Final Report
ROMANIA: CONSTITUENT SERVICE
AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EUR-A-00-94-00028-00
April 1994 to December 1998

I. SUMMARY

In the years since the violent events surrounding Romania's 1989 revolution, the country's democratic transition has been hampered by economic hardships, an absence of genuine political dialogue, and a weak civil society. From the start, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) recognized the need to develop the skills and experience of elected officials and civic activists to increase citizen involvement in the political process and improve governmental transparency. Following Romania's first democratic elections in May 1990, NDI assisted in the development of an independent civic organization, the Pro Democracy Association (PDA), to strengthen channels of communication between elected officials and the electorate and to enhance public confidence in the electoral process. From 1990-1994, NDI assisted in improving the management, leadership and organizational capabilities of PDA and its network of regional clubs through technical assistance and financial support.

The four years covered by this report (1994-1998) were transitional years for Pro Democracy, NDI, and Romania, itself. As the country moved toward the next step in its democratic transition with the 1996 elections, PDA was also becoming a more free and independent organization. As PDA's independence from NDI increased, the Institute began developing separate, but complimentary, democracy development programs. While PDA continued working at the grassroots, NDI worked with elected officials to develop public outreach techniques. By developing constituent relations programs at the local and national levels, NDI introduced new ideas aimed toward increasing and improving the level of political discourse in Romania.

II. BACKGROUND

From the mid-1960s until the end of the 1980's, Nicolae Ceausescu's oppressive domestic program of highly centralized control and extreme political repression launched Romania into a downward spiral, and denied citizens hope for economic or social prosperity. Tight control over the reigns of power stifled the country's growth at all levels. While cultivating an international reputation as an independent and even progressive communist,

in Romania Ceausescu developed a cult of personality that rivaled that of Stalin. In the late 1970s and 1980s, as other eastern European countries developed the beginnings of a civil society and economic liberalization, Ceausescu's authoritarian rule only strengthened. As the democratic tide swept through Eastern Europe, events in the Transylvanian city of Timisoara became a catalyst for Romania's sudden and violent political transformation that culminated in December 1989. Ceausescu was executed on Christmas Day of that year, but he left behind a legacy that would inhibit progress in the country for years to follow.

NDI responded quickly to Romania's changing political environment by conducting a survey mission to identify program opportunities in March 1990. In April of that year, NDI organized a training program that exposed Romanian NGO's to election monitoring and civic education programs. A month later, NDI co-sponsored a 60-member international election observer delegation to the presidential and parliamentary elections. Following the May 1990 elections, NDI assisted in the founding of an independent civic organization, Pro Democracy Association (PDA), by training Association leaders in organizational and communication skills and providing modest material support. The Association established a central office in Bucharest, and steadily expanded its network to reach municipalities throughout the country. PDA's primary goals were to increase civic participation; provide education to citizens and elected officials regarding fair election practices; and mobilize and train a nationwide cadre of monitors for election day activities. Throughout 1990 and 1991, PDA's organization of town meetings with parliamentarians and local officials provided NDI a vehicle through which to establish a presence in Romania, and develop the foundations upon which its future work would be built.

In 1991, NDI signed a cooperative agreement with PDA and deployed two resident representatives to assist the Association in the development of its civic participation, election monitoring and election training programs. Through technical assistance, NDI also worked to improve the management, leadership, and organizational capabilities of PDA's network of clubs. Enhanced organizational capabilities enabled PDA to increase popular understanding of the structures, processes and decisions of government and the role of citizens in an open society.

NDI provided eight years of technical and financial support to PDA, after which PDA reached many of its developmental goals and achieved a successful transition to institutional independence. Over the years, NDI gradually decreased its financial commitment to PDA, while increasing its programmatic independence and providing international experts to help ensure the Association's self-sustainabilty. This required PDA to develop its organizational capabilities and to compete for outside funding sources with other developing NGOs.

