

# **Albania**

# **ORT**

## **Democracy Network Program**

### **Quarterly Progress Report July - September 1996**

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# **ORT Albania Democracy Network Program Quarterly Progress Report July - September 1996**

## **INTRODUCTION**

ORT has met and exceeded all established goals for the fifth quarter. During July, August, and September 1996, the Democracy Commission approved and ORT signed eleven subagreements and disbursed funds to a second round of grantees. Key achievements were made in the areas of technical assistance and training, including the training of trainers (TOT) for advocacy and sponsoring the first of the four national government-NGO conferences.

## **GRANT PROGRAM**

The Project Management Unit (PMU) approved two new micro grants during this quarter. The PMU also continued to monitor the successful performance of the institutional development grantees of round one, establish performance results and indicators, and actively support the work of round two DemNet grantees.

### **New Micro-Grants Awarded**

- **The Society for Democratic Culture**  
"Voter Education Television and Radio Spots for Local Elections" project (\$3,000)

This project is part of the Society's on-going work in civic education and election monitoring work as one of a few Albanian non-partisan election watchdogs. Through a DemNet grant, radio and television spots were developed and broadcast on national radio and television stations informing citizens about the electoral process and of their civic right and duty to vote. The proposed activity's goal is to increase public confidence in the electoral process.

- **The Society for Democratic Culture:**  
"Media Monitoring of Albanian Local Elections" project (\$3,000)

This project is the Society's second media monitoring campaign funded by a DemNet grant. Initially, the monitoring program was created for the national elections in May 1996, this campaign will continue in a modified format for the local elections. The monitoring campaign's short-term objective is to increase the access, objectivity and amount of public information available to Albanian citizens by positively influencing the level and fairness of media coverage via a weekly release of media monitoring data. Using previously-funded equipment and trained monitors (see fourth quarterly report for a description of the grant), the Society will record and analyze radio and television

coverage of local elections for fairness and equity in broadcast time given to candidates and publish this data on a weekly basis. By increasing domestic analysis efforts and pressure from public opinion, the Society intends to enhance the state television and radio compliance with legal requirements on campaign media coverage.

### **Achievements of Round One Subgrantees**

While conducting mid-term evaluations of the first round grantees receiving institutional development grants and development activity grants, ORT found measurable progress and significant achievements.

#### **The Society for Democratic Culture's: "Election '96: Informing the Voters" project.**

The PMU reported the many accomplishments of the Society's project in the last quarterly report. The initial grant period of six months was scheduled to end after the national elections in May, however, the Society requested an extension of its six-month grant to spend its unused funds on producing and broadcasting radio and television spots. These public service announcements were designed to send a positive message to the public in the aftermath of the national parliamentary election. The spots apprised citizens - and indirectly the government - of the essentials of civil society, promoted democratic processes and reinforced democratic ideals. The spots were broadcast during prime time and before news programs in order to reach a broad audience.

**The Albanian NGO Forum** continues to operate with funding from an institutional development grant from the DemNet program. Since the beginning of the grant year, the Forum has almost tripled its membership; by May, membership jumped from 90 NGOs to 114, and then reached 170 NGOs in August. The notable increase is largely due to the opening of new offices in Berat, Korca, Gjirokaster, and Shkodra made possible through funding from the United Nations Development Program. The Forum, in conjunction with ORT, held NGO round tables in each of these cities.

*Services Provided:* The NGO Forum provides its membership with numerous services including translation, lay-out and printing of NGO newsletters, photocopying, Email access, seminar and meeting facilities, technical assistance and advice on proposal writing, drafting statutes, program planning, registration procedures, and facilitating contacts with lawyers, donors, and other NGOs. On a daily basis, three to four NGOs use the facilities and equipment, and an additional eight NGOs per month consult Forum staff on project-related issues. To better assist the membership, the Forum has brought on board a volunteer to provide consultation on a weekly basis for two additional hours. As a result of these consultations, approximately twenty NGOs have received grants from outside funding sources domestically and abroad. In addition, fifteen newly-created NGOs have consulted with the Forum on drafting statutes and other documents and to network with other NGOs.

