

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Strengthening Governance and Management Capacities for Health Emergency Preparedness, Response and System Resilience in Albania

PROJECT:	SOLIDAR – TOGETHER IN HEALTH EMERGENCIES
Category:	Service Provider
Corresponding to Outcome:	Outcome 1: Strengthening the Health Emergency System
Support for Activity:	Activity 1.1.4 Support capacity building on planning, management, monitoring, and evaluation capacities of the Health Care Service Operator, the Central Directorate of the Operator and its regional branches.
Period of assignment:	02.02.2026 – 31.12.2026

1. BACKGROUND

Albania is a disaster-prone country and occasionally exposed to natural and man-made hazards. Emergency events, such as floods, forest fires, droughts, torrential rains, high snowfalls, heatwaves, landslides, avalanches, earthquakes, and epidemics, are encountered annually. In 2019, Albania experienced a strong earthquake and shortly afterwards, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and put the Albanian healthcare system under considerable pressure, with health services disrupted and many lives lost. Both disasters implied a heavy burden on the country's economy, livelihoods, and human development. The dimension of disasters in Albania are impacted by the level of poverty, state of infrastructure, constructions in risk areas due to fast urbanization, and exploitation of natural resources, such as overuse of forests and riverbanks. The lack of medical emergency supplies and resources during disasters plays a key role, and gaps in coordination between institutions and agencies involved in emergency preparedness and response. Especially, the primary healthcare (PHC) level has limited capacities to respond to a health emergency.

The SOLIDAR project has therefore set itself the goal of: People, including the most vulnerable, have improved access to quality emergency care services managed by a more resilient health emergency system at all levels. The project objectives are: 1) Strengthening the Health Emergency System, 2) Strengthening Emergency Medical Services, and 3) Strengthening Community Engagement. The requested services feed into the first objective.

2. RATIONALE

The Health Care Service Operator (HCSO) was legally established on 4 July 2018, by a decision of the Council of Ministers of Albania. This foundational decision provided a broad framework for the organization's mission, responsibilities, structure and functioning. In January 2019, the Minister of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) further detailed the HCSO's mandate by issuing an order that outlined its internal regulations and functioning.

Since its establishment, the HCSO has assumed a central role in the management of health services across Albania. Its key responsibilities include:

- Organizing and ensuring the provision of basic public health services and other auxiliary services as outlined in the package of public health services.
- Overseeing the delivery of primary healthcare services through health centers and clinics.
- Organizing the provision of services with beds in regional and municipal hospitals, adhering to the standards and protocols approved by the Minister of Health.
- Coordinating the administration of human resources within the primary healthcare system, as well as in public and hospital health, in alignment with the applicable legislation.
- Ensuring that planning, implementation, accounting, and financial reporting functions are conducted in compliance with current laws and regulations.

As a relatively new organization, the HCSO faces a multitude of challenges that hinder its ability to fully achieve its mandate. These challenges include: a) limited financial and human resources, b) emigration of health personnel at all levels of expertise, c) lack of clarity in competences, functions and inter-agency roles, and d) insufficient development in terms of human resources, infrastructure and budget allocations. To address these challenges and enhance the quality of healthcare services nationwide, HCSO has recently developed its 2025–2030 Strategic Plan. This plan aims to position HCSO on a new development path, reinforcing its role as a key institution within the public healthcare system and contributing to the ongoing improvement of healthcare for all citizens. The HCSO's mandate, and Objectives of Strategic Plan 2025-2030 requires specialized skills and considerable experience to navigate these challenges effectively. Strengthening the organizational capacity of the HCSO is essential not only for its own institutional development but also for enhancing the quality and capacity of primary and secondary health services across Albania. By addressing these gaps, the HCSO can solidify its role as a cornerstone of the healthcare system, contributing to improved health outcomes for the population and advancing Albania's broader public health objectives. Strengthening the capacities of the HCSO is critical to improving Albania's readiness and response to health emergencies, ensuring resilience in the face of disasters and protecting vulnerable populations during crises.

3. ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVE

The objective of this assignment is to lead and implement a structured institutional capacity strengthening process for the Health Care Service Operator (HCSO), enabling improved planning, management, monitoring, evaluation, and service organization for health emergency preparedness, response, and system resilience, in alignment with the HCSO Strategic Plan 2025–2030.

4. SCOPE OF WORK

Component 1: Institutional Review & Planning Support

The organization will be responsible for the following tasks:

- Conduct an assessment of the implementation status of the HCSO's Strategic Plan 2025-2030, including a review of existing legal, policy and strategic frameworks governing the role and responsibilities of the HCSO in emergency care, preparedness and response.
- Organize and document a Kick-off Meeting with HCSO leadership.
- Coordinate consultations with relevant HCSO departments, regional branches and local health care units.
- Prepare an Implementation Status Report, including: current implementation status, capacity gap analysis linked to strategic performance, priority areas for support related to emergency care, preparedness and response.

Key Output: **Validated Implementation Status Report serving as framework for training needs analysis and capacity development planning**

Component 2: Capacity Building

- Conduct a targeted training needs assessment by designing and implementing appropriate assessment tools (e.g., questionnaires, structured interviews) to evaluate staff qualifications, skills, and allocation, with a focus on planning, management, monitoring, and related functions, aiming to strengthen capacities and enhance skills to support the implementation of the Healthcare Services Operator's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, focus on emergency care, preparedness and response. This assessment will ensure that training sessions are tailored to the specific needs of HCSO staff.
- The Capacity Building Package will consist of modular, task-oriented guidance documents, self-paced learning materials, and practical tools aligned with HCSO's legal mandate and operational workflows. The package will be designed to support long-term institutional learning, enable independent use by HCSO staff, and allow regular updating by internal teams without external support.
- Develop a tailored training concept based on insights from the strategic plan review and the assessment of staff qualifications. The concept should outline the structure, methodology, and content for four (4) customized, hands-on training sessions totaling a maximum of 8 days for a group of up to 20 participants, targeting key personnel at the CDO, regional branches and local healthcare units.
- Deliver hands-on training sessions, incorporating interactive learning methods such as case studies, role-playing, and group exercises, with the support of an international expert.
- Manage all logistical aspects of training implementation, including participant selection, preparation of training materials, participant evaluation and coordination of venues and schedules, to ensure high-quality and impactful capacity building with focus on health emergency care, preparedness and response.
- Compile a comprehensive training summary report, documenting key insights, participant feedback, challenges, and recommendations for future capacity-building initiatives.

Key Output: **Implemented training program and Training Summary Report**

Component 3: Joint Working Sessions

1. Joint Working Sessions for Strengthening the Monitoring System:

- Lead and facilitate up to three (3) joint working sessions with HCSO leadership and staff to assess existing performance tracking mechanisms, identifying strengths and areas for improvement in data collection, analysis, and reporting systems, with focus on health emergency care. Ensure a participatory approach that builds existing institutional practices and aligns with national regulations.
- Integrate technical recommendations provided by an International STE, ensuring that the monitoring system is contextually appropriate, operationally feasible, and aligned with national policies.
- Support the HCSO in designing and implementing a monitoring and inspection system of health services, including the measurement of quality-of-service delivery and performance.
- Manage all logistical aspects for all working sessions, ensuring seamless organization, stakeholder participation, and efficient documentation of key discussions, findings, and action points.
- These activities are planned to be developed in support of the implementation of the Strategic Objective 1.2: "Plan and implement a health services monitoring and inspection system, including the assessment of service quality and performance", of the Service Optimization and Rationalization sector under the Directorate of Health Care Rationalization, of the HCSO Strategic Plan 2025-2030.

