PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10

EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-ALB-07-190 - Media, Transparency and Accountability in Albania

Date: 25 March 2011

Acknowledgements

The evaluators would like to thank all of those who took the time to provide their expertise and insight on the media environment in Albania and on the work of the Media, Transparency and Accountability in Albania project. In particular, Mike de Villiers of IREX/Europe, and Lilo Sokol and Andrea Stefani of the Hapur Foundation. The team would also like to thank Ms. Arbes Bakalbashi for her logistical support for the evaluation field work.

All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

Authors

This report was written by Sue Nelson and Silvana Rusi.

Landis MacKellar, the Evaluation Team Leader, provided editorial and methodological advice and quality assurance.

Ms. Aurélie Ferreira was Project Manager and Mr. Eric Tourres Project Director at Transtec.

Table of Contents

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

(i) Background 1
(ii) Findings 1
(iii) Recommendations 3

III. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT 4

(i) Introduction 4
(ii) Development Context 5

IV. PROJECT OBJECTIVES, STRATEGY, AND IMPLEMENTATION 7

(i) Project objectives and strategy 7
(ii) Implementation 8

V. EVALUATION FINDINGS 9

(i) Relevance 9
(ii) Effectiveness 10
(iii) Efficiency 11
(iv) Impact 13
(v) Sustainability 14
(vi) UNDEF Value Added 15

VI. CONCLUSIONS 16

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS 18

VIII. OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND CLOSING THOUGHTS 19

IX. LIMITATIONS, CONSTRAINTS AND CAVEATS 19

X. ANNEX 1: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED 20

XI. ANNEX 2: PERSONS INTERVIEWED 21

XII. ACRONYMS 22

I.

II. Executive Summary

(i) Background

The Media, Transparency and Accountability in Albania project sought to strengthen the role of the Albanian media to promote transparency and government accountability by 1) investigating and informing citizens on issues of civic concern and corruption, and 2) developing, implementing and enforcing its own ethical and professional standards. The project was implemented by IREX Europe through the Hapur Foundation (a centre for investigative journalism), and the Union of Albanian Journalists (a professional association). IREX intended to support the Hapur Foundation in its efforts to increase Albanian media reporting on corruption through the development of magazine-style investigative TV programs produced by journalists from a country-wide network of stations. IREX also intended to support the Union's organizational capacity to advocate for journalists, monitor threats to media freedom, and build consensus on professional standards. IREX provided some training to both institutions at the start of the project and provided two experts in investigative reporting for some of the training. The $300,000 project ran from October 2008 through September 2010. The evaluation field work took place in February 2011, well after the project was completed. As a result, the evaluators relied on 1) project and other documents; 2) interviews; and 3) project products to conduct the evaluation.

(ii) Findings

The project built on portions of an earlier media development project funded by USAID and implemented by IREX U.S. As a result, most of the project framework was already in place, making implementation of the UNDEF-funded activities by IREX Europe relatively straightforward. The project objectives and activities were **relevant** given the high levels of corruption, the lack of objective investigatory reporting and the difficult environment for journalists and outlets attempting to cover these types of issues in Albania. Hapur's reporting appeared to have been timely, investigating issues such as the preferential privatization of state assets and the functioning of unlicensed clinics. The Union's work to protect journalists and develop standards for independent journalism also served an important function in Albania's difficult media climate. Investigatory reporting is sensitive and most journalists work informally and have no protection other than the solidarity of other journalists coordinated through the Union.

The project appeared **effective** in delivering its intended outputs. It produced 21 full-length investigative programmes which were broadcast through a network of 20 stations that reached about 80% of Albania. Most of these stations were local ones, which limited the potential audience for the reports. The national public TV station had stopped carrying the Hapur productions during the previous IREX U.S. project allegedly for political reasons. The number of persons that saw the shows is unknown as there is no audience measurement system in Albania. However, some of the programmes' content was picked up by other media and some of the reporting did result in public officials taking action. The use of the network also provided the local stations with practical experience in investigative reporting and demonstrated the value of networking. To strengthen this, Hapur trained 55 persons and 8 of the stations on investigative journalism. The Union took action against threats to media freedom, issuing 24 press releases, and held 10 consensus building activities on professional standards and ethics. The development of a Union ID card for members served as an effective incentive for journalists to join the Union and pay their initial dues, increasing Union membership by 64%. Although most journalists did not pay their subsequent dues, they still were considered as Union members.

The project activities and management were done with **efficiency.** IREX Europe provided supervision for Hapur and the Union, but left the day-to-day activities and management to its local project manager and media expert (both of whom identified as Hapur). More than 90% of the funds went to Hapur in the form of a sub-grant from IREX, of which 11% was earmarked for Union activities. Investigative reporting is expensive and most of the sub-grant went for the productions and costs for the persons involved (managers and reporters). Only about 13% of the funds to Hapur went for training. Most of the stations in its networks, and about half of its reporters, had already been trained under the previous IREX U.S. project and IREX Europe was able to leverage this experience to its advantage.

One of the UNDEF evaluation questions was on the value added of the TV show production in terms of outreach. It was evident from interviews that visual productions are more effective than written ones and that TV has a much more extensive reach in Albania than newspapers. An important point is that the network stations provided the airtime to broadcast the shows. This was an essential point in the project's design. Otherwise this component would have been prohibitively expensive and inherently unsustainable.

The actual **impact** of the project is difficult to determine due to the number of external factors which makes attribution difficult. However, there were some actions taken after several of the Hapur shows aired. These included: shutting down eight illegal dental clinics by authorities in Tirana; fines on two oil trading companies for price fixing; removal of some illegal construction in Durres by national authorities; and, discussions in Parliament after a report on abuse in a governmental construction project in the capital. The Union's activities also appear to have resulted in journalists being better organized to undertake collective action when the freedom of the media or a journalist are threatened. The template developed with the Ministry of Labour for collective contracts between journalists and media owners set badly needed employment norms for journalists.

Sustainability of the project activities is a major issue. The media market is over saturated and the advertising market is small. Both Hapur and the Union were created under the earlier IREX U.S. project as a means to implement those project activities. Hapur remains dependent on donor funding and has not been active since the end of the UNDEF-funded project. It still assumes IREX will find it funding and did not maintain its website after 2010. The Union still provides some small scale legal and other assistance to journalists funded by another small grant.

