

## **TLAS STRATEGIC PLAN (2011-2013)**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Tirana Legal Aid Society (TLAS) is an independent non-profit legal services organization with the mission of: "Fulfillment of the legal and social needs of the people in need, education and raising of the awareness of the Albanian society on the rule of law and human rights; initiatives on the improvement of the legal system, development of the community and strengthening of the democracy in Albania." This plan describes the objectives of the organization and the strategies to be used to achieve those objectives for 2011 through 2013.

### **II. BACKGROUND**

TLAS was founded and started its activity in 1999 as a project of CAFOD Albania. It became an independent organization in 2006. TLAS provides legal services for civil, administrative, family law, labor law cases, and cases involving violations of human rights to Roma, other minorities, people with disabilities, orphans, pensioners and other individuals with insufficient income. TLAS seeks to fulfill its mission in three ways: first, through the provision of the free legal services for civil cases for individuals in need by giving legal information and advice and representation in court and administrative bodies; second, by improving public awareness of individuals in need of their legal and social rights and the right to access to justice; third, by working for improvement of legislation, regulations and practices through lobbying and advocacy campaigns, for the protection of the rights and interests of vulnerable communities. While services are focused on the Tirana district, TLAS also provides legal services, trainings and street law activities in other cities including Fier, Elbasan, Durrës, Berat, Kukes, Peshkopi, Tropoje, and Has, among others.

Albania has made progress on economic growth and poverty reduction in recent years. Progress has also been made in building democratic institutions and reforming the court system. However, many Albanians are still very poor and minority groups, particularly the Roma and Egyptian communities remain marginalized. For example, in some areas only 13% of Roma children are enrolled in school. In Tirana and Elbasan and elsewhere housing occupied by Roma families for over 20 years use to be bulldozed by the city government, with no alternative housing being offered. The justice system continues to function poorly due to shortcomings in independence, accountability and transparency. Access to justice is limited, especially for vulnerable groups and marginalised. Although much progress has been made in the social, political and economic spheres since then, many problems remain, including those caused by:

- weak public administration structures and lack of enforcement of legislation;
- a lack of capacity among civil society organisations particularly in rural areas and low levels of participation in civic affairs;

- rapid urbanisation caused by migration, particularly to Tirana.
- increased poverty and social exclusion of sections of the population.

TLAS has responded to these problems with a wide range of services and projects as described below. (See the TLAS website for additional background information on the organisation. <http://www.tlas.org.al/english/>)

### **III. CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS**

#### **A. Major Services**

##### **1. Direct Services to Individuals**

The direct services include paralegal services for administrative cases, legal services for court cases, “law line” services for legal advice over the phone, clinics to enable individuals to represent themselves before state authorities, and mediation for alternative dispute resolution. TLAS operates mobile services to reach vulnerable individuals in remote areas.

##### **2. “Street Law” Activities**

TLAS organizes visits and meetings through street law activities in the urban and rural areas of Tirana and other cities. It also publishes a newsletter and brochures and leaflets with legal information in simple, easy to understand terms.

##### **3. Monitoring**

TLAS regularly conducts monitoring projects on different aspects of the legal system. They have done monitoring reports on the level of corruption in the Notary Public system, on the activity of the Bailiff’s Offices, on the functioning and work of the Court Administration; and on the level of satisfaction of the public toward court services.

##### **4. Lobbying and advocacy activities**

TLAS engages in advocacy and lobbying activities for the improvement of the existing legislation, as well for the drafting of the new legislation. They have had significant success in this area, including getting important amendments to laws on property and civil status and in the establishment of a nationwide legal aid program. They are also working on improvements to welfare benefit and social services, to court administration, disability pensions for veterans, and pension credit for work done by former prisoners .

##### **5. Internship Student Programme**

Students from the Faculty of Justice and Social Work are present in TLAS offices, involved in information and awareness activities of street law, in mobile services

and in assisting the clients' case management as well as in other monitoring, surveying, legal initiatives and training activities.