2. Joint Working Sessions for Enhancing Financial Management:

- Lead and facilitate up to three (3) joint working sessions with HCSO leadership and staff to review existing budget allocation processes, identifying strengths and weaknesses in sufficient data availability, alignment with health care needs and efficiency in resource allocation, focus on health emergency care;
- Support the HCSO in improving the process of ensuring that budget allocations for health centers are based on planned activities and needs identified, create guidelines or user-friendly tools to streamline budget planning and ensuring consistency across health centers;
- Provide technical assistance to the HCSO in establishing mechanisms to monitor the utilization of allocated budgets and assess the impact on health center performance;
- Review and refine together with int. STE proposed key performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of budget allocations in meeting planned activities;
- Review and refine together with int. STE recommend processes for regular review and adjustment of budget allocations based on evolving needs;
- Review and refine together with int. STE recommendations for the digitalization of financial management systems to enhance transparency, accountability, and real-time tracking of expenditures;
- Lead and facilitate up to three (3) joint working sessions with HCSO leadership and staff to analyze the existing methods used by the institution to maintain inventories of infrastructure and medical equipment, highlighting strengths and weaknesses in keeping real-time, consistent and complete information;
- Provide technical assistance to the HCSO in creating a detailed and standardized inventory for infrastructure and medical equipment and develop procedures for managing the inventory efficiently, including clear instructions and workflows for healthcare centers to report inventory data;
- Manage all logistical aspects for all working sessions, ensuring seamless organization, stakeholder participation, and efficient documentation of key discussions, findings, and action points.
- These activities are planned to be developed in support of the implementation of Strategic Objective 1.1. "Development of a sustainable system of internal financial control and risk management, to ensure fair, legal and effective use of public funds", of the Financial and Budgetary Administration Sector at the Directorate of Finance and Support Services, of the HCSO Strategic Plan 2025-2030.

3. Joint Working Sessions for Strengthening the Health Information System:

- Lead and facilitate up to three (3) joint working sessions with HCSO leadership and staff to assess the current Health Information System (HIS) infrastructure, including hardware, software, and databases and evaluate the quality, reliability, and completeness of the data collected, focusing on infrastructure, service provision, and disease patterns, focus on health emergency care;
- Support the HCSO in analyzing workflows for data collection, entry, validation, and reporting to identify inefficiencies or redundancies;
- Review and refine together with int. STE specific recommendations for enhancing the HIS to improve its effectiveness and reliability;
- Provide technical assistance to the HCSO in coordinating with other organizations and stakeholders which collect reliable data and information on infrastructure, service provision and disease patterns and in facilitating discussions to establish data-sharing agreements and protocols between the different institutions;
- Manage all logistical aspects for all working sessions, ensuring seamless organization, stakeholder participation, and efficient documentation of key discussions, findings, and action points.
- These activities are planned to be developed in support of the implementation of the Strategic Objective 2 “Development and use of an integrated Health Information System”, of the Service Optimization and Rationalization Sector, under the Healthcare Rationalization Directorate, of the HCSO Strategic Plan 2025-2030.

4. Joint Working Sessions for the Rationalization of health services:

- Lead and facilitate up to six (6) joint working sessions with HCSO leadership and staff, regional stakeholders,
- Support the HCSO in the development of a rationalization framework for health services in Albania, encouraging its initiative and lead in the process of rationalizing or reorganizing the geographical distribution of health centers in the territory, based on community needs and Census 2023 data, with focus on health emergency care;
- Support the HCSO in defining criteria for determining the optimal distribution of health centers (e.g. population thresholds, travel time, service capacity, etc.);
- Develop multiple scenarios for rationalizing the distribution of health centers, considering resource constraints and policy priorities;
- Develop a step-by-step action plan for implementing the rationalization process, including timelines, responsibilities, and resource requirements;
- Develop materials to explain the rationale and benefits of the proposed changes to communities and stakeholders;
- Develop guidelines and tools for ongoing evaluation and adjustment of the geographical distribution of health centers;
- Establish indicators to track the impact of the rationalization process on service coverage, equity, and efficiency;
- Set up mechanisms to gather feedback from communities and health workers on the effectiveness of the changes;
- Manage all logistical aspects for all working sessions, ensuring seamless organization, stakeholder participation, and efficient documentation of key discussions, findings, and action points.
- These activities are planned to be developed in support of the implementation of the Strategic Objective 3 “Reorganization and establishment of new public health structures according to CENS 2023”, of the Service Optimization and Rationalization Sector, etc. under the Healthcare Rationalization Directorate, of the HCSO Strategic Plan 2025-2030.

