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# Quarterly Report

## July 2004 – September 2004



Governance Reform and Sustainable Partnerships



Development *Alternatives*, Inc.

*In partnership with the Academy for Educational Development (AED)  
Funded by US Agency for International Development (USAID)*

GOVERNANCE REFORM AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS (GRASP)

## Quarterly Report

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**July 2004 – September 2004**

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# Table of Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>PROGRESS BY GRASP COMPONENT</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<i>CP1: Improved LGU Outreach to Citizens</i> .....	7
<i>CP2: Increased LGU Communication with Citizens on Budget and Revenue Allocation Process</i> .....	7
<i>CP3: LGUs Comply with Transparency and FOIA laws</i> .....	8
<i>FB 1: LGU Procurement Procedures are More Transparent</i> .....	9
<i>FB 2: Improved LGU Finance and Budget Process</i> .....	11
<i>FB 3: Local Governments are Prepared to Access the Credit Market</i> .....	13
<i>PS1: LGUs Receive Customer Feedback on Efficiency and Quality of Public Service Delivery</i> .....	13
<i>PS 2: LGUs Align Costs with Fees Charged for Public Services</i> .....	15
<i>LED1: LGUs Contribute to Local Economic Development</i> .....	18
<i>DCB1: Local Government and Professional Associations Strengthened to Serve their Membership</i> .....	22
<i>DCB 2: Peer networks Contribute to the Replication of Best Practices in Local Governance</i> .....	23
<i>PR1: Improved National Level Policies Affecting Local Government Functioning</i> .....	23
<i>SFS 1: Improved Interaction Between Citizens and Local Public Institutions</i> .....	25
<i>SFS 2: Domestic Technical Services Market Strengthened for Local Government</i> .....	30
<b>PROGRESS AGAINST USAID INDICATORS</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<i>Monitoring and Evaluation Plan</i> .....	33
<b>MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<i>Media and Public Relations</i> .....	36
<i>Coordination, Management Issues and Other (as needed)</i> .....	36
<b>OUTLOOK -- UPCOMING GRASP EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES</b> .....	<b>38</b>

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## Executive Summary

This quarter, GRASP wrapped up its direct technical assistance and training targeted to the initial local governments within 14 Counties around the country and began a new phase of program implementation to include 19 larger cities. Once GRASP and USAID decided on the 19 cities, GRASP management conducted in-depth interviews with the Mayors of each to confirm interest and commitment in the program objectives, and to assess the development priorities of the local administration. GRASP continued to collect quantitative data to evaluate the program's performance against USAID indicators and the results are promising:

- 45 GRASP-assisted LGUs have increased the percent of their program budget spent on services identified by citizens (205% of the end of Year 2 target).
- 83 GRASP-assisted Local Government Units have increased their locally available revenues (332% of the end of Year 2 target).
- 105 GRASP-assisted Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are participating in strategic planning, implementation and oversight activities (210% of the end of Year 2 target).
- 52 new community services were created through a defined participatory approach (104% of the end of Year 2 target).

### **Improving Local Government Accountability and Outreach to Citizens**

- GRASP expanded the successful Citizen Information Center (CIC) model to communes throughout Romania to contribute to greater transparency and accountability of village local governments. Fifty-two commune representatives, including 18 mayors from Suceava, Braila, Iasi and Bistrita counties, began creating new CICs or upgrading the range and the quality of services provided by the existing CICs.
- GRASP completed the development of a CIC Operators Guide. This important GRASP product includes the range of standard and optional

services to be delivered by a CIC, as well as clearly defining the process of establishing and operating a CIC.

- GRASP completed the Budget Transparency Toolkit. The product includes the methodology of organizing public hearings and public consultations on draft budgets. It also includes self-help tools for local governments such as a model questionnaire for citizens' opinions and templates for "Budget- in-Brief" leaflets and power point presentations.
- The Suceava County Local Governments Web Portal was established to enable 36 local governments to share information related to: budgets, strategies and programs, organizational structures, procurement documents, investment opportunities, and local council decisions. Citizens and businesses will be able to view this information directly, post questions, and participate in discussion forums and opinion surveys. The Portal will ultimately host information about all 100 Suceava LGUs.

### **Improving Local Budget and Financial Management Systems**

- GRASP completed the Capital Improvement Planning and Budgeting manual to serve as a legacy product in Romania. Using the manual, GRASP trained nine trainers in Capital Improvement Planning and Budgeting in order to better deliver training and technical assistance through their local association or other local sustainable institutions.
- Caracal officials confirmed that the town had received one billion ROL (\$30,300) from the Olt County Council to finance a feasibility study for the capital investment project -- -- "Integrated system for waste management" that was part of the GRASP-assisted Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)
- Following the approval of the GRASP-assisted CIP, the Bals local government invested one billion ROL (\$30,300) in "Extension of the water supply network in the Corbeni-Roman neighborhood", 150 million ROL, quarterly, in the "Rehabilitation of public lighting network" and prepared the necessary documentation for the local council approval of a waste management project.
- GRASP sponsored the County Economic Directors Association (ADECJR) to organize a round table in Suceava where three best practices on financial management and attracting new funds for infrastructure projects were presented by Suceava, Galati and Ialomita counties. The round table resulted in six counties replicating the best practices from the event.

### **Increasing Local Government Transparency**

- GRASP received an official letter from the Ministry of Public Finance requesting continued assistance in public procurement training and technical assistance and to prepare amendments to the public procurement law..
- In Zalau, GRASP experts helped local government representatives develop the terms of reference for the tender documentation and the list of objective evaluation criteria for a feasibility study and technical project on the rehabilitation of a social services center.
- In Braila, GRASP assisted in the development of terms of reference and bidding documentation for the procurement of services for assessing and reorganizing the public transportation system.
- Based on trainee feedback, GRASP completed a Procurement Guidebook for public procurement officials. The Guidebook will include a compendium of case studies on sensitive public procurement issues in Romania and region-wide, along with a public procurement software model to assist local officials in tendering more efficiently.
- Sixty-three media organizations and 59 local governments participated in a workshop to examine the contents of the FOIA law, its advantages and the issues of accessing information, and learned how to use this resource to enhance their research and reporting. A survey of participants at a follow-up event revealed that 100% of respondents felt more confident in dealing with all or some aspects of information management, 87% used the information they learned at the GRASP training sessions in their daily work, and 73% used the FOIA manual provided by GRASP.

### **Improving Citizen Oversight and Public Service Delivery**

- Following the GRASP monitoring of sanitation services project activity in 10 local governments, four of the local governments improved their contracting policies based on citizen input, and one of them has enacted a local regulation with service standards of performance.
- In order to broaden the impact of the sanitation monitoring activity, GRASP developed and completed a Public Services Monitoring Toolkit that will be distributed country-wide.
- A total of 42 social workers, finance managers and secretaries from 16 local governments participated in needs assessments performed by GRASP. Iasi County designed and funded 21 new services meant to improve the lives of more than 500 beneficiaries. Suceava proposed

twenty-one new services capable of addressing the needs of about 850 disadvantaged citizens.

- The design of the Social Services Unit Cost Measurement Toolkit was pilot tested in Iasi, Suceava and Salaj counties and finalized after thorough consultations with three practicing NGOs - Motivation Foundation, Trebuie, and Center Aurora. This Toolkit will enable local governments to predict more accurately and be reimbursed for the true cost of social services.
- To support the operations of the newly established Iasi Metropolitan Development Agency, GRASP committed a \$45,000 grant and provided technical assistance for the development of its Intranet system and land use program.
- The County Council of Arges received a GRASP voucher to provide training in proposal writing, project management, and accessing international donor funding. Within months of completing the training the County Council applied for, and was awarded, two different grants totaling \$75,000 for establishing a counseling office to support families and children facing financial difficulties. The program is sponsored by the Ministry of Labor with World Bank support. In addition, PHARE funded a program for and improving the health condition of the Roma community in Malureni Commune.

### **Increasing Local Economic Development**

- Craiova Local Council approved the GRASP-sponsored Public-Private Partnership for Local Economic Development between the local administration and the Local Council of SMEs (CLIMM).
- In Caracal, the GRASP-inspired Economic Development Department of the City Hall launched its webpage at [www.pmc.romanati.ro/dde/index.htm](http://www.pmc.romanati.ro/dde/index.htm).
- The Caracal local economic strategy developed under GRASP produced the: 1) creation of the Caracal Entrepreneurs Association, 2) attraction of 22 billion ROL (\$666,000) for a gas improvement project, 3) commissioning of a feasibility study for waste management, 4) completion of works for a water distribution network (1,800 m. of pipeline were rehabilitated for a total value of 2.5 billion ROL), 5) investment of about \$70,000 from Zonatex, an Italian company that bought 600 sq.m. of land and established a new textile manufacturing company, 6) expected investment of \$100,000 of the German REWE company which has indicated an interest in building a “Penny Market” in Caracal, 7) start of a real estate project with a total value of \$1.1 million by the Hungarian EGE Consulting Group to modernize 19 apartment buildings.