## **6. Support for Non-Profit Organizations**

TLAS provides legal assistance to non-profit organizations that work with and include members of the target groups for TLAS services. The assistance includes registration in court of local associations and training workshops for the strengthening of their legal capacities.

## **7. Training for Government Employees**

TLAS provides training workshops for the public administration employees, judges and civil status offices and administrators of Welfare & Social services' employees.

## **B. Projects and Campaigns**

### **1. Civil Registrations**

The main focus of this component of the project will be the legal assistance of the low income individuals for the civil registrations. Birth registrations of children no longer represent the same concern as they did in early 2004 due to changes in legislation. TLAS experts drafted an Amendment to the Civil Status Law for birth registration, and this amendment was adopted by the Albanian Parliament on June 9, 2008.

In light of these changes to legislation, TLAS will continue to provide services to register births of unregistered children. TLAS will handle the birth registration type of cases that present complexities and that continue to necessitate court proceedings or necessary intermediary proceedings, whether administrative or judicial. The number and the cost of birth registration cases are not at the same level that TLAS had calculated before. In order to increase awareness and the implementation of the provisions of this legislation and enable the beneficiaries to take advantage of such provisions, there is a great need to work in two directions, providing services and enhancing capacities & awareness of the civil office' servants.

During 2009-2010, TLAS developed and organized 25 training workshops and round tables with the employees of the civil status offices all over the country for the knowledge and interpretation of the legislation on civil status in terms of information and development of the national registry, to empower the Vulnerable Communities for the access to services.

In a series of birth registration cases, other problems must be resolved in order to successfully complete the birth registration procedures, such as residence transfer, death registration, divorce, child custody, etc. therefore, the birth registrations may be complex ones.

## **2. Child Custody**

The number of people in need (TLAS potential clients) that are demanding services for the cases of custody of their children is growing. Many requests are presented from the residential institutions and individuals to have the custody of the abandoned children, because the biological parents of the children are dead, or not possible to be located (because of the emigration), in the prison, or because they are financially unable to take care properly for the living and education of their children. For the group of cases (legal insecurity of the child custody because of the parents being in emigration) TLAS has been previously involved in the cases of the custody of children, in order for the relatives of the children (from the mother or the father side) to have their custody, so they can take care of the children and prevent any eventuality of trafficking.

For the second group of cases, TLAS paralegal counselors have placed, temporarily, under the custody of the specialized institutions (with the parents consent) the children living in families in extreme poverty, in order for them to have the proper living conditions and education. We are of the opinion that this work must continue in the future in the assistance, support and best interests of the children, to keep them away from the streets, to prevent trafficking and to guarantee them suitable living conditions and education.

## **3. Legal Aid**

One of the TLAS's major successes in the last two Years was to lobby for the creation of a state funded legal aid service to provide free legal advice and representation in criminal, civil and administrative matters to low income Albanians. The legal aid law, drafted by TLAS experts, was enacted in late 2008 and went into effect in May, 2009. Although the law is now in effect, there are many decisions to be made and actions to be taken before legal assistance can actually be provided under the new system. The State Commission on Legal Aid, the body established by the legal aid law, will have the significant advantage of drawing on over a decade of experience by TLAS and other NGOs in providing legal assistance as goes about its work.

The action "The Enhancing Access to Justice of vulnerable groups" is intended to strengthen government accountability by ensuring that poor and marginalized individuals of the targeted groups can use the legal system: courts, the legislative bodies and executive departments, to protect human rights, combat discrimination and address fundamental issues concerning civil registrations, housing, health care, education, employment and safety. Project activities are intended to lead to more effective enforcement of existing laws (including civil legal registration and provisions prohibiting discrimination in particular), adoption of new laws and amendments to existing "Social Assistance and Services" Legislation. One of the components of the project is to use the existing and new services, as they become available, to address the significant problems faced by the targeted groups included Roma and vulnerable prisoners in the targeted area of Tirana, Elbasan, Fier, Durrës and Lezha Regions. While each target group has its own specific problems there are common problems of

exclusion based on poverty, disabilities, age, unemployment, lack of education, place of residence, and, to different degrees, ethnicity. The exclusion is deriving from the weak rule of law, limited access to justice and the lack of mechanisms for dialog between government and vulnerable communities or their CBO's.

