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MODEL COURT PROJECT FACTSHEET

The USAID Model Court Project aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Moldovan courts by implementing new strategies to manage organizational and administrative activity of the courts, ensuring continuous analysis of court performance, digitalizing court operations, consolidating courts' public communication capacity and institutionalizing the user-friendly court concept in the judiciary. The Project is implemented in two phases. Phase I included the period between January 11, 2021 and January 10, 2024, and Phase II covers the period between January 11, 2024 and January 10, 2027.

OBJECTIVE I: SELECTED MOLDOVAN COURTS IDENTIFIED AND SUPPORTED THROUGH TARGETED ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE FUNCTIONING AND SERVICES TO GAIN MODEL COURT STATUS

During its Phase I, the Project offered technical assistance to the Balti, Ungheni and Edinet District Courts, which gained the Model Court status, having successfully implemented a series of innovations, such as the application of quality management standards in courts' activity, the development and implementation of strategic development plans and communication plans, the

identification and application of court performance management strategies, the establishment of advisory councils, etc. The three courts have also streamlined their operations by enhanced use of digital tools, such as the videoconferencing system and the E-File Module, consolidated their capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable persons and significantly improved their performance. During its Phase II, the Project will select and support three other district courts in their effort to become model courts. The selected district courts will develop and consolidate their institutional capacities in the following five areas of excellence: quality management, court performance, communication, online services, and court facilities management.

OBJECTIVE 2: SUPPLEMENTARY NATIONAL LEVEL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED IN KEY AREAS NECESSARY FOR CHANGES TO ENHANCE COURT IMPROVEMENT AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO SUPPORT TO THE NEWLY CREATED SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF MAGISTRACY, THE NEW SUPREME COURT OF JUSTICE, AND OTHER KEY LEGAL ACTORS IN MOLDOVA

During Phase I of Project implementation, its activities contributed to the development and launch of version 5.1 of the Integrated Case Management System, equipping courts with modern electronic devices, implementation on the national level of strategies to manage caseload and workload of judges, adoption of nationwide minimum quality standards on the activity of district courts and courts of appeal, along with improvement of normative framework on court operations and court user perceptions regarding the functioning of the Moldovan judiciary. Through its activities planned for Phase II, the Project will support its institutional partners in harnessing the results achieved by model courts to facilitate and accelerate the implementation of the model court concept on the national level. The Project will also contribute to consolidating the organizational capacity of certain justice sector institutions and to establishing and functioning of communication platforms necessary to ensure the sharing of good practices pertaining to court activity and improving various aspects of court operations. In addition, the Project will continue offering support for court digitalization, extension of the use of E-File Module and videoconferencing to enhance public access to case information and court operations.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS:

- Model courts will serve as examples of people-centered institutions with enhanced efficiency, accessibility, and transparency, contributing to an increased level of public trust in the entire judiciary.
- The award of the Model Court status will motivate other courts to improve their performance and quality of services, including by implementing minimum quality standards adopted on the national level.
- Justice sector institutions on the national level will consolidate their capacity to increase the quality of courts' activity.
- Courts will implement new administrative strategies and modern technological solutions to streamline their work processes, digitalize their operations and consolidate their communication capacity, resulting in improved public access to information on the activity of the judiciary.

RESULTS ACHIEVED TO DATE

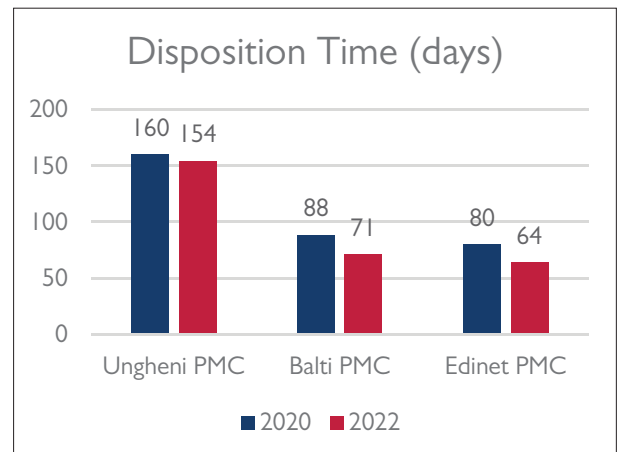
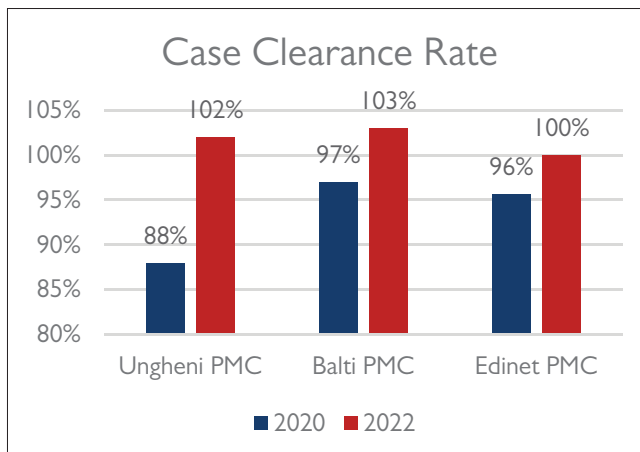
The Model Court Project started in 2021 to provide assistance to improve the performance of courts in delivering quality justice services and to enhance the connection between courts, communities, and system users. Since its inception, the Project's support has contributed to the following results.

