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**USAID/MACEDONIA
JUDICIAL STRENGTHENING PROJECT
(JSP)
MONTHLY REPORT: JANUARY 2015**

February 6, 2015

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Tetra Tech DPK.

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I. PROGRAM-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND TASKS

RESULT 1: STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN JUDICIAL SECTOR REFORM

1.1 Requirement 1.1: A Short, Focused Assessment, Baseline Survey, and Resulting Action Plan on Justice Sector LPAs and CSOs, and the Role they can play in Strengthening the Rule of Law in Macedonia

The Judicial Strengthening Project (JSP) fulfilled Requirement 1.1 during its first two years of implementation.

1.2 Requirement 1.2: Per the Findings of Requirement 1.1, the Capacity of at Least Two Judicial Sector Professional Associations are Improved

Per the findings of Requirement 1.1, JSP designed, delivered, and completed a training program to build the capacities of the Macedonian Judges Association (MJA), Court Administrators Association (CAA), and other legal professional associations (LPAs), as well as civil society organizations (CSOs). The sections below outline the follow-up activities and events carried out during January 2015 that built on the implementation of the training program.

1.2.1 Other Support for LPAs

Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA)

Strategic Litigation Training

On January 27-28, Mr. Adam Weiss, Legal Director of the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), delivered a two-day training on strategic litigation and human rights protection for 17 members of MYLA and 5 law school graduate members of the European Law Students Association (ELSA). Through an interactive approach and practical group work, this training was an excellent opportunity for the participants to learn from Mr. Weiss's extensive experience in this field and enhance their work in the area of human rights protection in Macedonia. Perhaps the greatest benefit from this training for MYLA as an organization came during the group sessions; MYLA members prepared a Draft Litigation Strategy for 2016-2018, which Mr. Weiss subsequently reviewed and polished.

Court Administration Association (CAA)

In January, JSP and CAA started planning the "Open Day at Courts" events, as envisioned in the Strategic Plan of the Rule of Law Council (ROLC). Tentatively, events will be organized in five courts in Macedonia on the Day of the Judiciary (March 31, 2015), targeting all citizens interested in knowing more about the courts' operations. These events are expected to contribute to increasing courts' transparency and citizens' understanding of courts' basic processes.

Macedonian Judges Association (MJA)
Judicial Code of Ethics (the “Code”)

In January, MJA made progress in preparation for an event to publicize and promote the new Code to its members. JSP will financially support this event, which will take place on the Day of the Judiciary, March 31. JSP financially supported the printing of the Code, which was completed in December, 2014.

European Law Students Association (ELSA)

In January, printing of the fourth ELSA thematic brochure on free legal aid was completed. Five hundred bilingual copies of brochure were printed (in Macedonian and Albanian), and the first presentation of the brochure is planned for early February at the South East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo.

Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women (ESE)
Domestic Violence Bench Book for Judges (Bench Book)

Significant progress was made towards completion and eventual distribution of the Bench Book. The professional designer hired by JSP finalized the design for the book, and on January 27, JSP published the Request for Quotations (RFQ) for printing the book with a January 30 deadline to receive quotes. Printing is expected to be completed in the first half of February, and will be distributed to judges that process domestic violence cases and ESE members.

1.2.2 Broad-Based Coalition of LPAs

Rule of Law Council (ROLC) Public Awareness Campaign

In January, JSP’s contracted vendor, the McCann Erikson Group, began preparations for the implementation of the ROLC public awareness campaign. JSP organized two meetings on January 8 and 12, at which the McCann Erikson Group presented the first version of a campaign video to representatives from MYLA and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), and received feedback for improvements. On January 21, the McCann Erikson Group presented a modified video to ROLC members. On January 26, the McCann Erikson Group held a focus group meeting to test how the message and proposed approach of the TV spot will be perceived by the general public. At the request of the USAID COR, and with no impact on schedule, a second focus group meeting was held on January 30. The campaign is expected to launch according to schedule in mid-February and last for three months. It is envisioned that the campaign will start with the video spot along with the printed communication elements, and the radio spot and the informative meetings with journalists will follow.

ROLC Promotional Materials

A promotional leaflet for the ROLC was developed. The leaflet provides basic information on the formation, aims, and areas of work of the ROLC, as well as information about its membership and organizational structure.

This leaflet will serve to promote the ROLC and will be used in the presentation of the ROLC before different stakeholders. The printing will be finalized in the first week of February. Once finalized, 3000 copies of the leaflet will be printed and distributed, 2500 in Macedonian and 500 in English.