#### **4. Social and Economic Assistance Reform**

Another serious issue of the low income individuals in Albania is the failure of the state structures to guarantee them the deserved access to welfare benefit schemes. TLAS lawyers advice and follow the cases of senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, unemployed, especially, in the field of the welfare benefit schemes, asking legal assistance to solve their family issues. It is a priority of the government of Albania to amend the legislation on the welfare benefit scheme, in order to make it more effective and efficient for the citizens and for the state budget. TLAS, in another project funded by Vodafone Albania Foundation analyzed the actual legislation of the welfare benefit scheme. TLAS during 2009 prepared a study and analysis of the legal framework for the social and economic assistance, analysis which have preceded the amendments and improvements of the legal framework.

In 2010, TLAS group of experts drafted the amendments of the social and economic assistance legislation and submitted them on July 2010 to the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Chances. Through such improvements, TLAS aims to include in the social and economic service scheme, all such categories of families in need that because of the legal deficiencies are not included in the scheme and exclusion of the families that abusively benefit from such scheme and do not meet the necessary criteria.

#### **5. Court Monitoring**

During 2009, TLAS carried on with its activities of the monitoring of the courts in 12 districts of Albania, to measure the satisfaction level of the courts' users (judges, court clerks, prosecutors, lawyers, litigants, etc) for the services provided by the courts. The project funded by USAID was extended in the District Courts of Durrës, Elbasan, Pogradec, Saranda, Shkodra, Vlora, Kruja and Korça, Court of Appeal of Tirana and Court of Appeal of Vlora and Court of High Profile Crimes in Tirana.

The survey was aiming further expectations for the improvements of each Court performance, transparency and accountability; strengthening Judicial and Court Administration integrity, increasing the level of transparency and the proper access to court hearings, court records, publication of the opinions and court information, avoiding the delay' practices, increasing the public trust and confidence.

#### **6. Alternative Sentences**

As a result of recent amendment to Criminal Code it is estimated that more than 600 prisoners each year will qualify for release from prison under alternative sentences

and that almost 70% have very low or no income. TLAS is now providing legal aid to the most vulnerable prisoners in the Tirana, Durres , Elbasan and Fier regions).

## **7. Pre-trial Detention**

For the first time in its operation, TLAS was involved in the protection of the rights of the pre-detainees, as a vulnerable category that suffer from the violation of their rights during their staying in pre-detention, in the framework of the project “Improvement of the Pre-detention System in Albania”, financed by Soros/Budapest, as a sub-contractor of the European Institute of Tirana. The lawyers of TLAS interviewed the pre-detainees and their family relatives in 17 pre-detention facilities in Albania. Through the interviews were identified several violations of the rights of pre-detainees, which are submitted before the administrative bodies or courts.

## **8. Pensions**

Some other cases that TLAS intends to represent in court or before the administrative structures, are pension cases. Some low income individuals that must benefit from the pension scheme, but because of the lack of coordination and law implementation from the state bodies are left out of it, need to be assisted to insure the amount they need and deserve from work done so far.

## **IV. ISSUES CONSIDERED IN DEVELOPING STRATEGIC PLAN**

In developing this strategic plan TLAS did a review and assessment of the its current organizational strengths and challenges and the accomplishments under the 2007-2010 strategic plan,

### **A. Staff**

All evaluations have commented on the knowledge, skill, experience and commitment of the staff of TLAS and the strong and effective leadership. However, it must be noted that TLAS is a very small organisation. As of mid-2010 there are 5 full time and 2 part time staff members: the executive director, a senior lawyer, 2 lawyers with approximately 5 years of experience, a counselor, an administrative/finance officer and a bookkeeper. Earlier in 2010 two more senior lawyers left TLAS, and in September another new law graduate full time attorney was hired.