### **Building Sustainable Partnerships**

- To date GRASP has provided \$1.7 million to support projects that have succeeded, and continue to provide measurable impact, in order to improve the lives of citizens through the creation of partnerships between civil society and local governments.
- GRASP grantee the Association for Civil Society Development in Rural Areas already received funding totaling over \$200,000 for three projects to address citizen-identified infrastructure needs such as telephone connections and road repairs.
- GRASP grantee PAEM Arad Association organized a job market for young graduates in Arad. Sixty-five private companies presented their companies and job offers amounting to a total of 1,000 jobs. PAEM launched the book “Career Perspectives: Guide to Vocational Counseling”, based on 12 months of experience working with 450 young job seekers.
- A new group of 15 women, graduates of GRASP grantee Integra Association’s third series of training programs, are prepared to start new businesses and change their lives. Integra has received a grant totaling \$150,000 from the Shell Foundation.
- GRASP grantee Ecologic Club BIOS finalized the Water Resources Management Plan for Sibiu County -- incorporating more in-depth information about the impact of water quality on public health -- that will be submitted for County Council approval in October.
- During this quarter GRASP grantee “Femina 2000” Association increased its consulting services to citizens, including services to 111 first-time beneficiaries to the center, representing a 236% increase. Beyond consulting services, the grantee also finished and updated the feasibility study, “Social Housing for Rroma,” part of a 170,487 euro project funded through PHARE and the local budget, and at the behest of the Tîrgu Neamt City Hall, “Femina 2000” Association conducted a feasibility study on improving road infrastructure in the Rroma community of Tîrgu Neamt, which is part of a joint PHARE-Tîrgu Neamt City project totaling 195,820 euros.
- On September 24, GRASP grantee REC Association organized a public meeting to disseminate the Olt Environmental Action Plan that helped secure \$3 million from the central government for an investment project in Piatra Olt to rehabilitate the water collection and supply systems and extend the water distribution network to serve 14,306 residents 24 hours a day.

- To maintain and enhance the activities associated with the “Creanga Land” project, the Tîrgu Neamt local council approved a decision on September 30 to provide continued funding totaling \$2,700 per year.
- Partnering with Saliste City Hall and the local water management company, Ecologic Club BIOS took the initiative to implement proper water source protection procedures to the spring that feeds the water reservoir used by 20% of villagers from Vale, one of the nine villages included in Saliste.

### **Reforming the Policy Environment**

- Equal Opportunities for Women Foundation (SEF) proposed amendments to national legislation targeting problems of single parent families focusing on providing more comprehensive services regarding child care, legal counseling, housing, and employment. The debates on these amendments led to the modification, by the Government of Romania, of the Ordinance no. 68/2003, regarding social services, through the new Ordinance no.86/2004, approved on August 19th and published in the Official Monitor No. 799 of August 30th, 2004.
- During the third quarter, GRASP representatives met with the mayors and staff of the 19 cities proposed for continued collaboration and developed draft MOUs to serve as the basis of that collaboration.

## Progress by GRASP Component

### Local Government Initiatives

#### CP1: Improved LGU Outreach to Citizens

During this quarter, GRASP focused its activities on training commune representatives to create and operate Citizen Information Centers (CICs), as well as on product development.

On September 5-8, GRASP experts organized a training session in Vatra Dornei for 52 commune representatives, including 18 mayors from Suceava, Braila, Iasi and Bistrita counties. The training agenda included discussions about the role and responsibilities of CICs, the steps to follow for setting up a CIC, the relationship with citizens/clients, the standard services that a CIC should offer and the presentation of GRASP-sponsored software requirements for CIC operation. Participants suggested supporting permanent communication among the CIC operators, organizing similar trainings on a regular basis for all local governments, and editing CIC promotional materials. As a result of this activity the participating local governments will be able to create new CICs or upgrade the range and the quality of services provided by the existing CICs, thus contributing to greater transparency and accountability of local governments.

During the same period, GRASP completed the development of a CIC Operators Guide. This important GRASP product includes the range of standard and optional services to be delivered by a CIC, as well as clearly defining the process of setting up and operating a CIC. The product is expected to multiply GRASP efforts, through replication and dissemination by GRASP staff and trained local government specialists. The Guide will be printed and distributed by the end of December.

#### CP2: Increased LGU Communication with Citizens on Budget and Revenue Allocation Process

Due to the budget cycle and GRASP transition to new local governments, during this quarter, GRASP completed an initial evaluation and collected data for Budget-in-Brief materials in Mircurea Ciuc, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Botosani and Iasi. As a result of these visits a tentative schedule for public hearings on the draft budgets was set for the month of December 2004.

For replication purposes, GRASP has developed the Budget Transparency Toolkit. The product includes the methodology of public hearings organization and public consultations on the draft budgets. It also includes a model questionnaire for citizens' opinions and templates for Budget-in-Brief leaflets and presentations. The Budget Transparency Toolkit, in both Romanian and English, will be printed soon. With the assistance of the Toolkit, willing Romanian local governments will be able to communicate more effectively with their citizens on matters of public spending without GRASP involvement.

The city of Macin is one prime example of a local government that has experienced the impact of budget hearings. Sorin Mureseanu, former Mayor of Macin, stated on a recent visit, "*You managed to change our mentalities. The way we think now is to respond to citizens' needs and present to the citizens our budget in order to gain their support in local government spending.*" Macin will be holding additional public hearings on the budget without GRASP assistance.

CP3: LGUs Comply  
with Transparency  
and FOIA laws

Romanian governance has evolved in the three and a half years since the FOIA law was issued toward greater openness to the public and greater willingness to inform and consult with citizens. Many local governments which have operational CICs and PR departments in their organizational structure implement the law properly and correctly and provide free access to public information in their communities. However, there are still communities which, although aware of the legal provisions and having formally appointed a person charged with applying the FOIA, have failed to delegate appropriate responsibilities; therefore the law is not actually enforced. There are local governments that are not aware of, or simply ignore, the law and the guaranteed access to public information. Even national public institutions, such as the National Public Servant Agency, are not aware of the contents of the law and procedures – as proven by their demand that citizens justify requests for public information or, even worse, by having modified the on-line information request form mandating the inclusion of such justification ([www.anfp-map.ro](http://www.anfp-map.ro)).

In July 2004, GRASP organized, in cooperation with two of its local Resource Partners – Transparency International Romania and the Center for Independent Journalism – four additional regional workshops (the first workshop was organized by GRASP in June 2004): *Free Access to public information – the relationship between civil servants and media representatives*. The workshops did not aim to “teach” the law to civil servants and journalists; rather, to help the two groups overcome the obstacles in its implementation by promoting a mutual exchange of experience and by sharing best practices and procedures. Sixty-three media organizations and 59 LGUs participated in the workshop.

As a result of these workshops, media representatives became more familiar with the contents of the law, its advantages and the subtleties of accessing information, and learned how to use this resource to enhance their research

and reporting. They also drafted a number of recommendations regarding FOIA implementation such as: by one request, citizens should receive answers from more than one institution; public institutions should list documents that can not be publicly released, rather than those which can; and the law should clarify whether deadlines for providing public information are given in calendar or work days.

In September 2004, in cooperation with Transparency International Romania and the Center for Independent Journalism, GRASP conducted a follow-up session to determine the changes that occurred in the public servant/journalist relationship as a result of earlier cooperation. The assessment was based on a questionnaire addressed to all participants, civil servants and journalists. 106 people were interviewed (56 civil servants and 50 media representatives). The survey revealed that 100% of respondents felt more confident in dealing with all or some aspects of information management, 87% on average used the information they learned at the previous session in their daily work, and 73% on average used the FOIA manual. The great majority of the respondents asked for additional trainings on classified information, protection of personal data, and management of information requests.

Another initiative that was completed during this quarter was the delivery of server hardware and software to the County Council of Suceava to host the Suceava County Local Governments Web Portal. The Portal will become operational next quarter following site customization and data collection from communes. This activity is part of GRASP's efforts to improve the transparency of local government operations by enabling information sharing mechanisms. Once operational, 36 local governments will be able to share information related to: budgets, strategies and programs, organizational structures, procurement documents, investment opportunities, and local council decisions. Citizens and businesses will be able to view this information directly, post questions, and participate in discussion forums and opinion surveys. The Portal will ultimately host information about all 100 Suceava LGUs. The first 36 LGUs are direct beneficiaries of two GRASP IT grants and therefore have the capacity to contribute with relevant data more effectively.

FB 1: LGU  
Procurement  
Procedures are  
More Transparent

During this quarter GRASP focused on three important areas, including: training for local government association members, cooperation with the Ministry of Public Finance, and direct technical assistance to voucher beneficiaries.

At the end of August, GRASP, in cooperation with ADECJR, organized a training workshop on public procurement. The three-day seminar focused on the difficulties encountered and successes registered in the complex area of public procurement in Romania. Among the topics of interest for workshop participants were the future modifications in the procedure on appealing decisions using EU regulations, the most recent modifications in the Romanian regulations related to the adjustment of the contract value -

considering inflation, the importance of a good planning process using the annual procurement plan, and the connection between the Public Procurement and the Order of The Ministry of Public Finance no. 1792/2002 (effective beginning January 2004) regarding the procedure for spending public money. The legislation is strictly interconnected with the procurement process and must be used for all local government financial commitments.

Participants requested a five-day follow-up session, which GRASP provided. GRASP input was complimented by Mrs. Carmen Apostol, Deputy Director of the Public Procurement Department from the Ministry of Public Finance and Mr. Victor Marculetiu, the President of the newly established Association of Romanian Specialists in Public Procurement. On this occasion, Mrs. Apostol noted that *“the workshop is the first step in creating a network between the local public administration associations and the Ministry of Public Finance. We are happy that GRASP facilitated this event. This activity is a real success and a promising beginning in creating a network and opening up new opportunities for team work.”*

At the training with ADECJR, Mrs. Apostol pointed out the need for establishing precise internal norms for public institutions in the field of public procurement and requested GRASP's help in accomplishing this task. As a result, GRASP received an official letter from the Ministry of Public Finance outlining the following areas for GRASP continued assistance:

- Development of case studies on prioritizing the public funds allocated to investments;
- Ways of avoiding conflicts of interest to establish a healthy competitive framework (ways of identifying and finding solutions for the conflicts of interest);
- Ways of preventing fraud and corruption in the international public procurement context;
- Availability to take part in trainings as “trainers”;
- Support in drafting and distributing a course material/ guide on public investments; and
- Ways of approaching public-private partnership contracts, methodology on types of public-private partnership contracts for public procurements.

