

## **ORT ALBANIA DEMOCRACY NETWORK PROGRAM Quarterly Progress Report July - September 1997**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The "Democracy Sector" NGOs responded to the recent civil unrest by demanding to play a much greater role. The ORT DemNet grants during this critical period facilitated the Albanian NGOs input into preparing for the Parliamentary elections held in late June, as well as the post-election period. Below we describe success stories of how the NGO community contributed toward a peaceful resolution of the crisis, and strengthened the democratic institutions within Albania by engaging their members and local communities.

### **GRANTS PROGRAM**

#### **Democracy Sector Grants:**

The **Society for Democratic Culture (SDC)**, with the help of a DemNet grant, mobilized 1200 volunteer observers in 30 districts in its most comprehensive election monitoring exercise to date. SDC volunteers monitored 75% of the 115 election zones throughout the country and 25% of the 4,800 polling stations, constituting the largest local observation in Albania. Despite obstacles to communication and transportation from the outlying districts to the capital city of Tirana, SDC local chapter leaders made every effort to deliver their results on a timely basis so that the SDC could produce a compilation of election data from which to judge the integrity of the election process.

The observation data served as the basis for the SDC's preliminary and final reports issued to the public and political parties confirming that the voting process was, for the most part, free and fair. The report noted the seriousness of the voters, the contribution of the OSCE, the Multinational Protection Force, and the local police as mitigating factors in the success of the election. The SDC did cite specific instances of violence and stealing of ballot boxes in some voter districts leading to a repeat vote for those districts. Local political parties, international organizations and foreign governments all officially recognized the results of the election and the efforts of the SDC as a domestic observer. It is widely held that the SDC helped to ensure the integrity of the election process and helped to build the confidence of Albanian citizens in the democratic process.

As in most post-communist countries, the state television or radio stations remain the primary domestic source of news. In fact, prior to June 1997, private media was prohibited in Albania. By virtue of its control over state media, the party in power has in the past been able to manipulate the media during an election campaign period regardless of the election law mandating proportional coverage of all political parties and candidates. The first DemNet-funded **media monitoring** activity by the **Society for Democratic Culture** revealed heavy bias by the media towards the ruling party during the May 1996 elections. The importance of neutral state radio and television was especially critical for the June 1997 parliamentary elections because the campaign immediately followed an

extremely tense period of civil unrest with an abbreviated campaign period; curfews and travel restrictions prevented candidates from distributing literature or meeting with voter groups and further emphasized the need for unbiased radio and television coverage.

The SDC boosted its electronic media monitoring program by training additional volunteer monitors and expanding its analysis to examine the content and priority of coverage as well as time allotment. In order to raise public awareness and influence the steering committee of radio and television, the Society published its findings and identified areas for improvement in objectivity, fairness, and compliance with existing legal standards. The SDC published three bulletins, a preliminary report, and a final report which it distributed throughout the campaign period to political parties, state radio and television stations, newspapers, foreign governments and international organizations. The SDC's weekly bulletins announced the monitoring program, outlined its goals, and noted important issues to be addressed. One of the primary goals of the program was to urge the Central Election Commission's (CEC) subcommission on government electronic media to clarify its platform so that it defined in detail: (1) time parameters for media coverage of political subjects in a coalition or a common activity; and (2) requirements for coverage by radio versus television news. The reports also published exact time allocation of coverage for different parties. Knowing they were being held accountable, the Central Election Commission complied with legal standards, and for the first time, the steering group of radio and television consulted the SDC for improvements to election campaign coverage and adopted some of their recommendations for improvement. Although the findings of the SDC noted that the media still favors the big parties (through qualitative elements such as visual and audio recordings), the SDC recognized a marked improvement in time allocation equitability and coverage of all political parties. Through the success of this program, the SDC is confident that the Albanian public now receives fair and objective state media coverage of electoral campaigns, and no longer will media distortion obstruct citizens' access to accurate information. The SDC also developed a stronger, more qualified monitoring team and possesses one of the few complete archives (audio and video) of the election campaign coverage over the last three elections (May 1996, October 1996, and June 1997.)