There are several issues that must be addressed in the strategic plan: continued professional development for current staff; the capacity of the staff to meet current and future grant obligations; and planning to address any staff departures. Although all members of the current staff are well qualified to do their current jobs and are working very effectively, the jobs are very demanding because of the very large number of people seeking help from TLAS, the wide range of tasks required, and, in some cases, frequent travel around the country. The plan must insure that these lawyers have the support they need to continue to work effectively, including training for new tasks, and

the opportunity to take on new responsibilities. In particular the more junior lawyers need to acquire the skills and experience to take leadership roles in major advocacy projects on legislation and other policy changes. Assuming TLAS does hire a new law graduate there will need to be a professional development plan for that lawyer.

In applying for any new grants TLAS must give careful consideration to the capacity of the staff to meet the obligations of the grant, including the capacity to train and supervise any new staff members hired to work on additional grants. TLAS also needs to consider the possibility that senior staff members may leave and have at least a contingency plan for dealing with that should it occur.

## **B. Services**

Another of the great strengths of TLAS is that it offers such a wide range of services: street law; paralegal services for administrative cases, legal services for court cases, “law line” services, clinics; mediation; mobile services; monitoring; lobbying and advocacy; student internships; legal support for non-profit organisations; and training for government employees. This mix of services is absolutely vital to TLAS’ success. Because it has direct contact with so many people through its outreach programs and direct client services it has the knowledge and credibility to do lobbying and advocacy on major policy issues. Its support for non-profits enables it to have strong community ties and have allies in advocacy campaigns. The student internship program makes it possible to serve more clients, to educate future lawyers on the needs of the poor and train possible future staff members. Monitoring projects support other advocacy initiatives. Training for government employees helps solve legal problems for clients. All these services support one another.

One of the major challenges for TLAS is to maintain the right balance among all these services. There is so much demand for individual services that TLAS could spend all its time doing administrative and court cases. However, it still would not be able to come close to helping everyone and it would not be as effective without providing the other services. Similarly, if it did very little direct client work in would not be anywhere near as effective in its lobbying and policy work.

Throughout its existence TLAS has done a good job on maintaining the right balance of services, however doing this will still require careful attention in the future. With continued outreach the demand for direct services will grow. If TLAS is able to get funding under the new Legal Aid Law, that is likely to require some adjustments in priorities. If private lawyers and other legal aid NGOs get funding under the legal aid law, TLAS may be able to collaborate with them to divide responsibility for services. TLAS will continue to need support from donors, who in turn require particular services to be provided. With any changes TLAS must be sure it has the time and staff expertise to do quality work in each area.

### **C. Priorities**

TLAS, like all legal aid organisations, has priorities regarding the people it serves and the types of problems it handles. In 2009 the breakdown by target group was : 27.7 % families in need; 25.3 % unemployed; 14% household women of low income; 13% pensioners; 20 % disabled, ex-politically persecuted people and abandoned children. TLAS also expanded its target groups to include certain prisoners and pre-trial detainees. For several years TLAS has given a high priority to serving Roma and Egyptian communities, originally around Tirana, but now in several cities around the country. In 2009 the breakdown by case type for TLAS services was: 18 % registration of births; 14 % welfare state benefit system, 28 % family and Civil Status cases, around 31 % labor law cases, pension, insurance, administrative, etc; 9% property cases etc.

The issue is whether this allocation of resources by types of clients and types of cases responds to the needs that exist in the communities in a fair way. TLAS has demonstrated the capacity to shift as needs change. For example, in 2010 there are more pension cases because of an effort by the government to correct problems in the pension system. Similarly, as the changes in the Civil Status Law have gone into effect the types of birth registration cases have changed and TLAS is doing much more complicated cases.

While case priorities must respond to genuine needs, the need for legal aid is always greater than the capacity of any legal aid organisation to provide services. TLAS clearly responds to real needs, but there is still a question of whether the work it is doing is having as great an impact as possible. The work on birth registrations provides a good example of work that is especially effective because it led to changes in the birth registration law, which in turn made it possible for many more people to register. In addition, birth registration brings other benefits, such as access to education and social welfare programs. As much as possible case priorities need to emphasize work that can lead to systemic changes.

