

**Albania**

**ORT**

**Democracy Network Program**

**Quarterly Progress Report**

**October-December 1995**

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## INTRODUCTION

The second quarter met all established goals including: a fully operational and staffed office, grant proposal assistance and recommendations to the Democracy Commission, and training activities as described below.

## GRANT PROCESS

During November and December, Lisa Davis and Program Officer Kalia Musha scheduled meetings with over 30 Albanian NGOs to discuss their project ideas, to explain the proposal application process, and to make the proposals more public policy-oriented with maximum impact. Suggestions and assistance have been incorporated into revised grant proposals. During this time, an additional 23 concept papers and project proposals were received. (Note, almost all of the requests need to be supplemented with additional information to be considered as project proposals.) Follow-up meetings with some of these organizations were held to further develop their concept ideas and to request additional details. Associations were provided with guidelines to prepare more detailed project proposals.

**Planned activities:** All associations will be invited back to either inform them that their concept as stated does not fit our project purposes and criteria, suggest more relevant project ideas, or guide them in preparing project proposals. A meeting with the Democracy Commission (DC) to discuss project proposals is planned for early January 1996.

ORT issued one micro-grant on December 22, 1995 to the **Union of Independent Dissidents**, a registered NGO whose focus is to promote democracy and freedom. The micro-grant in the amount of \$100 funded a project in the priority sector of Democracy. The project is a Memorial Conference for the poet Nexhat Hakiu which will include speeches and solicit ideas about the present freedoms of speech and press in the new democracy. The League of Writers and Poets has donated the use of their hall to the association to hold the conference, and local speakers as well as a local high school band will perform for free. The PMU assisted the association in preparing a pamphlet containing information about the association, and about Nexhat Hakiu, the circumstances surrounding the suppression of his work, and the new freedoms provided in the law. ORT assisted in making copies of the pamphlet for distribution at the conference. ORT was invited to attend and sit in the dais during the January 10 conference. ORT and the Union of Independent Dissidents signed a subgrant agreement which also required a simplified accounting procedure which the association will follow to submit its expenditure report.

ORT has completed the English translations of all the grant proposals. In addition, Kalia Musha has prepared a database to prepare short summaries of each concept paper or project proposal to be submitted to the Democracy Commission. Each summary will reflect the following information: name and address of association; priority sector; association's main goals; date founded/registered; brief summary of project proposal; funds requested; and public policy orientation. The staff is compiling this information into the database.

## TRAINING ACTIVITIES

During December, ORT completed the first two-day computer courses on Basic Computer Skills for NGO leaders and staff. Forty representatives (including 20 women) of NGOs attended the two Basic courses. The course was open to all types of NGOs and was designed to introduce the computer, its basic components and functions, maintenance and care, and the Windows program. Mary Walsh, a local training consultant, designed the course after conducting a needs assessment of 12 NGOs. In response to requests by some of the NGO participants, Ms. Walsh is preparing a short "Buyers Guide" and "Computer Set-up and Maintenance Guide" for distribution to those NGOs buying computers. She is also adding more details to her course notes and will provide these for translation and distribution to course participants and others.

**Planned activities:** Ms. Walsh will design the next level course, for current computer users, on word processing software. This course will begin the last week of January or beginning of February and will be taught by an Albanian instructor trained by Ms. Walsh. ORT will begin to advertise the course when the course materials are completed.

ORT's preliminary ideas for other training are as follows: Proposal Writing (design a mini-course for those NGOs with relevant concept papers pending and adapt for general audiences to explain application form later); Strategic Planning (designing goals and plans of action); Governance of an NGO (creation of a board, the board's powers, general assembly's powers, etc.); Management of an NGO (hiring staff, office structure, file management, etc.); Financial Management of an NGO; Fundraising; Attracting and Managing Volunteers; Building the Government and NGO Relationship; and NGOs and the Media. ORT seeks to build upon or replicate the course taught by our counterparts in Macedonia on team-building to teach cooperative actions among NGOs to accomplish major impact on policy development in Albania.

Doug Rutzen suggested ICNL conduct a training of trainers of a group of lawyers who could later serve as local trainers to assist ORT in training courses. These lawyers could teach the relevant legal provisions applying to the subject we teach, e.g., tax law relating to fundraising issues.

ORT is in the process of gathering information on other training held by NGOs in Albania to avoid duplication. In this regard, the NGO Forum and the new Democracy Project of the United Nations Development Program plan to hold a round table discussion with international NGO donors within the next few weeks to discuss each project's objectives and future information sharing. The UNDP is considering playing a coordinating role among donors. (The new Democracy Project of the UNDP will begin its grants program (of \$100,000) in March, 1996, designed to assist NGO development in the rural areas.)