The cooperation between the Ministry of Public Finance and GRASP will continue during the next quarter.

Addressing the new round of voucher winners, GRASP short-term procurement specialists offered hands-on technical assistance to Zalau, Caracal and Braila, cities that are among the 10 winners.

In Zalau, GRASP experts helped local government representatives develop the terms of reference for the tender documentation and the list of objective

evaluation criteria for a feasibility study and technical project on the rehabilitation of a social services center. Subsequently GRASP provided technical assistance and monitored the bidding process. Three companies submitted technical proposals and two of them sent their representatives to witness the official opening procedure. After the procurement committee analyzed and scored the proposals, using GRASP-developed templates, it made the final decision and sent an official notification to the winning company.

In Caracal, GRASP provided guidance on drafting the bidding documentation, offered different options for the structure of the expected training on proposal writing and project management, and suggested models for the financial proposal.

In Braila, GRASP assisted in the development of terms of reference and bidding documentation for the procurement of services for assessing and reorganizing Braila's public transportation system.

As a result of this activity the local governments of Zalau, Braila and Caracal will be able to properly apply the provisions of the Romanian procurement law and select the most capable providers of services in an open and transparent manner. During the next quarter, GRASP will continue to closely support the voucher beneficiaries in the procurement process, monitor the proper application of procurement laws, and assess the quality of the procurement products.

Finally, GRASP developed the Procurement Guidebook with a case studies compendium and procurement software. The products will be printed and available for distribution in November.

FB 2: Improved LGU  
Finance and Budget  
Process

This quarter, GRASP focused on fostering the capacity of local government associations and professional bodies to deliver GRASP-developed products. Concurrently, the Program introduced the methodology of capital investment planning and budgeting to the newly elected mayors and local councilors in GRASP-assisted local governments to ensure the sustainability of previous efforts.

Based on the training calendar established in cooperation with the ADECJR, GRASP delivered two training of trainers workshops (TOTs) and one course in Capital Investment Planning and Budgeting. Two more training courses on Financial Management and Proposal Writing, in collaboration with ADECJR, will be completed in October.

Forty civil servants from Arad, Buzau, Brasov, Tulcea, Ialomita, Neamt, Bistrita Dolj, Iasi, and Braila participated in GRASP TOTs and were given practical exercises in managing role-playing simulations and case studies. One of the gaps in skills development at the local level in Romania, identified by training participants, is a repository of locally developed materials dealing with

issues in the core financial management areas such as accounting, budgeting and revenue collection. Participants revealed important interests and skills in this area, which should be encouraged both by local authorities and projects such as GRASP. As a result of these trainings GRASP has selected nine trainers that will further refine their presentation skills in Capital Investment Planning and Budgeting in order to deliver GRASP training and technical assistance. This approach shall form the foundation of a sustainable training and consulting system in local fiscal management that has a broad reach throughout the country.

After completing the TOTs, with ADECJR, on September 7-9, a workshop on Capital Investment Planning and Budgeting was held. Twenty-one participants from 14 counties learned about establishing capital policies, assessing capital needs, preparing capital project proposals and steps in technical analysis, as well as assessing LGU financial capacity. The participants were instructed on project ranking criteria and methods, drafting capital program and budget documents, and monitoring and implementing the CIP. The comparison between the City of Milwaukee CIP and two local CIPs, from Medias City and the Sibiu County Council, pioneered by GRASP in Romanian local governments, offered the participants a practical comparative application.

As a result of this training, the participants encouraged GRASP to introduce the CIP tool to newly elected mayors, presidents of counties and local councilors, and requested copies of the GRASP-developed CIP toolkit for practical application.

Following the above-mentioned training session GRASP held meetings on Capital Investment Plans with newly elected officials and local councilors from those communities that benefited from GRASP assistance on this topic. Presentations were delivered to the Sibiu County Council and the local councils and mayors of Gostavatu, Stoenesti, and Caracal. On this occasion the newly elected President of Sibiu County Council, Mr. Martin Bottesch, proposed that the communes and towns officials be trained and assisted in using the CIP toolkit by the county council working group members; the Mayors of Gostavatu and Stoenesti wanted their county level officials to be more aware of the tool to ensure stronger support for their projects; and the mayor of Caracal stated that the town had received one billion ROL from the Olt County Council to finance a feasibility study for one of its capital investment projects – “Integrated system for waste management”. In Craiova, the Mayor is actively using the GRASP-sponsored CIP for lobbying purposes. *“We all worked very hard and everyone is proud of the results”,* stated Mrs. Sabina Dumitru from Craiova City Hall. *“The mayor likes this capital improvement plan and he likes going to the ministry to present the results.”* The Bals CIP will be included in the Mayor’s Guide to be published by SC Millenium Management SRL. Following the approval of the plan, the Bals local government invested 1 billion ROL in “Extension of the water supply network in the Corbeni-Roman neighborhood”, 150 million ROL, quarterly, in the “Rehabilitation of public lighting network” and prepared the necessary documentation for local council approval of the waste management project.

For transparency reasons GRASP supported and encouraged those local governments that completed CIPs to post them on their websites. A number of them did so, such as the Sibiu County Council at [www.cjsibiu.ro](http://www.cjsibiu.ro), Craiova City at [www.primariacraiova.ro](http://www.primariacraiova.ro), Caracal City at [www.pmc.romanati.ro](http://www.pmc.romanati.ro), Medias City at [www.primariamedias.ro](http://www.primariamedias.ro) and Bals Town at [www.bals.ro](http://www.bals.ro). For information and emulation purposes the CIPs of Cismadie, Stoenesti, Gostavatu, Craiova, Bals, Medias, Caracal and Sibiu County are posted on the GRASP website [www.grasp.ro](http://www.grasp.ro).

In an effort to replicate the experience and knowledge to a large number of local governments, GRASP has developed the Capital Investment Planning and Budgeting manual and toolkit that will be printed and available for distribution by Dec. 15.

FB 3: Local Governments are Prepared to Access the Credit Market

During this quarter GRASP finalized the Creditworthiness Self-Analysis Tool that was piloted in Baia Mare. GRASP staff met with the local statistics office, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Labor Department to gather the necessary data for the local economy assessment, and conferred with several departments in the city hall, including budget, revenue and urban planning, for the development of the financial, and budget analyses.

The Self-Analysis Tool uses the general methodology of the international credit rating agencies, adapted to Romanian circumstances, to assess the overall credit condition of a LGU. It is a diagnostic tool to demonstrate critical risk areas that threaten the ability of the LGU to make timely principle and interest payments. It will be used by a LGU prior to requesting a loan from a bank or issuing a bond in the domestic capital market. It allows the LGU to prepare mitigation measures to reduce the risks associated with its debt and, hopefully, will help the LGU obtain a lower cost or interest rate on its borrowing.

The Creditworthiness Self-Analysis Tool, which will be made available to interested local governments, will also result in a creditworthiness report to the city of Baia Mare. The report will help Baia Mare improve its financial situation and ultimately, it may help in pursuing a credit rating from an international rating agency.

PS1: LGUs Receive Customer Feedback on Efficiency and Quality of Public Service Delivery

During this quarter GRASP continued to provide technical assistance to 10 selected local governments on the citizen monitoring system of the sanitation services project. Selected local governments included: Slatina, Craiova, Alesd, Tulcea, Macin, Iasi, Ciurea, Tomesti, Curtea de Arges and Topoloveni.

On July 7, condominium association representatives from Alesd met with the Mayor and the local sanitation company managers to discuss the monitoring results and the local quality standards for sanitation and trash collection. In addition, a survey regarding the sanitation service was included in the sanitation leaflet and more than 100 citizens responded. As a result of citizen

input the representatives of the Alesd sanitation company, SALUBRI S.A., submitted on September 20, for public debate, the draft of the new local sanitation regulation. The document included many citizen suggestions, including provisions to:

1. Ensure that local businesses and condominium associations have distinct waste collection contracts and separate bins for rubbish;
2. Adjust the garbage collection frequency to meet the specific requirements for each condominium association, rather than providing a general schedule; and
3. Guarantee that construction debris collection has a separate fee and collection point.

As a result of this meeting the Alesd sanitation regulation will reflect input provided by citizens and be in accordance with the latest government regulations.

The other nine local governments monitoring waste collection have trained, with GRASP support, the public monitors, introduced them to the monitoring cards, and started the process by collecting, analyzing, and publishing the monitoring card reports. Concurrently, GRASP and respective local governments carried out awareness campaigns by distributing service leaflets, posters and organizing special classes in local schools.

As a result of GRASP's activity all 10 cities have implemented the sanitation monitoring system and their civil servants have the skills and knowledge needed to carry the system forward. Four of the local governments improved their contracting policies based on citizens' inputs and one of them has enacted a local regulation with performance-based service standards. The Mayor of Topoloveni issued a decision explaining the responsibilities of local public servants in charge of monitoring sanitation services. In Tulcea, Macin and Topoloveni, the local public administrations decided to change the contracting procedures and the service provider following citizen input. In Craiova, the monitoring system results will serve as the basis for changing one of the local sanitation providers to improve the service in line with citizen expectations.

