Emergency Assistance In Romania's Countryside

Photo: Cornelia Bucur/Grasp

New ambulance in Dumbraveni and the firemen/paramedics servicing it.

"I joined this program thinking of my brother who died last year in a terrible car crash together with three of his friends. I want to ensure that others stand a better chance."

- Radu Cristian Dumitru, 24, one of the ten members of the emergency team in Dumbraveni

First Person

Dumbraveni is a town of 10,000 in the county of Sibiu, Romania, with no hospital or ambulance station. Response time in emergency cases currently is upwards of forty minutes. Last year, four young lives were lost in a car crash while waiting for help to arrive. Responding to victims in need of assistance takes far too long in remote areas while local governments often do not have the resources to provide rural communities with a reasonable level of service in these life or death situations.

USAID addressed this problem by providing a grant to Dr. Raed Arafat, who initiated the Medical Service for Emergency Assistance, Reanimation and Extrication Services (SMURD). The project, which was awarded $46,000, is being used to create two emergency crews that will work as part of the firefighting departments in two communities of Sibiu County. SMURD is a joint effort involving local authorities, health services, and firefighter departments - all with the direct support and contribution of the community members who know that they will be a lot safer once the ambulance service is in place.

SMURD used this grant to buy the necessary instruments and train the rescuers who will join firefighters on emergency calls. Firefighters are trained to use specific instruments and give emergency treatment before the ambulance arrives. The Dumbraveni team is equipped to international standards thus providing a cardiac arrest case from the rural area the same chances of survival as an urban area case. The team also responds to traffic accidents and provides first aid until medical ambulances arrive or until patients are taken to the hospital.