III. OBJECTIVES

Many of NDI's objectives for Romania's democratic transition were achieved indirectly through PDA. Those objectives were:

- **Increase public confidence in elections**

- **Educate citizens regarding various aspects of democratic governance**

- **Foster increased citizen participation in public affairs**

Because NDI recognized PDA's importance to Romanian civil society, several of NDI's direct objectives focused on the Association's long-term sustainability. As PDA became increasingly independent, NDI set its own objectives for Romania's democratic development that centered on PDA. NDI's direct objectives included:

- **Enhance and expand PDA's electoral activities**

- **Enhance the management, leadership, and organizational capabilities of PDA and its clubs**

- **Strengthen PDA's financial self-sustainability in advance of complete independence from NDI**

- **Increase popular understanding of the structures, processes, and decisions of government and the role of citizens in an open society**

- **Strengthen the foundation of a civil society in Romania by providing channels of communication between citizens and elected officials**

IV. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

To allow PDA to continue its activities and to strengthen its network, NDI provided $120,000 in support between 1994 and 1996. The agreement covered expenses related primarily to institutional support and election monitoring activities. Funding also was provided for the production of newsletters, training manuals and other publications, and advocacy campaigns. From April 1996 thru April 1997, NDI signed a cooperative agreement with PDA in the amount of $68,000. The completion of this agreement in September 1997marked PDA's financial independence from NDI.

PDA's Election-Related Activities

An integral component of PDA's work was the organization's activities surrounding the local and parliamentary elections in spring and fall of 1996, respectively. As early as September 1994, PDA sponsored "Voter Month" to educate citizens about accountability. Beginning in March 1995, PDA engaged in an alternative electoral system campaign and a complementary citizen's information program which included a caravan tour of several cities. In direct preparation for the local elections, PDA led a successful, unified NGO effort to

reverse restrictions on domestic election observers; initiated an extensive GOTV campaign featuring candidate forums; and mobilized more than 3,000 volunteer monitors nationwide. For the presidential and parliamentary elections, PDA again launched a nationwide GOTV and voter education campaign, organized a "civic caravan", and prepared a nationwide Parallel Vote Tabulation project to raise citizen's confidence in the electoral process.

(Please see Appendices for detailed reports on PDA's activities)

NDI's Election-Related Activities

NDI assisted PDA in developing its election-related activities. NDI's Resident Representative in Romania from May 1994 until August 1996 (John Swanson), consulted with PDA on developing its electoral program. In addition, NDI conducted its own election-related activities.

- **In early 1995, and in support of PDA's efforts to offer alternatives to Romania's present electoral system, NDI sent Brian Feeney -- an election systems expert and active member of Northern Ireland's Social Democratic and Labor Party -- to a symposium on electoral issues organized by Romanian Parliament. NDI was able to provide information about the political implications of different electoral systems and to demonstrate the international community's serious interest in the parliament's efforts at becoming a more responsive institution.**

- **In October 1995, NDI and the International Republican Institute (IRI) re-released recommendations from the 1992 elections in a mass mailing to members of parliament and the government. These recommendations included many issues which had not yet been resolved, including the permanent accreditation of domestic election observers and the establishment of a permanent election bureau.**

- **In late 1995, in combination with PDA's election activities, NDI advised the international community and Romanian MPs about the potential problems associated with the electoral law. NDI's commentary cited inadequate legislation for political party financing and media access along with the lack of provisions for domestic election monitors and the establishment of a permanent election bureau.**

- **In the spring of 1996, NDI Romania Field Representative John Swanson conducted a long-term observation of eight municipalities (Timisoara, Brasov, Craiova, Constanta, Focsani, Cluj, Iasi and Bacau), meeting with mayors, election bureau presidents and local political party leaders to discuss problems, irregularities and overall administrative preparedness leading up to the elections. By visiting the cities on a regular basis, Swanson developed a rapport with the election officials and gathered accurate information on election activities within each municipality. Swanson documented his observations in a series of seven weekly local election bulletins that were distributed to interested parties in both Romania and Washington. The bulletins**

provided a broad analysis of the pre-election environment and were designed to give a snapshot of election activities outside of the capital city.