During this quarter GRASP also completed the Public Services Monitoring Toolkit. The product is a legacy of effective monitoring to willing local governments. It can be easily applied by any local government for the benefit of citizens and service providers. Romanian and English versions of the Toolkit will be available for distribution by November 2004.

To improve the efficiency of a number of Pitesti local government services, GRASP and its subcontractor ATS S.R.L, a local private software company from Tirgoviste, finalized the implementation of an integrated software application. The new application provides a unique interface to four critical databases maintained by different departments within the city hall: Taxes and

Fees, Authorizations/Building Permits, Budgetary Execution and the Civil Registrar.

As a result of this development effort made by GRASP, the City of Pitesti will improve:

- The efficiency of the tax collection process, resulting in increased revenues through the synchronization of the Civil Registrar with the Taxes and Fees;
- The effectiveness of its services to citizens by expediting the building permit release process;
- The transparency of administrative acts by allowing expenditures to be reflected in real time;
- The efficiency of administrative acts by eliminating duplication of data and effort and improving communication between organizational units within the LGU; and
- The availability and accuracy of population data (at the City level), which in turn will provide more qualitative information for other local initiatives.

The Pitesti project is an example of a best practice of software redesign/integration that can be applied by other local governments looking to integrate legacy platforms under a unique interface. Both the technical solution and the project implementation methodology can be replicated in virtually any Romanian local government.

PS 2: LGUs Align Costs with Fees Charged for Public Services

During the month of July, GRASP organized two training sessions in Suceava and Salaj on carrying out a social needs assessment methodology. A total of 42 social workers, finance managers and secretaries from 16 local governments participated in both events. The preliminary results of the needs assessment performed by GRASP subcontractors were presented and discussed. *“The assessment is important for conceiving strategies and action plans,”* said Alexandru Basa, Executive Director of the Salaj County Council Social Assistance Directorate on this occasion. After these initial trainings, the social service teams from Iasi, Suceava, and Salaj received mentoring from GRASP and its local partners in improving their communities’ social services to better target the specific needs of the population.

During July and August, GRASP and its subcontractors organized three follow-up training and planning sessions on social services for Iasi, Suceava and Salaj local governments.

As a result of this training, the local governments of Iasi County designed and funded 21 new services meant to improve the life of more than 500 beneficiaries. The proposed new services ranged from educational centers for poor children (both for children of pre-school age and for children already in

school to prevent their dropping out), to weekly school shelters for children living far from their school, to home and institutional care for the elderly, to shelter for victims of domestic violence, to employment counseling, and to prevention of child abandonment in maternity wards. The inter-disciplinary teams, consisting of LGU social workers, accountants and secretaries, developed their plans, in consultation with their respective communities and potential beneficiaries, and presented them to their decision-makers – four mayors and the County Council Secretary General.

In Suceava, 51 representatives of eight local government teams, including six mayors and vice-mayors from five localities, county council, de-concentrated units, academics, and NGO representatives participated in the GRASP training workshop to better target services to the needs identified in the assessments. Twenty-one new services capable of addressing the needs of about 850 disadvantaged people from Suceava were proposed.

In Salaj, local government officials presented individual social services plans. The county council appreciated the attempts made to understand community needs before planning, as well as the concern for cost efficiency during the planning exercises. *“We are very grateful to GRASP for enabling the development of these processes in our county,”* said the County Council President, Mr. Tiberiu Marc, on this occasion.

State and private-sponsored social services for the elderly, handicapped, orphans and other underserved populations are frequently provided but difficult to sustain and make cost efficient. During this quarter GRASP, in cooperation with its subcontractor INCD, pilot-tested an approach to accurately measure unit cost of critical social services in communities throughout Iasi, Suceava and Salaj. The design of the unit cost measurement toolkit was finalized after thorough consultations with four practicing NGOs – the Charitable Association Christiana from Vatra Dornei (GRASP grantee providing home care for the elderly), Motivation Foundation, Trebuie and Center Aurora (all three being USAID ChildNet grantees and providing care for people with disabilities) as well as one institutional public service provider for the elderly - the Center Pojorita from Suceava county.

One of the study’s interesting outcomes was the comparison of the costs incurred by the same category of beneficiaries (dependent elderly) in home care versus institutional care settings. The home care services proved to be four times cheaper for the same category of beneficiaries. These kinds of results influenced the decision-making process at the local government level.

The Romanian and English versions of this important toolkit, as well as the Needs Assessment Methodology Toolkit, will be printed and disseminated to interested local governments by the end of November 2004. As a result of this activity local governments and social service providers shall have a useful tool to estimate the required resources to properly meet the social assistance needs of their communities and plan accordingly.

## **Metropolitan Area Development**

During this quarter the Metropolitan Council of Iasi worked on its institutional building and public awareness campaign. On July 17 the Council welcomed its new members, the newly elected mayors of six metropolitan communes, approved its technical committees, made up of locally delegated specialists trained by GRASP in urban planning, and approved the creation of consulting committees, made up of external experts and private sector representatives.

On September 9, the Iasi County Court approved the establishment of the Iasi Metropolitan Association and the Metropolitan Council launched a public contest for available positions. To support the operations of the newly established Agency, GRASP has committed a \$45,000 grant and provided direct technical assistance for the development of its Intranet system and land use program.

In an effort to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the decision-making process of the Iasi Metropolitan Council, GRASP assisted 14 local governments with executive decision-making support tools, data collection and analysis solutions. As part of this effort, on July 5-9 GRASP subcontractor EMI Systems organized in Iasi a training session during which 22 participants (mayors, vice-mayors, chief architects, finance managers, secretaries and systems administrators) learned how to operate MapDecision software as well as the data collection mechanisms, developed specifically for the Iasi Metropolitan Area LGUs. During the training, participants worked with real-life data and analyzed development scenarios in their communities. Exchanges of ideas resulted from the group's analysis of public services infrastructure in relation to budget spending, poverty distribution, and unemployment rates.

As a result of this applied training method, each LGU is now in the process of developing a profile of their community with maps of problem areas, based on commonly agreed upon development indicators. These reports will be analyzed in the upcoming meetings of the Iasi Metropolitan Council to provide decision makers a baseline for future strategy.

Following this training, MapDecision software will be deployed in all 14 local governments together with an online collection tool that would ensure up-to-date data availability. This is the last step in the institutionalization process of this executive decision support tool in the Iasi Metropolitan Area, which began last year as a pilot. More than 120 indicators were collected and aggregated for each of the 14 LGUs during this period of time.

In parallel with the software deployment activity, on September 8-10, GRASP completed a series of working meetings with metropolitan specialists in order to develop their abilities and strengthen their skills in analyzing and interpreting the urban indicators and use them in the decision-making process. The participants were exposed to presentations and simulations using the MapDecision software. As a result local experts were able to identify a location for a wholesale agricultural market in the Metropolitan Area. GRASP

and EMI experts helped them build different scenarios and finalize the needed documentation.

For lobbying and public relations purposes, GRASP launched in July the metropolitan website that displays strategies, capital investments plans, presentations of LGUs and of the entire Metropolitan Area, and the Projects Fair section- [www.zonametropolitaniasi.ro](http://www.zonametropolitaniasi.ro). Concurrently, the Iasi Metropolitan Council continued its efforts to ensure regional and national support for the construction of a vital motorway that would directly link the Iasi area with the western border of Romania. The president of the Metropolitan Council, Mr. Flaiser, and the Vice President, Mr. Nichita, coordinated with all relevant regional development agencies, prefectures, counties and cities to sign a joint letter addressed to the National Development Plan requesting the amendment of the national infrastructure network plan with a new Iasi-Targu Mures motorway.

### **Emergency Services**

During this quarter, GRASP grantee, SMURD, with direct technical assistance from the Project, successfully raised funds, through the TAIEX program of the European Community, to pay for the assistance of two European Union experts. Their objectives were to evaluate the existent institutional capacity of the Romanian Fire Corps, to define a shared vision for the organization in the future, with a higher capacity of intervention in the case of complex emergencies, and to make recommendations regarding further development needs, including training and equipment. The overall contribution of the two European Union experts could be valued at about \$15,000.

Concurrently, SMURD developed the manual *Techniques and Materials for First Response* and printed the *Extrication Manual for the Training Centers*.

GRASP continued its work on tourism development in Tulcea and Bihor, small and medium enterprise support in Craiova, local economic development action plan implementation in Caracal and Mioveni, and business improvement district development in Iasi and Braila.

After analyzing the tourism assets of their county and completing a thorough analysis of Bihor and Tulcea area's strengths and weaknesses, the local working groups approved their marketing plan and the logo under which the plan would be implemented. The main elements include: a) a list of the best tourism operators that would be targeted by the promotional materials based on a set of criteria and a questionnaire; b) the development of a website and Tourism Promotion Guide ; c) a media campaign; d) Tourism Information Centers; and e) participation in national and international tourism fairs. The approval of the marketing plan and the expected publication of the Bihor and Tulcea Tourism Promotion Guides next month are the last two elements of a comprehensive development package delivered by GRASP to both counties.

In an effort to provide an additional boost to local economic development, GRASP conducted a Business Attitude Survey among the main local employers of Bihor and provided direct technical assistance and financial support to the County Council for developing the local Community Profile. Six hundred brochures and 600 CDs were produced. Representatives of the public sector, business sector and non-governmental organizations contributed to this effort. It includes information about the county history, natural environment, population and labor force, economy, investment opportunities, health, education, culture, and useful contacts.