Key Outputs: **HCSO-endorsed tools, frameworks and action plans and Joint Working Sessions Summary Reports**

5. DELIVERABLES

- 1. Implementation Status Report:** A consolidated report assessing the current implementation status of the HCSO Strategic Plan 2025–2030, identifying institutional and capacity gaps related to health emergency care, and defining priority topics for capacity-building activities and joint working sessions. The report serves as the analytical baseline for the design of subsequent capacity-building interventions.
- 2. Training Needs Assessment Report:** A summary report presenting findings from the assessment of staff qualifications, skills, and functional roles across the HCSO, identifying gaps and priority training needs in planning, management, monitoring, evaluation, and related functions, with specific recommendations to guide the design of targeted capacity-building activities in emergency care, preparedness and response functions.
- 3. Capacity Building Package:** A comprehensive and tailored capacity-building package for the HCSO, including a structured training plan, timeline, and milestones for institutional and individual strengthening at central and regional levels. The package incorporates training curricula, session outlines, practical exercises, and learning methodologies focused on planning, management, monitoring, financial management, and resource allocation, with emphasis on health emergency care.
- 4. Training Summary Report:** A report documenting the delivery of four (4) customized training sessions, including participant attendance, training content, methodologies applied, practical exercises conducted, key learning outcomes, participant feedback, and recommendations for future capacity-building initiatives.
- 5. Working Session Documentation Packages (by thematic area):** Comprehensive documentation packages for each thematic area addressed through joint working sessions, including agendas, meeting notes, attendance lists, key decisions, agreed next steps, and synthesized technical outputs produced during the sessions.
- 6. HCSO Tools, Frameworks & Action Plans:** A set of practical, user-friendly tools, frameworks, and action plans developed and refined through capacity-building and joint working sessions. These outputs support improved planning, monitoring, financial management, information systems, and service organization within the HCSO, with a focus on strengthening health emergency preparedness, response, and system resilience.
- 7. Final Consolidated Report:** A consolidated final report summarizing all activities undertaken, key outputs delivered, outcomes achieved, challenges encountered, and lessons learned throughout the assignment. The report includes practical recommendations to ensure sustainability of results and to support continued strengthening of the HCSO beyond the project period.

6. QUALITY ASSURANCE

The SOLIDAR project is highly committed to ensure the highest quality of the actions it undertakes, and thus each of the assignments needs to ensure the attainment of the best possible quality outcomes.



During the present assignment, the subcontractor shall therefore apply at least the following quality measures:

- Propose personnel who are professional experts in their fields without any appearance of a conflict of interest with the present assignment;
- Apply a methodological approach that is of the highest quality and state-of-the art;
- Effectively communicate with the project staff and stakeholders in order to manage expectations and address any concerns;
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the implementation of activities and flag any obstacles early on;
- Provide monthly reports with attached reports from workshops and training sessions during that period of time to highlight meaningful progress in the different intervention areas;
- Hold monthly meetings (after the receipt of monthly reports) with the responsible SOLIDAR project staff to ensure timely feedback on the course of action and to spot potential changes needed in the actions undertaken;
- Comply with the projects' directives, procurement guidelines and visibility and communication guidelines and rules;
- Receive approval from the SOLIDAR on final products prepared (draft and final documents of the Capacity building Package and Manuals).

7. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The service provider is expected to adopt a collaborative and participatory approach, working closely with the Health Care Service Operator (HCSO), its Central Directorate (CDO), and regional branches at every stage of the assignment. This collaboration is essential to ensure that the solutions and frameworks developed are practical, contextually appropriate, and aligned with institutional priorities. Furthermore, the service provider is requested to actively engage with other stakeholders, including national health agencies, health service providers and external organizations involved in data collection and service delivery, to build consensus and enhance coordination.

The approach must be grounded in evidence-based practices, utilizing data, international standards, and best practices to ensure the relevance and reliability of the deliverables. Furthermore, all activities should align with existing policies, strategies, and frameworks within Albania's health sector to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of efforts.