As a result of the crisis and the institutional failures of the previous government, citizens are more cautious of uncontrolled power of the government. For this reason, SDC is expanding its media monitoring program to evaluate the news media for accuracy, objectivity and the amount of emphasis placed on priority issues. In response to the SDC's request for technical assistance, ORT arranged a **regional exchange** with a Romanian counterpart NGO supported by DemNet partner, Freedom House / National Forum Foundation. Mircea Toma, the Executive Director of the Institute of Psychological Research, Media Monitoring Agency, and Bogdan Tanea, a computer specialist in data processing and analysis helped the SDC develop an innovative program based on international standards to monitor both print and electronic media, and track the information with a custom-designed database. (*Update: in response to this campaign, a member of Parliament recently issued an nationally televised statement that NGOs, specifically the SDC, should be responsible to monitoring the accuracy and objectivity of the media.*)

Through other DemNet grants, training, and technical assistance, NGOs worked during the pre-election period to increase voter turnout, inform the public, and focus candidate's attention on issues important to constituents. In the epicenter of the civil unrest, the city of Vlore, the pre-election environment was one of the more tense. Through two candidate debates and the production and distribution of voter education material (summarizing the position of the candidates and voting procedures), the **Union of Vlore Intellectuals (UVI)** contributed to strengthen the democratic processes. The UVI **candidate debates** provided important information to voters about each candidate's platform, a baseline for evaluating the winning candidates and for holding them accountable to their campaign promises. These initiatives produced a calmer electorate which could be more confident that its problems were a priority to Parliamentary candidates. Parliamentary candidates, local citizens, and foreign journalists noted the professionalism and objectivity of the organized debates. Candidates from other voting districts even requested that UVI organize debates in their district. As a result, the ORT grant and training enabled this new NGO to gain skills, confidence, and recognition to organize future debates, government and citizen forums, and produce civic education materials to increase citizen participation in the democratic process.

Typically, political parties in Albania select relatively few women candidates for Parliament and place little focus on issues important to women; as a result, voter turnout among women has been very low. A group of women's NGOs, including DemNet grantee, the Women's Center, continued their efforts as in previous election campaigns to draw party focus to women's issues and to support women candidates and encourage women voters to participate in the election process. Through a DemNet grant, a group of **nine women's NGOs** combined their efforts to host **candidate debates** in districts where women candidates were running and a **media campaign** including posters, radio and television spots with the message: "Without Women There is No Election, Without an Election There is No Solution". A final roundtable after the election established a more permanent coalition with the goal of increasing participation of women in political decision making. Through collaborative effort, these nine NGOs brought attention to women's issues at the national and local levels, and encouraged women to play a part in resolving the social / political crisis by making their opinion known through their vote. Another DemNet grantee, the **Law and Rural Women's Rights Association**, targeted rural women's participation in the election through roundtable discussions on electoral procedure and the importance of voting by women. After holding eleven roundtables in different villages, the Law and Rural Women's Rights reports that 100% of the women attending their voter education and encouragement program voted on election day.

Other DemNet grantees targeted specific age groups for their voter education and encouragement activities and candidate debates. With DemNet funds and technical assistance, the **Albanian Youth Council** held a "Live and Vote" Concert for university students in which it distributed leaflets on the election law and voting process, held speeches, and acted out skits on the importance and power of the youth vote. The innovative "Live and Vote" Concert reached an even bigger audience after the full one and a half hour concert was broadcast on two separate occasions. The Albanian Youth Council feels that this activity, its publications, and the publicity generated from the concert influenced young people (voters below the age of 28) to go to the polls at a rate of 82%, a rate higher

than the overall voter turnout rate of 76%. Similarly, **the League of Albanian Pensioners** targeted their activities towards the elderly by holding two candidate debates specifically focused on issues of pensioners. Through a DemNet grant, technical assistance, and training on how to organize a debate and prepare voter guides, the Pensioners attracted over 50% of the candidates in the two districts to the debate. Pensioners attending the debates received voter guides so that they could evaluate candidate views on issues of concern to the elderly. Members were elated at the candidates focused responses to their concerns and stated they felt that they now had played an important part in creating government-citizen dialogue on their issues. The League plans to extend this government-pensioners dialogue into the post election periods by preparing a draft law related to pensions.