GRASP conducted similar Business Attitudes Surveys and supported the production of Community Profiles in Arad and Salaj as well. 600 brochures and 600 CDs were produced for each county. On this occasion the President of Arad County, Mr. Gheorghe Seculici stated: *"We are pleased to have such a Community Profile with the latest information on the economy of Arad County. We have to congratulate GRASP for its professionalism. I am confident that potential investors will find everything they need about Arad business opportunities"*. Both tools are important elements for sustainable local economic development at the local level.

During this quarter GRASP created the foundations for successful business improvement district (BID) implementation in Iasi and Braila. The BID association in Braila has been legally established and has a new president, one of the participants of the GRASP-sponsored study tour to Serbia. The identification of capital improvement projects has been finalized and the promotion of the association and area development will be done through a series of events, brochures, and other marketing materials. The local government support for this project was strongly confirmed by the new Mayor of Braila, who also reiterated the local financial commitment.

In Iasi, the open competition for the position of BID manager attracted 15 applicants. The hiring process was completed in August. In the meantime, a capital improvement project list for the area was identified and funding solutions discussed with the BID members and the chief architect of Iasi. Events and shop owner activities to attract people to the zone were approved.

As a result of these activities, both BID projects have completed their institutional framework and are in the position to select and start rehabilitation works, as well as establishing marketing events to turn the respective downtowns into attractive areas for local and foreign shoppers and visitors.

In Arad, GRASP and its subcontractor the Berman Group, completed the technical assistance on foreign direct investment (FDI) by delivering a final report. The FDI Performance Assessment is focused on three elements: business climate, business property, and services provided. Geographic position, logistics, cheap and skilled labor force, availability of industrial sites and a supporting local government, are the main positive elements of Arad City, whereas bad roads, lack of international flights, low performance of the custom offices, bad public transportation, and bureaucracy are among its

drawbacks. Recommendations to enhance strengths and address weaknesses were included in the final report.

Although GRASP's assessment places Arad on the top of the list for direct foreign investment destinations in Romania, it also recommends that the local government support the development of a new industrial zone for green field investments, look more aggressively for investors, and assign professional full-time staff to FDI activity.

On August 26, the Craiova Local Council approved the GRASP-sponsored partnership for local economic development between the local administration and Local Council of SMEs (CLIMM). On this occasion Mr. Antonie Solomon, the Mayor of Craiova stated: *"We thank GRASP for connecting the business sector and local administration of Craiova. It is the first time in 14 years that we are really starting to cooperate and work together in the best interest of our citizens"*.

The partnership provides for the opening of an information center within Craiova City Hall, defines the principles of cooperation in LED projects such as the creation of a business incubator and of an industrial and technological park. It also calls for joint city promotional efforts to attract foreign investors and lists a number of facilities for companies that will invest in Craiova. At the initial stage one of the top priorities set forth by the partnership agreement is the elaboration of a Local Sustainable Development Strategy. The official approval of this partnership is the first of this kind for Craiova and creates an excellent basis for cooperation between local companies and public authorities. During the next quarter the partners will develop a detailed action plan and define the responsibilities of each stakeholder.

In Caracal, the Economic Development Department of the City Hall launched its webpage: [www.pmc.romanati.ro/dde/index.htm](http://www.pmc.romanati.ro/dde/index.htm). This event is part of the GRASP-sponsored local economic development strategic plan for Caracal and marks an important milestone in its implementation. The website includes detailed information regarding the LED Strategic Plan, Caracal Community Profile, local companies, and the Capital Investment Plan. A special section is dedicated to cooperation with GRASP. The website will improve the communication between public authorities and the business sector. The latter will be able to access useful information on local opportunities and the major projects initiated by local authorities. It will also serve as a reference source and promotional tool for attracting foreign investors, fostering an increase in available jobs and income for local residents.

Other important developments in the implementation of the Caracal strategy are:

- The creation of the Caracal Entrepreneurs Association. It has employed an executive director who shall develop a business plan and design the main services that the association will provide to its members;

- The attraction of 22 billion ROL for the gas project. During this quarter the construction works on the heating plant and the distribution network moved close to completion;
- The commissioning of a feasibility study for waste management;
- The completion of works for a water distribution network. 1,800 m of pipeline were rehabilitated for a total value of 2.5 billion ROL. There are also indications that the Commercial Bank of London will finance the renewal of the old water and sewage systems;
- The proposal writing and project management training for its own staff co-financed by GRASP through its voucher program;
- The investment of about \$70,000 from Zonatex, an Italian company that bought 600 sq.m. of land and established a new textile manufacturing company. Another Italian company, Chimcomplex, has expressed interest in modernizing an old plastic company;
- The expected investment of \$100,000 of the German REWE company has expressed interest in building a “Penny Market” in Caracal. The company bought 5.000 sq.m. of land and is looking for additional property from the local council. The construction works started on October 10; and
- The start of a real estate project with a total value of \$1.1 million by the Hungarian EGE Consulting Group. The project includes the modernization of 19 apartment buildings.

As a result of the achievements mentioned above, the citizens of Caracal will enjoy modern and improved public services and a higher quality of life.

In an effort to stimulate job growth and train students for future positions that the market demands, Mioveni established this quarter the first partnership in Arges County history between a High School in Mioveni and the Nuclear Institute. The aim of the innovative agreement was to improve the education opportunities while promoting jobs in the nuclear field. The Mioveni economic development implementation committee, in conjunction with the local government and the Nuclear Institute, adapted the local high school’s curriculum to conform to the needs of the labor market. The institute will provide an in-kind donation of their employees to serve as teachers to train students on a number of topics within the field of nuclear energy during the school year, as well as additional follow up practical training of the students at the Institute. As a result of this initiative that responds to a market need, the future graduates of Mioveni schools will have extensive practical training to find a job in this growing market.

During this quarter GRASP has also completed, in cooperation with the Berman Group, three important Toolkits to serve as a legacy for LED activities conducted under the program: BID Implementation Guide, Tourism Development Handbook, and Business Attitude Survey/Community Profile

Guide. The products will be printed in the next two months and distributed to interested Romanian local governments.

DCB1: Local Government and Professional Associations Strengthened to Serve their Membership

Eleven professional and national local government associations have completed the first quarter of activity in the one-year grants provided for institution building and service development.

<b>Member Association or Professional Body</b>	<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Learning Network</b>
Association of Communes	ACoR	Institution building
Association of IT Professionals	ANIAP	E-Government
Association of County Finance Officers	ADECJR	Financial Management and Fiscal Decentralization
Association of CICs	ANCIC	Citizen Participation and Citizen Information Centers
Association of County Secretaries General	ASGCJR	Social Services and Public Private Partnership
Municipal Secretaries	MSA	Social Services and Public Private Partnership
Municipal Economic Directors	AMR	Financial Management and Fiscal Decentralization
Municipal Chief Architects	AMR	Local Economic Development, City and Environmental Planning
County Chief Architects	AACJR	Regional Development, City and Environmental
Town Economic Directors	AoR	Financial Management and Fiscal Decentralization
Association of Municipalities	AMR	Institution building

Activities funded by the grants program to strengthen their institutional development included: training for association membership/TOT; and GRASP's provision of direct technical assistance.

ANIAP conducted training on virtual private networks (VPN) in Bucharest from July 12 – 15, 2004 for 10 of their members. The association also conducted training in project management from July 26 – 30, 2004, held in Bucharest for ten members.

ADECJR held a TOT on public procurement from August 24 - 25 in Mamaia for 10 members. The association also held a TOT on capital improvement planning and budgeting in Predeal from September 7-8, for 19 of its members.

Each of the local government and professional associations that conducted an event received technical assistance from GRASP. GRASP provided ADECJR with trainers, training materials, and helped in organizing and identifying members' training needs. GRASP provided ACOR with assistance in preparing membership drives. The organizations worked closely with GRASP on message development and data collection after each event. Data was later packaged to present to their membership as successes of the organization.

DCB 2: Peer networks  
Contribute to the  
Replication of Best  
Practices in Local  
Governance

ADECJR organized a round table in Suceava where three best practices on financial management and attracting new funds for infrastructure projects have been presented by Suceava, Galati and Ialomita counties. The round table resulted in six counties replicating the best practices from the event.

ACOR held two learning networks, both designed to attract new members, to inform members of changes made in dues collection and challenges with legislative change. The Networks were held in Constanta County on August 28 and Prahova County on September 30. The Constanta Learning Network resulted in 40 new members while the Prahova Network resulted in 10 new members joining the organization.

ANCIC held three Learning Networks. On July 14, ANCIC held their first Learning Network on the role and importance of Citizen Information Centers in implementing Law 544 regarding access to public information. The event was held in Bucharest and 58 members and potential members attended. On September 9, ANCIC held a Learning Network in Arad to discuss service options for CIC's. There were 30 participants and ANCIC grew by 13 new members as a result of the event. On September 29, ANCIC held a Learning Network in Iasi to discuss the role and importance of Citizen Information Centers in implementing Law 544 regarding access to public information. There were 44 members and potential members in attendance.

From August 25 -27, the ADECJR held a Public Procurement workshop aimed at disseminating case studies and best practices. Twenty-one members joined together to discuss difficulties met while applying the procurement legislation and lessons learned. The event resulted with an increase of 13 new members to the association.