The project's purpose was to strengthen the media as a key underpinning of the good governance and accountability required for democratic development. The evaluators found that the UNDEF-funded activities were valuable and contributed towards the strengthening of the media's ability to promote transparency and accountability. UNDEF's two-year funding enabled IREX Europe to extend the activities started under the previous project. This helped to consolidate the position of investigatory journalism and the role of the media as a public watchdog. It also ensured that the Union functioned long enough to become an established part of the Albanian media environment. The branding of these anti-corruption and freedom of media activities as UNDEF was a visible sign of UN interest and attention to the serious issues raised in the Hapur productions and the Union activities. At the same time, the project activities could have been made more effective had they not been done in isolation from the other good governance and anti-corruption work being done in Albania. Developing synergies with other projects and organizations working on the same issues could have ensured follow-up to the issues uncovered by the Hapur reports and Union activities. The scope of the problems this project tried to address is so large that it will take a well-coordinated and integrated effort to make a lasting difference.

(iii) Recommendations

Projects such of these are important in conditions where the freedom of the media is not yet assured and where the role of the media as a watchdog of the public interest needs to be strengthened. The media in these cases serve as an important check on the arbitrary actions of government and others, and its reporting on, and support for, journalists helps ensure that the public is informed, that rules are respected and officials are held accountable. To make these types of activities more effective, synergies should be developed with civil society organizations' (CSOs) that work on human rights and accountability issues who could provide legal aid and advocate for journalists rights, as well as to provide follow-up for the problems identified in the investigative stories. Implementers, such as IREX Europe, should help their sub-grantees which are not yet organizationally mature to find other donor funding. Hapur should look toward agreements with the larger national TV stations to produce paid reports for their programming. International implementers, such as IREX, should also use its leverage of being an international Non Governmental Organizations (NGO), with UN funding along with its networks of international organizations working on issues of media freedom, to lobby national stations and outlet owners on the value of meeting international media standards and broadcasting investigative reporting.

III. Introduction and development context

(i) Introduction

The Media, Transparency and Accountability in Albania project was a two-year (1 October 2008 - 30 September 2010) $300,000 project implemented by IREX Europe through two Albanian NGOs: the Hapur Foundation, a centre for investigative journalism; and the Union of Albanian Journalists, a professional organization. The project worked to strengthen the role of the Albanian media to promote transparency and government accountability by producing investigative reporting shows on issues of civic concern and corruption, and by strengthening the Union's ability to improve professional standards and ethics.

The evaluation of this project is part of the larger evaluation of the Round 2 UNDEF-funded projects. Its purpose is to contribute towards a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will, in turn, help UNDEF to develop future project strategies. Evaluations are also to assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved.[1] The evaluations are more qualitative in nature and follow a standard set of evaluation questions that focus on the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and the value added of UNDEF-funding. This is to allow meta-analysis for cluster evaluations at a later stage. This report follows that structure.

The evaluation took place February - March 2011 with the field work in Albania done 14-18 February 2011. The evaluation was conducted by Sue Nelson, an expert in democratic governance, and Silvana Rusi, a development and evaluation expert. The evaluators reviewed available documentation which included project and media sector reports (Annex 1), as well a sample of the Hapur products which are still available on YouTube. The interviews started with IREX Europe by Skype, followed by in-country interviews with Hapur and the Union, media owners, producers, journalists, MPs, experts and other donors (Annex 2).

During the preparatory work, the evaluators identified several issues which they followed up on during the field work in Albania. These included:

- **Sustainability** of the project activities and whether the training provided resulted in improved professional ethics and continued efforts at investigatory journalism.
- **Ownership** of the project's concepts in the face of the difficult media environment for investigatory journalism which was evident in the project documentation.
- **Risk factors** to see if the design addressed the major constraints to strengthened professional ethics and the ability to undertake effective investigatory journalism.
- **Value added** from UNDEF.

In addition, the team explored the issues raised by UNDEF on the project:

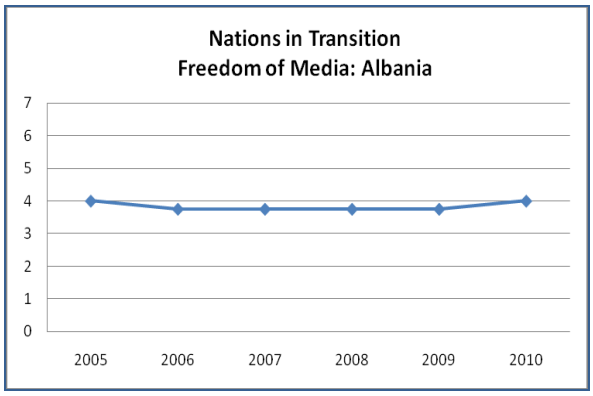
- **Project design** and the correlation between strengthening ethical standards of journalisms and project sustainability and its results; and
- **Outreach** in terms of the value added of producing TV shows.

[1] Operations Manual for the UNDEF-funded project evaluations, p. 3.

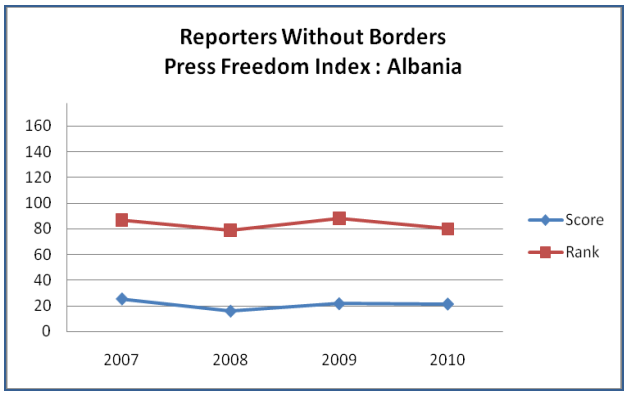
(ii) Development Context

Freedom of the press is guaranteed in the Albanian constitution. There is a pluralistic media sector, with a high number of outlets but the media sector and professional journalism in general face many constraints. The market is over saturated with more than 30 daily papers and 95 licensed TV stations.[2] The advertising market is small (€50-60 million[3]) and cannot support the number of existing outlets. Many outlets have political or economic affiliations which are reflected in their reporting and which hinder the development of editorial independence.[4] The electronic media is more politicized than the print media, which is fragmented. The media lacks professional management and many journalists work informally. This enables owners to avoid payment of social insurance contributions and leaves journalists vulnerable to exploitation and the vagaries of their employers.

Freedom House characterizes the media sector in Albania as partially free. It reports incidents of intimidation of journalists who undertake critical reporting and self-censorship. The EU noted in its progress report for Albania that the courts issue disproportionate and sometimes selective fines against the media in cases involving politicians.[5] The government has taken actions against some of the outlets that provide critical reporting, in particular, the private TV station Top Channel, which airs a very popular investigative reporting show called Fix Fare, ordering it to vacate the state owned facilities it leases and which the state decided to privatize.