Case priorities are, obviously, also directly affected by funding. However, some grants may require doing things that are outside an organisations established priorities and there must be guidelines for deciding to seek any particular grant. For example, the grant to serve pre-trial detainees represented both a new target group and new kinds of cases.

### **D. Funding**

TLAS is funded by the following grants for 2010 and in some cases into 2011.

- “Enhancing Legal Aid Services for Minorities,” CRD, 65.000 Euros,
- “Empowering the vulnerable Communities, for access to legal services,” UNICEF, 46,982 USD



- “Improving pre-trial detention in Albania,” SOROS BUDAPEST, 25 000 USD
- “TLAS survey to measure the satisfaction level of court users,” USAID/ROLP, 18,000 USD.
- “Increasing Access to Justice for Vulnerable Communities,” Vodafone Albania Foundation, 20,000 Euro
- “Increasing Access to Justice for Vulnerable Communities,” European Commission, 147, 000 Euro, 2010-2011

In combination most of the grants support the core work of TLAS, from Street Law to lobbying and advocacy. Several grants support very specific projects such as the survey of court users, improvements to pre-trial detention and legal aid for the victims of the Gërdec explosion. From 1999 through 2009 CAFOD UK has been a primary supporter of TLAS, but that support is being reduced after 2006 and stopped in 2009.

The recently established State Commission on Legal Aid is a potential source of support for TLAS in the long run, but it will take at least a few years to fully establish the legal aid service and get adequate funding for legal aid in the national budget. For the foreseeable future TLAS will need funding from international donors in order to continue to provide a full range of services. Even when the state legal aid program is in operation it will not fund many key activities such as monitoring, training and support for NGOs and lobbying and advocacy.

Foreign donors are likely to continue to support TLAS and in particular support efforts to implement the legal aid law, but there is a risk that donors will see Albanian funding for legal aid as a substitute for their support. It will be important for TLAS to show that both foreign and domestic support is needed to provide the type of legal aid services needed to create a justice system that works for all members of Albanian society. Albania is entering a critical phase of the effort to become a member of the European Union. One of the factors in that process is the adequacy of the justice system and TLAS, as it has, can argue to donors that support is needed to meet the standard for admission.

One specific concern of the European Union is the exclusion of Roma communities. Albania has joined the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Albania has adopted a National Action Plan which includes objectives which TLAS is working to achieve. There are a number of donors supporting the overall effort and there may be more funding opportunities for TLAS that are specifically related to the Albanian Plan.

TLAS will continue its effort to get funding from private supporters in Albania. The grant from the Vodafone Albania Foundation has been very successful and could encourage other Albanian donors to support legal aid. TLAS will need to work to create a climate that encourages domestic support and may investigate the possibility of tax changes to promote more charitable contributions.

As discussed below, the idea of having Albanian lawyers do cases *pro bono* for legal aid clients has been raised. In addition to a possible source of more legal help for members of the target groups served by TLAS, there may be funding available for TLAS to coordinate *pro bono* activities and train the lawyers who do the cases. There is increasing international support for *pro bono* work and TLAS already has a connection to the Public Interest Law Institute in Budapest which is actively working in this area.

Another activity which is not directly related to funding but could lead to more financial support for TLAS is the new regional coalition of legal aid organisations. Known as the Ohrid Initiative for Legal Aid (named for the city where the group first met), it includes representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The primary benefit from membership in this group will be from sharing experiences in the most effective ways of providing legal aid, but, if the group becomes well established, it could aid in the effort to persuade international donors of the importance of funding NGOs providing legal aid.

