



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ALBANIA

SUCCESS STORY

Protecting Women's Legal Rights

Promoting women by training future judges and prosecutors



Second-year law students at the Magistrates School learn about legal and judicial aspects of family law and domestic violence

PHOTO: MAGISTRATES SCHOOL

Albania has integrated coursework on domestic violence, trafficking in persons, and gender sensitivity into the Magistrate School's curriculum, training future generations of Albanian legal professionals to protect women's legal rights.

U.S. Agency for International Development
www.usaid.gov

Albania has passed critical laws in support of women's legal rights in recent years, including a new family code and anti-trafficking legislation but it remains one of the few countries in Eastern Europe without legal protections for victims of domestic violence. The few laws that do exist to protect women are inadequately enforced due to poor judicial administration and lack of awareness about domestic violence across the legal profession.

A USAID-supported program, the Women's Legal Rights Initiative, has successfully integrated coursework on domestic violence, trafficking in persons, and gender-sensitivity into the existing curriculum of the Magistrates School, which trains Albania's future judges and prosecutors, exposing them for the first time to these issues. The school's domestic violence curriculum now includes 14 hours of instruction for second-year law students on topics ranging from the legal and judicial aspects of family law and domestic violence to the role of prosecutors in these cases.

By all accounts, the domestic violence curriculum has been a resounding success. In their evaluations, students gave this course the highest rating. The courses on trafficking in persons and gender awareness and sensitivity follow the same format, framing the legal and judicial issues in a social and economic perspective. More importantly, judges and prosecutors carry the specialized knowledge and heightened sensitivity that they acquire in these courses and apply them in their professional lives.

Ms. Ariana Fullani, Executive Director of the Magistrates School, says these courses have been fully integrated into the institution's permanent, ongoing curriculum and will be funded by the school's budget beginning in the fall of 2006. This decision demonstrates the direct impact of USAID's work in protecting women's legal rights now and for future generations.