



**Quarterly Report**  
**ALBANIA: POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT AND**  
**PROMOTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**  
**USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00**  
**January 1 to March 31, 2001**

**I. SUMMARY**

This quarter, preparations for parliamentary elections in June got underway in a political environment that was noticeably less hostile than usual, in large part due to the milder rhetoric adopted by Democratic Party (PD) President Sali Berisha. Following a visit to the United States, Berisha has repeatedly called for dialogue with the ruling Socialist Party (PS) and has attempted to work with the PS on ensuring fair elections. Nevertheless, conflict between the two parties flared up over the selection of a new chairman and two members to the Central Election Commission (CEC) following the resignation in January of the previous chairman Fatos Nano. The conflict was resolved in mid-February, after which the CEC and the political parties have been progressing at a steady pace to prepare for elections in June 2001.

Albania's democratic development is grounded in political parties that are responsive to and representative of citizen's interests and that operate within a constructive political party framework, and in a citizenry engaged in the political process to effect positive change. The program conducted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) operates on three fronts to address these pressing political and civic challenges. The Institute's Political Leadership Development Program trains emerging political party leaders in party development and communication with citizens. NDI's Civic Forum Program facilitates discussion groups with more than 600 citizens on topics related to democratic development in order to build citizens' advocacy skills, so that they can effectively organize to address community problems. In March 2001, NDI added an NGO/Voter Education program, funded by USAID through the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), to facilitate the efforts of local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct voter education projects in advance of the June 2001 parliamentary elections.

In this quarter, NDI undertook the following activities:

- Conducted civic forum discussion groups on the role of elected officials in a democracy, decentralization, and the role of citizens in a democracy;
- Trained approximately 80 young political party members in four regions across Albania on team-building and effective leadership;

- Held four single-party seminars focusing on the role of councilors, media relations, and coalition-building with representatives from seven right-wing parties, including the Democratic Party, Republican Party and Legalite Party.

In this quarter, NDI recorded the following results:

- Citizens who learned about Civic Forum from program participants started a discussion group; and
- Participants of ZHUP I and ZHUP II seminars trained their colleagues in seminars on team-building and leadership.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

During the past three months, Albania's government and Central Election Commission continued to make preparations for upcoming parliamentary elections in June. In late January, Fotaq Nano, chairman of the Central Election Committee, resigned from his post following sustained criticism over his conduct during the local election season in 2000. Two other CEC members followed suit, prompting concern that election preparations would be seriously delayed. After heated protests from opposition political parties over the selection process for replacing the three CEC members, the CEC elected its chair and filled the other two positions in mid-February, giving it enough time to finish election preparations.

Currently, the main impediment to preparing for the elections is the formation of local government election commissions (LGECs). As the election code stipulates, the LGECs are to be composed of representatives from the seven parties or coalitions that gained the most votes nationwide in the 1997 parliamentary elections. A small member party of the Union for Democracy coalition contested the constitutionality of a recent CEC ruling that states only one LGEC representative is allotted to coalitions, rather than each party of the coalition being granted one representative. Since the LGECs are responsible for the revision and maintenance of the electoral registers and voter lists, the dispute is delaying crucial elections preparations.

Politically, PD leader Sali Berisha has adopted a noticeably conciliatory stance in relation to the government and opposition political parties. In February, major political parties met to discuss preparations for June elections, which set a framework for cooperation and discussion on election preparation related issues. Berisha has sought to engage former members of the Democratic Party who separated with the controversial leader since the parties' inception in 1992 by encouraging them to rejoin the PD in opposition to the Socialist-led government. This offer has been rejected by most former PD figures, many of whom regard Berisha's reconciliation as a insincere ploy meant to garner votes in June.

Berisha's new call for cooperation comes after the Reform Movement of the Democratic Party (PDLR), led by former Berisha compatriot Genc Pollo, split with the PD in late January. As a result of several months of negotiations, the PDLR, the Movement for Democracy (PLD), and the Party of the Democratic Right (PDD) announced their merger into a single party on January 31. In late March, this right wing force officially registered as the Democratic Party of

Albania. Due to lack of reliable polling information, support for the PDLR is unclear, but the party appears to be slow in mobilizing for elections, in part likely due to Berisha's redefinition.