The political and economic crisis challenged the effectiveness of the formal channels of conflict resolution (police, courts, governmental bodies) in responding to the increased social unrest. DemNet grantee, **the Foundation for the Reconciliation of Disputes**, organized roundtables of lawyers, teachers, economists, and art and culture specialists in three districts to examine existing problems and engage the Foundation's local mediators to help the community identify the types of conflicts and ways to address them. In Shkodra, the Foundation identified significant conflicts between the state and individuals and also within families. In the district of Elbasan, the Foundation found most of the conflicts in the rural areas stemmed from the issue of previous property ownership while in Rreshin, the Foundation found much different disputes based on old blood feuds and conflicts among secondary school students taking revenge on other students. Through open discussions, training on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and media coverage of the roundtables, the Foundation increased the capabilities of community leaders and the local mediators to address conflicts in each area. Training post-tests of the roundtables revealed that 90% of the participants grasped the modern dispute resolution techniques and were able to use them in role-playing exercises. The Foundation identified the top five participants as possible candidates for the extension of the Foundation's mediator network. After the completion of three additional roundtables in other districts, the Foundation will design an area-specific strategy for the mediators to focus on specific target groups.

**The Albanian Helsinki Committee** focused on important issues of minority rights, human rights, and treatment of the large number of Albanian refugees in other countries. The protection of minority rights in Albania has long been a focus of the AHC in its monitoring missions throughout Albania. Although travel was severely restricted, AHC led a frank discussion with representatives from minority groups around the country and new national government leaders on minority rights in a book promotion roundtable (promoting the AHC translated publication, "Minority Issues in Europe".) The AHC and the minority representatives presented an update on the treatment of minorities and their efforts to monitor the status of minorities on an ongoing basis. Both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Counsel to President Mejdani were in attendance and expressed their interest in working with independent human rights NGOs to monitor human rights, laying the groundwork for a real partnership in addressing problems in the future.

One of the stated priority objectives of the new Albanian government is to draft a new constitution through an open process allowing public debate on the issues. AHC held the first roundtable on the

constitution drafting process with DemNet funding to discuss several priority issues such as the need for an independent judiciary and a change in the existing (non-transparent) supervisory organs. As a result, government officials in attendance noted that the forum provided an important dialogue on the constitution and that future forums were needed to go more in-depth on specific issues. NGO inclusion at the beginning of the constitutional drafting process demonstrates a willingness on the part of the government that did not previously exist.

During 1997, a large number of Albanians fled to neighboring countries. Upon an investigation by the AHC of the treatment of refugees, the AHC uncovered discriminatory practices and appealed to both the Albanian and Greek governments. The AHC, in conjunction with the Greek Helsinki Committee and the International Helsinki Federation wrote an official letter of protest to the Greek government urging reconsideration of its discriminatory policy to legalize all illegal aliens from countries other than those neighboring Greece. This initiative also motivated the Albanian government to begin dialogue with Greece on a legal framework, including establishing seasonal work permits for Albanians. Upon an investigation of the refugees in Italy, the AHC found generally satisfactory treatment of Albanians, but all refugees were gravely concerned about their future. The AHC appealed to the Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, labeled as largely ineffective and absent from the debate to prevent rapid deportation of refugees and to conduct a more complete review of cases for migration. As a result, the Ministry's efforts became more prominent in the following months.

#### **NGO Service and Network Center Grants:**

Access to reliable information on women's issues remains a challenge in Albania. Although some government agencies collect, analyze and disseminate information on women's issues, data is often inadequate, inaccurate, or inaccessible to the public. Women's NGOs consistently find that politicians have a limited awareness of women's issues or are disinterested in promoting female candidates for leadership positions. Thus, the role of women's NGOs in researching, writing, collecting and disseminating information is essential to support policy development and political participation of women in decision-making. Under a DemNet grant, the **Women's Center** is building institutional capacity to support women and women's NGOs in their policy initiatives. During the past quarter, the Women's Center compiled a library of local newspapers and domestic and foreign periodicals and developed a user-friendly cataloguing system for researchers. The Women's Center also prepared and distributed information on issues related to women's health, violence, international treaties and declarations relating to women nationwide. As a result, the Center has seen an increase in library use and requests for additional materials. A substantial number of students have used the facility in preparation of their theses, journalists have used the books and articles to research stories, and women have come to the library to check out and read the foreign periodicals. The Women's Center has also been very active in encouraging networking, information sharing, and joint activities among women's NGOs in policy making.

The role of the Women's Center in networking and collecting data proved valuable during the crisis as well. The Women's Center maintained regular contact with women's NGOs in most other

districts, gathering information on the current conditions and sharing it with international humanitarian and security organizations in Tirana. The Women's Center also served as one of the principle organizers for a peace demonstration in Tirana, organized working group meetings to address teacher support for primary and secondary school students in coping with the stress of the crisis and the interrupted teaching schedules, and coordinated a number of radio programs on variety of issues including violence, sexual education, and the importance of women's participation in the elections.