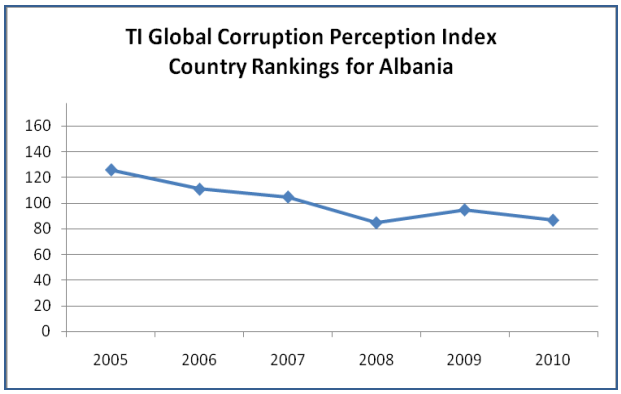
Scale: 0 = Best, 7 = Worst



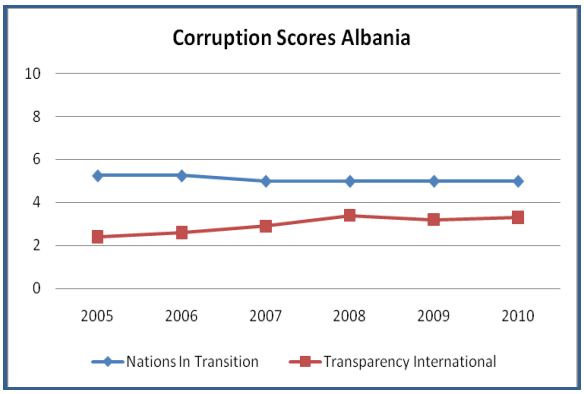
178 countries ranked. Scores: 0 - 100+, 0 = best

Reform of the media sector has been slow, with the new law on electronic media at the bill stage for the past three years. Albania is the only country in Europe without audience monitoring, and the outlets now sell advertising time based on anecdotal information. However, media experts think globalization and syndication will help to professionalize the media sector. There are signs that the big syndicated media shows are coming to Albania which will bring new models of brand management and require the hard audience data that will force change within the market.[6]

[22] Reuters Interview
[3] Marketing analyst Interview
[4] Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union. p 26
[5] Ibid
[6] Interview with media marketing analyst. The biggest advertisers are the telecom and financial firms.



Based on 178 countries ranked.



NIT scores are based on a scale of 1-7 with 7 = lowest
TI scores based on a scale of 1-10, with 10 = best

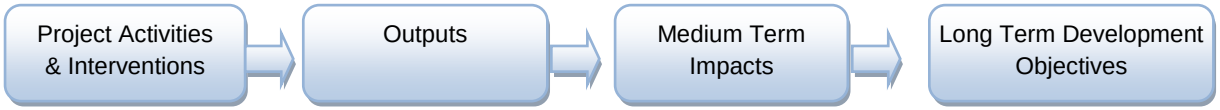
Albania has also been undergoing a difficult political transformation. Although it is 20 years into its democratic transition, it still has issues with the separation of powers and checks and balances. This has limited the accountability of public officials and others and enabled the systemic corruption. Although the government has made some efforts to address the problem, and Albania's country rankings on corruption perception have improved in the past decade, its scores on the various indexes show only marginal improvement. According to Transparency International, political parties use accusations of corruption or political purposes, which has politicized investigation, adjudication and media reporting. Finding tips on corrupt acts is relatively easy, and with the plurality of media, they are being exposed. The main problems are the lack of objectivity and impartiality among the media, the pressure put on journalists and outlets not to broadcast the stories, and the lack of follow up for stories they uncover. Addressing corruption will take an integrated effort that requires constructive media coverage, political will with concrete action, a stronger judiciary, and a less apathetic public.

IV. Project objectives, strategy, and implementation

(i) Project objectives and strategy

The project sought to strengthen the Albanian media as a key component of good governance and accountability for democratic development. It intended to build the Albanian media's role in promoting transparency and accountability by improving its capacity to 1) investigate and inform citizens about corruption and issues of civic concerns; and, 2) develop, implement and enforce its own ethical and professional standards. As noted, it intended to do this 1) through building the capacity of the Hapur Foundation to produce and distribute investigative reports through its network of local TV stations, and 2) by strengthening the membership and capacity of the Union to protect its members' rights and to monitor threats to the freedom of the press.

Project intervention strategy:



Improving Investigative Journalism		**Increased capacity of media to investigate and inform citizens resulting**	**Media able to serve its public watchdog and information role resulting in increased accountability& transparency**
• **Produce TV shows on corruption, those who fight it and 2009 parliament elections**	• 20 investigative TV reports aired on nationwide network of stations • Impact of report monitored	Increased media reporting on corruption, especially outside of capital Increased government action against corruption	Reduce corruption by increased citizen awareness, accountability & transparency
• **Provide workshops and in-station consultations for media outlets and staff on investigative journalism**	• 10 workshops • 45 in-station consultations	Less reluctance of journalists to conduct investigative journalism against corruption	Strengthened investigative reporting by local TV stations
• **Assist Hapur to develop as an independent centre supplying TV programs and journalism training**	• Strategic plan • Organizational development activities per plan	Continued production of reports after end of project funding	Sustainability of organization through production
Strengthening Journalistic Professionalism		Increased adherence to professional standards and ethics and improved self-regulation	More professional media sector and strengthened freedom of the media
• **Strengthen Union's organizational development and strategic planning capacity**	• Expanded membership (# of members & geographic coverage) • Increased number of cases referred to and addressed by Union	Increased ability to advocate for members	Sustainable Union working to protect journalists' professional rights
• **Monitor threats to media freedom in Albania**	• 6 monitoring reports	Improved reporting on threats to freedom of media	Strengthened freedom of the media
• **Conduct consensus building activities on professional standards and ethic among journalists**	• 10 consensus building activities	Increased consensus on professional standards and ethics code among journalists	Strengthened media able to develop, implement and enforce its own ethical and professional standards

(ii) Implementation

IREX Europe managed and monitored the project, which was implemented primarily through sub-grants to the Hapur Foundation and the Union of Albanian Journalists. Management and implementation of the project was relatively straight forward. IREX Europe is a European NGO founded with support from IREX U.S., the organization which designed and implemented the earlier and more substantial USAID-funded media development programme. IREX Europe is legally and financially independent of IREX U.S. though it shares the statues and principles of IREX U.S. and the two NGOs are network partners. The earlier USAID programme had created the Hapur investigatory reporting programmes and the Hapur Foundation as well as the Union, and supported many other trainings and capacity building activities. The UNDEF-funded project built on a portion of those activities.