- **In the days preceding the 1996 local elections, CEE Regional Director Susan Atwood and Program Assistant Matthew Joyce traveled to Romania and spoke with election experts, political party leaders and local officials concerning the general administrative preparedness for Romania's second local elections since the fall of Ceausescu. On election day, they traveled with Swanson to the western town of Focsani to observe election day activities at various polling sites.**

- **In August 1996, NDI Romania Representative John Swanson produced a report on Romania's electoral preparations in connection with June's local elections. The report analyzed the progress of Romania's election administration infrastructure in the four years since NDI observed local, presidential and parliamentary elections in 1992. The report was distributed to media, government officials, and political parties throughout Romania.**

- **In conjunction with PDA's domestic efforts, NDI raised the issue of domestic monitors with interested parties in Washington, D.C. as well as Romania in the post-election period. NDI issued a statement citing specific irregularities in Romania's domestic monitoring program and advocated for a more transparent system.**

Institutional and Programmatic Support of PDA

Because NDI played a critical role in the establishment of PDA, the Institute maintained a vested interest in its organizational development. In the eight years of NDI assistance to PDA, the Association matured steadily and gained a credible reputation as an ardent advocate for citizens' rights and fair, democratic governance. As PDA proved its ability to sustain itself, NDI gradually decreased its financial commitment while helping PDA to develop its own organizational capabilities.

Organizational development was fostered in three ways: through local branch training; structural development and planning; and by cultivating financial sustainability.

Local Branch Training:

- **In June and July 1994, NDI Romania Representative John Swanson traveled throughout Romania evaluating and offering organizational advice to various PDA clubs. Swanson's team found that PDA clubs needed to develop a stronger sense of purpose and be reassured of their potential to affect positive change. The team suggested that PDA headquarters should assume more responsibility for maintaining morale and monitoring local level activity.**

- **In November 1994, NDI brought four seasoned grassroots organizers to assist selected "model" PDA clubs in Bacau, Cluj, Slobozia, and Timisoara to develop strategies for conducting activities based on local needs. The international training team included NDI Senior Program Officer Mike Marshall; Ray Mullan of the Community Relations Council in Northern Ireland; Marie Nahikian of Habitat for Humanity; and Sydney Stakely of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. The training mission provided techniques that the four clubs used as they developed specific timelines for solving local problems.**

- **In the fall of 1997, as part of a larger effort at decentralization, NDI provided targeted training for PDA to further develop its institutional needs. Michelle Rydz, NDI's Democracy Network Project Representative in Romania, trained clubs on basic organizing skills including issue advocacy, door-knocking and strategic planning. The long-term goal of these targeted training sessions was to increase the independence of PDA regional clubs, while still ensuring that PDA remained a nationwide network of local branches.**

- **In early 1998, Michelle Rydz continued training PDA clubs on basic organizational development and advocacy skills including issue definition, grassroots fundraising, door-knocking and strategic planning. The long-term goals of these targeted training sessions were to increase the independence of PDA clubs, transfer skills they needed to mobilize citizens effectively, and enhance their capacity to compete for funding from Romanian and international sources.**

Strategic Planning

- **From December 9-11, 1994, PDA held its annual general assembly near Brasov. NDI Resident Representative John Swanson attended the meeting as an invited guest observer. The meeting revealed a growing sophistication in Pro-Democracy which was continuing to refine its operational structure and diversify its funding sources. During the assembly, Marian Tata, president for the previous three years, was reelected and a nine-member board of directors was chosen. The assembly featured intensive discussion of local, issue-focused advocacy programs which increasingly formed a basis for PDA's national activities. Skills developed during NDI's grassroots activism training seminars that November helped foster these discussions. In addition, Association members began a discussion of long-term preparations necessary for the 1996 elections, including a revision of existing election laws.**
- **From Feb 18-20 1995, NDI Slovakia Representative Jerry Morrison conducted intensive work sessions with the PDA leadership council and staff on communications and how a board can serve as a conduit between the grassroots membership and the Association's professional staff members.**

- **From March 27 to April 2, 1995, CEE Regional Director Susan Atwood and NDI**

Romania Program Officer Tracy Gartenmann traveled to Romania to assist John Swanson conduct a series of meetings with PDA national staff, leadership council, and Brasov and Focsani activists. Meetings with PDA helped refine the 1995-96 PDA/NDI workplan, and reinforced NDI's and PDA's commitment to electoral law reform regarding the provision of domestic election monitors for the 1996 legislative elections.