Capacity building is a central pillar of this assignment, with a strong emphasis on sustainability. The service provider is expected to focus on transferring knowledge and skills to HCSO staff, enabling independent operation and adaptation of systems after the project concludes. This includes integrating all aspects of the assignment into an overarching capacity-building plan with separate modules. Workshops and training sessions tailored to the specific needs of the HCSO and its stakeholders are anticipated to be organized and facilitated by the service provider to ensure hands-on learning and practical application.

The service provider is also requested to ensure that activities promote equity in access to healthcare, considering gender and the needs of vulnerable populations. Modern technology, including digital tools and platforms, should be leveraged wherever applicable to improve efficiency, data management, and communication.

Finally, the approach should include robust monitoring mechanisms to track progress, gather feedback, and make iterative improvements throughout implementation. By integrating these elements, the service

provider will ensure the delivery of a holistic, inclusive, and sustainable solution that addresses the institutional priorities and broader health sector goals of Albania.

8. SERVICE PERIOD

The assignment is expected to be implemented over a period of approximately 11 months, from February 2026 to December 2026. The detailed implementation schedule and sequencing of activities will be discussed and finalized during the contract award phase based on the technical proposal. Adjustments to the timeline may be made by mutual agreement to accommodate stakeholder availability, validation processes, and institutional review requirements, without affecting the overall scope, outputs, or total level of effort. The assignment will be considered completed upon the submission and formal acceptance of all deliverables.

9. QUALIFICATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE ORGANIZATION

The organization should have the following qualifications in order to address effectively and timely the specific requirements of these assignments:

Technical experience:

- At least 1 reference project in delivering training sessions on planning, management or monitoring in the healthcare sector

10. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Interested organizations should submit:

- **Technical proposal** A detailed technical proposal document outlining the following key components: a) Approach and methodology for the assignment; b) Work Plan, including detailed timeline; c) Quality control mechanisms and sustainability of the intervention; d) team composition and roles; e) risk management and contingency plans. The complete technical proposal should not exceed 15 pages and must be legible (font size 11 Arial) and clearly formulated.
- **Financial proposal** including a proposed budget, including a breakdown of costs per deliverable of expert fees, number of working days, and all other activity costs, using the attached Financial Offer Form.
- **CVs of key personnel** who will be involved in the assignment. Expert profiles and qualifications (at least 2 CVs) need to be included. The CVs of the personnel proposed must be submitted using the provided format. The CVs shall not exceed 4 pages.

11. AWARD CRITERIA

The weighted average basis will be applied to evaluate the applicant. The award of the contract will be made to the organization whose offer has been evaluated and determined as:

- Responsive/compliant/acceptable, and;
- Having received the highest score out of a pre-determined set of weighted technical and financial criteria specific to the solicitation, as stipulated below:



AC	Award Criteria	Weighting
	Technical Proposal	70%
AC 1	Approach and methodology for the assignment	30%
AC 2	Work Plan, including detailed timeline	5%
AC 3	Quality control mechanisms and sustainability of the intervention	5%
AC 4	<p>Qualification of expert 1 – Senior Health Management Expert</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An advanced degree in a relevant field (e.g., health management and administration, or public health, studies). • A minimum of 7 years of professional experience in healthcare administration, including the development of manuals, policies and strategic documents. • Proven experience in developing capacity building materials, administration of manuals related to health. • Working experience and very good knowledge of the health system and process of decentralization of local government in Albania. • Experience working in multidisciplinary teams and engaging with government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders • Excellent research, analytical, and communication skills. • Ability to work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders. • Proven experience in capacity building and training. • Proven capacity to conduct literature review; • Proven capacity to develop and deliver written reports; • Excellent oral and written communication skills in English and Albanian. <p>Qualification of expert 2 – Senior Health Finance Expert</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant higher education and qualification (s) for finance, economics and administration of Health Service, or public institution. • A minimum of 7 years of professional experience working in the health finance sector, particularly in managing or advising on the administration of health services or public institutions. • Extensive experience in inventory management in healthcare facilities (e.g., hospitals, clinics, primary healthcare centers). • Familiarity with medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, and equipment inventory systems. • Proven experience working with multidisciplinary and multisectoral teams and engaging with government agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders • Proven experience in developing capacity building materials and manuals related to health care services administration. • Proven experience in capacity building and training. • Proven capacity to conduct literature review; • Proven capacity to develop and deliver written reports; • Proficiency in English and Albanian, both written and oral. 	30%