The project in country was managed by a project manager, Lilo Sokol, and a senior media advisor, Andrea Stefani, who were recruited by IREX Europe. Both had been associated with Hapur in the earlier project and knew IREX implementation and reporting requirements. Mr. Stefani is a well-known Albanian journalist and provided the capacity building training for investigative reporting. IREX Europe also provided a consultant, Eno Milkani, who participated as cameraman/editor for the Hapur productions. The project funded the Hapur office and provided some computers and modems for project management. The team of reporters used for the investigatory reports was built around a core of those who had already been trained and used under the earlier programme, with four additional new journalists.

Hapur Project Manager Lilo Sokol left, with Andrea Stefani on the set at Ora News TV station.

Hapur made an agreement with TV Ora, a private outlet that covered the capital and nearby areas, to use their studios and technicians to record the 20 minute debates that followed the investigative journalism segments, as well as to broadcast the productions. These debates were not part of the original project objectives. However, Ora cancelled the agreement in September 2009 because one of the reports was critical of one of their advertisers. A new contract was concluded with Vizion+ which aired the shows once a week and organized TV debate around two Hapur stories.

IREX Europe provided technical assistance to Hapur and the Union, primarily at the start of the activity, as well as two trainers from the Balkans (Nevada Rsumovic for computer assisted reporting and Sasa Lekovic for investigative journalism) for portions of the in-station training. The project used its network of local TV stations to broadcast its investigatory stories as the national public TV, (TVSH) and other TV stations with nationwide coverage would not broadcast its programmes because of the nature of their content. To compensate, the Hapur productions were uploaded onto YouTube and IREX helped Hapur to create a project website to serve as a repository for its programmes, which was originally not anticipated in the project.

Hapur managed the sub-grant of the Union of Albanian Journalists. The Union activities were managed by its Director, Aleksander Cipa. An inception visit by the IREX Europe Director, Mike de Villers, helped assess Union needs and constraints and develop its organizational strategy, as well as to help with the start up of the Hapur productions. A mid-term monitoring visit was also undertaken by IREX Europe. For the Union, IREX Europe helped establish a website and issue membership cards as an incentive for members to pay their Union dues.

V. Evaluation Findings

(i) Relevance

The project objectives and activities were extremely relevant given the high levels of corruption, the lack of objective investigatory reporting and the difficult environment for journalists and outlets attempting to cover these types of civic issues in Albania.

The Hapur productions targeted issues of both local and national importance. For instance, some shows discussed illegal economic activities and gains such as "Illegal constructions in Gramsh," "Illegal private dental clinics," and "Illegal businesses in Durres". Others discussed questionable government actions, such as "Fired public officers," "Abuse with pension procedures," and "Unexecuted court decisions". Other productions highlighted the plight of communities with reports on topics such as "The village without electricity," "Water supply in Sinja", and "Environment pollution". More dealt with issues of privatization, including the "Privatization of the Albanian State Refinery," and "The conflict of private land in Ishmi zone." The report on the "Conflict of private land in the South seaside" is Hapur's most watched video on YouTube, having been accessed 2,251 times since it was uploaded in 2009

Witness being interviewed in the report on Private land in Kepi Rodonit.

Hapur's reports also appeared to have been timely. As an example Hapur reported on the privatization of the former public enterprise the Albanian Refining and Marketing organization or ARMO (photo right) in June 2009 after it was reported to them as a corrupt practice. The new private oil company was subsequently challenged in the Constitutional Court by the Association of Hydrocarbons, and the tax office suspended its activities in 2010 alleging that it had not paid its taxes. This was also after a Hapur report. However, the police blocked this suspension[7] which illustrates the continuing need for this type of public watchdog reporting.

The Union's work to protect journalists and the freedom of the media also served an important function. The journalists who work informally have no protection. Outlets are under pressure by both political and economic forces and many are in difficult financial positions. These all contribute to the climate of self-censorship and reluctance by journalists and outlets to tackle the tough issues, such as corruption, which could alienate politicians, government and advertisers. According to the Media Sustainability Index "the pressure is so strong [from political alignments, economic interests and important advertisers] and progressively increasing that media that are independent and open to any news item or source are rapidly decreasing."[8] The Union's activities to develop standards for independent journalism and to

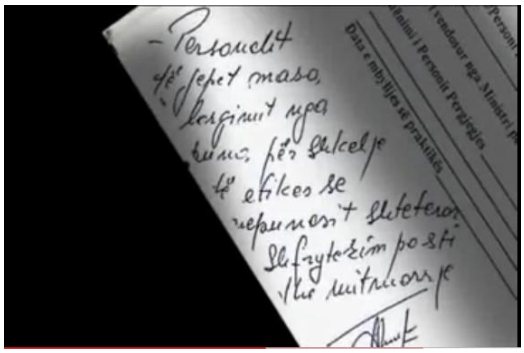
[7] Freedom House, Nations in Transition Report 2010
[8] IREX Media Sustainability Index 2009 p 8

eliminate informality within the sector, as well as to issue collective statements on threats to the independence of the media or attacks against journalists are still extremely relevant and needed.

(ii) Effectiveness

The project produced its anticipated outputs, targets for which were realistically set and based on the experience of the previous project. Hapur produced 21 programmes, one more than its target. These programmes were originally based loosely on the U.S investigative reporting show "60 Minutes." They used a panel at the end of each programme to debate the issues, which was to be a useful way to reinforce the report's message with the viewers. Most of the Hapur reporters were those from its previous project who had been trained by IREX U.S. This assured IREX Europe of a quality Hapur product in terms of content and production. This was essential given the sensitivity of the subjects covered and the need to ensure impartiality and factual reporting, but at the same time, this limited the opportunities for Hapur to train a younger generation of journalists. This was compensated to some extent by the training Hapur provided to the 20 TV stations in the network that aired these shows.

The most effective means to distribute the Hapur shows would have been the networks plus the national public TV station, which reportedly covers 90% of Albania.[9] However, that station, which had aired some of the shows in the earlier project, has not participated, reportedly because of the political affiliation of a director who started in 2006.[10]



Hapur report on the fired public officer at the Ministry of Labour

According to Hapur, its network ensured its broadcasts reached 80% of Albania, however the number of persons who actually saw the shows is unknown due to the lack of audience measurement systems. The final evaluation of the earlier USAID-funded project found very low levels of Hapur recognition in a 2007 opinion poll[11] and there did not seem to be a reason to think that these numbers had increased under the UNDEF-funded project as the means for distribution was similar. The only difference appeared to be that the UNDEF-funded shows included more national issues than the previous ones which focused on local issues and did not have the debate segment at the end of the programme.