- **In February 1997, with some financial support from NDI, PDA held its first General Assembly in more than two years. The General Assembly brought together members from all of its 35 local clubs, where they voted to change PDA's statutes to allow for increased competition and national exposure for board positions, voted in a six-member national board, and installed a new PDA president for the first time in four years.**

- **From May 1 to 4, 1997, NDI supported a retreat attended by five members of the PDA Board of Directors and six members of the headquarters staff. The goal of the retreat was to assess PDA's objectives, values and vision and develop a strategic plan of activities for the next two years. Jacqueline Allen, a public relations professional from Scotland, helped facilitate the meeting and create the strategic plan. The comprehensive discussion covered topics such as identifying PDA's audience; clarifying the mission, vision, and aims of PDA, specific internal and external activities; and a strengths, weaknesses, threats analysis of the organization.**

- **In November 1997, NDI conducted a final evaluation of its work with PDA and took the opportunity to explore a range of program possibilities in order to establish how NDI can best continue to contribute to the political transition process. For this assessment, NDI's Romania Team was joined by Patrick Merloe, NDI Senior Associate, and Enda Kenny, an Irish Member of Parliament. In Bucharest, the delegation met with leaders of Romania's main political parties, the Prime Minister, the President's NGO advisor, and leaders of various NGOs. In the cities of Pitesti, Galati, Braila and Cimpulung Muscel, the delegation also met with local governmental officials, citizens, and local PDA leaders and volunteers. As a result of its assessment mission, NDI prepared a concept paper outlining a possible program to forge partnerships between Members of Parliament, local elected officials and NGOs in selected constituencies (judets).**

- **In early 1998, NDI provided financial support for PDA's General Assembly in Bucharest. After an initial plenary session, delegates to the Assembly broke into groups to discuss lessons learned from PDA's 1997 activities, changes in the organization's statutes, ways to further coordinate PDA branch activities and possible new programmatic directions for 1998.**

Financial Sustainability

- **In September 1996, NDI's Grants Manager, Lucy Shiu, went to Bucharest to conduct staff training on multiple grants management and to offer suggestions on how to improve PDA's financial accounting system. Later in the month, PDA staff member Violetta Bau attended a four-day fundraising workshop in Budapest coordinated by the Civil Society Development Foundation. PDA's Bucharest club also held a weekend retreat with a management expert to discuss possible areas for improvement and to establish the organization's priorities.**

- **On May 23-25, 1997, Jacqueline Neuwirth, a fundraising expert and co-owner of a San Francisco-based consulting firm, conducted a training workshop on the fundamentals of fundraising. More than 30 PDA members representing 15 clubs throughout Romania participated. The training was part of an effort to overcome organizational challenges as NDI decreased its financial assistance to the organization. PDA responded by initiating a program that gradually placed more financial responsibility on local clubs.**

NGO Advocacy

Taking advantage of PDA's established position in Romania and its ability to bring together indigenous and international NGOs, NDI organized a training program to strengthen the NGOs sector by educating a variety of organizations on their role in developing civil society.

- **From May 28 to 29, 1994, NDI organized a seminar on "NGO Involvement in the Legislative Process". The objective was to transfer practical skills to indigenous NGO leaders on analyzing draft legislation, conducting advocacy campaigns on the local and national levels, building coalitions and promoting a legislative agenda, and proper parliamentary liaising. Twenty-five issue-based NGOs were represented, including women's, ethnic, human rights, civic, youth and consumer groups. The training team included NDI Governance Officer Susan Benda; Margaret Bolton, Policy Officer for the UK-based National Council of Voluntary Organizations; Ion Iacosi, Parliamentary Liaison for the Helsinki Committee; Alina Inayeh, PDA Executive Director; Obie Moore, Romania Representative of the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES); Edwin Rekosh, Romania Representative of the International Human Rights Law Group; and NDI Romania Representative John Swanson. Plenary presentations were made by John Anelli, IRI Romania Representative, and Mona Nicoara and Marian Pancu, Parliamentary Liaisons for the Helsinki Committee.**

- **During the last few weeks of September 1994, NDI and PDA collaborated on a series of small-scale lobbying seminars, conducted by Jim Fort, the former lead lobbyist for United Parcel Service. PDA clubs in Timisoara, Cluj, Focsani, and Craiova convened local NGOs for the seminars. Understanding that systems were less developed outside of Bucharest, Fort focused on basic activities of communicating with public officials,**

such as writing letters, holding meetings, and writing press releases.