OBJECTIVE I

- Three Pilot Model Courts successfully obtained the Model Court status in five areas of excellence:

- quality management
- court performance
- public communication and outreach
- online services
- court facilities management.

- Performance of the three Model Courts considerably improved. Their clearance rate increased and the disposition time reduced, the courts becoming more efficient.



- Three Model Courts organized Advisory Council meetings, which helped enhance the courts' understanding of the needs of the court stakeholders and measures undertaken to meet their needs.
- Three Model Courts regularly analyzed the results of the quality management tools (self-assessment, court staff commitment, and court user satisfaction surveys) and used the data to plan and implement corresponding improvements based on the feedback received from judges, court staff, and court users. This approach led to a continuous improvement of the self-assessment, court staff commitment and court user satisfaction survey results.
- Court users and the general public had easy access to court information presented in layman's terms. Access was provided via free availability of the information materials in the court premises, as well as their posting on social media and the National Courts' Web Portal.

The 2022 court user exit survey revealed that on average 86% of court users in the Model Courts were satisfied with the information provided by the court services.

- Court users in three Model Courts availed of redesigned waiting areas focused on court user needs. The waiting areas included new signage, information panels, info-kiosks, info-points, secure facilities for vulnerable groups, state fee payment electronic terminals, scanners, and facilities for court visitors with disabilities.

- Three Model Courts successfully piloted e-Filing with over 50 civil cases filed online via the e-Filing system.
- Four new Pilot Model Courts were selected out of ten applicant courts to be supported and guided on the path to obtaining the Model Court status.

