

## People with Intellectual Disabilities Vote for the First Time in Kosovo

Washington, DC - February 6, 2008

In an effort to build upon the self-advocacy movement of persons with disabilities in Kosovo, **Kosovo Mental Disability Rights Initiative (K-MDRI)** recently assisted "**Ne Per Ne**" peer support group members in fully understanding and participating in Kosovo's historic winter elections to choose national and municipal assembly members and mayors. "Ne Per Ne," which means "*We for Ourselves*," is Eastern Europe's largest peer support group for persons with intellectual disabilities, started by MDRI.

In preparation for Kosovo's November elections, the peer support groups invited and welcomed representatives of the major political parties to discuss the importance of the elections, the work of the parties, and the issues that would affect them. Participants were able to ask questions of the candidates such as "what are you going to do regarding jobs for people with disabilities?"

**For the first time in their lives, approximately 90% of the peer support group members voted in Kosovo's elections.**

*"My vote made a difference. I thought it wouldn't count, but it obviously counted; I'm very happy MDRI helped me realize that." - Avni (Kacaniku Peer Support Group)*

*"I thought I couldn't vote because I don't know how to read; I didn't know I could bring people with me who could help me." - Laura (Peja Peer Support Group)*

*"I would get so upset at my peers during the peer support group meetings when they would say that they don't know how to go to the voting place; it's very easy, think ahead and plan transportation before hand. I asked my father to take me and he was happy to do that. They could ask someone too - 'I don't know how' is not a valid excuse." - Gazi (Kamenica Peer Support Group)*

**Kosovo Mental Disability Rights Initiative (K-MDRI)** is an initiative of **Mental Disability Rights International** as a result of our 2002 report, "**Not on the Agenda: Human Rights of People with Mental Disabilities in Kosovo.**" To find out more about the work in Kosovo or to read more about MDRI, please visit our [website](#).