PR1: Improved National  
Level Policies Affecting  
Local Government  
Functioning

### **Interministerial Technical Committee on Decentralization**

Earlier efforts of the policy team paid off during the third quarter. As a result of GRASP assistance the Ministry of Administration (MAI) made the first step in the effective implementation of the Strategy, by establishing the Interministerial Technical Committee (ITC) on Decentralization. Supported by the Chancellery, Finance, Health, Education, Transportation, Environment and Labor ministries, ITC also became the main channel to welcome the input of local government on decentralization.

The meeting called by MAI on September 10, 2004, was a success given the overwhelming participation of the ministries of health, administration, education, transportation, environment, finance, labor and social assistance, as well as FALR and donors. Finance Secretary of State Gherghina joined Secretary of State Profiroiu in highlighting that ministries need to stop working in isolation when distributing responsibilities. The mission of the Inter-ministerial Technical Committee includes the immediate enhancement of communication between the Chancellery and ministries in order to issue ministry orders that establish the Working Groups for their work in developing sectoral decentralization strategies. The Government decision is planned for adoption in mid-October. GRASP has supported CUPAR in drafting a plan that sets out the responsibilities and procedures of the ITC, as well as in organizing the meeting. In addition, the policy team assisted CUPAR in writing the governmental decision that will formally establish the ITC. *“We would like to thank CUPAR and GRASP for their efforts in launching the Strategy implementation in a coherent and professional manner”*, said Corina Hopartean, Executive Director FALR at the first meeting of the ITC.

### **Strengthening the Technical Capacity of CUPAR**

As a key unit in the Ministry of Administration and Interior, CUPAR needs support and resources to strategize and implement the decentralization process. Because of the critical role played by the Unit in the decentralization process, CUPAR has increased its staff – adding several young experts hired over the last few months, all of who require training in different areas. GRASP conducted a thorough needs assessment for CUPAR in June, and subsequently developed a tailored training program. Internal and external reporting, organizing and presenting information, barriers to team work, decision making processes, consensus and compromise, basic knowledge in planning using specialized software (e.g., Microsoft Project) were the topics of two series of training, in July and August. *“I now know how to define objectives, set priorities, and allocate resources, and transform a big mess into coherent stuff. I would like to use this program in my life as well,”* stated one of the participants in the session.

GRASP also purchased three Microsoft Project licenses together with three MP manuals in Romanian and offered them to CUPAR on a contract basis. The overall impact of the capacity building component is the enhancement of CUPAR staff capabilities to push forward the decentralization process as a cohesive team of professionals working in a challenging and complex environment. As one participant said: *“we work as firefighters, under high pressure and risk, in a complex environment, where planning is essential.”*

### **MAI Requests Additional Assistance from the GRASP Policy Unit**

Secretary of State Marius Profiroiu requested GRASP to assist the ITC in undertaking its first activities. The ITC will produce sectoral strategies for decentralization in education, health, transportation, utilities, the environment, and social services. GRASP has scheduled to finalize by the end of this year an in-depth review of the legislation governing the sectors involved in decentralization and provide recommendations for legislative changes.

Additionally, the policy team will concentrate on strengthening the capacity of the Working Groups, by providing training and expertise on models in sectoral decentralization adopted by other countries.

### **Progress in the Municipal Insolvency Area**

On September 29-30, 2004 the Inter-ministerial Working Group (IWG) on municipal credit had its third meeting. The IWG was established by the Romanian Government, under a World Bank adjustment lending operation, to undertake research and analysis in order to create an effective legal framework to govern the resolution of problems resulting from municipal insolvency. GRASP serves as a technical advisor to the IWG, providing a wide range of expertise on both international and regional practices with regard to municipal insolvency.

The Working Group discussed the concept paper for the elaboration of the draft law on insolvency, clarified the intervention procedures for financial distress and insolvency situations and agreed on the preliminary design features of the municipal bankruptcy procedures.

As a result of this meeting, IWG will submit the new form of the concept paper to the Government officials for approval and agreed on the workplan for the coming months. The latter provides for the elaboration of a draft insolvency law by GRASP consultants, for the organization of a workshop on municipal insolvency for mayors and LGU's professional associations and for review of the first draft of the insolvency law by IWG (meeting set for November) and other stakeholders, including local governments, lenders, International Financial Institutions and financial intermediaries.

SFS 1: Improved  
Interaction Between  
Citizens and Local  
Public Institutions

To date GRASP has provided \$1.7 million to support projects that have succeeded, and continue to provide measurable impact, in order to improve the lives of citizens through the creation of partnerships between civil society and local governments.

On September 16-17, 30 grantee organizations, along with their local public administration partners, met to share experiences during a two-day conference in Baile Felix. In addition to learning from one another, the conference focused on creating sustainable public-private partnerships. While all of the grantees were successful in addressing top priorities in local communities, an outstanding example presented by Daniel Ion, president of the Association for Civil Society Development in Rural Areas, demonstrated how the grantee facilitated the submission of eight infrastructure projects for communes in Tulcea County with the potential to directly impact thousands of Romanian citizens. Three out of eight projects have already received funding totaling over \$200,000 to address citizen-identified infrastructure needs such as telephone connections and road reparations.

Not only did grantees learn from one another, but the conference provided a unique opportunity for NGOs and local public administration representatives to work towards a common understanding concerning various types of partnerships, learn about the challenges the other entity faces when devising and conducting a partnership, and cultivate concrete partnerships for future sustainability of projects initiated and implemented with GRASP support. The event was prominently promoted in the local media--all local newspapers as well as two local TV stations highlighted the event.

To address the needs of some of the poorest citizens, on September 1, GRASP awarded grants to the Foundation for Community Support, Sfântul Stelian Association, and Association Ovidiu Rom to enhance the achievements of the "Ready, Willing and Able" Project, which was initiated in Bacau with funding from World Learning/USAID, and to replicate the achievements in Bucharest. The 10-month grant to the Foundation for Community Support in Bacau aims at getting severely impoverished children off the streets, educating them, and integrating them into public schools. At the same time, the Foundation targets the mothers of these children, putting them through an intense work training program ultimately focused on incorporating them into the workforce. In Bucharest, Sfântul Stelian and Ovidiu Rom work in partnership to implement the Bacau model and emulate its successes; they collaborate with local and national authorities to increase the number of impoverished children who attend school, boost access to jobs for these children's mothers, and enhance the current social projects in Bucharest. With GRASP assistance, the projects were designed to significantly impact national-level social services policy reform initiatives—the Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family is already engaged in the project; increase the capacity and improve the ability of local administration to address these difficult issues in partnership with CSOs; replicate the project in other municipalities; and refine and disseminate a model public-private partnership for improving the lives of children and families in extreme poverty.

The following three categories summarize some of the most significant grant results this quarter.

### **Direct Community Impact**

With GRASP grant support and the assistance of its public institution partners (County Agency for Employment, County Department of Education, and Arad City Hall), PAEM Arad Association organized a job market for young graduates in Arad. Sixty-five private companies presented their companies and job offers amounting to a total of 1,000 job opportunities, both for university graduates and young people who had not completed university degrees, for which the participating companies were willing to train. In addition to hosting the job market, PAEM launched the book *Career Perspectives: Guide to Vocational Counseling*, based on 12 months of experience working with 450 beneficiaries (high school students, beneficiaries of the social shelters administrated by the Arad City Hall and young people in the Arad Penitentiary.) Based on a socio-economic study of Arad County, the book focuses on the tendencies of the

local job market, and will be disseminated to all public schools, local public administrations, and other interested actors in Arad County.

A new group of 15 women, graduates of Integra Association's third series of training programs, are prepared to start new businesses and change their lives. For many of them, the counseling provided by Integra specialists was the incentive they needed to start pursuing their goals, like selling plants and therapy oils, opening their own pharmacy, or starting up a jewelry shop. The beneficiaries are women who face different challenges in breaking into the workplace: young graduates, single mothers, divorced women, widows, unemployed women, or simply women who have a hard time making choices. *"More than 150 women have attended our program in the last 12 months. As far as we know, 30 women found jobs, 10 started their own small businesses and another 15 are now in the process of doing so,"* said Florica Chereches, Executive Director of the Association. To continue their work in relation to opening up markets for their clients with micro-enterprises, Integra has received a grant totaling \$150,000 from the Shell Foundation. To encourage corporate social responsibility, Integra plans to work with Shell to promote products from their clients' micro-enterprises in Shell stations across Romania.

GRASP grantee, Ecologic Club BIOS, finalized the Water Resources Management Plan for Sibiu County, following public meetings in Agnita, Medias, and Sibiu, which were attended by more than 70 representatives of local public administration, water companies, and health, civil protection, and meteorology departments. The plan incorporates more in-depth information about the impact of water quality on public health, provisions for crisis management (floods, draughts) from the civil protection departments and the Sibiu office of the National Agency for Meteorology and Hydrology, and local regulations allowing health department representatives access to water treatment plants, and will be submitted for County Council approval in October.

### **Partnerships and Sustainability**

The Disabled People's Society in Zalau has successfully obtained official accreditation for the social services they provide to people with disabilities. This status means that the society is accredited by the National Authority for People with Handicaps to provide services such as counseling, recuperation and rehabilitation activities, and vocational services. Moreover, as a member of a national CSO coalition, the society has been involved in an advocacy campaign to change Romanian legislation concerning people with disabilities to make it more compatible with European legislation. Finally, at the local level, the Zalau City Hall has approached the society to partner in a project addressing the creation of new community services.