Hapur also provided the intended 10 workshops and 42 of the planned 45 in-station consultations. This effort, which involved local stations in a network that received some investigatory reporting training and which showed the reports at the same time each week to increase its impact, transferred some knowledge and improved practices to the participating stations. Although they were primarily the same stations as used previously, the UNDEF project trained more journalists in the districts. This is a continuing need due to the high staff turnover in the small and financially strapped stations. The stations visited during the evaluation reported that the training was useful as it combined the theoretical and practical elements of reporting. At the same time, it's impact will be limited unless the working conditions and remuneration for journalists are improved. Media experts did say that change is possible in the sector, if it is encouraged by targeted interventions, which was the strategy of the project.

[9] Interview with media owner in Tirana

[10] Albania DGA Evaluation, Final Report, USAID 2008

[11] The 2007 polling found 11% watched the show frequently, 15% occasionally and 11% rarely. DGA Evaluation p 20.

Hapur mastered the reporting and production aspects of the project activities, but its biggest challenge was finding a market for its products. This was illustrated repeatedly by stations pulling out because of political or advertiser pressure. To help mitigate this and extend its reach, they developed their website. This was a logical extension of the Hapur activities and provided a publically accessible repository for the productions as well as a means for Hapur to market its products. Its effectiveness is unknown as the site was no longer functioning by the time of the evaluation and statistics on its use were not available. Hapur did upload its reports onto YouTube which resulted in some subsequent viewing. For example the report on the official fired from the Ministry of Labour had 1,146 views while the report on the selling of seaside land received over 2,000 views. At the same time, some of the other reports have only had one or two views.

The Union's activities to increase its membership were effective as they were linked to something tangible-- the issuing of a membership card which had value to journalists. The card was provided as a receipt for the payment of dues which provided the Union with some income. However, most journalists seemed to have interpreted this as a one-time requirement, and did not see the need during interviews to pay dues on a regular basis. The number of members increased from 480 in 2008 to 790 in 2010. There were 870 members by the time of the evaluation. The Union returned some of these funds to its regional offices, of which it established 5 during the project. The Union issued 24 press releases and held 2 press conferences (instead of the 6 reports as planned) as well as held the 10 consensus building activities as foreseen in the project document. Monitoring threats to journalists and independent media is an important function as journalists continue to be attacked. As an example, the head of the Union's branch in Gjirokastra, who is also a TV and newspaper reporter, was beaten in November 2010. The attackers allegedly shouted "Let's see if you will be more careful what you write after tonight."[12]

(iii) Efficiency

From the interviews and reports, it appears that the project was managed efficiently. IREX Europe provided supervision for Hapur and the Union, but left its local project manager and media expert to manage the day-to-day activities. The IREX Europe Director, who is also a broadcast expert, provided some hands-on assistance, especially at the launch of the project and the IREX Europe Finance Director only used about a half-day a month to supervise and process the financial reports. Two more junior programme coordinators monitored the project from IREX's base in Lyon, France and undertook a mid-term monitoring visit. The Union probably could have used additional mentoring from IREX Europe as the Hapur sub-grant managers were their colleagues which made acting in a supervisory role difficult.

The total funding for the grant received by IREX Europe was $275,000 with $25,000 retained by UNDEF to cover the evaluation costs. Of this IREX provided $231,246 to Hapur and the Union in the form of a sub-grant and had $4,586 remaining at the end of the project. IREX Europe spent $39,178 or under $20,000 a year to manage the project and provide technical

[12] "Attack on Albanian Journalist, SEEMO, 22-11-2010

assistance, which seems extremely reasonable for an international NGO. As Hapur still does not appear to have a sense of independence from IREX in terms of marketing itself and generating income from its productions, and as the Hapur productions and Union activities served a useful purpose and helped strengthen the role of the media and awareness on issues of civic importance, the intermediary role of IREX Europe was key to the UNDEF-funded project's success. It is unlikely that these two institutions would have been able to continue operations after the end of the USAID project without this IREX project.

Originally both Hapur and the Union were only to be funded for 18 months but with cost-savings this was extended for Hapur, but not for the Union.

Hapur received the lion's share of the subgrant funding ($190,228). Of this:

- $93,743 went for its productions (originally $85,000 but they used the unspent money from the Union's sub-grant to cover an additional three episodes);
- $64,000 for human resources which covered the costs of the Senior Media Expert and Program Manager (whose contracts were also extended for the duration of the project);
- $14,691 for workshops (training and in-station consultations). These costs were below the initial budget estimates as the Senior Media Expert implemented the in-station consultations as part of his time as expert;
- $12,216 for Hapur Foundation running costs which included rent, communications, utilities, equipment and supplies;
- $3,669 for the Hapur website. The website was not in the original budget but was made possible by cost savings for international travel by IREX Europe which found better rates, and from savings in other line items; and
- $1,909 for the debates.

The budget allocation illustrates the focus IREX Europe placed on Hapur and its productions. Investigative reporting is expensive as it takes time and money. The funding allowed the reporters to go out to the location being investigated to collect facts and interview people. This is something most of the other investigative shows do not do. One of the UNDEF evaluation questions was on the added value of TV show production in terms of outreach. It was evident from interviews that visual productions are more effective than written ones and that TV has a much more extensive reach in Albania than newspapers. The project did not pay for any airtime to broadcast the reports, relying instead on the stations in the network to use them as part of their regular line ups. This was an essential part of the project design, otherwise this component would have been prohibitively expensive and inherently unsustainable. As the participating stations rely on advertising revenues, they estimated that the programmes would attract more viewers, which in turn would increase their advertising revenues. This, of course, assumes that their advertisers did not feel threatened by the investigative reports. Uploading the reports onto YouTube and establishing a project website were also cost-effective ways to extend the reach of the project and increase its potential impact.

Direct funding to the Union was minimal ($27,648). Their sub-grant ended six months before the end of the UNDEF project and was not extended, even though a no cost time extension could have been granted (the Union only spent $23,019 of its grant). The unused funding was used to produce three more Hapur episodes which IREX Europe thought would be more effective. There is a potential conflict of interest in these types of decisions when the sub-grant is managed by the group that benefits from the unused funding.