*Government -NGO Relations:* The NGO Forum also serves as a liaison between the NGO community and the government in meetings and conferences. To this end, the Forum's Executive Director met with several advisors to the Prime Minister, ministerial level cabinet officials and department chiefs to discuss issues such as establishing a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural school in Gjirokastra, increasing frequency of information sharing with NGOs and extending an invitation to a series of government-NGO round tables. Forum representatives have also met with the Chief of the Humanitarian Aid Department to discuss adopting a tax exemption law for NGOs, potential changes in the existing code, ways to better collaborate on legal reform and deregulation; and the treatment of NGO funding by foreign donors. As a part of the Balkan Empowerment Project, the NGO Forum hosted the regional conference on "NGOs and Government." This conference included government representatives from Albania, Romania, and Bulgaria, and their respective NGO communities. It provided a venue for examining comparative models of NGO-Government relationships in these countries. The conclusions drafted at the end of the conference recognized a need for a more supportive legal framework for NGOs at the national and local levels, including suitable tax arrangements; that collaboration efforts between NGOs and local government should be strengthened; and that there is a lack of communication and exchange of information between NGOs and government in the policy area. The Forum is planning to hold a series of round tables with the government over the next six months to address the issues raised.

*General Membership Meetings:* At the August meeting written activity and financial reports were distributed, as well as copies of the monthly Bulletin, and conclusions from regional conferences hosted by the Forum. The Forum also distributed an evaluation form to its members requesting feedback on services. The results of the evaluation completed by 50% of the members rated the Forum's services - See attachment.

**The Family Planning Association's project "Improving Reproductive Rights in Albania"** has made substantial achievements. The Association has raised consciousness about the necessity of engaging in family planning practices through regional seminars, distribution of pamphlets and other information to university students, broadcasting radio programs, and working directly with government representatives to draft a law on reproductive health. Two recent seminars on reproductive rights and health targeted 60 residents in Vlora (a port city with high incidence of prostitution, drug use and trafficking) and in Lezha (a rural town with no formal health education). In recognition of the Association's expertise, the Ministry of Health requested that the association collaborate on drafting a comprehensive reproductive health law. In response, the Association has researched model laws and legal precedents on reproductive health, discussed concepts and necessary guarantees for reproductive rights, and provided the Ministry with background materials. With DemNet funds, the association published a booklet in Albanian citing international treaty provisions recognizing and guaranteeing reproductive rights as human rights; copies of the booklet were delivered to government ministries and Parliament. **The Ministries publicly thanked the Association** for their assistance and materials during their speeches at a recent national conference on Reproductive Health. The project has also raised the level of coverage by Albanian media on individual rights in family planning.

Both regional seminars were covered on national news, four times daily. Throughout September, the Association broadcast four 30-minute radio programs on reproductive rights in the context of Albanian life, international human rights, and the activities of the Association. The Association also had a journalist speak on the issue of reproductive rights and the media during the conferences. With the remainder of the DemNet funds, the Association will hold a national seminar, distribute a public education poster, and continue to lobby the government and Parliament for completion and adoption of the reproductive health law.

**The Health for All Foundation (formerly the "Albanian Resource Center for Health")** relocated, trained new office staff, and held an executive board meeting of the new foundation to discuss organizational and programmatic issues. In May, the Foundation participated in a public health fair held in Tirana to advertise its public health information and service center. The Health for All Foundation is also increasing services to NGOs through Email and by the provision of secretarial, consulting, and publication services. The Foundation will prepare a written menu of services, including prices, and develop a monitoring and evaluation system to record utilization of facilities and services.

**The League of Albanian Anti-Communist Women** through its National Platform for Action project organized round tables for its members and clients in the cities of Korca, Pogradec, Durres, and Fier, to identify and discuss the problems faced by ex-politically persecuted women. After the regional round tables, the League held a national seminar to create their strategy for inclusion in Albania's National Platform for Action for women. ORT Project Director Lisa Davis, participated as a speaker on the following theme: "Cooperation with foundations and other organizations as a necessity for resolving current problems of ex-politically persecuted women." The Association is preparing to address the government with a list of concrete actions based on the findings of the regional and national seminars.