In recent gatherings of the NGO community, organizations noted that they have little information about other NGOs, especially those in different sectors, about donors, about NGO organizational development, and about legal issues and government relationships with NGOs. Through a DemNet grant, the **Albanian NGO Forum** has revamped its newsletter to better address these issues, and has obtained and translated NGO organizational development materials to make available in its library. The bilingual July and August editions of the NGO Bulletin covered these crucial issues, and the forum also provided copies of the first and second Ministry of Labor drafts of an NGO licensing laws and the recommendations for amending it by a coalition group of NGOs. In addition, the NGO Bulletin highlights success stories of Albanian NGOs (often DemNet grantees) who are working on policy making initiatives, such as draft legislation, which provide useful role models, help create a clearer vision, and reaffirm that NGOs are playing a valuable role in policy formulation. Through publications like the Albanian NGO Forum's Bulletin, government, NGOs, and donor recipients receive up-to-date information about NGO issues and policy developments by NGOs.

#### **Social Safety Net Sector Grants:**

The mass armament of the people and subsequent shooting and bombings during the crisis had a tremendous effect on its citizens. One of the sectors most directly affected was the health sector - the violence spawned a huge demand for hospital supplies, pharmaceuticals, services, and in particular, blood donations. Through a DemNet grant, the **Albanian Blood Donors Association** designed and broadcast a television spot urging people to donate blood during the crisis and provided information on the times and locations of blood donation services. During the two month period immediately following the broadcasts, the blood donations increased 10% throughout the country. Furthermore, the association attracted mass media attention to the need for increased blood donations. The blood drive also helped establish a stronger link between the hospitals and the transfusion centers to optimize the clinical use of blood and forged a stronger working partnership between the Blood Donors Association and the Ministry of Health, including collaboration on a draft law to improve the quality and safety of blood donation and the treatment of blood donors.

#### **Economic Growth Sector Grants:**

Small business development and the legal framework enabling it is crucial to the economic development of Albania. In the south-eastern city, Korca, a number of small businesses in construction, beverage production, handicrafts, rugs, and retail shops are the backbone of economic

development in the region. Business owners have joined together to form associations to represent their issues and needs to government, but these efforts have left little time to meet the competing demands of their business and organizational development of their associations. In response to this need and with the technical assistance of the USAID Small and Micro-Enterprise Development Assistance project and the DemNet, several associations combined their resources to create the **Business Association Assistance Center (BAAC)**. Under the DemNet grant, the BAAC provides support services, meeting facilities, and a forum for establishing contacts and meetings with local and central government, and training and technical assistance on the laws and good practices of business. During the last quarter, the BAAC attracted two new member associations: the Construction Association and the Banker's Association. The BAAC held its first general membership meeting to elect a new board and better develop the mission statement and board rules; the meeting set a deadline for collection of membership fees to partially sustain the center, and identified strong and weak points of association members on which to develop an action plan for assistance. Most critical to the members is their contact with local and central government representatives via the BAAC, to discuss issues important to business development, business protection, and regional development. At a recent meeting with the Prefect, the BAAC introduced itself and its member associations in order to create a working partnership. The Prefect promised full support and agreed to forward draft laws in the business area to the associations for comment, and to relay any concerns raised by the business associations to the central government. As a result of the first meeting, the Prefect requested a follow-up meeting with the associations to help the government identify regional development projects. BAAC members are now preparing their proposal for the Prefect and local governmental organs, including a significant infrastructure project by the Construction Association.

Albania's economy is largely agrarian. Farmers face a number of issues as a result of the transition to a market economy, and the **National Union of Albanian Farmers** was created to help them identify common issues and address them through policy formulation. With a DemNet institutional development grant, the farmers' association is reorganizing and providing training the village level. During the last quarter, farmers in six new areas formed local chapters of the association. To manage the expansion and raise farmer's issues at the commune, local and national levels, the farmers' association holds regular steering committee meetings. In the past quarter, the steering committee responded to the needs of farmers in areas where local government was paralyzed, and successfully negotiated for the transfer of 70 combine harvesters from districts of Lushnja, Kavaja, Durres and Elbasan and Tirana to districts of Korca and Devoll for harvesting time. In addition, the farmers' association solved irrigation problems by negotiating with government representatives to deliver water to 7 districts where irrigation associations operate. In response to the demand for credit, the association worked with the Irish League of Credit Unions and the USAID-funded VOCA project to establish the first two branches of an Agricultural Credit Union in Lushnja and Kavaja. The farmers' association publicized these successes in radio and television spots and distributed a pamphlet. As a result, new farmers contacted the association about starting chapters in rural areas in North and South, and for the second quarter in a row, the association achieved an increased payment of member dues, demonstrating that farmers value the role of the association in helping to meet their needs. In the next quarter, the farmers association is planning a public hearing with

government officials on land tax issues, additional technical assistance for credit unions, establishing and operating of producers and dealers associations, and to hold its annual meeting.