Constituent Relations

Since its early days in Romania, NDI recognized that, as in other countries in the region, there was a virtual absence of communication between citizens and their elected officials. Closing the gap that existed between these two groups became one of NDI's stated objectives. To this end, NDI supported PDA in numerous constituent relations activities, and conducted its own seminars and ongoing consultations to encourage dialogue at the national and local levels.

Local Level Constituent Relations

- **In early 1995, in cooperation with the Civitas Foundation, NDI brought Irish political activist Brian Feeney to Romania to conduct a seminar in Cluj on local government. Twenty local elected officials, from around the Transylvania region, attended the seminar, where Feeney outlined how to inform citizens of legislative objectives, how to ascertain citizen opinions, and how to incorporate citizens into the decision-making process.**

In an effort to address the growing number of problems resulting from increased centralization, NDI conducted a series of seminars on local government communications in 1995-96. The objective of the program was to make local government officials more responsive to citizen concerns and to understand the intrinsic political benefits of incorporating citizens into the decision-making process.

Cosponsored by the indigenous Foundation for Local Development and Public Services and the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA), the series was used as a case-study for USAID's long-term local government programming over the following three years. International experts shared examples of effective constituent involvement in their respective governments. Interactive workshops included holding a mock public hearing and creating a mock citizen advisory board to underscore the positive effects of bringing constituents into the decision-making process. Participants analyzed the situation in their own municipality and determined how to utilize citizens effectively as a resource. After drafting workplans to address specific problems in their areas, open critique was offered by fellow participants and trainers.

A summary of this seminar series follows:

- **From June 26 to 28, 1995, mayors, council members and support staff from five surrounding cities met in Piatra Neamt to discuss the benefits of constituent participation. Representing NDI were Judy Nadler, Mayor of Santa Clara, CA, and Scott Johnson, USAID coordinator for local government programs in Romania and**

former city manager of Cincinnati.

- **From September 22 to 25, 1995 in Craiova, and again from September 28 to October 1 in Brasov, mayors, council members and support staff from surrounding cities convened to discuss the positive aspects of public participation with international trainers. The NDI training team consisted of Jim Nathanson, a former council member of the District of Columbia, and Scott Johnson.**

- **From December 7 to 10, 1995, in the eastern city of Constanta, and again from December 14 to 17, in the northern city of Baia Mare, NDI invited international local government experts to lead seminars for elected Romanian officials and their staff from surrounding municipalities. The NDI expert team was composed of Judi Longfield, a municipal councilor in Canada who had previously worked with the Institute on Guyana's local government programs, and Scott Johnson.**

- **From February 1 to 4, 1996, NDI conducted the sixth seminar in the eastern town of Timisoara. NDI invited local government experts to share examples of effective constituency outreach programs with elected Romanian officials and their staff from surrounding municipalities. For this program, NDI was joined by Tom Volgy, a former Mayor of Tucson and veteran NDI trainer.**

- **From July 18 to 21, 1996, NDI hosted a local government seminar in Brasov, the culmination of the seminar series designed to improve constituency servicing by local government. NDI invited a select group of previous local government seminar participants to share successful experiences and information on bringing citizens into the decision-making process at the local level. The seminar involved interactive workshops and provided an opportunity for elected officials to work together to solve similar municipal problems, continually reinforcing the concept that citizens' participation is an ongoing process, not a one-time event.**

National Level Constituent Relations

NDI also addressed constituency servicing at the national level:

- **In early 1996, NDI Representative John Swanson completed a constituency service manual for Romanian parliamentarians. In developing the manual, Swanson relied on his experience as a legislative assistant on Capitol Hill as well as more than 40 interviews he conducted with Romanian parliamentarians on their approaches to constituent relations. He consolidated his research and highlighted the most successful examples of constituent outreach efforts. The final translated version was distributed**

to all Romanian MPs in July. (*Please see the Appendices for a copy of NDI's constituent liaison manual*).

