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Small Grants Program Advances the Goal of Transparency in Health Engagement Project in Albania



About the Small Grants Program

Through a competitive selection process, The Project has identified four key local organizations and media groups and awarded grants focused in health system transparency. These 12 months grants are intended to improve and promote media and civil society organizations (CSOs) roles as watchdogs. The recipients are focused on educating the public, leading advocacy campaigns, demanding progress, holding the government publicly accountable, and assisting government institutions to function better. The selected recipients designed their approaches to achieve the following objectives:

- ◆ **Objective 1:** Increase CSOs' role and media professional's capacities in to better informing and educating the public on risks for corruption and corruption practices in the Albanian health system.
- ◆ **Objective 2:** Increase capacities of civil society organizations and media to more effectively advocate and collaborate with the target institutions to urge the Government of Albania to pursue corruption in the health sector.

During the first 6 months of implementation, these grants have reached public officials, journalists, CSOs, patient's associations, legal professionals, citizens and patients through targeted awareness campaigns, tailored trainings and capacity building activities, and in-depth investigative reporting.

The Project has also provided mentoring and capacity building activities for grantees to improve their capacities and relationships with the three independent watchdog institutions, namely the Ombudsperson Office, the Albanian Supreme Audit Institution and the HIDACCI.

About the Project

USAID's Transparency in Health Engagement project aims to **improve health services for Albanian citizens by focusing on corruption and encouraging cooperation among selected independent government institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs) and media to urge for more responsible governance in the health sector.** Working with the High Inspectorate for the Declaration and Audit of Assets and Prevention of Conflict of Interest, the High State Audit, and the Office of the Ombudsperson, the project will generate evidence to measure corruption and relevant mediating factors; and perform public sector reforms and audits. Through Grants under Contract, the Project is capacitating and engaging key local organizations and media groups for health transparency focused grants to strengthen their roles as watchdogs of public funds.

Achievements

BIRN Albania through the *Transparency in Health through Data and Investigative Journalism Project*, aims to foster more informed and transparent public debate on the healthcare sector by strengthening cooperation between journalists and civil society in order expose corruption and advocate solutions. **20 national and regional journalists** have been trained on data journalism and investigations techniques, resulting in more qualitative data-rich and investigative stories produced.

Around 350,000 people have been reached through Reporter.al webpage, where **13 data-rich/ investigations** stories have been published on health care transparency issues. The articles have been republished over 70 times in other media outlets in Albania. **3 journalists** have been selected to conduct more in-depth investigations that will **contribute to an increased awareness of authorities/ public on the causes and consequences of corruption in health sector in Albania.**

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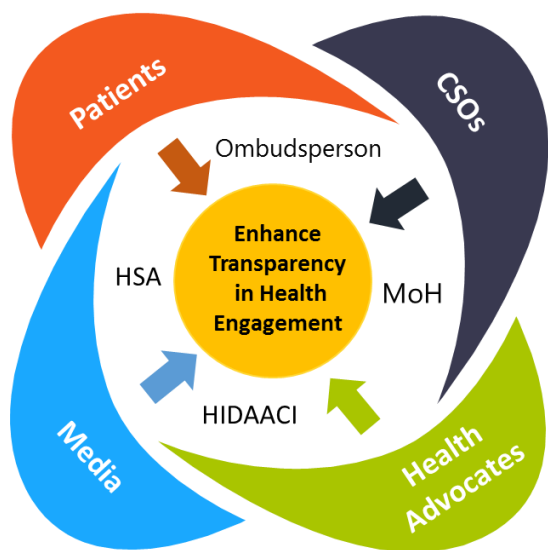
Partners Albania for Change and Development through the *Stronger CSOs for Transparency in Health Project*, is seeking to strengthen inter-organizational collaboration to foster greater reach amongst citizens and increased awareness about corruption. **20 people representing 15 civil society organizations from 11 municipalities of Albania** have participated in a series of capacity building activities focused on mobilizing communities in fighting corruption and improving transparency in the health sector and advocacy. These CSOs are collaborating with their local counterparts to develop their advocacy plans for better health care. These advocacy plans will be based on the needs of their local communities and will focus on (i) requesting implementation of standards at health centers; (ii) improving disability schemes based on more simplified criteria; (iii) increasing transparency of the budget of health centers. These efforts will **contribute to increase the role of CSOs in advocating the government to address issues of corruption in the health sector and to implement practices that increase transparency and accountability of health institutions.**



fied cases/practices. In coordination with the Ombudsman staff, 13 fact finding missions have been conducted in health care institutions, to identify shortcomings in accountability within the health sector. ARCT has conducted a series of focus groups with all interested stakeholders to revise complaint mechanisms and referral process to better meet the needs of patients. A draft report has been finalized with findings and recommendations for Government and will **advocate for legislative amendments to address identified problems.** The findings will be discussed in public hearings with the parliamentary commissions on labor, social and health issues.

Together for Life, through the *Empowering patients: Fighting corruption in the health system through empowering patients and independent oversight institutions project*, aims to educate, to inform and to encourage patients and citizens to denounces the corruption in healthcare system by using mechanisms like media and other independent institutions like the Ombudsman, Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, Information and Data Protection Commissioner, Order of Physicians, and Courts.

Around 90 chronic patients have been informed about their rights, how to address their complaints and the role of the main independent institutions that safeguard their rights as patients through Project support activities. Around 110,000 people have been reached through shendet.com.al webpage where 5 informative articles, 2 investigations and two raising awareness video on patients' rights have been published. Further, 1200 people have been informed through printed supplements of Shendet Plus newspaper. **Informed and empowered patients will contribute to an increased demand for better health care services.**



Albanian Rehabilitation Centre for Trauma and Torture (ARCT), through the *Transparency in Mental Health Project*, the organization aims to improve the Albanian health system accountability and transparency by identifying corrupt practices in health sector and advocating for non-repetition and prevention of identi-

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