## **V. STRATEGIC PLAN**

The 2007-2010 TLAS strategy had five overall objectives:

- Client services: Continue to provide critical legal assistance — that includes information, education, advice, advocacy and representation. Ensuring providing representation in strategic case
- Legal information and education in many forms will continue to be principle part of TLAS strategy
- Public relations, coordination and administration of TLAS. Continue inspire and motivate a dedicated, competent and courageous staff.
- Law improvement and advocacy for social policy fund development.
- Fund Development

All of these objectives were achieved to a significant degree. The first two, client services and legal education and information are the basic day to day work of the organisation and have been since the beginning. Law improvement and social policy advocacy come out of the client services work and have also been a key aspect of TLAS' work throughout its existence. Evaluations going back 10 years show that TLAS has always had an excellent staff and the continued success in fundraising shows both that the organisation does effective work and that it is skilled at seeking support. For each objective, TLAS had anywhere from 8 to 15 specific strategies. With some exceptions, work was done to implement these strategies.

The strategic objectives for 2011 – 2013 have been slightly revised

**Objective 1: Client Services: TLAS will provide high quality and appropriate services to individuals and families based on case priorities intended to meet the needs of the communities they serve.**

Comment: This objective includes the obligation to have clear case priorities based on the needs of the communities being served. Those needs must be periodically assessed based on the demand for services, information obtained during outreach, and work with community groups and other organizations. The priorities must take into consideration the need to engage in other activities including legal information and outreach and law improvement and advocacy and the need to have an effective balance among all the activities. The case priorities should be clearly communicated to the communities being served. The case priorities must also reflect the organizations long-standing commitment to serving Roma and Egyptian communities.

To achieve this objective TLAS must accomplish the following results by engaging in the activities specified for each result.

Result: TLAS will have clear case acceptance priorities based on current community needs.

- Case acceptance priorities will be developed based on the type of problem, the significance of the problem to the person requesting assistance, the ability of the person to solve the problem with advice, and the likelihood of success in the case.
- TLAS will review case acceptance priorities each year. The review will include an assessment of requests for service in the prior year, an assessment of information learned through outreach activities and any other relevant factors such as changes in the law or new funding. TLAS will prepare draft case acceptance priorities
- Following the review TLAS will inform client communities and other stakeholders of the proposed priorities and seek comments.
- TLAS will make any changes to priorities based on the comments and publicize them widely.

Result: The objectives of TLAS' clients will be achieved in a substantial majority of cases accepted for representation.

- TLAS will provide appropriate training for staff members for all types of cases within TLAS priorities.
- TLAS will provide appropriate supervision, including peer supervision, for all staff members to periodically review progress on cases.
- TLAS will establish and operate a system for review all closed cases to evaluate the quality of service and make any necessary changes to case practices.
- TLAS will conduct annual performance evaluations of all staff. The evaluation of the executive director will be done by the Board of Directors.

**Objective 2: Legal Information and Outreach: TLAS will provide information and outreach in ways best suited to the needs of the communities we serve.**

Comment: TLAS uses a variety of techniques to provide legal information and do outreach and different techniques or a combination of techniques are most effective depending on the issues and the audience. The issues chosen for information and outreach must take into consideration the needs of the communities and the likely effectiveness of the activity. Priorities for information and outreach services should be coordinated with the priorities for direct client services and law improvement and advocacy and should reflect an effective balance among all the activities.

To achieve this objective TLAS must accomplish the following results by engaging in the activities specified for each result.

Result: TLAS will provide effective advice and referrals for individuals who are not accepted for representation.

- TLAS will allocate sufficient staff time to provide advice and referrals.
- TLAS will provide training for staff members on issues where advice is offered.
- TLAS will provide periodic training to community partners to enable them to provide assistance to individuals not accepted for representation.

Result: There will be increased public awareness of the role of legal aid in protection of rights and the provision of community services.

- Develop an annual public relations plan that heightens awareness of the work performed by the TLAS and the challenges faced by its clients.
- Publish newsletter and other street law publications that include staff, donors and clients.
- Develop and maintain the TLAS website page.

Result: Communities served by TLAS will be aware of their rights and how to protect them.