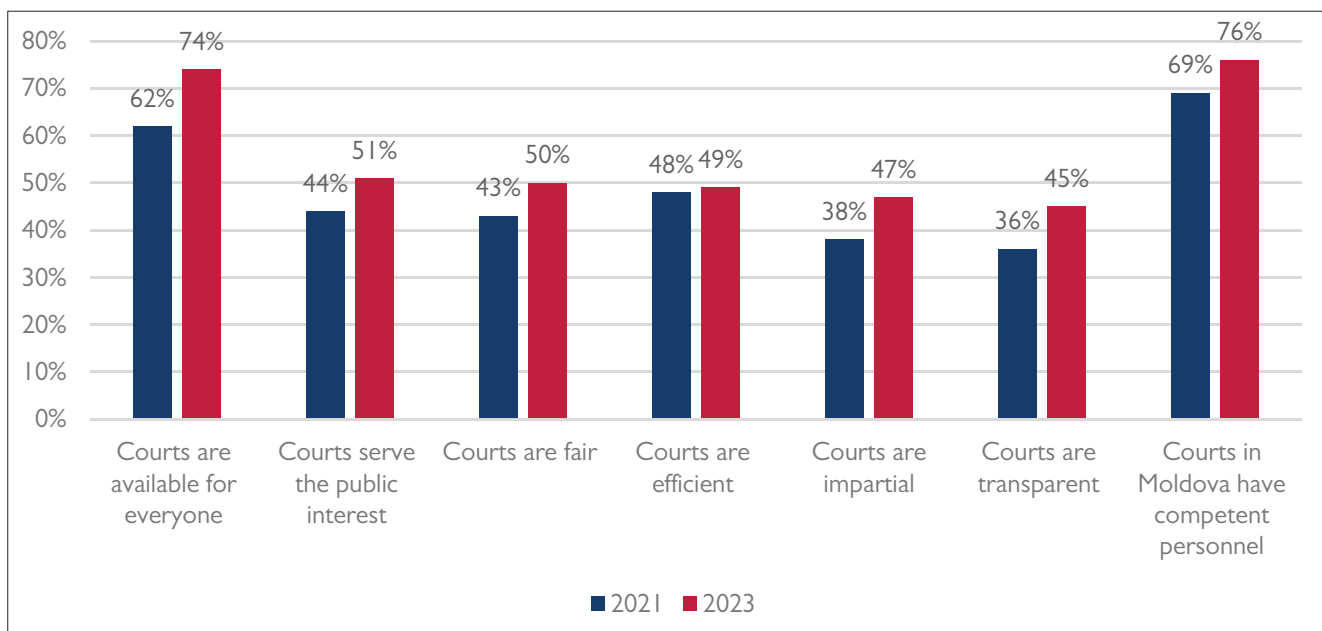
OBJECTIVE 2

- The Superior Council of Magistracy approved the Regulation on the Minimum Quality Management Standards the Project developed, which mandatorily expands the model court standards to all district and appellate courts in Moldova.
- The Superior Council of Magistracy approved the amendments the Project proposed to four regulations to streamline and digitalize court operations.
- The Project developed new branding and marking for the Superior Council of Magistracy and the entire judicial system officially approved by the National Heraldic Commission.
- Moldovan courts use a new upgraded version 5.1 of the Integrated Case Management System including 59 new successfully developed, tested and installed upgrades.
- Moldovan courts were equipped with 56 info-kiosks, 18 videoconferencing equipment sets, 12 audio recording equipment sets, 18 high-speed scanners, 32 desktops and 6 LED screens.
- The use of E-Filing was expanded to all district courts, while the Project's support to the digitalization of Moldovan courts and promotion of the use of online tools in court operations contributed to the increased use of these online tools by the court users. Thus, the National Court's Web Portal was more frequently accessed in 2023 by 17% of court users as compared to 8% in 2021 (+9 p.p.). The share of those using postal services reduced from 63% in 2021 to 47% in 2023 (-16 p.p.).
- The Project organized two Collaboration, Learning and Adapting Forums that fostered the interest of other courts to become model courts. 10 district courts applied to become model courts in the Project's Phase II.
- The Project's national legal literacy campaign contributed to over 71 million views of the video spot on the National Courts' Web Portal, and over 8 million views and impressions related to the animated videos and social media posts about the judiciary and access to court information. This led to more court users being informed about and satisfied with court operations.
- Moldovan authorities successfully implemented nine recommendations listed in the White Papers the Project developed following two National Caseflow Management Conferences and submitted to Superior Council of Magistracy and Ministry of Justice.
- National Institute of Justice (NIJ) institutionalized the Project's Judicial Leadership in Quality Management Program by expanding strategic planning and communication trainings on the national level.
- The Project developed a Court Administration Manual, while the NIJ is using the manual as a training material in its court administration training courses.
- The Project addressed the corruption risks in the courts by training 369 judges and staff in corruption risk assessment. The training events were conducted in partnership with the Agency for Court Administration, the National Anti-Corruption Center, the National Integrity Authority, and the Ombudsman Office.
- The Project trained 4104 court staff and judges exceeding the target of 370, including trainings on application of the International Court Excellence Framework and on court performance monitoring and management.

- The outreach campaign conducted under the Project’s Grants Program led to the increase in the number of survivors of domestic violence who asked for and availed of free legal aid countrywide from 798 women in 2021 to 1339 women in 2023, i.e., by 68%.
- Another information campaign for Ukrainian refugees contributed to legal assistance having been provided to 514 refugees (452 women and 62 men) by mail, phone, and in the office and to 191 refugees (155 women and 36 men) during the mobile visits to 7 remote localities.
- Grantees’ outreach activities for persons with disabilities led to 121 persons with disabilities, including 68 women and 53 men, having availed of free legal aid. People with disabilities face most problems in social protection, health and rehabilitation, accessibility, domestic violence, and credit contracts from non-banking companies.

In summary, the Project’s support led to court users’ improved perceptions about court’s fairness, efficiency, impartiality and transparency.

Court User Satisfaction National Survey Results (2021/2023)



“The Superior Council of Magistracy has closely followed the development of the Pilot Model Courts, and, namely, the Ungheni, Balti and Edinet District Courts. Indeed, there is a significant progress and I would like to mention the trust of citizens in the justice. According to a recent survey, the public trust in the national judiciary, as a whole, does not exceed 25%. However, those who have benefited from the services of the Pilot Model Courts reported the level of trust in justice, which exceeds the country’s average twice or even more.”

Sergiu Caraman
Ad-Interim Chairperson of the Superior Council of Magistracy
 Model Court Award Event

September 21, 2023