#### **Early Achievements of Round Two Grantees:**

- **The Albanian Ecological Club - Mirdita Branch**  
Regional Seminar on the Preservation of Rubiku Hills

The PMU staff participated in the planning and implementation of the "Reforestation of Rubiku Hills" seminar made possible by a DemNet micro-grant. Despite its inexperience, the Ecological Club's seven member conference task force proved to be well organized and hosted a successful seminar. Attendees consisted of actively-engaged membership, two representatives of Parliament from the surrounding region, a member of the national forestry department, head of the local court, and the town leader. The seminar addressed causes of de-forestation in the area, environmental and health reasons necessitating reforestation, the need for urban planning by the local government, enforcement of existing laws, policy reform, and the roles that national and local government, NGOs, and the public should play in addressing environmental problems. In response to one recommendation regarding curriculum reform in primary schools, a

deputy of Parliament agreed to assist and support efforts by the NGOs in pursuing such reform. Other recommendations included legislation requiring replanting and reforestation by logging companies and government guarantees to update technology in the adjacent copper processing plant when plant operation resumes. These and other recommendations will be condensed in a report to be submitted to the government; the Mirdita Club will also use this report for future reforestation projects.

### **Future Grant Rounds**

ORT instituted a new procedure for reviewing and approving grant proposals for institutional development grants (IDGs) and development activity grants (DAGs) by establishing three grant rounds per year. In August, the Democracy Commission granted authorization to the PMU to approve applications for all micro grants at or under a \$3000 ceiling. Thus, applications for micro grants will be received and approved on a rolling basis outside the structured IDG and DAG grant rounds. The application deadline for grant round three for IDGs and DAGs was October 15. During the past quarter, the PMU has assisted applicants in preparing and revising project proposals. After the deadline, the PMU will evaluate and rate the proposals, translate the recommended proposals into English, and submit them to the Democracy Commission for approval.

### **PMU INITIATIVES, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON GRANT PROCESS**

#### **Lessons Learned**

- Several of the subgrantees are having trouble complying with the recommended reporting format or they are submitting reports that do not address specific impacts of activities or indicators outlined in their respective subagreements. During mid-term evaluations, these subgrantees agreed to better define impacts.

#### **Recommendations**

- Conduct brief impact reporting training session and provide each of the subgrantees with a detailed handout including examples of reporting techniques. At the training session, divide NGOs into groups with subgrantees based on the size and type of grants held to improve/facilitate dialogue among participants.
- Revise progress report forms and implementation forms as attached to subagreement to better solicit "impact" reporting.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING**

### **Independent Research Training**

The PMU finished the third training course on Independent Research in Support of Democratic Development in July with a three-day course in Shkodra. This workshop was considered to be the most successful because of the experience and age level of the participants. They were more receptive to ideas and had a better grasp of the role of research in supporting public policy objectives.

ORT Training Consultant, Margaret Moores, developed a training module and workbook, altered according to the various levels of NGO development of the groups, and trained local training consultants to deliver subsequent training. By the third workshop, the local trainers demonstrated a marked improvement in their comprehension of the concepts and the facility with which they conducting the training.

The training workshops clearly satisfied the initial objectives of the training program, which were to increase the capacity of NGOs to :

- define research strategies in support of their activities,
- access existing (secondary) data sources (including governmental data),
- design programs of primary research (surveying, sampling, interviews),
- draft research proposals,
- design and conduct surveys, and
- analyze and interpret secondary and primary research data.

Sessions were organized around focused activities and discussions relating to each of these objectives. Through a combination of instruction, participatory discussions and practical exercises, participants were encouraged to clearly identify, focus and plan research activities required by their NGO in order to achieve maximum impact in the areas of concern to them in addition to the abovementioned priority areas.