Albania has undergone a remarkable transformation since political reform began in 1991, but the early momentum embodied in the defeat of the communist Party of Labour has dissipated as the country continues to face challenges to its stability. The popular will for improved democratic development has been frustrated by the inability of the political class to overcome partisanship and corruption, as well as a lack of understanding of the mechanics of governing a democratic state. Equally important, the public has not understood its role as the legitimate source and guarantor of political power.

NDI's Political Leadership Development Program (ZHUP) provides a multiparty group of emerging political party leaders with practical training on party development, election preparation, political ethics, political message development, coalition building, fund-raising and voter contact. Indirectly, the program has built informal relationships among members of disparate political parties, providing them a neutral forum to share ideas and viewpoints. Through NDI's Civic Forum program, many citizens who felt disconnected from their government as a result of past political and governmental controversies attend civic education discussion groups in order to improve their communities over time through the democratic system.

### **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

#### ***Civic Forum***

NDI's Civic Forum Program is currently conducted with more than 50 groups of 10 to 15 citizens on a bi-weekly basis in the districts of Tirana and Durrës. Discussion topics during the period included government decentralization, the roles of elected officials, and the role of citizens in a democracy. During the past three months, NDI field coordinators (FCs) took responsibility in developing discussion topics related to anti-corruption efforts.

In this quarter, many groups completed the education phase of Civic Forum. In discussion with FCs, NDI concluded that these groups are ready to enter the advocacy phase of the program. During this second phase of Civic Forum, NDI assists citizens in selecting issues affecting their communities, organizing around these issues, and advocating for them at the local government level. In preparation for this advocacy phase, field coordinators began a project of their own to advocate to the appropriate government authorities on clarifying issues related to the complex social insurance system.

#### ***Collaboration with World Learning***

Several citizens from NDI's Civic Forum program have been selected by World Learning and NDI to participate in a World Learning-funded study mission to Bulgaria in late April. The training will complement their beginning advocacy efforts and introduce them to other citizen initiatives in the region.

## *Meetings*

During the period, NDI met with the Tirana prefect to inform him of Civic Forum's work. The prefect has been active in the decentralization process and asked to receive information about citizens' opinions of the government and to attend a discussion group.

NDI staff also met with the deputy mayor of Durres, who complimented Civic Forum's work and emphasized the importance of teaching citizens what their role is in a democracy.

## ***Political Leadership Development Program (ZHUP)***

### *Regional ZHUP Program*

The third phase of the Political Leadership Development Program (known by its Albanian acronym ZHUP), the Regional ZHUP program, began during this quarter. Designed as a series of four seminars, each of which is conducted in four regions with more than 80 activists across the country, Regional ZHUP builds on the training of ZHUP I and II, which trained 54 emerging political party leaders on party development, election preparation, and leadership skills. NDI conducted an exhaustive selection process in which parties nominated participants that were 25 to 35 years old, active in their party's local branch, Youth Forum or Women's Forum, and had a role in the October 2000 elections.

This quarter, NDI conducted its first seminar entitled "Effective Leaders Work With Their Members," which covered techniques of decision-making and team building, and strategies for improving internal party communications. The seminars were conducted in Durrës (Region 2) on February 16 and 17 for 21 participants, in Berat (Region 3) on February 24 and 25 for 11 participants, in Vlora (Region 4) on March 3 and 4 for 19 participants, and in Shkodra (Region 1) on March 10 and 11 for 21 participants. In addition to NDI's resident representative, participants from ZHUP I and II conducted the trainings.

### *Single-Party Training*

In preparation for the 2001 parliamentary elections, USAID approved an addendum to NDI's workplan for additional funding to conduct single-party trainings, particularly with parties whose recent formation put them at a competitive disadvantage. NDI recruited Roy Dooney, a senior member of Ireland's *Fine Gael* party, to work with NDI's resident representative on developing a training schedule in advance of the elections.