### **Environmental Sector Grants:**

The Pogradec river, which begins in the mountains and passes through the city of Pogradec to Ohrid Lake, has long been a dumping ground for household garbage and sewage. For at least the last ten years, this garbage and raw sewage has flowed directly into the Lake, contaminating the water. Citizens living along the river are not concerned about dumping in the river partly because of the garbage problem throughout the city and partly because there are few garbage disposal containers placed along the river's banks. Through a DemNet funded micro grant, the environmental association in Pogradec, Kadme and Harmony, entered into an agreement with the city of Pogradec to clean and maintain the river and prevent dumping. Kadme and Harmony, with the local government installed 18 waste containers along the river's bank and a grate at the mouth of the river to catch waste. Kadme and Harmony enlisted volunteers living along the lake in a campaign to increase involvement in maintaining the river, starting with a survey on citizen's usage of the river and a community photo exhibition of the river and its problems. The Mayor of Pogradec and Kadme and Harmony celebrated the opening of the project as one of the first public-private partnerships in cleaning up the city. Through DemNet funds, Kadme and Harmony demonstrated that NGOs and the local government can work together to solve local problems.

Due to the concern for public safety and travel, DemNet grantees, the Association for the Protection and Preservation of the Natural Environment (PPNEA), and the Albanian Ecological Club of Lezhe postponed project activities. PPNEA rescheduled its International Symposium on Prespa Lakes until October, and the Albanian Ecological Club of Lezhe delayed start-up of its project on Reestablishing Former Nature Reserves until later in the Fall.

### **Grants Awarded in this Quarter:**

During July through September, ORT accepted project proposals for micro grants on a rolling basis. In the aftermath of the crisis and the number of postponed projects, very few NGOs submitted new proposals. ORT did receive award the following grants:

- ▶ **The Young Researchers of Social Sciences of Shkodra: Civic Education Project: “*O Tempora? O Mores!*” (Now? or Never!) (\$1,910)**

With its DemNet grant, the Young Researchers of Social Sciences of Shkodra will sponsor a series of six formal debates between students and professors of social sciences (law, history, literature, and philosophy), NGO leaders, journalists, lawyers and sociologists on issues of democracy and civic responsibility. Since Shkodra has not yet stabilized, the goal of these meetings is to help youth and the community reflect on the issues of the crisis. Debate participants will also learn to defend an idea, and the jury and audience will learn how to objectively evaluate arguments. To reach a broader audience, a subproject will also fund two local television programs on the debates. As a final component of the project, the

Young Researchers will open an essay contest entitled, “The word is the first” to provoke discussion of non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms.

- ▶ **The Women’s Legal Group:** “Building a Partnership Between Women Deputies of Parliament and the Women’s Legal Group” (\$875)

The Women’s Legal Group is one of the first legislative drafting and advocacy groups in Albania. The group will use its DemNet funds to hold a reception with the new women deputies of Parliament. The reception will serve as a forum to explore a working partnership on legislation protecting the rights of women and children.

- ▶ **The Institute for Contemporary Studies:** “Mobile Business School” (\$2974)

The Institute of Contemporary Studies is using its DemNet microgrant to respond to the needs of the Albanian private sector. The DemNet grant will support the first pilot training program of the Institute’s “Mobile Business School,” for Elbasan business persons and collaborating with the Regional Business Agency. Courses will include: “Start Your Own Business” and “Improve Your Business” and business law issues. The Institute will publish its findings and advertise its activities in magazines to reach a greater audience of business persons and governmental representatives.

### **Future Grant Rounds:**

The last application deadline for institutional development grants and development activities is October 15<sup>th</sup>. ORT has announced a special focus on the economic growth sector during this round.