- **In early 1998, with NDI's technical assistance, PDA brought four western European parliamentarians to Romania to lead constituent relations seminars in Brasov and Ploiesti: Berndt Ekholm of the Swedish Social Democratic Party; Sir Michael Neubert, a former 20-year MP of the British Conservative Party; Gerald Reynolds, of the Irish Fine Gael Party; and Ian Twinn, a former fourteen-year MP of the British Conservative Party. Over two days, MPs discussed several important factors in improving relations with constituents, including methods for involving citizens in decision-making, fundraising strategies for supporting constituent relations activities, and methods for using parliamentary staff to serve constituent needs.**

Parliamentary Development

- **On May 30 and 31, 1994, a group of NDI representatives - Susan Benda, Tracy Gertenmann, John Swanson, and Margaret Bolton of the UK National Council of Voluntary Organizations - met with key legislators on the Permanent Bureau of the Parliament to discuss the results of the PDA/NDI weekend seminar on "NGO Involvement in the Legislative Process. Many expressed a desire to work with NGOs if they could be convinced that NGOs are non-partisan. These meetings also gave NDI representatives a chance to discuss revisions to the parliamentary rules of procedure.**

- **In the last week of September 1994, NDI brought two experts in parliamentary rules of procedure to Bucharest for three days of intensive consultations with Romanian MPs and their staff. Charles Flanagan, a Fine Gael MP in the Irish Dail, discussed the practical application of rules from a politician's perspective, while Stanley Bach, an expert in rules at the Congressional Research Service (CRS), provided more technical information. Topics discussed included controversial aspects of a recent invalidation of several rules by the Constitutional Court, especially party migration and immunity; improving parliamentary efficiency through enhanced committee work and more focused plenary sessions; and increasing transparency of parliamentary proceedings, a broad theme that had characterized much of NDI's work with Pro Democracy.**

- **In December 1994, as a follow-up to the September Rules of Procedure consultations with the Romanian Chamber of Deputies and Senate, NDI produced a report entitled "Observations on Proposed and Potential Changes in the Rules of Procedure of the Romanian Parliament.' The report provides suggestions for increasing the efficiency and transparency of the parliament; examples of parliamentary practice in the Irish Dail and U.S. Congress; and information on specific issues raised in meetings with Romanian elected officials and staff such as the role and scope of committees, the need for a permanent rules committee and party migration.**

V. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Institutional and Programmatic Support of PDA

Although NDI took a more hands-off approach to Pro Democracy's activities between 1994 and 1998, it is still fair to say that, without NDI's technical assistance and financial support, PDA would not have been able to survive. NDI also funded a preponderance of PDA's election-related activities in 1996, for which PDA gained considerable notoriety. Therefore, NDI is including in its final report the results and accomplishments of PDA that can be indirectly attributed to NDI support.

One of PDA's major accomplishments was its successful campaign to change provisions of the local election law that related to domestic election observers. In April 1996, the Chamber of Deputies Juridical Committee passed nearly all the amendments advocated by PDA for the legislation on local elections. This was largely the result of a coordinated lobbying effort, led by PDA, that included more than 70 other NGOs. Most significantly, the Committee relaxed regulations for domestic election observer accreditation. According to the changed regulations, observers were granted unlimited access to polling stations in the *judet* where they are registered, as opposed to having access to only one polling station.

In addition to the election law victory, PDA also succeeded in increasing the credibility and viability of domestic election monitors as a non-partisan, unbiased observers. In the months before the 1996 local election, PDA was forced to confront the sudden emergence of three domestic monitoring groups with questionable nonpartisan credentials and monitoring capabilities. PDA lodged a formal complaint with the Central Election Bureau and began to verify the member lists of the new monitoring groups. In doing so, PDA discovered that many of the monitors had been recruited by the ruling party or were totally unaware that their names were being used. A press conference was subsequently held to detail the findings. PDA's ability to generate domestic press and focus attention on electoral irregularities countered this blatant attempt to subvert the monitoring process. PDA's efforts were complimented by NDI's Washington-based efforts to publicize election irregularities. At one point, it appeared that the Central Election Bureau was prepared to ban independent monitors from observing the vote count, but in part because of the publicity surrounding the new monitoring groups, the Bureau never implemented that restrictive measure.

Supported by NDI, PDA's voter education effort increased citizens' awareness of the importance of voting in a democracy, and galvanized hundreds of young volunteers who might not otherwise have become involved in the election process. Through PDA's USAID-funded Civic Caravan, voter education materials were disseminated throughout Romania, and over 40 candidate forums were held. For many citizens, this was the first time they were given the opportunity to experience one of democracy's most tangible events - a live political debate. The successful completion of the voter outreach program was a testament to PDA's increased

organizational capacity. The volume of activities required an unprecedented level of coordination between PDA and its national network of local clubs.