During this quarter "Femina 2000" Association increased its consulting services to citizens, including services to 111 first-time beneficiaries to the center, representing a 236% increase in comparison to 47 assisted the previous quarter, and increased the total number of beneficiaries to 312 since the

beginning of the project. Beyond consulting services, the grantee also finished and updated the feasibility study, "Social Housing for Rroma," part of a 170,487 euro project funded through PHARE and the local budget, implemented by Eco-Generosus Foundation. Pending final decision from the donor, the project will build 16 houses, enabling 16 families to integrate into the community, attend public schools, and look for stable employment. In addition, at the behest of the Tîrgu Neamt City Hall, "Femina 2000" Association conducted a feasibility study on improving road infrastructure in the Rroma community of Tîrgu Neamt, which is part of a joint PHARE-Tîrgu Neamt City project totaling 195,820 euros.

On September 24, GRASP grantee, REC, organized a public meeting to disseminate the Olt Environmental Action Plan, which was developed through the facilitation efforts of REC and was adopted by the Olt County Council in May. The Olt County Council hosted the meeting and representatives from 40 local governments attended. The session was opened by the vice president of the County Council who congratulated the members of the Environmental Partnership Team who produced the document, and also noted, "*This document helped us back our request for funding from the central government, which subsequently provided us \$3 million for an investment project in Piatra Olt.*" In implementing the Environmental Action Plan REC worked closely with a Craiova-based company on two feasibility studies. One of the studies provided Draganesti-Olt local council with the optimal solution for rehabilitating the water collection and supply systems and extending the water distribution network to serve 14,306 residents 24 hours a day. Currently only 7,000 residents have running water, for a few hours a day. The project is eligible for SAMPTID and the estimated cost is 2,525,502 euros.

The beneficiary of the second study is Osica de Sus local council. The study looked at extending the water distribution network to 1,700 more users and rehabilitating the water collection system. The estimated project cost is 510,596 euros and will be eligible for SAPARD. REC's experience in developing environmental action plans to provide citizens access to environmental information, participation in environmental decision-making, and access to justice on environmental matters generated requests from local government representatives from Buzau, Vrancea, Tulcea and Gorj to assist them in creating local environmental action plans for their respective counties.

During GRASP's initial assessment meeting in Neamt County, tourism promotion was viewed as a top priority by the city's NGO community, citizens, and public administration. Working together, local government and GRASP grantee, Neamteanca Craftsmen Association, transformed a central area in Tîrgu Neamt from an empty, desolate yard to a first-rate park, "Creanga Land," for citizens and tourists to learn about the works of Ion Creanga through statues, theatre productions, concerts, and readings. Moreover, the park offers a perfect setting for the association and other local vendors to sell arts and crafts, promoting the sustainability of the association and bringing resources to the region. To maintain and further the activities associated with the "Creanga Land" project; the Tîrgu Neamt local council

approved a decision on September 30 to provide continued funding totaling \$2,700 per year.

Two members of the advisory board formed in Aroneanu commune by Terra Nostra Foundation have designed eight project drafts based on priorities identified in the LED strategy. Six of these projects were presented at the Investment Opportunity Fair organized by GRASP in Iasi at the end of June. Under the grantee's guidance, the city hall staff will refine the drafts and develop them into project proposals.

Partnering with Saliste City Hall and the local water management company, Ecologic Club BIOS took the initiative to implement correct water source protection procedures with regards to the spring which feeds the water reservoir used by 20% of villagers from Vale, one of the nine villages included in Saliste. BIOS is furnishing the necessary piping and supporting poles, the water management company is contributing professional services and sand, and the city hall is providing the necessary work force under Law 416. As a result of this activity, residents will have more sanitary drinking water for drinking and cooking.

### **Public Policy**

GRASP-supported project activities continued to promote citizen involvement in local public policy. During this quarter, grantee activities have led to eight feasibility studies performed, seven public hearings organized, seven public meetings held, one advocacy campaign conducted, 12 instances of local government decisions disseminated to citizens, six occasions when citizens were surveyed and informed of results, and six times where local governments informed citizens of local problems.

As part of the grant awarded to Equal Opportunities for Women Foundation (SEF), GRASP facilitated three debates on the Government Order nr. 68/2003 on social services, involving CSOs, EU representatives, and Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity and Family officials. The proposed amendments targeted the problems of single parent families by providing more comprehensive services regarding child care, legal counseling, housing, and employment. The debates led to the modification, by the Government of Romania, of the Ordinance no. 68/2003, regarding social services, through the new Ordinance no.86/2004, approved on August 19th and published in the Official Monitor No. 799 of August 30th, 2004. Some of the critical changes included: funding of social services to be done on the basis of fair competition in order to utilize efficiently public funds; free access for all public and private social service providers in finding opportunities; and the elimination of business companies from the category of social service providers. *"We are grateful to GRASP for creating the venue for debate on such a critical piece of legislation as that of social services and for turning us into a network in one day. We would like to keep it going for other essential topics related to people's lives,"* stated Corneliu Gavaliugov, Counsellor, Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family. After reading in the newspapers about the roundtables, a single mother

called to GRASP and inquired about her rights and her daughter’s education opportunities under the new policy.

The GRASP grants program continues to be widely publicized in the local and national media, increasing the transparency of GRASP-supported projects, lending credibility to the implementing organizations, and highlighting cooperation between local governments and NGOs. Twenty-three local newspaper articles have been published and nine television and 10 radio spots have promoted the projects at the local level.

During this period, approximately \$145,405 has been provided to GRASP-supported projects by outside sources. Of this, local governments have contributed \$32,503.

### Total Grants Funds Leveraged Since Inception

	Partnership Co-funding	Sustainability Funding
Local Government	\$35,559	\$220
Central Government	\$41,000	
Private Sector	\$237,322	\$150,000
International Donors		\$112,500
Own Contribution	\$4,278	\$6,271
<b>Total</b>	\$318,159	\$268,991
<b>Total Funds Leveraged</b>	<b>\$587,150</b>	

SFS 2: Domestic  
Technical  
Services Market  
Strengthened for  
Local  
Government

This quarter GRASP signed MOUs with 10 of the local governments that applied to receive infrastructure improvement Vouchers to subsidize the cost of local service providers. GRASP reviewed terms of references for a requested service and calculated its cost share for procuring that service. In total, local governments will procure approximately \$154,000 in services out of which GRASP will contribute approximately \$52,225. Subsidy levels for these 10 Vouchers are on average 34% as opposed to an average 80% subsidy level provided by GRASP for the seven local governments that received Vouchers in the pilot phase of the program. This reduction in GRASP subsidy level indicates there is a burgeoning domestic market for technical services to local governments and they are increasingly willing to pay for these services on their own.

Below is a matrix identifying the local governments that will benefit from the Vouchers, the services that will be provided and the status of the procurements at the end of this reporting period. In general, local governments applied to receive funding to procure feasibility studies for urban transport, heating, sewerage, and other public utility improvements that could be realized with EU Phare pre-accession assistance. Some Vouchers will cover the cost of additional proposal writing and project management training for local government officials.

<b>Local Government</b>	<b>Activity type</b>	<b>Amount requested</b>	<b>LG Contribution</b>	<b>Total cost</b>	<b>MOU Status</b>	<b>Estimated procurement start</b>	<b>Estimate activity completion</b>
Braila City Hall	Urban transport study	\$7,000	\$13,000	\$ 20,000	Signed	Oct 30, 2004	April 30, 2005
Craiova City Hall	Urban transport study	\$7,000	\$ 37,103	\$ 44,103	Signed	Oct 30, 2004	April 30, 2005
Zalau City Hall	Feasibility study for a social night centre	\$ 3,675	\$ 3,675	\$7,350	Signed	Tender process finalized; service provider selected	March 31, 2005
Jibou City Hall	Feasibility study for extension of sewage system	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$7,000	Signed	Nov 30, 2004	April 30, 2005
Caracal City Hall	Proposal writing training for 7 persons (90 hours of training)	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$7,000	Signed	Oct 30, 2004	May 30, 2005
Tomesti Commune Hall	Feasibility study for road rehabilitation	\$3,750	\$3,750	\$7,500	Signed	Nov 30, 2004	April 30, 2005
Vatra Dornei City Hall	Feasibility study for the town heating system	\$7,000	\$13,000	\$20,000	Signed	Nov 30, 2004	April 30, 2005
Sibiu County Council	Training in proposal writing and project management	\$5,400	\$6,600	\$12,000	Signed	Nov 30, 2004	May 30, 2005
Iasi County Council	Training in proposal writing and project management	\$5,400	\$8,600	\$14,000	Signed	Nov 30, 2004	May 30, 2005
Vicovu de Sus	Feasibility study for water supply and sewage	\$6,000	\$9,000	\$15,000	Signed	Nov 30, 2004	April 30, 2005

## Progress against USAID Indicators

## USAID Indicators achievement - September 2004

Performance Management Criteria	Targets				Actuals	Project target achievement (%)
	year 1 & 2	year 3	year 4	year 5	year 1 & 2	year 1 & 2
<b>SO 2.3</b>						
Number of USAID-assisted LGUs that have increased the percent of their program budget spent on services identified by citizens	20	40	60	80	<b>41</b>	205%
<b>IR 2.3.1.1</b>						
Number of GRASP-assisted Local Government Units that increase their locally available revenues	25	55	80	125	<b>83</b>	332%
<b>IR 2.3.1.2</b>						
Number of public services in which cost is aligned with fees charged for delivering the service, while incorporating customer feedback about efficiency and quality	15	35	65	105	<b>NA</b>	NA
<b>IR 2.3.2.1</b>						
Number of GRASP-assisted Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participating in strategic planning, implementation or oversight activities	50	100	150	200	<b>105</b>	210%
<b>IR 2.3.2.2</b>						
Number of new community services created through a defined participatory approach	50	100	150	200	<b>52</b>	104%

### **LGCI Data**

#### **SO 2.3 Number of USAID-assisted LGUs that have increased the percent of their program budget spent on services identified by citizens:**

- Local Economic Development – Five LGUs committed \$905,000 for implementation of LED projects or for implementing projects included in a Development Strategy that had citizen input and was prepared with GRASP assistance;
- Vouchers – the seven vouchers’ beneficiaries allocated \$32,514 for the services they designed, based on citizen suggestions;
- Metropolitan Development – 14 LGUs from Iasi County committed \$49,280 for metropolitan area implementation; the values vary from \$1,540 for the 12 communes to \$15,400 for Iasi City Hall and Iasi County Council;
- Citizen Participation – Six LGUs committed \$966,625 to implement 19 services suggested by citizens during budget hearings;
- Grants – Nine LGUs contributed \$32,503 in cash contributions to implement Grant projects; many others contributed in-kind contributions; and
- Capital Investment Plan – 1 LGU allocated \$39,275 for public lightning based on citizens’ requirements and CIP implementation.

