



Empowering Citizens To Improve Their Community

In Slatina, Romania the local waste collection contractor, Salubris SA, has managed trash collection for 70,000 city residents since 1998. Although the service is provided more regularly and efficiently than in the past, piles of garbage and waste often gather uncollected for weeks on streets and in front of apartment buildings.

As promptness in collecting the garbage needed improvement and the local authorities did not exercise enough control over the contractor, citizens of Slatina (Olt County) decided it was time for them to step in. In December 2002, local governments and civil society representatives were invited to compile a list of issues for which USAID could provide assistance.

USAID helped the citizens develop an innovative monitoring system in response to requests from Slatina officials for help in enforcing good quality services from private contractors. Volunteers in Slatina were invited to help their city halls monitor the quality of their sanitation services. Part of the monitoring system involved basic citizen education about customer rights for local public service delivery. Leaflets on sanitation and waste collection services were distributed to the community describing procedures for filing complaints and monitoring the service quality.



Photo: GRASP/ Kristina Creosteanu

Citizens in the city of Slatina, the capital of Olt County, learn to monitor sanitation services.

In 2002, GRASP was established as a means for USAID to provide assistance in decentralization of government and support to local authorities through sustainable public/private partnerships. With USAID support, the citizens of Slatina negotiated with the private contractors and city hall in defining practical indicators of service quality, such as frequency of street cleaning, solid waste collection, time response for snow removal, and the cleaning of waste container and waste collection trucks.

Two hundred citizen monitors drawn from 130 condominium associations fill out report cards each month and send them to city hall. Slatina city officials convey the results from these monthly reports to Salubris S.A. and to the local press in order to inform the public about the performance of the service provider and improve the service.

“We are the clients of the public service and we need and expect good quality services. This is the way we help the service provider to be informed of its day by day performance. Our proposals and suggestions challenge the company to be more effective.”

- A condominium association representative

The citizen volunteers have expressed great satisfaction in working to improve the environment in their neighborhoods and have become increasingly empowered in dealing with Salubris SA. With the support from Salubris S.A. general manager and the Mayor of Slatina, the monitoring system will be a permanent activity run by the municipality in cooperation with the Condominium Associations.