RESULT 2: MORE INDEPENDENT, EFFICIENT, AND CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF JUDICIAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

2.1 Requirement 2.1: Legal Framework and Judicial Branch Policies Strengthen Independence, Effectiveness, and Accountability of the Judicial System

2.1.1 Judicial Branch Forum (JBF)

In January, JSP began preparations for the eighth JBF meeting. After consultations with the relevant partners, it is scheduled for February 11-12, in Mavrovo. Also, JSP solicited suggestions from the members for topics to be included in the agenda, and at the time of this writing, five topics were proposed. The organization of the ninth JBF meeting (tentatively scheduled for June 2015) will be transferred to Judicial Council, in an effort towards the long-term sustainability of the JBF.

2.1.2 Support Amending the Law on Case Management (LCM)

On January 14, JSP staff met with Judge Stojance Ribarev, President of the Appellate Court Shtip, to discuss the implementation of the LCM and to identify the inconsistencies that have arisen in its implementation, which could ultimately result in amendments to the LCM. Judge Ribarev shared his ideas for improvements, mainly related to the operations of the Working Bodies for Case Flow Management and the publishing of court decisions on court websites. These topics will be included in the agenda for the eighth JBF meeting.

2.2 Requirement 2.2: Administration and Management Rules, Policies and Procedures, and Systems and Practices to Support a Modern Court System

2.2.1 Finalization of the Supreme Court's Jurisprudence Bulletin (Bulletin)

In January, JSP made progress towards completion of the printing and distribution of the Bulletin. After the JSP-hired professional designer finalized the design of the Bulletin, on January 22, JSP published the RFQ for printing, with a January 27 deadline to receive quotes. The procurement process was completed on January 28, and the company 4D Feniks Vizija was selected as the most successful vendor. The printing is expected to be completed in February and will be distributed to all judges in the Republic of Macedonia.

RESULT 3: INCREASED FAIRNESS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE THROUGH MORE EFFECTIVE LEGAL PERSONNEL AND EFFICIENT PROCESSES

3.1 Requirement 3.1 Develop and Implement Targeted Specialized Trainings for Judges, Court Administrative Executives, and Court Staff

3.1.1 Continue Training Opportunities for Judges with the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors (JTA)

Support Systematic Trainings on the LCP for all Civil Judges

On January 29, the JSP Chief of Party met with Supreme Court Justice Lidija Taseva to follow up on preparations for the LCP trainings. Justice Taseva indicated that, due to the heavy workload of the Court, it would be impossible to organize the first training on February 13-

14 as previously planned. As a result, the date for the first training was set for February 20-21.

3.1.2 Support Commercial Law Trainings for Judges

In January, JSP asked the JTA for suggestions for commercial law training topics that JSP could support throughout the year. The JTA suggested two topics for trainings: 1) the legal status of managers and different management levels according to the Law on Companies; and 2) legal aspects of risk management of companies, in light of the new European regulations. The suggested timeline for implementation of these trainings is March/April for the first, and May/June for the second training.

3.2 Requirement 3.2: Improve Caseload Processing and Reduce Backlog of Cases

3.2.1 Develop Strategies for Differentiated Case Management (DCM) and Determine National Time Standards (NTS) for Different Case Types

In January, JSP engaged US expert, Mr. James Woodward, as a potential consultant for development of a case weighting methodology that will ultimately streamline the assignment of cases to DCM tracks depending on their complexity. The consultant would work closely with the DCM working group, and the assignment is scheduled for late February-early March. In preparation for this consultancy, JSP sent Mr. Woodward various relevant documents, including laws, reports from the previous consultants, as well as documents prepared by the DCM working group.

RESULT 4: CRISIS-MODIFIER AND MATERIAL SUPPORT

Court Entrance Remodeling at the Basic Court (BC) Skopje II

On January 15, JSP published the RFP for the remodeling of the entrances to BC Skopje II and organized the on-site visit for potential vendors on January 20. Subsequently, JSP sent responses to vendors' questions per the RFP and published Annexes to the Technical Specification on January 23. The final deadline for submission of proposals is February 10. The remodeling work will improve the court's main entrances and relocate the intake office so that it has a separate entrance and can provide better service to the public.

II. PROBLEMS AND REMEDIAL ACTIONS

Problems have been minimal and are of the type to be expected in the regular course of implementation.

III. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR FEBRUARY 2015

The summary of activities planned for February 2015 is as follows:

- Launch the ROLC public awareness campaign
- Complete the eighth JBF meeting
- Conduct one LCP training
- Print the Judicial Practice Bulletin of the Supreme Court
- Print and distribute the Domestic Violence Bench Book for Judges
- Complete the procurement process and begin the remodeling of BC Skopje II entrances
- Conduct a presentation of the fourth ELSA thematic brochure on free legal aid in SEEU in Tetovo

- Consultancy of case weight expert, James Woodward.