(iv) Impact

The actual impact of the UNDEF-funded project is difficult to determine. There are many factors which make attribution difficult, including the presence of other investigative report shows (including the very popular Fixed Fare), other anti-corruption activities going on and the fact that Hapur worked on these issues before the UNDEF funding so some of its impact is the culmination of these seven years. The training of both the Union and Hapur probably had limited impact in the long-run given the high turnover of staff and the environment. One of the informants noted that to make substantive change, the decision makers need to be trained.

Hapur intended to track the impact of its reports but the information provided was sketchy, and only a few of the items listed appeared to demonstrate actual attributable impact back to a report. These included:

- Closing down of 8 illegal dental clinics in Tirana after the airing of the report on the clinics by the authorities in the capital;
- Fines on two oil trading companies for imposing and controlling high prices after a programme on the monopoly in the oil market;
- Prosecution investigation of the privatization of the state oil refinery (although the direct link to the airing of the Hapur broadcast is uncertain due to other factors, such as the complaint by a German company on the process);
- Freezing of the privatized state oil refinery for not paying taxes after tax evasion was reported on a Hapur show;
- Removal of some of the illegal construction in Durres by national authorities after the Hapur report;
- Discussions in Parliament after an opposition member saw the report on the "Abuse with the pyramid building projects" in Tirana;
- Requests from additional stations to broadcast Hapur productions (TV Joni, TV A1 and TV Vizion+). Vizion + also added its own televised debate that followed the report on fuel deposits;
- Reporting on the stories raised in the Hapur shows by other media, such as Gazeta Tema which picked up the issue of the fired public officials in the Ministry of Labour;
- Requests to investigate the Durres shipyard by its worker; the water supplies in Komsi and Shkalnuer and the health effects of a mobile phone antenna by citizens in Shkalnuer; and the Association of Micro Trade businesses on excessive taxes.

Ilir Yzeira of Hapur reports on ARMO

Some of the reporters and those who went on camera in the reports said they received threats and intimidation. One case involved the Chamber of Commerce that allegedly called the journalist Fiqiri Sejdiaj and threatened him about the report on the firing of public officials in the Ministry of Labour. In that case, the former employees took the government to court and the government was fined substantially. The reporter for the report on the privatization of public buildings said he received SMS threats to stop the broadcasting of the segment. The person who denounced the illegal construction in Gramshi city reportedly was threatened by the private construction companies that were doing the illegal construction, and the police allegedly detained the person who had blown the whistle on construction land prices for 24 hours without explanation. Ilir Yzeiri did the story on a private university that was originally approved and licensed as a medical university hospital and had received donations to build the hospital. The Zonja e Keshillit te Mire Foundation, which runs the university among others, is suing Mr. Yzeiri for €100,000 for damaging their image. Mr. Yzeiri has received the

support of the Union as well as TV stations, such as Top Channel, which interviewed him on the case.

It should also be noted, that the wife and sister of the Senior Media Expert for the project were fired from their jobs, according to several informants, because of his work on these investigated reports.

Hapur produced 63 investigative stories so the shortness of this list of impacts also demonstrates the general lack of follow up for reports, some of which exposed some serious issues of corruption and abuse of power. It also illustrates the need to link investigative reports with civic and legal action to maximize their effectiveness and ensure accountability. As an example, the report on the privatized refinery helped result in action by the tax authorities, but the sanction (freezing plant activities) was not enforced by the police.

Aleksander Cipa of the Union of Albanian Journalists (right) signs agreement with the Director of TV Alsat (photo from TV Alsat report posted on YouTube)

Most journalists interviewed noted the sense of solidarity given by the Union activities and thought the Union would assist them in times of trouble. Its activities raised awareness on issues of informality in the sector. Its agreement with the Ministry of Labour on a model contract for journalists is just now starting to be adopted by media owners. TV Alsat agreed in 2010 to issues contracts to all of its journalists to professionalize its operations and respect the integrity of journalism so that TV could be independent (photo left).

(v) Sustainability

Sustainability for the activities implemented under the project is an issue. Although the project had a component to support Hapur Foundation's "organizational development," those activities focused on the challenge of Hapur finding stations that would broadcast its reports. The Hapur brand was known in media circles and had a reputation for integrity and objective reporting, but with the financial constraints facing stations, and the difficulties faced with government, advertisers and others in broadcasting investigative reports, the only sustainability Hapur could achieve as an organization in the near term would probably either be through association with a well-established media organization that would guarantee purchase of its production, or through other donor funding. Hapur personnel still see themselves as IREX/Albania and appeared to be relying on IREX to find them continued funding. They no longer had an office, had put their equipment in storage and let their website lapse. IREX Europe will reinstate the website as it sees the website as an important repository of reports. The reports are on YouTube, but unless the user knows what they are looking for, they can be difficult to find.

The professional model of investigative reporting provided by Hapur seems to have been noted by media professionals. Most of the former Hapur journalists are still working (for others) and are still using its ethical standards. According to those interviewed, some of the stations that received the investigatory training are using it to improve their own news and productions. The term network only referred to synchronizing the timing of the Hapur report broadcast among participating stations. As a result, its network ended after its production ended in May 2010. However, some of the stations are entering into their own networking agreements to share their own productions.

The Union, which was also an IREX U.S creation, is still working, having been able to maximize the benefit of its UNDEF-funded work during the past two years, despite the small level of funding. It received another small grant which has kept its main office open and which covers some legal assistance for journalists. It has not seemed to have done much marketing, and most members have not kept up their dues after receiving their membership cards. Nevertheless, the journalists interviewed still associated themselves with the Union and participate in its joint declarations. The Union's focus on professionalizing the media is resulting in the growing acceptance by media outlets and the government of improved standards, and the model contract is now starting to be adopted by owners. The Union card appears to be sought as an indication of a certain level of professional experience and is still attracting new members. The Union is the only journalist association that is still active. Two others mentioned in interviews were said to be dormant. The environment within Albania is a major constraint to the sustainability of the professionalism and ethical lessons promoted by the Union and Hapur productions. The union's regional offices did not appear to be open, but they still had representatives for the offices who managed the Union activities in their areas and who convened meetings when needed.

(vi) UNDEF Value Added

The activities were branded as UNDEF-funded, which showed United Nations interest and commitment to fighting corruption, developing an independent media and promoting good governance and accountability. The fact that the project was UN funded also reinforced the concept that the implementers were impartial and advocated international standards, which is important when investigating sensitive issues in a politicized environment.