ORT has received requests for specific in-house training. The Project Director of Land O'Lakes Dairy Project, Debbie Wagner, has requested our assistance in training local staff on NGO development. Her new staff will be working with rural women dairy farmers to form business cooperatives. We discussed organizing in-house training for early February.

Lisa Davis will speak at a conference on the subject of violence against women, held by the women's association, "Reflexione" to take place on January 26 or 27. Topics covered will include foreign and international laws concerning violence against women, information on how NGOs influence the enactment and implementation of such legislation, and what NGOs can do to change the law in Albania.

## **NETWORKING WITH NGOs**

ORT attended several events held by Albanian NGOs: the opening of the Kavaje Community Center, the national conference of the **Independent Forum of Albanian Women** (members from each region were present), the Women's Center meeting with women deputies of Parliament, the AID/UNDP Gender Statistics Workshop, and the graduation ceremony and reception of the Trainers of Trainers of Women NGO leaders sponsored by the UNDP and the World Bank. At these events, a brief introduction of our project, and one-on-one discussions with organizers and participants were conducted. The PMU staff held an office Holiday party where we invited leaders of NGOs, USAID supervisors, and other AID project representatives. We have been requested by the NGO Forum, the Albanian Civil Society Foundation, and the Youth Council to write a short article about our project for their January newsletters.

Lisa Davis and Kalia Musha also accompanied Christine Sheckler and Doug Rutzen to two round table discussions of NGOs. Thirty NGOs in Tirana and fifteen in Shkodra participated. We discussed their knowledge of NGO law and access to government.

## **CREATION OF NEW NGOs**

ORT's technical assistance can be very instrumental in the start-up of new NGOs. Building on her previous work with the Central and East European Law Initiative (CEELI), ORT Project Director Lisa Davis continued to work with an interested group of legal professions who want to form a women's bar association. ORT invited a small group of female lawyers representing every part of the legal profession (judges, prosecutors, private advocates, law faculty, and government lawyers) to a round table discussion. The entire group supported the formation and welcomed the assistance of ORT and CEELI.

**Planned activities:** The PMU will publicize and convene a larger meeting during which ORT will facilitate the discussion of issues of formation, purpose, raising membership, and future activities.

In addition, several meetings were held with the president and the coordinator of a new Community Center in Kavaje. Issues discussed included registration, activity development and civic education. As a result of these meetings, the Center has registered and included within their statute the purpose of civic education, and they are planning a March democracy activity. The **Kavaje Community Center** submitted a micro grant proposal of \$500 to help fund the event, which will consist of an art contest for paintings depicting the freedom celebration which spontaneously erupted in Kavaje

March 1992, the year of the first pluralist election. (In fact, there is one famous square in Kavaje, named "Democracy Square," and the people of Kavaje as well as President Berisha claim that Kavaje is the birthplace of Democracy.) Per ORT's suggestion, the Center directors are coordinating with the **Society for Democratic Culture** and will have local elected leaders speak about the upcoming elections and the electoral process.

**Planned activity:** Lisa Davis will speak and participate in judging the freedom art contest.

In December, Lisa Davis met with Christopher Banks, a representative of the USAID contractor The Urban Institute. Mr. Banks is working with the Director of Albanian Housing Policy and with the Housing Investment department of the Ministry of Construction. His work is focused on forming condominium associations, starting with some prototypes in Tirana, Durres, and Kruje. We discussed mutual cooperation on setting up an umbrella NGO to provide assistance to apartment owners to set up their condominium association and began renovation projects. Mr. Banks discussed cooperative work between the Dem Net program in Poland and his group in setting up an association of condominium associations there.

**Planned activity:** Although ORT will not fund small soft credits or a revolving loan fund for renovations, we agreed to combine our technical assistance in further months to try and establish such condominium associations. At a later point, a start-up umbrella organization may request funds from the Dem Net program.

ORT met with two representatives from the USAID project, Small Business and Micro-Enterprise Development for Albania (SMEDA), Mike Fielding and Dhimitri Papamihali, to discuss mutual areas of cooperation. SMEDA is organizing and providing technical assistance to business groups and is assisting in the creation of trade associations. They are currently working with groups in Korca and want to expand their activities to Elbasan. They have requested our assistance to work on training and technical assistance with the SMEDA project as well as the Albanian Regional Business Associations. During December, SMEDA introduced the leaders of a women's business association from Korca, who was in Tirana to meet with deputies of Parliament

**Planned activity:** ORT will continue to coordinate and draw up concrete plans for these areas, including a trip to Korca to meet these groups and describe the Dem Net program.