In early March, NDI held meetings with representatives of seven political parties to introduce Dooney and to solicit requests for election preparation training. NDI staff also met with OSCE Deputy Head of Mission Robert Owen and USAID Mission Director Howard Sumka. While in Albania, Dooney also met with Genc Pollo, leader of the dissident Reform Movement of the Democratic Party (now the Democratic Party of Albania), to discuss areas in which he could provide training to this new group.

Dooney returned to Albania in late March to conduct trainings with ten parties, seven of which were at the time considering a pre-electoral coalition. Two trainings were held on two consecutive days with 50 local councilors (officials at the commune level) from the Christian Democratic Party and 30 local councilors from the Social Democratic Party. The seminar covered the role of a councilor, councilors and the media, and election preparation skills. A group of 20 local branch chairmen from the Socialist Party attended the third training on media relations.

The final training brought together two representatives from seven political parties, including the Democratic Party, the Republican Party (PR), the Democratic National Front (PBK), and the Legality Movement Party (PLL), who were in the process of negotiating a pre-election coalition. Dooney spoke to the group about the process of coalition-building in Ireland and then consulted with the party on the future of its negotiations.

#### **IV. RESULTS**

##### ***Civic Forum***

##### **Objective: Citizens understand and engage in the political process.**

In October 2000, NDI distributed a survey to Civic Forum participants to measure attitudes about and knowledge of democratic principles and processes. The survey established a baseline that will be used in the future to measure the changes in attitude and knowledge among Civic Forum participants. Findings showed that after participating in Civic Forum for approximately six months, 41 percent of Durres participants and 28 percent of Tirana participants strongly agreed with the statement that "I have a clear understanding of the role of my local and national elected representatives." In Tirana, 42 percent of citizens strongly agreed that "Citizens should know the structures and function of government," and 66 percent of Durres respondents answered likewise.

A majority of citizens also demonstrated that they have positive attitudes toward engaging in the political process. In Tirana, 22 percent strongly agreed, 38 percent agreed, and 24 percent somewhat agreed with the statement, "I have a role to play in making positive changes in my local community." In Durres, 38 percent of participants strongly agreed with this statement, 25 percent agreed, and 17 percent somewhat agreed. Additionally, in response to the statement, "My neighbors and I working together with our local government can solve some problems in our community," 22 percent of Tirana participants strongly agreed, 25 percent somewhat agreed, and 36 percent agreed.

Full survey results are attached as Appendix I.

Several participants in Civic Forum have communicated the information from the sessions to their communities and have motivated other citizens to become involved in learning about their role in government. One participant in Durres told a colleague about Civic Forum and motivated that colleague to help start a discussion group in his area. In another instance, citizens in Tirana independently organized a meeting together without the field coordinators (FCs). Villagers in a

town outside of Hamallaj were overheard speaking about the work that citizens in Hamallaj were doing with Civic Forum.

## ***ZHUP***

**Objective: Approximately 120 emerging political party leaders and activists acquire party building and election preparation skills that favor their development as future political leaders.**

NDI recruited 80 participants for the Regional ZHUP program, a number lower than anticipated due to a recalibration of what was manageable given the nationwide reach of the program. During the quarter, ZHUP I and II participants trained Regional ZHUP program participants, thus strengthening their respective roles within their parties.

The following comments were made by participants of the regional ZHUP seminars:

“A good lesson in quieting the political climate; we talk like friends even though we’re from different parties.” - Participant from Berat

“I like the way the work was managed. It’s a model we might follow in our branches.”- Participant in Vlora

“In our political activity we’ve implemented strategies and taken decisions without knowing their names. You’ve given us methods.” - Participant in Shkodra

## ***Single-Party Training***

**Objective: Political leaders and activists strengthen election organization and voter outreach capabilities in advance of parliamentary elections.**

As NDI commenced single party training during this quarter, no results have been manifested thus far.