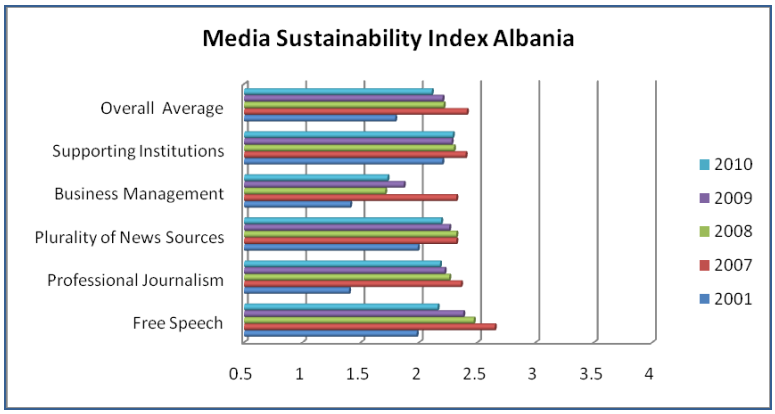
VI. Conclusions

The purpose of the project was to strengthen the media as a key underpinning of the good governance and accountability required for democratic development. The evaluators found that the project did help to improve the media's capacity to investigate and inform citizens on issues of corruption and civic concern, but that the difficulty in airing the shows on national TV, and in particular, national public TV, limited its potential impact, as did the lack of synergies with other anti-corruption or good governance activities. The mix of local and national topics for its reports seemed appropriate as it attracted the interest of both audiences and drew national attention to some of the problems in the local areas. The amount of investigating reporting done in small towns is minimal as the local journalists are extremely vulnerable to intimidation because of their isolation and are afraid they will lose their jobs. This makes the Union's solidarity and activities even more important. The use of the debate format at the end of the shows was a useful means to reinforce the messages within the reports for the viewers.

The project's help to the Union to develop and disseminate ethical and professional standards was important, especially its public focus on the critical issues of informality in the sector and the threats to an independent media. But much more work still needs to be done to ensure that these standards are adopted within the sector and enforced. Much of this is beyond the Union's capacity although with more funding and mentoring, it could implement the more active advocacy effort that is needed.

Although these activities contributed towards strengthening the media as a foundation for good governance and accountability, the scope of the problems in the media and in the broader environment meant that it could at the most only make a very modest contribution towards increasing transparency and accountability in Albania. At the same time, most of the project's activities could have been made more effective had the project developed synergies with the good governance and anti-corruption work being done by other donors and organizations in Albania. This could have helped to provide the follow-up to the issues raised in the reporting and synergies for the training activities which could have increased its effectiveness as well as its potential impact.

The project used the IREX Media Sustainability Index as its baseline to measure project performance. The overall average for the Index dropped during the life of the project as shown the chart below.



Scale: 0-1 = Unsustainable Anti-Free Press; 1.01-2 = Unsustainable Mixed System; 2.01-3 = Near Sustainability. 3.01-4 = Sustainable

The 2010 description of the media situation shows that very little has changed from the start of the project: "… many journalists resort to self-censorship, even in addressing the critics of the party in power, because politicians—in cooperation with media owners—enact silent forms of revenge on their critics, such as leaving them out of studio debates, or even firing their relatives from public posts. For those journalists who respect freedom of speech and insist devoutly on the truth, the cost is high. However, while journalists critical against the power of its corruption are obstructed and attacked in different forms, the ones who choose to serve powerful interests benefit from privileged treatment"[13]

It was unlikely that a project with such limited focus could have effected a visible change in the Index scores. The Index measures a large number of indicators, most of which are beyond the scope and control of a modest project. Instead, a more realistic set of indicators could have tracked more closely the actual impact of the project-- such as changes to government practices or policies, the number of persons held accountable for reports aired, and numbers of outlets adopting a full formal system of employment.

[13] IREX Media Sustainability Index 2010, Albania, p 9

VII. Recommendations

Projects such as these are important in conditions where the freedom of the media is not yet assured and where the role of the media as a watchdog of the public interest needs to be strengthened. The media in these cases serve as an important check on the arbitrary actions of government and others, and its reporting on and support for journalists helps ensure the public is informed, that rules are respected and officials are held accountable for their actions. Even if the organizations implementing the project are not sustainable, the activities are worthy of support.

To improve projects such as these, the evaluators recommend implementers:

- Develop programmatic synergies with the activities being implemented by other organizations, including CSOs, government Ombudsmen and other organizations, such as international NGOs working on issues of freedom of the media, protection of journalists and anti-corruption, as well as international organizations such as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other donor programs. These organizations can advocate for change, follow up on problems uncovered during investigations, work to improve the media's enabling environment, provide legal aid for victims, as well as provide synergistic training for relevant actors-- all of which can help to extend the reach and strengthen the impact of the project's activities.

- Be clear on the purpose of the project (whether it is to develop investigative journalism/protect journalists or if it is the organizational development of a media organization such as Hapur or the Union) and focus the activities on those that most directly support the achievement of that purpose. The UNDEF funding was relatively modest, especially in the case for the Union. Dispersing it among too many activities, including ones focused on organizational development and sustainability, can dilute efforts and limit the project's potential impact.

- Track the results of the project beyond outputs. This helps to raise the level of focus to a more strategic level and helps to prioritize the activities that have the most effect. Being able to demonstrate the results of a project can also attract other donor funding and partners which can help support its objectives, continue or expand its activities and/or replicate it, all of which can contribute towards an increased outcome of the original project.

- Be careful to avoid potential conflict of interest and other potential problems when using one national NGO to manage the sub-grant of another. The operating procedures should be clearly stated in a handbook in addition to a clear and complete Memorandum of Understanding among the parties on their roles and responsibilities and level of substantive involvement of all parties, to provide support for the manager but also to limit possibilities for arbitrary action or situations of conflict of interest.

- Implementers, such as IREX Europe, should assist sub-grantees that are not yet organizationally mature or sustainable to find other donor funding, especially for sub-grantees such as Hapur which identify so closely with the implementer and feel a sense of organizational loyalty to them. Hapur should also look towards making agreements with international news channels and profitable national TV stations to produce their investigatory reports to generate some income. It should also look to support from international corporations working in Albania as part of their corporate social responsibility as well as other international media assistance programmes, such as the BBC World Trust or Soros Foundation.

- Use the leverage of being an international NGO with UN funding to lobby with the Union to convince media owners and the government of the benefits of adopting international standards for an independent media and its professionalization, as well as to convince national stations and in particular, the national public TV station, on the moral high road for investigative reporting despite outside pressure. Involve other international organizations and networks to support this effort.