#### **Note:**

- Total cash co-financing for GRASP-generated activities is \$2,025,197;
- “Percent of budget spent on services identified by citizens” figures may be adjusted during the 2004 Romanian fiscal year until we have an accurate view in 2005.

#### **IR 2.3.1.1 Number of GRASP-assisted Local Government Units that increase their locally available revenues**

#### **Note:**

- Voucher project implementation - One LGU wrote several funding proposals; through the end of September 2004, two projects totaling \$72,698 were approved; and
- Capital Investment Plan – 1 LGU obtained funding to implement two projects that have been analyzed and incorporated in the CIP.

The main activities that GRASP supported to reach this indicator are:

- Municipal credit market development;
- Financial management;
- Capital improvement planning and budgeting;
- Proposal writing and project management; and
- Local economic development.

The activities GRASP is implementing toward reaching this indicator have long term impact, and we are expecting to be able to collect and report results after Capital Investment Plans projects are funded- beginning in the

second half of 2004, and after new funding is provided based on proposal writing.

**IR 2.3.1.2** Number of public services in which fees are aligned with cost charged for delivering the service, while incorporating customer feedback about efficiency and quality

**Note:**

The activities GRASP plans to implement in order to reach this indicator are:

- Train LGUs to measure unit cost for public services; and
- Use citizens' input to monitor the quality of public services.

Already 20 LGUs decided to improve social service delivery based on a cost/client analysis. Those LGUs are in the middle of the process that includes the next steps: services analysis, new service delivery plan, obtain Local Council decision, fund's allocation, services contracting, and services delivery.

**Per a March 5, 2004 email from GRASP, DCOP, Benjamin Feit and the March 15, 2004 response from Victor Radulescu, it was determined that this indicator would not be reported to USAID by December 2004.**

**IR 2.3.2.1** Number of GRASP-assisted Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) participating in strategic planning, implementation or oversight activities:

- Local Economic Development – 49 different bodies were involved in LED projects implementation; 15 of them are Non-Governmental Organizations and 34 are companies;
- Service Monitoring – in eight LGUs the condominium associations were involved in trash collection and street cleaning monitoring;
- Citizen Participation – six CSOs have been active in the facilitation of budget hearings;
- Grants – 31 CSOs have been actively involved in strategic planning, implementation, and oversight activities in their respective communities; and
- 11 GRASP Resource Partners are included.

**Note:**

GRASP has changed the way it counts CSOs: instead of counting the ones involved in “strategic planning, implementation or oversight activities” we decided to count only the ones involved in “implementation or oversight activities”. “Participating in strategic planning” does not indicate active involvement. Instead, GRASP has taken a more critical approach to assure that CSOs are actively participating as legitimate partners. This reduces the total number of CSOs counted.

**IR 2.3.2.2** Number of new community services created through a defined participatory approach

- Citizen Participation – 19 services has been created following citizen input during budget hearings; and

- Grants – 31 services have been implemented in LGUs based on citizen input and needs.
- Vouchers – following proposal writing training supported through a GRASP Voucher, two project proposals were funded and started implementation (health/Rroma and children).

**Local Government Capacity Index**

GRASP measured the impact in assisted Local Government Units using the Local Government Capacity Index (LGCI). The baseline data was collected in September 2003, and will be compared with the latest measurement completed in September 2004. The following analysis will be completed:

- Improvement per question for assisted Local Government Units
- Improvement by each of the three topic areas: Financial Management and Operations, Services, Citizens/Local Government Interaction
- Areas of concentration for continued improvement of LGUs

Because the scoring process and data analysis are ongoing, the following data is a summary of some of the more notable achievements. A detailed report will be submitted to USAID in the middle of November.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Data</b>
<b>Average increase in score for all 15 questions</b>	39.2%
<b>Question with the highest increase in scoring</b> <i>“Local government has a multiyear capital improvement plan (CIP) (3 or 5 years) that includes project operations and maintenance costs.”</i> Baseline data illustrated only 2 LGUs had started the CIP process. After GRASP’s targeted technical assistance 11 LGUs created CIPs and 18 LGUs have begun the process	Increase in average score from 0.03 to 1.36
<b>Topic area with highest increase - Financial Management and Operations</b>	62.7%
<b>City with the highest increase-</b> Braila baseline score of 20 increased to 38 total points	90%

**\*Please note this is preliminary data and will be reconciled for the final report**

## Management and Administrative Activities

### Media and Public Relations

In the third quarter of 2004, GRASP continued to enhance its public image by collaborating closely and fostering relationships with local media representatives. Numerous positive articles in the local press were written regarding program activities and can be found on the “News and Views” section of GRASP’s website [www.grasp.ro](http://www.grasp.ro). Once again, GRASP has compiled a compendium of news articles for USAID review.

New success stories were drafted and disseminated to GRASP’s PR/Media distribution email list, and two more stories were placed on the USAID website <http://www.usaid.gov/stories/>. GRASP has five additional stories that were submitted in August and September awaiting final approval from USAID’s “Telling Our Stories” staff.

### Coordination, Management Issues and Other Activities

On September 22, GRASP senior management completed assessment visits with 22 of the most important cities in Romania. Nineteen cities were ultimately selected to participate in future GRASP activities due to their demonstrated commitment to involving citizens in the decision-making process, the opportunities that exist to conduct high impact projects with possible international donor funding, and belief that cooperation with these cities will yield positive results that can be further disseminated throughout the rest of Romania. The selected cities are listed on GRASP’s website, and represent approximately 30% of all the citizens in Romania, including mayors from all political parties and all regions who have expressed eagerness to work with GRASP and a deep appreciation of previous USAID assistance.

This quarter GRASP completed Cluster Task Force close out meetings to specific local governments and provided reports to all 79 local governments and civil society organizations who participated in program activities. Some of the feedback includes: the town of Macin, who had two participants in the GRASP proposal writing training course, intend to lobby local governments in their area to serve as a resource center to help prepare proposals that can be funded through international donors. In addition, the Vice-Mayor and Economic Director of Macin promised to hold another public hearing on the budget without GRASP technical assistance, using their own funds. The city

of Tulcea will continue to monitor public services and expand upon their award winning environmental program that includes 150 children and young adult volunteers. The city of Braila, along with at least ten other local governments, requested continued assistance from GRASP in building upon successful programs and trainings. Braila's Business Improvement District will be ready within two months as local government has increased their contribution to the project improving an existing park, remodeling buildings, and creating additional parking spaces for citizens to access the pedestrian street of shops, restaurants, and hotels.

The County Council of Arges, an initial voucher recipient from GRASP, proudly shared their success in putting theory into practice. The County Council initially received a voucher to provide training in proposal writing, project management, and accessing international donor funding. Within months of completing the training the County Council applied for, and was awarded, two different grants totaling \$75,000 for establishing a counseling office to support families and children facing financial difficulties. The program is sponsored by the Ministry of Labor with World Bank support. In addition, a program for funding and improving the health condition of the Rroma community in Malureni Commune was financed by Phare.

## Outlook -- Upcoming GRASP Events and Activities

- The CIC Operators Guide will be printed and available for distribution next quarter improving the quality of services delivered in CICs.
- The Budget Transparency Toolkit will be printed next quarter to provide willing Romanian local governments the ability to communicate with their citizens on matters of public spending.
- The cooperation between the Ministry of Public Finance and GRASP will continue next quarter in examining and developing solutions to procurement matters.
- The Procurement Guidebook with a case studies compendium and procurement software will be printed and available for distribution in November.
- Two more training courses on Financial Management and Proposal Writing, in collaboration with ADECJR, will be completed in October.
- The Capital Investment Planning and Budgeting manual and toolkit will be printed and available for distribution next quarter.
- The Creditworthiness Self-Analysis Tool will be made available to interested local governments, and a creditworthiness report will be provided to the city of Baia Mare.
- The Public Services Monitoring Toolkit will be available for distribution by November 2004.
- The Social Services Needs Assessment Methodology Toolkit will be printed and disseminated to interested local governments by the end of November 2004.

- MapDecision software will be deployed in all 14 local governments in the Iasi Metropolitan Development Area together with an online collection tool that will ensure up-to-date data availability of information.
- The approval of the marketing plan and publication of the Bihor and Tulcea Tourism Promotion Guides will be completed in November.
- The BID implementation, Tourism Development, and Business Attitude Survey and Community Profile manuals will be completed and distributed in November.