According to the participant evaluations, most attendees found the program to be very relevant. Sessions involving applied exercises (as in the Research Strategies exercise) were most popular because participants were able to pursue their individual interests and achieve tangible results. One of the clear impacts of the workshop was revealing the distinction between low-impact, descriptive research and more probing and informative alternatives. Judging by previous research proposals reviewed by DemNet, NGOs survey attempts were overly ambitious, vague, and had the tendency to collect "descriptive" or even obvious information, to validate the existence of a problem rather than understanding the roots of that problem. The basic differentiation between describing and understanding a problem will hopefully be reflected in some of the future proposals, as it is particularly important that policy recommendations and proposed solutions be based on solid factual background.

In addition to the exercises and sessions relating to research strategies, participants appeared particularly interested in the issue of access to government data. The session on existing sources of information became a lively forum for discussing frustrations in accessing government data. In addition to sharing experiences (good and bad) and exchanging advice on obtaining approval for release of data, the trainers discussed the need for "Access to Information" legislation and the even more important need for "Policies on Distribution" for approved, official statistics. Many of the participants previously pursued acquiring official statistics and other government data, and most found the process to be overly restricted and arbitrary. One NGO in the social sector had tried to access statistics relating to crime violations from the local police commission, but was repeatedly asked to return "tomorrow" until they finally lost hope of ever receiving the data. Such cases appeared to be numerous. Most of the NGO representatives who had succeeded had done so based on the whim of an individual bureaucrat or because they had contacts in government. Participants realized the democratic benefits of having open and enforced policies on distributing government data to societal institutions (media, academia, libraries). The PMU anticipates some NGOs will follow-up on this issue by collaboration in order to lobby Parliament to adopt such policies.

Representatives of active, experienced NGOs (most of those in Shkodra and Tirana workshops) entered the workshop with an understanding of their need for information and the need to conduct research in some form. This group achieved a better understanding of the role of research and facilitating constructive dialogue with the government, developing effective solutions based on solid background information, the potential for publicity and media attention surrounding the release of survey results, and the fundamental right to collect, analyze and disseminate information on any topic of concern or interest. The role of research was formally introduced in the first session of the workshop, and was emphasized throughout workshop exercises and demonstrations. Less active NGOs (including most of those in the Gjirokaster workshop) received a basic introduction to the distinction between public policy and politics, which may seem evident in a political culture but does not translate easily given the restricted political dialogue of post-Hoxha Albanian culture. This fundamental distinction was an important, unanticipated, lesson from the workshop; and the Albanian co-trainers were particularly useful in "pitching" the Gjirokaster workshop at an appropriate level so these concepts could be easily understood.

As a result of the workshops, the Training Consultant and co-trainers have identified the associations showing a strong interest in developing research projects, and expect these NGOs to apply for DemNet funding (6 NGOs from the Tirana Workshop, 2 from the Gjirokaster Workshop, and 5 from the Shkodra Workshop.) If these or other NGO participants submit project proposals including research component, the PMU will be able to further evaluate the impact of the training. The PMU will also provide assistance to these groups to finalize their proposals by engaging one-on-one technical assistance to help pinpoint research projects that best serve their public policy objectives.

## **Sector Conferences on Building Government-NGO Partnerships**

On September 30 and October 1, the PMU held the first in a series of national conferences entitled, "Building Government-NGO Partnerships in Environmental Protection" with the active participation of 20 government officials, 34 NGO representatives, and 12 international donor representatives (see Annex 1). The main objective of the conference was to develop working partnerships between the three sectors to promote environmental protection in Albania. Each group was asked to present its development strategy and opinion on the role of Albanian NGOs in environmental protection and to identify constraints in environmental policy and the legal framework that inhibits improvements in environmental protection.

The objectives and the outcomes of the conference were met and exceeded. Through presentations and discussions, an improved understanding among the participants evolved, and working relationships (existing and future ones) between NGOs, government, and donors in the sector were solidified. At the end of the conference, a joint declaration was agreed upon and adopted by all participants (see Annex 2). The declaration identifies key environmental issues facing Albania and recognizes that state needs help from NGOs and donors to resolve these issues. The declaration outlines recommendations for action which include: completing an environmental legal framework, analyzing the failures in implementation of current environmental laws, drafting a concrete strategy for government-NGO partnerships, formalizing the participation of NGOs in the policy formulation and implementation process, and improving collaboration among NGOs with the creation of an environmental NGO council.