## **V. EVALUATION**

### ***Civic Forum***

NDI is meeting its objective of helping citizens at the grassroots level to understand and engage in the political process. Discussion groups continued to meet on a bi-weekly basis, and groups are now moving into the advocacy phase of the program. As planned in NDI’s workplan, discussion groups in the first quarter of 2001 have begun the public advocacy phase of the program, in which citizens are beginning to organize around issues and lobby government officials for change.

The process of expanding Civic Forum to another site and training new staff has been delayed by three months from the January –March 2001 timeframe specified in NDI’s workplan.

A new site has been chosen, and preparations for the expansion are currently underway. NDI estimates that the new site will be operational within two months' time.

## ***ZHUP***

The participant selection process, whereby candidates were nominated by parties rather than directly selected by NDI, resulted in several problems. The most noticeable was the lack of women nominated, which created a gender imbalance in the seminars. To rectify this gender imbalance in the future, NDI is considering requiring parties to nominate a certain percentage of women participants. Some parties also nominated more candidates than requested, and several sent candidates who were over the specified age limit of 35 years old. The quality of the participants, however, was generally very good, and participants were both enthusiastic and engaged.

## **VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

### ***Civic Forum***

In April, field coordinators will start more groups as former groups end the education process and choose not to continue with advocacy. Civic Forum will distribute its first newsletter the second week of April. It will be available for citizens and local officials and is being developed by the field coordinators. A copy in English will be available.

In June, NDI's Civic Forum programs in Kosovo and Albania will hold a joint retreat in Kosovo to share training and organization methods and experiences, develop best practices and enhance regional cooperation.

Throughout the month of April, NDI staff in Washington, D.C., Kosovo, and Albania will be working together to develop an evaluation tool for Civic Forum that will be ready to implement by the first week in May.

## ***ZHUP***

In the coming quarter, NDI will conduct ZHUP training on voter contact, media skills, and preparation for the June parliamentary elections. NDI has tentatively scheduled a second round of single-party trainings for late April for parties in advance of the elections.

## Appendix I

### Survey Results from the District of Durres (Number of Respondent Answers)

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
The democratic process in Albania is effective.	24	20	22	25	56	60
My government works for me.	17	8	23	35	54	41
I should know who my elected representatives are.	105	35	56	5	13	14
The only responsibility a citizen has in a democracy is to vote.	112	38	33	3	9	15
The articles of the Albanian Constitution directly affect my life.	46	28	21	13	46	43
I have a clear understanding of the role of my local and national elected representatives.	82	38	46	6	13	15
I believe that democracy involves citizens working together for the common good.	125	32	24	1	2	7
Citizens should know the structures and functions of government.	139	31	39	0	3	0
I have a role to play in making positive changes in my local community.	66	31	45	8	21	7
I feel the benefits of democracy in my daily life.	60	27	30	24	40	22
My neighbors and I working together with our local government can solve some problems in our community.	36	42	36	8	43	34

**Appendix I (Continued)**

**Survey Results from the District of Durres  
(Number of Respondent Answers)**

<b>Survey Questions</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
The democratic process in Albania is effective.	68	77	43	15	9	20
My government works for me.	41	67	31	14	21	38
I should know who my elected representatives are.	100	29	93	2	10	10
The only responsibility a citizen has in a democracy is to vote.	41	32	51	23	25	59
The articles of the Albanian Constitution directly affect my life.	67	61	60	8	18	16
I have a clear understanding of the role of my local and national elected representatives.	64	70	62	8	16	11
I believe that democracy involves citizens working together for the common good.	80	34	88	16	13	18
Citizens should know the structures and functions of government.	90	30	75	4	13	2
I have a role to play in making positive changes in my local community.	49	55	84	5	20	12
I feel the benefits of democracy in my daily life.	63	66	68	4	16	13
My neighbors and I working together with our local government can solve some problems in our community.	49	55	77	8	13	16