## **STRENGTHENING NGO RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

In December, Lisa Davis met with the newly arrived Project Coordinator of the USAID Public Administration project, Hugh Nichols. The Public Administration project is designed to give technical assistance and training to the local governmental entities, including the Institute for Management and Public Administration (parastatal). Mutual cooperation in our activities, specifically working together to convene public meetings in municipalities around Albania, was discussed. In addition, we agreed to share information, findings, and assessments with each other.

Mr. Nichols said that a part of his project's technical assistance would be to prepare monographs on public policy, during the period of February to October 1996. He said that by next October or November, the project would start its training component and there are possibilities for future cooperation at that point. In particular, we discussed possible trips together with an incoming training advisor to discuss concerns with local government officials in some cities outside Tirana.

**Planned activity:** ORT will meet with the training advisor in January to coordinate further on issue of local government/NGO relationships.

## **STRENGTHENING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF NGO NETWORKS & SERVICE CENTERS**

In November, Lisa Davis met with representatives from the Albanian Civil Society Foundation, Rolanda Dhimitri, Executive Director, Elvis Toci, Information Officer, and Stephen Sampson, from DANIDA, to discuss coordination of our donor activities. At the meeting, these representatives proposed the idea of jointly funding the creation of an NGO business center. Lisa Davis has discussed this issue with other USAID projects providing specific technical assistance to NGOs, i.e., Larry McDonald of the Commercial Law Development Program and Maura Schwartz of VOCA. We discussed the idea of creating an "incubation center" for NGOs, which is conceptually the same as the business center but would provide additional support to NGOs through the provision of a telephone answering service and mail box address for member/customer NGOs. These other USAID projects do not have funding for such a project, but merely raised the issue regarding the needs of the organizations with which they are working. We discussed approaching the Albanian Civil Society Foundation to see what steps have been taken on their initiative and whether these additional services would be foreseeable in their operation.

**Planned activity:** Lisa Davis will meet with Artan Spahiu of the NGO Forum in January to further discuss their operations and ability to provide a service center .

In addition, there are existing NGOs which already play or want to play coordinating roles in their subject areas. These subject specific forums could be funded to have additional office space and equipment to provide such services to their similar organizations. For example, the Association of Young Researchers of the Social Sciences has a pending grant proposal to fund an international youth center to serve a coordinating role for youth NGOs and international counterparts. The Women's center has played a coordinating role for women's organizations, and many of the groups use the Women's Center's address as their contact point. Finally, the Albanian Resource Center for Health (ARCH) will submit a proposal for partial funding of a health NGO center outside of the hospital (where they currently have one office) in which they will provide offices for the Health NGO Forum and other health NGOs. These specific subject area NGO forums could play such a role. The review criteria will be their institutional capacity and their ability to play an objective service-oriented role with transparent operational rules and not one of preference and priority given to the NGOs with which they like to work.

## NGO LAW

ORT worked closely with Doug Rutzen, Legal Director for the International Center for Not-for Profit Law, to develop and began implementation of NGO legal work. During Mr. Rutzen's visit to Albania, we attended two round table discussions with various NGOs, one in Tirana and one in Shkodra. In these round tables, we discussed their knowledge and access to the law applicable to NGOs as well as access to government. Since most NGO participants had very little knowledge about the law, and in some cases inaccurate knowledge, we decided to prepare a legal handbook describing the legal provisions and to address legal issues NGOs will face which are not covered by the law. ORT agreed to cooperate with ICNL to produce a NGO legal handbook in the following ways: to help prepare a legal questionnaire to gather information on legal barriers actually faced by NGOs currently; to distribute this questionnaire with the Albanian NGO Forum at various upcoming meetings and through a more extensive mailing; gather responses and summarize and translate; select additional new people for a working group to draft a NGO legal handbook; immediately hold a meeting of the new working group to set a short working schedule (3 months) and discuss per diem; oversee the working group and hold meetings in the ORT office; acquire estimates for in-country publishing of handbook; help in the distribution of handbook and possible training of NGOs.

During December, the PMU collected publishing quotes, confirmed the participation of two members of the drafting group, and translated the legal questionnaire prepared by ICNL. ICNL has provided a outline of NGO legal issues and the index of a similar handbook prepared by them in the Czech Republic to aid the group.

**Planned activities:** ORT will distribute the questionnaire in NGO meetings and via post, and hold the first meeting of the drafting group. ORT will also translate the outline and handbook index. The timeline for production of the handbook will be as follows: distribution of the legal questionnaire (January 15 -30); drafting of the handbook (January 15 - March 15); publication of the handbook (before June).

## OFFICE ORGANIZATION AND STAFF

During the months of November and December, the office was completely staffed with three local hires: Program Officer, Office Manager and Finance Officer. Training of the staff and organizational and management systems are still in formation. Further equipment was purchased and insurance and licenses were obtained for the ORT vehicle. Further insurance will be purchased in January regarding theft within the office and the vehicle.