The PMU will conduct follow-up training directly to the NGO participants to strengthen their policy analysis, formulation and advocacy skills, and provide grants to support their public policy-oriented projects. The participants, both government and NGO, will use the joint declaration and recommendations as the basis for drafting a concrete strategy for working partnerships on specific issues and in formalizing their relationship. With the help of Dr. Lirim Selfo, the Chairperson of the Committee on Environmental Protection (a key government representative in the conference), the joint declaration will be presented to the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. ORT will continue to provide technical assistance to the government and NGOs in carrying out the joint declaration and its recommendations for action.

### **Training of Advocacy Trainers**

During the month of September, the PMU with the assistance of short-term training consultant, Charles Curry-Smithson, designed and delivered a five-day training of trainers course for eight NGO representatives (two persons from each of the DemNet priority sectors.) Working with the eight trainers, the ORT training consultant adapted the training modules to fit Albania and taught them how to administer the training and the substantive issues to be included in the training. The new trainers will be employed in subsequent public policy training workshops. The first advocacy training course will use the two trainers from the environmental sector and will train 15-20 environmental NGO representatives in mid-November.

The purpose of the training to be delivered by the eight trainers is to create and/or strengthen the public policy and advocacy skills of Albanian NGOs so they can constructively engage in the policy making, policy analysis, or policy implementing processes. The advocacy training workshops are designed to be interactive ones. For the environmental advocacy training, the participants will largely, if not wholly, represent those NGOs participating in the Government-NGO conference. The advocacy workshop should lead the participants to work to build concrete strategic plans together.

### **NGO Law Training**

The PMU assisted the regional DemNet contractor, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, in organizing a Training of Trainers on NGO law, that was held on September 7. The PMU helped identify 19 trainers from regions around Albania and to draft invitations to these participants. Kalia Musha, the PMU Training Officer, worked closely as ICNL's local coordinator to prepare the agenda and course materials with local trainer, Vjollca Mecaj. The PMU provided assistance to the ICNL representative, Debbie Cooper, in her preparatory visit, providing logistical advice, finding a translator, and allowing her to work out of the DemNet office. During the training of trainers course, the participants engaged in exercises and discussions on legal provisions and current issues facing Albanian NGOs. The participants drafted a list of legal issues that are not clearly defined under existing law, and agreed to meet again after an initial training seminar in their respective regions to discuss the impact of the training and possible revisions or amendments to the legal framework for NGOs. ICNL has contracted with the Albanian NGO Forum to carry out regional courses employing the trainers. A local donor, the Albanian Civil Society Foundation, who sponsored half of the participants, will deliver training in other regions with the same trainers. The PMU agreed to integrate the trainers and the subject matter in its NGO organizational training plans.

### **Regional Media Training**

The PMU financed two NGO representatives to participate in the National Forum Foundation's "Media Relations" training in Budapest. A representative from the Albanian Youth Council, a DemNet grantee, and a representative from the NGO training association, DeMeTra, attended the training. Both associations have planned training for a number of Albanian NGOs to be held during the upcoming year. The PMU will use the training materials developed during the conference in planning its upcoming sector workshop and keep them in the resource center for use by other NGOs.

### **Local Government - NGO Technical Assistance Meetings**

The PMU, in collaboration with the USAID Public Administration Project (PAPA), held two technical assistance meetings in Pogradec and in Shkodra. These meetings facilitated a dialogue between a local NGO representative and the Mayor for discussion of opportunities for citizen involvement (through NGOs) in local decision making and to discuss joint implementation of a

specific city projects. The first meeting took place in Pogradec at which time the parties discussed a summer sports program for youth. Unfortunately, the NGO representative failed to disclose to the PMU the occurrence of a previous controversy with the Mayor. As a result, the Mayor of Pogradec was uneasy to identify opportunities for collaboration; and not entirely enthusiastic about future projects. In contrast, the second meeting in Shkodra resulted in a constructive discussion on collaboration with and NGO to undertake a "greening of the city" project. The Mayor of Shkodra assigned the Vice-Mayor to the project with the environmental NGO, and offered the free use of a city bus to the NGO to carry out a training expedition around the Shkodra Lake (a part of a DemNet funded project.) The meetings served as a learning experience for all the parties, including DemNet and PAPA. They opened a dialogue between city administrators and citizens. After local elections in October, the DemNet program and the PAPA will outline a workplan for collaboration to urge government officials to hold public hearings on local issues and to prepare NGO representatives discussions for further citizen involvement.