	Financial Proposal	30%
AC 5	Clarity and coherence of the financial proposal, realistic estimation of the costs for the training implementation	10%
AC 6	Financial score = lowest price / price of the tender being considered x 100	20%

12. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Organization will act as the primary implementing partner and will be responsible for the operational planning, coordination, and delivery of activities under this assignment. In particular, the Organization will:

- Lead operational planning and ensure effective day-to-day coordination of all assignment activities;
- Organize, facilitate, and document capacity-building trainings and joint working sessions;
- Draft tools, guidelines, frameworks, and reports in line with agreed methodologies and timelines;
- Coordinate with relevant stakeholders at national and sub-national levels, including HCSO central and regional structures and LHCU's;
- Manage logistical arrangements related to meetings, trainings, and working sessions, including participant coordination and documentation;
- Ensure that all outputs are contextually relevant, practically applicable, and institutionally feasible for implementation by the HCSO.

The assignment will be implemented in close collaboration with and under the technical guidance of an international Short-Term Expert (STE). The STE will:

- Provide technical leadership, methodological guidance, and quality assurance throughout the assignment;
- Ensure alignment of methodologies, tools, and outputs with international best practices and standards;
- Review, validate, and provide technical feedback on key deliverables prepared by the Organization;
- Support coherence and consistency across capacity-building activities and system-strengthening outputs.

The SOLIDAR Project Team will provide overall oversight and coordination of the assignment and will:

- Facilitate access to relevant project documentation, institutional information, and stakeholders, where possible;
- Monitor and supervise implementation progress to ensure compliance with project objectives, timelines, and quality standards;
- Review and approve work plans, key deliverables, and reports prior to finalization;
- Provide timely guidance and feedback to support effective implementation.

No key activity or deliverable shall be finalized without the prior review and approval of the SOLIDAR Project Team.



SOLIDAR

BASHKË NË EMERGENCAT SHËNDËTËSORE

13. CONDITIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE TENDER PROCESS

The Call/Tender will be published on the project website <https://solidar.org.al/>.

The conditions for participation, documents to be filled in and award criteria will be provided to the interested bidders after their Expression of Interest (EoI).

Bids must be submitted in English language.

Bids must be submitted physically to the project address:

GFA Consulting Group GmbH - Dega Shqiptare

Rruga Janos Hunyadi

P. 34, Kati 2, Zyra Nr.2

Njesia Administrative Nr.5

1019 Tirana, Albania

All bidders are requested to submit two (2) separate sealed envelopes as follows:

i. Technical Proposal

A physical and electronic copy of the proposal (on a USB stick) placed in a sealed envelope clearly marked: **“Strengthening Governance and Management Capacities for Health Emergency Preparedness, Response and System Resilience in Albania – Technical Proposal”**.

The envelope shall contain the technical proposal and all its scanned accompanying documents.

ii. Financial Proposal

A physical and electronic copy of the financial proposal (on a USB stick) placed in a sealed envelope clearly marked: **“Strengthening Governance and Management Capacities for Health Emergency Preparedness, Response and System Resilience in Albania - Financial Proposal”**.

The envelope shall contain the financial proposal and its scanned version.

Public officials are not considered eligible under policies of the Donor, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Bids submitted after the deadline specified in the Call published on the project website <https://solidar.org.al/> will not be considered.

Any commercial, technical, or procedural queries shall be submitted **electronically** to solidar.office@gfa-group.de within the deadline indicated in the Call.

Enquiries by telephone or any other form of direct contact are **not admissible** and may lead to **disqualification**.

No costs incurred by the bidder in the preparation and submission of the tender will be reimbursed. All such costs shall be borne solely by the bidder.

By submitting a tender, the bidder accepts to receive notification of the outcome of the procedure by electronic means. Should you decide not to submit a tender after expressing your interest, we would be grateful if you could inform us in writing, indicating the reasons for your decision.