- TLAS will continue to engage in street law activities, publish brochures and leaflets, appear on radio and television programs, and work with community partners on legal information using language and formats best suited to the needs of the communities served.
- TLAS will conduct an annual review, in consultation with community members, partner organisations, government officials and experts to assess the effectiveness of its legal information and outreach programs. TLAS will modify its information and outreach programs whenever necessary in order to respond to changing community needs.

**Objective 3: Law Improvement and Advocacy: TLAS will engage in lobbying and advocacy to change public policies and funding priorities to advance the interests of the most disadvantaged members of Albanian society.**

Comment: TLAS has conducted numerous lobbying and advocacy campaigns and several are still very active, particularly the amendments to the Civil Status Law and establishment of the State Commission on Legal Aid. TLAS has also started work on a campaign to amend the law on Social Assistance and Services. Each of these campaigns will continue to require a significant amount of time, although work on fully implementing the Civil Status Law may not take much time after 2011. The legal aid campaign will continue for several years and, if successful, the Social Assistance campaign could take a significant amount of time for several years. Any new lobbying or advocacy campaigns can only be done if there is a clear relationship between the campaign and other TLAS services and/or there is sufficient funding to support the campaign.

To achieve this objective TLAS must accomplish the following results by engaging in the activities specified for each result.

Result: Members of the communities served by TLAS will know how to register births and other civil status events and will be able to register without legal assistance except in very complicated situations.

- TLAS will advocate with government officials to adopt sub-laws and regulations to ensure that almost all civil status events can be registered without going to court
- TLAS will continue to train civil servants on the requirements of the Amended Civil Status Law
- TLAS will continue to give a priority to complex registration cases that require going to court and, based on that experience, propose policy changes to limit the number of cases requiring court approval.
- TLAS will continue to educate members of the communities served about birth and other registration requirements.

Result: The Law on Legal Aid will be fully implemented and funded and eligible Albanians will be receiving legal aid services.

- TLAS will work in collaboration with the State Commission on Legal Aid to develop policies and procedures on 1) selection criteria, appointment procedures and service agreements for lawyers providing legal aid; 2) reimbursement rates for state-funded legal assistance; 3) client eligibility standards; 4) client application and appeal procedures; 5) case acceptance priorities; 6) a training curriculum; and 7) quality standards.
- TLAS will raise awareness and support for legal aid among key stakeholders and members of the public at large and obtain commitments from the government and Assembly leaders to provide adequate funding for legal aid.

- TLAS will assist in recruiting and training lawyers to provide legal aid.
- TLAS will seek financial support from the government and donors to enable it to engage in these activities to the extent necessary.

Result: Amendments to the Law on Social Assistance and Services will be adopted and individuals and families who are now excluded from the law will receive assistance and services.

- TLAS will work with community partners to raise awareness of the need changes in the social assistance law.
- TLAS will work with the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Chances revise the proposed amendments and obtain government support for the changes.
- TLAS will lobby the Assembly to adopt the revised law.
- If the amends to the law are approved, TLAS will work with government officials to draft sub-laws and implement the legislation, educate the community and other stakeholders about the new law, train civil servants on the new requirements and represent individuals who encounter problems getting assistance.

Result: Pre-trial detainees will not be held in jails for excessive amounts of time.

- If funding is available TLAS will continue to represent pre-trial detainees in various cities around Albania
- TLAS will develop recommendations for improvements to the pre-trial detention system and advocate with the responsible government officials to adopt the recommended improvements.

Result: TLAS will undertake new law improvement and advocacy projects based on community need and available resources.

- TLAS will adopt guidelines for choosing new law improvement and advocacy projects in consultation with community partners
- TLAS will work to develop the staff capacity to undertake major projects, including the capacity to take cases to the European Court of Human Rights.
- TLAS will work to develop partnerships with other organisations, both domestic and international, with the capacity to engage in advocacy projects.