### **Future Technical Assistance and Training**

**Training in Institutional Capacity Building and Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making.** The PMU will hold a third joint training session with local office of the Regional Environmental Center. The training is designed to build the institutional capacity of environmental NGOs in organizing and managing their associations and projects, to impart strategic planning skills, and to strengthen their capacity for advocacy on environmental issues. This third training course is designed for the more experienced environmental NGOs and will be taught at a higher level than the previous two courses. The PMU will fund the consultant fees for two environmental trainers on organizational issues, and will deliver training on public participation in environmental decision making based on materials produced by a PMU training consultant in the previous course. The training will include a five-day training of trainers (TOT), who will deliver a three-day training course for participants. To be held in Tirana in mid-October.

**Advocacy Training for Environmental NGOs** to be held in Vlora, November 1996. (see Sector Conferences on Building Government-NGO Partnerships)

**Sector Conference #2: Building Government-NGO Partnerships for Economic Growth in Albania** to be held in Korca, December 1996.

**Financial Management of NGOs.** In October, a short-term technical advisor will assist the PMU in developing a financial management training module and train six trainers. The new local trainers, and the PMU Finance Officer, will train finance officers and directors of the DemNet grantees. The course will cover topics such as budgeting, accounting standards, sound financial management practices, Albanian tax law, and USAID reporting requirements. Courses will be repeated after every grant round.

## STRATEGY FOR NEXT YEAR

During the previous year, the PMU's priority was to identify and work with potential NGO grantees with public policy-oriented objectives and to develop and fund their project ideas. The PMU provided a number of these NGOs with grants, technical assistance and training. By September 1996, the PMU had signed 20 subagreements, obligating \$178,825.00 (45%) of the PMU's grant funds. The PMU's strategy for the next year is to proactively seek NGOs in the weaker priority sectors (environment and economic growth), and to reach more NGOs in the rural areas. During the next year, the PMU will monitor and support its grantees who received money in Year One in successfully implementing their projects and achieving concrete results. Finally, a significant part of the PMU's activity will focus on broader technical assistance and training to NGOs (grantees and others) to actively assist them in building partnerships and/or increasing dialogue with the national and local government, and to strengthen the policy analysis, formulation, and advocacy skills of Albanian NGOs. During Year One, the PMU developed local training capacity among the NGO community by training eight policy advocacy trainers, two policy research trainers, and four financial trainers, and DemNet regional contractor, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, trained 11 lawyers and coordinators in NGO legal issues. These local trainers will be engaged by the PMU to conduct training in Year Two.

## TIMELINE FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

**Grant Rounds for Institutional Development Grants and Development Activities Grant:**  
October 15, 1996            February 15, 1997            June 15, 1997

**Grant Applications for Micro grants will be accepted and evaluated throughout the year.**

### Technical Assistance and Training for Grantees and Non-grantees

Advocacy Training for Environmental NGOs	November 1996
National Conference: "Building Government-NGO Partnerships in Economic Growth"	December 1996
Advocacy Training for NGOs in the Economic Growth Sector	January 1997
National Conference: "Building Government-NGO Partnerships in the Social Sector"	February 1997
Advocacy Training for NGOs in the Social Safety Net Sector	March 1997
National Conference: "Building Government-NGO Partnerships in Democracy"	April 1997
Advocacy Training for NGOs in the Democracy Sector	April 1997

**Technical Assistance and Training Designed Specifically for Grantees**

Financial Management Training

November and December 1996

March and July 1997

Project Implementation Training

November and December 1996

March and July 1997

**NO PROPOSED CHANGES IN PROCEDURES, CRITERIA OR STRUCTURE**