## **TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

### **National NGO Research Initiative**

Albanian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with the assistance of the ORT Democracy Network Program, are examining the causal factors in the crisis and formulating innovative solutions to meet citizen needs and repair weakened political and ideological institutions. In August, ORT worked with a group of 50 representatives from 35 NGOs to design objectives and questions for a national research initiative. ORT’s short-term research and NGO training consultant, Dr. Lori Jenkins, worked with additional members of the NGO sector to refine the questionnaire and to train local NGO representatives to administer the survey. The research will collect data on public opinion of the political, economic, and social status in Albania - in particular the factors that caused the recent crisis and what steps may resolve it. The conclusions and recommendations drawn from the data will serve Albanian NGOs and other segments of society to draft plans for their activities, including social service delivery, advocating new laws and public policy.

Over the next six weeks, local NGOs and ORT will conduct this national research survey in each district, interviewing at least 50 people to ensure a broad sampling of citizens from villages and cities throughout each district. Local partners will be primarily responsible for logistics in each district. Once the data is collected and analyzed, ORT will hold technical assistance workshops with NGOs by sector so that they can more effectively use the results to formulate projects and new policy recommendations. The results of the survey will also be available to the general public.

### **Project Implementation Training**

Despite the fact that many of the Tirana-based NGOs and a few in other cities have implemented other donor-funded projects, their skills, if any, are rudimentary in project management, monitoring and evaluation, and program reporting. DemNet grant agreements require institutional development and development activity grantees to submit: (1) workplans; (2) baseline data; (3) monitoring and evaluation plans; (4) quarterly financial reports; and (5) program reports identifying project impact and lessons learned. To assist grantees, ORT conducts regular meetings offering individual technical assistance, meets with NGOs after submission of quarterly reports (if revisions are necessary), and conducts mid-term and final evaluations to measure impact according to goals and pre-established indicators.

In addition, ORT provides project implementation training to at least four representatives of each NGO. The participants work with the ORT staff in preparing or revising workplans and budgets; and discuss strategic planning and how to monitor and evaluate success, including collecting initial baseline data. ORT offers the course after projects have begun and grantees have gained some experience in project implementation; this allows for a more effective dialogue, more clearly defined strategic objectives, and plans to achieve them. During this quarter, ORT trained five DemNet grantees (a total of 10 representatives).

ORT project implementation training, combined with mid-point and final evaluations, strengthen program and institutional capacity of DemNet grantees. Results show that grantees participating in the training adhere more closely to workplans, report more tangible project results and impact, and more often meet reporting deadlines.

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

Since most grantees are carrying out policy advocacy activities for the first time, grantees need continuous support in achieving policy advocacy goals. ORT has designed additional direct technical assistance in legislative drafting and policy advocacy to help NGOs achieve their goal of successfully drafting policy recommendations or developing a proposed law and advocating it to the government. A key component of the TA will be provided by a newly-created local support group of Albanian advocacy specialists, advocacy trainers, and legislative drafters. To create this local support group, ORT will draw from its existing advocacy trainers, attorneys with previous experience in the NGO sector, and staff members of NGO service and network centers, to which

ORT will provide training by short-term consultants in advocacy and legislative drafting skills. By creating and training a local cadre of legislative drafters and advocacy specialists, ORT will ensure sustainability of the Democracy Network program ideals. ORT will also review grantees final drafts of laws and policy recommendations with sector-specific foreign legal advisors who will be able to provide comparative law models and assist in designing appropriate laws to meet Albania's needs.

ORT continues to offer training in financial management for new grantees. In November, ORT will conduct its next round of training on developing a modern fund accounting procedure and advise grantees on financial reporting requirements under USAID.

Finally, ORT is rescheduling the CEE regional conference, "Shared Experiences and Future Partnerships", co-funded by regional Democracy Network partner, the National Forum Foundation, for February of 1998.

### **Draft NGO Licensing Law - Technical Assistance**

ORT DemNet is closely monitoring the progress of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection's draft NGO licensing law. As the government ministries are in the process of reorganization, the draft law did not change during the last quarter. At the same time, Albanian NGO members of the advocacy coalition monitored the progress of the law. Recently, a new chief of the NGO directory at the Ministry of Labor was selected. ORT has maintained close contact with DemNet regional partner, the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL). In October, ICNL Representative Douglas Rutzen will make a trip to Albania at which time ORT and ICNL will assist the NGO sector in revisiting its current legislative strategy and any outstanding issues regarding the draft law. Together ORT and ICNL will meet with the new Ministry personnel to discuss collaboration in the drafting and review process.