice skills and engage them directly under proper supervision in resolving actual client cases in criminal and civil matters. Despite some persistent delays with this tasks reported previously, the technical assistance provided by an international expert, the establishment of a new legal clinic board, and the legal clinic faculty visit to Poland last October contributed to positive momentum for setting up the CLEP during this academic year.

Since the last reporting period, tangible progress has been made in ensuring CLEP launches in the three professional master classes. The UTLF reports that over 95 students have already registered for the elective CLEP classes and the required administrative support and curricula development are in place to ensure a good start of the first CLE classes during this academic year. To ensure live client engagement for the students during the same semester, the CLEP Board has agreed to cooperate with two not-for-profit organization providing free legal aid to clients. A draft MoU between the UTLF and the two NGOs has been negotiated and once signed the agreement is expected to provide an appropriate temporary mechanism until live client engagement has been phased in to the CLEP class experience. With final preparations completed during this quarter, JuST is now in place to move with opening the tendering process to engage a local contractor to refurbish the designed spaces for the clinic in the coming quarter.

JuST will continue to work closely with the UTLF and Legal Clinic Board (LCB) to ensure the accomplishment of the steps outlined in the Action Plan and legal clinic expert recommendations. Immediate attention will be paid to engaging the Legal Clinic Board to approve the by-laws and develop draft curricula for making the CLEP classes annual elective courses within the upcoming new academic year.

Law School Career Day

During the reporting period, JuST supported the UTLF in organizing, in collaboration with the American Chamber of Commerce in Albania (AmCham Albania), a Career Day, a first such activity for the Faculty. The immediate target group for the Career Day consisted of the law students in the Faculty's Master's program and aimed at placing the students in direct contact with potential hirers, headhunting companies, and further professional studies and travel program. The Career Day was preceded on March 11 by a training seminar on career development skills such as interviewing and CV writing.

The day-long Law Faculty Students Career Day event took place on March 12 in the UTLF premises. In the opening ceremony, remarks were delivered by the Director of the USAID Office in Albania, Mr. Jim Barnhart, the Law Faculty Dean, Mr. Altin Shegani, and the Executive Director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Albania, Mrs. Floreta Luli-Faber. Participants on the demand side (with respective stands) included 20 companies, including representatives of businesses interested in hiring law students such as law firms, banks, mobile telephone operators, insurance companies, headhunting companies, education agencies, and international organizations. Over 355 students formally registered for the event with the number of student beneficiaries certainly higher as in peak hours not all students coming in registered.

The activity was covered by media such as the Albanian Telegraphic Agency, Klan TV, A1 TV, and ABC TV.

Magistrates School Database

During January - March 2013 the database designer hired by JuST and the database methodology expert together with the Magistrates School IT department have worked in testing the search functionalities of the database and in improving its contents and form. The database designer has addressed outstanding issues raised by the Magistrates School and JuST. A beta page of the database will be shared with select potential users during April and any appropriate recommended changes to be reflected in the database. Upon request of the Magistrates' School Director, the public launching of the database is scheduled for the first week of May 2013.

Challenges Ahead for Component Three

The expansion of the CLE classes in the third Advocates Chamber in Fier and the start of second year CLE classes in Vlora and Durrës chamber have provided some positive momentum in the relations with the NCA. Establishing an NSA to oversee both the initial legal education and continuing legal education for aspiring and current bar members respectively, as mandated by the legal amendments, may present a number of challenges for mainstreaming CLE during this year that need to be addressed carefully.

With NCA Chairman focused primarily on setting up an assistant lawyer's school, it is uncertain whether the NCA will engage in the careful planning and commitment of resources required for mainstreaming CLE during next year. Careful attention will also have to be paid to ensuring that any by-laws approved by a viable NSA regulating CLE follow best practices and are in line with the commitments undertaken by the NCA in the memorandum signed with USAID.

Recent progress with launching the first clinical legal education classes this semester and the refurbishing of the UTLF legal clinic designed spaces provides an opportunity to move forward with addressing some inherent challenges with establishing a viable legal clinic program. Ultimately, the sustainability of the program rests with the creation of a cadre of professors who embrace and embody the new philosophy to legal education that the clinic introduces. To achieve this goal, a number of challenges need to be overcome including ensuring that professors are appropriately motivated to make the long term professional investment to the clinic.

JuST will need to continue to work closely with the Legal Clinic Board to follow up on the commitments made as well as make any adjustment to the assistance plan in line with the agreed-upon plan of action.