Through its impressive range of election-related activities, PDA gained the reputation as a model monitoring organization for the entire region. In April 1997, three national staff members and six regional PDA representatives were invited by the French *Est Liberte* Association to serve as international observers in the Bulgarian parliamentary elections. Seven PDA members were again recruited by *Est Liberte* to monitor the Albanian parliamentary elections as international observers in June 1997. These invitations were testament to Pro Democracy's professional, impartial and internationally renown monitoring capabilities.

Local Branch Training

In its preliminary assessment of PDA's local clubs, NDI established relationships with the Association throughout the regions, and drafted a plan for the organization's development based on first-hand knowledge of the clubs' positions. This rendered NDI better able to anticipate PDA's future training needs. In the course of NDI's work with PDA, the Association matured steadily, and gradually loosened ties to NDI. During the latter years of cooperation between the two organizations, PDA clubs throughout the country began organizing independent civic education activities, and constituent relations and advocacy seminars for citizens and elected officials.

NDI's 1994 grassroots activism training with local clubs generated a number of substantive strategies for mobilizing citizens around local community issues. Each of the four "model" clubs with which NDI worked developed action plans to solve local problems through increased citizen action, planned targeted advocacy campaigns, and enhanced cooperation with local government. The model clubs presented their local action plans at the PDA Annual General Meeting, which in turn, benefitted the nationwide network.

In early 1995, NDI supported PDA local clubs as they conducted numerous civic awareness and community problem-solving projects. In the city of Focsani, for example, PDA leaders and activists conducted extensive opinion research to use as the basis for a series of "deliberative forums" on crime prevention. In these forums, PDA activists presented three proposed solutions and led a structured discussion to determine effective methods for counteracting street crime with specific communities. In conjunction with the local police department, PDA activists aimed to produce leaflets with advice and contact information as determined by the deliberative forum participants.

Following NDI advocacy training in March 1998, PDA-Cluj created a manual of the judet's local council members in an effort to make these officials more accessible to citizens. The manual included each official's full name, address, office hours and priority issues. The club collected the information through meetings with local councilman and women throughout the *judet*.

Strategic Planning

During PDA's 1997 General Assembly the organization demonstrated an impressive level of maturity when the Association was forced to confront a potentially divisive internal dispute. After a surprise challenge for the Association's presidency, the vote was inconclusive since neither candidate received absolute majority. A second vote based on a simple majority led a number of individual club members to question the validity of the election. An outside lawyer determined there were minor irregularities and, in order to quell internal dispute, PDA convened a second Assembly and conducted another vote based on an absolute majority. The decision to hold a second election was made in order to maintain the credibility of the Association. The professionalism that characterized the eventual resolution of this internal matter was truly unique among Romania's NGO community, and demonstrated that PDA had developed its own internal democracy.

Demonstrating PDA's ever increasing professionalism, the Association's 1998 General Assembly was better planned and logistically organized than ever before. The national staff was well-prepared, and delegates were focused and engaged during the separate seminars.

Financial Sustainability

The results of NDI's fundraising training can be seen in PDA's diversification of funding sources over the years. Having evolved from an organization with only one funder (NDI), PDA is now supported by numerous international organizations and conducts a variety of local fundraising activities. Some of PDA's fundraising successes include: funding from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in 1996 to produce and distribute a manual on "How to Observe the Electoral Process"; a grant from the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society to PDA-Cluj to host an NGO forum in May 1998; funding for the Association's 1998 General Assembly by from three organizations: The Foundation for the Development of Civil Socity-Romania, the Soros Foundation, and PHARE. In addition, PDA has received funding from USAID, IFES, the Dutch Embassy, the German Marshall Fund, the National Endowment for Democracy and private Romanian companies.

The wide range of activities that PDA conducted in 1998 with neither technical nor financial assistance from NDI, is evidence of the fact that the Association has succeeded as an independent organization. NDI considers the Association's evident capacity to sustain itself in the future to be one of the most significant results of its eight years of close cooperation with PDA.

NDI's Election-Related Activities

In addition to the support it provided Pro Democracy, NDI conducted a variety of successful election-related initiatives on its own. Through the 1995 parliamentary symposium with Brian Feeney, as well as through meetings with MPs and government officials, NDI presented various options for electoral law reform. Through discussions of electoral law choices, Romanian legislators broadened their knowledge of relevant models for change. NDI's presence also demonstrated that Western countries were interested in, and supportive of, Romania's efforts at political reform.