**Objective 4: TLAS Operations: TLAS will make effective use of its resources through careful planning, appropriate training and support for staff and collaboration with partner organisations.**

Comment: TLAS has accomplished a great deal with a small staff and limited resources. It has always been well managed and always had a highly skilled and committed staff. However, with ever increasing demands, the time has come for more

explicit planning regarding use of resources and more formal professional development plans to ensure that more junior staff members can develop the capacity to play stronger leadership roles in the organisation. Assuming that the State Commission on Legal Aid is able to support other organisations and lawyers to provide legal aid TLAS may be able to shift some of its responsibilities for activities outside of Tirana to other organisations. Careful planning will required to accomplish this.

To achieve this objective TLAS must accomplish the following results by engaging in the activities specified for each result.

Result: TLAS will make efficient use of staff resources in accordance with work priorities.

- TLAS will adopt work plans for projects and major activities which identify the goals of the project, significant events in the next six months and estimated resources needed for the project. These plans will be updated every six months and tracked by computer.

Result: Staff members will have the skills, time and resources to do the work assigned and will develop the capacity to take on new and more complex work.

- TLAS will create an individual professional development plan for each member of the staff which describes their current skills and responsibilities, identifies additional skills to be developed and includes a plan for developing those skills.
- TLAS will establish a supervision system, including peer supervision where appropriate, so that each staff members work is reviewed on a periodic basis.
- TLAS will conduct staff evaluations on an annual basis. The executive director will be evaluated by the Board of Directors. Professional development plans and supervision plans will be revised, if necessary, based on the evaluations.

**Objective 5: Financial Development: TLAS will establish a durable base of support for its core activities and obtain funding from international donors, private Albanian donors and the Albanian government to engage in activities necessary to accomplish its mission.**

Comment: Since its founding TLAS has had a durable base of support from CAFOD UK, but that will not continue. Other grants have mostly been for a period of one year or less, although some are as long as a year and a half. It is extremely difficult for TLAS to do long range planning without a reliable base of support for core activities. Efforts to establish that base will be a key objective. Although the establishment of the State Commission on Legal Aid is promising for the long run, it will not provide significant support in the next few years and will almost certainly never provide support for some key activities such as lobbying and advocacy. Domestic support from private foundations such as Vodafone will take several years to develop.

To achieve this objective TLAS must accomplish the following results by engaging in the activities specified for each result.

Result: TLAS will have stable funding to support core activities.

- TLAS will develop a multi-year funding proposal which analyzes all potential sources of support and explains the need for core services in relation to the needs of disadvantaged communities, the goals of Roma inclusion, protection of human rights and promotion of Albanian accession to the European Union.
- TLAS will work with key allies and funders to develop a unified funding plan.
- TLAS will work with the Ohrid Initiative for Legal Aid to develop a comprehensive plan for support of legal aid in the Balkans.

Result: TLAS will receive funding from the State Commission on Legal Aid for direct services to individuals.

- TLAS will support the implementation of the Legal Aid Law as outlined in Objective 3 above.
- TLAS will advocate with the Assembly to provide funding for the State Commission on Legal Aid.

Result: TLAS will receive significant funding from private Albanian donors.

- TLAS will seek further funding from the Vodafone Albania Foundation and publicize the significant accomplishments under the first Vodafone grant.
- TLAS will investigate possible changes to Albanian legislation, including tax legislation, which would create incentives for private donors to support organisations providing public services, including legal aid.

Result: TLAS will obtain funding that supports its mission and does not divert resources from its core activities.

- TLAS will establish criteria for seeking grants that promote core activities and avoid taking on responsibilities that require staff spend time and acquire skills that do not promote primary objectives of the organisation.
- TLAS will establish a procedure for reviewing possible grant applications to ensure that they meet the criteria for grant priorities.

Result: Legal aid services will be supported or provided by the widest possible range of organisations.

- TLAS will work with the National Bar Association and international organisations to introduce *pro bono* to Albanian lawyers and develop a plan to provide *pro bono* legal aid services in conjunction with services provided by TLAS and to supplement services supported by the State Commission on Legal Aid.



- TLAS will supervise and train private lawyers to provide *pro bono* legal aid services.