VIII. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

The Media, Transparency and Accountability in Albania project appears to have been a sound investment for UNDEF. It allowed the Hapur and Union activities to continue for two years which gave IREX Europe a chance to consolidate the gains made under the earlier project, and to undertake activities that made a difference in the lives of every day persons. It also helped solidify the Union's position among journalists as a defender of the rights of journalists in particularly difficult conditions.

The evaluation interviews showed that Albanians are using the media, and in particular, the investigative shows, as a means to publicize their problems and generate action when other channels are closed to them. The Hapur journalists still receive requests from citizens to investigate certain issues and documentary proof of problems. The most popular investigative journalism show in Albania, Fixed Fare, receives 10-15 requests a day from the public and hundreds of e-mails a week. The power of the media is evident in these national shows, where investigations have resulted in high-level resignations and where Fixed Fare producers say officials now start to resolve issues just upon learning they are about to the focus of one of these reports.

Hapur was not as high powered as Fixed Fare, which was a product of a strong media enterprise, Top Channel. Perhaps linkages with a strong enterprise are necessary to ensure a platform to broadcast such shows and to be able to withstand the subsequent political pressure. But reports that are not as sensational but affect the everyday lives of people, such as their water supply, medical facilities and the illegal use of their tax money are important to citizens and build demand for good governance. Hapur is dormant without donor funding, but its personnel, expertise and know-how are still there. Although they are dispersed among different media outlets, they are still being used to promote the objectives of the project and are disseminating project ideals and standards in these workplaces.

IX. Limitations, constraints and caveats

The evaluation took place five months after the end of the project and had to rely on project documents and interviews to make its assessments. Had the evaluation taken place while the project was being implemented, the findings would have been more focused on implementation modalities and issues such as quality of training. But with such a gap in time, the evaluation had to focus primarily on what had been accomplished and what effect and/or impact was still visible by the time of the evaluation. The Round Two UNDEF evaluation time frames are also quite short and the team was only able to visit a few of the 20 stations that participated in the Hapur network, although it was able to meet with a good cross section of media experts, journalists, owners and outlets in Tirana.

X. Annex 1: Documents Reviewed

European Commission

- Commission Staff Working Document, Analytical Report accompanying the Communications from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, Commission Opinion on Albania's application for membership of the European Union, (COM(2010) 680), SEC 2010 (1335), November 2010
- Desk Review, Albania Media Freedom, Progress Reports 2008 and 2009

Freedom House:

- Freedom of the Press - Albania (2010)
- Nations in Transition, Albania, 2010

IREX

- Media Sustainability Indexes 2009 and 2010, Albania

IREX Europe

- Final Project Narrative Report, UDF-077-190, 31 October 2010
- Mid-Term Annual Progress Report, UDF-ALB-07-190, October 2009
- Project Document, UDF-ALB-07-190, Media, Transparency and Accountability in Albania, July 2008

Hapur

- Hapur in YouTube (lists of programs done by Hapur available on YouTube)
- Hapur Production Spreadsheets
- Hapur TV Station Network (lists of stations in Network)
- Hapur Workshops (list of workshops, participants, trainers)
- Impact for Hapur, 2011 (list prepared for evaluators)

Reporters without Borders

- Freedom of Press Report, 2009

SEEMO

- "Attack on Albanian Journalist, SEEMO, 22-11-2010 http://www.newssafety.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19752:attack-on-albanian-journalist&catid=68:europe-central-asia-media-safety&Itemid=100522

UNDEF

- UDF-ALB-07-190, Media, Transparency and Accountability in Albania, Notes on Project-Specific Evaluation, Undated

Union of Albanian Journalist

- List of Union of Albanian Journalists Periodic Statements in support of the right of Albanian Journalists and Reporters, Period October 2008 - March 2010
- Report of the Albanian Journalists' Union for the period of October 2008 - January 2010, Undated

U.S. Department of State

- Human Rights Reports: Albania 2008 and 2009

USAID

- Albania DGA Evaluation, Final Report, July 2008

XI. Annex 2: Persons Interviewed

List of interviewed people	Responsibility
Mr. Mike de Villiers	Director, IREX Europe
Mr. Andrea Stefani	Director of the Hapur Foundation
Mr. Aleksander Cipa	Director of the Union of Albanian Journalists
Mr. Remzi Lani	Director, Albanian Institute of the Media
Mr. Lutfi Dervishi	Local affiliate of Transparency international
Mr.Timo Luto	Hapur Reporter
Mr. Fiqiri Sejdia	Hapur Reporter
Mr. Agim Pipa	Hapur Reporter
Mr. Ilir Yzeiri	Hapur Reporter
Mr. Thanas Goga	Marketing Analyst, A&R Advertising Company, Tirana
Mr. Andrea Stefani	Director of the Hapur Foundation
Mr. Llazar Semini	Associated Press
Mr. Sami Neza	Centre for Information and Transparency
Mr. Benet Koleka	Reuters Representative
Ms. Iris Luarasi	Owner Radio Ime /Lecturer of Journalism at the University of Tirana
Mrs. Suzana Cullufi	USAID, Democracy and Governance Officer
Ms. Elina Koci	USAID, Media Programme Officer
Mr. Stefano Calabretta	EU Delegation Albania, Programme Manager Civil Society and Human Rights
Ms. Artes Butka	EU Delegation Albania, Media officer
Ms. Lora Ujkaj	EU Delegation Albania European Delegation, Programme Manager anti-corruption assistance
Mrs. Valentina Leskaj	Member of Parliament, Head of Media Parliamentary Commission
Mrs. Marjeta Merkuri	Director of Union of Albanian Journalists / Vlora branch
Mr.Genc Demiraj	Administrator, Amantia TV (Vlore), UNDEF Project Network
Mr. Shkelqim Bylykbashi	Chairman, Media Club Albania
Mr.Ermir Kasmi	Coordinator, Media Club Albania
Mr. Gezim kociu	Owner TV (Lushnje), UNDEF Project Network
Mr. Thoma Mita	Director/ Journalist TV (Lushnje) UNDEF Project Network
Mr. Genti Ibrahimi	Institute for Policy & Legal Studies
Mr. Filip Cakulli	Producer, Investigative Program “Fix Fare” TOP CHANNEL
Mr. Saimir Kodra	Journalist, Investigative Program “Fix Fare” TOP CHANNEL

XII. Acronyms

ARMO	Albanian Refining and Marketing Organization
EU	European Union
Hapur	Hapur Foundation
NGO	NonGovernmental Organization
TI	Transparency International
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
Union	Union of Albanian Journalists
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development