NDI also succeeded in publicizing the need for electoral reforms in advance of Romania's 1996 parliamentary elections. NDI representatives emphasized the need for electoral law reform in meetings with U.S. Ambassador Alfred Moses and distributed its recommendations from the joint 1992 NDI/IRI election observation mission to all members of the Romanian parliament. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe incorporated NDI's recommendations on necessary election reforms in a letter to President Iliescu. Due in large part to NDI's efforts, members of the U.S. Congressional Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe also wrote a letter to President Iliescu detailing their concerns. Furthermore, NDI's recommendations were published in two national newspapers, and presented formally in a press release. As noted above, changes to the election law were eventually made that placed fewer restrictions on election monitors which allowed them to carry out their duties as impartial observers.

NDI's series of seven weekly election bulletins, written in 1996 by NDI Field Representative John Swanson and distributed to interested parties in Romania and Washington, brought unique insight into Romania's local electoral campaign to more than 50 individuals and organizations. The bulletins highlighted some of the more compelling races and sought to describe the electoral organizational deficiencies experienced in many of Romania's districts. Through the bulletins, NDI provided an objective description of the successes and failures of Romania's 1996 local elections.

Constituency Relations

NDI's seminar series on local government outreach yielded considerable positive results. First, it raised the awareness among local officials from over 15 cities on the value of incorporating citizens' input into the decision-making process. Far too often in Romania, citizen involvement has had a negative connotation for politicians. Further, whereas in the past citizen involvement has invariably been in response to a problem, this series conveyed the value of involving citizens in the decision-making process before problems surface. These workshops showed elected officials that involving citizens in the decision-making process from the beginning helps diffuse potential problems and minimizes distrust between local officials and their constituents.

Second, collaboration on action plans required participants to work together and reinforced the advantages of cooperation to increase efficiency. In the process, the seminars provided practical training to the participating local officials on enhancing their program

planning and implementation of skills. Upon leaving Romania in late 1996, John Swanson reported that four of the cities involved in the program had already implemented their action plans which included conducting public hearings, opinion surveys and appointing local task forces. Written materials distributed during the seminars weres reproduced repeatedly and distributed to newly elected officials.

NDI's collaboration with the Foundation for Local Development and Public Services (FDLSP) contributed to that organization's development and broadened its capabilities. FDLSP trainers gained valuable experience by helping NDI design the local government program and by acting as small group facilitators. Soon after the completion of its joint program with NDI, FDLSP received new grants and were invited to form partnerships with other NGOs. The organization subsequently used modules and materials designed for NDI's seminars to lead Soros Foundation-funded training seminars for newly-elected officials.

Furthermore, NDI's constituency relations manual became a valued resource to MPs from across the political spectrum. In distributing the constituency relations manual, NDI provided practical legislative outreach methods to all Romanian MPs who otherwise might not have been exposed to them or might not have realized the potential benefits of a more direct line of communication between them and their constituents.

VI. CONCLUSION

Democracy building in Romania has been a long and difficult undertaking. To have created and develop a strong, viable, Romanian organization in the form of the Pro Democracy Association, therefore, has been a significant achievement for NDI. In a 1996 article, American political analyst Thomas Carothers wrote, "Romanian public interest NGOs are financially dependent on foreign donors. Most have not found a way to sustain themselves financially and will continue to exist only as long as they receive support from Western aid organizations and foundations." While PDA received 100 percent of its funding in 1992, by 1996, NDI funding accounted for less than half the organization's budget, and today it is completely financially independent of NDI. Although PDA still relies heavily on international support, it is slowly developing a Romanian funding base. Furthermore, its current financial diversification has given the Association the freedom and confidence it needs to develop new and innovative ideas.

The establishment of an independent organization like Pro Democracy is, in itself, impressive. But, more important and more impressive is the fact that PDA's ideals of non-partisan citizen participation have proven sustainable in Romania. In an environment of distrust in which most participants in the public arena are polarized and biased – including the press and many NGOs – Pro Democracy's promotion of non-partisan principles has frequently been challenged and criticized, but has ultimately proven attractive, viable, and necessary.